

ETERNITY VISIBLE: THE TRAGIC CYCLE OF HISTORY IN VERGIL'S *AENEID*

by

George Saad

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a comprehensive interpretation of Vergil's *Aeneid* as an expression of cyclical time. In capturing the historical intensity of the transformative Augustan moment, Vergil compresses the archaic past of Homer together with an eternally unfolding Roman future. Through this reading, the interpretative difficulties of the *Aeneid* come into dialogue with the evolutionary cosmology of antiquity and the historical consciousness of modernity. The "two voices" Adam Parry found in the *Aeneid*, the voice of public triumph and the voice of private despair, are unified by their reconciliation in an irreducible Roman experience of tragic history. As literature, the epic repeats itself in its ring composition; as a cosmology, it expresses the ongoing generational conflict of the gods; as history, it describes the reoccurring process by which the whole world became Roman. In the cycle's dense repetitions and vivid transformations, the mystery of tragic joy is made visible.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

*AUC* — Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*

*Aen* — *Aeneid*

*BT* — *The Birth of Tragedy*

*DRN* — *De Rerum Natura*

*Ecl* — *Eclogues*

*Geo* — *Georgics*

*HHA* — *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

*Plut* — Plutarch's *Lives*

*UdA* — *The Sunset of the West (Untergang des Abendlandes)*, in volumes I and II

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After my high school graduation, I did not read much Latin for five years, instead struggling to learn something about the modern world. It is a further testament to the quality of my education at Loyola that I was able to immediately resume reading Vergil at UNCA in 2013, where I first conceived the general approach of this thesis. Dr. Brian Hook endured the confused exuberance of this first attempt, patiently guiding me when I was eager with insights but still unable to see them as a whole. The questions posed in that undergraduate Vergil class did a very good job of introducing me to the interpretive problems of the *Aeneid*.

Dalhousie University's Classics Department practices a uniquely integrated brand of philology — literary yet philosophical, philosophical yet cosmological. I also exist at these crossroads which defy academic categorization, and I thank all of the professors for their iconoclastic commitment to a better kind of classics. Dr. Eli Diamond has been a very helpful and accessible graduate supervisor, and Dr. Peter O'Brien has helped me further refine my ideas on Vergil, both through his teaching and direct conversations. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Jack Mitchell, has expressed an encouraging enthusiasm for this project for the past year, and I am most grateful for his patient understanding and insight.

Any thinker is only as good as their friends, whose joys and troubles force them to make their theories real. Just as these ideas took root at UNCA, I was fortunate to have friends willing to entertain the relevance of Vergil as a poet and philosopher. Manuel Alex Moya, Brian Beers, and Zak Jambor all found the humor to consider my theories on the relevance of Latin literature as we played croquet at the Black Mountain Croquet Club. Nothing could have made this poem more vividly real to me than our philosophical discussions as young men in 2014, feeling like we had lost our homes at Troy and desiring to found something greater.

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*Ab uno disce omnis*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Ich glauben, der Stern, von welchem ich Glanz empfangen, ist seit Jahrtausenden tot.  
I believe that star, which grants me this glory, has been dead for a thousand years.  
— Rilke, “Klage”*

Before I discuss Vergil, the poet of history, I would like to reflect on the meaning of historical time in general, and in my country in particular. The student of history likes to imagine that they have gained some power of prophecy from their discipline, yet some historians of my time have predicted their own irrelevance, and the end of historical awareness itself. Like the Christian eschatologist, the modern historian often forecasts an *end* to history in the triumph of contemporary Western values. One year before my birth, in 1989, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama wrote that the end of the Cold War marked “the end of history as such... the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government”<sup>1</sup>.

But just when it had seemed defeated, history has suddenly erupted. In each passing year of my life, I have observed the breakdown of the secure post-historical confidence Fukuyama enjoyed. Yet while historical ghosts and exemplars inevitably return in times of disturbance, these incursions of the past penetrate far deeper. The discoveries of science have gradually come to reshape our perception of time itself, both through a broader scientific education and through the new technologies these sciences have created. In physics, the mundane and material can no longer be regarded as solid “matter” impervious to time. There is no true element, as every element has a “life-span” expressed in its chemical half-life. When the atom is split, it remains entangled with its former parts, as if it had memory of the past. At the macrocosmic level, any

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<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama in *The National Interest* (4). As a member of the RAND corporation and an influential political figure of the early 90s, Fukuyama’s thesis was initially embraced, then attacked and ridiculed as the United States faced the crises of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

complete account of our history must now include the shifts of continents, the reversals of climate, and the expiration of the sun. Moreover, these discoveries can now be communicated across the world at a rate approaching the speed of light, and every surviving human record can now be instantly recalled. Perhaps Fukuyama was in part correct — the well-defined historical consciousness of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries has disappeared, but its disappearance has left us engulfed in a deeper flux of metaphysical disorientation. Just as Vergil wrote under the pressing memory of Homer, we now live among layers of instantly disappearing and returning historical experience. Time no longer passes, it accumulates.

At the human level, a helpless paralysis can emerge from an age of such temporal density. Every step forward now passes through Roman ruins and abandoned industrial sites. Experience becomes filtered through the cynicism of historical engagement. Pleasures never live up to their promise, and every vice has been proven. The modern crisis of meaning has proceeded from this shock of an expanding temporal horizon. As Rilke laments, the exceptional and noteworthy traditionally reside in the stars, but what can we worship when we know that we receive the light of dead stars? Yet this crisis of historical awareness arrives just as we seem to have fully escaped time's practical constraints. Day and night are both illuminated, and our circadian rhythms can become vestigial annoyances. Lifespans have been extended. The inherent decay of the body's structures in time may be preventable. Yet in spite of all these technical advances, every defeat of the natural temporal process has only produced a deeper psychic engagement with the mystery of time.

The history of my own country provides a great example of this phenomenon. The United States of America is proudly free of Europe and free of the European tradition, which it has scorned in various ways throughout its history. While Americans are often bitterly divided about



their own aims, we agree that America represents an escape from the patterns of European history. There may be many admirable European achievements, but European states should not be emulated. Liberals celebrate this separation from Europe as the dawning of a new egalitarian project of American freedom, while conservatives stress the preservation of America, which would be harmed by the adoption of European models. Deference to Europe is a deference to tradition, and a step backwards in history, which Americans move forward and leave behind.

It seems the break has been successful, and a new cultural substance now acts independently, undetermined by history. As the centuries have unfolded, America has formed a distinctive character and culture which does not conform to European expectations. And yet, this movement towards greater independence encouraged American identification with a better, idealized Europe of antiquity — not the Europe of court and crown, but the Roman republic of *dignitas* and *libertas*. The attempted erasure of European modernity accompanies the eruption of the ancient European past, bursting forth as repressed archetypes hungry for manifestation in the American world. Even the basic vocabulary of American political life revives antiquity. No enthusiastic parliament should write laws, but a properly Roman Senate. No mere prime ministry can defend the republic, which requires a president, at once a civilian and a commander, to marshal its armies. The country's first president set the model for the responsible use of such executive authority, and George Washington retired to his fields like a victorious Cincinnatus rolling back into history's triumph.<sup>2</sup>

Such a pious cultural mythology seems implausible today, and Roman analogies in America went on to grow in grandeur as they declined in their republican purity. The same

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<sup>2</sup> Hardy writes in *The Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington*. "You have often heard him compared to Cincinnatus," the French traveler Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville wrote after visiting George Washington at Mount Vernon in 1788. "The comparison is doubtless just. The celebrated General is nothing more at present than a good farmer, constantly occupied in the care of his farm and the improvement of cultivation."

Washington celebrated as the severe Cincinnatus, the opponent of European luxury, becomes the very symbol of baroque indulgence in Constantino Brumidi's *The Apotheosis of George Washington* (Appendix C-1). Less than a century after the revolution, this 1865 fresco on the Capitol dome depicts Washington as Jupiter presiding over the Olympians under the seal *e pluribus unum*. The imagery is remarkable on a few levels. Clearly the republican ideology of the Founders had not survived the Civil War, and Washington was now portrayed as heaven's eternal ruler rather than a public servant who diligently limited his time in office. Additionally, the fresco's frank paganism seems remarkably sacrilegious in a Christian, especially Protestant nation, whose Puritan forbearers had rejected the artistic depiction of even Biblical scenes. Minerva, Venus, Neptune, Mercury, Vulcan, Ceres, and the new American goddess Columbia, eponymous with Christopher Columbus, join the heavens alongside George Washington, who observes our national political affairs as a *god*.

If Brumidi had instead portrayed Washington as a saint, or the head of a national Christian church, untold controversy would have immediately erupted among the various Christian denominations. At the twilight of the Christian era, the religious vocabulary of the present cannot express our national ideal or national practice. Such a radical distance between civic mythology and professed religion was unknown to the ancients, who surely could have explained and justified the relationship between the Roman state and its inseparable religious ornaments. Yet the Capitol dome, the seat of American government, expresses an ideology which would be discounted as absolutely absurd by the entire citizenry. Any serious American historian now suggesting that George Washington's soul lives on as the Roman god Jupiter would be relegated to the rather dim parts of libraries. 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans would have had a metaphorical appreciation for these images, but still would not have defended the metaphor in its

entirety, especially if they were at all pious. The president is not a king, and certainly not the king of heaven.

But imagine if some future civilization were to examine the ruins of the Capitol dome in an attempt to discern American identity! Uncorrected by a depleted literary record, and perhaps misguided by unstable digital records, they would reach very different conclusions about the basic assumptions of American life than we might expect. If the Washington fresco was somehow lost, they would still see two other apotheoses dating from Roosevelt's 1930s: the Lincoln Memorial — a vague imitation of the Parthenon — and the Jefferson Memorial — a direct imitation of the Pantheon. Judging from our most prominent public monuments, they might conclude that we were an odd successor kingdom to Rome, in which major political figures constructed a civic religion of Roman forms, and impressed it upon the people even though it violently contradicted the officially professed Christian doctrines. If they would take our civic imagery seriously, our Roman vestiges would become, for them, the central puzzles of cultural interpretation.

Perhaps we need to step back from individual symbols and look at the scheme of American history as a whole to see if there is anything more to these analogies. The three phases of Roman history — the monarchy, republic, and empire — also correspond to the political evolution of the United States. It was first a colony under the British crown, then a republic animated by austere ideals of civic participation, and it is now an empire which has successfully exported its culture across the globe. Washington moves from Cincinnatus to Jupiter as the nation matures from an agrarian republic to a unified industrial state. Americans have not only borrowed the forms of Rome, but actually mimicked its history with uncanny precision. In his series of paintings titled *The Course of Empire*, Thomas Cole, an American painter of the

romantic Hudson River school, even drew American landscapes evolving from Arcadian pastures to grand urban empires, eventually ending as Roman relics.

Not coincidentally, American iconography prominently quotes the Roman poet who best captured the scope of the Roman historical process. Publius Vergilius Maro captured the full range of Roman history in the *Aeneid*, his *magnum opus*. Writing in the Augustan period, when republican institutions transformed into imperial forms, Vergil was sensitive to the unique historical intensity of his age. The *Aeneid* captures Rome's evolution through the centuries in a single epic narrative, a narrative which is now prominently quoted on the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States (Appendix C-2). *Annuit coeptis* reads the inscription, "He (God) has favored our undertakings". The phrase also appears as a prayer to Jupiter in the *Aeneid*, asking him to bless a raid upon the enemy (9.625). The favor of providence does not conserve the old powers of Europe, but something *coeptus*, "having just begun". Nor will this favor result in a familiar stability. The slogan at the bottom of the seal reads *novus ordo seclorum*, a "new order of the ages". Vergil's original phrase appears in his prophetic fourth eclogue as *magnus... saeculorum... ordo*, "the great order of the ages". Charles Thomson<sup>3</sup>, the classical scholar who served as the "perpetual secretary" of the Continental Congress, stressed the possibility of American novelty in his adoption of the ancient phrase, yet this novelty is also a return to Vergil's time. The poet who has ordered the ages still lives within them, and teaches us the general pattern of history in which we still so clearly participate.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomson remains a forgotten and enigmatic figure of the revolutionary period, withdrawing from public life after Washington's inauguration and devoting himself to the study of Greek. A figure of definite interest to classicists, he taught Latin as a young man, and also produced translations of the Septuagint and New Testament. See Briggs' biography in the Society for Classical Studies' *Database of Classical Scholars*.

1.1 *E Pluribus Unum: Vergil's Varied Arts*<sup>4</sup>

*Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes)  
—Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"*

In the spirit of America's motto, and like the poet of 19th century America, Vergil also contains multitudes, as he writes for the entire Roman world. A poet cannot traverse centuries and continents without accumulating some contradictions. Aeneas, a prince who leads a band of refugees from the ruins of Troy, is the *Aeneid's* unlikely hero. The proud Roman empire depends on the arms of a defeated man who keeps recounting his defeat. His motivations are also contradictory — the gods have promised Aeneas that he will found a people in Italy who will be great far into the future, yet his redemptive victory will only grant him a small settlement among hostile peoples, far from the home he once knew. The proposition transcends any sensible notion of personal sacrifice for a personal goal — the goal resides in a future history that neither Aeneas nor any of the next several generations will experience. Along the way, he reconciles with his former enemies — the Greeks — and grievously injures a people he might have loved dearly — the Carthaginians, led by queen Dido. Finally, the journey will conclude in the familiar story of imperial conquest. Aeneas, the victim of Troy, will conquer the peoples of Italy and the Italian king Turnus, and arrogate their land for a Roman future. He is a victor and a victim, a simple man and a trickster, a hero and an anti-hero.

Naturally, such a confusing presentation of an imperial idol has prompted centuries of debate and criticism of the *Aeneid*. Most recently, a strain of controversial criticism has emerged from scholars at Harvard after the Second World War. Having witnessed the terrible pretensions of empire across Europe and skeptical of America's own postwar hegemony, the "Harvard

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<sup>4</sup> A stock Vergilian phrase: *Tum variae venere artes. Labor omnia vicit.* (*Geo.* 1.145).

school” began to see Vergil as an honorable American rebel, a dissident in an overbearing program of European imperialism. This reading of Vergil risks importing modern values into Vergil’s antiquity<sup>5</sup>, but Kallendorf’s “Historicizing the Harvard School” demonstrates that the Renaissance humanists were also skeptical of Aeneas’ heroism. He notes that Petrarch went so far as to censure Aeneas as a traitor and worshipper of false gods (Kallendorf 394-5), and that Lionardo Salviati, a modernizing critic skeptical of the classical tradition, finds him guilty of “lack of courage, perjury, betrayal, and seduction” (Kallendorf 400). Perhaps these readers were themselves guilty of reading Vergil through their own contemporary lens of medieval Christianity, but they also were responsible for elevating the *Aeneid* as a blueprint for a successful revival of pagan values. The Renaissance critics came to a compromise with their cultural ancestor: Vergil’s hero has his vices, but these vices are simply a rhetorical function of the poem, meant to be read *in utram partem*, testing and informing the reader by negative examples balanced against the overall positive framework (Kallendorf 401-2).

The method of reading “through each part” also informs one of the most influential papers of the Harvard school, Adam Parry’s “The Two Voices of Virgil’s Aeneid”. Where the Renaissance Italians divided Vergil’s world into “pagan” and “Christian” voices, Parry explores the more contemporary distinction of public grandeur and private suffering.

We hear two distinct voices in the *Aeneid*, a public voice of triumph, and a private voice of regret. The private voice, the personal emotions of a man, is never allowed to motivate action. But it is nonetheless everywhere present ... [Aeneas] cannot resist the forces of history, or even deny them; but he can be capable of human suffering, and this is where the personal voice asserts itself (Parry 79).

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson’s *Darkness Visible*: “The major weakness of the Harvard school is, as I see it, that it is obviously rooted in our peculiarly contemporary brand of pessimism ... Furthermore, it is clearly impossible to ignore Vergil’s very real (if qualified) admiration for Augustus, his hope for political salvation, his desire to believe in the cosmic order, and, failing a strong faith in human nature, his reverence for human dignity” (15).

Across his modern reception, Vergil challenges his readers with doubts just as he draws them into his song. His world should be very accessible for Italians eager to return to their antique roots, yet he does not fulfill their expectations of an unblemished classical heroism. Americans long tutored in the importance of classical civics might expect to read the *Aeneid* as a training manual in the art of statecraft, but they will find their instructions within a diary of personal torment and dissatisfaction. As a poet, historian, philosopher, and political figure, Vergil has the ability to appeal initially to many different audiences for different reasons. However, these audiences are then lead to some other realm they did not expect to encounter. The ambiguity the narrow reader experiences as a problematic contradiction also encourages an expansion of the literary perspective. Vergil is large, contradicts himself, and he makes his readers even larger — Maffeo Vegio, a Renaissance Latin poet, was even inspired to craft a thirteenth book of the *Aeneid* to tie up Vergil's loose ends.

But even as Parry was presenting Vergil's many layers, a European tradition of interpretation attempted to maintain the *Aeneid*'s unity as an expression of Stoic ethics and cosmology. Viktor Pöschl, writing from Heidelberg after the devastation of Germany in the Second World War, hears one theme emerging from the epic:

The struggle and final victory of order — this subduing of the demonic which is the basic theme of the poem, appears and reappears in many variations. The demonic appears in history as civil or foreign war, in the soul as passion, and in nature as death and destruction. Jupiter, Aeneas, and Augustus are its conquerors, while Juno, Dido, Turnus, and Antony are its conquered representatives. The contrast between Jupiter's powerful composure and Dido's confused passion reappears in the contrast between Aeneas and Dido and between Aeneas and Turnus. The Roman god, the Roman hero, and the Roman emperor are incarnations of the same idea (Pöschl 18)

In a post-war Europe experiencing the bitter aftertaste of political passion, and struggling to rebuild itself in a lasting unity, Vergil's world may have two voices, but they are clearly distinguished as moral and historical forces. Any appeal the reader finds in the vanquished

should be understood as a tempting but ultimately fatal sympathy with demonic forces. When we pull Vergil's world apart, it ultimately crystalizes into the eternal Platonic forms of Good and Evil. Jupiter starts to seem like a monotheistic deity, responsible for vanquishing evil, and the outlines of a Christian metaphysics appear. To hear the second voice is to fall victim to the sins Aeneas' counterparts represent — rage, lust, and personal aggrandizement. The poem at once asserts the divine order, the validity of the state, and the justice of its hero.

Pöschl's interpretation is admirable for its insistence on unity. Across the *Aeneid*, even individual scenes contribute to a single poetic statement. The tragic deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, which can be read as a single independent episode, have been studied as a miniaturization of the entire epic itself<sup>6</sup>. Frequent readers of the *Aeneid* often enjoy a kind of literary synesthesia — the comparisons and contrasts Vergil evokes within his own work are often overwhelming, and testify to the emergence of one true voice from Vergil's repository of historical allusions and poetic intuitions. However, Pöschl weakens his statement by presenting this unity as the unambiguous victory of rational Roman civilization. Are Juno, Dido, and Turnus truly defeated in such a way they are fully expelled from the emerging Roman experience? Pöschl's unified order suppresses the second voice of despair and defeat, which will *itself* join the Roman project. Aeneas himself does not march forward confident of a clear, rational *ordo Romana*, but rather seems just as beset by his passions as his adversaries. When Aeneas slays the willful Turnus to conclude the epic, he does so *furiis accensus et ira terribilis*, “burning in rage and terrible in anger” (*Aen.* 12.946). The conquered possess the inflamed spirits of their Roman conquerers, whose execution of justice is never as dispassionate as it presents itself.

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<sup>6</sup> The first section of Farron's *Love and Grief* takes the incident to be representative of the emotional tragedy of the epic as a whole. I discuss the episode in section 3.6.



Such a transfiguration of history's *reliquas*, its "leftovers" (*Aen.* 1.30), seems magical, and history has often treated Vergil as a magician. In the Middle Ages, the classical name of Vergilius gradually changed its vowel and became Virgilius. This new spelling reflected the growing appreciation of Vergil as a kind of wizard, wielding the *virgula*, or magician's wand.<sup>7</sup> Even in late antiquity, Roman emperors approached the epic in an aura of mystique, taking the *sortes Vergilianae*, the Vergilian lots, in which one selects verses at random as prophecies of the future<sup>8</sup>. While a purely literary reader might dismiss such uncomprehending receptions as beneath their concern, the narrower lots of modern ideology have supplied even worse readings. As Thomas makes clear in *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, the fascists and the communists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could equally find Vergil a comrade in arms<sup>9</sup>, each picking their voice to the exclusion of the other. Against this modern butchery, the *sortes* were actually a better interpretive tool, stretching the assumed unity of the work to find meaning in even a single line chosen at random. To advance beyond these superstitions of old, the problem of Vergil must be stated directly, as a problem of philosophy — Vergil contradicts himself, and yet he unifies all of his contradictions. What is this magic, which at once affirms and overcomes the madness of a society caught in rapid metamorphosis?

### *1.2 All the Years at Once: The Synthetic Historical Moment*

Vergil can maintain this perspective only by packing centuries of history, which resolves all contradictions, into a single moment of poetic imagination. The *Aeneid* is truly a historical

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<sup>7</sup> Ziolkowski and Putnam's compendium *The Virgilian Tradition* quotes Huguccio of Pisa, "Likewise from *virgula* (little shoot) Virgil was named, inasmuch as his mother dreamed that she was giving birth to a certain shoot, which reached up to heaven; that was nothing else if not that she would give birth to Virgil, who would touch heaven by his wisdom" (870).

<sup>8</sup> The section on the *sortes* in *The Virgilian Tradition* emphasizes that the lots are a middle-late antique practice, in which several emperors, including Hadrian, took part (829).

<sup>9</sup> Chapters 7 and 8 of *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* show how both ideologies found something attractive in Vergil, but also couldn't fully accept him for the lingering "other voice" they could not reconcile.

epic, yet this does not mean it is primarily concerned with the depiction of historical events.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that Vergil is not interested in giving a literal account of Roman history, or even one with clear, direct parallels to the events of his lifetime: he does not begin with the founding of the city and an account of the Italian past as we might expect from a history, but in a decidedly foreign time and place. The *Aeneid* is not a historical presentation or allegory, but rather achieves another level of abstraction — the *historical process*, the very passage of time and our understanding of that passage, constitutes its theme. Vergil attempts to make the process as a whole perceptible by uniting histories in a single narrative moment. Leaving aside any implicit historical associations with the Augustan universe<sup>11</sup>, there are several distinct perspectives contributing to the synthetic historical moment of the Vergilian imagination.

1. The age of Homeric heroes, represented in Aeneas himself, and further depicted at the fall of Troy in Book 2, in the Mediterranean wanderings of Book 3, as well as in the return of Diomedes in Book 11.
2. The pre-Roman Italian world, consisting of fractious tribes only recently granted Roman citizenship in the relatively contemporaneous Social Wars (91-88 B.C.), which dominate the entire last half of the epic.
3. The ancient near Eastern world, represented by Dido and her transplanted Phoenician culture in Books 1 and 4.
4. The Carthaginian world and the period of the Punic wars, referenced by Dido's curse at *Aen.* 4.584-629.

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<sup>10</sup> See Otis' *Study in Civilized Poetry*, Chapter 2 for a good description of the earlier attempts at a strictly historical Roman epic, including Ennius' *Annales*.

<sup>11</sup> Dido, for instance, may well also be associated with Cleopatra.

5. The Roman world of Augustus and the civil wars, which is only explicitly referenced in Book 6, with the catalogue of specific Roman personalities in the underworld, and in Book 8, when Aeneas receives from Venus the shield depicting scenes of future Roman triumphs.

6. An indefinite future into which the Roman world has been forecasted to endure. Jupiter's especially vague language hints at this in the opening book of the epic, which references an *imperium sine fine*, "empire without end" (*Aen.* 1.279) and *Romanos... volventibus annis*, "Romans ... across the turning years" (*Aen.* 1.234).

Within the epic, each of these perspectives participates in a single narrative timeframe. While the action ostensibly occurs in the Homeric world of Aeneas' lifetime, it simultaneously references the Roman past and allegorizes the Augustan political present, which itself makes prophetic claims for the future. Every temporal vector actively participates at once, anticipating and referencing each other. Vergil renders the historical process as a whole, the *ordo saeculorum*, accessible in a single literary unit of condensed time.

### *1.3 Planting and Founding, Dissolving and Turning: Vergil's Verbs as Historical Phases*

The *Aeneid* unifies this unique and incredibly complex relationship between the past, present, and future through a profound engagement with the cycles of temporal process. Without publishing a work of philosophy, Vergil's work becomes, in its demanding interpretation, a philosophical subject, and a challenge to the philosophical assumption of an eternal truth abstracted out of time. Skipping across centuries and living in the future, Vergil presents a philosophical vision in which truth cannot be separated from the seasons of human life. Our actions and perceptions may be right at some moments, wrong at others, and must always be

seen in connection with the true eternity — the set of prototypical transformations forever recurring in historical time.

This section will demonstrate how four highly metaphorical verbs capture this *ordo* of temporal phases in the *Aeneid*<sup>12</sup>. The *Aeneid* captures the lifespan of nations, and these nations sometimes live as children, sometimes as parents, and sometimes as passing elders. They may be born under much care and attention, as Juno *fertur ... colere*, “is said to nourish [Carthage]” (*Aen.* 1.16). *Colere* captures the foundation and maintenance of the state as an act of organic nurturance, closely related to the processes of agriculture. The Oenotrians also exemplify this ethos in how they cultivated ancient Hesperia, the sections of southern Italy, bringing the vine and agricultural civilization (*Aen.* 1.530-3). This cultivating process requires the investment of generations, as Carthage is an *urbs antiqua* (*Aen.* 1.12), and Hesperia a *terra antiqua* (*Aen.* 1.531). The weight of ancestral generations supports the establishment of religion and custom — “cult” and “culture” come from the 4<sup>th</sup> part of the verb, *cultus*. Juno’s cult resides at Carthage (*Aen.* 1.16-8), and the Alban cities, inhabiting Italy before Aeneas’ arrival, *coluere sacrum*, “cultivated as sacred” (*Aen.* 7.602) the Roman custom of opening the gates of Janus to announce the beginning of war. The *Aeneid* explains the present through the ancient past, and invites the reader to inspect the lineage of revered and enduring institutions.

Yet Rome was not a stable agricultural society enduring unchanged throughout the centuries. The gates of war often opened, and then “all love of the plow disappeared” (*Aen.* 7.636). For the imperial state, the aim of war is not to grow new societies over centuries, but to incorporate existing societies as subjects. The slow cultivation of *mores* yields to the abrupt establishment of imposed *leges*, constructing a state atop native custom. In the *Aeneid*, the verb

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<sup>12</sup> The verbs are illustrated as phases in a cycle in Appendix E-2.

*condere* governs this mode of society, the artificial city of marble, put together from elements not originating in the land. Aeneas's civilization stands in contrast to Juno's in the opening prologue — he continually suffers *dum conderet urbem inferretque deos Latio*, “until he should found a city and bring his gods to Latium” (*Aen.* 1.5). A foreign presence will suddenly make itself known, and import its own values in establishing a city. The Roman people will also be constructed in a similar sense, as a conscious, intentional effort against opposing forces, for *tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem*, “such a struggle it was to found the Roman people” (*Aen.* 1.33). If *colere* suggests the soil, *condere* suggests the solid buildings of architectural civilization. Romulus will establish (*condet*) the walls of the city (*Aen.* 1.275-7), and Dido, building atop the goddess' cultivation, has built (*condebat*) a large temple to Juno (*Aen.* 1.447).

The Oenotrians received their name from the οἰνός, “vine”, while Romulus will call his city by his own name (*Aen.* 1.257). Nameless generations are identified with the soil they till, while individuated and self-absorbed rulers become the cities they design and construct. Each way of life has its season. The growers must precede the builders, and *condere* also conveys a sense of storage, burial, and conclusion<sup>13</sup>. The city disconnects from the land, and the celebration of the cultural harvest also recognizes death as the price of urban success. During the Italian war, Aeneas taunts his opponent Tarquinius, *non te optima mater condet humi*, “your most celebrated mother will not establish you in the ground” (*Aen.* 10.557-8). Burial is both a final construction and a return to nature. It hides the body, and “to hide” is also within the range of *condere*<sup>14</sup>. It is not surprising, then, that Vergil exploits the wide metaphorical potential of this verb at the epic's conclusion. Aeneas suggests that Turnus *clausumque cava te condere terra*,

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis and Short give as a second definition “With the access. idea of carefulness, *to put away, to lay, put, or place somewhere for preservation, etc.; to lay up, store or treasure up*”.

<sup>14</sup> See Lewis and Short definition II.B.3-4.

“bury [himself] enclosed in the hollow ground” (*Aen.* 12. 892-3). When Turnus refuses to return to the soil, Aeneas must resort to a more active form of “foundation”. *Ferrum adverso sub pectore condit*, “He establishes his sword beneath [Turnus’] exposed chest” (*Aen.* 12.950). Aeneas’ name will be highlighted by the founding accomplishments of Augustus, his descendant who will build up the city into a true world capital. Turnus will return to the land as a material sacrifice to the Roman construction. For both the victor and the victim, the ambivalence expressed in *condere* summarizes the tragedy of Roman civilization, a concluding force which at once exults and lays to rest its predecessors. This is the most particularly Roman activity — Roman history was even dated *ab urbe condita*.

But while the founding activity of *condere* attempts to escape from generational history and establish eternal civilizational standards, another Vergilian verbal metaphor quickly contradicts this hope. Just as we found cities in the spirit of a burial, lives break apart into elemental particles returning to the soil. After Aeneas plants his sword, *illi solvuntur frigore membra*, “Turnus’ limbs dissolve in a chill” (*Aen.* 12.951). It is difficult to translate this third verb, *solvere*, without resorting to the English derivative, as no other verb captures such a comprehensive “coming apart and reabsorbing into the world”. “To go numb” would be the specific definition appropriate to limbs, but this kind of numbness arises from the loss of unified sensation in death. Turnus’ world comes apart just as Aeneas’ comes together. Yet Aeneas’ action will deliver none of the concrete finality it promises — his own limbs went numb in a chill when he was nearly drowned by Juno to start the epic (*Aen.* 1.92), and his story was not finished. The moment of shock is not a conclusion. The limbs arrest, but motion continues, seeking new realms and forms. Aeneas seeks new guidance from the heavens, lifting his hands to sky (*Aen.* 1.93), while Turnus’ life “flees beneath the shades” (*Aen.* 12.952). Yet Vergil presents

the return of souls in Book 6, his description of the underworld, so that Turnus' dissolution in death may not be final. Dido's tragedy begins when she *solvit pudorem*, "loosed her chastity" (*Aen.* 4.55), and ends when Iris "frees" (*solvo*) her from her body (*Aen.* 4.703). Dido comes apart and rejoins nature — *in ventos vita recessit*, "her life returned to the winds" (*Aen.* 4.705). Human life can dissolve by the sword or through an apparently liberating seduction, yet its elements abide, available to reform and return again.

*Volvere* provides the counterpart of *solvere*, a verb which expresses the turning of time towards resolution and reconstitution. In the prologue, Juno forced Aeneas *tot volvere casus*, "to [turn] so many misfortunes" (*Aen.* 1.9). This literal reading will not suffice, as English cannot make sense out of a neutral "turning" of difficulties. The English "undergo" emphasizes the redemptive bottom of a turning cycle, and also fits with the classical conception of a test of worthiness, like the labors of Hercules. However, *volvere* also has a more active sense. The Parcae, the sisters who spin the loom of fate, become the subject of the verb and "ordain" the destruction of Carthage (*Aen.* 1.22). Jupiter also enjoys command over the circular scroll, "rolling out the secrets of fate" (*Aen.* 1.262). The highest Olympian turns time itself, a sublime perspective which empowers him to laugh at the fears and frustrations of his daughter Venus (*Aen.* 1.254-6). The gods master the mysteries of the historical process, while mortals *volvitur in caput*, "are turned upon their head" (*Aen.* 1.116) when caught in its blind storms. The prologue makes amply clear that the *Aeneid* will be an epic expressed through cyclical motion.

Aeneas may not be able to turn the scrolls of fate, but he can roll together his wide experiences in reflection and deliberation. *Volvere* functions psychologically for him, as he attempts to uncover the deeper patterns of his fractured fate. After he is shipwrecked in Carthage, Vergil describes him *per noctem plurima volvens*, "turning over many things through the night"

(*Aen.* 1.305). Humans can approximate Jupiter's comprehensive mastery over time by comparative contemplation, an art in which Aeneas engaged when he ensured his comrades that they have "suffered worse" and that "the god will grant an end to these things also" (1.199). Jupiter may hold the scroll of fate, but does it contain information qualitatively different from Aeneas' own experience? When he tells his crew that "perhaps, someday, even these events will be pleasing to remember" (*Aen.* 1.203), has he offered reassurance essentially different from the wider vision of history that Jupiter offers Venus (*Aen.* 1.254-296)?

This ability to turn over one's history becomes especially necessary when it has reached an impasse, a point of uncertainty. Juno began the epic by forcing Aeneas *tot volvere casus*, "to undergo so many misfortunes" (*Aen.* 1.9), and Aeneas will conclude the epic by turning back in time when faced with his final crisis. When Aeneas kills Turnus, he does so *volvens oculos*, "turning over his eyes" (*Aen.* 12.939). It is through this turning of his eyes that he notices the belt of Pallas, and the earlier injustice returns to the foreground. As a leader, Aeneas possesses a strange and subtle virtue, the ability to turn over his experiences, to turn the dread past into the promise of the future. Yet this mixture of past and present can also be a curse, provoking the burning anger of prior injury when the present victory has already been won. The Renaissance master Bernini well understood the temporal and generational nature of Aeneas' burden in his depiction of Aeneas carrying Anchises and leading Ascanius out of Troy (Appendix C-3). The hero of a broken age must turn time back into a coherent whole — must become the fractured fourth dimension.



## Chapter 2: Across the Turning Years — A Living Cycle of History

*In Vergil's poetry everything participates in the inner drama and reflects the poet's awareness of the stirrings within the souls of his characters and of the destiny inherent in the events.*

*Everything — landscape, morning, evening, night, dress and arms, every gesture, movement, and image becomes a symbol of the soul.*

— Viktor Pöschl, "The Art of Vergil"<sup>15</sup>

Agathe Thornton's aptly titled work *The Living Universe* presents the Vergilian cosmos as a biological entity, turning itself over through time in analogy with the human experience of seasonal cycles.

The concept of time implied here is 'cyclic', and the fact that the ancient time notion is 'cyclic' and not 'linear' is well known. Vergil thought of time in the ancient way, as the following examples will show. When the Wooden Horse has been drawn into Troy and festivities follow, 'The sky turns and the night rushes up from the Ocean' (2.250). As the sky's vault turns, the day goes below the horizon and the night comes up. In *Georgics*, 1.239, the 'row of constellations', that is, the stars of the Zodiac 'turn themselves obliquely on a path cut through the two moderate zones. The day (*Aen.* 9.7), the summer season (5.626), the months (1.269), and the years (1.234) 'turn themselves' or 'roll around' [*volvare*] in the same way, time being cyclic, with the recurrence of the same stars, seasons, and works. This is most graphically expressed in the *Georgics* when the regular recurrence of the farmer's tasks is described: 'The farmer's toil returns, driven in a circle, and rolls back on itself along its own footsteps [*in se sua per vestigia volvitur*]' (2.401f). In this way, just as the sky revolves with its constellations, so does time, whether of shorter or longer span, time consisting of or filled with the activities of men (Thornton 70).

In this seamless unification of human life with the life of the world, Vergil creates a macrocosm animated by novelty, creativity, and purpose. And just as we cannot comprehend the reality of life and its purposes in anything less than a lifetime, only in the fullness of history does this living macrocosm mature in its tragic completion, and project itself forward *volentibus annis*, "across the turning years" (*Aen.* 1.234).

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<sup>15</sup>(3-4).

## 2.1 Tragedy's Return in German Romantic History

### 2.1.1 Living Nature and Historical Cycle in German Romanticism

Vergil's self-conscious projection of his Roman universe into the future invites us to read his epic as active participants in an eternally unfolding historical drama. As modern classicists, we can now perceive the cosmic cycle Vergil presents as a completed whole. While many scholars might eschew the generalizing bent of such a project, it is essential to generalize about historical patterns in order to understand an epic attempting to synthesize multiple pasts, the present, and an unbound future into a single narrative structure. Moreover, many authors in antiquity read history as a patterned cycle<sup>16</sup>. Plato discusses the cycles of the state in the *Republic*<sup>17</sup>, and the historian Polybius adapts this philosophical view<sup>18</sup> in his universal history<sup>19</sup> of the Roman era. It is impossible to understand Vergil without stepping into his world, in which he participates in a unique reordering moment of historical rebirth and salvation within the cycles of history<sup>20</sup>. It cannot be coincidental that Vergil articulates the providence of the future just as

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<sup>16</sup> Ballew's *Straight and Circular: A Study of Imagery in Greek Philosophy* gives a comprehensive survey of cyclical ideas in Greek thought.

<sup>17</sup> The five regimes of aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny are described in Book 8.

<sup>18</sup> "Such is the cycle of political revolution, the course appointed by nature in which constitutions change, disappear, and finally return to the point from which they started. Anyone who clearly perceives this may indeed in speaking of the future of any state be wrong in his estimate of the time the process will take, but if his judgement is not tainted by animosity or jealousy, he will very seldom be mistaken as to the stage of growth or decline it has reached, and as to the form into which it will change." (6.2.9)

<sup>19</sup> Momigliano writes in "The Origins of Universal History", "To find universal history in full dress we must therefore go to Polybius, the political historian who claimed to be a universal historian, or, to use his own expression, *ta katholou graphein*, "to write a general history" (5.33). He is the first extant author to have made this claim, though, as he himself knew, not the first to have made it.... According to Polybius, the Romans created universal history by conquering the world or at least by affecting directly or indirectly the future of the whole world." (542)

<sup>20</sup> Toll's "Making of Roman-ness" articulates the sociological context of this Vergilian moment. "There was, in fact, in that generation, a furor of the millennialism which the Christians were soon so dramatically to funnel into their own new vessels, from a wide variety of sources. The Etruscan seer Vulcanius (and others) had interpreted the comet that appeared after Julius Caesar's assassination as the omen of the beginning of a new eon. The neo-Pythagorean philosophers were discussing the millenarian renewal of the world with the dawn of a new Great Year. Already in 43, coins had been struck bearing symbols of a new age of gold. Finally, the advancing of the sun from Aries into Pisces with the precession of the equinoxes was filling Vergil's whole generation with the kind of anticipation of epochal change which was invoked in the 1960s, in expectation of the next precession (into Aquarius), by the librettists of "Hair." (35-6)

Christianity begins to promise a life after death — Vergil, alongside the early Christians, prophesies a Messianic end to the old world and the birth of a new order.

The waning pagan world also appreciated Vergil’s sense of cycling eternity as an expression of the heroic ethos. The 4<sup>th</sup> century history of Ammianus Marcellinus, highly sympathetic to the last pagan emperor Julian the Apostate, alludes to the *Aeneid* as the prototypical myth through which the continually reappearing *exempla* of Roman history return.<sup>21</sup> What has come before this moment, and what will follow it, to justify such an intense awareness of historical time in this period, which we now, quite significantly, define as the beginning of the Common Era? While Vergil is not a Christian, an appreciation of historical context reveals how Vergil, the late pagans, and the early Christians are participating in a similar reordering of the historical imagination, in parallel if not in conjunction.

Despite the privileging of Greek art and literature in the 19th century German imagination, German romanticism articulates a view of history which best approaches the perspective needed to arrange the elements of Vergil’s *magnus ordo nascens*. This proceeds from the basic philosophical perspective of the German romantics, who did not share the same linear, progressive sense of historical time dominant in contemporary Anglophone thought. Moreover, this reading of history has its grounding in an essentially biological view of historical life, joining Vergil in eliminating the division between human life and the life of the world. Since history is the story of human beings, whose lives unfold across centuries of birth, death, and

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<sup>21</sup> “Ammianus’ genuine and ingrained Virgilianism helps to define further the celebrated paradox of “the historian caught between two worlds.” O’Brien (299). O’Brien also notes that Vergil was also the poet of St. Augustine, who rejects “Virgil’s epic and the cosmic system it encodes in the *City of God*. In order to replace the powerful concept of Roman eternity with the dual concepts of the *City of Man* and the *City of God*, however, Augustine had at once to demythologize radically, and historicize uncompromisingly, Virgil’s account of heroism and action in the *Aeneid*. Against Augustine’s bloodless ciphers, Ammianus’ vividly realized hero [Julian], doomed as he is, makes a pointed contrast” (299). In this reading, Vergil becomes the ambivalent poet of the transition to Christianity, summarizing the pagan legacy in the fullness of eternity while thereby preparing a new Christian cosmology.

regeneration, it is primarily an organic process. The notion of linear historical progress must be heavily balanced, and perhaps even contradicted, by the decay, destruction, and retrogression which is also a part of the life cycle. Goethe inaugurated this viewpoint in his direct study of plant life. His *Metamorphosis of Plants* countered specialization and “the overgrowth of nomenclature”<sup>22</sup> in biology by proposing a general morphology of the plant life cycle. For Goethe, the scientific perspective had to move beyond our now familiar empirical positivism and incorporate the vital cyclicality inherent in nature.

At the height of the romantic period, Hegel continued in this tradition by suggesting a general morphology of historical development, presenting the idea that truth is embedded within time and the historical process. In this view, reason is only fully actualized at the end of a cycle of development: “When philosophy paints its grey on grey, then has a shape of life grown old... The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk”<sup>23</sup>. As if demonstrating Hegel’s project of grounding philosophical inquiry in the historical process, Heidegger’s philosophy found its articulation in a dramatic historical reassessment of Aristotle. Heidegger claims that “Aristotle's *Physics* is the hidden, and therefore never adequately studied, foundational book of Western philosophy”<sup>24</sup>. Aristotle’s notion of  $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  expresses being as unfolding in motion and time, as characterized by “movedness”. This “movedness” resonates with the morphology of the life cycle, as it presents a vision of reality sensitive to time.

As Backman explains,

“Heidegger's early notion of the “movedness of life” (*Lebensbewegtheit*)... [has an] intimate connection with Aristotle's concept of movement (*kinēsis*). Heidegger's aim in

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<sup>22</sup> Wellmon’s “On Goethe’s Morphology of Knowledge” discusses Goethe’s morphological approach to botany.

<sup>23</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, 21, quoted in Little’s *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article “Philosophy of History”. At 2.3 this article also claims, “Hegel's philosophy of history is perhaps the most fully developed philosophical theory of history that attempts to discover meaning or direction in history... Hegel regards history as an intelligible process moving towards a specific condition—the realization of human freedom.”

<sup>24</sup> See “On the Essence and Concept of  $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  in Aristotle's *Physics*” in *Pathmarks* (183–230; 185).

the period of *Being and Time* was to “overcome” the Greek ideal of being as *ousia* – constant and complete presence and availability – by showing that the background for all meaningful presence is *Dasein* [being-in-the-world], the *ecstatically temporal context of human being*” [emphasis added] (Backman 241).

By foregrounding the *Physics* of Aristotle, Heidegger intends to present us with a kinetic view of being itself, full of potentials ready to burst forth, just as the flower is contained in the seed. In this metaphysical vision, the richly varied arts and voices of the *Aeneid* may meaningfully coexist in an ecstatically temporal Vergilian moment.

### 2.1.2 Nietzsche’s Historical Revaluations of Values

While these strains of thought are evident throughout the tradition of German romanticism, Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler are the two highly heterodox thinkers who make these ideas fully historical and resonant with the Augustan age. Nietzsche’s connection to the ancient world is quite obvious, as he was a philologist whose philosophy evinces a heavy Hellenic influence. However, while he did not write as extensively on the Romans, his polemics against Christian morality claim that Christianity is an *Umwertung der Werten*, “revaluation of values”. This revaluation is a redefinition of Roman, or generally pagan, codes of morality. What was good to the Romans — *nobilitas, fama, imperium* — becomes evil to the Christian. Likewise, what was bad<sup>25</sup> to the Roman — *condemnatio, infama, servitudo* — becomes a badge of honor for the hopeless underclasses of the Roman world who first flocked to the message of the Gospels. Christianity turns the world upside down, preaching “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*Holy Bible*, Matthew 5:3). In the incredibly spirited, competitive, and worldly arena of the Roman aristocracy, such a formulation is not merely the expression of an idiosyncratic religious feeling, but the inversion of the very terms of

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<sup>25</sup> Notably not “evil”, as Nietzsche believed that pagan morality did not execute such universal, categorical judgements as “evil”. Rather, there were simply benefic and malefic forces, *bona* and *mala*, which were good or bad for particular agents, and not intrinsically.

life itself. The force and depth of that conflict is expressed in Nietzsche's philosophy, as well as in the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas carries the weight of the Roman state on the arms of a dispossessed refugee. The paradox of Aeneas' story, in which a thoroughly defeated loser assumes a quest for universal *imperium*. is directly tangent to the moral revolution of the Christian religion.<sup>26</sup> "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (*Holy Bible*, Matthew 20:16).

But while this might be the most popular and striking example of a revaluation of values, Nietzsche understood revaluation as a more general phenomenon also found within purely pagan cultures. Greek tragedy is the paradigmatic revaluation of values, as there is aesthetic pleasure in the destruction of noble heroes. When and how does such a revaluation arise? This is the primary problem of Nietzsche's first major publication, *The Birth of Tragedy in the Spirit of Music*. For Nietzsche, tragedy is an art which begins in the Dionysian, which is to say, in the spirit of music. Tragedy arises in the harvest festivals, in unselfconscious dances and celebrations which gradually become objectified in the prominent presence of a few exceptionally talented individuals performing before the rest. These performers, the tragic actors, become identified with Dionysus, the ecstatic god capable of revaluing pain into tragic joy. "It is an indisputable tradition that in its earliest form Greek tragedy records only the sufferings of Dionysus, and that for some time the only stage-hero therein was simply Dionysius himself... [the tragic figures] are but masks of that original hero" (*BT* 10).

For Nietzsche, the tragedies of Euripides are a turning point at which the art form becomes rationalized, Socratic, and Apollonian<sup>27</sup>. The tragedian achieves greater sophistication,

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<sup>26</sup> I summarize here in order to not distract from the main argument. See *Genealogy of Morals* for the best explication of the revaluation of values, though revaluation is more of an interpretive method than a single doctrine, and pervades all of Nietzsche's work. The *Genealogy* also makes the origin of Nietzsche's concept in antiquity explicit.

<sup>27</sup> "What did you want, you rascal Euripides, when you sought to force this dying man once more into your service? He died under your powerful hands." *BT* 10.

but tragedy gradually begins to lose its dream-like quality. It becomes technical, linear, and individualized. The Apollonian revaluation of tragedy slowly suffocated the Dionysian feeling of the Greeks, and culture evolved towards the rationalized Hellenistic world in which Vergil participated. As the cultures of the Renaissance and Enlightenment focused on the Apollonian elements of antiquity, the Dionysian truth of tragedy has been lost. Nietzsche therefore embraces the ineffable *Geist* of the Dionysian as the essence of antiquity, overcoming the scriptural literalism of mainstream philology. The study of a dead past in a new spirit, sensitive to its music, can reinvigorate art and culture in a new Renaissance.

Tragedy sits in the midst of this exuberance of life, sorrow, and joy, in sublime ecstasy; she listens to a distant doleful song — it tells of the Mothers of Being, whose names are: *Wahn, Wille, Wehe*<sup>28</sup>. — Yes, my friends, believe with me in Dionysian life and in the re-birth of tragedy. The time of the Socratic man is past: crown yourselves in ivy, take in your hands the thyrsus, and do not marvel if tigers and panthers lie down fawning at your feet. Dare now to be tragic men, for ye are to be redeemed! Equip yourselves for severe conflict, but believe in the wonders of your god! (*BT 20*).

### 2.1.3 History's Movement from Dionysian to Apollonian

*There are some poems that are not only written metrically, but are experienced along with music... lyric poetry being such, it is necessary to read it with song, even if we do not possess and have forgotten its songs.*

— *Commentarius Melampodis, a scholium to Dionysius Thrax's "Art of Grammar"*<sup>29</sup>

As Nietzsche's title suggests, Dionysus can be defined by his association with song, which gives birth to tragedy and remains in the background of the tragic classical culture. Nietzsche's Dionysius has become more than a historical Greek god. He represents a pre-conscious dream state in which the mythological and theatrical worlds take form in musical intuitions<sup>30</sup>. Likewise, Apollo's affinity for the measured bow is not merely a symbolic

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<sup>28</sup> "whim, will, and woe".

<sup>29</sup> Jack Mitchell's translation, supplied in Fall 2017 Sappho seminar.

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, in keeping with his embrace of perspectival truth, even suggests that his Dionysius is just a label he grants his own intuitions. "And so, my instinct at that time turned itself against morality in this questionable book, as

association, but an expression of a sober consciousness that harmonizes unprocessed inspiration. Dionysius presides over the intuitive mysteries of aesthetic rapture, while Apollo's firm gaze cuts through the haze to grasp the crystalized essence of being. While Nietzsche's opposition of these two gods forms an elegant, if somewhat simplistic, conceptual dyad<sup>31</sup>, the more profound insight of *Birth of Tragedy* is that these two gods have a *temporal* and *historical* relationship. Tragedy, like any organic phenomenon, is *born* through Dionysius, and matures under Apollo, consolidating in the statuary forms and set plays of Athens. The theatrical tragic hero "takes the entire Dionysian world on his shoulders" and "protects us from the music, while, on the other hand, it alone gives the highest freedom thereto" (*BT* 21). Just like an individual human understanding evolves across a lifespan, the Socratic and Apollonian elements in tragedy emerge at specific phases in the life-cycle, beginning in the mystery of childbirth and ending in the Socratic riddle. According to *Birth of Tragedy*, this process began in pre-Homeric Greece and ended in the highly self-conscious civilization of Periclean Athens. As the *Commentarius Melampodis* observes in the later Hellenistic world, culture forgets its first songs, yet there cannot be any culture entirely free of its music.

Oswald Spengler read Nietzsche<sup>32</sup>, and expanded the possible scope of these ideas, observing that history *itself* unfolds as a tragic cycle. His *magnum opus*, *Der Untergang der Abendlandes*, was a bestseller in Weimar Germany, and expressed a fatalistic pessimism about

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an instinctual affirmation of life, and a fundamentally different doctrine, a totally opposite way of evaluating life, was invented, something purely artistic and anti-Christian. What should it be called? As a philologist and man of words, I baptized it, taking some liberties (for who knew the correct name for the Antichrist?), after the name of a Greek god: I called it the Dionysian." *BT* 4.

<sup>31</sup> See Silk and Stern's study *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (209ff) for an extended discussion of this dyad, which forms through a synthesis of the ancient gods with the project of Romantic philosophy. Nietzsche adopts Dionysius as the unexplored antithesis of the popular classical interpretations of his time, which emphasize the serene clarity of Hellenic culture.

<sup>32</sup> In the preface to his Second Edition, Spengler writes "Goethe gave me method, Nietzsche the questioning faculty".



the future of Western culture. While the title is typically rendered in English as *The Decline of the West*, I will be avoiding this translation because it has contributed to a mainly reactionary reading of Spengler. Although Spengler held deeply racist and imperialist views, expressed particularly in his political polemic *Prussianism and Socialism*, his theory of history is not a simple expression of contempt for cultural aliens, and has a much broader theoretical basis than might be imagined from such a poorly translated title.<sup>33</sup> I have chosen to render the work as *The Sunset of the West*, because it better captures the comprehensive and cyclical character of Spengler's thought, and does not evoke chauvinistic and apocalyptic hysteria. Moreover, an examination of philosophical terminology reveals a strong case to be made for this alternative translation, as *Untergang* is a prominent term in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and the "going under" of the eponymous character is not a bleak, one-dimensional "decline".<sup>34</sup>

Spengler took Goethe and Nietzsche to be the foremost representatives of a particularly German intellectual outlook, which is characterized by the "philosophy of Becoming", prefigured in Goethe's "living nature".<sup>35</sup> This tradition may be understood as espousing the philosophy of organism against the philosophy of mechanism. Biology, and not physics or

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<sup>33</sup> Spengler's political viewpoint may be taken to be that of the old conservative Prussian nobility who supported Hitler but also saw him as symptomatic of the very decline they wished to forestall. It should also be noted that Spengler's tragic view included pessimism about Hitler himself. Pfeifer writes at *The Modernism Lab*, "Oswald Spengler, the German historian and author of the seminal, two-volume work, *Decline of the West* or *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, was born in 1880 to a conservative, petit bourgeois German family. He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1904, after having initially failed his doctoral thesis on Heraclitus because of insufficient references. As his editor Arthur Helps suggests, Spengler's pessimism was inflected by his own frustrated professional ambitions and meager economic means. By 1911, Spengler foresaw war and hoped for an imperial future for Germany, which he feared might deteriorate like Rome after the Punic Wars. Although he voted for Hitler in 1932, by the time of his death in 1936, his books were banned by the Nazis after he criticized their policies of anti-Semitism and publicly opposed their biological ideology."

<sup>34</sup> The prologue speaks of Zarathustra's "going down" to the people following a decade of monastic contemplation. "Going down" is a phase of development, and not a movement towards a terminus. "Lo! This cup is again going to empty itself, and Zarathustra is again going to be a man. Thus began Zarathustra's down-going (*Untergang*)."  
(Zarathustra's Prologue 1)

<sup>35</sup> Spengler draws a distinction between Goethe and Newton. "Sie [Kulturen] gehören, wie Pflanzen und Tiere, der lebendigen Natur Goethes, nicht der toten Natur Newtons an." (*UdA*, Introduction, "What is World History?")

chemistry, is the true queen of the sciences. It does not seek to explain discrete phenomena by cause and effect, but understand the whole from the initial principle of the life cycle. We may, for example, contrast how Gibbon and Spengler each seek to understand the fall of the Roman Empire, since their differing methods reflect this basic philosophical divergence. In his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon lists a series of discrete reasons for the decline of Rome — material decadence, a reliance on barbarian armies, the concentration of power in a handful of disinterested elites (Chapter 38). Gibbon’s concerns clearly reflect the anxieties of an English intellectual concerned with the proper administration of empire. The listing of causes provides a blueprint by which national decline and ruin may be kept at bay. This is not a tragic perspective, but a diagnostic one.

By contrast, while Spengler’s *Sunset* no doubt proceeds from similar political anxieties, he doesn’t comb history for potential remedies. While he criticizes Roman decadence just as Gibbon does, he does so in the tone not of a moralist, but rather of the spectator of a tragic scene. To continue Goethe’s flower analogy, Spengler observes his own society with the same resignation and bitter acceptance as a gardener before the first frost. History, considered in the widest possible terms, has a definite morphology, just like a flower — its cycles begin in the inward impressions of a seed, and extend outward, until they overextend, wither, and die. *Per* Kroll, “Spengler stresses that the principle which determines the movement of history is not *causality*, but *destiny*” (Kroll 70). Like Vergil’s Jupiter, this destiny principle does not predict the exact times, events, or personalities which will manifest themselves in historical time, but it can make certain claims about the wide course of a historical culture. In essence, we can be certain of the transformative power of time itself, certain that “the god will grant an end to these

sufferings also” (*Aen.* 1.199-200), even as we stand with Aeneas as one “unknowing of the particulars, but rejoicing in the image” (*Aen.* 8.730).

#### 2.1.4 History’s Awakening to the Fate of *Zivilisation* in Spengler

Spengler’s destiny principle is also qualitatively similar to ancient prophecy. To take one example of the necessity underlying tragedy, Oedipus fulfills a prophecy of patricide and incest through his very attempts to avoid it<sup>36</sup>. While in Greek tragedy these prophecies largely pertain to the personal destinies of the powerful, for Vergil the whole of history is now subject to the *fata* contained on Jupiter’s scrolls. The association of *fata* with the tradition of oracular prophecy is demonstrated etymologically — *fata* are the things that have been spoken, from *for, fari, fatus*, to speak. Jupiter seems to be in close relationship with fate, as it is his opening speech reveals the Trojans’ *immota fata*, “unshaken destiny” (1.254-96). MacInnes argues that these *fata* are nevertheless distinct from Jupiter’s will, and can “be viewed as the intermediary between *theon* and mankind” (MacInnes 171). Additionally, less deterministic phrases, like *fortuna*, also contribute to a more generalized concept of destiny. “When *fortuna* refers to past or present events, the reader, if not the speaker, always knows the divine purpose to which the word is loosely or ignorantly applied”(MacInnes 174). Even the most careful readers of Vergil must concede some degree of irresolvable vagueness in these usages. There is an undeniable sense of pattern and direction to the universe, but its determining agents are not easily labeled. Vergil expresses a historical and cosmological necessity neither caused nor represented by any single god or human, an underlying course of development written into the fabric of being itself. For Spengler, that course of development can be observed through the basic cycle of nature, manifest in the macrocosm of history; for Vergil, it can be found in

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<sup>36</sup> The theme of Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus*.

one supreme and spiritual deity whose decrees are *fata* — inviolable courses of destined events. But the deity has not irrevocably fixed the destiny of every man before his birth. For nations like Troy and Rome, and individuals, like Aeneas and Dido, there are certain matters of their life which must come to pass; these are actualities determined beforehand in the divine mind, but there are many contingencies which are left to the self-determining human agent (MacInnes 170).

What general predetermined actualities might outline the *fata* of a process as grand as history itself? In *Sunset of the West*, history has two basic phases — *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* — or Culture and Civilization. While not essentially Dionysian, *Kultur* retains the metaphoric sensibility characteristic of prehistoric tragedy as viewed by Nietzsche. Symbolic expressions retain their potency, and the complex of narratives we designate as “mythology” actively inspire and shape public consciousness. It is the seed of a society not yet fully expanded, still enraptured in its own dream. Participants in the society do not see themselves as merely executing formal roles and offices, but intimately feel a connection to a deeper metaphysical order in which they participate. Spengler termed this awareness in the *Kultur* phase *Dasein*, a compound of *da*, “there”, and *sein*, “being”. It is a state of being in world, an absorption into a musical environment unmediated by rationalization.

But, as with all organisms, the social seed must grow beyond the original intensity and unity of that first conception. While vegetative life stays confined in *Dasein*, higher forms of life mature to *Wachsein*, or “waking being”. As *Kultur* wakes up, it becomes self-conscious and so begins to actualize all of the promises it once dreamt. The inner seed of metaphor and ritual matures into the definite understanding of science, confident in its grasp of the external world and ready to spread its understanding through an empire. Spengler calls this moment of maturity the dawn of *Zivilisation*. It is the destiny to which every successful *Kultur* will awake, a destiny the West has confronted since the Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the very consciousness of the world as “modern” heralds the arrival of waking being, as it is only after the

interruption of dreaming being that we can go back and retroactively designate the former *Dasein* as a “pre-modern” form of consciousness.

In our modern, awakened West, we are more familiar with the linear model of historical progress, as we trace our history from the notebooks of DaVinci to the Wright brothers’ planes. And yet, to develop the example, the Wright brothers, for all their achievement, still don’t excite our imagination as vividly as the visionary DaVinci, though they compare favorably to the CEO of United Airlines. In the cyclical view Spengler espouses, there is a tragic deficiency inherent in *Wachsein*, inherent in growing up, in the moment where potentiality condenses into actuality. As Kroll notes, Spengler felt this tragedy personally, as he felt unable to communicate his impressions and intuitions into the professional framework of *Zivilisation*. “This perceived impossibility of capturing the immediacy of his ‘visions’ in scholarly prose was a source of despair for Spengler” (Kroll 75). Notably, he initially failed his dissertation on Heraclitus for citing too few references. But the awakening of *Wachsein* heralds a crisis deeper than the struggles of a misplaced historical romanticist. For we all dream, and when we awake the dream ends forever. Kroll continues,

‘All clearly articulated dreams have first acquired their form when one reflects upon them immediately upon awakening, which is to say, are placed in the form of waking experience’ [translated from German]. *On the level of cultural history, this means that historical consciousness is a function of awakening, and that history is a prehistory of that awakening* (Kroll 75). [emphasis added]

While the awakening brings with it the tremendous achievement of modern civilization, a tragic consciousness arises which strongly longs to return to *Dasein*, to go back to the suspended dreams, lost as they were resolved. The sentiment is far from particular to Spengler, and can be observed today in criticism of modernity on the right wing (reactionary nationalism) as well as on the left (deep ecology). An untouched past becomes the stage of tragedy in many ages. Just

as the industrial revolution began, cultivated European sentiment desperately longed to return the castles, springs, and forests of the brothers Grimm. Likewise, the consolidation of the Roman empire takes Vergil back to the fall of Troy. The most tender and sentimental longings are felt just as the alarm clock sends the dreamer off to work.

To use the vernacular, we may say that, as *Zivilisation* is achieved, people simply become “spoiled”. As the organized state brings with it unimaginable abundance, it doesn’t satisfy the imagination or alleviate a growing cultural alienation. What began in the harrowing vision of *Frankenstein* becomes the pedestrian reality of omnipresent androids. Soulful Greek tragedies are literalized into gruesome gladiatorial reenactments. The internal map expands out onto the externalized surface, and politics and business usurp the dignity of poetry. Cosmology is regarded as inconsequential speculation, while instrumental technology makes utopian promises. Art becomes an exercise in mass consumption, and is increasingly replaced by the *panem et circenses* of melodramatic public spectacle. Our awakening comes with disappointment because the perceptive quickly realize that a unified and expanding *Kultur* is destined to become a disjointed, mundane, and increasingly alienated *Zivilisation*. And while his political readers may interpret this tragedy as a call to action, to reinvigorate the state or return to the fields, Spengler accepts entropy and decay as a part of the organic process. While societies may grow as monads, they cannot reverse their eventual diffusion back into separate elements. As Kroll emphasizes, “Contrary to corporatist visions of the *Volksorganismus*, Spengler defines modernity by the very impossibility of such organic cohesion” (Kroll 71). Like Charles Foster Kane piling up the treasures of dead masters in his lonely mansion, alienation grows in the shadow of plenty.

Eventually, like a flower, the *Zivilisation* collapses of its own weight and composts into a barbarian dark age, from which a new *Kultur* will eventually appear. The failure is not simply a

matter of moral decline or political error, though these become increasingly likely in the crisis of values at a society's twilight. Rather, the scientific principle of entropy remains the most basic cause, as the rigid artifice inherent in civilization can only be supported for a fixed amount of time. While there is certainly a degree of Cassandran prophecy in Spengler, his fatalism is rooted in the broad morphological outlines of the civilizational life cycle. From *Kultur* to *Zivilisation*, from birth through old age and death, a culture has a life just like any individual. And while these two polarities can and should be subdivided, all history must take account of that basic current, this 'coming from' and 'going towards' and 'returning as'.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.1.5 Spengler's Antiquity

*I see world-history as a picture of endless formations and transformations, of the marvelous waxing and waning of organic forms.*

— Oswald Spengler, *Sunset of the West*<sup>38</sup>

In the *Sunset*, there is a sharp distinction between Greco-Roman culture and the modern West. The distinctions of "ancient", "medieval", and "modern" suggest a continuity with Greco-Roman culture which never truly existed. Spengler believed that the narrative of continuous Western progress beginning in Greece and culminating in a dominantly Anglo-Frankish-Germanic modernity must be overturned, and new historical guideposts erected. The culture of antiquity was a single cycle which perished with the fall of Rome, and a new cycle, with new fundamental assumptions, began. For Spengler, his shift of historical perception was as profound as the shift from a geo-centric to a heliocentric universe — he even termed this shift in historiography a Copernican discovery, resetting the common historical guideposts.<sup>39</sup> As much

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<sup>37</sup> While I have endeavored to summarize these ideas without distracting from the main argument, Spengler himself outlines his vision rather directly and quickly in the first chapter of *UdA* I, which then goes on to illustrate supporting corollaries and examples of the theory over two volumes.

<sup>38</sup> "Introduction", section 7.

<sup>39</sup> *UdA* I Chapter 3, "The Problem of World History".

as the goal of reviving the Roman Empire has captured the European imagination since Charlemagne, the modern West has grown from a fundamentally different mythology, incubated in the Dark Ages and given full expression in the myth of Faust. While the precise morphology of the Faustian culture is outside the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that Spengler views it as nearing a terminal state in a calcified *Zivilisation*, and that the inspired, expansive elements of the Faustian culture extinguished themselves in the First World War.<sup>40</sup>

Just like Nietzsche, Spengler is a modern writer with modern concerns, but the conceptual core of his theories clearly arises out of antiquity. Greece is *Kultur* par excellence, and Rome is *Zivilisation*. The European rivalry politics of his own day lurk barely beneath the surface — politically fractious, metaphysically inclined Germany is Greece, imperial and empirical England is Rome, and France occupies some medium position between the two. The cycle of antiquity, which is a whole in and of itself, and not simply a prelude to modernity, begins in the *Urkultur* world of Homeric song, articulates a sacred view of the cosmos in pre-Socratic philosophy, and produces tragic art<sup>41</sup>. Just as for Nietzsche, Socrates' questioning of culture represents the end of musical tragedy. As the society becomes fully awake and self-conscious in *Wachsein*, the philosopher Aristotle educates the ruler, and Alexander the Great fully expands a Greek world no longer inwardly contained at an early stage of development.

Eventually, a Roman society more fully absorbed in its political ambitions will assume rule from the Greeks, schooled in the *ars of regere imperio populos*, “ruling the peoples in dominion” (*Aen.* 6.851). The political drama of the late republic is the final transition from *Kultur* to *Zivilisation*, as Rome violates its own republican mores in the rush for *imperium sine*

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<sup>40</sup> *UdA* I Chapters 9 and 10 focus on the Faustian culture, which Spengler sees as more dynamic and willful than that of antiquity. Faust is the Urmyth, and Faust's bargain with the devil for technical prowess represents our culture's unfettered embrace of the technical.

<sup>41</sup> See Appendix E-3 for a visual presentation of the cycle of antiquity as conceived by Spengler.



*fine* (*Aen.* 1.279). Yet in its final victory, the Roman Empire is fully Become and no longer Becoming. Without any great enemies remaining, the military can only lord over its own resentful citizens, and becomes the last common institution in a society of cultural aliens. The ancient music from which tragedy was born no longer echoes in the halls of power, as the disenfranchised people now seek what Spengler terms a *Zweite Religiosität*, a “Second Religiousness”, a highly emotive form of new religious feeling which yearns for metaphysics in a world of rational technocracy<sup>42</sup>. The earnest new religiosity adopts the syncretic cultural forms emerging from the melting pot of empire, and religion comes back into harmony with lived experience. For instance, as the diverse and eclectic world of Greece disappears beneath the dominion of a unitary Caesar, people begin to pay homage to one God rather than many. In Rome itself, Vergil becomes a spiritual innovator by reviving the epic genre, bringing new gods to an Italy unable to capture its own rise in the old prose of Latium.<sup>43</sup>

### 2.1.6 Aeneas’ Journey *Per Extrema*

*vivo equidem vitamque extrema per omnia duco*  
*I am indeed alive, and am living life beyond every limit.*  
 — Aeneas to Andromache, *Aeneid* 3.315

Every element of this historical paradigm is present in the *Aeneid*, which presents them within the turning cycle of epic. When we simply describe Vergil as a poet of empire, we miss the wider elements which frame the imperial moment. Indeed, Vergil’s unique historical vision did not arise from his commission to write a Roman epic, but from his own personal absorption

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<sup>42</sup> “The material of the Second Religiousness is simply that of the first, genuine, young religiousness-- only otherwise experienced and expressed. It starts with Rationalism's fading out in helplessness, then the forms of the springtime become visible and finally the whole world of the primitive religion, which had receded before the grand forms of the early faith, returns to the foreground, powerful, in the guise of the popular syncretism that is to be found in every Culture at this phase.” *UdA* II, Chapter 9. Interestingly, Jack Kerouac adopted the concept in *I Am the Revolutionary*.

<sup>43</sup> Please refer here to Appendix D, which summarizes these paradigms in Nietzsche and Spengler, and correlates them to Vergil.

into Roman *Zivilization* from the bucolic Italian countryside, a jarring contrast which constitutes the theme of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. The juxtaposition of the city alongside a prehistoric landscape begins in his earlier work, and is naturally assumed into his metahistorical epic. Mack notes in *Patterns of Time in Vergil*,

The result is an interaction between what (for the story) is future and what (for the reader) is past. Fact and fantasy, historical and fictional time merge. Such an interaction is effected in different ways in all three of Vergil's works. In the *Eclogues* it involves a unique blending of pastoral timelessness and contemporary Roman history. Pastoral always hides a city in its background, but Vergil brings Rome right into the pastoral world, and the resulting tensions give the *Eclogues* their special character. The *Georgics* is built on the movement back and forth through time which gives it a scope far beyond the limits set by its model, the *Works and Days* of Hesiod. Here too, one of the effects of Vergil's manipulations is to keep Rome, past, present, and (potentially) future before us. And finally, of course, in the *Aeneid*, one thousand years are brought together in less than ten years, as the legendary Trojan hero fights to establish the Rome of the poet and his Augustan audience. How very different this is from anything that preceded it! (Mack 4)

It is notable that Mack references the historical scope of one thousand years, a period of time which functions as a loose estimate for a cultural life cycle in Spengler, as well as the age of Rilke's dead star. This is roughly the period from Homer to Augustus, as well as the period from the early Middle Ages to our pending terminal point.<sup>44</sup> The whole of the cycle can only be captured by an intense focus on these beginning and ending antipodes. Just as Spengler formulated his theory of history from the intuition that he stood at the end of a cycle, so do the *extrema* of history, the empty field and the bustling metropolis, define Vergil's world. The Greek polis, the golden mean of society, is only a distant perception, an enemy force for a society defined by the clash of a sharp dualism — the wilderness and the world-city.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> When Spengler regards the Augustan age as a terminal point, it is not meant to suggest the literal end of the empire, but a crisis and collapse of the values which sustained its rise. In this way he echoes Nietzsche's assessment of a coming crisis of modernity.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix E-4 for an illustration of Aeneas' route through the cycle of history.

There is a scene in Book 1 which I have long regarded as quietly ironic, even humorous, and helps characterize Aeneas as a character of world-historical extremes, as a man of both the frontier and the city. When Venus assumes the disguise of a huntress to advise Aeneas after his shipwreck, Aeneas gives her a spirited, if confused, introduction.

Nos Troia antiqua, si vestras forte per auris  
Troiae nomen iit, diversa per aequora vectos  
forte sua Libycis tempestas adpulit oris.  
**Sum pius Aeneas**, raptos qui ex hoste Penates  
classe veho mecum, **fama super aethera notus**.  
Italiam quaero patriam et genus ab Iove summo.  
Bis denis Phrygium conscendi navibus aequor,  
matre dea monstrante viam, data fata secutus;  
vix septem convolsae undis Euroque supersunt.  
**Ipse ignotus, egens**, Libyae deserta peragro,  
Europa atque Asia pulsus.' (*Aen.* 1.375-85)

*A storm has driven us from ancient Troy (perhaps the name has passed your ears), and we have been taken across many seas, and by some chance are on these Libyan shores. I am devoted Aeneas, I who bear with me the household gods snatched back from the enemy, famous in name in the heavens above. I seek the Italian country, and a tribe descended from the highest Jove. I set out on the Phrygian sea with twenty ships, and as my mother goddess shows the path, I followed the fates that had been given. Barely seven survive, and they are battered by the waves and wind. I myself wander the wastelands of Libya as a needy stranger, driven from Europe and Asia [emphasis added].*

The range of these self-descriptions, offered candidly to somebody Aeneas thinks is a total stranger, reveal Aeneas' psychological *extrema*. Though he is a cosmically renowned hero, famous in even the banquets of the gods, he has been reduced to the station of a shabby derelict, abandoned by two continents and lost on a third. There is more than a little compensation behind the bluster of *super aethera notus*, and the pompous claim resonates in the future grandeur of the Roman state. Just as Rome suddenly and violently disrupts the gentler rhythms of pastoral Italian life, Aeneas wanders the uncultivated wilderness with *Zivilisation's* haughty sense of public renown. Caught between his vague ambitions and meager circumstances, it is only the first declaration that rings entirely true — *sum pius Aeneas* — “I will endure and bring my past into

the future, no matter if I may be a prince or a pauper". Across the antipodes of historical development, there is a basic enduring constancy.

Spengler would not be surprised by this juxtaposition of the imperial city and the wilderness, as he would expect that a *Zivilisation*, particularly one in its more advanced stages, will return to the material formlessness from which it emerged. The institutions which appear to govern a late Rome are little more than facades through which spiritually denuded oligarchs wage purely personal battles. As Kovács relates,

Democracy, in Spengler's interpretation, is a special form of will-to-power appearing in the guise of money. Democracy, in another respect, is a self-eliminating process; it results in Caesarism, personal domination which brings to its end the life-cycle of a given culture. It is the end of history. The course of chronological time is rolling on from the past through the present into the future, but it is not historical time any more (Kovács 73).

Spengler helps illuminate the underlying barbarism which unites civilized Rome with the Homeric age, and dispossessed Aeneas with the monumental architecture of his descendants. This approach also explains the appropriateness of epic as a genre for Augustan Rome. Across the centuries of Greek *Kultur*, Homer was not so directly imitated. Homer's world, particularly the world of the *Iliad*, represents the *Urkultur* of clans, oral tradition, and heroic, one-on-one combat. Yet the memory of this Homeric experience has returned in the rapid development of rustic Italy into a world power, whose hubristic generals now taunt the delicate sensitivities of educated Greece.

The *Aeneid* senses and fears a return to a Homeric dark age in the rapid ascent of Rome. The Harvard readings have given a good articulation of this fear, which deprives the epic of joy even in its victories. Johnson writes in *Darkness Visible*,

The primacy and triumph of evil are intolerable thoughts in the classical moments of Graeco-Roman culture, so intolerable that the least hint of mere dualism is combated ferociously. In Vergil's poem, for the first time, the possibility that hell can triumph is

found to be worth pondering... Vergil proffers us a desperate, patient strength we can believe in because he gives us no calm and not much hope (Johnson 148).

In the Roman world from which Vergil writes, the “walls of lofty Rome” (*Aen.* 1.7) have been shaken by the eruption of civil war. High and seemingly incontrovertible powers now seem utterly fragile. *Furor*, apparently shut up behind Augustus’ gates of Janus, still lives deeps in the hearts of the *ignobile vulgus*, and threatens to inflame their political discontent (*Aen.* 1.149-50). These *cives Romani* are also easily influenced by scandal and rumor. As Aeneas and Dido painfully experience, rulers of the new age must weigh their every decision against the superficial judgement of *impia Fama* (*Aen.* 4.298), a swift and unstoppable evil which feeds on its own lies (*Aen.* 4.173-175). The highest civilization, presided over by ministers “marked in their devotion” (*Aen.* 1.151), lives with an acute fear of the resentment, excitability, and downright savagery of the very inhabitants and officers which constitute it. In the wake of the civil wars, the atmosphere of the gladiatorial pitch extends all the way up to Augustus and the highest seats of government, themselves won and held chiefly by strength of arms.

As the empire grows, disenchanted factions withdraw from the public life of the nation. The constituent parts of the social body lose the cohesion which enabled their initial success. Yet although Rome always suffered from a secessionist sympathy, an earlier generation of statesmen quelled civil disturbance ideologically, by promoting an organismic view of the state strikingly similar to Spengler’s. Livy reports that, in the earlier *Kultur* years of the republic, Agrippa Menenius was sent to the seceding plebs as an envoy with the following message:

In the days when man's members did not all agree amongst themselves, as is now the case, but had each its own ideas and a voice of its own, the other parts thought it unfair that they should have the worry and the trouble and the labor of providing everything for the belly, while the belly remained quietly in their midst with nothing to do but to enjoy the good things which they bestowed upon it; they therefore conspired together that the hands should carry no food to the mouth, nor the mouth accept anything that was given it, nor the teeth grind up what they received. While they sought in this angry spirit to starve

the belly into submission, the members themselves and the whole body were reduced to the utmost weakness (*AUC* 2.32.9-12).

As self-serving and patronizing as the parable may sound to modern ears, it illustrates the real danger of Rome dissolving in the cancerous overgrowth of factions that no longer look at the civic body as a unified whole but merely as a vehicle for the expansion of their own *imperium*. The biological metaphor continues through the death of the social body — the pursuit of *fama*, the indulgence of *furor*, and the exclusive reverence of *imperium* all are like parasitic tumors, pursuing their own agendas from within a weakened public infrastructure. The tales of Rome’s decadent emperors are significant not merely as sensational biography, but as examples of the madness resulting from a decaying union of the personal, the public, and the cosmic. As the social body rushes out onto the last frontiers, the motivations behind this final thrust forward become increasingly personal, idiosyncratic, and vengeful — *Homeric*. Yet these visceral values animate the empire, and turn civilized cities into centers of striving. To use an apt phrase describing the slain Pallas, they are *dolor atque decus*, the “grief and glory” (*Aen.* 10.507) of the Roman age.

## 2.2 Ring Composition and Moral Reevaluation

### 2.2.1 Transformation Through Ring Construction

(A) (B) (B) (A) (A) (B) (B) (A)  
*Non equidem invideo, miror magis; undique totis usque adeo turbatur agris*

*Truly, I do not begrudge you, I marvel rather — today, on every estate, everything rises and falls without rest.*

— *Eclogues* 1.11-12, composed in ring structure

The very construction of epic poetry in rings and repetitions captures the motion of a living cycle, repeating and referencing itself. Ring composition refers to the general ordering of

elements of a work in (A)(B)(B)(A) order, so that the beginning (A) and the concluding (A) resonate with each other, while the middle (B)s complete the narrative or syntactical body. The outer elements form a ring around the inner content, framing the work as a full cycle. To take a ready example, the *Iliad* begins with the unharnessed wrath of Achilles, and ends with the burial of the ultimate object of that wrath, Hector. Their connecting similarities as the prime protagonists and premier warriors of their respective sides are clear, so that we can see them as (A) figures linked across the many (B) themes expressed in the work's body. Both the plausibility of their comparison and the tension of their contrast are expressed through the narrative ring.

These rings are present at many levels of focus, even on the level of a single line of verse. At this most basic level, this kind of ring composition is more commonly known as a “chiasmus”, which applies the same principle of (A) “crossing over” (“chiasmus” coming from the Greek *χίασμα*, “crossing over”) (B) to achieve a whole aesthetic unit. Because Latin poetry does not syntactically restrict word order, such effects are almost normative in Vergil's poetry. Consider this line, which begins Dido's speech confessing her love for Aeneas to her sister Anna,

(A) (B) (B) (A)  
Anna soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent! (*Aen.* 4.9)

*Sister Anna, what sleeplessness frightens me, still held awake!*

This illustrative example can provide insight into the aesthetic and psychic import of ring composition. As Whitman<sup>46</sup> notes, there is a conceptual link between ring composition and the

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<sup>46</sup> “Ever since the time of Cicero, if not before, Homer's habit of returning to things previously mentioned in reverse order has been observed, and sometimes compared to the rhetorical figures of hysteron proteron. This device, doubtless of mnemonic purpose to assist the singer to keep in mind what he had said before, is also pregnant with stylistic possibilities; like ring composition, it returns to its point of origin and effects circularity of design, while the

more specific literary device of hysteron proteron, or technique of making “the first one the last”. This typically refers to a temporal sequence shifted out of its logical order — “He ran for cover and heard the gunfire”. In this line, the participle *suspensam*, “held up” modifying the objective pronoun *me*, anticipates and duplicates the subject *insomnia*, “sleeplessness”. We know that Dido has been held awake before we then learn that she is tortured by sleeplessness, and the chiasmic ring structure emphasizes this redundancy of the participle. The (B) element *suspensam* prefigures what will be fully confirmed in the concluding (A) *insomnia*. The line expresses the rhetoric of a hysteron proteron through the style of a chiasmus.

The interrelation of these devices is also neither coincidental nor artificial. Ring composition, understood as a general aesthetic, projects an ambiguous sense of agency and a non-linear association of events. Dido is *suspensam*, a passive, bound victim of these terrors, yet her own *insomia* are a marauding, terrifying force. The language suggests psychic possession or dissociation, as is confirmed by her later portrayal as a wild reveler, possessed by the deep undertow of Dionysian emotion (*Aen.* 4.300-303). This is the achievement of ring composition — to call into question our very sense of linear time, personal agency, and enduring identity, as the concluding (A) element has often undergone a wholesale transformation of meaning, location, and personality from its origin. The whole of the *Iliad* can be condensed if you read the bookends, the (A) elements, together — we met Achilles in a murderous rage, and now we bury Hector, the breaker of horses<sup>47</sup>. The initial rage had been directed at Agamemnon, but the particular personalities have been subsumed into the comprehensive epic vision. As the work is laid to rest, the anger which prompted Homer and inspired the Muse is now buried with Hector,

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inverted elements may also be spread out to include as a centerpiece a whole scene or scenes, as in a frame. Thus hysteron proteron and ring composition, too, suggest not only circularity, but framing and balance” (Whitman 254).  
<sup>47</sup> See Whitman’s *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, in which he does a thorough job of cataloging the ring structures in the *Iliad* in Chapter 11, “The Geometric Structure of the *Iliad*”.



with the body of his enemy. The beginning speaks directly to the end, sewing up the narrative in an indivisible conceptual *integrum*.

Quint notes that this blending aesthetic of the chiasmic cross is appropriate for the confusion of the traumatic emotions, emotions which can shatter our common sense of the ego and its boundaries. As the poetry of warfare, epic seeks to capture exactly this effect.

The epic stages the simultaneous attempt and failure of thought and figure to make sense out of the violence that is its subject. Like warfare itself, chiasmus plots out distinctions and draws up sides, only to reveal an underlying reciprocity that undoes them or turns them into paradox (Quint 295).

Betrayal in love may also prompt such a confusion of boundaries, and Quint notes that Book 4 is, as a whole, a chiasmus marked by fire as the (A) element. Dido first finds her passions reawakened by the fires of a fresh love for Aeneas, only to commit suicide on a funeral pyre. The same phrase locates this fiery wound in her chest, *infixum ... pectore vulnus* (*Aen.* 4.689) at the start and end of the book (Quint 284). This overwhelming episode, beyond a sober rational account, can only be understood by the ambiguous yet uniting motif of the fiery wound. The fire is at first pleasantly provoking, then it burns beyond measure in confusion (the (B) elements of the affair and breakup), and finally it smolders in the ultimate release from passionate pain. The many potential expressions of this single element capture a process of love, pain, and release too complex for a single account.

Ring composition, then, is not merely a *pro forma* affection, but a fundamental expression of the epic worldview. While Quint does very well to point out the link between the martial theme of epic and the style of ring composition, he narrows his focus down to the poetic and the historical. Chiasmus remains “a response to a particular historical crisis, a poetic choice rather than a figure inevitably embedded in the structures of thought and language” (Quint 274). He emphasizes that Vergil definitely crafted certain episodes as a deliberate, formal chiasmus,

such as the interlinked *aristeiai* of Aeneas and Turnus at *Aen.* 12.500-53. Yet ring structures are found at every organizational level of the poem, from single lines to the work as a whole. The *Aeneid* does not feature rings, it *consists* of them. A mythopoetic worldview expressed in a heavily inflected tongue, not bound by word order, will be full of cyclic references lost to the modern linear sense of language and narrative. The *Aeneid* should be read through and within its rings, as they blend and transfigure the disorienting shocks of love, pain, and grief at the heart of the epic.

### 2.2.2 Epic Epithets as Ring References

Outside of formal ring composition, even a single word used in the correct place can create the same distorting, blurring effect. We might consider these partially formed or miniature “loops” of repetition rather than fully crafted “rings”. In the oral tradition of epic, we can find such patterned repetition in the use of epic epithets, the adjectives or phrases regularly accompanying major characters’ names. Aeneas’ epic epithet, *pius*, “dutiful, devout”, is a very abstract moral term, yet it is tightly bound with the hero’s particular character. The Trojan prince is *insignem pietate virum*, “a man marked by his devotion” (*Aen.* 1.10). By offering us such a direct identification, Vergil invites us to engage in syncretic moral evaluation of his behavior across widely disparate and dissonant moral scenes. Aeneas changes dramatically throughout the epic, and so his initial moral designation is defined, challenged, and revalued by his words and actions. After suffering the betrayal of Aeneas, Dido plainly calls him *impius*, “disloyal” (*Aen.* 4.496). Aeneas himself also seems to doubt the power of the virtue Vergil assigns him. In the fighting in Book 10, Aeneas tells Lausus, obediently defending his wounded father Mezentius, “*fallit te incautum pietas tua*”, “Your dutifulness deceives you, rash boy” (*Aen.* 10.812). Aeneas now speaks to an earlier version of himself, also naively running back into a burning Troy to

save his own father, and preserve the *patrios penates*, “the fatherly gods” (*Aen.* 2.707-720). As Anchises has died, and Aeneas finds himself once more in war, the old devotion now seems like a futile sentimentality. Is it really Lausus who has been deceived by his *pietas*, or his slayer?

Once he has killed Lausus, a vision of *patriae... pietatis imago*, “the ghost of fatherly devotion” runs through Aeneas’s mind (*Aen.* 10.824). The construction is strange and abstract, as it is unclear how *pietas* might have an *imago*, which would more properly belong to his father, here rendered as an adjective. Nonetheless, Vergil builds the conceptual image through his associations — Aeneas’ *pietas* closely derives from his dutiful behavior towards his father, and must be reconsidered when his father has become an insubstantial *imago*. While Aeneas may still be *pius*, his values have evolved, as his devotion propels him forward, not “to the shades and ash of the ancestors” (*Aen.* 10.827-8). In losing his homeland and his father, Aeneas has lost a key point of moral reference, and remembrance of his filial piety prompts grief mixed with self-aggrandizement. Pitying Lausus, he offers him the consolation that he “falls by the hand of great Aeneas” (*Aen.* 10.830). Perceiving the devotion of the fallen, Aeneas can only offer his own stature as a reply to Lausus’ tragedy. In the new *pietas*, the promise of fame can become a new kind of devotion, and replace even life itself.

Yet Lausus’ father Mezentius, a decidedly irreligious man, comes undone in learning of his son’s death. Lausus was the *via sola*, “one path” by which Aeneas could destroy him, as he holds no fear of death nor reverence for the gods (*Aen.* 10.879-80). When he is defeated, Mezentius begs for a single act of mercy, that Aeneas “permit him as a companion in the tomb of his son” (*Aen.* 10.906). Clearly, *pietas* is not permanent, nor does it belong solely to the just. Heroes marked for their devotion, like Aeneas, can become laws unto themselves, while godless tyrants like Mezentius can seek simple dignity in death.

### 2.2.3 A *Pietas* of Impermanence: The *Aeneid*'s Turning Moral Universe

The broad scope of this moral inversion is unique to Vergil. While the portraits of Achilles bookending the *Iliad* certainly express the transformation of his individual personality, there is no such wholesale revaluation of the moral universe in itself. The truths of the heroic code are reaffirmed through Achilles' experience — the rage engendered by Agamemnon's haughty condescension has been discharged and reconciled, Hector's virtue has been properly recognized, and the balance of justice has been restored, albeit at a great cost. After Homer has taken us through the ring cycle, we better understand the tensions underlying a stable cosmic and social order. While *arete* remains *arete* in Homer even as individual personalities have a confused or changing relationship to the moral ideal, the very definition of *pietas*, Vergil's primary virtue, is an open question in the *Aeneid*. Yet surely Vergil is also no moral agnostic — every page of the *Aeneid* is full of purpose, meaning, and strong value judgments. How are we supposed to read an epic in which morals *themselves* turn over alongside fate?

As in the *Iliad*, Vergil clearly telegraphs the outer (A) poles of his epic ring. Aeneas' first appearance receives the exact same verbal formula as Turnus' death. *Extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra*, "Suddenly, Aeneas' limbs dissolve in a chill" (*Aen.* 1.92), as Aeneas falls into the stormy waters unsettled by Juno's intrigues. At the end of the epic, Turnus begs for mercy — *ast illi solvuntur frigore membra*, "yet his limbs dissolve in a chill" (*Aen.* 12.951). To some extent, the two share a common fate. Both have been thrust unwilling and unprepared into worlds alien to their native characters. The humble Aeneas has become the prototype of a world conqueror, and the uncompromising Turnus brings ruin through his devotion to honor. Aeneas never fully accepts the injustice of his personal fate, which casts him as a *profugus fato*, "a refugee by destiny" (*Aen.* 1.2). Turnus' life also carries the stain of enduring injury, as he departs

life *indignata*, “disrespected” (*Aen.* 12.952). The two (A) elements clearly belong together, with one clear difference — Aeneas lives, Turnus dies. The loosening of the verb *solvere* has not been equal to each of them. Aeneas breaks down to achieve new stature, while Turnus comes apart, and the unresolved ring continues forward indefinitely. This is a genius ambiguity, a brilliant reevaluation of victory and defeat which transports the reader back to the start of the epic. The Roman reader, watching the son of Italy die, becomes like Aeneas mourning Hector, like the survivor who will go on to greater heights, proven in the success of the Roman empire. Vergil’s final contradiction propels the imagination backward and forward through history, and his cycle envelopes every repeating story of empire, its opponents, and its successors.

In killing Turnus, Aeneas assumes some of the qualities of his nemesis Juno. He had been suffering *ob iram memorem*, “on account of [her] remembering anger” (*Aen.* 1.4), but now he is *memor*, as the sword belt of Pallas, *saevi monimenta doloris*, “a reminder of his raging grief” (*Aen.* 12.945), triggers his merciless assault (*Aen.* 12.942-3). Now staking his claim to Italy, Aeneas consolidates the pain of his experiences in this final act of violence, at once fulfilling and burying his past, as the verb *condit* (*Aen.* 12.950) suggests<sup>48</sup>. Returning to the beginning, when Aeneas’ limbs dissolve in a chill, he cries out, *O terque quaterque beati, quis ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis contigit oppetere*, “O three and four times blessed were those who happened to perish before the faces of their forefathers beneath the lofty walls of Troy!” (*Aen.* 1.94-96). An earlier version of Aeneas, subject to the same abuse, wished for the very fate the later Aeneas grants to Turnus — a death before his people on his native soil.

Vergil carefully balances support and criticism for Aeneas’ action, yet he also makes clear the moral difficulty he faces. Aeneas is *terribilis ira*, “terrible in his anger” (*Aen.* 12.946-7)

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<sup>48</sup> See Planting and Founding, Dissolving and Turning at 1.3 in the Introduction.

and ignores Turnus' plea to "pay hatred no regard" (*Aen.* 12.938), yet he serves a sympathetic cause — *Pallantis pueri, victum quem vulnere Turnus straverat*, "[the belt of] the boy Pallas, whom Turnus had laid out, conquered by a wound" (*Aen.* 12.943-4). Anchises had advised Aeneas that, as a Roman, he should *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, "spare the defeated and strike down the proud" (*Aen.* 6.853). Aeneas instead strikes down the defeated — but on behalf of a *subiectum*. He is haughty in his rage, yet that rage also possesses and conquers him. The moral injunction is at once fulfilled and rejected on different planes of Aeneas' temporal experience. He is an avenger to Pallas and his Trojan past at the same time as he is the violator of Latium. Our existence in time does not afford any unambiguously good activity — the resolution of the past shapes the emerging conflicts of the future.

Yet *pietas* suggests permanence and dedication, and it would be too simplistic to suggest that Aeneas simply renounces his morality in the tumult of his experience. Aeneas cannot practice the old virtue of Hector, a devotion to his people, who have disappeared. Yet this is only a species of *pietas*, the "fatherly devotion" referenced at *Aen.* 10.824. A familial devotion becomes a more global and eternal sense of survival, of enduring through all the contradictory feelings and impulses present at the epic's conclusion. From his principal appearance in the *Iliad*, where Poseidon saves him because the continuation of his line has been fated (*Iliad* 20.302-6), Aeneas boasts this enduring steadfastness. He remains *pius*, for to be *pius* is to endure after life loses its clarity, its purpose, and its promise. Dido and Hector choose death before disgrace, and Priam's line will disappear from history, but Aeneas must face the grimmer fate of the survivor.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See Nagy's *Best of the Achaeans*, Chapter 15, "An *Aeneid* Tradition", for an illuminating discussion of Aeneas' role in the *Iliad*. Although he remains in the background to Hector, he is deliberately compared and contrasted with Achilles, and described as having an anger towards Priam which parallels that of Achilles towards Agamemnon. See *Il.* 13.459, where Aeneas is described as avoiding battle due to his *menis*, "anger", against Priam.

This enduring *pietas* establishes new standards of devotion, yet these standards have been stripped of the illusion of permanence enjoyed in ancestral Troy. Aeneas has fallen into the confusion of historical time. The final contradiction of Roman rage alongside Roman justice emerges from the memory of historical experience. Turnus' execution is prompted by the sight of Pallas' belt, and Pallas himself was buried in a memory of Aeneas' grief — robes of gold and purple, *quas illi laeta laborum / ipsa suis quondam manibus, Sidonia Dido / fecerat*, “which Sidonian Dido had once happily made for him [Aeneas] by her own hands” (*Aen.* 11.63-65). The trauma of memory loops back deeper, beyond any specific crime of Turnus.

As with Turnus, Aeneas brought Dido to her end in moral ambiguity, as *procul... nescius... pastor*, “an unknowing shepherd at a distance”, who accidentally shoots an equally *incautam*, “unwary”, deer (*Aen.* 4.68-72). Ascribing moral judgement to Aeneas or Dido becomes complicated by this metaphor, which suggests that neither has entered into the relationship with conscious intention. Intention requires a unified purpose, but here Aeneas hears a voice of justification in Mercury's appeal to Roman destiny (*Aen.* 4.219-37) alongside a voice of guilt and regret at encountering Dido in the underworld (*Aen.* 6.450-66). Mercury speaks of a distant future incomprehensible for a mortal understanding, while Dido returns to the embrace of her dead husband. Aeneas' moral dilemmas are grounded in the passage of time itself, and his idealism aims an impossible reconciliation of irreconcilable aims. Devotion in an age of impermanence only promises disappointment, and leaves destruction in its wake.

#### **2.2.4 Aeneas and Dido: Circles of Sacred Lies**

History, it seems, makes liars of us all, and the first four books loop around in a ring of deception. The *doli Danaum*, “the tricks of the Greeks” (*Aen.* 2.44), the lies of Sinon and the machinations of Odysseus, began Aeneas' suffering, and yet his mother Venus laughs at the *doli*

Dido will also suffer (*Aen.* 4.128). When Juno and Venus meet in an untenable conspiracy to unite Aeneas with the queen, and Dido anticipates Aeneas's plan to depart,

At regina dolos (quis fallere possit amantem?)  
praesensit, motusque exceptit prima futuros  
omnia tuta timens (*Aen.* 4.296-8)

*The queen foresaw the tricks (for who could deceive a lover?), and was the first to discern the events about to occur, fearing all these supposedly safe things.*

The Greek assault was a targeted manipulation, while in Carthage the lies are not so simple. Aeneas deceives Dido only insofar as he also deceives himself, as they both were caught up in the same illusory romance, both caught between Venus and Juno, between the wounds of their former lives, their dreams of the future, and the passions of the present. When Aeneas tells his tale, a shared grief and history of harsh deception binds the two in intimacy. Dido's sympathy forms the basis of their attraction, as her escape from Phoenician intrigue has made her sensitive to Aeneas' plight (*Aen.* 1.630). To some degree, she loves this man because they both have been deceived by fate. Yet Dido now brands her lover, the survivor of Greek lies, *perfide*, "faithless one" (*Aen.* 4.305; 366). Her lament *nusquam tuta fides*, "nowhere is faithfulness safe" (*Aen.* 4.373), speaks to Aeneas' experience as much as her own. Vergil surely appreciated the irony of *pius Aeneas* appearing just after Dido pronounces the end of all fidelity (*Aen.* 4.393). Dido receives a new Trojan horse, one again clouded in the appearance of piety<sup>50</sup>, and prepares yet another. She disguises her preparation for suicide as *sacra Iovi Stygio*, "rites for Stygian Juppiter" (*Aen.* 4.638). When her sister Anna, deputized to prepare these rites, finds Dido's corpse upon the pyre, she realizes that Dido cruelly "sought her in fraud (*fraude*)" (*Aen.* 4.675). Once broken by illusion, truth crumbles within even the most earnest souls. Lies make liars of the deceived, yet the deceptions become mere tiles in the larger mosaic of the eternal truth.

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<sup>50</sup> The Trojan horse was alleged to have been an offering to Minerva.



### 2.2.5 Nietzsche's Affirmative Eternity

*"All that is straight lies," the dwarf murmured contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle."*

– Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>51</sup>

A crisis of identity, a crisis of values, a crisis of truth itself — the *Aeneid* echoes across eternity, but speaks directly to our analogous historical moment. How can we live between a past and future that have overwhelmed every present? How can we accept this bounty of time?

Aeneas observes the eternal turning over of life as a metaphysical principle in the underworld, just before he pivots towards a new Roman life. His father Anchises explains the scene:

tum pater Anchises: 'animae, quibus altera fato  
corpora debentur, Lethaei ad fluminis undam  
securos latices et longa oblivia potant.  
has equidem memorare tibi atque ostendere coram  
iampridem, hanc prolem cupio enumerare meorum,  
quo magis Italia mecum laetere reperta.' (*Aen.* 6.13-8)

*Then father Anchises said, "These are the souls to whom another body is owed by fate, and they drink up serene waters and deep forgetfulness at the shore of the river Lethe. For some time now, I wish to recount them to you, and show them to you in person, and to number these offspring of mine, so that you will more greatly rejoice with me when Italy is discovered."*

The devastation of the past and the weight of the future torture Aeneas in life, but the underworld becomes an unexpected source of solace. Here the wide abstractions of time which have overcome Aeneas are neatly perceptible, and the process of history occurs before our eyes.

Souls are permanent, but memories are not, as they can disappear in the waters of oblivion. The underworld is not merely a receptacle for the dead, but the living incubator in which the future is born. Aeneas observes the future souls of the Romans only by going down to the underworld and

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<sup>51</sup> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 46.2 "The Vision and the Enigma".

returning to his father's tutelage. Glory and destiny reside below, while Aeneas wonders what *dira cupido*, "grave passion"<sup>52</sup>, motivates these souls to again seek the light (*Aen.* 6.719-21).

Aeneas envies the position of these souls because he still faces a mission of reincarnation within the narrower confines of lived experience. Just as he must be reborn as the first Roman, the mission of these future Roman souls will be the redemption of their first life, as fate now "owes [them] another body". Anchises address him here as a Roman, bringing his life into communion with those he now observes, and granting them a single mission.

'tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.' (*Aen.* 6.851-3)

*You, Roman, remember to rule the peoples in your power (these will be your arts), and to lay peace atop custom, to spare the defeated and to war down the proud.*

The future imperative *memento* captures the unique historical perspective of this injunction. In the future, when the Roman state is actualized, it will then remember its unjust suffering in past lives, and so act with a greater awareness of equity and justice. Of course, the injunction is also addressed to Aeneas as a current actor in history, and it has been shown how his actions in the second half of the work do not simply meet the criteria of this principle. The underworld, like Olympus, offers him a short glimpse into a comprehensive perspective impossible for mortal beings. As a *Romanus*, he briefly transcends the limitations of his experience. The Roman project will, in its fullness, overcome the haughty Greeks who defeated the mortal Aeneas. Yet Rome will also overturn itself in its adoption of Christianity. Jesus, defeated and humiliated by Rome, will become its spiritual king, even while offering mercy and salvation to those who

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<sup>52</sup> Also used at *Aen.* 9.185 to describe the passion of Nisus and Euryalus to embark on some great adventure, and of Palinurus' unhappy state in the underworld at *Aen.* 6.373.

persecuted him. *Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, the turning over of victor and vanquished, endures as the eternal precept governing centuries of changing Roman forms.

Finally seeing his fate in all its dimensions, Aeneas wishes to freeze the moment, wondering why those forever forgetful in Lethe's waters should again desire to return to experience. Anchises likewise attempts to make the vast domains of a future empire comprehensible through one simple moral dictum. The moment of eternal revelation overpowers the reality of tangible experience. In this spirit of transcendence, he exits the underworld through the gates of ivory, where "the shades send false dreams up to the sky" (*Aen.* 6.896). The dreams are false because no earthly perspective can capture this eternal procession, a vision of human community which will erode when Aeneas rejoins the wars above. No human can at once spare Turnus and avenge Pallas, though Turnus will be avenged and Pallas will be spared at some point in the returning tides and flows of the Stygian waters.

In this scene, Aeneas comes into his closest identification with Dionysus, the god whom Nietzsche designates as the only true tragic character. Among the god's many mythologies, Heraclitus associates Dionysus, the god who dies to be born again, with Hades, the god of the underworld.<sup>53</sup> Apollodorus also reports that the god was driven mad by a jealous Hera, Vergil's Juno, and was purified by the *magna mater* goddess Rhea in Phrygia, the site of Troy (*Biblioteca* 3.5.1). Dionysus syncretises with the Roman god of the vine Liber by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>54</sup>, and the freedom of wine comes to mirror the freedom protected by the Roman state. The

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<sup>53</sup> εἰ μὴ γὰρ Διονύσω πομπὴν ἐποιοῦντο καὶ ὕμνον ἕσμα αἰδοίοισιν, ἀναιδέστατα εἴργαστ' ἄν· ὡντὸς δὲ Αἰδῆς καὶ Διόνυσος, ὅτε φ μαίνονται καὶ ληναίζουσιν, "For if they did not march and sing the phallic hymn for Dionysus himself, it would be a most shameless activity. For Hades and Dionysus are the same god, for whom they sing and celebrate the Lenaia.", Heraclitus DK Fragment 15.

<sup>54</sup> Rousselle's "Liber-Dionysus in Early Roman Drama" discusses when exactly these cults syncretized. Dionysus was resisted as a foreign god in its early manifestations.

Hellenistic historian Diodorus Siculus presents a Dionysus surprisingly adapted to the Roman political mission:

He also instructed all men who were pious and cultivated a life of justice in the knowledge of his rites and initiated them into his mysteries, and, furthermore, in every place he held great festive assemblages and celebrated musical contests; and, in a word, he composed the quarrels between the nations and cities and created concord and deep peace where there had existed civil strife and wars. (*Library of History*, 64.13-14)

For Nietzsche, Dionysus was the ultimate personification of the revaluation of values, and his tragic magic is felt nowhere more intensely than in Book 6. Aeneas may forget the collected pain of the ages just as he views it all at once. This circle of souls is the pivot around which the poetic ring turns. At the center of the epic, surrounded by the nightmare of Aeneas' historical experience, the eternal Roman world resides in a timeless future already past.<sup>55</sup>

Ennius, attempting to present his *Annales* as the Roman rebirth of epic, also embraced the transmigration of souls, claiming to be the revived spirit of Homer<sup>56</sup>. Yet Vergil's epic teaches us that true spirits do not return proclaiming their noble lineage and enjoying a second triumph. They return only to wonder what madness drives forward these cycles of life, and desire a more permanent tomb. All the same, Aeneas went forward, Aeneas said yes to life, even though he has already seen too much of it. Aeneas could not simply love Creusa, or Dido, or his country, but he could love his fate — a fate beginning as pain, becoming tragedy, and emerging as joy.

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you have said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, "You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!" then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored--oh then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants—eternity.* (*Zarathustra* 79.10)

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix E-7 for a diagram of the epic's rings, with Book 6 at the center.

<sup>56</sup> Aicher, in "Ennius' Dream of Homer", remarks that this doctrine also enabled him to surpass the taboo against imitative Homer in Alexandrian literature. "Ennius is not imitating Homer — he is Homer!" (Aicher 231).

### Chapter 3: Juno Raises Hell — A Cosmos in Chaos

*Revaluation of all values is the most fundamental character of every Zivilisation. For it is at the beginning of a Zivilisation that it remoulds all the forms of the Kultur that went before, understands them otherwise, practices them in a different way.*

— Oswald Spengler, *The Sunset of the West*<sup>57</sup>

quod si mea numina non sunt  
magna satis, dubitem haud equidem implorare quod usquam est:  
flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo. (*Aen.* 7.310-12)

*But if my divinity is not up to the task, I should scarcely delay to seek aid from any source: If I am unable to turn the heavens, I will raise hell.*

As Juno enters into alliance with the Fury Allecto, the underworld follows Aeneas up into Italy. The queen of the heavens will not hesitate to become the queen of hell if her authority has been undermined. It is more important to Juno that she defeat Aeneas than that the cosmic order, an order in which she enjoys a very high honor, be maintained. This violation of cosmic boundaries by the gods charged with their maintenance creates a cosmos of chaos in the *Aeneid*, a cosmos turning alongside the tragic wheel of human history. This degree of recklessness in Vergil's gods has been noted by Hejduk, as she characterizes Jupiter as a god who only offers his subjects *imperium* devoid of feeling, thought, or conscience — “*imperium* is not to make possible things like art and science, but rather to take their place” (Hejduk 323). Jupiter acts as a god of *Zivilisation*, tearing up the subtle arts in the crude pragmatism of imperial rule.

Yet while Hejduk well captures the nature of Jupiter's rule, she overstates the degree to which his divinity actively shapes the action of the epic. Abandoned refugees like the Trojans become obsessed with power because they have been deprived of it, and the providence of Jupiter becomes indistinguishable from the natural course of history. After Aeolus has crashed the Trojan ships, and Aeneas has rallied his men and mourns them — *iam finis erat*, “now, when

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<sup>57</sup> *UdA* II, Section 4 “Buddhism, Stoicism, Socialism”, Section 4.

it was all over” (*Aen.* 1.223), Jupiter appears, never confronting or challenging Juno’s intrigue. Juno moves the realms of heaven and hell, land and sea, and Jupiter appears afterwards to simply “move the secrets of the fates, unrolling them” (*Aen.* 1.262). *Movebo* also appears in that construction, and Jupiter moves the deep *arcana* which lie beneath events.

As the Italians and Trojans fight at the end of the epic, Jupiter emphasizes that he does not intervene in human events, and that the *fata* govern their affairs.

sua cuique exorsa laborem  
fortunamque ferent. rex Iuppiter omnibus idem.  
fata viam invenient. (*Aen.* 10.111-3)

*Everyone’s own undertakings will bring about their struggle and their fortune. Jupiter is the same king to all. The fates will find a path.*

The king of the gods discerns through the wide scheme of history that the new Roman *imperium* is destined to come about through the natural progression of human *exorsa*. His will is epiphenomenal to the more fundamental logic of history, engrained in the *fata* he himself heeds. In Spengler’s terminology, human beings will naturally awake from their native *Kultur* state and found the boundless empire already manifest in Jupiter’s vision. Jupiter does not command the cosmos, but perceives in advance how the central conflict of the epic, the conflict of Juno and Venus, will be resolved.

### *3.1 The Morning Star Rises: Venus’ Radical Ascendance*

As father Jupiter stands proud and aloof, beyond the *curae* of life, gently chuckling at his daughter’s concerns (*Aen.* 1.124-57), Aeneas and the Romans are caught up in the fight of two goddesses, Juno and Venus, each with a claim to Jupiter’s support, and each transforming the realms they govern. Venus’ alignment with the Trojan cause can be traced backed to the *iudicium Paridis* (*Aen.* 1.27), which elevated her stature against that of the dishonored Juno. Helen, widely known as the most sexually attractive woman in the world, receives her protection

and personifies her charms. While in the *Iliad* Venus had generally supported the Trojan side, her advocacy in the *Aeneid* derives from a more personal motivation: Aeneas is her son, a demi-god she bore to the mortal Anchises. Historically, her introduction and acceptance into the Roman pantheon coincided with Rome's Mediterranean expansion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, resulting from contact with Greece's Aphrodite and Carthage's Astarte.<sup>58</sup> Venus therefore represents a particularly foreign influence for the Romans, bearing the promise of the young and exotic.

The particularly Augustan figure of Ascanius, given the name Iulus to match the imperial *nomen* Iulius, exemplifies this capacity of Venusian youth and charm. After the Trojans poach the cattle of the Harpy Celaeno, the grim monster issues a dread prophecy. The Trojans will only arrive in Italy when they consume their own tables out of desperate hunger (*Aen.* 3.247-57). Ascanius, whom Dido received when he was impersonated by Venus' son Cupid in Book 4, disarms this prophecy with unmatched charm and beneficence. When the Trojans eat the wheat cakes beneath their fruits for their first meal in Italy, Ascanius jokes that they must be eating their tables (*Aen.* 7.116)! Venus fulfills prophecy with a smile, and empowers youth to deeds far beyond their years. She also guides the youth Pallas in battle procession, as he glows like the light-bearing *Lucifer*, the morning-star dear to Venus, "raising his sacred head in heaven, and dissolving the shades from the sky" (*Aen.* 7.585-91). Venus shines through the darkness of history, offering a better future in the promise of daybreak.

Aeneas' mission to "carry his gods into Italy" (*Aen.* 1.68) directly references the gods of Troy, but his mission also parallels the slow migration of Venus onto the Italian mainland — Aeneas founds a temple of Venus in Sicily at *Aen.* 5.759-60. In a mythology that developed

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<sup>58</sup> Smolenaars section one (96ff) "From Love-Goddess to *Genetrix*", discusses the assimilation of Venus into the Roman pantheon.

gradually out of cultural exchange, she is the mother of the Romans *via* the lineage of Aeneas, and can appear as a conservative ancestress, yet she was usually pictured nude. By Vergil's time, she had become a fixture of political ideology as the *populares* of popular enthusiasm channeled her provocative and revolutionary spirit in overturning the established *mores* of the senatorial classes. The ruthless general Sulla, who served as a legal dictator amidst the political turmoil of 81 BCE, inaugurated this special reverence for Venus among Rome's foremost families. When he wrote to Greeks, he styled himself as *Epaphroditus*, "favorite of Aphrodite" (*Plut.* 34.2). Adopting the Latin cognomen *Felix*, "the fortunate", Sulla believed he emerged from the carnage of civil war because he was specially regarded by Venus. Naturally, his personality also betrayed an indulgence of Venus' bounty. In his narrative history *Rubicon*, Holland characterizes Sulla:

Baleful cynic though he was, he was also an unusually religious man. He believed with perfect certainty that a goddess was prompting him [to lead legions against Rome]; a great goddess, more powerful than any of the gods who might be affronted by his actions. Whatever he did, however high he reached, Sulla could be confident of the protection of Venus, who granted to her favorites both sex appeal and fortune... Certainly, throughout his life, Sulla deployed his charm as a weapon, on politicians and soldiers as much as whores (Holland 67-68).

In spite of the unquestionable endorsement of success, Sulla was an unusual and controversial politician whose personal excesses<sup>59</sup> and political overreach scandalized Roman convention. His persona loomed large over the *triumviri* and the ambitious campaigners of the late republic, and his goddess gained in stature as well. The Julian clan also claimed descent from Venus, but they, like Aeneas, were *profugi fato*, exiles from Roman *imperium*, having held the consulship only twice in two centuries (Holland 22). The family had arisen from a political *Troia*, having

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<sup>59</sup> See Plutarch *Sulla* 2 for the criticism: "Nor is it out of place to mention such testimonies in the case of a man said to have been by nature so fond of raillery, that when he was still young and obscure he spent much time with actors and buffoons and shared their dissolute life; and when he had made himself supreme master, he would daily assemble the most reckless stage and theatre folk to drink and bandy jests with them, although men thought that he disgraced his years, and although he not only dishonoured his high office, but neglected much that required attention.



supported the doomed Marian cause, and, when Julian fortunes began to change, their political opponents also took note of Julius Caesar's divine backing. Pompey is reported to have had a dream in which he led a triumphal procession bringing offerings to the temple of Venus, but awoke disturbed as he knew that the goddess signified Caesar's fortune, and not his own (Holland 311). The goddess had once favored the young Pompey against his rival Sulla, as he proudly proclaimed his dawning prodigy to the dictator, "More people worship the rising than the setting sun" (Holland 138). Augustus himself was only a teenager when his adoptive father Julius Caesar was assassinated and he entered political life. Venus aids the young and bold, supporting what may today be termed the revolutionary principle.

The spectacle of sturdy Roman potentates worshipping bubbly Love was a cultural reevaluation for the martial Romans. Long before Vergil, Rome had had a distinct cultural mythology and explanation of her origins, and a highly successful one. Roughly contemporaneous with Vergil, Livy boasts of Rome's favor by Mars.

Now, if any nation ought to be allowed to claim a sacred origin and point back to a divine paternity, that nation is Rome. For such is her renown in war that when she chooses to represent Mars as her own and her founder's father, the nations of the world accept the statement with the same equanimity with which they accept her dominion [*imperium*]. (AUC Preface)

The values of Roman *imperium* naturally find their spiritual corollary in the god of war, whose brutal spirit sired Romulus and Remus and quite clearly animates the aggressive Roman state. Yet Mars plays only a metaphorical and *pro forma* role in the *Aeneid*. He appears in the midst of war, but does not partake in the decisive controversies among the gods. Fratantuono has studied the instances in which he appears in the poem<sup>60</sup>, finding that, while he mainly appears as a metonym for simple warfare, he makes a mythological appearance on the depiction of the battle

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<sup>60</sup> In "*Saevit Medio in Certamine*: Mars in the "Aeneid".

of Actium on Aeneas' shield *saevit medio in certamine*, "raging in the middle of the battle" (*Aen.* 8.700). This "middle" positioning is meant ideologically as well as physically, on the battlefield. Appearing more frequently in the Iliadic second half of the epic, his presence is not one of glorious patriotism but of grim neutrality. As the two sides exchange casualties,

Iam gravis aequabat luctus et mutua Mavors  
funera; caedebant pariter pariterque ruebant  
victores victique, neque his fuga nota neque illis.  
di Iovis in tectis iram miserantur inanem  
amborum et tantos mortalibus esse labores;  
hinc Venus, hinc contra spectat Saturnia Iuno. (*Aen.* 10.755–760)

*Now heavy Mars equals their griefs and common burials. The conquerors and the conquered die and fall equally, and an escape was unknown to both sides. The gods in the house of Jove pity the empty anger of both sides, and that the labors of mortals are so great; from here Venus gazes down, and Saturnian Juno opposite her.*

If the Trojans, Latins, and their attendant gods participate in the dialectical conflict of history, Mars has been reduced to a god trapped in melancholy oversight. Fratantuono comments, "Few passages in the *Aeneid* so clearly evoke a nihilistic view of marital strife; Mavors treats all equally in the matter of suffering and deaths" (Fratantuono 156). Hardly a partisan, this equalizing executioner reads like the *pallida Mors*, "white Death", of Horace's fourth ode, who *aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas regumque turris*, "strikes the shops of the unwashed and the towers of kings with an equal foot" (*Aen.* 4.13-14). Venus and Juno, looking on in opposition, are the interested parties representing the conflicting ideologies.

Insofar as Mars can be associated with a side in the Italian war, Fratantuono sees him as favoring Turnus, as the Rutulian warrior is linked to him in a direct simile (*Aen.* 12.331-36) of his battle charge, and indirectly, when he is compared to a wolf<sup>61</sup> stealing a lamb in attacking the Trojan Lycus (*Aen.* 9.963-66). He also finds this quiet alignment in the final appearance of Mars,

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<sup>61</sup> The wolf of course being the symbol of Romulus and Remus, sons of Mars, who were suckled by a she-wolf after being abandoned to the wilderness.

in which Turnus and Aeneas stand opposite each other in a contest *Martis anheli*, “of breathing Mars” (*Aen.* 12.789-800). Mars makes his presence felt just before Jupiter placates Juno by eradicating Trojan culture and preserving the tongue and customs of Latium (*Aen.* 12.791-842). Fratantuono concludes that “the mortal avatar of Mars will ultimately triumph over the Trojan past, and the god who was seemingly absent from the dismantling of the walls of Troy will in some sense preside over the demise of what might have been the dead city’s rebirth” (Fratantuono 163). Following this reasoning, the Roman character of Mars is associated with the traditional Juno and indigenous Italian stock, which endures in its brave and noble defeat. While viewed sympathetically in the *Aeneid*, Venus and the Trojans are conceptual foreigners in hardy Latium, and their gifts of beauty, luxury, and playful sexuality are viewed with the same suspicion the martial senate maintained against the flashy clan of Venus.

Vergil’s Romans at least as much the sons of Venus as the sons of Mars. This mythological shift reflects the literary and political history of his time. The goddess had ascended through the verse of Catullus, the philosophy of Lucretius, and a political climate ready to embrace foreign ideas and Venusian *venustas* against the stodgy tradition of Latium. The last years of the republic should be understood as a revolutionary time, and the encounter with Greek thought inspired the youthful and amorous in the Romans — arriving as the erotic songs of Venus, Love overcame a native resistance worthy of Turnus.

The spirit of *venustas* is particularly prominent in Caesar’s contemporary, Catullus. Heavily influenced by Greek Hellenistic models, Catullus proclaims that he and Lesbia should “deem the gossip of rather severe old men (*senum serviorum*) as worth less than a penny” (Catullus 5.2-3). Catullus’ statement is indirectly political, as he is attacking the *senatus*, the “body of old men” who opposed Catullus’ neoteric circle of literary sophisticates. It would be

impossible to find a more hopeless captive of Venus than Catullus, a personality wholly unsuited to the formal *officium* expected of a Roman magistrate. But the Venusian spirit which began as a bohemian curiosity became an ideological reality in the hands of the Julian clan. With the ascendance of Venus, the daring and passion supplants the cautious governance of a conservative Senate. The best politicians embodied and wielded her charms, but those who could not master or embrace Venus could not escape her surge. Caesar's rival Pompey seemed to act with a sensible pragmatism when he wed Caesar's daughter Julia, yet Julian *venustas* carried the day.

Spurned by Rome, Pompey turned for comfort instead to his wife. He had married Caesar's daughter Julia, for the chilliest of political motives, but it had not taken him long to grow helplessly smitten with his young bride. Julia, for her part, gave her husband the adoration without which he could not flourish. Surrendering to their mutual passion, the couple began to spend more and more time secluded in a love nest in the country. Pompey's fellow citizens, unaccustomed as they were to displays of conjugal affection, sniggered in prurient disapproval. Here was the true scandal. The public resentment of Pompey began to be tinged with scorn. (Holland 242)

In Pompey's dilemma, Venus' overwhelming charm clashes with the implacable and resentful conservatism of the Roman *optimates*, the conservative senatorial class. Venus is ascendant, but not dominant. Lucretius, whose Epicureanism celebrates Venus, addresses her as the *Aeneadum genetrix*, the "mother of Aeneas' people [Romans]" (*DRN* 1.1). She can remake the world anew, but there should no expectation this gift will be well received.

### 3.2 Tradition Endures: Juno's Conservative Resistance

As the goddess of marriage and settled custom, Juno stands as Venus' direct counterpart, incapable of persuasion through Venusian charm. Jupiter begins the epic by reassuring Venus of Rome's future fortune (*Aen.* 1.254-296), but he gives a final address to Juno (*Aen.* 12.791-842) in which the goddess apparently wins the honors of the battle despite Turnus' imminent military defeat. As the epic ends, our expectations of victory and defeat turn over. In a ring structure stretching across the poem, speech (A) to Venus resonates with speech (A) to Juno, yet the

second speech captures all the developments of the intervening (B) elements. Even after Aeneas has overcome Juno's implacable resistance, Jupiter assures her that she has left an indelible mark on the character of the Roman people.

hinc genus Ausonio mixtum quod sanguine surget,  
supra hominues, supra ire deos pietate videbis,  
nec gens ulla tuos aeque celebrabit honores (*Aen.* 12.839-40)

*From there a people which has been mixed with Ausonian blood will arise, and you will see them pass above all men, above the gods in piety, and no other tribe will celebrate your honors equally.*

The upstart Trojans, guarded by Venus and opposed by Juno, will found a state which worships Juno and suppresses the Venusian. This cyclical evolution can be read in parallel with Aeneas' transformation from an aimless heartbreaker with a sob story in Carthage to a general who has won a purely abstract and institutional marriage in Italy. As Aeneas now burns in avenging rage, it does not seem Juno has been properly defeated, but has simply transmuted herself into the guardian of established custom in a new cycle of history.

Moreover, as Juno *laetata* "eagerly" (*Aen.* 12.841) enjoys the prospect of her future worship, Venus ends the poem in a decidedly auxiliary role. After so many trials, she does not plan the Roman future alongside Jupiter, but has returned to the Homeric battlefields as her son's healer. When a truce has been broken, and Aeneas has been wounded by an arrow, Venus pulls a dittany plant from Mt. Ida, and brings it down *circumdata nimbo*, "surrounded by a cloud" (*Aen.* 12.411-19). Though Aeneas is healed, Venus slips into the background. Remarkably, the reinvigorated Aeneas does not return with Venusian gusto but rather with a world-weary, enigmatic, and retrospective statement to his son, Ascanius.

"disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,  
fortunam ex aliis. nunc te mea dextera bello  
defensum dabit et magna inter praemia ducet.  
tu facito, mox cum matura adoleverit aetas,

sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum  
et pater Aeneas et avunculus excitet Hector.’ (*Aen.* 12.435-440)

*Learn, boy, courage and true struggle from me, but fortune from others. Now I will grant you safe passage in war with my right hand, and will lead you out to battle’s great rewards. Do this now, when soon your mature age will have blossomed, be mindful (memor), and your father Aeneas and uncle Hector will inspire your spirit, as you recall the examples of your people.*

Aeneas here sounds more *pious* than perhaps anywhere else in the epic, and directs that *pietas* not simply in the retrospective self-pity of the early books, but towards his son’s Roman future.

Moreover, his vocabulary and tone suggest that Venus nearly exhausted the last of her resources in his healing. Aeneas is not in love with his life. *Amor*, at least of the Venusian quality, has graduated to tender disappointment and regard. All of the fluttering hope and anticipation the goddess grants seem to have entirely died in her wounded son. Aeneas is Venus’ son in only the plainest biological sense. Venus’ conceptual relative *fortuna* is explicitly disavowed. *Sis memor*, “Be mindful”, instead recalls and revalues *saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*, “the persistent anger of savage Juno” (*Aen.* 1.4). The passionate injuries and grudges of the Homeric age yield to the *exempla* of Roman excellence. The historical cycle grows again on a more fertile soil, as the *Urkultur* of the Italians absorbs the last *reliquias* (*Aen.* 1.30) of the Homeric age.

### 3.3 Love’s Teary Birth: Venus the Tragic Mother

Vergil paints a very illustrative picture when he depicts *hinc Venus, hinc contra spectat Saturnia Iuno*, “Venus and Juno watching the battle opposing one another” (*Aen.* 10.760). The two goddesses represent two modalities of feminine experience, intimately linked yet in definite opposition. Venus represents all those aspects of the feminine which we may associate with female seduction — youth, playfulness, striking beauty. The specifically sexual aspects of her character are emphasized to the exclusion of her wider persona. Juno represents the developed feminine character, the woman defined by standing as a wife and mother. While the Romans

viewed women as having an exclusively domestic role in society, Juno extended the persona of a traditional matron to a public image, governing the defense of Rome itself in her cult role as *Juno Sospita*, “Juno the Savior”<sup>62</sup>. Marriage, maternity, the transmission of culture and custom to the next generation — these are Juno’s concerns. Within the female life cycle, Venus will likely become Juno, and Juno still commands her own Venusian charms. The same phases of *Kultur* and *Zivilization* find a compelling if rough analogy in the female life cycle. Yet, like *Kultur* and *Zivilization*, Venus and Juno elide without fully accepting or comprehending each other. Their attempt to join Aeneas and Dido in *pacem aeternam*, “eternal peace” (*Aen.* 1.99) only results in the most tragic episode of the epic, as Venus and Juno can never be fully wed.

The frustration both Venus and Juno experience emerges from the inversion of their expected role in the passage of time. Outside of the *Aeneid*, Venus’ metaphysical character is fluid and undermined by a tendency towards secularization. Her close relationship with the biological processes of conception and gestation makes it difficult to draw a strict boundary separating manifestations of her divinity from the course of the natural world. Lucretius and the stridently atheistic Epicureans prize Venus, suggesting a strong worldly orientation to her character. As the *genetrix* (*DRN* 1.1) of all life, Venus “alone governs the nature of things” (*DRN* 1.21). Moreover, against an analogous modern concept of nature as ruled by some “divine law”, Venus is whimsical and capricious. Lucretius goes on to warn, *Sic in amore Venus simulacris ludit amantis* (*DRN* 4.1101); “Thus in love, Venus mocks the lovers by images” (*DRN* 4.1101). Vergil directly echoes this line when Venus appears to Aeneas in disguise, and Aeneas complains to his mother, *falsis ludis imaginibus*, “you play with me by your lying appearances” (*Aen.* 1.407-408). Against the transcendence and distance of the Olympian sky gods, whose

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<sup>62</sup> Ovid records her cult as standing next to that of Cybele, the *magna mater*, on the Palatine (*Fasti* 2.55-59).

divinity is more recognizable to modern monotheists, Venus fully partakes in the sensual world, in all its pleasures and confusions.

### 3.3.1 Aeneas in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

Venus' compromised divinity becomes the defining theme of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*<sup>63</sup>, a work with direct relevance for the *Aeneid*. It begins with an enumeration of the rare goddesses who have avoided Aphrodite's charms — Athena, Artemis, and Hestia (*HHA* 1-33). All the other deities have succumbed, including Zeus, who has been repeatedly compromised by Aphrodite's seductions (*HHA* 34-44). Zeus takes his revenge by inducing her to have the shame of mating with a mortal, the Trojan Anchises. Aphrodite adorns herself in the disguise of a chaste maiden on Mt. Ida and appears before a skeptical Anchises, who thinks she must be divine (*HHA* 65-106). Aphrodite coyly denies the charge, ironically claiming that she is a mortal princess "inexperienced in making love [*philotes*]" (*HHA* 133). After they have intercourse, Anchises realizes that his suspicions were correct, and begs for pity (*HHA* 185-190). Aphrodite then gives a reply which illuminates the suffering of her son in Vergil's epic:

Anchises, most glorious of mortal humans!  
Take heart, and do not be too afraid in your judgement<sup>64</sup> [*phrenes*].  
You should have no fear that I would do any kind of bad thing to you,  
or that any of the other blessed ones would. For you are dear<sup>65</sup> [*philos*] indeed to the  
gods.  
And you will have a dear [*philos*] son, who will be king among the Trojans.  
And following him will be generations after generations for all time to come.  
**His name will be Aineias [Aeneas], since it was an unspeakable [*ainos*] grief<sup>66</sup>  
[*akhos*] that took hold of me — grief that I had fallen into the bed of a mortal man.**  
[Emphasis added] (*HHA* 192-199)

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<sup>63</sup> I am here relying on Nagy's translation and gloss of the relevant Greek words.

<sup>64</sup> Nagy leaves this as *phrenes*, I am supplying "judgement".

<sup>65</sup> I supply "dear".

<sup>66</sup> I supply "grief".



While the pitiless Greeks and relentless Juno may be the immediate causes of Aeneas' strife, his very conception bore a mark of doom. The defeated Aeneas lacks distinction as a demi-god because his mother is all too aware of the dangers and deficiencies which arise when mortals mix with immortals. As an ill-conceived and ill-fated offspring, his life itself is understood as tragic from the very start, a painful reevaluation of the erotic joy his mother had promised. Aphrodite goes on to relate the story of Ganymede, who was rewarded with immortality after he was abducted by lustful Zeus (*HHA* 202-217), and the story of Tithonus, whose mistress Eos erred in granting him immortality, but not eternal youth, so that he withered to nothing more than a voice in her chamber (*HHA* 218-238). Fearful of Anchises meeting the same fate, Aphrodite will not attempt this with him, and prepares to endure "a disgrace that will last for all days to come, without end, all on account of you" (*HHA* 248). The threat of her seductions no longer intimidates the other gods, as she herself has fallen to them, and "gone very far off track, in a wretched and inexcusable way" (*HHA* 253-254). Aeneas will be raised among the nymphs, and will return to Anchises in adolescence, though Anchises must not reveal his parentage to anyone (*HHA* 256-291).

The *Hymn* presents a Venus who has continually undermined the other Olympians, and now suffers the same fate. Romantic passion between the gods and mortals is problematic, as if it results in the birth of a child, the child will be mourned as an *ainos akhos*, an "unspeakable grief". Olson remarks that the *Hymn* was known in Augustan Rome, and that "as the most extensive ancient poetic account of the origins of the Julian family... it is impossible to believe that it did not somehow make its way to Augustus, and from him, presumably, to Vergil" (Olson 61). While it is impossible to know the degree to which the *Hymn* directly influenced the *Aeneid*, we can presume that Vergil and his principal readers saw the cursed mother-child bond of Venus

and Aeneas as a unique and undeveloped topos in the Homeric corpus. In classic tragedy, a typically Apollonian hero falls back into the washing tide of Dionysian flux. The clear-sighted Oedipus, who once illuminated the mysteries of the sphinx, goes blind; the retrospective search for personal origins undoes his clear and confident perception. But Vergil sensed the unique inversion of this pattern in Aeneas' origins. Aeneas' status as a "refugee by fate", a *profugus fato* (*Aen.* 1.2), gives his tragic story an inverse arc. Born in grief, and having come of age in a city's ruin, he does not suffer a tragic fall, but achieves a *tragic emergence*. Venus *genetrix* renews Aeneas throughout the unspeakable curse of the life she granted him.

### 3.3.2 Venus Appears to Aeneas

Two scenes in the *Aeneid* reference this inversion of Venus, the lover, as unwilling mother. Venus' visitation of Aeneas following the shipwreck in Carthage (*Aen.* 1.305-417) has very clear and direct parallels to her visitation of his father Anchises in the *Hymn*. In a fairly extensive literature<sup>67</sup>, scholars note the uncomfortable juxtaposition of *mater* (*Aen.* 1.324) and *virgo* (*Aen.* 1.327) in the scene. Venus again appears in her coy disguise, "bearing the appearance and manner (*habitus*) of a maiden" (*Aen.* 1.325). Clad as a devotee of chaste Diana, the costume of a virginal huntress hardly fools Aeneas, who in his initial reaction insists that she is *dea certe*, "surely a goddess" (*Aen.* 1.328). Vergil quietly suggests that this disguise is undermined by the overwhelming sensuality of its owner. A bow hangs from her shoulders, her hair has been scattered in the winds, and, most suggestively, her flowing garments have been collected just above her "exposed knee", *nuda genu* (*Aen.* 1.318-320). Though she claims that it is a custom of Tyrian girls to so adorn themselves when Aeneas expresses his skepticism (*Aen.* 1.336), she seems to have adorned herself with more of an eye for style than true imitation and

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<sup>67</sup> Gutting, Olson, and Reckford have all offered commentary on close relationship between the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite* and *Aen.* 1.305-417. Their overlapping insight inspires this section even where not directly sourced.

disguise. Her wild hair is like a set of pre-bleached jeans, a deliberately crafted and unconvincing façade.

Upon her departure, these three areas of her body are again referenced, as “she shone in her rosy neck, turning away”, her “ambrosial hair breathed the scent of the gods”, and “her dress flowed down to her lowest feet (*ad imos pedes*) (*Aen.* 1.402-4). The full presence of a goddess seems to have become apparent, as her hokey knee-length dress has fallen into a fuller dignity. Yet Reckford reads the scene quite provocatively, suggesting that here the garment has entirely slipped down *ad imos pedes*, and Venus is actually nude (Reckford 3). The follow-up line “and the true goddess was revealed by her stride”, *vera incessu patuit dea* (*Aen.* 1.105), supports this reading, as *patuit* does not have a sense of purely cognitive recognition, but visual, open exposure. Vergil is quietly suggesting the unresolved tensions of Venus’ character, dark and shameful for Aeneas, calling to mind her potential for raw, destructive seduction, just as she proceeds in her divine *incessu*. It also recalls the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, as Aeneas experiences a theophany uncannily similar to that which his father experienced at his conception. Vergil seems to be playing the role of a subtle Hellenistic astrologer<sup>68</sup> in Book 1, as the crisis of the shipwreck captures Aeneas’ fate in the epic’s opening moments, from his natal origin (*Aen.* 1.305-417) to his Roman destiny, guaranteed by Jupiter himself (*Aen.* 1.223-296).

While Venus hopes to approach her son in her flirty and frivolous fashion, and Vergil employs his own humor in describing the episode, the episode evokes Aeneas’ rebuke to his mother, “O you too are also cruel, as you play with the one you bore (*natum*) by false images!”. He then laments his alienation from his mother, and longs to “join hands, and exchange true accounts (*veras voces*) (*Aen.* 1.407-409). Aeneas cannot accept this kind of playful interaction

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<sup>68</sup> See Appendix B on Hellenistic astrology for a short synopsis of the astrological structure of the *Aeneid*.

because the confusion of his birth mirrors his fractured existential condition. As Venus fluctuates uncomfortably between lover and mother, her son lives without a spouse or ancestral home. As Reckford comments, “Aeneas’ mother is intensely seductive; she is the very archetype of sexual passion; and Aeneas’ father has been crippled, perhaps sexually, as an indirect result of the same onetime, glorious encounter that engendered Aeneas himself. He was, from birth, a carrier of greatness, but also a ‘man of pain’” (Reckford 24). This original mark on his character manifests in the epic. “It is not just that he is a loner, separated by his commission from the ordinary pleasures and comforts of life. There is also something confused and confusing in his behavior to women, and in his inability to register genuine emotion until afterwards, when it is too late” (Reckford 24). Reckford goes on to cite as examples his delay in returning to Troy to save Creusa, and his dispassionate farewell to Dido, though he later grieves violently when they meet in the underworld. Like his mother, Aeneas inspires and feels strong passions, but their intensity is not matched by their constancy. Aeneas has a composite character arising from the union of Aphrodite and Anchises:

Aeneas resembles his mother, then, in his tendency to withdraw, and even to disappear. He resembles his father in being wounded. And, again, he resembles his mother in appearance (he is extremely handsome), but also in a certain unconscious insincerity. Despite all his virtues — and perhaps, on account of his deepest erotic feelings — he cannot really be counted on in matters of love (Reckford 25).

Anchises references his wound at *Aen.* 2.647-649, where he reports that he has become “despised by the gods” and lingers on in life across “useless years”. Like Aeneas before his final battle, the charms of Venus have entirely passed over him in spite of his intimacy with her. To the contrary, Jupiter struck him with lightning, *contigit igni*, presumably for telling of his encounter with Aphrodite, perhaps to Aeneas, who clearly is aware of a relationship which was supposed to never have been revealed. Anchises tries to convince Aeneas to go on without him,

yet less than fifty lines later, fire appears not in the striking bolt of Jupiter, but as a *mollis flamma*, “a soft flame”, which licks the hair of Ascanius, but does not consume him (*Aen.* 2.679-86). Anchises immediately has a change of heart, and prays joyfully to the Jupiter who burned him (*Aen.* 2.689-91). The painful wound becomes a sacred christening of the coming generations, as Venusian charisma matures in the providential parentage of Aeneas.

### 3.3.3 Venus Seduces Vulcan

A second scene, this time in in Book 8, gives a somewhat more humorous perspective on the contradiction of Venus’ role and the troubled circumstances of Aeneas’ birth. At *Aen.* 8.307-401, Venus successfully petitions Vulcan to forge weaponry for Aeneas, a clear echo of Book 18 of the *Iliad*, where the nymph Thetis petitions Hephaestus for a shield on behalf of Achilles. However, this relatively straightforward proposition in Homer has more layers in Vergil’s Roman world. Venus is married to the lame god of the forge, though her infidelities are famed and numerous. It is not only Aeneas who has suffered from Venus’ inexhaustible stores of seduction. And yet the goddess has the temerity to petition Vulcan as a *genitrix nato*, as a “mother for her son” (*Aen.* 8.338), even though that son was born by Anchises. An elegant chiasmic phrase<sup>69</sup> captures her self-awareness of her shameless manipulation. She is *laeta dolis et formae conscia coniunx*, “a wife rejoicing in her tricks and well aware of her figure”, (*Aen.* 8.393). The irony continues when Vulcan is described a *pater aeterno... devinctus amore*, “father bound by eternal love” (*Aen.* 8.394). Both sides have a clearly compromised and somewhat absurd role in a marriage which was also comedic for Homer<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> See Smolenaars (100-2) for good commentary on this section, and its Homeric precedents.

<sup>70</sup> In Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Hephaestus builds a mechanism to trap his wife in bed with Ares. The gods laugh at the scene, and the adulterers do not suffer meaningful consequences (*Odyssey* 8.267 ff).

Venus nonetheless easily seduces her husband and wins the weapons for Aeneas. Interestingly, she and her husband do not come into conflict over her infidelities, which Vergil craftily alludes to in narration, but instead clash over conflicting accounts of the Trojan war. Seemingly accounting for her absence, and her gap in communication about Aeneas, she tells Vulcan that she didn't ask him for help "while the Argives destroyed Troy, living on borrowed time (*debita*)" (*Aen.* 8.374-5) because he didn't want him to spend his labors *incassum*, "in vain" (*Aen.* 8.378). While he might interpret Venus' excuse as simple conciliatory rhetoric, Vulcan takes care to correct her account, and even chastises her retrospective attitude. "Why do you inquire about cases from history's depths (*ex alto*)?", he asks (*Aen.* 8.395). "It would have then also been fitting (*fas*) for me to arm the Trojans, and neither the all-powerful father [Jupiter] nor the fates were forbidding Troy to stand". The language here suggests a drastic shift in tone from the light-hearted irony of the initial encounter. Referring to the moribund Troy as *debita* presents Venus in the unlikely role of a philosopher, as this somewhat unusual construction casts the fall of Troy as part of a larger cyclical metaphysics, in which the epoch of a flourishing Troy was merely a portion borrowed from greater eternal forces, and is owed back to them. Both Lucretius and Epictetus echo this same idea, that human life, and, by extension the life of a city, is a temporary gift to be returned to the gods.<sup>71</sup>

Why does the worldly goddess, so concerned with her son's safety, suddenly offer this reading of history with a philosopher's *apatheia*? If Venus is as cunning in this scene as she seems to think she is, this position may be another weapon in her arsenal of tricks, the *doli* in which she rejoices. Vulcan, eager to help her, will reject this claim, and speak Venus' own language of sweet optimism. The Roman future will be one of charismatic self-determination,

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<sup>71</sup> Both use the metaphor of a banquet guest who retires from life, which is not their right, but a portion allotted and owed to a greater host. Cf. *DRN* 3.938-9, *Enchiridion* 15.

and not yet another replaying of historical tragedy from history's murky depths, *ex alto*. The past likewise wasn't as strictly determined as it now seems. Before Venus' charms, the epic's own self-understanding of the fated fall of Troy<sup>72</sup> melts away. Even grim and somber Vulcan, the craftsman of binding chains, feels compelled to reshape history to gratify his sweet wife. Lucretius was likewise prostrate before her and her ability to move even the murky seas, which smile at her approach (*DRN* 1.8). Insofar as she accepts her role as mother and wife, Venus can rejuvenate all the dead stock of history. In love, we believe not in fate.

The unique force of Venus' inversion has a further demonstrable effect on the god of the forge. Venus, as the mother of Aeneas and wife of Vulcan, is a *matrona* unbound by any of the traditional expectations of Roman society. So, when Vulcan arises after a night of lovemaking to craft Aeneas' new weaponry, he becomes like a matron in Vergil's simile.<sup>73</sup>

Inde ubi prima quies medio iam noctis abactae  
curriculo expulerat somnum, cum femina primum,  
cui tolerare colo vitam tenuique Minerva  
impositum, cinerem et sopitos suscitatur ignis  
noctem addens operi, famulasque ad lumina longo  
exercet penso, castum ut servare cubile  
coniugis et possit parvos educere natos:  
haud secus ignipotens nec tempore segnior illo  
mollibus e stratis opera ad fabrilia surgit. (*Aen.* 8.407-415)

*Then, when now the first quiet in the middle of the disappearing night has quickly banished sleep, when a woman, whom Minerva has charged to pass her life on a meager spindle, first arouses the ash and sleeping flames, adding the night to her work, and trains her servants at the lights in their lengthy task, so that she is able to keep the bed of marriage chaste and raise the little children: not otherwise, and at no other time did the slower master of the flame rise his soft blanket to his handiwork.*

While she may not fully and convincingly play the role of a Roman *matrona*, Venus' powers are such that they can inspire the steely god of the forge to paternal tenderness. Vulcan approaches

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<sup>72</sup> Visiting Aeneas in a dream, Hector suggests that if Troy were to have lived on, he would have saved it. (*Aen.* 2.291-2)

<sup>73</sup> See Smolenaars section three (103 ff), "Role Reversal: Vulcan as Femina" for more discussion of this scene.

his archetypically masculine craft with the delicate care and culture of a loom, and a son that would be a humiliation receives maternal care. Venus simply cannot be contained, and works by proxy where her effervescence would be limited. She seduces Vulcan to his task, and Vulcan, now acting as Aeneas' mother, in turn commands a harmonious army of laborers. The Cyclopes, Brontes, Steropes and Pyracmon, working *in numerum*, "in rhythm" (*Aen.* 8.453), "train (*exercent*) the iron" (*Aen.* 8.424-25), just as the *matrona* of the metaphor trained her attendants (*Aen.* 8.411-12). The charge of Venus' passion drives down the line right to the iron of Aeneas' shield. Her divinity is as effusive, variegated, and creative as nature itself, even where it might have been rejected on account of past injuries.

Yet, for all her projective and transformative capacity, Venus cannot kiss away all the consequences of her own seductions and the unique pain they engender. When Dido loves again, and "loosen[s her] shame" (*Aen.* 4.55), she dares a deadly Venusian gambit. Some matters of the heart are final, and demand that we give an equal account of Venus' rival Juno, a vindictive *matrona* too often outraged in history's tumult, eager to add her griefs to sweet passions.

### 3.4 *The Matron as Maelstrom: Juno's Remembering Rage*

Juno's rage represents the fixation of a permanent memory, of a devotion to the past so enduring that it becomes a positive danger to active life. In the prologue, Vergil immediately connects Aeneas' suffering to the regressive orientation of Juno's character — the Trojans toil fruitlessly *saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*, "because of the enduring (*memorem*) wrath of savage Juno" (*Aen.* 1.4). The adjective *memor* appears again as Vergil lists the specific reasons for Juno's rage. The daughter of Saturn remains *veterisque memor Saturnia belli*, "mindful of the old war" (*Aen.* 1.23), in which she was a partisan of the Greek side. Striking home the point with an effective visual, Vergil also notes that the unfavorable judgement of Paris, in which Venus



was deemed her superior, *manet alta mente repostum*, “remains stored away in her unreachable (*alta*) consideration” (*Aen.* 1.26). Just a section earlier, Rome itself is described as *alta*, (*Aen.* 1.7), creating a neat parallelism between the distant goal of forming the Roman state and the untouchable, immovable character of Juno’s disdain for the Trojans. The future Roman state will arise from the depths of Juno’s opposing memory.

The opening rhetorical question of the work identifies Juno’s wrath as more than an incidental or particular emotion. It is a wrath which challenges our very notion of divine character and conduct in its persistence. *Tantaene animis caelestibus irae*, “Are there such great wraths unto divine spirits?” (*Aen.* 1.11) The narrative itself, in all its ambiguities and moral conflicts, will supply the answer. As if in an abrupt cinematic change of scene, Vergil refocuses our attention towards the past — *urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni*, “There was an ancient city, and Phoenician colonists held it” (*Aen.* 1.12). For Vergil, the answer to a philosophical question is ultimately historical, located in the troubled relationship *Iuno memor* has with history. “Without forgetting it is quite impossible to live at all” proclaims Nietzsche<sup>74</sup>, and Juno, in clear violation of this precept, has mounted a corrupted defense of the past and entirely short-circuited the historical process. Aeneas must cut through the gyrating rings of historical dysfunction expressed in Juno’s remembering rage.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> “Forgetting belongs to all action, just as both light and darkness belong in the life of all organic things. A person who wanted to feel utterly and only historically would be like someone who was forced to abstain from sleep, or like the beast that is to continue its life only from rumination to constantly repeated rumination. For this reason, it is possible to live almost without remembering, indeed, to live happily, as the beast demonstrates; however, it is generally completely impossible to live without forgetting. Or, to explain myself more clearly concerning my thesis: There is a degree of insomnia, of rumination, of the historical sense, through which living comes to harm and finally is destroyed, whether it is a person or a people or a culture.” Nietzsche, *On the Uses and Abuses of History*, I.

<sup>75</sup> Agathe Thornton’s work *The Living Universe* divides the *Aeneid* into five different violations of Juno and their resolutions by Jupiter — 1. the storm at sea 2. the marriage of Aeneas and Dido 3. the burning of the ships and delay in Sicily 4. the war caused by Allecto 5. the breaking of the treaty through Juturna. This admirable interpretation highlights the many sub-cycles residing within the overall cyclical structure of the work.

### 3.4.1 Juno's Cult and *Kultur*

Unless approached with this theme in mind, Juno's several specific historical commitments are not easy to classify. Her position in the narrative as an antagonist of the Trojans seems to be a natural outgrowth of her allegiance with the Greeks, as she waged the Trojan war *pro caris... Argis*, "on behalf of her dear Argives" (*Aen.* 1.24). Yet it is not clear that Juno, or Hera in Homer, was motivated as much by affection for the Greeks as by the persistent memory of Trojan outrages. For just after Vergil notes that Juno is currently "remembering of the old [Trojan] war" (*Aen.* 1.23), he lists those items stored up in her memory at the time of that war — the judgement of Paris, the insult to her beauty, the Trojan race she scorned (*invisum*), and the honor her husband Jupiter has accorded to Trojan Ganymede (*Aen.* 1.26-28). This preoccupation with the past produces a nice parallelism with the historical consciousness of Aeneas, who is similarly dislocated in time, as his actions prefigure — indeed are defined through — a Roman future. The intensity and specificity of the list of Trojan provocations clearly indicates that, at least in Vergil's emphasis, Juno values the Greeks simply for their opposition to Troy.

If Juno's remembering devotion manifests negatively in her hatred of the Trojans, its positive manifestation can be found in Carthage, which has overtaken her cult at Samos for her foremost attention (*Aen.* 1.16). If Juno is so trapped in Homeric history, why should she be so supportive of this civilization whose walls are just now rising (*Aen.* 1.437)? While Vergil does not entirely explain the specifics of the relationship, it is clear that Juno and Carthage share a relationship beyond that of patron and client. Juno's relationship with Carthage is maternal, perhaps even metaphysical. Vergil uses the particularly rich verb *colo* to describe their relationship, as "Juno honored (*coluisse*) Carthage more than all other lands" (*Aen.* 1.16). This

honor is more than a formal or political respect, however. It is a deep devotion born of personal contact and investment, as the verb also has an agricultural meaning, describing the tilling of the soil. The fourth part of *colo* is *cultus*, which suggests that Juno has *cultivated* Carthage as a civilization, so that her *cult* naturally resides here. At least for Vergil, we should think of Carthage as a terrestrial manifestation of the Junonian principle.

Just like Juno, Dido suffers from a tortured memory. Like the judgement of Paris for Juno, the death of Sychaeus informs every aspect of Dido's psyche. The determination not to marry again is held *fixum immotumque*, "strict and unshakeable" (*Aen.* 4.15). Juno and Dido maintain the early city as a kind of sheltering nunnery, a refuge for those deeply and irreparably injured by the world. Dido's deep pain informs her sympathetic openness to charity. "Not innocent of evil myself, I have learned to aid the afflicted" (*Aen.* 1.630), she proclaims to her Trojan guest. Yet both Juno and Dido have their passions aroused by Aeneas, one at first in love, and the other in a consistent hate which suggests the attraction of an obsession. Following Dido's indulgence of this passion, it is only Juno's consort, the iridescent messenger Iris, who can release Dido's troubled soul from her body (*Aen.* 4.693-705). In her tragic encounter with Aeneas, Dido reveals her devotion to Juno's fatal *pietas*.

Spengler's *Kultur* also derives from the fourth part of *colo*, and Dido cannot extend herself beyond her sad departure from her Phoenician *Kultur*. To use Spengler's favored plant metaphor, rather than embracing the freedom of a fluttering gymnosperm, she must maintain the illusion that Africa's foreign deserts can shelter her like her native soil. When Anna encourages her to act on her feelings towards Aeneas, she specifically cites the hostile circumstances of their foreign frontier. Dido has spurned the kings of Africa in marriage, hoping to remain aloof from her new world, even as these warlike peoples, now insulted by her insular arrogance, surround

them in the desert (*Aen.* 4.35-44). By leaving Dido, Aeneas revives the original trauma of Sychaeus' death — only in him did she again recognize *veteris vestigia flammae*, “the footprints of the old flame” (*Aen.* 4.23). In this second experience of loss, she experiences the trauma without any hope of the future, which now seems only a bleaker rewind of her injured past. Dido cannot summon the forgetting which is essential in the transition from *Kultur* to *Zivilization*, and her memory takes her down to the infernal realms where memory eternally resides. She “matches love for love” only when reunited with Sychaeus in the underworld (*Aen.* 6.474),

Juno betrays a similar fixation on the preservation of native *Kultur*, as in the poem's second half she assumes the role of the guardian of native Italian mores. As with the Greeks, her favor only arises as a byproduct of her Trojan enmity, and her influence, spread among the Latins by the nefarious Allecto, brings ruin to her partisans. Juno instigates the conflict in a manner exactly appropriate to her character, as Amata, having been influenced by Allecto, delivers a scathing condemnation of her husband Latinus as a betrayer of his daughter and his people.

'exsulibusne datur ducenda Lavinia Teucris,  
o genitor, nec te miseret nataeque tuique?  
nec matris miseret, quam primo Aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta virgine praedo? (*Aen.* 7.359-62)

“O father, is Lavinia now to be handed over to these Trojan exiles, and you do not pity your lot, nor that of your daughter? And do you not pity her mother, when this faithless one will leave us on the first North wind, seeking the oceans with his stolen maiden as his loot?”

In Amata's estimation, an *exsul* should be greeted with suspicion by the very fact of their exile. Foreigners might be countenanced provided that they are foreigners with a permanent home, but the exile must be a fraud, criminal, or charlatan, as they must approach all interactions with the aloof distance of an outsider. They have not paid the debt of trust built up in the years of loyalty

and conservation which Juno rewards. In labeling Aeneas *perfidus*, the voice of Dido speaks again on Italian soil, and Amata's harsh words suddenly seem justified by historical experience. *Iuno memor* imparts remembrance alongside her wrath. Amata, again recalling Dido, rages like a Bacchante through Latium, drawing the women of the city to her cause, which she justifies as *iuris materni cura*, "care for a mother's right" (*Aen.* 7.402).

But this pretense of conservation only masks a deeper wrath. Juno wishes to destroy her sacred mother's right for the Trojans more than she wishes to preserve it for the Italians. The goddess is placated only when she is assured that the Trojans will lose their culture, if not their literal genealogy, in the process of becoming Roman. Though we may doubt her sincerity, Juno seems satisfied by the assimilation of Trojan blood to Latin customs (*Aen.* 12.819-842). In this resolution, Vergil finally completes his explanation of the nature of Juno's wrath. As Juno is finally satisfied by the complete elimination of the Trojans as Trojans, she has not been fighting against Rome as such, but acting out her vengeance against that which she values most — the matrilineal principle of cultural succession. The quiet death of Aeneas' nurse Caieta at *Aen.* 7.1-4, before Allecto's intervention, foreshadows Juno's successful bid to erase his Trojan memory entirely. Juno's rage may have arisen from largely personal causes, but it can only be satisfied by a program of genocide in the widest possible sense — the elimination of a *genus* as a *genus*, the harshest possible punishment for the goddess of cultural conservation. By Juno's code of values, to change the Trojans is almost as satisfying as to destroy them.

### 3.4.2 Juno as *Magna Mater*

In terms of the broader evolution of civilizations, this brand of matronly conservatism recalls the earliest divinities of agricultural civilization, the various *magna mater* divinities of the near East who were assimilated into the Greco-Roman pantheon. The Great Mother embodies

and ensures the regular circular flows of the agricultural season, and humanity must approach her with a subservient awe approaching self-immolation. The individual, novel, and idiosyncratic (Apollonian) are to be entirely subordinated to the superorganism of the world life cycle. The uterine walls of *Kultur* replicate and preserve themselves, inhibiting outsiders and hindering foreign influences. Among the Romans, the *magna mater* should be understood as a kind of source goddess, reflected in the native maternal deities of Juno and Ceres, as well as in the imported cult of Cybele and in the various idiosyncratic Eastern cults of the later Empire. In *Darkness Visible*, Johnson notes that Vergil's Cybele, the purest manifestation of an Asiatic *magna mater* in Rome, enjoys a potency typically reserved for the core Roman Pantheon (Johnson 143). She matches the similarly magnified Juno in a direct confrontation, saving Aeneas' ships from Turnus' attempt to burn them (*Aen.* 9.77-122). The ships are saved as an extension of the reverence Cybele commands for the natural world she conserves — they have been constructed with a wood *pinea silva mihi multos dilecta per annos*, “from a pine forest dear to me [Cybele] for many years” (*Aen.* 9.85). Just like Aeneas' mother Venus, she receives the appellation *genetrix* (*Aen.* 9.82), and the Trojans are regularly associated with her in one of their epithets, the *Phyrgii*, referencing the neighboring eastern kingdom of Phrygia which honored Cybele. Most significantly, the old religion of Troy and even the piety of Aeneas himself is closely associated with the worship of the Phrygian mother goddess, as Anchises carries the *Phyrgiique penates* at *Aen.* 3.148, and Aeneas prays to her at *Aen.* 10.251.

Lucretius<sup>76</sup> reports that the attendants of Cybele at Rome are eunuchs known as the Galli, and they have been condemned to their sentence for “dishonoring the spirit of the Mother, and being ungrateful to their parents” (*DRN* 2.614-5). Those condemned to her service likely

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<sup>76</sup> *DRN* 2.600 ff.

experienced a terror at their fate similar to that which Aeneas suffered as an exile buffeted by Juno. Yet Aeneas adheres to the conservative morality of filial piety which the goddess demands, and, after Juno is reconciled to Rome, the Roman *mos maiorum* demands a similar obedience to older generations, though the right of violence in the family is wielded directly by the masculine *paterfamilias*. Aeneas and Rome thus assimilate the maternal terror which had molded their unique identities. While it may seem inexact to connect the extremes of Cybele's cult with Roman, Olympian Juno, this criticism discounts the fact that Juno's wrath is decidedly *not* Olympian, and springs from a deeper well of orgiastic fanaticism. As Johnson notes, the eastern religious sensibilities still incipient in Augustan Rome are not captured in the minor character of Cybele, or in any particular divinity, but in "the chthonian and daemonic elements that appear both in Book 6 and (frequently) throughout the last six books of the poem" (Johnson 143), demons which Juno directly conjures. These daemonic elements express a primeval, though not merely retrospective, mysticism, at once recalling the earliest civilizations of Mesopotamia and embracing primitive native Italian spiritualisms<sup>77</sup>. These spiritual traditions are hostile to the rational doctrines of *Zivilisation*, to both "Lucretian affirmation of man's liberty and of the intelligibility of the world he lives in" and "Cicero's affirmation of the *res publica*" (Johnson 143-4).

In the *Aeneid*, those characters aligned with or influenced by Juno are animated by ruthless and fanatic conviction, while the Venusian Trojans despair their overwhelming fate. Dido, Amata, and Turnus all die the deaths of true believers who cannot countenance a compromised life. Such fanaticism has also appeared in the archaeological records of ancient

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<sup>77</sup> Johnson discusses of how the native rites of Etruria became a palatable appearance for Oriental mysticism in the Augustan age (143).

Carthage, Juno's home. Recent research<sup>78</sup> at the ancient city of Carthage has confirmed that the Carthaginians likely practiced child sacrifice, and scholars have come to challenge the more charitable view that Roman reports of this practice were simply the slanders of an enemy. The superhuman conviction and constancy Juno can bestow on those enthralled in the protection of her cult, the cult of unbroken cultural succession, demands the blood of the next generation as the price of the *cultural* superorganism. It is a wholly irrational demand, intended for an audience fully subservient in awe, but such demands are not unfamiliar to Juno, whom we first meet in a pique of envy at the arbitrary punishments of other goddesses, acutely conscious of her waning *honor* (*Aen.* 1.34-49). The fact that the Greeks won the war and Aeneas is living out his days in wretchedness seems never to cross her mind — she must command sacrifice as a *metaphysical* principle, as that which she is *owed*, and not merely in the pragmatic *do ut des* tradition of the Olympians.

### 3.4.3 *Iuno Evocata*

As Juno reconciles herself to Rome, Rome reconciles itself to Juno. *Pius Aeneas* sheds Italian blood in sacrifice (*Aen.* 10.517-20;11.81-2), and Rome begins to conceptualize itself as a devouring superorganism, as the world state to which all life owes an unpayable debt. As a goddess, Juno could not be equally favorable to two states, each shedding ritual blood, each conceiving itself as the capital of the Mediterranean. Yet the goddess most comfortably resides in a native culture, and not within a world empire. How does Juno finally become Roman? Dating back to the early days of the republic, the Romans would call Juno out of the cities of their enemies, and ask that she instead come their aid. During the siege of Veii in 396 BCE, the

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<sup>78</sup> The recent article "Cemetery or Sacrifice? Infant Burials at the Carthage Tophet: Phoenician Bones of Contention" supports the view that the Carthaginians likely engaged in child sacrifice.



Roman commander first asks for the aid of Apollo, and then beseeches Juno, attempting to call her out of the city and into Rome's aid in a ritual request known as an *evocatio*<sup>79</sup>:

Te simul, Iuno regina, quae nunc Veios **colis**, precor, ut nos victores in nostram tuamque  
mox futuram urbem sequere, ubi te dignum amplitudine tua templum accipiat. (*AUC*  
5.21)

*And at the same time I pray to you, queen Juno, who now **cultivate** Veii, that you follow us as champions into our city, which will soon be yours, where a worthy temple would receive you, worthy of your bounty. [emphasis added]*

Juno may reside in the cities she cultivates, but the process of becoming Roman assumes Juno's *Kultur* into *Zivilisation*. This plea at Veii is only one *evocatio* involving Juno. Macrobius reports that the Romans also attempted to summon *Iuno Caelestis* from Carthage (*Saturnalia* 3.9.7-8). Feeney's "Reconciliations of Juno" reports that there are four recorded instances of *evocatio*, and in three of them, Juno is the goddess being recalled (Feeney 193). The Romans could fear Juno and her adversarial protection of the native *Kultur* they wished to conquer, while still believing that she may, through the passage of Roman history, come to reside at Rome.<sup>80</sup> Romans could become the enemy — the cosmic Mother, whose all-encompassing creation and destruction will be reborn as a *Weltkultur*, an *imperium sine fine* (*Aen.* 1.279).

### 3.5 *Saturnia Iuno: Saturn's Daughter and the Return of the Titans*

Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;  
magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.  
iam redit et Virgo, **redeunt Saturnia regna**,  
iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.  
tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum  
desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
casta fave Lucina; **tuus iam regnat Apollo.** (*Eclog.* 4.4-10)

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<sup>79</sup>Orlin's "Evocatio" in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* defines the concept: "Evocatio is a ceremony by which the Romans transferred to Rome the chief divinity of a city that they were besieging. They "called out" (the literal meaning of *evocatio*) the divinity and promised it a better home in Rome, as an incentive to abandon the city and thus make it easier for Roman forces to capture the city that now lacked its divine protection".

<sup>80</sup> Feeney's view of an ongoing and incomplete assimilation of Juno to Rome relies on Servius' commentary, which states at *Aen.* 1.281 that, according to Ennius, Juno was pacified through the victory in the Second Punic War, where she supported Carthage (Feeney 179). Interestingly, the other examples of Juno's *evocatio* — Veii, Falerii Veteres, Volsinii — occur at Italian cities, just as Juno rules the native Italians in the *Aeneid* (Feeney ft. 95).

*Now comes the last age of Cumaean song, and a great order is born from the unity of the ages. Now the Virgin returns, **and the kingdoms of Saturn again pass through**. Now a fresh offspring is sent down from the lofty sky, and, chaste Lucina, only favor that boy through whom the age of iron will first end, and a golden people will arise upon the entire earth; **for now your Apollo reigns**. [emphasis added]*

Vergil himself outlines the ages of history in his “messianic” fourth eclogue, and indicates the relationship of these ages to the divine cosmology. Apollo’s role is clearly oriented toward the providence of the future<sup>81</sup>, which he clearly perceives and articulates to the Trojans. The promise of a new age inaugurated by a precocious child heavily echoes 9.641-44, where Apollo promises the young Ascanius that he will escape the cycle of Troy’s cursed history, crafting a fresh order of the ages. Yet the Trojans must endure one more cycle, one more transformative repetition of the past. The Sybil at Cumae, also channeling Apollo, reveals to Aeneas the familiar details of another repeated historical episode he must endure before he founds the new age. The familiar scenes of the Trojan war will again all be present — the Xanthus river will lie as the Tiber, another Achilles has been born as Turnus in Latium, and a foreign bride will once more be the cause of war (*Aen.* 6.87-94).

This grim prophecy of *horrida bella*, “terrible wars” (*Aen.* 6.86), will come true in the second half of the epic. History’s cycle wraps itself in a tighter and tighter ring, constricting human freedom in genealogical turns of aggression, injury, and revenge. While cyclical patterns reside in the nature of time itself, and cannot be permanently eradicated, Apollo’s prophecy can illuminate the cycle so that it restarts a higher level of human awareness. Just as Apollo killed the Python<sup>82</sup>, he can cut through the ancient cycles of the Aeneas’ eastern world, symbolized by the

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<sup>81</sup> See Appendix E-6 for an alignment of the epic’s most prominent gods by their relationship with time.

<sup>82</sup> Recounted in the *Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo*, which describes how Apollo establishes his oracle through the slaying of a serpent.

ouroboros<sup>83</sup>, a serpent wrapping around and eating itself. Through his revival of epic poetry in a civilized world, Vergil shines a modern Apollonian self-awareness upon the endless serpentine flux of spontaneous destruction and reformation, of the serpent shedding its own skin. The circle of being continues uninterrupted, yet, by the very act of perceiving the process in its entirety, the prophetic Apollo cuts it apart so that it must reform differently.<sup>84</sup> Homeric clans form the Greek polis, and the Greek polis yields to the Roman imperial state.

Yet while the fourth eclogue celebrates the Augustan age as a transcendence of the dark cycles of civil war, it also very confusing when read alongside the *Aeneid*. Vergil assures Lucina that the Saturnian age now returns, an age of a golden people, *aurea gens*, surpassing an iron people, *ferrea gens*, who are now passing away. The return of a primeval golden age should be expected: lacking a rich and cohesive *Kultur*, *Zivilisation* has a strong attraction to the native simplicity of a mythic Eden. However, it is very problematic that Vergil associates this golden age with Saturn, who is referenced most frequently in the *Aeneid* in the adjectival epithet *Saturnia Iuno*. Why is the fearsome Juno so closely associated with Saturn, whose benevolent return is celebrated in the *Eclogues*?

### 3.5.1 Saturn/Kronos in Hesiod

In order to answer this question, we must look to Hesiod and the cosmogonic myth of Greece. Vergil's late-career adoption of Homeric epic seems like less of an abrupt shift in genre

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<sup>83</sup>See Appendix E-1 for a depiction of the ouroboros.

<sup>84</sup> Here, I borrow from Campbell's *Occidental Mythology*, which sees the attitude towards the snake as a good metaphor for the evolution of occidental myths from an oriental heritage, a process very much at work in the creation of a Roman myth from a Trojan heritage. "In India, the old mythology of serpent power presently recovered strength, until, by the middle of the first millennium B.C., it had absorbed the entire pantheon and spirit of the Vedic gods — Indra, Mitra, Vayu, and the rest — transforming all into mere agents of the processes of its own, still circling round of eternal return. In the West, on the other hand, the principle of indeterminacy represented by the freely willing, historically effective hero not only gained but held the field, and has retained it to the present... The lesson is... a self-moving power greater than the force of any earthbound serpent destiny" (Campbell 24).

when we consider the Hesiodic inspiration of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*<sup>85</sup>. Vergil's poetic sensibility originated in primeval landscapes, in longing for the lost ages described in early Greek cosmology, which forms an essential background to his work. Hesiod's *Theogony* describes the genealogical succession of the gods, beginning with the basic pair of Uranus and Gaia, "Heaven" and "Earth". Uranus is castrated and overthrown by his son Kronos and the Titans, and Kronos is in turn deposed by Zeus and the gods of Olympus. In the Roman tradition, Kronos becomes *Saturnus*, Saturn, and Zeus becomes *Iuppiter*, Jupiter. Just as in Spengler's historical process of waking rationalization, each generation of the gods becomes increasingly individualized and specified, gaining in their particular domain while losing the broad elemental scope of Uranus and Gaia. Uranus and Gaia might have continued to exist as static harmonious entities beyond the boundaries of space and time had not Kronos, translated as "Time", cut out another dimension of experience by castrating his father. The crime is committed with a sickle, a symbol which is preserved today in the cultural imagery of Father Time and the Grim Reaper.

The new generation of gods is known as the Titans, and they achieve greater specification in their respective realms. Oceanus, the ocean, and Helios, the sun, belong to this divine generation. Kronos begins to father the Olympian generation with his sister Rhea, strongly identified with the *magna mater* archetype. Plato connects her name with ῥέω, "to flow or discharge", which strongly suggests the menstrual cycle, the embodiment of cyclical time, rendering her a fitting companion to Father Time (*Cratylus* 402b-c). Kronos then becomes paranoid of his own children due to the memory of the violence he committed against his own father, and eats them as they are born. Yet Rhea saves Zeus, who tricks Kronos into swallowing an emetic which induces him to regurgitate his brothers and sisters. The Olympians defeat the

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<sup>85</sup> The *Georgics*, filled with reflections on farm life, plainly owe a great debt to Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

Titans, and the Titans are imprisoned in Hades. Zeus' deceptive tactics indicate an enrichment of the intellect, and his relative mercy towards the Titans presents an elevated standard of Olympian justice.

Yet if Zeus' victory creates a more refined world order, his triumph rests on a more fragile foundation. Vergil notes in Aeneas' tour of the underworld that "the ancient race of the earth, the generation of Titans, have been cast down by [Zeus'] bolt, and wallow (*volvuntur*) in the lowest depths" (*Aen.* 6.580-581). And in this 'cold' civil war between the Olympians and the Titans, Vergil's *Saturnia Iuno* has become a full defector to the older generation, threatening to raise the hell in which the Titans are imprisoned (*Aen.* 7.312). Juno's deep memory reaches back further than her own experience, and evokes the old enmity between Jupiter, her husband and brother, and her father Saturn. According to Hesiod, her adversary Venus is also not a full Olympian, as she was born from the genitals of Uranus which had fallen into the sea.<sup>86</sup> The clash of the goddesses over Aeneas disturbs the compromises on which the Olympian cosmology so delicately rests. The backward savagery of Juno's father Saturn in consuming his own children mirrors the goddess' obstinate fixation on destroying Aeneas. Yet in Vergil's vision of a golden age, the Olympian Apollo will rule while allowing the defeated Saturn to return.

How might this reconciliation between the Titans and Olympians occur, and what could be so appealing about the ancient reign of Saturn? In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod notes the richness of human life in the age of Kronos.

[The] first of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos, when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth, unforced, bare them fruit

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<sup>86</sup> By describing Venus as *nata* to Jupiter at *Aen.* 1.256, Vergil seems to be referencing the myth of birth to Dione, though the immanent nature of Venus is still manifest in her function as an erotic goddess.

abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods (*Works and Days* 2.109-120).

In this passage, both the positive and negative aspects of Saturn's reign can be integrated in the concept of historical inertia. The *gens aurea* is fully provided for in the bounty of the earth, and does not suffer the daily intensive work introduced by agricultural civilization. They do not suffer, because they do not desire, indeed cannot even conceive, anything beyond the endowment of the present moment. Yet Kronos, whose very name was often interpreted as meaning time (*Chronos*)<sup>87</sup>, knows too well that this age will collapse under the progression of history, and will even swallow his children to maintain his reign. The ubiquitous presence of such a mythology of the golden age, found also in the Hebrew Garden of Eden, reveals a universal human tendency to conceive of emergence in historical time as a degradation. These myths appeal to an urge, even in ancient societies, to a simpler state, to what the German romantics described as the Dionysian enchantment of *Kultur*. Yet the myth of Saturn illustrates the tragic horrors such dreams can engender when they feed the hubristic delusion that time can be reversed, and a jealous, reactionary god consumes the next generation.

### 3.5.2 Freedom and Law Under Saturn

In the *Aeneid*, Saturn has a bivalent character, reflected in the divisions between the Italian tribes in the war with the Trojans. The kings Latinus and Evander note that Saturn played a role in the pre-history of Italy, but differ entirely on the nature of his role. Anderson's article "Juno and Saturn in the *Aeneid*" masterfully defines and reconciles the discrepancy between these two kingdoms and their accounts of Saturn.

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<sup>87</sup> Plutarch criticizes this association in his discussion of Egyptian religion, *Of Isis and Osiris* 32. However, Cicero affirms this association in his *De Natura Deorum* 25: "By Saturn again they denoted that being who maintains the course and revolution of seasons and periods of time, a deity actually so designated in Greek, for Saturn's Greek name is Kronos, which is the same as *chronos*, a space of time."

Vergil associates Saturn with both Latinum and the site of Rome; Latinus claims that absence of law follows the spirit of Saturn's institutions, while Evander asserts that Saturn introduced law and order from which later ages degenerated; Latinus is descended from Saturn while Evander is a foreigner. In addition, Vergil portrays Latinus' kingdom as anarchic, as forcing the king to permit the war which he expressly admits is evil. On the other hand, at Pallanteum, the king and his people live in simplicity, dedicated to the principles of hospitality, and strictly adhering to their religious ritual... **It is, in short, as if two different aspects of Saturn have descended down to Aeneas' time: first, the hereditary line from father to son, from king to king, but now coming to an end in Latinus; and second, the orderly, peaceful, and simple existence under a lawful king, which Evander's little city seems to cherish and which Latinus disavows.** Now, Evander has been driven from his native land and settled down as a foreigner in this village at the urging of Apollo and in obedience to fate (334-6). Such circumstantial parallelism with the experience of Aeneas would suggest that this primitive site of Rome contains the nucleus of the ultimate Rome of Augustus. Law once typified Saturn's rule, and law will prevail through Aeneas. **When Latinus admits his error, when Turnus, the human symbol of the war and lawlessness, falls, the two unhappily separated aspects of Saturn, the blood line and the rule of law, will be re-united through Aeneas' marriage with Lavina. To achieve this, however, no native Italian, no Etruscan sufficed: a foreigner, a Trojan, the enemy of Juno and the natural rival of Turnus, had to produce this restoration** (Anderson 528). [emphasis added]

When Aeneas and the Trojans are reconciled to the Italians, and Juno makes peace with the union of the peoples, the wisdom and justice of Saturn harmonize with the genealogy of kingship. The fracture of the ages is healed in the resetting of the cycle. Saturn can rule alongside Apollo only when a foreigner has revalued the polity, resolving its contradictions in a new imperial vision of Roman unity. In the final confrontation of Aeneas and Turnus, Saturn's primal fury is now directed at Turnus, but Aeneas' *ira* toward him cannot be simply equated with Juno's rage against the Trojans, or with Saturn's cosmogonic attempts to preempt the Olympians. He does not claim any vengeance for himself, but channels a younger voice speaking from the grave — "Pallas sacrifices you by this wound, and exacts this penalty from your foul blood" (*Aen.* 12.947-949). It is as if Aeneas emulates Jupiter<sup>88</sup> in his attempt to revive the victims of Saturn's

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<sup>88</sup> Thomas' "Torn Between Jupiter and Saturn" conceptualizes Aeneas as an Olympian in conflict with Saturnian Italy. Thomas sees Aeneas as agent of Jupiter's Augustan ideology, so that "the deceptive Jupiter and the deceptive Aeneas would in the decades that followed be seen in the form of Augustus, who succeeded in perpetrating the

boundless fury, and revalues the nature of Saturn's grim rage by his very act, bringing an ancient primeval force into alignment with a loftier Olympian justice.

According to Cicero, Saturn's name derived from the word *satis*, "enough"<sup>89</sup>. Contentment, and a simple satisfaction, characterize Saturn's age, yet Juno is repeatedly described in terms of her *dissatisfaction*. When *Saturnia Iuno* attempts to strand the Trojans on Italy in Book 5 by burning their ships, she is "not yet exhausted (*saturata*) in her ancient grief" (*Aen.* 5.608)<sup>90</sup>, has "an insatiable (*nec exsaturabile*) heart" (*Aen.* 5.781), and does not find her already considerable destruction "enough (*satis*)" (*Aen.* 5.786). At other moments, Juno herself uses this language of Saturn. In Book 7, before she sends Iris to influence the Latins, she rejects the possibility of ending their hostilities, rhetorically lamenting that she has become "sated (*exsaturata*)" (*Aen.* 7.298) in her vengeance against Aeneas. It seems her "great powers have not been enough (*satis*)" (*Aen.* 7.309), and so she vows to raise hell. Iris later accuses Aeneas of having an insatiable greed when she warns Turnus that the Trojan has already penetrated into Italy, and "it's not enough (*nec satis*)" (*Aen.* 9.10).

As a cosmological figure, Saturn represents the extremes of the *Kultur/Zivilisation* cycle very effectively. The Latins, organized without laws and animated by passion, represent the faction closest to the age of Hesiod and Homer, an *Urkultur* which will enter into a messy, impulsive war over a stolen bride. The Latin connection to Saturn is one of blood, as Saturn was the great-grandfather of Latinus, the *ultimus auctor* of the line (*Aen.* 7.49). In Evander's

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greatest political fiction of the West, that an absolute monarchy was in fact a pure republic. It is my view that Virgil saw what was going on (Thomas 146)." Yet Aeneas also serves Saturn in his alliance with Evander.

<sup>89</sup> "The Latin designation 'Saturn' on the other hand is due to the fact that he is 'saturated' or 'satiated with years'; the fable is that he was in the habit of devouring his sons — meaning that Time devours the ages and gorges himself insatiably with the years that are past. Saturn was bound by Jove in order that Time's courses might not be unlimited, and that Jove might fetter him by the bonds of the stars." *De Natura Deorum* 25.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson notes these usages at 523-24.



Pallanteum, Saturn arrived *arma Iovis fugiens et regnis exsul ademptis*, “fleeing the weapons of Jupiter, an exile from his stolen kingdom” (*Aen.* 8.320)<sup>91</sup>. Saturn becomes a lawgiver to the *genus indocile* “the unteachable race” (*Aen.* 8.321), and his narrative arc mirrors that of the *Aeneid* itself — disposed exiles will become good Roman lawgivers. By “granting the people laws” (*Aen.* 8.322), Saturn attempts to lay down the rational basis for a *Zivilisation*, but his project failed when *belli rabies et amor successit habendi*, “the madness of war and the love of greed followed” (*Aen.* 8.327). *Fortuna*, chance itself, ensured that Evander and the Greeks, “driven from their country”, would inherit the civilizing legacy of Pallanteum (*Aen.* 8.328-336). In these two Italian manifestations, Saturn represents the reverie of the pastorals of Vergil’s youth, as well as the mature paternal wisdom we might hope to find in a venerable ancient society. Human beings can be good in a personal, communal way, or they can be good through the establishment of laws, but neither mode of history will survive the pull of time. The figure of Saturn allows Vergil to express the virtues, as well as the incompleteness, the *dissatisfaction*, of both historical moments, a dissatisfaction which moves history even when he has been defeated and imprisoned.

### 3.5.3 Juno Between the Titans and Olympians

*Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* At Juno’s final reconciliation to fate in Italy, the king of the gods can finally provide an answer.

es germana Iovis Saturnique altera proles  
 irarum tantos volvis sub pectore fluctus  
 verum age et inceptum frustra summitte furorem

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<sup>91</sup> Diodorus Siculus tells us about a return of the Titans in Italy at 5.71.4 of *Library of History*: “Zeus also had other wars against the Giants, we are told, in Macedonia near Pallenê and in Italy on the plain which of old was named Phlegraean (“fiery”) after the region about it which had been burned, but which in later times men called Cumaean. Now the Giants were punished by Zeus because they had treated the rest of mankind in a lawless fashion and, confiding in their bodily superiority and strength, had enslaved their neighbours, and because they were also disobeying the rules of justice which he was laying down and were raising up war against those whom all mankind considered to be gods because of the benefactions they were conferring upon men generally.”

do quod vis, et me victusque volensque remitto (*Aen.* 12.830-3)

*You are the sister of Jove and the other offspring of Saturn — you turn over such great waves of outrage beneath your breast! Even so, take heed and send away this rage begun in vain. I am doing what you wish, and recuse myself, willingly beaten.*

Jupiter perceives that his wife stands uncomfortably between himself and her father, Saturn, and that this unique position in the succession of generations explains her savage rage. *Irarum tantos* directly echoes the *Aeneid*'s opening query (*Aen.* 1.11), and, even in the act of making concessions, Jupiter displays his sharp perception of the imprisoned genealogical memories turning behind the great disturbances of the past 12 books. From the start, he knew that “harsh Juno” would come to embrace Rome (*Aen.* 1.279-83). Jupiter perceived the dual motivations under which his wife and sister was operating, and knew that the remembering tyrant would come to preserve Saturn’s freedom in Roman Italy. Jupiter and Apollo would rule alongside this Saturn, the just Saturn of Evander, as the Titans and Olympians unite in a temporally compressed cosmos.

### *3.6 From the Blood of Titans: Humanity’s Promethean Revolt*

*MELIBOEUS: Still tell me, Tityrus, who is god of yours?*

*TITYRUS: The city they call Rome, Meliboeus!*

— *Eclogues 1*

The return of Saturn in the *Aeneid* recalls another key detail of the battle between the Titans and the Olympians. Dio, Julian, Oppian, and Plato suggest that humans were formed from the blood of defeated Giants or Titans, and that humanity’s inferior position to the Olympian gods reflects this defeat<sup>92</sup>. While Hesiod does not tell this story in his works of early Greek religion, the connection between the Titans and humanity was a consistent theme among these later authors. Perhaps this perspective arose from theological syncretism with the eastern

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<sup>92</sup> Edmonds’ *Redefining Orphism* discusses this concept in terms of his definition of an “Orphic” tradition of ancient religion (Edmonds 368ff).

Mediterranean, as the *Enuma Elish*, a Babylonian creation myth, claims that human beings were made from the blood of the god Qingu, who also was defeated in a theomachy. These humans must serve the gods as slaves, mirroring the harsh terms and predetermined fate Vergil's Olympians impose on mortals<sup>93</sup>. Across Greco-Roman and near Eastern myth, there lies a fundamental uniting theme: humanity's unique condition between the realms of the natural and the divine is like that of a defeated god, possessing great abilities but unable to fully actualize them. What if human beings, the sons and daughters of Titans, take *Saturnia Iuno* as their example and decide to assert their own rights as the gods of an earlier time? Even in Hesiod, the Titans may be allies in a cosmological insurrection. Prometheus, who first granted mankind fire against Zeus' opposition, was a Titan (*Theogony* 507-616). If Saturn's kingdom is in Italy, surely Italy must be a land in which hubris is rewarded.

### 3.6.1 Ascanius' Ascent to the Stars

In Roman society, the memory and judgement of posterity was the path to divinity for mortals. Historical commemoration elevated political action, allowing historical figures like Augustus to partake in divinity, however much this might be resisted during their lifetimes. Conversely, especially poor emperors do not merely suffer historical criticism, but are erased from the eternal plane of historical time in a *damnatio memoriae*. History offers human beings the chance to defy their bitter fate by outstanding deeds, and Vergil writes of Augustus with the prospect of deification in mind. In his epic, it is the demi-god Aeneas who carries the lineage of Augustus, and while the Trojans may not fully perceive the future glories of Rome itself, they can understand this Roman future as a continuation of the divine charisma carried in the line of

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<sup>93</sup> “Qingu is the one who instigated warfare, who made Tiamat rebel and set battle in motion.’ They bound him, setting him before Ea, they inflicted the penalty on him and severed his blood vessels. From his blood Ea created Mankind, on whom he imposed the service of the gods, and set the gods free” *Enuma Elish* 6.29-34 in *Babylonian Creation Myths* (111-113).

Anchises. This manifests in Book 9, when Apollo casts his providential glow on the boy Ascanius, blessing the Trojan cause with the assurance of Delian prophecy.

macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra,  
dis genite et geniture deos. iure omnia bella  
gente sub Assaraci fato ventura resident,  
nec te Troia capit. (*Aen.* 9.641-44)

*“Take blessing in your fresh manhood, young boy. You are born of the gods and shall beget still more, and so you will arrive at the stars. All those wars about to come by fate will cease by law under the rule of Assaracus’ house, and Troy will not seize you”.*

In the comforting words of Apollo, the current dispossessed status of the Trojans should be taken as an accident of history. The next generation can escape from *Troia*, which is more than the literal historical city of Troy from which Ascanius has already escaped: it is, rather, a wider phenomenon of *Troia*, an ancient past which is still haunting the Trojan present. As one both born of the gods and destined to give birth to a further lineage of divine kings, Ascanius has the rare opportunity to escape the tragic cycle of history and institute a new *ius* which will forever forbid the sufferings Troy endured. By emphasizing that this redemption is embedded in a divine genealogy, Apollo affirms a deeper truth hidden beneath the confusion of merely contingent events. Here, as in the fourth eclogue, the divine character of the Julio-Claudian line implies an Apollonian awakening, as these Julian gods emerge from the tumult of history, empowered to rectify and reset the secular order. However much the German romantics may have resisted admitting these positive aspects, the opportunity to reorder the world is the healthy fruit of *Zivilisation*, in which humans are longer passively beholden to *Dasein* experience, but have awoken to a state of *Wachsein* executive control. For a Trojan prince blessed by Apollo, this means waking from the Homeric victimization of the past to the Roman *imperium* of the future.

In the terms of Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, such an Apollonian Roman state will be one of individuation, rational order, and legal codification. The spirit of music will yield to the duties

of efficient government. Yet these enlightened features of the Roman state offer themselves admirably to the judgement of modernity, and the practice of peace and order can be godly in itself. In his prophecy to Ascanius, Apollo's lofty idealism suggests that the Trojans will effectively become gods through a process of civilizational uplift. After his short, cryptic statement, he immediately returns to the battlefield assuming the form of Ascanius' distinguished old mentor Butes, warning him not to continue to partake in the battle (*Aen.* 9.646-63). In the historical context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Apollo's pacifism is historically aligned with the sensitivities of Romans weary of civil war, and philosophically aligned with the serenity promised by both Stoicism and Epicureanism.

### 3.6.2 Mezentius' Inhuman Cruelty

However, the battlefields of Italy also offer less attractive paths toward divinity. The Etruscan king Mezentius, an enemy of the Trojans, debases the gods to the level of a particularly grotesque humanity. He is twice described as a *contemptor divum*, "hater of the gods" (*Aen.* 7.648, 8.7), yet his godlessness is so flagrant that it almost seems to promote him to divine rank. Indeed, Vergil adopts the same narrator's confusion of divine incomprehensibility<sup>94</sup> when discussing Mezentius:

hanc multos florentem annos rex deinde superbo  
 imperio et saevis tenuit Mezentius armis.  
 quid memorem infandas caedes, quid facta tyranni  
 effera? di capiti ipsius generique reservent!  
 mortua quin etiam iungebat corpora vivis  
 componens manibusque manus atque oribus ora,  
 tormenti genus, et sanie taboque fluentis  
 complexu in misero longa sic morte necabat

*This city (an Argyllian Etruscan city) flourished for many years until the king Mezentius then held it with haughty power and savage weaponry. Why should I recall the horrible slaughters, the barbarous deeds of this tyrant? Let the gods hold out such [judgement]*

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<sup>94</sup> *tantaene... irae* at *Aen.* 1.11.

*for this personality, this type! He even joined dead bodies with the living, placing hands upon hands and faces upon faces, this was his type of torture, and on this miserable embrace, swimming in discharge and gore, he would thus kill them with a long death. (Aen. 8.481-87)*

As portrayed by this gruesome imagery, Mezentius imposes a fear worthy of a god through his utter ruthlessness. Mezentius confuses the very terms of life and death for those who dare to cross him. It is a twisted version of hell which inverts the just order presented in the transmigration of souls in Book 6. Indeed, this mixing of the living and the dead seems to embody Juno's promise to raise up the underworld if she cannot sway heaven (*Aen.* 7.312). In testing the lower bound of human conduct, Mezentius has become the symbolic vessel of the goddess' rage. He is the earthly hell through which Aeneas once more must cross. Before his final battle with Aeneas, Mezentius articulates the terms of his brutal theology yet more clearly: *Dextra mihi deus*, "my sword arm is my god" (*Aen.* 10.773), he proclaims. The contrast with Apollo's message to Ascanius could not be clearer. An unvarnished lust for dominance, stripped of any human consideration, allows Mezentius to approximate the overwhelming force of a god, albeit in a very narrow and ultimately self-defeating fashion. By equating divinity with inhuman brutality, Mezentius will be remembered for his flagrant injustice, suffering an eternity of *infamia*.

But Vergil's theological landscape offers humans more than a simple choice between good and evil in a polarized universe. Ascanius and Mezentius represent personal fulfilments of metaphysical principles. Taking two appropriate concepts from Vergil's universe, they may be said to be functioning as personifications of *Pax* and *Furor* respectively. Roman *Pax* has overcome *Furor*. Yet Vergil's revaluation of a cosmos in chaos is only partial and incidental if it only involves humans crossing the boundaries from humanity to divinity by simply representing a metaphysical theme as a Platonic archetype. If he had relied on prefabricated symbols in place

of a living art, Vergil would be guilty of the charge of evacuating the Dionysian from his poetry and of creating the propagandistic, formalized narrative which characterizes a superficial *Zivilisation*. Instead of the *Aeneid*'s being a turning wheel of historical experience, it would be merely the rhetorical exercise of Nietzsche's unmusical Socratic artist, and its gods nothing more than dead imitations.

### 3.6.3 Nisus' Theological Adventure

But the poet of the *Eclogues* has not forgotten, in his graduation to metaphysics, the bucolic spontaneity of the pasture. The chronology of Vergil's major works mirrors the cycle of history — beginning in the open fields (*Eclogues*), ascending to agriculture (*Georgics*), and culminating in an empire (*Aeneid*). The free spirit of Vergil's origins has not disappeared in the brutal world of *imperium*, though an unvarnished longing for adventure has become more dangerous. His most evocative and controversial theology comes from the fevered dreams of untutored youths, when Nisus addresses his companion Euryalus, encouraging him to join him in a daring nighttime raid on the Rutulian camp:

dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt,  
Euryale, an sua cuique deus fit dira cupido?  
aut pugnam aut aliquid iam dudum invadere magnum  
mens agitat mihi, nec placida contenta quiete est. (*Aen.* 9.184-7)

*O Euryalus, do the gods place this desire in our minds, or does each man's grave passion become his own god? For some time now my mind compels me to start a fight, or to venture into something great, and it is not satisfied in soothing quiet.*

While the question about divine origin remains rhetorical, the ensuing tragedy makes Vergil's answer fairly clear. Nisus and Euryalus are initially successful in their raid, but Euryalus arrogantly flashes the spoils of their victory, and is cut down in the enemy camp,

purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro  
languescit moriens (*Aen.* 9.435-6)

*Like a purple flower, when it has been cut by the plow, wilts as it dies.*

Nisus observes his friend's fate and kills some Rutilans as they close in on him. Nevertheless, he dies atop Euryalus' body, and *placida... morte...quievit*, "rests in a serene death" (*Aen.* 9.445).

The ring composition, recalling the *placida contenta quiete* of 9.187, suggests that Nisus himself is truly the author of his own tragedy. His *dira cupido* has become his own god, *cuique deus fit* (*Aen.* 9.165). As we already have seen in the larger epic ring structures, Vergil effects a profound transformation from the first (A) element to the concluding one. A burning adolescent desire for excitement and glory ends in the dead contentment which it initially spurned, as it crosses over the transitional (B) element of a flower blooming and dying.

Nisus' naturalistic atheism, experimental spirituality, and embrace of existential subjectivity are the consequences of a metaphysical void. The cries of abandoned Trojans harmonize with Rilke's lament for a demystified modernist landscape, "Who, if I should cry out, would even hear me in the angelic realms?"<sup>95</sup> But even the fullest despair redeems itself by dissolving back into the Dionysian flow of intense subjective sensation. "When you have stared long into the abyss, the abyss stares back into you"<sup>96</sup>. Vergil likewise sanctifies this headlong quest, though the pair have been explicitly motivated by their *impietas*:

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. (*Aen.* 9.446-449)

*Oh, you lucky pair! If my poems are at all effective, no day will ever wipe you from eternal memory, so long as the line of Aeneas dwells on the immovable stone of the Capitoline, and a Roman father will rule the empire.*

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<sup>95</sup> *Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?* "Duino Elegies", 1.

<sup>96</sup> *Wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein.* *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 146. A very elegant chiasmus, and one which certainly captures the transformation of its (A) and (B) elements!



Just as despairing Aeneas once blessed the *beati* who died beneath the walls of the ancestral Trojan homeland (*Aen.* 1.94-96), Vergil now valorizes the blind faith of young adventurers. While they have no conscious idea of “Rome” as such, their tragic intuitions prefigure the divinity of the eternal city. As youths, it is fitting that they should receive such novel inspirations. Dido and Amata also suffer disaster when they don the tragic mask of Dionysus<sup>97</sup>, but their tragedies are tragedies of remembrance, not tragedies of blameless naivety. Nisus and Euryalus act without the mediation of memory or received religion, becoming the gods they cannot locate out in the heavens, gods which will be remembered across Roman eternity. To die in defense of the past is to die like Turnus, *indignata* (*Aen.* 12.952), dishonored and discarded. However, to die for the future is to partake in it. Apollo may relate this future as prophecy, but we, as humans, can *experience* it in a single moment of Dionysian embrace. The dead blood of Saturn may live again.

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<sup>97</sup> Dido *bacchatur* at *Aen.* 4.301, Amata wanders *simulato numine Bacchi* at *Aen.* 7.385.

## Chapter 4: The Eyes Turning Over — The Revolutions of Fate

*We think in generalities, but we live in detail. To make the past live, we must perceive it in detail in addition to thinking of it in generalities.*

– Alfred North Whitehead<sup>98</sup>

As time turns, the heavens turn, and as the heavens turn, so do the fates of nations. Jupiter may flick his hands across the pages of centuries as an afterthought, but humanity is captured in its moments, and it turns within itself. Mortal eyes realize their fate with a pain that cannot bear to look at its object. When Dido realizes she has been betrayed, for example, and attempts to address Aeneas, she

aversa tuetur  
huc illuc volvens oculos (*Aen.* 4.362-3)

*Gazes off, turned away, darting her eyes here and there.*

Aeneas will also face emotions he cannot reconcile by turning over his eyes. After the defeated Turnus pleads for mercy,

stetit acer in armis  
Aeneas volvens oculos dextramque repressit;  
et iam iamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo  
coeperat, infelix umero cum apparuit alto  
balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis  
Pallantis pueri (*Aen.* 12.938-43)

*Aeneas stood fierce in arms, turning his eyes, and he restrains his sword arm, and already the plea had begun to persuade him, delaying more, when the sad swordbelt of the boy Pallas arose on Turnus's raised shoulder, and shone in its famed amulets.*

Neither Dido nor Aeneas can afford direct vision of these overwhelming sights, infused with too many contradictory perspectives. Dido, having abandoned her chastity, looks upon a betrayer *insignem pietate*, “marked for his devotion” (*Aen.* 1.10). Aeneas cannot reconcile the pleas of his

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in "The Education of an Englishman" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 138 (192).

defeated enemy with the memory of his deeds. Vision itself fractures when the intensity of memory overcomes the solidity of the present moment.

Within human history, there are also moments when a single overwhelming impression upends lasting historical trends. During the civil wars, Caesar, victorious against his rival Pompey at Pharsalus, landed at Alexandria, as Egypt was itself suffering a civil war between king Ptolemy and her brother Cleopatra. While Caesar succumbed to Cleopatra's charms, it was initially a strong revulsion towards Ptolemy which drove him towards the queen. Ptolemy had ordered the assassination of Pompey, hoping for asylum, and presented Caesar with his head in a basket. He expected the favor to draw him into Caesar's confidence. Caesar instead wept, as Pompey had been his son-in-law in marriage to Julia, and he quickly turned on Ptolemy and deposed him from the throne (*Plut. Pompey* 80).

When hardened generals bawl over the bodies of their enemies, they cry in the uncanny embrace of one with whom they spilled blood. In these moments, victor and victim elide, and the shape of their conflict at once mirrors, contradicts, and surpasses the dying world of old. The historical conflicts that once seemed so dark and incomprehensible now illuminate our vision, as Carthage, Troy, Greece, and Italy come together in the transformations of a new Roman age.

#### *4.1 Carthago Culta: Aeneas' Tears at Juno's Temple*

The first revolution of fate occurs very early in the epic, and quietly foreshadows its final resolution. Just after being shipwrecked in Carthage, Aeneas weeps tears of joy at the temple of Juno, finding "his first hope" in the depiction of Troy's defeat:

Hic templum Iunoni ingens Sidonia Dido  
condebat, donis opulentum et numine divae,  
aerea cui gradibus surgebant limina, nexaeque  
aere trabes, foribus cardo stridebat aenis.  
Hoc primum in luco nova res oblata timorem  
leniit, **hic primum Aeneas sperare salutem**

**ausus, et adflictis melius confidere rebus.**

Namque sub ingenti lustrat dum singula templo,  
reginam opperiens, dum, quae fortuna sit urbi,  
artificumque manus inter se operumque laborem  
miratur, videt Iliacas ex ordine pugnās,  
bellaque iam fama totum volgata per orbem,  
Atridas, Priamumque, et saevum ambobus Achillem.  
Constitit, et lacrimans, 'Quis iam locus' inquit 'Achate,  
quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?'  
En Priamus! Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;  
sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.  
Solve metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem.'  
Sic ait, atque animum pictura pascit inani,  
multa gemens, largoque umectat flumine voltum (*Aen.* 1.446-465)

*Here, there was a large temple which Sidonian Dido was building for Juno, a temple rich in gifts and in the presence of the goddess, where bronze entrances were rising from the steps, and beams are joined in bronze, and a hinge creaks on the bronze doors. For the first time, in this grove, something he'd never known before arose, and soothed his fear, and here, for the first time, Aeneas dared to hope for salvation, and to trust better in his wretched circumstances. For while he surveys the particulars at the foot of the large temple, awaiting the queen, while he marvels at what good fortune there is in the city, and at the bands of workmen and the great task of the works they share (inter se), he sees in a row the battles at Ilium, and the wars now well known in their fame across the world, he sees the sons of Atreus, and Priam, and Achilles, a menace to both. He stands, and says, "O, Achates, what place, what land is not now full of our toils? Look, there's Priam! Here, these are the rewards of renown, the world's [rerum] tears flow, and they regard humanity. Release your fear; this fame will bring you some salvation." Thus he speaks, and he soothes his soul on the empty pictures, and sighing often, he floods his face in a river of tears. [emphasis added]*

Aeneas feels most open, safe, and emotionally vulnerable in a foreign land hostile to Rome, at the temple of his greatest adversary, and before images of his own demise. Vergil takes great care to frame the significance of the moment. The strong repetition of the demonstrative pronoun emphasizes the singularity and strangeness of the event: *hic templum... hoc primum in luco... hic primum*. Aeneas' reaction is strongly tied to the location, the goddess whose spirit infuses it, and even the particular moment in time. The repetition of *primum* also seems odd in a work that only began some 400 lines ago. Vergil is not speaking externally, in terms of his

narrative, but internally, in terms of Aeneas' internal life. Aeneas is observing his past anew as a true revelation, as a *nova res*, inexpressible outside of his subjective experience.

Furthermore, the moment calls into question the constancy of Aeneas' character. Bathing himself in a river of tears, he is as overpowered by emotion as he looks at the images of his Trojan past, though earlier, in his speech to his men immediately after the shipwreck, he had seemed as sturdy as Cato, projecting public resolve and confidence (*Aen.* 1.198-207). Yet Vergil also tells us that this stoic projection was less than fully sincere. He had “fake[d] hope on his face”, *simulat spem vultu*, and “pushe[d] his deep grief back within his heart” *premit altum corde dolorem* (*Aen.* 1.209). That grief erupts before the temple of Juno alongside the very hope (*ausus... sperare saltum*) he could not summon earlier. Something in this place has freed and healed the pain Aeneas had initially suppressed.

The “two voices” of this moment express the emotional paradox of tragic reevaluation in all of its confusion and intensity. The first hope, a moment of cosmic oneness with a suddenly sensitive and human world (*mentem mortalia*) inspires neither laughter nor joy but an overwhelming flood of tears. In this respect, Aeneas' reaction is analogous to that of the tragic spectator, who derives a profound pleasure from sympathy with the doomed heroes and heroines of the dramatic stage. Farron's *A Poem of Love and Grief*<sup>99</sup> emphasizes the immediate emotional reactions ancient tragedy could elicit, and his focus on the irreducibly tragic elements of the *Aeneid* finds solid support in this scene. Yet Aeneas is still more than a tragic spectator — he is recalling events in which he was a participant, and he still experiences the legacy of this tragedy in his current desperate circumstances. After the fashion of tragedy in its primeval Dionysian

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<sup>99</sup> Section 2.A-C presents the strong case that modern scholarship has denuded the immediately emotional reaction expected in ancient art. Against unity and abstraction, Farron emphasizes that in antiquity “the goal of poetry [is] pleasure, which comes from overwhelming emotional involvement, causing primarily (and to us paradoxically) crying” (Farron 46).

state, the tragic moment lacks clear distinction between its spectator and its performer, between stage and chorus. Aeneas weeps at the memories of his past, but even more so at the fact that others, by so adorning this temple, also weep for him. Before he cries himself, the *lacrimae rerum* belong to the builders of the temple, not to him.

Aeneas' ecstatic reaction at the temple supports reading Vergil's Juno as a refinement of the *magna mater* archetype, particularly because the scene correlates so well with the preceding neglect of Aeneas' actual mother, Venus. Aeneas' mother is a stranger to him and flits off into the heavens as she rebukes her as cruel (*Aen.* 1.407), while his greatest enemy consoles him in a bosom of maternal comfort, even enveloping him in the protective trees of her sacred grove. He finds solace in the harshness of his circumstances, and the man of his mother's grief, *ainos akhos*, embraces his grief as his mother. Juno's presence is not merely incidental — Aeneas feels at home in a place *opulentum et numine divae*, “rich in the spirit of the goddess”. Still more striking, we have every reason to expect that Aeneas *should* identify more closely with Juno. Like Juno, he is characterized by his memory of the past, and, as Vergil frequently reminds us, embodies a *pietas* that ought to suit the conservative Juno. While Juno's acceptance of Aeneas' victory in Book 12 would seem a shocking reversal if considered out of context, Vergil quietly anticipates the reconciliation in Aeneas' emotional response to the past at her temple.

Indeed, even Aeneas' comments to Achates on the value of their fame (*Aen.* 1.459-463) should be read as an embrace of Juno's transmission of history through cultural inheritance. In any other context, the endorsement of praise as “its own reward” (*sua praemia laudi*) would seem to be a simple reflection of Roman ambition and thirst for public honors. Yet this sentiment appears alongside some of the most emotionally sensitive lines in the poem, and Aeneas does not seem to be simply delighting in the propagation of his image like a vain candidate for the

consulship. The spirit of the goddess has prompted this reaction. Juno guards and retains this image carved into her temple, just as Juno still lives in an emotional world dominated by the Trojan war. Aeneas currently suffers as a wanderer in a world without memory, occupying a hazy universe of uncertainty and traumatic amnesia. Without the *culture* of Juno, the world will remain without recognition, fame, and, basic humanity.

*Memor Iuno* has indulged a private vendetta against him, but fundamentally Aeneas needs Juno's acceptance, not her defeat. The remembering mind can be revalued into a powerful organ of Roman eternity. Aeneas' later success in Italy means nothing if Juno does not regard his achievement and transmit the cultural memory of his struggle. Beginning the poem as a refugee from fate (*Aen.* 1.2), Aeneas' tears at the temple are joyful because they bring him back into the flowing eternity of Juno's everlasting memory, the overwhelming motherly presence which the helpless infant experiences as an eternal and boundless infinity. What land could possibly not recognize us? The Roman reader<sup>100</sup>, perhaps himself in a distant land ignored or abused by the imperial capital, could have also vicariously enjoyed Rome's triumph despite his own defeat. The empire offers its victims an assimilated *Nachleben* that may seem masochistic and perverse, but is attractive when compared with a real alternative of personal, cultural, and historical dissolution, the fate suffered by Priam's line and the city of Troy. In some sense, Aeneas is crying because, simply by looking at the site of her temple, he feels that Juno has spared him, *cultivating* his experiences in the eternity of historical memory.

As we pull away from Aeneas' reverie, Vergil reminds us that, though all the regions of the earth are *plena laboris*, "full of Trojan toil", Aeneas only *animum pictura pascit inani*, "feeds

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<sup>100</sup> See Gransden's *Virgil's Iliad* (2-3) for a discussion of how these images may be historically substituted. "The reader's sense and recollection of Book I will be transformed in memory and become part of his final sense of the whole epic, the perspectives of which extend from the hero, focus of all the poem's temporalities".

his soul on an empty picture”. The images of Roman greatness Aeneas receives on his shield in Book 9 elicit the same unfulfilled vagueness of an undefined *res*. As he takes up “the fame and fate of his descendants upon his shoulder”, he remains “unknowing of things” and “rejoices in the image (*imagine*)” (*Aen.* 8.730-1). While the past and future remain tragically insubstantial, these *res* can only ripen when Juno comes to fully reside in the Roman social organism, consolidating the temporally dense Augustan moment. Despite all the problems Juno presents throughout the Trojans’ journey, she remains the object of their awe and devotion. Helenus cautions Aeneas that he must sacrifice to Juno if he will ever see Italy (*Aen.* 3.434-40), and they make their offering clothed in “Phrygian vestments”<sup>101</sup> (*Aen.* 3.545). In his attempt to return to history’s memory, Aeneas goes back to Juno, goes back to the great mother of Troy, goes back yet further— back to the *antiquam . . . matrem*, “mother of old” (*Aen.* 3.96), and ahead to an eternal Roman fame. Before the dread duty of empire, before Pallas and Turnus and Dido, Aeneas enjoys his greatest embrace in the memory of his suffering. We may well remember – perhaps Vergil did himself – that, as Polybius<sup>102</sup> reports, Scipio Africanus quoted the *Iliad* during his victory at Carthage, weeping for his enemy, but fearing for his own country:

A day will come when sacred Troy shall perish,  
And Priam and his people shall be slain. (*Iliad.* 6.488-9)

The teary visions of history can transform the past. The images of burning Troy promise safe harbor; defeated Carthage foretells the ruin of Rome. Memory offers eternal life to the hopeless, and perpetual censure to the powerful.

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<sup>101</sup> The *Phyrgio... amictu* are only placed on after a preceding prayer to Pallas, strengthening the association of Juno with Cybele and the native Trojan religion.

<sup>102</sup> Fragment comes from Plutarch, in 38.22 of the *Histories*.



#### 4.2 Troia Soluta: Troy's Final Disappearance from History

When Troy was rediscovered in the modern era, the city was found to contain nine layers, suggesting that the cyclical destruction and rebuilding of the city, a contested outpost on the Hellespont, was a regular occurrence in antiquity<sup>103</sup>. Perhaps this is the reason why Homer did not describe the destruction of Troy in the *Iliad*, as his epic cycle emerges from the ongoing history of continuous warfare in the Aegean. Yet when Aeneas recounts Troy's fall in Book 2, Vergil emphasizes the final destruction of the city, even though Troy still existed in the Roman world, and benefited from its notoriety in the *Aeneid* during the period of Augustus.<sup>104</sup> In the *Aeneid*, the city becomes a vehicle through which Vergil can express a horrifying paradox of living death. As Aeneas recounts his memories of Troy's last night to Dido, he gives a grim and artful expression of a horrifying enigma, of being aware, alive, and hopeful in a moment of certain doom.

incipio super his: 'iuvenes, fortissima frustra  
pectora, si vobis audentem extrema cupido  
certa sequi, quae sit rebus fortuna videtis:  
excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis  
di quibus imperium hoc steterat; succurritis urbi  
incensae. moriamur et in media arma ruamus.  
**una salus victis nullam sperare salutem.**' (*Aen.* 2.348-54)

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<sup>103</sup> "On the site now proved to be the place where Homer's Troy stood, the excavations have revealed nine strata of earth and ruins, representing recognizably distinct periods in the history of the three cities that have there been built— first the prehistoric, before Homer's time ; then the Greek, the city of Priam; lastly, the Roman city. In the uppermost, or ninth, stratum were found a temple, theater, and other buildings of unmistakably Roman construction, with many inscriptions which show that the name Ilios is historic. Below this, in the eighth and seventh strata, are the remains of small houses of the Greek city, with evidences of fortifications of no great magnitude. In the sixth stratum is an acropolis, with many buildings and storehouses, strong fortifications, marked by towers and gates. Mycenaean vases, the painted archaic terra cottas that are not later than 700 B. C., found in this stratum determine its date to be that of the Trojan war, as told by Homer — that is, between 1500 and 1000 B. C. In the fifth, fourth, and third layers, period unknown, prehistoric objects occur." "Ruins of Ancient Troy" (461).

<sup>104</sup> "During this period the Hellenistic Temple of Athena was repaired, as were the Sanctuary and theater, and a new Bouleuterion and Odeion were built. The decoration of the new theater is particularly interesting in that it contained a relief of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome. The other reliefs belonging to the decorative program have not survived, but it seems likely that the Romulus and Remus relief belonged to a cycle chronicling the Trojan origins of Rome." Rose's "Troy and the Historical Imagination" (409).

*I [Aeneas] begin to speak: “Young men, you bravest souls — brave for nothing — if you wish to follow me, daring to our certain end, you can see what fortune really remains for us: every god has departed, on whose account this empire stood, and left behind their temples and altars; you come to the aid of a burning city. Let us die and rush into the midst of battle. **There is but one salvation for the doomed — not to hope for any salvation.** [emphasis added]*

In the moment of sure and impending catastrophe, the normal balancing of fears and hopes evaporates, and Aeneas experiences his helplessness as a liberated final commitment to decisive action. The use of *audentem* and *sperare salutem* echos 1.451-2, *sperare salutem ausus*, and also suggests a close relationship between the two passages. Aeneas first dared to hope again at the temple of Juno, reawakening something in him which had been dormant since that moment of shock in the falling Troy. In Carthage, Aeneas transforms the pain of remembrance into a tragic affirmation of his fate, accepting even the fall of Troy. Yet when he had actually faced his doom, Aeneas had spoken with a cutting self-awareness and stoic acceptance.

*Una salus victis nullam sperare salutem*: this epigrammatic statement challenges the reader. *Salus* has an array of meanings, and perhaps some of the confusion can be alleviated by weakening the objective *salutem* — “the only hope of salvation is not to hope for safety”<sup>105</sup>. This would suggest that there is a higher, greater *salus* the Trojans might find by facing their deaths without cowardly thoughts of safety. However, there are many different words Vergil could have used to draw out this distinction. To the contrary, he deliberately aimed for a difficult, apparently contradictory unity of expression. Just as with *pious*, Vergil exploits an abstract term which can adapt through the inversions of his narrative. *Salus*, especially *salus* in times of war, is not really *salus* any longer — Turnus, upon learning of Amata’s suicide, and also about to die himself, is

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<sup>105</sup> “The first *salus* means ‘salvation’, the second ‘survival’ and that figure of anaphora with change of meaning.” (Horsfall 293).

hailed by the messenger Saces as the *suprema salus* of his people (*Aen.* 12.653). *Salus* itself must transform to meet the challenges of fate.

If Aeneas had died with the city of Troy, as he wishes in his lament at *Aen.* 1.95, the *salus* epigram would have been fulfilled negatively. By not indulging any hope, his followers would have died free from fear, modeling the serenity, or Epicurean *ataraxia*, which characterizes a wise and just soul. *Salus* may come to mean death, but it is a proper kind of death. As Lucretius counsels, *nil igitur mors est ad nos*, “and so, death is nothing to us” (*DRN* 3.380). As any given worst-case scenario develops, to recognize even a nightmarish end as “nothing” expands and revalues our sense of *salus*. In this view of death as a form of *salus*, Troy becomes a case study in the vain ephemerality of human affairs, and its sagacious dead, who chose not to flee, icons of contentment and integrity.<sup>106</sup> The Christian concept of glory in martyrdom and of a death more glorious than life only completes a conceptual revaluation which had begun in Hellenistic thought.

But Aeneas’ actual fate of survival transcends the comforts of a palliative philosophy for the doomed. The Trojans will survive Troy, and their new sense of *salus* must incorporate the wholesale destruction of their cities, families, and basic assurance of personal security. Troy may be remembered as a kind of bitter curse from which future generations can proceed, in the sense in which Apollo assures Ascanius that *nec te Troia capit* (*Aen.* 9.644). While this kind of spiritual cleansing from the past may be possible for the young, the very fact that Troy still lives in Vergil’s poetic memory shows that has not been granted an easy exit from history.

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<sup>106</sup> Notice the close parallelism here with the standard philosophical problems of the Christian afterlife. Aeneas and his men could also choose to die because of the possibility of a heaven. A better, higher life after death is one of the strongest and most appealing revaluations of the Christian religion, and these themes are anticipated in both Epicurean and Stoic philosophy, though within a pagan context.

#### 4.2.1 The Council of the Gods in Book 10

Even late in the epic, when the narrative would seem to have shifted entirely towards the Italian civil war, the council of the gods meets — to once more discuss the Trojan war! Venus begins by expressing concern for *iterum nascentis Troiae*, “Troy being born again”, (*Aen.* 10.26-27). She then proceeds to “swear by the smoking ruins of burning Troy” (*Aen.* 10.45-6), casting the city as an object of religious devotion and poetically exaggerating how recently the city had fallen, bringing its smoking ruins back into the present. The developments of the preceding ten books seem to have made absolutely no impression on her, as she seems to have regressed back to the same retrospection Aeneas had fallen into in the early books. Venus now exhibits a mother’s memory, and briefly exhibits the same retrospection as Juno. After so many Vergilian portraits of Italy, she suggests that the Trojans should have simply rebuilt Troy upon its ashes (*Aen.* 10.59-60).

On the other side, *memor Iuno* still cannot accept the verdict of a war she *won*, and refuses to grant the Achaean-defeated Trojans any respite from a guilt for which they have handsomely paid.

nosne tibi fluxas Phrygiae res vertere fundo  
conamur? nos? an miseros qui Troas Achivis  
obiecit? quae causa fuit consurgere in arma  
Europamque Asiamque et foedera solvere furto?  
me duce Dardanius Spartam expugnavit adulter,  
aut ego tela dedi fovive Cupidine bella?  
tum decuit metuisse tuis: nunc sera querelis  
haud iustis adsurgis et inrita iurgia iactas.' (*Aen.* 10.90-95)

*Do I try to turn the shaky affairs of Troy from their foundation? Do I? Well, tell me, who turned over the wretched Trojans to the Greeks? What was the reason that Europe and Asia took up arms, and dissolved their alliance in treachery? Was I the leader when the Trojan adulterer attacked Sparta, did I grant him weapons, or foster war in his heart? Then would have been the time for your fear: now, too late, you raise disputes scarcely just, and bring back up meaningless arguments.*

Notably, Jupiter does not even attempt to correct this claim by Juno, which presents the Greek perspective lacking in Book 2. Several thousand lines after Aeneas' intimate retelling of the story of Troy at Dido's banquet, Juno offers a convincing response by simply digging a few steps further into her deep reserve of memory. In a certain sense, the conflict at Troy is more present in Book 10 than it is in Book 2. While Aeneas in Book 2 relates his personal account of the city's end, his tale of woe only serves to multiply his pains in Dido's arms. His personal memories can only "renew grief" (*Aen.* 2.2). Juno's historical rejoinder presents the Trojan state as ultimately corrupt and complicit in its own destruction, and offers a principled reason why it should not be reestablished. Juno's unfavorable account of Troy's history suddenly breaks the spell of sympathy for Troy that Vergil has crafted over nine books.

Behind all of her rage and apparent irrationality, Juno has adopted the perspective of a beneficent philosopher, who knows that the Trojans themselves would not flourish in a *nova Troia*. Horace, philosophizing in *Odes* 3.3, describes Juno's demand that Troy not return as *consiliantibus... divis*, "divine counsel" (*Odes* 3.3.16-17). Horace further elaborates Juno's opposition to the Trojans, claiming that a resurgent Troy would bring back the cursed wickedness of Paris, and that each time it would rise, Juno would again destroy it in the same patterned cycle (*Odes* 3.3.61-9). In this Augustan imagination of the mythic past, Troy has not proven itself in the history Juno cherishes. While Rome may trace its origin to the Trojan Aeneas, Rome also defines its inauguration of a new cycle of history through the final close of the Trojan drama. *A longus ... pontus*, "distant sea" (*Odes* 3.3.36-7) now separates Rome from Troy.

Aeneas also seems to finally grasp the disappearance of Troy in Book 10. The viciousness of his assaults on the enemy wash away his memory in the shock of fresh blood.

During Aeneas' *aristeia*, the captive Magus begs Aeneas for mercy, claiming the *victoria Teucrum*, "victory of the Trojans" (*Aen.* 10.528), does not require him to die. Magus' choice of the *Teucri* epithet reflects the futility of his plea. These are new Trojans, whose memories can now inspire horrors equal to their pain, and who, as Juno has reminded us, do not enter Italy in unblemished innocence. Juno seems to have correctly assessed the Trojans when Aeneas tells Lausus *fallit te ...pietas*, "[that his] devotion deceives [him]" (*Aen.* 10.812). The old devotion of Troy passes away, now recognized as a deception, as Lausus has fallen victim to the same circle of sacred lies stretching back to the Trojan horse (Section 2.2.4).

Skepticism of Aeneas' *pietas*, about to come into direct question in the concluding books of the epic, can be grounded in the original Greek perspective on the Trojan war that Juno provides. From Juno's perspective, and perhaps from that of a disapproving reader sympathetic to the Italians, these new Trojans are simply the wicked Trojans she has always known. Yet in Italy they now enjoy a new sense of purpose. Articulating a moral justification for killing Magus, Aeneas invokes the shade of his father and the interests of his son (*Aen.* 10.530-4). Across all the disconnected suffering Aeneas has known, he now sees his father, a Trojan, and his son, a Roman, in a single vision. In a new Roman *pietas*, Aeneas now fights for the future. Putting the same point more directly, Horace warns that those who would revive Troy are *nimum pii*, "too devoted" (*Odes.* 3.3.57). The past can still have a voice united with the future, but Juno and Aeneas finally agree that the self-defeating suffering of the Trojan experience cannot continue. Now it is for others to spill their blood in something more than a mere "victory of the Trojans", as the Aeneas who flew from battle at Troy is now a ruthless executioner.

Venus' late reference to a new Troy (*Aen.* 10.26-27) is particularly wrong because the Trojans have failed dramatically every time they attempt to directly resurrect Troy. Aeneas

names his misguided settlement at Crete Pergamum (*Aen.* 3.133), and there the Trojans suffer a deadly plague. When the Trojans are stalled in Sicily after leaving Carthage in Book 5, Juno dispatches Iris, and she urges the Trojan woman to burn the ships so that the expedition must end at Sicily, where Aeneas had stopped to conduct funeral games for Anchises (*Aen.* 5.604-663). The games had been a rare moment of joyful spontaneity in the *Aeneid*'s universe of grim necessity, but then Iris, pretending to be the aged matron Beroe, quickly ruins the festivities. Addressing the "ancestral gods (*penates*), stolen from the enemy" (*Aen.* 5.632), she asks if "no walls will ever be named for Troy, if [she] will never again see the Xanthus and Simois, the rivers of Hector" (*Aen.* 5.633-4). Even as the youths, about to enter their new homeland, celebrate their elder Anchises, some segment of Troy's aged population cannot conceive of a world without Troy, and so uncritically accepts Juno's dubious appeal for the cultural conservation of a fallen city.

After Ascanius sees the fleet burning, and Jupiter intercedes with a rainstorm to put out the fire (*Aen.* 5.664-99), Aeneas realizes that some of Troy cannot continue on to Italy, and, after taking counsel from Nautes and the spirit of his father, he leaves behind those "spirits not requiring great renown" (*Aen.* 5.751) with the local Trojan king Acestes. Haunted by his vision of Anchises, and distraught at the prospect of leaving behind many of his people, Aeneas humbly pays reverence to the Trojan Lar (*Aen.* 5.743-5). This will be his final moment of Trojan community, and his earlier promises to Anchises now ring hollow: in fleeing the city, Aeneas had told his reluctant father there will be "one shared danger, and a single salvation (*salus*) for us both" (*Aen.* 2.709-10). This statement has proven to be quite incorrect, as Aeneas embarks to fulfill a destiny entirely unlike anything he shared with his father or with the disappearing community of Troy as a whole. His country's gods fail and die as he says his final prayers with

them in Sicily, though his absent mother Venus does not seem to have entirely registered this development in her son.

#### 4.2.2 The Death of Palinurus

The conclusion of Book 5 also contains one of the strangest and most unsettling episodes of the epic, which also serves to cleanse the memory of Troy. Palinurus, Aeneas' navigator, dies on the western coast of Italy, and his death opens the threshold to Italy for the surviving Trojans. The Trojans approach *Libyco cursu*, "on the Libyan course" (*Aen.* 6.338), towards the same area of the sea where a storm had blown them back to Carthage in Book 1. Passing this point will allow them to finally leave behind Troy's troubled history, and Venus intercedes with Neptune to ensure their safe clearance (*Aen.* 5.779-826). Neptune demands *unum pro multis dabitur caput*, "that one life will be offered on account of many" (*Aen.* 5.815). This is the debt of history which must be paid before Troy can be forgotten in the Roman visions of Anchises in Book 6. The attempts to recreate Troy have failed because Troy no longer exists as a society, but only as a band of survivors. A dissolved state, *soluta*, cannot be revived, but it can be scavenged and reintroduced to the historical landscape by more lasting forces, such as the god Neptune.

Neptune is the appropriate god for this task, as it requires that Palinurus, the precise *gubernator*, a master of the sea, succumb to an oceanic flood of watery sleep and surrendering forgetfulness. The rational protestations of the sacrificial victim must be overcome by a deep undertow of metaphysical inevitability. Neptune dispatches Somnus to deal death, bringing sleep to Palinurus, though he is *insonti*, "innocent" (*Aen.* 5.841). Somnus then takes the appearance of the Trojan Phorbas, who lures him gently asleep with soothing promises, *loquelas* (*Aen.* 5.842), diminutive bits of comforting speech, offering in pleasant alliteration *pro te tua munera inibo*, "I will assume your labors on your behalf" (*Aen.* 5.846). Palinurus' response is skeptical, and he



will not so easily be seduced by Sleep, *caeli totiens deceptus fraude sereni*, “having been so often betrayed by the fakery of a calm sky” (*Aen.* 5.851). Palinurus attempts to retain mastery of his ship through the sheer obstinacy of waking awareness, refusing to allow the natural process of sleep to overtake him.

This fear of sleep might make sense for Palinurus as the captain of the ship, but it also evokes a shared Trojan experience — the Greeks sailed from Tenedos to sack Troy *tacitae per amica silentia lunae*, “beneath the pleasing quiet of a silent moon” (*Aen.* 2.255), and they invaded a city *somno vinoque sepultam* “buried in sleep and wine” (*Aen.* 2.265). Aeneas first learns of his city’s doom not in active confrontation on the battlefield, but from Hector, *in somnis... ante oculos*, “before [his] eyes in a dream” (*Aen.* 2.270). The parasympathetic realm of wine, dreams, and rest has been lethal to the Trojans, and Palinurus’ vigilance upholds the legacy of these memories. The fall of Troy, marked by the inversion of day and night, has left its survivors in a state of perpetual wakefulness, preparing them for their evolution into the *Wachsein* state of Roman *Zivilisation*. In defiance, Palinurus grasps the rudder, but Neptune’s watery powers will not relent, as Phorbas anoints him with “a branch dripping in Lethe’s dew, and soporific in Stygian power” (*Aen.* 5.852-856). Palinurus is not simply to die, but to die in forgetting and in sleeping, as Vergil makes the association of water, sleep, and death explicit. Palinurus cannot resist, and he falls overboard “with a part of the ship ripped away, and with the rudder” (*Aen.* 5.857-858). The fleet goes on, not hearing his cries, and the sacrifice has been successfully performed “by the promise of father Neptune” (*Aen.* 5.863).

Aeneas then notes that the ship is off course, and delivers a lament which further affirms the Trojan ethos of constant watchfulness. Though Palinurus refused to trust in the promise of

peaceful waters, the Trojan leader assumes that a lack of attentiveness must be the true failure underlying his capitulation to the sea.

‘o nimium caelo et pelago confise sereno,  
nudus in ignota, Palinure, iacebis harena.’ (*Aen.* 5.870-1)

*‘O, Palinurus, you who trusted too much in placid sea and sky, you will lie naked on an unknown shore.’*

When Aeneas encounters Palinurus in the underworld he notes that Apollo promised him that the captain would achieve a safe passage, and asks him if the god, “never before found to be false,” has failed him “in this one reply” (*Aen.* 6.343-346). Apollo, the divine representation of clear perception, contrasts with Neptune, the master of the tumultuous mysteries of the sea. Palinurus absolves Apollo of any inaccuracy by expanding Vergil’s original account. He does not drown, but suffers the *Notus... violentus*, “the violent sound winds” driving him “for three days” (*Aen.* 6.355-356). This recalls the other appearance of Palinurus in Book 3,

ipse diem noctemque negat discernere caelo  
nec meminisse viae media Palinurus in unda.  
tris adeo incertos caeca caligine soles  
erramus pelago, totidem sine sidere noctes. (*Aen.* 3.201-204)

*Palinurus himself, unable to distinguish night from day in the sky, forgets the route in the middle of the sea. We wander so greatly on the sea, in the blind fog, for three uncertain suns, and for so many nights without stars.*

The *gubernator* has before been lost within Neptune’s confused mists, which now directly attack him. The disarming confusion between night and day returns in the odd presentation of his death, an event which seems indiscernible, swallowed into the recesses of magic and mystery.

Neptune’s liquid assault can only be related in fractured accounts, as Palinurus, Aeneas, and Vergil himself all supply partial and differing aspects of the narrative across two different books, on sea and in the underworld. The Trojans have known three days of mystique at sea before, and Apollo’s revelation will shine for Palinurus, but not as expected. He will meet the shores of Italy,

but only to encounter a “a cruel tribe... ignorantly believing [him] to be a prize” (*Aen.* 6.358-61). To the defeated Palinurus, Aeneas is now *invicte*, “the unconquered one” (*Aen.* 6.365), and he asks that he might bury him, as he is forbidden proper entrance to Hades as he lies exposed on the shore. Aeneas assures him that neighboring peoples will bury him, and “the place will hold the eternal name of Palinurus” (*Aen.* 6.381). This miniature episode functions as a mimesis of the Trojan destiny as a whole — Troy will wash away into the dreamy oblivion of mythological tales, but some of the Trojans’ names will live on in Italy. The helmsman reacts to his destiny,

his dictis curae emotae pulsusque parumper  
corde dolor tristi; gaudet cognomine terra (*Aen.* 6.382-3)

*When these words had been spoken, his cares were dispelled, and his grief was driven from his sad heart — for a brief time. He delights in the land’s name.*

The adverb *parumper* undermines Aeneas’ attempt at consolation. The promise of a *locus aeternus* provides only brief respite. Perhaps the promise means so little because Palinurus has just experienced the great erosion of time in the loss of Troy. His Capo Palinuro may well become the *ignota harena*, “unknown shore”, which Aeneas laments at *Aen.* 5.871. Surely nothing can be certain to last upon the sea. Yet the captain serves a purpose beyond his own personal glory. Palinurus was the son of Iasus, and Macrobius speculates (*Saturnalia* 5.15.12) that he may be the brother of Iapyx, the surgeon who heals Aeneas before the final duel with Turnus (*Aen.* 12.383-467). Servius, commenting on *Aen.* 12.391. supports the notion that the line of Iasus derives its name from the verb ἰάομαι — “to heal”. While the origin of Palinurus’ name is less clear<sup>107</sup>, he is, like his brother, a healer. *Unum pro multis* — having dispatched with his

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<sup>107</sup> Ambrose suggests that he should be associated with the returning wind of homecoming, though it may also be a generic name for a captain (456).

services, the many people of Troy now require his life as an offering<sup>108</sup> to the god of the sea. He disappears in dark scenes of uncomprehending mobs, and his name will not be glorious, yet he washes away horrors deep in Trojan memory. For Neptune<sup>109</sup> once left Priam dead and nameless in a city he had ruled.

Neptunus muros magnoque emota tridenti  
fundamenta quatit totamque a sedibus urbem  
eruit (*Aen.* 2.610-2)

*Neptune shakes the walls and foundations of Troy with his great trident, and rips out the entire city by its foundations.*

iacet ingens litore truncus,  
avulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus (*Aen.* 2.557-8)

*A great corpse lies upon the shore, a head torn from its shoulders, and a body without a name.*

Troy will dissolve away, never to rise again, for preservation is merely the confirmation of destruction.

#### *4.3 Graecia Voluta: Pallas Athena's Turning Loom*

Ruthlessness and amnesia, however, are not a reasonable foundation for a state, and certainly not one which successfully overcomes a wretched past. Without some greater vision of civilization, the forgetful victim simply becomes an even worse aggressor, and Juno's harsh judgment of Troy would be entirely warranted. This would not be a cycle of living history, but a miserable circle of dead dysfunction. Trading outrage for outrage, the excesses of the Italian civil war would form a perpetual feedback loop through Roman history. There would be substitutions of victor and victim, but no renewal in an emerging age of Roman peace. Some true *salus*,

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<sup>108</sup> For insight into the Christian overtones of this formulation, see Martinez's note at 598-99 in *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio*. Readers of Dante have long identified Palinurus with Manfred, the king of Sicily, who dies under parallel circumstances.

<sup>109</sup> Troy also receives the epithet *Neptunia Troia* at *Aen.* 3.3, as Aeneas and his band sail away from a city presumably dissolved into the sea.

withstanding the adaptations of experience, must abide. The Sybil of Cumae gives a surprising indication of where Aeneas' true salvation before his journey to the underworld:

tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito,  
qua tua te Fortuna sinet. **via prima salutis**  
**(quod minime reris) Graia pandetur ab urbe.**' (*Aen.* 6.95-97)

*Do not yield to these evils, but proceed against them all the more boldly, as much as your fortune allows you. And, what you would barely even imagine, the first way of salvation will appear from a Greek city.* [emphasis added]

The *salus* of the Trojans will come from the revaluation of their former Greek enemies into allies. While this would be surprising to Aeneas, it would seem natural to the Roman audience. The cultural achievement of Greece was a crucial aspect of Roman social life, and Greek literature had a plain influence on Vergil's literary ambitions. Vergil does not attempt to disguise his debt to Homer, but actively emphasizes it in emphatic phrasing and direct allusion. The debt does not diminish Vergil, but highlights his novelty, as he enriches the Homeric psyche in his awareness of history. As Otis remarks, "[Vergil] is constantly conscious of himself inside his characters; he thinks through them and for them" (Otis 49). The strong presence of Vergil's own unifying voice emphasizes the scope of his poetic achievement — as Parry might phrase it, the Roman world is full of voices which could never be unified in Homer's style. Italy is truly the *maior opus* (*Aen.* 7.45).

By adapting Homer to a new Roman purpose, Vergil revalues the epic genre for a new historical form of awareness. While Homer's world might hold universal interest, it does not project itself into history so that future admirers might directly participate in the epic. The Homeric ring firmly closes — Hector is buried, the suitors are dispatched, and balance is restored. The Vergilian ring, on the other hand, demands continuous repetition in history— some Aeneas among the Latins will surely return in Gaul and lay siege to Rome. Homer remains in the

*Dasein* of Greek experience; Vergil ascends to the *Wachsein* of Roman self-awareness, which has awoken to its own dreams as historical models. It is not an exaggeration to claim that Vergil invented the historical consciousness as we now understand it, as an awareness of the past which frames the aspirations of the future.

But while Vergil has expanded upon the work of Homer, some of Homer's Greeks persist in this new cycle. While Homer's gods have been renamed in the Roman pantheon, Vergil continues to use the Greek epithet Παλλάς to refer to Athena. Known as Minerva<sup>110</sup> to the Romans, Pallas Athena has a close association with Athens, the city that bears her name and rivals Rome in historical stature. A guardian of the Greeks, a master of warfare, and an injured party in the judgement of Paris, she naturally sides with the Greeks at Troy, closely aiding their efforts throughout the *Iliad*. Sinon, pretending to be an abandoned Greek who has turned on his people, convinces the Trojans to take the Greek horse within their city by telling them it was left as an offering to Pallas Athena. The Trojans can greatly damage the Greeks by receiving the gift and then destroying it, as "every hope (*spes*) of the Greeks and trust (*fiducia*) in undertaking the war always stood in the aid of Pallas" (*Aen.* 2.162-3).

Within Vergil's world, Pallas Athena is clearly the most Greek of the gods. Yet, in so associating the Greeks with Pallas, Vergil also leaves open the possibility of Roman revaluation of Greek culture, a culture *voluta*, turned over in the new Roman world. For the Trojans also worship Pallas in spite of her alignment with the Greeks in the war. The wise Trojan Nautes "was taught by Pallas, daughter of Triton" (*Aen.* 5.704-8). Within Troy itself resides Athena's Palladium, thus described in Apollodorus:

They say that when Athena was born she was brought up by Triton, who had a daughter Pallas; and that both girls practiced the arts of war, but that once upon a time they fell out

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<sup>110</sup> I will continue to refer to the goddess as Pallas Athena in this section to emphasize her connection with the Greeks.

(εις φιλονεικίαν); and when Pallas was about to strike a blow, Zeus in fear interposed the aegis, and Pallas, being startled, looked up, and so fell wounded by Athena. And being exceedingly grieved for her, Athena made a wooden image in her likeness, and wrapped the aegis, which she had feared, about the breast of it, and set it up beside Zeus and honored it. But afterwards Electra, at the time of her violation, took refuge at the image, and Zeus threw the Palladium along with Ate into the Ilian country; and Ilus built a temple for it, and honored it. (*Biblioteca* 3.12.3)

As Sinon relates, Odysseus and Diomedes stole the Palladium and polluted the statue of the goddess with bloodied hands, so that the Greeks lost her favor and the “mind of the goddess is turned away” (*Aen.* 2.164-170)<sup>111</sup>. The Greeks may have won the war, but they have done so only by committing acts of impiety against their own patron, rejecting their own goddess. The harsh consequences of victory almost equal that of defeat. Agamemnon faces the rage and treachery of his wife, and is murdered upon his homecoming. Odysseus’ struggles to return home and reestablish his household constitute an entire epic unto itself. And Vergil mentions an instance of Pallas Athena’s direct retribution against the Greeks in Book 1, when Juno complains that her powers have diminished in comparison to those of the other gods. “Was not Pallas able to burn the Greek fleet and submerge it beneath the sea, on account of the outrage and crimes of just one Ajax?” (*Aen.* 1.40-1)

In Book 11, when the Latins seek the aid of Diomedes, who has retired to Apulia in the colonial settlement of *magna Graecia*, he gives a definite and conclusive retrospective on the Trojan war. He will not aid the Latins, as they wage *ignota bella*, “ignorant wars” (*Aen.* 11.254), not knowing the true fate of the Greeks in their apparent victory. Diomedes has learned in the fullness of time that the Trojan war was a moral abomination, and those who assaulted Troy “have undergone horrible sufferings (*infanda supplicia*)” and “paid every penalty for our

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<sup>111</sup> Though Vergil merely alludes to these events, they are well documented in Greek literature, as the impiety of the Greeks towards their former benefactor Pallas Athena becomes a theme in their post-war tragedies, including Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and Homer’s *Odyssey*. Horsfall’s commentary on Book 2 describes this literature (322).

outrages (*scelerum*)” (*Aen.* 11.257-8). Athena animated the Greeks in victory, and her cleverness was manifest in the stratagem of the horse. Yet now Diomedes looks back on this victory with a deeper wisdom of ethical commentary. Aeneas, besides being a great warrior, lives up to the poet’s moral advertisements. Both he and Hector were “distinguished in courage and in weaponry”, but Aeneas was “first in his *pietas*” (*Aen.* 11.291-2). The same Greek mind which once destroyed Troy now perceives the proof of the enemy’s virtue. When Anchises makes an implicit comparison of Greek *artes* with Roman *imperium*, counseling Aeneas to leave astronomy, oratory, and statuary art to “others” (*Aen.* 6.847-853), he also expresses this turn from the old Greek wisdom of craft towards the new Greco-Roman wisdom of human order and justice.

Besides punishing the Greeks, Pallas Athena now quietly supports Aeneas. Anchises joyfully notes that “a temple of Minerva upon a citadel” (*Aen.* 3.351) greets the Trojans in their first contact with the Italian shore. Athena’s martial competence has crossed the Adriatic, and now supports the Roman cause. The favor of Pallas especially resides in the city which will be Aeneas’ *via salutis*. The river Tiber, personified as a deity, explains to Aeneas in a dream,

Arcades his oris, genus a **Pallante** profectum,  
qui regem Evandrum comites, qui signa secuti,  
delegere locum et posuere in montibus urbem  
**Pallantis** proavi de nomine **Pallanteum** (*Aen.* 8.51-4)

*Arcadians chose a place on these shores, a tribe emerging from Pallas, who followed King Evander and his standards as friend, and established Pallanteum, a city in the hills, named from their ancestor Pallas. [emphasis added]*

The triple invocation of the name signifies its importance as an etymological construction, *de nomine*. However, Saturn gave the city its laws, and it worships Hercules, not Athena. Moreover,



this Pallas is a mortal ancestor not directly associated with Athena.<sup>112</sup> Yet, as Apollodorus relates in his account of the Palladium, Athena assumed the name of Pallas after accidentally killing her. The contest between the two had occurred εἰς φιλονεικίαν, “in the love of battle”, a battle in which Athena overstepped her bounds. In compensation, Pallas became indistinguishable from Athena herself, so that Athena may atone for her error and recognize the virtue of her sparring partner. Following this story, the name of Pallas signifies Athena’s capacity to commit injustice, however accidental, as well as her capacity to redeem herself by advocating for her victims. In a parallel pattern, it cannot be coincidental that Pallanteum is the “first path of salvation”. The goddess who enabled the Greek crimes at Troy now quietly insinuates herself in the Greek aid Aeneas now enjoys.

The Greeks may be historical enemies of the Trojans and future enemies of Rome, but these wars, like Pallas’ death, have been accidental mistakes between two peoples who love the contest, and can respect the virtue of their opponent. In the final judgement, the names of Greece and Rome will join like those of Pallas and Athena. Athenian rationality can empower the Greeks to redeem their errors. Apollo’s insight has directed Evander toward Pallanteum (*Aen.* 8.336), and he also has directed the Trojans toward the establishment of a Roman state. Greek and Roman can also meet in Apollo, a god whose name does not change across the two pantheons. The curse of Athena has not been visited upon these Greeks, as the Arcadians are an ancient people who never outraged the gods. Pallenteum stands on the future site of Rome, and Livy tells the story of Evander so that an “l” drops, and it becomes the Palatine hill (*AUC* 1.5). A rebirth of Pallas Athena in Italy is also suggested by the tradition of Aeneas bringing the Palladium to Rome, which Ovid reports is now under the custody of Vesta (*Fasti* 4.433). A just

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<sup>112</sup> Gransden’s Book 8 commentary states “The mother-city of Pallanteum in Arcadia was named after Pallas, son of Lycaon, Evander’s grandfather” (Gransden 86).

Saturn meets an evolved Athena in this serendipitous Arcadian moment, illuminated by the light of Apollo.

Adding to this heavy etymological symbolism, Pallas is also the name of Evander's son, his "hope and solace" (*Aen.* 8.514), who immediately takes his place as Aeneas' companion, opposite Achates (*Aen.* 8.466). Evander sends Pallas into battle with a prayer to Jupiter for his safety (*Aen.* 8.573-77), a pitiable foreshadowing of his death at the hands of Turnus, who steals his sword belt as a prize (*Aen.* 10.426-509). At the end of the poem, it is the memory of Pallas and the sight of his sword belt which induces Aeneas to slay Turnus.

balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis  
**Pallantis** pueri, victum quem vulnere Turnus  
straverat atque umeris inimicum insigne gerebat.  
ille, oculis postquam saevi monimenta doloris  
exuviasque hausit, furiis accensus et ira  
terribilis: 'tunc hinc spoliis indute meorum  
eripiare mihi? **Pallas** te hoc vulnere, **Pallas**  
immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.' (*Aen.* 12.942-9)

*The sword-belt of the boy **Pallas** glowed in its familiar decoration, whom Turnus had laid low with a wound, and was now bearing his enemy's symbol on his shoulder. Aeneas, after he took in the trophy, a reminder of his wretched woe, said, burning with anger and terrible in his grief, "Shall you be saved from your doom, while you boast the trophies of my people? **Pallas** sacrifices you with this wound, and **Pallas** takes a penalty from your defiled blood" [emphasis added].*

As at *Aen.* 8.51, in Aeneas' dream of Tiberinus, the name of Pallas is repeated three times.

Pallenteum and its people made no superficial impression on Aeneas, as his native son seems to possess him and perform a legal execution of Turnus<sup>113</sup>. The apparent difficulties of this final scene can be resolved if we read Pallas, son of Evander, in close association with Pallas Athena.

Athena persuades Zeus in Book 22 of the *Iliad* that Hector should not be allowed to flee from

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<sup>113</sup> Korenjak's "Pallas, Athene Und Der Schluß Der 'Aeneis'" heavily informs my interpretation of Pallas and the final scene. She describes this possession of Aeneas by Pallas as "daemonische Energie", "Pallas in ihm und durch ihn den toedlichen Streich fuehrt" (Korenjack 338).

Achilles, and helps restore peace in Ithaca at the conclusion of the *Odyssey*, following the bloody murder of the suitors. The epic persona of Athena symbolizes both pitiless execution and the potential for the establishment of peace in its aftermath, both of which lie implicit in Vergil's abrupt ending. The Homeric Athena also takes the form of mortals at these junctures, appearing as Mentor in the denouement of the *Odyssey* and Deiphobus before Hector's death in the *Iliad* (Korenjack Ftnt 11). At the conclusion of the *Aeneid*, the triple mention of Pallas' name in 12.942-9, echoing the triple etymology in 8.51-4, suggests the evocation of Pallas as a divinity. Such a repetition also occurs at the conclusion of the *Odyssey* (24.545-7) (Korenjack 339).

Athena's persona captures the moral revaluations of the Greeks within the epic ring. By emphasizing the Trojan horse, Sinon, and the deceitfulness of the Greek attack in Book 2, Vergil presents the Greeks as having violated Athena's realm even as they are supported by her. Her practical intelligence, capable of ingenious technical solutions, can also enable a violence which destroys the intricate balance of her schemes. Athena is also closely associated with the art of weaving, and as she weaves the Greeks into Troy, the loom becomes confused and entangled. First, they only gain entry by using her divinity as a part of their deception, as Sinon claims that the Greeks should burn the horse to offend Athena. Yet, in a sudden turn of events, Athena *actually does* come to turn against the Greeks, based on their sacrilegious and self-indulgent behavior within the city. When the Greeks abuse the victory she granted them, another Athena slowly reveals herself in their return. Her scheming craft becomes the quiet curse and ruin of her violators. In contrast to the strong individual personality of willful Juno, Pallas Athena is only quietly suggested in the *Aeneid* through her human analogues, through whom she realizes a justice subtly woven into the world.

Also unlike Juno, Pallas Athena herself does not obsessively remember the insults she suffers, but rather quickly and spontaneously reacts to them so that justice might be restored. Athena's aid becomes a cold hostility when her tactical gifts have been exploited beyond their just measure, and she quickly transfers her loyalty to the injured party. To phrase this transformation in the appropriate vocabulary of Greek philosophy, Athena's τέχνη, "craft", conceals her φρόνησις, "practical wisdom", which limits the domain of technical manipulation. The horse cannot be used to desecrate her temple. Mortals can quickly find themselves in her bad or good graces depending on their conformity to wisdom, though her shifting attitudes may not be immediately obvious.

The Trojan side also tests Athena's limits as Troy falls. Coroebus was a Greek, the son of Mygdon, and came to Troy as a contender for Cassandra's hand in marriage, offering his aid in the war (*Aen.* 2.341-44). He is a member of the band which Aeneas roused to mount a final resistance in the *una salus... non sperare salutem* speech. The group encounters Androgeos, a Greek who mistakes Aeneas and his comrades for friendly forces, and they slaughter him and his retinue (*Aen.* 2.370-85). Coroebus then speaks:

"o socii, qua prima' inquit 'Fortuna salutis  
monstrat iter, quaque ostendit se dextra, sequamur:  
mutemus clipeos Danaumque insignia nobis  
aptemus. dolus an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?  
arma dabunt ipsi.' (*Aen.* 2.387-91)

*"O comrades, let us follow along where Fortune first shows a path of salvation, and where she reveals a welcoming hand: let us change our shields and take the signs of the Greeks as our own. Trickery or courage, who really questions such things before an enemy? They themselves will supply the arms."*

The strong irony of claiming that there is an *iter salutis* after Aeneas has ruled out any hope of *salus* does not bode well for the mission (*Aen.* 2.354). Coroebus cannot bear the sight of Cassandra being dragged into the temple of Athena (*Aen.* 2.404), but when the Trojans attack,

they meet resistance from their own men, who now think them Greeks (*Aen.* 4.411). Yet the actual Greeks know their true identity from their actions, and they also oppose them *ereptae virginis ira*, “in rage at the stolen girl [Cassandra]” (*Aen.* 2.413). The confusion of the scene is compared to the flux of winds from all different directions (*Aen.* 2.416-9). Finally, even those they have fooled recognize *ora sono discordia*, “faces not matching their sounds” (*Aen.* 2.423). After the group is slaughtered, Vergil lists the dead, emphasizing that Coroebus, the author of the scheme, died first, *primus Coroebus* (*Aen.* 2.424). Finally, Panthus, a priest of Apollo, dies, unguarded by “devotion (*pietas*) [and] the band of Apollo” (*Aen.* 2.430).

Coroebus’ apparent moral indifference between *dolus an virtus*, “trickery or courage”, meets a thorough refutation. Vergil does not intend to be simply moralistic, though the moral point is certainly present. Coroebus is, after all, a Greek, and is subject to the same crude manipulations as his countryman. While his scheme’s failure carries an implicit criticism of the Greek invaders, there is clearly little moral condemnation to be assigned to the Trojan side in the desperation of a falling city. The more profound point lies in the mutable allegiances of Athena, the architect of Troy’s destruction as well as a patron of its eventual Roman salvation. Athena’s wisdom has an acute sensitivity to temporal circumstances. A Trojan horse might work brilliantly in one instance, but be a miserable failure in another, particularly when its victims have been alerted to the possibility of such deception from earlier historical exempla.<sup>114</sup> As Coroebus unsuccessfully attempts to devise a scheme in imitation of the Greeks, he is not guided by Athena’s sense of appropriate timing. *Doli* only work at moments, while *virtutes* gain Athena’s enduring loyalty. At the same moment, the Greeks commit the crime which will, in the fullness of history, turn Athena’s favor against them and towards Rome. The worst degradation

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<sup>114</sup> There is a nice analogy to computer data breaches here, which are also sensitive to the time a victim has to adapt. An unpatched breach is a “zero-day exploit”.

of Troy becomes the doom of Greece, one tragic cycle ending and another beginning, and both following Pallas Athena towards a new Roman understanding.

While a general hostility towards philosophy may have characterized his compatriots, Vergil enters the philosophical dialogue as a distinctively Roman realist. Sinon and Coroebus may have varying degrees of success in deception, but there remains a basic constancy to reality which can never be entirely defeated. Nobody can defraud history, and so history, a landscape that was still dim to the Greek theoreticians, has become the strongest test of conceptual validity. Pallas Athena has designated a subtle boundary between constructive craft and self-destructive trickery, and the old tricks and phantasms of the Homeric world will not overcome the Roman, who is now the one blessed by Athenian discernment. The stranger Achaemenides, another Greek with a sob story, really is simply a simple man devastated by the vainglorious excesses of Odysseus, and is accepted onboard as a “worthy suppliant” (*Aen.* 3.667) in Sicily. Fellow Trojan exile Helenus warns Aeneas to avoid sailing through Scylla and Charybdis (*Aen.* 3.420-432). Circe’s magical world is observed from a distance, as a kind of circus curiosity, as the Trojans sail towards their final Italian destination (*Aen.* 7.5-24). Aeneas has no need to seek out and conquer the strange and fantastic — his world is already strange and fantastic in its own right, and if Athena’s spirit still animates Odysseus’ route, it now expresses caution and strips away false pretensions of glory. Specific proofs and tests are no longer the province of heroism, which aims at a more general and enduring validation. Aeneas’ project is global, and global principles cannot be induced from niche exploration and situational cunning.

Yet Pallas Athena will surely again deceive any reader content to uncritically celebrate Aeneas’ triumph. She occupies two personae, and kills truths in their moment of revelation. To

adapt Heraclitus, Athena loves to hide herself,<sup>115</sup> and some of her slippery duality may also reside in Aeneas. The panoply of Athena’s associations converges in a single concluding moment. Aeneas, a man driven to a righteous anger, kills Turnus. Pallas, a youth demanding vengeance from the grave, kills Turnus. Pallas Athena, establishing a new Roman standard of justice in her practical wisdom, kills Turnus. Remember the confusion of Coroebus at the temple of Pallas Athena, remember the crimes of Ajax — in that moment the world turned over, in that moment the seeds of this moment were sown. And in this moment — has Aeneas gone too far — where does the goddess now flee? Will the House of Atreus now reside on the Pal(1)atine?<sup>116</sup>

#### 4.4 *Italia Condita: Roman Foundation, Italian Soil*

##### 4.4.1 A Troy of the Spirit

Italy was the center of Vergil’s world, yet it was *terra incognita* for Aeneas and the Trojans, an abstract geographic point on which to project their own desires. After Aeneas visits the Trojans Helenus and Andromache at their settlement of “small Troy” in Epirus (*Aen.* 3.349), he articulates his dream for Italy in his farewell:

si quando Thybrim vicinaque Thybridis arva  
intraro gentique meae data moenia cernam,  
cognatas urbes olim populosque propinquos,  
Epiro Hesperiam (quibus idem Dardanus auctor  
atque idem casus), unam faciemus utramque  
**Troiam animis:** maneat nostros ea cura nepotes. (*Aen.* 3.500-505)

*If I ever enter the Tiber, and the fields neighboring it, and come to know the walls granted for my people, then one day shall we make one and the same these kindred cities and neighboring peoples, Hesperia and Epirus (for the same Dardanus was the author of both lines) — it will be a **Troy in our spirits**. This matter will remain for our descendants. [emphasis added]*

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<sup>115</sup> φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, Heraclitus DK Fragment 123.

<sup>116</sup> See Appendix E-5 for an illustration of how Pallas Athena’s divinity cycles in its allegiance.

Civilization is no longer a matter of direct physical proximity and unbroken lineages, but of the spirit (*animus*) transcending national boundaries. The sentiment is at once sublime and strongly emotional. Aeneas' experiences in history have inspired him to conceive of a new kind of human community, yet he still has not seen the soil on which it will be founded. As he articulates a profound new philosophy, he leaves behind yet another pair of dear Trojan souls. How appropriate that soon his comrade Achates first beholds Italy "in a joyful shout":

Iamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis  
cum procul obscuros collis humilemque videmus  
Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates,  
Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant (*Aen.* 3.521-4)

*And now, as Aurora was glowing in the reddened sky, we see from a distance the hidden hills and Italy lying low. Achates first shouts out "Italy!", and our comrades greet Italy in a joyful shout.*

The triple repetition of the name *Italia* unites the sentimental reflection of Aeneas at "new Troy" with the immediate reality of his new Italian homeland. Intimate memory and vague hope join together, the tensions resolve in triple repetition, and the love they have left adopts a new home. In Italy, Aeneas can found a new city with the deliberate intention of reuniting spirits cast out upon the world.

Yet, when he finally arrives at in his new homeland, Aeneas does not feel a deep resonance with the Latins, and allies with the Greek colonists. As he sacrifices to the gods before the final confrontation with Turnus, he still seeks only a distant confederation with his enemies. "Let Latinus retain his weapons, and his established power", he prays, while "the Trojans will build my walls" in an independent state. Lavinia, the presumptive object of his love, will merely "lend her name to the city" (*Aen.* 12.192-4). Judging by Aeneas' words and actions, the Trojans could have merged with the Carthaginians, but will remain indifferent neighbors to the Italians. Aeneas does not seem ready to build an empire out of Italy.



Vergil himself was a foreigner at Rome, and seemed to regard the new world city with a sense of ambivalence. Like Aeneas, his imagination of *Roma aeterna* was grand, but his personal commitment to the city was not overwhelming. The national poet of Rome left behind the following epitaph:

Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc  
Parthenope; cecini pascua rura duces <sup>117</sup>

*Mantua bore me, Calabria took me back, and now Parthenope holds me. I sang of open fields, farms and leaders.*

Like that of his hero Aeneas, Vergil's life lacked a central geographic focal point, and his epitaph spreads him out all over the Italian peninsula except in the Roman city where we would most expect him. While this does not indicate any particular antipathy towards Rome, it does suggest that Vergil's concept of the great imperial city includes the experiences of those lesser cities it subsumed into its orbit over centuries of warfare<sup>118</sup>. Though the Italian cities lay the closest to Rome, they often did not enjoy any benefit of geographic and cultural proximity to the capital, as the republic trained its armies primarily through its ceaseless conflicts with its Italian neighbors. If Rome's "foreign policy" encouraged the revaluation of genuinely foreign attitudes into new Roman cultural products, its "domestic policy" in Italy was a much more frustrating affair, more characterized by lingering, unresolved enmity than fluid cultural exchange.

#### 4.4.2 The Social Wars

Two generations before Augustus, Italy had experienced the Social Wars, a series of conflicts between Rome and its Italian allies. The allies demanded the rights of citizenship after decades of fighting in Rome's wars, and Rome did not respond with magnanimous recognition of their contributions. In spite of the global range of Roman *imperium* following the Punic wars,

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<sup>117</sup> "Virgil, epitaph of", *The Virgil Encyclopedia*.

<sup>118</sup> Toll's "Making Roman-ness and the *Aeneid*" articulates this viewpoint.

provincial disputes remained a persistent theme of Roman life. The aggression of Rome inspired both the fear and envy of its neighbors, whose ambitions could be met harshly, or forestalled by greater incorporation into the Roman system. As in the Italian second half of the *Aeneid*, the moments of the greatest cruelty between neighbors were often closely juxtaposed with moments of mutual recognition and shared identification.

During the Social Wars, the rebels against the Roman state established their capital at the city of Corfinium, today less than two hours by car from Rome. The rebels certainly did not act as if they were merely waging war as a bargaining tactic. A full government was established, coins were minted, and the state was named *Italia*, a direct commentary on Roman neglect of their neighbors. Having grown up in the shadow of Rome, this new state of *Italia* had learned some lessons in brutality from its onetime master. When they liberated the town of Asculum, the Italian allies murdered all the Roman officials, and scalped their wives if they resisted rape. Yet even as *Italia* tortured and killed Romans, it only accelerated and enriched the growth of the Roman state, as Rome's new enemy had adopted all the forms and customs of the Roman state. *Italia* would not aim to eliminate Roman mores from the Italian peninsula, but simply to unify Italy under the Roman set of laws from which it had felt excluded.<sup>119</sup>

As in cellular mitosis, Rome would live through whichever particular expression of its identity survived, the individual vessels essentially immaterial to the survival of the greater pattern. Rebellion against Rome only renders the rebels into a fork of the Roman project, inaugurating a new cycle and creating another dispossessed Aeneas seeking a homeland. Nobody properly 'won' the Social Wars, as the Italian allies were defeated on the battlefield but obtained many of the concessions they originally sought. In many respects, this mirrors the conclusion of

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<sup>119</sup> Holland offers this interpretation of the Social Wars (51-3).

the *Aeneid*, where the Italians lose in battle even as their culture prevails. The meaning of victory has been revalued from our common sense. The victor loses a part of themselves in adapting to put down their enemy, while the victim retains a certain integrity which lives on even in the face of their own personal elimination.

#### 4.4.3 Human Sacrifice Among Friends

Aeneas approaches the Italians with a similar combination of extreme violence and casual camaraderie. In Book 10, after Aeneas learns of Pallas' death, he enters into his Iliadic *aristeia*, his moment of supreme martial excellence, killing Italians "like Aegeon, reputed to have a hundred arms and a hundred hands, and burn fire from fifty mouths and chests" (*Aen.* 10.565-6). In this simile, Vergil refers to the *hectoncheires*, or "hundred-handers", who allied with Saturn and the Titans against the Olympians, and now guard Tartarus.<sup>120</sup> Aeneas has joined *Saturnia Iuno* in the depths of the netherworld, and channels a visceral rage inappropriate to the Olympian world. He personifies the Titans' direct assault on Jupiter's reign, and steps backward in the cosmological succession so that he may be propelled forward. Returning to his "mother of old" (*Aen.* 3.96), Aeneas quickly assimilates to the untutored ferocity of his Italian environment. Italy and its defeated god Saturn animate Aeneas by inducting him in a violence capable of overthrowing the cosmic order under which Troy fell.

Aeneas taunts his enemies in the same manner as Achilles<sup>121</sup>, and demonstrates his capacity to commit every atrocity of war. For Achilles, a gratuitous *aristeia* is a simple expression of his character, which seeks glory in acts of war. But for Aeneas, excessive violence is a challenge to the picture of *pietas* Vergil has so far constructed, especially because that

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<sup>120</sup> See *Theogony* (624, 639, 714, 734–35). This simile also contradicts Thomas' view that Aeneas strictly represents the Olympian or Jovian order defeating the Saturnian age.

<sup>121</sup> See Gransden's *Virgil's Iliad*, "The Return of Aeneas", (138ff).

violence is dedicated to the memory of Pallas, whose image resides “in his very eyes” (*Aen.* 10.516). These should be acts of justice, but Vergil does not present them with any celebration. Aeneas seizes the sons of Sulmo and Ufens, named after an Italian city and river<sup>122</sup>, and offer them “as sacrifices to the shades [of Pallas]” (10.519).<sup>123</sup> It should be utterly shocking that a Roman epic, emerging after decades of civil war, features the hero engaging in human sacrifice of *Italians*. While modern readers might isolate and tolerate such actions to maintain their particular view of Aeneas, such a scene could not have failed to provoke very strong memories in fractious Italy.

Moreover, the sacrifice is also not an isolated incident. Both Haemonides (*Aen.* 10.536-42), and Turnus (*Aen.* 12.949) will also become the objects of such impious rites, as Aeneas dispatches them with a verb indicating sacrifice, *immolo*. As a priest of Apollo, Haemonides parallels Panthus, slain by the Greeks during the fall of Troy at *Aen.* 2.430. He also wears the *infula*, the priestly ribbons, and shines in his “vestment and distinguished white robes” (*Aen.* 10.539). As Aeneas’ heroism evokes his own sacrilegious victimization at Troy, Vergil intends for these scenes to be morally difficult.

At least temporarily, Aeneas views the Italians, the countrymen of his future descendants, as fitting sacrificial victims. Like Saturn and the Titans, he wages a war characterized by excess and futility. Aeneas will be victorious in history, but there will be none of the rapturous plunder and joy in victory a naïve Greek army may have once known at Troy. The best outcome for Aeneas involves killing an enemy who, if defeated, will then immediately become his neighbor.

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<sup>122</sup> Of Ufens, “His name is shared with a river in Latium... he is also by implication an eponym of the Ufentina, one of the thirty-five Roman voting tribes”. Of Sulmo, “A town located seventy-five miles east of Rome... the possible implication of the place and the Rutulian has troubling implications”. *The Virgil Encyclopedia*.

<sup>123</sup> Farron’s “Aeneas’ Human Sacrifice” demonstrates that Vergil quite intentionally emphasizes Aeneas’ human sacrifice, and that such sacrifices were viewed as monstrous by both the Greeks and the Romans.

As Aeneas is about to kill the wicked king Mezentius, the gods do not sing the praises of Roman justice, but can only pity both sides equally (*Aen.* 10. 755-61). As Book 10 yields to Book 11, the grief underlying Aeneas' rage again returns, as he mourns the fallen Pallas. He only honors the gods as a *victor* "with death on the mind" (*Aen.* 11.2-4), his victory polluted by the lingering memory of the bloody scenes. The sacrifices to the shade of Pallas are presented on his pyre (*Aen.* 11.81-4), and, suddenly, alongside Aeneas' most savage persona appears his most poignant and his most just, as he mourns what a companion Ascanius has lost (*Aen.* 11.58), and bids "greatest Pallas eternal farewell" (*Aen.* 11.97-8). A more tremendously horrifying tableau could not be drawn — a child murderer and a tender father — a man in whom every moment of the tragic cycle resides.

As such a scene would indicate, Aeneas is capable of fascinating wholesale reversals in his attitudes, reversals which seem contradictory but are unified in the historical experience he carries and represents. The Trojan hero has already internalized Achilles' lessons, and allows the Latins to bury their dead "lying out in the fields by the sword" (*Aen.* 11.102). Vergil now describes Aeneas as *bonus*, as he tells the Latins,

'quaenam vos tanto fortuna indigna, Latini,  
 implicuit bello, qui **nos** fugiatis **amicos**?  
 pacem me exanimis et Martis sorte peremptis  
 oratis? equidem et vivis concedere vellem.  
 nec veni, nisi fata locum sedemque dedissent,  
 nec bellum cum gente gero; rex nostra reliquit  
 hospitia et Turni potius se credidit armis.  
 aequius huic Turnum fuerat se opponere morti.  
 si bellum finire manu, si pellere Teucros  
 apparat, his mecum decuit concurrere telis:  
 vixet cui vitam deus aut sua dextra dedisset.  
 nunc ite et miseris supponite civibus ignem.'  
 dixerat Aeneas. illi obstipuere silentes  
 conversique oculos inter se atque ora tenebant. (*Aen.* 11.109-121)

*“What undeserved fortune has driven you to such war, Latins? Why are you fleeing us, **your friends**? Do you ask me for peace for the dead, taken by Mars’ lot? I would equally like to grant it to the living as well. I would not have come, nor would I be waging a war with this tribe, unless fate had granted me the kingdom. The king [Latinus] abandoned our friendship, and trusted that Turnus posed the greater threat. It would have been more just for Turnus to turn himself over to this death. If he aims to conclude the war by force, if he wants to drive out the Trojans, it would have been right to meet me with these weapons: the survivor would be the one to whom a god or his right hand granted life. Now go and set flame to your wretched countrymen.”*

*Aeneas had spoken. The envoys stood shocked in silence, and they turned their eyes and kept their gaze upon each other. [emphasis added]*

Strong friendship often arises from a relationship originating in strong opposition. This theme inaugurates the epic genre, as Gilgamesh becomes a close friend to his initial rival Enkidu. The fractious Italians must have also known many instances of deep bonds forged in conflict, yet they cannot believe that somebody might address them as *amici* while so many lie yet unburied. For Aeneas, however, this is just another sudden turn of fate in Italy. If he has found an ally in a Greek city, why should he not at once sacrifice and hail Italians? The verbs in this short speech reveal a mind rich in temporal context, able to quickly grasp the future from the past. The pluperfects *dedissent*, *fuerat*, and *dedisset* show that Aeneas understands the tragedy before him as a product of past errors, and so a strong sense of *fatum* allows him to accept these events in magnanimity. While the Italians see the war in its full immediate horror, Aeneas already knows how this story ends, and has awoken after the dreamy confusion of battle.

The concluding *dixerat* emphasizes the certainty and disturbing inevitability of Aeneas’ statement — after the carnage the Italians have just witnessed, such a serene assessment of affairs seems superhuman, perhaps even oracular. Though Aeneas delivers a positive message, it is a message that is inappropriately positive given the circumstances. The Trojans came to honor the dead, and Aeneas admonishes them for endangering the living. *Et vivis* emphasizes Aeneas’ readiness to return to the subject of the living, and *nunc ite et miseris* also brusquely dismisses

the enemy's concerns as beneath consideration. Aeneas holds no bitter, personal resentment against the Italians, which makes his violence towards them yet more shocking and difficult to process. Warfare becomes a regular routine of the state in *Zivilisation*, a concept utterly astounding to the Italians still enraptured in the mythos of martial honor.

The Italian reaction mirrors that of Aeneas' audience when he retold the story of Troy's fall at Carthage: *conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant*, "all fell silent, and eagerly turned their gaze [towards Aeneas]" (*Aen.* 2.1). The Italians, thrown into war on their own soil after Latinus' "long peace" (*Aen.* 2.47), are experiencing a shock similar to the trauma of the Trojan horse. The Trojans suddenly learned that their false friend Sinon had concealed a fatal trick; the Italians learn that their deadly enemy Aeneas regards himself as a friend. In Troy, devastation ends in obliteration, though Trojan and Greek will eventually again unite in Aeneas' "Troy of the spirit" (*Aen.* 3.505). These centuries of historical process have been internalized within Aeneas, and after the devastation ends, he immediately offers the Latins his friendship. In defeat, the Italians do not face doom, but the flourishing of their number in a Roman social organism. They can pass through everything Aeneas has suffered, and immediately partake in a new syncretic polity. King Latinus also recognizes that their ancestral kingdom can only stagnate within its own boundaries, but a foreign marriage will accelerate them past the kingdoms of Greece and Troy, and "bear their name to the stars" (*Aen.* 7.272).

The promise of ennobling aid from beneficent foreigners is a common theme in imperial histories, and the Italians, like most indigenous peoples, are divided at the prospect of union with the Trojans. Evander, Aeneas' most significant ally, is not properly Italian, but Greek. The deposed king of the Etruscans, Mezentius, represents every wickedness of provincial tyranny,

and opposes Aeneas, yet Tarchon, the current king of the Etruscans, fights with the Trojans.<sup>124</sup> Among the Latins, Drances receives Aeneas' offer of Trojan alliance with a sniveling obsequiousness, addressing him as "great in fame, greater in arms" (*Aen.* 11.124-5). Even if fate governs this destiny for Italy, Vergil cannot sympathetically portray those who would yield too easily. The Italian land and people may endure as world conquerers, but in defeat they will lose essential spiritual and cultural values. If you join your enemy, your enemy now possesses you, and your spirit perishes, as your body lives out the purposes and experiences of others, a more thorough sort of domination than mere death. Though Aeneas seems to comfort the dying Lausus, he only does so in a moment of grand megalomania. "You, poor thing, should still take comfort in your wretched death — you fall at the hand of great Aeneas" (*Aen.* 10.829-30). Taken at the personal level, this seems like a monstrous expression of fake empathy. The slain surely do not take comfort in the future greatness of the victor. Yet this is the proposition presented to the Latin people as a whole, which some like Drances seem eager to adopt.

#### **4.4.4 Turnus and Amata: The Bull and the Beloved**

In order to conquer the Italian spirit, these first Romans cannot allow any individual human perspective to dominate over the historical perspective of imperial destiny. Turnus and Amata are the two Italian individuals who most directly oppose the Trojans, and they do so in a particularly personal, subjective fashion. They must die to preserve life as it is known to them, and as they wish it to continue. Their cause should not be understood as nativism in any modern sense, as Amata is quite willing to suggest that Turnus himself is a foreigner to Italy, a Rutulian descended from Mycenae, if such an argument fulfills Faunus' oracle of a foreign bride for Lavinia (*Aen.* 7.365-72). Whatever the ultimate origin of the peoples of Italy, however, their

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<sup>124</sup> Tarchon appears at *Aen.* 8.506,603; 10.153,290; and 11.727,746.



current way of life has an integrity worth preserving. The descent of the generations has favored them, and they enjoy a healthy physical presence: Turnus is *avis atavisque potens*, “powerful in his forefathers and ancestors” (*Aen.* 7.56), and Italy’s native son is *pulcherrimus*, “very handsome” (*Aen.* 7.55); Turnus’ claim to Lavinia is self-evident, an expression of an unbroken chain of healthy virility. When Amata bemoans the marriage of Lavinia as a raging Bacchante, her grief emphasizes a physical symbiosis between Turnus and her daughter — “in truth, it’s for you [Turnus] she assumes Dionysus’ soft desire<sup>125</sup>, it’s for you that she dances in the chorus, it’s for you that she grows out (*pascere*) her sacred hair” (*Aen.* 7.391). *Pascere*, a verb connoting the slow feeding of herbivores, emphasizes the connection the Latins have to the world of plant and animal life. Turnus and Lavinia belong together in the same way that free animals belong in their fields.

Turnus and Amata — these are properly Latinate names, and they evoke everything Italy loses in their deaths. The name “Turnus” sounds close to *taurus*, and Vergil confirms the intuition in a very explicit allusion to Book 4 of the *Georgics*. As Turnus marches among the Italian warriors, clad as the legendary Chimera, the attention again returns to his physical appearance.

Ipse inter primos praestanti corpore Turnus  
vertitur arma tenens et toto vertice supra est. (*Aen.* 7.783-4)

*Bearing his arms among these foremost leaders Turnus himself makes the rounds, above all the others by a full head.*

The line recalls *Georgics* 4.538, *quattuor eximios praestanti corpore tauros*, which describes preparations for the sacrifice of bulls. Like these bulls, Turnus is an outstanding physical specimen, on full display before his death. At *Aen.* 12.103, as he prepares to meet Aeneas, he is

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<sup>125</sup> The *thyrsus*, a shaft of the fennel tree used in fertility rites.

compared to a bull training for battle, sharpening his horns on a tree. The *Georgics* also offer an episode which parallels the stakes of the conflict between Turnus and Aeneas.<sup>126</sup> In Book 3, Vergil illustrates the dangers of “blind love” in a simile involving two bulls about to compete for a heifer. The loser *victus abit longeque ignotis exsulat oris*, “goes off, conquered, and stays in exile on obscure shores” (*Geo.* 3.225). Yet the defeated bull will then train on a tree trunk (*Geo.* 3.233) and catch the former victor unaware, an *oblitum hostem* (*Geo.* 3.236). The bull fight in the *Georgics* mirrors the recurring historical cycle of the *Aeneid*. By defeating Turnus, the bull, Aeneas dislodges a stubborn nature which cannot be fully uprooted, and will surely return. As victor, he assumes the realm of the conquered, but some Turnus still trains on distant tree trunks, ready to overturn the complacent Roman.

The symbolism of the bull suggests that Turnus will be the victim of a sacrifice, and Vergil uses the verb *immolat* (*Aen.* 12.949) to describe his slaying of the prince. Latinus also predicts at the war’s onset that a *triste supplicium* awaits Turnus, a “woeful punishment” (*Aen.* 7.596-7). At the start of Book 12, he suggests that Turnus should give up single combat because it is essentially ceremonial — if he loses, he will accept the Trojans as allies anyway, and his death will prevent nothing (*Aen.* 12.38-9). But the bull, led drunk and unaware to his own slaughter, does not capture the full range of what Turnus represents, and what Aeneas must excise from the Italian community. He is also an African lion, wounded and dying for his love (*Aen.* 12.4-9), just as Dido endured Cupid’s arrow like an accidentally hunted deer (*Aen.* 4.68-73). Additionally, Turnus is compared to a horse no less five times in Book 12, including once where he drives the steeds of Mars (*Aen.* 12.331) (McDonald 45).<sup>127</sup> There is a gallantry to his

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<sup>126</sup> See Fratantuono *Madness Unchained* (371), where he suggests this parallel.

<sup>127</sup> McDonald’s article *Aeneas vs. Turnus: Labor vs. Amor* offers an excellent thematic comparison of Turnus and Aeneas as heroes of *amor* and *labor*.

character beyond the bull's strength and the lion's fury. The aristocratic bearing of a proud horseman is evident in his haughty disdain of chance, believing it to be a matter of his own capacity. It is Turnus, not Aeneas, who confidently proclaims that "Fortune favors the daring (*audentes*)" (*Aen.* 10.344), assuming for Italy the Venusian charisma of Fortuna. Aeneas, a tragic son of Venus, has lost this charisma in his weary trials, yet here in Italy Turnus embraces his strong emotions. He gives a stinging rejoinder to Drances, who is eager to surrender to the Trojans, dismissing him as a speaker of empty words. Fortune may yet change in the Italians' favor so long as they remain unbroken in spirit (*Aen.* 11.376-444). Turnus is the inspiring hero, animated by the justice of his cause and looking down on opportunistic compromise.

Amata, Turnus' presumptive mother-in-law, also reminds us of the romanticism behind his resistance. "The Beloved" takes her name from the passive participle of the verb *amo*, "to love". Her own *amor* is clearly invested in her son-in-law, and if she is guilty of any grievous fault, it is living vicariously through her daughter Lavinia.<sup>128</sup> She initiates the Italian war, and her Bacchic frenzy uncomfortably recalls Dido, also driven to madness by Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.296-330). Amata, at first nursing a private resentment, joins the tide of reactionary contempt Juno has dragged across the Mediterranean. Allecto injects her with a *viperea anima*, "snake-like spirit", and "deceives her rage", (*Aen.* 7.350-1), and perverts an unobjectionable preference for her daughter's marriage into a historical cataclysm. Still, Amata's speech to Latinus is not raving, but cogent and emotionally genuine. She speaks the language of *sancta fides*, "sacred trust", and correctly notes that the Trojans, the grooms of Helen and Dido, are not likely to be trustworthy

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<sup>128</sup> Burke's "Virgil's Amata" presents Amata as nursing an Oedipal attachment to Turnus, so that her tragedy parallels that of Jocasta. While the insular Latin clan would certainly have incestuous dynamics, Burke assumes too much individual freedom in the choice of a marriage partner in antiquity, as the continuation of the family line was certainly a passionate affair in which mothers would often overstep their bounds and project their own desires. Moreover, Juturna also suggests that she cannot live without Turnus (*Aen.* 12.882-3), so that Amata's dependence on Turnus is more a reflection of close Italian kinship than personal desire.

(*Aen.* 7.359-72). As with Juno’s late account of the Trojan war at *Aen.* 10.90, reasonable objections are concealed in venomous tongues. Why should the Latins trust the Trojans? What possible claim could Aeneas have to Lavinia? As hell rises up to earth, a mother’s natural prudence prepares a path towards destruction. Allecto’s snake does not bite her, *attactu nullo*, but fatally deceives, *fallit* (*Aen.* 7.349-51).

Amata’s tragedy, then, is not her madness, but that her perfectly sensible embrace of a familiar Italian son-in-law *appears* as madness and assumes its forms. There are two competing voices, one of maternal care and emotional connection with her people, and another of Allecto’s poisonous bile, which promises to only worsen the situation on which it feeds. The spirit of Bacchus has not fully overtaken her, as it does with Dido, but is only mimicked, *simulato numine Bacchi* (*Aen.* 7.385). Dido had lost her lover Sychaeus, and was about to lose another, and so she should be found in a Dionysian frenzy. Amata, however, knew love in the past — as her name indicates, she “was loved”. In Latinus’ stable and prosperous *urbes ... placidas*, “content cities” (*Aen.* 7.47), she enjoyed a fulfillment the exile Dido could never know. She has lived a blessed life, and her attempt to preserve it for Lavinia does not require any defense. While the Italian world before the war seems idyllic, it is also fragile. The disturbances the Trojans bring with them can quickly pervert personal attachments into toxic fanaticism, infected by the deep repository of remembered outrages *Saturnia Iuno* cultivates. The simile for how Allecto possesses Amata is unexpected.

ceu quondam torto volitans sub verbere turbo,  
quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum  
intenti ludo exercent—ille actus habena  
curvatis fertur spatiis; stupet inscia supra  
impubesque manus mirata volubile buxum;  
dant animos plagae: non cursu signior illo  
per medias urbes agitur populosque ferocis. (*Aen.* 7.378-84)

*Just as a whirling spinning-top beneath the twisted lash, which boys, ready for play, train in a circle around an empty atrium, driven by the lash its born about in turning spaces — a juvenile crowd gawks above it, uncomprehending, and the gang marvels at the turning box-wood, and [the whip's] blows give the top life — in that way, and no slower, Amata is driven through the centers of cities and fierce peoples.*

The independent *sponte sua* Latinus proudly announces as the ethos of the Latin people at *Aen.* 7.204 has vanished, replaced by a decidedly passive conception. Before contact with the Trojans, life apart from their sealed, symbiotic Italian cosmos was inconceivable, yet they will soon learn that the whip governs the imperial life of *Zivilisation*. Amata began as a concerned parent, and transformed into a monster as soon as she absorbed this violating spirit, imported alongside the Trojans. Yet while the Italians have lost their freedom and agency through their mere contact with Aeneas, they have not lost their innocence. The simile is harrowing in its expression of harsh mastery through the imagery of children's play.

When Turnus learns of Amata's suicide following the broken truce and open warfare in Book 12, the loss throws him into an acute shock, full of contradictory emotions.

obstipuit varia confusus imagine rerum  
Turnus et obtutu tacito stetit; aestuat ingens  
uno in corde pudor mixtoque insania luctu  
et furiis agitatus amor et conscia virtus. (*Aen.* 12.665-8)

*Turnus, perplexed by the changing appearance of affairs, was amazed, and stood in silent trance (obtutu). Great shame burns in his lonely heart, along with the madness of polluted grief, and love driven on by rage, and guilty courage.*

The phrase *uno in corde pudor* is extremely well crafted — shame isolates Turnus' feelings, and leaves him unable to process the chaos of his disintegrating world. His Latium was a beautifully unified society, yet now he knows the horror of personal alienation from his purpose. In this new Roman *varia imago*, his earnestness has become a liability, and he feels responsible for Amata's death by participating in a war with implications far beyond his expectation. These were Saturn's timeless people, whom Jupiter now implicates them in a historical drama they do not

comprehend. Aeneas might feel pain in relating to Dido the story of the fall of Troy, but he is able to do so effectively. The Trojans contextualize their trauma in the vocabulary and experience of history. But Turnus here stops numb, unable to process such a confusion of emotion, as the heroic code he proudly obeys has led to disaster. His moral certainty dies with Amata, and he moves towards a *Wachsein* state of conflicted self-awareness.

*Conscia virtus* is also a very apt phrase, as it signifies that guilt (the meaning of the adjective as used here) is closely linked to self-awareness. Personal consciousness deepens when confronted with the possibility of guilt, experienced as a crisis of the personal value system. Turnus only perceives the intricacy of his situation when already trapped within it. He only realizes the deficiency of his limited worldview when it has been fully refuted. Full of guilty virtue, Turnus expresses his bitter disdain for the moral expectations of this new world Aeneas has brought to Italy. Yet he can never go back now. History has caught him blind, and his innocence collapses all at once. The heroic values, as understood by the Italians, are no longer effective, and Turnus practices a bravery which will certainly end in his death. Fortune does not favor the brave. Yet Turnus does not change in his moment of confusion, and he rushes back into battle to face Aeneas, though even a victory clearly will not mend his overwhelmed society.

Turnus experiences another moment of existential despair after Juno removes him from the battle by presenting him with a fake Aeneas to chase, leading him safely off onto a ship which floats back to his home city. By his standards of martial heroism, this is a greatly lamentable event, and raises other broad questions as well. Though Juno is responsible, Turnus addresses his lament to Jupiter.

respicit ignarus rerum ingratusque salutis  
et duplicis cum voce manus ad sidera tendit:

'omnipotens genitor, tanton me crimine dignum

duxisti et talis voluisti expendere poenas?  
quo feror? unde abii? quae me fuga quemve reducit?  
Laurentisne iterum muros aut castra videbo?  
quid manus illa virum, qui me meaque arma secuti?  
quosque (nefas) omnis infanda in morte reliqui  
et nunc palantis video, gemitumque cadentum  
accipio? quid ago? aut quae iam satis ima dehiscat  
terra mihi? vos o potius miserescite, venti;  
in rupes, in saxa (volens vos Turnus adoro)  
ferite ratem saevisque vadis immittite syrtis,  
quo nec me Rutuli nec conscia fama sequatur.' (*Aen.* 10.666-679)

*Unknowing of affairs and ungrateful for his salvation, Turnus looks up, and stretches both hands out to the stars, along with his voice:*

*All-powerful father, have you regarded me as worthy of such punishment, and do you want me to pay such penalties? Where am I going? And from where have I fled? And what is this flight, how does it return me? Will I ever again see the Laurentine walls and camps? What about that band of men, and my weaponry which followed me? Have I left every one of them in an unspeakable death (a crime!), and do I now see them dispersing, and hear the groan of them falling? What do I do? Or what land is now so low that it could swallow me up? Take pity on me, winds, take the skiff into the crags, into rocks, and send it onto the shallows fierce with quicksand, where no Rutulian, no guilty repute can follow me.*

Turnus then proceeds to try to commit suicide three times, and to swim back to the battle three times. Juno prevents all these attempts, and the ship takes him back to his ancestral city of Ardea (*Aen.* 10.680-88). The scene draws a sharp distinction between Turnus and Aeneas, who receives divine protection and transport throughout the *Iliad*. Aeneas can envision a world without Troy, while Turnus accepts Aeneas' earlier praise of a death *ante ora patrum*, "before the faces of the fathers" (*Aen.* 1.95). *Ingratus salutis*, "ungrateful of his salvation", he spurns the safe quarter which Aeneas receives in the *Iliad*, and for which he now fights. Turnus would rather preserve an ineffectual sense of honor and duty to his people than adopt the new imperial ethos represented by Aeneas. He displays the fully sensitive personality Aeneas loses in becoming an imperial persona, leaving his heart behind in Troy and Carthage. Italy and its people are fully real to Turnus, and his decisions are highly personal. Amata's death later drives

him back to the battlefield even in a final futility, but he cannot accept any cowardly safety, even if granted by the heavens.

The questions he asks address his immediate disorientation, yet also express his fundamental conflict. *Where am I going? Where are my people? Why am I being taken from my home?* The prospect of being separated from the world which defines him compels him to suicide, a form of self-determination which also has been taken from him. There can no longer be any way for him to be good since his world, the source and standard of all goodness, keeps getting taken away from him by strange and overwhelming forces. Juno's salvation is no salvation at all. The delays Juno seeks (*Aen.* 7.315) are positively harmful to Turnus, who knows they will not save him (*Aen.* 12.74). As Turnus gains in self-awareness of his situation, the weight of *memoria* and its conserving goddess becomes little more than a torture.

Turnus' questions could well have been asked by Aeneas throughout the first six books of the epic. While the search for homeland forms the basis of the poem, Aeneas has learned to live with confusion on these matters for a long time. He explicitly asks Apollo at the Delphian oracle in Book 3, *quem sequimur? quove ire iubes? ubi ponere sedes?* "Whom do we follow? Where do you order us to go? Where should we place our kingdoms?" (*Aen.* 3.88). Imagine if, as in the case of Turnus, Aeneas had not received an answer to these questions. *Quid ago*, "What do I do?", asks Turnus, the generality of the query capturing his desperation. His frenzied outburst might be expressed as a single question — *who am I?* The question would have little meaning in the *Urkultur* experience of Italy, as identities only become self-conscious when they are tested by alternatives.<sup>129</sup> When the crisis of identity is not met, Turnus feels he is nothing, and his attempted suicide is his reply to a world in which he no longer has a place. However vague and

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<sup>129</sup> The histories of Germany and France provide a good modern comparison. Germany only becomes self-aware as a national state in response to the incursions of the more strongly centralized Napoleonic French.



frustrating Apollo's oracular pronouncements might be to Aeneas, their wide projection into the future allow him to find an identity in a future universal state, a Troy of the spirit, a *Zivilisation*. Turnus is left with nothing but the questions Aeneas seems to have escaped.

#### 4.4.5 Juno Betrays Juturna

Juturna, Turnus' sister, attempts a final defense of her brother, and experiences the same acute crisis, the same overwhelming feeling of displacement and abandonment. She was changed into a nymph by Jupiter after he stole her virginity (*Aen.* 12.138-41). Juno approaches her and encourages her to save her brother, treating her as a fellow victim of Jupiter's outrages and not a rival (*Aen.* 2.142-53). However, her encouragements only recall Juturna's past sufferings, and offer no real encouragement of saving Turnus. Juno, "having thus encouraged [Juturna], left her, uncertain and distressed by her mind's despairing wound (*tristi... vulnere mentis*)" (*Aen.* 12.159-60). As with Turnus, the goddess' attempts at aid and counsel only intensify her grief. Juno holds onto that which will soon disappear. The formula of a mental wound also places a nice stress on Vergil as a psychologist, whose characters have a rich inner life only indirectly manifest in their expressed thoughts and visible actions. Juturna acts to save her brother, assuming the guise of the respected Italian chief Camers and persuading the Italians that the war is not lost, and that Turnus should not be left to single combat. She also marshals an eagle, the symbol of Jupiter, her former attacker, which the Italians interpret as a favorable omen (*Aen.* 12.216-56). After battle recommences, the nymph commandeers Turnus' chariot, and steers him safely from the battle (*Aen.* 12.468-499). She later returns Turnus' sword, lost during the single combat with Aeneas (*Aen.* 12.783-85).

Yet her patroness Juno betrays all of these efforts in her final settlement with Jupiter. The goddess claims that she only advised Juturna *succere fratri*, "to aid her brother" and not

participate in the wider war (*Aen.* 12.813). Though Juno did not explicitly encourage Juturna to command the chariot, she did pressure the unwilling and doubtful nymph with broad charismatic language, proclaiming *auctor ego audendi*, “I myself sanction your daring” (*Aen.* 12.159). The pact was never clearly defined, and Juno would just as well have her agent create havoc while she can claim plausible deniability. When Juno agrees to the terms for the end of the war, she looks only to her own honor and motivation. The Italians will remain in history, and will regard her with the same honor as the Carthaginians<sup>130</sup>, but Turnus, who was never more than a bargaining chip, will die. Juturna’s interests are, of course, precisely the opposite — she has no conception of Olympian history, let alone concern for it, and just wants to save her brother. Juno’s cynical strategy has succeeded, and the innocent river nymph of Italy, an undoubtedly sympathetic figure, has now been violated by both the king and the queen of the heavens. Vergil’s interjection in the last hours of Troy seems to have found another subject in her pathetic figure — *Heu nihil invitis fas quemquam fidere divis!* “Ah, it is proper that we trust nothing in unwilling gods!” (*Aen.* 2.402).

Juturna’s initial skepticism was entirely correct, and Jupiter confirms Turnus’ impending death through a harrowing smoke signal, sending down the Furies in the form of birds which attack Turnus (*Aen.* 12.843-68). This indirect method of warning is appropriate for Juturna, whom the gods have treated like an inconsequential object, to be toyed with without consequence. Presumably attuned to such supernatural forces as a nymph, Juturna recognizes them, and cries out,

‘quid nunc te tua, Turne, potest germana iuvare?  
aut quid iam durae superat mihi? qua tibi lucem  
arte morer? talin possum me opponere monstro?  
iam iam linquo acies. ne me terrete timentem,  
obscenae volucres: alarum verbera nosco

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<sup>130</sup> *nec gens ulla tuos aequae celebrabit honores* (*Aen.* 12.840).

letalemque sonum, nec fallunt iussa superba  
 magnanimi Iovis. haec pro virginitate reponit?  
 quo vitam dedit aeternam? cur mortis adempta est  
 condicio? possem tantos finire dolores  
 nunc certe, et misero fratri comes ire per umbras!  
 immortalis ego? aut quicquam mihi dulce meorum  
 te sine, frater, erit? o quae satis ima dehiscat  
 terra mihi, Manisque deam demittat ad imos?' (*Aen.* 12.869-86)

*How is now, Turnus, your sister able to help you? What now remains for me, hardened by stife? By what art can I delay your demise? Can one as low (talin) as me oppose such a portent? Now, now at last I leave the ranks. Wicked birds, do not scare me: I recognize the beating of your wings, and their fatal sound, and the haughty orders of Jove do not deceive me. Does he offer this for my virginity? Why did he grant me this eternal life? Why has he removed the mortal condition? I would be able then to end such overwhelming grief, and to go to the shades with my poor brother! Am I really immortal? Oh, my brother, what enjoyment will there be for me without you? O, is there a land low enough to swallow me up, to send a goddess down to the lowest depths?*

The drama that began with Juno raising up the infernal realms concludes with Juturna wishing to descend down to hell. Instead, she simply retreats into the earthly rivers which are her domain (*Aen.* 12.885-6). In a certain sense, Juturna's lament is not merely bitter — *immortalis ego* is a legitimate question for a nymph, stolen from the normal human condition and yet unable to confront the Olympians. The gods can also be miserable, as Juno has amply demonstrated, and Juturna, sensing in the flight of the Dira the torment of the infernal realms, knows that her land has already become the *ima terra* she seeks. Her humility, her self-disqualifying *talin me*, stands in direct contrast with the haughty Juno, and yet there is also an echo of Juno's first speech, where she wonders about the true extent of her powers (*Aen.* 1.37-49). Juno's speech is sarcastic, vengeful, and narcissistic, consumed with inflicting suffering on others and promoting her own *honor*<sup>131</sup>, yet Juturna, suffering a far deeper tragedy, dares to ask what might still be sweet in life, *dulce*.

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<sup>131</sup> *Et quisquam numen Iunonis adoret  
 praeterea, aut supplex aris imponet honorem?*

Before her brother dies, the nymph earnestly seeks a blessing neither Aeneas nor Turnus have found. The gods have cheated and abused her, and now taunt her, an Italian, just after they seal the pacts of Rome, and yet she projects an impeccable grace and innocent embrace of life's bounty. The lament also recalls Venus' opening question to Jupiter — *hic pietatis honos*, "is this duty's reward?" (*Aen.* 1.253). Juturna's devotion to her brother has been exemplary, and though her divinity may now be painful, it is certainly not unrewarded. Vergil's magic revalues Jupiter's crimes and Juno's vengeance into the sweet flowing waters of Italy, and the pristine land, still intact despite the stain of foreign grievance, affirms itself, suffering yet beyond harm. As the verb *condere* suggests, to found is to bury, and Rome will be founded in Juturna's return to the land below. Aeneas may have seen the vision of history in the underworld, but it can be observed just as well in the endurance of the earth. The Titans and Olympians fought, and *Gaia invicta* remained the eternal champion.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Turnus' final act of resistance will be to hurl a "massive ancient stone", a boulder which "twelve men, born in bodies the earth now bears, could scarcely place beneath their neck" (*Aen.* 12.896-900)<sup>132</sup>. The effort is useless, but his return to form answers the despairing questions he earlier posed to the gods — this is Turnus, and this is how he will remain. After this final assertion, the *dira dea* then saps his strength so that he grows sleepy (*Aen.* 12.908-914). The form *dira* recalls the *dira cupido*<sup>133</sup>, and the dread goddess grants him this final grim pleasure. As Aeneas' eyes turn over in a final awakening to his fate, *volvens oculos* (*Aen.* 12.939), Turnus' last moments will be moments of dire love, spared from the realization of history. His soul will pass from the earth *indignata*, "devalued" (*Aen.* 12.952), but his land is affirmed in the reverie of old Italian idylls. "All the things we see when awake are death, even as all we see in slumber are dreams".<sup>134</sup> Italy, Italy, Italy — it was once a dream for Aeneas — *hic domus, haec patria est* (*Aen.* 7.122); *hic amor, haec patria est* (*Aen.* 4.347)! Here is Italy, here it now lies dying before Aeneas. The son of *Amor* herself, flitting from continent to continent in search of what he's forever lost, finds his country as he kills its dreaming lover.

The Trojan sons of Venus have become the Roman sons of Juno and Mars. Vergil's journey through historical time comes together in the ultimate tragic unity, the unity of love and death. Standing gravely over Turnus' body, we return again to the beginning, and remember that Ascanius began this war as a child's frivolous trophy hunt, spurred on *laudis... amore*, "by the love of praise" (*Aen.* 7.496).

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. *DRN* 9.25-6, *Et genus humanum multo fuit illud in arvis durius*.

<sup>133</sup> Used of Palinurus in the underworld at *Aen.* 6.373, of souls waiting to reincarnate at *Aen.* 6.721, and of the adventure of Nisus and Euryalus at *Aen.* 9.185.

<sup>134</sup> θάνατός ἐστιν ὀκόσα ἐγερθέντες ὀρέομεν, ὀκόσα δὲ εὔδοντες ὕπνος, Heraclitus DK Fragment 21.

Love traps the dedicated and emboldens the vain — love plays with the heartbroken, but buries her believers. *Omnia vincit Amor; et nos cedamus Amori.* (*Eclogues* 10.69).

## Appendix A – The American Experience

*History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.*  
— James Joyce, *Ulysses*

An Italian lent his name to America, and the airy ghosts of Vergil’s world find themselves returning to the light in a contested land, an idyll and a nightmare, where Saturn once again offers lawful freedom in one hand and senseless oppression in the other. Sending word back to the Medici in Italy, Amerigo Vespucci reported that the people of the Amazon “live amongst themselves without a king or ruler, each man being his own master”<sup>135</sup>. This native freedom was not to endure, yet the conquerors were not themselves satisfied with the flags they had imposed. Several hundred years later, the dissident European radicals of the Americas, Thomas Jefferson and Simon Bolivar, would attempt to recreate the lost freedom of the Amazon in law, as the unrestrained life Vespucci recorded had now become an ideal of the Enlightenment. The new nations of the continent would regain the natural liberty lost in Europe. The colonist had become a threatening savage to the crown, just as the native had been to the colonist.

No longer was it a virtue to be civilized, for the blessings of civilization came with the prospect of a civilized slavery. The revolutionaries of the Americas believed the New World could break the cycles of European history. The Amazon’s primeval freedom inspired a hope for more just laws, purified by their establishment in a land without a history of kings and queens. In the terms of the second half of Vergil’s *Aeneid*, the free Latins of Latinus’ realm may have been subdued, but only by a more just Greek law — not the vainglory of Odysseus, but the humane precepts of Evander’s new Arcadia in Italy.

Arcadia — I write from the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, where French settlers once granted the name of Acadia to the peninsula. These Acadians chose a mythological appropriate name, as their imagination of a bucolic North America would not survive the contest for empire. Arcadia always becomes a utopia lost, and Acadia is also known in its disappearance. In the Expulsion of the Acadians, the colonial British authorities deported the French-speaking Acadians from the peninsula, fearing their disloyalty during the French and Indian War. Among Francophones, the offense has been termed *Le Grand Dérangement*, “the Great Displacement”, expressing the disappointed innocence of a continent that cannot believe its own capacity for disturbance. Is there still so much unrest on such distant shores?

Today we live in a replay, and replay the Roman nightmare we must, for Vergil has taught us that the second round is the greater, and the third greater still. A band of exiles (**Trojans/Pilgrims**) have been oppressed and defeated by the more powerful states of their day (**Greece/Britain**). When they set out to claim an uncharted wilderness in providential destiny (**Italy/America**), their first colonies (**New Troy on Crete/Jamestown**) fail. Realizing that they cannot stand aloof from their harsh surroundings, the colonists find allies (**Evander/Pocahontas**). However, this goodwill shall not remain, and the native peoples will be romanticized even as they are mercilessly removed from history (**Turnus/Sitting Bull**).

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<sup>135</sup> The Medici letter, 7.

In this climate of colonial fear, punitive religion protects the settlers from the exotic temptations of their new home (**Dido/Puritans**). Yet others cast aside the gods of the old world, embracing a new Apollonian spirit of common sense and youthful curiosity to navigate this fresh terrain (**Ascanius/Thomas Paine**). A nation at once more conservative and more radical than its parent in the old world is born, and from this tension it also becomes more creative and assertive. In time, it perceives that it should also be more free, and political revolutionaries (**Brutii/Founding Fathers**) banish a king suddenly seen as foreign (**Tarquin the Proud/King George III**). In the new republican government, the division of power is supposed to guard against kingly abuses (**2 consuls, 3 branches of government**). Yet while the revolution sets a standard of political equality, it also codifies flagrant contradictions to this standard (**patrician and plebeian classes/American slavery**). These contradictions resolve in the gradual expansion of rights to the marginalized classes (**Conflict of the Orders/Civil War**), and the nation expands outward (**Punic and Social Wars/Manifest Destiny**) as its inner core becomes increasingly egalitarian (**Marian Reforms/Progressive Movement**).

As the old nobility erodes, the nouveau-riche emerge as the masters of a society raised to new heights by the achievement of raw military and commercial prowess (**triumviri/robber barons**). These potentates challenge the authority of the state, and the influx of foreign money and ideas overwhelms the complacent conservatism of the senatorial classes (**Greek philosophy at Rome, the German university in America**<sup>136</sup>). The state dissolves just as it reaches its highest glory (**Augustan Rome/post-WWII America**), and the society of soldiers turns to its artists to reimagine its history and create a better future in song (**Vergil/60s counterculture**). Reality itself achieves tragic intensity, and the televisual imagination offers the possibility of a new kind of leader, raised to new heights and lowered to new depths on the public stage (**Nero/John F. Kennedy**).

Vergil's embrace of poetic truth in a practical society was itself a revaluation of Roman values, a reimagination of a history which no longer reflected the world's aspirations. The epic vision, one fully absorbed in the reality of war, merges with the Hebraic tradition of prophetic pacifism. After suffering so many wars, the people will beat their swords into plowshares. Though the wars did not stop, this disbelief in the glory of war participates in the revaluation of values Nietzsche describes at the twilight of Greco-Roman culture. Yet Vergil overturned his world from within it, finding utopia in bloodshed and the eternal in the ephemerality of social chaos.

By creating the definitive Roman mythology, Vergil affirmed the constancy and unity of a particularly Roman experience, and projected it forward into our second Rome. Yet unlike Rome, the United States officially eschews the notion of a public mythology, expressing its faith instead in public documents. The human story of the American people can be laid aside, as the essence of American life, its laws, transcends any particular human experience in America. Mythology, far from being the basic social glue which unites our values, fears, and aspirations, is synonymous with lies, exaggerations, and propaganda. Coming out of the *sola scriptura* tradition

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<sup>136</sup> Many of which were, appropriately, founded by the robber barons — Andrew Carnegie at Carnegie-Mellon, John D. Rockefeller at The University of Chicago.



of Anglican Protestantism, the Founders had the confidence that a small set of documents could capture everything essential about a state, and preserve it against all adversity.

Yet, just as these impressive documents supported America's rise to the status of world superpower in less than two centuries, the United States itself became less and less inclined towards documents and more and more inclined towards mythology. While the folktales of American heroes had contributed to the formation of national identity, the rise of mass media increasingly turned America into a society dominated by images. In my own lifetime, the overwhelming flood of digital communications has brought the shades and mirrors of history into a single view, as I can pass through decades of recent history with a few clicks on YouTube. History is now an *aesthetic* experience, and it follows from this that public life has also become a form of art.

A few decades ago the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard termed this particularly American phenomenon "hyperreality", a state in which the real merges with the viral phenomena of televisual experience to create a synthetic phenomenological world between art and reality<sup>137</sup>. He was proven distressingly correct when, just after his death, many Americans couldn't distinguish between the utterances of Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin and Tina Fey, the satirical actor who played her on *Saturday Night Live*. At the practical level, postmodern theory had come to America in its most raw, technically adept form. If abstruse arguments for the inherent subjectivity of knowledge were unlikely to sway Americans, the naive confidence in technological constructions created a circumstance under which the real and the televisual became identical.

Vergil's unmatched ability to sew together historical reality with cultural mythology provides a model for how the post-factual age might become the age of aesthetic truth. The parallel between the *Aeneid* and the American "new world" story has been noted from the start. In the same century as Columbus' expedition, the Italian Pietro Martire d'Anghiera compared the European landing in America to "when Aeneas arrived in Italy"<sup>138</sup>. Yet the religious attitude of the early colonists limited Vergil's reach on these new shores. Puritan minister Cotton Mather made it very clear that his adoption of the *Aeneid* in his heavily Vergilian *Magnalia Christi Americana*, "Great Works of Christ in America", was not a paganizing Renaissance revival. *Tantae molis erat, pro CHRISTO condere gentem*, Mather proclaims<sup>139</sup>.

Despite his clear attraction to Vergil as an American poet, Mather could not see his people as governed by the same gods. The Biblical literalism of his theology created a strict division between scriptural Christian facts and pagan myths, which only serve a *pro forma* role in aesthetic expression. Yet that division has crumbled forever in a post-textual age, while Vergil still endures, ready to tell us how we might see our history and our dreams in a single vision.

Alongside this epistemological shock, America has also suffered a moral crisis following its confident expansion. When we read history, we now confront the same moral dilemma of

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<sup>137</sup> Besides *Simulacra and Simulation*, he also wrote a somewhat tongue-in-cheek cultural exploration of hyperreality in the United States entitled *America*.

<sup>138</sup> "American literature" in *The Virgil Encyclopedia*.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

*imperium* Aeneas confronts in the moments he hovers over Turnus, doubting the rights of his sword. Less than a few generations ago, nearly every educated American would have agreed Thomas Jefferson was a visionary author of the universal principles of human freedom. Yet the return of the human element to philosophy has encouraged us to look beyond his texts, where we found a slave-owner and rapist. Parry's *Two Voices of Virgil's Aeneid* was written in 1963, right when it had also become imperative for any sensitive and subtle observer to find two voices in American history. Alongside the official account of an empire constantly expanding in liberty, the historian should also note the unrecorded voices who found only exploitation by participating in the American experience. If this new Rome is to advance beyond the propaganda of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, a text famously written for and by the victors, the historian should be subtler than a factory inspector who finds management proud and workers well-treated on the day of their visit.

In the decades since this challenge emerged, it has become more difficult than any social protester of the 1960s could imagine. They believed that the two voices could be healed and unified, that they might slip a flower down the barrel of a gun and transfigure America's history of violence. Instead, the two voices have become millions of voices of social disintegration. The skepticism towards official narratives has turned into a paralyzing death spiral of social doubt, while the military-industrial state against which the hippies protested remains. The spirit of Thomas Hobbes returns in a more frightening postmodern incarnation — everyone's voice is at war with all others, while private digital streams create private digital realities. Americans no longer fear the monolithic invading forces of foreign powers, but the madness of their neighbors, regular people who just may take up a shooting spree. Yeats' poetic imagination of modernist despair crossed the Atlantic to become a literal reality.

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.*

Vergil's world also fell apart, and yet the center still holds. Aeneas wanders a lonely frontier, and yet believes that his every action resounds in the stars — Vergil can teach us how to turn our private nightmares into global dreams. Yet how can we embrace this flux? What endures through these historical repetitions? We can read the *Aeneid* just as Aeneas viewed the transmigration of souls in underworld, as a privileged insight into a completed history beyond any individual perspective. For Aeneas, it ordained the future, but we may take it a step further. We can see the cycle of violence, the same tragedy cycling over from our past, yet also enlightening us in a common human experience, a historical process all have felt yet none have overcome.

When empire has become our nightmare, Vergil still stands alongside Dante, leading us through this Roman underworld. Historical wisdom is the only escape from cyclic determinism, and these grave visions are actually a gift from our past. To perceive the cycle is master it, and revalue its elements at a higher level of understanding. It may shake us in the morning, when the dread dream disappears, yet the lingering images can inspire a renaissance.

## Appendix B – Astrology

A reading of the *Aeneid* as a historical cycle must consider the most common expression of cyclical temporality in the ancient world — the astrological zodiac. Though we cannot confirm that Vergil had any particular astrological interest, it is clear that Rome had achieved some awareness of Hellenistic astrology by the Augustan age. Marcus Manlius' *Astronomica* of the early 1st century CE belongs to the same elevated literature of dactylic hexameter verse defined by Lucretius and Vergil in the preceding generations. Augustus himself adopted the imagery of the sign of Capricorn on his coinage, while his successor Tiberius became known as a devotee of the divinatory arts, obsessively consulting the court astrologer Thrasyllus<sup>140</sup>. Though we moderns have been hesitant to read any classic through its astrology, it cannot be avoided when Vergil links astrological symbolism to the triumph of Augustus himself. The invocation of the *Georgics* imagines that Augustus may ascend into the constellation of Libra as a god.

anne nouum tardis sidus te mensibus addas,  
qua locus Erigonen inter Chelasque sequentis  
panditur (ipse tibi iam bracchia contrahit ardens  
Scorpius et caeli iusta plus parte reliquit) (*Geo.* 1.32-5)

*Or you (Augustus) may add yourself as a new star in the slow months, in that area of the sky between Virgo and the Scorpion's pursuing bite, as the burning Scorpion now retracts its claws, and cedes you a part of the sky more than you need.*

Libra, the sign of the balance marking the autumnal equinox, also makes an appearance later in the book, where it balances the hours of light with those of darkness (1.208-10). Alongside Capricorn, Libra seems to have been the definitive sign of the Augustan age. In Book 4 of the *Astronomica*, Manilius assigns each realm of the earth an astrological sign, and Libra belongs to Italy, whose empire now places the world in balance, while Scorpio, representing the world below, belongs to Sicily and Carthage (*Astronomica* 4.769-82).

This creative application of astrology to the geography of the Mediterranean offers us an insight into the Roman cultural imagination of Vergil's time. The association of Carthage with Scorpio accords with Book 4 of the *Aeneid*, as Dido's tragedy is one of betrayal, obsession, and the vengeance — themes astrologers would broadly characterize as Scorpionic, the sign of the underworld where Dido will rejoin her husband in love.

Turnus evokes Taurus, the astrological sign of the bull. The association enriches Vergil's characterization of Turnus' death as a sacrifice, as the bull was a sacrificial animal. It also places the epic in dialogue with the tradition of heroic bull slaying going back to Theseus. In a more astrological sense, Gilgamesh and Enkidu slay the bull of heaven in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, an

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<sup>140</sup> Barton's "Augustus and Capricorn" discusses this imperial symbol, which provides some insight into the difficulty of studying ancient astrology, as Augustus was not reported to have been born under the sun sign of Capricorn.

act of heroism perhaps connected to the religious rites marking the start of the year under Taurus in ancient Mesopotamia<sup>141</sup>.

At Roman feast of the Parilia was celebrated on April 21, when the sun ingresses into Taurus. In the *Fasti*, his study of the Roman calendar, Ovid suggests that the feast is celebrated in honor of Rome's birth, a theme certainly relevant to the *Aeneid*. At this feast, the priests of Pales, the god of livestock, sacrifice cattle in an archaic ceremony which still was celebrated in the age of Augustus (*Fasti* 4.721-862). Like Vergil's depiction of death of the Turnus, the Parilia celebrated the ancient bull even in its sacrifice.

Yet the astrological influences over Vergil's narrative penetrate even deeper, as the cosmological conflict of the epic reflects the basic division of Hellenistic astrology<sup>142</sup> between *kakopoioi* and *agathopoioi*, "bad-doers" and "good-doers", or, in the astrological idiom, malefic planets and benefic planets. Saturn and Mars are the greater and lesser malefics, while Jupiter and Venus are the greater and lesser benefics. In the *Aeneid*, Saturnine Juno is the source of all strife in the poem, and Mars also sides with the Italians in the final conflict — *kakopoioi*. Jupiter reassures the Trojans of their Roman province, and Venus aids her son Aeneas — *agathopoioi*.

Vergil's identification of Juno with Saturn in the epithet *Saturnia Iuno* brings his cosmology into accord with astrology. Yet this also may not have been a purely Vergilian inspiration, as there was a tradition in Hellenistic astrology of regarding Saturn as a feminine planet<sup>143</sup>. A feminine Saturn also balances out the gender representation of the malefics and benefics, providing the Platonic symmetry which the ancients doubtlessly desired in their cosmology.

The reversals and reconciliations of these gods and goddesses can be seen astrologically, as an expression of their cyclical manifestation in the temporal cosmos. There are no pure benefics or pure malefics in astrology, and likewise the epic cycle of the work turns over so that each is revealed in its opposite. Saturn, as Juno, reconciles himself to Jupiter's victory, while Turnus curses out *hostis Iuppiter* for his fate (*Aen.* 12.895). As the final planet of the ancient solar system, and the one with the slowest orbit, *Saturnia Iuno* circles the epic, following its most consequential transformation. In February the sun is in the sign of Aquarius, which was governed in antiquity by the planet Saturn. At this time Ovid also recounts that the goddess Juno was celebrated and a ritual purification of the old year was performed (*Fasti* 2.19-46). The renewal of Saturn through Juno completes the yearly cosmological cycle.

In this turning cosmological universe, benefic favor may even accompany its beholder straight to a tragic death. Pallas marches out into battle,

qualis ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda  
quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignis

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<sup>141</sup> Under astrological precession, the start of the year, the vernal equinox, would have taken place under in sign of Taurus until the year 2200 B.C.E., at which point the equinox took place in the sign of Aries, where it remained for the duration of classical antiquity.

<sup>142</sup> Beck's *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology* lays out the essentials of Hellenistic astrology.

<sup>143</sup> See Brennan's "Saturn As Feminine".

extulit os sacrum caelo tenebrasque resolvit (*Aen.* 8.589-91).

*Just like the morning star has bathed in the Ocean's tide, the star which Venus loves before all others, as she raises its sacred appearance in the sky and kisses away the shadows.*

Doomed Carthage was also beloved by Juno "more than all the other lands" (*Aen.* 1.15). Astrology presents us with a spirituality in which divine favor also engenders divine ruin, as not even the gods can escape the flux of time. The brightness of the morning star at dawn could not be seen without the darkness in which she rises.

A greater appreciation for astrological symbolism allows readers of Vergil to appreciate the epic as a cyclic whole. While Vergil has made eternity visible in a mythological history, this feat of imagination was only possible through an astrological worldview, sensitive to the transformations of time in the circling of the stars.

## Appendix C – Visuals

C-1

*The Apotheosis of Washington* (1865), U.S. Capitol

The deified George Washington presides over the heavens in the persona of Jupiter beneath the national motto *e pluribus unum*. The personified goddesses Liberty and Victory sit at his sides.



C-2

*Reverse of the Great Seal of the United States (1782), U.S. Department of State*



C-3

*Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius* (ca. 1618), Villa Borghese





## Appendix D – The Historical Paradigm

Spengler's <i>Sunset of the West</i>	Nietzsche's <i>Birth of Tragedy</i>	Roman History	Vergil's Universe	Social Organization	World Understanding	Cultural Products	Representative Quotation
<i>Urkultur, Dasein</i> (Dreaming Being)	Homeric Greece/ Presocratic philosophy	Monarchy	<i>Troia</i> and <i>Italia</i> , the world of the <i>Eclogues</i>	Tribes or bands of kinsmen, oral contracts, an economy of reputation and personal relationships, warlordism <b>Ex: Mycenaean Greece</b>	Poetic religion, oral traditions, heroic honor, sacred animism of local mythology, loose boundary between the divine and secular worlds, reverence for the song of the bard, organicity of nature, metaphoricality of society	Epic poetry, handcraft and weaponry, decorative royal dress, cosmological tapestry, the shield of Achilles, <i>der Sängerkrieg, der Himmelsscheibe</i>	Generations of men are like the leaves. In winter, winds blow them down to earth, but then, when spring comes again, budding wood grows more. And so with men-- one generation grows, another dies away. — <i>Iliad</i> 6.181-5
<i>Kultur</i>	Periclean Athens/Socrates	Republic	<i>Graecia</i> , the world of the <i>Georgics</i>	Emergence of the city-state, codification of law, rise of an enlightened nobility that circumscribes or eliminates royalty, cultural and economic power of the skilled trades and guilds, evolution of a scholarly class <b>Ex: Athenian democracy in the polis</b>	Rationalized religion, civic virtue, systemic philosophy, contractual relationship between ruler and ruled, increasing tension between religious and scientific methodologies, holistic approach of the Renaissance man	the plays of Euripides, the trial of Socrates, the sculpture of Praxiteles, the Parthenon, the works of Aristotle, Bach fugues, Martin Luther's "95 Theses"	One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words. — Goethe
<i>Zivilisation, Wachsein</i> (Waking Being)	Hellenistic World	Empire	<i>Roma</i> , the world forming in the <i>Aeneid</i>	"megalopolis", vast cities of cultural and ethnic diversity, imperial monoculture, cultural secession and rise of gangs, cults, and varied subcultures, bureaucracy and technocratic control <b>Ex: Imperial Rome, Alexandria</b>	Administrative and pragmatic rationality, philosophical skepticism, religious fanaticism and syncretism of the "Second Religiousness", Messianism, merging of elite and popular culture, historical repetition and allusion, "Alexandrianism" of extreme specialization, "Caesarism" of popular demagoguery, society as a vehicle for military and economic expansion	Juvenal's satires, gladiatorial games, a Praetorian security state, the <i>Domus Aurea</i> , the Pantheon, the catacombs of Rome, <i>basilicae</i> , distant military outposts, abandoned mining towns, The Empire State Building, sitcoms, the shield of Aeneas	The world is nearly all parceled out, and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered and colonized. To think of these stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far. — Cecil Rhodes

## Appendix E – Rings and Cycles

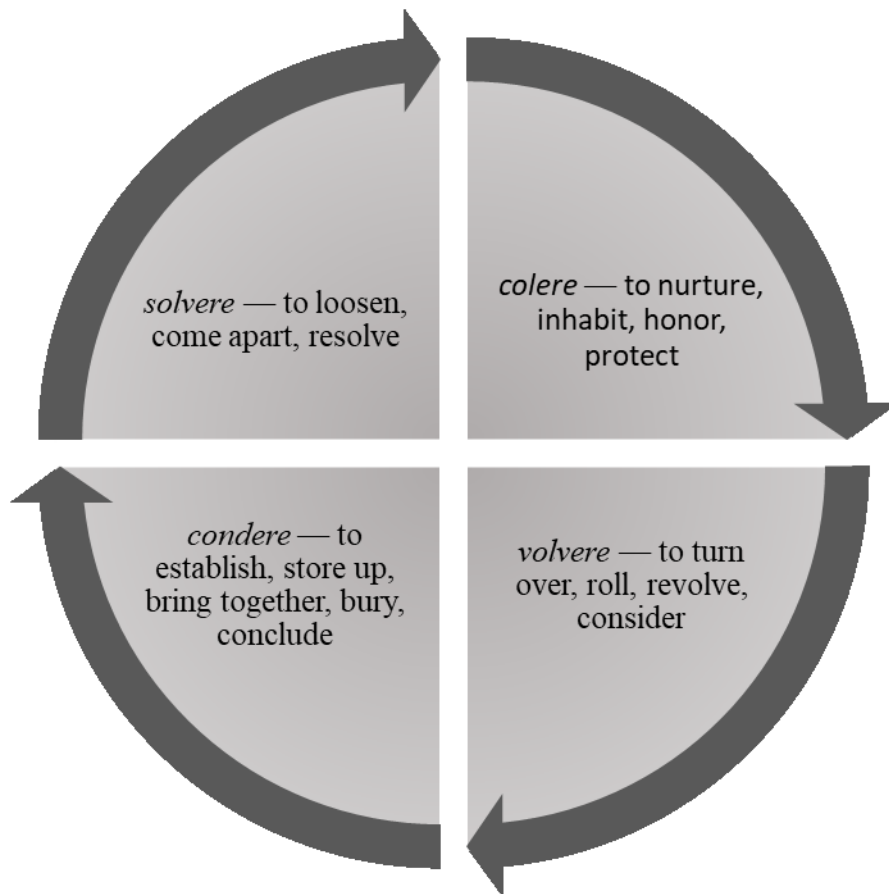
E-1

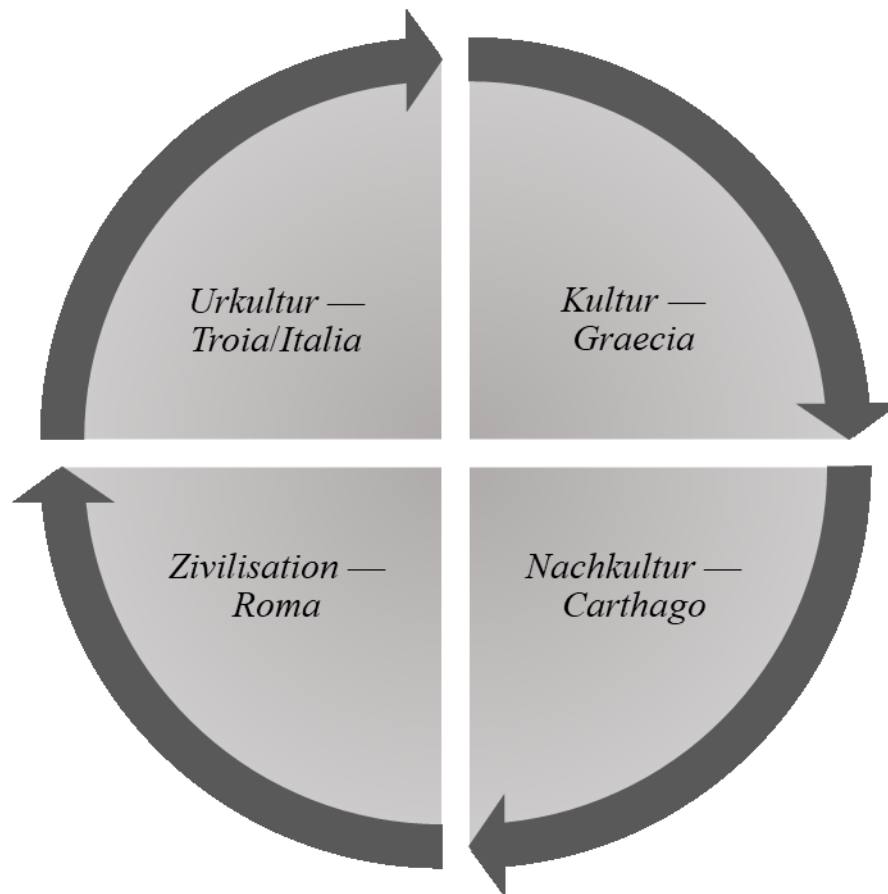
*The Ouroboros (1478)*



The basic symbol of eternal cycle, the early modern scribe Theodorus Pelecanos copied the ouroboros from the alchemical works of Synesius. In defining the eternity of the Roman experience and embracing the transmigration of souls, Vergil brings the Hellenistic world back into contact with this mythic serpentine eternity, now expressed as the recurring drama of history.

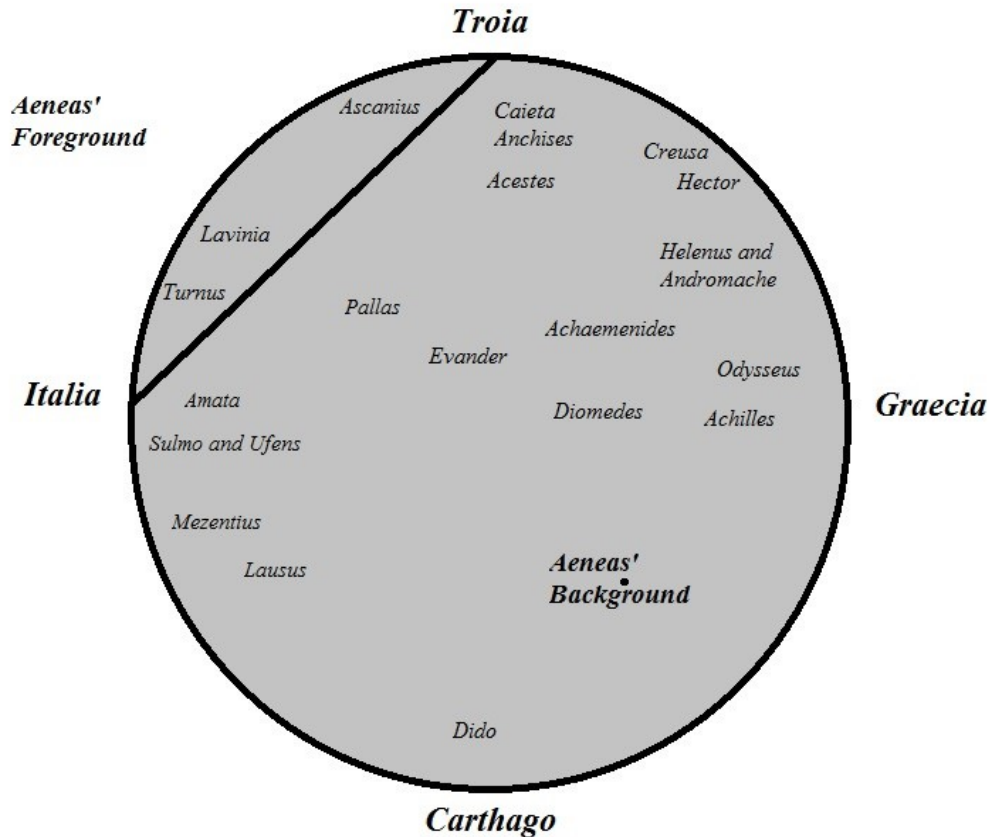
*Planting and Founding, Dissolving and Turning*



*Spengler's Cycle in Vergil's Universe*

This correlation of Spengler's cycle with Vergil's pertains more to the general scheme of Vergil's history than to the plot of the *Aeneid* itself, as neither *Roma* nor the *Kultur* phase of *Graecia* of the polis directly appear, although they certainly participate in the cultural landscape of the epic<sup>144</sup>. *Carthago* represents an interesting case, as its association with Juno and the verb *colere* suggest *Kultur*, yet it is a society of refugees from Phoenicia that will compete with *Roma* to achieve *Zivilisation*. Midway between the two poles, unsuccessfully striving for Rome's position, it occupies the transitional phase of the Hellenistic world, an "after-culture" which dies before the phase of full expansion. It passes away still loyal to its past, like Dido still longing for Sychaeus. This is how *Karthago* functions in Vergil's narrative, and the intermediary position also works in a strict historical chronology, as the Carthagians flourished in the Hellenistic world.

<sup>144</sup> Perhaps Diomedes' maturation in Book 11 represents the later maturation of the Greek polis.

*Aeneas' Journey Through Time*

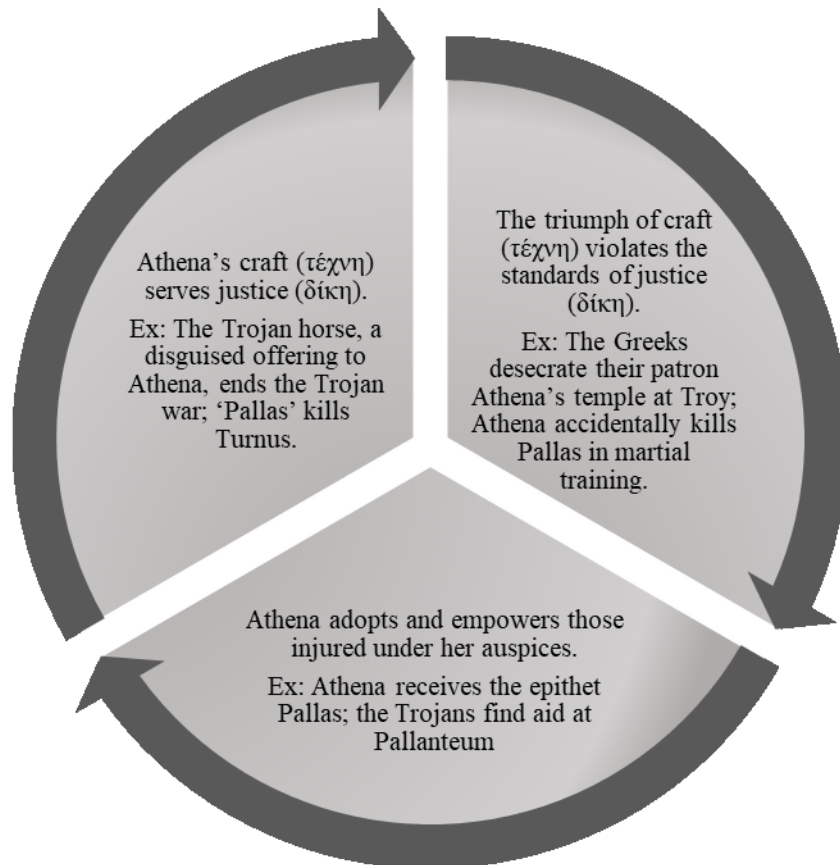
The characters in the foreground, the ones who have traversed the cycle and remain at its end, substantially participate in the Rome which will continue to cycle forward over the years. Ascanius, also Iulus, is the personification of the Julian family itself, while Turnus and Lavinia represent the living Italian land and ethnicity, as well as its martial ethos.

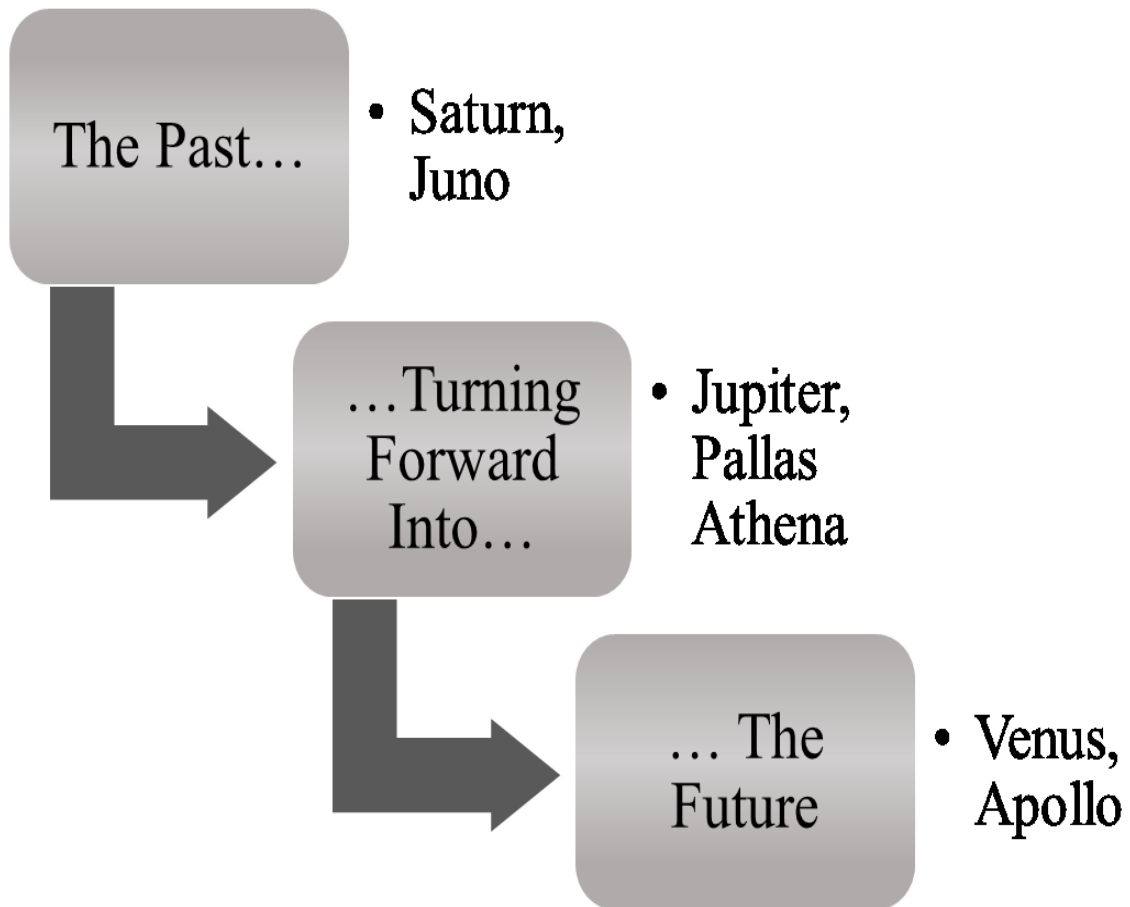
Caieta and Anchises, Aeneas' parental figures, lie buried in Italy, while Creusa and Hector died with Troy. Helenus and Andromache, having taken up residence in Epirus, now reside between *Troia* and *Graecia*.

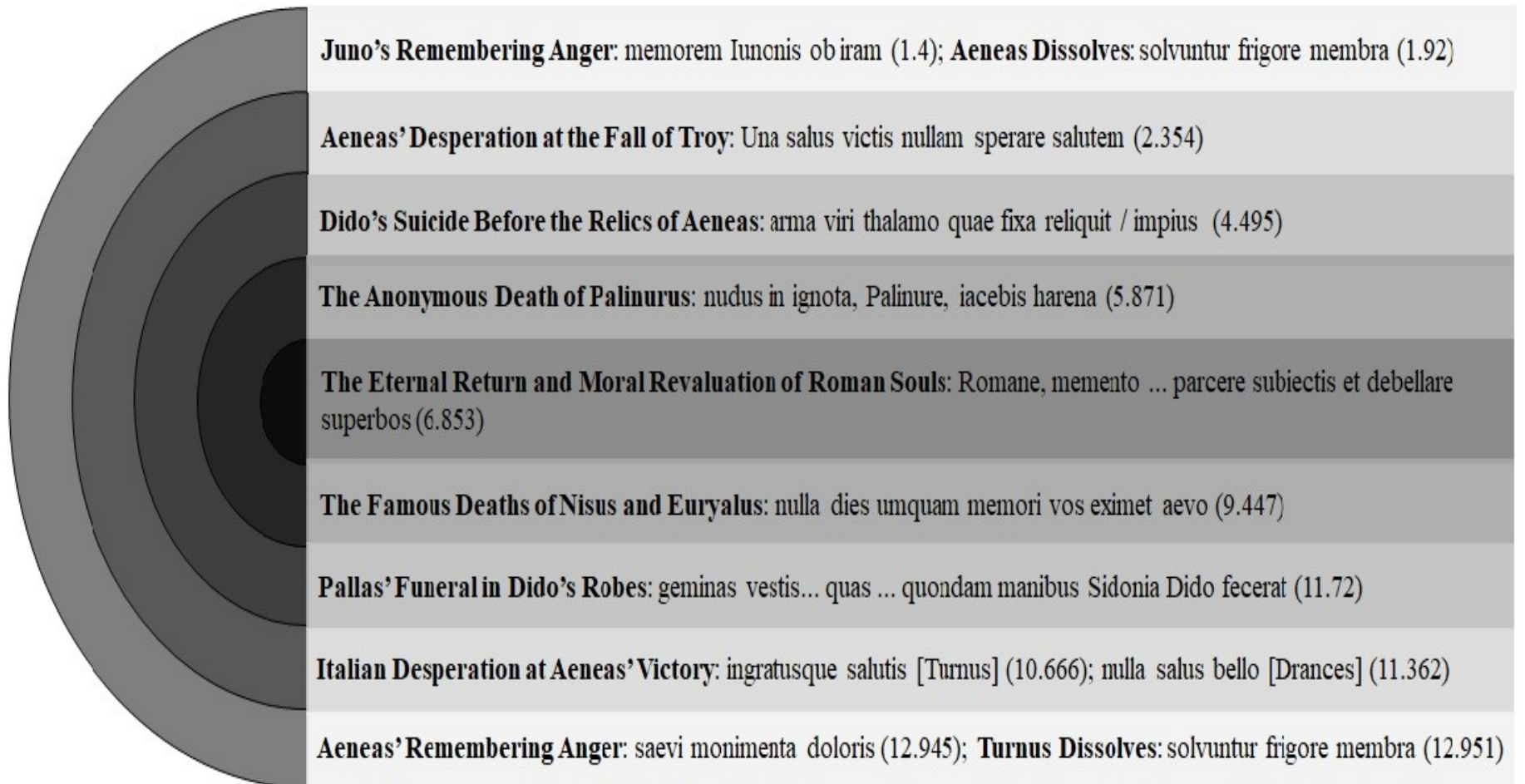
Pallas is spiritually present at the final scene, and his memory links to the memories of the Greeks at Troy. Diomedes and Achaemenides stay in the picture, while Odysseus and Achilles have been subsumed in the personae of Aeneas and Turnus.

Dido, like Carthage, disappears entirely, except for the memories evoked by her gifts. She only appears in the foreground through her curse. That curse also harms the defeated Italians as collateral damage, as they meet very disturbing ends in the second half of the epic.

*Pallas Athena volvens*





*A Ring Construction of the 'Aeneid'*



This ring structure of the epic does not aim to be exhaustive or suggest perfect parallels in every case. Rather than attempt to discern a perfectly balanced geometry in the work, it aims to illustrate the comprehensive perspective that is gained when readers look for Vergil's rings as a *method* of reading. Moreover, the rings vary in their definition. The bookends at Books 1 and 12 are very clearly marked, while the connection between the funeral pyre of Dido and the funeral pyre of Pallas requires more interpretation. The visit to the underworld in Book 6 is the clear pivot point where the moral universe turns over in the dictum *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, and Aeneas becomes a *Romanus*.

A strictly geometric approach should be avoided because there are other significant rings completed outside of this main pattern, like the ring of deceptions between Sinon, Aeneas, and Dido in Books 2-4, (Section 2.2.4). Athena's adoption of the Trojan cause runs throughout the epic, beginning in the rape of Cassandra in Book 2, and concluding with the justice Pallas demands at the end of the epic (Section 4.3, Appendix E-5).

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