

Alternatives To Aeneas: Meditations on Leadership and Military Discipline In Virgil, *Aeneid* 9*

With Aeneas away at Pallanteum recruiting allies for the war in Italy, *Aeneid* 9 stands alone in the epic as the only book in which Aeneas does not feature personally at all. A situation such as this demands new figures of leadership, however temporary, and the book offers the spotlight to a range of other heroes, on both sides, as they take control at the beginnings of a pivotal military engagement.

The absence of Aeneas and the challenges in leadership created by this absence are major themes in book 9. Indeed, the action of book 9 is a direct consequence of Aeneas' absence, as Juno instructs Iris to descend to earth to exhort Turnus to take advantage of the new opportunity (6-13):¹

*Turne, quod optanti divum promittere nemo
auderet, volvenda dies en attulit ultro.
Aeneas urbe et sociis et classe relictā
sceptra Palatini sedemque petit Evandri.
Nec satis: extremas Corythi penetravit ad urbes
Lydorumque manum et collectos armat agrestis.*

* This paper on the *Aeneid* is different from the one I delivered orally at the Virgil Society meeting in London on 10 March 2012. I am grateful to the editor, Daniel Hadas, for both his permission to publish the current piece in *PVS* and his constructive comments and suggestions on the finished article.

¹ The text of *Aeneid* 9 is taken from Hardie (1994). All translations are my own.

Quid dubitas? Nunc tempus equos, nunc poscere currus.

Rumpe moras omnis et turbata arripe castra.

(“Turnus, that which none of the gods were daring to promise to a wishful petitioner, look! time as it rolls along has brought this to you of its own accord. Aeneas has abandoned his city, his allies and his fleet and is making for the kingdom and palace of Palatine Evander. Nor is this enough: he has entered into the farthest cities of Corythus and he is arming a band of Lydians and country folk amassed together. Why are you hesitating? Now is the right moment to demand horses, now the right moment to demand chariots. Break off all delays and snatch the camp now that it has been thrown into confusion”).

To be sure, part of Iris’ argument is that delay on Turnus’ part may result in his facing additional forces at a later stage. But the emphasis falls on the complete absence of the leader (8), and the disarray into which the camp has now been thrown as a result (13).² For Iris, in line with frequent statements of ancient thinkers, absence of the central leader figure creates a void in orderly conduct. The rest of the book will assess the merits of this assumption on Iris’ part, and ultimately show it to be correct.

Although previous scholarship has drawn attention to the absence of Aeneas, and military leadership and discipline, as important themes in book 9, there has not yet been a full and exclusive discussion of these themes as they develop gradually within the book.³ The current paper offers a reading of book 9 strictly through the lens of the author’s negotiations on military leadership and discipline. I find there to be a range of good and bad practice on display, including the emerging maturity of Ascanius, as Virgil deftly chronicles the swiftly changing fortunes that can occur in warfare on the basis of individual action and decision-making.

² With regards to the phrase *turbata arripe castra*, I take *turbata* to be a statement of perceived fact, rather than a reference to a future activity (*i.e.* “throw the camp into disarray and capture it”).

³ Important earlier research on specific questions of leadership and military discipline raised by book 9 include: Di Cesare (1974) 157-71, in whose study of military failure I find much to commend (although I was not able to get hold of his 1972 piece in *Rivista di Studi Classici* on the subject); Saylor (1990), who offers a brief discussion of Virgil’s complex assessment of the merits of group versus individual action, focused around the lexical choices *globus* and *glomero*; Nisbet (1978-80), who looks briefly at the ways in which critical changes in fortune in book 9 mirror recognised good and bad tactics in Roman military history. Putnam (1965) 48-63 discusses psychological flaws across a range of commander figures in book 9. Hardie’s (1994) commentary is an indispensable scholarly aid to any study of book 9. Wiltshire (1999) takes the theme of Aeneas’ absence in a completely different direction from this paper.

The Memory of Aeneas and the Passion of the Individual

Before leaving for Pallanteum, Aeneas had left instructions to his men as to how they should act in his absence in the event of any adversity. When the Latin army appear on the horizon, led by an invigorated Turnus, the Trojans look out from their camp and keep to Aeneas' orders (38-46):

*Ingenti clamore per omnis
condunt se Teucris portas et moenia complent.
Namque ita discedens praeceperat optimus armis
Aeneas: si qua interea fortuna fuisset,
neu struere auderent aciem neu credere campo;
castra modo et tutos servarent aggere muros.
Ergo etsi conferre manum pudor iraque monstrat,
obiciunt portas tamen et praecepta facessunt,
armatique cavis expectant turribus hostem.*

("With a great clamour the Trojans hide themselves away through all the gates and man the walls. For this is what Aeneas, best of warriors, had commanded as he left them: if any adverse circumstance should have arisen in his absence, they should not dare to draw up a battle-line nor put their faith in the plain; instead they should protect the camp and the walls rendered safe by means of a rampart. Therefore, although shame and anger are urging them to engage in hand-to-hand combat, nevertheless they close the gates and carry out their orders, waiting in full armour within their hollow towers for the enemy").

At the outset, Virgil is keen to emphasise both the guiding influence of the now absent Aeneas - his orders not to venture outside the camp under any circumstances⁴ - and the way in which the Trojans' observance of these instructions overrides their own personal feelings. The Trojans' subjugation of emotions might be deemed particularly praiseworthy by the reader, seeing as their current strategy runs counter to both the

⁴ It will become clear from my argument as a whole that I take a strong reading of *credere campo* (9.42) and do not see it simply as a reiteration of the sentiment in *struere auderent aciem* (for which see Hardie, 1994, 78). Indeed, the gates of the camp emerge as an important spatial and symbolic marker point between successful and tragic activity for the Trojans. Turnus himself recognises this when he refers to the Trojans' outer defences as a "thin dividing lines between life and death" (*leti discrimina parva*, 143). Numanus Remulus will later articulate a similar sentiment when he mocks the Trojans for "stretching out their walls in front of death" (*morti praetendere muros*, 599).

(traditional) Homeric heroic impulse for face-to-face combat and the (recently disclosed) Roman impulse for imposing one's will on foreign aggressors.⁵

Virgil straightaway points out the extent of the mental challenge facing the Trojans in adhering to Aeneas' instructions. First, we are presented with the reaction of the enemy, who naturally interpret the Trojans' lack of aggression as an act of cowardice and unmanliness (55-57):

*Teucrum mirantur inertia corda,
non aequo dare se campo, non obvia ferre
arma viros, sed castra fovere.*

("They are amazed by the idle spirits of the Trojans: that they are not giving themselves to equal combat on the plain, that they are not bearing arms to meet them, as men, but are instead keeping the camp warm").

The insinuation in *castra fovere* (57) that the Trojans are behaving in an unmanly fashion – the most natural association is with a mother bird brooding over her nest (see Lewis & Short *ad loc.*) – carries forward into the intriguing simile that Virgil develops in the lines that follow (59-66):

*Ac veluti pleno lupus insidiatus ovili
cum fremit ad caulas ventos perpessus et imbris
nocte super media. Tuti sub matribus agni
balatum exercent, ille asper et improbus ira
saevit in absentis. Collecta fatigat edendi
ex longo rabies et siccae sanguine fauces:
haud aliter Rutulo muros et castra tuenti
ignescunt irae, duris dolor ossibus ardet.*

("And just as when a wolf, lying in ambush near the full sheep-fold, howls at the fence during the middle of the night, patiently enduring the winds and the rains. Safe under their mothers the lambs engage in bleating, while he, rough-sounding and unruly in his anger, vents his rage against elusive prey. His mad lust for eating, increasing over a long period, tires him out, and his jaws are dry of blood: just so does the Rutulian's anger flare up as he keeps watch over the camp and the walls, and a pain burns in his hard bones").

⁵ The proactive military agenda of the Roman mission is most famously captured in Anchises' words to Aeneas in the Underworld (6.847-54), esp. 6.851-53: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento ... debellare superbos.*

While attention is most naturally directed towards the unflattering picture of Turnus as an irrational beast controlled by burning emotions, we should not overlook the equally unflattering imagery used for the Trojans. The lambs' bleating from a protected location creates a pathetic contrast to the enemy's loud and aggressive gestures, and the fact that they take refuge *sub matribus* (61), a specific detail absent from the two Greek epic similes on which the present simile is modelled,⁶ only downgrades further the status of the Trojans to that of unmanly/effeminate or infantile individuals. Indeed, this is a simile from which neither party emerges unscathed. Significant here is that the sentiment is not now focalised through the enemy but comes directly from the epic narrator: both enemy and epic narrator alike implicitly acknowledge the psychological challenge that heroes face in pursuing the current course of action. So far, however, the Trojans fare well: they are not devoid of a proper heroic reaction to their predicament – they feel the shame that it entails (9.44) – but, crucially at this stage, they do not act upon these impulses against the better judgment of their leader.

After the miraculous interlude of the transformation of Aeneas' ships (77-122), an episode which itself manages to lend divine authority to Aeneas' instruction to his men not to venture outside the camp (114-15), we return to the on-going military preparations in Italy. In the face of Italian activity right outside their camp, the Trojans continue, at this point, to carry out Aeneas' instructions (168-75):

*Haec super e vallo prospectant Troes et armis
alta tenent; necnon trepidi formidine portas
explorant pontisque et propugnacula iungunt,
tela gerunt. Instat Mnestheus acerque Serestus,
quos pater Aeneas, si quando adversa vocarent,
rectores iuvenum et rerum dedit esse magistros.
Omnis per muros legio sortita periculum
excubat exercetque vices, quod cuique tuendum est.*

("On this scene the Trojans look out from atop their rampart and hold the high points with arms; moreover, anxious in their fear, they check out the gates and join ramparts with bridges, and they are bearing their weapons. Urging on the work are Mnestheus and keen Serestus, whom father Aeneas appointed to be the leaders of the young men and chiefs of affairs if adversity should call for it at any point. Along all the walls the army, dividing the peril, keeps watch and conducts shift work, each man with respect to his allotted guard-duty").

⁶ *Od.* 6.130-34 and *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 1.1243-47, with Hardie (1994) 83-84.

This noble picture of military attentiveness and discipline, under the guidance of officially appointed surrogate leaders, invites strong comparison with the enemy's nocturnal activities as described in the preceding lines (159-67):

*Interea vigilum excubiis obsidere portas
cura datur Messapo et moenia cingere flammis.
Bis septem Rutuli muros qui milite servant
delecti, ast illos centeni quemque sequuntur
purpurei cristis iuvenes auroque corusci.
Discurrunt variantque vices, fusique per herbam
indulgent vino et vertunt crateras aënos.
Conlucent ignes, noctem custodia ducit
insomnem ludo.*

(“In the meantime, the responsibility was given to Messapus to besiege the gates with a garrison of watchmen and to surround the walls with fires. Fourteen Rutulians were chosen to watch the walls with a band of soldiers, but a hundred young men followed each one of them, adorned with purple crests and shimmering gold. They rush around in different directions and diversify their shift duties and, stretched out on the grass, they indulge in wine and upturn bronze wine bowls. The fires shine brightly and the guard draws out the sleepless night in gaming”).

We are presented at first with a scenario not dissimilar to that of the Trojan camp – instructions from a leader to guard the walls – but in this case Messapus' leadership is evidently weak, as his men lack proper discipline. The note of discordance latent in *discurrunt* (164) is picked up in 164-65 with specific detail about the soldiers' wine-drinking and relaxation on the grass, a scene which recalls more readily the atmosphere of a festival.⁷ Moreover, the soldiers engage in gaming (*ludo*, 167) which, combined with indulgence in wine and expensive dress (*purpurei cristis ... auroque corusci*, 163), creates in the Roman mind a stock picture of foreign extravagance, laxity and immorality. Virgil could not have made the contrast any more acute, as disorder (*discurrunt*, 164) meets unity (*omnis per muros legio sortita periculum*, 174), due caution (*trepidi formidine*, 174) meets overconfident revelry (164-65), and, most importantly at a time of high military

⁷ Moreover, as my translation attempts to capture, there is potentially an important distinction to be made between *exercetque vices* (175) and *variantque vices* (164): *exerceo* foregrounds business and industry, whereas *vario* emphasises alteration and diversification, raising the possibility, in light of the surrounding context, that the Rutulians are deviating from those roles allotted to them by their commanding officer.

alert, one side holds weapons while the other holds drinking bowls and the paraphernalia of leisure.⁸ This contrast in military discipline will help to explain the early fortunes of each side when enemies finally face each other a little later.

So far so good for the Trojans ... but the private nocturnal discussion that follows between companions Nisus and Euryalus marks a significant turning point.⁹ Nisus' proposition to head a clandestine expedition to get word to Aeneas is not in itself an unsound tactic: the Trojan leaders have already been contemplating such an enterprise (226-28), and Nisus makes a fair case for his own involvement in light of his apparent knowledge of the terrain through hunting (243-45). But in the context of the emerging motifs of book 9, this is a worrying development. First of all, it is hard not to see this as the first Trojan tactical move to go against the instructions at 40-43, where Aeneas had warned his men against leaving the camp under *any* adverse circumstance.¹⁰ Perhaps more worrying than the proposition itself, however, is the *motivation* that lies behind it on the parts of Nisus and Euryalus. Nisus' opening words to Euryalus are most revealing (184-87):

*Nisus ait: '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.'*

("Nisus says: 'Do the gods add this burning passion to our minds, Euryalus, or does his own wild desire become to each man a god? For a long time now my mind has been spurring me on towards a fight, or to make some great attack,¹¹ nor is it content with gentle calmness").

⁸ I do not agree with Hardie (1994) 105 that the literal meaning of *tela gerunt* (171) – "they bear weapons" – is "intolerably weak". In the face of enemy laxity, the military normality that pertains to the Trojan side is all the more pointed for its being expressed via a simple (and emphatically delayed) phrase.

⁹ As will become evident, I find myself largely in agreement with classic treatments of the episode by Heinze (1903) 216-19 = (1993) 169-70 and Duckworth (1967) 130-40.

¹⁰ The discussion between Nisus and the Trojan chieftains takes place *castrorum et campi medio* (230), a curious phrase which commentators typically explain as a designated space that was left open within the camp. As Hardie (1994) 116 points out, however, the more natural rendering is "midway between the camp and the battle-field". Are we to envisage the discussion as taking place somewhere outside the defences of the camp but not on the battle-field proper? If we think of the camp as a symbolic marker between wise and unwise activity (see n.4 above), it is interesting to note that the Trojans' wavering between Aeneas' instructions and their own enterprise takes place in a liminal space between the safety of the camp and the danger of the plain.

¹¹ In a sentiment that already contains *pugnam*, Duckworth (1967) 131 n.16 is surely correct not to play down the hostile connotations behind *invadere* here.

During a private conversation with Euryalus, Nisus leaves us in no doubt that his underlying motivation is personal and emotional, a burning passion to break away from their current inactivity and embark upon the sort of aggressive endeavour that might bring him renown (cf. also 194-95). In effect, Nisus is the first Trojan to give voice to the tension between Aeneas' instructions and the more natural heroic impulses of the Homeric and indeed Roman warrior. His companion, Euryalus, appears to be equally susceptible to the allurements of glory (*magno laudum percussus amore*, 197), and Virgil regularly highlights the hastiness and burning feelings that are driving them forwards in their endeavour.¹² When he addresses the Trojan chieftains for approval (234-45), Nisus does well to hide his true motivation and keep the focus on the opportunity that has opened up and the strategic benefits of his proposal: no direct mention is made here of his inner passion, and any uncertainty about the terrain which he may have entertained in private is masked by bravado in his public address.¹³ That said, at one important stage in the speech, Nisus' true intentions reveal themselves (240-43):

*si fortuna permittis uti
quaesitum Aenean et moenia Pallantea,
mox hic cum spoliis ingenti caede peracta
adfore cernetis.*

(“If you permit us to take advantage of this opportunity, to seek Aeneas and the walls of Pallanteum, in due course you will see us all back here before you laden with spoils and having carried out mighty slaughter”).

These lines are problematic for the fact that Nisus does not specify in 242-43 precisely who will be seen back at camp. I follow Lennox (1977, 337-39) in understanding Nisus, Euryalus and Aeneas as intended subjects here, in that Nisus is looking forward to the triumphant return of all three of them once he has successfully reached Pallanteum, a scenario which might naturally involve cutting a swathe through the enemy in order to return to the Trojan camp. This reading at least maintains Nisus' focus on the mission to hand. But it is not without its problems. Discussion of spoils and slaughter is an unnecessary intrusion into an otherwise strategically motivated and altruistic proposal,

¹² For Nisus' burning passion, cf. *ardorem* (184), *ardentem* (198). For their speed of action, cf. *acceleremus* (221), *confestim alacres* (231).

¹³ In private with Euryalus: *tumulo videor reperire sub illo / posse viam ad muros et moenia Pallantea* (“I seem to be able to find beneath that mound a path to the walls and fortifications of Pallanteum”, 195-96); in public to the Trojan chieftains, *vidimus obscuris primam sub vallibus urbem / venatu adsiduo et totum cognovimus amnem* (“Down the dark valleys in our incessant hunting we have seen the first building of the city and we have come to know the entire river”, 244-45). To meet the needs of public rhetoric, communal certainty has replaced individual speculation.

and it is revealing of his ambition that Nisus should assume that he and his comrade will share a triumphant platform with their superior, Aeneas. Subconsciously, perhaps, Nisus betrays his true motives for the mission, and it may be counted as a failure in leadership that the Trojan chieftains do not pick up on this.¹⁴

At any rate, with the plan endorsed, the early stages of the night expedition are a success. Nisus establishes sound leadership credentials by assigning himself the role of cutting a path through the enemy ranks while instructing his companion to keep watch (320-23). This plan seems eminently achievable in view of the absence of discipline on the enemy's part, as the disorder in the ranks first noted at 164-67 has by now descended into a scene of complete drunken stupor (316-19):

*passim somno vinoque per herbam
corpora fusa vident, arrectos litore currus,
inter lora rotasque viros, simul arma iacere,
vina simul.*

(“Here and there they see bodies stretched out in sleep and drunkenness across the grass, chariots upturned on the shore, men between reins and wheels, arms lying here, wine jars lying there”).

Asyndeton here contributes to a scene of chaos, as chariots are upright while men lie prone – the very opposite, perhaps, of what one would expect to see in a military setting – and weapons lie scattered around seemingly unready for use.¹⁵ Individual enemy warriors are summarily dispatched by Nisus (324-38) as he adheres to his responsibility within the plan. But 342 strikes an alarming note, all the more pointed for its brevity: *nec minor Euryali caedes* (“no less was the slaughter carried out by Euryalus”). Euryalus appears at some point to have abandoned his responsibility as watchman to join in with the easy pickings among the enemy, and his delight in slaughter is described in the sort of ominous terms that earlier marked Nisus' enthusiasm for the plan.¹⁶ To his credit, Nisus continues to display leadership qualities by recognising the transgression and focusing minds back onto the mission (353-56):

¹⁴ Although see later discussion for potential mitigation in the case of Ascanius.

¹⁵ *per herbam ... fusa* (316-17) directly recalls *fusique per herbam* (164), but the scene has moved on logically from revelry to drunken sleep: wine jars which were upturned (165) now lie scattered (319), and gaming into the early hours (166-67) has resulted in exhaustion which will prove fatal (335-38).

¹⁶ *incensus* (342) and *fervidus* (350) recall the fire imagery of Nisus' own earlier passion (*ardorem*, 184; *ardentem*, 198), while *perfurit* (343) suggests an intense immersion in *furor*.

breviter cum talia Nisus

(sensit enim nimia caede atque cupidine ferri)

'absistamus', ait, 'nam lux inimica propinquat.

Poenarum exhaustum satis est, via facta per hostis'.

(“... when Nisus spoke these words in brief (for he sensed that they¹⁷ were being carried away by too much desire for bloodshed): ‘let us cease, for hostile daylight is approaching. We have drunk deep enough vengeance, a path has been made through the enemy’”).

The phrase *via facta per hostis* concisely alerts Euryalus to the fact that this part of the mission has now been fulfilled and that they should move on. But desire for slaughter has evidently caused the couple to linger too long in the enemy camp, now that daylight is approaching, and the related desire for plunder will inform Euryalus’ fatal decision to take burdensome spoils, especially the reflective plumed helmet of Messapus. This decision appears all the more foolish in view of the fact that the horses of Messapus’ men, which would have helped them both to evade enemies and to cut down travel time to Pallanteum, were tied up together and freely available for stealing (352-53).¹⁸ Once approaching enemy cavalry catches sight of Euryalus’ helmet reflected in the moonlight (373-74) – might Euryalus have spotted this enemy earlier if he had kept to his duty as watchman? – roles are tragically reversed, as the enemy finds strong leadership behind its *magister* Volcens (370), while Nisus and Euryalus embark upon a series of bad and individual strategic decisions.

When the Trojan pair rush into the dark woods, the enemy blocks them off at all access points (379-80):

¹⁷ The subject of *ferri* is left unstated, and some scholars, who seek to discern a difference between Nisus and Euryalus, follow Servius Danielis *ad loc.* when he suggests by implication that Virgil is here referring only to the excesses of Euryalus; see *e.g.* Lennox (1977) 336-37; Makowski (1989) 12. But the plural that follows (*absistamus*), as well as the earlier indication that both anticipate great slaughter from the expedition (242-43), point to a more inclusive sentiment here. Moreover, the simile of the lion (339-41), driven by an unreasoned/maddening hunger (340 *vesana fames*), is linked to both Trojans through syntactical ambiguity (see Pavlock, 1985, 214-15). On the preponderance of animal similes in book 9, a book bereft of the rational thinking of Aeneas, see further Hornsby (1970) 64-69.

¹⁸ This marks one of the more telling contrasts between the strategies of Nisus and Euryalus and those of Diomedes and Ulysses in the night raid in *Iliad* 10: the Greek heroes recognize the strategic value of the Thracian horses, albeit with some prompting from Athene, and use this plunder to make good their return to the Greek ships (*Il.* 10.474-514). Indeed, the reader who recalls the Homeric episode might assume that Nisus is following Odysseus in cutting a path through the enemy (356), rather than simply passing by the drunken ranks without spilling blood, precisely so as to create a passageway for horses without unduly upsetting them (*Il.* 10.488-93).

*Obiciunt equites sese ad divortia nota
hinc atque hinc, omnemque abitum custode coronant.*

(“The horsemen throw themselves before the known branchings of the road, here and there, and they encircle all the exits with a guard”).

Not only do the cavalry, here and elsewhere, act as a unit in this episode, but *nota* and *omnem* bring to mind a key fact: this is *their* terrain, terrain that they know very well, whereas Nisus had incautiously talked up his knowledge in his eagerness for the mission – his actual uncertainty will come back to haunt him. Euryalus never claimed to know the terrain, and this lack of local knowledge, combined with the onerous spoils that he has unwisely elected to retain, are held directly responsible for his falling behind Nisus and leading him into error within the woods (*Euryalum tenebrae ramorum onerosaque praeda / impediunt*, 384-85; *fraude loci*, 397). When Euryalus is duly captured (395-98), at no point does Nisus contemplate using what knowledge of the terrain he has to escape to continue the mission: his internal dilemma revolves only between the options of saving his friend or dying in the attempt (399-401). For this reason, once his attempts at rescue by long-range weaponry have proven futile, and Euryalus is killed by Volcens, Nisus opts for death by revealing his concealed location and seeking out the killer. The final moments of Nisus’ charge reveal just how much the tables have turned with regard to proper leadership and military decision-making (438-41):

*At Nisus ruit in medios solumque per omnis
Volcentem petit, in solo Volcente moratur.
Quem circum glomerati hostes hinc comminus atque hinc
proturbant.*

(“Nevertheless Nisus rushes into the midst [of the enemy] and seeks out Volcens alone through all of them, on Volcens alone he is fixed. Around him the enemy, gathered together in a mass, drive him off at close quarters here and there”).

Following straight on from the death of Euryalus (431-37), *at* signals the illogical nature of Nisus’ move: he has no companion left to protect, he is heavily outnumbered and his mission lies elsewhere. At the beginning of the expedition, Nisus was able to pick off single enemies unscathed, but his attempt to adopt the same strategy here (note the repetition of *solum* ... *solo*) is thwarted by an enemy that works together as a unit around its leader. Virgil does not specify in 438-45 exactly when Nisus receives the killer blow, and the omission is pointed: the difference in military tactics adopted by each side has made the final outcome inevitable.

With both young men killed, and the mission a failure, attention turns back to the Trojan camp (468-72):

*Aeneadae duri murorum in parte sinistra
opposuere aciem (nam dextera cingitur amni),
ingentisque tenent fossas et turribus altis
stant maesti. Simul ora virum praefixa movebant
nota nimis miseris atroque fluentia tabo.*

(“Aeneas’ hardy men set up a battle line against the Rutulians on the left part of the walls (for the right side was surrounded by the river), and they defend the huge trenches¹⁹ and stand sorrowful on the high towers. At the same time the wretched Trojans are moved by the faces of the men they know all too well, fixed on the end [of the enemy spears] and flowing with black gore”).

Faced with the harrowing sight of the enemy approaching with the heads of Nisus and Euryalus fixed on their spears (465-67), the Trojans act in the sort of controlled, strategically sensible manner which reassures the reader that, at this stage at least, the high-spirited behaviour of the doomed youngsters was a localised incident. Virgil’s repetition of military phraseology from earlier²⁰ reminds us that the Trojans are still adhering to Aeneas’ instructions, and the parenthetic note in 469 underlines the prudence of the particular tactic of manning only the left walls at this juncture. As at 44-46 and 168-75, the Trojans are shown to be not immune to emotional responses (*maesti; movebant*), but these emotions are still admirably contained so as not to compromise their leader’s key instructions. *duri* (468) is no idle epithet, as the Trojans are faced with, and overcome successfully, a series of escalating emotional scenes: as well as enduring the sight of their comrades’ heads, the Trojans effectively contend with the public reaction of Euryalus’ mother before it has a chance to break the men’s spirits (473-502, esp. 498-502).²¹

When the battle starts proper from 503, the early engagements are inconclusive, as the concerted attacks of the Italians are met comfortably by the Trojans, who, as Virgil reminds us, find themselves in the experienced position of defending walls (511). The toppling of one of the towers, and the subsequent deaths of two survivors, Helenor and Lycus

¹⁹ As Servius Danielis (*ad loc.*) suggests, *tenent* here must mean “defend/watch over” rather than “hold/man”: nothing in the narrative that follows suggests that the Trojans have ventured outside the camp at this point.

²⁰ For manning the walls, cf. 43, 174-75; for keeping watch in their high towers (470 *turribus altis*), cf. 46, 168-69.

²¹ We will come back to this episode later, in the section on Ascanius.

(530-66), do little to alter the overall trajectory of the conflict. A particularly emotional test for the Trojans, perhaps, is the plight of Lycus, who escapes immediate death from the enemy, reaches the walls of the camp and seeks help with outstretched hands to be pulled up to the ramparts (556-62, esp. 557-58). It is one thing to witness dead comrades outside the camp, but quite another to have the chance to save one. Still, there is no sense that any Trojan wavers from Aeneas' instructions by, for instance, attempting to open an access point for Lycus or venturing outside the camp to lend assistance: impressively, they continue to attack the enemy from within their walls (569-73). So far, the Trojans as a whole have resisted the heroic (and Roman) impulse for proactive military engagement and have contained their emotions admirably, to follow Aeneas' instructions. This then prompts the Italian Numanus Remulus to hurl abuse and mock them for what he sees as unmanly cowardice. His opening words – *non pudet?* (598) – pinpoint the speaker's central reason for surprise at the Trojans' inactivity, by a question which the reader has already had answered at 44: the Trojans feel *pudor*, to be sure, but they do not let it dictate their actions. Once again, the Trojans contain any emotional response they may have, and allow their surrogate leader, Ascanius, to exact punishment on Numanus in an appropriate manner on their behalf.²² Virgil again registers a reassuring sense of continuity in the Trojans' activities by means of pointed repetition of military phraseology.²³

But the Trojans' fortunes take a radical turn for the worse with the sudden introduction of Pandarus and Bitias (672-78):

*Pandarus et Bitias, Idaeo Alcanore creti,
quos Iovis eduxit luco silvestris Iaera,
abietibus iuvenes patriis et montibus aequos,
portam, quae ducis imperio commissa, recludunt
freti armis, ulstroque invitant moenibus hostem.
Ipsi intus dextra ac laeva pro turribus astant
armati ferro et cristis capita alta corusci:*

("Pandarus and Bitias, born of Alcanor from Mount Ida, whom the woodland nymph Iaera had brought up in the grove of Jupiter, young men equal to their native fir trees and mountains, open the gate which had been entrusted to them by the command of their leader, confident in their arms, and of their own accord invite the enemy within the walls.

²² Again, we will look at this scene later, in the section on Ascanius.

²³ Note the repetition of *propugnacula* at 170 and 664.

They stand by inside, on the right and the left, in place of the towers,²⁴ armed with the sword, their tall heads shimmering with the crests of their helmets”).

As in the early episode of Nisus and Euryalus, two youthful companions and guardians of the gate embark upon an endeavour that, we are implicitly told, goes against the strict instructions of the Trojan leader (675). But while the former was a tragic but essentially localised incident, the current venture presents a threat to the Trojans at large. This threat is, moreover, realised when the early success of Pandarus and Bitias, slaying the enemy at the gate (683-87), excites the Trojans’ spirits and encourages them to venture outside (688-90):

*Tum magis increscunt animis discordibus irae,
et iam collecti Troes glomerantur eodem
et conferre manum et procurrere longius audent.*

(“Then anger grows all the more in their discordant hearts, and now the Trojans gather together in one place and form a mass, and they dare to engage in hand-to-hand combat and run forwards further away [from the gate]”).

It is disconcerting that emotions are now goading the Trojans towards activity outside the confines of the camp. Tellingly, there are distinct echoes of the instructions of Aeneas which have now been discarded: the action of *conferre manum*, spurred on by *irae*, directly recalls the Trojans’ earlier subjugation of this very desire (*ergo etsi conferre manum pudor iraque monstrat*, 44), and *audent* picks up the specific injunction of Aeneas (*neu ... auderent*, 42).

Intratextual cues such as these are sufficient to signal trouble, as Virgil now focuses his attention on the consequences of disobedience. The opportunity has at last been afforded for Turnus to embark on a more productive *aristeia*, one that promptly sees the dispatch of one of the brothers, Bitias, albeit with some effort (703-16). From this point, the situation is at its most serious for the Trojans as a whole, as their confidence turns to fear (719) and the enemy’s spirits rise (717-18) as they start to work together (*undique conveniunt*, 720). The situation is exacerbated by Pandarus’ decision to close the gate again (722-30), a move branded as *demens* (“witless”/“devoid of rational thinking”, 728) by the narrator,

²⁴ Virgil clearly implies in these lines that the confidence of Pandarus and Bitias stems from their size and strength. This (misplaced) confidence is best captured if we take *pro turribus* (677) to mean “in place of the towers”, rather than “in front of the towers”. In similar vein, the translation “confident in their arms” attempts to capture the slipperiness of *freti armis* (676), where *armis* may refer to weapons (*arma*) and/or shoulders (*armi*); with the latter cf. 725. *obnixus latis umeris*.

because it has locked Trojans outside and, more worryingly, it has locked Turnus inside. The chance situation even precipitates a rise in stature for the enemy leader, as Turnus, so often compared with frustrated predatory animals, is revealed to the Trojans almost in the manner of a deity (731-33):

*Continuo nova lux oculis effulsit et arma
horrendum sonuere, tremunt in vertice cristae
sanguineae clipeoque micantia fulmina mittit.*

(“A new light shines out immediately from his eyes and his arms make a horrific sound, his bloody crests quiver on his head, and he shoots flickering lightning from his shield”).

As Hardie (1994, 228) notes, *nova lux* recalls the bright light that attends a divine epiphany, and the reflections of light in his shield cast the wearer in the guise of Jupiter, wielder of the thunderbolt.²⁵ This sense of magisterial supremacy is maintained during his straightforward confrontation with Pandarus (735-55), as Turnus meets his seething adversary (*fervidus ira*, 736) with a newfound calmness of disposition (*sedato pectore*, 740). Once Pandarus and Bitias are both dead, and the Trojans in complete disarray, Turnus is at his most powerful and dangerous in the epic. But an authorial note marks an unexpected reprieve for the Trojans (756-61):

*Diffugiunt versi trepida formidine Troes,
et si continuo victorem ea cura subisset,
rumpere claustra manu sociosque immittere portis,
ultimus ille dies bello gentique fuisset.
Sed furor ardentem caedisque insana cupido
egit in adversos.*

(“The Trojans turn their backs and flee in different directions, in quaking dread, and if this concern had occurred to the victor immediately, to break through the bolts with force and to let his allies in through the gates, that would have been the final day for both the war and the race [of Trojans]. But instead frenzy and a mad desire for bloodshed drove him burning against his adversaries”).

At exactly the right moment, from the Trojans’ point of view, Turnus abandons his divine aura and the rational military judgment of a leader, and gives way again to frenzy and the

²⁵ The same Jovian overtones are also apparent in Turnus’ slaying of Bitias with a *phalarica* ... *fulminis acta modo* (705-06).

animalistic desire for slaughter, as he embarks upon another *aristeia* (762-77).²⁶ This offers the Trojans a crucial opportunity to regroup (778-80):

*Tandem ductores audita caede suorum
conveniunt Teucrici, Mnestheus acerque Serestus,
palantisque vident socios hostemque receptum.*

(“After a long time the Trojan commanders, Mnestheus and keen Serestus, come together, having heard the slaughter of their own men, and they see their allies dispersed here and there and the enemy received [within their walls]”).

tandem certainly offers criticism of Turnus: by implication, his irrational rampage and failure to think strategically have gone on for a long time. But Di Cesare (1974, 169) does well to draw our attention to the subtle criticism of Mnestheus and Serestus in these lines. As the officially appointed leaders of the Trojans (*ductores*), they have been conspicuous by their absence since their introduction at 171. Where have they been for so long (*tandem*)? Evidently, they have been some way removed from the main action, as they first only *hear* the dying cries of their men (*audita*) before actually *witnessing* the scene first hand (*vident*). Better late than never, perhaps, as a rousing speech from Mnestheus (781-87) – which, on this occasion, appeals to a sense of *pudor* precisely in order to move the Trojans towards proactive military engagement (787) – brings them back together as a unit: Mnestheus’ skill as leader converts a picture of disunity (*diffugiunt*, 756) to one of solidarity and resolution (*firmantur ... agmine denso / consistunt*, 788-89; *glomerare*, 792). Turnus’ inconsistency costs him dear, as he reverts to his position as savage lion (*saevum ... leonem*, 792) and gives up his sense of Jovian majesty to Mnestheus, who is now the one hurling lightning (*fulmineus Mnestheus*, 812). From a position of absolute supremacy, Turnus ends the book barely escaping with his life by throwing himself into the river in flight (812-18).

To summarise to this point, what brings book 9 together as a discrete unit is its sustained focus on military leadership and discipline. In the absence of Aeneas, a variety of surrogate leaders from both sides step forward to be assessed, and all fall short to varying degrees, dependent on the emphasis they place on solidarity over individual action, control of emotions over giving them full rein. By the end of the book, the Trojans have lived

²⁶ Every word in this dense description of Turnus in 760 recalls the mindset of Nisus and Euryalus when in the midst of an apparently inferior enemy; for *furor* cf. *perfurit* (343); for *ardentem* cf. *ardorem* (184), *ardentem* (198); for *cupido caedis* cf. Nisus’ recognition at 354, *sensit enim nimia caede atque cupidine ferri*; with *insana* cf. *vesana* (340).

to fight another day – quite literally (10.118-45) – but largely because of the folly of Turnus at a critical moment. In this way Virgil signals the importance of Aeneas' presence, detailing the errors in Trojan leadership that occur in his absence. At the outset of book 9, Iris had stated as a fact that a camp without its leader was one already thrown into confusion (*turbata ... castra*, 13). The book as a whole has borne out this assumption, and Venus will concur when she later reflects upon the situation at a council of the gods at 10.22-25, emphasis falling on a simple phrase to explain the Trojans' turmoil: "Aeneas, unawares, is absent" (*Aeneas ignarus abest*, 25).

But book 9 is not all about implicit endorsement of Aeneas. One character, while not yet ready to alter the overall trajectory of the conflict, gains sufficient space in the absence of Aeneas to develop his own leadership skills and demonstrate promise for the future. This is the young prince, Ascanius, to whom we now turn.

The Emerging Leadership of Ascanius

Much has been written about Ascanius, and I find myself in agreement with what one might call the more traditional scholarly position, that Ascanius undergoes a positive growth in stature within the poem, with books 5 and 9 proving to be critical points of reference.²⁷ Broadly speaking, book 5 marks a transition in Ascanius from the dependent child of the earlier books to an individual with emerging talents in leadership, especially in his roles as leader of a file of riders in the *Lusus Troiae* (5.545-51, 570-72) and chief spokesman in the successful campaign to curtail the civil disobedience of the Trojan women (5.667-74). With the absence of Aeneas, book 9 presents itself as an opportunity for showcasing further the developments in the young prince, providing the clearest glimpses of the promise Ascanius is to fulfil in the future.²⁸

²⁷ For positive assessments of Ascanius' growth in stature during the poem, see Warde Fowler (1919) 87-92; Coleman (1942); Feldman (1953); Baker (1980). For more sceptical assessments, see Lyne (1987) 193-206; Petrini (1997) 87-110; esp. Merriam (2002).

²⁸ This in an important point: Ascanius does not formally pass into manhood within the chronological parameters of the epic, as he continues to be referred to as *puer* in later books (10.70, 236, 605; esp. 12.435-40). Instead Virgil signals by various means that Ascanius' manhood and significant purpose lie in the future: the omen of the flame (2.679-91); making him a consistent reference point within prophecies (Jupiter, 1.267-71; Tiber, 8.48); making him a predominant concern among the gods (Venus, 1.678; 10.132; Mercury, 4.232, 275-76); referring to him as a hope (*spes*) rather than an asset for the present (1.556; 4.274; 6.364; *spes surgentis Iuli*, 10.524; *magnae spes altera Romae*, 12.168). See further Feldman (1953) 308-10.

The increased stature for Ascanius in the wake of Aeneas' absence is brought to our attention when Virgil refers to him as *rex* (223), a startling conceit which may nonetheless be justified by the later suggestion that Ascanius is an individual "bearing both a spirit and the cares of manhood beyond his years" (*ante annos animumque gerens curamque virilem*, 311). It is Ascanius that Nisus and Euryalus feel duty-bound to approach to seek approval for their plan (222-23) and, following a short expression of praise from the aged Aletes (247-56), Ascanius delivers his longest speech of the epic (257-80):

*Immo ego vos, cui sola salus genitore reducto',
excipit Ascanius 'per magnos, Nise, penatis
Assaracique Larem et canae penetralia Vestae
obtestor, quaecumque mihi fortuna fidesque est,
in vestris pono gremiis. Revocate parentem,
reddite conspectum; nihil illo triste recepto.
Bina dabo argento perfecta atque aspera signis
pocula, devicta genitor quae cepit Arisba,
et tripodas geminos, auri duo magna talenta,
cratera antiquum quem dat Sidonia Dido.
Si vero capere Italiam sceptrisque potiri
contigerit victori et praedae dicere sortem,
vidisti, quo Turnus equo, quibus ibat in armis
aureus; ipsum illum, clipeum cristasque rubentis
excipiam sorti, iam nunc tua praemia, Nise.
Praeterea bis sex genitor lectissima matrum
corpora captivosque dabit suaque omnibus arma,
insuper his campi quod rex habet ipse Latinus.
Te vero, mea quem spatiis propioribus aetas
insequitur, venerande puer, iam pectore toto
accipio et comitem casus complector in omnis.
Nulla meis sine te quaeretur gloria rebus.
Seu pacem seu bella geram, tibi maxima rerum
verborumque fides'.*

("Indeed I, whose safety rests only with my father's return, implore you both', continues Ascanius. 'Nisus, I solemnly declare to you by the great Penates, the household god of Assaracus and the inner sanctuary of white-haired Vesta – whatever fortune and grounds

for confidence there is in me, I place it in your laps. Call back my father, give him back to my sight: nothing is gloomy when he has been received back. I will give you, made from solid silver and encrusted with reliefs, two cups that my father took from conquered Arisba, and two tripods, two great talents of gold, an ancient mixing bowl that Sidonian Dido gave. If indeed it comes about that he [Aeneas] takes Italy as victor, and gains its kingdom and orders the distribution of booty, you have seen the horse on which Turnus was riding and the arms he was wearing, all in gold – that very horse along with the shield and red crests I will set aside for you as your prizes even now, Nisus. Thereafter my father will give you twelve of the choicest matrons and captives, all of them along with their armour, and over and above these things the fields which king Latinus himself owns. But as for you, whom my own age follows at nearer distance, o revered boy, I now take you entirely to my heart and embrace you as a comrade in every chance. I will not seek any glory in personal matters without you. Whether I am waging peace or war, in you will I have the greatest confidence in both deed and word”).

Ascanius first endorses the plan and specifies its remit (257-62), before detailing the rewards that the pair can expect, in terms of both booty (263-74) and esteem (in the case of Euryalus, 275-80), on successful completion of the mission.²⁹ Scholarly attention has long been focused on Ascanius’ promises to the pair in the central section, and responses have been almost exclusively critical. Opinions range from a “delightful boast” (Coleman, 1942, 144) or “an array of gifts such as only a boyish imagination could contrive” (Feldman, 1953, 307), to much more forceful expressions of condemnation: the gifts are “barbarous” (Quinn, 1968, 203), “savage” (Owen Lee, 1979, 77 n.27), indicative of “a boy playacting” (Petrini, 1997, 29) who reveals “exaggerated self-importance” (Di Cesare, 1974, 162).³⁰

The persistence of this unfavourable scholarly assessment of Ascanius’ speech strikes me as surprising for two reasons. First, the poet in this book offers hints of the speaker’s maturation, as we have noted above (223; 311). Secondly, we must acknowledge that Ascanius has already displayed some skill in public speaking at a critical moment: his brief public reprimand of the Trojan women in book 5 was a fine demonstration of

²⁹ I take the vocative at 271 (*Nise*) in a localised sense, in that it is specifically Turnus’ horse and armour that are promised to Nisus alone (269-71). The twin nature of the material gifts in 263-74 (*bina ... pocula*, 263-64; *tripodas geminos*, 265) strongly suggests that at least some of the prizes are to be shared out between the pair.

³⁰ For further negative judgments, see also Heinze (1903) 157 = (1993) 129; Hightet (1972) 144-45; Pavlock (1985) 212; Henry (1989) 29-31; Merriam (2002) 857-59; Casali (2004) 328-35.

the speaker's rhetorical powers.³¹ Indeed, the opening section of the current speech (257-60) displays a similar sense of rhetorical maturity: it is highly appropriate, at the outset of a critical mission, for Ascanius to call to witness the divine guarantors of Trojan prosperity (Vesta and the Penates) and the household deity (Lar) that protects his own lineage. We surely owe it to Virgil, then, to seek out more charitable readings of the young prince's longest speech in the epic, and not reduce it simply to a (very) longwinded expression of boyish bravado.

To my mind, a seldom-read piece by McLoughlin (1968) provides an important step forward. Taking a more nuanced approach to the rhetorical effect of the speech, McLoughlin notes the deliberate temporal development in the rewards Ascanius offers to Nisus: first, he offers those gifts that he can deliver readily at the present time (263-66); then, dependent on success in Italy, he promises rewards that can be given in the immediate aftermath of the war, as soon as Turnus has been conquered (267-71); finally, looking further forward, he offers the sorts of gift (female captives as mothers, claimed land) which are the hallmarks of settled domestic life at a time when peace has been firmly established (272-74). Having astutely noted this progression of thought, McLoughlin unfortunately does not take his analysis a stage further by asking what Ascanius' motive might be for laying out such a detailed picture in front of Nisus and Euryalus.

I would argue that Ascanius is here specifically trying to tempt Nisus and Euryalus away from the immediate thrills of slaughter and spoils-gathering – a desire that Nisus had himself indicated at 242 – by offering them a much grander vision of the wealth and insignia of greatness that they can accumulate over time, provided that they concentrate on the central goal of returning with Aeneas. Indeed, the repetition in 261-62 – *revocate parentem, / reddite conspectum; nihil illo triste recepto* – rams home Ascanius' central point that it is Aeneas, and not spoils, that should accompany their return. Ascanius' strategic attempt to focus the minds of Nisus and Euryalus on the rewards *he* offers, rather than any that they might themselves acquire, is marked by a series of mature rhetorical ploys: emphasis on the highly ornate nature of the trappings (*argento perfecta*,

³¹ For example, Ascanius signals the future societal ramifications of the Trojan women's actions in his proleptic address to them as *cives* (5.671). Moreover, the speaker takes full advantage of the fact that his identity is obscured by a helmet to lend impact to the final revelation – he emphatically delays his name until the very end (5.673). No other words from any other speaker are required to bring the Trojan women to their senses (5.675-79). Baker (1980) 140 may well be right to suggest that Ascanius' place among the council of men in book 9 (226-27) comes precisely from recognition of his effective civic action in book 5.

263; *auri duo magna talenta*, 265; with the effective delay of *aureus* at 270); emphasis on the royal stature of the gifts, donated both willingly (*Sidonia Dido*, 266) and unwillingly (Turnus, 269; *campi quod rex habet ipse Latinus*, 274); emphasis on gifts which carry the hallmarks of slaughter and military conquest (*devicta* ... *Arisba*, 264; and the implied death of Turnus and enslavement of the conquered enemy, 267-74); encouragement to look upon even future gifts as *present* assets (*iam nunc tua praemia*, 271). For good measure, Euryalus' enthusiasm for heroism is pandered to in the form of the highly flattering address, *venerande puer* (276), which almost casts him as a god.

Now, one might say with the benefit of hindsight that Ascanius, having picked up on the potentially dangerous heroic impulses of Nisus and Euryalus, ought to have been more direct in his advice to these eager warriors. Indeed, Pavlock (1985, 212) may well have a point in suggesting that “this extravagant promise perhaps only encourages the materialistic desires that lead Euryalus to the disastrous events later in the episode”. So much may be conceded. But in the context of Ascanius' growing maturity, I would contend that there are much more grounds for a positive reading of the young prince's rhetorical efforts in this section. At least as much criticism should attach itself to the impetuosity of Nisus and Euryalus for failing to take on board the meaningful path to glory that Ascanius sets out carefully and in detail for them.

Ascanius' next significant role in book 9 is to deal with the aftermath of the slaughter of Nisus and Euryalus, and the particular reaction of Euryalus' mother (473-502). As she is the only mother to refuse to settle in Acesta and choose instead to travel on to Italy (216-18), all Trojan female reaction to warfare is concentrated within her at this point. She delivers a rhetorically powerful lament for her son, right in the midst of the male sphere of the battlements (478-79), and presents a (gendered) threat to the soldiers' spirits which needs to be eradicated (498-502):

*Hoc fletu concussi animi, maestusque per omnis
it gemitus, torpent infractae ad proelia vires.
Illam incendientem luctus Idaeus et Actor
Ilionei monitu et multum lacrimantis Iuli
corripiunt interque manus sub tecta reponunt.*

(“With this lament their spirits were shaken, and a sorrowful groan goes up through all the ranks, their broken strength is sluggish towards warfare. On the instructions of Ilioneus and Iulus – who is crying a great deal – Idaeus and Actor together snatch her up between their hands, as she is kindling grief, and place her back within the house”).

As Hardie (1994) 167 notes, Ascanius' grief has particular point here, in view of the pledge he made earlier to Euryalus to treat his mother like his own (297-98), and it serves the additional function of showing that, like his father, Ascanius is able to observe the communal good in spite of his own emotional response to the situation. But no one to my knowledge has spotted the particular parallel here with Aeneas' earlier reaction to the emotional queen Dido (4.391-96):

*Suscipiunt famulae conlapsaque membra
marmoreo referunt thalamo stratisque reponunt.
At pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentem
solando cupit et dictis avertere curas,
multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore
iussa tamen divum exsequitur classemque revisit.*

(“Her attendants take (Dido) up and carry her collapsed limbs back to her marble bedchamber and place her back in her bed. But dutiful Aeneas, although he wants to soothe the grieving woman with consolation and avert her concerns with words, groaning a great deal and his spirit shaken by great love, nevertheless follows the orders of the gods and goes back to his fleet”).

Similarities both thematic and verbal invite the reader to link the two episodes. In both, a distraught woman is carried back indoors by attendants – they are “placed back” (*reponunt*, 4.392; 9.502) within the domestic (female) sphere of the home. In both, the spirit of the male audience has been shaken (*animum labefactus*, 4.395; *concussi animi*, 9.498). And most significantly, both Aeneas and Ascanius manage to control extreme human emotion (*multa gemens*, 4.395; *multum lacrimantis*, 9.501) in the pursuit of a course of action that is in the best interests of the community and the central mission.³² Albeit as part of a wider group of commanders at this stage in his career, Ascanius is following directly in the footsteps of his father.

The final significant act undertaken by Ascanius in this book, and indeed in the epic as a whole, is the slaying of Numanus Remulus, the pompous Italian who hurls abuse at the Trojans for their cowardice and unmanliness in persisting with a strategy of non-engagement (598-620). Ascanius promptly kills the offender with a well-aimed arrow (621-36). Some scholars express concern towards Ascanius' initiation into the world

³² One might add that both are also motivated in their emotion by great love: we hear this directly with Aeneas (*magnoque . . . amore*, 4.395), and indirectly with Ascanius, who promises to hold Euryalus' mother in the same level of affection as his own mother (9.297-98).

of warfare. One might, for example, interpret Ascanius' reaction to Numanus' taunting as the result of boyish petulance.³³ Moreover, one might take on board the problematic place of archery in Roman military thinking and conclude that Ascanius' action only confirms the accusation of cowardice that Numanus had levelled a little earlier.³⁴ Those who would criticize Ascanius for his action, however, must weigh this against a variety of positive factors. First, Ascanius has negotiated successfully the mandates of both Aeneas and Anchises: the young lad manages to cast down a proud individual (*tumidusque novo praecordia regno*, 596; cf. *debellare superbos*, 6.853) while adhering to his father's instructions to remain inside the camp (41-43). Secondly, the act itself receives divine endorsement in the form of Apollo (638-58), the deity cherished by Augustus whose skills in archery will later help the Emperor to victory at Actium (8.704-05).³⁵

In conclusion, I would venture the proposition, on the strength of the analysis above, that book 9 holds Aeneas as a central concern precisely *because of* his absence from the action. First, it demonstrates the importance of his leadership through a more intense focus on the (flawed) leadership qualities and military discipline of others. Secondly, it creates space for the emerging leadership talents of his son, a youngster who is not yet ready to lead independently, but who shows promise for the future, if only Aeneas can secure that future for him. The stakes are certainly set high for Aeneas as he returns from Pallanteum to face his final battles.

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³³ See *e.g.* Coleman (1942) 147 and, more forcefully, Merriam (2002) 859-60.

³⁴ See *e.g.* Di Cesare (1974) 160; Lyne (1987) 202.

³⁵ In fact, only Aeneas and Ascanius receive direct guidance and instruction from Apollo in the poem (cf. 3.90-99), which forges another special bond between father and son.

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