2 Suicide, *Devotio*, and Ritual Closure

THIS CHAPTER FOCUSES ON THE DEATHS OF DIDO AND TURNUS. I treat these figures separately because of their paramount importance for the development of both the narrative and the ritual plot. Moreover, they share a key ritual link, which rests mainly on their association with the specifically Roman rite of *devotio*. Dido performs a complicated ritual that, among other things, includes elements akin to the *devotio*, while Turnus is the victim of a distorted *devotio*. Dido's suicide may thus be read as a perverted sacrifice that creates the expectation of ritual purity, an expectation that Turnus' death promises but eventually fails to fulfill. As a result, the tragic pattern of sacrificial perversion is also at work in the case of these two heroes but is ultimately transformed because it does not lead to restoration. The chapter ends with a consideration of the concept of closure as it pertains to the ritual plot and its impact on the poem's narrative ending.

I. DIDO'S RITUAL SLAUGHTER

The rituals that Dido performs in Book 4 occur in a discernible pattern, so that one may speak of a ritual plot existing side by side with the narrative plot. Unlike the other sacrifices examined, which mostly consist of sacrificial symbolism or adopt sacrifice as a metaphor, Dido's sacrifices are part of the fabric of the narrative. As a result, ritual and narrative plot merge in the scene of the supernatural wedding and in Dido's death on the pyre. In all other instances, the ritual plot flanks the movement of the narrative: Dido's decision to pursue a union with

Aeneas is followed by her ritual of extispicy and the long description of the magic ritual leading to her death on the pyre is preceded by the appearance of portents connected with ritual corruption. In addition to the incongruency between actual ritual practice and its representation in the Dido episode, there is a further incongruency at work, since the outcome of the narrative is at odds with the outcome of the ritual plot. In the narrative, Aeneas' departure is divinely inspired and sanctioned. Similarly, Dido's curse and death provide a mythological *aition* for the enmity between Romans and Carthaginians, while the reader knows all along that Rome will eventually triumph over Carthage. On the ritual level, however, Dido's death is cast as a human sacrifice, and the ritual perversion culminating in her slaughter is never restored to ritual correctness. This paradox between the narrative resolution and the lack thereof in ritual prefigures further perversion, conflict, and violence, as is evident from other instances of ritual corruption later in the poem, most significantly, the "sacrifice" of Turnus.

Book 4 begins with Dido's moral conflict over her love for Aeneas and her loyalty to her dead husband, Sychaeus. Anna immediately realizes that a match between Aeneas and her sister is politically expedient. Her speech convincingly demonstrates to both Dido and the reader that the queen's erotic attachment to the Trojan hero is closely interwoven with concerns of public welfare and policy (39–49; Monti 1981: 30). The ceremony she undertakes is motivated by her desire for a marriage but is also consistent with the practice of Roman public figures about to embark on an undertaking of national consequence:[1] Dido, encouraged by Anna, proceeds to perform sacrifice and extispicy, as Roman religious custom prescribed.[2] This ritual practice was part of a proper formal wedding, and as such it triggers the ritual plot:

> principio delubra adeunt pacemque per aras
> exquirunt; mactant lectas de more bidentis
> legiferae Cereri Phoeboque patrique Lyaeo,

[1] Monti 1981: 106 n.28. He also notes that the gods invoked by Dido in this sacrifice are especially connected to the prosperity of her city (31). O' Hara (1993: 108 n.23) compares Dido's divination with that of Decius Mus before his *devotio* (Livy 8.9.1).

[2] See Austin 1955: 41; Treggiari 1991: 164.

Iunoni ante omnis, cui uincla iugalia curae.
ipsa tenens dextra pateram pulcherrima Dido
candentis uaccae media inter cornua fundit,
aut ante ora deum pinguis spatiatur ad aras,
instauratque diem donis, pecudumque reclusis
pectoribus inhians spirantia consulit exta.
heu, uatum ignarae mentes! quid uota furentem,
quid delubra iuuant? . . . (4.56–66)

First they visit the shrines and ask for peace
at every altar: according to custom they sacrifice chosen sheep
to Ceres, giver of laws, to Phoebus, and to father Lyaeus,
to Juno, above all, under whose care are the bonds of marriage.
Dido herself, most beautiful, holding a chalice in her right hand,
pours libations between the horns of a white heifer,
or, with the gods looking on, moves slowly by the rich altars
and daily renews the offerings, and, poring over the victims'
opened bodies, consults the pulsing entrails.
Alas, how ignorant the minds of the prophets! Of what avail are vows
or shrines to one who is frenzied? . . .

Ceremonial attention to detail ensures the correctness of the procedure (*de more*). Yet the passage, instead of conveying the soothing solace of divine accord, generates a feeling of uneasiness and foreboding, as the conclusion to Dido's ceremony contains an authorial comment that casts serious doubt on the efficacy of this carefully executed ritual. The outcome of the extispicy is suppressed and dismissed as irrelevant:[3] Dido has already fallen prey to her consuming passion, eloquently illustrated in the empathetic image of the queen as a wounded doe following the divination scene. Perhaps a reference to the outcome of the ritual is not necessary. The reader knows that the ritual extispicy foretells Dido's own death at the pyre, as the ensuing simile of the wounded doe makes plain. The Roman reader also knows that Dido's participation in the performance of the ceremony would render it abortive, since her decision to

[3] O'Hara (1993: 112) argues that the syntactical difficulty of the phrase *uatum ignarae mentes* reflects the difficulty that both Dido and the reader have in interpreting the language of the entrails.

seek the auspices for a second marriage in effect constitutes a violation of her oath to Sychaeus. Her identification as *furens* further betrays her unsuitability for conducting any ritual procedure, since in actual practice it is precisely this kind of problematic element that the *uates*, as the intermediary between human and divine, is supposed to eliminate by keeping the sacred separate from the profane. Dido's inability to interpret the extispicy correctly does not preclude the reader's ability to guess the outcome correctly. The incongruency between Dido's ability to interpret the will of the divine and that of the reader displays the problematic nature of divine and human communication in this instance in the narrative.

The ensuing wedding ceremony between Dido and Aeneas enacted by supernatural forces also imparts an unnerving sentiment despite its ritual correctness (Austin 1955: 69):

> speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem
> deueniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno
> dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether
> conubiis summoque ululârunt uertice Nymphae.
> ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
> causa fuit; neque enim specie famaue mouetur
> nec iam furtiuum Dido meditatur amorem:
> coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam. (4.165–72)
>
> Now Dido and the Trojan leader arrive in the same
> cave. Primal Earth and Iuno as *pronuba*
> give the signal; fires flashed and sky was the witness
> to the wedding and the Nymphs on the mountaintop cried out.
> That day was the first cause of death and the first of
> evils; for Dido is not moved by appearance or reputation,
> no longer does she contemplate a secret love:
> marriage she calls it, with this name she veils her sin.

Once again, attention to detail is instrumental in generating maximum ritual effect: *Tellus* represents the bread of the marriage rite; the *pronuba* Juno is the matron who presides over the ceremony; the *ignes* stand for the marriage torches; the air is a witness (*conscius*; Austin 1955: 69); *conubium* is the legal term for marriage (Treggiari 1991: 43). The Nymphs'

cry corresponds to the wedding song, although the verb employed, *ululare*, ominously suggests a rather different ritual context.[4] The narrator declares that this is a wedding in name only, but a wedding his readers have witnessed nonetheless. The stark incongruity between this fictional representation of a wedding rite and the actual ceremony heightens the paradox of a bond that the gods are shown to abet yet that is doomed to be dissolved by the demanding forces of destiny. Ritual representation is put to work here to underscore the uneasiness imparted by the narrative. Viewed in conjunction with the previous ritual, it confirms what the extispicy merely implied: that this supernatural rite constitutes ritual distortion.

When Dido realizes the inevitability of Aeneas' departure, she turns once again to the divine. As her end draws nearer, anomaly is intimated in the results of the ritual:

> quo magis inceptum peragat lucemque relinquat,
> uidit, turicremis cum dona imponeret aris,
> (horrendum dictu) latices nigrescere sacros
> fusaque in obscenum se uertere uina cruorem;... (4.452–55)
>
> And so that she may complete what she has started and leave the light,
> she saw, as she placed gifts on the incense-burning altars,
> (horrible to relate) the holy water turn black
> and the wine she poured change in polluting blood;...

At first glance, the ominous outcome of this divination appears to contrast with the analogous ritual at the opening of the book. Yet a more careful examination reveals that this is a perverted version of Dido's opening ritual: here too the queen herself makes wine (among other) offerings at the altars. The use of the word *inceptum* suggests that the similarity of the two ritual descriptions is too close to be entirely fortuitous. Scholars interpret the word to refer to Dido's resolve to die and explain the following phrase, *lucemque relinquat*, as an amplification of the first (Austin 1955: 452). Rather than explaining away a somewhat compressed phrase by positing a tautology, I would like to suggest that

[4] Austin 1955: 69. See also Hardie (1993: 90), who characterizes the wedding as elemental and a demonic parody of the Roman wedding ceremony.

we read *inceptum* as referring to the preliminary extispicy whose outcome was suppressed and, by extention, to the wedding itself. Dido refers to her union with Aeneas as *inceptos hymenaeos* (316). In view of this reading, Dido's proposal to complete what she has begun (i.e., the ritual sacrifices) also suggests that the *telos* of the rites lies beyond the immediate context, in the future, where the sacrificial victim will be the queen herself. At the same time, we can trace the progression of the ritual plot, in which the initial correct ritual, however uneasy, is inverted to become a ritual marked by full corruption. The portents accompanying this description (457–65) also indicate that malevolent forces are at work. The benign and beneficial ritual sacrifice and extispicy fail to forewarn and protect but, now reversed, offer tangible evidence of pollution (*obscenum*).[5]

Dido's subsequent magic rite masks her resolve to end her life, while it also signals a second and final merging of the narrative with the ritual plot in the book. Magic rites of *defixio* conflated with those of customary sacrifice turn rituals familiar to the audience into rituals alien and unsettling. The magic ceremony is itself divided into three parts, with a progressive transformation of the rite from *defixio* to funeral rite to a self-sacrifice comparable to a *devotio*. This fusion of all three rites maximizes the divide between Dido's actions and standard ritual practice and underlines the corrupt nature of all three ritual processes it depicts.

Dido's recourse to magic was taboo for Romans. This act alone would be sufficient to signal ritual corruption and perversion of religious custom and law: magical practices were common in Rome and were taken very seriously when they were thought to involve a sudden and unexplained death. Roman religious authorities since the time of the Twelve Tables condemned such practices, and Augustan legislation renewed the state's sanctions against them (Livy 4.30, 25.1, 39.16; Dio Cassius 49.43, 52.36; see Graf 1997: 46–60). Despite the fact that Dido's magic ceremony is not without literary precedents,[6] Dido's rite

[5] On pollution as a sign of sacrificial perversion, see also Chapter 3, pp. 83–90.

[6] Simaitha in Theocritus' *Idyl* 2 and Medea's practices in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, as well as Amaryllis in Vergil's own *Eclogue* 8, are the most obvious models. Of course, both Apollonius and Theocritus, like Vergil, depend on their audience's sense of the impropriety of magic.

is more complex and more ominous, constituting the climax of a carefully prepared ritual plot that aims to underscore the idea of corruption of religious custom.

The opening of the description of Dido's ceremony points to the magic practice of *defixio*. Dido instructs Anna to build a pyre, prescribing that it contain the *monimenta* (498) of her marriage to Aeneas: the weapons (*arma*, 495) and clothes he left in their marriage chamber (*exuuiae*, 496; see Conington 1884, 2: 303) as well as the bed itself (*lectum iugale*, 496). The construction of the pyre inside the palace is appropriate to the obviously private character of the ritual; for now, her objective appears to be to free herself from her marriage bond with Aeneas. Yet in the same passage there are elements that point to a rite that seeks the opposite of what Dido asserts. The *effigies*, an image of Aeneas probably made of wax, along with *exuuiae*, relics of his clothes, are all used by Amaryllis in *Eclogue* 8 (*effigies*, 75; *cera*, 80; *exuuias*, 92) in her successful effort to bind Daphnis to her will, to make him return after he has abandoned her.[7]

Dido's magic, however, is fused with rites peculiar to funerals not only to heighten the pathos for the queen's impending death but also to expose fully her desire to cause Aeneas' destruction, his *funus* (Tupet 1970: 237–58). Scholars have long noted the passage's connection with Misenus' burial later in Book 6 (214–35; see Austin 1955: 151). Aeneas' *exuuiae*, his sword, and his effigy on the pyre (507–508) suggest that we are about to witness his symbolic funeral; Vergil uses the plural *funera* (500) for Dido's rites, a usage that I believe supports this reading. Moreover, the inclusion of elements from ritual sacrifice (the sprinkling of the *mola salsa*) already point beyond the *defixio* to the final transformation of the ceremony: Dido plans Aeneas' symbolic sacrifice. Interestingly, just as happened with the first ritual description, the narrative continues on to other matters, and the rite is forgotten until the final scene of the book.

[7] Tupet (1970: 237–38) offers a full discussion of all the ritual elements of this segment of Dido's ceremony. Eitrem (1933: 29–41), after a careful examination of Dido's magic rite, concludes that the ritual described would never have succeeded and that in fact it was never meant to succeed. A useful summary of his argumentation is found in Austin 1955: 149–50 and Tupet 1970: 238.

Dido's last instructions reveal that the true purpose of her activity was to perform blood sacrifice to the Stygian Jupiter:[8]

> 'Annam, cara mihi nutrix, huc siste sororem:
> dic corpus properet fluuiali spargere lympha,
> et pecudes secum et monstrata piacula ducat.
> sic ueniat, tuque ipsa pia tege tempora uitta.
> sacra Ioui Stygio, quae rite incepta paraui,
> perficere est animus finemque imponere curis
> Dardaniique rogum capitis permittere flammae.' (4.634–40)

> "Dear nurse, bring my sister, Anna, here:
> tell her to hurry and sprinkle her body with river water,
> and to bring along the victims and the offerings for atonement, as directed;
> Let her come then, and you, cover your brow with the holy headband.
> The rites to Stygian Jupiter, which I have started according to ritual custom,
> I mean to bring to completion and put an end to my cares,
> and entrust to the flames the pyre of that Dardanian."

It is not difficult to discern what is by now a familiar pattern: the emphasis on ritual correctness (the purificatory sprinkling with river water, the prescribed offerings of atonement, the sacrificial garland) is ironically undermined by the very anomaly of the choice of a human sacrificial victim. The use of the expression *incepta paraui* serves as a subtle reminder that it is the same ritual left unfinished when the narrative plot diverged from the ritual plot.[9] Yet as Dido prepares to take her life, a further reversal occurs. The queen directs her last words to the objects that symbolically stand for Aeneas. The sword that has hitherto been described as an offering (*munus*, 647) becomes the slayer.[10] Aeneas thus symbolically turns from sacrificed to sacrificer: the roles previously outlined in the magic rite are now completely reversed. Dido's death on the altar (*arae*, 676) thus perverts proper sacrificial procedure.

[8] Cf. 4.638–39. See also Heinze 1915: 141–43 (= Harvey 1993: 105).

[9] See also Tupet (1970: 250–51), who argues that the magic rites were preliminary to the main rite, a rite of destruction.

[10] A similar symbolism occurs in Sophocles' *Ajax*, where the sword is referred to as σφαγεύς, the slayer (815). On Dido and Ajax, see Chapter 6, pp. 182–98.

Intertextual contact with Clytemnestra's killing of her husband in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* confirms that ritual perversion is at the core of Dido's sacrifice:

> παίω δέ νιν δίς, κἀν δυοῖν οἰμωγμάτοιν
> μεθῆκεν αὑτοῦ κῶλα· καὶ πεπτωκότι
> τρίτην ἐπενδίδωμι, τοῦ κατὰ χθονός
> Διὸς νεκρῶν σωτῆρος εὐκταίαν χάριν. (1384–87)
>
> I hit him twice, and with two groans
> he relaxed his limbs; and after he had fallen
> I give him yet a third blow, a grace for my prayer
> to the infernal Zeus, the savior of the dead.

Clytemnestra describes the death of Agamemnon as a sacrifice to the Zeus of Hades. This is the climactic moment of the play and presents the most horrifying reversal of ritual: a deadly blow is called a gift or service accompanying a prayer. Agamemnon's blood is a libation, and the three strokes evoke the customary rite of pouring three libations after the feast: one to the Olympian gods, one to chthonic gods, and one to Zeus the savior. The inversion is twofold: the libation is of blood instead of wine; Zeus the savior, the benign deity who blesses the feast, is here the Zeus of Hades, the savior (keeper) of the dead (Zeitlin 1965: 472). Dido also purports to sacrifice to the Stygian Jupiter her "husband," that is, the symbolic image of Aeneas.

Yet in turning the blade of the sword toward herself, Dido is also a victim, as the famous tragic simile attests:

> aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes,
> armatam facibus matrem et **serpentibus** atris
> cum fugit ultricesque sedent in limine Dirae. (4.471–73)
>
> Or as when at the theater Agamemnon's son, Orestes,
> hounded, flees his mother armed with firebrands
> and black **serpents**, and the avenging Dirae sit at the doorway.[11]

[11] Dido's likening to Orestes points to the end of Aesch. *Cho.* (1048–50), where the young man is chased by the Furies after he has committed matricide: σμοιαὶ γυναῖκες αἵδε Γοργόνων δίκην / φαϊοχίτωνες καὶ πεπλεκτανημέναι / πυκνοῖς **δράκουσιν** [savage women these, like Gorgons, wearing gray garments and entwined with swarming **snakes**].

The intertext of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is thus particularly important in the depiction of Dido's torment but also appears central to her portrayal as a dangerous Erinys, as her final words to Aeneas, a formidable curse, attest:

> '...spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,
> supplicia hausurum scopulis et nomine Dido
> saepe uocaturum. sequar atris ignibus absens
> et, cum frigida mors anima seduxerit artus,
> omnibus umbra locis adero. dabis, improbe, poenas.
> audiam et haec Manis ueniet mihi fama sub imos.' (4.382–87)

> "...indeed I hope, if the pious divinities have any power,
> that amid the rocks you will drink up the punishment and often call
> Dido's name. I shall follow you with black torches, though absent,
> and, when cold death has separated my limbs from my soul,
> I shall be present everywhere as a shadow. Cruel one, you will be punished.
> I shall hear and this story will reach me in the Shades below.

Hardie (1993: 41) argues convincingly that this curse suggests Dido's future existence as a Fury who will make sure that Aeneas will be punished. This image of Dido as an Erinys is akin to Clytemnestra's identification with Ate and Erinys in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (Conacher 1987: 51–53; see also Lebeck 1971: 140). Furthermore, Dido's oscillation between priestess and victim, slayer and slain points to her ritual function as an object of *defixio*, whose death will bring destruction to Aeneas and his people. In this respect, her ritual shares important elements with the *devotio*, whereby a Roman general's death brings destruction to the enemy and ensures victory for the Roman side. Tupet (1970: 256) and Hardie (1986: 279–80; 1993: 29) have both recognized elements of *devotio* in Dido's ceremony and point out that she dedicates herself to the powers of the Underworld. Earlier in the narrative, at the moment when the queen falls in love with Aeneas, she is described as "devoted to future destruction" (*pesti deuota futurae*, 1.712).

Dido's depiction as both priestess and victim is most salient in her final curse on Aeneas and his people: the words *exoriare* ***aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*** [**another avenger** will rise **from our** bones] (625) and ***moriemur inultae*** / *sed moriamur* [**we shall die** unavenged / but let us die]) (659–60) mobilize yet another intertextual link with Aeschylus'

Agamemnon: the curse of the prophetess Cassandra, Apollo's priestess, who foresees her own killing by Clytemnestra but also prophesies that her death will find retribution: οὐ μὴν **ἄτιμοί γ'** ἐκ θεῶν **τεθνήξομεν**· / ἥξει γὰρ **ἡμῶν ἄλλος** αὖ **τιμάορος** [but **unavenged** by the gods **we shall** not **die**; for **another avenger of ours** will come in turn] (1279–80).[12] On the ritual level, this curse situates Dido's self-sacrifice in the realm of *devotio*, whereby victory in war is achieved. Vergil's mobilization of this ritual context in this instance announces the most shocking defeats in store for Rome. On the allusive level, however, Dido is cast as Cassandra, the most innocent victim (along with Iphigeneia) of the entire trilogy, who was "sacrificed" by Clytemnestra in the name of revenge. As a result, Dido's death, the blood sacrifice necessary for the completion of her ritual, is cast through her link with Cassandra as terribly corrupt.[13] The tragic pattern or ritual perversion thus calls for purity and restoration.

In conclusion, the ritual plot in Book 4, while it cannot fail to inspire readerly sympathy for Dido, indicates that her death as sacrifice cannot be sanctioned by religious law. Through the use of a ritual plot, the poet is able to articulate in no uncertain terms the violent nature of Aeneas' mission, by putting to work a language his audience could intuitively understand and interpret. At the same time, this ritual plot provides him with a mechanism through which he can offer a resolution of the ritual perversion in the manner of Greek tragedy. Indeed, the poet satisfies readerly expectations for such a resolution on the narrative level by providing Aeneas with divine justification for his actions; as the ritual plot unfolds, however, the cumulative effect of its reversals and perversions, which culminate in Dido's self-sacrifice, is the dismantling of this very resolution. If one of the functions of ritual is to contain violence by transforming it into a structured and controlled force beneficial to society, this it fails to achieve in Book 4. Turnus' death at the end of the epic, rife with elements of *devotio*, constitutes a ritual equivalent to

[12] Scholars have long noted the allusion. See, for instance, Pease 1935: 493; Fraenkel 1950: 596.

[13] To be sure, as one of the anonymous readers reminded me, Cassandra in this instance, for all her innocence, also recalls Clytemnestra with the emphasis she places on revenge. At once victim and avenger, Cassandra, like Dido, defies simple classification.

that of Dido. It remains to examine whether this time it will succeed in bringing ritual closure.

II. TURNUS' *DEVOTIO* AND RITUAL CLOSURE

Closure in recent literary criticism emerges as a concept open to negotiation, amplification, and redefinition (Fowler 1989; 1997). In this section, I would like to address the question of closure and aperture in the *Aeneid* by focusing on ritual representation and symbolism as formal closural devices in the epic. More specifically, I explore the important implications of the presence of ritual symbolism in the killing of Turnus. To be sure, critics have long noted that Aeneas employs the vocabulary of ritual sacrifice in his final words to Turnus.[14] I argue that the use of ritual vocabulary in this instance is part of the larger ritual intertext at work in the poem. Turnus' killing constitutes a perverted sacrifice and, in particular, a perversion of the Roman ritual practice of *devotio*. A consideration of the ending of the *Aeneid* from this perspective reveals that Vergil not only inverts the Homeric closural pattern[15] but also employs the tragic pattern of perversion stripped of the possibility of ritual restoration. As a result, the epic fails to assuage the readerly anxieties that the ritual symbolism has aroused and defies expectations for resolution and closure.

My analysis is divided into three parts. I first outline Vergil's appropriation of vocabulary properly belonging to the realm of *devotio*, which mobilizes a subtext (or intertext) that complicates and enriches the narrative plot line as well as the characterization of Turnus. Within this subtext, sacrificial perversion occurs, thus raising the expectation of ritual restoration. In the second part, a comparison between Livy's *devotio* narrative and that of the *Aeneid* illuminates the reasons behind Vergil's mobilization of this particular ritual intertext. The representation of Turnus as a *devotus* transforms him into a symbol of collective unity as his death appears a restorative act that would ensure the future fusion of Romans and Latins into one people. The section ends with a discussion

[14] The bibliography on the scene is vast. On the sacrificial vocabulary, see Putnam 1965: 195–96; Mitchell-Boyask 1991; and Hardie 1993: 21, 28.

[15] See Hardie 1997a and Perkell 2001.

of the poem's ritual intertext as a closural device. I suggest that the pattern of ritual corruption followed by restoration derives from Greek tragedy and therefore distorts the generic integrity of the *Aeneid*.

1. The Ritual Intertext of *Devotio*

The specific ritual context of *devotio* is first activated in Book 11, where Turnus, in response to Drances' accusations of cowardice, passionately announces his desire to sacrifice himself to save his people from further bloodshed.[16] As scholars have long recognized, the ritual term *deuoui* (11.442) is emphatically placed at the first metrical *sedes* with enjambment and a pause:[17]

> '... ibo animis contra, uel magnum praestet Achillem
> factaque Volcani manibus paria induat arma

[16] On *devotio*, see Schwenn 1915: 154–64. Burkert (1979: 63–64) classifies the practice as one of the transformations of the pattern of the scapegoat. The leader is seen as an offering to the deities of the Underworld. Aside from the classic example of P. Decius Mus (*Liv.* 8.6.9–16, 8.9.1–13, 8.10.11–14), the second instance of *devotio* in Livy is that of Decius' son in the battle of Sentinum in 295 during the Third Samnite War (10.28.12–17). Burkert (1979: 63) argues that the elder Decius' example "seems to have become a kind of heroic myth itself, obscuring the normal procedure." See in addition Stübler 1941: 173–204; Versnel 1976, 1981; Levene 1993; and Oakley 1997. The practice is also mentioned in Ennius' *Annales* (191–93 *Skutsch*) and in Cicero's *Sest.* 48. Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.9.9–13) gives a very different account of the same ritual, on which see Versnel 1976: 365–410.

[17] See, for instance, Highet 1972: 63 and Hardie 1993: 28. Conington (1884, 3: 359) notes that this is a kind of "formula of self-devotion, not unlike that given in Liv. 8.9." He also notes that the natural construction would have been *pro uobis*, "the dative being used of the powers to whom the person bound himself over: but Virgil as usual has chosen to vary it, regarding Latinus and the commonwealth as the parties to whom Turnus is thus consigned" (ibid.). Indeed, Decius utters strikingly similar words in *Liv.* 8.9.4: *agedum, pontifex publicus populi Romani, praei uerba quibus me pro legionibus deuoueam* [come, state pontiff of the Roman people, dictate the words that I may devote myself on behalf of the legions] and in 8.9.8: *ita pro re publica <populi Romani> Quiritium exercitu, legionibus, auxiliis populi Romani Quiritium, legiones auxiliaque hostium mecum Deis Manibus Tellurique deuoueo* [in this way on behalf of the state of the Roman people of the Quirites, of the army, the legions, the auxiliaries of the Roman

ille licet. uobis animam hanc soceroque Latino
Turnus ego, haud ulli ueterum uirtute secundus,
deuoui. solum Aeneas uocat? et uocet oro;
nec Drances potius, siue est haec ira deorum,
morte *luat*, siue est uirtus et gloria, tollat.' (11.438–44)

"...I'll face him with all my heart, though he may surpass great Achilles
and wear armor to match, wrought by Vulcan's hands.
To you and Latinus, my father-in-law, I, Turnus,
second in courage to none of my ancestors, *have devoted* my life.
Aeneas challenges me alone? I pray that he should challenge me;
and not that Drances rather, if this is the gods' anger, *may atone* it
with his death, nor, if this is honor and glory, that he may win them for
himself."

Once activated, the intertext of *devotio* is sustained throughout the narrative of Book 12 and soon merges with the main plot line: Trojans and Latins agree that the outcome of the war must be decided in a duel between Aeneas and Turnus. The two hosts ratify this pact in a solemn ceremony described in rich detail (161–221). Toward the end of the description of the ratification of the treaty, dialogue gives way to narrative: resentment grows on the Rutulian side as the probability of their leader's death becomes all too apparent. After the animals are sacrificed (213–15), Turnus approaches the altar in supplication:

At uero Rutulis impar ea pugna uideri
iamdudum et uario misceri pectora motu,
tum magis ut propius cernunt non uiribus aequos.
adiuuat incessu tacito progressus et *aram*
suppliciter uenerans demisso lumine Turnus
pubentesque genae et iuuenali in corpore pallor. (12.216–21)

people of the Quirites, I devote the legions and the auxiliaries of the enemy along with myself to the Divine Shades and to the Earth]. See also Renger 1985: 88. Pascal (1990: 252) argues that a close study of the speech of Turnus and the scene in which it takes place are "enough to rob the fateful word and all its vehemence of its ritual import." On *devotio* in the *Aeneid*, see further Johnson 1976: 117–19; Schenk 1984: 143; Renger 1985: 87–90; Pascal 1990: 251–68; Leigh 1993; Hardie 1993: 28–32; and Thomas 1998: 284–85.

> But indeed that battle seemed unfair to the Rutulians
> for a long time and their hearts filled with changing emotions,
> even more now, as they see at closer view the men unequal in strength.
> Turnus fuels this, advancing with silent gait and *worshipping*
> *as a suppliant the altar* with eyes downcast;
> so too his wan cheeks and the paleness in his youthful figure.

I argue that in the Vergilian narrative Turnus' depiction as a sacrificial victim in the impending duel forms an integral part of Turnus' *devotio*, which in turn is linked to the ritual subtext deployed in the final segment of the poem. Scholars have not seen a connection between the ratification of the treaty sanctioning the duel between the two combatants and the ritual vocabulary of *devotio* at work in the representation of Turnus. On the contrary, they interpret the latter as an instance of "self-serving rhetoric" (Pascal 1990: 267), present only in Turnus' own "skewed view of reality" (Hardie 1993: 28), or as a case of "deviant focalization" not related to the final sacrificial moment of the epic (Thomas 1998: 284–85).

The narrator, however, in the description of Turnus' role in the ongoing rites, employs ritual language appropriate for a sacrificial victim (219–21). Turnus' self-representation as a *devotus* is thus followed by the presence of sacrificial symbolism. This is accomplished by a shift in the focus of the narrative, which now zooms in on the Rutulians' feelings as they realize the inequality between the two combatants (*impar ea pugna*) and the inevitability of their leader's death. Turnus appears last in the procession and is depicted as a double of the animals prepared for ritual slaughter: his downcast eyes (*demisso lumine*) contrast with Aeneas' and Latinus' gazes toward heaven as they utter their prayers (Aeneas and his men: *illi ad surgentem conuersi lumina solem*, 172; Latinus: *suspiciens caelum*, 196). As is often the case with sacrificial victims, Turnus' youth is emphasized[18] and his paleness foreshadows his death.[19] The animals

[18] The animals usually sacrificed are *bidentes*, i.e., two years old. On the significance of the youth of the victim, see Versnel 1981: 143–45, 163.

[19] Interestingly, the word *pallor* is used only one other time in the entire Vergilian corpus. At *Aen.* 4.499, when Dido tricks her sister into preparing the pyre, the narrator concludes that as Dido finishes her speech, paleness covers her cheeks. Once again, the idea of paleness is connected with death.

just slain also prefigure Turnus' final sacrifice.[20] The narrative thus symbolically transgresses the ritual norm of sacrifice that we have just witnessed (which prescribes the slaughter of animals) and replaces it with the expectation of human slaughter. Turnus' imminent death is signaled as an act of sacrifice for the poem's characters and readers alike.

The ritual intertext is evoked through both the narrator's and Turnus' words. It remains therefore to demonstrate that it can be identified as that of *devotio* in particular. In the following scene, the disguised Juturna intervenes, seeking to inflame the already disturbed Rutulians, renew the fighting, and obstruct ritual procedure.[21] In order to carry her point, Juturna invites the Latins (and the reader) to consider Turnus as sacrificial victim and the treaty itself as a *devotio*:

> 'non pudet, o Rutuli, *pro cunctis talibus unam*
> *obiectare animam*? numerone an uiribus aequi
> non sumus? en, omnes et Troes et Arcades hi sunt,
> fatalisque manus, infensa Etruria Turno:
> uix hostem, alterni si congrediamur, habemus.
> ille quidem ad superos, *quorum se deuouet aris*,
> succedet fama uiuusque per ora feretur;..." (12.229–35)
>
> "Are you not ashamed, O Rutulians, *to expose one life*
> *for so many*? Aren't we equal in numbers
> or strength? Look, all of them are here, Trojans and Arcadians,
> and the fate-driven host, Etruria, enemies of Turnus.
> Even if every other man joins the battle, we barely have a foe for each.
> Turnus will indeed rise in fame to the gods, *on whose altars*
> *he devotes his life* and he'll be alive upon the lips of men...."

Although it may be argued that Juturna is using the rhetoric of *devotio* in order to achieve her goal, her opening remarks capitalize on the

[20] Putnam (1965: 164) notes that the use of *suppliciter* "leads the reader directly to the final lines of the poem where Turnus is the actual suppliant (*supplex*) before Aeneas." On the connection between the gods Latinus invokes in the ratification of the treaty and those invoked in Decius' *devotio*, see Renger 1985: 88–89.

[21] On this episode as an instance of disruption and chaos, see also Hardie 1993: 21.

Rutulians' feelings, which, as we have seen, are rooted in the expectation shared by both Trojans and Latins that Turnus is going to die. Juturna, by emphasizing Turnus' sacrifice for his people (229–30), draws attention to a constitutive characteristic of the process of sacrifice in general and of *devotio* in particular, the principle of substitution (Versnel 1981: 159–60). A structural parallel emphasizes the link between the themes of sacrifice, the treaty, and the *devotio* in these instances: as noted earlier, sacrificial symbolism describing Turnus' role in the treaty follows Turnus' self-representation as a *devotus*. Similarly, a striking passage brimming with sacrificial perversion follows Juturna's declaration of the treaty as a *devotio*.[22] As violence disrupts the rite, the killings in battle that ensue are cast in terms that evoke ritual slaughter:

> Messapus regem regisque insigne gerentem
> Tyrrhenum Aulesten, avidus *confundere foedus*,
> aduerso proterret equo; ruit ille recedens
> et miser *oppositis* a tergo *inuoluitur aris*
> *in caput inque umeros*. at feruidus aduolat hasta
> Messapus teloque *orantem* multa trabali
> desuper altus equo grauiter ferit atque ita fatur:
> 'hoc habet, *haec melior magnis data uictima diuis*.' (12.289–96)

> Messapus, eager to *break the treaty* with charging horse
> terrifies Aulestes, the Etruscan king who wore a king's
> insignia; that one stepping back stumbles, and *whirls*,
> poor man, *on the obstructing altar* behind him, falling
> *on head and shoulders*. And Messapus blazing swoops down
> with his spear, high on his horse, and, though the man *begged* for mercy,
> he strikes him hard from above with his beam-like weapon, and
> speaks thus:
> "He's had it, *this finer victim given to the great gods*."

[22] Another ratification of a treaty has occurred earlier in the *ekphrasis* of the shield in *Aen.* 8.635–41: that treaty is between the Romans and the Sabines and includes the sacrifice of a pig at the altar of Jupiter. The solemnity of the event is stressed throughout the description and contrasts sharply with the sacrilege of the broken treaty between Aeneas and Latinus in 12.169–296. See also Gransden 1976: 166–67 and Putnam 1998: 122.

Contrary to proper ritual practice, where animal takes the place of human offering, Messapus' slaying of Aulestes represents a complete reversal of the sacrificial norm of substitution, as a human victim replaces the animal.[23] This kind of reversal at once provokes readerly anxiety over the collapse of the ritual order and raises expectations for ritual correctness and resolution. Turnus' voluntary self-sacrifice, his *devotio*, appears the only means by which the disrupted ritual order may be restored.[24]

The perversion motif generates the expectation of Turnus' self-sacrifice as an act of restoration. In the next scene, Aeneas reinforces this expectation by claiming Turnus' life as a prescribed offering for the broken treaty, through which ritual purity may be attained:

> 'quo ruitis? quaeue ista repens discordia surgit?
> o cohibete iras! ictum iam foedus et omnes
> compositae leges. mihi ius concurrere soli;
> me sinite atque auferte metus. ego foedera faxo
> firma manu; Turnum *debent haec* iam *mihi sacra.*' (12.313–17)

> "Where are you rushing to? What is this sudden outbreak of discord?
> Curb your anger! A pact has now been struck and all
> the terms have been agreed upon. It is right for me alone to fight;
> let me do so and cast out your fears. With this hand I'll make
> this treaty firm; *these rites have* now *bound* Turnus *to me.*"

The conclusion of Aeneas' speech casts him in the role of sacrificer and Turnus in that of the sacrificed, while its formulaic tone, due to the heavy alliteration of *f* and the presence of the archaic *faxo*, has ritual resonance. Moreover, Aeneas employs the verb *debere* to describe Turnus' death as the only acceptable recompense for the violated rite, thus furthering the delineation of the treaty as a form of *devotio*. Compensation is also one of the distinctive characteristics of the *devotio*, as the verb *debere* is also found in Livy's description of the sacrifice of the *imperator* P. Decius Mus

[23] Contrast the correct application of the sacrificial principle of substitution that the reader has witnessed within the controlled ritual context of the games in *Aen.* 5; *hanc tibi, Eryx, meliorem animam pro morte Daretis / persoluo* [to you, Eryx, I vow this finer life as payment for Dares' death] (483–84).

[24] On the voluntary aspect of the *devotio* and of sacrifice in general, see Versnel 1981: 146–47.

to the gods below (8.6.10).[25] Thus Aeneas' vocabulary locates Turnus' sacrifice, the treaty, and the *devotio* within the larger context of sacrificial perversion and imminent restoration.

Despite a series of events that delays the final duel, the ritual subtext of *devotio* remains active alongside the main narrative movement.[26] It resurfaces as Turnus reasserts his intent to meet his death honorably, his voluntary self-sacrifice further bolstering the reader's hopes for ritual restoration. Aeneas proceeds to attack Latinus' city, and the Rutulian hero, realizing that his resistance will only cause further bloodshed, appeals to the gods of the Underworld in terms that suggest self-consecration, yet another constitutive element of the *devotio*:

> terga dabo et Turnum fugientem haec terra uidebit?
> usque adeone mori miserum est? uos o mihi, *Manes*
> este boni, quoniam superis auersa uoluntas.
> *sancta ad uos anima atque istius inscia culpae*
> *descendam* magnorum haud umquam indignus auorum. (12.645–49)

> Shall I turn my back and will this land know that Turnus is in flight?
> Is it to die so terrible? You, *Shades of the Underworld*,
> be kind to me, since the goodwill of the gods above has turned
> away from me.
> *As a pure spirit innocent of that crime I shall go down*
> *to you* never unworthy of my great ancestors.

Much like Livy's Decius, Turnus also invokes the *Manes* as he prepares to enter the realm of the dead. In the case of Decius, his self-consecration is reported as part of a ritual ceremony.[27] Turnus, by contrast, does not

[25] On *debere* and *devotio*, see Versnel 1981: 161, 169.

[26] On delay as a device related to closure, see Hardie 1997a: 145–46.

[27] See Livy 8.9.8, quoted earlier in note 17. Also compare Livy 10.28.13: *iam ego mecum hostium legiones mactandas Telluri ac Dis Manibus dabo* [now I shall offer the legions of the enemy along with myself to be sacrificed to the Earth and to the Divine Shades]. On the self-consecratory aspect of *devotio*, see Versnel 1981: 150–51, where he also makes a distinction between *consecratio* and animal sacrifice: "it is the gods (of the netherworld) who must take the *consecratus* either through the mediation of the enemy troops or in some other way . . . and thus accept the offer. Here we have one essential difference with the normal animal-sacrifice where *consecratio* and *mactatio*, though ritually distinguished, are

participate in a ritual act but employs language containing ritual terms (*sancta anima*, *inscia culpae*, *descendam*), asserts the purity of his spirit, and signals his liminal status as he is destined for the Underworld yet still resides in the world of the living. This passage too then belongs to the poem's ritual intertext, proclaims Turnus' suitability as a *devotus*, and reinforces the connection between the *devotio* and the impending duel.

Finally, Turnus declares that his imminent death constitutes expiation and cleansing for the ritual perversion that has occurred.[28] A few moments after his self-consecration, Turnus addresses his troops, asks them to cease the fighting, and readily offers himself as atonement for the breaking of the treaty.[29]

> 'parcite iam, Rutuli, et uos tela inhibete, Latini.
> quaecumque est fortuna, mea est; me uerius *unum*
> *pro uobis* foedus *luere* et decernere ferro.' (12.693–95)
>
> "Rutulians, stop now, and you, Latins, hold your weapons.
> Whatever the outcome is, it is mine. Better that *I, alone*
> *in your stead, atone* for the treaty and fight it out with the sword."

Turnus' words confirm what the poem's ritual subplot has suggested all along: his sacrifice will signal the end of the conflict and will allow his people to live in peace with the Trojans. The use of the formula *unum pro uobis*, the sacrificial principle of substitution, attests that the ritual subtext is here hard at work. Moreover, the presence of the verb *luere*, which was also employed in Turnus' declaration of *devotio* in Book 11 and which conveys the notion of cleansing, links yet again the poem's ritual subtext with sacrifice and with *devotio* in particular.

nevertheless closely connected and, more important, are practically in the same hands." See in addition Oakley 1997: 482.

[28] Livy 8.9.10: *piaculum omnis deorum irae* [an atonement for all the anger of the gods]; 8.10.12: *piaculum caedi* [a victim is slain in atonement]; 10.28.13: *luendis periculis publicis piacula simus* [that we should be sacrificed as atonements for the nation's perils].

[29] See also Turnus' first declaration of *devotio* at 11.444 (*luat*), where he presents his death as atonement for the ill repute of the whole of his community. See further Hardie 1993: 29. Schenk (1984: 184–85) reads this final *devotio* as Turnus' ploy to regain repute and good standing with the Latins.

Vergil's narrative outlines the constitutive elements of *devotio*: substitution, self-consecration, compensation, and expiation. The accumulation of these elements in the deployment and delineation of the poem's ritual intertext intensifies and reinforces the possibility of release from the anxiety that the disrupted ritual order has generated. At the same time, the repeated promises of closure in the ritual plot contrast notably with the successive delays in the narrative, which postpone the duel between Aeneas and Turnus and which frustrate and obstruct the poem's movement toward its end (see note 26, p. 63). The incongruity between the progression of the two plots underscores the ritual import of the duel.

Confirmation of the growing expectation that Turnus' *devotio* will restore ritual corruption and provide closural relief comes full circle in the scene of Juturna's withdrawal from the action. As she returns to the water, the nymph now signals the end of the ritual crisis she herself has launched by a symbolic sign of acceptance of her brother's *devotio*:

> tantum effata *caput* glauco *contexit* amictu
> multa gemens et se fluuio dea condidit alto. (12.885–86)
>
> So saying, she *covered her head* in a gray mantle
> and with many a moan the goddess plunged into the deep river.

While it evokes practices of mourning and ritual lament,[30] Juturna's gesture also points to the veiling of the head which is specific to Roman sacrificial practice,[31] and which Livy presents as an important component of *devotio*.[32] Since Juturna has instigated ritual corruption, her symbolic acknowledgment of the necessity for ritual purity which her brother's voluntary sacrifice will attain has particular importance for the process of final restoration.

Having established the existence of a ritual subtext in the last book of the *Aeneid*, it remains to explain the reasons behind its mobilization. In order to do so, it is first necessary to chart the characteristics of the

[30] On the lament of Juturna, see Barchiesi 1978, 1994 (= 1999); Perkell 1997.

[31] Compare Helenus' directions to Aeneas on sacrificial procedure at *Aeneid* 3.405.

[32] Livy 8.9.5: *Pontifex eum togam praetextam sumere iussit et uelato capite, manu subter togam ad mentum exserta, super telum subiectum pedibus stantem* [The pontiff ordered him to put on the toga praetexta and with his head veiled, his hand thrust out of the toga and on his chin, standing on a spear laid under his feet].

devotio rite as they are given by Livy as well as the function of the ritual within the narrative of Book 8 of *Ab urbe condita*. The numerous links between the two texts suggest that *devotio*, although a ritual rarely practiced in real life, was a conceptual framework available to Vergil for fruitful use. At the same time, this discussion will shed further light on the interconnections among ritual, closure, and genre.

2. Livy's *Devotio* and the *Aeneid*

The fullest account of the ritual practice of *devotio*, which prescribed that a Roman leader's voluntary sacrifice in battle would ensure victory for the Roman side, is preserved in Livy's narrative of the *devotio* of P. Decius Mus during the Great Latin War of 340 BCE. Livy provides a dramatic account of the *aition* for the ritual:[33]

Ibi in quiete utrique consuli eadem dicitur uisa species uiri maioris quam prohumano habitu augustiorisque, dicentis ex una acie imperatorem, ex altera exercitum *Deis Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi*; utrius exercitus imperator legiones hostium superque eas se *deuouisset*, eius populi partisque uictoriam fore. (8.6.9–10)

There in the quiet they say that by both consuls an image was seen, of a man of greater size than human and more majestic, saying that the imperator of the one side, and the army of the other is *bound to the Manes and to the Mother Earth*; and that, in whichever army the imperator would *devote* the enemy's legions and himself with them, victory would belong to that people and that side.

The extent to which Livy's description reflects actual Roman ritual is uncertain (Burkert 1979: 63–64; *Skutsch* 355; Feldherr 1998: 85–92). The contours of the ritual, however, can be mapped out: *devotio* is a rite of substitution, compensation, expiation, and self-consecration. In all rites of substitution, a man or beast, as the repository of the collective guilt, ensures the community's salvation from peril. In the particular context of *devotio*, this sacrifice is also viewed as an indemnity, a necessary debt that needs to be paid to the gods (Versnel 1981: 169). In addition, the

[33] See, for instance, Conington 1884, 3: 359; Highet 1972: 63; and Hardie 1993: 28.

devotus is envisaged as taking upon himself the religious impurities of his people, his death thus constituting an act of expiation and cleansing.[34] Decius' self-sacrifice is an act of self-consecration as well: the rite bestows sacrosanct status on the *devotus*, placing him in a liminal stage between the living and the dead, human and deity, and separating him from the community.[35]

In Livy's narrative of Decius' *devotio*, the superhuman powers of the *imperator* become remarkably visible and transform him into something greater than human. These powers thus testify to his special contact with the divine and at once separate him from the community and bestow upon him the power to confer victory.[36] At the same time, however, Decius' voluntary sacrifice also promotes collective unity: the rite, grounded in religious law, elevates him to the realm of exemplary heroism and transforms him into a symbol that, by inspiring unity among the ranks of an army on the verge of defeat, brings about an overwhelming victory. Turned into an *exemplum* of legendary patriotism, Decius thus serves as an embodiment of the extraordinary power of the Roman state and articulates for Livy's audience a model of Roman national identity (Feldherr 1998: 91–93).

The inclusion of the ritual subtext of *devotio* in the portrait of Turnus, however, invites inquiry into the reasons behind its mobilization. Since the latter half of the *Aeneid* in effect revolves around the problem of civic turmoil, the patriotic resonance of *devotio* within this context is obvious. Certainly, the problem of intracommunal violence is paramount in Livy's

[34] Burkert 1979: 64–67; Versnel 1981; Oakley 1997: 482. Feldherr (1998: 88–89) argues that the touching of the chin during the ritual symbolizes the *devotus*' taking upon himself the impurities of his people and spreading them to the enemy.

[35] Versnel (1981: 148–52) discusses the sacrosanct status of the *devotus* and identifies the practice as a rite of separation.

[36] Versnel 1981: 150–51; Feldherr 1998: 90. See also Livy's description of the appearance of the charging *deuotus* at 8.9.10: *conspectus ab utraque acie, aliquanto augustior humano uisu, sicut caelo missus piaculum omnis deorum irae qui pestem ab suis auersam in hostes ferret* [he was seen by each army, a sight somewhat more majestic than human, as if he was an atonement sent from heaven for all the anger of the gods who would carry destruction away from themselves and bring it on to the enemy]. On the role of spectacle in this instance, see Feldherr 1998: 91.

narrative of the Great Latin war as well.[37] Livy's representation of the conflict of 340 BCE between the Latins and the Romans as fratricidal[38] is conspicuously anachronistic and rather reflects events leading to the Social War of 90 BCE (Oakley 1997: 408–409). The rhetoric of the Latin side in the diplomatic exchanges before the outbreak of the war places particular emphasis on the kinship between the two peoples and claims a share in Roman government: *unum populum, unam rem publicam* (8.5.5). The reality of the times, however, was that the Latins, far from taking Roman rule for granted, as Livy's text implies, fiercely resisted Roman expansion.[39]

The common ground between the war of 340 BCE and that described in the second half of the *Aeneid* may appear as justification enough for the mobilization of the ritual subtext of *devotio*. Turnus' adoption, however, of the vocabulary of a ritual most familiar from the self-sacrifice of the Decii presents the readers of the *Aeneid* with a jarring incongruity. Turnus, an enemy of Rome and the personification of *furor* in the poem, is symbolically linked to a legendary hero of the early Republic (Thomas 1998: 284–85). As we have seen, critics usually explain this incongruity by ascribing it to narrative focalization or do not see a link between the

[37] The exact relationship between the texts of Vergil and Livy, however, still remains the object of speculation on the part of scholars.

[38] Livy 8.6.15: *Curam acuebat quod aduersus Latinos bellandum erat, lingua, moribus, armorum genere, institutis ante omnia militaribus congruentes: milites militibus, centurionibus centuriones, tribuni tribunis compares collegaeque iisdem <in> praesidiis, saepe iisdem manipulis permixti fuerant. Per haec ne quo errore milites caperentur, edicunt consules ne quis extra ordinem in hostem pugnaret* [It was sharpening their anxiety that they had to fight against the Latins, who shared the same language, customs, type of weapons, and, above all, military institutions; soldiers with soldiers, centurions with centurions, tribunes with tribunes had mixed together as equals and colleagues in the same guards, and often in the same maniples. For these reasons and so that soldiers might not be captured by some mistake, the consuls order that no one fight against the enemy out of rank]; and Livy 8.8.2: *fuit autem ciuili maxime bello pugna similis; adeo nihil apud Latinos dissonum ab Romana re praeter animos erat* [the battle besides was most like a civil war; indeed among the Latins there was nothing different from the Romans except their courage].

[39] See Oakley 1997: 409. Feldherr (1998: 82) also notes the similarity of the compromise offered by the Latins at this juncture and at the end of the *Aeneid*.

duel and Turnus' words, which they dismiss as rhetoric (Pascal 1990). To be sure, a duel and a *devotio* do not appear as related processes because of their different outcomes: the *devotus* is expected to die in battle, while the fighter of a duel is expected to win (Feldherr 1998: 91). Upon closer examination, however, single combat emerges as a practice with roots to ritual: oaths are customarily administered before the actual fighting takes place.[40] At the same time, scholars have posited that the ritual of the dedication of the *spolia opima* could be evidence for a period in early Roman history where a duel decided the outcome of wars (Oakley 1985: 398).

Interestingly, scholars do not usually see a connection between Livy's narrative of the Decian *devotio* and the duel of the younger Torquatus, which is also found in Book 8 of *Ab urbe condita*. Yet in Livy the relation between the stories of Decius and of the younger Torquatus is both thematic and structural. Not only does the young Roman share Decius' willingness to die for his country; his story is also embedded within the larger *devotio* narrative and is central to the overall theme of Book 8: the successful and humane settlement between Romans and Latins through an exploration of the problems inherent in exercising the great powers of *imperium* (Oakley 1997: 113). In an insightful analysis of Livy's passage, Feldherr (1998: 93) observes the similarity of the two practices. He further notes that the difference between the *devotio* and the duel is that in the former the *devotus* plays a double role, at once acting as a scapegoat for the victorious Romans and effecting the enemy's destruction. In the case of the duel, however, victory belongs entirely to the Roman side, while death befalls entirely on the enemy. Moreover, both the *devotio* and single combat constitute practices in which the individual represents the state;[41] and much like *devotio*, single combat can also be seen as a kind of judicial procedure (Fries 1985: 17–18; Feldherr 1998: 98).

[40] See *Aen.* 12.197–211; Feldherr 1998: 98.

[41] Oakley 1985: 405. It should be noted that Oakley here refers to the origins of the practice of single combat: "The practice of one man fighting on behalf of the state (the relics of which are to be found in the institution of the *spolia opima*) was abandoned early and instead the theme of the individual bearing the burden of the whole state is found in other institutions." Although the historical details are not important for my purposes here, it is clear that the connections between the representation of *devotio* and the duel between Turnus and Aeneas are very much relevant in this portion of the epic narrative.

In the case of the *Aeneid*, Vergil manipulates the connections between *devotio* and the duel in order to underscore the themes of successful symbiosis, unity, and peace. The *devotio* proper prescribes the death of the *imperator* and the destruction of the enemy's army.[42] Vergil, however, utilizes the ritual framework afforded by the rite of *devotio* to emphasize the ultimate fusion of the two warring sides into one community. The intracommunal nature of the conflict and the prospective unity between Romans and Latins envisaged at the end of the epic render the killing of Turnus at once necessary and problematic. Through the killing of Turnus, Aeneas appears as vanquishing the forces of madness and emerges as the leader of a new order; yet since the conflict is cast as civil war, killing the enemy is no simple matter. The portrayal of the duel as part of a ritual subtext of *devotio* allows Turnus to be a *devotus* whose death ensures "victory" for both sides: his willing self-sacrifice justifies Aeneas' action and accepts Trojan claims to Latium; his association with a legendary Roman general transforms him into a symbol of the future collective unity and shared "national" identity. The ratification of the treaty offers a ritual context within which Turnus' *devotio* can be realized, secures divine sanction, guarantees that further bloodshed will be averted, and legitimates the outcome. These points of contact between the *devotio* and the treaty, as well as the narrative emphasis on the participants and their reactions during the ritual ceremony and after its disruption, testify to the fact that Turnus' declaration of self-sacrifice is firmly situated within the context of a commonly understood and accepted ritual experience.[43]

The voluntary death of Turnus, painstakingly prepared in the course of the deployment of the ritual subplot of Book 12, may not compensate

[42] In a way, this is what happens in the *Aeneid* as well: Turnus' victory will result in the "defeat" of the Trojans, who are envisaged as losing their name and becoming Latins in 12.826–28. See especially Juno's request, *occidit, occideritque sinas cum nomine Troia* [Troy is fallen, let her be fallen along with her name] (12.828).

[43] The references to the audience also point to spectacle in general and gladiatorial games in particular. On *devotio* and gladiators, see Barton 1992: 40–46. Barton argues that the concept of *devotio* in the late Republic and early Augustan period applies both to heroic generals and criminals. I believe that Turnus' *devotio* belongs to the former category. Barton's argument helps explain the peculiar *devotio* in Ovid's *Ibis* (465–66). Watson (1991: 200–213), in her analysis of *defixiones*, discusses the Ovidian passage and refutes the possibility of its representing a *devotio*. Admittedly, *devotio* ritual is a type of *defixio* (on this, see Versnel 1976).

for the atrocities of warfare or for the loss of the Trojan and Italian youth, the most brilliant and precious component of Aeneas' new order. Turnus' death, however, constitutes the only plausible conclusion for the narrative plot, while the ritual subtext of *devotio* attests to the deeper significance of this death as a voluntary and restorative act that ensures victory for the Roman side. At the same time, the casting of Turnus as a Decius, the hero synonymous with *devotio* and a symbol of the heroic Roman past, both promotes the kinship between Trojans and Latins, already articulated in the scene of the divine reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno earlier in Book 12, and transforms Turnus from a personification of *furor* into a symbol of collective unity and peace. This does not mean that the anxiety over the preservation of peace and of the stability of the ritual order is eliminated. Rather, this symbolic sacrifice, as is the case with every ritual act, affirms the importance of preserving the ritual order so that similar crises may be averted.

Vergil's careful representation of Turnus in terms that evoke the *devotio* not only asserts his status as a hero but also sets the backdrop against which ritual closure may be achieved. As this ritual subplot unfolds, the deployment of the motif of ritual perversion intensifies and reinforces the expectation for ritual restoration. Yet the poem fails to satisfy this expectation, because Turnus' *devotio* is soon corrupted and never fully restored. To understand the significance of this flaunting of expectations, we must now consider how Vergil's adaptation of the use of ritual in Greek tragedy affects the problem of closure in the poem.

3. Ritual, Tragedy, Closure

The much-contested ending of Vergil's *Aeneid* presents modern students of closure with a fascinating problem. In particular, Philip Hardie has recently demonstrated how closural devices operative within the various segments of the epic promote openness, which in turn is linked to the Augustan ideological discourse that proclaims the endlessness of Roman power.[44] Exploring the problem of closure in the *Aeneid* also raises questions of generic constraints (Quint 1993: 50–96). The poem's generic and

[44] Hardie (1997a) discusses the series of closural devices employed in the course of the narrative as well as at the poem's ending. On closure from a psychoanalytic perspective, see Mitchell-Boyask 1996.

intertextual kinship with the Homeric epics invites an assessment of the poem's close in light of those of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Homeric epics are marked by openness, whether this is due to their oral and performative pedigree or to the vicissitudes of textual transmission (Fowler 1997: 11; Hardie 1997a: 139). In order to circumvent the uncertainty surrounding the concluding sections of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, critics have turned to the study of other, more formalistic mechanisms of closure: within this framework, the representation of a concluding ritual ceremony at the end of the poem's narrative appears an effective closural device, achieving a resolution of the problems, tensions, and ambiguities that take place in the course of the epic narrative (Redfield 1975: 160–223). More specifically, in the *Iliad*, the crisis created by Achilles' refusal to participate in the fighting is finally resolved through the ritual ceremony of Hector's burial, a ceremony that effects a reconciliation, albeit a temporary one, between the two enemies, Achilles and Priam (Seaford 1994: 31). Similarly, in the *Odyssey*, as Richard Seaford (1994: 41) has recently argued, the crisis that Odysseus' absence generates for his household is resolved in the domestic sphere with the wedding-like reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, while further violence between Odysseus and his neighbors is eventually averted through a divinely imposed reconciliation. Ritual corruption, though threatened in the course of the epic, is never realized (Redfield 1975: 167–69; Seaford 1989).

Closer to home, Philip Hardie (1997a) has insightfully demonstrated Vergil's self-conscious awareness of the closural problems inherent in his Homeric predecessors and calls attention to Vergil's inversion of the Iliadic ending: the poem concludes with the violent act of the killing of Turnus, while a ritual celebration (in the form of a triumph) is cast as a pledge for the remote future. Hardie goes on to note the absence of formal ritual ceremony at the end of the *Aeneid* but chooses to concentrate on thematic and structural aspects of closure. In his earlier *Epic Successors* (1993: 28), however, he had offered a reading of the poem's ritual vocabulary. Pointing out that sacrifice begins and ends the *Aeneid*, he argues that "the successful sacrifice of Turnus brings to an end the series of misfortunes inaugurated by the failure to sacrifice Sinon."

Nevertheless, as we have seen, a closer look at the ritual representations and the use of vocabulary properly belonging to the ritual intertext in the

course of the last book of the epic, far from championing Turnus' death as a "successful" sacrifice, reveals striking instances of ritual perversion: the breaking of the treaty between the enemies is an instance of controlled ritual gone awry; the killings in battle that ensue are now cast as human sacrifices; and in the final scene, the self-designated *devotus* appears no longer willing to submit to a process demanding his life. The incongruity between actual ritual practice and the ritual representations of the narrative is sharpened by the further incongruity between the resolution achieved on the level of plot and the lack thereof on the level of ritual.

In following this tragic pattern of corruption-restoration, the ritual discourse of *devotio* in Book 12 of the *Aeneid* foreshadows a similar mediation of opposites and affirms ritual purity over ritual perversion. The final scene of the poem, however, by defying readerly expectations that the tragic motif of corrupted sacrifice has aroused, robs the reader of the closural relief that ritual restoration provides. In the face of certain death, Turnus asks Aeneas to display the kind of *clementia* expected of a Roman conqueror[45] and grant the poem's final supplication in the manner of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The victim's volition, a constitutive element of *devotio*,[46] as well as of every sacrificial act, is paramount for the successful execution of the ritual and for the restoration of the disrupted ritual order. It does not follow, however, that the subtext of *devotio* is somehow abandoned or no longer operative: *devotio* and ritual perversion are inextricably linked and therefore require restoration and purity in the guise of a successful sacrifice.

Yet the promised successful sacrifice in the form of a *devotio* casts Aeneas as simply the recipient of Turnus' selfless act and effectively deprives him of any active role in the process of restoration and closure. As a result, a new ritual subtext, that of supplication, emerges and places Aeneas at the center of this process.

[45] Compare Anchises' words in 6.851–53, on which see Putnam 1965: 151–201. Of the vast bibliography on this scene, Hardie (1993: 32–35) offers an excellent discussion on the multiplicity of substitutions at work that eventually results in a confusion of the identity of Aeneas himself. See also Thomas 1998.

[46] Compare Livy 8.6.12: *mors voluntaria* [voluntary death], Ennius *Annales* (191–93 *Skutsch*) and especially the use of the word *prudens* (*Skutsch* 356). See also Versnel 1981: 146 and Oakley 1997: 483.

Certainly, Turnus' depiction as a suppliant looks back to the *Iliad* and the exchange between Hector and Achilles (22.306–74); yet there the narrative focuses equally on the two warriors and ends with the death of the one and the certainty of the death of the other. Hector's final words, a curse on his slayer,[47] balance Achilles' rejection of his supplication and affirm that the enmity of the two men will persist even after death. The savagery displayed by Achilles at the moment of Hector's supplication and his disregard for agreements and oaths,[48] however, will eventually be mitigated by his acceptance of Priam's supplication to bury Hector's body at the poem's end. Yet there is a further contrast between the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* in this final scene. Achilles' rejection is exceptionally cruel because Hector's stance is that of utter submission; nevertheless, the supplication itself is devoid of any of the formal ritual gestures.[49] As a result, in the *Iliad*, the ritual order, though threatened, is never formally corrupted. The pattern of ritual corruption and subsequent restoration appears as a potential problem in Homer but is actualized only in tragedy.

The *Aeneid,* by contrast, presents us with a corrupted *devotio* followed by a corrupted supplication. Unlike Hector, Turnus displays the formal characteristics of supplication: Trojans and Latins (as well as the readers) see him on his knees with his right hand reaching out to Aeneas (*duplicato poplite* [on bent knee], 927; *ille humilis supplex oculos dextramque precantem protendens* [that one, brought low, a suppliant, gazing at him and stretching his right hand], 930).[50] Aeneas rejects the supplication by employing the vocabulary of human sacrifice (*immolat*, 949). As such, his slaying of Turnus is a perversion of the ritual of supplication, which prescribes the granting of the request and prohibits the sacrifice of humans.

At the same time, Turnus' unwillingness to die is also a perversion of the ritual of *devotio.* Turnus' sacrifice bears a striking resemblance

[47] On the significance of the absence of this curse in the *Aeneid*, see Johnson 1976: 115–16.

[48] See, for instance, Schein 1984: 152–53 and Thornton 1984: 139.

[49] Thornton 1984: 138; Gould (1973: 75–77) describes these gestures in full.

[50] The narrative poignantly marks the presence of spectators in this final scene of the poem. The emphasis on the spectators of the duel forms a parallel to the spectators of the treaty earlier in the book.

to the earlier instance of sacrificial perversion that took place after the disruption of the treaty. As we have already seen, in that passage we witness a confusion of the boundaries between ritual slaughter and slaughter on the battlefield:

> ...at feruidus[51] *aduolat hasta*
> Messapus teloque orantem multa trabali
> desuper altus equo grauiter ferit atque ita fatur:
> 'hoc habet, haec melior magnis data uictima diuis.' (12.293–96)
>
> ...but Messapus blazing, *flies* with his *spear*
> high on his horse, and strikes hard down upon him with his beamlike
> weapon even as the man begged for mercy and speaks thus:
> "He's had it, this is a better victim given to the great gods."
>
> ...*uolat* atri turbinis instar
> exitium dirum *hasta* ferens orasque recludit
> loricae et clipei extremos septemplicis orbis; (12.923–25)
>
> The *spear flies* like a black whirlwind
> bringing dire death and lays loose the corselet's rim
> and the outermost circles of the sevenfold shield.

Much like Aulestes, who had stumbled on the altar and begged for mercy, Turnus too is making a formal request as a suppliant while simultaneously declaring his unwillingness to undergo the process of self-sacrifice. The last line of the poem, Turnus' life fleeing indignant with a moan to the shades below, looks back to *devotio* by calling attention to the unwillingness of the victim; the reference to the shades below (*sub umbras*, 952) evokes, however indirectly, the victim's dedication to the gods of the Underworld, one of the characteristics of *devotio* proper. All expectations for ritual restoration, repeatedly aroused and reinforced, are thus permanently defied, and formal closure is thwarted with the persistence of ritual perversion.

[51] Aeneas is also described as *feruidus* as he gives the final blow to Turnus: *hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit / feruidus* [saying this, blazing, he buries his sword into the breast facing him] (12.950–51).

Turnus' final plea to Aeneas not only corrupts the proper form of *devotio*, which the ritual plot of the final book had been at pains to establish, but also disrupts his portrayal as a heroic and unifying force in the poem. We have seen that Turnus' depiction as a *devotus* renders him a symbol of the unity between Latins and Trojans. The concept of unity and incorporation is paramount in supplication as well.[52] The stress on the power imbalance between supplicated and suppliant emphasizes the status of the latter as an "outsider" who seeks his incorporation within the community (Gould 1973: 101). Yet an important distinction needs to be made. In the case of the *Aeneid*, the ritual intertext of *devotio* has promised that unity between the warring sides would be accomplished through the willing self-sacrifice of Turnus. When Turnus refuses to fulfill his role as a scapegoat and becomes a suppliant, he requests his own incorporation within Aeneas' new order.

Nevertheless, unity, reconciliation, and peace need to be achieved side by side with the restoration of ritual purity. *Devotio* and supplication intersect in the final scene of the poem. Turnus, be it as a *devotus* or as a *supplex*, acts as a symbol of the collective unity that Jupiter and Juno proclaimed earlier in the poem. However we may choose to interpret Turnus' request for his own incorporation within this new order, it is certain that while ritual perversion persists, unity between the warring sides cannot be realized. Unlike what happens in Greek tragedy, ritual corruption in the *Aeneid* appears stripped of the possibility of restoration, and ritual closure is thereby denied.

Within this context, the absence of ritual purity at the end of the poem poignantly underscores the inefficacy of the final sacrifice of Turnus while at the same time promoting uncertainty regarding the ability of Aeneas' new order to establish lasting peace. I have shown the mechanisms through which the vocabulary of the Roman ritual of *devotio* is deployed in the last portions of the *Aeneid*. This vocabulary indicates the existence of a ritual intertext of *devotio* in the poem that would be intuitively recognized and understood by the readership of the *Aeneid*. The ritual plot is subsequently manipulated to raise and sustain expectations

[52] Gould 1973: 95. To be sure, Gould's analysis focuses on Greek *hiketeia*. One should stress, however, that Vergil's Roman audience would have been able to relate the implications of this Greek ritual practice to their own experience.

for ritual closure. The inclusion of the tragic pattern of ritual corruption intensifies and reinforces readerly expectations for ritual correctness. The poem ends, however, with an act of sacrificial perversion, as Turnus is transformed from willing victim to slain suppliant. The conclusion of the ritual plot thus undermines the closural effect of the narrative plot, sharpening anxiety, resisting completion, and permanently defying expectations for closure.

GREEK TRAGEDY IN VERGIL'S "AENEID"

Ritual, Empire, and Intertext

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