

THE MAN WHO WAS NOT THERE  
Aeneas and Absence in *Aeneid* 9  
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I have long suspected that the *Aeneid* is not "about" Aeneas but rather about Vergil, his poetic sensibility and his clear-eyed comprehension of the impossible paradoxes of his times and his task. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Book 9, the only book of the epic from which the person of Aeneas is altogether absent. As if verbally to underscore the absence of the hero, forms of the term *absens*, "absent," appear more frequently in Book 9 than in any other book of the *Aeneid* ---four times, including once in a simile, while there are three occurrences in Book 4 (from which the hero is also busy absenting himself), and only two in the other ten books of the *Aeneid* combined. At the same time, the abiding presence of Vergil's larger concerns in the *Aeneid* is underscored by repeated allusions in Book 9 to *arma virumque*, "arms and a man."

In the absence of Aeneas, we may discern in greater detail three Vergilian themes that interweave the epic and transcend the poem's protagonist: 1) Vergil's legacy from Homer, especially in this and the remaining books of the *Aeneid*, including imaginative leaps so swooping as to transform ships into nymphs; 2) the poet's awareness of the power of sexual, possibly homoerotic, possessiveness, a power that arguably draws into question the very meaning of traditional epic heroism; and finally, 3) his prescient and unheroic compassion for mothers-who, he seems to show, pay most dearly the costs of war.

Such unconventional, curiously unepic events have elicited a wide array of critical approaches to Book 9. After some initial comments about the structure of the book and its place in the epic, I will address various treatments of these three major themes and suggest ways that each may enlarge our reading of the *Aeneid*.

## STRUCTURE AND PLACEMENT

Internally, the structure of Book 9 falls into three parts: lines 1-167, the attack of the Rutulians on the Trojan camp and the burning of the: ships; lines 168-502, the story of Nisus and Euryalus; and lines 503-818, the first full-scale battle of the war. Notably absent from Book 9, in addition to Aeneas, is the young prince Pallas, so critically important in Books 8, 10, and 12. Vergil emphasizes Aeneas' absence by deliberate parallels in the timing of the events of Books 8 and 9, signaled in the opening line of Book 9: "While these things were happening at a far distant place. (*Atque ea diversa penitus dum parte geruntur*). While Aeneas is making his way to Evander's town, the battle at the Trojan ships is so fierce that an observer might think all was lost for the Trojans.

While Aeneas is sleeping in Evander's hut and Vulcan is making new armor for his use, Nisus and Euryalus are embarking on a disastrous nighttime expedition to summon him home. While on the second day Aeneas is touring the site of the Rome he is destined to found, Turnus is all but in possession of Aeneas' present encampment.

In addition to the two Homeric halves of the poem, with Books 1-6 modeled on the *Odyssey* and 7-12 on the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* may be seen as constructed on a "wave" pattern, in which the odd-numbered books alternate with the more emotionally intense even-numbered ones. Within this scheme, Book 9 is bracketed by Aeneas' luminous visit to the future site of Rome in Book 8 and by the horrors of war, culminating in the death of Pallas, in Book 10.

In Book 8 Aeneas is the admiring guest of King Evander, a modest and kindly host. The book is filled with wonderment -- forms of the word *miror* ("wonder") appear four times more frequently in this book than in the rest of the *Aeneid* all together-and the future site of Rome is painted with a glow of pastoral simplicity. The greatness of Rome's future people materializes in the scenes emblazoned on Aeneas' new shield at the end of the book. All here points to a hopeful future.

Book 10 in contrast contains some of the most violent descriptions of warfare in any ancient epic, including Homer's. Aeneas is maddened in his lust for battle, and in some twenty-five scenes Vergil paints the physical horrors of war in ways that surpass the most gruesome modern action films.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to see how the Vergil who is said to have studied the peaceful ways of Epicureanism in Siro's school at Naples could bring himself to write in such grisly detail about body parts. R. D. Williams offers one possible explanation: "It would have been easier for Virgil to pretend that even in wild grief his hero would show the self control and humanity that we all admire; but it was truer to what Virgil knew of real human behavior to present Aeneas otherwise."

In the wave structure of the *Aeneid*, Book 9 lacks both the allure of the peaceful future in the book preceding it and the mayhem seemingly required to secure that peace in Book 10. Book 9 is thus an odd book in more ways than one, especially when we consider a third overall structure according to which the book can be read.

The *Aeneid* is also composed as a triptych of four books each, with Books 1-4 recounting the wanderings of Aeneas; 5-8, his entry to Italy and the future site of Rome; and 9-12, the war with Turnus and the Latins. In this reading, Book 9 initiates the climax of the epic, the account of the war and the portion of the poem that Vergil declares his more significant: "a greater order of things is born for me, I begin a greater task" (*maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, majus opus moveo*, 7.43-44, M 54-55). It is therefore puzzling that Vergil starts the war-and what is for him the most important section of the epic-in the absence of his hero.

## VERGIL AND HOMER: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SHIPS

In the book's first episode, Turnus and his Rutulians, prompted by Juno to attack the Trojan camp in the absence of Aeneas, find it tightly closed on Aeneas' orders. Turnus determines to

smoke the defenders out of the camp into battle by laying fire to the Trojan ships anchored nearby. This leads to the story of how Cybele, the *Magna Mater*; great mother of the gods, once sought a promise from Jupiter that her trees used to make Aeneas' ships would someday be saved from destruction. Jupiter fulfills his promise now by turning the ships into sea-nymphs just as they are about to be burned by Turnus' Rutulians.

This passage is easier to summarize than to understand, primarily because the tone of the event described seems at variance with conventional standards of epic decorum. As a consequence, readers from Servius on have troubled over how to interpret its place in the *Aeneid*. For Servius it is *vituperabile*, "worthy of censure," for a poet to invent something so far from the truth as Vergil's turning the ships into nymphs. Recent scholars have, on the other hand, attempted to justify the incident precisely in terms of epic convention. Philip R. Hardie (ad loc.) discusses how, on one level, the episode recalls Homer's tale in *Odyssey* 13.125-64 of Poseidon's turning the ship of the Phaeacians into stone. He points out further that while most of the rest of the Homeric models for Book 9, some dozen in all, come from the *Iliad*, one does find the spirit of the *Odyssey* present in these final books as well. The episode of the ships may corroborate, therefore, his observation that the war in Italy is, from the point of view of Turnus, another *Iliad*, a last stand in defense of home, while for Aeneas it is also an *Odyssey*: a homecoming, a battle with suitors, and the winning of a bride. Elaine Fantham takes another tack, contextualizing the incident in what she shows to be a long tradition in Greek and Roman literature of supernaturally endowed ships. She demonstrates through close verbal analysis how carefully Vergil prepares the way for Aeneas to learn later of the strange transformation of his fleet, as the nymphs intervene in Book 10.219 ff. to lead him back to his mission. In Fantham's reading, the departure of the ships, transformed into nymphs, enables Aeneas to put away his sea-going past and to embrace his loyalty to a Roman future on Italian soil. "Vergil embarked," she argues, "on a dangerous poetic enterprise in order both to bring Aeneas' fleet to a worthy ending and to recall for the last time the adventures at sea that Aeneas had abandoned to establish his community on Italian soil."

There is yet another explanation, the simplest of all, that might account for the ship-nymph metamorphosis in Book 9: Vergil liked it. Vergil was an "imaginary" poet-as a young child in the present day said of her writer mother' possessed of such imaginative power that the sheer poetics of this scene might have pleased him more than any mere rationale.

If centuries of readers do not know how to "read" this event, neither does Turnus, who seems to misread it -- quite disastrously -- as a positive portent for himself and his army. Thus the motif of misreading a difficult "text" recurs throughout the poem. Turnus' reaction, as Brooks Otis emphasizes, is markedly different from the despair of Aeneas when the latter's ships are in fact actually burning in Book 5. (This contrast is even more precise when one recalls that in a tripartite reading of the *Aeneid*, Books 5 and 9 introduce new sections of the poem.) At 5.685-86, Aeneas tears his clothing from his shoulders upon learning the news; at 5.700-703, he is overwhelmed: "Aeneas is stunned by his bitter disaster" (*At Aeneas casu concussus acerbo*).

In the ship episode of Book 9, however; Turnus loses none of his supreme self-confidence:

"but Turnus' bold bravado does not fail him" (*at non audaci Turno fiducia cessit*, 126, M 164). Always the leader, he interprets the strange disappearance of the ships as favorable to himself because the hope of escape is now lost to Aeneas. He sees his own strength growing with the coming reinforcements of Etruscan allies. Furthermore, he adds, *his* men do not need to hide in the belly of a horse or sneak into the citadel by night but will fight on the next day in broad daylight. He then urges them to get some well-deserved rest and to gather hope for the battle to come (128-58)

In the broader Homeric context, Turnus is the new Achilles, arch-foe of Aeneas, seen by some readers to be the new Hector of the nascent Trojan race. Here, however; Turnus is at the center of the fighting at the ships while Aeneas is away -- very much as Achilles was away in his tent while the Trojans were threatening the ships of the Greeks in the *Iliad*. This puts Aeneas rather than Turnus in the role of Achilles, while it can be argued that Turnus is defending his homeland as Hector defended Troy while Achilles sulked in his tent. This difficulty of deciding which of the two, Turnus or Aeneas, is the new Achilles (prophesied by the Sibyl in Book 6) is another one of the interpretive puzzles the text seems continually to set for readers.

#### SEXUAL POSSESSIVENESS: THE EPISODE OF NISUS AND EURYALUS

The more I read of war, in other times as well as our own, the more I am persuaded that battle-lust is closely akin to sexuality. The central episode of Book 9, the story of Nisus and Euryalus, comprises a compelling tale of young ambition eager to be tried, together with the perils and heart-breaks always ready to thwart such endeavor. Along with the conclusion of the epic, the episode also presents one of the most overt examples of sexual possessiveness in the *Aeneid*.

In this passage, Nisus, the older of the inseparable pair of Trojans, longs to do some glorious thing. He proclaims his determination to set out on a mission to bring Aeneas from Pallanteum back to the Trojan camp, sure that he can find a path through the camp of the sleeping, wine-sodden enemy. Nisus prefaces his intentions with a question that suggests even at this moment a certain Vergilian ambiguity about passion for martial heroism: "Is it *I* a god that instills such passion in human minds, *I* Euryalus, or does each one's terrifying desire *I* become his own divinity?" ("*dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt, /Euiyale, an sua cuique deus fit dira cupido?*", 184-85, M 243~6). Euryalus demands to go with Nisus, Ascanius blesses the expedition with the promise of gifts, and in the carnage that follows, first Euryalus is killed, then Nisus in his efforts to save him.

In an authorial aside to his readers following the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, the narrator exclaims:

*Fortunati ambo! Si quid mea carmina possunt nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet  
aevo dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum accolet imperiumque pater  
Romanus habebit.*

(446-48)

Fortunate pair! If there be any power within my poetry, no day shall ever erase from you the memory of time; not while Aeneas' children live beside the Capitol's unchanging rock nor while a Roman father still holds sovereignty.

(M 592-97)

These are shocking words. What could be "fortunate" about this unfortunate pair; both of them dead in an expedition of dubious merit at the outset? To be sure, Vergil is claiming here the power of his poetry, a power about which now he has little doubt. But why is it *this* episode that evokes such passionate protests?

The Nisus-Euryalus episode has invited a spirited variety of interpretations. The spectrum ranges from seeing the episode as an unqualified example of ideal heroic action to seeing it as evidence of Vergil's deep suspicion of an outmoded and dangerous heroic code. Much of our reading of the episode depends upon how we view its associations with the other ancient texts upon which Vergil drew. The great theologian Karl Barth advised that one should always read the Bible in one hand with the morning newspaper in the other. Similarly, one cannot read the *Aeneid* without Homer at hand and, in the case of the Nisus-Euryalus episode, without Euripides, Plato, and Catullus as well.

Scholars have long made the connection between this episode and the similarly dangerous nighttime mission in the *Iliad*. There, Diomedes volunteers for a secret expedition into Troy after Nestor offers both fame and a gift of sheep as prizes. Diomedes chooses the cunning Odysseus to venture into the danger with him. As they depart, Odysseus prays to Athena for glory upon their return (*II.10.281-82*). This Homeric precedent offers a paradigm of the successful search for enduring reputation and social status (*kleos* and *time*). In addition, Odysseus' piety is evidenced by his proper prayer to Athena at the outset of the mission.

The *Iliad*, however, is not the sole model for the Nisus-Euryalus episode. Less noted but perhaps equally formative is Euripides' tragedy *Rhesus*, which deals with the same theme. Euripides' treatment of the story, unlike Homer's, implies a deep pessimism about all human activity. This pessimism appears, for example, in the way Athena provides extensive help to the Greeks and once takes the form of Aphrodite to keep Paris from pursuing them. Here the human actors are all but puppets, not independent agents as were Diomedes and Odysseus in the *Iliad*. In the *Rhesus*, Dolon requests from Hector an absurdly grand reward for his mission—the horses and chariot of Achilles—a prize that Hector readily grants and yet confesses he would like for himself. Glory thus has an appetitive dimension that cannot be read as admirable.

Barbara Pavlock has shown how both epic and tragic models contributed to form a new and peculiarly Vergilian version of heroic action. In her reading, Homeric glory yields in the *Aeneid* to Euripidean cynicism, and everlasting fame gives way to greed. Pavlock notes that the excessive rewards Ascanius offers to the young men encourage the materialism that leads Euryalus to

disaster and ultimately both men to their deaths. When Euryalus pursues human slaughter and a lust for personal possessions, his twin obsessions for fame and booty come together.

Anthony J. Boyle's reading of Book 9 is perhaps even more pessimistic, for he sees in this episode--and indeed in Vergil's work as a whole--a pervading, almost sinister irony. For him this is evident partly through the simultaneity of Books 8 and 9: while Aeneas is visiting the site of Rome in its Arcadian setting and receiving from his mother Venus a new shield with its image of Rome's glorious future--a gift he embraces even if he does not know its full meaning (8.731)--the "fortunate pair" are butchering Rutulians in ways that violate the very image in which Aeneas is rejoicing. When Nisus and Euryalus die, moreover; they enter into the casualty list caused by the savagery of Trojans and Italians alike in Books 9-12, the sort of human loss that Boyle calls the most unendurable of losses--the annihilation of the young. The deaths of the pair are the first of a long list that will include also Lausus, Pallas, Camilla, and finally Turnus himself. Here, Boyle argues, and many times elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, the human costs far exceed the proper claims of empire: "Wastage of such proportions nullifies the glory of battle. Momentarily, the imperial process is revealed to all as the creator of emptiness, suffering, despair."

John F. Makowski's more sentimental reading of the passage places the Nisus and Euryalus episode squarely within the tradition of homosexual love as set out in Plato's *Symposium*, a dialogue in which the speaker Phaedrus portrays Achilles and Patroclus as lovers whose actions in battle are directly related to their erotic passion for one another. This paradigm undergirds Makowski's argument that the Nisus-Euryalus episode presents a positive, not negative or ambiguous, view of their heroism and thus accounts for Vergil's aside to his readers, calling Nisus and Euryalus fortunate and blessed by a fame, if his song can make it so -- a fame that will be coextensive with the Roman Empire. In this interpretation, it was Vergil's genius "to suffuse the raw material of Homer and the *eros* of Plato and so to fashion the second greatest love story of the *Aeneid*."

Pursuing the erotic motif, Michael C. J. Putnam offers a far different, more nuanced and elaborate reading of what he calls "a strand of eroticism that runs carefully through the poem, knotting its beginning and end together." He reminds us that Juno's possessiveness is couched in sexual terms at the opening of the poem (she bribes Neptune with six nymphs of great beauty to work her will, 1.71-73). This theme is underscored in the second invocation to the muse in Book 7, offered (otherwise unaccountably) to Erato, muse of erotic poetry (7.37-38). It is sustained most of all in what Putnam sees as the clearly erotic relationship between Aeneas and Pallas, with its numerous verbal echoes of the Aeneas-Dido relationship. In this reading the conclusion of the epic does not revolve around grand political causes but rather exemplifies the power of personal passions. The victory of Aeneas does not look "to any newfound sense of order which might have been reached from an ethical use of arms leading to reestablishment of order but to the life of Aeneas' final victim suffering the ultimate indignity of death." If the relationship between Aeneas and Pallas is sexual, that between Nisus and Euryalus is more explicitly so. The episode in Book 9 is not a misplaced set-piece by a probably homosexual poet, but is thoroughly interwoven into the

emotional and narrative fabric of the *Aeneid*. Its consistency with the end of the epic, Putnam would argue, is profoundly meaningful.

For my part, I would point out that two similes within the Nisus-Euryalus episode, the first having to do with violence, the second with sensuality, may adumbrate further Vergil's ambivalence about conventional forms of heroism. In a passage strategically placed between Nisus' battle madness and that of Euryalus -- and thus applicable to both of them--the two are compared with a ravenous lion:

*impastus ceu plena leo per ovilia turbans  
(suadet enim vesana fames) manditque  
trahitque  
molle pecus mutumque metu, frernit ore  
cruento. (339-41)*

through crowded sheepfolds, urged by  
frenzied hunger,  
who tears and drags the feeble flock made  
mute  
by fear and roars with bloody mouth...  
(451-54)

For even as a starving lion, raging

The simile has a model in the slaughter of Rhesus and the Thracians in the parent episode in *Iliad* 10.485~6. There, however, Homer's simile is straightforward: "As a lion advancing on the helpless herds unshepherded / of sheep or goats pounces on them with wicked intention . . ." The reader will note that in the *Aeneid* Vergil adds the details of the lion's maddened hunger and, more strikingly, the terror of the victims. Once again Vergil shows the consequences to the vanquished of the superior power of the victor.

The second passage is a double simile, one of the most arresting sections of the *Aeneid*. Finally recognizing that the battle mania has gotten out of bounds, Nisus persuades Euryalus to leave the scene of the slaughter--but not until the younger man has plundered a few more spoils, including the plumed and polished helmet of Messapus, which he straps on. Because of the glitter of the helmet, Euryalus is detected by approaching enemy forces with Volcens in command. Although Nisus tries desperately to save his friend by deflecting the attackers to himself, Euryalus is laid open by a spear and dies. Vergil describes his death:

*purpureus velufi cum flos succisus aratro  
languescit moriens, lassove papavera collo  
demisere caput pluvia cum forte  
gravantur.  
(435-37)*

flower; severed by the plow, falls slack in  
death;  
or poppies as, with weary necks, they bow  
their heads when weighted down by sudden  
rain

... even as a purple

The second component of Vergil's comparison recalls the simile in *Iliad* 8.30-7, attached to the death in battle of Gorgythion, one of the sons of Priam: "He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden poppy bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of springtime." Catullus (80-

50 B.C.), the great love poet and Vergil's compatriot from northern Italy -- with whom he shares a deep sense of pathos if not historical sensibility -- made his own use of this Homeric simile in his poem 11. Catullus is bidding a bitter farewell to his faithless mistress Lesbia, who has treated him with no more concern than a plow that cuts down a wildflower at the edge of a meadow (11.22):

*nec meum respectet, ut ante, amorem,  
qui illius culpa cecidit velut prati  
ultimi flos, praetereunte postquam  
tactus aratro est.*

nor does she have any regard for my  
love,  
as before-she who through her guilt  
killed it,  
just as a flower at the edge of a meadow  
after it's nicked by a passing plow.

The context of Catullus' simile is different from Vergil's, but the erotic tone is unmistakable. In a reckless excess, perhaps psychologically not unlike that of Euryalus, Catullus has reversed traditional gender codes and made himself the fragile flower rather than plow, just as Vergil makes Euryalus the delicate victim rather than the dauntless spearman.

For W. R. Johnson, this simile is definitive for understanding the episode. He suggests that the Nisus-Euryalus story invites a variety of responses: We may feel sympathy for the young men, even while we do not admire their intelligence. We may even decide that the two men have been sentimentalized in a deliberate travesty of the Homeric precedent in order to undermine epic heroism itself. But because of Vergil's conflation of Catullan with Homeric imagery, we can no longer see these deaths as necessarily and profoundly tragic.

One more simile during the fierce fighting inside Aeneas' camp late in Book 9 may denote the poet's distrust of unalloyed battle rage. Here, as Turnus seizes the young Lycus and tears him from the safety of the Trojan walls, Vergil portrays Turnus as an eagle seizing a hare or swan and also as a wolf seizing a lamb:

*qualis ubi aut leporem aut candenti  
corpore cycnum  
sustulit alta petens pedibus lovis  
armiger uncis;  
quaesitum ant matri multis balatibus  
agnum  
Martius a stabulis rapuit lupo. (563-6)*

As when the eagle, armor-bearer of Jove,  
while soaring toward his eyrie has swept  
up  
some hare or snow-white swan in his  
crooked claws,  
or when the wolf of Mars has snatched a  
lamb  
out of the fold, its mother searching long,  
with many bleatings. (M 747-52)

Once more Vergil's simile incorporates more than is necessary into the characterization of Turnus as a ravaging warrior. Lycus may quite appropriately be seen as the seized lamb, but at no point does the lament of the bereft mother intersect with the substance of the narrative.

What we see, I think, in all these cases is Vergil's profound ambivalence about traditional

forms of martial heroism as a necessary or absolute good. I believe this in part because Vergil rarely fails to register his awareness that there are consequences to violence and, further, that it is mothers by whom these consequences are commonly borne.

#### COMPASSION FOR MOTHERS: LAMENT OF THE MOTHER OF EURYALUS

Carolyn Heilbrun writes of the tendency of men longing for the honor of a past culture to fail to mention the costs of that culture to women. Vergil is the clear exception who does not forget. In every book of the *Aeneid*, whether in simile, allusion, or narrative detail, the persistent laments of mothers bear witness to the importance of human attachments and the consequences of violence to those bonds. Vergil affirms the private claims of the close community, of family and maintenance of the cycles of life, as inseparable from the heroic achievements of history and Rome.

The culmination of the Nisus-Euryalus episode and functionally the centerpiece of Book 9 is the lament of the mother of Euryalus upon learning of her son's death. We know little about her, only that she alone of the mothers among the Trojan survivors was prepared to see the journey through to the end while the others remained in Sicily. She does not know Euryalus had left -- reminiscent of Telemachus' departure on his dangerous mission in the *Odyssey* without telling Penelope -- when the rumor first comes of his death. She is weaving at the time, and the shuttle drops from her hands and the yarn comes unwound. Mindless of the dangers of the battle line she runs to the walls with a woman's wild scream *femineo ululatu*, 477).

Several details in this passage echo the earlier grief of Dido, another woman who paid the price for someone else's quest for power. At Dido's suicide in Book 4, the town resounds with the wild cries of women, *femineo ululatu* (4.669), a term that appears twice earlier in the same book (168, 606). Like Dido at 4.590, the mother of Euryalus tears her hair in despair (478). Euryalus' mother-who is never named and therefore perhaps more generally represents all bereaved mothers-is called ill-fated (*infelix*, 9.477, M 633), the term frequently attached to Dido in Book 4. Some of these similarities may be inadvertent; taken together; they probably are not.

In her lament over Euryalus, the mother's grief poses the questions that can never be answered:

*"hunc ego te, Euryale, aspicio? tune ille  
senectae  
sera meae requies, potuisti linquere solam,  
crudelis? nec te sub tanta pericula missum  
adfari extremum miserae data copia matri?  
heu, terra ignota canibus data praeda  
Latinis  
alifibus iaces! nec te, tua flinera, mater*

*produxì pressive oculos aut vulnera lavi,  
veste tegens fibi quam noctes festina  
diesque  
urgebam, et tela curas solabar anilis.  
quo sequar? aut quae nunc artus  
avulsaque membra  
et filnus lacerum tellus habet? hoc mihi de  
te,*

*nate, refers? hoc sum terraque marique  
secuta?"*

"Euryalus, is this the way I see you? You, evening peace of my last years, cruel son, (4.1021) you leave me here alone? Sent out on such a dangerous task, you did not even let me, your mother, in my misery, say last farewells. You lie in a strange land, the prey of Latin dogs and birds. And I, your mother, did not follow you -- your corpse -- or close your eyes, or wash your wounds, or wrap your body in the clothes that I was weaving -- I, hurrying by night and day to finish before my death, consoling with the loom the cares of an old woman. Where shall I go now to find you? For what land now holds your limbs, your severed loins, your mangled corpse? My son, is there no more than this that you can now bring back to me? Is it for this I followed you by land and sea?"

In the first line of this passage the adjacency of the Latin pronouns for "I" (*ego*) and "you" (*te*) is especially poignant: *hunc ego te, Euryale, aspicio?* These two words appear together seven times in the *Aeneid*, four times in contexts in which separation by death has occurred or is pending. In 4.333 Aeneas begins his final address to Dido with *ego te*; in 6.692 the shade of the dead Anchises addresses Aeneas in the same terms; finally, in a scene closely paralleling the grief of Euryalus' mother, Amata in Book 12 implores Turnus not to resist the Trojans further (*Turne, per has ego te lacrimas.. . unum oro*, 12.56, 60, M 77-83). Amata, too, had hoped that Turnus would provide security for her old age. The proximity of the pronouns in each case makes more emphatic the break in the relationship.

Among the stages of the grief process is negotiation. For a moment the mother of Euryalus engages in the "if only" questions of her loss, the final one of which is this: Why could she not have covered her son's body with the cloak she had been weaving for him? In the ancient world, gift-giving between or among men was a public transaction, as in the case of the gifts to be awarded to Rhesus or to Nisus and Euryalus for their heroic exploits. In the *Aeneid*, gifts given by women extend the sphere of the private domain. Among men, the status of individuals is at stake with the gift. Women's gifts replace competition with community. One form of gift-giving manipulates power. The other repairs the social fabric.

Thus, in this episode, Vergil maintains parity between family and fame, between human

bonds and the public achievements that promise enduring reputation. The two do not merge, their coexistence is not even peaceful-it cannot be-but the claims of one on the other are powerful and exacting. I see the lament of Euryalus' mother, if not the death of the pair of lovers, as tragic in the highest sense.

Any assessment of Book 9 requires close attention also to the similes. Here again the details argue for a more problematic reading of Vergil's treatment of traditional heroic action. In a passage in the first section, Turnus is compared with a wolf stalking a sheepfold for prey, while the Trojans, following the orders of the absent Aeneas, hover inside the walls. The wolf rages at the lambs just out of reach, maddened by prolonged hunger and thirst:

<p><i>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. (59-64)</i></p>	<p>sheepfold will howl beside the pen at midnight, facing both wind and storm; beneath their dams the sheltered lambs keep on bleating; fierce and desperate with rage, the wolf is wild against his absent prey; after such long famine now the frenzy for food, his dry and bloodless jaws torment him.</p>
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Even as a wolf who waits outside the  
The simile is familiar from Homer. In *Iliad* 11.458-55, Ajax is compared with a hungry lion, harrying the oxen fenced in their pens. Corresponding similes are attached to Menelaus (*II.* 17.657-64), Sarpedon (*II.*12.299-306), and the Myrmidons (*II.* 16.156-63). In the *Odyssey* at 6.130-34, Odysseus is compared with a lion stalking oxen or sheep. In none of these cases, however; does Homer make any mention of mothers or their young. All other components of Vergil's simile here are precedented in their Homeric models except the bleating of the lambs under their mothers. Vergil never for very long separates conquest from compassion.

An argument can further be made that this passage is consistent with Vergil's handling of grief throughout the *Aeneid*. Through a careful comparison of Euryalus' mother with Mezentius, the father of Lausus who is killed by Aeneas in Book 10-some fifteen similarities in all-R. B. Egan concludes that the mother's lament as well as the episode that caused it is fully integrated into Books 9~12 and cannot, therefore, be dismissed as anomalous or merely showy pathos.

With a handful of lines in an otherwise sentimental poem, "The Mother on the Sidewalk," Edgar A. Guest captures precisely Vergil's assessment of the cost of war to the "brave and loyal mother of the boy who goes away":

There are days of grief before her; there are hours that she will weep;  
There are nights of anxious waiting when her fear will banish sleep;

...

And no man shall ever suffer in the turmoil of the fray  
The anguish of the mother of the boy who goes away.

In the *Aeneid*, the good of Rome imposes enormous costs on those who cherish community and the bonds of human affection. By the detail he lavishes in his poetry on the mourning of women, Vergil compensates for the losses that in life can never be made right.

#### WAYS OF READING BOOK 9

One respectable way of reading this book is to take it at face value. Aeneas' showdown with Turnus begins here, even though the provident Aeneas is away gaining allies for his cause. We see the ferocity of Turnus and know that he must be defeated so that *pietas* will ultimately prevail. Turnus' attack on the Trojan camp ends with ships metamorphosing into nymphs, a touch that places Vergil squarely in the tradition of Homer.

The young Ascanius exercises his fledgling wings of command in his dealings with Nisus and Euryalus. This is appropriate, too, because the *Aeneid* is always looking toward another father and son pair, Caesar and Augustus. The nighttime sortie of the two close companions is another heroic touch, one that evokes the mission of mighty Odysseus at Troy. A new Troy is aborning on the Tiber.

If the mother of Euryalus grieves too much, well, let us recall Andromache's keening on the wall at the death of Hector and mark this scene down to Vergil's occasional softer side.

By removing Aeneas physically from the scene of Book 9, however, Vergil also invites more problematic readings. In part because Aeneas is absent, Vergil is able to assess more thoroughly the human toll that the hero's eventual triumph will impose. Here he explores the underside of the heroic system and the costs it imposes on victor and victim alike, as well as on the women who share their lives. The deaths and dilemmas that Aeneas avoids in Book 9 are the very ones he will experience in the remainder of the epic, including in its final lines.

On the narrative level, the *Aeneid* is about Rome -- its founding, its perils, its possibilities. On a metaphorical level, the poem is an extended construction of Vergil's view of the world—a world that is intractably complex even for the victors. Book 9 elaborates these complexities by its place in the structure of the epic, its pointed ambivalence about the nature of heroism, and its elaboration of the particular costs of warfare to women and the young. Throughout Book 9 Vergil demonstrates the tension of his imaginative worldview, always hovering between hope and despair. In that very perplexity, however, he holds close to the heart the countless truths of what it means to be human.

Stylish but emotionally distant, *The Man Who Wasn't There* is a clever tribute to the film noir genre. 81%. TOMATOMETER. Total Count: 159. 85%. Audience Score. User Ratings: 41,252. Affectlessness is not a quality much prized in movie protagonists, but Billy Bob Thornton, that splendid actor, does it perfectly as Ed Crane. October 13, 2009 | Full Review | Richard Schickel. TIME Magazine. Top Critic. The film holds the interest, to be sure, but more due to the sure sense of craft and precise effect that one expects from the Coens than from genuine involvement in the story. November 7, 2007. This might not be my favorite Coen brothers film in terms of sheer enjoyment, but it is by far the most impressed I've been by one of their collaborations. The contrast of the black and white images filled with shadows and billows of cigarette smoke is the only way they... Review by matt lynch ~...~...~... "He told them to look not at the facts, but at the meaning of the facts. And then he said the facts had no meaning. It was a pretty good speech." I'm quite surprised that *The Man Who Wasn't There* rarely shows up in the top 5 of everyone's Coen ranked lists. I had been meaning to re-watch for years, as I hadn't seen it since its original release. The final prompt came in the form of watching not a Coen film, but seeing James Gandolfini in *Enough Said*. This re-watch was a marvel. The Coen Brothers' "*The Man Who Wasn't There*" is shot in black-and-white so elegantly, it reminds us of a 1940s station wagon -- chrome, wood, leather and steel all burnished to a contented glow. Its star performance by Billy Bob Thornton is a study in sad-eyed, mournful chain-smoking, the portrait of a man so trapped by life he wants to scream. The plot is one of those film noir twisters made of gin and adultery, where the right man is convicted of the wrong crime. He is not a swift man, and we get the impression that the crucial decisions in his life--his job, his marriage--were made by default. He has the second chair in a two-barber shop, next to his talkative brother-in-law Frank ( Michael Badalucco ).

The Coen Brothers' "The Man Who Wasn't There" is shot in black-and-white so elegantly, it reminds us of a 1940s station wagon -- chrome, wood, leather and steel all burnished to a contented glow. Its star performance by Billy Bob Thornton is a study in sad-eyed, mournful chain-smoking, the portrait of a man so trapped by life he wants to scream. The plot is one of those film noir twisters made of gin and adultery, where the right man is convicted of the wrong crime. He is not a swift man, and we get the impression that the crucial decisions in his life--his job, his marriage--were made by default. He has the second chair in a two-barber shop, next to his talkative brother-in-law Frank ( Michael Badalucco ). Mies joka ei ollut siellä (2001). The Man Who Wasn't There (original title). K-11 | 1h 56min | Crime, Drama | 19 April 2002 (Finland). 1:36 | Trailer. A laconic, chain-smoking barber with fallen arches tells a story of a man trying to escape a humdrum life. It's a tale of suspected adultery, blackmail, foul play, death, Sacramento city slickers, racial slurs, invented war heroics, shaved legs, a gamine piano player, aliens, and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Ed Crane cuts hair in his in-law's shop; his wife drinks and may be having an affair with her boss, Big Dave, who has \$10,000 to invest in a second department store. If not, maybe you can just enjoy the great acting and atmosphere. And if not that, the film probably just isn't for you. The Man Who Wasn't There is a 2001 film about a laconic, chain-smoking barber who blackmails his wife's boss and lover for money to invest in dry cleaning, but whose plan goes terribly wrong. Directed by Joel Coen. Written by Joel Coen and Ethan Coen. The last thing on his mind is murder. tagline. Me, I don't talk much. I just cut the hair. I lived in a little bungalow on Napa Street. The place was OK, I guess. It had an electric ice box, gas hearth, and a garbage grinder built into the sink. You

Ed wasn't the "man who was not there" because he was a barber, but because society never gave him importance or noticed his existence. His profession ends up becoming a symbol of this. The story is set in the 1950s, so it plays with the ideas and mentality of the time, especially the exaggerated belief in extraterrestrials, just as it makes little allusions to the cinematic aesthetics of that era (B movies, sci-fi, cinema noir). The Man Who Wasn't There did not live up to my personal expectations, but it is a solid neo-noir film from the Coen Brothers. Billy Bob Thornton and Frances McDormand do very well here, especially Thornton who perfectly plays the role as the subtle and quiet barber. The Man Who Wasn't There was the eleventh story of the sixth season of Big Finish Productions' Short Trips series. Charley Pollard's innocent request to meet a historical hero seems the easiest thing for a friend with a time and space machine to make happen. But as Charley and the Doctor seek out the Victorian explorer, they uncover a sinister scheme to unravel Earth's future by affecting its past. But where in its history was the deed done? And is it already too late to put right? Not that it's not good already. Joel Coen, who in "O Brother, Where Art Thou" showed himself to be one of the few living directors capable of fully exploiting colour, shows himself here to be one of the few living directors capable of fully exploiting light and shade. I particularly liked the scene where the defence lawyer explains why if we look at something too closely, we fail to see it, while his face (and only his face) is bathed in JUST enough too much light to prevent us from seeing it properly. The fact that there are so many good noir films should be regarded as a miracle. Here is another miracle. 70 of 107 people found this review helpful.

The Coen Brothers' "The Man Who Wasn't There" is shot in black-and-white so elegantly, it reminds us of a 1940s station wagon -- chrome, wood, leather and steel all burnished to a contented glow. Its star performance by Billy Bob Thornton is a study in sad-eyed, mournful chain-smoking, the portrait of a man so trapped by life he wants to scream. Probably not. And yet, and yet--for a movie about crime, it proceeds at such a leisurely pace. The first time I saw it, at Cannes, I emerged into the sunlight to find Michel Ciment, the influential French critic, who observed sadly, "A 90-minute film that plays for two hours." He is not a swift man, and we get the impression that the crucial decisions in his life--his job, his marriage--were made by default. So there is no "what happened"? Not in any sense that we can grasp, with our puny minds. Because our minds our minds get in the way. Looking at something changes it. They call it the "Uncertainty Principle". Sure, it sounds screwy, but even Einstein says the guy's on to something. Crazy credits. The opening titles cast shadows on the wall as if they are real. Alternate versions. By what name was The Man Who Wasn't There (2001) officially released in India in English? Answer. See more gaps. Learn more about contributing. Edit page. More to explore. Photos. First of all this is not a children's movie, not because of violence but because of its sheer intellect. I would not recommend this movie to one who doesn't like to spend time thinking about a movie. If you are easily entertained or just like to play with a ball of string, then this is not the movie for you. It also moved at a slow pace, so for the people who are reading this who have short attention spans you would not enjoy this oscar worthy film. Every actor gives a stunning performance and I was personally touched by the grace and content of The Man Who Wasn't There. 13 November 2001 8:50PM. Recommend?