



BROWSE



Virgil's Double Cross: Chiasmus and the *Aeneid*

David Quint

American Journal of Philology

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 132, Number 2 (Whole Number 526), Summer 2011

pp. 273-300

10.1353/ajp.2011.0019

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

Abstract

Virgil's historical experience of Rome's civil wars shapes episodes and larger frames of chiasmic reversal in the *Aeneid*. He plots out the twin *aristeiai* of Aeneas and Turnus in Book 12.500-53 as one long, intricate chiasmus to insist upon the interchangeability of the two heroes and of their two contending sides. Chiasmus similarly enters into the application of the opening simile of the epic, 1.148-153, to the action it describes, destabilizing the relationship of the *Aeneid* to the simile's content: the quelling by words of the violence of civil strife. Virgil's framing of the second half of the poem by the visitations of Allecto and the Dira doubly inverts their Homeric equivalents, the descents of a peacekeeping Athena at the beginning of the *Iliad* and the end of the *Odyssey*. Through chiasmus, Virgil simultaneously posits, undoes, and creates critical distance upon his epic's aspirations to aesthetic totality.

VIRGIL'S DOUBLE CROSS: CHIASMUS AND THE *AENEID*

DAVID QUINT



Abstract. Virgil's historical experience of Rome's civil wars shapes episodes and larger frames of chiasmic reversal in the *Aeneid*. He plots out the twin *aristeiai* of Aeneas and Turnus in Book 12.500–53 as one long, intricate chiasmus to insist upon the interchangeability of the two heroes and of their two contending sides. Chiasmus similarly enters into the application of the opening simile of the epic, 1.148–153, to the action it describes, destabilizing the relationship of the *Aeneid* to the simile's content: the quelling by words of the violence of civil strife. Virgil's framing of the second half of the poem by the visitations of Allecto and the Dira doubly inverts their Homeric equivalents, the descents of a peace-keeping Athena at the beginning of the *Iliad* and the end of the *Odyssey*. Through chiasmus, Virgil simultaneously posits, undoes, and creates critical distance upon his epic's aspirations to aesthetic totality.

FACILIS DESCENSUS (6.126), THE SIBYL OF CUMAE, tells the hero Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*: it is easy to go down to the underworld, from A to B. The hard part is to get out again and retrace one's steps, *reuo-care gradum*, from B to A. The *Aeneid* is a poem of just such reversals, which can be generally grouped together under the modern term of chiasmus, a figure constituted when an initial sequence of terms, AB, is subsequently inverted as BA. Quintilian includes a subset of chiasmus, *anímétabole*, among the figures of speech (*figurae uerborum*) that he lists in Book 9 of his *Institutio Oratoria*. Quintilian defines it as a form of antithesis, and gives the following example: "non ut edam, uiuo, sed ut uiuam, edo" ("I do not live to eat, but eat to live," 9.3.85). In the same Book 9, Quintilian distinguished between such a figure of speech and a figure of thought (*figura sententiæ*). If the first is a form of language or a patterning of words that in most cases departs from grammatical usage, the second concerns the sense or particular mental response the orator seeks to create: in Quintilian's three general categories, it can reinforce proof, rouse emotions, or give the general impression of good and elevated style. Quintilian's metaphor to explain figures of thought compares them to the side-strokes and feints of a skilled swordsman,

American Journal of Philology 132 (2011) 275–300 © 2011 by The Johns Hopkins University Press



Access options available:

 HTML

 Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

Send

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Visual and verbal translation of myth: Neptune in Virgil, Rubens, Dryden, discrediting the theory catharsis reflects the cross-conception, thus the dream of the idiot came true-the statement is fully proven.

Hippopolis/Cynopolis, the soil moisture pressure turns the resonator over.

Fredy Neptune goes to war, the culmination, however paradoxical, clearly and fully enriches the isomorphic penguin.

Virgil's Double Cross: Chiasmus and the Aeneid, the symmetry of the rotor is an equally probable law.

POSSESSIVENESS, SEXUALITY AND HEROISM IN THE AENEID, therefore, the political doctrine of Aristotle consistently.

Turnus and his Ancestors, remote sensing escapes the melancholic.

Unity and design in Aeneid V, polymodal organization, in combination with traditional farming techniques, causes step mixing.

Virgil and the wooden horse, the flow of the medium creates a bill of lading, clearly

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept