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***DECUS ITALIAE VIRGO***  
**VIRGIL'S CAMILLA AND THE FORMATION OF *ROMANITAS***

ELINA PYY

**Introduction**

In this paper I will discuss the representation of Camilla, a Volscian warrior- maiden who takes part in the war between Aeneas' men and the Italians in the later part of the *Aeneid*. Camilla is introduced to the reader for the first time at the end of Book 7, when she brings her Volscian cavalry to fight on the Italian side against the Trojan refugees. Virgil uses Camilla to close the catalogue of Turnus' allies, and portrays her as a stunning and astonishing warrior-queen, famous for her speed and marvelled at by Italian mothers and youths alike.<sup>1</sup> After her first appearance, Camilla disappears from the narrative, and does not show up again until the Book 11, in which she is a crucial character. The author depicts Camilla as conceiving the battle plan with Turnus, and describes in detail her skilful and fearless behaviour in battle.<sup>2</sup> The book is brought to an end with Camilla's fall, and the subsequent chaos and retreat of the Italian forces.<sup>3</sup>

Camilla's character is not an easily categorisable one. Indeed, her personage includes various contradictory and ambiguous qualities that are likely to evoke confusion. One of these is her relationship with her people and the tension between her two roles – a solitary child of nature and a respectable war-commander. In Book 11, Diana narrates the story of Camilla's childhood, identifying her as the only child of King Metabus, an exiled tyrant of the ancient town of Privernum. According to the *dea*, after Metabus had fled from the city with baby Camilla,

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<sup>1</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 7,803–17.

<sup>2</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,498–521; 11,648–724.

<sup>3</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,768–915.

he isolated himself from human society and settled in the wilderness with his daughter, whom he had dedicated to Diana. Virgil shows Camilla adopting the roles of huntress and warrior in her early childhood. Her lifestyle appears savage and uncivilized. She is said to have been nurtured with the milk of wild horses, and Virgil mentions no contact with surrounding civilizations.<sup>4</sup>

There is an intriguing contrast between Camilla's appearance in the story of her childhood and the role she adopts when entering the war as commander of the Volscian cavalry. Although Virgil explicitly mentions in 11,568–572 that Camilla was raised in the wilderness, as no city welcomed Metabus and his daughter, at the end of Book 7 she is depicted as sovereign leader of the Volscian troops, and as a warrior-queen highly identified with her people. Without further explanation, a savage hermit and daughter of a hated tyrant is transformed into a plenipotentiary member of society and the self-evident leader of her people.

The relationship between Camilla and the Volsci is not the only controversial quality of the character. A further confusing issue is the warrior-queen's ambiguous gender-identity. In his description of Camilla, Virgil utilises Greco-Roman amazon myths, and the fascinating archetype of *bellatrix virgo*, perpetually emphasising the tension caused by the mingling of gender roles. Camilla's femininity is alternately stressed and concealed, and her efforts to adopt the male role of a warrior are described as an exhausting, ongoing personal battle. The warrior-maiden is alternatively depicted as proudly highlighting her gender, while at other times ashamed of womanhood that exposes her to ridicule.<sup>5</sup> Gender, as both an essentialist and constructivist issue, is highlighted by Camilla's inner struggle with her masculine and feminine characteristics. Besides being a merciless warrior, she is depicted as a desirable daughter-in-law for Etruscan mothers.<sup>6</sup> Also, after detailing her disinclination for pursuits such as spinning and weaving, Virgil states that Camilla's feminine interest in luxurious spoils of war is her fatal weakness.<sup>7</sup> Altogether, Camilla's controversial personage, due both to her ethnic identification and her gender identity, make her one of the most ambiguous characters in Virgil's epic.

In this paper, I attempt to study Camilla focusing on the two contentious aspects of her nature mentioned above, and in the context of Roman identity and

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<sup>4</sup> For the story in its entirety, see Verg. *Aen.* 11,532–96.

<sup>5</sup> See Verg. *Aen.* 11,686–89; 11,705–11.

<sup>6</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,581–84.

<sup>7</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 7,805–6; 11,780–82.

the value system of the Augustan era. The role of Camilla has not been one of the more popular themes pertaining to the study of the *Aeneid*, and, to my knowledge, little comprehensive analysis exists about the significance of the character. It is somewhat surprising that Camilla's role and purpose in Virgil's epic has aroused comparatively little interest among classical scholars. In studies concerning the *Aeneid* and its versatile personages, the warrior-maiden has been largely overshadowed by other characters. The probable reason for this may be precisely that the ambiguous and contradictory nature of Camilla makes her difficult to understand and even more challenging to define and place in the overall composition of epic tradition.

Nevertheless, Camilla's complexity and obscurity is the very reason further study is worthwhile. Since the character can be considered confusing, provocative, and even unnecessary to the basic storyline of the *Aeneid*, there must be a valid reason why the author decided to introduce her to his contemporary Roman audience. Understanding why Virgil included the Italian warrior-queen in his patriotic epic masterpiece could provide new insight into the values and intentions of the author, and help us to further comprehend the social background that the *Aeneid* reflects.

I do not intend to scrutinize the character of Camilla exclusively here. I will, for the most part, bypass discussion about the origins of the Virgilian Camilla-story and its mythological and cultic connections, for both of these themes have been perceptively examined before.<sup>8</sup> My emphasis will be on Camilla's ethnicity, her social characteristics and her connection to the Roman historical and political issues reflected in the *Aeneid*. The terms "social" and "political" are somewhat problematic, for their meaning may vary greatly according to the

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<sup>8</sup> The role of Diana in the Camilla-story and the relationship between the *dea* and her protégée has been thoroughly examined by G. Arrigoni in her monography *Camilla, amazzone e sacerdotessa di Diana*, Milano 1982. In her work, Arrigoni has also scrutinized the possible background and historicity of the Diana-cult in the *Aeneid*. Camilla's devotion to religion from her childhood onwards and her relation to Diana has been shortly discussed by O. Schönberger, E. Cantarella and M. Wilhelm: O. Schönberger, "Camilla", *A&A* 12 (1966) 180–8; E. Cantarella, *Passato prossimo: Donne romane da Tacita a Sulpicia*, Milano 1996; M. Wilhelm, "Venus, Diana, Dido and Camilla in the Aeneid", *Vergilius* 33 (1987) 43–8. The formation of the Camilla tale has been comprehensively discussed by N. Horsfall, who considers the character Virgil's invention: N. Horsfall, "Camilla, o i limiti dell'invenzione", *Athenaeum* 66 (1988) 31–51. Another perspective on the formation of the story, its Volscian origins and later Romanisation can be found in Arrigoni (above) 65–115. Other useful general studies on the character of Camilla, see e.g. T. Köves-Zulauf, "Camilla", *Gymnasium* 85 (1978) 182–205 and 408–36; A. Brill, *Die Gestalt der Camilla bei Vergil*, Diss. Heidelberg 1972.

discussion and the cultural context. In the Roman society of the Augustan era, the concepts of political, social, military and cultic overlapped significantly, and it is therefore worthwhile to define more clearly the meaning of these terms. In this paper, I use these terms in order to refer to activity and interest shown by an individual towards the larger community, its functions and development. In the case of Camilla, the social and the political are rather naturally placed in context of warfare, for that is the channel through which her interest and activity in the common cause are expressed. Participation in military campaigns and the effort to impact on the development of the community are therefore the main factors that define my perception of these terms.

I intend to examine how Virgil represents Camilla's social consciousness and ethnic identity. What are Camilla's motives for participating in war against the Trojan exiles? What does her identification as a Volscian or an Italian warrior-queen signify? What is her contribution to the main theme of the *Aeneid*, that of the formation of Rome and Roman identity? These are questions that have not been comprehensively studied before and by putting them under scrutiny, I wish to illuminate the obscure character of Camilla as well as focus on the means through which Virgil dealt with the Roman value system and identity.

When studying the value aspects of the narrative and the representations of epic heroism, I will emphasise a gender-sensitive point of view. Camilla's character offers an excellent opportunity to examine how the roles of men and women are defined in Virgil's epic. What opportunities for heroic action are available for women or men? How do male and female heroisms complement each other in Virgil's narrative? What kind of message does the representation of epic heroism offer to Virgil's contemporary Roman audience? These questions, when studied in respect to Roman history and political environment, are likely to reveal some intriguing qualities about the concept of gender in Augustan Rome and its manifestation in epic narrative.

### **From private to political: Camilla's social transition**

Let me first discuss briefly the characteristics of Camilla. Huntress of Diana, solitary inhabitant of the woods, outsider to civilization and yet a queen-like warrior-queen – historians and philologists have analysed Camilla's personality from multiple perspectives without achieving unanimity. She has been accused of vanity and violence and yet admired for her ferocity and courage. Her solitary and quiet way of life and her furious love of war have been a combination too com-

plex for many. Very often scholars have tried to compare her to other characters of the *Aeneid* – Dido and Turnus in particular – and thus attempted to understand her multi-faceted nature.<sup>9</sup>

These kinds of comparisons, however, seem forced and unfruitful. Instead of trying to fit her into predefined models, one should accept that Camilla really is an unprecedented character, not only in the *Aeneid*, but to epic as a whole. Her personage is unique in nature, and comparisons to other characters only seem to increase these difficulties. T. Becker notes perceptively that, in a way, Camilla's contradictory nature expresses the ambiguity of the *Aeneid* itself, and her character reflects the uneasiness of Virgil's epic.<sup>10</sup> As with life itself, poetry is not without complication, and personages are not one-dimensional. Camilla's incongruity mimics Virgilian epic, which in turn mimics the complexity of life. She is purposefully troublesome to understand, and remains so. If anything, her paradoxical nature increases her fascination.

In earlier studies, Camilla has almost unanimously been portrayed as a highly apolitical character. The idea of her as a solitary child of nature, rejecting civilisation runs very deep. However, this apolitical image is not something Virgil makes explicit. Instead, this particular view of Camilla seems to be based mainly on interpretations made by scholars in the 1950's and 1960's that have been left unquestioned even in most of more recent studies.<sup>11</sup>

It is probable that the idea of Camilla as uncivilised and indifferent towards society stems largely from her close relationship with Diana. After all, Virgil's Diana is a rather non-political *dea*, the mistress of wilderness and nature, who has little to do with conflicts of human beings. In Book 11, Diana expresses her

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<sup>9</sup> Comparisons made between Camilla and Dido, see, e.g., J. Reed, *Virgil's gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid*, Princeton 2007, 83–4; and between Camilla and Turnus, S. Small, "Virgil, Dante and Camilla" *CJ* 54 (1958/59) 295–301, p. 298 in particular.

<sup>10</sup> T. Becker, "Ambiguity and the female warrior: Vergil's Camilla", *Electronic Antiquity* 4:1 (1997) 1–12. On Camilla's contradictory nature, p. 1–2 in particular.

<sup>11</sup> This kind of standpoint is prominent in studies of e.g. Small (above n. 9) and T. Rosenmeyer, "Virgil and Heroism: Aeneid XI", *CJ* 55 (1960) 159–64. Small has been the most abrupt by stating that Camilla inherited from her father, the expelled tyrant Metabus, a complete inability to adapt to society. According to Small, Camilla rejects civilisation because she is repulsed by interaction with other people and male domination over females, which was intrinsic to any society. Becker, too, has stated that by rejecting traditional female duties, such as wool-making, Camilla sets herself outside the boundaries of civilized society. Becker (above n. 10) 5; Small (above n. 9) 296. See also G. West, "Chloereus and Camilla", *Vergilius* 31 (1985) 22–9, p. 25 in particular.



disappointment over Camilla's decision to go to war: *Graditur bellum ad crudele Camilla / o uirgo, et nostris nequiquam cingitur armis* (11,535–536), and *uellem haud correpta fuisset / militia tali conata lacessere Teucros* (11,584–585).<sup>12</sup> The apolitical nature of Diana has often led researchers to the conclusion that, as her devoted worshipper, Camilla could also not be interested in social or political issues.

It must be stressed that this is not the only way of interpreting the above lines. In fact, G. Arrigoni has suggested that the political nature of Camilla is manifested in her decision to take part in war against the wishes of Diana. She changes her role from a *venatrix Dianae* to that of a Volscian warrior-queen, and, therefore, is indeed *politiké*.<sup>13</sup> I would concur with Arrigoni's interpretation and could indeed take it a little further by suggesting that participation in war against the Trojan exiles is actually a state of transition for Camilla, from apolitical to political. The problem of examining Camilla's socio-political nature hitherto has been the inability to recognise two different phases of her life – phases that actually seem to contradict each other. In her youth, hunting in the wilderness, Camilla indeed isolated herself from civilisation. Gathering her own troops and leading them to battle as an ally of the Latin forces, however, marks the end of this pastoral, peace-loving phase and signals the birth of a new, politically conscious and socially active Camilla.

This change can be observed even in her outer appearance, a matter Virgil depicts vividly and in some detail. When Diana tells the story of Camilla's youth, she describes her as wearing only the skin of a tiger instead of a golden headband and a woollen cloak, the costume suitable for an Italian maiden.<sup>14</sup> However, when Camilla makes her *grande entrée* at the end of Book 7, she is shown to be royal and civilised in every way, a respected commander of Italian cavalry. Her outer appearance strengthens this image, for instead of wearing the fur of a wild animal she is now dressed like a *regina*, with a golden hair buckle and a purple cloak

<sup>12</sup> All quotations from the *Aeneid* are from R. A. B. Mynors' *P. Vergili Maroni Opera*, Oxford 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Arrigoni (above n. 8) 20. Arrigoni states that Camilla's prohibition against taking part in war is actually rather unique. This feature of the story cannot be identified with Camilla's assumed models in Greek tradition, amazon princesses Penthesileia and Hippolyte. Arrigoni (above n. 8) 102. For a brief summary on Camilla's literary models, see, e.g., Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 11: A Commentary* (Mnemosyne Suppl. 244), Leiden 2003, on 11,535–96. Also, Arrigoni on Camilla in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, Roma 1984.

<sup>14</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,576–77: *Pro crinali auro, pro longae tegmine pallae / tigridis exuivae per dorsum a uertice pendent.*

that is, indeed, referred to as royal.<sup>15</sup> Her outfit is, in fact, strikingly similar to that of queen Dido in Book 4.<sup>16</sup> Even Virgil's choice of words in describing Camilla after she enters the war reinforces this transition from her earlier lifestyle. She is no longer represented purely as the virginal huntress of her youth, but as *regina* (11,499; 11,703; 11,801), *domina* (11,805), *bellatrix* (11,805), and *victrix* (11,764). These are all expressions that clearly imply her newly adopted socio-political role.<sup>17</sup>

### **Volscian and Italian: Camilla's ethnic identity**

Further to her transformation into a queen and commander, Camilla is depicted as tightly committed to her home region of Italy, and, in a way, even identifiable with it. Turnus, when admiring the warrior-maiden's eagerness for battle, intriguingly calls her *decus Italiae virgo*, "a maiden, pride of Italy" (11,508). Earlier, he enlivens the morale of the soldiers by reminding them they have Camilla on their side.<sup>18</sup> Camilla is thus represented as a guiding star of the Italian forces, necessary to their success and an inspiration to other warriors. She appears as an exemplary leader who somehow seems to incarnate the spirit of the motley group of Italian peoples.

The idea of Camilla as an ethnic symbol has been acknowledged by scholars before. G. West has suggested that Virgil invented Camilla to "symbolise at once the best and worst of primitive Italy". G. Williams, too, has considered Camilla as an ideal Italian who incarnates the counter side of the Trojans.<sup>19</sup> Indeed,

<sup>15</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 7,814–17: *regius ostro / uelet honos leuis umeros, ut fibula crinem / auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa pharetram / et pastoralem praefixa cuspide myrtum.*

<sup>16</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 4,138–39: *pharetra ex auro, crines nodantur in aurum, / aurea purpuream subnectit fibula uestem.*

<sup>17</sup> Note also the verb *aduenit*, used to express Camilla's entrance to the scene. On 7,803, Horsfall perceptively notes the term as "good military language". Horsfall also draws attention to the description of Camilla as *proelia uirgo / dura pati*, on 7,806–7. He suggests that, contrary to usual assumptions, *dura* should be understood as referring to the *uirgo* herself, instead of to *proelia*. If so, the description seems significant: as Horsfall notes, *dura* is an adjective *par excellence* of the Italic warrior. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary* (Mnemosyne Suppl. 198), Leiden 2000., ad loc.

<sup>18</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,432: *est et Volscorum egregia de gente Camilla / agmen agens equitum et florentis aere cateruas.*

<sup>19</sup> West (above n. 11) 22, 25; G. Williams, *Techniques and Ideas in the Aeneid*, Yale 1983, 19.

Camilla's character includes various qualities that, in the minds of Virgil's contemporary Roman readers, could be connected with primitive Italian peoples. Her untameable savagery, her close connection with nature and rustic practice of religion, her violent nature and her battle-endurance could all be considered characteristics that, in the Roman mindset, were more or less attributed to the primitive past of Italy. Camilla's romantic yet controversial role as a female warrior makes her an excellent character through which to articulate the idealised, prejudiced, and patronising views Romans held towards Italy. In a way, she seems to embody Virgil's literary version of the Roman practice of visually presenting defeated peoples and nations through female personifications.

Amongst Italian peoples, there is one group in particular with which Camilla is identified, namely the Volsci. The extent to which Camilla is characterised by Virgil as a representative of her own *gens*, is an interesting and difficult question. According to Arrigoni, the admiration Camilla attains in her first appearance is due primarily to her position as a Volscian queen.<sup>20</sup> Even though Arrigoni does not explain her viewpoint further, I find this interpretation very probable and worthy of further discussion. It can be considered significant that within the initial line in which Camilla appears she is described as *Volsca de gente* (7,803). This is the first thing the reader learns about her. Later, in Book 11, her Volscian background is referred to three times, with each occasion emphasising her position as leader of her people.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, when Diana foresees Camilla's fall in the battle, she determinately promises to claim her body and weapons in order to restore them to her fatherland: *post ego nube caua miserandae corpus et arma / inspoliata feram tumulo patriaeque reponam* (11,593–594). Since Camilla's fall takes place by the walls of Laurentum, *patria* must be understood as an indication of a more specific place than Italy as a whole – namely, the Volscian territory from which she had come to war. Throughout the story Virgil makes the effort to remind the reader of Camilla's identification as, not only Italian, but more particularly a Volscian queen and leader.

It is noteworthy that the Volsci were known as an accomplished and resilient warrior people amongst the Italians. Several battles against them during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. were wearing for Roman forces and severely disrupted Rome's first imperialistic endeavours. Therefore, the fact that Virgil includes the Volsci in his story, through identification with a fierce and resilient warrior-queen, seems a deliberate and significant statement. N. Horsfall has considered Camilla's

<sup>20</sup> Arrigoni (above n. 8) 28–29.

<sup>21</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,432; 11,498; 11,800–801.

identification as Volscian natural, and assumed that due to the proximity of the Volscian territory and the long tradition of their military value, it would have been somewhat strange if Virgil had excluded them from his war narrative.<sup>22</sup> This conclusion seems well justified. However, it is probable that to Virgil and his contemporary readers, Camilla's ethnic identity had still deeper meaning. The author was undoubtedly well aware of the associations that his mentioning of the Volsci would evoke in his Roman audience. The identification of Camilla as a Volscian instantly implies her magnificence as a warrior and foreshadows the peril she would cause to Aeneas' quest and the formation of Rome. From this point of view, Virgil's choice for Camilla's *gens* seems reasonable. In terms of dangerous enemies, the Volsci must have been one of the best known among Virgil's readers, and thus Camilla's role as a Volscian was an efficient way to remind them of the weary struggle that was required in order to unify Italy under the Roman rule. This is a masterful expression of Virgil's ability to deal with a wide range of Roman history in a subtle and metaphorical way.

As any well-versed Roman would perceive, Camilla's identification as Volscian does not only denote her ferocity, but also, and more crucially, her doom. The warrior queen's ethnic identity seems salient in terms of her tragic death and its metaphorical significance. According to T. Rosenmeyer, the plot of the *Aeneid* as a Roman national epic requires that "the Volsci must be neutralised: Camilla must go".<sup>23</sup> However, I find this idea disputable in so far as it suggests that through Camilla, Virgil attempted to wipe the Volsci off the stage altogether. After all, the emergence of the peoples is an idea of major importance in the *Aeneid*, and it is perceivable that Virgil endeavours to see something beneficial in all the peoples and ethnic groups that ultimately forged Roman society.

I would rather propose that through the death of the warrior-queen Virgil eliminates the Volsci as an independent people and, in a way, renders them harmless. Camilla as a strong leader represents the Volscian, and in a broader sense, Italian, peril and independence that stands in the way of the Roman mission. Her destruction figuratively breaks the spine of the headstrong warrior peoples and makes their assimilation to the Roman nation and subsequent oppression under Roman rule possible. It is noteworthy that Camilla's fall is depicted as her inevitable fate even before the battle has begun. Her death is a preordained destiny, a price that has to be paid for the unified Italy and the establishment of the Roman order. The expansion of the Empire and the assimilation of surrounding peoples

<sup>22</sup> Horsfall (above n. 8) 43–4.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenmeyer (above n. 11) 161.

are depicted as resulting in an organised and functional society – first in Aeneas' rule, and ultimately in Augustus' balanced and newly-unified society. The significance of Camilla's character in the formation of Rome and *Romanitas* is revealed in this sophisticated metaphorical play. Her importance to the political issues present in the *Aeneid* is highlighted as she forgoes her isolated lifestyle and becomes a social agent and a representative of her people.

### **Blood-lust, patriotism, personal ambition: Camilla's motives for war**

Concerning Camilla's participation in war as a sign of a new, politicised phase in her life, the question remains, what makes her take this crucial step? Why does a Volscan wild child forsake her protected, uncivilised way of life and gather a cavalry of her own in order to support one suitor against another in the betrothal quarrel of Laurentum? What does she fight for?

The usual answer among scholars has emphasised Camilla's uncivilised nature: she goes to war out of pure love of violence. This theory is prominent in older studies that tend to highlight the negative qualities of Camilla's personality: savageness, blood-lust and greed. For example, S. Small has explained Camilla's participation in war by her *amor telorum* (11,583), describing her as "symbolically bound to the spear by Metabus in her infancy".<sup>24</sup> This idea is present in some of the more recent studies as well. Williams, for example, has stated that when it came to fighting, Camilla must have had "little motivation on her part other than the blood-lust itself".<sup>25</sup>

These kinds of statements are eminently questionable, for they seem to build on the tradition of ethical judgement of Camilla's behaviour in battle. The cruelty with which she attacks her victims has often been condemned as bestial and unethical, when, in fact, it is no more brutal than that of other warriors in the *Aeneid*. In fact, Virgil's portrayal of Camilla in battle is entirely consistent with the epic genre and its formula. Camilla's mockery of her adversaries and Virgil's

<sup>24</sup> Small (above n. 9) 296. When narrating the story of Metabus' flight, Diana mentions that when he arrived at the stream Amasenus, and was not able to swim across the river with an infant on his arm, he tied his daughter to his spear, and hurled her over the river. Verg. *Aen.* 11,547–66.

<sup>25</sup> Williams (above n. 19) 19. Horsfall, too, lays stress on Camilla's love of arms. He considers *aeternum telorum et virginitatis amorem* a "massive and memorable pairing – A hint that C.'s love for the hunt (and thus potentially for war) is quite on a level with her devotion to Diana". Horsfall (above n.13) 11,583.

metaphors of a wild beast hunting prey not only run parallel to Virgil's own narrative – they are, in fact, Homeric. The same kinds of representations are applied to many other warriors in the *Aeneid*, even in Book 11.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore there is insufficient proof for blaming Camilla's blood-lust alone for her participation in war. What other explanations, then, can be found? I propose that one significant component is her seeking of personal glory and success. Rather than going to war because she loves violence itself, she goes because she loves the power and stature it gives her. In 11,655–658, Virgil tells us that Camilla had herself selected the best warrior-maidens to assist her in war and peace – that is to say, in battle and in hunt. The reader is left with the impression that she is, indeed, a huntress appreciated for her skills, who has a high standing among her own people. War against the Trojan exiles gives Camilla the chance to lead not only her own maidens and the Volscian cavalry, but also supplemental Latin troops donated in her command by Turnus. To the tyrant's daughter, who has in her infancy been robbed of her position, this must be deeply significant. In 11,502–506, Camilla indeed demands permission from Turnus to be the first to lead her troops against the allies of Aeneas, and even suggests that he himself should stay behind, defending the walls. This kind of behaviour illustrates the importance of personal glory as motivation for her actions, and the impression is supported by the emphasis she places upon her own name and fame when slaughtering an enemy: *nomen tamen haud leue partum / manibus hoc referes, telo cecidisse Camillae* (11,688–689).

More noble and altruistic explanations for Camilla's actions have been proposed, however. Becker and O. Schönberger have, to some extent, considered a pure love of homeland as significant motivation for Camilla. Becker goes so far as to consider Camilla as a supreme *exemplum* of Latin patriotism: he believes that a true love of the country drives her actions.<sup>27</sup> Arrigoni has also proposed, that despite its pejorative connotations, the word *horrenda*, that Virgil uses for Camilla when she volunteers to be the first to face the horrors of war, is not meant to be degrading but actually refers to the purity of Camilla's intentions. *Horrenda*

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Virgil's description of Tarchon in battle, only few lines after the metaphor concerning Camilla: Verg. *Aen.* 11,751–59. For Homeric models, see e.g. *Il.* 22,139–42; 21,493–5.

<sup>27</sup> Becker (above n. 10) 7; Schönberger (above n. 8) 188.

*virgo* is, according to Arrigoni, an admirable patriotic warrior, whose devotion gives rise to outrage.<sup>28</sup>

These theories of Camilla's devotion to the Italian cause are largely based on two lines in the *Aeneid*. At the end of Book 11, when Laurentum is taken over by chaos after the death of Camilla, Virgil intriguingly depicts matrons of the city as taking part in war. He shows them throwing wooden poles down the walls and seeking noble death, since *monstrat amor uerus patriae, ut uidere Camillam*.<sup>29</sup> The whole passage is extremely confusing and various studies have not led scholars to an unanimous interpretation.<sup>30</sup> It seems undeniable that the example of Camilla's courageous fight indeed works as an inspiration to the matrons of Laurentum. In the hour of desperation, they forsake their traditional roles as *matronae* and follow the example of a ferocious warrior-maiden. There is no doubt that the motives of these women are sincerely patriotic. One cannot, however, apply this logic to scrutinise the motives of Camilla herself. The bravery of her fighting and the tragedy of her death naturally create an impression of devoted patriotism. Her fascinating character alone and mere participation in war are likely to inspire devotion in others. Even so, the warrior-maiden's strong impact on others is, to my mind, not sufficient evidence of her own patriotism.

Fortunately, there are further sources of information. In Book 11 of the *Aeneid*, there is another passage that seems far more relevant and that, to my knowledge, has not been thoroughly discussed before. When Camilla lies wounded on the ground, she gives a short dying speech, as is befitting of a great warrior. What is especially noteworthy is that this whole speech – her last chance to sum up her life or leave a memory of herself – consists almost completely of a message to Turnus. Camilla pleads to her sister in arms, *Acca: effuge et haec Turno mandata nouissima prefer: / succedat pugnae Troianosque arceat urbe* (11,825–826).<sup>31</sup> It is strikingly significant that her last wish is of a purely military nature. When Camilla can feel death approaching, she focuses all her thoughts on what really

<sup>28</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,507; Arrigoni (above n. 8) 32. Further discussion on the intriguing expression about Camilla, see Köves-Zulauf (above n. 8) 191–3.

<sup>29</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 11,891–5.

<sup>30</sup> About the passage, its significance in the narrative and its possible parallels in Greek literature, see Arrigoni (above n. 8) 118–24.

<sup>31</sup> Horsfall considers the structure and nature of Camilla's speech, stating that "this balanced brevity reveals a warrior in command of her situation and loyal to her leader until the very end". Horsfall (above n. 13) 11,825. See also Horsfall on 11,823, as he shortly discusses Homeric models for the speech.

matters: the resistance against the Trojans and the preservation of Italy as it has been. Based on this passage, I would not consider it an exaggeration to state that at the moment of her death the development of Camilla's social and political consciousness achieves its culmination. In her story, one can perceive a growth from an isolated child of nature into a glory-seeking, ferocious amazon, and ultimately, into a patriotic warrior-queen concerned for her homeland and her people. Her story, full of psychological sensitivity and artistic outlook, represents an initiation and transformation from private to political.

### **What lies behind: Camilla as a reflection of the Roman past**

It is worthwhile to inquire as to why this story is told. What were Virgil's reasons for creating this complex and controversial character? It is important to note that one explanation might simply be the artistic valour Camilla's fascinating personage brings to the story. Even though the political overtones that partially direct the storyline are indisputably apparent in the *Aeneid*, one should also remember to honour the poem as an independent literary work guided by artistic ambitions. The contradictory image of a maiden performing the epic deeds of men is a matter that itself increases the fascination of Virgil's description of war. Camilla's gender heightens the tragedy of her violent death and renders the story even more moving. Her dialectical nature provides the story with an exotic touch and increases the reader's interest in the character.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that when discussing Camilla in respect to *Romanitas*, the study of political overtones cannot be completely bypassed. To understand the purpose and function of Camilla in Virgil's overall narrative, one should, at least, try to examine the part which a Volscian warrior-maiden plays in the basic theme of the *Aeneid*, the formation of Roman identity. I have briefly discussed Camilla's ethnic identification as an ideal Italian and Volscian, and the possible reactions the association may have evoked in Virgil's contemporary Roman audience. I will now take under scrutiny the other ambiguous characteristic of Camilla, her contradictory gender roles. It is worthwhile to pay some attention to Virgil's construction of male and female social roles, and to an understanding of them in the Augustan era, in order to ruminate on how the conception of *Romanitas* is reflected in or constructed by Virgil's epic narrative.

It seems evident that the formation of Camilla's identity is closely connected to the conception of Roman identity. According to B. Boyd, the character of Camilla as a war-loving female warrior is closely tied to an ethnographical



interest in specialities, features that are alien and even diverse to Roman behaviour.<sup>32</sup> This tendency to highlight exotic characteristics of alien peoples has strong origins in classical Greek literature, and it usually works as a means to define the identity of a viewer through comparison with the exotic Other. It is noteworthy that when first introduced, Camilla is depicted by Virgil as an object of amazement to Italian matrons and youths: she is marvelled (*miratur* 7,813) as something unforeseen and different.<sup>33</sup> It is likely that by placing emphasis on the warrior-maiden's peculiarity, Virgil addresses Roman readers of his own time: this is something we could never be, something unthinkable for Roman of the Augustan age. The confusion Camilla evokes in the Trojans and the Italians is relatable to that of Virgil's readers, and through those feelings both Aeneas' allies and contemporary Roman readers separate themselves from what she stands for. Through the Other they define themselves.

In order to understand the characteristics and phenomena Camilla embodies in the overall picture of the *Aeneid*, it is necessary to dig a little deeper into an analysis of the Roman value system behind Virgil's narrative. Value issues and their connections to contemporary Roman society are, indeed, strikingly apparent in the description of war in Books 10–12. Preceding the horrors of war, Virgil depicts the peaceful arrival of the Trojans to the Laurentum and the alliance between Aeneas and Latinus. In a moving and frustrating way, the author is then able to depict a chain of events that turn the peaceful alliance into tragic bloodshed. This portrayal seems to work as a means of reminding the reader that the war between the Trojans and the Latins is, in fact, a civil war, fought between two peoples who should be friends and allies. Through destructive conflict between Aeneas' men and the Latins, Virgil includes in his epic the theme of civil war and its attendant misery, a subject that is visible already in the *Bucolica* and the *Georgica*. Sufferings brought about by Roman Civil Wars, and the final restoration of peace by Octavian, have obvious parallels in the last three books of the *Aeneid*. Here, Aeneas is the one to finally bring the killing to an end and thus begin a new,

<sup>32</sup> B. Boyd, "Virgil's Camilla and the Traditions of Catalogue and Ecphrasis", *AJPh* 113 (1992) 213–34. On an ethnographical approach to Camilla's otherness: see esp. p. 218–9 in particular.

<sup>33</sup> Arrigoni has drawn attention to how in her first appearance, Camilla is defined specifically as "antifraasi rispetto alla dama romana, anche augustea, idealizzata come filatrice e come una Minerva domestica". Arrigoni (above n. 13), 628. Horsfall emphasises the significance of *prospectat euntem*, suggesting the fact that "the crowd watches from a distance is perhaps a measure of their awe and respect". Horsfall (above n. 17) 7,813. This seems likely; however, it also appears that the awe and excitement is mixed with fear of the unknown, which also partly explains the distance.

happier era for all who wish to align themselves with him. This is a highly noticeable allusion that has been widely studied and discussed elsewhere.

What has not been discussed, however, is the role of Camilla and the perspective of gender in this context. It is most intriguing that in a bloody, tragic depiction of raging civil war, there is a female commander present. Furthermore, it is not just any commander but an apparently crazy, blood-thirsty *dira*,<sup>34</sup> untameable as nature and unnatural as an exotic amazon. Considering the obvious parallels between the war in the *Aeneid* and Roman Civil Wars, how is the presence of Camilla explained?

I suggest that the character of Camilla is, in a sense, created to emphasise the inhumanity and abnormality of war itself. It highlights civil war as the most tragic of all wars, because it wrests people from their traditional roles. It makes friends and allies turn against each other, and it even drives women to participate in the horrors of battle. Virgil's Camilla can be seen as a textbook example of a product of a chaotic world, a creature that in a peaceful society never should – or could – exist.

Considering Camilla from this point of view, it is important to stress that she does not only have models and predecessors in ancient Greco-Roman literary tradition, but also in the time that Virgil's narrative most reflects – the Roman Civil Wars. The significant political and social role that high-class matrons obtained during the late Republic has often been explained through references to confused political circumstances. The *entrée* of Roman women to the socio-political scene is noticeably reflected in the politically active female characters of the *Aeneid*. The most prominent political woman in the narrative is, of course, Dido, Queen of Carthage. Themes of nationality and gender in the Dido episode, her position as a strong-willed foreign queen, and the peril she presents to the Roman mission, have often evoked comparison with Cleopatra, the most famous and infamous woman of the Civil Wars.

What about Camilla then? Even though there is no record of female warriors dating back to the Roman Civil Wars – apart from Mark Antony's wife Fulvia, who is said to have girded herself with a sword and commanded the troops in the Perusine war<sup>35</sup> – clear resemblances to the late Republic are still detectable in Camilla's character. These allusions are more general and subtle than in

<sup>34</sup> Virgil explicitly refers to Camilla as *dira pestis* in Verg. *Aen.* 11,792.

<sup>35</sup> Dio 48,10,3–4. Fulvia's meddling with the war was noted by Velleius Paterculus, Plutarch, and Appian, as well, but contemporary representations of her have been preserved merely in works of Cicero. See, e.g., Cic. *Phil.* 3,4; 5,11; 5,22; 6,2,4; 13,18.

the case of Dido, for they seem not to reflect any specific person, but rather the larger blurring of gender structures during the late Republic. The most crucial factor is the politicising process within Camilla's personality. Her transformation from a non-social and moderate servant of Diana into a socially conscious, glory-seeking and even patriotic agent can be considered a reflection of the changing role of late Republican women. Through Camilla's character, Virgil emphasises the abnormal state of a society that drives women to transform from *domiseda* to public and political. The representation of a woman in the masculine context of politics and power is a characteristic that appears both in Virgilian epic and in Roman historiography. In depictions of Dido and Camilla, as well as in those of Cleopatra and Fulvia, a reader can sense a topos of a fatal *dux femina*, a traditionally un-Roman phenomenon closely linked to the decline of society and the chaotic political situation.

If one considers Camilla as an embodiment of a distorted state of affairs, her tragic downfall could be seen as an allusion to the restoration of order. Through the death of a warrior-maiden, the chaos is ultimately conquered and settled down by Roman *virtus*, *pietas* and *humilitas*, values cherished by Aeneas and his men. Here, one can sense echoes of the moral programme of the Augustan era. Camilla's death represents the elimination of perverted gender-roles, and symbolises the restoration of social order and traditional female roles. She must go, for there is no place for her among Roman maidens. Whether the society of Aeneas or that of Augustus is to come, there is only room for Lavinias in Rome. Camilla's character responds to the need of a post-crisis society to define its values and its self-image. She is the Other who sets limits for the appropriate role of Roman women, and for the approvable development of society.

### **Hero or heroine: Camilla as a representative of epic virtues**

It may be surprising, when examined through this context that Virgil, in spite of everything, seems to be very fond of Camilla. He depicts her as a fearless fighter, *interrita* (11,711), an admirably brave leader of her troops and an exceptionally skilled warrior. This kind of characterisation leaves the impression that, despite her role as a representative of horrors of war and distorted gender structures, to Virgil, Camilla denotes something valuable as well – good old-fashioned epic heroism. This is naturally somehow curious, since Camilla's heroism seems to be of a strictly masculine nature. She is an incarnation of an ideal warrior, an

embodiment of masculine virtues appreciated in a war-commander: fearlessness, self-sacrifice and physical power.<sup>36</sup>

It is natural that these kinds of virtues have a crucial and obvious role in epic narrative of war. It is still difficult to understand why Virgil has attempted to represent them so strongly through a female warrior. The answer may well be that he wished to be able to depict the downfall of these values as well. It is striking that in Camilla's appearance in the battle, there is one single, yet fatal moment of weakness. Only moments before her fall, obsessed by the luxurious outfit of Cybele's priest Chloereus, Camilla is presented as irrationally chasing him, thus forgetting the overall battle and forsaking her duties as a commander of her troops. It is especially noteworthy that even though the gathering of spoils is a well-known epic tradition of men, Virgil deliberately chooses to refer to Camilla's weakness as feminine; he states that *unum ex omni certamine pugnae / caeca sequebatur totumque incauta per agmen / femineo praedae et spoliolum ardebat amore* (11,780–783).

It has been widely discussed as to whether the gathering of spoils is justifiably considered feminine, but it could be argued that the inaccuracy of an expression is not really the point one should focus on.<sup>37</sup> An issue of greater importance is the author's deliberate choice of words. After consistently depicting Camilla as a highly asexual, even masculine, character, this is the moment Virgil finally refers to her as *femina*. Schönberger has perceptively noted that when Camilla begins her chase after Chloereus, the terms connected to her before, *virgo* and *bellatrix*, are replaced by *femina* and *venatrix*.<sup>38</sup> I consider this extremely significant in that it is precisely at her moment of weakness that Camilla is represented as a woman and as a huntress. This is a turning point in which an asexual warrior-maiden finally becomes a representative of her gender and her uncivilised past.

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<sup>36</sup> It is noteworthy that the manifestation of male virtues in a virginal female warrior was by no means an uncommon or unprecedented phenomenon in the Roman tradition. On the contrary, this kind of combination was most familiar to Virgil's contemporary readers, not only because of the amazonmyths but mainly because of one of the most important deities of the public state cult, the virginal warrior-goddess Minerva. It seems that as Virgil describes Camilla's social and political awakening, he gradually alienates her from the archetype of Artemis-Diana and brings her closer to the less isolated, politically more active Athene-Minerva type. Thus, the highlighting of Camilla's male virtues can also be considered a part of this process, as her appearance in battle echoes the characteristics of the virginal warrior goddess.

<sup>37</sup> On the epic tradition of taking spoils and the feminine nature of Camilla's desire, see Becker (above n. 10) 7; Rosenmeyer (above n. 11) 161; and West (above n. 11) 24–5.

<sup>38</sup> Schönberger (above n. 8) 186.

Her role as a soldier and a man is destroyed by her quintessential role as a woman and a huntress. At this moment she loses the higher state of mind she had achieved when entering war. She is, again, de-politicised.

With her fatal failure to be political, to fulfil her role as warrior and commander, Camilla indicates the validity of traditional gender structures. Virgil uses her error and downfall to imply that male and female heroisms require very different qualities. Women cannot be expected to abide by the same heroic code as men: in the end, feminine weakness will overcome.

I contend it is the moment of her death that Camilla finally adopts a role that, based on values of Virgilian epic, is suitable to her. When she falls gracefully off her horse and onto the ground, she turns from huntress into prey. This is when Virgil's portrayal of her becomes very sensitive, as is befitting to the poetic theme of *virgo moritura*. In two lines he alters the reader's whole conception of Camilla: *labitur exsanguis, labuntur frigida leto / lumina, purpureus quondam color ora reliquit* (11,818–819). For the first time in the entire poem, the unbreakable warrior-queen is a girl, fragile and vulnerable in essence.

In his essay "Vergil on killing virgins," D. Fowler has studied the rhetoric of sexuality in the *Aeneid*. He suggests that Camilla's femininity is expressed in the passage of her death through metaphors referring to defloration and suckling.<sup>39</sup> Fowler has emphasised the perversity of Camilla becoming figuratively a bride and a mother only at the moment of her death. He considers these allusions a judgement towards her abnormal way of life, a reminder that, instead of entering war, she should have stayed at home to fulfil her traditional role.<sup>40</sup> Unlike Fowler, I do not perceive any kind of moralistic overtone in Virgil's depiction. I would argue that rather than judgement, deep grief and sorrow can be sensed in the representation of Camilla's death. Highlighting feminine qualities implies that the loss of a great warrior is now complemented by the loss of a potential wife and mother. Thus, the tragic nature of war is once again emphasised.

It has been widely debated among scholars whether or not Camilla's death is truly heroic according to traditions of epic. Rosenmeyer for example has con-

<sup>39</sup> Fowler refers to a line in which the spear is described as penetrating in Camilla's breast, figuratively drinking her blood, Verg. *Aen.* 11,803–804: *hasta sub exsertam donec perlata papillam / haesit virgineumque alte bibit acta cruorem*. D. Fowler, "Vergil on killing virgins", in M. Whitby – P. Hardie – M. Whitby (eds.), *Homo viator: Classical essays for John Bramble*, Bristol 1987, 187–98.

<sup>40</sup> Fowler (above n. 39) 196.

sidered the death scene as fitting to the epic conventions of a warrior's passing.<sup>41</sup> According to Small, however, there is no true greatness in the fall of Camilla, because she achieves no understanding of the purpose of her death. Small has stated that Camilla dies for Italy (that is, in order to make the new Italy possible) but without ever knowing it herself, and without understanding the significance of her sacrifice.<sup>42</sup>

One could claim that the same charge could be applied to the indisputably heroic death of Turnus. It is likely that he never knew the significance of his sacrifice or, at the moment of his death, understood the inevitability of Aeneas' mission. I am not convinced that this kind of enlightenment is necessarily required of an epic hero. Perhaps more pertinent factors are a resilient struggle against forthcoming death, dignity at the moment of passing and the significance of the death in a broader, political context. These conditions Camilla fulfils as well as any warrior in the *Aeneid*.

When discussing Camilla's death, Arrigoni has appropriately regarded her passing as *tristis mors* – unjust, physically violent and described in detail.<sup>43</sup> This is an intriguing standpoint I would like to take further by comparing it to a few parallels in Greco-Roman literature and tradition. I am here inclined to stress Camilla's resemblances not only to the archetype of an amazon and a warrior-queen, but also to that of a tragic *virgo moritura* of Athenian drama and Roman literature. I sense in Camilla's tragic passing away parallels with the representation of Iphigeneia in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, in Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as with the depiction of Polyxena by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. Besides these examples from Greek mythology, Virgil's narrative seems to draw on allusions to Roman tradition. In a certain fashion, Livy's narrative about Lucretia and Verginia in represents an apparent continuum to the tragic women of Greek tradition.<sup>44</sup> In all of these representations the defining

<sup>41</sup> In fact, Rosenmeyer considers that the purpose of the passage is to highlight Camilla's heroic nature and greatness as a warrior. Rosenmeyer (above n. 11) 163. See also Horsfall, who considers Camilla's death designed after the manner of Patroclus' in the *Iliad*. Horsfall (above n. 13) 11,794–835.

<sup>42</sup> Small (above n. 9) 300.

<sup>43</sup> Arrigoni (above n. 8) 55–63.

<sup>44</sup> Eur. *IA* 1540–80; Liv. 3,48,5–6; Lucr. 1,80–101; Ov. *met.* 13,441–80; 12,24–38. Violent deaths of tragic women in Greco-Roman tradition is a theme that has evoked a good deal of intriguing discussion. One of the more recent studies dealing with the subject is H. P. Foley's *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*, Princeton 2001. Among earlier studies, N. Loraux's *Come uccidere tragicamente una donna* (orig. *Façons tragiques de tuer une femme*, 1985), Bari

qualities of the death of a woman – injustice, inevitability and violent manner – are as apparent as they are in Virgil's narrative of Camilla.

Another common characteristic between these stories seems to be the rhetoric of *corpus*. A tragic virgin's death and moments preceding it are usually depicted in detail with explicit descriptions of the maiden's outer appearance. Body parts that are considered feminine or virginal warrant attention: references to pure, beautiful necks and breasts being most prevalent.<sup>45</sup> Common topos of unspoiled, or noble, blood is also a matter worthy of attention: this reference is made by Euripides about Iphigeneia, as well as by Ovid about both Iphigeneia and Polyxena.<sup>46</sup> The theme of blood is present in Livy's narrative about Lucretia too. Even though Lucretia's blood can not be depicted as virginal, it is still described as pure and chaste, as Brutus refers to Lucretia's *castissimum – sanguinem* (1,59,1).

It is especially noteworthy that these are all themes that are also clearly present in Camilla's death. Virgil describes in detail Arruns' spear penetrating Camilla's breast and drinking her virginal blood: *hasta sub exsertam donec perlata papillam / haesit uirgineumque alte bibit acta cruorem*. (11,803–804). Later at the moment of her death Virgil calls attention to Camilla's lapsing neck: *tum frigida toto / paulatim exsoluit se corpore, lentaque colla / et captum leto posuit caput* (11,828–829). Thus, Camilla's death, through the composition and the choice of words, is linked to the Greco-Roman literary tradition of *virgo moritura*.

It could be contended that the most important characteristic that defines the deaths of these women is the political nature of the incidents and the ensuing consequences for their respective communities. Iphigeneia's death is necessary in order to bring Agamemnon's men into the Trojan War. Verginia and Lucretia are unaware of the consequences of giving their lives, but their deaths ultimately result in the breaking up of Roman political order and the formation of a new regime. Virgilian Camilla unquestionably claims her status as part of this tradition. Her death at the end of Book 11 begins the countdown to the ultimate defeat of

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1988, has been most useful for my examination of parallels with the Camilla-story, p. 33–50 in particular.

<sup>45</sup> Eur. *IA* 1560; 1574; 1579; Liv. 1,58,10–12; Ov. *met.* 13,459; 13,478.

<sup>46</sup> Euripides on Iphigeneia: Eur. *IA* 1574; 1595; Ovid on Iphigeneia: Ov. *met.* 12,28–34; and on Polyxena: Ov. *met.* 13,457; 13,469.

the Italian side and the establishment of Aeneas' regime. It is, as Schönberger has put it, a turning point towards the Italians' catastrophe.<sup>47</sup>

I suggest that in her tragically conventional death, Camilla ultimately fulfils a heroic role appropriate for a woman in classical literature. She dies, as a virgin, for noble motives, bringing about the ultimate transformation of the society. Her death, even though she herself is unaware of it, ultimately ensures social order and harmony. It is perceivable that Camilla's death, as well as her personality, allows Virgil to play with different themes of epic and again bring together conventions from earlier traditions and literature.

Most striking is the way in which Virgil uses Camilla's death to express both masculine and feminine heroism at the same time. I have previously referred to Small's contention that Camilla's death is not, in a proper sense, a tragic passing – apparently neither that of a hero nor that of a heroine.<sup>48</sup> I hope to have supplied enough evidence to support my statement that it is actually both. Camilla's death combines the passing of a great warrior with that of a tragic, self-sacrificing maiden. This kind of mingling of gender roles is unprecedented in earlier and unexpressed in later epic. Through Camilla's virtuous death, Virgil illustrates male and female heroism concretely complementing each other – as an allegory of the society for which Camilla is sacrificed. In Virgil's narrative, male and female melt into one for the well-being of the community. He emphasises traditional gender roles as a natural and desirable phenomenon, but that does not imply the enshrinement of one over the other. The complementary nature of male and female virtues is, instead, the basis on which society is built – that of Aeneas as well as that of Augustus. I would emphasise that this idea is the fundamental message in any reading of the *Aeneid* from a gender-sensitive perspective. This message is most visible in the gender-confused, contradictory character of Camilla.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to scrutinise the enigmatic character of Camilla in its social and political contexts. I will conclude that, based on my theory of transition, Camilla is not, in fact, a purely political or non-political character. She is powerfully both, as her inner savagery conflicts with the expectations set on

<sup>47</sup> Schönberger (above n. 8) 188. About Camilla's death and its significance to the outcome of war, see also Becker (above n. 10) 2, and Williams (above n. 19) 70.

<sup>48</sup> Small (above n. 9) 300.



her by the surrounding society. Her transformation from uncivilised to political is shown in her participation in war against the Trojan exiles. This transformation is powerfully expressed by her outer appearance as well as by the politically charged terms that Virgil uses to describe her. Instead of an isolated child of nature, she is depicted as an Italian queen, a representation of primitive Italy and an incarnation of the Volscian power.

Camilla, however, is not entirely capable of social heroism. No matter how virtuously she attempts to fulfil her masculine role as a war commander, she cannot deny the *femina* and *venatrix* inside her. This incapability for political thinking makes her forsake her heroic role and thus brings about both her own doom, and that of the Italian cause. When Camilla gives in to personal passion, to desire for treasure and spoils, she is again depoliticised.

However, Virgil spares Camilla shame and, before her death, allows her achieve the final stage of her social transition. In her dying speech, Camilla expresses her worry for the outcome of war and the future of her homeland, indicating that her quintessential state of mind is not only political, but also patriotic. She has overcome the lust for personal glory that drove her actions before, and become truly *politiké* in the noblest classical manner.

Thus, Virgil's Camilla-story is a complex and intriguing tale of the formation of social consciousness. From a gender-sensitive point of view, it is also a subtle allusion to the period that is so essential to Virgil's work – the late Republic and the Civil Wars. Through Camilla's character, Virgil represents a distorted and chaotic society and its declining effects on traditional gender roles. Virgilian Camilla is, at the same time, the Other, through which the Romans define their values, and a severe threat to that value system. Her elimination is necessary, as it stands for the restoration of order and traditional social roles. Camilla's fall represents the taming of the savage Volscian and Italian resistance under the Roman order, and the nullification of perversely public and active female roles under traditional gender structures. Thus, both the formation of Rome and the restoration of Roman values are subtly reflected in her life and death.

The emphasis Virgil places upon the traditional gender system is noticeable throughout Camilla's story. Camilla's pursuit of male heroism, her fatal failure, and the final adaptation of a virtuous female death seem consistent with a message that male and female heroism, are, indeed, of a very different nature, and not to be confused. They are, however, complementary to each other, and together they form the basis on which society is built. This idea is beautifully represented in Camilla's death scene which combines the conventions of male and female heroism. Camilla is both a hero and a heroine, and through her, Virgil

demonstrates the harmony of male and female virtues. It is somewhat paradoxical that a character that once represented a threat to society and to traditional Roman gender structures, can also be depicted as an allegory of that society, and of its most valued virtues. The complexity of Camilla's character is, indeed, a masterful indication of Virgil's artistic ability and the subtlety with which he moulds the Roman value system into a fascinating and independent literary narrative.

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