

THE DEER HUNTER: A PORTRAIT OF AENEAS

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The theme of hunting occurs throughout the *Aeneid* at strategic points to link specific events and foreshadow certain outcomes. Many scholars have noted the increasingly ominous nature of hunting in the epic: from Aeneas's first hunt in book one to provide food for his people, through Ascanius's trophy hunt that sparks the war in Italy, to Aeneas's final vengeful hunting of Turnus. But as far as the protagonist Aeneas is concerned it is specifically through acts of deer hunting that an increasing lack of feeling in his character comes to light. In this paper I will argue that, through recurring instances of deer hunting, both literal and symbolic, a gradual desensitization of Aeneas is revealed. This prepares the reader for his final act in the epic: his killing of Turnus in book twelve, an unnecessary act that strips him of the qualities of *pietas* so abundantly attributed to him throughout the work.

‘...whatever reputation hunting may have in Roman culture at large, in the *Aeneid* it turns out to be an ominous motif’ (Lyne 1987:198)

In one of the early scenes of the Academy Award winning film *The deer hunter* (EMI 1978), starring Robert De Niro as the protagonist Michael, a couple of carefree, boisterous and somewhat immature friends go deer hunting for the last time before three members of the group will leave for military service in Vietnam. They are drinking and laughing and the hunting itself seems to be little more than a pastime — Michael seems to be the only serious hunter and capable shot. He follows the policy of ‘one shot’ — you do not need more than one to bring down a deer and he never takes a second shot. During their time in Vietnam the three rookies experience the reality of war in all its cruelty and disregard for human life. Michael is the one who stays calm and rational amidst the atrocities. He talks his terrified friends through a compulsory round of Russian roulette — the better alternative to an assured shot by their captors — and he carries the wounded Steven to safety. Steven returns from the war as a triple amputee and severely emotionally scarred. Nick, Michael's closest friend, is presumed to have died, but when evidence turns up that he is still alive, Michael returns to Vietnam only to witness him dying in a voluntary game of Russian roulette. The experiences of the war have driven him insane. Only Michael is able to resume his old life, more or less in tact but a changed man. This change in him is most explicitly revealed in the scenes of deer hunting.

The act of hunting in the *Aeneid* as a recurring activity and one of symbolic importance has been studied extensively (Otis 1964:70ff., 372ff.; Putnam 1965: 153ff.; Davis 1968; Dunkle 1973, Lyne 1987:193ff., Staley 1991, et al.).¹ References to hunting are seen as key motifs that both link significant episodes and foreshadow certain outcomes, and the symbolic value of the hunt is regarded with varying degrees of suspicion in terms of the epic as a whole. Yet the specific act of deer hunting as a means of characterizing the hero has not been considered. In this paper I will argue that hunting, specifically deer hunting, as a recurring motif in the *Aeneid*, reveals a gradual desensitization in Aeneas, the protagonist who remains in the shadows for most of the epic. Thornton (1996:389) argues for two purposes in Vergil's use of the injured deer motif: to evoke sympathy for the one who receives the wound, and to show the cruelty of the one inflicting the injury. In this way the act of deer hunting, real and symbolic, reveals something about the hunter. As Pöschl (1962:2) has pointed out, artistic forms in the *Aeneid* 'are not simply vessels for content ... but are themselves content'.

Over the years Aeneas's slaying of Turnus at the end of the epic has been met with opposing interpretations. Some see this as a cruel, senseless act while others justify the killing in terms of the bigger scheme of Aeneas's divine instruction to found a new Troy. More recently, instead of condemning or justifying Aeneas's rage, his final act is interpreted as typically human behaviour (Chew 2002:627; Putnam 2011:114, 116). But what does this tell us about the character of *pious* Aeneas, who has been charged by his father 'to spare the subdued'?² It has been argued that Aeneas shows no real character development in the epic. This paper will show that, as seen through the act of deer hunting, there is indeed a change that takes place in the character of Aeneas: in this case, a desensitizing change. I will be looking at the three acts of deer hunting where Aeneas is in the position of the hunter: his literal hunt in book one; his symbolic hunt of Dido in book four, and finally the irrational hunting of Turnus in book twelve. Not only do these hunts become increasingly sinister, but they also develop from a well-meaning hunt, through a thoughtless hunt, to a hunt that is not easily

¹ Aeneas's very first act in the epic is to shoot seven stags to feed the passengers of his seven ships. In book four the fateful relationship between Dido and Aeneas is consummated during a hunting expedition, and in the same book his symbolic hunt of Dido is described in the touching simile of the wounded deer. In book seven Ascanius sparks the war with the Italians by shooting the pet stag of a local girl. And finally in book twelve Aeneas is compared to a hunting dog chasing a bewildered deer (Turnus). Apart from these hunting events there are similes comparing Dido and Aeneas to Diana and Apollo respectively (books one and four), and when Aeneas meets his mother in book one she is disguised as Diana.

² ... *parcere subiectis* ... (6.853).

justified. Ascanius's trophy hunt in book seven, where he kills Silvia's pet stag and so sparks the war in Italy, will be mentioned briefly only. Even though this episode does not shed light on the character of Aeneas *per se*, it draws an important link between Turnus and the stag, and foreshadows what will take place in book twelve.

Book one

Significantly Aeneas's very first act in the epic is to hunt (Staley 1991).

*Aeneas scopulum interea conscendit et omnem
prospectum late pelago petit, Anthea si quem
iactatum vento videat ...
navem in conspectu nullam, tris litore cervos
prospicit errantis; hos tota armenta sequuntur
a tergo et longum per vallis pascitur agmen.
constitit hic arcumque manu celerisque sagittas
corripuit ...
ductoresque ipsos primum, capita alta ferentis
cornibus arboreis, sternit, tum volgus et omnem
miscet agens telis nemora inter frondea turbam;
nec prius absistit, quam septem ingentia victor
corpore fundat humi et numerum cum navibus aequet. (1.180-193)³*

Meanwhile Aeneas climbed a rock and with his eyes he searched the whole breadth of the sea. If he could perhaps catch some trace of Antheus, who had been tossed about by the wind ... There was no ship in sight, but he saw three stags wandering on the shore; behind them whole herds followed as they were grazing in a long line throughout the valley. Now he came to a halt and in his hand he grabbed his bow and speedy arrows ... First he struck down the leaders themselves, their heads held high with branch-like horns, then he scattered the whole mass of the herd, driving them into the leafy woods with his arrows. And he did not stop before victoriously laying on the ground seven huge carcasses to equal the number of his ships.⁴

³ The Latin text is from The Loeb Classical Library, Warmington (ed.), 1967, Volumes 1&2.

⁴ All translations are my own.

Dunkle (1973:129) sees this instance of hunting as a civilizing act, ‘a bringing of order out of chaos’ after the Trojans’ traumatic experience of the storm at sea. For Dunkle (1973:129) Aeneas’s first hunt is therefore symbolic of his role in the epic: the founder of a new civilization in Italy.⁵ In her study of his character Michels (1997:401) reads this hunt as an illustration of Aeneas’s ability to cope with an immediate situation. However, she fails to see that Aeneas did not set out to hunt in the first instance. I will argue that there is already a sense of destruction involved in this seemingly civilizing act, as well as a hint at Aeneas’s tendency to act impulsively.

What is conspicuous in this passage is that Aeneas first shoots the *leaders* of the herd (*ductoresque ipsos primum*, 189). Not only does he kill the most striking members (*capita alta ferentis cornibus arboreis*, 189-190), but he violently disrupts the social order of the herd. An important detail of this passage, mentioned above and also pointed out by Staley (1991:27) is that Aeneas did not set out to hunt in the first place. His aim for climbing the rock is to get a better view of the sea and so hopefully spot more Trojan ships that have survived the storm. Seeing no ships he spots the deer by chance and makes an impulsive decision to shoot them. Ross (2007:8-9) points to the military metaphor that dominates this passage: the arrows raining down on the deer that drive them into the leafy woods rather recall ‘the firepower of a modern army than of a single archer’. The word *victor* likewise recalls the sense of conquest yet the deer hardly posed any form of challenge. This latent violence is significant for later occurrences of deer hunting.⁶

Although the result of feeding hungry people is a positive one, the ominous nature of the deer hunt is already hinted at in its very first occurrence as this seemingly innocent deed. In this way Aeneas’s ‘first act’ already points to later instances of hunting where the results are far more dire: Aeneas’s symbolic hunting of Dido that is not planned but executed when the opportunity presents itself; Ascanius’s trophy hunt in book seven where he, like his father in this initial hunt, is attracted to the magnificent antlers of the stag, and finally Aeneas’s disruption of the social order in Italy when he kills Turnus, the Rutulian prince and betrothed of the Italian princess.

⁵ Anderson 1969:25 and Hornsby 1970:2 also see Aeneas’s first act in the epic in a positive light: as leader he looks after his people and tries to remain positive for their sake. Vance 1981:132 has a similar interpretation of Aeneas’s first hunt, yet he does point to the parallels between the good hunter and the good warrior, and uses the verb ‘assault’ to describe Aeneas’s action.

⁶ Pöschl 1962:13-24 highlights the importance of the first sequence of scenes in the epic as a symbolic forecast of the entire poem.

Book four

Aeneas's hunt in book four is significantly different from that in book one. Apart from the literal versus the symbolic, the first hunt could be easily justified: to provide food for his comrades. His symbolic hunt of Dido is not based on a sense of duty towards his people but on a pursuit of personal desires. Vergil uses the motif of the lover as hunter in the widely discussed simile of the wounded doe:

*uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
nescius; illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo (4.68-73).*

Unhappy Dido burns with love and wanders madly throughout the city, like a doe, struck by an arrow unsuspecting, which a shepherd, hunting in the Cretan woods, has hit from a distance; unknowingly he has left the swift iron in her. In flight she passes through the woods and ravines of Mount Dicte, the lethal reed sticking in her side.

The emphasis on the word *nescius* is apparent: it is placed at the beginning of a new line, but right at the end of the sentence to which it applies. Furthermore it takes up an entire metrical foot and is therefore singled out. Yet could this placing of the word also make it appear like an afterthought? Could we really believe that Aeneas was entirely ignorant?

Initially the accentuated placing of the words *nescius* and *pastor* seem to emphasize the unintentional nature of Aeneas's harm. Yet both these words are problematic when the whole passage is taken into account. In the first place we have a shepherd, whose traditional role is that of a protector of animals, in the position of a killer of animals (Putnam 2011:78). What is even more disturbing is that the shepherd deliberately sets out to hunt: *agens telis* (Lyne 1987:196; Chew 2002:623, Fratantuono 2007:103). These words echo the first deer hunt of book one where the exact phrase is used (1.191), and the injured doe runs bewildered through the woods just as the deer from Aeneas's first hunt fled into the 'leafy woods'. There is also a verbal echo between *nemora inter frondea* (1.191) and *nemora inter Cresia* (4.70). In the light of these connections Lyne (1987:196) reads the deer hunting simile of book four as an intentional pursuit. Likewise Chew

(2002:623) sees the parallels between the hunts of book one and four as suggestive of Aeneas's opportunism rather than his negligence.⁷

Aeneas's intentions might not be malicious. However, there is already degradation in his motivation when compared to his first hunt and in the very act itself. In book one he did not set out to hunt but, spotting the deer, he shot just the right amount to feed his people. In the simile of the wounded deer the shepherd (Aeneas) has gone on an intentional hunt but he does not take serious aim. He shoots from a great distance (*procul*) leaving the outcome to chance, too careless to notice that he has in fact wounded the deer. When read alongside the first deer hunt *nescius* seems to point to indifference rather than ignorance.

When Dido and Aeneas set out on the hunting expedition during which their relationship will be consummated in a cave, the party looks down in the valley on a flock of deer running about bewildered (4.153-155).⁸ This scene recalls the image of Dido as the doe running through her city in madness (Fratantuono 2007:106). Aeneas's deer hunting in book four therefore becomes increasingly ominous as the metaphorical wound of the deer simile turns into a real wound when Dido stabs herself because of his betrayal. Aeneas's hunting of Dido is not simply a distraction but an attack that will prove fatal for the victim (Dunkle 1973:135-136).

Book seven

Another deer hunt, once more literal and seemingly innocent, triggers the anger of the Italian people and so launches the war.

*arte nova speculata locum, quo litore pulcher
insidiis cursuque feras agitabat Iulus.
hic subitam canibus rabiem Cocytia virgo*

⁷ Some older interpretations of the word *nescius* are more favourable to Aeneas, but fail to connect the verbal echoes to the first deer hunting scene. Otis 1964:71 gives Aeneas the benefit of the doubt — he is unaware of his symbolic shot. Davis 1968:210 interprets this word rather in terms of degrees of ignorance. Although Aeneas is unthinking in his treatment of Dido, there is no indication that he is opposed to a relationship with her: it is the depth and consequences of her passion that he is unaware of. For Dunkle 1973:135 the word has a dual function: it refers to Aeneas's unawareness of the depth of Dido's feelings, but with regard to the hunting motif it points to irresponsibility and Aeneas's aimlessness at this stage. Hanson 1982:698 on the other hand interprets *nescius* entirely literally and argues that the hunter (Aeneas) is not responsible for the consequences of his shot.

⁸ ... *alia de parte patentis / transmittunt cursu campos atque agmina cervi / pulverulenta fuga glomerant montisque relinquunt* (In another part deer run across the open plains, and as they crowd together in flight they raise clouds of dust and leave the hills behind them).

*obicit et noto naris contingit odore,
 ut cervum ardentem agerent; quae prima laborum
 causa fuit belloque animos accendit agrestis (477-482).*

With new cunning she (Allecto) observed the terrain where on the shore pretty Iulus was chasing wild beasts with charge and traps. At this moment the maiden of Cocytus released a sudden madness on his dogs and touched their noses with a familiar scent so that they pursued the stag with a burning craving. This was the first cause of the suffering and the spark that lit the hearts of the country people with war.

This last sentence is crucial for the *Aeneid* as a whole and once more points to the ominous nature of the deer hunting motif. A seemingly harmless hunt yet again has dire consequences. Although the war could probably not have been avoided, it is triggered by Ascanius's killing of a pet stag. This single incident, significantly placed in a central position in the epic, determines the course of the second half of the poem. The tragedy is further heightened by Vergil's touching portrait of the stag and the affections of its owners, especially the little girl Silvia who so loves her pet. This increases the reader's sympathy with the victim on the one hand, as well as highlighting the destructive nature of Ascanius's act on the other hand.

*cervus erat forma praestanti et cornibus ingens,
 Tyrrhidae pueri quem matris ab ubere raptum
 nutribant Tyrrhusque pater ...
 adsuetum imperiis soror omni Silvia cura
 mollibus intexens ornabat cornua sertis,
 pectebatque ferum puroque in fonte lavabat
 ille, manum patiens mensaeque adsuetus erili,
 errabat silvis rursusque ad limina nota
 ipse domum sera quamvis se nocte ferebat (483-492).*

It was a big and beautiful stag with towering antlers, which father Tyrrhus and his sons were raising after he was snatched from the udder of his mother ... He answered to the call of their sister Silvia, who used to decorate his horns by carefully weaving in soft garlands. She would comb the creature's coat and wash him in the clear spring water. He was tame to the hand and comfortable at the table of his master. He would wander in the woods and return home of his own accord to the familiar threshold, even though late at night.

Later in the same book we have a description of Turnus: *Ipse inter primos praestanti corpore Turnus / vertitur arma tenens et toto vertice supra est.* 7.783-784 ('Among the leaders Turnus himself moved in arms, outstanding in body and taller than the rest by a head'). Like the stag that was *forma praestanti*, Turnus is equally singular in beauty (*praestanti corpore*). The connection between Turnus and the stag is ominous.

The purpose of Ascanius's hunting on the shore is not mentioned, but it is clear that his hunting of Silvia's stag is motivated by glory: *ipse etiam eximiae laudis succensus amore / Ascanius curvo derexit spicula cornu.* 496-7 ('Ascanius himself, burning with the lordly love of praise, aimed an arrow in his arched bow'). And like his father in book one he is attracted to the impressive antlers of the stag. The similarities between father and son are made clear through the motif of the deer hunt. In book four Dido's private wound is turned into a public catastrophe that foreshadows a greater disaster to come (Otis 1964:72); when Ascanius wounds Silvia's deer the result is equally dire. Just like his father Ascanius as a deer hunter spells disaster for other people. They both wound a deer for which the reader feels great sympathy and neither of them could have predicted the fatal consequences of their respective hunting activities (Lyne 1987:198-199). For both father and son these instances of hunting are described as irresponsible, irrational acts fueled by self-gratification: sexual fulfilment for Aeneas and glory for Ascanius (Dunkle 1973:138). The pattern is repetitive (Lyne, 1987:200).

Book twelve

The book starts with a symbolically wounded Turnus⁹ who has no other choice but to face Aeneas in the duel that has been delayed on various occasions. He is now a wounded lion on the defence.

*... Poenorum qualis in arvis,
 saucius ille gravi venantum volnere pectus,
 tum demum movet arma leo, gaudetque comantis
 excutiens cervice toros fixumque latronis
 impavidus frangit telum et fremit ore cruento:
 haud secus accenso gliscit violentia Turno (4-9).*

Like an injured lion in the fields of Carthage who turns in defence at last, a deep wound in his breast caused by the hunters. He rejoices and, shaking the thick mane on his neck, he fearlessly breaks the

⁹ In the sense that his forces have been significantly weakened, especially because of the death of Camilla (Fratantuono 2007:368).

spear that was hurled by the thief and roars with his bloody mouth.
Indeed no differently the violence rose in fiery Turnus.

Significantly the lion is Carthaginian. Not only does the setting recall Dido, but Turnus as a wounded animal with a shaft stuck in his body recalls Dido as the wounded deer. But though they are both compared to wounded animals, Turnus is a fearless lion who does not flee but stands his ground, angered by his pain (Otis 1964:373). However, the echo of Dido and the deer simile foreshadows Turnus's doom. Just as Dido's symbolic wound turns into a real wound at the end of book four, so Turnus will receive a real wound at the end of book twelve that would be equally fatal.¹⁰ The comparison of Turnus to a lion further recalls the description of Ascanius during the hunting expedition in book four: ... *praeterit illos, / ... pecora inter inertia votis / optat ... fulvum descendere montem leonem* (4.157-159).¹¹ As mentioned above, the similarities between father and son are apparent — Aeneas will therefore be equally persistent in his pursuit of Turnus, a worthy trophy.

The motif of the deer hunt culminates towards the end of book twelve where Aeneas intentionally pursues Turnus. Now Turnus is no longer a lion but compared to a frightened stag, recalling all the previous references to deer hunting and their increasingly ominous outcomes:

*inclusum veluti si quando flumine nactus
cervum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pinnae
venator cursu canis et latritibus instat;
ille autem, insidiis ... territus ...
mille fugit refugitque vias; at vividus Umber
haeret hians ... (749-754).*

Like a hunting dog in pursuit that, having chanced upon a stag trapped in by some river or caught in fear of the purple-red flags, bears down upon the creature barking. However the stag, afraid of the traps, flees back and forth over a thousand paths. But the eager Umbrian sticks to him with gaping jaws ...

The frightened deer immediately recalls the Dido-doe simile and its bewildered running back and forth recalls the queen's distraught wanderings throughout the

¹⁰ Dido commits suicide with Aeneas's sword (... *ensemque recludit / Dardanium ...* 4.646-647); Turnus will also die by Aeneas's sword (*ferrum adverso sub pectore condit / fervidus ...* 12.950-951), Poschl 1962:89, Putnam, 2011:109.

¹¹ '... he passes them by (the wild goats and deer) and hopes in prayer that among these cowardly creatures ... a tawny lion would be coming down the mountain ...'.

city: *Dido totaque vagatur / urbe furens* (4.68-69). But Aeneas has now regressed from a hunter-shepherd to a hunting dog and he is compared to an animal for the first time in the poem.¹² Animal symbolism, especially that of predatory animals, points to the ‘dehumanizing effects of uncontrolled passion’ (Stephens 1990:107, 117). *Pius* Aeneas has succumbed to *furor impius*.

According to Dunkle (1973:138) Vergil uses the motif of the deer hunt to comment on the (im)possibility of rationality in the midst of war. Even when Aeneas can see that Turnus no longer holds a threat, he pursues him relentlessly because preceding events, climactically the death of Pallas, have gradually desensitized him. Having started out as Juno’s hunted, he has himself become the hunter. In his role as hunter he causes the death of Dido and himself inflicts Turnus’s mortal wound. Dido commits suicide when Aeneas leaves her, an act that he might well have anticipated, yet he is not the active agent in her death. But when Turnus is killed at the end of the epic, Aeneas is the perpetrator — this time there is no question of ignorance (Putnam 2011:88). He gradually ‘loses a portion of his humanity’¹³ and this is the message Vergil leaves us with. In the last scene of the book Turnus is in exactly the position of the suppliant that in the Underworld Aeneas’s father told him to spare:

... *vicisti et victum tendere palmas / Ausonii videre ...* (936-937)

You have won, and the Italians see that I am raising my hands in submission ...

There are a number of verbal echoes between the final scene in the epic and Aeneas’s first hunt in book one: *septem ingentia victor / corpora* (1.192-193). The words *vicisti* and *victum* recall Aeneas as *victor* over the seven deer in the first deer hunt. And like the ‘seven huge carcasses’ he lay on the ground during that hunt *ingens Turnus* (12.927) is brought to the ground by Aeneas’s spear. And so we are brought full circle: Aeneas first act and his final act in the epic are both hunting. But whereas the first was a hunt for survival, the last is a hunt out of personal vengeance; in the first hunt the victims were animals, in the last hunt he slays a fellow human being.

Could we therefore detect any real character development in Aeneas¹⁴ from his first act to his last? Putnam (1965:152; 2011:106) sees a change in character

¹² Stephens 1990 sees animalistic behaviour in Aeneas from early on in the epic. Yet this is the first simile to equate Aeneas with an animal explicitly.

¹³ Davis 1968:208.

¹⁴ See Fuhrer 1989 for a good summary of the pro and contra arguments. She herself argues that we are shown a mature man under a variety of trying circumstances, which serve to explain his behaviour.

towards the end of the epic. Aeneas changes from being 'selfless' and 'long-suffering' to one who inflicts suffering out of personal motivation (Putnam 2011:106). There is a 'relentless negativity' in the poem's ending: the reader is given no respite as in the case of the *Iliad*, Vergil's main model for books seven to twelve, where the killing of Hector is followed by the ransoming of his body and the funeral games for Patroclus (Putnam 2011:103). Instead the focus is on Aeneas as an individual human being, displaying very human feelings, be they negative (Putnam 2011:116). His anger in book ten after the death of his protégé Pallas, most probably coupled with feelings of guilt towards the father Evander, prepares us for his reaction when he sees Turnus wearing the boy's baldric. In the Underworld Anchises has set a new ethical paradigm for the behaviour of a conquering hero towards his defeated foe (Putnam 2011:106).¹⁵ But to follow Anchises's instruction and spare Turnus would be to act impersonally (Putnam 2011:114). Chew (2002:627) likewise argues that Aeneas's slaying of his conquered opponent is understandable on a human level. She ascribes his action to the ignorance and uncertainty that characterizes him throughout the epic because of his inability to grasp the gods' plan for him. This not only causes the moral ambiguities in his character but also make him more sympathetic as a human being (Chew 2002:627).

Ross (2007:11-12) sets out the characteristics of the typical epic hero: he is halfway between the divine and the human. (Aeneas, like Achilles, has one divine and one mortal parent.) The epic hero experiences moments that touch on the divine but in order to move us, he needs to be 'thoroughly human' under those extraordinary circumstances. Humans suffer failure and defeat: those are the traits that distinguish us from the gods and move us as readers to feel empathy with the hero (Ross 2007:12). Whether his failures make Aeneas good or bad is a question that I believe cannot be answered satisfactorily.¹⁶ Aeneas is the new type of hero that fits in with the time when the *Aeneid* was written: he is as multifaceted and ambiguous as the dutiful, morally upright, yet ruthless emperor Augustus (Rutledge 1987:19-20). Likewise in the *Aeneid* the hunter is an ambiguous figure, 'now a fighter against wilderness and now a half-animal participant'.¹⁷ The deliberate ambiguity, already present in the first hunt, adds an ominous undertone that gradually increases through the different instances of deer hunting. By the time we reach book twelve we know that Aeneas in the guise of hunter will mean the death of Turnus.

¹⁵ Michels 1997:403 argues that the Underworld episode was but a dream which Aeneas forgot as soon as he woke up.

¹⁶ I agree with Michels 1997:399 who argues that no character in the *Aeneid*, apart from Sinon and Pyrrhus, are portrayed as entirely good or entirely bad from beginning to end.

¹⁷ Cartmill 1995:775.

In *The deer hunter* Michael goes hunting fairly reluctantly when he is back from Vietnam. He aims his gun at a beautiful stag; he has a perfect shot. He hesitates, then shoots over the deer's head and encourages the creature to run away. Having experienced the atrocities of war in Vietnam his attitude towards taking life has changed. Having experienced the war in Italy, Aeneas has become more capable of killing. Even though he stays his hand for a moment, our last image of him is that of a killer. In giving vent to his anger Aeneas may seem more human to us, but what kind of a human has he become?

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