

VERG. AEN. 4.215–217  
AENEAS *EFFEMINATUS*\*

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Aeneid 4 is concerned with Aeneas' and Dido's love story that does not have a happy ending. The tragic outcome of this story begins with Iarbas' bitter complaint to Jupiter (Aen. 4.198–218) after which Jupiter sends Mercury to Aeneas with the order to leave Carthage without delay. Iarbas' complaint ends with scornful and pejorative insults at the Trojan prince's appearance which scholars rightly argue that they reflect the attitudes the Romans had for the odd and effeminate easterners.<sup>1</sup> This short note aims to display that Verg. Aen. 4.215–217 are based on Hom. Il. 3.39–45 and 52–57,<sup>2</sup> suggesting also that the portrayal of Aeneas' effeminate appearance and behaviour is used to define, by contrast, the masculine hero who is not the lover but the warrior.

Raged by the rumours that have been spread out by *Fama* (*rumore accensus amaro* Aen. 4.203), Libyan Iarbas prays to his father Jupiter to punish Dido for her ingratitude (cf. Aen. 4.198–218), laying also pejorative charges against Aeneas:<sup>3</sup>

*et nunc ille Paris cum semiuiro comitatu,  
Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem  
subnexus, rapto potitur:*

(Aen. 4.215–217)

The phrase *ille Paris* recalls the corresponding *ille Aeneas* which has been found earlier at Aeneas' first meeting with Dido (*tunc ille Aeneas quem Dardanio An-*

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1) Cf. R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus with a Commentary*, Oxford 1955, 125; C. A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1999, 146; K. MacLennan, *Virgil. Aeneid IV* edited with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary, Bristol 2007, 106; J. J. O'Hara, *Virgil. Aeneid Book 4*, Newburyport 2012, 44 and J. J. O'Hara, *Commentary Aeneid 4*, in: R. T. Ganiban (ed.), *Virgil. Aeneid Books 1–6*, Indianapolis / Cambridge, Mass. 2012, 337–338.

2) Cf. A. S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos. Liber Quartus*, Cambridge, Mass. 1935, 234–235 and G. N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer*, Göttingen 1964, 386.

3) Cf. J. M. Seo, *Exemplary Traits. Reading Characterisation in Roman Poetry*, Oxford 2013, 50.

*chisae / alma Venus Phrygii genuit Simoentis ad undam?* Aen. 1.617–618).<sup>4</sup> However, Iarbas' words have a pejorative force. The Libyan king describes Aeneas as an 'alter Paris' followed by eunuchs (*cum semiuuro comitatu*), wearing a bonnet (*mitra*)<sup>5</sup> that emphatically brings to mind the feminine clothes<sup>6</sup> and having pomaded hair (*crinemque madentem*) that constitutes a striking charge of effeminacy.<sup>7</sup> This characterisation comes to its end with the charge that Aeneas has stolen (seduced) Dido from Iarbas. In other words, Iarbas identifies Aeneas with Paris<sup>8</sup> laying special emphasis on the fact that both Trojan princes are effeminate and seducers.<sup>9</sup>

Aeneas' effeminate behaviour is further evidenced by Turnus who prepares himself for the battle boasting of his courage and censuring the Trojan prince for his feminine appearance:<sup>10</sup>

[...] *da sternere corpus  
loricamque manu ualida lacerare reuulsam  
seuiuiri Phrygis et foedare in puluere crinis  
uibratos calido ferro murraque madentis.*

(Aen. 12.97–100)

4) Cf. Serv. Aen. 1.617 *tunc ille aeneas et hoc admiratiuum, non interrogatiuum*. See also Seo (n. 3 above) 43 and 51.

5) Cf. M. Griffith, What does Aeneas look like?, CPh 80, 1985, 315 who argues that the *mitra* is associated with the iconography of Trojan Paris from the fifth-century Athenian stage and vase painting. See also J. D. Reed, Virgil's Gaze. Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid, Princeton 2007, 85 and Seo (n. 3 above) 51.

6) Cf. Serv. Aen. 4.216 *rum tegimen. sane quibus effeminatio crimini datur, etiam mitra eis adscribebatur: multa enim lectio mitras proprie meretricum esse docet*.

7) Cf. Seo (n. 3 above) 51.

8) For the association of Aeneas and Paris in the *Aeneid* cf. Aen. 7.321 *quin idem Veneri partus suus et Paris alter*, 363–364 *at non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor, / Ledaeamque Helenam Troianas uexit ad urbes?* and 9.138–139 *coniuge praerepta; nec solos tangit Atridas / iste dolor, solisque licet capere arma Mycenis*. See also F. Della Corte, Perfidus hospes, in: J. Bibauw (ed.), Hommages à Marcel Rénard I (Collection Latomus 101), Brussels 1969, 319–321 and N. M. Horsfall, Virgil. Aeneid 7. A Commentary, Leiden 2000 ad loc.

9) Cf. Williams (n. 1 above) 145–147 who also observes that here Vergil employs the motif of the womanish womanizer.

10) Cf. also Aen. 9.614–617 *uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis, / desidia cordi, iuuat indulgere choreis, / et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae. / o uere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per alta*, where Turnus' brother-in-law Remulus Numanus criticises Trojans for their feminine appearance focusing on the colour saffron (*uobis picta croco et fulgenti murice uestis*) which is related to women, on the long-sleeved tunic (*tunicae manicas*) which is for foreigners and women and on the bonnet (*habent redimicula mitrae*) which comes with ribbons of feminine head-dress. See P. R. Hardie, Virgil. Aeneid Book IX, Cambridge 1994, 195 with further bibliography.

Turnus' phrase *semmiuri Phrygis* recalls the corresponding *cum semiuuro comitatu* used by Iarbas openly and pejoratively referring to Aeneas' effeminate and thus unheroic behaviour, since by calling the Trojan leader "eunuch" ("not man") essentially he accuses him of cowardice.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the expression *crinis ... murraque madentis* corresponds to *crinemque madentem* which constitutes a traditional sign of effeminacy,<sup>12</sup> although Turnus moves one step further with the insult *uibratos calido ferro* thereby implying that Aeneas similarly to women curls his hair. Most significant, however, is the *et foedare in puluere crinis* that may practically imply a rape,<sup>13</sup> because fouled hair associated with an ignoble death contains overtones of sexual violence, thereby confirming Turnus' pejorative references to Aeneas' effeminate behaviour.

These charges (effeminacy and seduction of women) recall the epic tradition and especially Homer's *Iliad* where Hector angrily reproaches Paris for leaving the battlefield in order to avoid single combat with Menelaus:

Δύσπαρι εἶδος ἄριστε γυναιμανὲς ἠπεροπευτὰ  
αἴθ' ὄφελος ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι·  
καὶ κε τὸ βουλοῖμην, καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν  
ἢ οὐτῶ λώβην τ' ἔμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων.  
Ἴη που καρχαλόωσι κάρη κομώωντες Ἀχαιοὶ  
φάντες ἀριστήα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὐνεκα καλὸν  
εἶδος ἔπ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδὲ τις ἀλκή.  
(II. 3.39–45)

οὐκ ἂν δὴ μείνεις ἀρηΐφιλον Μενέλαον;  
γνοίης χ' οἴου φωτὸς ἔχεις θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν·  
οὐκ ἂν τοι χαράισμη κίθαρὶς τὰ τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης  
ἦ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὅτ' ἐν κονίησι μιγείης.  
Ἄλλὰ μάλα Τρῶες δειδῆμονες ἦ τέ κεν ἦδη  
λαΐνον ἔσσο χιτῶνα κακῶν ἔνεχ' ὅσσα ἔοργας.  
(II. 3.52–57)

These verses stress the expectation that physical beauty should be closely associated with other masculine characteristics<sup>14</sup> such as strength and courage which are entirely absent from Paris.<sup>15</sup> Hector ironically calls his brother εἶδος ἄριστε, arguing

11) Cf. C. Ransom, *Effeminacy and Masculinity in the Iliad*, Antichthon 45, 2011, 36.

12) Cf. Cic. In Pison. 25 *erant illi compti capilli et madentes cincinnorum fimbriae et fluentes purpurissataeque buccae, dignae Capua, sed illa uetere*. See also Seo (n. 3 above) 53.

13) Cf. Reed (n. 5 above) 87. See also Seo (n. 3 above) 53–54.

14) Cf. Ransom (n. 11 above) 42.

15) Cf. II. 3.30–37 Τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησεν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδῆς / ἐν προμάχοισι φανέντα, κατεπλήγη φίλον ἦτορ, / ἄψ δ' ἐτάρων εἰς ἔθνος ἐχάζετο κῆρ' ἀλεείνων. / Ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τε δράκοντα ἰδὼν παλινόρσος ἀπέστη / οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησιν, ὑπὸ τε τρόμος ἔλλαβε γυῖα, / ἄψ δ' ἀνεχώρησεν, ὠχρὸς τέ μιν εἶλε παρειάς, / ὡς αὐτίς καθ'

that Paris' beauty does not combine with the traditional masculine features of βίη and ἀλκή and hence can imply an unheroic behaviour. Moreover, γυναιμανές and ἡπεροπευτά are insults referring to Paris' relation with women.<sup>16</sup> Most significant, however, is that Paris is set against a "real" man by implication (i. e. Menelaus) and that the lyre or his physical beauty (especially his hair) will not help him in the battlefield.

Having examined Aeneas' and Paris' effeminacy in the above Vergilian and Homeric passages, we may now consider if there is an intertextual relationship between Aen. 4.215–217 and Il. 3.39–45 and 52–57. The criticisms on Aeneas and Paris do not come from the narrator but from a third character (Iarbas and Hector) who aims to insult Aeneas' and Paris' effeminate appearance and behaviour. Both Iarbas and Hector lay special emphasis on Aeneas' and Paris' coiffure (i. e. *Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem / subnexus* – ἦ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος ὅτ' ἐν κόνιησι μιγείης) and on the fact that both Trojan leaders are seducers of women (i. e. *raptō potitur* – ἡπεροπευτά). More than that, both Iarbas and Hector obliquely refer to Aeneas' and Paris' effeminate behaviour (i. e. *cum semiuero comitatu* – γνοίης χ' οἴου φωτὸς ἔχεις θαλερὴν παράκοιτιν), while the expression *ille Paris* explicitly associates the Vergilian Aeneas with the Homeric Paris. However, Hector is familiar with Paris' appearance and behaviour in contrast to Iarbas who has never seen Aeneas and thus the accusations of effeminacy and seduction are certainly unfounded and they recall the prejudiced stereotype which the Romans had for the obnoxious easterners.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, these accusations have never been corroborated by Vergil in the *Aeneid*,<sup>18</sup> thereby confirming that Aen. 4.215–217 combine false rumours and prejudiced views on Aeneas and most importantly that Iarbas 'is reading' Homer or in other words is based on Homer's *Iliad* in order to describe Aeneas' effeminate appearance and behaviour.

To sum up, Iarbas' pejorative charges (Aen. 4.215–217) against Aeneas (effeminate behaviour and seduction of Dido) are based on Hector's analogous censure

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ὄμιλον ἔδω Τρώων ἀγερῶχων / δείσας Ἀτρεὺς υἱὸν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδής where Paris is terrified at the sight of Menelaus. See also G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary*. Volume I, Books 1–4, Cambridge 1985 ad loc.

16) See also M. Krieter-Spiro, *Homer's Iliad. The Basel Commentary*. Book III, Berlin / Boston 2015, 30 who argues that Hector does not reproach Paris only for his fundamental behaviour (γυναιμανές) but also because he acts on it. Cf. S. Koster, *Die Invective in der griechischen und römischen Literatur*, Meisenheim am Glan 1980, 49.

17) Cf. Pease (note 2 above) ad loc. See also Griffith (n. 5 above) 315.

18) Cf. also Aen. 4.261–264 *atque illi stellatus iaspide fulua / ensis erat Tyrioque ardebat murice laena / demissa ex umeris, diues quae munera Dido / fecerat, et tenui telas discreuerat auro* where Aeneas is dressed out with a luxurious garment offered to him by Dido, thereby adopting oriental customs which have negative associations for the Romans. In other words, Aeneas' oriental behaviour is incongruous with the Roman virtues and is criticised by the narrator. See Austin (n. 1 above) ad loc. and T. Schmit-Neuerburg, *Vergils Aeneis und die antike Homerexegese*, Berlin / New York 1999, 119.

of Paris (Il. 3.39–45 and 52–57).<sup>19</sup> The Libyan prince overtly identifies Aeneas with Paris (*ille Paris*) and hence Dido with Helen<sup>20</sup> implying in that way that the Carthaginian queen is similarly to the Spartan queen adulterous.<sup>21</sup> These analogies can also identify Iarbas with Hector who are not only the censorious characters, but also the masculine heroes in emphatic contrast to the effeminate cowards Aeneas and Paris. In conclusion, Iarbas' charges against Aeneas are not only an insult based on envy for Dido; but it also constitutes the way with which Iarbas identifies himself with a masculine hero, thereby reminding to Jupiter that Aeneas is the type of warrior whose conquests are over women (cf. Aen. 4.219–237 where Jupiter sends Mercury to Aeneas in order to remind the Trojan leader of his mission which demands masculine warrior ethos).

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19) Cf. Pease (note 2 above) 234–235 and G.N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer*, Göttingen 1964, 386.

20) Dido and Helen are both queens who offer hospitality to a Trojan prince, their husbands are absent (Menelaus is away on Crete and Sychaeus is dead) and they are women who are torn between their love for their guest and the need to preserve their conjugal faith. Cf. A. N. Michalopoulos, *Ovid Heroides 16 and 17*. Introduction, Text and Commentary, Cambridge 2006, 13–14.

21) Cf. Hom. Il. 6.345–351 ὡς μ' ὄφελ' ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ / οἴχεσθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα / εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, / ἔνθά με κῦμ' ἀπόρσε πάρος τάδε ἔργα γενέσθαι. / Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάδε γ' ὦδε θεοὶ κακὰ τεκμήραντο, / ἀνδρὸς ἔπειτ' ὄφελλον ἀμείνωνος εἶναι ἄκοιτις, / ὅς ἤδη νέμεσίν τε καὶ αἴσχεα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων where Helen admits that she is also responsible for her love affair with Paris.