Homer, Vergil, and Complex Narrative Structures in Latin Epic: An Essay

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Nikos Kazantzakis was arguably the last major European poet to write epic. Epic, especially in languages no longer understood or spoken outside academic circles, is now the scholar's preserve. The general reader encounters the Iliad and Odyssey in translation and through the intermediacy of scholars who often study the originals for reasons other than poetic, searching Homer for information, linguistic and social, about the Bronze Age. General interest in Hellenistic and Roman heroic epic is waning, despite the flurry of publication, since its appeal is its literary form and its political and intellectual resonances, which have less to allure scholars or readers whose primary interest is not poetry. Much of it lies in what Paul Friedländer called "the graveyard of literary history": extant, but unread. The fall from favor of Statius' once admired Thebaid coincides with the gradual disappearance of epic as a vital narrative form, with the rejection by poets of extended narrative verse, and with the growing feeling among scholars that the value of an epic is in some way proportional to its usefulness as primary source material for other studies.

Scholars reacted with overwhelming enthusiasm to Milman Parry's "oral" theory of Homeric composition, and his insistence that the Iliad and Odyssey not be treated as "literary" epics. His theory of the "oral" origins and transmission of the Iliad and Odyssey, which dominated Homeric scholarship for several decades, encouraged the epics to be approached not as the product of a master poetic craftsman but as a patchwork, with evident sutures, of different and sometimes conflicting oral traditions. Observed narrative complexity in the Iliad or Odyssey could be attributed not to artistic design but to felicitous seaming by rhapsodes, or to coincidental juxtaposition of ideas which, however artistically contrived they might appear to literary critics, were not the product of conscious artistry. Ironically, the "oral" theory replaced poetic complexity with other scholarly complexities. Indeed, the chief complaint leveled against the "oral" Homer by literary critics was, until recently, that it "deterred the reader from taking Homer's expression at its face value."

1 P. Vivante, Homer (New Haven 1985) 12.
Michael Lynn George, in his excellent *Word, Narrative, and the Iliad*, puts the problem this way:

All Parry's work took shape within the horizon of a world whose cardinal points had been charted by Matthew Arnold. For this critic concerned with the translation of Homer, the epics were conceived as the great utopia of transparency: Homeric poetry possessed "the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky." Within this context of unequivocal purity, transparency and translatability, Arnold promulgated those four cardinal truths—"directness," "simplicity," "rapidity" and "noblely"—which were to acquire canonical status in Homeric scholarship. Parry's theory of orality was to be marked by a constant return to and reworking of these principles.²

For a while Homer was set almost beyond reach of literary criticism, until, paradoxically, the deconstructionists, as foes of authorial intentionality, reunified him by denying him altogether: by talking of text rather than poet, and thereby allowing us to examine the text's poetic implications quite apart from presuppositions about what the poet (or poets) intended.

The Novelistic Model

Post-Homeric epic is clearly not "oral." Yet scholars still evaluate it in terms of what Lynn George calls Arnold's "four cardinal truths" which have acquired "canonical status" as measures of narrative excellence in ancient epic generally. There lingers from the days of gentlemanly Classical education a D. H. Lawrence-like aversion to insincerity, to the ironic, and to the non-explicit. Scholars arrived at three what one might call models of narrative to support the explicit reading of epic. A fourth model, that of the deconstructionist, has made little impact yet on Latin epic studies.

The "scholarly" model sees poetic narrative as a vehicle for virtuoso imitation and reworking of earlier writers, and is explained in terms of emulation, of artistic rivalry as an end, very often, in itself. It is an outgrowth of "source-research," and has a narcissistic appeal because it construes the poet as a mirror-image of the scholar, struggling to find his place within a genre, within a tradition, making narrative choices governed by a desire to imitate and conform. In its darker moments, the scholarly model is influenced by self-hatred: the poet is a mere imitator whose work smells of the (Alexandrian) Library rather than the "real" world.

The "political" model is applied mostly to Roman "national" epic—the *Aeneid, Pharsalia, or Punica*—whose intent is taken to be the validation (or subversion) of Rome, or a particular ruler and his program. The political

model usually assumes the poet is “sincere” in his encomia and flattery, treats the epic as a form of “propaganda,” and interprets it accordingly. Less frequently, it denies that the poet is necessarily sincere, arguing that he can oppose program and ruler either overtly or covertly, that his flattery may be not tasteful admiration, but artful deceit. The subversive political model is usually applied, and then with reluctance, only to Lucan’s Pharsalia, where the poet’s hostility to his contemporary regime seems validated by external data: he took a leading role in a plot to kill Nero. Many scholars nonetheless insist that Lucan’s praise of Nero in Pharsalia 1 is sincere.

Finally, there is the “novelistic” model, based on the modern prose novel—more particularly the “serious” historical or adventure novel, where the subject and purpose are explicit, the theme noble and ennobling, and the focus tight and clear on a “hero” or group of heroes. It assumes that epic narrative is—or ought to be—direct and linear, its “purpose” serious, noble (and ennobling) and in programmatic accord with its “plot.”

Critics usually combine the three models in some way. Elements of the “scholarly” model occur in all discussions of epic, and the novelistic model melds readily with the “political” in treatments of national epic. The poet’s decision to narrate a given hero’s actions implies—or ought to imply—his approval, at least in general, of the hero, his actions, and the outcome. We usually view most favorably those ancient epics, the Iliad, Odyssey, and Aeneid, which can be presented in terms of what epic is—or ought to be, if “properly” written according to our combination of models.

We also find, more rarely, a mixture of the novelistic and subversive political models which yields something like a modern anti-hero, especially when the poet insists on his hero’s ineptitude or failings. Apollonius in the Argonautica rivets our attention to Jason’s lack of resourcefulness with the epithet anechanos, “unable to cope,” which proclaims him the opposite of Homer’s Odysseus who is polymechanos, “full of ways to cope.”3 But the presence of an anti-hero lowers the scholarly opinion of an epic. We acknowledge anti-heroes with the same reluctance we acknowledge ambiguities in the wording of a text: only when we are explicitly told by the poet that they are ambiguous. Ambiguity and anti-heroes undermine the nobleness and seriousness we take to be fundamental to the genre.

Our models take little account of the differences between scholar and poet, prose and poetry, hero of modern novel and hero in an ancient, mythic sense, and of the differences between our obsession, as classicists, with unity and structure and the pluralism and ambivalence of much ancient thought. We know, of course, that Greek and Roman mythic heroes are too replete with conflicting elements to be stable, moral symbols; their very power, like that of the gods, endows them with immense capacities for harm as well as good. We also know the modern novel, like ancient myth, has

other, more complex heroic models encompassing such ambivalence. Yet we shy from complex paradigms on the assumption that an epic poet's goal is the justification or negation to his reader both of the heroic actions described and of the values underlying those actions. Epic should have a "hero" more predictable than the ambiguous Heracles or Theseus who rapes, betrays, and murders, as well as helps, fellow humans.

Lucan can be accommodated to our novelistic epic model better than other ancient epicists because he makes clear distinctions between the "good" and the "bad"—because he does operate in terms of moral absolutes, even if we do not accept the historical and political judgments implicit in his symbols. In recent years he has been to some extent forgiven his demonic Caesar because of his wholly new protagonist who approximates our novelistic model of heroism: the first "moral" hero of western epic. His Cato is the product of a political and philosophical view of the hero in defiant opposition, such as we find in Seneca's letters and essays, where Cato, Hercules, and Ulysses are moral heroes worthy of standing alongside Socrates. Lucan's idealized Cato, though highlighted with the colors of Lucretius' Epicurus, is, like the idealized Hercules and Ulysses, the product of a prose not a poetic tradition. In other poetry, including Seneca's own Trojan Women, Ulysses is, if anything, more cynically amoral than are his Greek precursors in Euripides' Trojan Women or Sophocles' Philoctetes.

The Lost Hero

Roman epic, aside from Vergil and Lucan, does not produce many "heroes" who fit easily into our novelistic epic model no matter how hard we push them. Valerius' Jason has much of Apollonius' anti-hero in him, and takes second place, even in the epic's opening lines, to the vessel on which he sails. In Silius Italicus' Punica, Hannibal, Rome's Carthaginian foe, holds center stage, and scholars have balked at calling him the hero because he is not a Roman, and because he meets, ultimately, with defeat rather than victory. Statius' Thebaid and Ovid's Metamorphoses do not provide any one figure, good or bad, whom we could describe as the narrative center. Statius outrightly disapproves of his two main characters, Eteocles and Polyneices, and banishes their souls to hell (Thebaid 11. 574–79). Given our narrative models, it is not surprising that Statius is excoriated for lack of discernible purpose or for narrative incoherence. The difficulty is not solved by

4 Seneca, Prov. 3. 4–4. 3, Ep. 98. 12, Const. Sap. 2. 1; see also my Lucan: An Introduction, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 39 (Ithaca and London 1976) 271–79.
5 R. M. Ogilvie, Roman Literature and Society (Harmondsworth 1980) 292: "the Thebaid cannot be said to be about anything"; G. Williams: "a basic lack of proportion pervades Statius' whole work and renders nugatory the laborious schemes devised to show its symmetrical structure," Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire, Sather Classical Lectures 45 (Berkeley 1978) 252; for further discussion see my "Statius' Thebaid: A Reconsideration," ANRW 32. 5 (1986) 2803–2912.
arguing that there really is a novelistic "hero" in the *Thebaid*, albeit a last minute one: Theseus. True, in *Thebaid* 12, the widows of the Argive Seven against Thebes arrive in Athens to visit the Altar of Clemency, hoping for help against Creon, who forbids burial of the bodies of their menfolk. Athens is, for them, a haven, as Egypt is to cranes during the winter (12. 515–18). But the cranes of Statius' similes need different refuges at different times. In *Thebaid* 5.11–16, thirsty Argive warriors, when refreshed, are compared to cranes arriving happily in Thrace—the opposite end of their migratory journey. The need, not the site, of sanctuary remains constant. Seasons and situations change for suppliants as well as for migrating birds.

As the Argive women arrive, Theseus enters Athens with another group of women as prisoners: the Amazons (12. 519–39). Their well-being is threatened, not by Creon, but by Theseus who will shortly proclaim himself the liberator of the Argive women. Yet they utter no complaint. Nor do they, like the civilized Argives, seek the Altar of Clemency. They go instead to that of the virgin Minerva. Their chastity, rather than their lives, is threatened. They show no womanly fears—not yet (*nondum*), Statius observes ominously (12. 529–31). The implication is that they will be forced, in time, to succumb. Concubinage and slavery will destroy pride and independence, as well as virginity. Their queen, Hippolyte, is already pregnant with Theseus' child (12. 535–39; 635–38).

Theseus enters the *Thebaid* in at least two conflicting capacities: as helper and destroyer of women. His role as woman's savior is the more unusual. Elsewhere he treats women badly, even by the standards of Greek mythic heroes. He even aided Pirithous in his attempted rape of Proserpina, as Pluto angrily notes in *Thebaid* 8.53–54. And Statius raises other uncomfortable questions about Theseus. Among his troops are men of Sunium (12. 625–26) "where a Cretan ship with lying sail deceived Aegeus, dooming him to fall into being the name of a shifty sea." Theseus' accession to power is clouded by his father's death: did he deliberately neglect to change the sails on his ship returning from Crete, or was he simply forgetful? The first three words of line 626: "Cretan" (Cretan was proverbially a land of liars), "deceived," and "lying" strongly suggest the former.

Theseus' heroism in the *Thebaid* is ultimately rudimentary, however complex and paradoxical Statius' presentation of the man himself may be. By the time he intervenes, the war and the epic are essentially over. The brothers are dead, the Argives cherish no hopes of victory. Thebes, her manpower, and her opposition lie shattered. The remaining issue is the burial of the Argive dead, and the obstacle is one, obvious, and old. The Theban king, Creon, is no warrior at the height of his powers. Neither is Theseus, whom Statius also depicts as old; his battle with Creon is a one-sided contest of the elderly. At an earlier stage, victory might have proved
more elusive, even for him. The issues were more complex, the opponents more formidable.

The Failure of Narrative Models

Statius' *Thebaid* cannot be understood in terms of our narrative models because it is dedicated to demonstrating how inaccurate such models of thought are. In even minute details, Statius shows how situations are misconstrued precisely because people make models or rules, then interpret specific actions as manifestations of them. In *Thebaid* 6, as a chariot race is about to begin, Statius says that the same desire to compete burns in driver and horse alike (6. 396). Yet when Adrastus' horse Arion, drawing Polynices' chariot, "burns more wildly" (6. 427), his agitation is not for reasons we might imagine (6. 428–29): "The Argives believe he is fired by their applause; he is, in fact, trying to escape his charioteer . . ." It may be generally true that horses are excited by applause at races. Such general truth may even apply at the beginning of this race. But it ceases to apply the instant Arion realizes his driver is not his master, Adrastus. The exception to the rule eludes the onlookers who presume that what applies generally applies invariably.

This particular spectator error does not affect the outcome of the race—just their understanding of the outcome. Other errors have more serious consequences. When Amphiaraurus' chariot crashes into the underworld at the end of *Thebaid* 7, Pluto assumes he is being attacked by Jupiter, or that the intruder is another mortal intent on stealing something from his realm. His assumptions are based on his recollection of experiences some of which precede the creation of the human race. And they are incorrect in this instance. Amphiaraurus has been, in effect, buried alive by Apollo because Apollo knows that Creon will forbid burial of the Argive dead after the war. Pluto's retaliation for Amphiaraurus' unwilling intrusion as a living man into the world of the dead is his decree that the dead shall lie unburied. Thus in Statius' world, Apollo's foreknowledge and his apparent intent to save Amphiaraurus' body from Creon's law become the causes of the very law from which he seeks to save his priest.

Statius' human and divine protagonists behave as they do because their view of themselves and their roles has become fixed at some point or level. Although circumstances and people change, they continue to behave as if nothing has altered, can alter, or should alter. More seriously, they see themselves—their lives, their ideas—as the ultimate reality. Their delusions and misapprehensions are all too often the shaping forces of human society and of history.
The Rhetorical Model

Our concern for explicitness and seriousness, like that of Umberto Eco's Jorge de Burgos, goes hand in hand with our concern for oneness, for unity. If something is in earnest (or divine) it must be in single focus and "serious." Indeed, a work's seriousness is a measure of its earnestness—and thus of its importance and its right to be included in a "serious" genre. We think good tragedy, for example, should be serious. Since many of Euripides' later tragedies, Orestes for instance, strike us as too full of bizarre or humorous elements to be genuinely "serious," we sometimes classify them as melodramas, even though, in doing so, we set ourselves at odds with ancient critics. Aristotle says contemporary critics felt the tone of Euripides' tragedies inappropriate for the opposite reason: because "many of his plays end in misfortune" (Poetics 1453a 8–9). So Aristotle goes on, in the same passage, to defend the poet's unhappy endings and even, wickedly, to accuse Euripides' detractors of hamartia: "they are in (tragic) error: hamartianousin."

In our assessments of ancient epic we, like Aristotle's critics, fault our originals rather than our critical models when they are at odds. Many classicists never come closer to a "Silver Age" epicist than a dismissive classroom jest because we have taught not epic itself but our model of what epic ought to be. Our models of epic narrative are flawed because they idealize a simplicity of narrative and purpose that does not exist anywhere in Greek and Latin epic.

Ancient poets, I suggest, were, in general, more like Statius than like ourselves, ready to allow a given idea, action, or narrative—even a given word—to belong to more than one field of reference, and to exploit fully its multivalence. Indeed, they had little use for the forthright expression we admire because they thought it less powerful in public speaking (Aristotle Rhetoric 1382b) and less effective even with friends (Plutarch Moralia 66E–74E). Those ancients who do praise artless speech and criticize the techniques of "formidable speaking"—deinotes—are often themselves the most skilled practitioners of "formidable speaking."

Plato, who defends Socrates against the charge of being formidable in argument (deinos legein) in the Apology, is (along with Homer) the source for many illustrations of the formidable style among rhetoricians. The Platonic Socrates' claims to bluntness and explicitness deceived few critics in antiquity.

Plutarch points out in Moralia 59D that creating the illusion of plain speaking when one is not speaking plainly is part of being formidable in argument: it is "counterfeit bluntness (kibdelos . . . parrhesia)." The edge between genuineness and falseness (which we often assume to be clear) is,

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6 The fundamental ancient text for the "forceful style" is Demetrius' On Style, particularly the fifth section; see F. Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," AJP 105 (1984) 174–208, and the works cited there.
in Plutarch’s opinion, so slight that one can distinguish between a friend and a flatterer in the following quotations from Homer. The friend will observe: “I’ll do it if I can and if it’s possible.” The flatterer will say: “speak your mind” (Moralia 62E). Curiously, these phrases occur in adjacent lines, but in reverse order, in three Homeric locations. Calypso says them to Hermes (Odyssey 5. 89–90); Hephaestus says them to Thetis, who wants him to make armor for Achilles (Iliad 18. 426–27); Aphrodite says them to Hera, who wants to borrow Aphrodite’s beauty to deceive Zeus (Iliad 14. 195–96).

It was not idly that Dionysius of Halicarnassus described Homer as polyphonotatos, the most “many-voiced,” of the poets (On Literary Composition 16). We will look, then, at Homer and Latin epic with an ancient rhetorical model in mind.

Rhetorically Opposed Narratives

In Odyssey 4, Telemachus and Peisistratus visit Menelaus’ Sparta to gather information about Odysseus. We share Telemachus’ curiosity, since we too have not yet “seen” Odysseus in the narrative. So it is tempting to summarize what Menelaus and Helen tell Telemachus about Odysseus, then pass on to book 5 and the hero himself. Yet if we do, we are assuming that Helen and Menelaus are introduced primarily to provide information to (and a safe haven for) Telemachus. Their narratives of Odysseus, however, are clearly shaped by their own experiences with one another, and tell us more about the narrators themselves than about him.

Homer (if I may so call him) directs our attention to Menelaus as he and his young visitors settle down to dinner (4. 49 ff.). Telemachus, of course, knows who Menelaus is. But when does Menelaus realize who Telemachus is? Homer does not give us the precise moment. He leaves us to detect it for ourselves. The princely status and age of his visitors allows several possibilities besides Telemachus. Orestes, for example.

Menelaus pays careful attention to his visitors. He overhears Telemachus’ whispered admiration for the wealth around him in the palace. The tone is flattering, at worst envious, but most likely naive. Telemachus declares the atmosphere and affluence Zeus-like.

Menelaus observes his visitors equally carefully as he moves on to his own narrative. “No mortal,” Menelaus responds to Telemachus, “would compete with Zeus . . . maybe there’s a man who competes with me—but maybe not.” (4. 78–80). He underscores his pride in his wealth, then appending a lament that his riches have come at a price: Agamemnon (Orestes’ father) was murdered while he himself made his fortune in Egypt (90–93). Although Menelaus blames himself for not being present to help his brother, he does not now explain why he did not, on returning from
Egypt, avenge Agamemnon. But the mention of Agamemnon's name produces no reaction from his listeners. The subject is dropped.\footnote{Further explanation of his failure to avenge is postponed until the following day when his visitor's identity as Telemachus is firmly established. Then Menelaus says that Proteus, the Old Man of the Sea, had urged him to hasten home to catch Agamemnon's murderer, Aegisthus—unless Orestes had beaten him to it (4. 543–47). Menelaus gives no sense of how long he was in Egypt, though he is clearly prompting the conclusion that he returned too late for vengeance: Orestes had already acted.}

Menelaus goes on to allude, obliquely, to his personal pain: presumably the rape of Helen by Paris and the subsequent Trojan War—their fathers must have told them about it, he declares! (93–95). This time he might get a more mixed response, though Homer does not note it. Peisistratus' father Nestor is never averse to storytelling, but Telemachus has no father around to tell him about the war. Narrowing his target, Menelaus adds a wish that he could have his lost friends back, especially Odysseus, who must be so missed by Penelope and Telemachus (97–112). This series of names does provoke a reaction: Telemachus weeps, though he tries to hide his tears (113–16). But, as in Odyssey 8. 487–554, when the listener weeps and attempts to disguise his tears, he shows the watchful observer that the narrative has a special poignancy for him.

Nothing has been said directly, but Menelaus now knows who his young guest is (116–19). We may, of course, assume that it is the purest accident that Menelaus has mentioned only Odysseus, out of all the Greek heroes from Troy, and that he has gone on to name Odysseus' wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus. But Menelaus observes a few lines later that he was struck by the physical resemblance of Telemachus to Odysseus. We must therefore allow the possibility that Menelaus spoke as he did to test a hunch about his visitor's identity.

Appreciation of this scene is often spoiled by the scholarly assumption so ruinous to our understanding of rhetoric and poetry: that meaning lies only in what is explicit and emphatic. For us, "emphasis" occurs when a word or idea is underscored. For the ancients, "emphasis" occurs "when something latent is unearthed from something said—cum ex aliquo dicit latens aliquid eruitur" (Quintilian Inst. Or. 9. 2. 64) and explicit statement is inartistic. For the classicist, then, recognition does not occur until it becomes acknowledgment. Thus if someone sees us on the street and does not answer our greeting it means he has not noticed us or has not recognized us. In the Odyssey, however, as in real life, it is routine for acknowledgment of what one has observed to be postponed, even withheld altogether. Communication is normally done indirectly, by innuendo, or while in disguise. Ill-timed self-revelation even in a moment of victory can be dangerous, as Odysseus points out in his narrative of the Cyclops (9. 500–42). Sometimes it would simply be tactless, as it would be if Alcinoos made it plain that he understood Nausicaa's hints about her own readiness for marriage in Odyssey 6. 66–67. In Book 4, Menelaus does not
acknowledge that he knows Telemachus' identity even after Homer tells us he knows it (4. 116–19).

Knowing who Telemachus is does not explain why he is present in your house. Relatives of warriors in the Trojan War might bear ill will to the king whose wife could be considered its cause. Better to discover what is on Telemachus' mind before admitting you know who he is. So Menelaus bides his time. Withheld acknowledgment allows expressions of kindness about Odysseus and his son to appear uncalculated, and thus genuine and heartfelt. Penelope adopts a very similar strategy later in the *Odyssey* with Odysseus. She almost certainly figures out who he is long before she actually acknowledges him; the test of the bow she proposes (and he accepts) is not so much to see if he is Odysseus, but whether he is as capable as he was twenty years ago.8

Menelaus is prevented from exploiting his rhetorical advantage, however, because Helen enters (120–22). In contrast to the reticent Menelaus, she instantly declares the visitor must be Telemachus, since no one else could so closely resemble Odysseus. Menelaus concurs, giving details which show how carefully he has noted the youth's physical appearance; he now openly acknowledges he recognized Odysseus' son (138–54). It is likely that he does not want to be upstaged by the newly-arrived Helen. But his signs of recognition are precise. We do not have to assume he is feigning, so as not to be outshone by Helen. Later developments show he is her match, rhetorically.

Mutual recognition and acknowledgment set the company lamenting Odysseus and Peisistratos' brother Antilochus (155–215). Helen seizes the opportunity to drug everyone's wine with a potion that prevents grief even if one were to see one's own kin killed before the city gate (219–34)—a potion she obtained from an Egyptian woman, and which, if she had had it then, would have proved useful to her during her years of willing (or unwilling?) residence in Troy.9 The drug administered, Helen narrates a story whose overt purpose and early statements show how great a man Odysseus is (235–50): he came into Troy before the city fell, disguised as a beggar; he even had himself flogged to make the effect authentic, and he fooled everyone in Troy—well, almost everyone.

But at 4. 250 the narrative changes direction: *pantes—ego de: “everyone, but I . . . ”* Suddenly Odysseus is at Helen's mercy (250–64): she recognized him, despite his efforts to elude her; she bathed him; she

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9 It seems, perhaps, more likely that she would have obtained it on the journey back with Menelaus, which, in Menelaus' account in *Odyssey* 4. 351–386, took them through Egypt. On Helen's drug see Ann Bergren, "Helen's 'Good Drug': Odyssey IV 1–305," *Contemporary Literary Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Classical Texts* (Ottawa 1981) 517–30.
One Greek declares and refutes, by that Helen's heroic mouth hailing narrative introduced had disguised, but she, Helen, saw through it. We can credit her claimed powers of observation, for she recognized Telemachus immediately on seeing him. But we also know she was unable to restrain herself from declaring her recognition instantly. Could she have kept Odysseus' identity secret if she had really discovered him in Troy? And was she really ready to betray Troy and return to Greece with Menelaus?

At first, Helen's drug and her narrative seem to have worked: Menelaus declares Helen's story marvellous. But then he appends a tale of his own, introduced by a line almost identical to that used by Helen to introduce her narrative of Odysseus (4. 242 and 271) telling how Odysseus had saved the Greeks concealed in the wooden horse (4. 265–89). The story is not overtly self-promoting. On the contrary, he narrates as an observer. Helen, he says, accompanied by Deiphobus, walked three times round the horse, hailing the Greek warriors by name, and imitating the voices of their wives. One warrior, Anticlus, would have cried aloud in response, and the Greeks would have been detected, had Odysseus not clamped his hand over the man's mouth and silenced him until Athena led Helen away.

We may wonder what has happened to the power of Helen's potion, since Menelaus' story is a total refutation of hers, not just an addition to heroic lore about Odysseus. The chronological setting is subsequent to Helen's: the eve of the fall of Troy. Menelaus' allusions to Deiphobus, Helen's second Trojan husband, and to her treacherous behavior undermine Helen's claims that she had come to regret leaving Menelaus for Paris and that her sympathies had reverted to her husband and home.

He has not forgotten the pain.

Helen's Expulsion

Helen has blundered rhetorically by allowing her narrative to be undermined by her behavior, and by making her claims so blatantly that she invites refutation, and is refuted. Menelaus' counter-narrative is successful (if not necessarily "true") and puts a chill on the evening. Although Telemachus tactfully ignores the undertones of the rhetorical duel, he observes to

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10 Indeed, we should recall that Eurycleia herself is found later in Book 4, in dialogue with Penelope when the narrative returns to Ithaca (4. 741–58).

11 Again, see Ann Bergren (above, note 9) and "Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought," Arethusa 16 (1983) 63–95, and especially 79–80.
Menelaus first that Odysseus' iron heart did not save him from destruction, and, second, that it is now time to sleep (190–95). Before Menelaus can respond, Helen orders the maids to make beds for Telemachus and Peisistratus on the porch, then retires to Menelaus' room, and from any further effort to assert herself as a narrator (296–305).

When conversation resumes the next day and Menelaus tells of his own return from Troy, Helen does not seem to be present. If she is, she is silent. Menelaus is free to narrate in his terms, to make himself the narrator-hero. Indeed, we might gain the impression that Helen was not with him on his return. When he describes himself withdrawn from his men, and walking the Egyptian beach deep in thought, he is alone (4. 367). He mentions Helen only as he reports what the Old Man of the Sea told him.

In Proteus' revelations (as reported by Menelaus), the most striking feature is how much more blessed Menelaus is than any other returning hero (491–592). Ajax is dead; so are his troops. Agamemnon's troops live, but Agamemnon dies. Odysseus survives; his troops are lost. Menelaus, in contrast, survives with forces intact. Odysseus, Menelaus' chief rival as "returned hero" is shown as alive, but miserable, stranded, and helpless, having neither crew nor ship, and essentially a captive of Calypso "who keeps possession of—ischei—him" (557–58). There is no allusion to Calypso's hope of giving him immortality, a matter the goddess later raises with Hermes in Odyssey 5. 135–36. Odysseus' prospects look bleak.

Proteus' version of Menelaus' future (as reported, of course, by Menelaus) is more promising. He will find bliss and eternal springtime in Elysium, not death in Argos, when his time comes. "You," Proteus says, "possess Helen—echeis Helenen—and are son-in-law to Zeus" (4. 361–69). The contrast with Odysseus is sharp: Telemachus' father is possessed by a goddess, whereas he, Menelaus, is possessor of the daughter of Zeus, and with her the certainty of immortality. There was, then, more than first met the eye when Menelaus, the previous evening, had rebuked Telemachus, albeit gently, for comparing his palace to Olympian Zeus': "No mortal would compete with Zeus . . . maybe there's a man who competes with me—but maybe not" (4. 78; 80).

The wily king has crushed Helen's attempt to tell her story to her own narrative advantage—by using her "superiority" to Odysseus as a means of advancing her own claims to fame and heroic recognition. Menelaus has taken over the narrative, as he takes control of Proteus despite Proteus' constant metamorphoses, and makes it tell the story his way: how much more blessed he is than any returning hero, including Odysseus. And Helen is his key to ultimate status: a family connection with Zeus, and immortality, part of the godlike affluence of his palace. That is all she is.
Seizing the Narrative Initiative

The two competing tales about Odysseus in *Odyssey* 4 are weapons in a struggle for narrative rights between husband and wife, the outcome of which will determine Helen's image in subsequent tradition. Odysseus, however central to Telemachus' search, is as incidental to Menelaus as he is to Helen. He is the heroic corpse each struggles to expropriate in a battle of narratives that Menelaus seems to win. Similarly, Menelaus' narrative of Egypt and his encounter with Proteus make Odysseus incidental to his own greater blessedness.

Although Menelaus refutes Helen, he never outrightly calls her a liar. Nor does he claim, in his own voice, that he is superior in divine blessings to Odysseus. He adopts the kind of approach which a rhetorician of a later age, Demetrius, praises as a special part of formidable speaking, *deinotes (On Style* 288): "the effect is more powerful because it is achieved by letting the fact speak for itself rather than having the speaker make the point for himself." And Demetrius, like most ancient rhetoricians, finds the Homeric poems as illustrative of "formidable speaking" as Plato. Menelaus achieves an abusive, discrediting effect without actually using abuse, *loidoria*. He lets his narrative do the necessary work for him while he himself stands back and treats Helen with formal courtesy and speaks with huge admiration for Odysseus. The force of what is communicated, as Demetrius notes of *deinotes (On Style* 241), lies not in what is said, but in what people pass over in silence.

Heroism in the *Odyssey* is to some degree determined by one's ability to seize and exploit the narrative initiative. Helen attempts and fails. Menelaus seems to succeed, momentarily, by crushing Helen yet using her, and by co-opting the inner narrative voice of Proteus to build his own boastful stature. But when we meet Helen and Menelaus again in *Odyssey* 15, Helen will have the final word: upstaging Menelaus in interpreting an omen for Telemachus (160–81). Nor has Menelaus persuaded Homer to invert his *Odyssey* and make it the tale of Menelaus. His riches, status, and a new house-broken wife are not to be the stuff of Homer's epic. Indeed, Menelaus is robbed of the status he seeks even as he thinks he is winning it. Homer is about to usher Odysseus into the center with his own authorial voice, and then to give Odysseus the second largest narrative voice after his own: four of the epic's twenty-four books.

During that narrative Odysseus will attempt, among other things, to advance his kind of heroism beyond Achilles' Iliadic glory. He will claim to have heard Achilles' lament that he would rather be a slave of the poorest

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12 And at a time made special not only by Telemachus' visit but by the double marriage of Menelaus' two children (only one of whom is by Helen). And Neoptolemus, killer of Priam, the father of both Helen's Trojan husbands, who is now husband of Helen's child, Hermione, is never introduced into the scene.
man on earth than king of the dead. The heroic choice of the *Iliad* dissolves in the face of death. How remarkable then Odysseus must be to reject the chance of immortality with Calypso since he knows what death is!

Lucian recognized and satirized this touch of narrative strategy which makes one's heroic rivals one's footnotes in his *True Story*: Odysseus' ghost approaches Lucian in the underworld with a letter for Calypso in which he regrets having rejected her offer of immortality and promises to slip away and meet her if he gets the chance (2. 35–36).

**Knowing One's Audience**

In the *Odyssey*, as in other epics, an “inner” narrative is rarely introduced simply to provide “information,” as we see from the different stories Odysseus tells various listeners about himself. In each case his narrative is a strategy which takes close account of who his immediate “inner” audience is, and what it is likely to know and to believe. When he narrates the details of his travels to the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 9, after brief allusions to Calypso and Circe, he takes his audience first to the more or less credible Cicones (9. 39–81), then to the dreamy, but not wholly preposterous poppydom of the Lotus-Eaters (82–104). After the Lotus-Eaters he comes to the giant Polyphemus—the first encounter that appears unbelievable.

Why does Odysseus expect the Phaeacians to believe him? First, the Phaeacians are themselves a non-geographical, “fairyland” people, despite later poets' determination to set them in Corfu or Drepane. Second, and more important, Homer explains in *Odyssey* 6. 4–10 that Nausithous, son of Poseidon, whom Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, says is his father (8. 564–65), brought his people to Scheria, their present home, from their original abode far across the sea “through fear of the Cyclopes, who were their superiors in strength.” The mythical Phaeacians' own national tradition, then, requires that they accept not only that Cyclopes exist, but that they are formidable foes. Odysseus' narration is persuasive in the sense Aristotle mentions in *Rhetoric* 1365b: it is persuasive because it persuades someone (*to pithanon tini pithanon*)—the person it is designed to persuade. And it is clear from *Odyssey* 7. 61–63, 146, and 205–06 that Odysseus knows of Alcinous' relationship to the Cyclopes and Poseidon. Polyphemus, in fact, would be Nausithous' half-brother!

Odysseus exploits the Cyclops myth to the full, making it the major portion of his narrative in *Odyssey* 9. He even mentions that there was close to the Cyclopes' territory, but separated by the sea, an ideal, fruitful


land with wonderful harborage, perfect for a sea-faring people to settle with impunity: for the Cyclopes do not know how to make ships (9. 116–41). Not only, then, does Odysseus tell a tale the Phaeacians must accept, at least in general, but also suggests that their fathers' fears led to an unnecessarily distant emigration, since an alternative and perfect settlement was available close by. He himself, in contrast, was able to confront and overcome a peril from which his Phaeacian hosts had fled in panic. Odysseus' narrative of triumph over Polyphemus, then, elevates him above the Phaeacians, much as Helen's narrative suggests her own superiority to Odysseus in Odyssey 4. But Odysseus has no Menelaus to cut him down to size.

The Cyclops narrative is critical to Odysseus. Having sailed into Phaeacian myth, thus establishing his credentials in terms acceptable to his "inner" audience, he proceeds farther into the realms of the fantastic, past Scylla and Charybdis, through the regions of Circean metamorphosis to the very borders between life and death. He employs an occasional element of self-deprecating humor to soften his extravagant claims. The blinded Polyphemus is disappointed that he has been conquered by such a little man (9. 509–16), and Elpenor, "Man's Hope," arrives before Odysseus in the land of the dead by falling from a roof-top while asleep (10. 550–60). No less important, Odysseus' narrative, replete with monstrous forces, divine persecution, and examples of his own misjudgments and those of his crew, enable him to account for what might be the gravest indictment of his heroic leadership: the fact that he is the sole survivor of his contingent at Troy.

Odysseus wins Phaeacian acceptance without saying anything about his role in the fall of Troy which would identify him as the scheming warrior of the Iliad. His stories, aside from some details of his necromancy in Odyssey 11, are not even about Troy. Odysseus may well have deduced that the Phaeacians know little and care less about Troy. For he prompted Demodocus to sing of Odysseus and the wooden horse (8. 471–98). He even wept at the narrative, as Telemachus does in Sparta, and his tears too are observed by his host (8. 521–49). But, whereas Telemachus' tears confirm Menelaus' opinion that he is Odysseus' son, Odysseus' tears show Alcinoos only that the story means something special to him; he does not seem to conclude that his guest is Odysseus.

When Odysseus returns to Ithaca, the Phaeacians and most other mythic peoples he encounters are replaced in the geography of his travel narrative by Phoenicians and Egyptians, by peoples within the range of experience and credibility of a Greek shepherd (13. 256–86), a swineherd (14. 199–359), the suitors (17. 415–44), and his wife (19. 165–203). He shapes his narrative to suit each particular "audience" and situation. To all except the suitors he represents himself as a Cretan (from a land proverbial for its liars in later Greek tradition) elevating his social status in each successive narrative, and always associating himself with the Cretan king Idomeneus. The link with
Idomeneus is noteworthy, since Nestor tells Telemachus that Idomeneus lost not a single man from his forces on the way home ( Odyssey 3. 191–92). Odysseus lost all of his.

A narrative within an epic, then, is not “simply” a vehicle for conveying information, even in the Odyssey. That is why it is better to avoid too literal-minded a distinction between the “truth” Odysseus tells the Phaeacians and his Cretan “lies.” Odysseus’ truth—which Homer vouches for in Odyssey 16. 226—is, as Alcinous recognizes earlier (11. 368–69), poetic rather than literal, it is a narrative, mythos, that is stated with understanding by a bard. That, after all, is Odysseus’ special claim to fame: he is the master of narrative, able to invent himself anew to each audience he confronts. Odysseus, as narrative mythmaker in company with the mythic Phaeacians, is entitled to present himself as he does in an order where “truth” is not factual discourse and factual discourse is not truth. Truth, in our narrowly literal and unpoetic sense, has little meaning in epic narrative. And to call fiction a lie is to undermine the basis not only of Odyssean myth but of Christian parable. Epic narrative is a complex rhetorical strategy, and was recognized as such by rhetoricians in antiquity. It requires our careful attention to the identity of the inner narrator and to the circumstances in which he is speaking. We must consider first not what we think the poet may wish to suggest to us but what the inner narrator seeks to suggest to his “inner” audience. Once we have taken that step, we are in a better position to evaluate the much trickier question of what myths the poets might expect their external audiences to believe.

Many epic characters, not only Odysseus, have good reason for altering a story, adapting it to his or her particular purposes at a given time. We should, in reading epic, make allowance for the playing of one stated version of a myth against another version that is unstated, but known to his audience, to create a kind of dialogue between the two. The narrator, or perhaps one should say internal mythmaker, often seeks to substitute his version of the myth for the one previously current. Yet we should not expect to see overt confrontation and denial. Just as Menelaus avoids calling Helen a liar while he demolishes her mythmaking, so other internal epic mythmakers often avoid direct acknowledgment of the myths they are seeking to replace.

Two passages, one from the Metamorphoses and one from the Aeneid illustrate this Homeric technique and the refinements added by Latin epicists—who take no less delight than Homer in showing the struggle for narrative control, and in demonstrating that the nature of one’s “inner” audience affects how one tells the tale. It is probably wiser to begin with a narrative episode that does not carry obvious further resonances for the external audience, before discussing the same technique in Roman national epic. We begin, then, with Ovid’s tale of Procris and Cephalus.
The myth of Cephalus and Procris tells, in broad, general outline, how Cephalus and Procris were married, how he was carried off by Aurora, who fell in love with him, how Procris either was unfaithful to him while he was away or left him suspecting that she was unfaithful, and how, finally, he accidentally killed her with a hunting spear. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Cephalus himself is the narrator. He is described as a man rather past his prime, who has come to Aegina when (and because) king Minos of Crete is threatening war against his native Athens (7. 456). He arrives, in fact, hot on Minos' nautical heels. For Minos has himself just visited Aegina to seek her alliance; as his ship sails out of the harbor, Cephalus' sails in (7. 469–93). Just before Cephalus begins his narrative about Procris, he has apparently concluded his embassy successfully. Minos has failed to enlist king Aeacus' help, and Cephalus has secured Aegina's aid against Minos. Cephalus is an orator, a rhetorician. He has advocated his cause with such eloquence, *facundia* (7. 505), that he is given a free hand to take as many troops as he likes (7. 501–11).

It is time for him to depart. The Sun is rising (7. 663); it is *dawn*: *Aurora*. Unfortunately the east wind is blowing (7. 664)—the breezes are against him. And his host, Aeacus, is asleep (667). During this delay at dawn, Phocus, son of Aeacus, notices and asks about Cephalus' unusual spear: what wood is it made of, and where does it come from (7. 671–80)? Phocus realizes it must be a first-rate throwing weapon, but claims not to recognize the wood of which it is made.

Cephalus does not reply immediately, but one of his fellow delegates adds that the spear is magic: after striking unerringly, it flies back into its owner's hands (7. 681–84). Phocus becomes even more eager to know about the spear and forces Cephalus to reply. Ovid tells us he is ashamed to say what the spear cost him, but does not explain what causes the shame (7. 687–88). Cephalus maintains silence until "tears rise to his eyes as he remembers his lost (*amissae*) wife," at which point he breaks his silence and announces: "The weapon ruined (*perdidit*) my wife and myself" (688–93). There is a contrast between Ovid's euphemistic description of Procris as "lost," and Cephalus' verb *perdidit*, with its tones of physical and moral destruction as well as loss.

Cephalus' problem is that his fellow Athenians know something about the magic spear and its properties: it is already legendary. They may also know something of how Cephalus obtained it. Perhaps Phocus does too.

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Cephalus cannot be sure. Before Ovid gets hold of the myth, its general outline seems to have resembled, more or less, the version Apollodorus gives (Library 3. 15. 1): Procris agreed to go to bed with a certain Peleion in return for a golden crown, and, on being caught by Cephalus, fled to Minos; Minos seduced her by giving her two presents: a fast dog and a swift javelin; when Procris was reconciled to Cephalus, she gave him the dog and javelin.

In Cephalus' narrative we find the dog and the javelin, and even allusions to the possibility of Procris' adultery. But he does not mention Procris' adultery, real or suspected, with the king of Crete. Minos is, however, not far away. He is very much part of the circumstances that lead to Cephalus' narrative of his love for Procris. Cephalus, we recall, is an eloquent speaker on a diplomatic mission and Minos is his apparently defeated rival for Aegina's support in a forthcoming war. But the forces have not yet sailed, and Aeacus, who could countermand their despatch, is asleep. Would Aeacus maintain his commitment to Athens if Cephalus admitted he had acquired his spear from Procris and that she had earned it—and the dog—as her reward for a sexual liaison with the enemy, Minos? The less said about how the spear was acquired, the better.

Yet Cephalus cannot tell an outright lie. First, a fellow delegate seems to know a good deal about the spear, and implies as much to Phocus (7. 681–84). Second, the aging Cephalus himself is well known to the Aeginetans, though they have not seen him for some time (7. 494–95). There is a chance his questioner will know his troubles with Procris. In responding, then, Cephalus allows for the possibility that his listeners may have heard, if not about Procris, then about Procris' sister Orithyia. He would surely, like Homer's Menelaus, be watching his listeners carefully for signs of recognition. To judge by the narrative strategies he adopts, he surmises that Phocus, or his own Athenian companion, has heard something before. So his task is to set forth not only a version different from the one in which Procris has an affair with Minos, but also to subvert all suggestion of Minoan infidelity without actually mentioning it.

He begins by telling how, after two months of marriage to Procris, he was abducted against his will, he says, by Aurora—Dawn—(7. 703). His first rhetorical action, then, is to make his story a parallel to that of Procris' sister, abducted by the North Wind. He is a victim. Aurora, he adds, allowed him to return when he could do nothing but talk of his lost wife. He is, then, faithful in spirit to his wife, if not in action. On returning, he came to suspect that his wife had been unfaithful during his absence. So he disguised himself with Aurora's help, though he does not tell Phocus as what or as whom (721). The scenario, then, takes on some Odyssean characteristics. Penelope was not deceived into indiscretion by Odysseus' disguise. Will Procris be deceived?

The disguised Cephalus tries to seduce Procris into what she thinks will be an affair. Despite her initial resistance, he finds her price, then throws
off his disguise and accuses her of infidelity (7. 740–41). Procris, Cephalus says, flees on being trapped by this deception. But he quickly regrets his behavior, he says, and follows her into the hills, where they are, eventually, reconciled. Cephalus does not say whether he told Procris the reason for his own disappearance. He mentions asking her pardon and admitting he was wrong (748), but seems to be excusing his overtly insulting and accusatory behavior rather than infidelity.

Cephalus has now accounted for the tradition that Procris had her price and was thought to be unfaithful. Yet he gives the impression he is the most seriously adulterous party and Procris the injured innocent while at the same time, by mentioning that Procris could be bought, he allows his listener to shake his head at the narrator’s apparent naiveté. He presumably leaves his account open to question because it departs from other versions which leave no doubt as to Procris’ guilt. He admits that Procris came to terms for sleeping with a “stranger.” But that stranger, as he tells it, was really Cephalus himself who had returned, like Odysseus, in disguise. Since Odysseus’ favorite verbal disguise in the *Odyssey* is as a Cretan (sometimes of royal blood), Cephalus has neatly allowed his “knowing” listener to rationalize away the incriminating details of the other version: that the Athenian ambassador’s wife had prostituted herself to Athens’ arch-enemy, Minos. Better that Phocion think him a gullible, even slyly unfaithful, husband whose own guilt makes him accuse his wife of infidelity than someone who knowingly holds in his hand a magic spear, the profits of his wife’s infidelity with his political opponent.

Having thus disposed of his wife’s infidelity, and established that there was a reconciliation, Cephalus says that Procris gave him a spear and a hunting dog as a present. The dog, he adds, is named Laelaps, “storm wind” or “tornado,” and is, Cephalus says, “faster than a Gortynian (i.e. Cretan) arrow” (7. 778). The only trace of Crete in his narrative is his comparison of Laelaps to a Cretan arrow. This may be a slip—an Ovidian slip, in which the truth is unintentionally revealed. But it may just as well be a means of suggesting a harmless explanation for the Cretan element in the tradition. Cephalus now centers his account not on the spear but on his other gift from Procris, the dog Laelaps, and on how he lost the dog, not on how he (or Procris) acquired it. He describes how Laelaps is turned into stone in mid-chase—a spectacular conclusion, it appears, to his narrative (7. 787–93), for at this point he breaks off.

We observe, however, that he has not answered his questioner, whose concern was not the dog but the spear. As he ends the first segment of his narrative (7. 792–93), Cephalus has still not told Phocion about the spear. Nor does Phocion let this omission from view: “What’s your complaint against the javelin itself?” he asks (7. 794). Having failed to put his questioner’s curiosity to rest at the first attempt, Cephalus deflects attention from the acquisition of the spear and from the wood from which it was made
and concentrates on the spear's ultimate use: how it caused him to lose his wife.

He continues his story, noting that he still goes hunting early every morning (7. 803–04). The heat of the auroral hunt leaves Cephalus yearning for cool winds and appealing for Aura, "Breeze, Air," to come to him, to enter his embrace, to blow away his fiery burning. Cephalus repeats the word Aura four times in as many lines to show the insistence of his passion for that cooling breeze (810–13). He loves, he says, to feel her breath upon his face (820). His passionate discourse about the refreshing breath of Aura lies, Cephalus admits, open to misconstruction (821–23):

I don't know who was putting in a listening ear to these ambiguous sounds, but hearing air so often called upon, he got it wrong and thought it was some nymph's name.

The confusion arises because the "ear," aurem, similar in shape and sound to aurae, "Breeze, Air," misunderstands the words spoken by the mouth, ore. The result is, Cephalus points out in 857, an "error" in the interpretation of what is being said that results from mishearing. When word eventually reaches Procris, she thinks Cephalus has taken a mistress, Aura. She fears "a name without a body," sine corpore nomen (830) a phrase that inverts Vergil's famous "a body without a name," sine nomine corpus (Aeneid 2. 558).

Procris, Cephalus continues, decides to see if her fears are true and spies on him. Again he tells his questioner of his usual routine: he sets out after dawn (Aurora), hunts, and calls upon Aura for refreshment (7. 835–37). The eavesdropping Procris betrays her presence by a slight rustling and he, the hunter, does not let an opportunity for a kill elude him. He mortally wounds Procris with the spear that she had given him. Procris, he adds, groans and emerges. Horrified, he tries to staunch her blood and begs her not to die and leave him stained with her blood (7. 849–50). Procris, in turn, begs him not to let Aura take over as mistress of the house, then dies in his arms (861).

There is a kind of airy, aural, oral quality about Procris as Cephalus presents her. She was sister of Orithyia, who was herself abducted by a breeze, an Aura, of sorts: the North Wind, Boreas. Further, Procris' husband Cephalus, is himself the grandson of Aeolus, god of the winds (Metamorphoses 6. 681–710). Small wonder, then, that their lives seem affected by the breezes and that the boundaries between physical love and love of the breezes or love of hunting are indistinct. This certainly seems to be the impression that Cephalus wants to convey to his listener: his obsessive early morning hunting is, in a way, his love of Dawn, Aurora. The difference between his affair with Aurora and his later erotic, though avowedly asexual, luxuriance in the Aura, the breeze that blows in at Dawn while he is hunting, is another form of the same kind of infidelity.
Cephalus’ verbal power lies in his ability to disturb his listener’s confidence in the spoken narrative by showing how easily sounds may be confused in oral/aural communication and lead to false suspicions of amatory intrigue: in short, he provides an explanation that minimizes the reliability of anything one hears (including tales of Procris’ amour with Minos). Cephalus’ narrative is so moving it reduces his audience to tears. He has saved the day for himself and his diplomatic mission (7. 863–65).

Whatever the “truth” about Cephalus and Procris, the visit to Aegina is a diplomatic triumph for Cephalus over Minos: revenge, perhaps, for his humiliation in the courts of Venus. As Book 8 begins, he sails off with everything he wants. The opposing breezes fall away at dawn (needless to say) and south winds hurry him and his new allies on their way (8. 1–4). Minos, frustrated, goes on to ravage Megara, thanks to the treachery of Scylla, another royal woman who lusted for his attentions (8. 7 ff.).

Cephalus’ story, then, is shaped by its narrator to the needs of this particular situation. Had Ovid narrated it “in person,” or had Minos, it might have assumed other dimensions altogether. Under different circumstances, Cephalus might himself have adopted other narrative strategies, as does Homer’s Odysseus. And surely the same is true of mythic narratives in which Ovid departs from the “traditional” version.

Dido and Anna

Roman epicists, like Greek tragedians, practise not only dramatic irony but its reverse, where characters know things we do not know—and never learn. In Aeneid 4. 420–23, Dido addresses her sister Anna as “the only one that perfidious (perfidus) man shows any respect for—he entrusts to you even his hidden feelings” (arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus). But what Aeneas’ “hidden feelings” are, and why he entrusts them to Anna, we never discover in the Aeneid. We are forced out of the text, into other traditions of Aeneas, Dido, and Anna.

The Servian commentary on Aeneid 4. 682 reports: “Varro says it was not Dido but Anna who, driven by love of Aeneas, killed herself on the pyre.” Dido’s observation in the Aeneid, then, would have had some resonance for Vergil’s contemporary readers because it refracts a tradition accepted by Varro, the Roman scholar-poet who “surveyed previous views and transmitted a great accumulation of Aeneas-lore.”

Vergil builds upon the Varronian version to enrich his own narrative with allusions to an undefined, close relationship between Anna and Aeneas. At the end of Aeneid 4, Vergil brings Anna, as did Varro, to the

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17 For other aspects of Anna’s relationship with Dido and Aeneas see Metaformations (above, note 15) 309–15 and the sources cited.
pyre, has her mount it as it burns, and abandons the narrative without retrieving her from the flames (Aeneid 4. 672–92). He even has her cry, with words made ironical by Varro's alternate version: "Is this what the pyre, the flames, the altars were preparing for me?"—hoc rogus iste mihi ... (676). The last words from the pyre are not Dido's but Anna's—her hope to catch with her own mouth any last breath from her dying sister (683–85). Dido and Anna merge, as do the different myths of Varro and Vergil.

It is Dido, not "Vergil," who draws attention to the tradition of Anna's close relationship with Aeneas. Vergil, like Homer in Odyssey 4, offers conflicting narratives without authorial comment—though he superimposes rather than juxtaposes. As in Ovid's narrative of Cephalus, internal voices, rather than the poet's authorial voice, recall mythic variants. Such practice suggests Demetrius' formidable, forceful style, deinotes, which not only speaks through another persona (prosopon) (On Style 243), but asks questions of one's listeners "without revealing one's own position on the issue, driving them to perplexity by what amounts to cross examination" (On Style 279).

Vergil rarely eradicates conflicting elements in the Aeneas tradition. Rather, he places them "formidably," and thus without explicit comment, in some "internal" narrative. That is why it is so important, when examining the Aeneid, to distinguish between what the internal narrators say and the author's own comments.

Punica Fides

Vergil's Aeneas cannot be fairly discussed in isolation from Odysseus. Vergil establishes the parallel clearly and explicitly. He describes, for example, the despatch of Mercury by Jupiter to Aeneas in Aeneid 4 in what is often a verbatim translation of Odyssey 5, where Zeus sends Hermes to make Calypso release Odysseus. But comparison, like simile, highlights difference not just resemblance. Odysseus is detained against his will by the immortal Calypso when Hermes arrives. She must be approached, because he is not free. By sending Mercury to Aeneas, not Dido, Vergil points out that he is not being coerced to stay in Carthage by its mortal queen.

Carthage, unlike Calypso's island or the land of the Phaeacians, has a geographical and historical existence. Odysseus' seven years with Calypso leave no consequences beyond the limits of her magical world. There is no child. Nor do Dido and Aeneas have a child—though he is the son of Venus and brother of Amor. Yet their childless parting, his abandonment of amor
for Roma, becomes the mythic cause of the implacable hostility of Rome and Carthage as in Silius' Punica, and, probably, Naevius' too.\textsuperscript{18} When Aeneas is in Carthage, then, he is both symbol and "hero." His relations with Dido, even his narrative of his travels, carry historical and political resonances beyond what is recoverable from Homeric epic. Vergil's polyphony is obviously more—and more obviously—intricate than Homer's. When, for example, Dido calls Aeneas "perfidious" on discovering he intends to leave her (Aeneid 4. 305), she uses an adjective fundamental to Roman propaganda against the Carthaginians—perfidus. Punica fides was proverbial among Romans for "bad faith."\textsuperscript{19} So Punic Dido is turning Roman proverbs topsy turvy by accusing Roman Aeneas of acting in bad faith in calling her his wife and taking the first steps towards a married relationship—inceptos hymenaeos (4. 316).

Aeneas replies, like a defendant in a court, that he never entered a formal marriage treaty (foedus) with her, and thus, by implication, is not guilty of perfidy (Aeneid 4. 339). To Mercury, an outside divine observer, however, Aeneas, dressed in Punic robes, seems uxorius, "doting on his wife" (4. 266). John Conington commented: "Dido was not Aeneas' wife; but he was acting as if she were."\textsuperscript{20} Vergil's Dido is understandably not persuaded by Aeneas' denial of perfidy on the grounds that no foedus was made, when her charge was broken fides. She describes him, with beautiful irony, as perfidus again at 4. 421 when asking her sister Anna, Aeneas' intimate confidante, to plead with him on her behalf.

Vergil leaves the verdict to us. It was not self-evident even to Roman readers who admired Vergil that his intent was to exculpate Aeneas. Silius Italicus, epicist, author of the Punica—Rome's wars with Dido's descendant, Hannibal—and commentator on Vergil, calls Aeneas Dido's "runaway husband"—profugi . . . mariti (Punica 8. 53), a bourgeois modification of Vergil's fato profugus, a man made "runaway by destiny" (Aeneid 1. 2).


\textsuperscript{19} Vergil uses perfidus only six times in the Aeneid—three times by Dido of Aeneas (4. 305, 366, and 421). Livy 21. 4. 9 describes Hannibal as having perfidia plus quam Punica; Punic perfidy is in the opening of Silius' Punica (1. 5–6): perfida pacti / gens Cadmea; and Regulus' Marcia, with bitter irony, accuses her husband of perfidy when he abandons his marriage vows (foedera) and fidelity (fides) by keeping his word of honor (fides) to the Carthaginians and returning to Carthage. Aeneas and the Trojans are several times referred to as perfidious by use of the patronymic Laomedontian, in reference to Priam's father who broke his oath to Hercules: Aeneid 3. 248; 7. 105; 8. 18, 158, 162 and, most pertinently here, 4. 105, where Dido talks of Laomedontae . . . profugi genis in reference to Aeneas' treachery (cf. Georgics 1. 502).

\textsuperscript{20} P. Vergili Maronis Opera, fourth edition, revised by H. Nettleship (London 1884) II 278.
Aeneas' Audience

Vergil's Aeneas, like Cephalus, is an orator, and needs to make the rhetorical best of awkward situations. When asked to talk about his sufferings he faces a dilemma potentially more embarrassing than Cephalus' in Aegina, and very different from Odysseus' in Phaeacia, despite the overt Homeric parallels. His audience is of "real" people, familiar with the western Mediterranean, and less likely to be taken in by a monster tale than the Homeric Phaeacians. Aeneas, though he sets his narrative in the wake of Odysseus, often depicts himself as arriving on (or near) the mythic scene too late, as Apollonius' Jason arrives at the garden of the Hesperides after Heracles has stolen its golden apples and thus much of its mythic significance (Argonautica 4. 1432–35). Aeneas steers himself as elegantly across the four hundred year gap between the myth of Troy's fall and the legendary date for the foundation of Carthage as Odysseus steers in the opposite direction: away from the world of men and heroes into the world of goddesses and monsters.

The Phoenician Carthaginians, unlike Homer's Phaeacians, are interested in the Trojan Wars and know more about who their narrator is than he knows about them. Aeneas' mother, Venus, briefed him on Dido and Carthage in Aeneid 1. 335–68, and he himself had observed the Carthaginians building walls, temples and theatres, and establishing a senate and constitutional government (1. 418–40). He knows he is addressing an audience of cultured, hard-working, political refugees, led by a widow, but not much more.

Aeneas, unlike Odysseus, never has to establish who he is. He is known, in name and reputation, to his listeners. Cephalus' audience may know more than is comfortable; Aeneas' definitely does: Aeneas is from a people defeated in war whose city was sacked; he must account not, as Odysseus does, for why he lost his troops, but for how he managed to survive with so many followers. The literary and artistic record before Vergil raises some question as to whether Aeneas is not, in some way, the cause of Troy's fall.

Aeneas often appears in ancient art assisting Paris' abduction of Helen from Sparta—a tradition drawn from the Cypria, a work of the so-called "Epic Cycle," dating to before 550 B.C. The chief ancient authority for Aeneas' negotiations with the Greeks is a contemporary of Vergil's, who lived and taught at Rome: Dionysius of Halicarnassus who, in Roman

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21 W. Clausen's racial distinction between the Phaeacians as Greeks and the Carthaginians as "aliens" who "have no share in the heroic world of the Greeks" is inaccurate on this score alone—quite apart from other considerations (Vergil's Aeneid and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1987] 30). There are, besides, numerous allusions to Phoenicians in the Odyssey.

22 L. Ghali-Kahil, Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène (Paris 1955); J. D. Beazley, Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1963) 458 no. 1, and Galinsky (see next note) 40–41.
Antiquities 1. 46–48, summarizes earlier writers, particularly the fifth-century Hellanicus of Mytilene: Aeneas abandoned Troy after Neoptolemos captured the acropolis, taking with him “his father, his ancestral gods, his wife, and his children, and the most valuable people and possessions” (46. 4); he then negotiated to leave the Troad after surrendering all the fortresses (47. 4–5). Sophocles in his Laocoön had Aeneas move to Mt. Ida before Troy's capture (48. 2). Menecrates said Aeneas, after Achilles' funeral, quarrelled with Paris, overthrew Priam, and became “one of the Achaean,” betraying the city to them (48. 3–4). It was “a literary tradition which . . . had its roots in the pre-Vergilian literary tradition.” 23 “Virgil's account of Aeneas' motivation does in passing answer very carefully the charges made by the hero's detractors, which it is clear enough that Virgil must have known.” So Horsfall observes in reference to Aeneid 2. 24 And he is correct in all but one vital point: the narrative is in Aeneas' voice, not in Vergil's authorial voice.

Because scholars, using modern narrative models, assume Vergil wants to justify Aeneas, they often fail to distinguish between the poet and Aeneas as narrators. Horsfall comments on Aeneid 1. 599: “When Virgil describes the Trojans as omnium egenos, he intends primarily a contrast with the wealthy Dido, but we may also suspect a deliberate rejection of those stories in which Aeneas was permitted to carry off property and treasure from Troy, incurring thereby the suspicion of treason.” 25 The speaker who describes the Trojans as destitute of everything is, however, Aeneas. The authorial Vergil, in contrast, says the Trojans were carrying Trojan treasure (gaza) with them, some of which goes down with Orontes' ship: Troia gaza per undas (1. 113–19). Yet Aeneas still has enough state treasure on hand to present Dido, ominously, with Helen's wedding regalia for her “unpermitted marriage” with Paris, and the scepter, necklace, and double crown of Ilione, Priam's eldest daughter (1. 647–56). That leaves him Priam's scepter, crown, and robes in reserve to give Latinus in 7. 246–48. How and when he obtained these treasures from Priam we are not told. Vergil is as tight-lipped on this subject as he is about Aeneas' confessional relationship with Anna.

In Aeneid 2, Aeneas, like Ovid's Cephalus, is an internal narrator with good reason to subvert tales of Troy's fall which an unfriendly critic might adduce. Like Cephalus, he responds to implicit suggestions of impropriety without ever actually acknowledging them. Vergil, like Ovid, does not mount the defense “himself.” He makes it our decision whether or not to believe Aeneas' apologia, and often leaves, as he does elsewhere, unsettling traces of the conflicting versions.

The Greek Aeneas

Aeneas does not have to prompt a Demodocus to find out what the Carthaginians know about Troy. The story is carved in detail on the temple of Juno in the center of Carthage (1. 441–93), and includes persons and incidents not only from Homer, but from other traditions, notably Penthesilea and the death of Troilus. The artistry has at least some verisimilitude, since Aeneas recognizes himself among the images (488): *se quoque principibus permixtum agnovit Achivis*—“he recognized himself mixing it up with (or mixed in with) the Greek leaders.” Pictures are rarely self-explanatory. What is Vergil suggesting Aeneas has seen himself doing? The Homeric parallel is obviously *promachois migenta*—“mixing it up with the champions” (*Iliad* 4. 354; *Odyssey* 18. 379). But the Latin is more ambiguous. In *Aeneid* 10. 237–38, when the Arcadian cavalry is “mixed up” with the Etruscans (*forti permixtus Etrusco / Arcas eques*) they seem to be fighting on the same side, but in *Punica* 15. 452, when Laelius is *permixtum Poenis*, he is fighting against them. *Permixtus* allows either interpretation in a military context. In *Punica* 1. 428–29, when Hannibal is mixed up with both sides—*permixtus utrisque*—in the confusion of the fighting, he is in danger from both. In Lucan *Pharsalia* 4. 196–97, the mixing of soldiers with one another indicates that they have come to a truce: *pax erat, et castris miles permixtus utrisque / errabat*. In fact, they celebrate with libations of mixed wine: *permixto libamina Baccho* (4. 198).

What Aeneas has seen, I suggest, is a negative or ambiguous representation of himself which he would wish to resolve in his favor. Fortunately for him the Phoenician bard, Iopas, sings a Hesiodic or Lucretian song, not heroic epic as does Demodocus. It is easier to cope with a tradition fixed in stone than one that is shaped—and can be reshaped—in words. But there is some sort of verbal tradition at Carthage too, as we can see from Dido’s questions at the end of Book 1: what were Diomedes’ horses like? How great was Achilles?—*nunc quales Diomedis equi, nunc quantus Achilles?* (1. 752).26 These would not be easy questions for Aeneas to answer, and Vergil does not give us his responses. Liger uses similar words to *taunt* Aeneas in mid-battle later in the epic: “*Non Diomedis equos, nec currum cernis Achillis*—You’re not looking at Diomedes’ horses or the chariot of Achilles” (10. 581).

Between *Iliad* 5. 311 and 454 Aeneas is twice rescued from certain death at Diomedes’ hands, first by Aphrodite, then by Apollo, and at the cost of his *horses*, which Diomedes uses to win the chariot race in the funeral

26 Scholars are readier to grant that ancient readers are expected to grasp the presence of rhetorical figures than to understand their force. Clausen (above, note 21) 31 says Vergil would expect his audience to notice the exquisite rhetorical figure, the inverted tricolon, in this line and the one preceding it.
games in *Iliad* 23. 377–513. Diomedes' horses, then, were once Aeneas'. Mention of Achilles could hardly stir happier memories. In *Iliad* 20. 283–92, Achilles would have killed Aeneas had Poseidon not intervened and declared that Aeneas must live and establish his dynasty among the Trojans (20. 293–308).

Aeneas' problem in Book 2, however, is not his inferiority as a warrior to the now dead Achilles; and it is not yet his inferiority to Diomedes, which becomes menacing only when the Rutulians invite Diomedes to join the war on their side in 8. 9–17. His problem is to account for his actions when Troy fell: for the charge of *perfidia*, treachery. As he responds to Dido and tells his story he must, above all, explain away anything in the tradition and in the temple reliefs that might be interpreted as indicating treachery on his part.

His strategy is rhetorically magnificent. Throughout *Aeneid* 2 and 3 he shows that he was not the person issuing the orders or taking command: he portrays himself more as Jason than as Odysseus: fumbling, hesitant, absent-minded, mentally unprepared either for the fall of Troy or for leadership. In his account of the wooden horse, Laocoon, and the breach of the city walls, from 2. 13–267, he does not even mention himself. His protagonists are Priam, Laocoon, and Sinon, a Greek agent who plays on Trojan sympathy and gullibility, pretending he has been chosen as a parting sacrifice by Calchas and Ulysses to counterbalance the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. Indeed, Aeneas uses Sinon's voice to narrate over half of the first two hundred lines of his "Fall of Troy" (69–72; 76–104; 108–44; 154–94). He takes a back seat at his own narrative. His voice is subsumed in Sinon's.

We can easily forget that Aeneas is narrator—and perhaps this is Aeneas' intent. For if we do, it will not disturb us that Aeneas can describe how the Greek fleet used "the friendly silence of the quiet moon" to sail in from Tenedos and how Sinon opened the wooden horse; that he can name the warriors in the horse, note how they came out, and their happy mood (2. 254–67). Other versions of the fall have the Trojan Antenor signalling the Greeks at Tenedos, helping the Greeks out of the horse, and, with Aeneas' help, opening the Scæan gates.28

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27 For the explanation that Dido is referring to the horses of Diomedes the notorious Thracian king rather than the Iliadic Diomedes, see W. Nethercut, "Foreshadowing in *Aeneid* 1. 751–52," *Vergilius* 22 (1976) 30–33. This suggestion is less an answer than an attempt to dodge the problem. Silius Italicus seems to have assumed that Diomedes' horses were those taken from Aeneas, and has his descendants appear in the funeral games for Scipio's father in *Punica* 16. 368–71. For the horses of Thracian Diomedes, see Lucretius 5. 30.

28 Scholia on Lycophron *Alexandra* 340; Dionysius 1. 46. 1; Dares Phrygius 37 ff. (note especially 41); Dictys 4. 18 ff. (especially 5. 8). The original version of Dares probably dates to the first century A.D. Dictys is possibly two centuries later. Servius (on *Aeneid* 1. 242) says Antenor and Aeneas betrayed Troy according to Livy. But Livy 1. 1. 1 does not actually go beyond saying Antenor negotiated with the Greeks. Sisenna (fr. 1 P [OGR 9. 2]) shows that the
The first direct glimpse Aeneas gives of himself follows immediately on his catalogue of Greek warriors in the horse: he is fast asleep as the city is being stormed. Indeed, he is so far from imagining Troy's doom that he dreams, he says, of Hector appearing to him all covered in wounds as he was after Achilles killed him and dragged him round the walls. Aeneas says he remembers asking Hector's spirit: "What delayed you so long?" (quae tante morae?), "Where have you come from?—how we longed for you!" (quibus ab oris expectate venis?), "What disgraceful cause has mangled your serene face?" (quae causa indigna serenos foedavit vultus?), "Why do I see these wounds?" (cur haec vulnera cerno?) (4. 282-87). He represents himself as honoring Hector, as so missing him that his dreaming mind has rationalized Hector's death into a puzzling absence, and therefore cannot account for the visible wounds. On the night Troy falls, then, Aeneas contends, Hector's message—Troy is doomed, you must run away—is utterly lost on him, since his unconscious mind has not accepted Hector's death.

Yet to these naive, uncomprehending and sleepy hands Hector entrusts the fire of Vesta, the guardianship of the city (2. 296-97). No jealousy or rivalry here, and certainly no treachery from one asleep! And Aeneas reaffirms his naiveté and incomprehension on awakening by comparing himself to a shepherd watching flames destroying fields and not understanding what is going on (2. 304-08). When he finally grasps the desperate situation, thanks to a briefing by Panthus, priest of Phoeus, he calls on those around him to die fighting (2. 318-54). They set off, he says, like wolves, to hunt (2. 355). The wolf simile is odd in the mouth of a man who has just compared himself to an uncomprehending (inscius) shepherd. It suggests an abrupt change from hapless defender to predator. And predator he quickly becomes when he encounters Androgeos, an uncomprehending (inscius) Greek, who, Aeneas says, makes a curious error. He mistakes Aeneas and his companions for fellow Greeks, and, on realizing his error, reacts as if he had trodden on a snake (2. 370-85). The prevalent snake imagery of Aeneid 2 has, until this point, harmed only the Trojans.29 It now not only heralds a Greek's death, but a shift in Aeneas' appearance.

Androgeos thinks Aeneas a Greek, and Trojan Coroebus' suggestion that they exchange armor with the dead Greeks, to which Aeneas accedes, completes the visual metamorphosis (2. 387-401). Aeneas now looks Greek, and moves with and among Greeks, appearing to be one of Troy's lupine predators, not its naive shepherd—a shepherd in wolves' clothing: "We go," he says, "immixti Danais—mixed in with the Greeks" (2. 396). Aeneas thus offers Dido an "innocent" explanation of how he appears in the

charge of Aeneas' treachery was well enough known in republican times at Rome to be the stuff of polemic; see Horsfall (above, note 24) 16.

sculptures on Juno's temple in Carthage where he is principibus permixtum . . . Achivis (1. 488). He hastens to add that though the purpose was to damage the Greeks, the consequences were disastrous: his fellow Trojans thought he was a Greek and slaughtered many of his men (2. 410–12). Any scenes of Aeneas fighting Trojans are thus explained away. No less important, the notion of switching armor is reduced to idiocy. The idea, he claims, was not his—the only idea he admits to is the patriotic urge to die with the city. The suggestion was Coroebus'. And Coroebus earned a special reputation in antiquity as among the great fools of all time (Aelian Varia Historia 13. 15). Still, better to be a partner in idiocy than in treachery.

The Mark of the Gods

The Greek-armored Aeneas now sweeps on into the royal palace behind Pyrrhus when the latter breaks down the door into the central chamber: vidi, he claims, "I saw!" (2. 499; 501) as he describes Hecuba and the Trojan Women and Priam fouling the altar with his blood (2. 469–505). Aeneas suggests no attempt on his part to intervene. He then recounts Priam's death again in more detail, from what appears now to be a rooftop position, but this time as a less excited, more passive observer, as a messenger in—even a spectator at—an ancient tragedy (2. 506–58).

Aeneas does not name anyone he killed in the fighting for Troy. The only person he says he tried to kill is Helen—if we accept the authenticity of 2. 567–88, a passage fiercely disputed. Aeneas says that from his high vantage point he sees Helen cowering out of view and decides to kill her for the ruin she has brought on Troy, but is prevented by his mother Venus. This "Helen episode" is one of only two lengthy lacunae postulated in Latin heroic epic; the other, Silius Punica 8. 144–226, also depicts Aeneas in a less than chivalrous manner—cause enough for its excision by many editors, ancient and modern. The textual difficulties in the passage are notorious—as we might expect when verses remain outside the textual tradition for an extended period.30 The juxtaposition of Trojan Aeneas in Greek armor, and Greek Helen in Trojan robes would indeed be powerful stuff, especially in light of the tradition that Aeneas helped Paris abduct Helen. It focuses ironic attention on who is to blame for Troy's fall.

Yet such attention may be precisely what Aeneas has in mind. For when his mother, Venus, shows Aeneas that it is not humans like Helen or Paris who are to blame for Troy's fall, but divine inclemency, she also exculpates Aeneas (2. 589–620). What is not stated, but would be clear to an ancient reader, is that the divine inclemency is at least partially Venus'—

she, after all, offered Helen as the prize to Paris for judging her the most beautiful goddess.

Aeneas uses Venus' revelation of the divine forces ruining the city to mark a major change in his narrative. The sight of Priam dying had reminded him earlier, he says, that he too had an aged father, a wife, and a son (2. 559–66). Now, after Venus' revelation, Aeneas suggests that there is a divine hand guiding him: he is no longer aimless, feckless, and marginal even to his own narrative. He is suddenly the focus of everything: indestructible (2. 632–33), his son is marked with tongues of fire (2. 679–700), himself a symbol of pietas, not only carrying his aged father on his back, but deferring to the old man's authority (2. 707–34). When he says he puts a lion skin on his broad shoulders and places himself beneath the load (ONUS) one would think we were watching Herculesshouldering the heavens rather than Aeneas a frail old man (2. 721–23).

We may easily miss, as Aeneas describes his departure from Troy, his allusion to an apparently prearranged assembly point for refugees: the shrine of Ceres (2. 741–44). Indeed, when he returns to the assembly-point after plunging back again briefly into Troy, a huge crowd of people joins him there, then heads for the hills (2. 796–804). Aeneas' picture much resembles that of Sophocles' Laocoon, as reported in Dionysius I. 48. 2, although in Sophocles Aeneas' exodus precedes, rather than follows, the fall of Troy. If we don't notice the rendezvous, it is because Aeneas focuses his narrative on the sad story of his wife's disappearance and death—a story whose pathos rivals that of Cephalus' narrative of Procris' death (2. 736–40).

The search for Creusa not only gives Aeneas the chance to make an emotional appeal to his audience, but to explain any tradition that set him in Troy after the fall. Aeneas puts on his armor (Greek or Trojan?) and finds himself wandering the streets of Troy, calling pitifully for Creusa, and seeing piles of Trojan treasure guarded by Phoenix and Ulysses, as well as women and children ready to be led into slavery (2. 749–67): the Troy of Greek and Roman tragedy. And from this Troy, according to Aeneas, Creusa's ghost liberates him for the future as she appears and bids him go to the Western Land, Hesperia, where the Lydian Tiber flows (2. 771–90)—instructions he seems to forget in Book 3 much as he forgets Creusa, whom he never mentions again.31

Conclusion: A Matter of Belief

Vergil's Aeneas was a master of Demetrius' "formidable style." He convinced not only Dido, for a while, that he was not a perfidious traitor, but the majority of Vergil's readers from the Renaissance onwards. Yet because we have confused his voice with Vergil's, we have more often

31 Iulus refers to her in 9. 297, but when Aeneas is away.
treated Vergil himself as a propagandist than as the ultimate master of the rhetorical "formidable style" Aeneas handles so well. Vergil, like Homer, Statius, and Ovid, knew that epic myth is not a matter of absolute truth, of "rejecting" one version in favor of another. The mythic narrator establishes the best picture he can of himself, given the tradition in terms of which he is working, and given the internal audience he is addressing. Vergil, like Ovid, takes it for granted that the external audience will know the alternative versions, and that its reading will be informed by them. It probably did not occur to him that Aeneas' narrative would displace all others. And they certainly were not displaced in antiquity and the middle ages.

The tantalizing glimpses Vergil affords us of Aeneas and Anna, or Aeneas' list of Greek warriors sliding down the rope from the wooden horse remind us that any narrative shows us only part of what is happening and from limited perspectives. Statius makes the same point more explicitly. He shows us Apollo answering for the muses the question as to whether our world is the bedrock of the universe or part of a much larger order that eludes our understanding (Thebaid 6. 360–64). But Apollo never tells us what the answer is.

Statius, I suggest, is typical of epicists in making insistent attacks on fixed boundaries and definitions, in subjecting characters and actions to constantly changing perspectives and frames of reference. That is why the shift of narrative voice must be noted with care. Homer, Vergil, and above all Ovid, grasp that what is seen or narrated depends on who is looking or narrating, and when and where he or she is looking. Attempts at finding simple answers yield radical misunderstanding: one is artificially isolating things which belong in interrelationships of great complexity.

That is why, I suspect, we could do worse than return to the ancient rhetorical model for examining epic to take new stock not just of the verbal and metrical talents and massive learning of ancient poets, but of their extraordinary force of mind that set them among the leading intellects of their times.32

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32 I should like to thank the editors of Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt for permission to rework parts of my "Statius' Thebaid: A reconsideration" for inclusion here, and Cornell University Press for permission to use revised sections from Metaformations. The discussions of Homer were presented first at Trinity College, Dublin and University College, Cork in 1980, and I am grateful for the suggestions made at that time by the late W. B. Stanford, and more recently by Hanna Roisman of the University of Tel Aviv who made numerous helpful suggestions and corrections.