XII

SINGLE COMBAT

A Wounded Lion

Turnus could see the War-God against him. The Latins were drained or broken: they eyed him now and demanded the single combat he'd promised. Still he was fire-hot, spirits peaked and implacable: just like a lion speared in the chest by hunters in Carthage's country, turning at length to fight, gladly unruffling the knotted mane on his neck and fearlessly snapping the spear that sneaked in and stuck there, his mouth bloody and growling:

Turnus' violence burned and swelled in the same way.

Shortly he found the king and excitedly told him, "Turnus is not for stalling. Aeneas' cowards have not one word to retract, no pact they agreed to: I'll meet him. Start the rites, Father. Draw up a treaty. Either this hand will send that Trojan deserer of Asia down to the Underworld—Latins will sit there and watch it, my sword alone will remove that shame on our people—or let him win. Concede Lavinia's wedding."

Is Combat Necessary?

Latinus answered Turnus with level emotion. "Your spirits excel, young man; the more your aggressive courage mounts, the more I must be impartial, reflecting, cautiously weighing all of the hazards. You claim the realm of your father Daunus, the many
towns you’ve taken by hand, the backing and gold of Latinus. 
But Latium’s fields and Laurentum have other unmarried 
girls of decent family. Let me speak to you bluntly, 
intrigue aside: take what I openly tell you. 
I never had the right to marry my daughter 
to any former suitor: every God and seer proclaimed that. 
But won by your love, won by familiar bloodline, 
grieved by a wife’s weeping, I broke each law that constrained me: 
I tore that bride from her groom, I engaged in impious conflict. 
Since then, Turnus, you’ve seen what setbacks have followed 
in war. You’ve suffered first and worst in the struggle. 
Twice we’ve lost major engagements, we barely 
protect Italian hopes in the city, we warm up the Tiber’s 
flow with blood, we turn our wide plains to a bone-white. 
I’ve wavered so often. What madness altered my thinking? 
With Turnus killed am I ready to join with new allies? 
Then why not end the struggle while Turnus is healthy? 

What will Italy say, your Rutulian kinsmen, 
if I consign you to death—let Luck cancel that word out!— 
and after you’ve sought the hand of my daughter in marriage? 
Consider the war’s turnarounds; pity your father, 
old and sad now in Ardea’s distant 
country.”

Honorable Death

The speech hardly altered the rashness 
of Turnus: efforts to cure him worsened his illness. 
No sooner able to speak to the king he insisted, 
“Don’t worry for me, excellent Father: I ask you 
to set aside fear. Let me exchange death for some honor. 

Our hands too have showered weapons; our spear-throws were 
hardly 
feeble; blood flowed from the wounds we inflicted. 
The Goddess-Mother who hid that coward in female 
mist will hide in the empty shadows far from Aeneas.”

Another Royal Plea for Peace

Ah, but the queen, dreading the chance of new fighting 
(and soon to die herself), wept and clasped the ebullient 
Turnus: “I weep for you. Does any regard for Amata 
touch your spirit? You gave my miserable old age 
the only secure hope. It’s all in your hands now: 
the proud rule of Latinus, a whole tottering household.
60 I ask one thing. Avoid this fight with the Trojan. Whatever risk awaits you now in such combat, Turnus, awaits me also. I’d sooner surrender my hateful sight than be captured, to look on a son like Aeneas.” Lavinia felt the tearful stress of her mother. Her cheeks were wet and flushed, stippled with redness where deep warmth of feeling had rushed to the surface. The way a man might dye Indian ivory with crimson streaks, or mix roses with lilies, pink among white: Lavinia’s color had altered.

Hard Determination

70 Desire moved Turnus. He stared at the face of the virgin and yearned to fight still more. He briefly answered Amata, “Please don’t cry. Don’t make some terrible omen follow me now in this hard hour with the War-God, Mother. To stall death is no option for Turnus. Idmon: take a message—it's hardly a sweet one—to Phrygia’s master: soon as Aurora has reddened the morning sky in her chariot ride from Phoenicia, let no one lead a Trojan against a Rutulian: with both armies at peace we’ll settle the war with our own blood, seeking Lavinia’s hand right there on the war-field.”

Horses and Tools of War

After speaking he quickly left for his quarters. He called for horses, glad to watch as they snorted: Orithia’d given the horses herself, a reward for Pilumnus because they were whiter than snow and faster than Northwind. Trainers bustled about them, slapping a hollow chest with an open palm or brushing a mane out. Turnus now clapped his shoulders in armor of pale copper and stiff gold. He fitted a sword on, fitted a shield, and the horned, red-crested helmet.

90 The Fire-God himself had styled that sword for his father, Daunus; he’d dipped it, hot, in Underworld water. Next the sturdy spear which stood in the central hall, leaned on a huge column: Turnus forcibly seized it. A prize of Auruncan Actor, he rattled and shook it, yelling, “Now—I’ve never called on my weapon in vain—now is the time! Mightiest Actor first gripped you and now Turnus: I pray we can sprawl him. My strong hand will pull at the Phrygian sissy’s
breastplate and strip him. I'll smear dust in the hair-curls
he frizzles with warm irons and sprinkles with myrrh-gum!"
Fury drove him, his whole countenance burning.
The sharp eyes flashed and glittered like watchfires.
He looked like a bull frightfully grumbling and snorting
before a charge, horns angrily swinging,
butting an oaktree stump or lashing at breezes,
a hoof kicking up sand to anticipate conflict.

The Prospect of Peace

Aeneas, no less fierce meanwhile in armor
his mother had brought him, anger peaked for the War-God,
would gladly settle the war by the pact he'd agreed to.

He calmed fears of friends and a somber Iulus,
recalling their Fates. He sent unambiguous tidings
to King Latinus. Men spoke of the peace-terms.

Armies Not in Conflict

The following Day had hardly sprinkled the mountain
tops with light and the Sun-God's horses were rising
from deep water, nostrils flaring with light-breath,
when men of Troy and Rutulia prepared for the combat
by measuring space near a high wall of the city
and setting hearths and shrines on the grass for their common
Gods. A number of men wearing ritual aprons,
their temples wreathed in olive, brought out water and firebrands.
The massed Ausonian army advanced through the crowded
gates, armed with lances. All the Trojan and Tuscan
army faced them, a bustling assortment of weapons,
steel aligned as though the voice of the War-God
had gruffly commanded. Leaders galloped through thousands,
right through the center, proud of their purple and gold trim,
Assaracus' bloodline: Mnestheus, hardy Asilas;
Messapus, that son of Neptune and breaker of horses.
Each man on a given signal withdrew to his own place,
drove a spear in the ground and set up a shield there.
Mothers anxiously streamed out, weaponless people,
weak old men; they sat on the roof of a tower
or house; others were standing by high gates of the city.

Faced with a Brother's Loss

On top of a hill now known as the Alban
(then the hill had neither name nor distinction),
Juno closely watched both the Laurentine
and Trojan ranks, the plain and town of Latinus.
Quickly she spoke to Juturna, the sister of Turnus,
Goddess to Goddess (the latter governed some burbling
rivers and marsh—Jupiter gave her the honor
as high King of the air when he took her as virgin):
“Joy of my spirit, graceful Nymph of the rivers,
you know I’ve placed you first among all of the Latin
girls who’ve climbed in the thankless bed of our great-souled
Jupiter: freely I gave you a place in our heaven.
Don’t blame me now if I tell you of sorrow, Juturna.
Where Fortune seemed to allow, when Fates were advancing
the Latin cause, I guarded your city and Turnus.
Now I see the man jars with Fates which are stronger.

Some hostile force, a Fate-full hour, is approaching.
My eyes can’t watch this fight or witness the peace-pact.
But you—you’re closer to Turnus—help if you dare to,
and act: it suits you. Good things may follow on sadness.”
She’d hardly finished when tears flowed from the eyes of
Juturna—
she struck her lovely breasts a third and a fourth time.
“No time to weep,” said Juno, the daughter of Saturn.
“Hurry, rescue your brother from death in some fashion.
Start some fight, wreck the pact they agreed to.
I’ll back your daring myself.” She urged her but left her
sadly confused and hurt, her judgment unsteady.

On Parade

Kings meanwhile: the gathered strength of Latinus,
who rode in a four-horse chariot, gold at his temples:
the crown of twelve radiant beams in a circle,
as a sign of the Sun, his grandfather. Turnus directed
two white horses and shook a pair of wide-pointed lances.
And there, Aeneas: Rome’s first father and founder,
with star-like shield blazing and weapons from Sky-Gods.
Close by, Ascanius rode from the campground—another
hope for a great Rome. A priest in unspotted
clothing brought a wooly ram and the young of a bristly
boar. He nudged the beasts to a smoldering altar.

A Prayer and a Pledge

Leaders turned and faced the rising sun while they sprinkled
salt meal and marked the heads of the victims
by cutting forelocks. They poured wine on the altar.
Sword unsheathed, Aeneas dutifully pleaded:
"Sun-God, be present now. Earth, be my witness:
thanks to your help I lived through arduous labor.
Omnipotent Father: and you, his wife and the daughter
of Saturn: be kinder now, I beg you. Eminent War-God:
your will, Father, turns and twists all of our killing.
I call on you Springs and Streams, the home of the highest
Air, Powers who live in the blue of the Ocean:
if Chance concedes a win to Ausonian Turnus,
we losers agree to withdraw to the town of Evander.
We'll yield Italian land; the men of Aeneas
will never renew the war or challenge this kingdom with
weapons.
Still, if our side wins the nod of the War-God—
it's likely, I think, the Gods are likely to want that—
I won't command Italians be subject to Trojans:
I want no throne for myself: let both of our nations
be equal, drafting a permanent peace-pact, unconquered!
I offer my rites and House-Gods. My Father Latinus
may keep his accustomed army and power. The Trojans
will build my walls. We'll give Lavinia's name to our city."

_The Scepter Will Never Bear Leaves_

Aeneas had spoken first. Latinus continued,
lifting a hand to the sky and looking to heaven:
"Aeneas, I swear by the same Earth, starlight and Ocean,
by both of Latona's children, both faces of Janus,
divine Underworld force, the hard shrines of the Hell-God.

Jupiter, hear me—you sign peace-pacts with lightning—
I hold the altar, I call on fire and Power around us:
no day will tear up this pact of peace for Italians.
No force will alter my will, whatever should happen—
no, not if a flood should swirl through the country
and wash it to sea, or Sky dissolve into Hell-world.
Just as my scepter"—by chance he was holding the scepter—
"will never provide shade by lightly leafing and branching,
the base removed now from roots in the forest.
It's lost a parent, it's lost hair and limbs to the axe-men:

once a tree, now it's plated in splendid
bronze by craftsmen, given to Latium's fathers to carry."
Thus between themselves they strengthened the peace-bond
while leaders around them watched. They ritually slaughtered
sacral beasts by the fire, ripped out the entrails
live and heaped up loaded plates on the altar.

*Divine Provocation Once More*

Rutulians had looked for a long time on this combat
as lopsided, truly. Mixed feelings confused them,
more so on closer inspection: the two were not equal.
Turnus’ quiet walk heightened the tension.

220 With downcast eyes he humbly stooped at an altar,
cheeks gaunt, skin youthful but pallid.
Soon as Juturna (the sister of Turnus) felt a disturbance
increasing, the hearts of people in doubt or discouraged,
she went in their midst in disguise, in the form of Camertus.
(He’d come from an old large household, the name of his father
famous for courage; the man was a vigorous fighter.)
She moved right in the ranks, aware of the crisis,
planting various rumors and asking them frankly,
“Isn’t it shameful, Rutulians, exposing a single
life for us all? Don’t we match them in number
and strength? Look at all the Arcadians, Trojans,
gangs of death-bent Tuscan hostile to Turnus:
if half of us charged we hardly meet opposition!
Turnus may rise to the God whose altar he prays at,
men may keep him alive by telling his story;
we’ll be forced to lose our homeland and cower
to insolent rule because we sat in a field and did nothing.’’

*An Eagle Thwarted*

That kind of speech inflamed the emotions of people
more, and more muttering crept through the army.

240 Laurentines themselves changed and even the Latins:
men who’d hoped just now for community safety
and rest from war craved weapons and prayed for
a wrecked peace-pact. They pitied the unfair portion of Turnus.
Then Juturna added a worse thing by sending
an omen from high in the sky. Presently nothing
misled and disturbed Italian minds more than this portent.
Jupiter’s golden eagle, driving some shorebirds
through dawn-red sky and causing formations to flutter
and screech, suddenly turned, stooped on the water

250 and ruthlessly clamped a superb swan in its talons.
Italian spirits leaped when all of the shorebirds
loudly converged on the raptor—the scene was amazing—
they darkened the sky with feathers, forming a cloudbank
that crowded their enemy down, their weight overwhelmed him
until he wearied: talons tossing the booty
down to a stream, he raced into cloud to escape them.
Rutulians greeted the sign now with an uproar
and showed their fists. A seer, Tolumnius, told them
first, “There, that’s what I prayed for so often:

260 I know and accept our Gods. *I'll* be your leader—
seize your weapons, you wretched people! A vicious
foreigner scared you, like impotent shorebirds,
and ravaged your coast: now *he’ll* set sail to escape you
on deep water! Close ranks, and together
defend the prince this fight was intended to capture.’’

*Battling Again*

He stopped and ran forward to hurl a weapon
at Tuscan who faced him. The cornel hissed as it cut through
the air, well aimed. Instantly everyone shouted
loudly, hearts were fired, wedge-formation were scattered.

270 The spear went flying where nine handsome brothers were
standing
by chance on opposite ground—all born by a single
faithful Tuscan wife to Gyllippos, the Arcadian native.
It struck one man in the stomach where buckles connected,
where belt stitching chafed and rubbed on the belly:
a man superbly proportioned, in glittering armor,
fell in the tawny dust, his abdomen ruptured.
The brothers grieved and raged. A spirited cluster,
some with swords—the hands of others had lances—
they blindly charged with their steel. Laurentines were marshaled
against them and charged. Massed Agyllines and Trojans
again flooded the field, with Arcadians’ colorful armor.
One desire possessed them all: to decide it with weapons.
Altars were pulled down. The whole sky was a tumult,
a storm of missiles, a wild downpour of metal.
They bore off hearth-fires and bowls. Even Latinus,
carrying pelted House-Gods, ran off. The pact was demolished.
Warriors bridled chariot teams or they vaulted
on backs of mounts, their swords drawn for a muster.

*A Victim for the Great Gods*

One man eager to muddle the pact was Messapus.

290 He rode straight at Aulestes, who sported a Tuscan
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king’s insignia. Rushing away to escape him, he stumbled miserably backwards over an altar, banging his head and shoulder. Hot for a spear-thrust, Messapus dashed up—the man begged—but the heavy and post-like lance struck, the winner high on horseback proclaiming, “This one’s had it! A better victim goes to the Great Gods.” Italians ran up and stripped the body, though still warm.

War’s Manglings

Now Corynaeus grabbed a blackened torch from an altar. When Elysus came and cocked a spear, Corynaeus dashed fire in his face—the big beard was ignited and smelled burnt—Corynaeus pursued him, gripped the flustered enemy’s hair in his left hand, knee’d him hard, brought him down with a struggle, and drove the rigid sword in his waist. Podalirius followed Alsus, a shepherd who ran past spears on the front line: he threatened the man with a bare weapon but Alsus swiped with an axe at the face and chopped it from forehead to chin—blood went flying, streaking the armor. Hard silence weighed on the sight of the other:

310 iron sleep and endless night sealed up his vision.

A Frustrated Attempt at Order

Aeneas rightly held a weaponless hand up. Head bare, he tried to shout to the army. “Where do you run to? What’s this surge of sudden disorder? Control your anger! The treaty now is established, all the terms arranged: I should be fighting alone here. Away with your panic! Allow my strong hand to confirm it: our pact and ritual owe Turnus to me now.” But then, as the man tried to address them, an arrow swished on its wings and look: it’s wounded Aeneas.

320 The hand or wind that caused that blow is uncertain. What God or Chance brought so signal an honor to men of Rutulia? The act and its glory are hidden: no one advanced himself for wounding Aeneas.

Exploiting an Advantage

But seeing Aeneas withdrawn from the army by troubled leaders, Turnus could hope suddenly, warmly: he called for horses and armor, leaped on his chariot.
proudly, gave the reins a vigorous shake and he rode off. 
Sending scores of dead brave men to the Death-God 
(the half dead he rolled aside), chariot trampling 
through ranks, he seized spears and threw them at fleeing 
men like blood-mad Mars himself when aroused by the frozen 
Hebrus River: he bangs a shield to intensify combat, 
whips maddened horses to race through an open 
field and leads the Southwind and Westwind in far-off 
Thrace, which grumbles under their hoofbeats, while Anger, 
Deceit and a black Terror drive with the War-God, his comrades: 
Turnus lashed at sweating horses as fiercely 
now in battle. They stamped on wretchedly slaughtered 
enemies, clumps of gore scattered by tearing 
hooves, blood pounded and mixed in the gravel. 
He gave Sthenelus soon to Death, and Thamyris, Pholus— 
the first from afar, the others up close. He killed from a distance 
Glaucus and Lades, both sons of Imbrasus, who’d raised them 
himself in Lycia, clapped them in similar armor 
to fight by hand or on horseback, outrunning the Northwind.

**New Land for a Corpse**

Elsewhere Eumedes drove in the midst of a skirmish. 
The son of aging Dolon and famous in warfare, 
he’d kept a grandfather’s name, a father’s muscle and mettle. 
Dolon had once boldly demanded, for going 
to spy on the Greek camp, a chariot prized by Achilles. 
But Diomedes had charged him another 
price for that boldness: he huffed for the horseteam no longer. 
Turnus watched Eumedes now in an open 
stretch: he threw a light spear through the clearing that hurt him: 
he halted his paired horse-team, leaped from the chariot, hovered 
over the half-dead form, pinned with his right foot 
the man’s neck, snatched a gleaming sword from his victim, 
and reddened it deep in the throat. He shouted above him, 
“Look at the Western Land you wanted and warred for, 
Trojan—lie there and measure it! There’s compensation 
for daring to test my sword: raise your walls on your death-
ground!”

**Stormwind at Sea**

He sent Asbytes along (as Eumedes’ friend) with a spear-throw. 
He killed Chloreus, Sybaris, Thersilochos, Dares 
and then Thymoetes, flung from a horse’s neck when it threw him.
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Just like the breath of a Thracian Northwind that builds up noise on the deep Aegean and surf on the beaches,
gusts swooping and clouds flitting through heaven:
Turnus cut a path where sections were yielding
ground, turning and running. He rode at his own speed:
wind rattled the horse-team and fluttered his head-crest.

Beheading

Phegeus could not stand that hounding and yelling.
He blocked Turnus’ chariot: gripping the foamy
bits of the driving horses he angled them downward.
But Turnus caught an exposed flank with a spear-head
as Phegeus pulled and hung on the bridle: it severed
the stitched cuirass but only tore some flesh from the body.
The man could still hoist a shield and turn on his rival:
he made for Turnus, he hoped for help from his dagger,
but axle and wheel rumbled forward and knocked him
headlong down to the ground. Turnus pursued him:
between the helmet’s base and the top of the breastplate
his sword cut off the head. He left the trunk in the gravel.

Attempts at Healing

While Turnus won in the field, scattering death-blows,
Ascanius now joined Mnestheus and loyal Achates:
they settled the blood-stained Aeneas, propping his every
other step with a long spear, down in their campground.
The man fumed. He tried to extract the head of the broken
arrow. He yelled for the quickest method to help him:
a wide sword might open the wound and uncover
the tip inside, sending him back to the fighting.
Iapyx had come already, the son of Iasus.
Phoebus had loved him greatly; possessed by that feeling
the God would have gladly given him talent and favor—
his own vision, fast arrows, and skill as a lyrist.
The man preferred, hoping to stall the death of a father,
knowledge of plant powers: the art of the healer.
He chose a quiet practice and work without glory.
Aeneas stood there, bitterly grumbling and leaning
against a huge spear, a crowd of soldiers around him,
Iulus weeping. Aeneas ignored them. Iapyx
rolled up and tied his cloak back like a doctor.
He busied himself applying strong herbs of Apollo.
Nothing worked. He tried extracting the arrow
head with strong iron tongs: it was futile.
Luck revealed no way, nothing Apollo
provided helped—while more and more on the savage
plain terror increased, danger approached, they could witness
dust that stood in the sky now, cavalry charging,
arrows falling thickly in camp. A pitiful wailing
410 rose from warriors falling under the rigorous War-God.

*Help from a Mother*

So Venus, distressed by the undeserved pain of Aeneas,
brought some dittany now from Crete, from Mount Ida,
the stem and leaves hairy, the blossom a downy
purple—a well-known plant to the wilderness goats there,
when struck on the back by a swift and tenacious
arrow. Venus obscured her form with surrounding
cloud and, using the plant, some water poured in a gleaming
cauldron, she made a secret decoction, including
healthful ambrosia drops and redolent cure-all.

420 Old Iapyx washed the wound with that fluid,
hardly aware that all the pain would abruptly
leave the body. Blood remained now in the puncture.
The arrow emerged with scarcely a tug from the doctor’s
hand. Old strength newly returned to Aeneas.
“Hurry and arm the man! Why do you stand there?”
Iapyx called out first, igniting spirits for fighting.
“It’s not some human resource, no art of a master,
not my hand that’s come to save you, Aeneas:
some great God makes you return to greater achievement.”

*The Family’s Example*

430 Eager to fight, Aeneas clapped on the golden
leg-guards left and right. Disgusted with dawdling,
he shook a spear, shield to one side, and fitted the back-plate.
He found Ascanius, hugged him close to the armor,
lightly kissed his lips through the helmet and told him,
“Learn luck from others, my boy; from your father,
real strength and work. My own hand will protect you
now in war and lead you to eminent prizes.
Do all the same, in time, when you grow to adulthood.
Remember: keep in mind parental example.
440 Your father Aeneas and uncle Hector should stir you.”
Renewed Spirits and Force

He finished speaking and moved through the gates like a giant, shaking a huge spear. Antheus joined him, Mnestheus hurried close-ranked troops from the campsite, a whole throng flowed out, the field was a blinding mix of dust and the ground was a stir and tremble of footbeats. Turnus could see, from a rise, the enemy coming. Ausonians watched as a chill raced through their marrow and shook their bones. But even before the Latins, Juturna had listened and known that sound: she shuddered and left them.

450 Aeneas took to the open plain with a shadowy column the way heavy weather will veer from mid-ocean abruptly to land, scaring and saddening farmers: they know in their hearts the storm will bring them disaster, flattening crops and fruit-trees, everything ruined—the roar and flight of the wind tell them it's close to the shoreline. That's how the Trojan leader motioned his column straight at the enemy. Pressed together in wedge-form, they braced him tightly. Thymbraeus stabbed the heavy Osiris; Mnestheus cut down Arcetius; Achates, Epulo;

460 Gyas, Ufens. Even the seer, Tolumnius, first to fling a spear at the enemy, crumpled. An uproar went to the sky and Rutulians, taking a turn on the dusty field as losers, retreated. Aeneas disdained the killing of men with their backs turned; he chased no one who faced him on foot or on horseback with spear in hand but searched for Turnus alone in the heavy gloom: he called for combat only with Turnus.

An Evasive Swallow

Fear stunned the mind of the man-like Juturna. Metiscus had held the reins of the horse-team for Turnus:

470 she dumped him—left him far back of the car-pole—and drove herself. Shaking the reins in her fingers she took on the voice and gear, the whole shape of Metiscus. Then like a black swallow that flits through a wealthy lord's majestic home, searching for crumbs in the stately hall and bringing food back to her cheeping young, now in an empty portico, now at a quiet pool twittering: so Juturna, drawn by the horse-team right at the enemy, flew by them all in the chariot swiftly. She showed her brother here and there to some cheering
but never allowed him to fight. She rushed him away in the distance.

Rage Provoked

Aeneas however pursued her turns and evasions. He called loudly through broken ranks, he expected to face the man. But whenever he spied his opponent or tried sprinting after the wing-footed horses, Juturna yanked at the chariot’s reins and escaped him. What could he do? He felt a moiling frustration. And other concerns called him in other directions: by chance Messapus jogged forward to face him, a pair of steel-tipped flexible spears in his left hand.

He aimed one of the weapons and carefully threw it: Aeneas had stopped, gathered himself in the armor, dropped to one knee, and still the impetuous weapon caught his helmet’s top and cut off some feathers. Anger really surged in Aeneas: he’d suffered sneak attacks, he’d watched chariot horses elude him: he called Jupiter now to witness: the altar and treaty were broken. At last he charged the enemy center, the War-God behind him, to wreak indiscriminate, savage slaughter. He threw off every restraint on his fury.

Killings Mount

What God will sing to me now of the barbarous killing throughout that field, the many leaders expiring, Turnus driving here, there the Trojan commander? How could such conflict please you, Jupiter, smashing people who’d soon join in a permanent peace-pact? Aeneas wounded the side of Rutulian Sucro (the first to stand and fight off Trojan advances) but hardly slowed him down. So a sword brutally punctured his lung—the fastest possible death—through the ribcage. Turnus unhorsed Amycus first, then Diores:

facing the brothers on foot, he stopped one charge with a spear-head; the other a sword struck down. Cutting the heads off, he carried and hung them back on his chariot, bleeding. Aeneas killed Talon, Tanais and headstrong Cethegus—three in one fight. He killed a somber Onites (named by Theban people, his mother Peridia). Turnus killed two Lycian brothers, sent from the Sun-God’s
field, and young Menoetes (his hatred of war unavailing—he’d walked around the fish-filled Arcadian river at Lerna and lived poor, unfamiliar with wealthy estates, his father renting the farm he had planted).

When fires are set in diverse parts of a forest they crackle in dry laurel and dash through the thickets: when rivers build and plunge down from the mountain heights they rumble and quickly flow to the floodplain, trailing wreckage behind them: Aeneas and Turnus rushed through battle here and there in the same way, blind to defeat, fury surging inside them, bursting their chests—all their force went into wounding.

*The Slaughter Continues*

Murranus announced the names now of his fathers, tracing a whole ancient royal Italian bloodline.

Aeneas threw a stone, a cumbersome boulder, that struck him headlong. The wheels of his chariot rolling, he fell to the ground under the yoke: dozens of hoofbeats drubbed him, horses unthinkingly trampling their master.

Turnus met the savagely yelling and charging Hyllus by throwing a spear at his gold-plated temple: the weapon pierced his helmet and lodged in the brain-case. Your hand also failed, Cretheus, one of the strongest Greeks, to save you from Turnus; and no God covered Cupencus:

Aeneas came on driving a sword through the breastplate, the sorry shield of brass could stall but not stop him. That same Laurentine plain witnessed your killing, Aeolus: startling the ground with the size of your backbone, you fell there. No Greek force had been able to sprawl you, not even the wrecker of Priam’s kingdom, Achilles.

You’d lived on the heights of Ida, your home in Lyrnesus; your death’s mark was here, a tomb in the soil of Laurentum.

*Armies Contending*

All the Trojans, all those Latin formations wheeled and bitterly struggled. Mnestheus, Serestus, Messapus the horse-breaker, forceful Asilas, Tuscan divisions, Arcadian wings of Evander: each man drove and strained himself to the utmost. No rest, no stalling: the strife was ravaging, total.
To Turn on the City Itself

And here his beautiful mother prompted Aeneas to head for the walls: to turn troops on the city and jolt the Latins fast, threatening sudden disaster. While tracking Turnus through various battle formations, circling this way and that, Aeneas had noticed the city untouched by hard fighting: it rested unpunished. The thought of a major attack immediately fired him. Calling Mnestheus, Sergestus and forceful Serestus, he took to a mound with his leaders; the rest of the Trojan forces ran there, keeping shields crowded and lances high. Standing tall in the center he told them, "Let no one balk at my order: Jupiter stands here! Let no one slouch because my plan is a new one. That city started the war—the seat itself of Latinus. Unless they comply and accept our yoke, admit they are done for, I’ll wreck it today: I’ll burn and level those rooftops. What, should I wait till Turnus is pleased to allow me to fight, till he wishes to meet again, though he’s beaten? My countrymen, there’s the head and height of this blasphemous conflict. Hurry and bring torches—fire will insist on a treaty!"

Soon as he stopped they all complied to match him in spirit: they formed tight wedges and bore down on the city. Flames and makeshift ladders appeared in a moment. Some men charged a gate and cut down the guard there; others launched missiles that turned the sky into shadow. Among those first at the wall, raising his right hand high, Aeneas loudly faulted Latinus and called Gods to witness: again he was forced into battle: hostile Italians now had twice broken a peace-pact.

A Beehive Filled with Smoke

People scurried inside. Dissension was mounting. One group ordered the city opened to Trojans, the gates unbarred, the king himself dragged to the wall-top. Others continued to haul out arms in defense of the city: as when a shepherd follows bees to their hive in a jumbled rockpile and forces acrid smoke in the crevice, insects inside fear for the wax and their building,

loudly buzzing and milling, their anger increasing: the dark stench rolls through their cells and a muffled
drone fills the rocks—some smoke escapes on the breezes.

_The Loss of a Queen_

More bad luck fell on the weakening Latins,
a grief that shook the whole city’s foundations.
The queen in her room had watched the enemy coming,
the walls rammed, torches hurled at the rooftops,
and no Rutulian ranks, no forces of Turnus.
She sadly believed the man had been wiped out in combat
somewhere. Anguish abruptly disordered her thinking,
she called herself a crime, the cause of all evil,
she rambled on insanely, angry and wretched,
tearing her purple robe. Determined to end it,
she tightened the knot of an ugly death from a rafter.

_New Grief in the City_

When luckless Latin women heard of the killing,
first her daughter Lavinia tore at her blossomed
hair and rose-pink cheeks. The rest were around her,
a raving tumult—wide hallways echoed their anguish.
Grim details spread from there through the city.
Resolve sagged. In ripped clothing Latinus,
610 stunned by his wife’s death and the city’s destruction,
mussed and dirtied his hair, scattering dust there.
He blamed it all on himself for not taking Aeneas
of Troy before and calling him son-in-law freely.

_Brother Against Sister_

Turnus fought in a distant field in the meantime,
chasing a scattered few, but not very swiftly.
Less and less he enjoyed the rush of his horses.
A sound borne on the wind had tingled his hearing,
mixed cries of blind fear in the city,
a joyless drone—then a roar of mounting confusion.

620 “My God—what grief or horror deranges the city?
What loud and jumbled clamor spreads from the ramparts?”
Maddened, he stopped speaking and drew in the horse-reins.
But here that sister who’d changed to the form of Metiscus,
the chariot driver in charge of the team and its steering,
countered his question: “Turnus, get after the Trojans—
that’s the first and clearest pathway to triumph.
Others can man the town roofs and defend them.
Aeneas may charge and mangle Italians in battle
but your hand too can savage and pack off the Trojans.

630 You'll end the fight with no less killing and honor.”

Turnus answered,
“I’ve known for a time it was you, my sister, who plotted
to wreck the pact first and throw yourself into battle.
You fail to hide your godhead now. What force on Olympus
willed you to come down here and endure such a struggle,
to see some brutal death of a miserable brother?
For what can I do now? What luck will ensure my survival?
I saw with my own eyes Murranus—he called me
and called me—no one surpassed the man or was dearer.

640 He’s down, a huge man, hugely wounded and beaten.
And wretched Ufens died to keep from beholding
our shame: Trojans own his body and armor.
Now they smash our homes—the last horror remaining.
How can I stand it, and not disprove Drances by fighting?
Will Turnus run off, the nation see him escaping?
In fact is dying so wretched? You Underworld Powers,
be kind to me now, the Overworld Powers against me:
I’ll come down to you, free from wrong and unconscious
of evil, never unworthy of grandfathers’ greatness.”

A Desperate Plea for Help

650 He’d scarcely ended when Saces, riding a foam-flecked
horse from the enemy center (an arrow had wounded
and bloodied his face), rushed up to Turnus and begged him,
“Turnus, our last savior, pity your people.
The arms of a lightning-like Aeneas threaten to break down
Italy’s highest fortress and turn it to rubble.
Torches fly at the roofs right now, Latins are turning
and looking to you, even King Latinus is mumbling:
whom should he call son-in-law? Which pact should he yield to?
Besides, the queen—a woman you trusted completely—
has killed herself. She madly dashed from the daylight.
Only Messapus and hard-working Atinus are propping
the gates’ defenders. A massed division surrounds them
on either side, with bare swords like an iron
cornfield bristling—while you wheel horses through desolate
farmland.”

Decision

Turnus, confused and struck by that picture of changing
luck, stood there silent and staring. Shame like a monstrous
fire in his heart mingled with grief and derangement, love and awareness of courage nettled his anger. Soon that darkness dispersed. Brighter in outlook, he turned a feverish gaze from the chariot back to the city. He saw in alarm the great walls of Latinus enveloped in fire: it rolled and billowed to heaven. One peak of flame had enveloped a tower—a tower Turnus himself had once raised with its thickset planking and wheels, the high gangways he'd set up. "Fates have beaten me now, my sister. Stop your resistance. Where hard Fortune and Gods call we should follow. It's settled: I'll fight with Aeneas, whatever the bitter weight of death. Juturna, you'll see me dishonored no longer. But give me rage first: I ask for some fury."

_A Mass of Rock Down a Mountainside_

He stopped, leaped from the chariot quickly and sprinted past enemy spears in the field. He left a despondent sister behind. He rapidly broke through the enemy center much as a boulder rushing headlong from mountain heights, detached by the wind or a violent downpour, old and loosened under the passing of seasons: a damaging mass with its steep and solid momentum leaps over rough ground and tumbles through forest, herds and people: Turnus rushed through dividing ranks to the city wall where most of the bloodshed soaked the soil, the air whistled with spear-throws. He signaled by hand and called loudly to war-friends. "Rutulians! Stop now. Master your weapons, you Latins. Whatever Luck's here, it's mine. Better that one man pay for breaking the pact. One sword will decide it." They all backed off and gave him room in the center.

_Clearing a Field_

After hearing the name of Turnus, Aeneas, our ancestor, left the high citadel ramparts: he broke off all that work, delay was discarded, he gladly leaped and banged hard weapons like thunder, louder than Mount Athos or Eryx when rumbling and jostling oaks, or even lordly Appenine, grandly lifting its snowy peak in the air and rejoicing. Now Rutulians, Trojans and all the Italian army stared intently—men who had guarded a looming
wall or had struck that wall with rams at the baseline. Armor slipped from their shoulders. Astonished, Latinus himself watched the two tall warriors, natives of different worlds: they’d battle each other, decide it with metal.

_The Final Combat Begins_

710 And they, soon as the field emptied before them, charged full tilt: they threw spears from a distance then fought up close, bronze shielding resounding. Earth itself groaned as the number of sword-blows mounted, manhood and luck in a scramble together: like two large bulls that turn and charge in the Sila Forest or fight enraged on the heights of Taburnus, foreheads crashing, alarmed herdsmen withdrawing, heifers lowing, every steer silent and anxious: who’ll command the whole herd and the forest?

720 The bulls powerfully grapple, wounding each other, horns ram and gore, spattering shoulders and necks with gouts of blood as woods echo their groaning: that’s how Troy’s Aeneas and Latium’s leader collided with shields. Air and sky filled with the uproar. In fact Jupiter held an evenly balanced scale that weighed the different fates of the two men: one would incline, condemning a man to death in the struggle.

_A Sword Shatters_

And here Turnus leaped out, thinking it safe now, lifting his whole body high for a sword-blow, and struck. Trojans and Latins anxiously cried out, both sides on their feet. But the sword disappointed a flushed Turnus: it treacherously shattered on impact. Seeing that strange hilt, his hand undefended, he turned to escape, sprinting faster than Eastwind. When Turnus first yoked horses for battle, the story goes, he was hasty, leaving the sword of his father and hotly seizing a sword of the driver, Metiscus. So long as he struck down turning and scattering Trojans the sword sufficed; but hitting the shield of the Fire-God, the man-made edge reacted like ice when you slap it—it broke up. The dull brown dust gleamed with its fragments. So Turnus wildly fled over rises and flatland now this way and that, indecisively circling.
Either close-packed Trojans everywhere ringed him
or rugged walls blocked him, or desolate marshes.

Stag and Hound

Aeneas nevertheless, though slowed by the arrow
wound that sometimes hurt and hampered his running,
followed step by step. Shaking, Turnus was pressured
the way a stag is brought to bay at a river,
or scared and driven to snares by violet feathers:
a barking lead hound hunts and presses the quarry
who bolts, afraid of a snare or the riverbank steepness,
and runs this way and that; but the Umbrian staghound alertly
sticks to him, now he clamps or seems to be clamping,
to bite down hard—on nothing: the deer has escaped him.
Soon the uproar was louder, neighboring marshland
and banks echoed, all the sky a thundering tumult.
Turnus ran, he turned to every Rutulian,
each by name, demanding the sword of his father.

Aeneas threatened immediate death to the person
who offered help. He scared and confused people; he threatened
(hurt but pursuing) even to ransack the city.
Now they’d completed five circles of weaving
and dodging. Truly the prize they strove for was neither
slight nor sporting: at stake was the life-blood of Turnus.

Help from the Goddesses

By chance a wild olive sacred to Faunus
had stood nearby, leaves bitter but valued by sailors
once who’d thanked, safely ashore, the God of Laurentum:
they’d hung gifts or attached clothes they had promised.

But Trojans had felled the tree. Unconcerned about holy
wood, they’d cleared a space on the field for this duel.
The spear of Aeneas had struck one spot, its momentum
thrusting it hard into tangled roots of the olive.
The Dardan leader struggled to pull out the weapon:
he wanted to chase the man with a spear if unable
to catch him. Crazed with fear Turnus was begging
Faunus: “Please have pity: clinging to that weapon,
you excellent Earth—if I always honored and praised you—
Aeneas’ men have profaned you now with this fighting.”

The call for a God’s help was not to be futile.
Aeneas got stalled for a long time at the stubborn
roots, struggling with all his force, unable to loosen
the wood’s bite. While he strained and hotly persisted, again Juturna took the form of the driver, Metiscus: she ran to her brother and gave him the sword of his father. Now Venus fumed at the brashness allowed to a Lake-Nymph. She went to those deep roots and tore out the weapon. Both men stood erect, re-armed and recovered, one trusting a sword, the other a vigorous spear-throw.

790 They stood up close, breath short, to fight for their War-God.

_Troy’s Name Lost_

Meanwhile the all-powerful King of Olympus spoke to Juno, who gazed on the fight from a golden cloud. “My wife, what end now is remaining? Aeneas will master this land—you know it yourself and admit it. Stars will claim him; Fates will raise him to heaven. What hope or plot can you cling to there in your chilly cloud? Is it right that a God be hurt, dishonored by humans, that Turnus retrieve a lost sword—and Juturna could do nothing without you—to strengthen the losers?

800 No: stop now. Yield at last to my prayer. Don’t let spite consume you in silence, or gloomy worry return so often—to lips of such sweetness! The end has come. On sea and land you’ve been able to vex Troy, to ignite this blasphemous fighting, disgrace a king’s house and tangle a marriage in mourning. I’ll block your further efforts.” When Jupiter finished, the Goddess, daughter of Saturn, lowered her eyes and responded, “Jupiter, truly knowing your will and your greatness, I’ve left that land and Turnus both—but not freely.

810 You’d hardly see me alone now on this cloudbank, enduring dishonor and honor: I’d rather be down there, circled by war and flame, dragging Troy into losing battle. Yes: I urged Juturna to run to her wretched brother and take some great risk for his life: I approved it. But not to bend her bow, to fight with those arrows: I swear by the Styx’s spring, that implacable water—the only name and oath binding on Sky-Gods. I do concede now. I’m done with war; I detest it. I ask one favor. No law or Fate is against it.

820 For Latium now and your own family honor, when peace is confirmed in a happy marriage—so be it—when both sides ratify laws and their treaties:
don't let Latins change the old name of their country,
become like Troy, or call their people the Trojans,
or change their own language or alter their clothing.
Let Alban kings and Latium stay through the ages,
a Roman people, strengthened by Italy's courage.
Troy and its name fell. Let them always be fallen."

Nations United

Man's and the world's Maker smiled as he answered,
830 "You are Jupiter's sister, the second daughter of Saturn:
what waves of intense rage rush through your body!
But come. Repress this wrath—it was vain from the outset.
I'll grant your wish, I yield, I'm willingly conquered!
Ausonians will keep the ways and speech of their fathers;
their name will remain the same. Trojans will mix in a body
merely and settle. I'll add their rites and their customs
to Latins'; I'll make one language for all of the people.
A nation will rise from the mixed Ausonian bloodlines
above all men, above the Gods in devotion:
840 no other race will match them, you'll see, in honoring Juno."
The Goddess was pleased. She nodded, altered her purpose
and soon withdrew from the heavenly cloud she had stayed on.

A Little Owl

That done, the Father himself considered another
task: sending Juturna away from the army of Turnus.
They say two plagues (people call them the Furies)
were born from Night's sickly womb in a single
birth with hell's Megaera. Tangles of serpents
knotted them all and wind-quick wings were allowed them.
They stay by their king, Jupiter's threshold or throne; when he's
angry
850 they're ready to point fear and sickness in humans,
whenever the Gods' ruler prepares a revolting
disease, or alarms with war and death towns that deserve it.
Jupiter quickly sent one down from the heavens
commanding she face Juturna, to act as an omen.
Riding a turbulent wind she flew to that country
just like an arrow twanged through mist from a bowstring,
tipped by a Parthian archer with virulent poison
(Cretan and Parthian arrow wounds are incurable),
hissing and passing quickly unseen through the shadows:
860 Night's daughter bore down on the earth in the same way.
After she found the Trojan ranks and the army of Turnus
she suddenly shrank down to the form of a little
owl that squats at times on graves or abandoned
rooftops late at night to drone rudely in darkness.
So transformed the Fury flapped and re-flapped by
Turnus' face—she squawked and struck the shield with her
wingbeats.
A strange fear numbed and softened his body.
His scalp chilled and tingled. Words stuck in his gullet.

*The Loss of a Sister*

But soon as Juturna knew the sound of that Fury's
wings in the distance, she massed then tore her hair in her sorrow,
she scratched her cheeks and beat her breasts with a sister's
grief: "Turnus—how can your sister protect you?
Can anything harder await me? What art can continue
to light your life? I cannot withstand such an omen.
Yes, I'm leaving—no need to ruffle or scare me,
filthy bird. I know your wings and that wing-lash,
your death's rattle. Great-souled Jupiter's lordly
command is clear. Here's how he thanks me—a virgin!
Why did he make me immortal? Why is my human
condition lost? I'd end such anguish instantly, truly—
I'd rather go as a wretched brother's friend through the shadows—
but no, I'm deathless. What gave me joy will be joyless
without you, brother. What depths of earth will be open
enough, sending a Goddess like me to the Death-world?"
She said that much, covered her head in a blue-grey
shawl, sighed deeply, and hid in the depths of the river.

*As Though Running in a Dream*

Aeneas closed in. Flashing a weapon before him,
big as a tree, he called with the heart of a savage,
"What stalls you now, Turnus? Why so reluctant?
Don't run off—you're bound to fight fiercely with weapons.
Change yourself into any form, gather whatever
spirits or tricks you can, follow the highest
star if you like, block and conceal yourself in some hollow."
Turnus shook his head. "You wildman, none of your fiery
talk scares me. The Gods—Jupiter's enmity scares me."
He said no more but looked around for a ponderous boulder.
A huge old stone happened to lie on the fieldgrass,
used as a landmark to settle disputes among farmers.
The backs of twelve hand-picked men could barely support it—
the backs of men the land might yield in our own age.
That leader restlessly gripped it, hefted it higher,
rang with it swiftly and hurled the stone at his rival.
Still he hardly recognized himself as the runner,
hands raised and huge boulder above him:
his knees quavered, the blood congealing and chilling.
Then the boulder itself rolled through an open
space and stopped short. The blow did not carry.
As though in a dream when languid quiet has covered
our eyes at night, we seem full of desire and we struggle
to run, eager but helpless, weak in the midst of our efforts:
we slump, speech unavailing, our usual muscle
strength fading, and words we form do not follow:
so with Turnus. However he strove to demonstrate courage,
a stern Fury denied the advance. His heart was a welter
of mixed feelings; he looked at the town, his Rutulians.
Slowed by fear—a fatal spear threatened—he trembled.
He saw no escape, no force to use on his rival.
He saw no chariot now or the driver, his sister.

*Hard as a Siege Missile*

While he delayed, Aeneas kept flashing the deadly
spear. He spotted a chance: he threw from a distance
with all his force. Stones from siege-slings have never
roared or smashed at a wall, nor has lightning and thunder
cracked so hard: appearing dark as a whirlwind,
bearing its grim conclusion, the spear went flying and broke
through
the corselet’s edge, the seven-fold shield at the bottom,
grinding, and tore through thigh. Turnus was buckled.
His massive knee was forced to the ground by the impact.
Rutulians moaned and leaped up. Every foothill around them
echoed the moan; deep forest answered the outcry.

*Hesitation*

Turnus, humbled, raised a look and extended
a hand: “I did deserve this. I won’t be a beggar,”
he said, “use your chance. If care about wretched
fathers can touch you—you had such a father, Anchises—
I ask your pity for Daunus. My Father is aging.
Return me to family, alive or stripped of the daylight
if that’s your choice. You’ve won. The loser’s hand is extended.
Ausonians watch us. Now you can marry Lavinia.
Don’t stretch hatred further.” Armored and trenchant,
Aeneas stood there. He looked around, restraining his
swordhand.

*A Fatal War-prize*

940 More and more those words had begun to deter him
when there and then, high on a shoulder of Turnus,
a painful sword-belt appeared, studs familiar and shiny:
young Pallas’ belt. Having wounded and sprawled him
Turnus had killed him—then sported the enemy’s prize on a
shoulder.

After Aeneas looked at the prize and absorbed its recalling
bitter grief, a crazed and frightening anger
burned him. “You—wearing a prize from my comrade—
you want to escape? Pallas will kill you: let Pallas
take your blood, a price for the crime you committed.”

950 He stopped and buried the sword in his enemy’s ribcage
hotly. Turnus slumped, a chill in his members.
Sighing, protesting, his life left for the shadows.
Edward McCrorie’s poems, translations and prose have appeared in a wide variety of magazines, newspapers and anthologies. His first book of poems, After a Cremation, was published in Berkeley in 1975 by Thorp Springs Press. His Virgil appeared in a collector’s edition in 1991 in New Hampshire from Donald Grant Press. He is currently working on another book of poems, and on a translation of Homer’s Odyssey.

At Providence College he teaches in a Western Civilization program that is team-taught and features the work of Sappho and Homer as well as Virgil. He finished graduate work at Brown in 1970, where poetry style was his main focus, and he regularly teaches the poets of nineteenth- and twentieth-century England and America.