

a) Christopher Nappa
Dept. of Classical and Near Eastern Studies
University of Minnesota
245 Nicholson Hall
216 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
USA

cnappa@umn.edu

b) 15—Greek and Roman Epic or 2—Language of the Body

c) Love Unlimited: *Amor*, Excess, and Absence in *Aeneid* 9

d) In this paper I argue that *Aeneid* 9 is organized around a theme also present in Vergil's *Georgics*, that of the power of *amor* and the concomitant need to control it. Throughout, Vergil makes it clear that *amor* in all of its forms must be carefully controlled at all times or disaster results.

Aeneid 9 also focuses on various types of *amor*, sometimes explicitly identified as such. While *amor* binds Nisus and Euryalus together, it is also *amor* that inspires Nisus to propose their mission in the first place. Yet throughout *Aeneid* 9, limits are exceeded and appropriate boundaries are not maintained. Nisus and Euryalus do not limit their greed when plundering, and therefore lose their lives. Turnus enters the Trojan camp and could end the war, but his own excesses keep him from letting his men in, so he too fails through lack of an appropriate limitation on his passions. Ascanius kills Numanus Remulus and wants to keep fighting, but Apollo imposes a limit, and the Trojan men have to restrain the extravagant grief of Euryalus' mother, so that it does not demoralize the Trojan warriors.

Book 9's focus on *amor* and excess is related to the larger themes of the poem in two ways. First, the inability to maintain appropriate control of various kinds of passion highlights Aeneas' absence throughout the book. This too recalls the *Georgics*, in which we learn that the hive destroys itself when it has no king. Secondly, Book 9 (like Book 10) highlights the important theme of coming of age, itself so often bound up with *amor*. Apollo's limitation of Ascanius' newfound passion for battle keeps Ascanius alive for the all-important transition to adulthood. The unlimited passions of Nisus and Euryalus cause their doom.