

VIRGIL'S ILLIAD

An essay on
epic narrative



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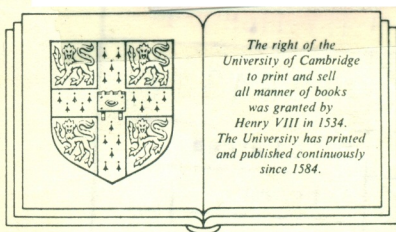
W. GRANSDEN

VIRGIL'S ILIAD

An essay on epic narrative

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA
296 Beaconsfield Parade, Middle Park, Melbourne 3206, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1984

First published 1984

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

Library of Congress catalogue card number: 84-4236

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Gransden, K. W.

Virgil's Iliad.

1. Virgil. Aeneid. Books 6-12—Sources

2. Homer. Iliad 3. Homer—Influences

—Virgil

I. Title

873'.01 PA6825

ISBN 0 521 24504 4 hard covers

ISBN 0 521 28756 1 paperback

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Introduction	I
Prologue: Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	9

Part I: Peace

1 Transition	31
2 Invocation	39
3 Homecoming	44
4 Dynastic	57
5 Juno	67
6 Catalogue	81
7 Diplomatic	87

Part II: War

1 Absence	97
2 Nisus and Euryalus	102
3 Siege	119
4 The council of the gods	126
5 The return of Aeneas	138
6 The funeral of Pallas	154
7 The council of war	174
8 Camilla's last stand	183
9 War and peace	192

Bibliography	218
Indexes	220

PREFACE

In 1965 I began to think about the European epic tradition, which was being established as a core course for first-year undergraduates reading English and Comparative Literature at the new University of Warwick. For the first time I began to look at the *Aeneid* in relation to its Homeric exemplars on one side, and to its successors, *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost* on the other. For someone with a traditional classical education, accustomed to look at works of literature more or less in isolation, this was an exciting and fruitful adventure, and my first debt must be to Professor G. K. Hunter, from whose original inspiration the course evolved and is, I hope, still evolving.

During this period there has also been a significant shift in the direction and emphasis of literary criticism itself. There has been a steadily growing interest in narrative and in the ways in which the reader himself constructs and manipulates narrative; in the 'voice' of the 'implied author' of a narrative; in the structure and articulation of long texts. At the same time there has been a tendency to move away from close analysis of isolated words and phrases, and to become more concerned with larger sense-units and the importance of recurring themes and motifs.

Nevertheless, readers of difficult texts, especially those in foreign languages, will continue to need annotated editions. Some years ago Professor E. J. Kenney invited me to edit *Aeneid* VIII for the series of Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics of which he and Mrs P. E. Easterling are general editors. This undertaking gave me the opportunity of trying to keep in mind the ways of looking at narrative to which I have referred, while not (I hope) quite losing sight of the

traditional needs and expectations of the student of Latin poetry. I do not know how successfully I solved that problem, but Professor Kenney subsequently invited me to edit *Aeneid* XI, and it was while pondering my Introduction to that text that I realised how much preliminary work I needed to do on the second half of the poem. That preliminary work has led to this book, the scope and intention of which are described in the Introduction.

I should like to thank all those colleagues and students, past and present, with whom I have been fortunate enough to be able to discuss epic poetry in general and Virgil in particular. From such discussions, as much as from reading, I have been able to get some beginnings of an understanding of the fascinations and complexities of narrative. In addition, my thanks are due to Susan Moore, of Cambridge University Press, who read the book in manuscript and saved me from many errors and imperfections, and to Elizabeth Hannay, who read the proofs and saved me from some more. For those which doubtless remain I am solely responsible.