

Etymology as a Comment on the Role of Juturna in Vergil's *Aeneid*

In the *Aeneid*, Vergil alludes to at least two possible etymologies for the name of Juturna, the sister of Turnus: she is either the “helper” of Turnus (from his name and the verb *iuvare*) or she is Turnus’ long-lived sister, from *Diuturna*, an alternate spelling of her name. The first interpretation appears in passages in which her name is connected to one of several verbs for helping (*succedere*, *succurrere*, and *iuvare*), and these passages include her first introduction into the narrative (10.439-40, in which she is not named) and a crucial passage in which Juno abandons her support of Juturna (12.813-814; noted in O’Hara 2017, 68). In contrast, references to immortality in Juturna’s final speech (12.872-84) have been understood as references to the perceived etymology of her alternate name, *Diuturna* (O’Hara 2017, 241). I argue that these variations in Vergil’s etymological play on Juturna’s name are not random, but correlate with her changing role in the narrative. As Juturna ceases to be Turnus’ helper and becomes his long-lived survivor, the etymologizing puns on her name highlight the impossibility of Juturna inhabiting either role in a cosmos that is hostile to her.

When Juno first incites Juturna to come to her brother’s aid, she is not even named, but identified as Turnus’ sister (*Interea soror alma monet succedere Lauso / Turnum*, 10.439-40). This passage has been identified as an instance of etymological wordplay (O’Hara 2017, 226-7). Initially, her role as Turnus’ sister and helper appears more significant than her name is. There is, however, already a complication to her “helper” role. Although the verb *succedere* is present and suggests one possible meaning of her name, it is not Juturna who is the helper but her brother, whom she encourages to help Lausus. At this moment, Lausus is in combat with Pallas, whom Turnus will slay, but whose death will lead to Turnus’ death at Aeneas’ hands. Despite her

association with “helping” generally, she is neither coming to Turnus’ assistance nor helping him in the long term.

When her name appears with an etymologizing verb again, Juno mentions her almost as a past project: “I persuaded Juturna to help her miserable brother (I confess it), and I approved her daring greater things for the sake of his life” (*Juturnam misero (fateor) succurrere fratri / suasi et pro vita maiora audere probavi*, 12.813-4). Again, Juturna is associated with a verb of helping, but here her helpfulness is at this point limited: Juno ends her support for Juturna, confirming her role as “helper” at the same time that she abandons her. Again, the etymological play is out of joint with the content of the plot. Juturna’s role as helper is remarked upon at the moment at which Juno makes it irrelevant.

Finally, Juturna’s much-discussed ultimate speech includes references to both etymologies. It begins with a question about being able to help her brother (*quid nunc te tua, Turne, potest germana iuvare?*, 12.872), which includes *iuvare*, the verb for helping that may be included in her name. Although this passage has been recognized as a reference to the downfall of Turnus (Paschalis 1997, 401), it also deals the final blow to Juturna’s role as “helper.” Toward the end, however, she refers to her immortality, including a rhetorical question, *immortalis ego?* (12.882), that likely encodes a reference to her name as Diuturna. In this final speech, her role as helper has completely broken down, and her new role is poorly determined. She expresses dissatisfaction with her own immortality and a desire to die even as she is playing on her own name. She has not helped her brother very much (and is now excluded from the possibility of doing so again) and she is unwilling to take on the role of the long-lived survivor. The rhetorical play on her name lends a new dimension to her mournful final speech. References to the meaning of her name illustrate her changing role, yet also the impossibility of either named

role—Juturna has difficulty both in being a helper and in being an immortal survivor. Her final speech has long presented difficulties as an unresolved voice of dissent near the end of the poem (Perkell 1997, 277). By creating dissonance by bringing up the etymology of Juturna's name at points where it makes less sense, Vergil foreshadows the discomfort of her unresolved departure by making her presence and purpose always somewhat disconcerting.

Bibliography

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