THE NARRATOR SPEAKS:
APOSTROPHE IN HOMER AND VERGIL

ELIZABETH BLOCK

University of Pennsylvania

The narrator in the Homeric epics and in the *Aeneid*, although he may broadly be defined as objective, impersonal, and unobtrusive, intrudes in subtle and various ways, providing through the information he makes available to the audience a continuous commentary on the action that is itself the poem. This commentary seldom overtly acknowledges the narrator's presence through articulation of his responses or address to the audience; speaking in the third person the narrator remains thus apparently distant and uninvolved.[1] At certain points, however, the narrator may intrude in the first person, or address characters and sometimes even the audience in the second person, distinguishing himself and his responses from those of the characters, the audience, or an ideally dispassionate observer. Because many of them employ either the vocative or an invocation formula which may seem mechanical, these narrative intrusions have received little attention, yet they almost always express and demand a strong response.[2] The rarity of such intrusions, and the patterns

---

[1] Implicit in this discussion is a distinction between the poet, who may intrude in various ways (in his manipulation of subjective or objective style, for example), and the narrator who is his persona, a fictional entity. The following analysis deals with overt narrative intrusion rather than with implied comment (as when Dido is called *infelix* in *Aen.* 1.712, for example), in which the voices of poet and narrator are even more complexly intermingled.

[2] For a summary of the argument for and against meter as a primary determining factor in the choice of modes of address see A. Parry, "Language and Characterization in Homer," *HSCP* 76 (1972) 1–22, esp. pp. 9 f. While this article is unfortunately without notes, it offers a brilliant and invaluable analysis of Homeric practice in the use of apostrophe. See also P. T. Eden, *Aeneid 8*, Mnem. Supp. 35 (1975), on 8.643: apostrophes " . . . almost always arise from some intenser feeling in the context." (The address to Icarus at *Aen.* 6.30 f. is a good example of a vocative the power of which ought not to be minimized by an argument from metrical necessity.) On the vocative in Homer see S. E. Bassett, "The Omission of the Vocative in Homeric Speeches," *AJP* 55 (1934) 140–52, who argues that the use of the vocative is dictated by *êthos* and *pathos*. See also J. A. Scott, "The Vocative in Homer and Hesiod," *AJP* 24 (1903) 192–96; H. N. Couch, "A Prelude to Speech in Homer," *TAPA* 68 (1937) 129–40. On "The Use of the Vocative in Alexandrian Epic," see G. Giangrande, *CQ* N.S. 18 (1968) 52–59, and on "The Vocative in Apollonius Rhodius," B. L. Gildersleeve and

that emerge from an analysis of their use as a rhetorical device differentiated from impersonal narration or the direct speech of a character, imply that both Homer and Vergil were aware of their power as departures from an expected epic stance. Furthermore, a comparison of these narrative intrusions in the epics of Homer and Vergil shows how their nature and effect, linked to the requirements of oral performance (and its narrator and audience), changed when they were adapted from a predominantly oral to a predominantly written literature.

While at all times the narrator addresses himself to an audience (which is not necessarily the actual audience of the poem), he defines its presence most clearly when he speaks directly to it. In articulating his own responses openly, in speculating on the responses of an audience, acknowledging a relationship of some degree between himself and the audience of the poem, the narrator asks the actual audience to alter, even if slightly, its perception of the action, by aligning or comparing its responses to his own or those it has been led to expect.

This "turning" from one stance to another, from objective to subjective narration, or from one audience to another, which the ancient rhetoricians straightforwardly labeled apostrophe,[3] brings about a complementary change in the stance of the audience. Apostrophe, according to Quintilian's definition, consists of *sermonem a persona iudicis aversum* (4.1.63); the term may also apply to speech that *a proposita quaestione abducit audientem* (9.2.39). Hampel has described the invocation form of apostrophe as follows: "convertitur enim sermo aut potius narratio a iudice, h. e. ab eo, ad quem sermo habetur, hic igitur ab eis, qui narrationem poetae audiunt vel legunt."[4] This diversion occurs most effectively at emotional junctures, to emphasize the response of the speaker and thereby shape the response of the listener: the strength of apostrophe, as

Miller, *AJP* 24 (1903) 197–99. The increased use of apostrophe in, for example, Cat. 64, and other forms of love poetry that strive for a personalized tone, deserves separate study.

  [3] See for example Aquila Rom. 9, quoted in E. Hampel, *De Apostrophe apud Romanorum Poetas Usu* (diss., Jena 1908) 8, a useful compilation of citations (and see also K. Halm, *Rhetores Latini Minores* [Leipzig 1863]). The effect of apostrophe may be achieved in a number of different ways (cf. Cic. *Or.* 40.137 f.): e.g., through *licentia* (*ad Her.* 4.36.48; cf. Quint. 9.2.27); *interrogatio* (Quint. 9.2.6 ff.); *exclamatio* (Quint. 9.2.26, with which compare *ad Her.* 4.15.22); *conversio* (Mart. Cap. 38.523, in Halm); *metabasis* (Quint. 9.3.24 f.). On apostrophe as a collective label see H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich 1960) para. 762–65.

  [4] Hampel (above, note 3) 9. The automatic equation of the poet with the speaker here implied persists in rhetorical theory which, based as it is on the presumption that only one speaker addresses the audience, although he may adopt any number of personae (cf. Cic. *de Or.* 3.204 f.; *ad Her.* 4.53.66), does not distinguish between apostrophe spoken in the narrator's own persona and apostrophe in a character's speech. For example, in *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton 1972), G. Highet lists apostrophe of one character to another in direct speech (p. 306), but does not even mention what I call narrative apostrophe. This lack of distinction obscures the development of the narrator as a separate persona.

Hampel notes (p. 8), consists in this: "quod oratio, quamquam averti videtur, tamen in eos intenditur, quorum docendorum vel commovendorum causa habetur."

Its purpose, then, is both to move and to teach, and to do so by shifting the attention of the audience, establishing a diversion through which the speaker guides the response of the listener.[5] The speaker pretends to feel, for example, anger, fear, or sympathy, in order that through himself his audience may confront, in the particular context, these same emotions.[6] Apostrophe, overtly verbalizing emotion toward either a real or imagined object, thus asks the audience to respond, ideally, as the narrator responds to the situations or evaluations that he introduces.[7]

The audience of an oral performance, in order to respond fully and immediately to the constantly flowing action, must at all times understand clearly what is happening. In poetic terms this means that the narrator is expected to be reliable. While he may present situations that allow for doubt and require interpretation, such as the false dream of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, he cannot present them in such a way that the audience mistrusts the very information available to it.[8] The relationship between singer and audience is, in the oral tradition, one in which the narrator's response is shared rather than challenged, with the result that

[5] In fact what the rhetorical theorists saw as the technique of apostrophe is also its purpose. Compare the use of the term *adfectus* to designate both cause (technique) and effect (cf. Quint. 6.2.20 f.; Macrob. *Sat.* 4.1).

[6] See on this narrative adoption of emotion to elicit emotion for example Plato, *Ion* 535c, d; Hor. *A.P.* 99 ff.; this concept is implicit in the basic techniques of oratory described by both literary and rhetorical theorists. See also Cic. *de Or.* 2.189 ff.

[7] This is the aspect of mimesis that Plato found so disturbing. See E. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass. 1963) esp. pp. 25 f., and Chapter 2 in general: the term mimesis "focuses initially not on the artist's creative act but on his power to make his audience identify almost pathologically and certainly sympathetically with the content of what he is saying" (p. 45, and see note 22). Both Plato and Aristotle, while disagreeing on details, agree in defining mimesis as a narrative mode—whether or not all discourse is intrinsically mimetic is another question—in which the narrator acts out or dramatizes emotions, words, and characters. But even here there is a distinction between poet and narrator: Aristotle in the *Poetics* praises Homer because he understands "what the poet ought to do himself. The poet ought to speak as little as possible as himself, for he does not present mimesis in this sense" (1460a13). For a good exposition of the differences between Plato and Aristotle, and on mimesis in narrative as a whole, see G. Genette, "Boundaries of Narrative," *New Literary History* 8 (1976–77) 1–13.

[8] This need for immediate clarity explains at least in part the development of such basic oral poetic techniques as parataxis, the placement of noun-epithet combinations, and the reliance on repeated and traditional elements developed through variation rather than innovation. Concerning the way such techniques reflect cognitive modes see for example A. Parry, "The Language of Achilles," *TAPA* 87 (1956) 1–7 (anthologized in G. S. Kirk, ed., *The Language and Background of Homer* [London 1964]); B. E. Perry, "The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately," *TAPA* 68 (1937) 403–27; J. Russo, "How, and What, Does Homer Communicate?" *CJ* 71 (1976) 289–99.

the audience of an oral narrative is primarily a feeling, not a judging, participant (although, as modern studies of oral poetry have indicated, the very presence and participation of this audience are essential to the success of the presentation, as they were in the view of Greek and Roman rhetoricians[9]). This mode of poetic interaction underwent a fundamental change, the full impact of which was obscured by the complexly allusive quality of Greek and Roman literature, with the development of writing as a poetic medium.[10] As the existence of the text itself freed the audience from constant and immediate involvement with the words and emotions of a speaker, a new distance began to develop between audience and narrator.[11]

While Homer's narrator is straightforward and trustworthy, as he must be if addressing a listening audience, Vergil's narrator, no longer the embodiment of interpretation, becomes another point of view that must be included by the reader in interpretation. The reader's emotions are not the same as the narrator's, but synthesize, criticize, and incorporate them.[12] The resultant changes in the relationships between narrator and

[9] On the audience in modern oral performance see especially B. Rosenberg in D. Ben-Amos and K. Goldstein, eds., *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (The Hague 1975) 75–101; W. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca 1977): "A history of the ways audiences have been called on to fictionalize themselves would be a correlative of the history of literary genres and literary works . . . " (p. 60). R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* (Cambridge 1977): direct address to the audience is "peculiarly appropriate to oral literature," but surprisingly rare, perhaps because the whole performance is considered an address to the audience (p. 118, and see pp. 121 ff., 231 ff.). The virtual absence of such address in the *Odyssey*, especially in comparison to the *Iliad*, deserves more attention than it will here receive. See also M. Hadas, *Ancilla to Classical Reading* (New York 1954): "All classic literature, it may be said, is conceived of as a conversation with, or an address to, an audience" (p. 50).

[10] Few scholars have touched upon the paramount influence of oral techniques on written literature. See in general W. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven 1967), esp. pp. 30 ff.; J. A. Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer," *TAPA* 80 (1949) 1–23. C. Conrad, "Traditional Patterns of Word-Order in Latin Epic from Ennius to Vergil," *HSCP* 69 (1965) 195–258, isolates for analysis the patterns of *Sperrung*, and notes that differences that may be found between oral and written poetry may be attributed to a decreased need to follow the movement of the intangible spoken word. S. E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley 1938) is most sensitive on this subject, esp. pp. 115 ff. See also Notopoulos, "Mnemosyne in Oral Literature," *TAPA* 69 (1938) 465–93, on the features of oral poetry derived from the exigencies of oral performance; G. M. Messing, "Structuralism and Literary Tradition," *Language* 27 (1951) 1–12: "The entire question of stylistics is vitally affected by the interplay of the written tradition and the spoken tongue" (p. 6).

[11] Just as Homer's poem is not purely oral, since we have it only in a final written form, so Vergil's is not purely literary, since *recitatio* was a common form of poetic presentation in Rome. The resultant complexities, while deserving of attention, will here be ignored. See E. Havelock, "The Preliteracy of the Greeks," *New Literary History* 8 (1976–77) 369–91: "High classical Greek literature is to be viewed as composed in a condition of increasing tension between the modes of oral and documented speech" (p. 371).

[12] The distinction that B. Otis analyzes (*Virgil, A Study in Civilized Poetry* [Oxford 1964]) between Homer's objective style ("we are seldom told . . . how a character feels and never

audience are reflected in the changing nature of narrative intrusion in the form of apostrophe. While in both Homer and Vergil narrative apostrophe is most powerful when it takes the form of direct address to a character, it may also occur, as the following brief survey indicates, as an invocation, a rhetorical question, or a direct address to the audience.

In the *Iliad*, Homer's narrator addresses Menelaos[13] and Patroklos[14] repeatedly, and in one instance each Melanippos (15.582) and Achilles (20.2). In the *Odyssey* only Eumaios is so addressed.[15] Vergil's narrator, in contrast, addresses both major and minor characters with relative frequency,[16] as well as those mentioned in catalogues, lists, and descriptions of action.[17] This personalization of groups, and addresses to abstract concepts,[18] are both variations of apostrophe not found in Homer. The invocation, a form of apostrophe that frequently includes a rhetorical question, appears to direct the attention of the audience toward the significance of what is about to happen, and to ask for help in describing momentous events.[19] Such appeals occur seven times in the *Aeneid*, six

---

told how to evaluate his emotions and actions," p. 58) and Vergil's subjective style ("first in the *empathy* with which he shares the emotions . . . second in his own, *personal reaction* to their emotions," p. 49, his italics) is actually one between a narrator separate from his characters and audience who involves himself subjectively in his poem, and Homer's narrator who, identifying himself with characters and audience, fosters an apparently objective narrative stance that ensures a communal response. For a similar hypothesis applied to a slightly different issue see J. Russo and B. Simon, "Homeric Psychology and the Oral Epic Tradition," *JHI* 29 (1968) 483–98 (anthologized in J. Wright, ed., *Essays on the Iliad* [Bloomington 1978]): "By making mental operations so plainly visible and palpable, the poet (or his traditional language) excludes any possibility of the listener placing a private or idiosyncratic construction upon the ideas communicated to him" (p. 487). For a fresh assessment of Homeric "objectivity" as distinguished from "subjectivity" in the traditional sense in which Otis uses the term, see now J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980), esp. Chapter IV: "The whole distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' has in fact turned out to be less clear than is often suggested" (p. 139).

   [13] 4.127, 146; 7.104; 13.603; 17.679, 702; 23.600.
   [14] 16.20, 584, 692 f., 744, 754, 787, 812, 843.
   [15] 14.55, 165, 360, 442, 507; 15.325; 16.60, 135, 464; 17.272, 311, 380, 512, 579; 22.194. While these are all the same formula, the possibility of fitting some form of third person address into the hexameter is confirmed by the examples at 14.121, 401 (although without the proper name). For the nominative of the name (which would require hiatus if combined with the formulaic epithet) see, e.g., 16.156.
   [16] 4.408, Dido; 5.840, Palinurus; 9.446, Nisus and Euryalus; 10.411, 507, Pallas; 10.514, Turnus; 10.790 ff., Lausus; 11.664 f., Camilla. These are developed characters, in addition to whom the following figures are directly addressed: 6.30 f., Icarus; 7.1 ff., Caieta; 8.643, Mettus; 8.668, Catiline; 10.302, Tarchon; 10.430, nameless Trojans.
   [17] 5.123, 495 f., 564, all to participants in the games; 7.684 f., 733 f., 744 f., 759 f., in the catalogue; 10.139 ff., 185 f., 200, 324 ff., 390 f., 402 f.; 12.538, 542, 546.
   [18] 4.65, the minds of seers (including a rhetorical question); 4.412, *amor*; 10.188, *amor*; 10.501 f., the minds of men.
   [19] Divinities may also be addressed directly in the *Aeneid*: 6.18, 10.316, Phoebus; 6.251, Proserpina; 7.49, Saturn; 7.389 ff., Bacchus (here it is difficult to distinguish the narrator

times in the *Iliad*, but only once in the *Odyssey*, at the beginning.[20]
Rhetorical questions not included in invocations occur seldom in the
Iliad, relatively often in the *Aeneid*, once in the *Odyssey*.[21] Finally, the
narrator addresses the audience directly five times in the *Iliad*, four times
in the *Aeneid*, not at all in the *Odyssey*.[22]

This comparison shows that even the frequency with which the narrator
acknowledges through apostrophe his presence or that of an audience
varies among the three epics. The underlying changes in the relationship
between audience and narrator may, however, be seen most clearly by
comparing the narrator's direct addresses to the audience and to charac-
ters. These apostrophes, perhaps because they are relatively free of the
formulaic restrictions of the invocation and the rhetorical question that
often accompanies it,[23] express most overtly the responses (and therefore
the relationship) of narrator and audience.

Macrobius comments (*Sat.* 5.14.9) that Vergil imitates Homer when
inter narrandum velut ad aliquem dirigit orationem. In Macrobius'
second example of this device (the first, *Iliad* 4.223, is included in the
discussion below), taken from *Iliad* 3.220, Antenor describes Odysseus:
"you would call him a subtle man and a fool . . . but when he
speaks. . . ."[24] Antenor attributes a response to the audience (of Odysseus'

from Amata, a not unusual confusion); 7.797, Tiber; 8.84, Juno; 10.542, 11.7 f., Mars. Many
of these may reflect invocation formulas; see Eden (above, note 2) on 8.84: "This kind of
apostrophe is foreign to Homer." But compare *Il.* 15.365, 20.152, both to Apollo, the only
examples of such apostrophe outside an invocation in Homer.

[20] In the *Aeneid* beginning at 1.1; 6.264; 7.37, 641; 9.77, 525; 10.163. In the *Iliad* at 1.1;
2.484, 761; 11.218; 14.508; 16.112. Compare the invocations in Ap. Rhod. 1.1; 3.1; 4.1.

[21] *Il.* 5.703 f.; 8.273; 11.299 f., take the form "who was the first, (who the last)," and may well
represent truncated invocations. 17.260 asks "who could tell . . . ?" It is worth noting that the
introduction to the catalogue at *Il.* 2.484 includes address to Muses, rhetorical question, and
disclaimer, probably a "complete" invocation. *Od.* 22.12 f. asks "who would think . . . ?" This,
the only apostrophe other than the introductory invocation and those to Eumaios, may
represent a vestigial invocation before the slaughter of the suitors. *Aen.* 4.296 (*quis fallere
possit amantem?*) has no precedent in Homer (but compare *Il.* 22.204 ff.: "How could Hector
have escaped . . . ?"). *Aen.* 12.500 ff. (*quis mihi . . . deus . . . expediat?*) is similar to *Il.*
12.176, which takes the form not of a rhetorical question, but of a disclaimer of ability to tell.
Il. 11.299 f. asks who Hector slaughtered; *Aen.* 11.664 f. asks a similar question about Camilla,
but is addressed directly to her, as is *Il.* 16.692 f. to Patroklos. *Aen.* 4.283 f.; 9.67 f., 399 ff.;
12.486, are all questions that are both the narrator's and the character's.

[22] *Il.* 4.223, *idois*; 4.429, *phaiês* = 17.366; 5.85, *gnoiês*; 15.697, *phaiês. Aen.* 4.401; 8.650,
676, 691. Contrast the generalized third person at *Od.* 18.68. I here ignore such words and
phrases in the *Aeneid* as *ecce* and *mirabile dictu.*

[23] On the invocation see W. W. Minton, "Homer's Invocations of the Muses: Traditional
Patterns," *TAPA* 91 (1960) 292–309; W. P. Basson, *Pivotal Catalogues in the Aeneid*
(Amsterdam 1975), esp. Chapter 3; A. P. Wagener, "Stylistic Qualities of the Apostrophe to
Nature as a Dramatic Device," *TAPA* 62 (1931) 78–100; and on Vergil's opening invocation,
R. G. Austin, "*Ille Ego Qui Quondam* . . . " *CQ* N.S. 18 (1968) 107–15, esp. pp. 109 f.

[24] I use R. Lattimore's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Chicago 1951; New York
1965).

speech) which is not correct, and by so attributing it emphasizes its opposite. Macrobius repeats the failure, consistent in rhetorical theory and in criticism of the ancient epics to this day, to distinguish between apostrophe in direct speech and narrative apostrophe. Thus, while noting the exceptional effect of these intrusions, he misses two essential points. The first is that this form of direct address of the audience by the narrator is extremely rare, and is used at specific and carefully structured junctures even in Homer; the second is that Vergil's practice in fact does not imitate Homer's at all, but rather avoids it.

Five times in the *Iliad* the narrator addresses the audience, in each case using a second person singular subjunctive,[25] and attributing a response to the audience that is either not correct, or emphasizes its opposite. The narrator thus establishes the correct interpretation through a contrast with an articulated response. These second person addresses mark crucial passages: Agamemnon's fighting (4.223); the eerie silence of the massed armies (4.429); the inhuman power of Diomedes (5.85); the desperate pitched battle by the ships (15.697); the fight over the body of Patroklos (17.366). The narrator bases his address to the audience (a generalized "you" quite distinct from the vaguely evoked "they" of epic narration, as seen for example at *Iliad* 2.811 f.) on a deliberate assumption of a particular response:

> so they fought on in the likeness of fire, nor would you have
> thought the sun was still secure in his place in the sky, nor the
> moon, since the mist was closed over all that part of the fight
> where the bravest stood about Patroklos. . . . (17.366 ff.)

Here the narrator suggests to the audience its own active observing presence, by attributing to it the fear and confusion with which he intends the scene to be overshadowed. The death of Patroklos, and the failure to secure his body, threaten the order of the universe; it is as if the sun were to fail to rise. This profound dislocation the narrator makes intrinsic to the experience of listening to the poem through the brief simile and the following direct address to the audience. The armies fight "in the likeness of fire," a vivid comparison that emphasizes through visual imagery the uncontrolled chaotic aspect of the battle. Because of this aspect, an observer would think the light of nature was extinguished, by the mist surrounding the contest. The narrator explains the confusion by compounding it, describing the fearsome lack of clarity and order by attributing to the audience a disordered and disorienting perception. The

[25] To argue that such forms address a generalized second person begs the question: why did such a subjunctive develop, and why use it at these points? J. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax* (Basel 1950) 107 ff., calls these subjunctives the equivalent of *On* or *Mann*, but acknowledges that they also represent a "turning" in the narration. (I owe this and other helpful references to G. N. Knauer.)

narrator's description of the scene echoes its confusion by equating light with dark, and through this description a response is permitted to the audience that, because it is confused and uncertain, is accurate. Narrator and audience share an inability to maintain a secure grasp of the fast-moving scene when lack of comprehension most accurately describes that scene.

The narrator here demands and depends upon the audience's complete acceptance of the dramatic illusion, its immediate participation in the emotional fabric of the poem. Except for the second person subjunctive at 15.697, each of these direct appeals is expressed in the negative (and on the argumentative quality—*dialegetai*—even at 15.697, see Schol. Ariston. in Erbse [Berlin 1975]), yet the narrator does not thereby cast doubt upon the correctness of the audience's perceptions, but rather affirms the correctness of its confusion. The subtlety of this device may be seen by comparing with these addresses the simile at *Iliad* 22.410 f., describing the death of Hector: "It was most like what would have happened, if all lowering Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire." Although this synthesis of comparison and potentiality could have been expressed with the formulaic "you would/might say" in the positive (as at 15.697, "you would say that they faced each other unbruised . . . "), the narrator here avoids the direct address to the audience, presumably because the introduction of a subjunctive address ("then you would have said that all Ilion . . . "), would have required the audience to separate itself from the scene and thus to step into a position of judgment. By involving the audience in doubt here, this form of direct address would weaken the force of the comparison, which is in fact true as a prediction.

Despite Macrobius' assumption that Vergil imitates Homer's use of apostrophe to the audience, in fact only four instances of the second person subjunctive occur in the *Aeneid*, and these are in themselves exceptional. The first example appears at 4.401: *migrantis cernas totaque ex urbe ruentis: / ac velut . . .* , where the audience seems to be watching the Trojans prepare for departure from Carthage. The address appears here to be to the reader-observer, as in Homer, but it describes the action, rather than a response to its implications; the simile that follows immediately focuses from a distant vantage point on the movement of the men, who seem busy, and tiny, like ants. At the end of the simile the narrator turns to Dido, who is watching presumably from her palace; to her the Trojans appear insect-like, distant, hurried, as in the simile. The "you" of *cernas* (line 401) could, after the simile, refer to Dido as well as to the audience, so that the apostrophe, addressed at first apparently to a generalized "you" as in the Homeric mode, effectively equates the points of view of audience and character, at the same time shifting the perspective both physically and emotionally. This conjunction of points of view of character and audience epitomizes the "subjective

style"—in Vergil's poem the audience is required to interpret, or at least observe, both from its own and from the characters' point of view. The audience does not share the narrator's perspective, but rather finds itself, at the moment when it appears to be so sharing, actually sharing that of Dido, and not in possession of the expected perspective at all.

Vergil's narrator again uses the second person singular subjunctive at 8.650, 676, and 691, in the description of Aeneas' divine shield, in each case calling upon the audience to imagine itself into the visual world depicted on the shield, specifically scenes in which Rome is threatened, and defended: *illum indignanti similem similemque minanti / aspiceres, pontem auderet quia vellere Cocles* (649 f.); . . . *totumque instructo Marte videres / fervere Leucaten* . . . (676 f.); . . . *pelago credas innare revulsas / Cycladas* . . . (691 f.).[26] Although the last example is closer than the others to the Homeric model in its hyperbolic imaginativeness, the effect is not really comparable, because the Vergilian ekphrasis intro- duces specific events possessing an objective reality for the audience. This appeal to the audience stimulates it to bring to its interpretation of the scenes depicted its own experience external to the poem (an effect repeated in many ways in the course of the *Aeneid*). In the process of this synthesis the audience separates itself both from the characters within the poetic world, and from the narrator.

This separation, as becomes clear from a comparison of the use of direct address to characters by the narrator, marks the most important change in the relationship of the audience to the poem. In Homer, direct address originating from the narrator reinforces feelings of sympathy toward the characters shared by narrator and audience; in the *Aeneid* the same type of apostrophe requires from the audience a complex adjustment of response and a corresponding willingness to engage in the task of reconciling conflicting emotions evoked by the presentation of varying perspectives.[27]

Adam Parry (above, note 2) argued that apostrophe addressed from the narrator to a character in the Homeric epics may have an artistic purpose (although he was vague about that purpose, especially in his discussion of apostrophes of this type in the *Odyssey*). Parry suggested that questions about the significance of narrative comments "center round the elusive and yet vital question of the *consciousness* of Homer's audience" (p. 1,

---

[26] Ap. Rhod. uses this second person for example at 1.725, 765, in the description of the cloak; Vergil's use of the form in ekphrasis (note its absence in the description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*) may derive from Ap. Rhod. In the *Argonautica* the form appears also in the Homeric mode, e.g., 3.1265, describing Jason exulting in his strength.

[27] Compare Ap. Rhod.'s casual intrusions in the *Argonautica*, for example at 1.196, 648 f., 919. His narrator also explicitly disclaims responsibility by invoking the authority of earlier poets, for example at 1.154, but this casual intrusion is conspicuously absent from the more emotionally charged Book 3. Compare Vergil's use of *fama est*, e.g. at 6.14.

his italics). He first analyzed traditional epithet formulas, then argued that the narrator addresses in apostrophe those characters who have certain specific traits in common. With the apparent exception of Melanippos and Achilles in the *Iliad*, those so addressed—Menelaos, Patroklos, Eumaios—exhibit characteristic traits of vulnerability, loyalty, and a vague but poetically essential weakness. All three furthermore define, negatively or positively, by possessing these traits, the protective qualities of the main characters to whom they are complementary—Agamemnon, Achilles, Odysseus. The use of narrative apostrophe to address Patroklos exemplifies both the nature and function of this device in Homer.

Patroklos, introduced in Book 1 (307), is apostrophized eight times in Book 16, a crucial book that marks both the end of his life and the redirection of Achilles' wrath, from Agamemnon to Hector. The role of Patroklos, whose understanding of Achilles surpasses that of all others (see, for example, 11.651 ff.), is simultaneously the most important in defining Achilles' role, and the most compact of major roles in terms of action.[28] Patroklos' death is the result both of Achilles' wrath and of his friendship, of Patroklos' gentleness, loyalty, vulnerability, and weakness; upon the audience's response to this death rests its response to Achilles and all he represents. In order to make vivid the metamorphosis of Achilles' emotions, the overwhelming sorrow of Patroklos' death, and thus the force of Achilles' final acceptance of his own mortality, the narrator himself shows a sympathy for Patroklos, which develops and confirms an answering sympathy in the audience and finally defines the conflict and its denouement. Patroklos' physical and emotional vulnerability, the qualities that evoke and are actually delineated by the narrator's sympathy, in turn define Achilles' weakness (his self-absorption), and thence at last his ability to surmount it (by acknowledging in Priam a sorrow like his own).

Book 16 begins with Patroklos' approach to Achilles: "Meanwhile Patroklos came to the shepherd of the people, Achilleus, and stood by him and wept warm tears. . . . " The narrator has not yet addressed Patroklos directly, and does not do so until Achilles has delivered his poignant and ironic comparison: Patroklos is like a little girl who looks to her mother for help. . . . Before Patroklos answers, and for the first time, the narrator turns to him: "Then groaning heavily, Patroklos the rider, you answered . . . " (20). This sudden intrusion is remarkable, and would certainly have been noticed by the listening audience; more remarkable is the pattern of these addresses that emerges as the book progresses.

[28] In this Patroklos is similar to Menelaos, whose role is concentrated in segments, for example in Book 3, where Agamemnon's response to Menelaos' wound defines aspects of the King's character that are fundamental, but antithetical to the aspects he presents to Achilles, to the armies, and to their leaders. Menelaos here defines Agamemnon's protectiveness, a quality he lacks elsewhere; similarly Eumaios defines the aspect of Odysseus that evokes loyalty, as he re-enters the society of his homeland.

Patroklos is not again addressed directly until he enters the final phase of his *aristeia* at line 584; after this, the apostrophes tell in outline the final story, an effect the power of which is apparent when all seven are looked at as a series: "So straight for the Lykians, o lord of horses, Patroklos, you swept, and for the Trojans . . . " (584 f.); "Then who was it you slaughtered first, who was the last one, Patroklos, as the gods called you to your death?" (692 f.); "Now you spoke in bitter mockery over him, rider Patroklos" (743 f.); "So in your fury you pounced, Patroklos, above Kebriones" (754); " . . . but as for the fourth time he swept in, like something greater than human, there, Patroklos, the end of your life was shown forth, since Phoibos came against you there in the strong encounter dangerously, nor did Patroklos see him as he moved . . . " (787 ff.); "He first hit you with a thrown spear, o rider Patroklos, nor broke you, but ran away again, snatching out the ash spear from your body, and lost himself in the crowd, not enduring to face Patroklos, naked as he was, in close combat" (812 ff.); "And now, dying, you answered him, o rider Patroklos" (843).

In two of these apostrophes, it will be noted that the narrator moves in mid-speech from the second to the third person. Oral delivery would emphasize the shift to apostrophe, and thus would call to the attention of the audience the special nature of the narrator's response—his emphatic sympathy and involvement. There has seldom, or never, been articulated a response to Patroklos that was not sympathetic; this may be attributed to the unambiguous and unremitting concern for him manifested by the narrator, at crucial points in the action, and unhesitatingly shared by the audience.[29] Because the narrator articulates and thereby encourages the audience's sympathy for Patroklos, the audience apprehends the depth of the conflict that Achilles feels both before and after Patroklos' death, not by judging it, but through direct involvement. This pervasive and emphatic sympathy for Patroklos thus characterizes Achilles more finely than direct narration, for in sharing rather than judging it the audience shares in Achilles' choice, and tragedy.

While narrative apostrophe to characters in the *Aeneid* follows the Homeric pattern in ways that acknowledge oral epic as a model, Vergil's usage departs from these models in ways that make clear the difference between the narrator in oral and written epic. Like Homer's, Vergil's narrator apostrophizes those characters or groups in reaction to whom the audience develops its responses to the main characters, especially Aeneas. Yet in addition to arousing sympathy for those so addressed, or actually

---

[29] It is noteworthy that, while characters frequently address each other with anger or contempt, the narrator never verbalizes such a response. The noun *nêpios*, for example, occurs in the nominative rather than the vocative when the narrator uses it, although it occurs in the vocative in speeches between characters.

because of such sympathy, the narrator confuses and confounds the
response of the audience to the complexities of the Trojan mission, and its
implications, a result exemplified by the apostrophe to Nisus and
Euryalus at 9.446 ff.

The Roman *pietas* of Nisus and Euryalus, their fatal flaw, and their
tragic end, are all clearly signaled in the narrative, which justifies and
demands a sympathetic response to the two young fighters. Euryalus,
asking Ascanius to protect his mother, foreshadows his own death (9.281
ff.); the bleak irony is emphasized by Aletes' words in response to the
proposed mission:

> di patrii, quorum semper sub numine Troia est,
> non tamen omnino Teucros delere paratis,
> cum talis animos iuvenum et tam certa tulistis
> pectora. (9.247 ff.)

These men represent literally and symbolically Rome's future strength
and virtue.

Up to this point, the emotional power of Nisus' and Euryalus' mission
and fate has been delineated, both by the partially playful sacrifice
during the games of Book 5, and by the heroic impulse, clearly articu-
lated, that comes to the fore in Book 9, but the tensions inherent in their
actions themselves have also been subtly clarified. Nisus and Euryalus
represent undeniably the ideal of Trojan fortitude and loyalty, embody-
ing *pietas* to parents, country, and friends, yet they are destroyed by the
same lust for gold that led Pygmalion to kill Sychaeus, that motivated
Polydorus' murder, and that will fatally mark Camilla and Turnus. Nisus
and Euryalus, like Patroklos, fight on when reason and orders have
dictated control and, like Patroklos, they fight and die for the man whose
absence motivated their attempt. Because their heroism and self-sacrifice
are also foolishness and lack of moderation, their deaths are emotionally
problematic for the audience. While Homer's narrator resolves a similar
problem by expressing his sympathy for Patroklos at each point of change
or acceleration in the narrative, Vergil's narrator, through the same type
of apostrophe, spoken once, exacerbates and compounds the confusion.

As Nisus falls dead on the corpse of his friend, the narrator expresses a
direct judgment:

> Fortunati ambo! si quid mea carmina possunt,
> nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo,
> dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
> accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit. (9.446 ff.)

The narrator, here overtly acknowledging his presence (*mea*), covertly
reminds the audience of its own presence by emphasizing the existence of
the future Rome. He implies that Nisus and Euryalus are lucky because,

if the poem lives, they too will live, along with the greatness that is
Rome. Seen from the perspective of the Roman future, such immortaliza-
tion may seem glorious and great, but taken in context the sacrifice of
these young men seems pitiful and senseless.[30]

The scene is followed almost immediately (9.473 ff.) by the dreadful
description of Euryalus' mother reacting with justified hysteria to the
unexpected sight of her son's head impaled on a pike, a scene that
foreshadows the death of Pallas and the grief of Evander, who anticipates
his bereavement as Euryalus anticipated that of his own mother. This
apostrophe, instead of confirming a sympathy that has been established
and sanctioned, as for Patroklos, raises a series of questions and confusions
that will persist and deepen as the poem progresses.

The deaths of Nisus and Euryalus cannot, as they occur, seem
fortunate: Aletes has spoken of the importance of bravery like theirs to
the Trojan cause and future; Euryalus' mother will soon make clear the
actual human cost of such bravery in a way that overshadows the act
itself with the resultant emotion. The real failure of the pair has several
facets: Nisus and Euryalus have failed to protect themselves, their cause,
those who love them, and each other; they have also failed to obey
Aeneas' explicit orders, and to justify such disobedience. The audience
sympathizes of course with the failure—it is pathetic and pure in its
way—but it is not in itself fortunate, nor are its victims. The narrator's
expression of admiration at this juncture reminds the audience of the
greater meaning of the war, the ultimate goal of establishing Roman rule.
Thus through apostrophe the narrator shifts the emotional attention of the
audience from its own to his response, unsettling this audience, and
demanding that it reassess its judgment, and think of the fate of Nisus
and Euryalus not as tragedy, but good fortune.

The narrator's response, the Roman, patriotic, far-sighted response,
clashes with the response triggered by the narrative itself, and demands
that the audience see and consider this difference. It is perhaps not an
exaggeration to say that the discrepancy is a shock that leads the audience
to question the perceptions not only of itself but of the narrator upon
whom it relies for its access to the poem. This is the unreliable, the
idiosyncratic narrator of fiction.

The apostrophe to Nisus and Euryalus in Book 9 emphasizes the
persistent presence of a tension arising from the need on the part of the

---

[30] *Fortunati* is, thus, a word peculiarly applicable to Nisus and Euryalus when read with
the dual meaning of *fortuna* itself, which implies both good and evil chance (cf. C. Bailey,
Religion in Virgil [New York 1935, repr. 1969] 243 ff.). As Bailey points out, their fate has
from the start been linked to this dual sense, through the use of the word *fortuna* for
example at 5.356; 9.282. Nisus and Euryalus, then, encompass in life and death the duality
inherent in the poem, where bad luck is not antithetical to, but part of, good luck, as when
Troy's destruction fosters the birth of Rome.

audience to accept responsibility for synthesizing disparate points of view. Unresolved at the end of the poem, this tension deepens perceptibly in Book 10, in which the poet brings to the fore through narrative apostrophe of all types the conflict between the events of the poem and the ultimate purpose of its action. The sense that Aeneas' cause must justly prevail is at odds with the fact, well established in the narrative, that this cause has motivated a destructive and tragic war. The resigned withdrawal of Jupiter from the council at the beginning of Book 10, as he relinquishes to fate his control over mankind, personifies the need for the audience to relinquish present certainty of interpretation to faith in the explanations provided by the future. At this point Aeneas' return from Pallanteum marks another beginning, signaled by the invocation at 10.163 ff. This, the last invocation of the poem, introduces a catalogue that personalizes the massing armies as they gather to fight and, more significantly, initiates a book that contains more narrative apostrophes than any other in the poem.[31]

In Book 10 the narrator twice addresses abstract concepts—*amor* in the catalogue (188), and the mind of man itself (501 f.). Turnus is addressed at 514, as are Pallas (411, 507 f.) and Lausus (790 ff.). Through the *exclamatio* at 501 f., which effectively shifts the focus from Turnus to the human condition, the audience, in whom pity for Pallas and a consequent condemnation of Turnus are well established, is suddenly confronted with a failing that is present in all men—and thus presumably in Rome itself: *nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae / et servare modum rebus sublata secundis!* Turnus plunders Pallas' body not because he is worse than most men, but because he is like them. In yielding to the lust for gold he only repeats the failure seen in Nisus and Euryalus, that fortunate pair. When, at 514, the narrator turns to Turnus himself, his direct address seems to echo Aeneas' focus, in the confusion of battle, on Turnus alone:[32] *ardens limitem agit ferro, te, Turne, superbum / caede nova quaerens.* This concentration of both Aeneas and the narrator highlights not merely Turnus' evil, but simultaneously his helplessness as a victim of fate, circumstance, and his own human fallibility. At the moment when Aeneas, transformed by grief and anger, enters upon the series of actions that will culminate in the death of Turnus, the audience finds itself responding from Turnus' point of view to the avenger Aeneas stalking his

[31] Ranging from vocatives in catalogues to direct addresses to major characters. See lines 139 ff., 163, 185 ff., 200, 302, 316 ff., 324 ff., 390–96, 402 ff., 411, 430, 501 f., 507 ff., 514, 542, 790 ff. It should be remembered that the use of apostrophes in catalogues and lists is not Homeric; Vergil uses such apostrophes to enhance the feelings of impending sadness that suffuse the battle scenes.

[32] The effect is similar to that of the apostrophe at 4.401 to the audience, which turns out to be equally to Dido. The same subtlety appears at 10.507 ff., where the apostrophe to Pallas may originate from the narrator or from the Arcadians.

victim; the audience thus is led to feel compassion for the enemy of
Rome's destiny, because it shares his fear. The audience finds itself
involved in a sympathetic response to a character it knows to be the
enemy, and it must therefore question its response much as it did in
Book 9. Again certainty about the poem's interpretation is undermined
by the narrator's intrusion, an effect repeated by the apostrophe to
Lausus:

> ut vidit, Lausus, lacrimaeque per ora volutae—
> hic mortis durae casum tuaque optima facta,
> si qua fidem tanto est operi latura vetustas,
> non equidem nec te, iuvenis memorande, silebo— (10.790 ff.)

Lausus' death evokes from the narrator a sympathy, and a promise of
immortality through his poetry, identical to that expressed for Nisus and
Euryalus. Lausus' bravery and *pietas*, his clearly articulated equality with
Pallas (433 ff.), his noble death, earn for him, an enemy of the Roman
cause, the narrator's, and the audience's, admiration. This admiration,
and the consequent sense of loss and sorrow that accompanies his death,
most poignantly challenge the certainty about the justifiability of the
Latin war that the audience expects to discover at some point in the
second half of the poem. The narrator's sympathy, focused on the
characters upon whom the tension of the poem rests, including, emphati-
cally, the enemies of Rome (Dido, Turnus, Lausus, Camilla), compounds
this conflict.

The apostrophe to Camilla in Book 11 is the last of these direct
addresses to major characters. As Camilla enters the battle, the narrator
asks (11.664 f.): *quem telo primum, quem postremum, aspera virgo /
deicis? aut quot humi morientia corpora fundis?* This rhetorical question
combined with direct address finds one exact parallel in Homer: the same
question is addressed also to Patroklos (16.692 f., and see above, note 21).
Implied but not articulated in the address to Camilla is the additional
Homeric phrase: "as the gods called you to your death." The apostrophe
to Camilla thus subtly predicts her death. Furthermore, by linking
Camilla not only to Patroklos, but to the other characters recently
addressed by the Vergilian narrator, the apostrophe again involves the
audience in a subtly sympathetic response that is at odds with Camilla's
threat to the Roman cause.

Except for repeated apostrophes to men dying in battle (e.g., 12.538,
542, 546, perhaps related to the form found at *Iliad* 15.582, the address
to Melanippos), the narrator seems after the death of Camilla to retreat
from such clearly expressed involvement, now posing rhetorical questions
which seem to state more personally and painfully what in the opening
invocation was an almost formal statement: *tantaene animis caelestibus
irae?* (1.11). At 12.486 f., as Aeneas stalks Turnus, the narrator asks: *heu,*

quid agat? vario nequiquam fluctuat aestu, / diversaeque vocant animum in contraria curae, echoing the question asked after Aeneas' vision of Mercury in Book 4 (283), where it expressed subjectively Aeneas' confusion. In Book 12 the narrator, with the same question, articulates not only Aeneas' confusion, but also Turnus' terrified desire to fight, Juturna's helplessness, and the unanswerable confusion of the battle itself. He expresses at once the subjectively genuine feelings of the characters, his own doubt, and the uncertainty with which the audience, caught between sympathy for Turnus and hope for Rome, is confronted. The Vergilian narrator thus uses apostrophe to underscore the distinct and shifting perspective of the audience, as the same device in Homer prevents such separation.

While the *Aeneid* is in many ways an oral work, shaped by the demands and freedoms of an oral performance in the form of *recitatio*, and rich with allusions to a model that itself represents the apex of an oral tradition, it is nonetheless a poem of the written word. Nowhere, perhaps, is this more evident than in the subtlety with which Vergil, through a narrator who articulates an idiosyncratic response, emphasizes the distinct perspective of the audience. Vergil thus elicits from his reader the participation that is possible only when the word is permanent and the act of reading an opportunity for reassessing, questioning, and judging that allows the individual reader to become a separate entity in the poem.[33]