

**Success and Failure in the Mission of Aeneas**

JOE PARK POE

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Although a few have expressed reservations, almost all modern critics agree that Aeneas—at least in the second half of the *Aeneid*—is to be regarded as a symbol of the ideal Roman. Aeneas' mission testifies plainly to the importance placed by the Romans upon devotion to duty and disregard of self for the common good. For duty's sake Aeneas sacrifices himself, suppressing his personal desires, denying fulfillment of his emotional needs, in order to accomplish the destiny dictated by heaven: *ego poscor Olympo*.

Aeneas' devotion to duty—that is, his lack of personal interest and involvement—is a matter of the greatest importance for the interpretation of the *Aeneid*. The degree of Aeneas' self-detachment is one measure of his success. For Aeneas' goal is more than merely military victory and the foundation of a new state. His conquest of Turnus and the Italian tribes has a universal significance, as the first step in the creation of the *res Romana*. It symbolizes Rome's righteous and disinterested conquest of the haughty and passionate in order to establish universal, permanent peace (6.851–53):

tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento  
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.

War for the Romans is not an end in itself but a means for the achievement of a higher moral goal, and that achievement depends on the conquerors' purity of motives, as well as on their military effectiveness.

It is not the purpose of this paper to question Aeneas' essential suitability for the great task assigned him by destiny. Clearly in the first six books Aeneas is prepared: the story of Aeneas' voyage describes a moral as well as a geographical progression. Whether or not it can be said that Aeneas' "character" develops within

the course of the epic, at least his attitude develops.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the voyage Aeneas' concern is almost wholly with the present. He desires only a home and peace—an understandable reaction after the traumatic experiences of the war and the final terrible destruction of his city. However, as he is driven from one place to another by supernatural forces, and as his future gradually becomes clear to him, he slowly becomes reconciled to his fate. He is schooled to suffering and selflessness. He may weep at leaving Helenus' Little Troy, but he leaves readily enough.

Of course in Book iv Aeneas backslides; with Dido he surrenders himself to his emotions. But by the end of the book his passion has burned itself out. In Book iv Aeneas' strength of purpose drops to a low point, but in the end he reaches a final decision to follow without question where fate leads: *Italiam non sponte sequor* (4.361), he tells Dido as he prepares to leave. And after this point he never consciously indulges his own desires to the detriment of his sacred mission. So, with the tragedy of Dido the conflict between self-indulgence and self-sacrifice, which is the theme of Books i–iv, is, in a sense, resolved.<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing in Aeneas' words themselves to indicate that his decision is definite and unchangeable. More than once before Aeneas has acted *non sponte sua*. But the situations of Dido and Aeneas, their past sufferings and their present missions, are very similar, and for each the love affair is represented as self-indulgent neglect of duty. Their identification is so close that

<sup>1</sup> For the development of Aeneas' character see Richard Heinze, *Vergils epische Technik*<sup>1</sup> (Leipzig 1903) 266–73. Viktor Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil*, tr. Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor 1962) 58–59, who argues against Heinze, thinks that the strength of Aeneas' character gradually reveals itself and fulfills its potential but that there is no essential change in character. It seems to me that the distinction is over-subtle.

<sup>2</sup> Of course the process of Aeneas' preparation for greatness is not completed until his purification and edification in Book vi. But Book iv marks a turning point in Aeneas' career. It is here that he consciously turns his back upon irresponsible self-indulgence. Heinze (above, note 1) 267 (as well as others after him—see Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* [Oxford 1963] 277–80), thinks that Aeneas shows moral weakness in Book v (700 ff.). But to insist that it is unworthy of Aeneas ever to have any doubts or anxieties seems to be an unnecessarily doctrinaire Stoic interpretation. To insist that Aeneas be so strict a Stoic as to be insensible is, as Pöschl shows (above, note 1) 54–58, a misinterpretation of Aeneas' character and its meaning. (Pöschl however does go too far in depreciating the “Stoic” aspect of Aeneas' character. Aeneas' acceptance of fate is of great importance, and in this sense the figure of Aeneas is a Stoic conception.)

the finality of Dido's act of suicide must suggest the finality of Aeneas' decision. In fact Vergil is even more explicit. As Francis Newton has shown,<sup>3</sup> a clear pattern of "wound" imagery establishes Aeneas' responsibility for Dido's death. Her love is a wound (4.1-5, 67), she is like a wounded deer (4.68-73), and Aeneas is an archer (1.184-93, 4.141-50). With Aeneas' sword she kills herself on their bed of love, placed on a ritual pyre. Perhaps it is not too much to say (Newton, give him credit, does not) that Dido is a scapegoat. She represents the emotional and desiderative side of Aeneas' nature which he sacrifices.

Therefore, when Aeneas in Books VII-XII shows sympathy for the Latins' suffering and disclaims enmity for them (11.106-19), or tries to prevent the breaking of a truce in the face of great provocation and with great personal risk (12.311-17), this is more than just generalized humanity and goodwill. The selflessness and self-control which he manifests here are carefully prepared for in the earlier books and are a matter of crucial symbolic importance. As Brooks Otis says, "He fights well because he feels it his duty to fight well, but he fights without the violence and cupidity that make war an end in itself or an expression of irrational *furor* indifferent to any peaceful or rational purpose. The obverse of *debellare superbos* is always for him *parcere subiectis* because his final aim is *pacis imponere morem*."<sup>4</sup>

It seems to me that this interpretation is essentially correct, but Vergil is not a simple poet and it need not be the whole truth. If it were, the *Aeneid* would be rather superficial. Aeneas and what he represents would offer too pat an answer to the world's problems. One of the epic's "messages" is that man's destiny (or, if you will, the universe, or man's condition)<sup>5</sup> has a mixed nature. As well as good it brings evil, exemplified in Juno's vindictive fury or in the serpents in Book II which kill the man who

<sup>3</sup> Francis L. Newton, "Recurrent Imagery in *Aeneid IV*," *TAPA* 88 (1957) 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> Otis (above, note 2) 316.

<sup>5</sup> I hesitate to use the term fate because Juno consistently opposes something called *fatum*, which is the final outcome of Aeneas' adventure. But Heinze (above, note 1), according to whose Stoic interpretation fate is identical with the will of Jupiter (p. 287), cannot really account for the evil of mankind's lot which Juno represents. He talks as if everything not specifically willed by Zeus were due to meaningless chance: In Epic poetry "eine Art Freiheit der Entschliessung" is necessary, and only "gewisse Dinge sozusagen die Hauptsachen" are determined by fate (p. 289). Otis (above, note 2) 226, footnote, sees that Vergil's concept of fate is really much more complex than this.

was right and take refuge at the cult-figure of Minerva. To the question *tantaene animis caelestibus irae* (1.11) the epic clearly answers, Yes. It would be very strange then if Aeneas' mission, the vehicle of destiny, were represented as a thing of pure goodness. It is the thesis of this paper that, when such as Dido and Turnus are sacrificed, they are not merely sacrificed to a greater good. They also are sacrificed because—the universe being what it is and human nature being what it is—that greater good never is perfectly realized.

The progression of the first half of the *Aeneid* is generally upward. There is a gradual winning-back, from great misfortune to virtual success. The second half, too, superficially ends successfully: that is, Aeneas wins the war. But it seems curious, in view of the injunction upon Aeneas *pacis imponere morem*, that Aeneas' adventure ends where it began—with the burning of a city.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is even more ominous that the last act is an act of violence. The epic ends not with a recognition and reconciliation, as does the *Iliad*, but with a killing.

Suffering, struggle, and destruction are several times represented in the first half of the *Aeneid* by scenes of darkness and violence: the frenzy of the storm and the terror of night. Co-

<sup>6</sup> Michael C. J. Putnam, in his recent book *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1965) 174, 192, 201–202, has seen clearly the significance of both the burning of Laurentum and the slaying of Turnus. The killing of Turnus, he says, “gives the lie to Anchises’ utterances about the future of Roman conduct.” My paper, which was almost completed when his book appeared, for the most part reinforces the argument of his Chapter 4 (151–201) on the basis of somewhat different evidence. I do disagree with his interpretation on two counts: Putnam exaggerates Aeneas’ guilt, and he seems to consider the *Aeneid*’s end entirely calamitous. Turnus is virtuous, “the last hope of his people” (p. 152), and “Aeneas fails to incorporate the ideal standards proper for the achievement and maintenance of empire” (p. 193). Moreover, “The progress of empire . . . is attributed only to madness, vengeance, and death” (p. 196). This is too extreme. Turnus does lose some of his fiery impetus in Book XII, but when Aeneas is wounded and it looks as if Turnus will be successful he is violent enough (12.324–45). And whatever Aeneas’ shortcomings (which are manifested only occasionally) he is at least preferable to the raging madness which Turnus almost consistently manifests. Putnam also seems to interpret Aeneas’ failure as a personal one more than as an expression of a not entirely benevolent fate: “The majesty of Jupiter is not so much expressly on the side of Aeneas as it is against Turnus” (p. 194). He seems not to recognize the significance of the participation of the gods in acts of violence in Book XII as in other parts of the *Aeneid*. However, I am in agreement with Putnam’s basic conclusion: that Aeneas in the end betrays tendencies of violence and irrationality which hint ominously at the future.

ordinate with the progress from disaster toward success there is a general movement from storm and darkness to the calm serenity of new light. In Book I Neptune calms the winds, brings back the sun (1.143), and rides away over the surface of the now becalmed sea (1.147). In Book II, as the battle ends, light begins to appear over the peaks of Mt. Ida, and the survivors set out toward the mountain, toward the dawn (2.801-804). In Book III, as Aeneas departs from Crete (3.194-99),

tum mihi caeruleus supra caput astitit imber  
noctem hiememque ferens, et inhorruit unda tenebris.  
continuo venti volvunt mare magnaue surgunt  
aequora, dispersi iactamur gurgite vasto;  
involvere diem nimbi et nox umida caelum  
abstulit, ingeminant abruptis nubibus ignes.

As the voyage continues we are told that *glacialis hiems Aquilonibus asperat undas* (3.285). The sunlight is not mentioned until they set out from Buthrotum, on the final leg of the journey to Italy (3.508); the sun sets and the mountains of Greece behind them are cast into shadow. At this point, however, they land in order to rest, and resume their journey in the middle of the night, so that Italy first is sighted with the new dawn (3.521-23):

iamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis  
cum procul obscuros collis humilemque videmus  
Italiam.

Dawn, then, represents peace, new hope, triumph.<sup>7</sup>

When Aeneas' voyage is resumed from Carthage (5.8-11), significantly,

<sup>7</sup> Of course not every mention of dawn carries this symbolic significance. But there is a general movement from darkness to light which reflects the Trojans' successful progress. The only time this movement is reversed is in the Dido episode, on the day of the hunt, which begins with the rising sun and ends with a storm. However, this undoubtedly symbolizes Aeneas' reversal of direction. For a general study of dawn imagery in the *Aeneid* see R. C. Jensen, "Dawn and Dusk in the Epics of Vergil and Lucan" (Diss. Univ. of North Carolina, 1961 [microfilm]). He recognizes that dawn sometimes is symbolic of hope (p. 47) and is sometimes the background for "momentous events" (p. 22), but fails to observe any progression from darkness-turmoil-struggle to light-serenity-peace. See also A. L. Keith, "The Dawn in Vergil," *SP* 22 (1925) 520-21, and Sophie Schulbaum, "La Symbolique de la lumière et des couleurs chez Virgile," *Eos* 33 (1930-31) 117.

ut pelagus tenuere rates nec iam amplius ulla  
 occurrit tellus, maria undique et undique caelum,  
 olli caeruleus supra caput astitit imber  
 noctem hiememque ferens et inhorruit unda tenebris.

This movement through and out of darkness, storm, and turmoil is climaxed with the attainment of the Tiber's mouth at the beginning of Book VII, which is described in these idyllic terms (7.25-34):

iamque rubescebat radiis mare et aethere ab alto  
 Aurora in roseis fulgebat lutea bigis,  
 cum venti posuere omnisque repente resedit  
 flatus, et in lento luctantur marmore tonsae.  
 atque hic Aeneas ingentem ex aequore lucum  
 prospicit. hunc inter fluvio Tiberinus amoeno  
 verticibus rapidis et multa flavus harena  
 in mare prorumpit. variae circumque supraque  
 adsuetae ripis volucres et fluminis alveo  
 aethera mulcebant cantu lucoque volabant.

However, the calm serenity at the beginning of Book VII soon yields to the swirling, frenzied fury of Allecto, which communicates itself to Amata and Turnus. As Heinze demonstrated, Allecto's frenzy is parallel with Aeolus' storm in Book I,<sup>8</sup> but there is a major difference: Aeolus' storm is the first major scene of the book, while the Trojans' adventures in Italy begin with dawn and quiet.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that in the second half of the epic there is a clear movement in the opposite direction, from dawn to darkness. But violence and turmoil no longer are associated with darkness. The only battle scene which takes place at night is the night raid of Nisus and Euryalus.<sup>10</sup> At the beginning of two battles (in addition to the battle of Book XII which is discussed below) dawn specifically is mentioned (9.459-63, 10.256-59):

et iam prima novo spargebat lumine terras  
 Tithoni croceum linquens Aurora cubile:

<sup>8</sup> Heinze (above, note 1) 178.

<sup>9</sup> Otis (above, note 2) 320, points out that the first favorable reception in Book VII, followed by Allecto's swirling fury, is a reversal of the sequence, storm to favorable reception, in Book I. Kenneth Reckford, "Latent Tragedy in *Aeneid* VII, 1-285," *AJP* 82 (1961) 252-69, has shown that even before the reappearance of Juno (7.286) there are hints of the "storm" to come.

<sup>10</sup> This episode, of course, was inspired by a Homeric precedent but this is not a full and sufficient explanation of its inclusion.

iam sole infuso, iam rebus luce relectis  
 Turnus in arma viros armis circumdatus ipse  
 suscitatur.

et interea revoluta ruebat  
 matura iam luce dies noctemque fugarat:  
 principio sociis edicit signa sequantur  
 atque animos aptent armis pugnaeque parent se.

And the first, spontaneous conflict between Trojans and Latins is described in this way (7.526–30):

aeraque fulgent  
 sole lacessita et lucem sub nubila iactant:  
 fluctus uti primo coepit cum albescere vento,  
 paulatim sese tollit mare et altius undas  
 erigit, inde imo consurgit ad aethera fundo.

Light, and then storm.

However, Book xi opens with a sunrise which does not bring with it fighting. In the last lines of Book x (905–909) the wounded Mezentius begged for burial, after which Aeneas wordlessly thrust his sword into Mezentius' throat. Now, there being no further mention of burial, we find that Aeneas has stripped Mezentius of his armor; and the first light of the new day illuminates him hanging up Mezentius' bloody spoils (11.4, 8–9):

vota deum primo victor solvebat Eo.  
 . . . aptat rorantis sanguine cristas  
 telaque trunca viri.

Not many lines later (11.182–85) dawn is again described as shining upon the mournful Trojans burning their funeral pyres. And at the end of this book the terrible and decisive struggle between Aeneas and Turnus is threatened (11.908–14):

ac simul Aeneas fumantis pulvere campos  
 prospexit longe Laurentiaque agmina vidit,  
 et saevum Aenean agnovit Turnus in armis  
 adventumque pedum flatusque audivit equorum.  
 continuoque ineant pugnas et proelia temptent,  
 ni roseus fessos iam gurgite Phoebus Hiberno  
 tingat equos noctemque die labente reducat.

The scene is one of darkness and tumult. Dark dust hovers over the battlefield. But the reddening sun shines on Aeneas' on-rushing horses, and respite is now brought not by the rising, but by the setting of the sun.

In other words, the original significance of the dawn imagery is perverted, and here it is night that brings peace—a peace no longer associated with bright new hope for the future, but with suspension of action and the insentience of the night. In Book XII the next dawn (113–15) does bring new hope of peace of a more positive kind. Both armies march out to sacrifice and to witness the duel which is to decide the war's outcome. But the peace is forestalled by an omen—an eagle which appears in the rosy morning light (12.247: *rubra fulvus Iovis ales in aethra*), snatches up a swan, and is attacked in turn by *cunctae volucres* which press upon him “in a cloud” and darken the sky (12.253–54):

aetheraque obscurant pennis hostemque per auras  
facta nube premunt.

This is a false omen which inspires the Latins to break the truce, and it is followed by a storm of spears (12.283–84):

it toto turbida caelo  
tempestas telorum ac ferreus ingruit imber.<sup>11</sup>

In Book II, as Bernard Knox has shown,<sup>12</sup> the controlling symbols are fire and serpent. References to fire and serpent, symbolizing violent, irrational passion and malice, pervade the book and are applied to Trojans and Greeks alike. (In the case of Pyrrhus, who is compared with a snake which has just emerged from hibernation and shed its old skin, the serpent symbolizes rebirth as well as malice.)<sup>13</sup> But when, near the end of the book, a flame plays around the head of Ascanius (2.682–84) this—as the text itself tells us (2.701–704)—signifies his regal destiny and the divine support of Aeneas' mission. Therefore, Knox suggests that since this is a sacred flame (2.686), and the words *innoxia* and *mollis* describe it, the flame here has lost all its sinister im-

<sup>11</sup> The rise of storm-imagery, in the second half of the *Aeneid*, to symbolize human violence and furor is discussed by Magdalena von Duhn, “Die Gleichnisse in den Allectoszenen des 7. Buches von Vergils *Aeneis*,” *Gymnasium* 64 (1957) 80–83, who shows that the storm originates with Juno.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Knox, “The Serpent and the Flame,” *AJP* 71 (1950) 379–400.

<sup>13</sup> Knox (above, note 12) 393–94.



plications. Knox also shows that the words *lambere* and *pasci* (2.684), describing the flame's action, are reminiscent of the twin serpents which killed Laocoön (see 2.211, 215). But here he thinks the snake imagery symbolizes only rebirth.<sup>14</sup>

I believe that this flame, with its new "proclaimed" meaning, does signify much the same thing as light and tranquillity after darkness and struggle; that it is primarily a productive rather than a destructive flame. But does it seem likely that fire and the serpent can now completely have lost their old significance? The fire is, indeed, harmless to Ascanius, but does this mean it is harmless for everyone else? Vergil need not have used these particular symbols at all unless he intended to exploit their implications, and in fact fire and serpent are used again more than once to indicate violent passion and destructive force. In one other instance these images are associated directly with Ascanius. Cupid, disguised as Ascanius, clings to Dido and is fondled in her bosom (1.717-19). This he does in obedience to orders of Venus, Aeneas' protecting deity: *occultum inspire ignem fallasque veneno* (1.688). (Similarly Allecto's serpent in Book vii slips over Amata's bosom, entwines itself around her neck, *fallitque furem / vipeream inspirans animam* [7.350-51].) There is at least a suggestion, then, that the mission which Ascanius represents has its sinister aspects.

In Book vii fire imagery, as well as snake imagery, is resumed. In the episode mentioned above, when Allecto casts a serpent into Amata's bosom (7.347), the motifs, serpent and fire, are again connected—the snake instills in Amata a fiery poison (7.354-56)—and it is apparent that they represent much the same thing. However, images of fire are by far the more common. Fire is the special property of Turnus after Allecto (7.456-57) has thrown into his breast her fiery torch (just as she cast a snake into Amata's bosom), and it signifies his raging passion.<sup>15</sup> And throughout the second half of the *Aeneid* fire-imagery is used frequently (of Trojans and Latins alike) to symbolize the violence and fury of battle. But significantly only in two episodes is it attached to the figure of Aeneas. It is important to Aeneas' function as a symbol of Roman virtue that he not be subject to the kind of frantic

<sup>14</sup> "Rebirth . . . is here its proclaimed and only meaning" (Knox [above, note 12] 397).

<sup>15</sup> See Pöschl (above, note 1) 91-93, 103.

emotionalism which fire represents. Aeneas must practice constant self-control because his is an effort *debellare superbos* and *pacis imponere morem*. The Stoic idea that all passions and sins are identical, and that the smallest self-indulgence grows naturally into the greatest *furor* is clearly to be seen in Dido's example in Book iv. Aeneas, then, cannot afford emotional incontinence because fire spreads—fires of passion tend to kindle other fires<sup>16</sup>—and Aeneas is fighting a war (eventually) to end war.

But on two occasions he is inflamed.<sup>17</sup> The first is the battle in which Pallas is killed. Even at the beginning of the battle his armor blazes (10.270–75):

ardet apex capiti cristisque a vertice flamma  
funditur et vastos umbo vomit aureus ignis:  
non secus ac liquida si quando nocte cometae  
sanguinei lugubre rubent, aut Sirius ardor  
ille sitim morbosque ferens mortalibus aegris  
nascitur et laevo contristat lumine caelum.

*Ardet apex capiti* is reminiscent of Ascanius' *innoxia flamma* of Book ii. But *funditur* and *vomit* are not, and this fire signifies more than just Aeneas' brilliance, power, or divine inspiration. The baleful implications of *sanguinei*, *lugubre*, *sitim*, *morbos*, *aegris* should not be ignored. After Pallas has been killed, Aeneas loses all self-control; in his distress, *ut semel intepuit mucro* (10.570), he is likened to the terrible monster Aegaeon, belching fire from its fifty mouths (10.565–70),<sup>18</sup> and no battle scene of the epic is bloodier

<sup>16</sup> See Newton (above, note 3) 39–43. The flame of Dido's self-indulgent love (4.2, 54, 66, 68) is kindled by Venus (1.637–60) through the agency of Cupid (1.688); it kindles in Iarbas a blaze of anger (4.197), then grows into a burning madness (4.300–301, 364, 376), and finally is externalized and consumes her. Aeneas recognizes the danger, for he says to her, *desine meque tuis incendere teque querelis* (4.360).

<sup>17</sup> However, the description of the helmet presented to Aeneas by Venus should also be noticed (8.619–20):

interque manus et brachia versat  
terribilem cristis galeam flammasque vomentem.

The use of fire-imagery, and particularly the image of the fire-breathing monster in Books viii and x, to indicate a "reversal of role" in Aeneas has been observed by Michael Wigodsky. (See the abstract of his unpublished paper, "The Arming of Aeneas," in *CW* 57 [1963] 95). This reversal of role Wigodsky describes as "becoming like Achilles"—an assumption by Aeneas and the Trojans of the more primitively savage characteristics of their Greek conquerors.

<sup>18</sup> There is not much in the description of Aegaeon to distinguish him from the fire-breathing Chimaera on Turnus' helmet (7.785–88). Nevertheless, one critic, W. H. Semple, "War and Peace in Vergil's *Aeneid*," *BRL* 36 (1953–54) 216, thinks that this simile is descriptive of the "ubiquitous energy" with which Aeneas prosecutes the war.

than the description of Aeneas' raging, vengeful *aristeia* in Book x.

One critic who has recognized the destructive element in Aeneas' character is C. M. Bowra, who calls it a "strain of savagery" inconsistent with his usual pitying, philosophical character.<sup>19</sup> Bowra concludes that, while the contradiction may have been a failure on Vergil's part, perhaps Vergil consciously was making a judgment about the heroic type. In his book *From Vergil to Milton* he adds,

Augustus undoubtedly took a fierce revenge for the murder of his adopted father, and it is possible that Vergil modeled Aeneas' revenge for Pallas on it. He seems to have felt that there are times when it is right for even a compassionate man like Aeneas to lose control of himself and be carried away by anger. This anger is . . . good not only in its cause but in its results. It helps Aeneas to secure his destiny and to overcome those who resist it.<sup>20</sup>

In other words, Bowra, although he seems to be disturbed by this darker aspect of Aeneas' character, refuses to interpret it as an unhappy thing. The *furor*, or loss of control, which fire represents is equated with power.

It is true that fire-imagery is used, in virtually every battle-scene throughout the second half of the *Aeneid*, to describe the state of mind of the participants. It is likely that Vergil wishes to say that "fire" is an inescapable attribute of the successful warrior; that, as Bowra in effect says, passion and violence are necessary to overcome passion and violence. The inevitability of passion may very well be the moral of the myth told in Book viii of Hercules' conquest of Cacus. Hercules is a traditional symbol of the strong man of reason and principle, the "opponent of anti-social *furor*"<sup>21</sup> and Cacus, with his fiery breath, is almost the essence of brute violence and furor. Yet in the heat of the struggle Hercules blazes not much less than Cacus. He is *furens* (8.228) and *fervidus ira* (8.230), and (8.219-20)

hic vero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro  
felle dolor.

Cacus is a terrible creature but Hercules is terrible too.

<sup>19</sup> C. M. Bowra, "Aeneas and the Stoic Ideal," *G&R* 3 (1933-34) 21.

<sup>20</sup> C. M. Bowra, *From Vergil to Milton* (London 1962) 69. For a similar opinion see W. F. Jackson Knight, *Roman Vergil* (London 1944) 142-43.

<sup>21</sup> Otis (above, note 2) 335. See, for instance, Horace, *Carmina* 3.3.1 ff. (cited by Otis).

But even if *furor* is necessary for the conquest of *furor*, and this may explain Aeneas' loss of self-control, it does not entirely justify it.<sup>22</sup> In the cases of Pyrrhus, Dido, Turnus, and Amata, fiery passion is represented as a source of evil. How can it fail to be melancholy in Aeneas? It means that Aeneas, at least partially, succumbs to what his enemies represent and what it is his duty to overcome.<sup>23</sup>

Once fire imagery is associated directly with Augustus himself, and perhaps here, too, may be seen an equivocal attitude toward the warrior-type. Augustus, who had brought peace to the Romans after a century of near-anarchy and civil war, is depicted on Aeneas' shield as a warrior, at the battle of Actium, belching forth twin flames from his temples: *geminas cui tempora flammis / laeta vomunt* (8.680–81). Here I think that fire clearly is not a derogatory symbol: it signifies extraordinary and triumphant power. Nevertheless Augustus, as Bowra says, had caused great injury. He was regarded as an avenger as well as a peacemaker, whose power was suspect.<sup>24</sup> Is it unlikely that, as well as triumph, this flame suggests a potential for destruction? A few lines later (8.697) we are told that Cleopatra, his enemy,

necdum etiam geminos a tergo respicit anguis.

This recalls the dreadful twin serpents of Book II, and it might be asked why Augustus' temples so specifically belch *geminas flammis*.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Bowra is preoccupied with the concept of the epic hero as a "saga hero." Perhaps, as he says ([above, note 19] 21), the "strain of savagery" was an integral element in the Roman character; and if Vergil's purpose in the *Aeneid* was to enunciate a cultural ideal, this, for Bowra, is a good and sufficient reason for its presence in Aeneas.

<sup>23</sup> See Putnam (above, note 6) 152 and 162.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Hercules in Book VIII is the symbolic counterpart of Augustus (as Hercules is associated or compared with Augustus in Horace, *Carmina* 3.14.1 ff. and 4.5.33 ff., and in *Aeneid* 6.801 ff.), and the Hercules-Cacus episode is a political allegory. For the connection between Hercules and Augustus, see H. Schnepf, "Das Herculesabenteuer in Virgils *Aeneis*," *Gymnasium* 66 (1959) 250–68, and H. Bellen, "Adventus Dei: Der Gegenwartsbezug in Vergils Darstellung der Geschichte von Cacus und Hercules," *RhM* 106 (1963) 23–30.

<sup>25</sup> It may be that here we are supposed to be reminded of the two-crested helmet of Romulus in Book VI (779–80), and that this image of Augustus is an even more specific reference to his warlike valor. For James Henry, *Aeneidea* (London-Dublin-Meissen, 1873–1892) 3.412, citing Val. Max. 1.6.8, says that the two-crested helmet is distinctive of Mars. Nevertheless, the use of the word "twin" a few lines later, in connection with the serpents, which are symbols of destination and malice, makes it unlikely that Augustus' flames are merely symbols of valor and prowess.

In Book XII, when Aeneas is inflamed a second time, a clear parallel is drawn between Aeneas' hot frenzy and Turnus' mad possession. The book is divided fairly abruptly into two halves. At the beginning Turnus' *furor* is recalled and re-emphasized. He burns with passion to continue the war (12.3, 9, 71, 101-102), while Aeneas longs for peace and struggles even in the face of extreme provocation against the passion to which finally he succumbs. Once Aeneas' potential for violence is hinted at, as he goes forth to the place appointed for his duel with Turnus (12.167):

sidereo flagrans clipeo et caelestibus armis.

The primary reference in this description, just as in the description of Augustus in Book VIII, is to Aeneas' valor and divine inspiration. As Pöschl says, "Foretelling future victory, Aeneas' arms gleam with divine brilliance."<sup>26</sup> But it should be noticed that the word used here is *flagrans*, not *fulgens*. Nevertheless, Aeneas still tries to call everyone to reason (*quo ruitis? . . . o cohibete iras!* [12.313-14]), even when Italian treachery brings again upon the Trojans the storm of violence (12.283-85; see above, p. 328) which for so long symbolized their suffering, and battle blazes furiously anew (12.293-301). His effort is in vain; though unarmed he is wounded.

Aeneas' wound is the turning point of the book. Finally he is infected by all the violence and loses his tolerant self-possession.<sup>27</sup> When he returns to battle after his miraculous cure he is a different man. His fury finally has been aroused, and he is great and terrible. As he and his followers shake the ground in their rage and might he is likened to a storm (12.451-55):

qualis ubi ad terras abrupto sidere nimbus  
it mare per medium (miseris, heu, praescia longe  
horrescunt corda agricolis: dabit ille ruinas  
arboribus stragemque satis, ruet omnia late),  
ante volant sonitumque ferunt ad litora venti.

Aeneas and Turnus now have partially exchanged roles. Turnus, in the first flush of enthusiasm after Aeneas' wounding, had driven

<sup>26</sup> Pöschl (above, note 1) 116.

<sup>27</sup> Putnam (above, note 6) 169, points out that perhaps Aeneas' wound is intended to recall the wounds of Dido and Turnus, who is compared with a wounded lion (12.4-9). Their wounds, too, symbolize an access of passion.

all before him like a storm (12.365–69). Although his fiery vigor continues to return sporadically until almost the end, he displays less and less eagerness for battle (12.615–16):

palantis sequitur paucos iam segnior atque  
iam minus atque minus successu laetus equorum.

In place of his hot, dynamic *furor*, several times he experiences a confusion—almost a paralysis—of emotion (12.665–66, 867–68, 905):

obstipuit varia confusus imagine rerum  
Turnus et obtutu tacito stetit.

· · · · ·  
illi membra novus solvit formidine torpor,  
arrectaeque horrore comae et vox faucibus haesit.

· · · · ·  
genua labant, gelidus concrevit frigore sanguis.

But Aeneas now blazes with passion. When he notices the peace and quiet of Latinus' city (at the prompting of his *pulcherrima genetrix* [12.554–56]), the sight kindles his mind (12.558–60):

aspicit urbem  
immunem tanti belli atque impune quietam.  
continuo pugnae accendit maioris imago.

“Bring firebrands,” he says, “and I shall reduce it to smoking ruins” (12.569, 573):

eruam et aequae solo fumantia culmina ponam . . .  
ferte faces propere foedusque reposcite flammis.

This is a return to the beginning, with this important difference: the victim now has become the destroyer. This alone need not indicate any fall from virtue, for it is Aeneas' unhappy duty to make war, although the hint is disturbing that the epic's movement is cyclical rather than progressive. But it should be noticed that at this point Vergil chooses to emphasize the peacefulness of the city.<sup>28</sup> If it is true that ordinarily Aeneas resorts to violence only in the interest of long-term peace, it is not true here. It is difficult to see what strategic value the burning of the city could have. In any case, this is not a calculated decision, but one made suddenly, in the heat of battle. Aeneas reacts to the tranquillity

<sup>28</sup> See Putnam (above, note 6) 174.

of the city with a blaze of vindictive passion, and I suggest that the reader is supposed to ask himself, "Where will all this burning end?"

Aeneas' hot fury continues to the book's very end. It is customary to justify Aeneas' killing of Turnus as a necessity of empire, and as an unhappy act of duty consistent with his selflessness:<sup>29</sup> "He seeks the life of Turnus not vindictively but because his death will save the lives of thousands." "Turnus, who is full of *furor* and *violentia*, is incapable of lasting peace." "Aeneas finally saw that it was too late for Turnus to get mercy . . . and Aeneas, as Pallas' destined avenger, had an obligation that greatly over-shadowed any *humanitas* he might wish to display toward his beaten foe."<sup>30</sup> Perhaps it is true that Turnus' death is necessary, although there is no clear indication that this is so (for Turnus' ardor has cooled considerably). But it seems significant that Turnus, unlike Hector, does not immediately receive a fatal wound. Vergil places responsibility for the killing squarely on Aeneas' shoulders. And Aeneas' decision now is not a deliberate and reasoned one as the statements above imply. In a moment of calm reflection he almost spares Turnus, but he kills him in a fit of burning passion (12.950-51):

hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit  
fervidus, ast illi solvuntur frigore membra.

It is true that Aeneas' slaying of Turnus is given divine sanction. Jupiter sends a Fury in the form of a bird of death which flies in Turnus' face and strikes his shield (12.865-66). This seems to signify the justice and necessity of the deed: The wise and impartial moderator of the universe sacrifices this one man for the good of all. But this bird is a creature of dread, clearly unsuited to represent enlightened good will. It is a creature of Hades, not Olympus, to which Night gave birth and *revinxit serpentum spiris* (12.845-50):

dicuntur geminae pestes cognomine Dirae,  
quas et Tartaream Nox intempesta Megaeram  
uno eodemque tulit partu, paribusque revinxit

<sup>29</sup> Pöschl (above, note 1) 137, calls it an act of *pietas*.

<sup>30</sup> Respectively: C. J. Ellingham, "Vergil's Pilgrim's Progress," *G&R* 16 (1947) 74; A. H. F. Thornton, "The Last Scene of the *Aeneid*," *G&R* 22 (1953) 84; Otis (above, note 2) 380.

serpentum spiris ventosasque addidit alas.  
hae Iovis ad solium saevique in limine regis  
apparent acuuntque metum mortalibus aegris.

“Twins (*gemmae*) which Night bore along with (the third) Megaera,” is a very particular way to describe triplets. It is the author’s evident intention to indicate that, to some degree at least, the slaying of Turnus is of a kind with the killing of Laocoön (prefiguring the destruction of Troy) and the maddening of Amata. In other instances in the epic, evil has originated with Juno, Venus and Minerva. There, perhaps, the relationship between these goddesses and *fatum* is equivocal.<sup>31</sup> Here, however, the complicity of the father of the gods with the malign is made specific. There is, then, a touch of evil in the universe itself. It seems to me that there can be little doubt that Aeneas is preferable to Turnus and his uncontrollable passion; and Jupiter’s dispassionate authority is superior to Juno’s malice. Probably Aeneas represents the best solution possible for suffering mankind. The *Aeneid* does not ululate with the finality of tragedy. But the serious blemish which Vergil sees in the very fabric of things makes this a profoundly pessimistic work.

<sup>31</sup> See above, note 5.