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A Possible Corruption in Verg. *Aen.* 12.510

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Abstract: A conjecture of *longe* is proposed at Verg. *Aen.* 12.510 based on Vergil's Homeric model and on a probable imitation by Statius.

In his recent edition of *Aeneid* 12, Richard Tarrant justifiably notes that, although Vergil's text looks almost entirely reliable and scarcely in need of any conjectures, it is nonetheless doubtful that "in a poem of nearly 10'000 verses the original reading has been faithfully preserved somewhere in the tradition in all but 40 places [where R.A.B. Mynors and G.B. Conte print conjectural readings]"¹. Indeed, although Vergil's text was accorded careful and uninterrupted attention by ancient scholars practically from the moment of its completion², which would seem to have minimized potential distortions, the apparent "cleanliness" of the text does not necessarily reflect a faithfulness to the original: for the very same scholarly attention could have led to alterations with the aim of achieving this smooth and easy readability, or to a preference for textual variants based on "cleanliness" rather than authenticity. And while we can hardly expect to glimpse behind the curtain of ancient editors and reconstruct Vergil's original, especially where the text appears impeccable, we should investigate points in the vulgate text, though not striking or of central importance, that leave room for doubt. Even a passage that is generally considered unproblematic, but could easily be a corruption of a more authentic reading, is worth scrutinizing. A good example is the brilliant conjecture of *en felix* instead of *infelix* in *Aen.* 12.641 proposed by T. Gehring in *MH* in 2003³. And yet Tarrant, despite his stated reservations as to the received text, only prints this insightful suggestion in his *apparatus criticus*⁴. In the present note, I propose a conjecture justified along similar lines.

In *Aen.* 12.509–512 Turnus kills two brothers, one with a spear and the other with a sword:

510 *Turnus equo deiectum Amycum fratremque Dioren,
congressus pedes, hunc uenientem cuspid longa,
hunc mucrone ferit, curruque abscisa duorum
suspendit capita et rorantia sanguine portat.*

* The author thanks Kevin McNeer and the anonymous reader of *MH* for their help.

1 R. Tarrant (ed.), *Virgil, Aeneid Book XII* (Cambridge 2012) 47.

2 See e.g. J.E.G. Zetzel, *Latin Textual Criticism in Antiquity* (New York 1981) 28–54.

3 T. Gehring, "Infelix – en felix (eine Konjektur zu *Aen.* 12,641)", *MH* 60 (2003) 165–166.

4 He explains his doubts in his note *ad loc.* G.B. Conte does not mention this conjecture in his edition (G.B. Conte (ed.), *P. Vergilius Maro, Aeneis*, Berlin/New York 2009).

It has been known to Vergilian commentators since the 16th cent. that Vergil's main source here is probably Hom. *Il.* 20.460–462⁵. Though there are some other passages in Homer (not mentioned in R.G. Knauer's index or in commentaries) where a hero kills one adversary with a spear and another with a sword⁶, this passage seems particularly relevant for a number of reasons: it also describes a joint death of two brothers⁷ in a few compact phrases⁸, without mentioning where the weapons strike their bodies⁹:

αὐτὰρ ὁ Λαόγονον καὶ Δάρδανον νῦν Βίαντος
ἄμφω ἐφορμηθεὶς ἐξ ἵππων ὥσε χαμᾶζε,
τὸν μὲν δουρὶ βαλών, τὸν δὲ σχεδὸν ἄορι τύψας.

Moreover, the *aristeia* of Achilles in *Iliad* 20 (to which these lines belong) is in general the main Homeric model used by Vergil in this episode¹⁰. Cf. also ἐξ ἵππων ὥσε χαμᾶζε with *equo deiectum*, ἐφορμηθεὶς with *congressus*.

The only detail in Homer's text that has no explicit correspondence in Vergil is the opposition of distances from which two blows are made (*σχεδὸν* vs the implied "further off")¹¹. Tarrant sees a twisted version of this opposition in *congressus*, which is used instead of *σχεδὸν/comminus* in this opposition in *Aen.* 12.342¹², but this sounds doubtful: it must mean that Aeneas kills both adversaries from close quarters, which contradicts all the parallels (and probably common sense too): spears are always used to kill from distance. At the same time, in *Aen.* 12.510 *congressus* seems to suit the sense of Homeric ἐφορμηθεὶς well enough.

I suggest, therefore, replacing *longa* in line 510 with *longe*¹³. Vergil uses this word instead of *eminus* in the same opposition in *Aen.* 10.715–716 (*non ulli est*

5 F. Orsini, *Virgilius collatione scriptorum Graecorum illustratus* (Antwerp 1567) 464, cf. G.N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer: Studien zur poetischen Technik Vergils mit Listen der Homerritze in der Aeneis* (Göttingen 1979) 429, 484, Tarrant, *loc. cit.* (n. 1) *ad loc.*

6 See, in particular, Hom. *Il.* 5.144–147; 11.101–109.

7 Unlike Hom. *Il.* 5.144–147.

8 Unlike Hom. *Il.* 11.101–109.

9 Unlike both other passages mentioned.

10 See Tarrant, *loc. cit.* (n. 1) 219.

11 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 20.378 μή πώς σ' ἡὲ βάλῃ ἡὲ σχεδὸν ἄορι τύψῃ, Verg. *Aen.* 12.341–342 *iamque neci Sthenelumque dedit Thamyrumque Pholumque, | hunc congressus et hunc, illum eminus,* Ov. *Met.* 3.119 *comminus ense ferit; iaculo cadit eminus ipse, 12.378–379 ante tamen leto dererat Phlegraeon et Hylen | eminus, Iphinoum conlato Marte Clanique.*

12 Tarrant, *loc. cit.* (n. 1) 175.

13 S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Vergil, Aeneid 10* (Oxford 1991) 257, defending the reading *longe* against *longo* of the majority of ancient manuscripts in Verg. *Aen.* 10.769 along the lines of J.N. Madvig's argumentation (perhaps correctly, *pace* Mynors and Conte), notes that the corruption is made easier by the influence of the adjacent noun (*agmine*); our case is similar (cf. *cuspipe*). Less controversial examples of similar corruptions are Verg. *Aen.* 7.288 (*ex aethere longe* > *ex aethere longo* M), Luc. 4.757 (*longe ... pulsus* > *longi ... pulsus* M₁Z, *longo ... pulsu* P₂), Stat. *Theb.* 11.493 (*longe | ora* > *longa | ora* P).

animus stricto concurrere ferro, | missilibus longe et uasto clamore lacesunt); cf. also *Aen.* 9.572 (*hic iaculo bonus, hic longe fallente sagitta*), 10.754 (*iaculo et longe fallente sagitta*). The position at line-end is quite normal for *longe* in Vergil¹⁴. The combination *longa + cuspide* is certainly possible¹⁵, as well as speaking of two people killed with a spear and with a sword without juxtaposing the distances¹⁶, but the epithet does not seem to have any particular motivation here¹⁷, and the main Homeric model here is otherwise followed by Vergil without omissions. If we suppose that the original Vergilian text was *cuspide longe*, Statius will appear to allude to it in *Theb.* 9.108:

*conuulsae cuspide longe
diffugere iubae patuitque ingloria cassis.*

Interestingly, the content of this passage in Statius is clearly indebted to a passage in the *Aeneid* that occurs close to the verses under discussion above: the hitting of Aeneas' helmet plumes by Messapus' spear in *Aen.* 12.491–493¹⁸. It is also worth noting that for the vulgate text *cuspide longa*, it seems we have neither quotations in ancient scholarly literature¹⁹ nor imitations in poetry before Corippus (6th cent.)²⁰ who actually postdates our earliest Vergilian manuscripts²¹.

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14 Cf. Verg. *Georg.* 1.358, Verg. *Aen.* 1.13, 3.703, 5.23, 7.288, 7.701, 8.92, 9.322, 12.44, 12.452, 12.480. Interestingly, the form *longa* never elsewhere appears at line-ends in Vergil, although other forms of *longus* do (*longo*: Verg. *Georg.* 3.506, Verg. *Aen.* 1.395, 5.90, 8.411, 11.143; *longos*: Verg. *Ecl.* 9.51; *longis*: Verg. *Aen.* 8.662; *longae*: Verg. *Aen.* 1.341; *longam*: Verg. *Aen.* 1.703).

15 Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 12.386 (*alternos longa nitentem cuspide gressus*). A combination noun + adjective at line-end is frequent in Vergil, and very often noun occupies the fifth foot and adjective the sixth: cf. e.g. Verg. *Aen.* 1.62, 1.84, 1.118, 1.223, 1.293, 1.296, 1.300, 1.395 etc.

16 Cf. Homeric passages mentioned in n. 6.

17 A comparison with *χαλκήρει δουρί* in Hom. *Il.* 5.145, in one of the possible parallel passages, also in the end of the second line of the scene, does not seem particularly convincing since it lacks semantic correspondence.

18 See M. Dewar (ed.), *Statius, Thebaid IX* (Oxford 1991) 79.

19 See O. Ribbeck (ed.), *P. Vergili Maronis Opera, Vol. III: Aeneidos libri VII–XII* (Leipzig 1872) 330.

20 *Iohannis* 8.394–395 (*quem cuspide longa | auersum post terga ferit*).

21 Cf. Ribbeck, *loc. cit.* (n. 19) 415. There are some instances of *longa + cuspide* in other *sedes* in post-Vergilian poetry (Ov. *Met.* 6.673, Stat. *Theb.* 5.399, 7.73–74, Mart. 14.221.2), but they can as well be explained as dependent on Verg. *Aen.* 12.386 (quoted in n. 15). Cypr. Gall. *Gen.* 1048 (*egreditur longa sustentans cuspide gressus*) is definitely dependent on it.