

INVIDIOUS SUCCESS : SOME THOUGHTS ON AENEID XII

A lecture delivered to the Virgil Society

21st November 1964

by Miss Rhona Beare, M.A.

Book IV is not the only book in which Virgil has risked alienating our sympathies from Aeneas. He takes the same risk in Book XII, not by forcing him into what seems a dishonourable action but by recounting his most glorious military exploit from the point of view of the defeated. As Conington says, till Turnus is dead we can spare no thought for the conqueror and the fruits of victory. Virgil intended this; that is why Juturna is brought into the story, and why Virgil describes in such detail the changing moods of Turnus who, to increase the pathos of the story, is made to foresee his doom.

This is not the first time that Turnus has been in great danger but it is the first time that he has felt fear. In Book IX when trapped inside the Trojan camp he appeared as a hardened warrior who actually enjoyed fighting against odds. The Trojans, seeing the light in his eyes, the nodding plume and the flashing shield (731-733), are as frightened as cattle with a tiger in their midst (730).

adgnoscut faciem invisam atque immania membra
turbati subito Aeneadae (734,735).

When threatened by the gigantic Pandarus, whose brother he has slain, Turnus is not only bold, he is cool and confident:

olli subridens sedato pectore Turnus
'incipe, si qua animo virtus, et consere dextram:
hic etiam inventum Priamo narrabis Achillem.' (740-742)

One would have thought that the man who could face an army, alone, could face any single opponent, whatever his prowess. Yet on the morning fixed for his duel with Aeneas he is pale and silent; with downcast eyes he offers a humble prayer at the altar (219-221).

The previous day he had insisted on meeting Aeneas, and had spoken of him with contempt:

'nulla mora in Turno; nihil est, quod dicta retractent
ignavi Aeneadae, nec, quae pepigere, recusent.
congregior.' (XII 11-13)

What has produced this sudden change? Perhaps Virgil intended to insert some description of an evil dream that troubled him on the night before the combat. It was partly dreams and omens that drove Dido to despair. We can hardly suppose him to be the sort of soldier who boasts loudly when danger is a long way off but loses his nerve when it draws near; we know that he has fought in many campaigns, and Book IX teaches us that in the face of danger he is more likely to be rash than timid. Why should he fear Aeneas when he can face a whole army undismayed? He is not the man to calculate the risks of any encounter, but when he thinks of Aeneas I believe

he is troubled by a premonition of death. It is not rational but intuitive, like the despondency that attacked Antonio before he made his bargain with Shylock. Juturna does not tell him what she learnt from Juno, that Aeneas was fated to kill him, nor would he have guessed it simply from her anxiety to prevent a meeting (XII 480-485, 623-630); yet somehow he knows it (XII 636, 646, 678) and this is what so dismayed him at the solemnising of the truce.

In a weaker form this dread had attacked him before, but he had succeeded in smothering it. At the debate in Book XI his eagerness to defend himself suggests that there was some truth in Drances' accusation that he was afraid of Aeneas (XI 373-375). War he desires (415-433); single combat he will face if Latinus wishes it (434-437). Then the debate is interrupted by news that Aeneas is marching on Laurentum, and Turnus seizes the moment (*arrepto tempore* 459) to abandon talk of single combat and to prepare an ambush.

Again at the beginning of Book XII though he burns with eagerness to fight Aeneas (*ultra implacabilis ardet*), is it not partly because the Latins, like Drances, have stung his pride by doubting his courage?

Turnus ut infractos adverso Marte Latinos
defecisse videt, sua nunc promissa reposci,
se signari oculis, ultra implacabilis ardet
attollitque animos. (1-4)

His pride demands that he should fulfil his promise, because the course that he himself advocated - full-scale war - has again proved unsuccessful. He had asked the Latins to trust in Camilla and the Volscian cavalry (XI 432,433); the cavalry are routed and Camilla slain. Therefore he insists on a truce and a single combat. The word "sedatus" is now used of Latinus (XII 18) and Turnus by contrast is *turbidus* (10). He is driven on by *violentia* (45), a passion so strong that at times it chokes him (47). He bolsters up his confidence by speaking as if it were Aeneas who is afraid (XII 11, 12; 52; 75,76; 99) and arranges the duel for the earliest possible moment, in order to give himself no time for reflection. He fails however; at the solemnising of the truce his old fears return, stronger than ever because he is now in the presence of his enemy. Aeneas seems to overawe him, as Achilles, though unarmed, overawed the Trojans. For it is not only because Aeneas has fate on his side that Turnus fears him; in years, in strength of body and strength of will, Aeneas is clearly superior.

For a second time the arrangements for the duel are interrupted: Aeneas, wounded by an unseen hand, is forced to retire.

Turnus, ut Aeneas cedentem ex agmine vidit
Turbatosque duces, subita spe fervidus ardet. (324-325)

The armies have now engaged, in defiance of the truce, and Turnus leads on his men like the god Mars with Panic, Wrath and Treachery at his side. The reprieve however is only temporary; Aeneas returns to the field of battle and Turnus eventually must face him with the knowledge that this means his own death.

'stat conferre manum Aeneae, stat quidquid acerbi est
morte pati.' (678, 679; cf. 636 and 646-649)

It is at this point that we see Turnus at his best. In Book IX we admired him because he cared nothing for danger. Before the breaking of the truce we pitied him because he was afraid. This pity might have been tinged with contempt if he did not here show courage of a different and far more moving sort: the courage that a man may show when waiting to be hanged. It is not the rashness that refuses to see the danger. It is not the unshakable resolution, the nerves of steel, that enable a man to take risks in cold blood and with his eyes open. Virgil has given us an example of that: Sinon, who is not the less brave for being treacherous. He had to watch all his friends sail away, and wait on the beach to be seized by the Trojans. They might have killed him without listening to his story. They might have listened and believed, yet still thought him better dead. These risks Sinon ran, unarmed and friendless:

fidens animi, atque in utrumque paratus,
seu versare dolos, seu certae occumbere morti. (II 61, 62)

Sinon only risked death; Turnus faced a certainty. The only advantage Turnus has is that his hands are not tied; he can die fighting. So Coroebus died, and so Aeneas hoped to die, when Troy was captured by the Greeks. That night Aeneas awoke to find the city burning and men dying in the streets. He armed hastily, (nec sat rationis in armis, 314) - had he meant to escape from the city his conduct would have been rational, but he was mad with anger and meant to fight. Any hopes he may have had of recapturing the city were dashed by Panthus, who told him that though fighting was still going on the issue was no longer in doubt. Aeneas was not dismayed. He put himself at the head of a band of young Trojans, telling them that the gods had deserted Troy and that there was nothing left but to die fighting:

'moriāmur, et in media arma ruāmus.
una salus victis nullam sperare salutē'. (353,354)

This is great stuff. It reminds one of Corneille's heroes. But there is no pathos in it because there is no fear. Turnus, just because his heart sinks as he faces the inevitable, is more human.

For a short while his fears leave him, driven out by other emotions. Juturna, bent on saving his life, has kept him from fulfilling his duties as a general, and now a message arrives that the Trojans will storm Laurentum if Turnus does not come to the rescue.

aestuat ingens
uno in corde pudor mixtoque insania luctu
et furiis agitatus amor et conscia virtus. (666-668)

Instead of fear to hold him back from his duty here are strong passions to spur him on. He means to make the most of them before they fade; hence his words to his sister:

Hunc, oro, sine me furere ante furorem. (680)

This time he does not go with downcast eyes pale and silent to meet his enemy; he is compared to a boulder crashing down a mountain-side (684-690). The fight begins, and Turnus seems to be holding his own. Virgil does not say here, as he did earlier (218) that the combatants are clearly ill-matched; Aeneas is no longer an eagle fighting a swan (247-250) but a bull fighting a bull (715-724). This simile may be intended to show us how the fight appeared to Turnus, as well as how it looked to the watching armies.

It is only for a few moments however that they fight on equal terms. As Jupiter weighs their fates in the balance, the sword breaks in Turnus' hand. No sooner has Juturna given him another than Jupiter sends a Fury to drive Juturna away and paralyse Turnus' will and strength. The outcome of the combat cannot now show us that Aeneas is the braver or the stronger or the more skilled in arms, for Jupiter has disabled his opponent. This Turnus understands:

'non me tua fervida terrent
dicta, ferox: di me terrent et Iuppiter hostis'. (894,895)

No man can avoid his fate, not even Oedipus. We have already learnt to feel for Turnus because Fate is against him: here in a new way we are made to feel that he is not allowed a chance. I do not mean the hostility of Jupiter, for Jupiter's will and Fate are synonymous terms in the Aeneid. I mean that just as his sword broke when he most needed it so now his strength gives way; he loses even himself. Aeneas did not suffer this experience at the capture of Troy, nor Hector in his fight with Achilles; we are reminded rather of Patroclus whom Apollo struck so that he should not be able to defend himself against Hector:

τὸν δ' ἄτη φρένας εἶλε, λῦθεν δ' ἔκδ' φαίδιμα γυῖα,
στῆ δὲ ταφῶν'

(Iliad XVI 805-806)

Virgil wished to turn Aeneas' victory into a tragedy by making us pity the victim, and he has succeeded. How does this affect our attitude to Aeneas? His strength is not attributed, like Turnus' sudden weakness, to the gods; we are not even told that they guided his spear. Virgil does not risk turning him into a puppet. Aeneas is formidable: but we cannot admire a victory unless it is hard-won. If the Greeks had outnumbered the Persians at Salamis we should not admire them for winning. From Horatius to Jack the Giant-killer, all popular heroes fight "facing fearful odds". Aeneas this time has the odds in his favour, and it is not likely to be popular. For who that feels any sympathy for the underdog can admire the strength and ferocity of the brute on top of him?

Let us test this argument by comparing the death of Turnus to the death of Hector. Hector also is unfairly treated by the gods; Athena tricks him into facing Achilles by disguising herself as his brother and offering to stand by him. When Achilles casts his spear, and misses, she hands it back to him, which gives him an advantage over Hector. Achilles is also the more deadly fighter; otherwise Hector would not have run three times round the walls of Troy to escape him. In spite of these advantages, Achilles' victory does increase his glory. He is cruel and revengeful - far more so than Aeneas - yet he is still worthy to be the central figure of the Iliad. What makes him worthy? What gives him his half-divine splendour? The intensity of his emotions, especially grief and hate, make him more alive than other men. He is invincible in war and has killed so many that he inspires awe, like an earthquake or a whirlwind. Perhaps it is this awe that prevents us from censuring him, as it prevents us from censuring the gods. The more dignified and terrible a god appears, the more cruel he can be without losing our respect. Remember the vision in which Aeneas sees the gods destroying his native city. Remember what a magnificent figure Juno is throughout the Aeneid. The Olympians do not need to fight against odds in order to win our admiration; for the quality we admire in them is not courage but power. Achilles is not unlike a god. Though mortal, and fated to die young, we admire him like the gods because he is invincible.

Now this is not the case with Aeneas. Though the son of Venus, though destined to become a god, he has experienced toil, failure, hope deferred. He has not suffered one bereavement, like Achilles, but many: his city, his wife, his father. He does not remind us of Apollo, or an earthquake, or a whirlwind. We do not expect chivalry of Apollo, but we expect it of Aeneas. We dislike Aeneas' revenge on Turnus, but not Poseidon's on Odysseus. Conington, talking of the Italian war, says "Our feelings are shocked when we see Aeneas plunging his hands in blood as deeply as a Homeric warrior". He is not shocked when he reads the Iliad. In the same way you can admire Robin Hood and Dick Turpin, yet not wish Mr. Pickwick to steal. Becky Sharpe may ruin the tradesmen, but Elizabeth Bennett must pay her bills. Therefore Sir Maurice Bowra (From Virgil to Milton, Macmillan 1945) who admires the "heroic qualities" (p.46) of Turnus, admires in Aeneas not "his outbursts of heroic fury" (p.68) but the moments when "he sees past the fury of the fight to some higher end of unity and harmony" (p.84).

Almost everywhere in Book XII except at the solemnizing of the truce we see Aeneas as a destroyer. We begin with his arming (XII 107-109):

nec minus interea maternis saevus in armis
Aeneas acuit Martem et se suscitatur ira,
oblato gaudens componi foedere bellum.

This follows a description of Turnus' lust for slaughter, but that does not grate upon our nerves as this does. 'Maternis in armis' reminds us that Aeneas has a big advantage over his enemy; his spear will pierce Turnus' shield and corselet, but Turnus' sword will merely break on the shield that Vulcan made. It is almost as if Aeneas were fighting an unarmed man. Then 'saevus' and 'se suscitatur ira'; how unattractive Aeneas is when angry! Especially when his bitterness prompts him to taunt a fallen foe. In Book X for instance after cutting off the head of Tarquinius he says:

istic nunc, metuende, iace! non te optima mater
condet humi, patrioque onerabit membra sepulchro:
alutibus liquere feris, aut gurgite mersum
unda feret, piscesque impasti vulnera lambent. (557-560)

Virgil intends us to see in these taunts the effects of Aeneas' grief at the death of Pallas (cf. X 532, 533), and to remember how Achilles, also seeking vengeance for a friend, flung Lycaon's corpse into the river saying "Go and feed the fishes; your mother will never bury you" (Iliad XXI 120-125). How far these heroes fall below the standard set by Odysseus, who rebuked Eurycleia for triumphing over the dead suitors (Odyssey XXII 410, 411):

ἐν θυμῷ, γρηῖ, χαῖρε καὶ ἴσχεο μῆδ' ὀλόλυξε·
οὐχ οὐκίη κταμένοιισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάσθαι.

Though Odysseus calls it impiety, Virgil does not make the impious Mezentius behave in this way but instead Camilla (XI 686-689) and Turnus (XII 356-361). In the Iliad exulting over the dead or dying is common practice and reflects no discredit on the speaker. Odysseus himself ἐπεδξαστο (Iliad XI 449) after dealing Socus his death blow. Virgil allows one such boast to Turnus and one to Camilla; only Aeneas utters more than one (X 557, 592; cf. 897).

We are meant to excuse Aeneas because it is grief for Pallas that has embittered him; Turnus and Camilla have no excuse but their natural ferocity. They both enjoy killing, and the glory they win makes them arrogant, prompting them to triumph over the fallen. They have not enough self-restraint or respect for the proprieties to abstain. The same lack of control leads them to take unnecessary risks; if they had not been blinded by battle-fever (IX 757-761; XI 781), Turnus could have captured the Trojan camp and Camilla could have escaped death. Whatever ferocity they display they will not forfeit our sympathy because we know that each is about to die and because we have not been led to expect gentleness from them.

Virgil expected that we should forgive Aeneas too, knowing that it is grief that makes him savage; if we do not, it is because he demands to be judged by a higher standard. He is fully adult; he has a highly developed sense of responsibility; his self-control enables him to think clearly and act according to his conscience on all occasions. If this was not wholly true of his conduct in Book II or Book IV, it has been the case ever since his visit to the Underworld. That is why he alone tries to restore order when the truce is broken (XII 311-317). Consequently the smallest act of injustice would seem more shocking in him than a serious offence committed by a hot-head like Turnus.

It is not justice, however, it is mercy in which Aeneas falls short. After the death of Pallas he not only refuses to spare enemies who ask for quarter (X 523-536); he prepares to honour the funeral of Pallas with human sacrifice (X 517-520). Yet mercy is normally one of his more attractive virtues, and pity can move him deeply (I 453-493. Mercy is perhaps a Trojan characteristic; Priam spares Sinon II 147 and Anchises spares Ulysses' comrade III 590-691).

Aeneas still shows these qualities after Pallas' death, but not consistently. When Lausus comes to the rescue of his father Mezentius, Aeneas admires his pietas and tries to avoid hurting him. Lausus however continues to rain blows on Aeneas' shield, until Aeneas grows angry and kills him with a single blow.

At vero ut vultum vidit morientis et ora,
ora modis Anchisiades pallentia miris,
ingemuit miserans graviter dextramque tetendit,
et mentem patriae subiit pietatis imago.
'quid tibi nunc, miserande puer, pro laudibus istis,
quid pius Aeneas tanta dabit indole dignum?
arma, quibus laetatus, habe tua; teque parentum
Manibus et cineri, si qua est ea cura, remitto.
hoc tamen infelix miseram solabere mortem:
Aeneae magni dextra cadis.' increpat ultro
cunctantes socios, et terra sublevat ipsum
sanguine turpantem comptos de more capillos. (X 821-832. The translation
is by W.F. Jackson Knight).

"But at the sight of his dying face and the mysterious pallor of death on his countenance, Anchises' son sighed heavily in pity as he discerned this reflection of his own love for his father. He stretched forth his right hand and spoke: 'O piteous boy, what shall Aeneas the True give to you to match your high feat of arms and your great goodness? Keep for yourself the arms which gave you so much joy; and I release you to join the spirits and ashes of your ancestors, if such a freedom can concern you. But even in

disaster you at least have some consolation for your grievous death in knowing that you died by the right hand of mighty Aeneas'. He then set to chiding Lausus' comrades who were hanging back; and it was he who lifted Lausus from the ground where he lay defiling with blood his well-trimmed hair".

Here at least Virgil successfully engages our sympathy simultaneously for the slayer and the slain, and he does it by making the slayer himself feel pity. We may compare the scene in the Underworld, where it is the depth of Aeneas' pity for Dido that enables us to feel for both of them at once (Book VI 450-476).

It is his mercy that impresses the Laurentian ambassadors, who come in Book XI to ask for the bodies of the slain:

'pacemne exanimis et Martis sorte peremptis
oratis? equidem et vivis concedere vellem'. (110,111)

This is the same man who, seeing the wounded Lucagus fall from his chariot, said (and even here Virgil calls him pius):

'Lucage, nulla tuos currus fuga segnis equorum
prodidit, aut vanae vertere ex hostibus umbrae;
ipse rotis saliens iuga deseris.' (X 592-594)

I find it quite revolting, and am not reconciled to it by the knowledge that Patroclus made a similar comment after killing a Trojan (Iliad XVI 745).

Aeneas then is merciful and ruthless by turns in books X - XII. Nowhere does he change so abruptly and yet naturally as in the last fourteen lines of the epic. Up to this point he had meant to kill Turnus as soon as he had the chance, but now seeing him wounded, helpless, admitting defeat, he hesitates until his eye falls on the sword belt which Turnus had stripped from the body of Pallas:

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 e sanguine sumit'. (945-949)

What is the effect on the reader of that moment of hesitation? Does it make one say 'How different Aeneas is from Achilles, on whom Hector's plea had no effect at all'? Or does it by contrast heighten the ferocity of the following lines? Whatever Virgil intended, the effect in my case is that the Aeneas I can sympathise with is transformed by hate into a man I cannot like at all. And it is at this point that the epic ends, with Aeneas literally hitting a man when he is down:

hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit
fervidus. ast illi solvuntur frigore membra
vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras. (950-952)

"Aeneas' eyes drank in the sight of the spoils which revived the memory of his own vengeful bitterness. His fury kindles, and terrible in his rage, he said:

'Are you to be stolen hence out of my grasp, you who wear spoils taken from one whom I loved? It is Pallas, only Pallas, who by this wound which I now deal makes sacrifice of you; he exacts this retribution, you criminal, from your blood'. Saying this and boiling with rage he buried his blade full in Turnus' breast. His limbs relaxed and chilled; and the life fled, moaning, resentful, to the shades".

Virgil has chosen to end at the climax instead of following it with quieter scenes free from bloodshed. In this the Aeneid resembles not the Iliad but the original *Μῆνις* which according to W. Leaf ended with Achilles dragging Hector's body to the camp. It was to correct the harshness of this ending that the last two books of the Iliad were composed. Virgil chooses to end at the moment of highest tension.

The last twenty-two lines of the Aeneid, like Book XII as a whole, are designed to secure our sympathy for Turnus. There were several possible ways of doing this. If Aeneas had thought of Turnus' youth and his love for Lavinia he might have felt more forgiving. He might even have regretted that he was bound (by his promise to Evander) to kill him. The death of Turnus would then more closely have resembled the death of Lausus: while we pitied him we should be sharing the feelings of Aeneas. Alternatively Turnus might have won our admiration by the courage with which he faced death. If when Turnus fell wounded to the ground Aeneas had said "You shall pay me now for the death of Pallas" and Turnus had replied "Do what you please. It was Fate that defeated me, not you" the epic would have ended on the same note at Book X. There it is Mezentius who falls to the ground.

advolat Aeneas vaginaque eripit ensem,
et super haec: 'ubi nunc Mezentius acer, et illa
effera vis animi?' contra Tyrrhenus, ut auras
suspiciens hausit caelum mentemque recepit:
'hostis amare, quid increpitas mortemque minaris?
nullum in caede nefas; nec sic ad proelia veni;
nec tecum meus haec pepigit mihi foedera Lausus.
unum hoc, per, si qua est victis venia hostibus, oro:
corpus humo patiare tegi. scio acerba meorum
circumstare odia: hunc, oro, defende furorem;
et me consortem nati concede sepulchro.'
haec loquitur inguloque haud inscius accipit ensem,
undantique animam diffundit in arma cruore. (896-908)

"Aeneas flew to Mezentius, whipped sword from scabbard, and spoke over him: 'Where is now the old fiery Mezentius and all the fury of his madman's will?' The Etruscan looked up to heaven and drank in the air; and recovering consciousness he made answer: 'Pitiless enemy, why mock me, why threaten me with death? There is no wrong in slaying; with no such belief did I come to do battle and Lausus my son made no such compact between you and me. But, if there can be indulgence for conquered enemies, I make you one request. Allow my body its covering of soil. I know that my people's bitter hatred pens me round. Keep, I entreat you, their mad fury away from me, and admit me to share a sepulchre with my son'. So he spoke, and deliberately gave his throat to the point; and in waves of blood he scattered his life upon his arms."

Notice that Mezentius asks for burial, as Turnus does. Though Aeneas gives no promise and Book XI tells us nothing except that Mezentius' armour was used for a trophy, we can hardly doubt that Aeneas did bury him with Lausus as he requested. Virgil does not tell us whether Turnus' request also was granted and he received immediate burial, or whether the story ended like the Iliad with king Daunus coming as a suppliant to ask for the body of his son. When Hector asked Achilles to let his parents ransom his dead body, Achilles replied (Iliad XXII 345-348):

μή με, κλον, γούνων γουνάζεο μηδὲ τοκίων·
αἶ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη
ᾧμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, οἷα ἔοργας,
ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι...

Virgil was not prepared to let his hero talk like that. If Turnus, like Mezentius and Hector, had simply asked for burial, Aeneas would not have refused it. But he asks that alternatively he should be spared altogether, and it is this request that Aeneas is turning over in his mind when he notices Pallas' sword-belt. Nor do Aeneas' last words suggest that the vengeance he desires is anything more than the death of his enemy. Five minutes later he may have been directing the Rutulians to take up the body. Even if at the time he meant to leave the body unburied, he surely could not have persisted in this resolution; after all, he was going to marry Turnus' cousin.

Virgil encourages no such speculations. Had he told us that Turnus received burial he would have given an illustration of Aeneas' magnanimity, but the story of Turnus' death would have lost some of its power. Virgil wants us to see Turnus as a lonely and helpless figure. First Juno abandons him; then Juturna is driven from his side. He must not now find a friend in Aeneas.

This then is the right ending for the tragedy of Turnus. Is it the right ending for the story of Aeneas? Suppose the epic had ended like the Odyssey, with Aeneas happily married to Lavinia and establishing a lasting peace with the Latins and the Rutulians. This would have involved making the Aeneid about two books longer. Turnus' death may end the war, but it cannot immediately end the mistrust and hate that have sprung up between Trojans and Italians. In the speech in which he proposes to storm Laurentum Aeneas shows that he now feels little good will even towards Latinus. (Earlier he had said: *non ego nec Teucris Italos parere iubebo, nec mihi regna peto* (XII 189, 190)). Now instead: *urbem hodie causam belli regna ipsa Latini ni frenum accipere et victi parere fatentur eruam* (XII 567 - 569). If his marriage to Lavinia were to follow closely on such a speech as this, it would resemble the wedding of Agamemnon and Cassandra in the Troades. Lavinia's mother has hanged herself and her cousin has been killed by Aeneas. Unless the wedding is postponed for at least a year it will be what Mackail called it: "a wholly political or dynastic arrangement ... for him, as for her, only one more sacrifice to duty" (Introduction to Mackail's Aeneid, page LXV).

It may be objected that this was normal; neither in Virgil's day nor in Priam's was a princess expected to choose her husband. True, but she was not normally expected to marry a foreigner who had just inflicted a crushing defeat on her native land. Yet even such a wedding as this can be represented as a cheerful, even a romantic, occasion: Shakespeare does so in Henry V. But then the French princess has not been gravely upset by the invasion of France and her mother has not committed suicide. Lavinia - though we are told little of her feelings - seems to be a timid and sensitive girl who can have known little happiness or peace of mind from the moment when her parents first disagreed over the choice of a husband for her.

From Book VIII to Book XII the events follow swiftly upon one another; the effect would be extremely lame if the last book had to begin "so the seasons passed, and old griefs were forgotten, and at length Latinus arranged glad marriage for his daughter". There would not be the same objection to ending with the reconciliation of Aeneas and Latinus the day after Turnus' death. The marriage would make a happy ending, the reconciliation would be tinged with sadness and hope. A happy ending is not improper in an epic. The Odyssey ends happily; but then no part of the Odyssey aims at tragic grandeur. The Aeneid, full of narrow escapes and ending in a victory, could have been an adventure story, but Virgil has made it tragic throughout. Book II is the tragedy of Troy, Book IV is the tragedy of Dido. Nisus and Euryalus die in Book IX, Pallas in Book X, Camilla in XI. Moreover the individual calamities of the second half of the Aeneid are incidents in a war that is itself calamitous, a war by which the Italians achieve nothing but bloodshed. To such a story a tragic ending is most appropriate.

I called Book XI tragic because of the death of Camilla, though she is Aeneas' enemy. This sympathy with both sides is another Homeric touch and the most significant in making the whole poem tragic. Sometimes we are asked to feel for Trojan and Italian simultaneously, as at the death of Lausus; sometimes to feel for first one and then the other. Camilla holds the centre of the stage for the second half of XI; the reader is not meant to take great interest in her opponents Tarchon, Arruns and the rest. If she were not a little too bloodthirsty there would be a risk that by the end of the book we should have become wholly Italian in our sympathies.

The Iliad does not contain as many separate tragic episodes as the Aeneid; it does not need to, because the tragedy lies in the heart of the story and directly involves the three principal characters, Achilles, Patroclus and Hector. In the Aeneid there is one central character who achieves success and many of secondary importance who meet with disaster. Aeneas' story is touched with sombre colours; we see his toil, weariness, dependency; we do not see him enjoying the fruits of victory. The calamities that befall others do not leave him unmoved. The death of Pallas for instance caused him great sorrow, not that Pallas was as dear to him as Patroclus to Achilles, but he liked the boy and he knew what it would mean to Evander. He is far more deeply involved in the terrible events recounted in Book II. The death of Priam and the burning of the city will haunt his dreams when Pallas has been quite forgotten. Dido's suicide was a shock, and I think he was more distressed at being unintentionally the cause than at the ending of a brief period of happiness.

Book IV shows clearly the risk Virgil ran in Book XII. In each Aeneas suffers, but someone else suffers much more, and Aeneas is the cause of the suffering. We admit that he did not intend to hurt Dido; we admit that in the Italian war he shows himself just, brave and frequently merciful. Nevertheless our liking for him wanes as he becomes the cause of tragedy to others. Perhaps this is inevitable. Virgil could have given him a better speech than that unfeeling and legalistic bit of rhetoric in Book IV (333-361); after all, Racine in Bérénice was dealing with a very similar situation and did not make the emperor Titus seem unfeeling. This is the speech that corresponds to 'ego te, quae plurima fando enumerare vales' (Bérénice Acte IV scène V).

N'accablez point, Madame, un prince malheureux.
II ne faut point ici nous attendre tous deux.
Un trouble assez cruel m'agite et me dévore,
Sans que des pleurs si chers me déchirent encore.

Rappelez bien plutôt ce cœur, qui tant de fois
M'a fait de mon devoir reconnoître la voix.
Il en est temps. Forcez votre amour à se taire;
Et d'un oeil que la gloire et la raison éclaire
Contemplez mon devoir dans toute sa rigueur.
Vous-même contre vous fortifiez mon cœur:
Aidez-moi, s'il se peut, à vaincre sa foiblesse,
A retenir des pleurs qui m'échappe sans cesse;
Ou si nous ne pouvons commander à nos pleurs,
Que la gloire du moins soutienne nos douleurs,
Et que tout l'univers reconnoisse sans peine
Les pleurs d'un empereur et les pleurs d'une reine.
Car enfin, ma princesse, il faut nous séparer.

I do not say that this appeal would have pacified Dido. It did not even satisfy Bérénice; she plans to commit suicide, and is only dissuaded in the last scene when Titus convinces her that he still loves her by saying that he will commit suicide unless she swears solemnly not to do so. What interests me in the speech I have quoted is not its effect on Bérénice but its effect on the audience. There is nothing brutal or unfeeling in it, though Titus does not waver in his resolve. He begs the queen to help him do his duty. Aeneas instead tells Dido that he has a perfect right to leave her.

Suppose Aeneas had spoken more like Titus; suppose that instead of justifying himself he had tried to comfort her; what difference would this make to the effect of the book if it still ended with Dido's suicide? I fancy the difference would be small. Aeneas' tactlessness jars on us at the time, but it does not linger in our minds as we read of Dido's growing despair. On the other hand the knowledge that Dido is going to kill herself is never far from our minds at any stage in the story.

ille dies primus leti, primusque malorum
causa fuit. (IV 169, 170)

If Bérénice had killed herself, we should blame Titus in spite of his pathetic speeches. If Dido had not, if she had resigned herself like Calypso, we should read of the Royal Hunt and Storm in a radically different frame of mind. Who blames Odysseus for trifling with the affections of Circe?

Similarly, however nobly Aeneas behaved after the death of Turnus, we should still be more moved by Turnus' death than by Aeneas' nobility. After the death of Brutus in Shakespeare's play, Antony speaks very generously of his virtues and Octavian promises him honourable burial. We like him the better for it, but the effect of the last act would be little altered if these two speeches were cut out of it. So with Aeneid XII. No alteration to the last twenty lines would seriously have altered the book as a whole, unless Aeneas actually spared Turnus' life; and this, besides being an anti-climax and a breach of his promise to Evander would also have killed our interest in Turnus - whose faults we forgive only because he is doomed to die.

Virgil's reason for ending the epic on a tragic note must be that though a happy ending (like that of the Odyssey) is more enjoyable a tragic ending is more moving. (Many of Shakespeare's comedies have a love interest, but his most famous love stories are tragedies, like Romeo and Juliet). I do not doubt that Virgil was right to make the Aeneid tragic. I am not nearly so sure that he was wise to give Aeneas the role of

Achilles. His role ought to bring out his most attractive qualities and set him in a favourable light. These qualities are for instance his affection for his son and his pity for the unfortunate. As for setting him in a favourable light, consider the points of the story at which we like him best.

At the beginning of Book VIII he is troubled by the news that Turnus is preparing for war:

quae Laomedontius heros
cuncta videns magno curarum fluctuat aestu
atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc. (18 - 20)

He spends much of the night sleepless with anxiety, turning over different possibilities:

cum pater in ripa gelidique sub aetheris axe
Aeneas, tristi turbatus pectora bello,
procubuit seramque dedit per membra quietem. (28-30)

I like this passage because it illustrates his sense of responsibility, and his over-anxious temperament.

Next morning he found the white sow with thirty piglets, the sign that in thirty years Ascanius would found Alba Longa.

quam pius Aeneas tibi enim, tibi, maxima Iuno,
mactat sacra ferens et cum grege sistit ad aram. (84, 85)

Juno's fierce hatred and Aeneas' meek persistence make an amusing contrast. His attempts at placating her have no visible effect, but he continues as scrupulous and respectful as ever.

When Aeneas seeks an alliance with Evander and is offered in addition the command of the Etruscan army, he and Achates stand for a moment in doubt:

multaque dura suo tristi cum corde putabant,
ni signum caelo Cytherea dedisset aperto. (VIII 522, 523)

Another sign of his over-anxious, desponding temperament. Without reassurance from prophecies and omens, he cannot be sure that he is carrying out the will of heaven.

Of course if he desponds too easily, as perhaps he does in the storm at sea in Book I, we shall despise him. He must be brave and wise, as well as anxious and weary, if he is to be what Mackail calls him (Introduction p. LXV) "a pathetic and heroic figure". Now towards the end of the Aeneid his character alters; he seems more self-assured, more confident that he will perform his appointed tasks worthily (XII 187-194). He no longer says "Italiam non sponte sequor". Once, obedience to the gods had been costly, as when they commanded him to leave Troy and Carthage. Now that his will is fully aligned with theirs, obedience is easy. In Book III the quest for Italy had seemed almost hopeless (arva Ausoniae semper cedentia retro: III 496), now his feet are firmly on Italian soil. There was a stage at which it was easy to feel a little sorry for Aeneas, because though the gods offered him immortal glory it was at the price of present happiness.

me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam
auspiciis, et sponte mea componere curas,
urbem Troianam primum dulces que meorum
reliquias colerem. (IV 340-343)

The lines are moving, if we forget to whom they were spoken. Even the ruins of Troy are dearer than the wealthy city of Carthage or the future kingdom in Italy. The gods do not care that Aeneas would rather have Creusa than an unknown Italian princess. They give him glory in war when he would have preferred peace. They promise him deification though (for all I know) he would rather have joined Anchises in Elysium. This is the irony of Aeneas' situation, and this is why no invidia attaches to his success. In the final books however Aeneas appears to adapt himself; he has forgotten Creusa and his thoughts turn less often to Troy. This is natural enough, but it makes him less attractive. I should have preferred to suppose that though he adopted the toga and the Latin language and ceased to call himself a Trojan he would rather have been helping Helenus to build his little city in Chaonia, with its citadel, gate and stream so pathetically named after the Trojan Pergama, Scaean gate and Xanthus. The Aeneid must end with Aeneas victorious, and yet since this means tragedy for his enemies (whom we are meant to like) Aeneas is more likely to keep our sympathy if it is to some extent a tragedy for him. It would be admirable (from this point of view) if like Epaminondas or Lord Nelson he had died in the hour of victory. This is Livy's version: Aeneas was killed in the battle in which he defeated Turnus, and buried by the river Numicus. It would be even better - because more in keeping with the way the gods have treated Aeneas so far - if it was Ascanius who was killed. Jupiter would explain to Venus that it was more fitting for the future kings of Alba Longa to be descended from Lavinia's son, since Ascanius is a relic of Troy and has no more place than Creusa in Aeneas' new home.

Why, you may ask, do I engage in the unprofitable speculations? Is not Virgil artist enough to find the appropriate ending to his own epic? One would have thought so, and yet T.E. Page writes (in the introduction to his edition, footnote 2 page xxii. This edition appeared in 1894) 'Although Aeneas is Virgil's hero, still his natural feeling seems to be with Turnus, and, almost in spite of his will, he makes him the more interesting figure'. Why should this be, unless Virgil is one of those who prefer the underdog, the lost cause, the forlorn hope? In which case he might have been glad if Maecenas had suggested a twist to the story that would give his hero the glamour of failure. Or would this have seemed tactless, since Augustus is meant to see his own career mirrored in that of Aeneas? I fear that the attempt to glorify success because Augustus was successful has led Virgil to lose sympathy with his own hero, with the result that the epic carries an implication equally unflattering to Augustus, that his victory also was won at too high a price, and that the avenger of Caesar is as hard to admire as the avenger of Fallas.