

Some Interactive Instances of the Hero's Name in the *Aeneid*

It is not the custom of *PVS* for the editor to perpetrate an editorial. The present incumbent has nevertheless, with his colleague's good-natured acquiescence, taken it upon himself to offer a *Beitrag* as illustration of the fact that conferences can be as lively and fruitful happenings as Calvus's and Catullus's poetic workshop described in Catullus 50. For one of the most stimulating contributions to a recent British Academy Three-Day Symposium on the Language of Latin Poetry¹ was that of Dr S.J. Harrison, entitled 'Interactive "Speaking" Names in Virgil's *Aeneid*'. As is the way on such occasions, there was only very limited time for discussion, and so, with Dr Harrison's kind permission, I here amplify an idea which came to me in response to that paper.

Interactive Speaking Names, we were told, are those 'whose latent connotative or semantic elements are brought out through interaction with linguistic elements other than proper names in the surrounding context.' Of the various categories we were shown there were permutations of explicit and implicit, Greek and/or Latin. Obviously it is the *implicit* categories—where there is no outward linguistic similarity—which attract greater debate and pose the greater challenge to the Virgilian expositor. A good proportion of these go back to Servius, serious word-plays one might call them, remembering Stoic and other philosophic concepts of language. Dr Harrison presented over a dozen new examples of Greek explained by Latin, to which the reader will look forward.²

The fact that none of Dr Harrison's examples falls in books 2 and 4, and their very nature, was marked by the phrase 'varying possible dull passages'. I took up this challenge, and what I want to investigate here is a number of places where in fact it is Aeneas himself whose name creates the interaction. So far as I know, only the first of these has

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hitherto been so expounded (see below). But all refer to passages in the poem of absolutely cardinal importance.

The nearest, pre-existing exposition of such a kind known to me is Norden's of Charon's words at 6.392–3:

*nec vero Alciden nec sum laetatus euntem
accepisse lacu*

an 'antithetische Wortspiel' on *χαίρω*, *Charon*. What is significant for my present purpose is that the name Charon is here to be understood; it is not contiguously stated. But everyone knows who it is: he has been named at 299 and 326. It is the same with three out of the four Aeneas instances which concern me here.

The name Aeneas is ostensibly Trojan; it appears in Greek as Αινείας or Αινέας. Without prejudice I asked myself what Greek words might be used in interaction with this. There are essentially two, both Homeric (see *LSJ s.vv.*):

1) αἰνός-ή-όν = δεινός, dread, 'terrible';

2) αἶνος, 'a tale', 'story', also in the sense of Attic ἔπαινος, 'praise'.

In fact this corresponds with the transmitted ancient views. The first extant interactive play on Aeneas's name is in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 194–5:

τῷ δὲ καὶ Αἰνείας ὄνομ' ἔσσεται, οὐνεκα μ' αἰνὸν
ἔσχεν ἄχος ἔνεκα βροτοῦ ἀνερος ἔμπεσον εὐνή.

And his name will be Aeneas because terrible distress possessed me for the reason that I laid myself in the bed of a mortal man.

This 'etymology' is repeated in the *Etymologicum Magnum Genuinum*; the *Etymologicum Magnum Auctum* adds the other word, glossed 'praise' (ἔπαινος). In reality the most serious etymologies³ are a city Αἶνος at the mouth of the Hebros (*Il.* 4.520) and another, Αἶνεα, opposite the mouth of the Axios (*Hdt.* 7.123). But Virgil is a poet, and he did something magnificent with the word αἰνός 'terrible'.⁴

At the very climax of the last book of the *Aeneid*, that inscrutable and awe-inspiring moment when Aeneas avenges his debt to his kinsman

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and guestfriend Evander for the gloating killing of his only son Pallas by Turnus, at that cardinal point right at the end of the poem, which sweeps to a close all of a sudden like a late Beethoven quartet, Aeneas is

furiis accensus et ira
terribilis. (12.946–7)

The five-word phrase is exactly balanced in its place at the end of the description by

stetit acer in armis
Aeneas (938–9)

at the beginning. Where is his *pietas* now? Some would say ‘Right here’: so *terribilis αἰνός* is Aeneas’s very nature, as shown by his name. There are further possibilities at the other end of the poem.

In Aeneas’s extraordinary encounter with his disguised mother⁵ Austin acknowledges the Homeric model (*Od.* 9.19–20) of 1.378–9, ‘but Aeneas’s words have a Virgilian emotional content and significance.’ In order better to understand this assertion let us set the passages side by side:

Homer: ἔμ’ Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καὶ μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.

Virgil: *sum pius Aeneas, raptos qui ex hoste penates*
classe veho mecum, fama super aethera notus.

I would look at *fama super aethera notus*. First of all it exemplifies *surenchérir*, outbidding, of the Homeric context, as for instance does Catullus 51.2

ille, si fas est, superare divos

of Sappho’s original. But, equally importantly, with the name Aeneas resonate the words *fama...notus*, if we understand *fama* in the sense of αἰνός, ‘tale’, ‘story’ > ‘praise’ (see above).

Also in this amazing first book, when Aeneas reassures Dido of his undying gratitude with a series of implied *adynata* (607–10), he uses

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Menalcas's closing words in honour of Daphnis (*Ecl.* 5.76–8):

semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt (= Ecl. 5.78)
quae me cumque vocant terrae (1.609–10)

The addition of 610 seems to make the point: Aeneas, who is shortly to be heard as the poet of the Sack of Troy and of his own wanderings, which will be a significant factor in causing Dido's fatal passion for him,⁶ is here shown as the person in whom is intrinsic the power to praise Dido wherever he may go: *Aeneas* > αἴνος = ἔπαινος.

Lastly, and perhaps most dangerously, do we not talk habitually of the 'ambiguity' of the *Aeneid* and of its eponym? The Sibyl herself is the embodiment of the enigmatic:

horrendas canit ambages antroque remugit,
obscuris vera involvens (6.99–100)

and she is coupled with Aeneas in the descent to the Underworld, such that

ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram. (6.268)

Here Servius speaks of the *enallage* of these attributes, and Norden asserts that the 'normal' *soli sub obscura nocte* would be less effective. Let us in turn assert that it would be so because it would not make this implication about Aeneas: he is as enigmatic a figure as his companion with her riddles. Now we may make the link *Aeneas* > αἴνος > αἰνιγμός. Should we really be surprised when the enigmatic pair emerge from the Underworld by the gate of false dreams?⁸

I rest my case: interactive play on Greek words implicit in the name *Aeneas* adds much illumination and Virgilian enhancement⁹ to the poem at key junctures, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.

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NOTES

1. Held at the British Academy from 20–22 April 1995.
2. I understand that they are likely to be published as addenda to an important new book, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay*, by James J. O' Hara, forthcoming in 1996 from the University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
3. See Pape/Benseler, *Wörterbuch der Griechischen Eigennamen*, ed. 3 (1863–70) 37.
4. This view was suggested by I.M.leM. Du Quesnay, in the course of a Virgil Colloquium held at the University of Liverpool in May 1977 and published in *LCM* 2 (1977) 139–40, with a discussion in which the present writer took part.
5. On which in general see my lecture to the Society, *PVS* 13 (1973–74) 28–41, developed in *Venuše a Dido* (a lecture given at Charles University, Prague, April 1993, hitherto unpublished).
6. See my lecture on Catullus 35 given in Prague, May 1995, and forthcoming in an English version in *LCM*.
7. M.L. West on Hesiod, *Op.* 202 helpfully glosses this special sense of αἶνος 'a fable or other story with an implied message in it for the hearer', cf. Hom. *Od.* 14.508, Archil. 174.1, etc. According to West αἰνιττομαί is 'say allegorically', 'hint at a truth by indirect means', whence αἰνιγμός, αἰνιγμα, for which 'riddle' is too restrictive a translation.
8. See Roland Mayer most recently on the subject of the Gate, *PVS* 21 (1993) 53–63.
9. Niall Rudd *supra*, 55, 58, notes Virgil's puns on *Alexis*, ἀλέγω > *curo* at *Ecl.* 2.6, 56.

