Genre, Mimesis, and Intertext in Vergil and G. R. R. Martin

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- For Adriana, Andrew, and Dusty[1]

Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* came out in 2004 to little critical acclaim. Classicists in particular had reason to be cagey, if not downright hostile, towards the many liberties the film took with Homer's epic.[2] For Romanists, however, there was one small reason to rejoice, since *Troy* featured one of Aeneas' relatively infrequent cinematic appearances.[3] As the city burns all about him, the young hero, already equipped with aged father but minus the burden of wife and child, eagerly accepts from Paris the golden 'sword of Troy,' a talismanic reassurance of the survival of the Trojan race. As a miniaturized version of the *Aeneid*'s second book, the moment leaves more out than merely a young Iulus, but it captures rather neatly the transference of cultural capital with which the *Aeneid* is so concerned – from the epic realm of Troy to the muddled history of Rome and Italy.[4] As cinematic good fortune would have it, the author of Aeneas' brief appearance, *Troy*'s scriptwriter David Benioff, has since gone on to write and produce HBO's televised adaptation of a very different sort of text, George Martin's *Game of Thrones*, a sprawling fantasy saga, which, in crude outline, narrates a protracted civil war in the medieval- and chivalric-inspired land of Westeros.[5] The coincidence is precisely that, but it is also serendipitous, because it provides a sharp reminder of the shared idiom of the two genres. Feasting, warring, dying, an incessant quest for fame, and a pronounced streak of self-reflexivity unify both epic and fantasy in the familiar language of the heroic, translated from ancient hexameter to modern prose and celluloid.

Three degrees of separation notwithstanding, in this paper I want to take rather more seriously the presence of the classics, and specifically of Vergil's *Aeneid*, in Martin's Westeros and to argue that Vergil's *Aeneid*, and the Homeric resonances it carries along with it, helps us untangle some of the modern work's bewildering mass of detail.[6] I argue that Vergil's text, specifically the episode of Nisus and Euryalus, the two young Trojans who go raiding through the Rutulian camp in *Aeneid* 9.176-449, offers a structuring device for one of Martin's minor plot lines, the relationship of Renly Baratheon with Loras Tyrell, and their movement together from the ludic context of chivalric tournaments in the series' first book to the martial plot of the second. Concomitantly, I want to use this reading not as a strictly philological or historical exercise, but rather as a test case for classical reception as a reading practice. What emerges from this experiment, I suggest, is a symbiosis of ancient and modern that yields benefits both for literary criticism and for classical outreach.

In the present context, my approach sets to one side the historically contingent questions of authorial intent or the audience's knowledge of Vergil and focuses instead on the possibility of a broader intertextual relationship. Indeed, *Game of Thrones*, at five volumes and 6000 pages, makes no direct gestures to any classical text, nor have the responses to the series to date focused on the classical content of Martin's library; furthermore, for many of *Game of Thrones*' viewers or readers, the *Aeneid* is relatively unknown.[7] This state of affairs effectively inverts the usual models of reception to which classical reception is accustomed, where the classical text is a privileged model, to which both authors and readers respond critically and from a shared background. Instead, *Game of Thrones* offers a reception context in which the Vergilian 'source' exists primarily in

the mind of a relatively small group of readers, and in which the considerable authority of the *Aeneid* is brought to bear more obviously by the interested reader rather than by the author.

That the intentionality of the author or of the majority of readers shouldn't be determinative of interpretation is a relatively longstanding canon of literary criticism both outside and within Classics.[8] An exclusive focus on either author or reader, however, necessarily ignores the text itself as a locus of transmission, where formal mechanisms such as allusion and intertext preserve a distinctive reading practice.[9] The genre of fantasy, partly defined by its concerns with chivalric heroism and the supernatural, exists in a clear genealogical relationship with the genre of chivalric romance and epic and hence classical epic. This family tree, which preserves salient characteristics from Homer down to Martin, should precisely encourage critics to attend to the evolutions and variations that unify and differentiate the tradition and its local exemplars. Moreover, as Stephen Hinds has shown, the apparent inertness of a typical feature of a tradition - a 'mere' commonplace - can always be animated through pointed juxtaposition with other commonplaces: whether as a self-reflexive commentary on the topos itself or as a startling invocation of a competing subtext or mood, intertextuality always offers the potential to enlarge our understanding of a work by bringing texts together for productive comparison at the micro and macro levels.[10] This essay does not seek to pin down a causal relationship of influence between Vergil and Martin. Instead, it engages the question of intertextuality between the two authors on many such levels: local similarities of characterization, action, and narrative features such as the mise-en-scene; commonplaces running through the epic and romance traditions; and the plot structures

associated with particular genres. The *Aeneid* is to be found in Westeros, whether or not Martin took Vergil as an explicit literary guide.

For a reader versed in the *Aeneid*, I suggest, the Nisus and Euryalus episode provides a template for Renly and Loras, but it is a template they follow partially, and with interesting variations. The setting aside of intentionality frees us to ask what work the Vergilian intertext, and the logic of Vergilian epic more generally, enables Martin's characters and plots to do, and how it helps to bring out some important points in higher relief. It does not seek to establish the *Aeneid* as a primary explanatory paradigm, but rather as one option among many. The *Aeneid* provides, nevertheless, a salutary comparison, and I conclude by suggesting that similarities and differences in Martin's handling of the type-scene have further implications for the dynamics of plot and genre in the work.

What do I mean by 'the logic of Vergilian epic'? Within the *Aeneid*, the Nisus and Euryalus episode performs various functions beyond narrating the tragic deaths of the young warriors. For example, the episode reflects on youth and its characteristics in a time of war, and obliquely offers an alternative view of epic emplotment. As Nisus doubles back to find Euryalus, he recalls Aeneas' pointed failure to find Creusa during the last fatal night at Troy, a gender-bending allusion that is characteristic of the episode's reception tradition.[11] Within this allusion is embedded also a generic commitment to teleological narrative – Aeneas as an epic hero cannot look backwards, whereas Nisus, a more romantic figure, must retrace his steps towards an inevitable death. Even as a minor narrative, and in fact precisely because of it, the subplot of Renly and Loras responds precisely to the digressive quality of Nisus and Euryalus' night raid.

Both episodes are likewise a *mise-en-abyme*, a miniature narrative of failed conquest within works dedicated to narratives of failed leadership.[12] And the topos more generally functions as a cautionary tale against youthful excess, as well as offering a tragic view of lost hopes and might-have-beens.[13] As such, Martin's characters participate in an elaborate type scene, which exists within a European tradition that stretches from the Homeric Doloneia through Statius to Ariosto and beyond, and which is formative for and emblematic of our broader understanding of epic, especially in its concern with heroism, *pathos* and *eros*.[14]

Classical Continuities: Structure and Themes

The intertextuality between *Game of Thrones* and the *Aeneid* is cued by two structural elements: first, the ambiguous sexual status of either pair's relationship, and second, the sequence of killing and frenzy operative in both episodes. The nature of the relationship between Renly and Loras has been somewhat controversial, especially after the HBO adaptation presented it decisively, and with Martin's approval, as sexual.[15] Nisus and Euryalus, too, whether Vergil meant them as lovers or the best of friends, certainly echo other such doomed pairs, chiefly Achilles and Patroclus.[16] More specific verbal echoes support the intertextuality as well, especially with the younger half of the pair. Both Loras and Euryalus are young, beautiful, and characterized by floral imagery. Loras is known as the Knight of Flowers, whose armor and other chivalric equipment display all manner of flowers, and whose sigil is the rose:

> Sansa had never seen anyone so beautiful. His plate was intricately fashioned and enameled as a bouquet of a thousand different flowers, and his snow-white stallion was draped in a blanket of red and white roses. (*Game of Thrones* 297)

Euryalus, meanwhile, is introduced as the loveliest of the young Trojans, in possession of verdant youth - Verg. *Aen.* 5.295 'Euryalus, noted for his beauty and flourishing youth' (*Euryalus forma insignis uiridique iuuenta*) – and is famously likened to a drooping flower at the point of his death:

> uoluitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
> it cruor inque umeros ceruix conlapsa recumbit:
> purpureus ueluti cum flos succisus aratro
> languescit moriens, lassoue papauera collo
> demisere caput pluuia cum forte grauantur.
>
> (*Aeneid* 9.433-7)

> Euryalus collapses in death, his blood flows over his beautiful
> limbs, and his neck, bent, droops on his shoulders:
> just as a crimson flower, cut by the plow,
> languishes dying, and the poppy flower with weary neck
> lowers its head when, by chance, rains weigh it down.

The similarities extend to the level of plot structure. We encounter both Renly and Loras and Nisus and Euryalus in two separate phases: first a ludic context, games or tourneys, followed by actual, and deadly, war. When the narrative refocuses on each pair during the war, both pairs further follow the same pattern: expedition, separation, death and frenzy. So, Nisus and Eurylaus compete in a footrace in *Aeneid* 5, while Loras and Renly participate in a chivalric tournament early in *Game of Thrones*, the first novel of the series. Both Loras and Euryalus win their events with the aid of a trick: Loras rides a mare in heat in order to agitate his opponent's stallion, while Nisus trips up a competitor to help Euryalus win the race. After the victory, in each case there is some argument about the awarding of prizes. Loras faces the wrath of the knight he had defeated and ends up forfeiting his reward, while Nisus, who had slipped on a patch of blood in the race, demands some prize as compensation for his bad luck.[17] Some time later, after both texts shift to a context of civil war, both pairs embark on a daring military enterprise. On the eve of battle, Renly and Loras are separated as they tend to their own commands, while Nisus and Euryalus are involuntarily separated as they get lost during their raid of an enemy camp. One of each pair dies – Renly and Eurylaus – and the other – Nisus and Loras – goes mad and seeks revenge.

IMITATION AND THE REAL

Even this very schematic outline already points up some interesting differences, primarily that the neat equivalence between the pairs is often complicated. For instance, Renly,

unlike Nisus, leads an army – rather than just a single companion – and not for a mere night raid, but with the rather grander aim of asserting his claim to the throne. If he is the Nisus to Loras' Euryalus, however, he is nevertheless a very unwarlike iteration of the trope. Crucially, where Nisus has a glorious *aristeia* to his name, Renly's participation in combat is patchy: where his brothers are warriors of renown, Renly himself was a young child during the war which brought his family to power, and his subsequent appearances track him as he comes ever nearer to fighting, moving steadily from court schemer, to royal spectator, to, at the very last, an almost-warrior. Thus, he jousts in the Tournament of the Hand, but is eliminated in the early rounds; he presides over, but does not participate in, the war games held during preparations for his campaign; and his premature death stops short what would have been his first full-scale military engagement.[18]

What this pattern exposes, however, is a deeper consistency between the two texts, and one that engages one of Vergil's fundamental concerns in book 9. Nisus, who is introduced in book 9 as a companion of Aeneas (*Aen.* 9.177 *comitem Aeneae*), is also one of a set of younger and less experienced men left behind when Aeneas departs to seek reinforcements. Indeed, Nisus and Euryalus embark on their doomed mission in order to find Aeneas and bring him back to the Trojan camp, which is meanwhile run by Iulus and a council of elders, all of whom are barely able to sustain the Trojan line against Rutulian attacks. The book is thus in important ways both suggestively counterfactual and proleptic, exposing the worrying consequences of removing Aeneas from the epic plot, and establishing his centrality to the epic present as well as the Roman future. This situation parallels the situation in *A Song of Ice and Fire*: a king who is

absent first due to drink and then, more permanently, due to his death, and a kingdom run by councilors and later on by children. Much like Renly's campaign, populated by young and optimistic soldiers – the so-called 'knights of summer' in one character's phrase[19] - the build-up to Nisus and Euryalus' raid offers a view of youthful excess when left unsupervised, their good intentions notwithstanding. In a very obvious sense, therefore, both texts demand that their heroes mature quickly in order to achieve success, and derive their poignancy from the heroes' failure to do so. This miniature *bildungsroman* is figured also in the broader plot, which progresses relentlessly from heroic play to a fully-fledged, and deadly, war.

Like Iulus, and like Nisus himself, Renly too substitutes for, but fails to improve upon, a stronger character.[20] Renly, in fact, is emphatically described as the living image of his elder brother, the late King Robert:

> In their midst, watching and laughing with his young queen by his side, sat a ghost in a golden crown.
>
> *Small wonder the lords gather around him, with such fervor,* she thought, *he is Robert come again.* Renly was handsome as Robert had been handsome; long of limb and broad of shoulder, with the same coal black hair, fine and straight, the same deep blue eyes, the same easy smile. (*Clash of Kings* 250; italics original)

The ghost metaphor, compounded by the anaphoric 'same', has various ramifications, but it immediately establishes Renly as an imitation, a shade of the real thing – the brother

whom he seeks to replace. The ghost image finds full realization in Renly's own death, when he becomes more literally a ghost in the morning mist.[21] Moreover, in a later battle, fought after Renly's murder, rumor has it that Renly's ghost appears to fight beside Loras, but this turns out to be a substitution of a different kind – not a ghost, in reality, but merely someone dressed in Renly's armour. Like the Homeric Patroclus dressed in Achilles's armour, Renly in confirmed as essentially yet another iteration of a fundamentally mimetic figure, with all the literary allusivity such repetition entails.[22] The closer we seem to move to an imitation of the Vergilian intertext, and the closer Renly comes to battle, the more superficial or illusory is the character himself.

The abortive movement from imitation to the real is replicated in Loras' story arc as well, though here it manifests itself in aesthetic rather than political terms. In Loras' formal entrance into the plot quoted above he is introduced as the Knight of Flowers. Sansa's gaze, which focalizes the episode, fetishizes the armour of the young man, just as the poet's gaze lingers on Euryalus' beauty in death. The moment lies at the intersection of a number of thematic concerns. At the tournament, Loras rides a mare in heat to distract his opponent's horse, and he himself has much the same effect on Sansa, gazing at him with somewhat mindless adoration. The eroticism of the tournament also intersects with a systematic Vergilian concern, as Euryalus is only one of a sequence of young virgins whose death evokes the blood of virginal defloration.[23] Flowers thereby become a loaded symbol in this allusive economy, and indeed both youths are attended by floral imagery. The opening description of Loras informs the reader that his armor is worked into a 'bouquet of a thousand different flowers, and his snow-white stallion was draped in a blanket of red and white roses' (*Game of Thrones* 297). The detail of the roses is meant

to catch the eye, both of the internal audience, to whom Loras offers the flowers, and of the reading audience, for whom roses might hold a range of symbolic meanings, from the Wars of the Roses to the emblem of romantic love. When Loras appears next, however, his floral armament changes, and tellingly so:

> When the Knight of Flowers made his entrance, a murmur ran through the crowd, and he heard Sansa's fervent whisper, 'Oh, he's so *beautiful.*' Ser Loras Tyrell was slender as a reed, dressed in a suit of fabulous silver armor polished to a shining sheen and filigreed with twining black vines and tiny blue forget-me-nots…Across the boy's shoulders his cloak hung heavy. It was woven of forget-me-nots, real ones, hundreds of fresh blooms sewn to a heavy woolen cape. (*Game of Thrones* 314)

The description this time is focalized through Sansa's father, Lord Eddard Stark, and despite the differences in gender and age, Lord Eddard responds to Loras in much the same terms as his daughter: a nearly ekphrastic fascination with the details of the armor.[24] Unlike the previous joust, where cape and arms bore different flowers, now the flowers on Loras' cape and suit of armor are identical, a similarity to which the text draws explicit attention ('forget-me-nots, real ones…'). The difference between the two appearances is explicable as the vanity of a young knight, and both occasions are clearly meant as a spectacle of wealth and excess, a token of Loras' *nom de guerre.* Precisely as such, however, the flowers betoken identity and its stabilization, and their duplication calls attention exactly to the gap between what is real and what is imitative. Loras

himself, a storybook knight whose prowess, at least so far, is ludic rather than martial, hovers between the two realms.

Here the shapes begin to rearrange themselves. I have so far treated Loras and Renly's allusive traits as two parallel lines, but in the following section I move to discuss the plot not as the linear and teleological progression of epic, but as the cyclical and repetitive wanderings of romance. The change is triggered by Renly's death, which in turns orders the allusions chiastically. Renly becomes Euryalus, and therefore also Loras; Loras becomes Nisus, and therefore also Renly. At a greater remove, the catastrophe of Renly's death forces Loras from the idyllic world of song into the frenzied *realia* of warfare, while in Vergil, the young lovers' death forces them out of the world of war and into immortality in verse (*fortunati ambo*!).[25]

DEATH, ROLE REVERSAL, AND THE CYCLICAL PLOT

Before focusing on the cyclical plot, however, it is worth dwelling for a moment on Renly's death itself, which also participates in the sequence from imitation to the real highlighted above. Renly's death, and his aborted first battle, both take place below the castle of Storm's End, the family's ancestral seat and the place of his birth. Our last view of Renly in life is of dressing for battle, the classic build-up for the epic *aristeia*, and he is slain, by a mysterious shadow cutting through his gorget, just at the point when he is about to pick up his helmet to complete the arming scene:[26]

> ‘Cold,’ said Renly in a small puzzled voice, a heartbeat before the steel of his gorget parted like cheesecloth beneath the shadow of a blade that was not there. He had time to make a small thick gasp before the blood came gushing out of his throat…The king stumbled from her arms, a sheet of blood creeping down the front of his armor, a dark red tide that drowned his green and gold. More candles guttered out. Renly tried to speak, but he was choking on his own blood. His legs collapsed, and only Brienne’s strength was holding him up. (*Clash of Kings* 367).

There is much of interest in the scene: blood and shadow have been thematic concerns throughout *Clash of Kings*, programmatic not only of the family drama of the Baratheons, but also of the developing unrest throughout the kingdom. Blood, and especially its dark red color, is also characteristic of epic heroic death and defloration, and as such, the scene recalls also the death of Euryalus, quoted above, a role Renly takes up through his death.

Two more elements are worth drawing out. First, that Renly’s death itself participates in the broader pattern of progression from imitation to reality, corresponding to, and making real, his only appearance in combat. In a brief passage during the Tournament of the Hand, in which we first meet Loras, Renly is driven from his horse in the early rounds, where the detail of the antlered helm once again appears:[27]

> Renly was unhorsed so violently that he seemed to fly backward off his charger, legs in the air. His head hit the ground with an audible *crack* that made the crowd gasp, but it was just the golden antler on his helm. One of the tines had snapped off beneath him. (*Game of Thrones* 296)

The moment dissolves quickly into humor, as the crowd fights over the golden antler until Renly walks among them to restore order, foreshadowing his attempt to claim the throne through popularity and alliance. The breaking of the tine, however, is ominous, especially in the symbolic economy of *Game of Thrones*, in which heraldic symbolism is strongly referential of its owner's characteristics, and here it stands explicitly for the snapped neck the tournament audience fear, and proleptically for the severed neck that will mark Renly's eventual death. As so often in epic, what is farcical in games becomes all too real in war. The fact that the movement of Renly's life and death follows the sequence from imitation to reality has important consequences, not least in suggesting that Renly and Loras each moves towards becoming the other. This idea of such a character inversion has some textual support. The switching of roles is marked in particular by the violent frenzy with which Loras responds to Renly's death.[28] The motto of Renly's family, House Baratheon, their 'words' in Martin's terminology, reads *Ours is the Fury*. And yet that fury is one that Loras, in his maddened response to his lover's death, explicitly takes upon himself. Thus, Renly becomes Euryalus, and Loras Nisus.

This technique, whereby identities blur, usually at the climax of a duel or in the heat of battle, is a familiar Vergilian technique, as David Quint and Alessandro Barchiesi have observed, as well as a particularly salient feature of the episode's reception history.[29] In Statius and later in Ariosto (who relies equally on his Vergilian and Statian models), the Nisus and Euryalus roles are regularly switched between the heroic pairs, Hopleus and Dymas in the *Thebaid* and Medoro and Cloridano in the *Orlando Furioso*.[30] Statius and Ariosto go further than simple switching, however. Both poets, for instance,

sever the pair's games-to-warfare sequence, Ariosto completely, and Statius by relegating Dymas to a minor appearance in the funeral games, and transferring the Nisus/Euryalus model instead to Parthenopaeus (yet another virgin, as his name suggests) in the footrace.[31] The reception tradition is therefore inherently flexible, and against its background the Vergilian intertext stands out as uniquely fitting for Renly and Loras' plot. This flexibility accounts also for the presence of Brienne of Tarth at the crucial moment of death, since it is she, rather than Loras, who first assumes the role of Nisus through her view of Renly's death and consequent grief. Her anger anticipates Loras', and in both cases the anger and the violence that follow stand metonymically for the battle Loras and Brienne now have no purpose in fighting.[32]

Loras' fury also corresponds to Nisus' reaction to Euryalus' death, and closely traces the movement from frenzy to revenge.

> simul ense recluso
> ibat in Euryalum. tum uero exterritus, amens,
> conclamat Nisus nec se celare tenebris
> amplius aut tantum potuit perferre dolorem:
> …
> sed uiribus ensis adactus
> transadigit costas et candida pectora rumpit.
> uoluitur Euryalus leto…
> at Nisus ruit in medios solumque per omnis
> Volcentem petit, in solo Volcente moratur.

(*Aeneid* 9.423-39)

> At once he [i.e. Volcens] drew his sword and went for Euryalus. Then Nisus, frightened witless, shouts, unable to hide in the shadows any longer, or bear such anguish….the sword was thrust with force and pierces the ribs and bursts the white breast. Euryalus collapses in death…but Nisus rushes amidst them and through them all seeks only Volcens, dwells only on Volcens.

Most striking here is Nisus' terrified madness – he is both *amens* and *territus* – and his vengeful focus on Volcens, whose name Vergil repeats to emphasize Nisus' intensity: *solumque… / Volcentem … in solo Volcente* (439).[33] Madness and revenge, together and individually, are typically epic sentiments, which are often used to drive the plot. The formative example is Homer's Achilles when he hears of the death of Patroclus, and the hero's reaction is crucial for the narrative of the *Iliad*, since it reinstates Achilles into the main plot, gives him the motivation to fight again, and sets him on the path that will lead to his own death.[34] In miniature, that is what Nisus does too – a maddened quest for vengeance, followed shortly by death, and with it a resolution of the subplot. Anger and revenge, however, likewise drive the *Aeneid*, from Juno's vengeful ire at the opening of the poem (1.4, *memorem Iunonis ob iram*), to Aeneas' revenged-fuelled *furor* at its close (12.946 *furiis acensus et ira*). Here, too, Nisus follows in Aeneas' footsteps, losing himself in his final moments in the poem to a madness that threatens to typify him as an epic paradigm.

Madness, likewise, plagues Loras. Just as Nisus loses his mind when he witnesses Euryalus' death, so too Loras loses his upon seeing Renly's corpse. But Euryalus, too, was 'raging' (*perfurit*) at 9.343, so drenched in battle fever that Nisus has to turn him away from the slaughter. Hence, madness characterizes Loras through both his intertextual predecessors. But if he successfully matches the madness of Vergil's characters, what he singularly fails to do is to die, and thus fulfill, finally, the paradigm established by Nisus and Euryalus. Vengeance here has more immediate consequences than in Vergil, since it sets up a sequence of repetitive attempts to re-enact old battles. Loras is something of a specialist in holding such grudges, even before Renly's death. Late in *Game of Thrones*, he volunteers to lead an expedition against the same knight whom he had tricked to win the joust.

> When the echoes of his words had died away, the Knight of Flowers seemed perplexed. 'Lord Eddard, what of me?'
>
> Ned looked down on him. From on high, Loras Tyrell seemed almost as young as Robb. <u>'No one doubts your valor, Ser Loras, but we are about justice here, and what you seek is vengeance.'</u> He looked back to Lord Beric. 'Ride at first light. These things are best done quickly' (*Game of Thrones* 470)

Lord Eddard's recognition is certainly proleptic, but whereas, before Renly's death, Loras' desire for revenge seemed part and parcel of the chivalric quest for glory, Renly's death concretizes this desire and transforms it into a narrative engine, driving Loras to enact repetitively the battle Renly's murder effectively pre-empted. The first such

repetition was the battle supposedly involving Renly's ghost. Despite Loras' being on the winning side in that battle, however, there is no resolution for him, nor indeed for the reader, faced with five volumes yet to come. The second iteration – a suicidal attack on an island fortress – almost realizes the Nisus-like sacrifice that Loras ought to have made some time ago. And yet we hear no confirmation of his death and his fate is left hanging for another book. This repetition compulsion and deferral, as Quint has shown, is characteristic of a particularly epic view of the plot of romance, coded as endlessly circular, even as epic tells a more linear story of progress and victory.[35] Moreover, the fact that the bereaved Loras seems to embody the tension between epic and romance only re-enlivens the Freudian terminology underlying Quint's narrative theory: desire, repression, grief, deathwish, and transference here function at the levels of character psychology and plot structure, and in doing so they firmly place Martin's work in the most canonical of literary - and literary critical - traditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The reading I have offered proceeds from a flexible model of reception, one that employs the Vergilian paradigm in multiple ways and to various effects. The Nisus and Euryalus intertext functions as a structuring device or template, certainly, but it operates in different ways for Renly than it does for Loras, and most importantly it is an *imperfect* paradigm. Especially when it is imperfect, it highlights important aspects of the character and of the plot. Thus for Renly, who seems to play both the Nisus and Euryalus roles

somewhat passively, the campaign is an attempt to inhabit more fully his elder brother's persona en route to inhabiting his own. For Loras, on the other hand, the intertext holds up an image of failure, and reveals his drift into the repetitive plot structures of romance. Later in the series, when the dust has settled, Loras says of Renly 'He was the king that should have been. He was the best of them' (*Storm of Swords* 923). He is being overly sentimental, perhaps, but between the Homeric overtones – Achilles was the best of the Achaeans – and the Vergilian pathos, he captures also the double valence of the intertext, as it reveals the vulnerability of epic to the disappointments of romance.

I want to conclude, however, with one final thought on the utility of this exercise. Given the current interest in classical outreach, there is no need to belabor the value of encountering Vergil in unexpected places; likewise, one should not exaggerate the importance Martin has for Vergilian studies. Nevertheless, the presence of a well-known Vergilian theme in this hugely popular text affords us an opportunity to assess the presence of the classics in contemporary popular culture beyond overt re-interpretations, such as Petersen's *Troy*. More practically, however, this sort of exercise models a way of reading that is classically inflected, and which connects what we do in our scholarship and in the classroom with the critical skills students are expected to take away from their university education. Such links are not, in the end, trifling, especially as the value of the humanities is increasingly questioned; and they can, perhaps, help to exemplify the continued currency of ancient literature and modern criticism within contemporary culture.

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[2] Academic responses to the film: Winkler 2007, to which add Mendelsohn 2008 and Paul 2013.

[3] For a survey of the *Aeneid* in film and television, Solomon 2013.

[4] Paul 2013: 75 notes that scenes such as these, however poorly executed, 'gesture towards the existence of an epic tradition.' As such, they replicate the oral tradition in which the *Iliad* itself developed.

[5] The series is properly called *A Song of Ice and Fire* and is currently made up of five volumes, of which I refer by name only to the first three. They are, in order: *Game of*

Thrones (1996), *Clash of Kings* (1998), *Storm of Swords* (2000). I use the following editions: G. R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones.* 2011 Mass Market Paperback, Bantam Books, New York; *A Clash of Kings.* 2003 Paperback, Voyager. (HarperCollins), London; *A Storm of Swords.* 2011 Mass Market Paperback, Bantam Books, New York.

[6] The bibliography on Nisus and Euryalus is considerable; the best two summaries are Hardie 1994: 23-34 and Horsfall 1995: 170-8, with bibliographical highlights collected in Whittington 2010: 594n.19. For the use the episode makes not only of Homer's Doloneia but also of its scholiastic tradition: Casali 2004.

[7] The work of cataloguing potential allusions is largely done by fans, which may account for the predominance of other works of fantasy, especially the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. A representative example can be found here: http://asoiaf.westeros.org/index.php/topic/784-references-and-homages/ (last accessed: Dec. 4th, 2013). I have not contacted Martin myself; indeed, my argument is designed to call into question the tendency to afford ancient texts greater freedom from authorial control than modern, and especially popular, works.

[8] For the theory: Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, Barthes 1977, Foucault 1977, Fish 1982, Martindale 1993, Hinds 1998.

[9] Kallendorf 2006.

[10] Hinds 1998: 17-51.

[11] Nisus: *Aen*. 9.393: *uestigia retro / obseruata legit* ('he tracked back footsteps already seen'); Aeneas: 2.753-4: *uestigia retro / obseruata sequor* ('I follow back footsteps already seen'). Whittington 2010: 604 points out that in Milton's *Paradise Lost,* of three variations on Nisus' speech in 9.427 *me me adsum qui feci* ('I'm here, here, I who did it')

in 9.427, Eve's 'me me only just object of his ire' (*PL* 10.936) is 'the closest to Vergil in both syntax and situation.' Vergil's episode itself alludes to the *Georgics*' accounts of Orpheus and Eurydice (Hardie 1994: 26). In *A Song of Ice and Fire*, gender-bending is more explicit, both through Loras' good looks, and the presence of the mannish Brienne, who mirrors him in some important aspects: see n. 000 below.

[12] On *mise-en-abyme* as a formal device, and specifically on the Nisus and Euryalus episode: Fowler 2000. On *Aeneid* 9 and narratives of failed (or immature) leadership: Hardie 1994: 14-8; on the Nisus and Euryalus episode as an *epyllion*: Mendell 1951: 216-9, Hardie 1994: 24-5. The *Song of Ice and Fire* saga is, in some important ways, a kaleidoscope of juxtaposed *mise-en-abyme* narratives. Renly's camp is, however, perhaps the most explicitly self-referential: *Clash of Kings* 256 '"Because it will not last," Catelyn answered sadly. "Because they are the knights of summer, and winter is coming." "Lady Catelyn, you are wrong." Brienne regarded her with eyes as blue as her armor. "Winter will never come for the likes of us. Should we die in battle, they will surely sing of us, and it's always summer in the songs. In the songs all knights are gallant, all maids are beautiful, and the sun is always shining."' The issues of identity here are worth noting: Catelyn's inability to see the world in other than Stark terms is paralleled by her husband in *Game of Thrones* 470 (quoted on p. 000 below). More generally, recognizing the difference between song and real life, and the disappointments that follow, are throughout a preoccupation of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and almost all of the main characters suffer disillusionment at some stage.

[13] For a discussion of adulthood and childhood in the *Aeneid* see, e.g., Petrini 1997: 21-47; for the fetishization of the heroic death: Reed 2007: 16-43.

[14] On the intersection of which themes, see Pavlock 1990, esp. 87-112 on Nisus and Euryalus.

[15] Martin confirmed that he 'meant those characters to be gay' in a convention in May 2005 (http://www.westeros.org/Citadel/SSM/Entry/To_Be_Continued_Chicago_IL_May_6_8/) (Last accessed: Dec. 5th, 2013).

[16] Servius *ad Aen.* 9.180 kicks off the debate by explaining Vergil's *unus amor* ('one love') as a shared pursuit of common interest: *id est eodem studio flagrabant* ('that is, they burned with the same passion'). The modern opinions are summarized in Hardie 1994: 31-4.

[17] Loras: *Game of Thrones* 314-6. Nisus and Euryalus: Verg. *Aen.* 5.353-8. Nisus will eventually be promised *digna dona* ('worthy gifts') by Iulus in promised reward for the night raid in 9.257-280; on the problems of the gift exchange see Casali 2004: 327-35.

[18] Tournament of the Hand: *Game of Thrones* 294-6; melee at Bitterbridge: *Clash of Kings* 247-54; death before battle: 365-7.

[19] *Clash of Kings* 256 '"Because it will not last," Catelyn answered sadly. "Because they are the knights of summer, and winter is coming"' (full quote in n. 000 above). Renly's 'extreme youth' is emphasized in his first appearance (*Game of Thrones* 147), in pointed contrast to Barristan the Bold, whom Renly nicknames 'Barristan the Old'.

[20] Iulus tries to imitate his father Aeneas; Nisus feels a less specific impulse to imitate, but as Hardie points out (1994: 108) his opening speech, wherein he lays out his motivation for the expedition, combines elements from both Nestor's speech at *Il.* 10.204-17 and Diomedes' reply (*Il.* 10.220-26) preceding the Doloneia. The evocation of

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these two characters is here poignant not only because Nisus and Euryalus will fail to replicate the successes of the Doloneia, but also because they typify (Nestor in the *Iliad* and Diomedes in his Vergilian reception in *Aeneid* 11) heroic vigor past its prime, in counterpoint to Vergil's young heroes, doomed never to reach theirs. It is also worth noting that both texts feature a council scene with surrogate father figures: Nisus and Euryalus with Iulus, who stands in relation to them as *pater Aeneas* does to the older Trojans, and Renly with his elder brother Stannis and Catelyn Stark, who provides a maternal view onto events. It is perhaps significant in this context that when Renly first appears, he is described jokingly as a 'prancing jackanapes' (*Game of Thrones* 147), an early modern phrase for a monkey, the quintessential imitative animal.

[21] *Clash of Kings* 369 '*Morning ghosts,* she had heard Old Nan call them once, sprits returning to their graves. And Renly was one of them now, gone like his brother, like her own dear Ned.'

[22] *Clash of Kings* 636 'It was *Lord Renly!* Lord Renly in his green armor, with the light shimmering off his golden antlers! Lord Renly with his tall spear in his hand! They say he killed Ser Guyard Morrigen himself in single combat, and a dozen other knights as well. It was Renly, it was Renly, it was Renly! Oh! the banners, darling Sansa! OH! to be a knight!' ; for the truth, cf. *Storm of Swords, p.* 923 '"It's said you fought magnificently in the battle…almost as well as Lord Renly's ghost beside you. A Sworn Brother has no secrets form his Lord Commander. Tell me, ser. Who was wearing Renly's armor?" For a moment Loras Tyrell seemed as though he might refuse, but in the end he remembered his vows. "My brother," he said sullenly. "Renly was taller than me, and broader in the chest. His armor was too loose on me, but it suited Garlan well."' Pramit Chaudhuri

points out to me that Loras' frustration here is at not being able to be identical with Renly, although, ironically, in falling (quite literally) short of his brother, he does in fact replicate Renly in another way. Note, too, the reversal of the Patroclus motif: Garlan Tyrell – the counterfeit – not only appears after, rather than before, his model, but he also in some sense supersedes both Renly and his own brother Loras.

[23] The clearest case is Camilla in *Aen.* 11.801-4, but as Fowler 1987 (with 188-9 on Euryalus and the poppy simile) has shown, the collocation of floral and bloody imagery is consistent in Latin literary history.

[24] It's worth noting further that the description of Eddard's gaze includes the bucolic metaphor 'slender as a reed', which might be taken as alluding to Vergil's Tityrus, playing on a slender reed (*Ecl.* 1.2 *tenui auena*). If so, we might also say that Eddard has a richer allusive world than his daughter, and one that reaches for the less heroic world of Roman pastoral.

[25] *Aen.* 9.446-10 *Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt, / nulla dies umquam memori uos eximet aeuo, / dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum / accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit* ('Fortunate pair! If my songs have any worth, no day shall snatch you from the memory of the ages, not while the people of Aeneas dwells on the immovable rock of the Capitol, and the Roman father holds dominion'). On the passage: Hardie 1994: 153-4; on the irony of Vergil's judgment: Quinn 1968: 206-7, Fitzgerald 1972: 117, Fowler 2000: 104.

[26] Helmet: *Clash of Kings,* 366: 'Brienne brought the king's gauntlets and great helm, crowned with golden antlers that would add a foot and a half to his height. "The time for talk is done. Now we see who is stronger."'

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[27] It appears for the first time at Renly's first introduction (*Game of Thrones* 144-7), where he is armored and holding his helm, thus forming a ring composition with his last appearance. Each of these details is first described in the author's voice, and then enumerated by Sansa, a doubling of both appearance and focalization thus intratextually connected to Loras' first appearance. In fact, Sansa thinks Renly 'the handsomest man [she] had ever set eyes upon' (144), until she sees Loras at the joust.

[28] The frenzy, too, participates in a variation on the sequence from imitation to reality. We first hear of it indirectly, in a report based on a rumor heard by non-witnesses (*Clash of Kings* 387 'It's said the Knight of Flowers went mad when he saw his king's body, and slew three of Renly's guards in his wrath…'). Loras himself later confirms the rumor, admitting obliquely to killing the guards (*Storm of Swords* 925).

[29] Barchiesi 1984: 30-43, Quint 2001.

[30] On the reception of the episode in Statius: Markus 1997, Pollman 2001, Ganiban 2007: 131-6; in Ariosto: Burrow 1993: 62-7, Wiley Feinstein 1990; in Milton: Whittington 2010.

[31] Lovatt 2005: 59-71.

[32] Brienne of Tarth is an interesting parallel for Loras throughout, and they form mirror images of each other. Brienne is a tall woman and broad-shouldered, Loras is a slender boy; he is marked throughout as beautiful, she as ugly. When they both fight Renly's guards after seeing Renly dead, her duel is defensive, his is aggressive. This parallelism is sustained by other characters as well: Renly assigns Brienne to the van with Loras (*Clash of Kings* 383); Jamie Lannister points out to Loras that both he and Brienne cheat in their first (on record) competition (*Storm of Swords* 924). Twining and Tripling are a

preooccupation of Martin through all five books, as it is of epic more generally (Hardie 1993: 10-11; the best example is Statius' *Thebaid*, on which see Henderson 1991).

[33] See Hardie 1994: 151 *ad loc.* for other instances of the anaphora with polyptoton in the *Aeneid*.

[34] On *furor* as an epic emotion: Hershkowitz 1998. On PTSD and the emotive response to the death of a 'special friend' in epic and in Vietnam: Shay 1994: 39-68; on PTSD in *Game of Thrones*, though without reference to Loras: Cole 2012.

[35] Quint 1993.

Genre Genres reflect differences in external format and situations of use, and are defined on the basis of systematic non-linguistic criteria. Universally recognized literary and subgenres are poetry (epic, lyrical), drama (comedy, tragedy) and fiction (novel, short story). However, the transition between literary and non-literary genres is smooth (e. g. , science fiction, essay, postmodern novel). Genre vs. Text type One way of making a distinction between genre and text type is to say that the former is based on external, non-linguistic, "traditional" criteria while the latter is based on th Martin Eden is Jack Londonâ€™s self-portrait; an early edition of the novel with a picture of Martin as a frontispiece gives him the face of Jack London. Like Martin, London came from an impoverished and adventurous background. The illegitimate son of a wandering fortune-teller, London spent his childhood in poverty in Oakland, California; as a teenager he became a waterfront tough, an oyster pirate, a member of the fish patrol, and a common seaman on a sealing schooner in the Bering Sea and the islands off Japan. Later, he became a hobo, was imprisoned for vagrancy, and prospected in the Yukon Mimetic Displacement This detour through an intertext is a widespread phenomenon affecting genres as well as individual works. It even presides over the formation of conventional literary language in those periods of literature when aesthetic fashions demand that the mimetic lexicon differ from that of everyday language.Â At the level of significance, the title is not topical but generic: it indicates a genre or subgenre, the ethos of which is, as we saw before, that it defines the object as something to be admired and directs the reader toward decoding rules. Martin Eden. Item Preview. remove-circle. Share or Embed This Item. Share to Twitter. Share to Facebook. Share to Reddit.Â Graphic Sexual Content. texts. Martin Eden. by. London, Jack, 1876-1916. Publication date. 1912. Publisher. New York : Published for the Review of Reviews Co. by Macmillan.