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## REVIEW

### **Aaron M. Seider, *Memory in Vergil's Aeneid*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 229**

*Fiachra Mac Góráin*  
*University College London*

This book is based on the author's doctoral thesis, written at the University of Chicago, and revised in communion with the Bochum-Texas *Memoria Romana* project. It confirms memory in the *Aeneid* as a fertile transverse topic which implicates narratology, characterization, rhetoric and the emotions, as well as historical and ideological matters. Poetic memory is glanced at, but regrettably only in passing (e.g. p. 6, n. 21). I found the book substantially convincing in its main argument that 'memory in the *Aeneid* acts as a social and narrative mechanism for integrating a traumatic past with an uncertain future' (4): memory *acts*, sometimes with unstoppable momentum, while characters remember, often with tendentious selectivity. Sometimes Aeneas can direct memory, but sometimes it impels *him* (see e.g. 184-193 on the death of Turnus). The five main chapters concern (1) turning to Rome; (2) dealing with memories of Troy; (3) Aeneas' and Dido's relationship; (4) apostrophes to the dead and dying by the narrator and his characters; and (5) memory in *Aeneid* 12, culminating in a reading of the epic's closing scene. Concepts drawn from more or less recent studies of memory are used to analyze passages from the *Aeneid* in which characters or the narrator himself either remember the past or look forward to how they imagine the present will be remembered. The main memory concepts are individual and social memory (and the interdependence between these two), and the creation of an oikotype, a standardized version of a community's past on which its members agree. Memory is malleable, rhetorically manipulated for the needs of the moment, and when these needs change or conflict with others' needs, then the memory may change, or there is disagreement about what the authoritative version should be.

Thus, it is argued, Aeneas's auspicious replacement of Celaeno with Anchises as the author of the table-eating prophecy is an unconscious distortion, if not a plain fabrication (28-31, 40-6); Aeneas privileges a pro-Trojan interpretation of the pictures on Dido's temple because he needs to (82-6); for similar reasons Aeneas seduces Dido with pitiable memories (101-7); Dido initially fosters memories that establish warm relations between herself and Aeneas, only to end up competing bitterly with him about how their affair will be remembered (111-21); a series of different characters (and also the narrator) voice diverging visions of how Nisus and Euryalus, Pallas and Lausus will be remembered, depending on the speaker's emotional standpoint at the time (140-54).

S. proposes to advance on previous scholarship on his subject, most notably Quint, who 'sets too strict an opposition between remembering and forgetting' (2). Sure enough, it emerges that memory in the *Aeneid* involves a calculated blend of remembering, refashioning, overwriting, and forgetting, rather than any outright choice between preservation and oblivion. Arguably this does reformulate Quint's 'repetition with a difference', but the emphasis is on the act of memory and on producing a version of the past which is useful for the future, rather than on the narrative structure. So, for example, Aeneas's 'terque quaterque beati' speech looks to how the Trojans will be remembered in the future, as well as back to the Trojan War (77-8); the emphasis on memory in Evander's tour of Pallanteum suggests that Rome too 'might have some mnemonic connections with the Trojan past' (55); contrary to most scholars' readings, S. argues that Aeneas finds some value for Helenus and Andromache in their static commemoration of Troy at Buthrotum, even though he distances himself from it (86-92); and he instructs Ascanius not to forget Trojan values in the future (161-7), even as Juno militates to consign Troy to oblivion (171-8). Aeneas and the narrator are complicit in establishing the *Lusus Troiae* as a commemorative ritual practised in Augustan Rome, a social memory that the poem's readers can enjoy of the games' origins (136). Here as elsewhere, the usefulness of troubled recent history for Virgil's readers remains on the margins of S.'s discussion (16-20). The reader is left to wonder whether the characters' memory negotiations offer hope for the uncertain future of the Augustan principate after the trauma of the civil wars.

A great strength of Quint's reading is his integration of the ubiquitous Homeric allusion into a Freudian narratological model which has points of reference in Roman history. S. is perfectly aware that many episodes in the *Aeneid* replay the Trojan past (e.g. 51, n. 72, 178, n. 63 and throughout), and he does invoke contrasts and comparisons with Homer at appropriate points (e.g. Helen's amnesiac drug, 80-1; Priam's appeal to Achilles to remember Peleus, 180-1); but to my mind he vastly underplays the literary and rhetorical potential of his subject by not considering focalized reminiscences of Homeric or cyclic epic as acts of memory. These would have fit well with and enriched the book, as the allusions are often emotionally charged and sometimes hotly contested plot-drivers, whether spoken by a divine or human character, or by the narrator himself.

While I was persuaded by much of this book's contents, I found the writing difficult to follow: the prose is energetic but too often obscure. Clearer and more crafted argumentation would have been in order, especially in the transitions between abstract discussion and textual application. This said, S. sheds welcome new light on his subject.