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Ennius Lyricus

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In the prologue to his *Andria,* Terence defends himself against a charge of literary incompetence. He has been accused of spoiling his Menandrean model by interpolating material from a second Greek play into the Latin version — the practice which modern scholars call *contaminatio.*[1] Terence does not deny the charge. Instead he willingly admits it and justifies himself through the precedent set by Naevius, Plautus, and Ennius. With heavy irony he adds that he would rather emulate their "carelessness" (*neclegentiam*) than the muddled pedantry (*obscuram diligentiam*) practiced by his critics.[2] *Neclegentia* seems to express an attitude of independence vis-à-vis Greek models, a freedom to borrow from them selectively and to adapt them without any constraints other than the artistic principles which the adapter formulates for himself. The superiority of *neclegentia* over the *obscura diligentia* of the purists is again argued, by implication, in the prologue to the *Eunuch.* Terence there states that his critics, through accurate translation (*bene vortendo*), turn good Greek plays into bad Latin ones.[3] It is well known that the attitude behind *neclegentia,* even if called by a different name, was to remain a fundamental principle of Roman literary creativity.[4] Its effects range from minor formal alterations, like the senarius as opposed to the trimeter, to major aesthetic transformations, like the *contaminatio* of Achilles and Odysseus in Aeneas.

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[1] *An.* 15-16: *Id isti vituperant factum atque in eo disputant / contaminari non decere fabulas.*

[2] *An.* 20-21.

[3] *Eu.* 7-8; cf. *He.* 16-19, *Ad.* 14.

[4] E.g., Horace, *A.P.* 131-34: *Publica materies privati iuris erit, si / non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem, / nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus / interpres.*

Ennius, as Terence said, helped to set the precedent for *neclegen-tia* in subsequent Roman literature. Terence was referring to drama, but the same observation could have been made of the *Annales*. The proem to book I of that work provides a good example. Ennius there portrayed himself as learning in a dream that he was Homer reincarnate. This revelation seems to have occurred in a scene which was intended to evoke the encounter of Hesiod with the Muses on Mount Helicon (*Theogony* 22-35).[5] Thus the proem involves a *contaminatio* of what, from an Alexandrian point of view, were two distinct epic traditions, the Homeric and the Hesiodic. There can be no doubt that Ennius was aware of the critical issues which distinguished the two traditions in Alexandrian theory, since in this same passage he also styled himself a Callimachean.[6] A reborn Homer experiences the privileged initiation of Hesiod and retravels the aesthetic journey of Callimachus. Thus the first and best poet of a grand and heroic theme, a theme

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[5]The situational parallels seem too close to admit of any other interpretation. Hesiod encounters the Muses on the slopes of Helicon. They know what is false and what is true, and they instruct him (22) on his theme. Further, they breathe an αὐδὴν θέσπιν into him so that he may celebrate the events of the past and foretell those of the future. Ennius also encounters an external source of supernatural knowledge (Homer), also on a "magic mountain" (Helicon or Parnassus — the tradition is unclear, and perhaps Ennius was not specific). He too is instructed in certain (Pythagorean) truths; and the instruction culminates with the revelation regarding the entry of Homer's soul into Ennius' body — perhaps, like the αὐδὴν θέσπιν of Hesiod, the reincarnation was described in association with a particular mission: to celebrate the events of the past, etc. The evocation of Hesiod is further signaled by the Callimachean dream motif (see below, note 6) borrowed from the *Aitia* proem, in which the reference to Hesiod is explicit (fr. 2 Pf.). There is, of course, a great deal of seemingly insoluble controversy surrounding the finer details of this very fragmentary passage in Ennius. Whether the poet was "initiated" in a scene with the Muses; whether such a scene included a symbolic drink from their sacred spring; whether such a scene was part of the dream or separate from it; where such a scene may have been set — these and other related questions simply cannot be definitively answered in the present state of our evidence. For a review of the issues and scholarship see A. Kambylis, *Die Dichterweihe und ihre Symbolik* (Heidelberg 1965), pp. 191-201.

[6]The dream motif (see J. Vahlen, *Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae* [3rd ed., Leipzig 1928], *ad* frr. iv, v, xi, xii of book I) is borrowed from the proem to Callimachus' *Aitia* (see the "somnii testimonia" in R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus* I [Oxford 1949], p. 11) and thus takes on a programmatic significance comparable to that of its model. One does not know that the alleged differences between the borrowing and the model were as great as assumed by O. Skutsch (*The Annals of Q. Ennius* [London 1951], p. 9 = *Studia Enniana* [London 1968], p. 7) — for example that Ennius actually slept on the mountain rather than visiting it in the dream — but Skutsch is surely right in observing: "To imagine that a man educated in the Greek world of his time could have been unaware of the περίπυστον ὄνειαρ, the famous dream of the most famous poet of the century, is to imagine that a modern literary man could write of a scholar's pact with the devil, without being aware of Goethe's *Faust*" (p. 10/8).

which comprises numerous episodes to be presented in the didactic manner, utilizes the baroque style of Alexandria. This mixing of apparent unmixables, embodying, as it does, a selective disregard for the artistic canons of ostensible models, exemplifies the creative freedom which Terence later characterized ironically as *neclegentia*.

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Here I propose to examine another instance of Ennian *neclegentia,* if one may be permitted to call it that. Once again the departure from tradition involves a *contaminatio:* specifically, the poet's broadening of the epic style to include features which in Greek literature were generally excluded from epic, being particularly associated with lyric poetry instead. The term "lyric" is admittedly imprecise, since it can be applied to a number of formal and thematic features which are more or less characteristic of much Greek poetry: choral and monodic lyric in a narrower sense, elegy, iamb, and epigram too. Accordingly, a narrower definition of the term is adopted for this article. "Lyric poetry" here means primarily the epinician ode, especially Pindar's version of it.

Heroic epic and the *epinikion* have at least one theme in common: both are encomiastic; they both celebrate the κλέα ἀνδρῶν. Clearly, however, they differ in their approaches to this subject. Quite apart from the obvious formal differences of scale, meter, music and dialect, the attitude of the lyric poet toward his subject is profoundly unlike that of the epic poet toward his. Epic poetry builds its effects primarily through narrative content. In the case of heroic epic, that content emphasizes action and events and incorporates a plot. The nature of any plot is to minimize a sense of the poet's active involvement in his creation. In exploiting dramatic effects such as irony, suspense, climax and peripety, a plot stands on its own; its internal logic is self-evident; its effects are immediate and do not require — indeed they essentially pre-empt — any interpretative comment on the part of the poet.[7] In an *epinikion,* however, there is no plot. Narrative content, such as that of a mythic *exemplum,* forms only part of a larger theme which also includes highlighted details of the athletic victory and fragments of the patron's biography. These various elements are not naturally related to one another. What makes them cohere is the context of metaphorical significations into which the poet fits them. The intrusive presence and didactic authority of the poet's (or chorus') *persona* is critical to

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[7]Cf. Aristotle, *Poet.* 1460 a 7 on Homer and mimesis: Ὅμηρος δὲ ἄλλα τε πολλὰ ἄξιος ἐπαινεῖσθαι καὶ δὴ καὶ ὅτι μόνος τῶν ποιητῶν οὐκ ἀγνοεῖ ὃ δεῖ ποιεῖν αὐτόν. αὐτὸν γὰρ δεῖ τὸν ποιητὴν ἐλάχιστα λέγειν· οὐ γάρ ἐστι κατὰ ταῦτα μιμητής.

defining the unity and over-all meaning of that context.[8] In being markedly subjective and interpreted, as opposed to objective and obvious, the meaning of lyric poetry is expressly the poet's, and thereby serves to elevate the poetic *persona* to the role of mediating between his subject and his audience. This quality makes the lyric style self-referential to a degree which even other didactic poetry, including didactic epic, never approximates. The lyric poet will not let his audience overlook or forget that the κλέα ἀνδρῶν are preserved through his agency,[9] that their metaphorical significance is revealed through his σοφία,[10] and thus that the subject and the poem and the poet are inseparable.

Res atque poemata nostra — the subject, the poem and the poet — is the way in which Ennius introduces his epic.[11] The phrase suggests an interdependence and equality of importance among these three elements, which will mutually share the fame of which Ennius boasts. Such a conceit is not traditional in epic poetry. In Homeric epic, as was noted above, the poet *in propria persona* remains offstage. While it is true that in Hesiod and philosophical epic the poetic *persona* is elevated to a prominent role of didactic authority, and that this development accompanies a new emphasis on the truth and importance of the subject,[12] the consequent narrowing of the goal of poetry to a more self-consciously didactic purpose entails a decline in the ethical status of poetry itself. Serious didactic poetry views the poem as a means to an end, not as an end in its own right. This attitude eventually leads to the replacement of poetry by prose as the serious didactic medium. Conversely, in the ostensibly didactic poetry of the Hellenistic age, as also in the small-scale alternative epic of Alexandria, the selection of academic, bizarre, or humble themes is a deliberate means of making the subject secondary in importance to the technical virtuosity of the poet. As suggested earlier, however, the conceit is a familiar one in Pindar. The poet begins his fourth *Isthmian,* for example, by jubilantly

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[8]Thus Pindar repeatedly refers to himself in the course of a typical *epinikion* (e.g., *Ol.* 1, 4, 7, 16, 18, 36, 52, 100-105, 108-112, 115-116). He also repeatedly asserts his claim to *sophia* — both explicitly through statements to that effect (e.g., *ibid.* 9, 116) and implicitly through the numerous ethical and aesthetic judgments which the poet presumes to make (e.g., *ibid.* 1-15, 30-36, 53, 97-100, 110-116).

[9]E.g., Pindar, *Py.* 3. 114; cf. *Ol.* 10. 91-96 and numerous other examples.

[10]E.g., *Ol.* 2. 83-86.

[11]*Latos <per> populos res atque poemata nostra / <clara> cluebunt:* 3-4 V. as restored by O. Skutsch ("Enniana 1," *Classical Quarterly* 38 [1944], pp. 82-84 = *Studia Enniana,* pp. 22-24).

[12]S. Koster, *Antike Epostheorien* (Wiesbaden 1970), pp. 7-10.

declaring his personal opportunity ($\check{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota$ $\mu o\iota...\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta o\varsigma$) to celebrate the $\mathring{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\alpha\acute{\iota}$ which his subject offers ($\epsilon\mathring{\upsilon}\mu\alpha\chi\alpha\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha\nu$ $\gamma\grave{\alpha}\rho$ $\check{\epsilon}\phi\alpha\nu\alpha\varsigma$) by means of a $\check{\upsilon}\mu\nu o\varsigma$ which will, the poet prays, itself be a $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omega\mu$' $\mathring{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota o\nu$ for the victory.[13] Very much the same effect seems to be created through the juxtaposition encompassed by "res atque poemata nostra... cluebunt."

But this is not the only, nor even the best, evidence for the lyric involvement of poet and theme in Ennius' epic style. Perhaps the clearest indication of this involvement is provided by a notice from the elder Pliny.[14] Pliny states that Ennius added a sixteenth book to his *Annales* because he especially admired a certain pair of brothers whom, presumably, the book in question was intended to honor. There seems no reason to doubt that Pliny's notice is based on what Ennius himself wrote, probably in the prologue to book XVI, to which Vahlen assigned the fragment. That being so, this notice reveals the remarkable extent to which Ennius has personalized his massive poem. Normally an epic poet will justify himself, if he presumes to do so at all, in terms of the special nature of his theme, as in the *Works and Days,* where the truth and utility of the subject are emphasized;[15] or he will justify himself through his special fitness for the role, an example being Hesiod's initiation in the *Theogony.* Where else in epic poetry prior to Ennius does the poet explain himself by saying, in effect, "because I wanted to"? A more conventional medium for the expression of the poet's personal attitude toward his subject is lyric poetry (to which elegy and iamb can be added), as in the seventh *Pythian,* where Pindar declares that he is moved by his subject ($\check{\alpha}\gamma o\nu\tau\iota$ $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ $\mu\epsilon$) and that he takes pleasure in it ($\chi\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ $\tau\iota$).[16]

In the light of this notice from Pliny, one can imagine that a similarly lyric attitude may have also appeared in other passages where, however, the evidence is less conclusive. For example, Aurelius Victor refers to the Ambracian victory of M. Fulvius Nobilior as follows: "quam victoriam per se magnificam Q. Ennius amicus eius insigni

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[13] *Is.* 4. 1, 2, 44 respectively.

[14] *N.H.* VII. 101: "Q. Ennius T. Caelium Teucrum fratremque eius praecipue miratus propter eos sextum decimum adiecit annalem." E. Badian's arguments for restoring *Caelium* (cdd. *Caecilium*) to this passage, and for connecting these brothers with the two tribunes of Livy XLI. 1. 7; 4. 3 are convincing: "Ennius and his Friends," *Fondation Hardt Entretiens* XVII (Geneva 1971), pp. 196-99.

[15] E.g., *Op.* 10, 286.

[16] *Py.* 7. 13-18.

laude celebravit.''[17] The *insigni laude* seems gratuitous (would not *celebravit* do the job by itself?) unless one imagines the poet interrupting his narrative with a personal encomium.[18] What form might such an encomium have taken? Perhaps 370-72 V. (of Fabius Maximus) preserves a partial example of a similar one:

> Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem.
> Non enim rumores ponebat ante salutem.
> Ergo postque magisque viri nunc gloria claret.

In particular the *nobis* and *nunc* of this passage suggest a personal perspective (as opposed to a general and timeless one) which the poet invites his audience to share. Such an "invitation" is a reflection of the paraenetic interest which normally complements lyric encomium. Great deeds are great examples, and the lyric poet takes it upon himself to draw the proper inferences for his audience. Such paraenesis in Ennius can even take the form of explicit advice, as in 465-66 V.:

> Audire est operae pretium procedere recte
> qui rem Romanam Latiumque augescere vultis.[19]

to which one may compare the Pindaric: $\emph{ἴστω γὰρ σαφὲς ὅστις...πρὸ φίλας πάτρας ἀμύνεται κ.τ.λ.}$ (*Is.* 7. 27). Thus the picture which emerges from these fragments is more that of the lyric κάρυξ σοφῶν ἐπέων[20] than of the epic ἀοιδός.

In what was probably a "sphragis" to book XV, the original conclusion to the *Annales,* Ennius described himself by means of the following simile (374-75 V.):

> Sicut fortis equus, spatio qui saepe supremo

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[17] *De vir. illus.* 52. 3. Vahlen assigned this notice to the opening of book XV.

[18] K. Ziegler's argument (*Das hellenistische Epos* [2nd ed., Leipzig 1966], pp. 15-16) that this overtly encomiastic quality was also a feature of Hellenistic "Heldenepos" may be true. It does not follow, however, that the *Annales* was just another "court" epic. The question of other Hellenistic forms which may have influenced Ennius is taken up later in this article.

[19] The fragment is known from the *scholion* to a parody of it in Horace (*Sat.* 1. 2. 37-38): "Audire est operae pretium, procedere recte / qui moechis non vultis." Vahlen put quotation marks around the fragment, evidently on the assumption that it came from a speech. But if these were the alleged words of some notable figure out of Roman history, say a Fabius or a Cato, then Horace's parody would have been that much more delicious, and Porphyrion's note would most likely have identified the speaker so as to point out the additional irreverence. Instead merely "Ennius" is mentioned as the source — "sed illud urbanius, quod cum Ennius 'vultis' dixerit, hic 'non vultis' intulerit" — which suggests that these words were not part of a character's speech, but rather were addressed by the poet to his audience, even as the Horatian parody takes the form of such an address.

[20] Pindar, fr. 70b. 24 Snell.

vicit Olympia, nunc senio confectus quiescit.[21]

If the reference of this fragment is to Ennius' reasons for concluding the poem at this point, as seems the most likely interpretation, then it projects the same lyric *persona* as the notice from Pliny. It elevates the poet to the level of his subject, enabling the poem to end not because the story does, but rather because the poet *in propria persona* decides that it will. Again parallels are readily available in Pindar,[22] but cannot be found in epic poetry.

There is certainly nothing novel in the observation that the *Annales* were unprecedented, so far as one has evidence by which to judge, in the degree to which they, as epic poetry, incorporated authorial intrusions. Less certain are the reasons behind this aspect of Ennian epic. Given that Ennius was writing epic poetry in the Greek manner, why did he depart from Greek tradition so markedly in this respect? Previous Ennian scholarship has offered at least three different answers to this question. K. Ziegler in effect answered it by denying the premise that Ennian epic represents a departure from tradition.[23] He argued instead that the *Annales* closely reflect the style of contemporary Greek historical epic. Unfortunately nothing of this genre has survived, making it impossible either to prove or to disprove Ziegler's thesis. The argument is reminiscent of the once popular search for "Posidonius" behind much of Cicero's *philosophica*. It is an *ignotum per ignotius,* and consequently no answer at all. W. Suerbaum suggests that self-references in Ennius are owed to the influence of prose historiography, particularly Hellenistic historiography, in which the book-length compositional unit offered numerous opportunities for

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[21]Cic. *De Sen.* 14. W. Suerbaum (*Untersuchungen zur Selbstdarstellung älterer römischer Dichter* [Hildesheim 1968], pp. 124-25) calls attention to the stylistically unprecedented nature of such self-description in epic poetry: "Dass sich der Dichter selbst mit einem Gleichnis auszeichnet, dafür gab es in der bisherigen epischen Dichtung keine Parallele. Die besprochenen Stellen entstammen alle nichtepischer Literatur." Self-description by means of simile is not common even in lyric poetry, though examples can be found in Pindar; e.g., *Py.* 2. 80-81 (the poet is untouched by slander, like a cork riding above the net). Perhaps the closest Pindaric parallel (though not a simile) is *N.* 8. 19, where the poet likens himself to a runner at the start of a race.

[22]E.g. *N.* 3. 76-82, where the poet abruptly brings his treatment of the theme to an end and closes the poem with a description of himself as an eagle in contrast to the raucous jackdaws who represent his unworthy rivals.

[23]*Das hellenistische Epos* (above, note 18), pp. 55-77. The extremely speculative nature of Ziegler's thesis is sensibly criticized by B. Otis (*Vergil* [Oxford 1964], pp. 396-98) — my thanks to G. W. Williams for calling my attention to Otis' discussion.

"personal" prologues — Polybius provides the best example.[24] On the basis of this supposition, Suerbaum argues that Ennius' personal references were confined to the prologues and epilogues of individual books. Yet the following evidence suggests that Ennius could also refer to himself from within the narrative content of the poem itself.

Aelius Stilo told that Ennius, in the famous "trusted adviser" passage,[25] sketched a portrait of himself under the guise of a friend to a certain Servilius Geminus.[26] Assuming that Ennius intended the identification to be made, how was this intention realized, if authorial intrusions were excluded from the narrative as Suerbaum supposes? There is nothing in traditional epic poetry, nor even in historiography, which could provide a model for such a *laudatio sui.* But in a Pindaric style Ennius might have written something like: "May I ever be like that friend who...."[27] The encomium of Fabius Cunctator discussed earlier (370-72 V.) provides another example of authorial intrusion into the narrative. And perhaps still other fragments should be read in a similar way: 377 V., for example, "Nos sumus Romani, qui fuimus ante Rudini," would make sense both as an autobiographical statement and as an allegorical expression of Roman "manifest destiny."

To return to the question which was posed above, it has been seen that neither Ziegler's argument, nor Suerbaum's, seems to provide a satisfactory explanation of the nature and extent of authorial intrusion in Ennian epic. The thesis of the present article, of course, is that such intrusions were one aspect of a broader "lyric" *contaminatio* which Ennius has modeled after the style of Pindaric epinicia. To a limited extent this thesis has been obliquely anticipated by G. Williams, who writes: "The inspiration for Ennius' personal entrances into his own narrative, so alien to the epic tradition, came from Callimachus. Relevant here is not only the prologue to the *Aitia,* but also such a composition as the first Hymn to Zeus."[28] Perhaps of even greater relevance than Williams' examples are the Callimachean epinicia specifically: those of the *Iambi* (8) and elegiacs (frr. 383, 384, and now

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[24] *Selbstdarstellung* (above, note 21), pp. 44-46.

[25] 234-51 V. (= Gellius XII. 4. 4).

[26] O. Skutsch (*Classical Quarterly* 57 [1963], pp. 94-96 = *Studia Enniana,* pp. 92-94) has shown that this passage brims with Hellenistic *topoi;* nevertheless, he feels that Stilo's identification was likely to have been correct.

[27] E.g., *N.* 8. 35.

[28] *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968), p. 697.

the "Victoria Berenices" from book III of the *Aitia*).[29] These "lyric" conflations in Callimachus have been studied by J. K. Newman who enumerates several "points of contact" between Callimachus and Pindar specifically.[30] He refers with approval to the view of Puelma Piwonka[31] which, he says, "suggests that a vital clue to Callimachus is his preoccupation with the transposition of lyric into other genres traditionally regarded as non-lyric." Thus this chain of argument indirectly arrives at a conclusion similar to the one which the present article advances — that a vital clue to Ennius is his transposition of lyric into epic. Yet there is no need to see the Pindaric element in Callimachus, rather than the work of Pindar himself, as the source from which Ennius drew the lyric *contaminatio* of his epic style. Since Ennius surely possessed the creativity to use Pindar independently, it seems more probable that he was inspired both directly by the potentialities of the lyric style, and by the example of Callimachus in putting some of them to use in other genres. Regardless of whether the Pindaric influence is direct or through Callimachus, the extension of such a style to epic poetry appears to have been without precedent.

A final observation about the racehorse simile of book XV is in order. At various other points in the poem Ennius took care to define his place in the tradition of ancient poetry. It has been noted that he saw himself as a reborn Homer, and that the revelation of this rebirth occurred in a setting which evoked both Hesiod and Callimachus. In the proem to book VII Ennius defined himself with respect to his Roman predecessors too — especially Naevius, whose style he characterized as primitive.[32] Given these indications of Ennius' punctilious sense of his place in the tradition of poetry, the racehorse simile assumes a larger significance. Victory in the horse race was specifically associated with lyric poetry.[33] Why raise such associations, if not to evoke and to acknowledge the lyric (Pindaric) element which he has incorporated into his multifaceted style?

Even at the purely formal level the influence of the lyric style in Ennian epic is detectable. Of Pindar's imagery Bowra writes the following:

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[29]My thanks to J. E. G. Zetzel for drawing my attention to this aspect of Callimachus' work.

[30]*Augustus and the New Poetry* (Bruxelles 1967), pp. 45-48.

[31]*Lucilius und Kallimachos* (Frankfurt am Main 1949).

[32]213-14 V.: "scripsere alii rem / versibus quos olim Fauni vatesque canebant." The context and reference of the fragment are known from its source: Cic. *Brut.* 76.

[33]Horace, *A.P.* 83-84: "Musa dedit fidibus.../...et equum certamine primum."

> The extensive use of imagery is a heritage not from epic but from
> lyric and elegiac song.... Pindar's imagery evokes a mental picture
> which by its unexpected application gives a new character to a theme.
> In its simplest forms it means that one sensible object is brought into
> close relation with another, and from the alliance of the two emerges
> a complex notion which works by pictorial means, but does not ap-
> peal directly to the eye.[34]

This observation could be applied equally well to Ennius' use of meta-
phor.[35] A good example is provided by the phrase "*aedificant nomen*"
in the following passage:

> Reges per regnum statuasque sepulcraque quaerunt,
> aedificant nomen: summa nituntur opum vi.[36]

The image of kings building their *nomen* into an *aedes* simultaneously
evokes the palace, the temple, the mausoleum, and the too ephemeral
nature of them all. It works more by suggestion than by description
and, in doing so, embodies the idiosyncratic polysemies of the lyric
style, rather than unfolding its meaning in the more linear manner of
epic narrative. When Ennius speaks of troops advancing "in an iron
cloudburst" (*fit ferreus imber:* 284 V.), or of the Roman army "drying
themselves off from sleep" (*sese exsiccat somno:* 469 V.), or of a ravag-
ing enemy "shaving down the rich fields" (*deque totondit agros laetos:*
495 V.[37]), he is transforming the nature of epic description. These
vivid, jarring metaphors have their place in the more restless, agitated
style of lyric.[38]

  In a seminal essay entitled "Die Kreuzung der Gattungen,"[39] W.
Kroll demonstrated that the traditional genres of poetry tended to lose
their specific functions and associations during the Hellenistic period.
As all the genres became more artificial, they all became more alike.
This tendency was especially pronounced in the humbler forms of
mime, epigram and even elegy, which had always been less subject to
the formalist constraints of an antecedent tradition. But the loftiest
genre, heroic epic, appears to have been so bound by tradition as to be

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[34] *Pindar* (Oxford 1964), pp. 240-41.

[35] "Besonders kenntlich ist es, wie Ennius bemüht ist, ein bezeichnendes Wort für
die Sache zu finden, der er einen starken poetischen Ausdruck geben will, oder wie er
mit Kühnheit der glücklichen Eingebung folgt" — F. Leo, *Geschichte der röm. Literatur* I
(Berlin 1913), p. 175.

[36] 411-12 V.

[37] *deque totondit* Merula; *detotondit* cdd.

[38] Leo (*loc. cit.*, above, note 35) collects the following additional examples: 225, 253,
278, 308, 316, 335, 348.

[39] *Studien zum Verständnis der röm. Literatur* (Stuttgart 1924), pp. 202-24.

virtually beyond legitimate experimentation.[40] Indeed it was perhaps partly the ossification of epic, its lack of opportunity for creative experimentation, which lay behind Callimachus' famous condemnation of the form. It is true that Apollonius' *Argonautica* differs in scale, emphasis, and dramatic interest from Homeric epic, but the general style is very consciously that of Homer.[41] Of Hellenistic historical epic, even granting that it was the ostensible genre of the *Annales,* not enough is known to permit one to judge whether Ennius' "lyric" *contaminatio* is original with him. But the obvious conclusion seems the best one: namely, that Ennius transformed epic style as part of a reborn tradition of epic poetry, one based on a new language, a new Homer, and *neclegentia.*[42]

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[40]L. E. Rossi ("I generi letterari e le loro leggi scritte e non scritte nelle letterature classiche," *Institute of Classical Studies Bulletin,* Supplement 18 [1971], p. 84) suggests: "ma forse il delitto più grave è la transformazione del genere più sacro, l'epica, che, rinnegata una sua fondamentale legge strutturale, la grande dimensione, diventa l'epillio." Yet the fact that traditional epic continues to be written suggests that the epyllion was felt to be more of an alternative form, something entirely new, rather than an attempt to transform a traditional one.

[41]The only concession to Hellenistic "Ruhmstreben" is a modest *sphragis:* IV. 1773-76.

[42]"Così i poeti romani non si sentirono astretti alle limitazioni infinite che i greci trovavano nella loro tradizione poetica...né furono, per dir così, obbligati a innovarla con sottili e intellettualistici esercizi tecnici" — S. Mariotti, "Letteratura latina arcaica e Alessandrinismo," *Belfagor* 20 (1965), p. 45. I am indebted to John F. Miller for much helpful criticism and advice in the development of this study.