The structure and purpose of Vergil's Parade of Heroes

THE PARADE of Heroes in Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.756ff., I have already discussed briefly in *Ancient Society* [1] and it is a text which has attracted a huge bibliography.[2] By far the most valuable item is the late Roland Austin's commentary (1977), but that is a work not without lapses and blind-spots,[3] and for English-speaking readers there are still a good many loose ends to be tidied up. This discussion summarises some results of ten years' thought.

To begin from lines 825ff.:

> ..... et referentem signa Camillum
> illae autem paribus, quas fulgere cerne in armis
> concordes animae .....
>
> And Camillus bringing back the standards; those two concordant spirits whom you see to gleam in matching weapons.

Vergil refers to Pompey and Caesar. The suspicion of an elaborate and elusive connexion of thought here led me to wider considerations of themes and links in the Parade of Heroes: Camillus was famed for saving Rome from the Gauls, though here he does not recover the Romans' treasure,[4] but rather brings back the standards, and is represented in terms of a figure strongly reminiscent of statuary;[5] his action is vividly contemporary in character and suggests the Romans' recovery of Crassus' standards from the Parthians.[6] But Camillus was also famed for setting up the temple of Concordia in 367 and it is the failure of Concordia in 49 BC to which Vergil next turns. It was of course Augustus who finally recovered the standards and established lasting Condordia.[7]

Caesar is called upon to lay down his weapons first: a descendant of Aeneas, he is to show his much-vaunted *clementia*, clemency.[8]

Let us now look back to the republician heroes in lines 818-24, leading up to Camillus: the royal Tarquins lead into the high spirit of Brutus[9] who drove them out and was then tragically forced to put his own sons to death for plotting against the state and aiming at the Tarquins' return (lines 817-23). Brutus claims (823) love of *patria* as his motive; ten lines later Caesar and Pompey are said to threaten her very existence (833). There follows (lines 824-25):

> quin Decios Drusosque procul saevumque securi
> aspice Torquatum et referentem signa Camillum
>
> Yes and look at the Decii and Drusi at a distance, and Torquatus brutal with his axe and Camillus bringing back the standards.

These names, and not Brutus' alone, sandwiched between the great monumental blocks of the Kings and Caesar and Pompey must be of particular importance. The alliteration of *Decios Drusosque* is striking. Vergil highlights the strength of the *gens*, symbolised by the masks in the family *atrium* which served as inspiration to Romans of good family.[10] Decii and Drusi are linked alliteratively and alphabetically. In legend there were two (or three) Decii who

sacrificed themselves for the state; the middle one in 295 fighting the Gauls (Livy 10.28). Equally Torquatus acquired his *cognomen* for stripping the *torques* from a gigantic Gaul when military tribune (361 BC: Livy 7.10); he likewise, *saevum securi,* cruel with his axe, executed his son for disobedience, much as Brutus had done. The Drusi are another matter: related to Augustus through his wife Livia (of the Livii Drusi), but because of the Gallic connexions of Julius Caesar, Camillus, a Decius and Torquatus, it is also clearly relevant that the first Livius to get the *cognomen* Drusus was said to have done so by killing a Gallic chief, Drausus (Suetonius *Tiberius* 3).

What precedes these republican heroes is a good deal simpler; the Alban kings, who were set among the descendants of Aeneas in the Forum of Augustus.[11] These kings are an historiographical embarrassment: in the third century BC general agreement existed that Troy fell about 1184 BC (or earlier) and that Rome was founded somewhere between 814-3 and 748-7 BC. Rome could not, therefore, have been founded by Aeneas or by an immediate descendant, and Alban kings — up to 16 of them by the first century BC — were summoned out of the void to bridge the gap.[12]

There was a pleasant but silly story in circulation long after Vergil's death (Servius on *Bucolics* 6.3) that Vergil intended to write an epic about them but was put off by their nasty names *(nominum asperitate).* Vergil here selects five names, some I suspect, at random or very nearly so.[13] Yet he gallantly conceals any hint of tedium and introduces here three key themes:

(i) the Albans and Romans as one family, all poetically conceived as descendants of Aeneas (757; cf. 717, 788).

(ii) the fusion of native Latins and Trojan invaders into one people, the future Romans (756-7); King Silvius is 'part-descended' from Italian blood (762), King Procas is at the same time 'glory of the Trojan race' (767).

(iii) Roman imperial growth (cf. notably 781f., 794f.), which is anticipated by the colonies which Alba is said to have founded; Vergil lists eight out of a total raised to the symbolic number of thirty.[14] It is indeed precisely this motif of growth which Vergil uses as a means of transition from Romulus (grandson of King Numitor through his mother Rhea Silvia) to the great panegyric of Augustus (791ff.).

Augustus is placed between the warrior Romulus and the lawgiver Numa, the pair of kings, fighter and priest, that are so common in Indo-European mythology.[15] Vergil associates all three with *imperium* (782, 795, 812) and perhaps intends the three rulers to be seen as a triptych, with Augustus in the centre sharing in the excellence of both.[16] It is Numa who formally establishes the rule of law at Rome (810), which was initiated in Latium by Saturn as part of his Golden Age (8.322), which it will be Augustus' task[17] to re-establish in Latium.

This notion of a triptych, thematically integrated, may be dismissed as fanciful. Certainly, I would suggest, its outlines are not left perfectly sharp and clear. For who is the Caesar of 789? Most critics assume that he is the Augustus Caesar of 792, but I should like to suggest that there is room for doubt and that Anchises turns briefly to his adoptive father Julius. 'Here is Caesar' points Anchises in the first passage, 'here is the man, here he is' in the second. Is Aeneas inattentive or is Anchises not pointing somewhere else the second time? When 'Caesar' is first introduced he is with 'all the offspring of Julius' (i.e. Ascanius, Aeneas' son), and it was, after all, only through Julius (*sanguis meus,* my flesh and blood, 835) that Augustus belonged to 'the offspring of Julius', in the narrower sense, not of the whole Roman people but of the Julian *gens.* Nor, despite the criticism of Julius voiced in 827-35 (see above) was the age of Augustus in any real doubt about the stature of Julius[18] to whom it is highly likely that there is another panegyrical allusion at 1.286ff.[19]

After Numa, Vergil turns to the remaining kings of Rome, who balance the kings of Alba preceding Romulus, but they are dismissed even more briefly (812-7); Servius Tullius is omitted and the two Tarquins share precisely two words between them (817; on this controversial line Austin's commentary is excellent). Just as the story of Romulus led into the monarchy, so the story of the first Brutus, the tyrannicide, serves as a bridging passage to the heroes of the republic (see above).

From the apostrophe to Julius Caesar (835), Vergil returns to a second group of republican heroes (836-46). Here we come back to the theme of Trojan ancestry (cf. 756, 767) as one of key importance; it is vengeance for his Trojan ancestors (840) that leads Aemilius Paullus (and by extension Mummius) to the defeat of Greece and to victory over Perseus king of Macedon who (*ipsumque Aeaciden,* 839) claimed descent from Achilles himself, thus fully avenging the fall of Troy, though as a matter of history, despite the claims made in 838, Aemilius Paullus did not actually capture Argos and Mycenae. This is a theme already familiar from Jupiter's prophecy in *I.*283-5: in that speech, there is no word of the victories over Carthage, but a heavy emphasis on the fact that the Romans would crush their (mythological) Greek enemies.[20]

Mummius, Aemilius Paullus, Cato and the Gracchi (one would be very wrong to think of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus alone) are great public men of the second century BC as are the Scipiadae,[21] who are also linked with the Gracchi more closely inasmuch as Scipo Africanus Maior's daughter married the father of Ti. and C. Gracchus. Cossus belongs to an earlier generation, but he is linked to Cato by alliteration and thematically he looks both forwards and back, for he won the *spolia opima,* that is, when commanding a Roman army with *imperium* he had in person killed the opposing general; Cossus therefore looks back to Torquatus and Drusus who achieved personal triumphs akin to the *spolia opima*[22] and to Romulus whom everyone knew had won them;[23] Marcellus likewise, whom we meet soon, was to do so. Thus all the winners of the honour are here.

But we encounter a new motif too, that of victors over Carthage: there was a distinguished Gracchus in the Second Punic War (Ti. Sempronius Gracchus, cos.215, 213 BC), and of course Scipiadae dominated the Second and Third. This is the link with Regulus, a hero of the First, whom Vergil calls by the agnomen Serranus[24] and with Q. Fabius Maximus the 'Cunctator', who triumphantly used delaying tactics (*cunctando*, 846) against Hannibal after Cannae. Fabricius and Regulus on the other hand are linked by their reputation as Roman farmer-soldiers of the old style, wielding sword or ploughshare with gallant impartiality in the state's service.[25] For all the great involvement of the Gracchi and the elder Cato in politics, the chief emphasis here once again is on military victory, and, in consequence, on the theme of the expansion of the *imperium*,[26] at least by implication, as Greece and Carthage are set alongside the Gauls as peoples doomed to subjection. A second repeated emphasis is that placed upon the importance of the traditional aristocratic *gens*, in its solidarity and values *(Gracchi genus, Scipiades, Fabii)*, recalling their visual presentation together with the masks of the *atrium* or in the funeral procession.[27]

The panegyric on Rome (lines 847-53) balances that on Augustus (791-5/807). I notice very little regard for the moral virtues here, but the details correspond closely to the Parade at large: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane,*[28] *memento*, 'do you remember, Roman, to rule imperially over the nations', *pacique imponere morem* 'and to impose the force of habit upon peace'. The first element requires no comment; the latter makes us think of Numa and of Augustus, at least of the Augustus who re-founds the Golden Age in Latium. *parcere subiectis*, 'to spare those who have submitted', perhaps should make us think of the instruction (835) to Julius Caesar to lay down his arms in the Civil War (though it is perhaps significant that in this presentation of Roman history a precise parallel is so very hard to find). And *debellare superbos*, 'to beat down the proud in war', should certainly prompt thoughts of victory over Gauls and Carthaginians.

Marcellus the Elder (855-9; cos.222) looks back in his winning of the *spolia opima* (855) to Romulus[29] and Cossus (841; see above p. 14), and as *victor* (856) to Mummius (837) and to Dionysus himself, returning triumphant from the East (804). As the man who stayed Rome in a crisis,[30] he is reminiscent of Quintus Fabius Maximus (846) 'who singly by delaying restored our state'; Marcellus is (858) conqueror of both Gauls (against whom as consul in 222 he won the *spolia opima* at the battle of Clastidium) and Carthaginians (from whom he wrested Syracuse after a long siege in 212); those are themes familiar enough by now. Let us be clear: these common themes show that the Marcelli are fully integrated into the Parade; lines 854-86 are not tacked on as an afterthought, written specially after the young Marcellus died in 23.[31] The young Marcellus is just as fully integrated as his forbear (875f.): 'no-one of Trojan descent (cf. 756, 767) shall exalt his Latin ancestry (cf. the Italians, 757, 762, 793) so high by his promise'. His virtues are those of both peace and war, like Silvius Aeneas' (769f.; cf. for that matter the combined excellences of Rumulus and Numa). Vergil laments his *pietas* (cf. 769) and *prisca fides*[32] (878); at the same time, his

right hand will be invincible in war (and he had indeed served in Augustus' Cantabrian campaign of 26 BC) whether serving with infantry, or as a cavalryman, which Vergil emphasizes probably because Clastidium had been a cavalry victory.

Finally, a few words on the purpose of the Parade, for its first hearer, Aeneas, and for the Roman reader at the time of composition. Vergil makes Anchises' purpose in guiding Aeneas through the crowd of his descendants most explicit: that Aeneas may rejoice with him the more in the discovery of Italy (717f.); an element of pleasure and a clearer sense of purpose is to be vouchsafed to Aeneas, lured ever forward with his spirit now fired with the love of fame to come (889). And it is precisely at the vision of what Augustus is to achieve (806 f.) that Anchises asks Aeneas 'and do we still hesitate to extend our distinction by our deeds[33] or does fear prevent you from standing firm on the land of Italy?'[34]

Perhaps it is more interesting to the historian to consider the intent and impact of the Parade in contemporary circumstances: it was clearly written (very) shortly after the death of Marcellus, was read to the imperial household shortly after that,[35] and became available to the general public after Vergil's death in 19 BC. Augustus, between King Romulus and King Numa is associated with the re-establishment (after Saturn) of a Golden Age in Latium (792-4), and with a huge extension of the *imperium* (794 ff.), compared favourably with the exploits of Hercules (800 ff.) and Dionysus (804 ff.) in a manner which educated readers would find clearly reminiscent of the panegyrics addressed to Alexander the Great. One should not lose sight of the fact that Vergil must certainly have known, as he composed these lines, that he would shortly be reading them to the *princeps,* who got an advance hearing of both *Georgics* and, in part, *Aeneid.*[36] He cannot have thought that one word would annoy or displease his patron and head of state.

But the year of composition (and perhaps also of the reading to Augustus) was after all 23 BC and Vergil must also be thought of as addressing the contemporary Roman reader at large with the alarming disturbances of that year clearly in mind; that must be part, at least, of the purpose of his warning to Caesar and Pompey against civil discord.[37] It would clearly be worthwhile to search the Parade for further possible contemporary allusions.

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Notes

1. *Ancient Society* 10 (1980), 20-3.
2. Apart from Austin, there is little of value in English; some recent German work is summarised in *Prudentia* viii.(1976), 80ff.
3. *Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1979), 231f.
4. Livy, 5.48: see R.M. Ogilvie *Commentary on Livy, Books 1-5* (Oxford, 1965), M. Grant, *Roman Myths* (London, 1971), 210 and Austin's commentary *ad loc.*

5. A theme discussed in the articles mentioned in notes 1 and 2.
6. The point is well made by Austin. See *Aeneid* 7.606, and R. Syme, *Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1956), 388, etc.
7. See Ogilvie, *op. cit.*, on Livy 5.49.7, T.J. Luce, *Livy* (Princeton, 1977), 288, 292, S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford, 1971), 265.
8. Syme, *op. cit.*, 159; Austin half-makes the point.
9. The memory of the tyrannicide prompted many to the expectation that Brutus would join in the conspiracy against Caesar: Syme, *op. cit.*, 59.
10. M. Gelzer, *Roman Nobility* (Eng. tr., Oxford, 1969), 27f., D. Earl, *Moral and Political Tradition of Rome* (London, 1967), 20f., *Prudentia* viii (1976), 83.
11. Cf. n.1 above. Note 771f.: Vergil constantly has visual attributes in mind.
12. Ogilvie *op. cit.*, 43f., Grant, *op. cit.*, 94ff. (lucid, provocative and occasionally unreliable), *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1974), 111f.
13. Vergil's ability, often revealed, to select rigorously is discussed in my 'Vergil and the conquest of chaos' *Antichthon* 15 (1981), 141-50.
14. R.E.A. Palmer, *Archaic Community of the Romans* (Cambridge, 1970), 9ff., A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* (Ann Arbor, 1965), 101ff.
15. Ogilvie, *op. cit.*, 88, Grant, *op. cit.*, 136-7; cf. 141 for allusions to Numa in Augustan propaganda.
16. Note that Augustus will 'found' (anew; *condet)* the Golden Age in Latium (792); the verb is one used repeatedly of Romulus' foundation of Rome, as at *Aeneid* 276f.
17. *Aeneid* 6.792-4, cf. 4.231, *Prudentia* viii (1976), 76.
18. Cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.2.44, 1.12.47, Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.746ff., Propertius 3.18.34, Vergil *Georgics* 1.468; it is as well to remember that Augustus vowed a temple to Mars the Avenger at Philippi.
19. Cf. Austin's commentary there and E.J. Kenney, *Classical Review* 18 (1965), 106.
20. Note that repeatedly in *Aeneid*, Books 7-12 the vanquished enemies of Aeneas are presented as descendants of the Greeks who had once defeated Aeneas' kin: see W.S. Anderson, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 88 (1957), 17ff.
21. Scipiadae: a bilingual pun; a blind Scipio had once leaned on his son's shoulder and the Greek for a staff is *skeptron;* that is very close to *skeptos*, the Greek for 'thunderbolt', which the family showed on their coins, and to which Vergil refers here: 'Two thunderbolts of war'; unravelled brilliantly in Austin's note.
22. This had only been done three times; Vergil is clearly aware of this rarity.
23. For a really complex allusion to Romulus' winning of them at 10.719f., see *Journal of Roman Studies* 63 (1973), 69 n.11.
24. So called because he was sowing *(serere)* on his farm when summoned to the consulship, according to the popular etymology; the hero of Horace *Odes* 3.5.
25. *Latomus* 30 (1971), 1112.
26. Note that the 'military' side of the Forum of Augustus was filled with those who 'made the *imperium* of the Roman people very large from very small beginnings' Suetonius *Augustus* 31.5). Curiously, this common emphasis is not likely to go back, explicitly at least, to the joint literary source of Parade and Forum; cf. n.1 and *Prudentia* viii (1976), 83.

27. Cf. n.10.

28. As Austin observes, this address, 'O Roman', is in the solemn manner of oracles, such as that devised for the Ludi Saeculares of 17 BC; cf. Horace *Odes* 3.6.1 and E. Fraenkel, *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 365f.

29. The *spolia opima* were normally dedicated to Jupiter Feretrius; hence a problem here, solved by Austin: Marcellus dedicated them, according to Vergil, in Quirinus' honour, for Romulus deified was called Quirinus and it was Romulus who, traditionally, built the temple of Jupiter Feretrius and decreed that the *spolia opima* were to be placed there.

30. Line 857: *tumultus* is the special word for a Gallic invasion.

31. When Vergil read these lines, Marcellus' mother is said to have fainted and to have been revived with difficulty (Suetonius-Donatus *Life of Vergil* 32).

32. 'In an old fashioned way he will do his duty by gods, men, and state and will keep his word'; the Latin is terser and more poignant.

33. A careful translation of *virtutem extendere factis* (806), which is certainly what Vergil wrote at this point; the issue may be confused in older editions and translations.

34. Those who know the *Aeneid* well will find it very rewarding to work out just how Anchises' formal oracular address to the Roman of line 851 applies, in detail and in verbal parallels, to Aeneas' future situation in Italy.

35. Cf. Horsfall, *Poets and Patron*, Publications of the Macquarie Ancient History Association 3, 22 n.54.

36. *Poets and Patron*, 11, L.P. Wilkinson, *Georgics of Vergil* (Cambridge, 1969), 116f.

37. Lines 832ff.; cf. 816 and the insistence that under Augustus Latium will enjoy a Golden Age.

The deplorable spelling 'Vergil' was imposed, as a matter of editorial policy, upon a non-consenting author.