

## **The Permanence of Cupid's Metamorphosis in an Apollonian *Aeneid*.**

In *Aeneid* 1.656-94, Venus lulls Ascanius to sleep and hides him far away into the heights of Idalium. Then, Cupid morphs into Ascanius and inflames Dido's elegiac passion (1.657-94). Commenting on this passage, Ahl notes: "Virgil never mentions the restoration of Ascanius, though scholars assume that he is restored after Aeneas leaves Carthage. Some later passages take on added interest if we don't assume so" (Ahl 2007, *Aeneid. Virgil*. Oxford, p. 334). A case in point is 9.621-63, Ascanius' first epic feat in the *Aeneid* and Apollo's subsequent intervention. I shall argue that this episode can be read as an interaction between Cupid and the god of poetry if we assume that the assimilation of Ascanius to Cupid continues in the background. Tracing the poetological dimensions of this encounter, my reading focuses on a well-known elegiac motif, namely the apparition of Apollo and/or Amor/amor as gods who order or force the poet to write elegy instead of epic (cf. Prop. 1.1; 2.1; 2.10.25ff; 2.13A; 3.3; Ovid *Am.* 1.1; 2.1; 2.18; *Met.* 1.452ff). I argue that Apollo's unique speaking appearance in the *Aeneid* and his peculiar interaction with Ascanius/Cupid paradoxically endorse Virgil's epic agenda. Thus, Virgil subverts a recurring elegiac motif by transforming Apollo into an epic god.

In 9.621-37, Ascanius enters the battle for the first and last time, and kills with his bow the boastful Numanus, who has just delivered an invective against the Trojans. Numanus' speech (9.590-620) is full of bombastic epic overtones and concludes with a phrase that recalls the epic program of the *Aeneid* (*sinite arma viris et cedite ferro*, "leave the weapons to the men and surrender the sword" 9.620). An archer *par excellence*, Ascanius is closely associated with Amor/Cupid. His attack on Numanus is reminiscent of Amor's forceful dictation of elegy instead of epic.

A Cupid-like archer has temporarily invaded the epic universe, but Apollo soon puts an end to this elegiac intrusion by ordering him to withdraw permanently from battle (9.638-66). Apollo's unique speech in the *Aeneid* recalls his poetological intervention in *Eclogues* 6.3-5; but in the *Aeneid* the god is not the Callimachean Apollo, but rather an epic god who endorses Virgil's epic program. His speech (9.653-6) alludes to *Iliad* 16.107-9, and thus Virgil takes Apollo out of his Callimachean milieu and puts him back into epic poetry. Scenes of epic flavor and the giants Pandarus and Bitias follow immediately after Ascanius' compelled retreat.

Clues in the *Metamorphoses* suggest that Ovid read the *Aeneid* this way. After killing the Python, Apollo meets Cupid and makes fun of his bow (*Met.* 1.454-62). Cupid strikes back and fires an arrow that kindles love in Apollo (*Met.* 1.466-73). I shall argue that in this episode Ovid refers specifically to *Aeneid* 9.621-63, and trace detailed intertextual references to support my point. While in the *Aeneid* Apollo endorses the epic program by ordering Ascanius/Cupid to withdraw, in the *Metamorphoses* Cupid 'elegizes' epic poetry by turning Apollo to an elegiac lover infatuated with Daphne.