

Patterns of Death in the *Aeneid**

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Nearly every reader of the *Aeneid* has a strongly held opinion about its ending: Aeneas' killing of Turnus is either the regrettable proof that Aeneas is not as honorable as we might wish, or a wholly justified response that contrasts the villainy of Turnus with his own piety, or emblematic of ancient philosophical views about anger and/or heroism, or a sign of the complexity of Vergil's understanding of what it is to be Roman. (I offer these extremes merely *exempli gratia*; there are many nuances to be had in this extremely well-plowed field).¹ This article discusses four of the major battle-deaths in the poem, two of which are presented as problematic, or at least noteworthy, by the killer or the poem itself, and two of which offer no comment. I seek to outline the pattern of audience expectation they create, and then explore what happens to that pattern at the end of the poem. These scenes are the deaths of Pallas, Lausus and Mezentius in Book 10, and of Turnus in Book 12.² The deaths of Dido in Book 4, Nisus and Euryalus in Book 9 and of Camilla in Book 11 are also relevant and so receive brief comment.

I begin with a few prefatory remarks, as this article discusses some of the most famous — and famously problematic — passages in Latin poetry, but at a different angle from that which is usually taken. First, to situate myself: I am not overly concerned in this work with the question of Vergil's stance vis à vis Augustus, although I am sensitive to the seedy underbelly of Vergil's portrayal of what imperialism sometimes renders necessary. I would be very surprised if Augustus was not also sensitive to it, and not necessarily in ways that would require either that the *Aeneid* be

* This article has been greatly improved by the generous comments of audiences at the Oxford Classical Society (particularly Fran Titchener, Stephen Harrison, Chris Pelling, and Judith Mossman) and the annual meetings of CAMWS (2006) and the ISPCS (2006). In the last-mentioned setting, in a country itself often at war, I was forced to rethink many of my facile armchair assumptions about patriotism and militarism. I will never read the *Aeneid* in the same way again, and for this especially I thank my hosts.

¹ I trust that it will be evident that I have profited much from my numerous predecessors. A scholar foolish enough to engage with topics as much discussed as Turnus, Dido, and the end of the *Aeneid* must either provide a bibliography longer than the poem itself or be extremely selective. I have chosen the second option and cited only those items I have found particularly useful. Philosophical readings of the end of the *Aeneid* include Bowra (on Aeneas as a Stoic, perfected after his trip to the underworld, but failing after the death of Pallas) and Galinsky, 1988 and 1994 (on Aeneas as the embodiment of proper anger of a variety of philosophical schools). Horsfall's 'keys to reading' the end of the poem include Platonic, Stoic, Aristotelian, and Epicurean viewpoints (1995: 198-202).

² Edgeworth, in an article parallel to this one in many ways, focuses his study of the ambiguities of the ending on the question of what will happen to Turnus' body after death: will it be returned honorably, like Lausus', or desecrated, like that of Mezentius (3-7)?

shameless propaganda or the emperor a gullible fool. Let me also register a confession of favoring complexity in literature not, I hope, at the expense of the evidence. My goal is not to use the end of the *Aeneid* to argue that Aeneas is good (or bad), or that Turnus is good (or bad), or even that Augustus is good (or bad), but merely to examine how we go about making sense of its final scene whatever conclusion we eventually draw.

My primary reason, however, for avoiding judgments about Aeneas' moral character is that my interest in the deaths of Turnus and Mezentius is but a small part of a much larger project, on the social functions of regret and remorse in ancient literature, and I offer some background.³ Since the publication of Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational*, it had been assumed that pagan antique peoples had little sense of remorse or regret, because they were shame cultures rather than guilt cultures; that is, they were concerned not with *doing* something wrong, but with being *caught* doing something wrong. Scholarship of the past fifteen years or so demonstrates that this distinction between shame-based and guilt-based societies has obfuscated more than it has clarified; it has been replaced by a greater awareness of the complexity of the evidence regarding emotional states and particularly how they are affected by social realities. Yet vestiges of this outdated notion still pervade classical scholarship, particularly in cases like the end of the *Aeneid*, where we are trying to judge the characters. The poem's final lines matter to us not only as a literary but as an ethical question: some of us would like Aeneas to be a hero, *tout court*, while others are disturbed enough by Roman imperialism, or war in general, to want to see a clear indication that some Romans were disturbed as well.

Emotions like remorse exist only when they are manifested in some way, so if you feel sorry but do not act sorry, things usually go much worse for you than if you act sorry but do not feel sorry. (This phenomenon is what is meant by the idea of a 'social script' of remorse or apology; see too Kaster, 4-5, 23-7 for the notion). It is of great significance for the *Aeneid*, for instance, that Vergil has portrayed Mezentius as looking back on his life and, on the whole, feeling as if it went rather badly, but has not given Turnus that option, despite setting up their deaths in a very similar fashion, and particularly when we note that Vergil has introduced an innovation in making Turnus' wound one that allows him to speak (unlike, that is, Hector's similar wound in the *Iliad*). This point is made even clearer by a comparison of Aeneas' reaction in book 10 to his own killing of Lausus and the poem's abrupt end, before we are given a chance to know what he might have thought about Turnus. So my focus is much less on how *we* might feel about Turnus' death than on how Aeneas might feel about it.

Turnus' slaying of Pallas and Aeneas' killing of Lausus are scenes that, among their similarities, share in the expression of sorrow, either by the narrator or by the character himself:

³ I define remorse as the unpleasant complex of feelings and actions that are the regular accompaniment of incorrect decision-making, typically including: 1) the assessment of an action as wrong/unfortunate, 2) an expression of sorrow or pain, sometimes including severe negative self-assessment, 3) an acceptance of at least some degree of responsibility for that action, 4) the attempt or statement of wish to make reparation or undo the wrong. See now Kaster, 66-83, especially 70, on Roman *paenitentia*, which almost, but not quite, maps onto any particular English word.

'o dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti,
haec te prima dies bello dedit, haec eadem aufert,
cum tamen ingentis Rutulorum linquis acervos!' (10.507-9)

'As a grief and a great honor you will return to your father: this day first gave you to war,
and the same day carries you away, yet you leave behind huge heaps of Rutulian dead'.⁴

This passage glorifies Pallas, but also reminds us that this was his sole chance for glory and that his aged father had entrusted him to Aeneas for safekeeping.⁵ It is usefully compared to a passage some three hundred lines later in the poem:

'quid tibi nunc, miserande puer, pro laudibus istis,
quid pius Aeneas tanta dabit indole dignum?
arma, quibus laetatus, habe tua; teque parentum
manibus et cinere, si qua est ea cura, remitto.
hoc tamen infelix miseram solabere mortem:
Aeneae magni dextra cadis' (10.825-30).

'Pitiable boy, what now, in return for your praiseworthy deeds, what can *pius* Aeneas give to you worthy of so great a nature? Keep your arms, in which you rejoiced, and I send you back to the shades and ashes of your ancestors, if this is any concern. You may, although unlucky, be consoled in your wretched death by this: you fall by the hand of great Aeneas'.

This second passage is Aeneas' reaction to his killing of Lausus. While it is impossible to determine whether he is bemoaning a sad necessity or blaming himself for what he has done, or even wishing it was undone, I find the first most plausible. But all of these concepts are conveyed by the English word 'regret', so let us merely say that Aeneas regrets the death of Lausus, without distinguishing whether he would undo it if he could.⁶

These two scenes appear in the same book, and they have often been compared, sometimes in order to draw conclusions about the relative merits of Aeneas and Turnus. This comparison usually goes as follows: Aeneas expresses regret about killing Lausus, but Turnus does not feel badly about his own similar role; rather he gloats over Pallas' dead body:

'Arcades, haec' inquit 'memores mea dicta referte
Evandro: qualem meruit, Pallanta remitto.
quisquis honos tumuli, quidquid solamen humandi est,
largior. haud illi stabunt Aeneia parvo
hospitia' (10.491-95).

⁴ Translations throughout are my own, aiming at utility and with no claim to beauty.

⁵ This is but one instance of an issue of great importance to both the *Aeneid* and the Romans: the relationship of fathers and sons, father-surrogates and almost-sons, is central to, among other things, understanding both why Aeneas might be tempted to spare Turnus' life for Daunus and why he refuses because of Pallas and Evander.

⁶ Aeneas also seems to feel pity, or something akin to it. On the simultaneous closeness and distance required for (Greek) pity, see Konstan, 75-105.

'Arcadians', he says, 'Remember and bring these my words to Evander: I send him back Pallas as he has deserved him. Whatever honor there is in burial, whatever consolation, I bestow. His hospitality to Aeneas will not have cost him little'.

Turnus' statement is interpreted as demonstrating his moral inferiority to Aeneas, and his behavior becomes even more questionable immediately following this passage, as he rips the Danaid baldrick off Pallas' body and, as we learn from the end of the poem, puts it on his own (although Turnus does return Pallas' body for burial; cf. Harrison, *ad loc.*). We are therefore entitled, runs the argument, to conclude that Aeneas is good and Turnus is not. Sometimes the statement is expressed in the form, 'Aeneas is (a true) Roman and Turnus is (primitive and/or) Homeric', but this formulation expresses essentially the same judgment.⁷ This sharp distinction between the men is probably true, as far as it goes: I feel certain that Aeneas is a better person than Turnus, and we can discern in him the seeds of most of the characteristics Romans prided themselves upon. Aeneas' treatment of Lausus' body is, as Barchiesi notes, remarkable for its humanity (13-4). I will even go so far as to say that if one of them had to die, I am glad it was Turnus because I do not trust him.⁸ But in an attempt at avoiding such ready moralizing, I instead concentrate on the observation that each vignette features a death and a reflection on its pathos, of the sort that we have perhaps come to expect especially after the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus in Book 9:

fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,
 nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo,
 dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
 accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit. (9.446-9)

Lucky pair! If my poetry has any power, no day will ever remove you from the memory of time, as long as the house of Aeneas shall abide near the fixed rock of the Capitoline, and a Roman father shall rule.

The expression of sadness immediately after death happens too in several lesser death scenes, such as those of Euryalus in his mother's speech, Pandarus, Lichas and Halaesus, Camilla, Cretheus, Cupencus, and Aeolus (*Aen.* 9.475-97, 749-51, 10.315-7, 417-20, 11.803-4, 817-31, 12.538-47).

As many have noted, Nisus and Euryalus are emblematic of the *Aeneid's* persistent focus on the waste of human life involved in warfare. The fact that Vergil seems to concentrate his evocations of pathos especially on the death of the young has also been noted by many; Hardie terms it 'a particularly obsessive and memorable set of themes' (1997: 153). By the time we have reached Book 10 of the *Aeneid*, we have something we might call a pattern: when a warrior in whom we have some interest dies, especially if he is young, the poem stops to reflect upon how tragic war is, precisely because in

⁷ I suspect, however, that this itself is an oversimplification of Homer and that the 'two voices' of Vergil derive ultimately from Homer's two voices: there is the heroic world as it exists, and there is Achilles' questioning of that world. See, for instance, *Il.* 6.416-7, where Achilles refuses to despoil an enemy and Harrison, *ad* 10.827-8 for the comparison with Aeneas' behavior at the death of Lausus.

⁸ See Wilson on the 'heavy-handed' nature of this comparison (73).

war so many young die.⁹ The fatal desire of Nisus and Euryalus to despoil their enemies also foreshadows, of course, the equally fatal desire of Camilla and Turnus for shiny things, and this is how patterns in the *Aeneid* tend to work — with each successive iteration of a similar piece of the story, many things are the same and several things are different, so that it is probably more accurate to speak of multiple strands of repetition rather than a simple pattern. Looking forward for a moment, the most significant instance of this pattern, the death of Turnus, is in part so significant because there the invocations of pathos and the wastefulness exist only by proxy, by our willingness to assume they should be and so must be present; we are somewhat aided by the characterization of Turnus' death in the final line of the poem as *indignata*, but only if we understand it as focalized through Vergil and not Turnus (Horsfall, 1995: 215). The poem's lack of closure renders it profoundly unsatisfying, by which I mean not that I, or some other reader, might like it to have ended differently (say, with a hearty embrace between the two antagonists), but rather that the end, by its inconclusiveness, calls into question the correctness of our interpretation of the earlier parts.¹⁰

The killing of Mezentius presents — at least at first glance — an aberration in this pattern of regrettable death. In book 10 Mezentius is saved from death by his son and retreats from battle, only to discover that Aeneas has killed his son in place of him. Wounded in more ways than one, Mezentius returns to battle and rides around Aeneas, throwing many spears, which Aeneas deflects with his shield. Eventually, Aeneas loses patience with this, as one might expect, and so he hits Mezentius' horse with his own spear. The horse rears and falls, taking Mezentius down with him, and Aeneas kills his foe, after Mezentius asks for burial with his son. (For present purposes, I avoid the question of whether killing a horse is the sort of thing we admire about Aeneas, and also whether it reminds us of one of Mezentius' most unsavory habits, the joining of the living with the [almost] dead, but I note in passing that it does deserve attention).¹¹ Book 10 ends before either Aeneas or the narrator has commented on Mezentius' death, or even before it is clear whether Aeneas will honor his foe's last wishes. His final words are:

'unum hoc per si qua est victis venia hostibus oro:
corpus humo patiare tegi. scio acerba meorum
circumstare odia: hunc, oro, defende furem
et me consortem nati concede sepulcro'.
haec loquitur, iuguloque haud inscius accipit ensem
undantique animam diffundit in arma cruore. (10.903-8)

'This one thing I beg of you, if ever kindness is done for a defeated enemy: allow my body to be buried in the earth. I know the bitter hatreds of my people threaten: prevent their rage, I beg, and place me as partner of my son, in a tomb'. He said this and, in full

⁹ As many have noted, the *Aeneid* is rife with this kind of pattern-making, a result of both its Homeric predecessors and of a Vergilian tendency to treat a similar story from several angles and in different ways so as to explore its multiple permutations of nuance.

¹⁰ See too Poliakoff, who offers, tongue-in-cheek, such an alternate ending (37).

¹¹ See e.g., Burke, 208 and Kronenberg, 420 for more on the topic.

awareness, took the blade in his throat and poured out his life with the blood flowing onto his armor.

Haud inscius Mezentius is implicitly contrasted with Aeneas, the quintessentially *inscius* hero (Kronenberg, 424). And this knowledge is not all that marks him as different. Mezentius is not only *not* young and beautiful like many of our other dying soldiers, he is a character with a checkered past: according to Vergil, or rather Evander (a significant difference), he attaches the living to the dead as a form of death by torture.¹² Given this bit of nastiness, if we accept its veracity, one might reasonably conclude that the poem has been generous enough with him, but I want to look more closely at how we work through this scene before we draw our final conclusions about it, particularly as the Mezentius of book 10 seems very different from the bestial Mezentius we have heard about from Evander in book 8 and from the more neutral but still hostile narrator in 7.647-54. Indeed, this Mezentius is given ‘the most courageous death in the *Aeneid*’ (Edwards, 160).¹³ One possible solution is asking what happens to Mezentius’ body after his death; this, perhaps, will let us know where Vergil stands on the matter, or at least where Aeneas does. But as happens later, during the death of Turnus, the ambiguity some see here seems to others to be forced; these latter critics feel certain that the poet gives them only one possible answer to the question of Mezentius’ burial, although for different readers this obvious answer differs: some are confident that *pius* Aeneas will repeat the gesture he has made over the body of Lausus, and will reward the bond between father and son by burying them together, for the son’s sake if not the father’s, and they refer us back to Aeneas’ noble treatment of Lausus (10.825ff; see above 19-20). After all, even Turnus returned Pallas’ body.

Others point to the twelve holes in Mezentius’ armor (11.8-11), none of which is accounted for by the description of the battle between him and Aeneas. Servius at least was sure they had been inflicted by the twelve cities of the Etruscan federation.¹⁴ Examining the question of whether Aeneas will (or can) ensure that Mezentius’ body is not mistreated and is buried with his son takes us too far afield; the start of book 11 is, however, significant in another way. Between the end of book 10 and the start of book 11 a possibility is raised and then simply abandoned. Note how different this is from the standard epic pre-death conversation (most famously between Hector and Achilles, but sprinkled judiciously throughout the *Iliad*), in which the losing warrior makes a request, usually for mercy and/or ransom, which is then unambiguously denied — with varying degrees of savagery, and sometimes with reference to an earlier time when that sort of thing was acceptable — before he is killed. In Homeric battle-scenes everybody knows

¹² *Aen.* 8.483-8; Dion. Hal. makes no mention of this in his treatment of the king (I.65).

¹³ See too Mazzocchini, 97-129 on Mezentius’ *aristeia* in general and 119 and 125 on Homeric models for Mezentius (Achilles, Menelaus, Odysseus, Sarpedon, Ajax, Hector), and Nethercut on Homeric echoes of Achilles, Andromache, and Laertes (34).

¹⁴ Fairly improbable, as Horsfall, 2003 notes *ad loc.* Others think they are symbolic of the twelve gods Mezentius has insulted by his impiety; see Eden, 32 on the question, and compare Edgeworth on the disturbing and never explicitly answered question of what happens to the eight youths Aeneas decides to immolate for Pallas in 11.81-93 (although, as Horsfall, 2003 notes *ad loc.*, there is no reason to suggest that they were not killed).

the stakes: if you win, there are few rules governing your behavior, and if you lose, tough luck. You may beg for your life, but your chances are not good.¹⁵

This noteworthy difference from Homer raises the question of whether the Mezentius-scene establishes a new pattern. Mezentius is not a young, inexperienced warrior, for whom the poem has sympathy, but his is also not quite a standard epic death, interesting mostly for what his severed body parts do as they fall to the ground. The reader's interest in him has already been assured by the grotesqueness of his portrayal in book 8; here it is further piqued because he doesn't fit the established pattern. He is clearly an important character, but we are simply not told how to react to his death.

Compare this to the poem's final comments on Nisus and Euryalus (above, 20). Whether we want to read those words ironically or not, there is at least some evidence there to interpret: the poem thinks, or wants us to think, or wants us to think that *it* thinks, that their death is worthy of commemoration. Mezentius, by contrast, dies, and the book ends. The end, as Vergil knows very well, is itself a dramatic position, but does nothing to clarify the sort of discussion it invites. In the time between book 10 and book 11, brief as it may be, we are left to wonder what will happen to Mezentius, and perhaps too what it will tell us about Aeneas. Book 11, however, begins on an entirely different note; it does indeed offer further relevant information, but only in passing, as if confirming the need for a closure it refuses to give.¹⁶

And yet, given that recognition of the pathos of death is a paradigm in the *Aeneid* primarily for the young, we might not expect the death of Mezentius, who is possessed of *canities*,¹⁷ to be explicitly regretted by the poem, not only because he has led a long life, but especially because he is *contemptor divum* (see too Macr. 3.5.10); perhaps he does not deserve our pity or Aeneas' regret. I now focus more precisely on what this incongruity in the death of Mezentius means for Turnus' death and for the end of the poem. Unlike many readers, who see the first few lines of Book 11 as giving them unambiguous information about Mezentius' afterlife (that is, he is either clearly buried or clearly not, either mistreated or not, 11.9), I see them as avoiding the problem. The end of Book 10 foreshadows the inconclusiveness of book 12, but with — as always — important differences. We have come to expect that the death of a major figure will be marked by some comment; at the end of book 10 that expectation is left unfulfilled. We can of course plausibly account for its absence (as I will shortly do), but we should still notice it. Perhaps a different way to phrase this point is to discuss internal audiences: before Lausus dies, Hercules sheds tears. The narrator himself bears witness to the deaths of Pallas and Nisus and Euryalus, and after the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, the latter's mother mourns. Finally, the death of Turnus is nothing if not a spectacle,

¹⁵ In fact, as Barchiesi notes, the only *successful* supplication occurring in Homer is that by Priam of Achilles, and it is clearly on this that Turnus' speech is modeled (111-12).

¹⁶ On this question in general, see especially Fowler, reopening his previous discussion. See too (on the *Aeneid*) Hardie, 1997: 142-51 and (on this passage and its similarities to the end of book 12) Harrison, *ad* 10.908.

¹⁷ The invocation of Aegeus' speech in Cat. 64.224 (see Harrison, *ad loc.*), if deliberate, suggests the similar pathos of needless death even of the no-longer young.

involving the Rutulians, Juturna, and even Juno. By contrast to this, although perhaps in keeping with his life, there is no reaction within the poem to the death of Mezentius.

Before Mezentius, the poem's suggestions about battle-death seem to focus on its needlessness and pathos. Nisus and Euryalus were, it turns out, not only young but *too* young, and their deaths are a shameful and stupid waste, redeemed only (if at all) by the beauty of the poetry that describes them. Turnus kills Pallas, and does not feel the least bit badly about it, although the poem does and there can be little doubt that the reader is meant to concur. Aeneas kills Lausus and is immediately regretful, and the narrative again gives us every reason to feel the same way: Lausus fights well, displays filial piety, and is furthermore disadvantaged by having the problematic Mezentius as his father (7.653-4). He is simply overmatched when he takes Aeneas on, and even this redounds to his credit because he is such a brave young man, wearing armor not sufficient for his bravery (*levia arma minacis*, 10.817). His death is easy to feel sorrow over, even by the opposing side. War is itself regrettable. Or so the *Aeneid* leads us to believe, but real life, as I shall suggest in my conclusion, does not always work this way.

Mezentius is a more problematic case, insofar as Book 8 clearly delineates him as a bad man. But, surprisingly, as his story unfolds further, the narrative is careful to offer an at least moderately redemptive view of him; the poem does not give us a simple problem or a comfortable solution. Several scholars have traced the evolution of the monstrous tyrant into a man whose death seems to have come *just* too soon, a man who, for all of his faults, is finally, in the moments preceding his death, able to see himself as part of a community, and who is able to mourn — for his son if not for himself — a life lived without that community.¹⁸ It may be that his death would always have come too soon, that his deathbed repentance (if it may be called that) would never have changed his behavior, but the complex portrayal of the character of Mezentius means that we are at least entitled to pose questions of this sort about him. Gotoff even suggests that Mezentius develops as a person in the moments before his death. Evander had in book 8 painted a portrait of Mezentius that is not designed to make Aeneas, or us, feel much at all about his death, but this portrait is shown by book 10 to be tendentious.

Mezentius delivers a remarkable speech at the death of his son:

'tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas,
 ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextrae,
 quem genui? tuane haec genitor per vulnera servor
 morte tua vivens? heu, nunc misero mihi demum
 exilium¹⁹ infelix, nunc alte vulnus adactum!
 idem ego, nate, tuum maculavi crimine nomen,
 pulsus ob invidiam solio sceptrisque paternis.
 Debueram patriae poenas odiisque meorum:

¹⁸ Kronenberg is especially worthy of mention here, as she reads Mezentius' so-called *impietas* in the light of Epicurean overturning of notions of *religio*. Sullivan, 358-62 suggests that Mezentius' final gesture, *tendere manus*, indicates that he is praying, and so finally is at peace with the gods.

¹⁹ There is a textual problem here, with even choice between *exitium* and *exilium*; Kronenberg offers the most powerful argument for the former, but Harrison, *ad loc.* convinces me that the latter is preferable.

omnis per mortis animam sontem ipse dedissem!
 nunc vivo neque adhuc homines lucemque relinquo.
 sed linquam'. (*Aen.* 10. 846-56)

'Did I have such a lust for life, son, that I allowed you to face the right hand of an enemy in my place, you whom I fathered? Will I, your father, be saved through your wounds and live through your death? Woe, now finally is exile unhappy for wretched me, now the wound is driven deep! I, son, am the man who has stained your good name by my crime, for which I was expelled by envy from my native land and paternal rulership. I owed my punishment to my fatherland and the hatred of my people; I ought to have given up my guilty soul to all forms of death! But now, living, I have not yet left men and the light. But I *shall* leave them'.

This speech may work to mitigate any audience discomfort; we have just been reminded that Mezentius is *not* young (his gray hair is mentioned for the first time as he learns of his son's death just a few lines before, at 10.844), and after this speech, in which he takes responsibility for his own life and his role in his son's death, Mezentius dies with a quiet nobility that is probably good enough. As Thome (1979: 136-7) and Harrison (*ad* 846-56 and 854) note, the passage bears affinities with a number of other epic and tragic mourning speeches for dead children; most noteworthy is Creon's lament for Haemon at Sophocles, *Ant.* 1261-76. The comparison to Creon (himself an example of either a man who was punished too much for his mistakes *or* one who deserved what he got) could alter our feelings about Mezentius; at the very least it suggests that we are entitled to find in his speech a moment of tragic pathos whatever our ultimate judgment of him.²⁰

Just as Lausus showed filial piety, Mezentius, in and by his paternal piety, metaphorically rejoins his community, even admitting its right to punish him for his misdeeds. We may or may not feel that his change of heart comes too late; he has much to answer for. But what seems to have happened, narratively speaking, is that with the death of Mezentius, our pattern has been challenged and then reaffirmed. We might find the end of book 10 troubling, but on second thought we are able to explain it. Mezentius is like and also not like other heroes, so he receives both similar and different treatment.

Before treating the end of the poem, I digress once more, this time to the warrior maiden Camilla, whose demise in book 11 again reaffirms the pattern of death I have outlined in the poem. Whatever is to be made of the comment that it is her feminine passion for gold that distracts her from battle (*femineo praedae et spoliolum ardebat amore*, 11.782), her *aristeia* is impressive, and it is plain that she is the Mezentius (or the Turnus, perhaps) of her book. The poem does not devote much energy to mourning her death, but its poignancy is made crystal clear by the terror of her killer Arruns, compared to a wolf conscious that he has gotten away with something well beyond his skill, by the anxiety of her people, and by sharp focus on the moment of her death:

²⁰ See too Harrison on Mezentius' tragic tone *ad* 10.903-4, and Conte on the influence of Capaneus, Creon, Latin historiography, and Orion on the portrayal of Mezentius, all of which eventually fade in narrative importance, overcome by the power of his love for his son (1986: 165-6).

'hactenus, Acca soror, potui: nunc vulnus acerbum
 conficit, et tenebris nigrescunt omnia circum.
 effuge et haec Turno mandata novissima perfer:
 succedat pugnae Troianosque arceat urbe.
 iamque vale'. simul his dictis linquebat habenas
 ad terram non sponte fluens. tum frigida toto
 paulatim exsoluit se corpore, lentaque colla
 et captum leto posuit caput, arma relinquens,
 vitiataque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras. (*Aen.* 11.823-31)

'Sister Acca, before this, I could act: now a bitter wound has done me in, and everything around grows black and shadowy. Run and carry these my last commands to Turnus: he should take my place in the fight and ward off the Trojans from the city. And now, farewell'. With this said, she dropped the reins, falling unwillingly to the ground. Then the chill, little by little, came across her whole body, she let go her relaxed neck and her head, taken by death, and, releasing her weapons, her life, with a groan, fled resentfully to the Shades.

Camilla bids farewell to Acca and also reminds her that the war must go on. Then she dies, with the very same phrase as Turnus. There is indeed much to compare in their deaths, not least of which is the fact that Camilla demands Turnus as her surrogate.²¹ But there are many differences too, primary among them the fact that her death does not come at the end of the book. So the war *does* go on, almost immediately. There is a brief pause in the fighting, but it is soon renewed, beginning with the death of Arruns (11.858-63). The insignificance of her death to the war — unlike that of Turnus — is highlighted by its placement.

Camilla's final words show that, unlike Mezentius, she does not accept the necessity for her death. She feels, and the poem encourages us to feel, that she has been cheated and has died a death not worthy of her. Unlike Lausus (above, 19-20), she cannot content herself with the thought that she has died at the hands of great Aeneas, for Arruns is contemptible. But, despite the ways in which her death differs from the pattern, it is still reminiscent of it. As a woman warrior, she is already something of an anomaly, but since Dido's death has already been presented as tragically unnecessary and yet somehow heroic, it is not much of a stretch to see Camilla as another Lausus, particularly given the similarities outlined between their fathers, both of whom are exiles and so bring up their children in isolation (8.489-95, 11.540-586). Again, a pattern is reaffirmed by variation.

Unfortunately, the expectation that the poem will give us easy answers — or any at all — to the questions it poses is dashed by its ending. We move, finally, to Turnus, who is in several key ways compared to Mezentius. I note here the most prominent similarities: their centrality to their respective books and the placement of their deaths at the end of those books, along with the delaying tactics employed in each book before their deaths; the complex emotional portrayal of each before their final battles; the fact that each is wounded, but in such a way that he has a chance to make a request before his death; and

²¹ On the *Aeneid's* economy of substitute deaths, see Dyson, *passim*.

finally, the poem's unwillingness to resolve the question of what happens to those requests in either case. Some have seen Turnus as an impious figure, which would also connect him to Mezentius, but I confess that I am not among them. Turnus may be on the wrong side, and he may have made a mistake or even several of them, but he has not given up on his gods; rather, they have given up on him (Mackie, 85). If anything, Turnus has been victimized by the gods from start to finish, from the moment Allecto pays her visit to him right up to the seconds before his death, a death that is presented as the direct result of some suspicious wheeling and dealing on the divine plane. This is again very different from the way things work in Homer: while the Iliadic Zeus certainly has a plan and it includes Hector's death, as well as Patroclus', until the final moments of each man we are at least permitted to view them as autonomous agents; with Turnus, by contrast, it is not even clear whether we can hold him responsible for his actions, as we see him only for an instant before Allecto afflicts him.²²

There are good reasons to want to look at the deaths of Mezentius and Turnus together. Unfortunately, the mitigating and comforting conclusions we were able to draw about Mezentius will not hold in the case of Turnus: he is *not* plainly impious or even wicked (here again there is much scope for argument about his wearing of the baldric, but the very fact that the discussion has lasted so many centuries suggests its fundamental ambiguity),²³ he has *not* lived a long life and earned his gray hair. He does not even recognize that he has lived a life different from what he might have wished and consequently death is not the worst thing that could happen to him. He is, like Hector and also like Camilla, baffled and frightened. The poem could easily have had Turnus, like Mezentius, recognize that it no longer makes sense for him to live and so offer up his neck. I can imagine a poem very like the *Aeneid* which ends with Turnus reassuring Aeneas that all is fair in love and war; he could quote Mezentius and his life could even flee *unresentfully* to the shades. But our poem emphatically does not end thus.

Turnus' death does *not* mark a failure of plot, nor has Vergil, in effect, painted himself into a corner, because the story of Turnus had to end this way, but the story of

²² Scholarship often ignores this problem, asserting (if it says anything at all) that the madness of Turnus is to be read as a result of his own psychology. He is, that is, to be understood as dangerously unstable; Allecto merely works with the material she finds in him. This view is supported by Allecto's interaction with Amata, where she does play upon feelings already present in the queen, and also in her guiding of the arrow to Silvia's pet stag, as the two groups of men who start the war are previously hostile to one another. The case of Turnus, however, is not so clear-cut: if we are meant to understand Allecto as an intensifier, why does Turnus brush aside her advice? On this question, Feeney is key, stressing the sheer incoherence of the Allecto-passages (168-78); see too Thome, 1993: 144-8.

²³ The poem tells us that he will wish he had not killed Pallas and taken the baldric (10.503-5), but not that he has done a bad thing. Much scholarly ingenuity has been expended in making Turnus impious, which I suspect stems from a modern notion that bad things should not happen to good people. If Turnus' death is somehow more his fault than Hector's is *his* (or for that matter, Achilles'), we can feel secure in knowing that the right side won. But Vergil has no such illusions, nor would he, living through a time in which Caesar held ultimate power and Pompey nearly did.

Aeneas can only do so at cost to our sympathy for the Trojan.²⁴ A number of critics of the *Aeneid* find Aeneas unpalatable throughout the poem, but especially here. Instead, as will likely be clear by now, I see the death of Turnus as the capstone to the poem's sustained engagement with the ambiguities of war (particularly civil war).²⁵ We do *not* have Turnus willingly sacrificing himself to necessity, much as some would like to see him as performing a *devotio*.²⁶ Rather, the *Aeneid* death-pattern Turnus fits most comfortably in is that of Lausus and Pallas outlined above. Like them, he is young and beautiful (in fact, he is the most beautiful: *ante alios pulcherrimus omnes*, 7.55, cf. 7.649-50).²⁷ As Hardie notes, Turnus is marked by rashness, a particular characteristic of the young in Roman thought (1994: 19).²⁸ Like Pallas and Lausus, he is matched against a warrior clearly his superior, as we see most plainly from Italian relief at the treaty-breaking scene in book 12, and like Pallas (if not Lausus) he claims that he is not afraid to die and then makes a vain attack before he is struck. Where, then, is the recognition that this death too is tragic? There is no moment of reflection for Turnus, from the poem or from Aeneas.

My aim is to move away from asking whether Aeneas' battle-anger at Lausus, Mezentius, and particularly Turnus marks him as hopelessly Homeric, or a flawed Stoic, or a dangerous criminal, or a wise leader, or any one of the other conclusions drawn about him, some of which are likely to be truer than others but no one of which can convincingly end debate on the topic. In fact, far from ending the debate, I want to focus attention on a different part of it. We do not have to decide that Aeneas has made a mistake in order to feel the pathos of the poem's final death, even (and I hope *especially*) if we find that death necessary for public order. But I *do* think Aeneas' emotional reaction to Turnus is of great importance, especially since it breaks a pattern. The open-endedness of Aeneas' final act — and I maintain that the ambiguity is real and not the product of fervid scholarly imagination — reflects a larger difficulty with Aeneas. On the one hand, Aeneas is in many ways the right person to found a new Troy, in part because of his capacity for regret, as we see nowhere more clearly than in the case of Dido. It is decidedly unfair to demand perfection from Aeneas, even if he is meant to reflect the nearly-divine Augustus. On the other hand, Aeneas' keen awareness, learned through his own suffering, of what is at stake in losing your country, your life, and everything you care about, makes it all the more unfortunate, to say the least, that he is prone to

²⁴ Beare deems the poem as providing the proper ending for the tragedy of Turnus, but not the story of Aeneas; unfortunately, Vergil could not have it both ways (26).

²⁵ There has been much written on the battles between Trojans and Latins as a civil war; see especially Conte, 1999: 33.

²⁶ See Pascal, *passim* for the argument against seeing *devotio* in Turnus' use of the verb *devovi* and previous bibliography at 251-2, nn. 3-4.

²⁷ According to Elftmann, 191, he is called *iuvenis* more often than anyone else in the poem: 9.806, 11.123, 12.19, 12.149, 12.221, 12.598.

²⁸ Turnus is clearly not as young as most of the truly 'young' men; given the habit of many genres of antiquity to delineate character by stereotypes (foolish young men, grasping prostitutes, garrulous old men), it should not surprise us that Vergil can imbue Turnus with both the characteristics of the very young and of the mature.

actions that do not incorporate that knowledge. In these instances, his regret may be limited by personal shortcomings, or it may be stifled by a higher moral understanding that renders it inappropriate, or some of both. I cannot always tell which, and neither, I suspect, can Aeneas, or even Vergil. To his own dismay, Aeneas is both the savior of lives and the cause of their wasteful destruction.

Perhaps Aeneas' feelings at the death of Lausus are simply inappropriate at the death of Mezentius; there is certainly scope for argument about this. But Turnus, even if he is a problematic figure, fits well into the poem's paradigm of those who die tragically young. In this respect, as in others, he is a doublet for Dido.²⁹ The deaths of both are a shameful waste, and not only in the way that those of Nisus and Euryalus, or any young person, are a waste, but more specifically, because both Dido and Turnus are the sort of people who could benefit the world, and not just the world, but Aeneas himself. I say this with full consciousness of their flaws, which serve to balance out those of Aeneas: where he is cold and reflective, they are warm and impulsive. We may prefer one set of characteristics, but both are necessary. Burnell, in fact, connects Dido more intimately to Turnus, suggesting that the killing of Turnus, *not* the Punic Wars, is Dido's real revenge: Turnus dies for essentially the same reasons as Dido does (love and pride), only this time it is much more unambiguously Aeneas' doing. By killing Turnus, Aeneas in effect re-enacts his killing of Dido, but this time with full knowledge and intent (Burnell, 189). Whether this is true or not, the two figures are surely similar, and the epic is much flattened by an interpretation that does not see Turnus' death as at the very least necessary but unfortunate. To refuse to do so, it seems to me, ignores what every Roman of Vergil's time would know about the complexity of real life.

At this point, it seems only fair to elaborate briefly on Dido's status as the original paradigm for my pattern of youthful death: Dido dies in book 4, and in the underworld in Book 6 Aeneas feels something reminiscent of what he feels after the death of Lausus:

'funeris heu tibi causa fui? per sidera iuro,
per superos et si qua fides tellure sub ima est,
invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi.
sed me iussa deum, quae nunc has ire per umbras,
per loca senta situ cogunt noctemque profundam,
imperiiis egere suis; nec credere quiui
hunc tantum tibi me discessu ferre dolorem'. (*Aen.* 6.458-464)

'Alas, was I the cause of your death? I swear by the stars, by the gods and any faith that exists under the deepest earth, that I left your shore unwillingly, queen. It was rather the commands of the gods, which now force me to go through these shades, through these places thorny from neglect and darkest night that forced me by their authority. And I could not have believed that I, by going, would have brought such great pain to you'.

Aeneas here accepts responsibility for Dido's death. Precisely how much is not necessary to determine, nor is it possible: he cites *iussa deum*, divine necessity, as the ultimate cause for his actions, but clearly also sees his own role. Dido is, at least on the surface, unreceptive to his words, as he was once to hers, and walks away (6.469-74; cf.

²⁹ On the similarities between Dido and Turnus, see Traina, 19-20.

e.g. 4.331-2, and compare Ajax in *Od.* 11.563-4). We then get some information about Aeneas, a near-unique opportunity in the poem. Dido leaves him in astonishment (*percussus*), tears (*lacrimis*) and pity (*miseratur* 4.475-6). But the poem moves quickly on to other characters from Aeneas' past, so insight is sparse. As with the death of Lausus, it is not clear whether Aeneas would do things differently if he had another chance — here, as there, probably not, as he is preeminently *pius* Aeneas, and the *iussa deum* were inexorable. Perhaps he might, knowing what he knows by the end of the poem, have avoided Dido altogether, or found a better way of communicating with her. I am not sure, here or with Lausus, that it would be better for Aeneas to feel differently; particularly in the latter case, continued or more seriously felt regret might incapacitate him in the midst of battle. My point resides in the repetition of Aeneas' inability to avoid causing the deaths of those he admires. Even — indeed, especially — if we do not find Aeneas morally blameworthy in either case, this mini-pattern suggests that regret need not be tied to fundamental character alteration to be a beneficial, humanizing thing.³⁰ And the fact that Aeneas feels it so deeply at Dido's death, and then at Lausus', raises the question of where it has gone by the end of the poem.

Until its conclusion, book 10 shows an Aeneas who feels sorry about causing death, at least in certain circumstances. This makes him a strange, un-Homeric kind of warrior, but it also marks him out as positively different rather than merely aberrant; he is the kind of leader we ought to admire, precisely because he is parsimonious in squandering life, and in book 10 he comes off better than in the underworld with Dido, which may suggest that he is making progress in this area. As he praises Lausus (10.825-30, above 19), Aeneas too is praiseworthy, for looking beyond the anger of the moment to see the larger picture. His interaction with Mezentius may suggest that his sympathy only extends to certain characters, but the poem has given us ample opportunity to rationalize this away, if indeed we were ever disturbed by it. Aeneas is not present to comment on the deaths of Nisus, Euryalus, and Camilla, but the poem fills in for him as it did when Pallas died. After the quiet regret of the Lausus-scene, especially by comparison with Turnus' lack of insight in a similar situation, a pattern is established or perhaps confirmed: Aeneas in particular will respond in a certain way when he kills, and it is a way echoed by the poem as a whole in bemoaning both the foolishness and the tragic inevitability of battle-death. Aeneas is shown to be better than other people, which is reassuring; indeed, it is a good part of why he must win this war. The post-Lausus Aeneas is finally able to accept the burden of making the world a better place even at cost to himself and others. Aeneas' regret over the death of Lausus meshes with his reluctance to fight in the first place: he wants that there be as little death as possible, not only because he is humane, but because he conceives of this war as a civil war and he

³⁰ I am in agreement with Williams' arguments that even futile, unnecessary regret has a function (ch. 11, esp. 166, 173, 179 and ch. 13, esp. 222-6). Recognition of and sorrow about having been, however unwittingly, the cause of pain to another is of vital importance in displaying the moral maturity of the person who feels these emotions. Even those who find Aeneas' behavior to Dido in book 4 unexceptionable would surely be disturbed if he did not have any feelings at all about her death.

does not want to destroy his people's chances for peace before they have become his people.

The mention of civil war raises my final point. There is a vital contrast between Aeneas' normal attitude to the dead and Julius Caesar's reaction after the battle of Pharsalus: upon seeing the bodies of his defeated enemies, who were also his countrymen and even former friends, he is reputed to have said *hoc voluerunt*, 'this is what they wanted' (Suet. *Div. Jul.* 30.4). Caesar's comment that his enemies got what they deserved is deeply alarming (and was seen as such by the ancients). It disturbs, and not only because it suggests that Caesar refused to accept responsibility for his own actions, even to so limited a degree as Aeneas with Dido. It disturbs also because it conflicts with his later, vaunted capacity for *clementia*, and especially his famous, regretful reactions to the murder of Pompey and the suicides of Cato and Brutus.³¹ A man who was able to forgive his enemies and to recognize that each side was acting from what it understood to be the right motives should not be the man who viewed the deaths of the best men of his generation so cavalierly, *particularly* when he had caused them. For Aeneas to replicate (or foreshadow) Caesar's lack of sensitivity to the feelings of the losers in a civil war creates almost unbearable tension at the end of the poem, because we have come to expect better of him.

Unlike that Caesar, this Aeneas with a non-Homeric capacity for regret — a skill he has learned at tremendous cost — is a great man, one who is a worthy predecessor of the Romans at their best, even if he fails in perfect morality. Because Anchises' mandate to Aeneas in book 6 is — or sometimes seems — impossible, Aeneas is forced at a key moment to choose between *parcere subiectis* and *debellare superbos* rather than being able to do both. I do not know if he makes the right choice, and the poem's silence on this issue can, like so many important questions, be read in two ways, either as a recognition of the sheer insolubility of the problem or as a triumphant confirmation that Aeneas has made the only possible decision; sometimes *pietas* has to preclude *clementia*, and it is not always easy to know when, but perhaps Aeneas does even if we do not (Lyne, 192). Servius is not wholly wrong to find Aeneas both *pious* in his hesitation and *pious* in his killing, but there is surely more to it.

Finally, unfortunately, Aeneas' last act in the poem, although it is certainly opened, also closes off possibilities, particularly for Turnus.³² Given the poem's constant focus on the loss of young men in their prime, the silence of its ending echoes loudly. Here if anywhere in the latter half of the poem, when the battle-noise has stopped and everything hangs motionless, we have a right to expect a sober consideration of the benefits of mercy, and by this I mean not only the strategic, but also the moral, advantages that will be gained by sparing the life of the champion on the other side (Lyne, 195). Would Turnus have broken a new, third, treaty if his life had been spared? Could Turnus have been reconciled to the Trojans and fought against their common enemies? Might the two men eventually have been friends? We can of course never know, but tragically, neither can Aeneas.

³¹ On Caesarian *clementia*, see now Dowling, 20-26, who is excellent on its importance as a political tool (rather than a 'feeling').

³² See especially Hardie, 1997, 144-5 on closure devices in the final lines of the poem and 145-8 on the poem's struggle to come to an end.

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