VERGIL'S CAMILLA: A PARADOXICAL CHARACTER

by W.P. Basson
(University of the Western Cape)

War as a prerequisite for the founding of a nation is a basic theme in the Aeneid. It is the labours, hardships and suffering that such a war involves which are alluded to in the much quoted line near the beginning of the epic: 'tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem.' And among the sacrifices that such a war exacts, not the least are those demanded of talented young people in their prime. The Aeneid contains some sterling examples of this latter category, including Lausus, Pallas, Euryalus and Turnus. The tragic death of these promising young heroes does not only meet this sacrificial demand, however; it also points up another aspect of war, viz. its apparent senselessness or futility. Thus to a very large extent Vergil’s epic hinges on a paradox — that between the inevitability of war on the one hand and its futility on the other. Seldom is this paradox more vividly exemplified in the Aeneid than in the case of Camilla, the Volscian maiden who devotes her full energy to Turnus’ cause in his struggle against the Trojans. The present article seeks to illustrate this by surveying the most important passages in the Aeneid in which Camilla figures.

Scholars agree in seeing in this heroine of the ‘least sombre of the battle books’, as Pöschl styles the eleventh book, one of Vergil’s most attractive but also most tragic characters. Depicting her as ‘a most appealing and sympathetic heroine’, Otis adds that she is ‘at once simple and terrible, naive and ferocious’. Fordyce, again, considers her to be ‘one of the most memorable figures in the poem, but ... a mysterious figure, unique among his major characters in that she is otherwise entirely unknown’. To what extent the evaluation of Camilla’s character by these and other scholars is correct, an analysis of the relevant passages perhaps will show. First, however, let us briefly consider Vergil’s apparent model(s) for delineating this interesting personality.

Vergil probably modelled his Camilla on at least two well-known female types in Greek mythology, Penthesilea and Harpalyce, representing the brave Amazon queen and the fleetfooted, devoted huntress respectively. It should be noted that in Aen. 7.803ff. and 11.648ff. Camilla displays characteristics usually ascribed to Penthesilea, with whom she is in fact compared later on in the latter book. Much more important is that both these passages have striking similarities to Vergil’s own description of Penthesilea in Aen. 1.490–93. Again, in Aen. 11.535ff. she resembles Harpalyce, who is also mentioned in the first book of the Aeneid. Like Camilla, this motherless daughter of the exiled Thracian king
Harpalyce accompanies her father to the woods, where she cares for him by virtue of her skill as a huntress.¹³ In view of these similarities Fordyce’s assumption that Camilla is a conflation of these two types appears to be sound.¹⁴ But Vergil may also have had in mind the story of Atalanta, as may be inferred from his description of Camilla’s fleetfootedness at the end of the seventh book of his epic.¹⁵ It has been argued by Fraenkel, convincingly, in my opinion, that Vergil in his characterisation of Camilla drew upon the Aethiopis, a poem in the epic cycle ascribed to Arctinus of Miletus,¹⁶ though I would suggest that he supplemented the data gained from this source with information obtained from Latin antiquarian lore.

Let us turn now to an analysis of the various passages featuring Camilla. We first meet her in Aen. 7.803–17, where she concludes the catalogue of Italian leaders mustering their forces as allies of Turnus. A member of the Volscian race (‘Volsca de gente’, 803), Camilla, no ordinary woman trained in domestic arts and crafts but a warrior (‘bellatrix’, 805) used to fierce combat, appears at the head of a contingent of female warriors on horseback. Vergil’s picture of Camilla and her companions is a spectacular one, focusing on their exceptional appearance. These girls glitter because they are decked out not in ordinary womanly finery but in arms of bronze: ‘florentis aere catervas’ (804). The keyword here is of course ‘florentis’, emphasizing as it does not only the fresh, blooming appearance that is peculiar to the girls’ youthful beauty but also the vitality, vigour and promise of their youth. Combined with bronze, ‘florentere’ implies that their freshness, their finery was, in the words of Henry, not ‘the ordinary bloom or finery of their sex, but the manly bloom or finery of aes’.¹⁷ A striking picture, indeed, but even more spectacular is the description of Camilla, which introduces the element of wonder, of fantasy, of hope rather than reality.¹⁸ Camilla not only is able to outdistance the winds by her speed (‘cursuque pedum praevertere ventos’, 807) — note the resemblance to the fleetfooted Harpalyce and Atalanta — she would even be capable of more miraculous feats (808–11):

‘illa vel intactae segetis per summa volaret
gramina nec teneras cursu laesisset aristas,
vel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumenti
ferret iter celeris nec tingeret aequore plantas.’

The deliberate use of potential subjunctives in these lines is meaningful for Vergil’s delineation of Camilla. Vergil does not state explicitly that Camilla in fact did all these miraculous things; rather that she could perform them. In other words, he eulogizes her potentialities, her latent talents, rather than her actual deeds. As so often in the case of Vergil’s youthful characters, it is expectation (‘spes’) rather than fact (‘res’), ideal rather than reality, that is stressed. But Camilla’s splendour is also enhanced by the sharp contrast drawn between her attire and her armour. Though her attire is royal (‘regius...honos’, 814–15), her shoulders being veiled in purple (‘ostro’, 814) and her hair clasped in a golden brooch (‘fibula crinem/auro internectat’, 815–16), her armour consists of a
Lycian quiver and a shepherd's myrtle-staff (816–17). Her splendid attire clearly marks her royal descent, while her simple arms recall the pastoral environment of her youth.

Camilla therefore figures as a princess and a shepherdess alike, uniting in herself both royal dignity and rural simplicity, a fact which adds considerably to her charm and splendour, and perhaps also explains her position of honour at the end of the catalogue. Pöschl well observes: ‘The glittering figure of the Volscian queen represents the entire splendour and strength of Italy. She is queen and warrior, pure child of nature and servant of Diana. Her nature is symbolized by purple cloak and golden clip, quiver and pastoral myrtle... The dark fate which forces Aeneas into battle is almost counterbalanced and canceled in Camilla and the apotheosis of Italian heroism.’ What is more, by this magnificent picture Vergil also prepares the reader for the wonderful story about Camilla's childhood told by the goddess Diana in Book 11. Small wonder that so much grace and beauty causes every one to marvel in open-mouthed astonishment: 'illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa iuventus/ turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat euntem,/ attonitis inhians animis... '(812–14).

Apart from a brief reference to her noble Volscian origin by Turnus in a fervent appeal to the Latini in Aen. 11.432 (‘est et Volscorum egregia de gente Camilla’), she next appears in Aen. 11.498–519. Accompanied by her contingent, she meets Turnus, who has just armed himself for war. Camilla’s behaviour is indicative of the intensity of her mood. As a warrior she appears to be aggressive and courageous, but also impulsive, impetuous and reckless. Not only is she prepared to tackle the Trojan cavalry but she even dares to face the Etruscan cavalry alone (503–504). In addition, she requests Turnus to allow her to be the first to face the dangers of the war (505). Camilla's character is further highlighted here by Vergil's phraseology, in particular by 'horrenda' (507) and ‘decus Italiae’ (508). While the first points to her ability to inspire awe or to instil admiration, the latter, in the mouth of Turnus, designates her as one who is likely to bestow glory, honour and splendour upon her fatherland. Significant, too, is Turnus' reaction to Camilla's request; he invites her — not any of the other Italian leaders, be it noted — to share his task ('laborem', 510) and responsibility as commander ('ducis et tu concipe curam', 519). This is a great compliment indeed. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find all attention focused henceforth on Camilla, not on Turnus.

Next we hear her fascinating life-story, as told by Diana to the nymph Opis in Aen. 11.535–96, a story which not only considerably enhances Camilla's splendour, beauty and charm but also introduces the reader to the pastoral environment of her childhood, a world of wonder and fantasy. Her special relationship with Diana is stressed from the outset; there are also strong hints, however, about the futility of her joining the war. Camilla comes to the battlefield with Diana's weapons, the javelin, bow and arrow — woodland weapons not suitable as armour for a cruel war. Her tragic death is already foreshadowed by Diana's initial words: ‘... graditur bellum ad crudele Camilla,/o virgo, et nostris
nequiquam cingitur armis,/ cara mihi ante alias' (535–37). Noteworthy in particular is ‘nequiquam’ (536), a term also used to anticipate the tragic death of the equally promising Lausus.26

Diana’s story, which explains her deep affection for Camilla, runs as follows: Deposed from the throne and forced into exile on account of his subjects’ hatred, the result of his arrogant use of power, Camilla’s father, Metabus, fled from his city Privernum with his baby daughter as his sole companion. Hotly pursued by the Volscians, they eventually reached the overflowing Amasenus River. From fear for the life of his little companion, whom by his patria potestas27 he dedicated to the goddess Diana as her hand-maiden,28 Metabus tied Camilla to his spear and hurled it across the river. While being dedicated to the goddess, Camilla was holding Diana’s own weapon, a hunting-spear, as her first weapon (‘prima’ 558) — obviously a symbol of her devotion to the goddess of the hunt but perhaps a symbol also of her ‘future desire for strife and warfare for its own sake’.29 The infant’s miraculous rescue from the enemy and the seething river is vividly captured by lines 561–63:

‘dixit, et adducto contortum hastile lacerto
immittit: sonuere undae, rapidum super amnem
infelix fugit in iaculo stridente Camilla.’

The enemy now closing in in great numbers, her father swam to safety on the other side of the river, where he pulled the spear, with Camilla tied to it, from the ground. Cut off from civilized existence, Metabus spent his life in pastoral fashion, nursing his daughter on the milk of wild beasts and initiating her while still very young in the use of pastoral weapons. Instead of the clothes and ornaments customary for girls Camilla wore the skin of a tiger (573–77). Despite her pastoral background, Camilla, perhaps by the intriguing combination of rural simplicity with royal splendour, attracted many prospective suitors. Their attentions, however, were all unsuccessful. For, dedicated to Diana alone, she cherished her destiny as a warrior and a virgin, as indeed the goddess herself states: ‘... sola contenta Diana/ aeternum telorum et virginitatis amorem/ interemerata colit’ (582–84).

Camilla’s dedication to Diana and to virginity is itself in vain, however, for she is destined by fate to die. Diana’s final words clearly anticipate her impending doom but they also imply that she will meet death because of her deep-seated love for weapons (‘aeternum telorum . . . amorem’, 583) and her wanton rashness. Significant in this regard in particular is ‘lacessere’ (585), a term specially used of provoking either beast or man to fight.30 In other words, though doomed to death by fate, Camilla will largely contribute to her own downfall by her provocative behaviour. Nevertheless, as a devotee of Diana she will have her death avenged by the goddess’ own weapons — no matter who the agent — after which her body will be conveyed to her fatherland to be duly laid to rest there.31

We next meet Camilla on the battlefield (Aen. 11.648–724). Vergil’s picture of her aristeia is extraordinarily vivid. Here, in the words of Pöschl, ‘the full magnificence of the Italian strength is shown’.32 Amidst the fierce slaughter
Camilla, with one breast exposed, exults like an Amazon ('exsultat Amazon', 648), wreaking havoc with her golden bow, spear and battle-axe, this last being a weapon peculiar to the Amazons. All the while she is surrounded by her companions as an Amazon queen by her women, whether it be Hippolyte or Penthesilea (648–63).

By equating Camilla with an Amazon, Vergil significantly enhances his picture of this maiden warrior on the battlefield, a picture which is elaborated by his choice of words, both here and further on in the narrative. In this regard, 'exsultat' (648), 'spargens' (650), 'rapit' (651) and 'indefessa' (651) deserve particular note. Obviously these terms point to Camilla as an unting warrior attacking her enemies with every means at her disposal; they also, however, imply a deep-seated enjoyment of war for its own sake, an indulgence whose extreme form may well be the morbid thrill of unrestrained violence, an insight which is deftly caught in the epithet 'aspera' (664). On the battlefield Camilla therefore appears to be brave and energetic, but also impulsive, reckless, harsh, ferocious and ruthless, qualities well borne out by the fact that within the range of only thirty-three lines (666–98) she dispatches no fewer than eleven opponents.

This picture of Camilla as an impulsive, reckless, ferocious and ruthless warrior clearly tends to be a negative one, blurring to some extent the positive one drawn of her miraculous qualities and pastoral background. She is not only ferocious and ruthless on the battlefield, however; she is also vain and complacent, as is evident from her arrogant behaviour towards Ornytus, one of her victims. Like Camilla, be it noted, this warrior has a pastoral background. In fact, Ornytus comes to the war as a hunter with only a countryman's hunting-spear as his weapon, his shoulders clad in the skin of a bullock and his head protected by a wolf's face. Towering above her dying enemy, Camilla vaingloriously taunts Ornytus: 'advenit qui vestra dies muliebribus armis / verba redarguerit. nomen tam en haud leve patrum/ manibus hoc referes, telo cecidisse Camillae' (687–89).

Camilla's ferocity and ruthlessness are also well illustrated by the death of two more victims, Orsilochus and the son of Aunus. From the former she flees at first but, having in turn become the pursuer by foiling him, she eventually, untouched by his repeated pleas for mercy, kills him in cold blood with incessant blows of her battle-axe (696–98). In the next episode (699–724) it is the warrior son of Aunus, a Ligurian, that the ferocious and ruthless Camilla encounters. Alarmed at the sight of Camilla, he, true to his race, resorts to an ingenious trick, scornfully taunting and challenging the resolute princess: 'quid tam egregium, si femina fort/i fides equo? dimitte fugam et te comminus aequo/ mecum crede solo pugnaeque accinge pedestri:/ iam nosces ventosa ferat cui gloria fraudem' (705–708). The Ligurian's words, in particular the final line, are significant. The word 'gloria' in effect points to Camilla's vanity referred to above, since her glory is unfounded, as implied by 'ventosa'. Indeed, Camilla has all along been deceived by this insubstantial glory of hers, as is suggested by 'fraudem'.

Camilla's reaction to these scornful words epitomises her impetuous nature. Raving with fury, she unperturbedly ('interrita', 711) accepts the challenge and
while scorning her opponent, pursues the now fleeing Ligurian on foot. Darting forward like a flash (‘ignea’, 718), she soon overtakes him and takes her vengeance. Camilla’s state of mind is well rendered in three lines, the phraseology of which contributes much to Vergil’s picture of her behaviour on the battlefield (709–11). Striking in particular are ‘furens’ (709), ‘accensa’ (709) and ‘interrita’ (711), notably intensified by ‘ignea’ (718). Clearly ‘accensa’ and ‘ignea’ imply that fire is a symbol of Camilla’s ferocity. What is more, the fire image here is also indicative of her ‘furor’, as suggested by ‘furens’. From sheer indignation Camilla therefore rages like a devastating fire causing havoc everywhere. But ‘furens’ also implies that, raving like a wild animal Camilla is out of her mind and so behaves in an unnatural, irrational manner.

This picture of Camilla as a raving, ferocious warrior ruthlessly killing her enemy is rendered even more poignant by a magnificent simile, in which her activities on the battlefield are likened to those of a hawk overtaking and killing a dove (721–24):

‘quam facile accipiter saxo sacer ales ab alto
consequitur pennis sublimem in nube columbam
comprensamque tenet pedibusque eviscerat uncis;
tum cruor et vulsae labuntur ab aethere plumae.’

The significance of the simile is threefold. First, Camilla’s rapidity on the battlefield recalls that of a hawk swooping down upon its prey. Second, Camilla overtakes and kills her enemy as ravenously as a hawk, a bird noted for its rapacity. Third, Aunus’ son is no match for the ferocious, ruthless Camilla, just as a tender dove is not the equal of a ravenous hawk. Moreover, the entire scene is remarkably enlivened by the use of forceful language, such as ‘consequitur’ (722), ‘comprensamque’ (723), ‘eviscerat’ (723) and ‘vulsae’ (724), as well as by the predominance of blood in both descriptions. The ferocious Camilla takes vengeance ‘inimico ex sanguine’ (720); the rapacious hawk disembowels the dove, the result of which is: ‘tum cruor et vulsae labuntur ab aethere plumae’ (724).

Camilla’s death at the hand of the insignificant Arruns is the theme of the next episode (759–831). The killing of so promising a maiden by so unimportant a warrior comes of course as an anticlimax, notably intensifying the tragedy of the warrior princess who, though embodying the flower of Italy, is destined to die. Equally significant, to the same effect, is the fact that Arruns is a sneaker who, prowling round and doggedly following Camilla, carefully calculates the right opportunity to kill the maiden unobserved. The impending tragedy of Camilla gains in intensity, if one bears in mind that she is wholly unaware of Arruns’ tactics. In fact, captivated by the brilliant attire and armour of the seer Chlorerus, Camilla is completely heedless of the lurking killer. Her reaction to so much splendour accentuates characteristics already referred to above, in particular her rapacity, vanity and rashness. Fired by an inherent passion for plunder (‘femineo praedae et spoliorum ardebat amore’, 782) and lured by vanity (‘captivo . . . ut se ferret in auro’, 779), Camilla now acts in an indiscriminate manner (‘caeca’, 781),

62
becoming reckless (‘incauta’, 781) and so storming blindly into the fray. It is this very rashness that offers Arruns the opportunity of casting his spear unnoticed and hitting Camilla (who has been quite unaware of the flying weapon).

As soon as Camilla is fatally struck, her companions rush to her aid, while Arruns, no longer able to rely on his spear or to face Camilla’s weapons, flees in fear mingled with exultation. This un gallant behaviour the poet forcibly impresses upon the reader by comparing Arruns to a wolf which, having killed a shepherd or a bullock, cowardly hides in the mountains, knowing well that he has done wrong (806–15). Camilla’s reaction, on the other hand, is typical of her impulsive, impetuous nature. Dying she tugs at the spear and, when she realizes that her end is near, she gives her last command, to be noted, to Turnus through her companion Acca: to take her place and ward the Trojans from the city (820–27).

Vergil’s description of the dying Camilla is indeed a dramatic and pathetic one, the pathos of the entire scene being echoed by the brilliantly effective phraseology of these lines: ‘illa manu moriens telum trahit, ossa sed inter/ ferreus ad costas alto stat vulnere mucro./ labitur exsanguis, labuntur frigida leto/ lumina, purpureus quandam color ora reliquit’ (816–19). A striking passage, and a fine display of Vergil’s poetic genius. The structure, tone and language of these lines make for vivid description, at the same time adding largely to the intensity of the scene. The following features in particular are noteworthy here. The futility of Camilla’s attempt to rid herself of the deadly weapon is forcibly suggested by the alliteration in ‘manu moriens’ (816) and in ‘telum trahit’ (816). Moreover, the pathetic repetition in ‘labitur...labuntur’ (817) helps to give a highly graphic description of how Camilla, bereft of her earlier vitality by bleeding to death (‘exsanguis’, 818), collapses in the arms of her companions. Lastly, the monosyllabic ‘stat’ (817) suggests the inevitability of Camilla’s death, a suggestion intensified by the seeming contrast between the cold, fixed gaze of death (‘frigida leto/lumina’, 818–19) and the freshness and vigour of life (‘purpureus...color’, 819), of which now she is almost wholly deprived (‘reliquit’, 819).

To this extraordinarily vivid picture a final touch is added in a passage that gives us yet another glimpse of Camilla as an energetic and gallant warrior. The phraseology of this passage graphically portrays her reluctance to leave life (827–31):

‘... simul his dictis linquebat habenas
ad terram non sponte fluens. tum frigida toto
paulatim exsolvit se corpore, lentaque colla
et captum leto posuit caput, arma relinquens,
vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.’

Camilla’s reluctance to succumb to death is suggested in particular by ‘non sponte’ (828) and to a lesser degree by ‘cum gemitu’ (831), but also by the prominently placed ‘vita’ (831), qualified by the significant ‘indignata’ (831), a term that tends to imply that Camilla’s spirit protests against the prospect of leaving her body. Conducive to the same general effect is ‘paulatim’ (829), which
clearly points to the intricate disentangling after death of the life or soul from the
body, with which it is conceived to be closely intertwined. Finally, the
preponderance of spondees in the above lines also evokes her slow struggle to
hold on to life. The overall impression is that, though breathing her last, Camilla
still displays a remnant of the vigour and ferocity that marked her life.

Her tragic death calls forth tremendous reaction from both sides, a fact which
in itself strengthens her image considerably. First there is a combined onslaught
on the Italians by the Trojans with their Etruscan and Arcadian allies. Next Opsis,
looking at the dead Camilla, bursts into a lament which not only emphasizes the
tragedy of Camilla but also points to the futility of war: 'heu nimium, virgo,
nimium crudele luisti/ supplicium Teucros conata lacessere bello!/ nec tibi
desertae in dumis coluisse Dianam/ profuit aut nostras umero gessisse pharetras'
(841–44). Camilla’s devotion to Diana has therefore been all in vain; yet there is
one consolation: her death will not be without honour. On the contrary, it will
ensure her fame throughout the world. It will also be avenged, which in fact
soon happens when Arruns, traced and pierced through with an arrow by Opsis, is
left behind in an unknown place by his unconcerned companions (865–66).

To the Italians Camilla’s death comes as a severe blow, not only causing
tremendous disaster but also accentuating the immense value she had had for her
side. In fact, her death is immediately followed by utter chaos, uncertainty and
demoralisation amongst the ranks of the Italians, now hard pressed by the
charging Trojans and their confederates. The total disorder is vividly depicted:
‘Prima fugit domina amissa levis ala Camillae,/ turbati fugiunt Rutuli, fugit acer
Atinas,/ disiectique duces desolatique manipli/ tuta petunt et equis aversi ad
moenia tendunt’ (868–71). Amidst this confusion the now victorious Trojans
ruthlessly attack, some entering the city together with the Italian fugitives and
wreaking havoc within the city-walls. Meanwhile the Italians are killed on the
very threshold of their gates, within their paternal city-walls; yes, even within the
protection of their own homes (881–83). At last the situation becomes so
precarious that citizens slaughter fellow-citizens, as ‘miserrima caedes’ (885)
clearly implies.

This grim picture of a pitiless carnage closes with a touching scene that focuses
on the role of the Italian mothers, a picture which is obviously, though indirectly,
instrumental in showing us the positive side of Camilla’s character. Emulating her
bravery, and stirred by true patriotism, these women fight from the walls with
whatever is to hand, eager to be the first to sacrifice their lives for their
city (891–95):

‘ipsae de muriis summo certamine matres
(monstrat amor verus patriae, ut videre Camillam)
tela manu trepidae iaciunt ac robore duro
stipitibus ferrum sudibusque imitatur obustis
praecipites, primaque mori pro moenibus ardent.’

The conduct of the mothers recalls that of Camilla. Notable in particular are their
enthusiasm and their exultation, as suggested by ‘trepidae’ (893) and ‘praecipites’
But Camilla's tragic fate also deeply affects Turnus. As soon as the report of her death, the disastrous defeat of the Italians and the chaos and panic in the city reaches him, Turnus, fired by his 'furor' ('furens', 901) and compelled by Jupiter's will, leaves the woodland, resolved to meet the enemy (901–902).

Let us now, in résumé, briefly assess Vergil's picture of this maiden warrior. Camilla clearly emerges from our analysis as an extraordinarily complex character, uniting in herself a rich diversity of apparently contradictory qualities. It is, however, precisely this variety of qualities constituting the paradoxical nature of her character that makes her such an intriguing personality. It should be noted, first of all, that she joins the battle not only as an exile but also as a princess and a shepherdess. Her descent therefore is royal, her background pastoral. In other words, Camilla represents both royal splendour and rural simplicity. In addition, she is no ordinary woman but a warrior ('bellatrix'), so lavishly endowed with exceptional charm, splendour and vigour that she both instils admiration and causes amazement. She appears, in short, to be the very embodiment of youthful grace, freshness and vigour — a young woman most likely to secure glory and honour for her fatherland.

This very positive picture of Camilla's character is enhanced by the romantic touch added to it by Diana's fascinating story about her pastoral background. At the same time it is considerably marred by the goddess' prediction that Camilla is destined to die. This no doubt anticipates the tragedy of Camilla's death at the hand of Arruns but it also remarkably intensifies it, in particular if one bears in mind the seeming paradox that a young life so full of promise has to be sacrificed prematurely for what appears to be a senseless cause. Surely the apparent futility of war is already intimated here.

Vergil's portrayal of Camilla's behaviour on the battlefield forms a marked contrast with the bright picture drawn of her romantic pastoral environment. Undoubtedly the battle scenes also, though indirectly rather than directly, point to some aspects of her character. Camilla impresses us from the outset by her courage, aggressiveness and vigorous leadership, fighting like an Amazon in the thick of the fray. But hers is an impetuous nature. Fired by this very impetuosity, she behaves impulsively and recklessly, in this manner clearly endangering the cause of the Italians. Further she is cruel, rapacious and ruthless, as is illustrated both by her behaviour towards fallen enemies and by the comparison that likens her to a hawk. Camilla's cruelty and ruthlessness appear to be the natural outcome of an inherent love of violence for the sake of violence, as may be inferred from the epithets applied to her. In this regard, 'horrenda' (11.507), 'aspera' (11.664), 'furens' (11.709,762), 'accensa' (11.709) and 'ignea' (11.718) deserve particular note. Also part and parcel of her character, and obviously strengthening its negative side, is Camilla's insatiable vanity, as is evident not only from her taunt to Ornytus (11.687–89) but also from her ardent desire to
parade herself (11.779). Finally, Camilla apparently lacks civilization, thus forming the exact opposite of Aeneas, whose specific mission it is to establish an ordered, civilized life. In this regard Wittenberg aptly observes: 'By bringing out her lack of civilization and her love of violence, Vergil showed that a person such as she could never become part of the civilization Aeneas was to found.'

In conclusion, it remains an open question whether Vergil envisaged Camilla as a major character in his epic. That she is, however, one of his most interesting, fascinating and finely portrayed personalities is beyond dispute. The fact that she displays both positive and negative qualities surely adds to her fascination rather than detracts from it. But she is also an irredeemably tragic personality. By her tragedy, rendered so poignant by the very paradox of her nature mentioned earlier, Vergil intended not only to remind the Romans of 'the tremendous cost of Italy' but intended also, I for my part firmly believe, to stress the futility of war as a mere means to an end, however noble that end may prove to be.

NOTES

1. I am indebted to my colleague, Mrs. E. van Zyl Smé, and to the anonymous referees for valuable suggestions on this article. Quotations from the Aeneid follow the text of R.A.B. Mynors, P. Vergili Maronis Opera (OCT), Oxford 1969.

2. Aen. 1.33.

3. Regarding the premature death of Marcellus and heroes such as Pallas, Lausus, Euryalus and Camilla, Brooks Otis, Virgil. A Study in Civilized Poetry, Oxford 1964, 303, observes: 'The ordeal of empire is based on sacrifice, especially sacrifice of the young.' See also W.Y. Sellar, The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age. Virgil, Oxford 1897, 391, who maintains that 'the chief source of interest in the Virgilian battle-pieces is the pathetic sympathy awakened for the untimely death of some of the nobler personages of the story'. Elsewhere (p. 417) Sellar refers to Vergil's 'tender compassion for the beauty of youth perishing prematurely'.


7. Otis (above, n. 3) 364.

8. C.J. Fordyce, P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Libri VII–VIII, edited by John D. Christie, Oxford University Press 1977, 201 (on Aen. 7.803ff.). It is a matter of dispute whether Camilla is indeed one of Vergil's major characters. While J.J. Jolin, CB 25 (Jan. 1949) 29, considers her to be Vergil's greatest female character, Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 71 n. 15, opposing Jolin's view, calls her 'a minor character' (p. 69). Again, Constantinides (above, n. 4) 5 holds that Camilla's figure is 'among the most splendid and most finely drawn in the second half of the Aeneid'.

9. In Greek mythology Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, came to the aid of Troy after the death of Hector but was finally slain by Achilles. See F. Schwenn, 'Penthesileia', RE Suppl. 7 (1940) 868–75.


13. On Harpylie, see Eitrem, *Harpyke*, *RE* 7 (1912) 2401–2404. Cf. also the remarks of Gransden (above, n. 11) 189–190. It is interesting to note that in *Aen.* 11.675 a certain Harpylieus is presented as one of Camilla’s victims.


18. See Fowler (above, n. 17) 86. Cf. Poschl (above, n. 6) 198 u. 18; Kenneth Quinn, *Virgil’s Aeneid: A Critical Description*, London 1968, 188; Constantinides (above, n. 4) 5.


20. Poschl (above, n. 6) 169.

21. See above, n. 19.

22. Cf. Small (above, n. 4) 297; Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 11; Quinn (above, n. 18) 245.

23. On this meaning of ‘horrendus’, see ThLL 6,3,2982, lines 6–36; cf. *Page ad loc.*; Quinn *ibid.* (‘the daring epithet horrenda’).


25. As has been noted by Quinn (above, n. 18) 245–246.

26. Of Lausus ‘nequiquam’ is used in *Aen.* 7.652. See Fordyce (above, n. 8) 180 (on 7.652) for interesting remarks on this ‘pathetic adverb’.

27. As implied by the emphatic ‘ipse pater’ (558). See Servius on 11.558; *Page ad loc.*


29. See above, n. 19.

30. See Gransden (above, n. 11) 187–190.

31. As implied by the emphatic ‘ipse pater’ (558). See Servius on 11.558; *Page ad loc.*

32. As Small (above, n. 4) 297, puts it. Note, however, that Small makes this point on the basis of Camilla’s being tied to a spear. See also *Page* 394 (on 11.558); Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 71, who quotes Small.

33. See ThLL 5,1,236.66–237.26. *Page* 395 (on 11.584) remarks: ‘aciesere s is specially used of provoking either beast or man to fight, and emphasizes the wanton rashness of Camilla.’

34. Diana expressly states to Opis: ‘post ego nube cava miserandae corpus et arma / inspoliata feram tumulo patriaeque reponam’ (593–94). Quoting *Aen.* 6.229 (‘tum membra toro defleta repouunt’), *Page* 395 (on 11.594), comments: ‘pono and its components are regularly used of the reverent disposal of the dead.’ The prefix ‘re’ is as important as ‘pono’, as has been noted by *Page* (on 3.170).

35. Poschl (above, n. 6) 118.

36. The ‘bipennis’, a two-edged axe, was specially used by the Amazons in battle. Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 4.4.7 (‘Amazonia securis’); Ovid *Her.* 4.117 (‘secuirigamrae pellas’); Kappes, Ladewig-Schaper-Deuticke on 11.656.

37. Note the force of ‘rapit’ (651) but in particular of ‘exsultat’ (648). On ‘ex(s)dueto’, see ThLL 5,2,1951, lines 44–73, and on ‘rapio’, OLD fasc. 7,1573–1574. These terms are also used of Turmas, e.g. ‘exsultat’ (11.491), ‘raptas’ (12.330) and ‘spargit’ (12.339).

38. *Page* 401 (on 11.705) notes the ‘scornful alliteration’ in ‘femina forti/ fidis’ (705–706). The triple alliteration of ‘f’ is significant because the Romans regarded ‘f’ as a very ugly sound (Quint. *Inst.* 12.10.28–29; Cic. *Orat.* 163). Though Vergil usually avoided the sound (Macr. *Sat.* 6.1.9), he
used alliterations of it for a savage effect (e.g. 4.218.603; 12.573).

36. Page, *ad loc.*, observes that 'ventosus' is a word specially used of something that is 'puffed up but without solid worth'. For a similar use of 'ventosus', cf. *Aen.* 11.390 (of Drances' speech). See also *OLD* fasc. 8.2031, s.v. *ventosus*.


38. For the association of 'furo' and 'furor' with fire and wild animals, see *ThLL* 6,1,1624, lines 68–76; 1624.81–1625.5; 1632, lines 52–62.

39. Of Arruns it is stated: 'qua se cumque furens medio tulit agmine virgo,/ hac Arruns subit et tacitus vestigias lustrat;/ qua victrix redit ilia pedemque ex hoste reportat,/ hac iuvenis furtim ceteris detorquet habenas' (762–65).

40. On 'purpureus' as indicative of youthful freshness and vigour, see *OLD* fasc. 6.1524; also Austin's significant note (on 1.591) that it implies 'the bright glow of youth and health' (p. 186). Cf. also the remarks by Ladewig-Schaper-Deuticke, Kappes and Page, *ad loc.*, on this scene.


42. As stated by Page 408 (on 11.829).

43. In lines 845–47 we read: 'non tamen indecorem tua te regina reliquit/ extrema iam in morte, neque hoc sine nomine letum/ per gentis erit . . .' Page 410 (on 11.885) remarks: 'The slaughter is “most pitiable” because it is of citizens by citizens.'

44. On the behaviour of the mothers, see Page 411 (on 11.895); in particular J. Zarker, 'Vergil's Trojan and Italian Matres', *Vergilius* 24 (1978) 15–24.

45. In *Aen.* 11.709 Camilla is 'accensa', and in 11.782 it is said that she 'femineo praedae et spoliorum ardebat amore'. It is the image of fire that is recalled by 'accensa' and 'ardebat'.


47. Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 70; Small (above, n. 4) 71.


49. Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 71.

50. Wittenberg (above, n. 4) 70; Small (above, n. 4) 299. See also Otis (above, n. 3) 303; Sellar (above, n. 3) 391.
Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

For further information go to:
http://www.casa-kvsca.org.za/acta_classica.htm