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## Entellus and Amycus: Vergil, *Aen.* 5. 362–484

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Commentators have previously noted that Vergil's description of the boxing match between Dares and Entellus (*Aen.* 5. 362–484) frequently echoes the details and language of Apollonius Rhodius' account of Polydeuces' fight with Amycus (*Argonautica* 2. 30–97);<sup>1</sup> already in late antiquity, Servius *ad Aen.* 5. 426 emphasized (not without exaggeration) the extent of Vergil's borrowing from the *Argonautica* in this episode: *est autem hic totus locus de Apollonio translatus*. It has not been noted, however, how remarkably Vergil actualizes Apollonius' description of Amycus as βουτύπος οἶα (2. 91) when he has Entellus slay the bull he had won, nor has anyone considered the implications of Vergil's allusions to his Alexandrian model. Vergil describes the boxing match in rich ethical tones, and in the present argument I aim to demonstrate that he did not use Apollonius in merely a decorative or conventional manner, but for clearly chosen thematic purposes. While one level of the story, supported by references to the Homeric boxing matches in *Il.* 23. 651 ff. and *Od.* 18. 1 ff., consistently makes Entellus a figure of noble restraint, the allusions to Apollonius create an antithetical pattern, linking him with the ogre Amycus. This deliberate paradox stresses a theme which surfaces repeatedly in the *Aeneid*—that the corrupting forces of anger and violence take hold easily and in unexpected places, and that responsible people must constantly labor to subdue them.

<sup>1</sup> R. D. Williams, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quintus* (Oxford 1960), provides the most thorough collection of parallels to Apollonius (and Homer as well); most of the parallels discussed in this paper are noted by Williams.

The beginning of the episode tends to raise the expectation that we will have a simple story of an arrogant Dares confronting the noble older competitor, Entellus, and most commentators, in fact, have interpreted the whole of the narrative from this perspective.<sup>2</sup> Dares rushes into the contest without hesitation and demands that Aeneas give him the prize and not keep him waiting, *quae finis standi? quo me decet usque teneri?* (5. 384).<sup>3</sup> Entellus does not rush to the fight, and his initial reluctance is in contrast with his opponent's rude boldness, *improbis iste / exsultat* (5. 397–98). Vergil carefully selects and adapts elements from the match of Epeios and Euryalos in *Il.* 23. 651–99 and that of Odysseus and Iros, *Od.* 18. 1–107, to reinforce the motif of the triumph of reason over rashness. Homer's Epeios had jumped to the contest, grasping the first prize (23. 664–67), threatening to crush any man who dared oppose him, and turned his boast into reality, knocking his opponent senseless. Dares resembles Epeios insofar as he comes boldly to the match and grasps the horn of the bull offered as the prize (5. 368, 382),<sup>4</sup> but the outcome of Vergil's fight is exactly the opposite of that which Homer's contest leads us to expect. Whereas Epeios' opponent leaves the ring badly injured (23. 696–99), in *Aen.* 5. 468–70, it is not Dares' opponent who exits so ingloriously, but bold Dares himself: *genua aegra trahentem / iactantemque utroque caput crassumque cruorem / ore eiectantem mixtosque in sanguine dentes*. Even in the world of sport, Vergil rejects willful belligerence, and reverses his Iliadic model to articulate this theme. It is appropriate that Entellus gain some of the resonances of Odysseus, for that Homeric hero is also an older man, and is similarly reluctant to fight at first, but once involved proves a formidable pugilist: Vergil's allusion invokes a figure whose initial patience and self-control reflect

<sup>2</sup> There has been general agreement in Vergilian scholarship that Entellus' victory represents the triumph of a noble character. R. Heinze, *Vergils epische Technik*<sup>3</sup> (Leipzig 1914), pp. 154–55, sees Entellus as a character "psychologisch vertieft," sensitive to Eryx' memory and his own former reputation, who fights against a defiant ("trotzig") opponent. Cf. also B. Otis, *Vergil, A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963), pp. 98, 274; W. S. Anderson, *The Art of the Aeneid* (Englewood Cliffs 1969), p. 53; R. A. Hornsby, *Patterns of Action in the Aeneid* (Iowa City 1970), pp. 114–15.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, *op. cit.* (above note 1), p. 118, saw in the phrase *effert ora* (5. 368–69) a gesture of "arrogant defiance"; J. Conington, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*<sup>4</sup> (London 1884), pp. 365–66, however, claimed that Vergil merely meant *effert caput*, and a similar interpretation appears in W. M. Lindsay, *Classical Quarterly* 25 (1931), 144–45, which discusses Donatus' commentary on Ter. *Hec.* 33, *pugilum gloria*.

<sup>4</sup> One should also note that in *Il.* 23. 681–82 Diomedes must pressure Euryalos to challenge Dares; similarly Acestes has to persuade Entellus to fight (5. 387). The reluctant Euryalos loses, the reluctant Entellus wins. See the discussion of F. Klingner, *Vergil* (Zurich 1967), p. 474.

upon Entellus in a complementary way. So like Odysseus before his fight with the bullying Iros (*Od.* 18. 1–107), Entellus strips for the contest and reveals his strong limbs: φαίνε δὲ μηρούς / καλοὺς τε μεγάλους τε, φάνεν δὲ οἱ εὐρέες ὤμοι / στήθεά τε στιβαροὶ τε βραχίονες (18. 67–69), *magnum membrorum artus, magna ossa lacertosque / exiit* (5. 422–23).<sup>5</sup> The selection of boxing gloves, moreover, shows Entellus giving up the personal advantage of using his deadly *caestus*, and in so doing renouncing the wanton destruction these gloves cause. Dares is dumbfounded (5. 406) and frightened (5. 420) when he sees the *caestus* of Eryx, which Entellus throws into the contest area, and shrinks away from these murderously weighted weapons, *terga boum plumbo insuto ferroque rigebant* (5. 405); Entellus, however, readily offers to use equal and less threatening thongs.<sup>6</sup> Vergil anachronistically makes the *caestus* which Roman pugilists commonly wore in his own day part of an older era, that of Herakles and Eryx, in order to allow the characters, led by Entellus, to demonstrate their enlightenment in abandoning the savage customs they have inherited.<sup>7</sup>

Many other details in the passage, however, suggest that both the characterizations and the ethical issues are more complex. In the extensive allusions to Apollonius' boxing match Vergil refuses to equate Entellus with the valiant demigod Polydeuces and Dares with the hideous aggressor Amycus: instead he subtly but thoroughly clothes Entellus with the trappings of Amycus, and Dares with those of Polydeuces. We learn that Dares once defeated and killed a boxer from Amycus' people, as Polydeuces had done to king Amycus himself (5. 371–74). Coming to their boxing contest, Dares, like Polydeuces, exercises his arms (though not without a great amount of

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Klingner, *op. cit.* (above note 4), p. 475. Th. Ladewig, C. Schaper, P. Deuticke, *Vergils Gedichte*<sup>13</sup>, II (Berlin 1912), p. 214, also note that *virtus animusque in pectore praesens* echoes *Od.* 18. 61, κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀγῆνωρ.

<sup>6</sup> On Greek boxing gloves and the Roman *caestus* cf. J. Jüthner, *Über antike Turngeräte*, Abhandlungen des archäologisch-epigraphischen Seminars der Universität Wien 12 (Vienna 1896), pp. 65–95; E. N. Gardiner, *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (London 1910), pp. 402–11. One realizes at once by looking at the boxers depicted on the mosaics from the Baths of Caracalla (now in the Vatican Museum)—to name one of several archaeological monuments which show the Roman *caestus*—that Vergil is not exaggerating when he speaks of lead and iron in the gloves.

<sup>7</sup> E. N. Gardiner, *op. cit.* (above, note 6), pp. 431–32, attributes this anachronism to Vergil's "Roman ideas," namely, that "murder and bloodshed are the very essence of a fight. Therefore, as the heroes of the past excelled the men of today in physical strength, they must have excelled them in the bloodiness of their fights and the murderous brutality of their weapons." This seems to be a serious misvaluation of Vergil. For a discussion of the possible thematic purposes of anachronisms in the *Aeneid*, cf. F. H. Sandbach, *Proceedings of the Virgil Society* 77 (1965–66), 26–38.

show), a precaution that neither Entellus nor Amycus takes: πῆλε δὲ χεῖρας / πειράζων . . . / οὐ μὰν αὐτ' Ἄμυκος πειρήσατο (2. 45–48), *ostenditque umeros latos alternaque iactat / brachia protendens et verberat ictibus auras* (5. 376–77). Dares further resembles Polydeuces in testing his opponent's tactics: ἀπηνέα δ' αἴψα νοήσας / πυγμαχίην, ἣ κάρτος ἀάατος ἧ τε χερσίων (2. 76–77), *nunc hos, nunc illos aditus, omnemque pererrat / arte locum et variis adsultibus inritus urget* (5. 441–42), while Amycus and Entellus stand motionless (*Arg.* 2. 78 and *Aen.* 5. 437 ff.). Turning now to Entellus, one notes that, like Amycus, he wears a double cloak: ἐρεμνὴν δίπτυχα λώπην (2. 32), *duplicem . . . amictum* (5. 421). Both figures attempt a knockout blow from above and fail (*Arg.* 2. 90–92; *Aen.* 5. 443–45):

ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτ' Ἄμυκος μὲν ἐπ' ἀκροτάτοιον ἀερόθεις  
βουτύπος οἷα πόδεσσι τανύσσατο, κὰδ δὲ βαρεῖαν  
χεῖρ' ἐπὶ οἱ πελέμιξεν. ὁ δ' ἀίσσοντος ὑπέστη . . .

*ostendit dextram insurgens Entellus et alte  
extulit, ille ictum venientem a vertice velox  
praevidit celerique elapsus corpore cessit; . . .*

Finally, Entellus pursues Dares round the area of competition as the ogre chased Polydeuces: ὧς ὄγε Τυνδαορίδην φοβέων ἔπειτ' οὐδέ μιν εἶα / δηθύνειν . . . (2. 74–75), *praecipitemque Daren ardens agit . . . / nec mora nec requies* (5. 456 ff.). By the end of the fight, Entellus is caught up in the emotions of the match and becomes totally enraged and savage, *saevire animis . . . acerbis* (5. 462), and he leaves the bout an arrogant *victor superans . . . superbus* (5. 473).

A catalogue of places where Vergil's allusion to a literary model substantially affects the reader's appreciation or even understanding of the passage would be very long.<sup>8</sup> Many of the correspondences between Entellus and Amycus are subtle features of behavior and

<sup>8</sup> Some few examples and references must suffice here. *Geo.* 1. 429–33 has an acrostic *Ma-Ve-Pu*, spelling the beginnings of Vergil's names, a learned footnote to Aratus and Callimachus, *Ep.* 27 Pf. (cf. David O. Ross, Jr., *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* [Cambridge 1975], pp. 28–29, with further bibliography). R. S. Scodel and R. F. Thomas, *American Journal of Philology* 105 (1984), 339, discuss a more subtle but thematically important usage: *Geo.* 1. 509, *Geo.* 4. 561, and *Aen.* 8. 726 refer to Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 108, and as in their Callimachean model, their mention of the Euphrates River comes exactly six lines from the close of their respective books, showing a progression from a threatening to a tamed Euphrates River. R.O.A.M. Lyne, "Lavinia's Blush," *Greece & Rome* 30 (1983), 55–64, discusses the significance of the reference to Menelaus' wound (*Il.* 4. 141 ff.) in *Aen.* 12. 64–70. For further examples and discussion, cf. G. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer*, Hypomnemata 7 (Göttingen 1964), esp. pp. 162–63, 339 with n. 1, 5; J. K. Newman, *Augustus and the New Poetry*, Coll. Latomus 88 (Brussels 1967), pp. 242–45; 258–59; G. Williams, *Technique and Ideas in the Aeneid* (New Haven and London 1983), pp. 82–87, 93.

dress, but the pattern is consistent and obviously deliberate, a clear sign that Vergil has a point to make: his paradoxical use of figures from the *Argonautica* highlights the corrupting effects that violence works upon Entellus.

The episode concludes with an emphatic rejection of uncontrolled violence.<sup>9</sup> The enraged Entellus has begun to show a strong affinity to the figure of Amycus, but when the fight becomes too heated, Aeneas intercedes and stops it, and, restrained by Aeneas, Entellus reverses this process of assimilation to the ogre. Whereas Amycus tried to strike Polydeuces, rising like an ox-slayer (βουτύπος οἶα, 2. 91), now Entellus with a blow of his fist slays the bull given to him as a prize, offering it as a better victim to honor Eryx than the death of his human opponent (5. 483–84):

hanc tibi, Eryx, meliorem animam pro morte Daretis  
persolvo

Some commentators have seen sarcasm in Entellus' words,<sup>10</sup> though this seems unsuited to the context. Whether or not they are sarcastic, however, the substitution of an animal for a human victim shows the restoration of balanced and judicious behavior where previously the affinity that Entellus had shown for Amycus demonstrated that the descent to savagery is an ever-present danger.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Wellesley and Cologne*

<sup>9</sup> We should also note that earlier in this episode the story of Eryx, Entellus' boxing master, changes from a tale of just punishment to one of pathos. In other mythological accounts, Eryx covets Herakles' cattle or abuses strangers (cf. Serv. *ad Aen.* 1. 570; Apollod. 2. 5. 10): here he is honored and acknowledged as the *germanus* of Aeneas (5. 412, cf. 5. 23–24), and his fatal encounter with Herakles is called *tristem* (5. 411).

<sup>10</sup> James Henry, *Aeneidea* III (Dublin 1881), p. 121, argues that Entellus' words are "the brutal scoff of the conqueror", that "the Romans were not so delicate and refined as to say, or to think, it was better to spare the human being and kill the beast." Conington, *op. cit.* (above, note 3), p. 377, concurs, while Williams, *op. cit.* (above, note 1), pp. 135–36, refuses to decide whether Entellus' words show humanity or brutal sarcasm. In my opinion, the context heavily favors a demonstration of humanity—avoiding promiscuous destruction of human life is a serious issue throughout the episode—and certainly Vergil was sufficiently delicate and refined to hold the sentiments that Henry finds unthinkable in Rome.

<sup>11</sup> Sadly, the civilized values of this episode do not ultimately triumph. Later the offerings will not be vicarious animals, but human beings: in 11. 81 ff. Aeneas arranges human sacrifices for Pallas' funeral. In 12. 296, moreover, when fighting disturbs the truce, Messapus' words recall the boxer's dedication of the bull, but in a grim and exaggerated reversal, for Messapus describes the Roman whom he slays on the altar as *melior magnis data victima divīs*. The restraint of the boxing contest is gone, and instead Messapus observes the fatal wound with the taunt heard in the Roman arena when a gladiator fell, *hoc habet* (cf. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v. *habeo* 16.d, which cites in addition to this passage Ter. *An.* 56, Sen. *Ag.* 901, Pl. *Mos.* 715).

