

Well, who is 'you'? It is generally assumed to be Pollio on the occasion of his victory over the Parthini in Illyria, to which Horace refers (Od. II, 1, 15). Horace also tells us in the same poem that Pollio wrote tragedies, and I do not myself see anything odd in Virgil's offer to lend his fame to assist a friend. I would, however, agree that the position of the dedication is odd, and not perhaps entirely explained by Mr. Hardie's suggestion that it may have been 'the débris, or a first draft, of a rejected dedication to Pollio' because we are still left with the problem as to why the lines were not used at the beginning of the Eclogue. Part of the enigma both in this and the fourth Eclogue is perhaps bound up with the subject as Pollio was an enigmatic man. A soldier and politician with literary ambitions who could afford to sneer at Livy's accent he hardly commends himself at first sight as worthy of the flattery of the greatest Latin poet. But he had saved Virgil's farm, and Virgil's sense of gratitude was overwhelming. He had also encouraged him to write the Eclogues.

We have covered much ground, yet I am conscious of many omissions. I have said nothing for example about Virgil's religion, in which he seems to have preserved the same kind of ambivalent attitude that characterises the profounder passages in his poetry, or of the morality of the Aeneid and all the difficulties inherent in the choice of a statesman hero. I have done nothing again to resolve the mystery of the Golden Bough or of Aeneas' exit from the Underworld via the Ivory Gate. Some difficulties can doubtless be explained away. Perhaps Aeneas' shield is not so odd after all. Probably his plough could be shown to be perfectly normal. Possibly even the fourth Eclogue is not so strange as it seems. Even so I am still, I must confess, just a little bit worried lest I lose my way in the forest following a dim track on a cloudcast moonlight night because I am not quite sure whether it is a real track or only a figment of my imagination. In fact I am still inclined to feel that when all is said and done there is something odd about Virgil.

A Note on the Trochaic Caesura in the third Foot.

Many lines with the trochaic caesura seem to stand out as particularly beautiful - in Ec. I for instance:

56. hinc alta sub rupe canet frondator ad auras ..

73. dumosa pendere procul de rupe videbo ..

The lines in Theocritus which stay in the mind often have this construction; and of course such lines are very much more numerous in Theocritus, and in Homer, than they are in Virgil's Latin. Virgil does it very well:

Geo. II 493. Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestis
Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.

I suppose Virgil preferred the usual caesura as more natural to the solidity of Latin. Very few such lines occur in the magnificent close of Aen. VI:

878. heu pietas, heu prisca fides, invictaque bello/dextera.

I find one passage, Aen. VI 322, where Virgil uses the trochaic caesura in four consecutive lines:

Anchisa generate, deum certissima proles,
Cocyti stagna alta vides Stygiamque paludem

di cuius iurare timent et fallere numen.

haec omnis, quam cernis, inops inhumataque turba est ..

Can anyone find more than four anywhere? I think it just came so; Virgil did not seek this effect, and there only about forty such lines in the first 300 lines of the Sixth Book. No doubt he knew very well what he was doing.

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AGAIN THE SHIELD OF AENEAS (Aeneid VIII. 625-731)¹

Time has dealt with imaginative attempts to map the scenes depicted on shields in ancient epic, such as that found in Leaf's Iliad, vol. II, Appendix I (pp. 602 ff.) for the Shield of Achilles, or the rather more sophisticated application of the principles of Geometric art to the motifs of the Aspis in the Hesiodic corpus, as worked out by J. L. Myres (J.H.S. 61 [194] pp. 17 ff.). It may be only a flat-footed criticism that seeks for system or coherence in Virgil's choice of scenes for Aeneas' shield and in their arrangement, but the curiosity is understandable enough; indeed the question is still very much alive, as recent discussions indicate.² Otherwise one must be content to dismiss the 106 lines of the description as a "mere miscellany" or "a selection of scenes calculated to flatter Roman pride", and leave it at that. Obviously unsatisfactory, particularly in the case of Virgil, a pen-poet working, we are told, (and there seems no ground for doubting the tradition) off a prose sketch. His choice of what to include and what to omit in such a descriptive passage needs to be taken as part of a conscious plan, deliberately executed. This is not invalidated by the tradition that he composed sporadically and as the spirit moved him, or by the fact that not all the necessary adjustments to remove minor inconcinnities had been effected at the time of his death in 19 B.C.

Before coming to grips with particulars, some general, even elementary remarks are perhaps in place. No attentive reader can fail to be struck by the fundamental differences in conception between Aeneas' shield and that of Achilles in Iliad XVIII; hardly anywhere else in the poem is the independence of the Latin poet so evident. The most important would seem to be these:

(i) In the Iliad Achilles' shield is convincingly motivated; Aeneas' is not. After the death of Patroclus and the stripping of his body by Hector, Achilles is "deficient" (in the Quartermaster's sense of the word) of his equipment, and he remains ineffective until re-equipped. Aeneas on the other hand was certainly armed at the crisis of the Fall of Troy (Aen. II 671 f.) and nothing has happened since to part him from what he had then. The only excuse for Aeneas' new and special shield in Aeneid VIII, apart from epic precedent, is that he will need first-rate arms to face the ferocity of Turnus, that alter Achilles, and for one of his descent divinely-made weaponry is obviously indicated.

(ii) In Iliad XVIII the poet takes us into Hephaestus' smithy and shows step by step the process of manufacture: ποσειδῶν δὲ... ἐν δ' ἔποινε... ἐν δ' ἔτιθεε; recur with variations, and the Lame God does all the work himself. Vulcan descends to the Liparae islands, a suitably volcanic site for a mythological forge, but once