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The Eminent Bard and the Soldierly Greek: Refractions between Virgil and Ammianus

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Ammianus cites Virgil on three occasions. At 15.9.1 he quotes from the *Aeneid*, the work of *Mantuanus uates excelsus*, on the strength of which aficionados of the biographical fallacy may conclude that Virgil was unusually tall. In 17.4.5, an allusion to Gallus in the *Eclogues*, the poet is simply named as *Vergilius*. But at 19.9.7, another quotation from the *Aeneid*, Virgil is *eminentissimus uates*. As I have noted elsewhere,[1] Ammianus' conception of how to deal with foreigners is firmly based on Virgil's immortal formulation of Rome's imperial mission: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (*Aen.*6.851-3).

What exactly Virgil meant by these words is not immediately obvious: the word order might suggest that Rome should come in peace and resort to war only if friendly overtures are spurned. But that was certainly not the view of Horace in the *Carmen Saeculare: bellante prior iacentem / lenis in hostem* ('superior in war, gentle towards a defeated enemy') (*CS* 51-2).

I shall first examine the patterns of behaviour to be observed in Ammianus, who clearly agreed with Horace, then return to Virgil's own usage in the *Aeneid*.

I

For Ammianus the standard scenario is as follows. Barbarians offer provocation (that is, display *superbia*, though the word is but rarely used); Rome responds, often with lightning swiftness; the terrified barbarians grovel and beg forgiveness; Rome, provided their abjection is deemed adequate, graciously grants them peace.

A general statement of the principles involved is found in the speech of Constantius when he made Julian Caesar (15.8.7). The barbarians have been running riot in Roman territory, but thanks to Julian's appointment *et colla superbarum gentium detumescent et imperii fines erunt intacti* ('the necks of arrogant tribes will be deflated and the frontiers of the empire remain intact').[2]

Julian's campaign in 357 offers a first example. At the outset Chnodomarius and his fellow kings are described as *caput altius attollentum* ('raising their heads too high') (16.12.2). Julian's response was appropriate: *fastus barbaricos ridens* ('laughing at their barbarian presumption') (3). But Chnodomarius continued arrogant: *ardua subrigens supercilia, ut saepe secundis rebus elatus* ('raising his eyebrows high, as one elated by frequent successes') (4). Before the battle of Strasburg Chnodomarius cut a fine figure (24); the contrast with his terrified surrender afterwards (60) is pointed. Brought before Julian he made a suitable display of subjection, *primo curuatus, deinde humi suppliciter fusus, gentilique prece ueniam poscens* ('first bending, then prostrating himself in suppliant fashion, and asking for peace with the prayers of his people') (65). Though he lost his kingdom, his life at least was spared: sent to Rome, he survived to die of senile decay (65).[3]

In 358 another Alamannic king, Suomarius, came to seek peace (17.10.3-4). He had once been arrogant, but now, with his looks and gait proclaiming him a suppliant, *nihil arbitrio suo relinquens pacem genibus curuatis orauit* ('leaving nothing to his own decision he begged for peace on bended knee'). Yet again peace was readily conceded. Julian then moved against another king, Hortarius (17.10.5-9), one of those who had led the attack on Strasburg in the previous year (cf. 16.12.1). Impressed by the damage the Romans were doing, *orauit ipse quoque ueniam* ('he himself also begged forgiveness') (7) and promised to do what he was told. At first he kept back some of his prisoners, but a second interview with Julian put him in a more receptive frame of mind: *Caesare trementibus oculis adorato uictorisque superatus aspectu* ('adoring Caesar with trembling eyes and overcome by the victor's appearance') (9). The terms granted were somewhat harsher than before, but this time they were observed.

So Ammianus can sum up the work of two seasons in words apt to our theme (17.10.10): *ita reges illi tumentes quondam immaniter rapinisque ditescere assueti nostrorum Romanae potentiae iugo subdidere colla iam domita et uelut inter tributarios nati et educati obsecundabant imperiis ingrauate* ('So those kings who were formerly monstrously puffed up and accustomed to grow rich on the plunder of our lands submitted their now tamed necks to the yoke of Roman power and energetically obeyed our commands as if they had been born and bred as tributaries.').[4]

There are also a few examples of this standard pattern that do not involve Julian. First the campaign of Constantius against the Sarmatae and Quadi in 358 (17.12.1-16). Both had been guilty of raids in Pannonia and Moesia (1). The Sarmatae first suffered a punitive attack that put them to flight (4). The survivors planned a counter-attack under the pretext of seeking peace (7). The Quadi came to their assistance (8), but they too were overwhelmed and came *rogaturi*

suppliciter pacem ('to ask in suppliant fashion for peace'), though Ammianus criticises their bearing as excessively confident and remarks that Constantius was too tolerant of such behaviour (9). The same could not be said of their king Zizais, who presented perhaps the most spectacular display of abjection on record. At first sight of Constantius, *abiectis armis pectore toto procubuit, exanimis stratus* ('casting aside his arms he fell face-down, lying senseless'). His mission was to beg, but fear caused him to lose his voice and sobbing hindered such efforts as he made to utter. But eventually, regaining the power of speech, *concessionem delictorum sibi tribui supplicauit et ueniam* ('he begged to be granted forgiveness and pardon for his crimes') (10). His followers then conducted themselves in such a manner, *ut uincerent humilitate supplicandi regalem* ('that they outdid their king in the humility of their supplication'). Peace was granted to Zizais and various other princelings (11), then, by a kind of domino effect, to Araharius and his Quadi, who stood *curuatis corporibus* ('with bodies bent') (13), the Sarmatae (15), and a very great number of kings and peoples (16). As Constantius put it in his speech at the end of the season (17.13.28): *restareque solam salutem contemplantes in precibus, effusi sunt uestigiis Augusti clementis* ('reckoning that their only remaining hope of survival lay in prayers, they threw themselves at the feet of the clement emperor').[5]

Finally Gratian and the Lentienses in 378 (31.10.2-17). The provocation was the usual: treacherous raids across the frontier (2), encouraged by the knowledge that Gratian was about to go East to assist Valens against the Goths (3-5). So *sublati in superbiam nostra confidentius irruperunt* ('roused to arrogance they invaded our territory with excessive confidence') (5). The Roman response went sufficiently well (6-11) for Gratian to think in terms of genocide (11). This inspired the Lentienses to desperate resistance (12-16). Gratian was equally stubborn, but he was also aware that time was not on his side and he needed men. So the Lentienses were allowed to surrender once the proper motions had been gone through: *deditionem, quam impetrauere supplici prece* ('the right to surrender, which they obtained by supppliant prayer') (17).

I turn now to a number of instances where this standard pattern is broken: when the Romans fail to dictate events, allowing too much initiative to the barbarians; when the Romans make excessive concessions; or when the barbarians fail to display sufficient self-abasement.

The campaign of Constantius against Vadomarius and Gundomadus in 354 (14.10.1-16) displays all these undesirable features. The scene is set in familiar fashion: frequent raids across the border by the brothers (1). But Constantius' response was sluggish (2-8), and when the Alamanni sent envoys *delictorum ueniam petituros et pacem* ('to seek pardon for their offences and peace') (9), they did so only because of unfavourable omens. Of grovelling and kowtowing there is not a word, yet it was decided to grant peace, *quae iustis condicionibus petebatur* ('which was being sought on just terms') (10): the view not of Ammianus but of the emperor and his advisers; it implies that the terms were formulated by the Germans, another obvious flaw in proceedings. Small wonder that Constantius felt the need to justify himself to his army. He claimed that it was not unRoman to show leniency to suppliants (14) - but as we have noted Ammianus' narrative makes no mention of supplication. The army accepted the peace (16), but solely because they believed that Constantius enjoyed good fortune only in civil wars. As a final indignity the treaty was made *gentium ritu* ('according to the practice of the tribes'), so the Alamanni had dictated not only the terms of the peace but also its form.

The campaigns of Valens against the Goths in 367-9 (27.5.1-10), though otherwise sound, ended in somewhat dubious fashion. In 369 the Goths were reduced to such straits *ut legatos supplices saepe mittentes uenialem poscerent pacem* ('that frequently sending suppliant envoys they sought pardon and peace') (7), which Valens decided to grant (8). It is also made clear that he dictated terms: *propositos condiciones assentiri Gothos* ('the Goths accepted the proposed terms') (9). All this is as it should be. But Athanaric claimed to have sworn an oath that he would never set foot on Roman soil, while it was obviously out of the question for the emperor to cross to the Gothic bank - Ammianus' use of *imperatorem* is pointed here. Formalities were therefore conducted on ships in the middle of the river. Ammianus voices no open disapproval. He merely observes in all innocence that Athanaric eventually died in Constantinople (10).

Even more disquieting were the negotiations between Valentinian and Macrianus in 374 (30.3.3-6). As early as 370 Valentinian gave thought *quibus commentis Alammanorum et Macriani regis frangeret fastus* ('by what means he might break the presumption of the Alamanni and their king Macrianus') (28.5.8). In 374 he planned a major expedition, but was persuaded instead to summon Macrianus to Mainz (30.3.3-4). Macrianus arrived in archetypal mode, *immane quo quantoque flatu distentus, ut futurus arbiter superior pacis* ('swollen with monstrous arrogance, as if he were to be the principal arbiter of the peace'), and stood on the bank of the Rhine *caput altius erigens* ('raising his head too high') (4). Then Valentinian, labelled *Augustus* to bring out the full shame, was rowed close enough to the opposite bank for negotiations to be concluded, *immodestis gestibus murmureque barbarico tandem sedato* ('when their immodest gestures and barbaric din had eventually been quieted') (5). Thereupon *discessit turbarum rex artifex delenitus* ('the troublesome king departed mollified') (6), no doubt with his head still held high. This is obviously much worse than Valens and Athanaric. It is painfully clear that the initiative had remained with Macrianus throughout and that his arrogant assumption that he would be the arbiter of peace had been amply fulfilled. But there is a final irony. Despite the unsatisfactory nature of proceedings the peace was unusually lasting: Macrianus remained a faithful ally for the rest of his life (6).

The lengthy tale of Constantius' dealings with the Limigantes begins in 358 (17.13.1-30), following on from the successful campaign against the Sarmatae and Quadi. Constantius was again inclined to leniency (2). The Limigantes, terrified, begged for their lives, but were clearly not sufficiently cowed. Determined to resist if ordered to evacuate their lands, they came to the bank of the Danube *cum genuino fastu* ('with their native presumption') (5). Only after an attack on Constantius himself (5-10), which gave rise to a ruthless massacre by his furious troops and further counter-measures (11-20), did the survivors decide to surrender. Thus to the laurels of victory *accessit eorum quoque supplicatio* ('there was added their supplication too') and *cum precibus... inclinauere ceruices* ('with prayers... they bent their necks') (21). Yet they remained quiet only briefly (23).[6]

After Julian's conclusion of peace with Macrianus and Hariobaudus in 359, Vadomarius had come as *precator* for three other kings who were not present, Urius, Ursicinus and Vestralpus, *pacem itidem obsecrans* ('begging for peace in like fashion') (18.2.18). But it was feared that, once the Romans had withdrawn, they would not abide by terms *per alios impetratis* ('obtained through the agency of others'). What follows is breathtaking: *sed cum ipsi quoque missis legatis, post messes incensas et habitacula captosque plures et interfectos, ita supplicarent tamquam ipsi haec deliquissent in nostros, pacem condicionum similitudine meruerunt* ('But when they too had

sent envoys, after their crops and homes had been burned and many of them had been captured and killed, and had begged as if they had themselves committed these offences against us, they were judged worthy of peace on similar terms.') (19). Ammianus does his best for Julian, avoiding any mention of his name and reducing the Roman expedition to a prepositional phrase, but he cannot refrain from remarking that the victims had done nothing to deserve it, which left Mommsen still so shocked that he inserted *non* before *ipsi*! The principle that all foreigners are *superbi* by nature and so must be debellated before one thinks about sparing the grovelling survivors is nowhere made more brutally clear.

Another instance of insufficient self-abasement comes in 369 (28.2.5-9). Envoys from the Alamanni complained about Valentinian's decision to build a fort on Alamannic soil (5-6). Their attitude was satisfactory (7): *flexis poplitibus supplicabant* ('they begged on bended knees'), but not their words, which warned Rome against persisting in an unjustifiable plan. Moreover, when they received the inevitable unfriendly answer, the Germans attacked and annihilated the troops who were working on the fort (8-9).

The events which led to Valentinian's death were more complex. The story starts in 373 (29.6.2-6). Valentinian decided to establish a camp across the Danube (2), which provoked mild protests from the Quadi. Then the Roman commander Marcellianus, *intempestiue turgens* ('inopportunely puffed up'), treacherously murdered the king Gabinius, who had protested *modeste* (4-5). The news of so atrocious a deed (6) stirred the Quadi to fury. Thus far the Romans seem clearly in the wrong. But old mindsets die hard. Once the Quadi, along with the Sarmatae, take the field, they become *ad raptus et latrocinia gentes aptissimae* ('peoples most inclined to pillaging and brigandage') (8), and their justification is largely forgotten.[7] When Valentinian prepared to attack them in 375 (30.5.11), they are labelled *tumultus atrocis auctores* ('those responsible for the atrocious disturbance'). The Roman advance was swift and effective (13-15), and although the narrative is interrupted by portents of Valentinian's imminent death (16-19), we seem to be back with the old familar pattern. The Quadi sent envoys, *pacem cum praeteritorum oblitteratione suppliciter obsecrantes* ('begging in suppliant fashion for peace and forgiveness for the past') (30.6.1). It was agreed that peace should be granted, but when they were admitted to the presence, though they stood *membris incuruatis... metu debiles et praestricti* ('with bended limbs... weak and paralysed with fear'), they again pointed out that the cause of all the trouble had been Rome's unjust and inopportune plan to build the camp (2). Whereupon Valentinian lost his temper, had an apoplectic fit and shortly died (3-6).

So far then we have seen first a standard pattern, then diverse variations and defects to which it may be subject. But that most traumatic of all confrontations between Rome and the barbarians in Ammianus, Edirne and its aftermath, has almost the air of a farcical parody on these themes.

We begin with another ironic reversal. The Theruingi, who in 376 asked with humble prayers (31.4.1) to be admitted to Roman territory, came not as marauding barbarians but as themselves the victims of barbarian incursions by the Huns. They were then subjected to largely unprovoked Roman aggression (31.7.3). Before the battle it was Valens and his flatterers who were overconfident (31.12.5). Wiser heads advised him to wait for Gratian (6), so that *tumor barbaricus flammans* ('blazing barbarian presumption') might more easily be crushed. But Valens did not want to share the glory of victory and so was determined to fight alone - a sign of *tumor*, one might think.

Yet there were negotiations. A letter from Fritigern implied that the Goths, like the Romans, were civilised people subject, alas, to annoyance by savage tribes. He promised perpetual peace in exchange for Thrace - hardly a token of subjection (8). The mission came to nothing. But just before the battle the Goths, whether terrified or merely playing for time, sent an embassy to beg for peace (12-13). The Romans were still too confident: the envoys were spurned as of insufficient social standing. Yet when Fritigern sent to ask for hostages of high rank, the suggestion was approved (14-15). But the hostages had barely set out when their mission was aborted by a premature attack on the part of undisciplined Roman units (16-17). So three years of Roman error and misjudgement were brought to the blackest of farcical climaxes.

And yet, after the catastrophe, came a glimmer of resurgent dignity. The Goths besieged Edirne (31.15.2) and in their arrogance demanded its immediate surrender (5). But the proprieties reasserted themselves. For all the impudence of his message the envoy did not dare to enter the city: the letter was brought in 'by some Christian' (6). The reaction was impeccable: *portatis scriptis et recitatis utque decebat contemptis* ('when the letter had been delivered, read and treated with the contempt it deserved'), the defence continued. Edirne did not fall, and the besiegers eventually dispersed to range annoyingly but ineffectively over the northern provinces (31.16.7). Meanwhile in the East the *magister militum* Julius, aware of what had happened in Thrace, was able to gull the Goths in his territory with false promises of pay and then massacre the lot (8). Ammianus' approval of this act of treachery is pragmatically unabashed: *quo consilio prudenti sine strepitu uel mora completo, orientales prouinciae discriminibus ereptae sunt magnis* ('when this prudent plan was carried out without fuss or delay, the eastern provinces were freed from great dangers').

So much for *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, or rather vice versa. There is, as we have seen, copious evidence for how Ammianus thought the principle ought to work, how it did work when things went as they should, and how and why it sometimes failed. What of *pacique imponere morem?* Ammianus is too realistic to descant on this theme. Barbarians make and keep the peace only through fear, and break it again as soon as they reckon they might get away with it. Constantius had a vision (15.8.14) of himself and Julian which again echoes Virgil: *militabimus simul, una orbem pacatum, deus modo uelit quod oramus, pari moderatione pietateque recturi* ('We shall stand side by side, to rule together with equal moderation and dedication a world at peace, provided God grants our prayers.'). But God or the gods had other ideas.

II

I turn now to *superbia* and *superbus* in the *Aeneid*. I shall consider first those instances that refer to peoples or cities. The earliest, significantly, alludes to the Romans, whom Juno had heard would one day destroy Carthage: *hinc populum late regem belloque superbum / uenturum excidio Libyae* ('hence will come to destroy Libya a people widely ruling and arrogant in war') (1.21-2). *Bello* is to be construed with *superbum*; thus we have here an example of a phenomenon familiar in Ammianus and indeed found elsewhere in Virgil: *superbia* engendered or enhanced by success in war.

Next Dido is ironically presented as a near precursor of the Romans, hailed by Ilioneus in the words: *o regina, nouam cui condere Iuppiter urbem / iustitiaque dedit gentis frenare superbas*

('o queen, whom Jupiter has allowed to found a new city and curb arrogant tribes with justice') (1.522-3), presumably the tribes of North Africa, though their *superbia* is not further defined. A few lines later he assures the queen that the Trojans are not like that: *non nos aut ferro Libycos populare penatis / uenimus aut captas ad litora uertere praedas; / non ea uis animo nec tanta superbia uictis* ('We have not come to ravage the homes of Libya with steel or to carry captured booty to its shores; that violence is not in our minds, nor do the conquered have such great arrogance.') (527-9).

Hindsight might prompt us to qualify this claim: not any more, and only because they are defeated, since other passages present Troy as a clear example of *superbia* brought down by war: *postquam res Asiae Priamique euertere gentem / immeritam uisum superis ceciditque superbum / Ilium* ('After it seemed good to the gods to cast down the cause of Asia and Priam's undeserving people and arrogant Ilium fell.') (3.1-3). Here *immeritam* acts as palliative, but the fact is still stated, while if Priam in his fall may represent his city we may add: *tot quondam populis terrisque superbum / regnatorem Asiae* ('once arrogant ruler of so many peoples and lands of Asia') (2.556-7), which appears to assimilate Priam to those who show *superbia* in the exercise of power, a theme to which I shall return.[8]

For the shade of Creusa it is not surprisingly the Greeks who merit the epithet. She deems it better to die on Trojan soil than be carried off a captive: *non ego Myrmidonum sedes Dolopumue superbas / aspiciam* ('I shall not see the arrogant seats of the Myrmidons or Dolopes') (2.785-6), where *superbia* may connote both the effect of the success in war which might have led to her enslavement and the harsh exercise of power towards its victims.

Once the Trojans reach Italy the behaviour of the Latins gives rise to typically proto-Roman judgements. Aeneas complains of it when he makes his people known to Pallas: *Troiugenas ac tela uides inimica Latinis, / quos illi bello profugos egere superbo* ('you see natives of Troy and weapons hostile to the Latins, refugees whom they have harried with arrogant war') (8.117-8).[9]

What the Greeks were to Creusa, the Trojans themselves are to Juturna. Immortal glory awaits Turnus, but *nos patria amissa dominis parere superbis / cogemur....* ('we, our country lost, shall be forced to obey arrogant masters') (12.236-7). Again the *superbia* of the Trojans will be increased by their predicted success in this war and will manifest itself in their treatment of the defeated.[10]

The words are far more frequently applied to individuals. They too may be rendered proud by success in war or some other form of competition. So Entellus, after his victory over Dares in the boxing match (5.473) is described as: *uictor superans animis tauroque superbus* ('the victor exulting in spirit, made arrogant by winning the bull'). His *superbia* manifests itself in typical ways: first boastful speech (474-6), then ostentatious action, as he literally fells an ox with a single blow (477-81), and finally a gibe specifically aimed at his defeated opponent: *hanc tibi, Eryx, meliorem animam pro morte Daretis / persoluo* ('I sacrifice this better spirit to you, Eryx, in lieu of the death of Dares') (483-4).[11]

Agrippa's rostral crown at Actium is called *belli insigne superbum* ('an arrogant emblem of war') (8.683). It too was a mark of success in war, awarded for his previous naval victories. No

improper speech or action is attributed to him and the goodwill of the gods is attested by favouring winds (682). A little later Augustus receives the gifts of the conquered and dedicates them to Apollo (8.721-2): *dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis / postibus; incedunt uictae longo ordine gentes* ('he reviews the gifts of peoples and fixes them on arrogant portals; the conquered tribes approach in long procession'). The grounds for *superbia* are again supposed military success and Augustus too is guilty of no overt impropriety. But whether these instances are wholly positive or testify to some residual distaste for Agrippa's ambitions and Augustus' marked tendency to brag of imaginary victories is a question that may here be left open.[12]

Hercules affords another example: *nam maximus ultor / tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbis / Alcides aderat* ('for the mighty avenger Alcides was at hand fresh from the death of thrice-twin Geryon with arrogant spoils') (8.201-3). The use of *ultor* here recalls the comment on the first Brutus: *animamque superbam / ultoris Bruti* ('the arrogant spirit of Brutus the avenger') (6.817-8). In both cases one might once more wonder about the connotations: justifiable pride in glorious achievements or discreet doubts about the merits of vengeance as a motivating force for action.[13] In the case of Hercules we were told only five lines before how his next opponent Cacus kept the heads of his victims *foribusque adfixa superbis* ('fixed to his arrogant doorposts') (8.196). The risks inherent in such behaviour had been proved at the fall of Troy: *barbarico postes auro spoliisque superbi / procubuere* ('the portals arrogant with barbarian gold and spoils fell') (2.504-5).

Superbia may also be inspired by the distinction of one's family. The most striking instance might seem at first sight positive: *coniugio, Anchisa, Veneris dignate superbo* ('Anchises, deemed worthy of [or perhaps 'made self-important by' - or of course both] your arrogant union with Venus') (3.475). Pride in such a connection is surely justified - or had some been inclined to boast about it too much? *Dignate* is also suggestive: the dangers of a preoccupation with *dignitas* cannot yet have faded from men's minds. One version of the story records that Anchises himself was smitten with a thunderbolt by Jupiter for bragging of his conquest in his cups (Hygin.*Fab.*94). No such doubts subsist in the case of Drances. There is more than a hint that his lineage was not in fact sufficient to warrant such an attitude: *genus huic materna superbum / nobilitas dabat, incertum de patre ferebat* ('nobility on his mother's side gave him arrogant lineage, his father's ancestry was uncertain') (11.340-1).

The term may also connote splendour of physical appearance. The most interesting instance is the description of the luxurious appointments of Dido's palace: *arte laboratae uestes ostroque superbo, / ingens argentum mensis, caelataque in auro / fortia facta patrum, series longissima rerum / per tot ducta uiros antiqua ab origine gentis* ('Cloths worked with art and arrogant purple, much silver on tables, and the brave deeds of her forebears engraved on gold, the very long sequence of deeds wrought by so many men from the ancient origin of her people.') (1.639-42). Here the purely physical aspect is reinforced by the number of Dido's forebears and the distinction of their achievements.[14]

Cruel or tyrannical behaviour also justifies the accusation of *superbia*. Thus Pyrrhus, according to Andromache: *stirpis Achilleae fastus iuuenemque superbum / seruitio enixae tulimus* ('we have borne, struggling with slavery, the presumption of the stock of Achilles and the arrogant young man') (3.326-7). Here *superbum* has several shades of meaning, connoting not only Pyrrhus' harsh treatment of his captive but also the arrogance inspired by his birth and his own achievement in the war.

Dido applies it to Aeneas: *i, soror, atque hostem supplex adfare superbum* ('go, sister, and speak as a suppliant to our arrogant enemy') (4.424). The use of *hostem* underlines the paradoxical situation: not the proud reduced to begging, but the virtuous pleading with an arrogant enemy, though (425-8) she has done nothing to deserve to be put in such a position.[15]

But the arch-tyrant is Mezentius, according to Evander's lecture to Aeneas on Italian geopolitics: *hanc multos florentem annos rex deinde superbo / imperio et saeuis tenuit Mezentius armis. / quid memorem infandas caedes, quid facta tyranni / effera?* ('Then king Mezentius held it flourishing for many years with arrogant rule and savage arms. Why should I mention his unspeakable slaughters, the savage deeds of the tyrant?') (8.481-4). The focus here is entirely on his treatment of his own subjects, who are finally driven to try to put down his arrogance by civil war (491-5).[16] But the task will require a military adviser: *nulli fas Italo tantam subiungere gentem* ('it is not permitted for any Italian to subdue so great a people') (502).[17]

Perhaps this is also the rubric under which to set one of Virgil's most striking uses of *superbus*, when Juturna becomes aware of the approach of the Dira: *nec fallunt iussa superba / magnanimi Iouis* ('nor do the arrogant commands of great-spirited Jupiter escape me') (12.877-8). In the lines that follow she accuses Jupiter of behaving with a cruel and wilful perversity that might well mark the actions of a mortal tyrant, and Virgil's own comments a few lines earlier hint that he might almost have agreed with her: *meritas* (852) is only a partial palliative. The war in Italy exhibits a number of instances, some straightforward, some less so. The earliest is also the most bizarre. Rhamnes is killed by Nisus: *simul ense superbum / Rhamnetem adgreditur, qui forte tapetibus altis / exstructus toto proflabat pectore somnum, / rex idem et regi Turno gratissimus augur, / sed non augurio potuit depellere pestem* ('At once he attacks with his sword arrogant Rhamnes, who by chance lay on thick rugs, snoring with all his might, himself a king and an augur most valued by king Turnus, but he could not by his augury ward off destruction.') (9.324-8). Can a man sound asleep and snoring loudly be *superbus*? Apparently so. Perhaps he was guilty of arrogance brought on by his kingly power and in particular by his gift of prophecy, said, perhaps a little unfairly, to have proved inadequate. Moreover, since he was killed in his sleep, he hardly had a chance to demonstrate subjection.

Remulus is a much simpler case: *digna atque indigna relatu / uocıferans tumidusque nouo praecordia regno / ibat et ingentem sese clamore ferebat* ('Shouting things worthy and unworthy of record, his spirit puffed up with his new kingship, he advanced and made himself great with noise') (9.595-7), sneering loud and long at the 'twice-captured Phrygians' (598-620). Such arrogance is not to be born: *talia iactantem dictis et dira canentem / non tulit Ascanius* ('Ascanius did not endure his boastful words and dire threats') (621-2). He succinctly dismisses his dead opponent's bombast: *i, uerbis uirtutem inlude superbis! / bis capti Phryges haec Rutulis responsa remittunt* ('Go, mock courage with arrogant words! The twice-captured Phrygians return this answer to the Rutuli.') (634-5), a very proper proto-Roman response. Virgil notes with approval his brevity and moderation: *hoc tantum Ascanius* ('Ascanius said no more than this') (636) - not quite two lines as against twenty-three, as the singular *hoc* points up.

More complex is the case of Camilla's victim, the son of Aunus. She accuses him of *superbia*: *uane Ligus frustraque animis elate superbis, / nequiquam patrias temptasti lubricus artis, / nec fraus te incolumem fallaci perferet Auno* ('Futile Ligurian, elated to no purpose by your arrogant spirits, slippery you tried in vain your father's arts, but trickery will not bring you back safe to

deceitful Aunus.') (11.715-7). Yet he has shown no manifest signs of *superbia*. On encountering Camilla he was terrified (699), thought first of flight and only when that proved impossible resorted to guile (702-4). The speech he then makes (705-8) might well be judged arrogant in different circumstances, since he accuses Camilla of being the one who is running away and taunts her with being afraid to dismount and face him on foot. But in fact he wants only to trick her into dismounting so that he will have a chance of getting away on horseback. Nor is Camilla's response to be explained on the ground that she takes his words at face value, since it is clear that she has seen through his ploy. Perhaps overconfidence in his inherited powers of deception led him to believe that Camilla would be stupid enough to fall for such a pitiful device - that is certainly the cause of her anger.

The brothers Bitias and Pandarus, who opened the gates of the Trojan camp, are called *fratres... superbos* (9.695). The reason is discreetly adumbrated earlier. Their action was a breach of discipline inspired by overconfidence in their own abilities: *portam, quae ducis imperio commissa, recludunt / freti armis* ('trusting in their arms they opened the gate which had been entrusted to them by order of the commander') (675-6).

So we come to the *superbia* of Turnus. When he sets out in quest of Pallas (10.441ff.), his *iussa superba*, at which Pallas is amazed, are further glossed as *dicta tyranni* (448), to which Pallas replies with conspicuous moderation (449-51). Once he has killed Pallas, Turnus at least returns the body for burial (10.492-4). His arrogance now lies in his action, as he despoils his victim of the fatal *balteus*, or perhaps more precisely in his reaction (500): *quo nunc Turnus ouat spolio gaudetque potitus* ('now Turnus celebrates and rejoices at winning that trophy'). It appears to be this that inspires Virgil's comment: *nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae / et seruare modum rebus sublata secundis* ('The mind of men does not know its fate or what the future will bring, nor how to preserve moderation when borne up by success.') (501-2). The failure *seruare modum rebus sublata secundis* is pretty much a definition of that form of *superbia* which is engendered by success, and when Aeneas hears of Pallas' death and sets out in search of his killer, Turnus is indeed described as *superbum / caede noua* ('made arrogant by this new death') (514-15).

Success, though in delusive form, is also the spur to his last display of *superbia*. The spectacle of Aeneas retiring from the field and the Trojan leaders thrown into confusion stirs him to false hope and leads him to call for his horses and weapons (12.324-6): *saltuque superbus / emicat in currum et manibus molitur habenas* ('leaping into his chariot he gleams in arrogance and plies the reins in his hands') (326-7). After describing the havoc he caused Virgil speaks of him as: *caesis / hostibus insultans* ('trampling on slain enemies') (338-9). The meaning is of course literal - Turnus' horses are trampling on his fallen foes - but also indicates his haughty attitude.

There are also a few relevant passages where *superbia* does not appear. Jupiter, reassuring Venus, describes the task awaiting Aeneas in Italy in words closely akin to 6.852-3: *bellum ingens geret Italia populosque ferocis / contundet moresque uiris et moenia ponet* ('He will wage a great war in Italy and will hammer fierce peoples and impose customs and walls on men.') (1.263-4), while Anchises warns him: *gens dura atque aspera cultu / debellanda tibi Latio est* ('in Latium you will have to overcome in war a hard race, rough in its ways') (5.730-1).

When Venus complains to Jupiter about the successes of Turnus and the Rutuli, her words pre-echo 12.338-9: *cernis ut insultent Rutuli Turnusque feratur / per medios insignis equis*

tumidusque secundo/ Marte ruat? ('Do you see how the Rutuli vaunt and Turnus advances through the midst, marked out by his horses, and charges puffed up by success in war?') (10.20-1) - the familiar phenomenon of arrogance born of success.

After his killing of Camilla, Arruns is observed by his impending nemesis Opis: *ut uidit fulgentem armis ac uana tumentem* ('when she saw him gleaming in arms and vainly puffed up') (11.854). Once more ostentatious appearance and arrogant conduct go together, while Arruns has already been guilty of insolent speech in his prayer to Apollo (789-93), where a superficial modesty gives rise to a series of scathing insults to Camilla.

Potential occasions to spare the submissive are largely confined to Aeneas' killing spree in the tenth book and are uniformly spurned. The first missed opportunity is provided by Magus, who dodges Aeneas' spear: *et genua amplectens effatur talia supplex* ('embracing his knees as a suppliant he spoke thus') (10.523). He pleads for his life in the name of Anchises and Iulus and offers a ransom (524-9). Aeneas scorns the offer: the killing of Pallas has excluded all deals. Such is the vote of Anchises and Iulus (531-4). This striking evasion of moral responsibility prefigures his final words to Turnus.

Next is Tarquitus, *exsultans contra fulgentibus armis* ('exulting against him in gleaming arms') (10.550). Aeneas overpowers him: *tum caput orantis nequiquam et multa parantis / dicere deturbat terrae* ('then he cast to earth his head as he begged in vain and was preparing to say many things') (554-5), and gloats because his body will not receive burial (557-60).

Liger too is at first boastful (10.580-5). But after the downfall of his brother Lucagus he begs for mercy (595-8). Aeneas not only kills him but treats him with contempt: *pluribus oranti Aeneas: 'haud talia dudum / dicta dabas. morere et fratrem ne desere frater.'* ('To him as he begged at length Aeneas replied "You weren't talking like that a while ago. Die and let brother not desert brother".') (599-600).

He sneers again at the fallen Mezentius (10.896-908), who rebukes him with much dignity and begs, not for his life, but only that his body be returned for burial: *unum hoc per si qua est uictis uenia hostibus oro: / corpus humo patiare tegi* ('I beg this thing by whatever mercy there may be for vanquished enemies: allow my body burial in earth.') (903-4). Mezentius seems unsure whether any such principle exists, or at least is known to Aeneas, for which he can hardly be blamed. Notoriously Virgil does not tell us whether Aeneas granted his request, though some infer that he did from the opening lines of the following book.[18]

That book offers an example of a very different kind. On the next day *oratores* come from the Latin city to beg for peace (11.100-1), who actually use the word *parceret* (105). Aeneas is ready to grant it: *haud aspernanda precantis / prosequitur uenia* ('forgiveness follows those whose prayers are not to be despised') (106-7), exclaiming: *pacem me exanimis et Martis sorte peremptis / oratis? equidem et uiuis concedere uellem* ('Do you beg me for peace for those who are dead and carried off by the fortunes of war? I would grant it also to the living.') (110-11).[19] But later it is made quite clear that the terms will be dictated by the proto-Romans, as is proper: *regique iubet responsa Latino / certa referre uiros et pacis dicere leges* ('he orders men to take back a firm answer to Latinus and dictate terms of peace') (12.111-12). At this stage his demands are moderate: *paribus se legibus ambae / inuictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant* ('let both peoples

undefeated commit themselves to an eternal treaty on equal terms') (12.191-2). Less measured is the ultimatum he issues before his final duel with Turnus: *urbem hodie, causam belli, regna ipsa Latini, / ni frenum accipere et uicti parere fatentur, / eruam et aequa solo fumantia culmina ponam.... / hoc caput, o ciues, haec belli summa nefandi. / ferte faces propere foedusque reposcite flammis* ('If they do not agree to accept the bit and obey when defeated, today I shall destroy the city, the cause of war, and the kingdom of Latinus, and level its smoking towers with the ground.... This is the fount, citizens, this the nub of dreadful war. Bring torches quickly and demand the treaty back with flames.') (12.567-9, 572-3). The pattern could not be clearer: provocation - reaction - subjection - peace - or else!

And so at last to the death of Turnus. Turnus begs, for his father's sake, that Aeneas return him to Daunus, alive or dead: *miseri te si qua parentis / tangere cura potest, oro (fuit et tibi talis / Anchises genitor) Dauni miserere senectae / et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mauis, / redde meis. uicisti et uictum tendere palmas / Ausonii uidere; tua est Lauinia coniunx, / ulterius ne tende odiis.*' ('If any care for a wretched father can touch you, I beg you (your father Anchises too was such a man) to pity the old age of Daunus and return me, or, if you prefer, my body, deprived of the light, to my own. You have conquered and the Ausonii have seen me extend my hands in defeat. Lavinia is your bride. Do not carry your hatred any further.') (12.932-8). It is almost as if Turnus were quoting at Aeneas the principles by which his descendants were allegedly destined to abide and challenging him to observe them himself. Aeneas is swayed (939-41) till he sees the fatal baldric. Overcome by madness and anger (941-7), he kills Turnus and cries: *Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas / immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit* ('It is Pallas, Pallas who sacrifices you with this blow and exacts vengeance from your criminal blood.') (12.948-9). We are reminded of the death of Magus above, voted for by Anchises and Iulus. Another, most unedifying parallel springs to mind: the sanctimonious Athenian husband, who exclaims 'It is not I but the law that kills you' as he murders his wife's lover (Lys.1.26).

Which leads to a final question: what does the last line mean? To render *indignata* as e.g. 'resentful' does not do the word full justice. It surely suggests something like 'resentful at being treated in a manner inconsistent with one's *dignitas*'. That is clearly true in the line's previous application to Camilla (11.831). There it is instantly apparent why Camilla feels her *dignitas* has been infringed: she has been first insulted and then killed by a coward, and so lacks even that cold comfort that Aeneas offers to Lausus (10.825-30: note *dignum* in 826). Also transparent is the reference to the Araxes as *pontem indignatus Araxes* (8.728): any great river might regard a bridge as an affront to its . Perhaps Turnus too felt that he deserved better, that Aeneas ought to have played by the as yet unwritten rules of a different world - but a world that Aeneas already inhabits when he is dealing with ambassadors, not engaging in epic single combat. Did Virgil agree with him? We cannot be sure: *indignata* is deponent, not passive. And when it comes down to what Virgil thinks, we very rarely can feel we know. Yet he could certainly, had he wanted to, have written a completely different line.

III

There is another important and suggestive link between Virgil and Ammianus. For Ammianus *superbia* is only one of a constellation of words and concepts that are typical of barbarian behaviour. Among the most significant of these are anger, madness, savagery, burning, swelling, seething, and suggestions that an individual, an army or a people is out of control or behaving like

an uncontrollable force of nature.[20]

When this language is applied to barbarians it carries no moral blame. That is simply how such peoples naturally behave. The civilised man does not criticise them for it. He simply sends a gunboat or runs away: the choice is a pragmatic, not an ethical one. But when Ammianus uses such notions to describe Romans his tone is almost always severely critical. It means that they have betrayed their civilised heritage and sunk to the level of savages themselves.[21] There is, however, one significant exception. Roman troops in the heat of battle may burn and boil; they are often found in the grip of anger and madness. At worst this is seen as excusable, while if it arises from some such provocation as a treacherous attack on themselves or their commander, especially if he be the emperor, it may even be cause for commendation.[22] Now exactly the same vocabulary as Ammianus applies to barbarians and at times to Romans is constantly employed by Virgil of Aeneas and many others on both sides. There may, I feel, be lessons to be drawn from Ammianus to help us with a problem that has greatly exercised scholars: how are we to judge Aeneas?

First and perhaps foremost, the principle of *parcere subiectis*, both when it works and when it does not, appears in Ammianus only when the fighting is over. It is about an emperor in council or on his tribunal, receiving an official embassy to which he may choose to dictate terms. There is never the slightest hint that it is meant to apply in the course of an actual battle. In other words it operates only in precisely those situations where Aeneas too observes it. I would therefore suggest it is unfair to criticise Aeneas for failing to live up to it in circumstances to which it simply does not apply.[23]

Nor do I feel that Stoicism is helpful here.[24] If Aeneas is doing anything wrong, it is not that he is sometimes failing to live up to some Stoic ideal, but rather that he sometimes behaves like a barbarian, not like a (proto)-Roman. But even this, I suspect, is also unfair. There is no simple dichotomy in Virgil between Trojans and Italians to match that in Ammianus between Romans and barbarians, itself highly artificial, since many of Julian's men were themselves Germans and Franks. Nor is Aeneas a straightforward example of supposedly civilised man. He stands at the cusp between a barbaric/heroic and a more settled age. Nor again do the epic single combats in which he and others engage allow him or them to be fully assimilated to either a Roman general or a Roman private.

And yet Virgil does keep hammering home the point, as he need not have done, that Aeneas makes a habit of gleefully killing men who are down and begging for mercy. His behaviour is disquieting. We do at least regret it, even if we cannot fairly blame it. But that is in part at least because we take Aeneas seriously, as Virgil surely meant us to do, in a way that we never could Achilles.[25]

So.... Have I proved anything to you? I am not sure that I was even trying to. Perhaps just this: that those who study Rome's greatest poet might do well to give some attention also to her greatest historian.[26]

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NOTES

[1] Cf. Seager, *CQ* 93 (1999), 605.

[2] The limited and purely defensive objective is fundamental to Ammianus' perception of Roman frontier policy. Cf. Seager, *CQ* 91 (1997), 267-8; *CQ* 93 (1999), 579, 604-5. It is, however, fairly flexible: Julian's invasion of Persia is presented as a defensive measure; cf. *CQ* 91 (1997), 262-5.

[3] For more or less similar examples from Julian's campaigns of 357 and 358, cf. 17.1.2-12, 17.8.3-5.

[4] For similar examples from 359, 360 and 361, cf. 18.2.1-18, 20.10.2, 21.4.7-8.

[5] For further trouble with the Sarmatae in 374, appropriately dealt with by the future emperor Theodosius, cf. 29.6.15-16.

[6] In 359 events followed a very similar course (19.11.1-15), again culminating in an attack on Constantius in person (10-12) and an even fiercer response by the outraged Romans than in the previous year (13-15).

[7] It is recalled in passing at 12 and out of context at 30.1.1.

[8] On the Trojans before their arrival in Italy, cf. also 4.537-41, even if Dido is hardly an impartial witness.

[9] His mother is of similar mind (8.613-4).

[10] The description of Tibur as *superbum* (7.630) is probably an allusion to its impressive setting. One may also recall the aggressive pride at the possession of a Tibur postcode felt by Catullus (44.1-4).

[11] For *superbia* born of success, cf. also 7.544 on Allecto.

[12] It is hard to see Agrippa as *fidus Achates*. Dio consistently presents an unresolved ambiguity between ambitious ostentation and much-advertised modesty (53.23.1-4, 27.1-6, 31.3-32.1; 54.4.5-7, 24.7). It often seems as if Dio (or his source) is refuting a predecessor who claimed that Agrippa was dangerously ambitious and untrustworthy. Note also Maecenas' alleged advice at Dio 54.6.5; also Vell.2.93, Suet.*Aug.*66.3, Plin.*NH* 7.149.

[13] Cf. Hor.*C.*1.2.43-4.

[14] Cf. also 1.697-8 on Dido's reception of Achates; 5.268-9 on the victors in the games; 12.125-6 on the leaders before the final conflict.

[15] The epithet is transferred to the dwellings of the cruel in the cases not only of Cacus (8.196) but also of Circe (7.12).

[16] Cf. also 11.539 on Camilla's father Metabus: *pulsus ob inuidiam regno uirisque superbas.*

[17] When Aeneas dedicates the spoils of Mezentius (11.2ff.) he too calls him *rege superbo* (15-16), but the meaning is not glossed further.

[18] Cf. also the treatment of Aulestes by Messapus (12.293-6).

[19] We may note in passing the savage irony with which Drances recommends to Latinus the cession of Lavinia to Aeneas (11.352ff.). Here the language of self-abasement and pleas for peace are addressed not to the enemy Aeneas but to Turnus (358, 365-6).

[20] Cf. Seager, *Ammianus Marcellinus, seven studies in his language and thought* (1986), 34-6, 48-58.

[21] Cf. Seager, *Ammianus*, 131-5.

[22] Cf. Seager, *Ammianus*, 35, 51, 132-5.

[23] Cf. Lyne in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (1990), 321-33; Nisbet, *ibid.*, 387-9; Bowra, *ibid.*, 372-4.

[24] Cf. Lyne, *ibid.*, 319-22; Bowra, *ibid.*, 363-77.

[25] Cf. Bowra, *ibid.*, 376-7; Nisbet, *ibid.*, 388-9.

[26] Before its presentation to the Society, versions of this paper were delivered to the Classics and Ancient History Research Seminar in Liverpool and as the Elizabeth Hunter Lecture at the Florida State University, Tallahassee. I have endeavoured to preserve as far as possible the characteristics of the oral genre, not least by restricting references to modern scholarship to an absolute minimum. Translations of Virgil and Ammianus are my own, make no claim to literary merit, and are literal except where literality might prove unintelligible.