

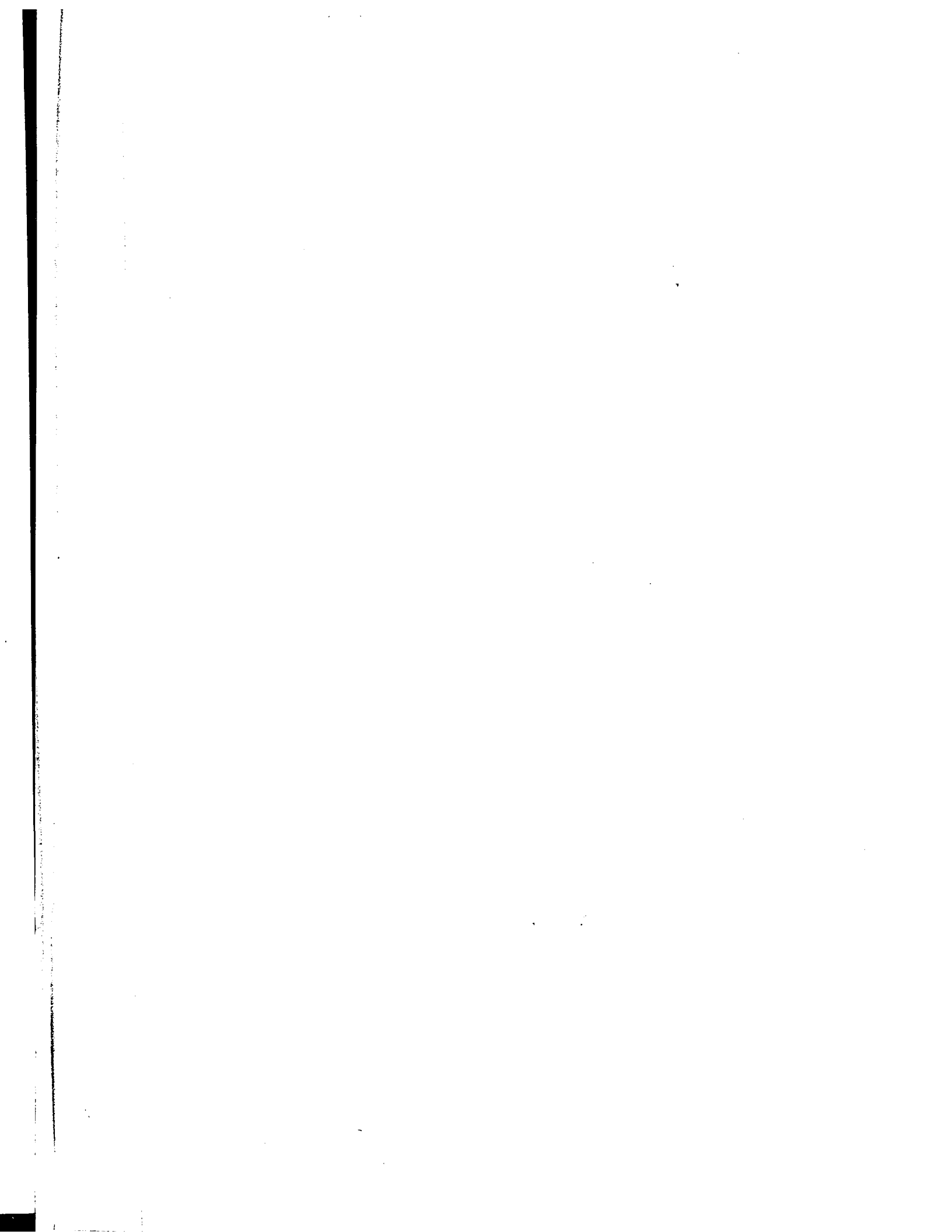
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Wofford, Susanne Lindgren

**THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES: THE EPIC COUNTERPLOT IN HOMER,
VIRGIL AND SPENSER**

Yale University

PH.D. 1982

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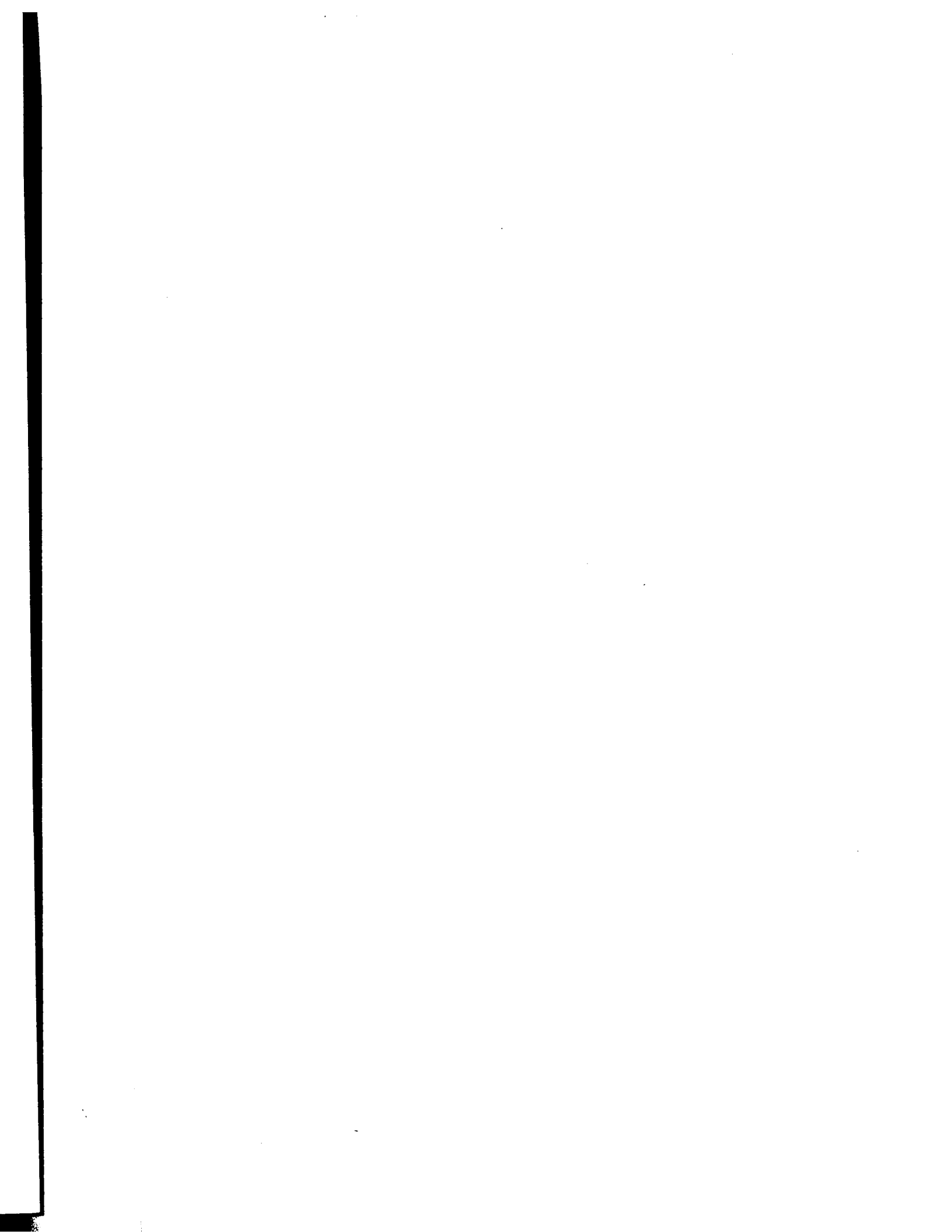
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The Choice of Achilles:
The Epic Counterplot in Homer, Virgil and Spenser

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of
Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Susanne Lindgren Wofford

May 1982

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ABSTRACT

THE CHOICE OF ACHILLES:

THE EPIC COUNTERPLOT IN HOMER, VIRGIL AND SPENSER

Susanne Lindgren Wofford

Yale University

1982

This dissertation argues that the epic poems of Homer, Virgil and Spenser are characterized by a division between the main heroic plot and the epic counterplot. The heroic plot is constituted of those actions or possibilities for action of which the characters in the poem are aware, and it takes death as its defining subject. The epic counterplot is constituted of those actions, scenes or perspectives which the poet adds to the heroic story in order to explain or illuminate it. The counterplot provides a larger perspective on the events of the main narrative and so lends them social, artistic or historical significance. The characters can know nothing of this larger significance of their actions, important as it may be for the readers' understanding of the poem. This dissertation uses Achilles' choice between a long, peaceful life without glory and heroic death at Troy as a metaphor for the choice the poems make between the plot and the counterplot.

The distinction between plot and counterplot is first defined with reference to the Iliad, in which these two strands are almost

completely separate. The Iliadic counterplot is constituted of scenes of peaceful life, scenes of natural calm and rural beauty, and descriptions of artefacts. The epic similes which establish a contrast between the war and the scenes they describe are the primary vehicle for the Iliadic counterplot. Since the plot and the counterplot are kept separate, the perspective of the counterplot does not mitigate the harsh experience of the characters. The scenes in the counterplot provide social or general consolations, but do not change the situation of the individual, so the Iliad eventually turns away from the counterplot towards a presentation of death as the defining event of heroic existence.

In the Odyssey plot and counterplot merge: in mythic places and on Ithaca, Odysseus goes to the world depicted in the Iliadic counterplot and finds his strength there. In its narrative structure the Odyssey recreates some of the epic distance maintained between plot and counterplot in the Iliad, but this distancing does not keep the two strains separate. The merging of plot and counterplot, the second chapter argues, brings ambiguity into the poem, for in order to reconcile these two strands of the epic story, the poet must disguise the significance of violence and death in the heroic narrative.

The third chapter argues that Theocritus in the Idylls and Virgil in the Eclogues take up the subject matter and poetic stance of the Homeric counterplot and make it their main focus. In both bucolic and pastoral poetry, the counterplot surrounds the plot and reveals its limited point of view. While epic poems (or at least the epic poems considered here) may be defined as poems which finally turn away from the counterplot and present the plot of mortality, unmiti-

gated, as their central drama, bucolic and pastoral poems attempt to show how the counterplot provides solutions or at least consolations for death. Bucolic or pastoral settings, when reincorporated into epic poetry, thus represent a sub-category within the counterplot.

The fourth chapter argues that in the Aeneid Virgil begins by merging the plot and counterplot and gradually moves towards separating the two strands nearly as completely as does the Iliad. Idyllic scenes seemingly removed from the exigencies of heroic life and the prophetic vision of the Augustan future constitute the Virgilian counterplot. Those scenes in the counterplot which are merged with the main narrative are found to create ambivalence in the poem; the only parts of the counterplot not darkened by contact with the heroic story are those kept completely separate and placed in the future. Virgil thus recreates the epic distance by temporalizing the relationship between plot and counterplot. This separation, which creates a special relationship between author and readers, dramatizes the limitations and bleakness of the world in which the characters must act. While maintaining the importance for society of the broader point of view, the Aeneid turns back towards the Iliadic version of heroic experience by suggesting that for the individual no mitigating broader perspective exists.

The fifth chapter argues that Spenser also uses the division of plot and counterplot to establish a special relationship with his readers. The Spenserian counterplot includes the proems, the poet's comments to his readers, and the mythic scenes in which Spenser presents many of the ostensible values of the poem. A contrast thus exists between the certainty about the value of art and the existence of

larger structures of meaning in the counterplot and the doubt about their existence suggested in the main narrative. The division between plot and counterplot thus serves to reveal the ambivalence in Spenser's allegorical technique.

This study suggests that each of the epic poems considered uses the division between plot and counterplot to expose the limitations of its primary set of values. The implications of heroic action are made evident through the contrasts established in the counterplot. But, except in the Odyssey, the main narrative is always the determining strand of the story, and each of the other poems turn away from the counterplot and make the plot of mortality their central concern.

PREFACE

This dissertation has benefited from the suggestions of more friends and teachers than can be named, but a few specific debts need to be acknowledged. My thanks go first and foremost to my dissertation advisor, Professor Thomas M. Greene, whose thoughtful comments have helped to strengthen the argument. His continuing confidence and warm support have meant a great deal. I also wish to thank Professors John Hollander, Gordon Williams and A. Bartlett Giamatti for their encouragement and advice. My debts to these four teachers go beyond those indicated in the notes, for in different ways each of them introduced me to the study of poetry, especially epic poetry.

I wish also to thank in particular Lawrence Martin, Mihoko Suzuki, Glenn Most, Sheila Murnaghan, Michael Cadden, Eugenia DeLamotte, Debra Fried and Ellen Peel. The patience and care of my typist, Ruth Coddington, has been much appreciated. Lastly, my thanks go to my parents for their interest, assistance and support.

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CHAPTER ONE

HEROIC CHOICE IN THE ILIAD

"Similes, or Homer's similes at least, keep things apart; metaphors fuse them together."

John Finley, Jr.

Four Stages of Greek Thought

(i) The Epic Counterplot

In Book IX of the Iliad Achilles tells the embassy from Agamemnon that he must choose between two fates:

For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me
I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either,
if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,
my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting;
but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers,
the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life
left for me, and my end in death will not come quickly to me.¹
(IX,410-6)

¹This dissertation refers throughout to the Oxford text of the Iliad, ed. D.B. Monro and T.W. Allen, 3rd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920). The quotations in the text, unless otherwise noted, are taken from Richmond Lattimore's translation: The Iliad of Homer, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). When not appearing in quotations, proper names have been given the form which, it was thought, would seem most familiar. Less familiar proper names and some Greek words have been transliterated (although quantity is not represented except as it is represented in the Greek spelling). Capital Roman numerals refer to books of the Iliad, small Roman numerals to those of the Odyssey. On the rare occasions when Lattimore's line numbers do not coincide with the Greek, Lattimore's have been used when the reference follows a quotation and the Greek line numbers have been used when it does not.

Achilles speaks here as if he still had a choice before him, but the events of the poem suggest that he already has passed the point when the choice of the heroic way was made. The embassy succeeds in convincing Achilles that he cannot sail away from the Trojan war; in his response to their arguments he too seems to know that his fate is already bound up with the fates of the Achaean warriors (see IX, 650-5; compare IX, 356-61 and 427-9).²

Nonetheless, Achilles clearly has toyed with the idea of returning home. During his conversation with Odysseus, Phoenix and Ajax, he implies that the contrasting possibility of a long and peaceful life highlights in his mind the Achaean failure to wage war in

²Cedric H. Whitman, in Homer and the Heroic Tradition (New York: Norton and Company, 1965; first copyrighted, 1958), pp.188-91, especially p.190, points out that the embassy does not fail entirely to move Achilles. James Redfield, in Nature and Culture in the Iliad (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), also suggests that Achilles may not wish to go home in part because his father sent him out to be a warrior: "Achilles' mother may value his life before honor, but Achilles cannot disappoint his father's expectations of him. The idea of going home was always the weak point in his position...."(p.17). The association of returning home to a long life with his mother and the need to stay and die with his father suggests a more externalized understanding of Achilles' motives here, one more in tune with the notions of Homeric character described by E.R. Dodds in The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1951). See pages 34 and 45-8 on the strength of the father in archaic family structure.

accordance with heroic values and customs.³ This vision of a different fate seems to have entertained Achilles as he sat in retirement, and perhaps the possibility of an alternative ending to his life itself led him to wonder about the value of heroic action. As both Finley and Kirk suggest, Achilles' speculations here probably represent an attitude closer to heroic pique than to pacifism, for he offers neither a coherent critique of the traditional reasons for fighting nor any real

³In Homer on Life and Death (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980), Jasper Griffin suggests that we can see how seriously Achilles contemplates the implications of his two fates by comparing his response to that of a traditional hero in the Ulster cycle. This hero, Cúchulainn, makes the fully heroic choice. As a boy Cúchulainn

learned that he who took up arms for the first time on a certain day would be a mighty warrior, 'his name would endure forever in Ireland...and stories about him would last forever.' He seized the opportunity. "'Well," Cathbad said, "the day has this merit: he who arms for the first time today will achieve fame and greatness. But his life is short." "That is a fair bargain," Cúchulainn said. "If I achieve fame, I am content, though I had only one day on earth." But Achilles, who has duly chosen the heroic path, is filled with bitterness as he broods on Agamemnon's treatment of him' (p.99).

Griffin takes this dialogue from Táin Bó Cuailnge, translated as The Tain by T. Kinsella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) pp. 84-5.

Adam Parry, in "The Language of Achilles," Transactions of the American Philological Association 87 (1956), 1-7, discusses the power of Achilles' rhetoric, and his disillusionment upon becoming aware of the difference between what he had expected in esteem and what he had got. Achilles' discovery of the gap between the ideal and the reality, Parry argues, causes him to question the values themselves (p.5). Thus Parry sees a certain thoughtfulness or disillusionment arising in Achilles through his confrontation with Agamemnon, a disillusionment expressed in this scene. For Whitman too the quarrel with Agamemnon is merely the impetus to a deeper questioning of heroic values until heroism comes to mean "the search for dignity and the meaning of the self" (p.193). The questioning described in this chapter, in contrast, is of a much more limited sort, at least insofar as it involves Achilles.

alternative.⁴ But he does briefly question the reason for fighting, and the questions he raises are tied to his thoughts about an alternative fate.⁵ The choice seems to be one center of his thoughts: his anger and his resentment of Agamemnon drove him from the Achaean army, but his thoughts about a return to a long life seem to occasion the unusual philosophical, reflective stance which he takes during this conversation.

During his withdrawal from the war, Achilles sings heroic songs (klea andron) to himself and Patroclus. This scene represents a rare moment in which heroic song enters the world of the Trojan war.⁶

Achilles' philosophical comments follow upon this scene: the entire episode in Achilles' shelter presents a world distinct from the Achaean camp, and the philosophical and self-reflective questioning of the heroic ethos which takes place here does not typify the poem as a whole. In this scene Achilles does not by any means relinquish his claims on Agamemnon, and as his anger abates later in the poem, his desire for honor and the gifts which substantiate it seems to return

⁴See G.S. Kirk, Homer and the Oral Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.10-11, and M.I. Finley, The World of Odysseus (Penguin Books, second revised edition, 1978; first published 1954), pp.117-22.

⁵Patroclus also seems to think that this is the case. See XVI, 36-7.

⁶Redfield in Nature and Culture in the Iliad comments that "it is a mark of Achilles' unique self-reflective consciousness that he has become his own poet" (p.36), but he stresses how rare such moments are in the Iliad. Helen, too, is touched by this self-consciousness; she is another character who seems to have made a choice which she, at least occasionally, regrets.

(see XVI,84-6 and 90).⁷ But he does begin to doubt the importance of the very claims he is making, and at the center of these reflections lies the source of his doubts, the choice which he suspects he may already have made.

Is Achilles the only one who must choose between fighting the Trojan war and returning home to live a long and peaceful life? Achilles himself suggests that, given the contrast between the way the war is being fought and the heroic ideal, all the men should think of returning home:

And this would be my counsel to others also, to sail back
home again.... (IX,417-8)

The results of Agamemnon's "test" of the men in Book II suggests that others too have often thought of returning home. Agamemnon himself suggests giving up several other times. Achilles is different, of course, since he is promised everlasting glory as well as the certainty of a short life if he stays at Troy: his two alternatives, then, represent more extreme versions of the options all warriors have before them. Because his early death is a certainty if he chooses the glorious fate, the choice is a more difficult and a more immediate one for Achilles than it is for other warriors who may still think they can escape a death far from their homes. Since Achilles learns of his alternatives from his mother, his choice is explicitly stated and ar-

⁷These lines seem to imply that his desire for honor and gifts return, unless we assume that Achilles here is presenting the only argument which he thinks might convince Patroclus to hold himself back. Certainly his concern for gifts and honor does not stay with him after Patroklos' death. As Jasper Griffin has pointed out, p.100, in Book XIX Achilles does not return to battle for gifts.

ticated as a choice between fates.⁸ The fact that Achilles knows what his fate will be in either case stands as another example of how Achilles sometimes glimpses human life from the more distant point of view of the gods. This divine perspective--one which is shared, of course, by the bard, who knows the fates of all of his characters--probably adds to the philosophical overtones of Achilles' speeches. So Achilles is more explicit and self-reflective than the other warriors, and has a greater sense of doom, but his choice between two fates, one of which is heroic and one of which is not, stands for a choice which all the Achaeans and even their poet must make.

The Achaeans have left the long and peaceful life behind, and the poem about them devotes much time to illustrating what this decision really means. The poem presents an image of total war, and, through its focus on the story of Achilles and Hector and on the many dead and dying, suggests that for most there is no return from this scene of absolute violence.⁹ The poem, then, is a war poem, and,

⁸See Jasper Griffin, p.163, who stresses Achilles' foreknowledge of his fate, and points out the importance of Thetis: "Achilles knows, because he is son of a goddess...; Hector is ignorant because he is only a man."

⁹Simone Weil has most fully described this aspect of the Iliad in her essay (published separately) The Iliad, or the Poem of Force, translated by Mary McCarthy (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill, from the November 1945 issue of Politics; first published in French in 1940-1). Jasper Griffin, p.93, has also emphasized that in the Iliad wounds are usually serious and that "death is constantly present" in the heroes' thoughts. See especially his chapter on "Death and the Godlike Hero," pp.81-102, and his treatment of the examples of the motif of the short life, pp.127-9.

moreover, an heroic war poem which gives glory to the heroes it celebrates by remembering their great deeds in battle. But the poem also includes a variety of scenes and images which are separate from the war: in the epic similes, and in some of his descriptions of peaceful life at home, in Troy and in the Achaean camp (less frequently except in Achilles' shelter) the poet provides some 'relief' (as it has been called) from the battle scenes. His descriptions of armor and other artefacts, whether in similes or as part of the plot, also turn our minds briefly from the war and remind us of the civilization which has been left behind.

All of these scenes which do not make up the actual fighting or the plot which directly explains or motivates it can be seen as illustrating that long and peaceful life at home which Achilles has left behind. By reminding us of this peaceful world within the story of the war, the poem makes us see how painful it is to leave it behind, even for glory: in this way the poem dramatizes the choice of Achilles. The poem itself ultimately makes the same choice Achilles has made, for it chooses glory in battle and immortal fame for its theme, but it makes this choice only after it has clearly indicated what the heroic way will mean. To say that the poem makes the choice of Achilles is to say that it remains an heroic poem, not a poem about peace or long life: it is thus a poem which shows the costs of the heroic choice, and it does not flinch from showing us what a short life means to those who live it. Throughout the poem characters choose the heroic alternative, but the poem is never blind about what that choice means (and, in their best moments, neither are they).

Achilles' speech about his two alternatives, then, can be seen

as a paradigm for the way the poem itself works. The poem sets the short glorious fate of heroes in war against the scenes taken from the world of peace so that the audience can understand what choosing to stay at Troy will mean. The poem too chooses to stay at Troy. The tension which the poem sets up between the two alternatives makes us feel what being a hero means in this poem. The part of the poem devoted to the first alternative of Achilles, the heroic way, which he chose when he came to Troy, can be characterized as the main plot of the epic: it includes the story of the Trojan war and the concerns of fame and value raised by heroic action and heroic death. Achilles' second alternative can be characterized as the counterplot of the epic:¹⁰ it illustrates the peaceful life which Achilles and the other Achaeans have left behind. Through the counterplot, the poem explores the heroic code which motivates the characters in the main plot; the scenes in the counterplot sometimes reveal contradictions in the heroic code, but the poem also uses the heroic values which direct its main plot to explore the peaceful alternative and to reveal its limitations.

It might seem that the part of the epic which tells about the war itself does not constitute the entirety of the main plot of the poem. But the story of the war includes the effects of war--the anger and pain it causes, the questions of morality and ceremony which it raises--so the heroic plot of the Iliad can be said to include (with

¹⁰The term "counterplot" was coined by Geoffrey Hartman, who uses it to describe a similar phenomenon in Milton's Paradise Lost. See "Milton's Counterplot," in Beyond Formalism (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970; essay first published 1958), pp. 113-23. See p. 115 for Hartman's definition of the counterplot.

one or two exceptions) all the events which the human characters of the poem are aware of and all the scenes in which they take part. The counterplot, which illustrates the peaceful alternative now lost to the warriors and which helps by its presence to dramatize that loss, includes largely those scenes (mostly in the similes) not available within the world of the characters. The counterplot is made up of some references to the past lives of the characters, certain similes, and certain scenes among the gods (scenes of which the characters have no knowledge and of which they experience no analogue in the world of war). Certain descriptions of artefacts, and the few self-reflective moments in the poem are also assimilated into the counterplot: we feel them to work with the scenes of peaceful life to contrast with the sweeping action of the war.

The human characters in general are not affected by the counterplot: the scenes in the counterplot provide "relief" (if we wish to call it that) for the audience but not for the warriors. During the tug of war over Patroclus' body, for example, no warrior sees people standing in a circle pulling on the hide of a great ox to make it into leather (see XVI,389ff). In fact, the poet stresses that the men's minds are taken up with the battle: "the hearts of the Trojans were hopeful/to drag him away to Ilion, those of the Achaeans/to get him back to the hollow ships. And about him a savage/struggle arose" (XVII,395-8). Whatever the effect on the audience, the simile which compares the battle over Patroclus' body to the stretching of an ox-hide does not shift the focus of the soldiers' attention or change the direction of events. The comparison is directed solely towards the audience: it does not represent an alternative point of view

for D.F. Rauber this simile exemplifies Homer's "indirect similes," in which the distance between the two elements compared is great, but some common ground can still be found. For Rauber, the common ground is the feeling of joy over space and expanse, shared, one presumes, by the soldiers and the shepherd.¹¹ But nothing in the scene suggests that the soldiers see the night or their fires in this way at all.

In fact, the point of view from which the fires resemble stars is a very distant one, one which seems closer to the point of view the gods or the poet (distant from the watchfires in a different sense) might have. Moreover, the Trojans, we know, are wrong to feel so certain of their success and to look forward to their great deeds of the next day. The poet's irony colors this image of them sitting around their watchfires with high hearts: one thinks particularly of Sarpedon, who will die during the fighting on the next day. The poet does not question the shepherd's joy in the starry night, but he uses the scene of the soldiers around their campfires to illustrate how little they can see of the future. This irony, which is directed against the Trojans (though perhaps they are seen here as symbols for men or at least warriors in general), is particularly clear in the speech of Hector which precedes this description. The similarity between the poet and the shepherd, or between the audience and the shepherd, is greater than any implied similarity between the shepherd and the soldiers who may or may not be enjoying the evening.

¹¹See D.F. Rauber, "Some 'metaphysical' aspects of the Homeric simile," Classical Journal 65 (1969-70), 98-9.

Several other similes present figures like this shepherd (usually other herdsmen in fact)¹² who have no analogue within the world of the war and whose point of view seems closest to that of the audience. The poet describes the glory and brilliance of the night sky, and we recognize the scene. The poet stands as mediator between the two worlds, offering comparisons which either directly or ironically illuminate the scenes of war. Like the shepherd, we take joy in the scene described and in the simile itself, even though we recognize the strain in the comparison. As James Redfield has commented, the themes or presented action of the epic often contrasts with its effect, and we feel that contrast in this description. "Epic Song," Redfield writes,

tells stories of violent action; but when the stories are told, a tranquillity descends upon the folk. The bard sings of sorrow and death, but his songs give pleasure. The themes of heroic song are themes of ruin and disorder, but the song itself is an ordered thing, and heard as such.¹³

In the case of the simile comparing the watchfires to stars, then, the shepherd can be said to be like the audience, and the world of the still air and the high hills and the bright moon and stars to be part of the counterplot. The picture of the nighttime sky does not affect the soldiers for they do not see it; it does not represent an alternative dramatically available within their world, and insofar as the soldiers around their fires view the brightness of the fires with the same attitude as the shepherd views the stars (which we cannot assume), they seem blind to the realities of their world. Our sense

¹²See for example IV, 275-9 and IV, 452-5.

¹³James Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 39.

of the meaning of the scene is changed by the simile, but their position is not.

It may seem unnecessary to stress the difference between our perspective and that of the characters in the poem. Why should they share our view of their situation? This distinction is underlined here to illustrate how the scenes which constitute the counterplot can be said to be those which are not available to the characters and also to show how the poet serves as a mediator. From what we can gather, it seems also to be historically the case that the similes served to draw together earlier archaic material with images from the later world in which the poet lived. The problem of the differing cultural levels in the Iliad and of the relation of the similes to them is a vexed one. As Lesky puts it in his brief discussion of "Cultural Levels in the Homeric Poems,"

The Alexandrian critics were the first to remark that such things as riding, signalling by trumpet and boiling of meats occurs in the Iliad only in similes. If these come from the poet's own world, it becomes necessary to posit at least two distinct cultural levels....¹⁴

In 1896 Platt had developed these Alexandrian notes into a theory about Homer's archaizing.¹⁵ In spite of Fränkel, who had argued that some of the stock subjects of the similes came down from the past, scholars generally have taken the view that the similes contain more contemporary references than does the narrative at large. In 1930

¹⁴A. Lesky, A History of Greek Literature, trans. James Willis and Cornelis de Heer, 2nd edition (New York: Crowell, 1966; 1st published in German, 1957-8), p. 53.

¹⁵A. Platt, "Homer's Similes," Journal of Philology 24 (1896), 38.

Bowra concluded that

while in his narrative Homer maintained a close and consistent archaism, in the similes he allowed himself more rein and freely borrowed from the life he saw about him....¹⁶

Scholars continue to study this question. G.P. Shipp's study has established that the similes of the Iliad betray themselves as late compositional elements: according to him, they conform not to the linguistic norms of the Iliad, but to those of the Gdyssey, Hesiod, and even of Attic Greek.¹⁷ D.J.N. Lee agrees with Shipp, and adds that similes which seem to contrast grammatically and logically with their narrative context should be understood as even more recent than the other similes.¹⁸ In a recent restatement of his position, Homer and the Oral Tradition (1976, although several chapters are reprinted from earlier articles), G.S. Kirk affirms that the language of the similes is not only un-traditional but demonstrably late. He concludes that "the elaboration and careful placing of many of the developed similes must be due to the monumental composer himself" and adds, "if my conjecture is right and many of these similes were due to Homer in the 8th century B.C., then it must be accepted that the main composer of the Iliad (and probably of the Odyssey too) was prepared on occasion

¹⁶C.M. Bowra, Tradition and Design in the 'Iliad' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 131. M.P. Nilsson in Homer and Mycenae (London: Methuen, 1933), pp. 276ff, argues that the similes incorporate the most recent elements. See also Michael Coffey, "The Function of the Homeric Simile," American Journal of Philology 78 (1957), 116.

¹⁷G.P. Shipp, Studies in the Language of Homer, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972; 1st edition, 1953), pp. 208-22.

¹⁸D.J.N. Lee, The Similes of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' Compared (Parkville: University of Melbourne Press, 1964), p. 2.

to alter the whole heroic coloring of the epic tradition he had inherited."¹⁹ It seems fair to conclude that the similes represent more of the poet's own world, the world he shares with the audience, and that through the similes he was able to present the scenes from the Trojan war to an audience relatively unfamiliar with the heroic world.²⁰ While not all the similes form part of the counterplot, this historical contrast between many of the scenes which make up the counterplot and the scenes of the Trojan war helps to clarify the distinction between the two.

In order to determine which similes form a part of the counterplot, we must briefly consider current theories on how the similes can be interpreted. What kind of "relief," for example, can the similes be said to provide? A growing number of critics have begun

¹⁹G.S. Kirk, Homer and the Oral Tradition, pp. 6,7.

²⁰A few dissenting voices are heard, however. Jacqueline Duchemin has argued in "Aspects pastoraux de la poesie homerique: les comparaisons dans l'Iliade," Revue des Etudes Grèques 73 (1960), 362-415, that the majority of the pastoral similes have roots in Babylonian literature and even in pastoral nomadic life, and thus that the similes must represent older material. With regard to Mesopotamian literature, Phillip Damon has argued in "Homer's similes and the uses of irrelevance," in Modes of Analogy in Ancient and Medieval Verse, University of California Publications in Classical Philology 15 (1961), 262ff, that, while the long similes may be later Ionic accretions, the short epic comparisons represent Mycenaean or even older conventions (see p.264 in particular). As far as cultural levels in the poem, Lesky distinguishes two camps. Webster, Page, Whitman and others maintain that Homeric poetry can be traced back to beginnings in the Mycenaean age; for them, the poems embody a "direct tradition." But for Kirk and for Lesky himself, it is the differences between the Mycenaean and the Homeric worlds which should determine our readings. They trace the "Mycenaean" elements to memories which survived the overthrow of Mycenae rather than to any direct poetic tradition; for them, "the 'dark age'...is the formative period for both the legend and the epic." See Lesky, p. 30.

to see contrast as the primary effect of many Homeric similes.²¹

²¹Modern accounts of the interpretation of Homeric simile often begin with the work of H. Fränkel, Die homerischen Gleichnisse (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1921). Fränkel argued against the old tertium comparationis method of interpreting the similes; he pointed out instead the highly allusive quality of the extended simile. Rather than searching for one Vergleichungspunkt, he argued, we should look at the whole picture and compare in particular the affective or emotional qualities of the simile and its context: we should base our interpretations on an overall Übereinstimmung (see pp.104-7). Most modern critics use this approach as their starting point. Michael Coffey, for example, notes that the details which are "logically unessential" are often used to enhance the total picture. He argues that, in IV,482ff, the unessential details--"the growth of the tree, the purpose for which it was felled"--increase our interest in the tree and thus our sympathy for the warrior. See Michael Coffey, "The Function of the Homeric Simile," American Journal of Philology 78 (1957), 117, 132-3.

More recent studies, however, have begun to interpret the similes more closely. G.P. Shipp divides the similes into three categories: 1) simple comparisons, 2) fuller comparisons, 3) the typical Homeric simile in which "the picture used as an illustration is developed for its own sake" (p.79). To these categories D.J.N. Lee has added a fourth type: "the simile which does not compare, the comparison which does not illustrate" (his italics). He uses as an example the extended simile about a shepherd overlooking a storm (IV,275ff). Whereas Fränkel had found the shepherd merely decorative, Lee points to the ungrammatical, illogical balance of the simile; he argues that in this simile there is no balance between the protasis and apodosis (see D.J.N. Lee, pp.6-7). Lee's argument illustrates the increasing interest of scholars in the tension or contrasts created by the Homeric simile.

In "Some 'metaphysical' aspects of the Homeric simile," Classical Journal 65 (1969-70), 98-9, D.F. Rauber suggests three types of extended Homeric similes: in the "simple" simile, the comparison is fairly direct (e.g. V,554ff); in the "indirect" simile, the intellectual and emotional distance between the two elements is great (e.g. VIII,553ff); and in the "metaphysical" simile, the separation of elements is at a maximum. He uses as an example of the "metaphysical" simile, the description of stones falling as snow (XII,278-89), and describes the tone of the simile as "deeply melancholic, almost Virgilian in its pathos" (p.100).

David Porter's recent article, "Violent Juxtaposition in the similes of the Iliad," Classical Journal 68 (1972-3), 11-21, also typifies recent approaches which stress the power of contrast in the Homeric simile. Porter emphasizes the degree to which many similes

In 1977 Carroll Moulton published a definitive study of Similes in the Homeric Poems.²² Moulton is concerned to stress both the differences and the connections between the similes and the narrative, for he sees the interplay of likeness and difference as the defining trait of the Homeric simile:

a view which emphasizes the imagery's departures from the narrative tends to obscure its remarkable integration with it. Every simile requires a balanced assessment; a principal constituent of the memorable Homeric simile is the tension between the effects of 'sameness' and 'difference' evoked by the comparisons.²³

As an example of the way similes can balance effects of "sameness"

contrast with the battle scenes in which they are set and wants to underscore "the habitual nature of these violent juxtapositions" (p.12). He proposes four categories of contrastive similes: 1) similes which compare war to an agricultural or pastoral scene; 2) similes which compare war to some productive human activity; 3) similes which compare war to the life of women and children; and 4) similes which compare war to scenes of calm in nature. Porter concludes by suggesting that "one powerful effect of these similes is to increase our sense of the violence and destructiveness of the war, perhaps even at times to suggest its senselessness"; with this sort of simile, Homer seems to "underline the tragic nature of war" (pp. 18-9). Porter's examples suggest how many similes may work as part of a counterplot.

A final recent study by W.C. Scott, The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile, Mnemosyne, 28 (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, Bibliotheca Classica Batava, 1974) also categorizes comparisons and points out contrasts, though its main point is to show that the similes are the products of oral composition. For a brief but informative treatment of this topic, see also G.S. Kirk, "Homer: The Meaning of an Oral Tradition," in Homer and the Oral Tradition, pp. 1-18. In the same work, see also "The Oral and the Literary Epic," pp. 69-112. This book is helpfully reviewed by Frederick M. Combella in Comparative Literature 31 (1979), 196-9.

²²Carroll Moulton, Similes in the Homeric Poems, Hypommemata, 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977). See also the review by J.T. Hooker in the Journal of Hellenic Studies 98 (1978), 170.

²³Moulton, p. 51.

and of "difference," Moulton analyzes the simile in which the Achaean rampart is compared to a sand castle:

They streamed over
in massed formation, with Apollo in front of them holding
the tremendous aegis, and wrecked the bastions of the Achaians
easily, as when a little boy piles sand by the sea-shore
when in his innocent play he makes sand towers to amuse him
and then, still playing, with hands and feet ruins them and
wrecks them.

So you, lord Apollo, piled in confusion much hard work
and painful done by the Argives and drove terror among them.
(XV, 359-66)

On one level this simile contrasts the picture of the boy at the sea-shore with the grim reality of war. Moulton points out that the foolish boy is a frequent figure in similes for one who is ignorant of war. Yet he also finds a real correspondence between the boy and Apollo (and by implication between the boy's sweeping gesture and the war):

the boy, almost frighteningly, plays both when he builds and when he destroys; it is almost as if his emotionless, distanced neutrality merges with an attitude of the god.... The rare direct address to Apollo at 365 confirms this impression....the contrast between simile and narrative coalesces with the correspondence between them....²⁴

We determine the effect of the simile, then, by estimating the differences and the likenesses between the scene of the simile and that of the war. The world represented by the boy and his sand castle no longer exists for the Achaean warriors on the plain of Troy, and even the Trojans have already begun to feel that their children will never play innocently on the beach again (see VI, 447-9, VI, 500-2, and XXII, 484-501). Yet something in the boy's gesture does echo the heartless

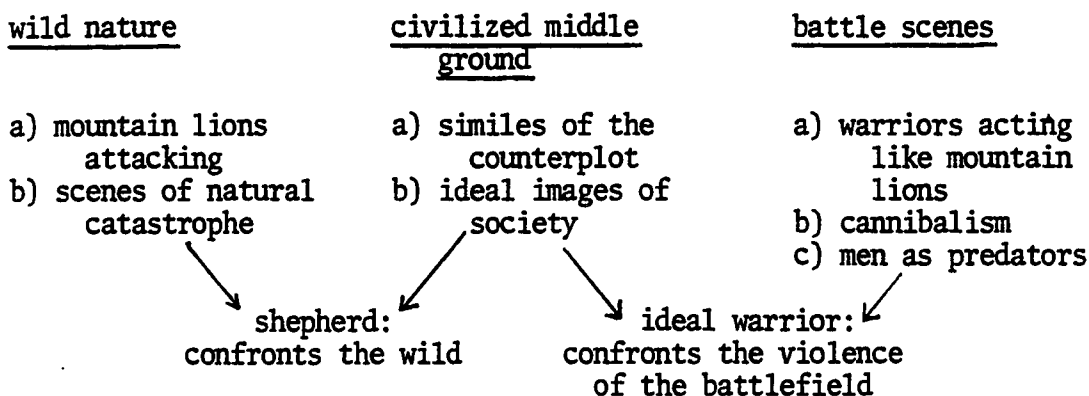
²⁴Moulton, p. 72.

and thoughtless zeal with which Ares inspires the fighting men and with which Apollo destroys his victims. But to see that similarity is to feel the difference all the more strongly: the simile causes us to weigh the two alternative interpretations--that the scene on the beach and the war scene represent two alien worlds, that in fact there is a deeper similarity between them--so that we feel the horror of the comparison all the more deeply. This simile, then, like the counterplot, has a double effect: both represent a world quite separate from the war which nonetheless can illuminate the war, sometimes in a most painful way.

The counterplot, then, as the term will be used here, includes those similes which contrast most with the world of the war. In Moulton's terms, they are those similes in which, once we have weighed the likeness and the difference, the balance seems almost even or tips towards the effect of difference. To put it another way, the counterplot excludes the world of the war and all scenes compared to the war in which what is represented could or does occur at some point within the main plot of the poem. Those similes in which the likenesses between the two scenes compared seem to outweigh the differences usually represent situations which do occur or could occur or seem to occur by analogy in the poem. Similes which compare heroes to lions attacking their foes or to other predatory animals do not make us think of the contrast between the hero and the animal. On the contrary, such similes often seem to ennoble the hero: as Redfield puts it (describing XX,164-73), "these transformations (in the form of similes) mark moments of high heroic

action."²⁵ Similarly, scenes of violence in nature (storms, floods, forest fires) and similes which describe one wild animal attacking another seem to fit well with the battle scenes described.²⁶

The following diagram may help to lay out visually the relationship between the similes of the counterplot and the similes of natural aggression and violence on the one hand and descriptions of actual aggression in the battle on the other:²⁷



The ideal warrior, as this diagram suggests, stands between an ideal of heroic society, which seems more and more in the past as the poem progresses, and the world of death which he confronts on the plain of Troy. The shepherd, on the other hand, confronts the world of the

²⁵ James Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 192. Also see pp. 186-92. This account relies on Redfield's analysis of the functioning of Homeric similes, although it draws conclusions different from his.

²⁶ For some alternative methods of categorizing Homeric similes, see E.G. Wilkins, "A Classification of the Similes of Homer," The Classical Weekly 13 (1919-20), 147-50 and 154-9; D.J.N. Lee, pp. 65-73; D.F. Rauber, pp. 97-103; David Porter, pp. 11-21; and W.C. Scott, pp. 190-205.

²⁷ As is apparent, this diagram relies on Redfield's treatment of the ties between shepherd and warrior. See Nature and Culture in the Iliad, pp. 189-92.

wild: he lives on the borders of the civilized world, the agrou ep' eschatien, the land beyond the limit of agriculture (which Redfield interprets as "an image of the battlefield").²⁸ and his job is to protect his herds from wild animals. Thus the shepherd is in a position analogous to that of the warrior: both stand outside society in order to protect certain things that society values. As Redfield puts it, 'man's war with man is compared to man's struggle with undomesticated nature. Peace, we are reminded, has its violences; man's world is an uncertain achievement, hard won and easily ruined.'²⁹

To a certain extent, the analogy he suggests holds true: if a warrior fails to hold off the enemy, his society will be destroyed; if the shepherd fails to protect the flocks, or if the natural world is allowed to overtake the human world, then society would disappear. The differences between the warrior and the shepherd, however, are also great. The warrior sometimes discovers the enemy within himself. He himself perpetrates acts of violence of exactly the kind he hopes to protect his society from. Thus the comparisons between warriors and wild animals, especially beasts of prey, always seem quite precise, while comparisons between warriors and shepherds emphasize the contrasts between their worlds and their activities. Peace may indeed have its violences, but they seem small in comparison to the violent acts we see in war; man's war with man is incomparably more destructive than man's war with undomesticated nature precisely because it is a war with man. Values, ideals and beliefs are

²⁸Redfield sees the agrou ep' eschatien as a key symbol. See Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 190.

²⁹Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 191.

part of what is destroyed in a war with men, and this loss, as we see in Achilles' case, can break a man. The shepherd and the warrior, then, can be characterized as opposite types, the more clearly opposed precisely because of their analogous positions.

The ideal warrior, in other words, is drawn by the circumstances of war to act more and more like a predatory animal, while the shepherd in any conflict with the wild tends to feel more and more human, to feel his ties to society even more strongly. The shepherd will be destroyed before he becomes a wild beast, and his very fragility is part of what makes him different from the warrior. The shepherd is ultimately a part of society and thus a part of what the warrior protects. Similes involving pastoral activities tend to function as part of the counterplot, while descriptions and evocations of the ideal warrior do so only peripherally. All the similes and images which fall within the central category in the diagram, the civilized middle ground, form a part of the counterplot, while all similes and images describing battle scenes or analogous scenes in nature do not form a part of the counterplot. Similes or images presenting shepherds as they confront the wild are assimilated into the counterplot, for they most dramatically represent the fragility of the civilized world. Similes or images presenting the response of the ideal warrior as he confronts the violence of the battlefield, however, rarely work to make us think of a world separate from the battle and hence do not form a part of the counterplot. This diagram suggests, then, some structural reasons that similes comparing warriors to wild animals, or scenes of war to scenes of natural catastrophe (such as storms), do not logically form a part of the counterplot although they do compare the world of

the audience to the world of the war.

(ii) The Counterplot as the Poet's Consistent Alternative

Should the many scenes which contrast with the war be considered as part of a single counterplot? Or should they rather be considered as random images which serve only to illuminate (or to contrast with) one event or another in the war? Moulton has argued strongly that the similes work in larger patterns of "dynamic symmetry" in which similar events or images are balanced and also differentiated by being framed or described by analogous similes.³⁰ He concludes that "similes in the Iliad, to a far greater extent than has previously been realized, are ordered in sequences to effect balance, contrast (or reversal) and expansion (intensification)...." He argues that it is justifiable to speak of "narrative through simile" and that it is better to analyze "likeness" and "difference" than to argue for an independent existence of the simile or the world it evokes.³¹ In the concluding chapter on the Iliad, Moulton shows how Paris, Agamemnon, Patroclus and Achilles are all characterized by patterns of typical similes.

Moulton's argument that similes should be interpreted as part of the sequence of which they form a part provides a basis for considering

³⁰ He contrasts this theory of "dynamic symmetry" in the Iliad with the theories of "ring" or "geometrical" composition by forward by J.L. Myres, "The Last Book of the Iliad," Journal of Hellenic Studies 52 (1932), 264-96 and Cedric Whitman, in Homer and the Heroic Tradition, especially pp. 249-84, although he sees the theories as coming together in Book XXII. See Moulton, p. 54.

³¹ Moulton, p. 87.

the images and scenes which contrast with the war as part of a counterplot. So to consider them, however, does not imply that they should be interpreted as having an independent existence. The scenes in the counterplot arise from the poet's need to compare the war to scenes in a more familiar world, so the scenes which make up the counterplot cannot be said to be independent of the war scenes. The counterplot is not a subplot or a second plot which intertwines with the main plot to form the story; rather, it stands in opposition to the main plot and grows out of it. Geoffrey Hartman, who introduced the term "counterplot" to describe a similar feature of Milton's epic poetry, defines the term in this way:

Milton's feeling for this divine imperturbability, for God's omnipotent knowledge that creation will outlive death and sin, when expressed in such an indirect manner, may be characterized as the counterplot. For it does not often work on the reader as an independent theme or subplot but lodges in the vital parts of the overt action, emerging from it like good from evil.³²

As Hartman argues to be true of Milton's counterplot, the scenes which make up the counterplot in the Iliad arise from the story of the war and become the key indicators of the poet's own point of view on his story. Put more simply, the counterplot cannot be called a second plot, for it has no dramatic reality within the world of the poem; it cannot exist without the story of war from which it arises.

If these images which contrast with the main heroic story have no dramatic reality in the world of the poem, do they come together to form a counterplot? Do we remember one contrastive scene when we hear of the next one, just as we remember (and need to remember) the pre-

³²Geoffrey Hartman, Beyond Formalism, p. 115.

vious parts of a plot when we read of a new event? A few simile sequences can provide examples of the extent and the limits of the counterplot, and interpreting these sequences can also help to show how the counterplot arises in opposition to the main plot and yet becomes an integral part of the poet's story.³³

Homer introduces the catalogue of ships, a rhetorical tour de force, with an extended simile sequence of seven connected similes.³⁴ This catalogue of similes serves as a rural counterpart of the heroic catalogue to come. The simile sequence begins as Athena stirs the hearts of men so that to them "battle became sweeter...than to go back/ in their hollow ships to the beloved land of their fathers" (II,453-4).³⁵ War is "sweeter" than return: the poet explicitly reminds us of the other option before the warriors. The simile sequence opens by comparing glowing forest fires in the hills to the fiery lights flashing on bronze armor. It compares violence in nature to the war scene, a comparison which seems accurate and ennobling. This first simile, then, does not present a scene which contrasts with the world of the war, and the forest fires do not seem to be excluded from the world of the war. The poet then compares the Greek soldiers to multitudinous nations of migrating birds and stresses the pride and the nobility of

³³See W. Schadewaldt, who argued that the similes form a separate world which we put together like a mosaic, in "Homer und sein Jahrhundert," in Von Homers Welt und Werk, 3rd edition (Stuttgart: F.E. Koehler, 1959; 1st published, 1944), pp. 132-3.

³⁴Moulton's analysis of this sequence, pp. 30-3, has influenced this interpretation.

³⁵See Iliad XI, 13-4, which are the same lines, suggesting that this is a typical moment of heroic inspiration.

the birds. The scene of the meadow filled with birds contrasts with the war scene slightly, but we hardly notice the contrast. The poet here moves slightly further from the world of the war, but the excitement, numbers, noise, and glory of the birds still strike us as appropriate to the evocation of warriors.

In the third simile, however, the counterplot begins to emerge:

They took position in the blossoming meadow of Scamandros,
thousands of them, as leaves and flowers appear in their season.
(II,467-8)

This is the season of war, and the poet describes the warriors' presence in the meadow as being as timely as the appearance of spring flowers. But this comparison only reminds us of the difference between the two seasons; the warriors seem part of the flowering spring that decorates the Scamander, yet they are marching to their destruction. The poet implicitly contrasts the flowers and leaves which return every spring and the men who do not. This implicit comparison should not be ignored, for the poet frequently compares man the natural world in order to point out man's mortality. In a famous example of this topos, Glaucus' answer to Diomedes in Book VI, the simile ostensibly serves a different purpose:

As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber
burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning.
So one generation of men will grow while another
dies.
(VI,146-50)

Here Glaucus suggests that the cycles of human growth are comparable to those of leaves, yet the pathos of the comparison also reminds us of the difference between the two. From the gods' point of view perhaps, the generation of men may seem like that of leaves, but from the human point of view, the difference is striking. The leaves return

every spring, but the generation of man is hardly replaced in one season. As in the case of Glaucus' simile, in the simile about the soldiers beside Scamander an accurate parallel with nature balances a radical disjunction; in both cases, the difference between the two is conveyed partly by the elegiac tone.³⁶

Then follows the central and pivotal simile of the sequence, the fourth simile, which presents a rural scene centering on the image of milk pails:

Like the multitudinous nations of swarming insects
who drive hither and thither about the stalls of the sheepfold
in the season of spring when the milk splashes in the milk pails:
in such numbers the flowing haired Achaians stood up
through the plain against the Trojans, hearts burning to break
them.

(II,469-73)

Here the poet explicitly reminds us that the simile has no reality within the world pictured: the Achaeans are thinking about breaking the Trojans, not about pails of milk. The contrast between the battle scene and the productive rural world shown in the simile seems quite strong, and by making us feel this contrast, the poet reminds us, in the moment of heroic splendor, of what is lost. Although the numbers of insects provide a link to the battle scene, the main purpose of the simile seems to be to illustrate what the battle is not, and even the explicit comparison of the men to insects undermines the portrayal of heroic glory and might with which the simile sequence began and which is its ostensible purpose. As a related comparison will later mock the devils in Pandemonium, this comparison seems to reduce the warriors in scale and almost to mock them. Insects only get in the

³⁶See also Iliad II, 800.

way of the milking (they are minor annoyances); similarly the mass of the soldiers may seem almost incidental, at least to the heroic story, in which only a few noted heroes and leaders gain glory (and produce material for the story, which, if anything, is the war's main product). Homer says a few lines later that he could not name the common folk, 'not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had/a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me...' (II,489-90). He will sing only of the lords of men.

In the next simile of the sequence, the rural scene is developed further. The poet again undermines the common soldier, for he compares the leaders of the company to goatherds easily dividing their flocks. These goatherds are separating their flocks to take them to pasture, but the Achaean leaders are separating their flocks of men to lead them into the encounter. Again the rural simile grows out of the battle scene and yet pictures a world which contrasts with the world of the soldiers. The difference between taking your goats to pasture and leading your men into war only reminds us that the goats and the shepherds are far from the battle. Agamemnon is then compared briefly to Zeus, Ares and Poseidon, but the final extended simile of the sequence returns to the rural analogue: Agamemnon towers over his host "like some ox of the herd pre-eminent among the others,/a bull, who stands conspicuous in the huddling cattle" (II,480-1). As Moulton has noted, Agamemnon is transformed here. No longer is he like the gods (as he was in lines 477-9); now he is but head bull in a flock presumably driven by Zeus himself.³⁷ By the end of the sequence,

³⁷Moulton, p. 30.

even the towering heroes are part of the herd, and the gods are the herdsmen who profit from their struggles. In this last simile, we recognize a familiar touch of Homeric irony: Agamemnon and the other leaders might imagine themselves as separating their men as flocks, but they clearly do not think of themselves as a part of that herd. The counterplot leads further and further from any perspective which could be taken by a character in the midst of the action. It leads the poet to take on a perspective which resembles that of the gods.³⁸

In this sequence, the rural scenes function as an extended analogue for the heroic world. The sequence moves from the wild, natural world to scenes of pastoral tranquility. These rural scenes contrast dramatically with the martial events they supposedly illuminate, and they may even slightly diminish the stature of the warriors in our eyes. At the end of the sequence, the poet calls on the muses to help him remember all the heroes he must catalogue, so the poet's catalogue becomes the last step in a narrative sequence that has moved from wilderness to an agricultural world where man has controlled nature and made it his own. The moment of story-telling, like the rural scene, occurs far from the battle. Homer builds up to his invocation by listing similes which develop the image of a world in which his story-telling could find its appropriate place. He dramatizes his own efforts to tell of the war: we are reminded by the simile se-

³⁸See Jasper Griffin, pp. 179-204, who develops the notion that the gods in the *Iliad* are a divine audience, like an audience at a tragedy, whose presence and attention also serve to heighten for us the emotional significance of the terrible events. "But the men in the poem," he notes, "do not know of this (the gods') suffering" (p.196).

quence and by the invocation that the poem is quite unlike the war, that it may even be inadequate to the war, and that it is our only way to recapture that remote, heroic world. The Iliad seems partly to be about that effort to know and tell that distant world, to find comparisons between our everyday reality and that lost one; the tension between the rural and the martial scenes, which the simile sequence slowly intensifies, may constitute a defining subject of the poem as a whole. The form of the catalogue, and the moment of telling the story, thus operate here as parts of the counterplot. On the other hand, the heroes, as we are often reminded when they die, are excluded from the world of timelessness and artifice in which the poem participates.

The simile sequence, then, illustrates how the counterplot arises from the story of the war and is never completely separable from it. Can this notion of counterplot be extended to include images and scenes which do not fall side by side in the poem? Clearly we do not need to remember every contrastive image in order to understand or respond to a given simile, and oral formulaic theory prepares us to expect a certain randomness in the use of imagery. The counterplot cannot be considered a plot in the strictest sense. Yet as we respond to these images, we do remember that similar images are present in many parts of the poem. The fact that they are repeated suggests all the more that they form part of a continuing and consistent if indirect commentary on the action. The counterplot may work in several ways: we may notice that a comparison recurs elsewhere in the poem; we may notice that the scene it depicts resembles other scenes also used to characterize the same action or event, or

we may notice a more specific thematic or imagistic connection between the simile we are reading and other images or comparisons nearby. In any of these three cases (or whenever they combine), we feel the images and scenes combining to create a secondary movement of ideas and sympathy in that part of the poem. This secondary set of images does not represent a world available to the soldiers, and it directs our ideas and sympathies, not theirs.

The death of Simoeisios Anthemides, one of the first Trojans to die after the fighting begins in Book IV, can stand as an example of comparisons which occur in several places in the poem. Homer likens Simoeisios' fall to that of a poplar:

He dropped then to the ground in the dust, like some black poplar,
which in the land low-lying about a great marsh grows
smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost tree-top:
one whom a man, a maker of chariots, fells with the shining
iron, to bend it into a wheel for a fine-wrought chariot,
and the tree lies hardening by the banks of a river.
(IV,482-7)

The Trojan Asios also falls like a great tree: "He fell, as when an oak goes down or a white poplar/or like a towering pine tree which in the mountains the carpenters/have hewn down with their whetted axes to make a ship timber" (XIII,389-91). The poet uses precisely these words, or formulae, to describe the fall of Sarpedon (one of the six direct repetitions of an extended comparison in the Iliad; see XVI, 482-4).³⁹ These similes compare the fall of a tree cut down by a

³⁹ See Moulton, who, in a note to page 94, lists all the repetitions of extended similes in the two poems: there are six in the Iliad and two in the Odyssey.

craftsman to the fall of a warrior vanquished by another warrior.⁴⁰ In each case the violence and loss in the moment of death contrasts with the productive scene described in the simile. In an extended simile such as the one quoted above, we are drawn into the peaceful scene through the landscape. Although he makes a vehicle for war, the chariot-builder seems to be part of the productive rural world so separate from the war, and the return of attention to the war at the end of the long description seems sudden.

These comparisons claim a likeness between the two scenes, however, a claim which cannot be easily disregarded. This claim of likeness raises the question of whether war can be seen as a productive activity, or whether it is in any way similar to building chariots or making ships. Will the dead warriors, like the trees, be molded and hewn into some material that society can use? In one sense, the poet himself is in the process of doing so, and his poem could be said to be that product. Or perhaps the glory, that partial immortality of the warrior, is what their deaths produce. When Sarpedon dies, we may think of his speech on death and glory, which many have found to express the heroic ideal most fully (XII,310-328). Nonetheless, the main effect of these similes is to increase the pathos of death. If we take the claims of comparison seriously, we still feel the pathos of the similes, for we realize that the warriors themselves can enjoy none of the glory they win. They are separated from whatever larger meaning their deaths take on. That larger meaning is unavailable to

⁴⁰Other examples of this topos include Iliad V, 560, and XIII, 178-81.

them (though hoped for), just as the scene in the simile represents a world now unavailable to the characters fighting the war. Their immortality through fame and the order which gives their death glory and significance form a part of the counterplot while the moments of their deaths do not. Thus a certain strain arises when we interpret these similes of the counterplot, for the claims of likeness and difference pull against one another.

When Sarpedon dies, we remember that other soldiers have fallen as he does and been compared to trees falling in lovely mountain scenes. If we did not remember, at least vaguely, that the simile used to describe his death forms part of a group of related similes, we might see his death as atypical, as separate or distinct from the deaths of other less important heroes. Instead we interpret his death as an emblem of what death means to the hero in the Iliad. This one simile hardly constitutes the entire description of his death, but in this small way his death is tied to the deaths of many heroes before him and thus seems to stand for them all. Although we may not remember each example, we feel a counterplot at work in this scene, and this sense changes the way in which we interpret Sarpedon's death.

To take one further example of the way repeated images or similes can help to draw the counterplot together, we might consider the image of insects buzzing around a pail of milk which appears in the fourth and pivotal simile in the simile sequence in Book II. A very similar comparison of men to insects buzzing around milk pails is used to describe the men crowding around the corpse of Sarpedon in Book XVI. Homer remarks that no man could have made out Sarpedon

since he was piled from head to ends of feet under
a mass of weapons, the blood and the dust, while others about him
kept forever swarming over his dead body, as flies
through a sheepfold thunder about the pails overspilling
milk, in the season of spring when the milk splashes in the
buckets. (XVI, 639-43)

The warriors are helpless and minute before the greatness of the question of retribution for the death of Sarpedon, which Zeus ponders in the following lines. The shocking juxtaposition of the war and the peaceful, spring scene reminds us of all that has been lost by these warring nations; as Porter points out, at the conclusion of the simile, the poet "seems intentionally to dwell on the springtime and the milk just before plunging us back into the fray." Porter adds that "this technique of concluding the simile with precisely those details which will drive home the abrupt contrast" is a common one.⁴¹ The clash of vehicle and tenor in this instance adds to the pathos of Sarpedon's death. Here too it seems striking that the scene evoked is a common one, the details of which recur in many similes. Sarpedon's death is set against a common background so that it represents a dramatic but typical hero's death. The poet narrates this section of the story with rhetorical flourishes, but his efforts only intensify our feelings of loss and make us view Sarpedon's death as more typical rather than less.

This example leads to larger topic of the shared background of these scenes, a second way in which we feel the counterplot at work. Some events are depicted by a series of related similes, which evoke a more or less continuous world in contrast to the world of the war.

⁴¹David Porter, p. 13.

The pathos of Sarpedon's death is intensified partly by the large number of rural scenes which ostensibly describe it. The many rural scenes seem almost to touch one another in this section of the poem, so the counterplot works as one more rhetorical gesture to intensify the pathos of the scene.

Just before the simile about the flies and milk pails, the poet describes the noise of the battle around Sarpedon's corpse:

As the tumult goes up from men who are cutting
timber in the mountain valleys, and the sound is heard from far
off,
such was the dull crashing that rose from the earth of the
wide ways....

(XVI, 633-5)

The only listeners hearing the sound from far off are those listening to the singer tell his tale; the only other possible analogue for the implied listeners are the gods who listen to the noise rising from the earth. The comparison of these woodcutters, mentioned only moments after Sarpedon's death, echoes the description of his fall:

He fell, as when an oak goes down or a white poplar,
or like a towering pine tree which in the mountains the
carpenters
have hewn down with their whetted axes to make a ship-timber.

(XVI, 482-4)

This simile was discussed above as an example of the way repeated similes or repeated scenes can help to tie the counterplot together. Here we see how related similes, when used to describe the same event, can intensify the sense of a counterplot at work. Since warriors are frequently compared to trees, the noise of battle seems appropriately described as the noise woodcutters make. The poet does not even have to refer specifically to the tree comparison previously used for Sarpedon, since the comparison is so commonly used for the

deaths of soldiers. Rather than making explicit reference to the previous simile, he merely increases the references to the counterplot. This second reference to woodcutters within the sequence of Sarpedon's death blends into the simile of the milk pails which follows it by only a few lines. The density of these rural scenes creates a continuing contrast between the rural world of peace and the war. The horror of Sarpedon's death is represented in part through the violent conflict of these scenes with the war scene, a violent conflict symbolized in part by the bloody tears of Zeus on the ground (XVI,459-60). Like Zeus, we recoil from the violence and death. The many references to peaceful, productive life remind us of the life that Sarpedon has not chosen. These peaceful scenes may provide us with some "relief" from the war, but they also prevent us from becoming so accustomed to the bloody deaths that we do not feel them. The constant shifting back and forth from the plot to the counterplot keeps us aware of the horror of the war.

The counterplot in the Iliad can be felt in a third way: throughout a whole section of the text, the similes can seem to connect with one another because they evoke similar images or themes. Rather than simply looking at one event characterized by several related similes, we can also consider how the war is characterized by contrast to a series of related scenes throughout a whole section of the narrative. Throughout Book XVI the similes make up a counterplot which connects certain rural scenes and descriptions of productive human activities. The larger context of Book XVI provides an example of the dynamic symmetry which Moulton found to be typical of narrative construction in the Iliad as a whole. As we have seen, similes

are repeated with slight variation; parallel movements and dispersed simile sequences expand our understanding of each individual event. Throughout the book, these various comparisons also blend together to create an image of a world set apart from the battle scenes: this other world of peacetime activity contrasts with the world of the war, which remains at the center of attention.⁴²

As the Myrmidons fall into battle formation, for example, the poet describes their tight ranks with a comparison taken from building:

And as a man builds solid a wall with stones set close together
for the rampart of a high house keeping out the force of the
winds, so
close together were the helms and shields massive in the middle.
For shield leaned on shield, helmet on helmet, man against man,
and the horse-hair crests along the horns of the shining helmets
touched as they bent their heads, so dense were they formed on
each other. (XVI, 212-7)

The building buffets back the might of the winds as the Myrmidons will try to beat the force of the Trojans. The detailed description of how the helmets and shields fit together makes us visualize how the soldiers resemble a wall. Yet even here where the connections between the two scenes seem quite strong, the differences nonetheless stand out. The building is a lasting achievement; many in the tight ranks will be destroyed by battle. This simile too helps to establish the peaceful background of comparison which becomes the context for Sarpedon's death.

⁴²The similes in Book XVI which do not treat this theme describe stags or bulls being destroyed by wild beasts of prey, thus producing emblematic pictures of what the war does to peacetime life as it is described in the similes of the counterplot.

Soon after the builder simile, the Myrmidons are said to surge forward in waves

like wasps at the wayside
when little boys have got into the habit of making them angry
by always teasing them as they live in their house by the roadside;
silly boys, they do something that hurts many people;
and if some man who travels on the road happens to pass them by
and stirs them unintentionally, they in heart of fury
come swarming out each one from his place to fight for their
children. (XVI, 259-65)

The Trojans are compared to the silly boys whose mischievous play brings harm to others. A stranger, some traveler, becomes the victim of the boys and the angry hornets; the poem suggests no real analogue in the main plot for this passing observer unless it is human society itself. In this simile, an example of peacetime trouble advances the description of the war, but also reminds us how much worse will be the accidental suffering that results from the rush of the Myrmidons.

Kirk interprets this simile by stressing the tension between the likeness and difference of the compared scenes. He points out that, although wasps are not normally heroic, the poet "half-humorously" draws them into the heroic context "by the standard martial phrase about 'all their defensive spirit.'" But for Kirk the contrasts are still greater than the likenesses:

At the same time their individuality is brought out by a striking anthropomorphic touch (reinforced by the 'homes' or 'houses' of 261) that establishes a counterpoint to the massed and anonymous heroes: the wasps are fighting, not for the 'heroic' ideals that are the most obvious driving force of Homeric warriors, but for their children. This artifice, only apparently naive, makes the wasps seem human at the same time as the Myrmidons are seen as partly animal; it arouses our sympathy for them as they respond so violently to trivial but powerful threats. If the image piquant and pathetic in itself, it would seem absurd. As things are, it is neatly placed in a context that it

illuminates more brilliantly and subtly than a more explicit and heroic image could.⁴³

The Danaans are then compared to ravenous wolves that attack lambs and kids astray from their flock because of "the thoughtlessness of a shepherd" (XVI,352-4). Again a peacetime error (or lack of responsibility) that results in harm or loss is used to explain the violence of war. But in the case of the siege of Troy mistakes, negligence or foolish games are not at issue: what is negligence for the shepherd becomes a kind of heroism for the warriors, and the two realms, so often compared, prove to be inverted.

The men swarming over the corpse of Sarpedon were compared by the poet to flies around a milk pail. The examples above help to suggest how the extended narrative context of this simile creates a sense of a counterplot: the narrative context emphasizes the radical differences between the rural scenes in peacetime and the heroic scene by constantly returning to the rural or peacetime world. These scenes also add to the pathos of Patroclus' death which follows soon upon Sarpedon's. Here, near the tragic center of the poem where Patroclus earns his glorious name and finds his death (and thus sets the tragedy of Achilles in motion), the rural similes represent a world irrevocably lost to most of the fighters. The loss of this world is represented in part through the violence of the contrasts between the world of peace and the world of war.

In spite of the density of its images in this section of the

⁴³G.S. Kirk, Homer and the Oral Tradition, p. 7.

poem, the counterplot still arises from the heroic story and cannot be detached from it. The rural similes provide analogues of loss and represent other kinds of death. These analogues, especially when they are developed in productive similes or in similes about artefacts suggest that there may be a value to the fall of a man in war; these comparisons in part claim that the war also has its products. But just as we begin to think of the likenesses, we are reminded of the differences: the fall of a tree which will be carved into something useful becomes an analogue which makes the death of a hero more painful in its waste. Thus the counterplot seems to contrast all the more with the war because it begins by making claims of likeness. The poem insistently makes the connection between productive arts and the destruction of war, and this connection is part of what makes up the poem's tragic vision.⁴⁴ By the death of Patroclus, however, this connection seems to exist almost entirely to suggest how opposed the two worlds are. If there is a connection, it is one from which the soldiers do not benefit: the counterplot intensifies our sense of loss at their deaths, and it may also suggest at times a larger context in which their deaths have meaning. But the poem never hides the fact that the larger context remains unavailable to the heroes who die.

This illustration of the ways in which rural images and scenes can coalesce so that they seem all to be part of a counterplot began with a simile describing the death of Simoeisios Anthemides. Return-

⁴⁴See F.E. Harrison, "Homer and the Poetry of War," Greece and Rome 7 (1960), 9-19, for a thoughtful essay on the relationship of Homer to the heroic ethos and to tragedy.

ing to the story of Simoeisios, we can see now that his fall, illustrated by a rural simile, itself is set in a larger context of rural scenes. This larger context, the counterplot as it develops in this section of the poem, can serve as a final example of the way disparate images come to be felt as part of a continuous background context against which the story of the war is set.

As the armies prepare to fight in Book IV (only about 50 lines before Simoeisios dies), the Greeks move forward like waves while the Trojans raise their voices

as sheep in a man of possessions' steading
stand in their myriads waiting to be drained of their white milk
and bleat interminably as they hear the voice of their lambs....
(IV,433-5)

In this contrastive simile, the flocks waiting to produce milk differ strikingly from the warriors who produce nothing: there is no immediate analogue in the war for the milk unless it is the death and glory of heroes. As the two lines of warriors clash, a din arises which is described by another rural simile:

There the screaming and the shouts of triumph rose up together
of men killing and men killed, and the ground ran blood.
As when rivers in winter spate running down from the mountains
throw together at the meeting of streams the weight of their
water
out of the great streams behind in the hollow stream-bed,
and far away in the mountains the shepherd hears their thunder;
such, from the coming together of men, was the shock and the
shouting. (IV,450-6)

As with scenes of floods, storms and other natural disasters, the rural scene here to some extent fits the battle. It is not until the poet reaches the shepherd, who is far away and hears only the roar, that the rural scene begins to seem inappropriately matched with the battle. From his distanced perspective the shepherd could not dis-

tinguish the two roars described; for such a listener, the simile could be the reality. His distance from the mighty roar of the waters can stand as an emblem of our distance from the action of the poem. Like the shepherd in the simile ending Book VIII (see above pp. 10-4), this shepherd may stand in part for the audience as we try to understand the heroic world by only hearing about it from afar.

This sequence of similes provides the context of the death of Simoeisios. As we saw above, Simoeisios dropped to the ground

like some black poplar,
which in the land low-lying about a great marsh grows
smooth trimmed yet with branches growing at the uttermost tree-top:
one whom a man, a maker of chariots, fells with the shining
iron, to bend it into a wheel for a fine wrought chariot,
and the tree lies hardening by the banks of a river.

(IV,482-7)

As Moulton has shown, in this sequence the poem moves from "the surf of the sea" (IV,422) (compared to the Danaans), to the flocks waiting to yield white milk (compared to the Trojans), to the shepherd hearing the din of the waters meeting, and finally to the fall of a poplar by a clear stream.⁴⁵ The sense of a counterplot here is so strong that the water imagery begins to blend together: the narrative proximity draws all of these images together and creates out of them the picture of another world even though this world is constituted by scenes that exist at different times and in different places.

The images of surf and of snow-fed mountain torrents suggest a natural violence which parallels the aggression of war, but the other rural scenes undercut this parallel by contrasting the war with exam-

⁴⁵See Moulton, p. 33.

ples of human productivity. In rural similes to be able to nurture is to be able to produce; the flocks bleat unceasingly "as they hear the voice of their lambs" (IV,435). The war disrupts a similar tie between Simoeisios and his parents. This simile sequence thus creates a tension between those elements that make the comparisons to the war seem accurate and those that seem only to magnify its destructiveness. At this point in the poem, this balance does not tip firmly towards one side or the other: the counterplot represents another world of the war, yet it arises through comparison to the war and those similarities are never ignored.

This section of the poem, then, demonstrates how closely the counterplot can be interwoven with the main narrative and still stand out as distinct and separate. The counterplot can be based on one or two specific images, such as the repeated images of water and herds which draw these scenes together, and it can refer to other images or scenes not included in this part of the poem. As here, the audience senses the way these particular images weave together, and it also recognizes parallels to other figures and images. Not only does Simoeisios' death fit into a specific narrative context in which the counterplot is strongly felt, but the simile which describes his death is used with slight variation for several other heroes. Similarly, the shepherd in the simile who hears the crashing waters resembles several other such figures who stand aside from the action. To estimate the effect of the counterplot, then, we must be alert both to specific narrative context and to echoes from other parts of the poem.

Earlier in Book IV, in a simile which may be a part of the sequence discussed above (a dispersed sequence, in Moulton's termin-

ology),⁴⁶ the grim arming of Ajax's company and of the other Achaean warriors is compared to the grimness of a dark storm:

As from his watching place a goatherd watches a cloud move
on its way over the sea before the drive of the west wind;
far away though he be he watches it, blacker than pitch is,
moving across the sea and piling the storm before it,
and as he sees it he shivers and drives his flocks to a cavern;
so about the two Aiantes moved the battalions....

(IV,275-80)

This goatherd too has no real analogue in the war scene; his efforts to protect his flocks can be compared to nothing going on on the windy fields of Troy.⁴⁷ The storm on the ocean captures the sense of foreboding and power in these opening scenes of the war, but the poet moves from that closer parallel to the less analogous world of the goatherd in his cave. The simile begins describing a scene vaguely analogous to the war, but by the ending only the contrast which it establishes seems to matter. In this section of the poem such a figure without parallel in the war world is often pictured listening to the noises of war or seeing vague images of what the war may be like. These figures help to establish the counterplot in this section of the poem, for the poet moves through them into a description of a world much more separate from the war than that scene from which the likeness originally arose.

⁴⁶See Moulton, pp. 37-9.

⁴⁷Fränkel, p. 23, had referred to the goatherd of this simile as merely a decorative figure in a landscape (*Staffagefigur*), and pointed out that the real comparison is between the threatening dark clouds and the threatening hordes of the Aiantes' men. See D.J.N. Lee, p. 7, who points to the ungrammatical, even illogical structure of this simile, and locates the interpretive problem in this imbalance. Both explanations, while helpful, fail to explain the presence of the goatherd.

One further example can show that this figure without analogy in the war frequents this section of the poem and moves the poetry from an account of war to a description of a separate world. In the opening of Book III, after the approach of the Trojan squadrons and the beautiful, odd simile of the cranes who slaughter Pygmy warriors (III, 2-7), the poet compares the dust raised by the advancing hosts to the mist scattered by the south wind:

As on the peaks of a mountain the south wind scatters the thick
mist,
no friend to the shepherd, but better than night for the robber,
and a man can see before him only so far as a stone cast,
so beneath their feet the dust drove up in a stormcloud....
(III,10-3)

The reference to thieves or robbers echoes the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon in Book I, as well as the background story of Paris' abduction of Helen. Thus in the battle scene there may be several analogues for the robber, and Paris is introduced soon after this simile. For the shepherd, however, the mist is a hindrance; he has no place in the world of the war and can make nothing of it. Anyone--an everyday man--would be completely enclosed in this mist. The call to commonplace experience, the blindness of "a man" ("a man" translates tis, the indefinite pronoun--thus also "anyone" or "any man") in mist, seems particularly strong and representative here. Like the goatherd who watches the storm from afar, or the shepherd whose heart is made happy by the night sky, this man resembles the audience of the poem. All stand far from the world of the war.

This set of figures--shepherds listening from afar, men passing on their way attacked by wasps, men lost in mist--glosses the poet's

claim to ignorance in his invocation to the Muses in Book II.

Tell me how, you Muses you who have your homes on Olympos.
For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things,
and we have heard only the rumor of it and know nothing.
(II,484-6)

The poet suggests that he is almost as ignorant as the goatherd who watches the storm from afar and listens to the sound of thunder. The poet, of course, is inspired by the Muses, so ultimately he stands in between the shepherds and goatherds and the heroes themselves. Unlike the shepherds and passing men, the poet listens to the thunder and hears in it echoes of the greatness of ancient strife.

These examples help to show why the different parts of the counterplot are hard to disentangle. Not only are there many individual sections which seem to contrast with the war story, but all these different images of a separate world of peace seem to add up. The counterplot is not easily divisible into categories based on content, image, themes or degree of contrast, since its different strands interweave into different patterns in each section of the poem. So it seems more useful to attempt to weigh the effect of the counterplot as a whole in different sections of the poem than to stress the interpretation of any one simile which may or may not give a sense of the force of the counterplot in that section of the poem.

(iii) The Old Days When There Was Peace

The counterplot, then, is constituted of those scenes not available to the characters in the poem.⁴⁸ But do not the peaceful

⁴⁸With one or two exceptions, notably the shield of Achilles, which will be treated below on pp. 81-92.

closely with the death of Hector that (even if we did not already know the story) we know the outcome of the war early on. The scene between Hector and Andromache itself begins with Andromache's plea to her husband not to return to the battle; she imagines her child an orphan, herself a widow (431-2). Hector refuses her plea, but admits that he too has foreseen the fall of the city:

For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it:
there will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish....
But it is not so much the pain to come of the Trojans...
as troubles me the thought of you, when some bronze-armoured
Achaian leads you off, taking away your day of liberty,
in tears....

(VI,447-8;450;454-6)

Hector hopes to be dead when this day comes so that he will not see Andromache dragged away as captive.

The scene with the child, then, rather than being a scene of quiet domesticity, is filled with overtones of grief and foreboding. Like this scene, all scenes of peaceful life in Troy are touched with pathos, for we, and the characters, feel that they represent a world already lost. No Trojan can enjoy a peaceful moment without being reminded that peace does not belong to the present. Because such scenes as predictions of loss, or as embodiments of a world of the past, are cast in a mood of grief, the scenes in Troy itself are as "far from hot baths" (XXII,445) as are the scenes on the battlefield.⁴⁹ Andromache may be able to draw hot baths, but she is never without foreboding and fear (see XXII,451-5). For us, also, the scenes in Troy are never enjoyed as simple peaceful moments, for the

⁴⁹ See Simone Weil, p. 4.

poet's warning voice always reminds us of the fact of death behind any momentary ignorance of pain on the part of the characters ("poor innocent," XXII,445; or the well-known example of the teeming earth on Castor and Polydeukes, III,243-4).

Peaceful, domestic scenes in Troy, then, do not form a part of the counterplot, for they never represent a world which is free from the ravages of the war. The peaceful life which the Trojans enjoyed in the past does function as a part of the counterplot, however, on the rare occasions when it is evoked. The world of peace is occasionally evoked by the poet to remind us how completely unavailable it is to the characters. As Hector runs for his life beneath the walls of Troy, for example, the poet contrasts this mortal race with the days of peace in the past:

They raced along by the watching point and the windy fig tree
always away from under the wall and along the wagon-way
and came to the two sweet-running well springs....

Beside these
in this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows
of stone, and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and
their lovely
daughters washed the clothes to shining, in the old days
when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the
Achaians.

They ran beside these, one escaping, the other after him.
(XXII,145-7; 152-7)

In this description peacetime activities are clearly set in a past dramatically unavailable to Hector as he races by for his life. Since "the old days when there was peace" are clearly set in opposition to the present, this scene can serve as an emblem to represent how completely unavailable the world of the counterplot has become to the Trojan characters.

Like the old days when there was peace at Troy, the scenes from

the past of the Achaean warriors--the only peaceful scenes with which they are associated--also function as part of the counterplot. The only case in which it is not certain that the world of peace has been left behind is the case of Achilles in withdrawal. The brief scenes in Achilles' encampment in Book IX do seem more distant from the war, if only because Achilles has momentarily persuaded himself that he is leaving the battle for good and choosing long life. But Achilles is convinced not to leave, and the notion that he could withdraw is made to seem an illusion. His encampment on the edge of the battlefield, like Troy, does not represent a world apart from the battle.

For the other Achaean warriors, matters are simpler. Clearly they have left the world of peace behind them when they came to Troy. Homer intensifies our sense that the world of peace is lost to the Achaean warriors by describing their homes as idyllic natural scenes and by showing that the warriors were conceived and spent their childhoods in lovely natural settings of the type which often appear in the similes. These lovely natural scenes represent a world inaccessible to the characters in the present. To return, for example, to Simoeisios, whose death is compared to the fall of a tree growing in bottomland by a river (IV,473ff), we learn why the simile makes his death particularly poignant. Simoeisios himself had had a rural birth and upbringing: his mother had conceived him on the slopes of Ida, by the banks of the clear Simoeis "when she had followed her mother and her father to tend the sheepflocks" (IV,476). Like the poplar, then, Simoeisios grew up by the banks of a clear river, but unlike the tree, which seems to have produced chariot wheels, Simoeisios' death does not seem to produce anything but grief: "he could not/render again

the care of his dear parents" (IV,477-8). Simoeisios' rural birth and childhood extends the poet's comparison, but it also intensifies the contrast between the final end of the tree and of the man.

Homer tells us in passing of other heroes who were conceived while their parents were temporarily acting as shepherds or who spent their childhoods in lovely, rural worlds. As the examples add up (and here we feel the effect of the formulae), the rural childhood of so many heroes becomes a paradigm for the pattern of human life--or at least for the pattern of heroic life as it is described in this poem. The twins Aisepos and Pedasos were conceived, we learn as they die, when their father Boukolion served as a shepherd and loved a nymph (VI,21-6). Similarly, Iphidamas, Antenor's athletic son, was reared "in generous Thrace, the mother of sheepflocks" (XI,222). His maternal grandfather had betrothed him to a Thracian woman, but Iphidamas "went away from the bride chamber, looking for glory" (XI,227). As he dies, we learn that he "had known no delight from her yet, and had given much for her" (XI,243). He had paid generously in sheep and goats, but all this is left behind him forever when he leaves for Troy.

Achilles' life also follows this pattern. But the time Thetis tells the Nereids of Achilles' childhood, the paradigm of a rural childhood for heroes has already been well-established, and she uses only a brief simile to describe it. Achilles "shot up like a young tree"; Thetis "nurtured him like a tree grown in the pride of an orchard" (XVIII,56-7). Here the connection between young man and tree is made explicit, while the opposition between warrior and tree remains implicit.

These few examples suggest that peaceful, rural scenes, when they do not appear in similes, are always set in the past. The poet, not the characters, describes these scenes, for, like all parts of the counterplot, this world of the past represents a point of view or set of possibilities no longer available to the characters themselves. For these heroes the rural world is a world of origins, but not, except for the poet's comparisons, a world of endings.⁵⁰ These rural scenes in the past, then, are colored with a touch of nostalgia for the poet and for his listeners. The scenes of peaceful childhood sharpen the images of loss and pain in the war, and they also help to universalize the story, for all people lose their childhoods. By setting these rural scenes in the past, Homer intensifies the loss we feel when facing the deaths caused by the war, for he associates loss of life with loss of childhood. Thus we experience their loss by analogy. The rural childhood of these heroes comes to represent by extension the childhood of all the heroes (at least metaphorically), and the bucolic world of the peaceful shepherd is associated with all that has been left behind--by adults who have left their childhoods behind, by the Achaeans, who have left their fields and homes, and by the Trojans who can no longer herd flocks or cut down trees on Mt Ida except by special dispensation.

From the perspective of the heroes and of the main narrative, the heroic world is immediate and the peacetime world evoked in the

⁵⁰ It is also striking that these early rural scenes are often tied to mythological stories about nymphs or goddesses consorting with men, as if the Iliad were concerned to dramatize the undoing of our ties to myth or to a mythic world.

to create a tableau representing a peaceful, productive life. The simile carefully separates and distinguishes the world of heroic action from the world of the woodcutter. The soldiers fighting feel no sense of refreshment; the only thing they have in common with the woodsman is the timing of their onslaught. Thus the simile of the woodcutter functions as a typical simile of the counterplot, for it turns our minds away from the war and sets up in our minds a comparison, a double image, which does not correspond to anything which the warriors might experience.

The two scenes may be united because they take place at the same time, but time works quite differently in each world. Like most shepherds or woodsmen of the counterplot, this woodsman is described as doing something which he might do everyday. The lunchtime scene seems endlessly repeatable, and the sense that it can be repeated is particularly striking since the scene is used to mark a specific time in the heroic world. The repeated gesture or experience of the rural world is used to mark the specific moment that the warriors break the line. The breaking of the line--like the death of a hero--occurs only once and has a special and individual meaning.

This second time scheme--a time scheme different from that of the heroic world--characterizes most of the scenes of the counterplot and explains some of their poignancy, for they remind us by contrast of how much the heroic plot focuses on mortality. When the heroes leave their rural childhoods behind, they enter a world which operates according to historic, causal time. Cycles of the seasons and the continuing patterns of life that grow out of them no longer determine the life of a warrior: since it is unavailable, that

repeating, undifferentiated time of peace and peaceful custom seems idyllic.

The time scheme in the Iliad thus seems to work in a double way. The rural scenes in the counterplot imply an iterative time scheme, yet that kind of time--the absence of historical, linear or causal time--is lost to the heroes. Within the poem this rural time scheme is placed in a past not too distant but made irrevocable by war and death. For the audience, however, the sense of time in these rural episodes has an opposite effect. For Homer's audience and for us today, the epic action seems to be set in a remote past when grandeur and greatness of muscle and spirit exceeded anything we can imagine ("two men, the best in all a community,/could not easily hoist it up from the ground to a wagon,/of men such as men are now, but he alone lifted it and shook it...." XII,447-9). The repeating time of the rural scenes, where when so often means whenever, resembles the kind of time that the audience and we feel we live in. The main plot, set in the past, seems to us to represent mortality, while the counterplot, set in the iterative present, appears to be a world of repeating cycles of time in which mortality does not enter. We can see why mortality and greatness seem to be tied together in this poem, for in the world of repeating patterns of time there is no sequence, no sense of causality. It is false, of course, to say that there is no mortality at all in the world of the counterplot, but it seems accurate to say that in this poem that is how that world is presented. We know that this woodcutter will eventually die, but that is not the point of the simile and his death is never mentioned. All men face death, but in this poem mortality is understood in part by the way it

contrasts with or interrupts the iterative patterns of time in the rural world.

When peaceful rural scenes do appear in the present or in the main plot, they do not provide any escape from or alternative to the tragic world of war. On the contrary, these scenes seem only to prefigure the events of the war. A proleptic rural version of heroic loss begins the story of Lycaon, one of the most pathetic victims of Achilles' wild, destructive rage after the death of Patroclus. Simone Weil, in her brief essay on "The Iliad as a Poem of Force" calls this incident central: since she takes force to be the only hero of the poem, Achilles' savage murder of Lycaon stands for her as an emblem of the social relations which inform the entire poem.⁵² Weil argues, rightly it seems, that force can make men into things, and that the case of Lycaon who becomes food for fish exemplifies this reifying tendency in heroic action. One night in his father's orchard, Lycaon

with the sharp bronze was cutting young branches
from a fig tree, so that they could make him rails for a chariot,
when an unlooked for evil thing came upon him, the brilliant
Achilleus, who that time sold him as slave....

(XXI, 37-40)

The picture of Lycaon cutting branches in his father's orchard reminds us of other scenes picturing woodcutters, but this story has a different ending. The warrior is the "unlooked for evil thing" in the rural world; he destroys the peaceful moment. Because it seems to resemble scenes in the counterplot, this scene dramatizes all the

⁵²See Simone Weil, pp. 24-5.

more forcefully that that world is lost forever to both Lycaon and Achilles. Although Achilles had ransomed him the first time (twelve days before this second meeting), now even that hope is lost. As Lycaon pleads for his life, he reminds Achilles of the incident in the orchard, but his words have no effect on Achilles. Thus this rural scene is a less destructive version of what happens on the battlefield, and largely prefigures the later events.⁵³

The larger context of Book XXI suggests again that when rural scenes function as part of the main plot, they cannot be separated from the world of war. This section of the story opens with the image of the river banks echoing the cries of the drowning warriors in a grotesque, literal version of the pathetic fallacy, used elsewhere in the poem with great delicacy. Several particularly contrastive agricultural similes emphasize the violence of the scene (especially XXI, 257ff and XXI, 346ff). Towards the end of the book, as the gods discuss their reasons for fighting, we learn that Apollo too was a herdsman who was betrayed. The god of the care of flocks and herds as well of music, archery, prophecy and medicine,⁵⁴ Apollo had had his

⁵³A rural scene taken from earlier in the war also proleptically represents the future fate of the warriors involved, Isos and Antiphos. As Agamemnon kills them, we hear that once before "Achilleus/had caught these two at the knees of Ida, and bound them in pliant/willows as they watched by the sheep, and released them for ransom" (XI,104-6). Achilles binds them with willow shoot, rural devices taken from a rural world. This rural binding of Isos and Antiphos only prefigures their deaths; idyllic or bucolic actings out of the scene of violence do not render it less destructive. The sense in which this episode can be seen as a rural analogue of the war was first pointed out to me by my friend Mihoko Suzuki in a conversation about the Iliad.

⁵⁴Oxford Classical Dictionary, ed. H.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 81.

own rural apprenticeship while working for Laomedon for a year. Poseidon walled the city to make it impregnable, while Apollo "herded his shambling horn-curved cattle/along the spurs of Ida with all her folds and her forests" (XXI,448-9). Later Laomedon refused their promised wages and threatened to bind them and send them away as slaves, so they departed unpaid in fury: such was the origin of their hatred for the Trojans.

The story of Apollo and Poseidon, then, serves as a mythic paradigm which the experience of the characters seems to follow, for Apollo's and Poseidon's story represents in a divine version how rural oases can offer no real escape from the political world of aggression. In fact, the cause of the war is shown to be rooted in this rural world (which fits well with the myth of Paris, for he supposedly made his choice while he too was a shepherd on Ida, though this story is referred to only obliquely in the Iliad and does not seem there to have been set in the countryside (XXIV,29). Rural episodes of the main plot, then, episodes which might seem much like the scenes of the counterplot, are predictive and proleptic: they suggest the pattern of the coming tragedy.

These rural scenes also reveal the fragility of the rural world. It offers no protection against aggression or even against treachery. Shepherds are unable to defend themselves, and even Apollo and Poseidon can be cheated. The image of the ambush of the herdsmen on Achilles' shield is an emblem of the fragility and inadequacy of the rural world in a world of force. Peaceful rural scenes are destroyed when they come in contact with the war. The fragility of these worlds partly represents the fragility of the men

who grew up in such worlds; hence the poet's elegiac tones which on occasion attach themselves to the landscape.

If the rural scenes of the main plot represent in other terms what will happen in the war, this connection can perhaps be described as part of the tragic structure of the Iliad. In an epic with a more comic shape or in a romance, such rural worlds (whether in the past or the present) can represent real alternatives to or escapes from the world of heroic action. But in a tragedy, patterns of images do not create a separate world which is liberating. Rather, patterns of images, along with the plot and the nature of the world in which the story is set, all help to dramatize the way options close in on one another, so that there is no escape from the tragic world. Instead of being liberating, image patterns seem obsessive, unavoidable, repeating. Thus in the Iliad these rural scenes in the main plot contribute to the tragic closing of destiny which the poem embodies.

(iv) Art, the Epic Distance and the Choice of Death

The counterplot changes our interpretation of the Iliad chiefly in two ways. Since the counterplot is not collapsed into the main plot, because the poet's world, what he knows and his methods of trying to describe the heroic world are kept separate from the heroic plot itself, the counterplot helps to develop and maintain the epic distance.⁵⁵ Since the counterplot becomes part of the poem largely

⁵⁵For definitions of the importance and effect of the epic distance, see Thomas M. Greene, The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 8-25, and James Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, pp. 35-40.

as part of the poet's effort to mediate between the heroes' world and that of his audience, the counterplot also brings with it a certain self-consciousness about artifice. Each of these two ways in which the counterplot influences our reading of the Iliad needs exploring in its own right. The effects of epic distance will be treated first, for they are particularly complex and the self-consciousness of the poet also arises in part because of them.

The poet maintains such a distance from his material that his perspective often seems more like that of the gods than that of men. This distance arises in part from many of the similes of the counterplot which both compare and contrast the scenes they present with those of the war. In some cases the sense that the simile is right for the scene balances fairly evenly with our sense of shock at the comparison. This tension within the similes of the counterplot can serve to articulate the tragedy of the Iliad, for it represents in the reader's or audience's experience the forces pulling the world of the Achaeans and Trojans apart. These similes of the counterplot, then, can serve to illuminate many of the contradictions of the heroic plot by means of the questions they raise in our minds: are they like or not like the scene they describe? Some similes seem particularly torn between the effects of likeness and the effects of difference.

A few examples of similes (from the family of threshing and reaping similes) which are particularly torn between the effects of likeness and the effects of difference can serve to show how this odd mixture makes us view the war from a great distance and still feel its sorrows. Is the poet suggesting a real connection between threshing or reaping and war? If so, what product does war produce? Con-

sider first the only simile in the poem specifically about reaping. During the battle in Book XI (as part of the simile sequence involving the woodcutter at lunch), we hear the two armies compared to two lines of reapers:

And the men, like two lines of reapers who, facing each other,
drive their course all down the field of wheat or of barley
for a man blessed in substance, and the cut swathes drop shower-
ing
so Trojans and Achaians driving in against one another
cut men down, nor did either side think of disastrous panic.
(XI,67-71)

On the face of it, this simile establishes a strong contrast between war and peace. As David Porter puts it, "the gulf between the harvest scene and the war scene needs no comment," and he also adds that this and other scenes of harvest remind us "of scenes the warriors have left behind, scenes many will not see again."⁵⁶ The scene which is used in the simile to describe the war represents precisely that rural world unavailable to the warriors, and we feel the sadness in that juxtaposition. This simile seems almost to invert the two worlds it supposedly compares, for the rural and heroic worlds are contrasted in such a way that the presence of one seems to mean the absence of the other. If you are a hero, you necessarily lose the peace represented in these rural scenes, but if you have the peace, you lose the heroic dimension of life.

In the simile, a confusion of terms makes our reading more balanced, however. The simile is not solely a contrastive simile. In the world of the simile, the two lines of reapers each help each

⁵⁶David Porter, p. 14. The second quotation is taken from Porter's note 3.

other to cut down the grain, but in the fight, the warriors stand as both reapers and grain in the sense that they both kill and are killed. In war, a reaper can become that which is reaped by an accident of fate. This transfer of terms implies that all the warriors are stalks of grain winnowed by the war-god. The simile makes us step back and momentarily look at the warriors as if they might genuinely be compared to wheat or barley, so we begin to take a distant point of view on the fight, a point of view like that of the gods.

The first example of threshing images in the poem also seems both to fit the war scene and to contrast with it, and again the idea that there might be some real likeness leads us towards the perspective of the gods:

As when along the hallowed threshing floors the wind scatters
chaff, among men winnowing, and fair-haired Demeter
in the leaning wind discriminates the chaff and the true grain
and the piling chaff whitens beneath it, so now the Achaians
turned white underneath the dust the feet of the horses
drove far into the brazen sky across their faces
as they rapidly closed and the charioteers wheeled back again.
(V,499-505)

The Achaeans are compared to the chaff, while no exact analogue is suggested for the Trojans; Demeter does the threshing (which reflects the fact that the gods are taking control of the battle in this section of the poem). While both scenes bring before our eyes visions of hot, dry, dusty days, the peacefulness of the threshing scene contrasts with the fury of the fight, and to compare warriors to the chaff is to raise the implied question of what grain or what product the threshing of war produces. As in the case of other rural scenes, here too we can imagine this threshing scene repeating itself for all time: such is the sense of custom that it carries. But even the war

itself seems at a stage which could go on endlessly: time does not seem to pass in a strikingly different way in these two worlds, perhaps because the war is described from such a distance. Thus the simile seems to suggest some real likenesses as well as some clear contrasts between the war and the agricultural world.

In Book XIII, Menelaus charges Helenus, and Helenus's arrow bounces off Menelaus' breast armor:

As along a great threshing floor from the broad blade
of a shovel the black-skinned beans and the chickpeas bounce high
under the whistling blast and the sweep of the winnowing fan, so
back from the corselet of glorious Menelaos the bitter
arrow rebounded far away, being driven hard back.

(XIII, 588-92)

Michael Coffey attempts to show that in this simile the force of the wind and the energy of the winnower are used to enhance the description of the arrow's movement,⁵⁷ but, in fact, the terms of this simile are reversed. Since Helenus lets the arrow fly, he might seem to be the winnower, but his arrow too is like those things that are threshed. Instead of the arrow, Menelaus' cuirass is compared to the winnower's fan; he too, like the beans and the peas, is being threshed--presumably by the war-god. The absolute balance created by the way each hero resembles both the thresher and the threshed fits the situation, of course, for this brief struggle ends in a draw between Menelaos and Helenos. But it also suggests that in war there are few real differences between Greeks and Trojans. From a very distant point of view, war and threshing can be seen to have some-

⁵⁷
Michael Coffey, p. 122.

exemplifies contrastive bucolic similes set in the fighting.⁵⁹ The fact that it seems more contrastive than the other members of its family supports our sense that towards the end of the poem the counter-plot more directly and more dramatically opposes the heroic ethos which defines the main action and creates its ending.

These agricultural scenes contrast with those heroic events they are said to illuminate: they constitute another world, a pole apart from that of heroism by which we understand the war and by means of which we can describe its full significance. These threshing similes also complicate our sense of heroism by showing how heroic struggle can be a grotesque or even perverted version of everyday peaceful, productive activities. These rural similes would provide only a general commentary on the heroic code if the poet did not insist on close analogies and visual comparisons. The close, visual or physical similarity between the peaceful action and the heroic gesture make the martial versions of threshing or reaping seem horrific analogues of civilized behavior which cannot stand as paradigms for civilized action. This is not, of course, the only aspect of heroism and military glory presented in the poem, but it is a measure of the breadth of significance of the Iliad that the brutal face of war is also shown.

By and large, these threshing similes contrast, then, with the war scenes,⁶⁰ but with their visual precision and their odd distance

⁵⁹W.C. Scott, in The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile, p. 82, argues for an opposite interpretation.

⁶⁰See Iliad XXI, 257ff and XXI, 346ff, probably the two similes which contrast the rural scene and the war scene the most dramatically.

from the events, they also move us farther from the action in the very moment that they reveal its horror. The balance between the claims of likeness and the claims of difference puts a strain on us; it enacts the strains of battle on the level of interpretation. The doubleness in the way these comparisons work also suggests an ambiguity in the workings of the counterplot, an ambiguity exploited more by later writers than by the poet of the Iliad. The ambiguity can be summed up in this question: does the counterplot turn us away from war (does it represent a criticism of the heroic ethic) or does it rather turn us towards the war by giving us a perspective sufficiently distant to allow us to watch the action without despairing?

The counterplot often provides just this sort of protective distance from the pain which the poem describes. When Menelaus is wounded, for example, the poet quickly draws our attention away from his wound into the world of the counterplot. After Athena kindly brushes the arrow away from its more fatal course, it grazes Menelaus' skin under the corselet. The poet spends seven lines describing the arrow as it plunges through Menelaus' war-belt but as soon as the dark blood rushes forth he shifts his attention:

As when some Maionian woman or Karian with purple
colors ivory, to make it a cheek piece for horses;
it lies away in an inner room, and many a rider
longs to have it, but it is laid up to be a king's treasure,
two things, to be the beauty of the horse, the pride of the
horseman:

so, Menelaos, your shapely thighs were stained with the colour
of blood, and your legs also and your ankles beneath them.

(IV,141-7)

It is strange to move so quickly from considering the blood gushing forth to picturing the beautiful ivory cheekpiece. The simile distances us from the wound itself by aestheticizing it: it is com-

pared to an object of art, and we are subtly reminded that, for us (who after all encounter it in a poem), the wound itself is also an object of art, which can, surprisingly, be contemplated in part for its beauty.⁶¹

Agamemnon and Menelaus definitely do not share our perspective on this wound:

Agamemnon the lord of men was taken with shuddering
fear as he saw how from the cut the dark blood trickled downward,
and Menelaos the warlike himself shuddered in terror;
but when he saw the binding strings and the hooked barbs outside
the wound, his spirit was gathered again back into him.
(IV,148-52)

The wound is not fatal, but nonetheless Menelaus is frightened and Agamemnon groans heavily. They are fighting a war; we, like the gods, are watching one.⁶² Our position is an odd one, for we sympathize at the same time as we stand outside and enjoy the action.

The context of the simile adds to the sense that we view Menelaus from a distant perspective. It is ironic to compare Mene-

⁶¹In this sense the counterplot has an effect similar to that Northrop Frye attributes to "romance": "Romance," he writes, "is characterized by the acceptance of pity and fear, which in ordinary life relate to pain, as forms of pleasure." See Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 37. Virgil develops these techniques of aestheticizing in a number of episodes, including the story of Nisus and Euryalus. See W.R. Johnson, Darkness Visible (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 59-68, who develops a similar interpretation of that episode.

⁶²See Jasper Griffin, pp. 179-204, who discusses the double role of the gods in the Iliad (as interveners and as watchers who are moved by the action though distant from it). "The divine audience both exalts and humbles human action," Griffin concludes (p. 201), and, because of the presence of the divine audience, "we are able to share their viewpoint and to see human life as they see it, in its double aspect of greatness and littleness" (p. 203).

laus' thigh to an artefact left in a storeroom: although the cheek-piece is indeed "a king's treasure," the context reminds us of another sense in which Menelaus has been laid aside and left unused. From the point of view of the narrative, Menelaus is the first to be wounded; this narrative ordering may be symbolic, since Menelaus is the aggrieved husband whose lost honor is the principal cause of the war. Here his wound causes the fighting to begin again. The wound in his thigh may also stand for a sexual wound, a physical analogue of the social wound he has already endured. By implying this larger connection between this wound and the cause of the war itself, the wound inflicted by Helen and Paris, the poet also distances us from the immediate context, and perhaps also makes us take Menelaus less seriously. The wound and the dripping, staining blood not only make Menelaus seem like an artefact, then, but they also focus our attention explicitly on Menelaus' body, thus reminding us of the sexual plot which underlies the war. Oddly, by moving close to Menelaus and looking directly at his thigh, we shift our point of view to a much more distant one. The focus of the simile and the use of the counterplot move us from the world of the war to a perspective from which the war seems painful but beautiful.

The counterplot, then, adds to the dimension of the poem in which the violence of the war is aestheticized. But the contrast between most scenes in the counterplot and the war also serves to dramatize the violence of the war. Can the counterplot serve these two quite different functions in the poem? Part of the brilliance of the Iliad, and of the way the poet has interwoven these contrasting scenes of peace and war, lies precisely in the double effect of these similes

and images.

As the simile describing Menelaus' wound reminds us, the counterplot also serves to enlarge our perspective. The similes in the Iliad are often treated as one of the expansive gestures of the epic. As Thomas Greene has put it, expansiveness is one of the defining norms of the epic:

The first quality of the epic imagination is expansiveness.... (The characteristic imagery of epic) expands, exfoliates, fulfills itself in harmony with the expansive, emancipated imagination governing it. The epic simile cannot, by definition, be a brief candle of an impression.... It tends to be in itself a miniature, complete action.⁶³

How often do the heroes participate in or have any glimpse of this larger, expansive world which their actions help to define? The poet's use of the counterplot helps to remind us, as does Greene's reference to the simile as a separate, complete action, of how little the warriors in fact see of this larger world. The poet, the audience, and by analogy the continuing community of Achaeans (and Trojans for a while), share the larger perspective; the warriors must live within the reduced point of view. Their only glimpses of the larger significance of their actions and of the larger world occur when they look at works of art which have a genealogy or when they remember their own past. Few besides Helen in her tapestry (III,125-8) and Achilles in his meditation seem to have any continuing sense of the world outside the war.

The reduction of scope, or the limited perspective of the

⁶³Thomas Greene, Descent from Heaven, pp. 9, 11. As is evident, this section of the argument relies on Greene's study of "The Norms of Epic" in Descent from Heaven, pp. 8-25.

warriors corresponds in the plot to (or dramatically enacts) the deaths they face. If one is about to die, one is unlikely to have a broader point of view on loss of life. Rather, like Menelaus and Agamemnon, one shudders and feels fearful. The Iliad is about death, about what it means to have to have the prospect of immediate death always present and yet to continue to struggle. In fact, this is a shared human condition, but it is made more extreme and immediate in the case of the warriors and so they concentrate on the fact of death in a way that other human beings do not do, most of the time. Through the reduced scope of the main plot and the narrow focus on the dusty plain of Troy the Iliad insists on the bitterness of mortality; it shows how little meaning death seems to have to the individual who falls in the battle.

Through his expansive gestures, however, the poet also insists on a larger point of view, one which the warriors do not share except, perhaps, as they hope for "glory" (kleos). This more distant perspective is brought into the poem largely through the similes and images of the counterplot. The poet finds some meaning in all the deaths he recounts by incorporating them into a larger order; art, in this case the poem, is one example of such an order, and the community which lives on another example. The poem thus insists on cultural continuity: even if the Achaeans and the Trojans were all to die out, the poem addresses itself to a larger audience and insists that human culture continues in spite of such catastrophes. This idea is in some ways as difficult to take as the insistence on the finality and pain of death, for a more melodramatic poem might imply that all society will disintegrate as the great heroes die. But, in spite of

catastrophe, in spite of individual death, the poem insists that society goes on, and this continuity is represented in large part by the counterplot.

The poem, then, is honest about both things: it does not deny the horror of individual death by reassuringly reminding its characters that the community they fight for will endure, but it does not deny either that there is a more distant perspective from which these deaths are not so painful and from which they take on a different significance. So the poem separates these two points of view, leaving the warriors without much sense of the larger perspective. Their deaths and their horror and grief are presented directly, not filtered through any reassuring concept of the larger order of art or society. The poet's direct descriptions of so many deaths of warriors, made visually precise and almost grotesquely clear to us by the contrastive similes of the counterplot which dot the battle scenes, make us see those deaths more from the warriors' point of view. But the poem, and in particular the counterplot, also moves us outwards so that we also see that their deaths form part of a larger order, which may simply be aesthetic (the poem itself), cultural or even natural. The counterplot thus makes the expansive gestures of the Iliad while also dramatizing the difference between our point of view and that of those on the battlefield.

Since it is a principal device for establishing the epic distance, then, the counterplot has a number of effects. It adds to our sense of mourning at so many deaths by associating the warriors' loss of life with our own loss of childhood, so that we experience their loss of analogy. It also reminds us that by going to Troy and by

dying they lose everything that makes up life as we know it. It adds to our horror at their deaths by helping us to visualize them in minute detail and through contrast. The contrasts between the rural life evoked in the counterplot and the war are sometimes so extreme that they imply a criticism of the heroic ethic itself, for the contrasts remind us how alien force is to civilized life.

The counterplot also adds to the dimension of the poem which stresses the continuity of the community, for it contributes to the expansive vision of the Iliad. But it has to do this through a sort of illusion, for none of those who die (or who mourn) are comforted by this fact. The community which lives on is not identical with either the Trojans or the Achaeans: the Trojans' city has practically fallen before the poem ends, and the poet was clearly keenly aware of the gap separating his world from the period of Mycenaean greatness. Whatever the historical facts, the poet clearly makes this gap a major theme in his poem. A part of the sadness which arises from reminding us of some larger order, then, arises because this larger order will not really allow either the Trojan or the Achaean world to live on, except metaphorically, except by analogy, except through fiction.⁶⁴

The counterplot can thus have a double effect which coincides with what one might call its double intention: to explain or describe but also to criticize. The similes in the counterplot are in-

⁶⁴The expansive moves of the counterplot resemble pastoral gestures of expansiveness. This similarity, and the similar double emotions to which this strategy gives rise, will be explored below in Chapter Three.

formed by the double purpose of putting two separate worlds together and still keeping them distinct. This double intention creates an ambiguity in the similes and images in the counterplot, and when we feel that the two interpretations of a simile pull equally strongly in different directions, we are responding to that ambiguity. This ambiguity is not random, however, for the poem seems to call for these different meanings (they correspond to different ideas or themes which the poem introduces on different levels of the story). So a certain self-consciousness arises within the poem from the interplay of plot and counterplot.

Throughout the Iliad the poet makes brief references to the poetic process itself. In his invocations to the Muse, he asks for inspiration; he calls for aid particularly with regard to the content of his story. He seems more sure of the form, which seems to come from him.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the poet seems to take his invocations seriously: he is an inspired bard creating his poem as he goes along. In his references to the process of creating an heroic poem, the poet of the Iliad does not seem to have the self-consciousness about his art that later epic poets make their trademark. But by using a counterplot the poet constantly juxtaposes two different worlds, and this juxtaposition itself seems to have led to a consciousness of art which might even be called self-consciousness. As was suggested earlier, it is when Achilles reconsiders his decision to come to Troy, when he lays the glory and particularly the esteem (time) offered by the heroic life alongside what the life of peace can

⁶⁵As E. R. Dodds points out, The Greeks and the Irrational, p. 80.

offer, that a slightly philosophical tone seems to enter the poem. The interplay between counterplot and main plot produces a similar tension.

A very few self-reflective or self-conscious moments occur in the main plot itself. In Book XVIII, Achilles is presented as talking to himself, an unusual thing for an epic hero to do. He speaks, disturbed, to his own great-hearted spirit ("pros hon megalatora thumon", XVIII,5) in what seems to be an early example of self-justification against the hint of guilt ("yet I told him," XVIII, 13). But in spite of this example of a reflective tendency, and in spite of his earlier doubts, Achilles is driven by events and emotions to embody the forces of violence, and after Patroclus' death he seems less reflective about his emotional state. Hector, too, of course, has moments of self-reflection in which he considers several alternatives, and Helen reflects in her mind on the double bind in which she finds herself. These early touches of self-consciousness in the epic hardly effect the overall tone of the story, however, in which forces we think of as psychological are externalized as various gods or daimons, and in which a character can blame a change of mind on an outside force apparently without considering how convenient this method of projecting mistakes outward can be.⁶⁶ Inwardness and inward reflection do not characterize these heroes, nor do they typify

⁶⁶See E.R. Dodds, "Agamemnon's Apology," The Greeks and the Irrational, pp. 1-27; H. Fränkel, "Der homerische Mensch," in Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums, 2nd edition (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1962; 1st ed., 1950), pp. 83-94; and James Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, pp. 20-22 (Redfield summarizes Fränkel's conclusions).

the poet's treatment of his own efforts to write about them. Depending on the inspiration of the muses, a dependence he takes seriously, he is as outwardly motivated as his characters, and apparently as uninterested in reflecting on the sources of his vision and knowledge.

The main times at which the poet's art becomes at all self-reflective occur in the counterplot, and these self-reflective moments tend to arise when the poet describes works of art or craft. The main exception to this rule, those descriptions of decorated armour or decorated objects which appear within the main plot can be argued to be not the exceptions they seem. There are relatively few artefacts described in the Iliad (especially in comparison to the Odyssey), just as there are relatively few "technical" similes; the shield of Achilles is the only one which the poet describes at length.⁶⁷

When Iris comes to tell Helen of the single combat arranged between Paris and Menelaus, she finds Helen weaving a tapestry,

a red, folding robe, and working into it the numerous struggles of Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armoured Achaians, struggles that they endured for her sake at the hands of the war god. (III,126-8)

Like the Iliad, Helen's art produces a representation of the battle. The poem leaves it unclear what this tapestry means to Helen, but certainly this moment in which the poem reflects on itself also

⁶⁷ Kenneth John Atchity, Homer's Iliad: The Shield of Memory (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), discusses the role of artefacts in the Iliad. His lengthy and thorough study differs in emphasis from the present argument, but has provided many insights (in particular into the meaning of the shield of Achilles). See the review of Homer's Iliad by Catherine Campbell Rhorer, Yale Review 68 (1979), 295-301.

captures some of her anguish. Helen's weaving is mentioned just as we hear that both sides were "hoping now to be rid of all the sorrow of warfare" (III,112), and Iris instills in Helen a "sweet longing after her husband of time before, and her city, and parents" (III, 139-40). Shortly after we hear of the tapestry, Helen accuses herself of being shameless (kunopidos, III,180, "doglike," "shameless," hence Lattimore's "slut"). It seems fair to assume that this tapestry represents a self-consciousness on her part about her role in the war, a self-consciousness also indicated by her famous line to Hector, "hereafter/we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future" (VI,357-8). The narrative context also suggests that Helen's weaving portrays the desire, felt by everyone, to return to a world of peace in which war is encountered only in art. In either case, Helen, during her brief appearances, seems, like Achilles, sometimes to stand outside the ordinary (and non-self-conscious) world inhabited by the other characters.⁶⁸

Another decorated artefact is Zeus's aegis, which Athena puts on in Book V. This shield too figures forth the world of war:

And across her shoulders she threw the betassled, terrible
aegis, all about which Terror hangs like a garland
and Hatred is there, and Battle Strength, and heart-freezing
Onslaught
and thereon is set the head of the grim gigantic Gorgon,
a thing of fear and horror, portent of Zeus of the aegis.
Upon her head she set the golden helm with its four sheets
and two horns, wrought with the fighting men of a hundred cities.
(V,738-44)

The picture of the fighting men and the reference to the allegorical

⁶⁸See Atchity, pp. 89-92, on the symbolic importance of Helen's weaving and on her self-consciousness.

figures, which cannot be pictured in the mind, suggest that the aegis almost represents the fact of battle itself. At any rate, the scene of Athena's arming takes place "beside the threshold of her father" (V,734) and is seen by none of the human characters. Only the audience hears about the aegis, so it must be a representation directed more at us than at the warriors. This description, like other set ecphrases, seems more to concern itself with how to convey the terror of war than to suggest any self-consciousness on the part of the heroes.

A similar arming scene, one which does involve a human character, is described in Book XI. To what extent does Agamemnon meditate on the designs on his shield as he arms himself? The center of his shield contains the same kinds of designs as the aegis was earlier said to have:

and circled in the midst of all was the blank-eyed face of Gorgon
with her stare of horror, and Fear was inscribed upon it, and
Terror. (XI,36-7)

Agamemnon seems unconcerned with the decorations; we do not know whether he notices them, but they certainly do not seem to be at the forefront of his thoughts. The poet's words, rather, are more for us than they are representations of anything which might involve him. Fear and Terror are what the shield supposedly instills in others, and it seems fair to argue that the main purpose of this description is to convey to the audience a quality of Agamemnon and an aspect of war itself, rather than to indicate his self-consciousness about his role in the war.

Aside from these few references and aside from the shield of Achilles (which will be discussed momentarily), almost all the images

of artists or craftsmen at work or of their products form a part of the counterplot. The group of "technical" similes illustrates this tendency towards self-consciousness about art within the counterplot.⁶⁹ These "technical" similes in particular contrast with the war scenes, as the comparison of Patroclos's corpse to a greased oxhide being stretched by the people can remind us (XVII,389-95). To take another example, the comparison of the evenness of the fight to the even scales of the honest cottage spinner trying to earn enough to support her children can strike us as particularly inappropriate since this widow earning her pittance could be said to represent the world after the war (see XII,433-5). A final example, the comparison of the sharp line of battle to the careful chalkline of a carpenter, again seems particularly contrastive, for the carpenter is cutting a ship's timber while the warriors are not building anything. The poet here is focusing on the skill it takes to build something, and he implicitly contrasts his own skill with the destructive precision of the war.

These references to craftsmen become associated with the various rural scenes in the counterplot. They all seem to add up to a picture

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Taking the word "technical" from its Greek base and following Moulton's lead, this essay will include in the group of "technical" similes, all similes about craftsmanship, artisans, products and artefacts. The number of these similes in the *Iliad* is surprising small. Moulton lists seven similes as falling within this somewhat limited group: III, 60-3; IV, 141-7; IV, 482-7; XV, 410-3; XVI, 212-4; XVIII, 600-1; XXIII, 712-3 (see Moulton, note to page 91). To this list one might add XII, 421-3; XII, 433-5; and XXIII, 760-3.

of a separate world distinct from the war.⁷⁰ In the rural scenes of the counterplot touches of self-consciousness can perhaps be found in the figures of the shepherd alone, the man aside and separate who seems to be more of an on-looker than a participant in his world. As we have seen, the shepherds or on-lookers often seem to be figures for the audience. Whenever the poet actively compares the two worlds in his poem, whenever he is explicit about using his similes to mediate between the two worlds, we glimpse artistic self-consciousness entering the poem. But the best example is surely the shield of Achilles.

The shield of Achilles is often said to represent the world of the poem in small, and it is true that on the shield the sets of oppositions which constitute the world of the poem reappear.⁷¹ Redfield, on the other hand, has called the shield a "master simile," because he sees in the shield all the elements in the similes set in order,

⁷⁰The fact that the references to craftsmen in similes and the ecphrases in which many artefacts are described form a part of the counterplot may also explain why the counterplot brings a certain self-consciousness into the epic. The association of rural scenes with descriptions of art and the making of artefacts reappears in Theocritus' bucolic poetry.

⁷¹Many scholars have argued that the shield represents a symbolic union of opposites. Thus C.R. Beye, for example, argues that on the shield Homer "manages to include more of the basic antitheses in the human situation: the permanent and the fleeting, the beautiful and the ugly, the serene and the excited, the ideal and the real, war and peace, the finite world and infinite heaven." See C.R. Beye, The Iliad, The Odyssey and the Epic Tradition (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1966), p. 143. See also Atchity, p. 173.

reflected upon and made coherent.⁷² Perhaps it is clearer to say that the counterplot is summed up on the shield, and that on it the usual relation between the counterplot and the main plot is reversed. What is the counterplot of the rest of the poem becomes the main image on the shield; what is the main plot of the rest of the poem serves almost as a counterimage on the shield. The scenes of aggression are present to reveal the limitations of the peaceful scenes which make up most of the shield, and these scenes of aggression are in their turn put in perspective.⁷³

The shield of Achilles also raises a question about the definition of counterplot, for if the shield, which belongs to Achilles, sums up the counterplot and gives it coherence, can it truly be said that the counterplot represents a world inaccessible to the characters and free from their feelings and fears?

Even though Achilles does see it, the shield forms a part of the counterplot for several reasons. Like Agamemnon, Achilles doesn't seem to attribute much significance to the designs on his shield, and

⁷²See James Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 187. Oddly enough, Redfield's analysis shows that the shield represents scenes different from those he sees as key in the similes (e.g. the agrou ep' eschatein, a key image in the similes because it is an image of the battlefield, only appears briefly and marginally on the shield).

⁷³In terms of art history, the shield also embodies that complex relation of past and present that informs the poem as a whole. As Lesky, p. 58, following Schadewaldt, puts it, "There is a striking and, as it were, symbolic mixture of elements in the shield of Achilles. The description of its manufacture takes us back to the Mycenaean dagger-handle with its ornament of metal inlay, but the nature of the scenes portrayed is most closely paralleled by bronze shields of oriental type from the 8th century." He cites W. Schadewaldt, Von Homers Welt und Werk, p. 94 note 7.

no one else has the courage to look at it:

The goddess spoke so, and set down the armor on the ground before Achilleus, and all its elaboration clashed loudly. Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilleus looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare. He was glad holding in his hands the shining gifts of Hephaistos.
(XIX,12-8)

He tells his mother that he is glad to have immortal weapons, and that he is worried that flies will get into Patroclus' wounds (23-7). He does not seem particularly interested in what is engraved on the shield. The reaction of the Myrmidons, moreover, would be more appropriate if this shield were more like the aegis or like Agamemnon's shield. The engravings on the shield do not seem to affect anyone in the main plot; they do not seem to offer a new point of view or to represent an alternative to the characters embroiled in the war, and especially not to Achilles. He looks on his shield and feels glad because it was the gift of an immortal, but mostly he feels great anger: cholos (16). This is not the wrath (menis,1) which opens the poem, but it is the same wrath which overpowers Achilles in his squabble with Agamemnon over Briseis (see I,217; and IV,513, and IX, 646). Redfield defines cholos as "a whole-body reaction, the adrenal surge which drives men to violent speech and action."⁷⁴ Cholos, he quotes Achilles as saying,

swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart
and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of
honey. (XVIII,109-10)

⁷⁴ See Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, p. 14.

Achilles' own words here remind us of how strange a reaction this anger is to the scenes on the shield. Why does the shield make Achilles angry? Perhaps because it represents no alternative for him since he now knows that he will die (see XVIII,95-9); perhaps because it represents the world lost to Patroclus; perhaps because it represents almost the opposite of what Achilles, in his violent desire for revenge, now wants. Whichever is the case, the shield does not represent Achilles' point of view, and it does not seem to represent a point of view which has any power within the world of battle. It is almost as if Achilles and his Myrmidons do not see what Hephaestus put on the shield. The shield, then, like the counterplot, represents a world unavailable to the characters, a world which does not change the action of the war.⁷⁵

On the shield Hephaestus first pictures an image of the heavens, with all the stars and celestial bodies, as though to insist that this shield will represent all creation. The celestial bodies at the center of the shield also suggest that the shield represents a world of order. In the second ring he forges two cities, one at peace and one at war, a pair of opposites which stand for the two worlds which the poem constantly opposes. The city at peace can be said to

⁷⁵ Atchity also suggests that the shield represents something to the audience which it does not represent to the characters. He argues that the shield is a "suspension of narrative momentum" (p. 160), though he does not stress that it is a suspension of the war story of which the human characters are unaware. He also argues that the shield represents the universalizing "of the poem's visionary scope" and suggests that, like the similes, the shield reminds the audience that "the war is only one aspect of human experience" (p. 160). Finally, he stresses that the poem, like the shield, "shields its audience from a purely mortal fate" (p. 183).

represent the counterplot; the city at war, the main action of the Iliad. In the peaceful city, a wedding and a legal ceremony reveal the ordered, artful way that men come together to make contracts and to resolve disagreements. The wedding reminds us of the destroyed marriage which started the war; the disagreement reminds us of the one which was not settled so peacefully in the opening of the poem. Thus the scenes on the shield refer to events in the poem, and the scenes in the peaceful city, like those in the counterplot, contrast with the main plot of the Iliad. The music, harps and dancing at the wedding and the ring of chairs of polished stone in which the town elders sit for judgment all emphasize that these human ceremonies are themselves products of art in the larger sense, just as scenes of measurement in fields (XII,421-3) and other types of social agreements which appear in the counterplot stand in the rest of the poem for the conventions that make civilized life possible.

Outside the besieged city at war, one group of besiegers wants to attack and sack the city, a plan which reminds us of the Achaean plans, while the other group wonders whether to

share between both sides the property
and all the possessions the lovely citadel held hard within it.
(XVIII,511-2)

In Book XXII, Hector will debate whether he should make this proposal to Achilles (XXII,117-21). The citadel itself reminds us even more of Troy: as Helen, Andromache and the Trojan elders stood on the walls of Troy watching the battle, so "their beloved wives and children stood on the rampart/to hold it, and with them the men with age upon them, but meanwhile/the others went out" (XVIII,514-6). The men of the city sneak out to ambush their besiegers; these fig-

ures of soldiers are "shrouding themselves in the light bronze" (522) in two senses, for they are both wearing armor and are engraved on the shield. With an illusory sense of time passing, some sheep and cattle then come into view "and two herdsmen went along with them/ playing happily on pipes, and took no thought of the treachery" (525-6).⁷⁶ The herdsmen seem almost like one of the shepherds from afar who appear throughout the narrative in similes and now have accidentally wandered into one of the battles. The killing of the herds and the herdsmen brings the besiegers, and the battle begins. Hate, Confusion and Death (Ker,535), allegorical figures resembling

⁷⁶This scene closely resembles scenes in pastoral poetry, as Dr. Johnson recognized when he selected these lines as his epigraph for Rambler Essay Number 36 on Pastoral Poetry. See Samuel Johnson, Selected Poetry and Prose, ed. Frank Brady and W.K. Wimsatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 167-70. See also David Halperin, "Theocritus and the Ancient Definition of Bucolic Poetry," Diss. Stanford 1980), p. 262 and U. Ott, Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirtengedichten, Spudasmata, 22 (Hildesheim: G. Olms 1969), pp. 100-5, who compare Theocritus' ecphrasis of the ivy cup in Idyll 1 with the description of the Shield of Achilles. See also Clyde Murley in "Plato's Phaedrus and Theocritean Pastoral," Transactions of the American Philological Association 71 (1940), 283: "Approaching more closely to the form of the pastoral as we know it, are scenes early becoming somewhat stereotyped, as these rural scenes on the shield of Achilles and in Hesiod's Shield of Heracles."

A particularly pastoral scene on the shield is the picture of the vineyard:

Young girls and young men, in all their light-hearted innocence,
carried the kind, sweet fruit away in their woven baskets,
and in their midst a youth with a singing lyre played charmingly
upon it for them, and sang the beautiful song for Linos
in a light voice....

(XVIII, 567-71)

The carefree youths give the rural labor an idyllic quality; the dirge, in which loss and longing are transformed into a beautiful song that makes the workers joyful, could come from many scenes in later pastoral poetry.

those on the aegis, dominate the battle scene. Many phrases are used (such as "gleaming in armor," 510) which echo heroic formulae used to describe the warriors at Troy. The fight reveals the fragility of the rural scene, for it is completely destroyed. The scene thus represents the reason that the world of peace is no longer present on the Trojan plain or in the main plot of the poem. The city at war, then, and the scenes around it, remind us very specifically of Troy and the war raging around it, the main plot of the Iliad.

Hephaestus then forges an extended agricultural scene. We hear of two fields, one freshly plowed, another being harvested, side by side on the shield. Thus all times are present on the shield, since sowing and harvesting go on side by side as they did in the golden age. Like the world of the similes of the counterplot, the rural world represented on the shield seems to be timeless.⁷⁷

By these scenes of rural laborers, Hephaestus carves the pastures where a herd of longhorns shambles by a stream. This rural, peaceful scene is broken by the attack of a pair of lions which the herdsmen fail to chase away. The war which had destroyed the other herdsmen here is replaced by a scene of natural aggression: both scenes qualify the rural simplicity of the herdsmen who are not suspicious enough to be on the lookout. The picture of the herdsmen failing to rout the lions echoes an image used earlier in Book XVIII to describe the progress of the Aiantes:

⁷⁷See Atchity, pp. 175, 179, on the shield as representing "an idealized temporality."

And as herdsmen who dwell in the fields are not able to frighten
a tawny lion in his great hunger away from a carcass,
so the two Aiantes, marshalls of men, were not able
to scare Hector, Priam's son, away from the body.

(XVIII,161-4)

The repetition of the scene again suggests how much the shield reflects
the larger world of the poem.⁷⁸

The echo of this simile points to an important paradox of the
shield, for it reminds us that the shield literally reflects the poem
in which it is set and yet that the characters (who might or might
not look at the shield) cannot see the shield in this light. They do
not know that Hector had been compared to a lion, so they cannot see
the reflection of the simile on the shield. They can recognize a
general relation to their world, but they cannot see the shield as a
particular comment on their world. Thus the shield is more a part of
the counterplot, and, in fact, the link between the counterplot and
self-consciousness about artifice, a link which in general is not seen
by the characters, is made most clearly on the shield. The poet re-
minds us over and over again that the scenes on the shield are like
life, yet he also points out how artificial they are, both by con-
stantly reminding us of the materials of which they are made and by
echoing scenes from the larger poem. The figures clash "like living
men" (539); the earth being plowed looks dark behind the ploughmen
"like earth that has been ploughed/though it was gold. Such was the
wonder of the shield's forging" (548-9). Here the poem explicitly

⁷⁸Atchity, p. 166, also points out this echo of the poem on
the shield.

describes its own aesthetics, for the Iliad too combines imitation of the world with strict formalism, and on the shield we see the poet's own self-consciousness about that artifice.⁷⁹

The mimetic function of the shield is stressed as part of a general emphasis on the artifice and skill of its maker. The poet carefully describes the materials Hephaestus used to weld together this representation of the world, so that we cannot forget that it is only a representation. For example, he tells us that the vineyard was "heavy with cluster,/lovely and in gold, but the grapes upon it were darkened/and the vines themselves stood out through poles of silver. About them/he made a field ditch of dark metal, and drove all around this/a fence of tin..." (561-5). At the same moment that he expresses his wonder at how mimetic the pictures are, he reminds us that they are pictures: "The herdsmen were of gold who went along with the cattle" (577); the glimmering sheep in the valley are literally glimmering (588). The self-consciousness about artifice revealed in the description of the shield ties all the scenes of the counterplot to artefacts and artifice, and the link between artifice and the counterplot seems particularly clear in the rural scenes on the shield.

The description of the shield concludes with a final technical simile. Homer describes the dancers who dance on a floor "like that

⁷⁹This combination of representation of the natural world and self-consciousness (and self-reflectiveness) about art and artifice seems to contain the germ of what will later become the central paradox of pastoral poetry: that what is most artificial seems the most natural, and vice versa. As Atchity stresses, the fact that the shield is presented in the course of its making is one more reason that we feel the poet's self-consciousness at work here (p.160).

which once in the wide spaces of Knosos/Daidalos built for Adriadne of the lovely tresses" (XVIII,591-2). The dancers whirled "as when a potter crouching makes trial of his wheel, holding/it close in his hands, to see if it will run smooth" (600-1). Here art and craftsmanship come together in an image of idealized civility. The grace present in this scene (and present in person in Hephaestus' house) is lost to the Trojans and the Greeks. As has often happened in other similes of the counterplot, in his extended description of the poet evokes images in greatest contrast to the war scenes just before he turns us back to the fighting. This final technical simile and the description of the dance ring with a tone of affirmation and wonder at the beauty of art. In this strongest statement of the counterplot, art itself, or the circling forms, comes to stand for civilization and even for life.

The shield of Achilles, then, seems to represent an alternative ideal. It offers a commentary on the poem two-thirds of the way through the story, and the poet's self-reflective gestures suggests that we must have the more distanced point of view provided by such a commentary in order to see that ideal. Surrounded by the Ocean River (which suggests that the shield encompasses all life), and centered on the ordered Zodiac, the shield represents an idealized view of life in which time, moving by the orderly patterns of the seasons, seems endless. The rural scenes on the shield reflect the timelessness of many of the similes in the counterplot. The shield itself is so formal: the five concentric rings pick up the ring of stone chairs on which the elders sit, the dancing figures move in rings, and even the circling potter's wheel fits the pattern. This

stress on order, art and social institutions suggests an ordered world which can contain mortality; it suggests that we trap time with form. The shield itself was forced in the "imperishable, starry" (370) house of Hephaestus, an immortal place out of time, and as art, the shield participates in this timelessness.⁸⁰

Thus the shield shields us from Achilles' point of view. Like the other images of the counterplot, it moves us away from the stormy characters and their battle, and it allows us to find a larger order in which we can make sense of the story of the war. It represents the sweeping view of the gods on the action, or of the poet, for it is more ordered than one suspects the gods' view of the world would be. But it does not represent a point of view on the action at Troy with which any human character can sympathize. It represents, like the rest of the counterplot, the meaning the poet has made out of their deaths--or a picture of a world in which their deaths can take on meaning--rather than any meaning they can find in them. Perhaps this is why Achilles gets angry when he sees the shield.

The shield represents the counterplot at work in force. It is the only section of the poem in which the counterplot dominates, and so it teaches us how to read the counterplot. It leads us to see the implications of the counterplot more fully than was possible

⁸⁰The audience sees the house of Hephaestus, just as we watch the god making the shield, but the human characters in the poem see neither of these things. Just as in narrative terms, the shield represents a break in momentum which we feel but which they, of course, cannot, so the shield also has a developed mythical background which is largely unavailable to the characters. Scenes involving the gods which the characters do not see, like the description of the making of the shield, form a part of the counterplot.

before. To a certain extent, the shield like the rest of the counterplot represents the rural worlds or the city of peace as ideals, yet it also shows the limitations of those worlds: it balances nostalgia for rural life with pictures of its helplessness. The shield shows why heroic effort is necessary as well as what the world of heroism cannot contain, for it suggests that, for the world it pictures, military force is necessary even if the civilization defended is then lost to its defenders. Otherwise we will all end up like those ambling herdsmen.

Like other parts of the counterplot, the shield provides a solution to the problem of death by placing human loss in a larger context of order and form. Even if certain characters portrayed are killed, the shield itself seems timeless and the order it represents seems timeless. But this order is larger than any order which a human being can see or feel in his or her life: it represents the vision of the artist, but there is a limit to how comforting that vision can be. Like the shield, the counterplot has an aspect which reminds us of childhood; it seems to fulfill our wishes a little too easily, for it grows out of a deep desire that there be an escape from the destructiveness of war, and ultimately an escape from death. This escape from death can only be possible from the point of view of men in general, which is why, as far as individuals go, the poem continually makes the choice of Achilles.

Throughout the similes of the counterplot various natural and rural scenes suggest a world in which time flows without the disastrous results of the war. This seemingly uninterrupted natural flow of time has been called "timelessness," although a fairer word would be

"seasonal circularity" for in the rural world one season follows upon another and makes it seem as if this change involves no loss. The comparison to the human situation is not as apt as it seems, but in the time scheme of the counterplot the distinction is not noticed because we rarely return to the same scene. "When the woodsman" may mean "whenever the woodsman" or "everyday when the woodsman" but the woodsman himself will not be the same forever.

When Gorgythion, one of Priam's sons, falls before Teukros's arrows, the poet rhetorically builds a sense of pathos:

Gorgythion the blameless, hit in the chest by an arrow;
Gorgythion whose mother was lovely Kastianeira,
Priam's bride Aisyme, with the form of a goddess.
He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden poppy
bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of
springtime;
so his head bent slack to one side beneath the helm's weight.
(VIII,303-8)

As we hear the comparison, we think first of how like the flower the man is: in this simile, war is made to seem like a natural event, like a rainstorm, or even like a coming to fulfillment, and death is like a quiet, graceful bowing out. As Adam Parry has put it, here landscape and natural description becomes "a direct metaphor for things human."⁸¹ Looking more closely at the Gorgythion simile, however, one might question this interpretation, although it certainly states accurately what the simile is trying to accomplish. But, as the graceful description of Gorgythion's death ends, we begin to think of all the differences between Gorgythion and the poppy. Unlike the

⁸¹Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," Yale Classical Studies 15 (1957), 29.

poppy which does not die in this simile (and even if it did, it would return every spring to nod its head once more), Gorgythion dies. His death is final; it is a single unique event which is not repeated. As is so often the case, the striking visual similarity, which is what gives the simile its beauty, is the element which keeps us from noticing how dissimilar the tenor and the vehicle are. This simile seems poised between claiming that the human world can be adequately explained by reference to the natural world and revealing, by example, the terrible limits to that view. Man falls in the gap between those things that are adequately described by natural similes and those things that can never be accounted for in that way. The poet maintains a balance between our likeness to poppies which bend or to trees which fall and our difference from them. Perhaps it is partly because of the evenness of this balance that the Iliad, of all epic poems, seems closest to tragedy.

This is not to say that the counterplot ceases to contrast with the battle scenes, or that it ceases to represent a world lost and desired by the characters. But it has another function as well, a function which helps reveal the brutal honesty of the war story. By slowly revealing that there is no world in which death can be escaped (though there may be a world in which death is less violent and less sudden), the counterplot shows that the war story has universal significance. The war story does not describe a situation in which men are faced with a different destiny from that which they normally face; rather, the war story represents the human condition in the extreme. In the final instance, the counterplot does not offer any real alternative for us either; it only seems to do so. Like the shield, the

counterplot offers only a communal or historical solution to the problem of death. It elides the grief of individual death by placing such death in a larger context which seems to give it significance or which simply distances it. If the individual is part of a larger community which goes on after his death, or part of a rural world in which the seasons and seasonal activities go peacefully on, or part of a family in which the proper order of generations is maintained (in which the father dies before the son), his death may not be tragic as are the deaths of the heroes on the battlefield. Nonetheless, to that individual death is still a final end and the difference between himself and the community determines everything. Because of its second function, that of making us visualize death precisely, the counterplot constantly reminds us of the individual's perspective. Thus the epic poet can use scenes of the counterplot to reveal the horror of the war or the contradictions or limits in the heroic point of view, but he does not finally turn to the counterplot. The heroic world also judges the counterplot, and through the juxtaposition its limits are shown. The poet of the Iliad makes the choice of Achilles for his poem, because his tragic vision shows death for the individual as the final reality, whatever immortality may be found in the larger order of art or in the continuity of society.

Thus the counterplot in the Iliad serves a number of functions. First of all, it allows for a kind of double reading, for it is always juxtaposing a world of peace and restraint with the scenes of the war, and these descriptions remind us how like and how unlike these two worlds are. The clash between them (and the likeness, especially when it leads to striking visual similarity) increases the horror of

the war. The counterplot also has an aestheticizing or distancing function in which we are removed from the violence of the war by being made to see some beauty in it. This beauty is conveyed by comparison to lovely artefacts, or, as in the case of Gorgythion, to moments of natural beauty. This distancing also contributes to the dimension of the poem which sets all the events in a wider focus and suggests other kinds of continuity beyond the individual. The counterplot also increases the epic self-consciousness and enacts it, because the poet is always aware of holding two worlds in tension and comparing them, and because most references to art and poetry occur within the counterplot. Finally, the counterplot represents a world outside of the war now lost to the heroes, so it helps to dramatize their loss and to provide analogies for us to understand what their loss means. Thus some of the functions of the counterplot may seem almost contradictory (moving us closer in so we sympathize; moving in farther away so we feel a distance), and this doubleness is at its heart.

But each of these functions also has another aspect to it. The counterplot may represent a world outside of the war, but the story of Apollo and Poseidon (and other etiological myths such as the judgment of Paris) implicates that outside world as well. The rural scenes which tell the story of the past reveal many of the patterns that the war goes on to fulfill. The tragic spirit seems to bend all things to its will, so in the Iliad the rural world does not represent an escape. The counterplot may add to the epic distance, but because it exists only from a distant perspective, it does not mitigate the tragedy of the heroes. The counterplot may allow for a double reading, but because it ultimately increases the horror of the war

(and does so without making the poem seem melodramatic), it ultimately turns our attention back to the war story. The counterplot has a complex and ambiguous effect on our interpretation of the Iliad, for it at once suggests an alternative point of view to the heroic ethic and it reveals the limitations of that alternative point of view. Since the counterplot is, in the end, a device to allow the poet to communicate with an audience unfamiliar with the heroic world, and not the main plot of the poem, these contradictions or ambiguities are not explicitly explored in the Iliad. Nonetheless, this double function is lodged in the counterplot, and later writers, who develop and extend the epic counterplot, will use this ambiguity to embody more complete challenges to the heroic world and often find that these challenges offer answers which are more false or more misleading than those represented by the counterplot in the Iliad.

In the Iliad, then, the counterplot is felt more or less strongly at different points in the story, and it disappears altogether by the end. Early in the narrative the similes of the counterplot seem more balanced and less contrastive, as if, early in the war, there still may be a genuine comparison to be drawn between the worlds of war and peace.⁸² In the middle of the poem, as the war scenes get more violent and the destruction seems more and more widespread (and especially once Patroclus and Sarpedon die), more violent contrasts between the plot and the counterplot begin to appear. The counterplot

⁸²See Cedric Whitman, Homer and the Heroic Tradition, pp. 264-70, who argues that Books II through VIII represent a montage of scenes from the early years of the war.

continues to be felt more and more strongly until the death of Hector. Then, during the funeral of Patroclus, the counterplot comes the closest it ever does to merging with the main plot, for the funeral and the funeral games themselves represent an effort to provide a larger context of significance for the death of the individual.⁸³ Finally, in Book XXIV, the counterplot disappears altogether. There is only one simile in the book, and it is an inverted simile which illustrates the way in which Achilles and Priam share each other's fate (see XXIV,480-4). It does not represent a world far from the world of the war.

The funeral games represent one moment in which the main plot and the counterplot are almost reconciled. The games are a monument, a human creation which tries to control grief by giving it some social meaning. The games present an analogue to the war, or an imitation of combat, for they constitute an arena in which one can win honor through struggle and thus perpetuate one's name. In these games strife is transformed into a social occasion which will be remembered and recounted, and this timeless dimension of the games is represented in the artefacts which are won as prizes. These artefacts are placed at the center of attention, and the world of crafts is evoked throughout the games to strengthen the impression that they themselves are an artefact (see XXIII,712ff; XXIII,760ff). The prize for the runners, the famous mixing bowl received as ransom for Lycaon, best exemplifies

⁸³On the games, see Redfield, Nature and Culture in the Iliad, pp. 204-10.

the careful attention paid to the prizes:

a mixing-bowl of silver, a work of art, which held only six measures, but for its loveliness surpassed all others on earth by far, since skilled Sidonian craftsmen had wrought it well, and Phoenicians carried it over the misty face of the water and set it in the harbor, and gave it for a present to Thoas. Euneos, son of Jason, gave it to the hero Patroklos to buy Lykaon, Priam's son, out of slavery....

(XXIII,741-7)

The wider Homeric world is drawn into the description of this one artefact; the cup not only represents an aestheticizing of past experience, an encasing of it in form, but it turns our attention away from Troy to the larger world. This expansive gesture also typifies the games, for funeral games put death in a larger context to give it meaning.

Even this cup, however, suggests the darker side of the tendency to aestheticize death, for the individual who dies is excluded from this larger context. The cup reminds us of Achilles' refusal to listen to Lycaon the second time he captured him, and how, in that bitter moment, all strategies for controlling or directing anger (strategies such as ransom) had collapsed. The inadequacy of the solutions of the counterplot are also revealed by the games. Their inadequacy is perhaps best summed up by the fact that Achilles is not purged of his grief by the games. In Book XXIV his grief still seems as violent as ever:

Then, when he had yoked the running horses under the chariot, he would fasten Hector behind the chariot, so as to drag him, and draw him three times around the tomb of Menoitios' fallen son, then rest again in his shelter, and throw down the dead man and leave him to lie sprawled on his face in the dust.

(XXIV,14-8)

As Achilles lies in the dust weeping, he weeps for himself as well as for Patroclus:

only Achilleus
wept still as he remembered his beloved companion, nor did sleep
who subdues all come over him, but he tossed from one side to
the other
in longing for Patroklos, for his manhood and his great strength
and all the actions he had seen to the end with him, and the
hardships
he had suffered; the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters.
Remembering all these things he let fall the swelling tears....
(XXIV,3-9)

As the funeral games began, Achilles had identified Patroclus' funeral pyre as his own, and his friend with himself (e.g. XXIII,126; XXIII, 141-51). Now he grieves for all of the experiences they have shared; he grieves for his past life, the loss of which is symbolized by the loss of Patroclus. There is no solace for death. Here, as throughout the poem, Achilles seems more fully to experience the mortal condition even as he stands somewhat outside of the perspective of the other warriors. Achilles' mother, his connection to the divine, is always there to make him even more conscious of what he has lost. Given that he has glimpses of the divine world, and has some capacity to affect it through his mother, Achilles is perhaps the only hero who occasionally stands in between the main heroic plot and the counter-plot.

In Book XXIV Priam too is given a glimpse of a divine order, but Priam's journey across the plain in the dark is an unearthly journey, almost a journey of the dead. The darkness prevents us from having any sense of scope. In spite of the divine intervention, the focus of the scene (and of the book) gets narrower and narrower. Priam and Hermes respond to each other as father and son (see 362, 371, 373) and when Hermes identifies himself as a god, it is in terms of his having been sent by his own father (461). All relations,

choice of the non-heroic life.⁸⁴ But by the end of the poem these words come to represent precisely the reason that Achilles must stay at Troy, that the poem must stay at Troy, and that we feel our own fate is wrapped up in the story of the war. As the poem ends, it focuses in on death as the only certainty and the only source of value in the human community, and it implies that any turning away from this truth would be a delusion. In its final scenes, then, the poem chooses, as Achilles chose, to leave the scenes of long and peaceful life behind in order to represent death at Troy.

⁸⁴See G.P. Shipp, p. 269.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ODYSSEY: ART AND DETACHMENT IN THE EPIC

"It is Homer who chiefly has taught other poets the art of telling lies skillfully."

Aristotle, Poetics

(i) The Merging of Plot and Counterplot
in the Odyssey

In the ninth book of the Iliad, Phoenix reminds Achilles that he had tried to teach him to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds, 'muthon te rheter' emenai prektera te ergon" (IX,443), or, as Fitzgerald translates it, "to be a man of eloquence and action."¹ Phoenix thereupon demonstrates his eloquence by recounting a lengthy retrospective tale designed to win Achilles back to the war. Although he does move Achilles to some extent, words cannot overcome Achilles' feeling of anger. To Ajax, who also makes an eloquent appeal, Achilles comments,

all that you have said seems spoken after my own mind.
Yet still the heart in me swells up in anger....
(IX,645-6)

Eloquence is clearly a recognized virtue in the Iliad, but especially in the books describing action on the battlefield, it seems a rela-

¹Homer, The Iliad, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 217.

tively ineffective one. In the Iliad, the heroic ethos remains largely unalloyed, at least in the minds of the heroes, so that the poet must turn to similes, etiological digressions and descriptions of artefacts for space in which to work out a non-heroic counterplot.

In the Odyssey, the poet merges the Iliadic counterplot with the main plot of the epic.² The Odyssey collapses the epic distance so that characters and poetic strategies which in the Iliad appeared only in the counterplot now figure prominently in the central heroic action. Characters like shepherds and goatherds who appeared only in similes have now become participants in the main action of the poem, and heroic poetry, largely excluded from the main plot of the Iliad, not only figures prominently in the plot but is recited by the hero himself. The counterplot of the Iliad included rural scenes of simple life, descriptions of artefacts, as well as more idealized and mythic scenes not seen by the characters in the poem; the hero of the Odyssey is made actually to be present in scenes like these. Odysseus is not only compared to swineherds, but he must meet them and recognize the

²The edition of the Odyssey to be used in this chapter and elsewhere is The Odyssey of Homer, ed. with commentary by W.B. Stanford, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1959; 1st ed., 1947). References to the Odyssey will be included in my text by book and line number; references to Stanford's commentary will be included in these notes by volume and page number. Quotations in translation are taken from The Odyssey of Homer, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). Uppercase Roman numerals refer to books of the Iliad; lowercase Roman numerals refer to books of the Odyssey. Greek words have been transliterated, but common proper nouns have been given the Latinized forms where they are the more familiar. In the rare cases when Lattimore's line numbers are not identical with the Greek line numbers, Lattimore's line numbers have been kept where the reference is to a quotation from his translation, and the Greek line numbers have been kept when the reference is simply to the text of the Odyssey.

comparison. In fact, he himself takes the comparison seriously, so through his actions the poem redefines heroism to include qualities and deeds which in the Iliad did not typify the characters in the main plot.³ In the Odyssey, the hero goes to the world of the counterplot and finds his greatest resources there, and, indeed, this shift of emphasis represents one of the Odyssey's most serious criticisms of the earlier epic.

In the Odyssey the heroic ethos is adjusted and adapted to a world wider than that of the battlefield: as the heroic ethos is set against a wider cultural background, its narrowness and limitations become clearer. Something of the old warrior ethic still remains in Menelaus' story of his homecoming, in Odysseus' stories of his wanderings and in the yarns he spins for Eumaeus and Penelope. The raid on the Cicones (ix,39-61), for example, sounds like a non-idealized version of the Trojan war,⁴ and this tactic is not one Odysseus plans to

³An Iliadic definition of the heroic ethos would set heroism in opposition to many of the elements that make up the Odyssey--rural episodes, adventure stories, folktales, romance and myth, for example. But Odysseus is an heroic, not a mythical or parodic figure: we see his heroism in his stubborn determination to succeed, in his extraordinary self-control, and in the fact that he does reconstitute a society. See James Nohrberg, "The Iliad," in Homer to Brecht, ed. M. Seidel and E. Mendelson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 3-4, who defines epic heroes as builders of society. So it is useful to speak of the Odyssey as redefining heroism rather than abandoning it; the consequences of this redefinition of heroism lie at the heart of this interpretation of the epic.

⁴See G.S. Kirk, Homer and the Oral Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 10-1, and M.I. Finley, The World of Odysseus, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978; 1st ed. 1954), pp. 46-8 and 63-4. Finley sees the heroic ethos as "complete and unambiguous, so much so that neither the poet nor his characters ever had occasion to debate it." It depended, he argues, almost entirely on "prowess and honor" (p. 113). For the reality of warfare in the heroic age, see also G.S. Kirk, "War and the Warrior in the

abandon (see his remarks xxiii,350-8). But many other kinds of narratives are added to these war stories. Throughout the Odyssey the poet juxtaposes different heroic narratives; all help to make up the larger complex version of heroism that the poem as a whole presents.

In his travels through wild and mythic places Odysseus visits worlds which, while somewhat different from each other, all resemble scenes in the counterplot of the Iliad. In spite of its grotesque qualities, the visit to Cyclops has much in common with the many similes in the Iliad depicting rural life.⁵ The visit to Circe combines the mythical touches of the counterplot with its depiction of domestic artefacts and peaceful rural life, and Calypso, too, representing the union of domesticity and myth, falls into this configuration. Minor episodes in Odysseus' journey, such as the visit to the Lotus-Eaters or the voyage by the Sirens, also have a mythical coloring.⁶ Finally Phaeacia itself, a world with many ties to myth,

Homeric Poems," in Homer and the Oral Tradition, pp. 40-68.

⁵The Cyclops episode, as well as many Iliadic similes, influenced the development of Theocritus' bucolic poetry. See Charles Segal, "Landscape into Myth: Theocritus' Bucolic Poetry," Ramus 4, No. 2 (1975), p. 122, and David Halperin, "Theocritus and the Ancient Definition of Bucolic Poetry," Diss. Stanford, 1979, pp. 252-61. See also Chapter Three below for a more complete discussion of this topic.

⁶See Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972; original edition, Dialektik der Aufklärung, 1944), pp. 32-5. Adorno and Horkheimer interpret the episode of the Sirens as an allegory of the way myth and rational labor combine dialectically in the Odyssey. See also the beginning of Excursus I, "Odysseus, or Myth and Enlightenment," p. 43.

sums up many of the themes and common scenes of the Iliadic counterplot. Odysseus has the help of a nymph in arriving, for example, and departs on a mythical boat which is so in tune with men's minds and with natural forces that it needs no helmsman (viii,557-63). It can be argued, then, that with a few minor exceptions (such as the raid on the Cicones), the places which Odysseus visits before he returns home (the settings and subjects of books v-xii) represent worlds which would have found a place only in the counterplot of the Iliad.

The poet of the Odyssey has greatly expanded the role of mythic places and characters, and this expansion represents a second major criticism of the Iliad. In the Odyssey the poet engages myth more seriously, so he is also bound to weigh more carefully the effects of myth on a narrative poem. The complications that result from sending a mortal hero to visit mythic realms largely give rise to the complex narrative structure of this section of the poem, for the narrative structure of books v through xii serves, among other purposes, to distance the mythic worlds. The emphasis on artifice in these books and the enclosure of the mythic worlds within Odysseus' own well-crafted story also serve to aestheticize and thereby to distance these experiences from the audience and from the world of Ithaca. Odysseus' self-consciousness about artifice, which parallels the poet's own self-consciousness about the artifice in the poem, further distances these worlds by making them seem fictional.

The poet needs to distance these worlds to cushion his hero (and his poem) from the effects of myth on the human personality. The mythic adventures are included in the epic poem (except for one notorious gap), for the poem is engaged in broadening the notion of the

heroic identity as well as in exploring different levels of the human character. They are included, however, in such a way as to render them sufficiently far from the world in which Odysseus must meet his final test and finally re-establish himself (that is, the world represented by his home on Ithaca). For example, the mythic worlds, expanded versions of certain parts of the Iliadic counterplot, are finally sealed away from the main plot, for when Odysseus leaves Phaeacia, the possibility of return to that world is forever closed.

When Poseidon turns the Phaeacian ship into stone, Alcinous calls upon his people to "stop our conveying of every mortal who makes his arrival/here at our city" (xiii,180-1). His decision puts a temporal seal on the mythic worlds, for from that time forth the Phaeacians will not guarantee the safe transport they offered Odysseus. The safe transport--the mythical ease with which their boats linked alien worlds--represented that metaphorical quality which the collapsing and comparing of the different parts of Odysseus' adventures creates. Now that transport, that easy connection between different realms, is cut permanently, and the Phaeacians are made to pay for the ease with which they brought together realms which are separate. A visit from Odysseus, as always, causes some suffering. In the return of the Phaeacian boat, some responsibility for Odysseus' visit seems to be transferred onto those he visits, for the Phaeacians, not Odysseus, pay for Poseidon's anger. The poet, like Odysseus, here seems to make the Phaeacians bear the responsibility for his having included mythical adventures within an epic poem. The poet draws our attention away from the misfortunes of the Phaeacians so that we do not treat them as seriously as we would, perhaps, treat similar deaths

in the Iliad. Fifty-two specially chosen young men (viii,35-6 and 38-9) are sealed into an island of stone, yet they are never directly mentioned, even by Alcinous (see xiii,168-9 and 172-83).

The Phaeacian world, and by analogy all the mythical worlds which Odysseus has already left behind when he reaches Phaeacia, are permanently cut off from Ithaca once Odysseus returns. They are distanced geographically and through narrative structuring, while a time limit is set on the amount of intercourse between these mythic worlds and human voyagers. This complex distancing helps to recreate the distance between the plot and the counterplot, and thereby allows the poet to include in an heroic poem certain values and more mythic solutions to the human predicament not easily accommodated within the heroic ethos. One way in which the poet controls the ambiguities brought into his poem by the merging of the Iliadic plot and counterplot, then, is to recreate some of the distance which kept the heroes of the Iliad from sharing the poet's perspective on them.

The poet does not completely seal off the mythic realms, however, for he also blends the Iliadic plot and counterplot throughout his poem. The Odyssey does not simply create out of the mythic world another counterplot, distanced from the main action and unavailable as a point of view to the characters who must act in the human world. On the contrary, Odysseus visits all of these realms. He transports Phaeacian treasure to Ithaca, treasure which stands not only for the gifts which he hides in the caves of the Naiads but for all the riches of a mythical realm: along with gold, he brings back to Ithaca an esteem for art, a respect for its power (a kind of esteem and self-consciousness about artifice atypical of Iliadic heroes, but easily

recognizable in Calypso, Circe, and Alcinous' court) and a closer relation to the gods.

His close tie to Athena, made explicit to Odysseus in the scene on the beach when he first arrives on Ithaca, represents a small part of the Phaeacian world which Odysseus brings home. Alcinous had commented that before the coming of Odysseus the gods had never disguised themselves on Phaeacia:

for always in time past the gods have shown themselves clearly
to us, when we render them glorious grand sacrifices
and they sit beside us and feast with us in the place where we do,
or if one comes alone and encounters us, as a wayfarer,
then they make no concealment.... (vii,201-5)

Although Alcinous does not know it (here he is speaking of Odysseus), Athena has already disguised herself on Scheria (see vii,19-20), and it is here that Odysseus first speaks with her. While Odysseus' coming interrupts the close and comfortable relationship between the Phaeacians and their kin, the immortals, Odysseus seems to absorb some of that relationship and bring it home with him. He is the transporter of that part of the counterplot back to Ithaca.

Odysseus, then, is a figure for the poet in a more radical sense than has previously been recognized, for he is the unifying agent of the poem. He is the only character who experiences all the realms represented in the poem.⁷ His men, after all, do not return;

⁷Except Olympus, of course. But Olympus is much vaguer and more distant in this poem than it was in the Iliad, in keeping with the fact that the Odyssey is closer to romance. Writing on the role of divine intervention in epic poetry, Thomas Greene defines romance as tending to exclude extended representations of the divine world: "romance characteristically presents only the conclusion of the intervention. One may hear a disembodied voice; one may witness a miracle; one may even encounter some marvellous unearthly creature;

the episode of the Sirens, whom Odysseus hears but his men do not, reminds us how much more Odysseus sees and hears than any other character in the poem.

When the Phaeacians decide to stop transporting travelers from one world to another, they also, by analogy, cut off a certain metaphorical ease with which the poem has related one world to another. Metaphor, of course, comes from the Greek words meaning "to transfer" or "to carry across" (metaphora from metapherein).⁸ A metaphor makes

but one never glimpses their origin or starting place. This explains the mystery and melancholy of romance, which always accepts less than total knowledge." See The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 112.

⁸See "Metaphor," in the Oxford English Dictionary, 1971 ed. See also George Puttenham, in The Arte of English Poesie (1589; facsimile reproduction of 1906, rpt. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1970), p. 189, who discusses metaphor as a figure of transport: "There is a kind of wresting of a single word from his owne right signification to another not so natural, but yet of some affinitiee or conveniencie with it."

Many ancient theorists on metaphor did not discriminate theoretically between metaphor and simile. See, for example, Aristotle, Rhetoric III, iii, 4. Nonetheless, in the Poetics Aristotle does discuss metaphor as "the application of an alien name by transference," 1457b, 4-5. The text and translation are taken from Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, ed. and trans. S.H. Butcher, 4th ed. (1911; rpt. New York: Dover, 1951; 1st ed. 1894), pp. 76-7. The distinction claimed in this dissertation is simply that simile dramatically represents within itself the process of finding resemblance, and thus, especially given the structure of an epic like the Iliad, constantly reminds us of the differences as well as the similarities between the terms compared, while metaphor covers this process over and thereby leads a poet into more symbolic or even mythical realms. For illuminating comments on the ancient use of structures of comparison and opposition, see G.E.R. Lloyd, Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Greek Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), esp. pp. 90-1, and 184-92. See also M.J. McCall, Jr., Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Metaphor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), esp. "The Pre-Aristotelian Testimony" (pp. 1-23) and "Aristotle" (pp. 24-56).

an equation between meanings of completely different orders, and perhaps we can argue that, by analogy, the poem makes connections between the various worlds Odysseus visits. If this interpretation is fair, then Poseidon (and Zeus, who goes along with Poseidon's plan, with only slight modification) can be seen as removing the divine sanction which made possible the easy access between alien worlds and separate meanings. Whether or not the mythic worlds, and in particular the realm of the Phaeacians, can be seen as a place of metaphor, the poem largely leaves behind the more metaphorical claims

In the modern period, the definition of metaphor and the philosophical and literary study of it have expanded so greatly that the field cannot be fully treated here. Starting with Coleridge, who in the Biographia Literaria (see chapters 13-5 in particular) treats the power of making metaphors as essentially coterminous with the power of the "imagination" itself, modern theorists have seen metaphor as the "trope of tropes," a fusing of categories described and regretted by Gérard Genette in "La rhétorique restreinte," in Figures II (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969), pp. 21-40. Some important modern theorists of metaphor include I.A. Richards, who in The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1936) introduced the distinction between "tenor" and "vehicle"; William Empson, who in Seven Types of Ambiguity, 3rd ed. (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1953; 1st ed. 1930) challenges this clear-cut distinction as one which cannot be maintained when the number of possible readings expands with none of them becoming dominant; Kenneth Burke, who in "Four Master Tropes" in A Grammar of Motives (New York: G. Braziller, 1955), pp. 503-17, discusses metaphor as the trope of perspective which sees one thing in terms of something else and thereby introduces a certain incongruity resulting from the carry-over from one realm to another; Roman Jakobson, who in "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles" in Fundamentals of Language, 4th rev. ed. (The Hague: Mouton, 1980), pp. 90-6, defines the poetic function as the projecting of the metaphoric onto the metonymic, the superimposition of similarity on contiguity, and thus shows that metaphor always has a metonymical tint and that metaphor and metonymy cannot be sharply distinguished; and Jacques Derrida, who in "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," trans. F.C.T. Moore, New Literary History 6, No. 1 (1974-5) 5-74, sees the founding metaphors of philosophy as untrue, argues that the truth of metaphors lies in revealing the non-truth of their own function, and shows that philosophy is a system pointing to a governing term which itself is a trope and thereby escapes the system. For some more recent work on metaphor, see the issue of Critical Inquiry on "Metaphor" (Winter, 1977).

of the mythic worlds when Odysseus reaches Ithaca.

Many similarities connect the Phaeacian adventures and the Ithacan ones, but these similarities never suggest an exact equivalence in structure of episode, poetic strategy or theme. Parallels, analogies and inversions of Phaeacian (and other mythic) adventures abound on Ithaca, however, so it is fair to say that Odysseus' return from his voyages acts out in terms of the plot the action of a simile. He himself is not only engaged in comparing the worlds he has visited, but the structure of his story suggests many more comparisons. Odysseus is a character who uses the power of analogy to test his family and servants, and his story often reveals bits of mythic places or parts of idealized scenes lodged in Ithacan recesses. One further way, then, in which the poem represents Odysseus' mythic adventures as a counterplot not quite separate from the main action is by finding analogies to those experiences on Ithaca. These analogies remind us that many of the poem's central values are articulated most explicitly in the mythic sections of the poem.⁹

Scenes from the Iliadic counterplot, as well as certain poetic strategies and perspectives typical of the counterplot, reappear in the mythic adventures of Odysseus. In order to expand the mythic adventures and still preserve the heroic identity of Odysseus, the poet groups these adventures together and distances them from the latter

⁹ See Cedric Whitman, Homer and the Heroic Tradition (New York: Norton, 1958), p. 289, and especially Michael O'Loughlin, The Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired Leisure (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 17 and *passim*, who see the Phaeacian world as representing certain key values in the poem.

episodes of the story. The poem thereby sets up a structure of analogy between these two larger sections of narrative, a structure which is supported by the unifying presence of the hero in both parts of the story and by a variety of thematic and formal parallels between them. This structure of analogy suggests a doubleness or ambiguity, further emphasized by the roles Odysseus plays on Ithaca, in the nature of the hero and his actions.

The most radical form this doubleness takes is outright deceit. Thus the Odyssey redefines heroism and suggests that heroic success in this poem depends more on verbal than on physical power. Physical strength is still essential (see viii,186-234; xviii,66-107; and xxi,404-xxii,329), but even more important is the hero's ability to tell tales and manipulate images. Prowess and desire for honor are capacities that Odysseus shares with many Iliadic heroes, but they are insufficient on an island like Ithaca where the best people, the aristoi, disregard them. To defeat the suitors, Odysseus must trick them by disguises and lies, and the deceit of the wily hero blends with the many less extreme examples of artifice in the poem. The poem abounds with extreme forms of artifice--deceptions, lies, disguises, physical transformations, and the secret midnight unravelling of a shroud--and it joins them through analogy and direct comparison to the arts like singing, story-telling, and weaving. Thus the Odyssey incorporates art and artifice into the heroic ethos, and suggests that, even in their extreme forms, the tactics of the artist are well-suited to the tasks of heroism. The audience or readers feel a certain ambivalence, however, when faced with this merging of deceit (or artifice) and heroism; this doubleness in the hero's identity allows him to avoid

the same responsibility for his actions which a hero whose actions were not surrounded by ambiguities would have to bear.

In the Odyssey, then, scenes which would have been part of the Iliadic counterplot are merged with the main plot in two distinct ways. One way, described above, is the grouping of these scenes together in one section of the poem, and the separation of them from the concluding episodes. A second way is to merge the counterplot and the plot more directly, for the scenes from the Iliadic counterplot do not appear only in the mythic parts of the Odyssey. On Ithaca, the disguise of Odysseus as beggar and the scenes with Eumaeus are the clearest examples of the Iliadic counterplot, and, of course, there is rural Ithaca itself. It is, after all, one of the many lands left behind when the soldiers went to Troy.

While, like the mythic worlds, rural Ithaca is partially distanced from the heroic story--Eumaeus lives in retreat (see xiv,372-4), as does Laertes (see xi,187-96)--the scenes and attitudes typical of the counterplot are more completely merged with it there. Odysseus is at once both beggar and hero; he recruits his supporters from the loyal countryside, but he (or Athena) still must transform them into military men (xxii,101-15; xxiv,498-9). The doubleness in his identity suggested by the structure of the poem is reinforced by his disguises on Ithaca, so that, in two somewhat different ways, the merging of the Iliadic plot and counterplot in the Odyssey leads to a new, complex, and at times troubling conception of the hero.

This merging of the plot and counterplot in the Ithacan sections of the poem brings into the main plot of the poem many more scenes representing the common people and the lower classes: farmers; herdsmen;

slaves; beggars; the unattached, unpropertied laborers (the thetes); and the demioergoi ("those who work for the people," the craftsmen, traveling tinkers, prophets and minstrels mentioned by Eumaeus, xvii, 382-5) all play a prominent role in this epic.¹⁰ Not only are they present in the poem in greater numbers than in the Iliad, but the opposition between hero and farmhand is broken down in different parts of the poem. As the ghost of Achilles, speaking to Odysseus from Erebus, intransigently states,

I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another
man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on,
than be a king over all the perished dead.

(xi,489-91)

Achilles has changed since he complained to Zeus that drowning in a river was the ignoble fate of a swineherd's boy, not a warrior (see XXI,281-3). The Odyssey redefines heroism to include the hero's capacity to use humble means when necessary: Odysseus must be willing to become like a minstrel on Scheria or to appear as a beggar on Ithaca, where the only real hospitality he enjoys is not offered by the nobles but by a swineherd.

Odysseus himself best sums up this blending of heroic and non-heroic worlds when he responds to Eurymachus' insults by challenging him to a contest defined first in rural and then in heroic terms, as

¹⁰See M.I. Finley, pp. 56-7, on the point that socially and materially minstrels were not of the same class as warriors. W. Schadewaldt, in Von Homers Welt und Werk, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: F.E. Koehler, 1959; 1st published, 1944), pp. 54-70, also offers evidence that the bards were not aristocrats. On the relations of different classes in the Odyssey as an explanation of the greater role played by the lower classes in the Odyssey, see Peter Rose, "Class Ambivalence in the Odyssey," in Historia 24 (1975), 129-49.

though these were completely analogous:

Eurymachos, I wish there could be a working contest
between us, in the spring season when the days are lengthening,
out in the meadow, with myself holding a well-curved sickle,
and you one like it, so to test our endurance for labor,
without food, from dawn until dark, with plenty of grass for our
mowing.

Or if it were oxen to be driven, those of the best sort,
large ones and ruddy, both well fed with grass, of an equal
age and carrying power, and their strength is not contemptible,
and there were four acres to plow, with the glebe giving to the
plowshare.

There you would see if I would carve a continuous furrow.
Or again, if this day the son of Kronos should bring on
a battle, and I were given a great shield and two spears,
and a helmet all of bronze well fitted over my temples,
so you would see me taking my place as one of the foremost
fighters, and you could not speak so in scorn of my belly.
(xviii, 366-80)

Odysseus does not literally become a farmhand or a beggar, of course,
nor does he fully adopt the attitudes of a poor man. His heroic self-
restraint is all the more apparent when he is suffering indignities as
a beggar in his own household, and when he finally takes revenge, it is
as a warrior in the full Iliadic manner.¹¹ Nonetheless, as his comments
on the belly suggest (see also vii, 215-21), Odysseus has been humbled by
his struggle to keep alive, and from his wanderings he certainly under-
stands more about the poor man's condition. He is like a poor man, and
the poem takes this likeness seriously.

The intimate knowledge of his father's farm that Odysseus shows
in the final book, for example, implies that he has had a rural boy-
hood. The pattern of growth from rural to heroic existence, suggested
in the Iliad, is reestablished concretely in the final scenes of the

¹¹ Among the other similarities, note the repetition of Iliadic
formulae in xxiv, 525.

Odyssey. In the Odyssey rural scenes which took place in the counterplot are reenacted in the heroic present, and the poem reveals some of the strain of this uncomfortable union.

Since Odysseus meets characters, such as Eumaeus, who would have played a role only in the counterplot of the Iliad, and since the Odyssey merges these two plots into one, similes and comparisons, suggested by the poet in the Iliad, are lived out in the Odyssey by the characters. Similes thus play a different role in the Odyssey than they did in the Iliad, for they serve to represent or even to create states of mind in the characters. Occasionally, the similes in the Odyssey, like those in the Iliad, seem to represent a world or attitude distinct from that of the characters, but such moments are rare. More often, similes or comparisons are recognized by the characters, and the plot itself seems to turn on the ability to recognize similarity. Odysseus, Penelope, Telemachus, and others constantly compare situations and the people they meet to determine the truth; the drama of the recognition scenes depends on their capacity to see likeness. Odysseus not only meets Eumaeus, but sees and acts out the ways in which he is like Eumaeus; the like-mindedness (homophrosune) of Odysseus and Penelope, rediscovered by them both in the course of their conversations, allows them to recognize each other. These likenesses, as others, are made dramatically real in the poem, so instead of wondering, as we did in the Iliad, whether or not a given comparison claims a genuine similarity, we now wonder how long it will take the character at issue to recognize it. Seen in this light, the Odyssey pays tribute to the power and the accuracy of the poet's similes. Since even the discovery of identity is made to depend on

the capacity of the viewers to recognize a genuine likeness, the Odyssey may be said to be shaped by a morality of the simile.

The word "simile" is used here to refer to both stated and implied comparisons. Stated comparisons are either extended similes in their own right or briefer statements of likeness; implied comparisons are those likenesses suggested by the narrative structure (for example, the many repeated scenes of arrival) or by the paralleling or doubling of character types.¹² In books xiii through xv, for example, many similarities between Odysseus and Eumaeus are suggested though never stated, and this implied comparison (or at least one aspect of it) is concluded when Eumaeus welcomes Telemachus

...as a father, with heart full of love, welcomes his only
and grown son, for whose sake he has undergone many hardships
when he comes back in the tenth year from a distant country....
(xvi,17-9)

Here the implied comparison becomes a simile, and the simile gains force and prominence because it has been so well prepared by the episodes preceding it.

The first drama of likeness in the Odyssey is the story of Telemachus' journey for news of his father. Since he has never seen his father, it seems fair to interpret this search in the broadest sense. Besides asking for news of his father's return, Telemachus wants to learn what his father was like. From the stories of Nestor, Helen and Menelaus, Telemachus learns several things about his

¹²See Bernard Fenik, Studies in the Odyssey, Hermes 30 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), especially Part II, "Doublets," pp. 137-231.

father (as does the audience), but mainly he learns that he resembles him. Menelaus sees the likeness, but holds his tongue. As Telemachus weeps, hiding his eyes in his cloak, Menelaus connects him with his father; the audience notices an even closer tie to Odysseus, for Odysseus is the only other character to cry behind his cloak in just this manner (compare iv,113-6 and viii,83-6). Helen recognizes Telemachus immediately, and explains her thoughts in a roundabout way which illustrates the ties between recognition of similarity and recognition of identity in this poem:

Shall I be wrong, or am I speaking the truth? My heart tells me to speak, for I think I never saw such a likeness, neither in man nor woman, and wonder takes me as I look on him, as this man has a likeness to the son of great-hearted Odysseus, Telemachus....
(iv,140-4)

This man resembles Telemachus, she says, and this recognition leads to discovery of his identity. She is able to see this resemblance because she sees a similarity between Odysseus and Telemachus. Menelaus sees this likeness too:

I also see it thus, my wife, the way you compare them, for Odysseus' feet were like this man's, his hands were like this, and the glances of his eyes and his head and the hair growing.¹³
(iv,148-50)

Menelaus too recognizes Telemachus because he resembles his father. In these few scenes the poet illustrates the way one moves from the recognition of likeness to the discovery of identity--even one's own identity.

¹³ Here Lattimore clarifies the Greek, which uses an indirect expression and thus does not directly mention Odysseus. Nonetheless Lattimore's interpretation seems likely.

The moral force of these comparisons does not become fully apparent until Odysseus reaches Ithaca and comes to Eumaeus' hut. When the beggar first appears, the swineherd welcomes him for two reasons. Perhaps his own master, he says, "in need of finding some sustenance, wanders/some city or countryside of alien-speaking people" (xiv,42-3), so he asks the beggar to recount the sorrows he has suffered (xiv,47). Imagining that Odysseus and the beggar may be caught in like circumstances, Eumaeus connects the two of them in his mind. Next, Eumaeus cites the traditional belief that "all vagabonds/and strangers are under Zeus" (xiv,57-8). These two statements, cited frequently throughout the Ithacan section of the poem, are two versions of the same belief. The idea that Odysseus may be wandering in straits like those of the beggar is a personal, explicit version of the general reason that people should care for beggars. As Odysseus puts it to Antinous, "I too once lived in my own house among people,/prospering in wealth, and often I gave to a wanderer...." (xvii,419-20). As always, Odysseus here tests the suitors to find out how petty they can be, but he also articulates a basic premise of his society. One takes care of beggars because one might find oneself in their position one day. The suitors should recognize the potential likeness between themselves and a beggar, for no one can be sure that his good fortune will last.

The belief that there is a potential likeness among human lots even underlies the institution of guest-friendship, for in accordance with this institution, the host sees in a strange guest not a stranger, but someone quite like himself. This recognition of likeness is then formalized by the exchange of gifts. The word xeinos (or xeine in the vocative), which both Eumaeus and Penelope (among others) consistently

use to characterize Odysseus, means "guest," "stranger," or "guest-friend." The word itself combines the two ideas of "guest-friend" and "stranger," ideas which otherwise seem quite opposite in meaning, and thus acts out the drama of perceiving closeness or likeness among strangers.

Socially, the view that one should be capable of recognizing the potential likeness between oneself and a wandering stranger represents a morality in the poem. The suitors see no likeness between themselves and the beggar, and they (famously) abuse him and the conventions of hospitality. But, like Eumaeus, Odysseus' loyal servants, not only recognize the potential likeness between themselves and the beggar, but consistently point out that Odysseus too may be wandering somewhere.

Philoetius, for example, says immediately upon seeing the beggar:

Welcome, father and stranger (pater o xeine); may prosperous
days befall you
hereafter; but now you are held in the grip of many misfortunes.
Father Zeus, no god is more baleful than you are.
You have no pity on men, once you yourself have created
them; you bring them into misfortune and dismal sufferings.
It has come home to me, when I saw it. My eyes are tearful
as I remember Odysseus, since I think he too is wearing
such rags upon him as this, and wandering among peoples....
(xx, 199-206)

First Philoetius recognizes the general lot shared by all men and then he states the specific comparison between the beggar and Odysseus; these are the two statements of likeness that the suitors are incapable of making.

Others loyal to Odysseus also compare the beggar and their king, so the ability to see a likeness between the two begins to serve as a sign of loyalty. In book xix, after having been convinced that the beggar had really seen Odysseus, Penelope calls Eurycleia to bathe him:

Come then, circumspect Eurykleia, rise up and wash
the feet of one who is the same age as your master. Odysseus
must by this time have just such hands and feet as you do,
for in misfortune mortal men grow old more suddenly.
(xix,357-60)

And Eurycleia, before she feels the scar and discovers his identity,
comments

There have been many hard-traveling strangers who have come here,
but I say I have never seen one as like as you are
to Odysseus, both as to your feet, and voice, and appearance.
(xix,379-81)

Once again recognition begins with the perception of likeness. At
first the beggar seems like Odysseus only in the most general sense,
but the likeness gradually becomes more precise.

This episode suggests one reason for the many reversed similes in
the Odyssey.¹⁴ These reversed similes seem to transfer one character's
experience onto that of another or to combine the perspectives of
characters who might otherwise seem quite different. Perhaps the most
striking of these reversed similes is the simile of the drowning swim-
mer used to describe Penelope's feelings as she finally embraces her
husband:

¹⁴For statistics on the use of similes in the Odyssey, see
Carroll Moulton, Similes in the Homeric Poems, Hypomnemata, 49
(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 117-8; D.J.N. Lee,
The Similes of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey' Compared (Parkville:
University of Melbourne Press, 1964), p. 3 and pp. 65-73; Michael
Coffey, "The Similes of the Odyssey," Bulletin of the Institute of
Classical Studies 2 (1955), p. 27; and E.C. Wilkins, "A Classifica-
tion of the Similes of Homer," in The Classical Weekly 13, No. 19
(March 15, 1920), pp. 147-50 and 13, No. 20 (March 22, 1920), pp.
154-9. For a treatment of reversed similes see Anthony J. Podlecki,
"Some Odyssean Similes," Greece and Rome 18 (1971), 81-90 and Helene
P. Foley, "'Reverse Similes' and Sex Roles in the Odyssey," Arethusa
11 (1978), 7-26.

And as when the land appears welcome to men who are swimming,
after Poseidon has smashed their strong-built ship on the open
water, pounding it with the weight of wind and the heavy
seas, and only a few escape the gray water landward
by swimming, with a thick scurf of salt coated upon them,
and gladly they set foot on the shore, escaping the evil;
so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,
and she could not let him go from the embrace of her white arms.
(xxiii, 233-40)

Here the poet captures the way in which Odysseus' and Penelope's methods and perspectives have become one in a beautiful simile which transfers Odysseus' many shipwrecks and near-drownings onto Penelope. Penelope can recognize Odysseus when she reaches the point of feeling his experience as if it were her own. Thus behind the reversed simile is a secondary, implied comparison: the poet implies that Penelope's trials at home have been like shipwrecks and near-drownings, and this likeness is part of what Odysseus must come to recognize in Penelope.

The reversed similes, then, seem to encapsulate the morality which the poem draws from the simile. The final reunion (and consequent reconstitution of society) comes only when each can recognize and feel as his own the experience of the other. One not only must see a potential likeness between himself or herself and a stranger, but must take this likeness seriously to the point of having changed places, at least in mind, with that stranger.¹⁵ The poem constantly affirms the truth of its comparisons, and within the plot represents the recognition of likeness as the starting point for any understanding of identity. Many

¹⁵These words would also apply to the experience of an audience listening to a poem or to that of a reader. This connection is not a surprising one, perhaps, since the poet of the Odyssey seems conscious of and concerned about the effects of artistry.

of the characters, Odysseus and Penelope most prominently, thus experience what the poem itself is about, and the decision to make the experience of the characters in some way congruent with the affirmation of poetic power helps to move the Odyssey towards romance.

These scenes suggest the extent to which the whole poem is engaged both in examining the likeness between Odysseus and the unusual roles he plays and in searching for something unchanging which might underlie them all. The poem as a whole has the shape of a simile (or of a series of similes), for it juxtaposes and compares Odysseus' experiences in mythic realms with his experiences on Ithaca. These comparisons suggest that it is possible to transport a great deal from the mythic worlds to the world in which Odysseus must be king and leader, and the poem creates links between these worlds through simile and structural comparison.

While in the Iliad the characters are unaware of the many scenes with which their actions are compared, in the Odyssey the hero at least takes part in these different scenes, and all of the main characters are confronted with tests of their capacities to recognize the likeness in dissimilar things or roles. Their awareness of the odd connections between dissimilar people or places, their discovery of the likenesses which underlie the differences, and the parallel awareness of the poet himself of the connections between the different parts of his story, are largely responsible for the greater degree of self-consciousness about identity and artifice in the Odyssey. Just as Achilles, by the knowledge that he has a choice between two fates, is moved to become more thoughtful about the meaning of the war and the reasons for fighting, so Odysseus, by more intimate knowledge of the

alternatives to his destiny, becomes so much more conscious of the different levels of his story and roles he must play that he often seems an artist in his own right.

The self-consciousness about identity and artifice which pervades the poem is revealed most clearly when Odysseus first arrives on Ithaca. In this scene Odysseus' own will²iness, represented as a self-conscious manipulation of images of himself, is shown to be one and the same as Athena's self-consciousness about the plot she is constructing. Through its careful manipulation of parallels and contrasts with previous scenes, this scene also draws the audience or reader into the game of recognizing similarities, and so it makes us more conscious of the poet's techniques. The scene can therefore stand as an emblem of artistic self-consciousness in the poem. Since it also represents the moment at which Odysseus must begin to transfer all that has happened to him into an Ithacan context, it is the turning point of the poem and bears the weight of the joining of the mythical and the Ithacan worlds. This scene, then, clarifies the effects of merging the plot and counterplot. In it, as the next section will show, the decision to have Odysseus adopt an aestheticizing stance gives new possibilities and sets new limits to the epic and its hero.

(ii) Odysseus on the Beach at Ithaca

A second time Odysseus awakes alone on a strange island and complains:

Ah me, what are the people whose land I have come to this time,
and are they savage and violent, and without justice,
or hospitable to strangers and with minds that are godly?

(xiii,200-2)

Odysseus uses similar words when he is awakened on Scheria by the cry of Nausicaa and her maids playing ball.¹⁶ As on Scheria, Odysseus then seeks the aid of a young, noble-seeming youth, for Athena appears to him in disguise as a shepherd, a delicate boy, like a king's son (xiii, 222-3). As in Phaeacia, here Odysseus is doubtful and worried when he need not be: he grieves for what is lost when it is already found.¹⁷ This type-situation of a nameless stranger on a beach being aided by a noble figure recurs throughout the poem. Odysseus on Circe's island meets Hermes (x,277); he and his men meet the Laestrygonian king's daughter (x,105); and Menelaus meets Eidothea at Pharos (iv,363), all in similar contexts. Even Eumaeus' tale of how he came into Laertes' possession contains a version of this situation.¹⁸ In the story he tells about his adventures on the Thesprotian shore, Odysseus again makes use of this stock scene (xiv,316ff).

Why does the poet present Odysseus' homecoming as a familiar, Odyssean stock situation? Why, in particular, does he set the scene to remind us of his arrival in Phaeacia? The awakening on Ithaca and the parallel one on Scheria are the most developed of these scenes

¹⁶K. Rüter, in *Odyseeinterpretationen, Hypomnemata*, 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969), p. 232, suggested this connection. Note that some of the words Odysseus uses when he wakes up in Phaeacia and in Ithaca are identical (xiii,200 = vi,119). The second part of Rüter's book, "Phaiakis-Interpretationen," and especially "Scheria und Ithaca" (pp. 229-33) and "Die Ankunft des Odysseus auf Scheria und Ithaca" (pp. 230-3) have influenced this study.

¹⁷Fenik, p. 45, suggests that this dramatic irony is the deep structure of many typical Odyssean scenes.

¹⁸Fenik, p. 32 and p. 34, also points out this connection.

(which probably owe their similarities to oral compositional techniques). The repetition has the effect of dramatizing how alien Ithaca seems to Odysseus when he finally reaches it, and it helps us see that Ithaca is a place he will have to learn to recognize. Ithaca may not have changed, but the point of view from which Odysseus regards it has changed so much (a change represented in part by the mist which Athena scatters over the landscape) that he must learn to see it anew. His failure to recognize Ithaca immediately represents proleptically Penelope's inability to recognize her husband immediately. Odysseus' discovery that he has reached home is the first of all the Ithacan recognition scenes.

These repeating patterns draw the attention of the audience or reader as well. We too note the formal similarities and differences between this scene and all the other scenes on beaches. We too go through the experience of recognizing Ithaca, and become more conscious of the highly patterned form of the poem. We notice, for example, that on Scheria Odysseus tells Nausicaa a largely truthful tale; on Ithaca, his first instinct is to disguise himself and to lie. The poet tells us that, like Athena, Odysseus did not tell the truth, "but checked that word from the outset,/forever using to every advantage the mind that was in him" (xiii,254-5). The word which describes Odysseus' thoughts as he tells this lie is polukerdea (255), meaning "crafty, very cunning." Like the epithet for Odysseus in the first line of the poem, polutropon (i,1), which describes him as the man of many devices (or many turnings), polukerdea conveys a double meaning: it implies both profit and guile. Reaching the truth on Ithaca, it seems, will be a more tortuous process than it was on Scheria.

Athena laughs at his lie and transforms herself into a tall and beautiful woman. She is the only character in the poem who correctly and immediately assesses what is true in Odysseus' lying stories: even though the Cretan story is a lie, it reveals Odysseus' true character. Recognizing this, Athena upbraids him:

It would be a sharp one, and a stealthy one, who would ever get
past you
in any contriving; even if it were a god against you.
You wretch, so devious, never weary of tricks, then you would not
even in your own country give over your ways of deceiving
and your thievish tales. They are near to you in your very nature.
But come, let us talk no more of this, for you and I both know
sharp practice, since you are far the best of all mortal
men for counsel and stories, and I among all the divinities
am famous for wit and sharpness; and yet you never recognized
Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, the one who is always
standing beside you and guarding you in every endeavor.
(xiii,291-301)

The sharp and stealthy one is kerdaleos (291), the word with which her speech opens, and her language overflows with the traditional epithets for Odysseus' cunning. She calls him schetlie (293), which means both "enduring" and "hardened" or even "cruel." She says he is wily-minded and never weary of tricks, using dolon (293), the word for trick, bait, stratagem or guileful device which Demodocus used to describe the Trojan horse (viii,494). Athena uses this word in the first book when she tells Telemachus he must think of ways to slay the wooers, either openly or by guile (dolo, 1,296). It is the same word that Demodocus uses in his story of Ares and Aphrodite to describe the trap or snare of Hephaestus (dolon, viii,296,282). And, as Odysseus tells the story, Polyphemus uses this word to tell his friends that "no man is slaying me by guile" (dolo, ix,408), while Odysseus uses it to describe his plot for escape (ix,482). In the Iliad, Helen had used the word to describe Odysseus. She tells Priam:

This one is Laertes' son, resourceful Odysseus,
who grew up in the country, rough though it be, of Ithaca,
to know every manner of shiftiness (pantoious...dolous) and
crafty counsels.

(III,200-2)

It is the word which Odysseus uses to describe himself to the Phaeacians: "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known before all men/ for the study of crafty designs (doloisin)" (ix,19-20). This notion of stratagem or tricky device, then, has been associated with Odyssean heroism throughout the poem, and on the beach at Ithaca, Athena, slyly praising him for his love of deceit and for his wiliness, reveals that she admires precisely these traits. Her admiration focuses attention on these aspects of Odysseus' character, making wiliness and even deceitfulness seem his defining characteristics.

Athena admires these traits because she finds them in herself. She says that they are both well-versed in craft, again using the word kerde (xiii,297): both are crafty and shrewd, and able to scheme to further their own advantage.¹⁹ With this word the poet connects Odysseus and his patroness: the poet uses it to describe Odysseus before he speaks, Athena uses it for herself and Odysseus, and finally she uses it to describe herself alone (the word for the craft or sharpness for which she is famous is kerdesin, 299). Athena tells Odysseus that she sees through his tricks in part because she too is expert at plots and disguises; she can recognize him because they have so much in common. It is through his lie that she recog-

¹⁹Lattimore renders it "sharp practice" (xiii,297); Fitzgerald, interpreting her claim, and emphasizing it, translates the phrase "Two of a kind we are, contrivers, both."

nizes several of Odysseus' characteristics: his wiliness, his tendency to hide behind disguises and stories, his unwillingness to say what he thinks, and the fact that he never lets up on this self-control. These traits manifestly true of her also in this scene, take on a new meaning in her speech because it is associated with her own craftiness, which is that of the artist.²⁰

Athena recognizes and points out Odysseus' most salient character traits by listening to his lying tales, and he recognizes Ithaca in part by listening to her words (see lines 344-51 where Athena dispells the mist by describing the landscape, so that her words seem to unveil the scene). They are both story-tellers, and, from this point on, their plots become one and the same; they sit down here to map out the rest of the action of the poem. As they begin to plot, Odysseus turns to Athena and says, "Come then, weave the design, the way I shall take my vengeance" (xiii,386). The phrase metin huphainein, "to weave a plan, design, or device" is often used, especially in the Odyssey, to describe the process of planning or scheming (see VII,324; iv,678; and ix,422), but it is more than formulaically appropriate as a figure for Athena's plotting. When she appears to Odysseus as a beautiful woman, she is described as one "well versed in glorious handiworks" (xiii,289) (or, more literally, "knowing how to make glori-

²⁰For illuminating remarks on Athena's conversation with Odysseus and on her definition of his central characteristics, see W.B. Stanford, The Ulysses Theme, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968; 1st ed. 1954), pp. 25-42, esp. pp. 30-3 on epetes, anchinoos and echephron. See also his reflections on the Autoclean elements in Odysseus' character in "The Grandson of Autolycus," pp. 8-24.

ous things"). Since the chief female craft is weaving, this phrase furthers the identification of Athena as a weaver. Circe and Calypso are both presented as weavers (v,61-2; x,222-3), and the same phrase used of Athena is used of Circe in a context that makes it certain that weaving is the craft at issue. Penelope, of course, is the most famous female weaver of the Odyssey. As she tells the beggar, she planned to weave and unweave the shroud of Laertes to draw out the time (xix,137-50).

Like Penelope, Athena is a weaver who both weaves and unweaves her plots. The art of divinities like Circe and Calypso is very different, for their weaving abolishes time: their art is immortal and stands for their immortality. Athena's weaving, by contrast, is "human," in that, like Penelope, she weaves and unweaves episodes and events to draw out the time until her plot can come to its proper close. Athena is a weaver who does and undoes her labor. First she beautifies Odysseus, then she turns him into an old beggar, then she beautifies him again, then demotes him once again and finally beautifies him one last time. Similarly, her plotting on his behalf is a kind of weaving and unweaving of events which allows her to draw out the time until it is right for Odysseus to strike.

The poet of the Odyssey also weaves and unweaves in just this way. He too draws out time with his narrative. Through interwoven stories which take back as much as they tell us, he slowly reveals Odysseus' character. The image of weaving and unweaving seems particularly apt for the poet of the Odyssey because of the complex narrative structure and because of the way truths and lies are so carefully mixed together. The poet draws out the time with these stories

in order to give the main characters sufficient time to judge each other and their situation correctly. The poet weaves and unweaves the plot and the counterplot, joining them in one fabric in one moment, and then separating them in another. This weaving brings new opportunities to his hero and adds new horizons to his poem, but it also costs him some of the simplicity and strength of the epic fabric.

We can distinguish, then, between the human art of narrative, which in this poem is tied to the slow unwinding time in which Odysseus and Penelope come to recognize each other once again, and the various images of divine or near-divine art (such as Circe's magic, Calypso's artful transformations of nature, or even the Phaeacians' artfully contrived garden and lovely dancing) which often seem dissipating or weakening. There is nothing over-refined about narrative art as the poem presents it: it is rough, twisted, and hard to make out, like the hero it describes.

Athena has been the agent of the plot throughout the poem. Zeus twice refers to her as the only one responsible for the shape of the action (see v,23-4 and xxiv,479-80; in both cases the same words are used). In the end of the poem, for example, when Athena asks Zeus how he wants her to end things between Odysseus and the Ithacans, Zeus responds, "My child, why do you ask and question me in these matters?/ For was this not your own intention, as you have counselled it,/how Odysseus should make his way back, and punish those others?" (xxiv, 478-80). Zeus names Athena as the planner, the source of the plot, and clearly she stands as a figure for her poet, the organizer of the narrative. Here on the beach at Ithaca, Odysseus too is associated with this principle of plotting. He plans the plot with Athena, and

thus there is a much closer identification between the poet and the hero in this poem. Like Athena, Odysseus shares the wider perspective of the poet, a perspective denied to the heroes of the Iliad, and his grasp of this wider world is represented by his voyages to symbolic realms.

The audience or readers respond to Athena's art of weaving and unweaving by noticing the similarities and differences between the different episodes. We notice, for example, that on Ithaca Athena transforms Odysseus into an old beggar, while on Scheria her power had worked in the opposite direction. In order to help the wandering stranger in this cautious land, Athena transfigures him:

then Athene, daughter of Zeus, made him seem taller
for the eye to behold, and thicker, and on his head she arranged
the curling locks that hung down like hyacinthine petals.
As when a master craftsman overlays gold on silver,
and he is one who was taught by Hephaistos and Pallas Athene
in art complete, and grace is on every work he finishes,
so Athene gilded with grace his head and his shoulders....
(vi,229-35)

The poet glosses Athena's transforming power by the art of a craftsman inspired by Hephaestus or Athena herself.²¹ It is appropriate that on Scheria, a place where artifice is so highly valued, the poet should turn to a simile drawn from the world of craftsmen; the simile suggests that Athena creates Odysseus as an artist would an artwork. Since Odysseus is also a character in a poem, this playful mingling of levels suggests the self-consciousness of the poet himself. Also

²¹In the beginning of book viii, the poet describes a second transfiguration of Odysseus (viii,17-23), a well-known crux for analysts. Note that Odysseus also undergoes a double transfiguration in Ithaca as well as in Phaeacia (xvi,173-6 and xxiii,156-63).

appropriate for Scheria is the mingling of natural beauty with the beauty created by craftsmen, especially since the artist involved is a goddess. The very same description recurs when Athena transforms Odysseus on Ithaca (xxiii,159ff): the techniques of oral composition remind us of the deep connections between Odysseus' passage to recognition on each island. On both Ithaca and Scheria Odysseus becomes one of Athena's artistic triumphs, and, through her, he takes more and more responsibility for the plot. In the first moment of transformation then, Athena is identified as an artist in her own right. In the scene on the beach at Ithaca, her artistic powers are tied even more explicitly to the plot, and Odysseus becomes her partner in artifice.

On Scheria, Athena had twice transformed Odysseus into a nobler and more beautiful young man (vi,229-237; viii,18-20). On Ithaca, she turns him back into an impoverished beggar. Which is the more true version of Odysseus, and which is the disguise? On the beach at Ithaca we see that truth and falsehood cannot be so clearly opposed. Truth is arrived at through falsehoods, hence the Odyssey itself represents one of the great affirmations of the power of fiction. Each image of Odysseus is true to some aspect of his experience, and although the "beggar" is explicitly his "disguise," others (such as Eurycleia and Philoetius) see it as the most likely role for their master after ten years of wandering. Yet the man Penelope remembers--and the man she gets, for the poem ends with Odysseus transformed once again into his noble self (xxiii,156-63)--is more like the stately young man. These two images represent in part a past and a present between which it is Penelope's job, and ours, to discover a likeness.

stance as noble beggar on Phaeacia,²² and the generosity of the Phaeacians contrasts with the meagerness of the suitors' response. The Phaeacian episodes contain hints of the inversions which will occur on Ithaca, while the Ithacan scenes bring out submerged meanings in the Phaeacian scenes.

The parallels and inversions in the Ithacan and Phaeacian scenes function like the inverted similes: by cross-referencing, scenic repetition and compressed allusion, the poem acknowledges in each episode elements and even poetic strategies outside the bounds of that particular bit of narrative. Throughout the poem, allusions to other congruent scenes reveal a poetic strategy of generic inclusion. As actor, Odysseus too includes many roles in his repertoire; he is polutropos, for he turns from one reality to another. Moreover, the conventionality of the scene on the Ithacan beach is precisely the quality that signals how radical and unusual is the redefinition of heroic identity that is worked out there. The confrontation of two worlds, which comes about through the repetition of conventional elements, makes the audience or reader become more conscious of the poet's techniques. In this scene

²²Odysseus' role as beggar represents another inversion of the Phaeacian plot, for there too he collected gifts. As M.I. Finley points out, the word Odysseus uses to describe his efforts at collecting gifts and treasure is aitizo ("I beg"); Eumaeus uses this word when he tells his master to beg for food from the suitors (xvii,351). Finley cites this episode to point out that what Odysseus meant in his tale, and what he means in Phaeacia when he says he will wait a year to gather more wealth there (xi,358-61), is related to the custom of guest-friendship, not to the kind of begging Eumaeus describes. See M.I. Finley, p. 122. Given the elaborate parallels between the Phaeacian and Ithacan episodes, however, it seems fairer to conclude that, whatever their original social significance, Odysseus' begging in Ithaca represents a lower-class version of his gathering of gifts in Phaeacia.

Odysseus too is represented as being particularly self-conscious of artifice, and he is clearly linked here with Athena, the mover of the plot. Self-consciousness about the artifice of one's own identity and about its multiple sources is represented here as being one with a self-consciousness about artifice itself, for such self-consciousness means that one can be present at the planning of one's own plot.

The identity of Odysseus thus seems double in this scene, for Odysseus is both a character in the plot and one of the organizers of it. This doubleness of the hero is mirrored by the doubleness of the episode which reflects previous scenes such as the arrival at Scheria. The aesthetic stance which Odysseus takes in this scene derives ultimately from the poet's decision to merge the plot and the counterplot. Athena's divine perspective, shown to be an aestheticizing view of events, and Odysseus' aesthetic stance, both reflect the tendency of the counterplot to widen the focus and to treat the events of men's lives as though they were works of art. In this scene on the beach, the merging of the plot and the counterplot seems to work, for Athena puts the weight of her opinion on its side. But being both a character and an agent of the plot also creates an ambivalence or strain in the identity of Odysseus. The extreme aesthetic position, as is made clear in the mythic sections of the poem, is untenable for a hero. As he begins to share with Athena responsibility for the order of the plot (or at least learns the divine point of view on events), Odysseus comes close to taking an aesthetic stance so extreme that it would render heroism impossible.

This strain in the identity of Odysseus is represented in the song of Ares and Aphrodite sung by Demodocus, a character with whom

Odysseus seems to feel a special kinship. Odysseus himself must depend on his skill as a story-teller while on Scheria, for his artistic triumph there assures him his voyage home and thus brings him heroic success. His words are his heroic deeds on Scheria, and his success there is won by careful timing, a polite lie, and a good tale.²³

Demodocus' song, in which the artist and the warrior are rivals, captures the problematic quality of any union of the two in a single character.

Slipped in as entertainment, this seemingly light, irrelevant song tells of a key union and an important opposition for the Odyssey. The union of Ares and Aphrodite, War and Love, mirrors the union of heroic and domestic (or sexual) episodes in the Odyssey. The gods are not angry at Ares when he is caught; rather, they laugh at his predicament. When asked if, knowing the price, he still desired to sleep with Aphrodite, Hermes, who had delighted in Calypso's grotto and been the agent who taught Odysseus how to master Circe, responds:

Lord who strike from afar, Apollo, I wish it could only
be, and there could be thrice this number of endless fastenings,
and all you gods could be looking on and all the goddesses,
and still I would sleep by the side of Aphrodite the golden.
(viii, 339-42)

Ares is not blamed but envied for his dalliance, and his sexual ad-

²³As Tzvetan Todorov has argued in "Le récit primitif," in Poétique de la prose (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), pp. 71-2, speech-as-action in the Odyssey is derived from the constative mode of discourse, while speech-as-action is performative. This apparently contradictory point allows Todorov to suggest the extent to which performative and constative discourse continually interpenetrate in the Odyssey. In Odysseus' speech to the Phaeacians, in particular, the constative is embedded in the performative.

ventures seem partly a matter of entertainment for the gods as well. Light-hearted as it is, this story embodies the same ambivalence which, in the main narrative, suggests that it is both appropriate for Odysseus to spend a year with Circe or seven with Calypso and necessary that ultimately he resist them.

The union of Ares and Aphrodite mirrors the union of Odysseus with Circe and Calypso, and all three of these unions help prepare the non-adulterous human version of sexual attachment with which the poem ends. In his adventures and even on Scheria Odysseus is a near-mythic character who embodies the heroic past and sleeps with goddesses. He is an Ares figure wandering through different versions of the bower of Aphrodite. He is physically grand, especially after his double transformation on Scheria; he is physically powerful. In fact, in his next song, Demodocus compares Odysseus to Ares: he tells "how in particular Odysseus went, with godlike/Menelaos, like Ares, to find the house of Deiphobos" (viii,517-8).²⁴

Ares and Aphrodite are twice tricked by Hephaestus, the bandy-legged god: they sleep together because they think he is away visiting in Lemnos, and then, making love, they are caught by his nets (his snare, his dolon, viii,282). As in the simile describing Athena's transformation of Odysseus, throughout the poem the poet connects Hephaestus with the cunning craftiness of Athena and with various derivative human crafts. He was the maker of the winebowl that Menelaus gives Telemachus (iv,615-617); he crafted the silver dogs that guard

²⁴There is, of course, no ambiguity in the Greek about the fact that "like Ares" modifies Odysseus.

Alcinous' palace (vii,91-4). In the end of the poem we are reminded that he made Achilles' funeral urn (xxiv,74-5). Thus Hephaestus and his craft represent the power of art, a power which this poem insists is considerable. The divine artisan of comic appearance uses his cunning to capture a god and a goddess who figure as heroes in Demodocus' story. Odysseus, too, will attempt to trap would-be adulterers with his guile. The suitors, like Ares and Aphrodite, think that the husband is far away, and are caught in his snare (being mortal, they, of course, come to a worse end). As a figure of guile, and as a figure of the craftsman, Hephaestus can be said to resemble Odysseus. This identification becomes complete when Odysseus' adopted persona and his appearance change on Ithaca: he becomes ugly and bent, more like the comic figure of the bandy-legged smith of the gods.

Demodocus' song about Ares and Aphrodite thus separates and distinguishes Odysseus' two personae, and presents them as two separate characters. To separate completely the Ares and the Hephaestus in Odysseus is impossible, for both remain a part of his personality throughout his adventures. The Hephaestus aspect--at least in physical terms--may be submerged until he returns to Ithaca, although the poet repeatedly comments on his cunning. On the other hand, even on Ithaca he cuts an almost mythic figure whenever he chooses to reveal himself (for example, Telemachus thinks he is surely one of the gods when he first sees his father in his transformed state, xvi,181-5); if his identity as nearly mythic warrior is submerged at times, it nonetheless remains the foundation of his character. Without knowing it, then, Demodocus incarnates the two sides of Odysseus' character in two separate figures; this unfolding of his character helps to reveal the

degree of opposition between the heroic and the non-heroic traits which Odysseus embodies.

The progress of the song by and large parallels Odysseus' progress in the poem. It begins with the pleasure of Ares, and then moves to the triumph of Hephaestus; only in the ending of the story is there any lack of congruence to Odysseus' progress. The romance of Ares and Aphrodite represents the kind of heroism appropriate to the mythical or semi-mythical worlds which Odysseus is visiting as he hears the song. The hero must combine the force of the warrior with grace and beauty. Aphrodite must be more with Ares, in spite of the costs. But as he reaches Ithaca, the Ares in Odysseus must give way to the Hephaestus in him; the Hephaestus in him later leads him to victory. In Demodocus' song, however, Hephaestus is only briefly triumphant. Quickly his triumph turns into comedy, and he is forced by Poseidon to unleash the two lovers, with only the mildest of promises to stand in their stead.

The ending of the song only apparently contrasts with the events on Ithaca, however, for Ares' escape suggests that Odysseus' heroic side will also be victorious. When she turns him into a beggar, Athena sets a limit to Odysseus' heroic past; he will be able to re-establish his heroic identity only from within the bonds artifice has set upon him. Since he certainly succeeded in re-establishing his heroic self from within the disguise as a beggar, and since the Ares in him clearly reasserts itself, Odysseus seems to have successfully reconciled the two contradictory aspects of his identity, and indeed he has in a basic way. But the image of Odysseus' heroic identity being trapped by his cunning suggests that the two are harder to reconcile with one

another than the simile of the bow (xxi,405-11), in which the artist and the warrior are united, would suggest. By his artifice Odysseus has set limits on his heroic identity, and those limits continue to be felt throughout the last books of the Odyssey.

Can a character be at once an epic hero and an artist conscious of the artifice behind his work and proud of it? Odysseus succeeds in joining these opposites within himself, but his poem bears witness to the tension between the two roles and to the difficulty of resolving it. The fact that Athena is the primary figure for the artist and agent of the plot suggests that to be a supreme artist is, to some extent, to take on the perspective of the gods. This distanced perspective on human events ultimately excludes the human point of view and precludes heroic action (as so many readers of the Iliad, who feel that the gods in that poem have less dignity than the mortal warriors, have protested). The implied connection between divine power and artifice suggests that to be an artist is not ultimately the epic hero's lot.

The mutual recognition scene between Odysseus and Athena, then, makes manifest in small a number of key relationships in the Odyssey. In it the unusually close relationship between Athena and Odysseus is defined and explained. Athena knows him, and likes him, because he and she are so much alike; their close kinship of spirit derives from a shared shrewdness and cunning, especially about artifice. Athena in particular is identified as the agent of the plot, and here Odysseus is clearly identified with her as fellow craftsman. In fact, the plot has been largely under his control since his arrival in Phaeacia. Lastly, many of the parallels between Ithaca and Phaeacia, especially the formal analogies which make the scenes on the two beaches

doublings,²⁵ make the audience or readers more conscious of the artifice of the poem itself.

The scene on the Ithacan beach reveals that Odysseus not only is conscious of the artifice which informs his story but helps to direct it. In a brief article on the Odyssey, Tzvetan Todorov has remarked that in the Odyssey "les personnages mentent les uns aux autres, le narrateur ne nous ment jamais. Les surprises des personnages ne sont pas des surprises pour nous. Le dialogue du narrateur avec le lecteur n'est pas isomorphe à celui des personnages entre eux."²⁶ This remark helps to show how unusual this scene is, and how unusual is Odysseus' relationship with Athena (and with his poet). In fact, the narrator's "dialogue" with us is not distinct from his "dialogue" with Odysseus. We usually know more than the other characters know, but once Odysseus is on Ithaca, we never know more than he does.

The Odyssey, then, incarnates what Thomas Greene has called "a vital formalism compatible with heroism,"²⁷ but this formalism also limits the poem in certain ways. Our self-consciousness of and Odysseus' involvement in the artifice of the plot have the effect of distancing and aestheticizing the story. We are willing to look at lies as aesthetic things, well-crafted stories; but as the categories of truth and falsehood become harder and harder to apply, the poet

²⁵See Fenik, pp. 143-53.

²⁶Todorov, "Le récit primitif," in Poétique de la prose, p. 73.

²⁷Greene, The Descent from Heaven p. 67.

risks losing the seriousness of his poem.²⁸ The shift towards greater poetic self-consciousness means a possible sacrifice of larger certainties in favor of the meaning which form itself can bring.²⁹ The poem asks us to accept an aesthetic order which posits a meaning, but its meaning can be quite arbitrary since it gets its coherence and validity only from the aesthetic order itself.³⁰ Thus the poem chooses not to emphasize the loss of the six men whom Scylla kills, nor does it present the deaths of the suitors and the disloyal servants in the context of serious human loss. These deaths are distanced, romanticized, and soon forgotten. The aesthetic order and our attention to it allows us to treat them almost as aesthetic events, necessitated

²⁸The degree to which the emphasis on an aesthetic perspective in the Odyssey threatens to make us underestimate the seriousness of the poem can be seen in Todorov's article on "Le récit primitif," in Poétique de la prose. By focusing on the self-reflective qualities of the narrative in the Odyssey, Todorov ends up making the Odyssey sound like 1001 Nights: "L'Odyssée n'est pas donc un simple récit, mais un récit de récits, elle consiste en la relation des récits qui se font les personnages....Le récit qui traite de sa propre création ne peut jamais s'interrompre, sauf arbitrairement....Le thème de l'Odyssée n'est pas le retour d'Ulysse à Ithaque; ce retour est, au contraire, la mort de l'Odyssée, sa fin. Le thème de l'Odyssée, ce sont les récits qui forment l'Odyssée, c'est l'Odyssée elle-même" (pp. 74-5). While what Todorov claims may be true in a highly metaphorical sense, it cannot stand in any other sense as a fair description of the Odyssey, since after all one half of the poem takes place after Odysseus' returns to Ithaca. The Odyssey is not, in fact, only about art or only about narrative.

²⁹This sacrifice of larger certainties may, once again, stem from the Odyssey's closeness to romance. See above note 7.

³⁰Followed to its logical conclusion, this idea suggests that all art can only convey such ultimately arbitrary meanings. But epic poems do not always represent this problem so self-consciously and thus do not often make it a central issue within the epic plot.

by an aesthetic order; as Zeus tells Athena twice, she had always planned that Odysseus would punish the suitors (v,24; xxiv,480).

Thus the artistic self-consciousness of the poet and of his hero allows, among other things, a streak of cruelty to appear in Odysseus' character almost without being noticed. Odysseus' treatment of his father in the final book, for example, strikes many readers as cruel,³¹ but his manipulation of his father's feelings is forgotten in the final scene when events (and Athena) seem kind to Laertes (as he himself attests, xxiv,514-5; for Athena's action, see xxiv,520-1). The poet never hides the cruelty of Odysseus, but he also does not blame Odysseus for it (as the poet of the Iliad, and the gods in that poem, openly blame Achilles for his excesses of anger). Instead he slips these episodes into the story, and by calling our attention to the artifice of the story itself he diminishes their thematic significance. Meir Sternberg has described the strain brought into the poem by the poet's need "to manipulate and control the reader's response to some of the less savory facets of Odysseus's personality." He argues that "Homer aims to ensure and maintain our essentially sympathetic attitude towards the protagonist, and...to explore his character in all its

³¹Fenik, p. 49, emphasizes the difference in the kind of story Odysseus tells Laertes: it "indicates that Odysseus should have been back long ago and is therefore probably dead" (his italics). He concludes that there is "a heartless element to the scene which stems from a less than tactful manipulation of the traditional elements...." See also George J. Dimock, Jr., who, in "The Name of Odysseus," in Essays on the Odyssey, ed. Charles H. Taylor, Jr., (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963; essay 1st published, 1956), pp. 54-72 and especially p. 55, suggests a double etymology for "to odysseus" (odyssasthai), "to suffer and to cause suffering."

complexity. It is largely in terms of the reconciliation of these mutually exclusive aims that the expositional order...can be accounted for."³² As Sternberg suggests, the poem's way of glossing over the cruelty of Odysseus--that side of Odysseus which brings suffering rather than the side that suffers--represents only one part of its interest, for the Odyssey unflinchingly presents its hero as the only character with the toughness and endurance to outlast the hostility of a god.

Odysseus' toughness and endurance derive in part from his cruelty, from his willingness to sacrifice others when his own ends require it, and the poem does present these qualities as contributing to his heroism. Thus it is not a lack of clarity or force in the poet's presentation of the crueler side of Odysseus which is pointed to here; rather it is the discomfort, or strain in the fabric of the story, which results from the poet's efforts to achieve two quite different ends at once which is at issue. The serious presentation of the nature of Odysseus' heroism strains against the tendency to distance us from its results (or to aestheticize those results), and this strain arises when poetic strategies and stance typical of the counterplot are transferred into the arena of heroic action.

If the Iliad ends by turning back to death as the unavoidable fact underlying the poem, the Odyssey turns the other way. The cen-

³²Meir Sternberg, Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978), p. 92. (Both quotations are from p. 92.) See also Sternberg's chapter on "Delayed and Distributed Exposition in the Odyssey: The Dynamics of Narrative Interest," pp. 56-89.

tral recognition scene in the Iliad is between the hero and his mortality,³³ while in the Odyssey the hero's sense of his mortality is muted. Odysseus actively chooses mortality and in that sense faces his death; nonetheless the poem by and large treats death from a more distanced, aesthetic standpoint, a fact which is symbolically represented by Athena's capacity to change the direction of time by doing and undoing the effects of aging.³⁴ Similarly the deaths of both Odysseus' comrades and his enemies are distanced so that they are not felt as serious losses in the poem. Even though he meets the dead, Odysseus does not treat death as though it were as painful as Achilles clearly feels it is (see xi,483-6 versus xi,488-91). The scene with the dead affirms the poem's basic commitment to life and to poetic strategies which enhance it and keep us from thinking about death.

Odysseus' death is explicitly included in Teiresias' prophecy, but the point of the prophecy is to tell Odysseus what he must do to be sure that he will live a long life. If he goes on the long journey to the land of people who know nothing of the sea, then, Teiresias says,

Death will come to you from the sea, in
some altogether unwarlike way, and it will end you
in the ebbing time of a sleek old age. (xi,134-6)

³³Greene, The Descent from Heaven, p. 47, sees the recognition of mortality as the central recognition in epic.

³⁴Sheila Murnaghan, my friend and colleague, suggested in a recent lecture that Athena's capacity to change the direction of time indicates the extent to which the Odyssey can be thought of as a romance.

The Odyssey gives Odysseus both great fame and the long life which Achilles (and the others who died at Troy) gave up. Thus, though the poem includes some confrontation with death, its central impulse is not towards death, but towards the steps necessary to hold it off as long as possible. One way to keep death at a distance is to emphasize the artifice of the story and even of the stories within the story. To emphasize artifice in a poem is to set death in a broader perspective, to treat it as if it were an event which might be controlled or directed by the artist. These techniques of bringing detachment into the poem are used by the poet of the Iliad in his counterplot but are rejected in that poem as ways of responding to death.

Odysseus' distinctiveness and character is brought out by the expanded role he plays in the Odyssey. He is a hero who values civilization, and his epic values it also. The increase in artistic self-consciousness helps to emphasize the degree of the poem's respect for the arts that make civilized life possible. The expansion of the main heroic story to include scenes from the Iliadic counterplot which are mythic or non-heroic was an essential broadening of the epic. But the desire to include or even to unite an heroic and an aestheticizing view of death also limits the degree of moral or philosophical seriousness which the poem can claim. The Odyssey is serious about many things--about endurance and its costs, about the ties between fathers and sons, about reunions of husbands and wives, and even about the necessity of linking the past and the present--but it is not ultimately serious about death.

The poem's tendency to treat death as if it were not an event of great consequence is balanced, however, by its honesty about the

effects of artistic self-consciousness on an epic poem. The Odyssey seriously explores the effects of the self-consciousness it embodies: it reveals the advantages that such self-consciousness brings to Odysseus and his poem, but it also reveals that such self-consciousness can make room in the poem for a cruelty and a hardness sometimes significant enough to undermine the very values of civilization which the poem ostensibly defends.

(iii) Odysseus in Mythic Places

The heightened self-consciousness which merging the Iliadic plot and counterplot brings to the Odyssey also becomes apparent in a different use of natural settings and a different relation of heroes and poet to the natural world. In the Iliad the world of nature is presented in the counterplot as an alternative, timeless world in which human mortality seems distant. These natural scenes introduce the myth of timelessness, for the events they describe seem endlessly repeatable and the natural seasons continually repeat their cycles. The fact that in this rural world man does not continue endlessly does not have to be faced directly in the Iliad because this world is not the central focus of attention. In the Odyssey the hint of timelessness in these brief scenes is developed into a fully embodied myth.

The Odyssey contains several passages of extended natural description. Calypso's grotto, Circe's island, and the Cave of the Naiads on Ithaca, all mythic places, reveal that combination of artifice, divine presence, and natural process which suggests that they may satisfy the human longing for immortality; they all represent the immortality their divine patronesses have transferred onto

them.³⁵ Odysseus, unlike the heroes of the Iliad, visits these places, and thus comes himself to measure their degree of likeness or appropriateness to him. Like the heroes in the Iliad who are like and yet not like the flowers or trees or natural scenes to which they are compared, Odysseus both belongs and does not belong in the mythic places to which he travels. In the Iliad, the poet eventually rejects the comparison between the warriors and the natural scenes in the counterplot; in the Odyssey, Odysseus himself comes to reject his identification with these mythic places except in their most modified forms.

Along with the self-consciousness of the Odyssey, then, comes a different way of using natural imagery. As Adam Parry has pointed out, in general in the Iliad "a natural phenomenon is made directly a simile of something human."³⁶ In this first mode of natural metaphor, Parry argues, "the poet does not have to make contact between himself and nature by attributing his emotions to the latter. Nature is so close to man that he can confidently maintain the sense of his own difference."³⁷ In fact, as suggested in Chapter I, a sense of difference may often be the main result of a direct natural simile. Parry suggests that there is a second mode of natural metaphor, which usually appears in more developed cultures, in which nature tells

³⁵The Gardens of Alcinous are slightly different, and are treated below.

³⁶Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," Yale Classical Studies 15 (1957), p. 3.

³⁷Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," p. 5.

us "what we are not but yearn to be"; the natural world becomes a complex metaphor for man's unfulfilled aspirations.³⁸ Parry places classical pastoral poetry at an intermediate position between the earlier and the later uses of natural metaphor.

In the Odyssey, though there are many direct natural similes, we at times glimpse the later, more self-conscious kind of natural imagery. A touch of longing or at least admiration fills the descriptions of these mythic places. Though Odysseus skips over his seven years on Calypso's island, a brief review of that setting will remind us of how much Ogygia resembles many of the other mythic islands that Odysseus describes to the Phaeacians. Calypso's grotto is the only one of these striking landscapes that the poet presents directly, and, as audience, we are introduced to its natural bounty as we travel there with Hermes. After describing the splendor of the spot, the poet tells of Hermes' pleasure: "even a god who came into that place/would have admired what he saw, the heart delighted within him./There the courier Argeiphontes stood and admired it" (v,73-5). The first part of this comment seems to express the poet's own wonder at the beauty of the spot he imagines, for then he goes on to say that Hermes did indeed admire it. As Greene has suggested, the garden finally is "ingeniously contrived," "an object of contemplation; it is an aesthetic object from which one stands aside and admires."³⁹

The figure of the admiring outsider often appears in these

³⁸Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," pp. 7-8.

³⁹Greene, The Descent from Heaven, p. 59.

mythic settings, and seems to express the poet's own admiration for their beauty. These places themselves combine divine art and natural beauty in a way that does not happen in ordinary, mortal places, so both because of the admiration in the poet's voice and because they are so unlike our world, these mythic places seem to stand at a distance, and even the poet seems nostalgic for them. The Gardens of Alcinous are a slightly more earthly version of the locus amoenus that myth and divine power created on Calypso's island. As Hermes paused before Calypso's cave, so we pause with pleasure over the lovely description which stands in the text for the beauty of the figured location itself. Thus we experience something akin to what Odysseus himself feels when he crawls onto the island; on Ogygia, we hear first and directly about the lovely scene so that we can realize the powerful pull of such mythic spots.

Since these beautiful and desirable places seem unavailable in our world, the poet, as Parry suggests is the case for later poets, draws closer ties between his hero and the natural world. This closer tie is created in two ways in the Odyssey. First, the poet puts the hero into a natural scene which figures the unfulfilled aspirations of men. In fact, the poet imprisons Odysseus in this world for seven years: the hero's imprisonment in a natural world which offers immortality stands as an emblem of the merging of the plot and the counterplot in the Odyssey. Odysseus' rejection of this offer represents how difficult and unstable a union the poet has established. Later the poet will establish a second, more indirect, more distanced tie to the natural world, and he will limit the extent to which the natural world is used to represent man's unfulfilled aspir-

ations, especially the desire for immortality.

Because of Calypso's offer of immortality, Odysseus knows that this natural scene embodies a myth which ultimately excludes human beings, and he eventually rejects it. However much he may have enjoyed himself upon arrival, he eventually comes to feel himself to be in an alien environment (see v,82-4).⁴⁰ He knows that this world does not describe him, and he longs to return to one which does. Calypso's island becomes a false paradise for him: the timelessness of the mythic scene is only painful repetition for the mortal who is only delayed there. Odysseus sits apart from the loveliness of Calypso's isle, though it takes a narrative ellipsis of seven years--the gap of greatest duration in the poem--for him to take this position.

As Odysseus rejects immortality, the Odyssey, like the Iliad, rejects as solutions to the problem of death scenes which seem to offer immortality, and the heroic ethic, which depends on facing and accepting the fact of death, is reaffirmed. Nonetheless, the poet's attitude here is more ambivalent than the stance of the poet in the Iliad, for some aspects of the myth of immortality, and such places as the Cave of the Naiads which are not so different from Calypso's grotto,

⁴⁰Odysseus clearly experiences this natural setting as an alien place, a place of exile (see v,82-4). He turns his back on Calypso's island, where he does not feel he belongs; the cold, empty seascape, watery as his tears, more accurately mirrors his feelings. Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," p. 25, cites this passage to show its change from the poetics of the Iliad. But see Viktor Pöschl, in The Art of Vergil, trans. Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962; originally published as Die Dichtkunst Vergils, 1950), p. 183, who points out the connection between Odysseus' feelings and the sea, a connection which expresses the unity of man and nature typical, in Pöschl's opinion, of Homer.

are found in Ithaca too. The poet does not completely reject his longing to include these worlds in his poem.

The dangers that these mythic worlds represent are indirectly clarified by the prophecy that Menelaus will go to Elysium after he dies.⁴¹ Proteus prophesied that the hero himself would be translated there upon his death:

there is made the easiest life for mortals
for there is no snow, nor much winter there, nor is there ever
rain, but always the stream of the Ocean sends up breezes
of the West Wind blowing briskly for the refreshment of mortals.
(iv, 565-8)

Set at the world's end, Elysium is almost beyond the chance of seasons; the lack of change in the seasons and the steady wind (which both become common paradisaical symbols; see Dante's Purgatorio XXVIII, 7) symbolizes the immortality granted by the place to those mortals invited to enjoy it. The similarity of Elysium and the other mythic places Odysseus visits emphasizes the connection between the lovely places and the gods. Although being conveyed by the gods to Elysium will mean immortality for Menelaus, it will also mean being conveyed away from a human realm. Menelaus will travel to Elysium only when he is about to die, so that in a sense the trip itself represents death,

⁴¹This passage contains the earliest known description of the Elysian Fields. See William S. Anderson, "Calypso and Elysium" in Essays on the Odyssey, ed. Charles H. Taylor, Jr., (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963; essay first published, 1958), p. 73. See also Moses Hadas, "Blessed Landscapes and Havens," in Hellenistic Culture (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 212-22.

not immortality, or at least the end of his mortal life.⁴² Only a man about to die can be translated to Elysium (if he is to be translated at all); in the same way, accepting Calypso's offer of immortality would end Odysseus' life as a mortal hero. Elysium may be, as O'Loughlin has claimed, one of the governing metaphors for the poem,⁴³ but it represents more than the permanent mixture of the ideal and the natural. It also represents indirectly the dangers to the hero of such idyllic places which offer immortality.

In many ways Odysseus' departure from Ogygia is his most heroic moment. C.R. Beye calls this episode Odysseus' aristeia, "the Homeric word for that moment in battle when a hero achieves his finest form. The heroism of his suffering, his self-control and wit, continue throughout the turmoil of majestic winds and waves."⁴⁴ In leaving Calypso's island, Odysseus gets the long life that Achilles rejects, but he also rejects the figuration of that long life as immortality. Confronted with the mythic dimension of the world of the counterplot, Odysseus is ambivalent and finally rejects it as a trap. At the point we see him on Ogygia Odysseus has resolved the tension between his desire to enjoy Calypso and her isle and his desire to return home, a

⁴²W.B. Stanford, The Odyssey of Homer, I, 283, comments that "in Elysium full bodily powers were retained, in contrast with the weakness of the flitting ghosts in Hades." The argument here is not that Menelaus actually dies but rather that there is an uncanny tie between death and Elysium such that we cannot easily imagine a full human being living on there.

⁴³O'Loughlin, p. 17.

⁴⁴C.R. Beye, The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 193.

tension never explicitly described by the poet, but implied by Odysseus' lengthy stay. His decision to leave Calypso, once he is allowed to do so, represents a serious point about the nature of heroism. As Adorno and Horkheimer put it, "the title of hero is only gained at the price of abasement and mortification of the instinct for complete, universal and undivided happiness."⁴⁵

The poet's treatment of Odysseus' stay on Ogygia is more ambivalent, however, than his treatment of Odysseus' departure suggests. In the scene on Ogygia, the poet stands more in the position of Hermes than in that of Odysseus. He is partly drawn into the scene as he describes its beauty, and so are we. The poet admires Calypso's grotto, yet he strongly affirms his hero's need to escape it. He presents both the allure and the need to escape with equal power, so in this scene he seems more divided than his hero. The poet is unwilling to abandon his instinct for undivided happiness yet his story shows precisely why he must do so.

In The Dialectic of Enlightenment Adorno and Horkheimer pose the problem in the terms of heroic identity. They examine the confrontations of the individual self with the multifarious, dissociated mythic world; they present Odysseus as struggling with myth and are particularly concerned with Odysseus' mastery of nature, both within himself and in the outer world. Adorno and Horkheimer outline and define the paradoxical role in the epic of Odysseus' visit to these mythic realms. These islands, where nature is directed by magic or divine art, are

⁴⁵Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 57.

dangerous oases as well as places which represent a mastery of nature. As a player of roles on Ithaca, Odysseus will demonstrate such a mastery over nature (a mastery, as we learn from the incident of the boar hunt and from the description of his marriage bed, he also had in his youth). These places, then, represent values and capacities similar to Odysseus' own, only more powerfully embodied.

The seriousness of the threat to the heroic ideal in these worlds is equaled, in the opinion of Adorno and Horkheimer, by the intensity of their attractiveness. In the "dialectic of enlightenment," the fact that both aspects of the opposition are contained within one event or narrative episode does not decrease the violence of their opposition.⁴⁶ Their phrasing of the issue suggests that the only way Odysseus can survive the challenge offered to heroic effort by nymphs like Circe and Calypso is to submerge himself in the mythic element so fully that he rises on the far side. This paradox of Odyssean heroism helps to show why Circe and Calypso do not threaten the heroic ideal as seriously as some of their descendants in later epic may do (Alcina and Armida, for example). To put it more simply, the tension between the heroic ideal and the idyllic worlds in which nature is controlled by magic is also felt within Odysseus, for he unites within himself the hero and the artist, whose control over nature is of the same kind as that of Circe or Calypso.

Adorno and Horkheimer thus also describe the internal drama of

⁴⁶For a clear description of Adorno's dialectical criticism, see Frederic Jameson, "T.W. Adorno, or Historical Tropes," in Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 3-59.

Odysseus. Although heroic labor and artifice, epic and myth, are seemingly put in opposition by the Odyssey, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that they are not as different as they may seem. Both epic and myth, for these critics, are based upon exploitation and domination of the outer world. They base their interpretation of the Odyssey on this insight about the "aesthetic dualism" of the poet of the Odyssey: "In Homer, epic and myth, form and content, do not so much emerge from and contrast with, as expound and elucidate, one another."⁴⁷ They describe the voyages from Troy as the way taken through myths by the self, but they insist that the threats to the heroic identity encountered in this mythic, anthropomorphized world provide the very knowledge which allows the hero to survive. Thus, the identity of the self "is so much a function of the unidentical, of dissociated, unarticulated myths, that it must derive itself from those myths."⁴⁸ Artifice proves the mediating term between the oppositions that are thus established; in artifice, where nature is mastered through adaptations and disguises, the adventuring self can play with many roles in order to reveal the unchanging identity within.

In this somewhat allegorical way, Adorno and Horkheimer claim that Odysseus' heroic identity depends dialectically on his mythic adventures, and they posit as a hermeneutic key the dialectic between the self and the multitudinous outer world which tries to distract it from its historical tasks:

⁴⁷Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 46.

⁴⁸Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 48.

the knowledge which comprises (Odysseus') identity and which enables him to survive, draws its content from experience of the multitudinous, from digression and salvation; and the knowing survivor is also the man who takes the greatest risk when death threatens, thus becoming strong and unyielding when life continues. That is the secret of the process between epic and myth; the self does not constitute the fixed antithesis to adventure, but in its rigidity molds itself only by way of that antithesis: being an entity only in the diversity of that which denies all unity.⁴⁹

These critics thus suggest the significance of the mythic adventures for the resolution of Odysseus' internal divisions, and they suggest a variety of reasons why Odysseus cannot and does not simply leave the mythic world behind him when he leaves Calypso. Their interpretation, which allegorizes the mythic adventures as internal oppositions, needs to be reformulated in one aspect: Odysseus as character does not change significantly in the course of the Odyssey, though the poem does act out a number of oppositions which reside within its differing poetic strategies. Thus what Adorno and Horkheimer argue is true of the hero as character is perhaps more properly said to be true of the poem itself.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 47.

⁵⁰Adorno and Horkheimer are not alone in reading the myths as projections of internal experience. See, for another example, C.H. Taylor, Jr., "The Obstacles to Odysseus' Return," in Essays on the Odyssey, ed. C.H. Taylor, Jr., (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 87-99. Taylor suggests that "the strength of (Odysseus') opponents is rooted either in the external, natural world or in the non-rational elements within human nature" (p. 93) and that "the sea is an ancient emblem of the whole realm of the irrational, and drowning in the sea a compelling image of being overwhelmed from below, returning to the elemental" (p. 95). Since Adorno and Horkheimer see Odysseus as a symbol of "bourgeois man" and of an entire social order, perhaps their interpretation depends less on internalization than it might seem.

The poet does indeed turn to artifice as the mediating term between the heroic character and the mythic worlds. From the moment he constructs his raft (v,241-61), Odysseus is more and more a craftsman. The opposition between the heroic ethos and the offer of immortality is replaced by the opposition between true and feigned (ultimately, between true and false) and the new poetic task becomes that of finding a way to bring these two terms together. Art, of course, is neither true nor false; nor are Odysseus' stories on Ithaca (nor even, perhaps, those told on Scheria).

On the island of Scheria our attention is particularly drawn to the value given to art in Phaeacian society and to Odysseus' own art, his skill as a storyteller. Scheria appears to be a place where human artifice is partly separated from the divine, as it is not on Ogygia or Aeaëa. The Phaeacians are mortals, after all, even if they are kin to the gods. The island of Scheria presents an idealized picture of customary Homeric society, and in this ordered and peaceful world, the arts of civilization are venerated.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the human art of the Phaeacians is closely tied to the power of the gods, and the world of Scheria is shaped by both mortal and immortal power. Alcinous' household, with its gardens set about the palace, evokes the union of artifice, human and divine, and the natural beauty which Phaeacia represents. The palace is filled with artefacts: golden doors, silver pillars, a frieze of dark-blue enamel, and gold and silver sculptured hounds.

⁵¹See Rüter, p. 229ff.

fashioned by Hephaistos in his craftsmanship and cunning
to watch over the palace of great-hearted Alkinoos
being themselves immortal, and all their days they are ageless.
(vii,91-4)

Here art is explicitly tied to immortality and to the power of the gods. The description of the palace connects the divinely wrought and ageless hounds and other mimetic artefacts with the arts of weaving and ship-handling at which the Phaeacians excel (vii,108-11).

The gardens themselves--orchards and vegetable gardens with springs running through them--resemble Elysium; the evenness of the climate with the west wind blowing gently all year round makes the garden a seasonless, generative locale which produces fruit continually almost of its own accord (vii,177-9). As Stanford comments, the "Zephuros, a westerly wind, is a pleasant ripening breeze in this fairy-land and in the Elysian fields and in later classical literature," and he notes that "the whole has the formal proportions of a Dutch Garden, and is hardly paralleled in classical Greek literature."⁵² Some human labor does enter this mythical scene, for the poet describes the careful rows, the plotting, the piping of water for the townsmen and for the garden, and the careful fence driven round about it. The gardens thus represent a joining of human labor and divine power. Just as the Phaeacians are kin to the gods, though not gods themselves, so their garden is like the magical or paradisaical gardens of Circe and Calypso, though not identical with them. The gardens and the palace are a visual oxymoron: an idyllic spot, they represent the union of human

⁵²Stanford, The Odyssey of Homer, I,325.

and divine art on which, mutatis mutandi^s, Odysseus will depend in Ithaca. s)
If Nausicaa is a domesticated version of Artemis (vi,102-9), then the gardens may be said to be a domesticated version of the mythic islands which Odysseus describes in his apologoi.

Scheria thus poses some of the same problems to Odysseus as the other mythic islands did, and this similarity is brought out in plot terms when Alcinous tries to marry off Nausicaa to Odysseus. This offer of marriage constitutes a human version of the same threat posed by Circe and Calypso: life on a far distant, idyllic island with a lovely woman who is not Penelope. The Phaeacians lack the toughness of Odysseus, for their world is not one in which heroism is possible. They live too close to the gods, too far from the exigencies and struggles of human life.⁵³

The lovely landscapes in which Odysseus finds himself--on Ogygia, on Aea, and on Scheria--find an analogue in the Cave of the Naiads on Ithaca. This cave, known to the Phaeacian sailors, combines elements of myth and reality, divine artifice and natural splendor, as many of these other lovely settings did. The Cave of the Naiads can exist on Ithaca, but it is a measure of the changed world of the second half of the poem that on Ithaca it must be distanced, removed, out of the main ways of the island. This emblem of nature transformed by divine art is hidden away under the wide boughs of an olive tree:

⁵³ That the Phaeacian world is, as Stanford puts it, "a fairyland" (I,325), may seem obvious. It is important to this argument, however, to establish that, however much Phaeacia may symbolize the values of the poem (as O'Loughlin, among others, has claimed), it is not ultimately a fully human world or one which offers any real solutions to Odysseus, and thus it must be cut off from the world of Ithaca.

At the head of the harbor, there is an olive tree with spreading leaves, and nearby is a cave that is shaded, and pleasant, and sacred to the nymphs who are called the Nymphs of the Wellsprings,

Naiads. There are mixing bowls and handled jars inside it, all of stone, and there bees deposit their honey. And therein also are looms that are made of stone, very long, where

the nymphs weave their sea-purple webs, a wonder to look on; and there is water forever flowing. It has two entrances, one of them facing the North Wind, where people can enter, but the one toward the South Wind has more divinity. That is the way of the immortals, and no men enter by that way.

(xiii,102-12)

In this cave, mortal and immortal meet, as in Phaeacia, and the divine power behind natural beauty also appears here. The winebowls or mixing bowls hollowed in the rock represent divine art becoming nature: the description reminds us that natural scenes in this epic symbolize immortality largely because they have divine sanction. The cave represents the way the natural world in the Odyssey most often stands for a divine power or perspective.

In his description of the Cave of the Naiads, the poet strengthens the connection between art, divine power and immortality, a connection which suggests the basic contrast in Odysseus' identity between hero and artist. As the existence of the cave suggests, this basic contrast still exists on Ithaca, though in a much more muted form. Even in the Ithacan sections, the poet is still trying to draw together these two quite distinct roles, though he diminishes the role of the divine on Ithaca (as he does slightly on Phaeacia); nonetheless the perspective and powers of the artist consistently reveal themselves to be either of divine origin or at least very similar to the perspectives and powers of the gods. The presence of the Cave of the Naiads on Ithaca reminds us that these basic oppositions, while

apparently softened by the absence of outrightly mythical material, will still have to be resolved (or will still make their unresolved presence known) on Ithaca.

In its distant, out of the way setting the Cave of the Naiads also symbolizes one of the poet's strategies for including mythic material in a story which at its base is threatened by the presence of myth. While Odysseus rejects the extreme form of myth, a goddess's offer of immortality, the poem nonetheless wishes to include some form of myth; myth represents the power of the artist, which is central to the system of values embodied in the Odyssey. But since myth, and the immortality which it offers, would ultimately destroy any human heroism, the poem distances it from its main presentation of the heroic personality on Ithaca. The poem (and Odysseus) distances the mythic worlds through structuring the narrative to represent the unavailability of these worlds, and by putting them in the past. These two strategies come together in the long analepse of Odysseus' retrospective tale.⁵⁴ Thus the tension between the identity of the hero and the claims of the artist may suggest some reasons why the narrative

⁵⁴ For a definition of analepse see Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 90-105. In Genette's terms, Odysseus' apologoi is extradiégétique (see pp. 238-40), a point which clarifies the fact that Odysseus' stay on Calypso's island takes place largely in a narrative gap. For a clear survey and summary in English of Genette's theory, see Shlomith Rimmon, "A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: Genette's Figures III and the Structuralist Study of Fiction," PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature I (1976) 33-62.

structure of the Odyssey is as complex as it is.⁵⁵

The Odyssey, then, recreates a certain amount of the epic distance through narrative ordering.⁵⁶ It distances the mythic world by letting most of it appear only in Odysseus' own tale, so its truth is vouched for only by him. Also, since he has permanently left behind the worlds he describes--a fact which is symbolized by the dramatic fashion in which he departs from Ogygia--so these mythic places are introduced only as part of the past. Other idyllic places in this poem are also set in the past, a fact which suggests that using the past as protection is a consistent strategy. Syria, for example, the homeland of Eumaeus, is described as a place where people prosper in a happier relation to nature than prevails on Ithaca. Syria is

not so much a populous island, but a good one, good for
cattle and good for sheep, full of vineyards, and wheat raising.
No hunger ever comes on these people, nor any other
hateful sickness, of such as befall wretched humanity;
but when the generations of men grow old in the city,
Apollo of the silver bow, and Artemis with him,
comes with a visitation of painless arrows, and kills them.
(xv,405-11)

⁵⁵For another opinion, see Sternberg, pp. 56-89, who attributes the ordering of the narrative to the poet's desire to keep us in suspense. Most critics do not see suspense as a major aspect of the Odyssey's story. See also Whitman, pp. 306-8, who attributes the narrative structure of the Odyssey in part to the shifting tastes and values of the period in which it was composed.

⁵⁶On the structure of the Odyssey, see W.J. Woodhouse, The Composition of the Odyssey (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930); J.A. Scott, "The Poetic Structure of the Odyssey," Martin Classical Lectures I (1930) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1931), 97-124; and A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), chapter 8. Whitman's entire book is devoted to the question of the structure of Homeric epic. See his chapter "The Odyssey and Change," pp. 285-309.

Here too an idyllic place set in the past is represented as being under a separate dispensation from the gods, for on Syria death itself is not painful. The vision of agricultural plenitude resembles the plenitude described in Alcinous' mythic garden. Eumaeus was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery, so Syria is a world to which he may never return, a world on which he looks back with nostalgia. The past seems to be a safe place for myth to reside, for then it still has some relation to the present but does not change or affect present exigencies.

All of these mythic worlds are geographically distant as well. On the edges of the world, Elysium and Phaeacia best represent the way that geographical distance can symbolize more than a distance of space. Elysium, too, is set at the limit of life itself, while Phaeacia represents the limit of the world that can in any sense be called human. And Phaeacia is finally closed off to the human world after Odysseus reaches Ithaca.

The most extreme example of narrative distancing occurs in the Calypso episode, where a major ellipsis in the narrative separates the ending of the apologoi and the beginning of the poet's version of Odysseus' story in book v. Calypso's mysterious appeal is also distanced in Odysseus' own narration, for he hides a good part of seven years in a narrative gap. Calypso's appeal is too powerful to be represented directly in the poem, so we only hear of it after Odysseus has become determined to leave her. Another way of distancing mythic events is exemplified in the tale of Odysseus' adventures. There the mythic world at times provides comic and grotesque scenes; through

these different lenses the dangers of the mythic world can be examined more safely.

A final way in which the poet distances mythic events and thus recreates some of the epic distance in his poem is to interweave different types of story into one episode. Odysseus' stories often include suppressed within them the possibility of a different story. This technique of story-telling (which is probably a result of oral composition) distances the events described and makes them seem less real to us, because it gives the stories a strange, ambivalent, almost uncanny feeling.⁵⁷ Such episodes, as well as the character of Odysseus himself, seem double as they compress into themselves parts of an opposite story. This technique can be described as the technique of narrative doubling.

A structural parallel between the visits to Cyclops and Circe, for example, shows that each episode contains the germ of a story far different from the tales that Odysseus actually tells. Odysseus and his company are drawn to explore the cave of Polyphemus partly by their pleasure in the untilled but fruitful island of goats just across the bay from the caves of the shepherds.

⁵⁷A definition of the uncanny is extrapolated here from the definition of Tzvetan Todorov in Introduction à la littérature fantastique (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970). Todorov suggests that an event in a story is uncanny when the reader hesitates between a natural and a supernatural explanation of it. By analogy, in the *Odyssey* an episode might be said to be uncanny when the audience or reader feels uncertainty about how the episode will end because the episode seems to have, inscribed within it, two separate episodes, or two separate kinds of experience.

The island, like the Cyclops' own land, is a fully natural landscape, for the Cyclops are ignorant of the arts of ship-building and agriculture and neither travel there nor till their own lands. Odysseus describes how

the lawless outrageous
Cyclopes ..., putting all their trust in the immortal
gods, neither plow with their hands nor plant anything,
but all grows for them without seed planting, without cultivation,
wheat and barley and also the grapevines, which yield for them
wine of strength, and it is Zeus' rain that waters it for them.
(ix,106-11)

Up until this point in the description, the Cyclops sound as if they live in a primitive paradise in which all wants are satisfied by Zeus without their having to labor. In their land too Odysseus finds the natural plenitude that he and his men had enjoyed on the island of goats. But at this point in the description, the episode takes a turn, a turn hinted at by the reference to their lawlessness in line 106.

Odysseus goes on in this new vein:

These people have no institutions, no meetings for counsels;
rather they make their habitations in caverns hollowed
among the peaks of the high mountains, and each one is the law
for his own wives and children, and cares nothing about the others.
(ix,112-5)

Just as in this description a bountiful natural landscape gives way to horror, so in the episode Odysseus and his men are attracted by a setting which becomes the preface to disaster.

Odysseus and his company encounter hints of a civilized life in Polyphemus' cave. The rustic details of Polyphemus' shepherd's life suggest momentarily that this monster might lead the rough but honorable life of a Eumæus:

We went inside the cave and admired everything inside it. Baskets were there, heavy with cheeses, and the pens crowded with lambs and kids. They had all been divided into separate groups, the firstlings in one place, and then the middle ones, the babies again by themselves. And all his vessels, milk pails and pans, that he used for milking into, were running over with whey.

(ix,218-24)

But Polyphemus, in spite of his affection for his sheep and the ordered pastoral plenitude in his cave, is not a kindly shepherd leading his humble life. The episode thus contains hints of a submerged pastoral episode which it does not become.⁵⁸

Odysseus uses a similar narrative strategy to describe his adventures in the land of the Laestrygonians and on Aeaea.⁵⁹ In these two cases an appealing coastline also appears to offer harbor, but leads only to horrors inland. As they near Laestrygonia, Odysseus describes the shortness of the night with a rural example:

one herdsman, driving
his flocks in hails another, who answers as he drives
his flocks out; and there a man who could do without sleep
could earn him
double wages, one for herding the cattle, one for the silvery
sheep. There the courses of night and day lie close together.
(x,82-6)

This description adds to our sense of the inviting, even homey quality

⁵⁸In Virgil's *Aeneid* (III,639-81) the Cyclops episode also contains hints of a pastoral episode which it does not quite become. See below Chapter IV.

⁵⁹While the similarities in Odysseus' stories clearly are in part the result of oral compositional technique, these similarities still play a role in the poem and affect our response. See G.S. Kirk, "The Oral and the Literary Epic," in *Homer and the Oral Tradition*, pp. 69-112, for a negative answer to the question, "Do we need a special 'oral poetics' in order to understand Homer."

of the coast as they approach it. In Laestrygonia, however, they meet no hard-working shepherds; the travelers see puffs of smoke in the distance which lead them to cannibals.

As they approach Aeaëa, the coast again appears to offer a haven for the ship, and again Odysseus spots a smoke wisp in the distance. As Odysseus' men listen to his description of the smoke (x,149), their hearts contract as they remember the Laestrygonians and the Cyclops (x,198-202). They too sense the recurring narrative patterns in which they seem to be caught.

The visit to Circe's woodland home does not, of course, lead to the disaster that the narrative pattern implies. But this shared narrative structure, due as it probably is to the oral composition of the epic, helps to emphasize the dangers of Circe. We see first the ways in which the arrival on Aeaëa resembles the previous episodes, and only slowly begin to accept Circe's genuine ambiguity--she is both a source of danger and, once mastered, a source of strength. The Polyphemus episode and the Circe episode, the two developed adventures in the first part of the apologoi, each contain elements of the kind of adventure that the other becomes, perhaps because both danger and its rewards remain in tension throughout Odysseus' story. In each case Odysseus' ability to outwit his antagonist constitutes his heroism. But in the case of Circe, Odysseus reminds his listeners, "yet I did not lead my companions away without some loss" (x.551). The death of Elpenor brings out in the ending the sense of a suppressed story collapsed into the Circe adventure, and one wonders what other losses the episode threatened.

The first part of the visit to Circe's island is colored by

this same doubleness. Circe, "that divinity of regression to the animal,"⁶⁰ transforms Odysseus' men into swine. This deed ostensibly represents Circe's evil side, which Odysseus will overcome. The description of the bestial transformation remains so compressed that interpretation must hover on the edge of the literal. Nonetheless, even in the story of the transformation, there are hints of another story hidden beneath the version we hear.⁶¹

The story begins with Hermes' advice to Odysseus. After he has shown Circe that he can master her, Hermes says, Odysseus must sleep with her:

Do not then resist and refuse the bed of the goddess,
for so she will set free your companions, and care for you also;
but bid her swear the great oath of the blessed gods, that she
has no other evil hurt that she is devising against you,
so she will not make you weak and unmanned, once you are naked.
(x,297-30)

Hermes here seems to suggest a connection between being transformed and being unmanned. Perhaps the episode represents an elliptical, displaced expression of fears of castration or of the sexuality which later in the episode proves to be an aid to Odysseus and his men. Whatever the psychological experience being invoked here, the transformation also has a more literal function in the plot. In their transformed state, Odysseus' men are certainly not equipped for heroic voyaging, so an important effect of Circe's magic--whatever it may represent ulti-

⁶⁰Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 33.

⁶¹These hints that perhaps the men enjoyed their transformed states are developed by Spenser in his version of this episode in Faerie Queene II,xii, 87: "Let Gryll be Gryll, and have his hoggish minde."

mately--is to remove them from the sphere of heroic action. Such release from the world of adult responsibilities has its pleasures, just as a return to childhood and the control of the mother can seem appealing.

Another sign that being transformed leads Odysseus' men to abandon their heroic task lies in Circe's methods of transforming them. First she mixes them a potion "to make them forgetful of their own country" (x,236); only then does she strike them with her wand. Before they can be transformed, they must forget their desire to go home.⁶² If this episode were interpreted allegorically, seeds of another story would again appear here. The men come and drink Circe's wine, and soon forget their desire to return home. How different is this version from what actually happens to Odysseus (see x,472)? Circe, in effect, makes them into her own domesticated animals. The episode clearly resists being interpreted in this fashion, since the transformations are stated to have actually occurred (at least physically, the men lose their outer shape, but not their minds: see x,239-40). Nonetheless, symbolic meanings hover over the scene so that it has an uncanny double effect.

The poetry again becomes peculiarly compressed at the moment that the men resume their human shapes, for it seems to capture an oblique sense of loss at this second transformation:

⁶²See Charles Taylor, Jr., "The Obstacles to Odysseus' Return," p. 90.

...they turned back once more into men, younger than they had been and taller for the eye to behold and handsomer by far. They recognized me, and each of them clung to my hand. The lovely longing for lamentation came over us, and the house echoed terribly to the sound, and even the goddess took pity.

(x, 395-9)

Odysseus' men do not resume the same human shapes which they lost: in this second transformation they seem to have benefitted from magic not so different from that Athena uses in transforming Odysseus into a younger, more beautiful man. Their gain suggests the presence of a different, submerged story. It also represents the paradox that in the Odyssey being submerged in the destructive element seems to fortify the heroic will. Once again Odysseus seems uncertain at heart about whether Circe's effects were good or ill. The ambiguous Circe is threatening, yet she provides Odysseus with some important information for his homeward trip.

When he returns to those comrades still waiting on the beach, Odysseus finds them weeping. Odysseus the narrator uses a double simile to describe them:

And as, in the country, the calves, around the cows returning from pasture back to the dung of the farmyard, well filled with grazing,
come gamboling together to meet them, and the pens no longer can hold them in, but lowing incessantly they come running around their mothers, so these men, once their eyes saw me, came streaming around me, in tears, and the spirit in them made them

feel as if they were back in their own country, the very city of rugged Ithaca, where they were born and raised up.

(x, 410-7)

These similes illustrate how the Iliadic plot and counterplot have been conflated in the Odyssey, for here there is little distance between these men and a typical barnyard scene. The men's fears seem childish when they are likened to those of calves. The first simile

is inverted, for Odysseus is, if anything, a father figure to them: the image of the mother seems more appropriate for Circe. She had domesticated the other group of men by turning them into dependent animals. Now this second group of men have become like domesticated animals. The double simile connects homecoming, the humble barnyard scene and the attachment of mothers and offspring; all of these themes also seem to hover in the background of the transformation scene.

The Circe episode can thus be interpreted as having within it a secondary suppressed episode, a mythical version of the homecoming and its dangers. Odysseus' mastery of Circe can be seen, in these terms, as a mythical analogue for his testing and sparring with Penelope. The simile also indicates the extent of Odysseus' responsibility for his men: they are as dependent on him as calves are on their mothers. One shortcoming of Odysseus' heroic success is that he returns home wealthy, but only after having lost all his companions.⁶³

Odysseus' trope--the presentation of an emotion or a state of mind by means of an animal simile--parallels Circe's own troping behavior; she turns the men who depend on her into swine, while for the poet they are calves. Coming right after the double proof of her magic, the simile represents a dangerous quality in both human emotion and art. It undoes the externality of Circe's transformative magic by suggesting how such a scene could be interpreted psychologi-

⁶³Since the men bring about their own downfall by eating the cattle of Helios, Odysseus is not directly blamed for their loss. But here, as elsewhere, they are represented as dependent on him, and in the Scylla episode he knowingly sacrifices some of them to save himself, so he cannot be held as being entirely without responsibility for their loss.

cally. The placement of the simile suggests a similar danger in the poet's technique, for being like calves almost unmans the men, and the power to reveal that similarity also seems to threaten the heroic enterprise. The tension between the hero and the artist in Odysseus is felt here, for the transformations wrought by similes are as essential to the artist as they may be undermining to the hero.

Even after he tells of mastering Circe, Odysseus continues to describe her world as both desirable and threatening. Circe herself still threatens his heroic success, for Odysseus almost forgets to leave. But Circe tells Odysseus how he can control the spirits of the dead in Erebus in order to hear the words of Teiresias. Odysseus' ability to master all these shapes from the past comes from Circe, and the ring composition of the apologoi helps to emphasize her role.⁶⁴ Yet Elpenor's mysterious death, another compressed episode, suggests that this elegant vacation had to be paid for. The analogy to the ending of Odysseus' visit with the Phaeacians is close: in both cases Odysseus' own responsibility has been transferred onto a secondary character or set of characters, and both endings suggest a suppressed (and less felicitous for Odysseus) episode beneath the surface of the story we hear.

Circe also warns Odysseus about the danger of the Sirens. The Sirens enchant men with their singing, just as a bard does; Odysseus himself is in the midst of enchanting the Phaeacians with his

⁶⁴See Whitman, p. 288. Even if we don't accept Whitman's more elaborate schemes, the Circe-Nekyia-Circe narrative structure surely suggests her importance.

tale.⁶⁵ The Sirens' song represents, among other things, the danger of escaping completely into the world of art--a potential danger in Scheria where the court revels in an almost effete concern for elegance and savoir faire. In the episode of the Sirens, heroic task and song clearly oppose one another. The episode seems almost an allegorical representation of the degree of opposition between the two sides of Odysseus' character.⁶⁶ And, typically perhaps, the solution the poem suggests is that Odysseus try to combine song and heroic journey in such a way as not to diminish his heroic success.

The mythic worlds in the Odyssey, then, are distanced from the main story through narrative structure, through manipulation of grotesque elements, and through narrative doubling. In these ways the mythic worlds are bounded off into a separate arena, distinct from the human action. Narrative doubling, as we have examined it in the Cyclops and Circe episodes, provides a glimpse of the difficulties of including such disparate episodes within an epic; these episodes also reveal some of the ambivalence in the structure of the hero's charac-

⁶⁵The connection between Circe's enchantments and Odysseus' is made verbally. The Phaeacians are twice described as being spellbound by Odysseus' tales: "kelethmo d' eschonto" (xi,334) and (xiii,2) resembles (though is opposite in meaning to) what Circe says to Odysseus when he does not fall before her charm: "soi de tis en stethessin akeletos noos estin" (x,329). Stanford also points out this connection, and suggests that "kelethmos probably has magical origins.... Poetry originally had magical uses in spells, runes, incantations." See The Odyssey of Homer I, 394.

⁶⁶For an interesting, new interpretation of the Sirens see Pietro Pucci, "The Song of the Sirens," Arethusa 12, No. 2 (1979) 121-32. Pucci argues that the diction of the Sirens' song reproduces the diction of the Iliad. The Sirens thus identify Odysseus as the warrior of Troy rather than the hero of the Odyssey and invite him to return to that role.

ter, for he is the teller of these tales. By representing the principal mythical characters as artists or magicians capable of transforming people or landscapes, the poet represents in the mythic world the tendency to take an aestheticizing stance on heroic action. By offering immortality, the mythic world also offers an escape from death; this escape is associated with artistry, for the mythic worlds of the poem consistently show that to be an artist is to come close to taking a divine view of human action. The mythic worlds also represent an arena of loss (even if only, as in the case of Calypso, a loss of time), although the reasons for this loss are usually covered over. Lastly, the mythic worlds often embody an uneasy doubleness of tone and perspective in which one senses, lingering beneath the surface of the story, other meanings which would be more disruptive to the heroic enterprise.

These traits of the mythic worlds in the Odyssey suggest why later pastoral poets picked so many details from these episodes as sources for their poems.⁶⁷ For in the mythic worlds of the Odyssey the contradiction between art and heroism is made explicit, and pastoral poetry too makes use of this contradiction. Pastoral poems also tend to be set in carefully bounded spaces, separate arenas for smaller actions,⁶⁸ and represent loss while providing some recom-

⁶⁷For a fuller description of pastoral poetry, for the distinction between pastoral and bucolic poetry, and for a study of these borrowings, see Chapter III below.

⁶⁸See Michael C.J. Putnam, "Virgil's First Eclogue: Poetics of Enclosure," Ramus 4, No. 2 (1975) 163-86, for an argument that pastoral depends on enclosure.

pense for that loss. The answer they provide to the problem of death is likewise the promise of a kind of immortality, brought about through art and through the power of poetry. Paul Alpers has defined the central impulse of pastoral poetry as being a direct concern "with the extent to which song that gives present pleasure can confront and, if not transform and celebrate, then accept and reconcile man to the stresses and realities of his situation."⁶⁹ The pastoral poet claims that art has great power, but he is also willing to stand by and lament if he proves to be wrong, the lament itself being another song which provides another form of consolation. In either case, the stance is an aestheticizing one, for art is seen either actually to transform loss into life, or at least to transform it into song.

In this sense pastoral poetry also depends on the distancing provided by art, usually in the form of a narrative frame: the singers are rarely singing their own songs or about their own grief, except indirectly. Thus the situation of a pastoral singer resembles that of Odysseus in the hall of Alcinous. As Odysseus said to his men after they pass Scylla and Carybdis, "I think that all this will be remembered some day too" (xii,212); indeed, all of their suffering is recollected by Odysseus in the tranquility of the Phaeacian court. Pastoral poetry thus reveals an ambivalence or doubleness in its structure as well as in its self-reflexiveness and secondary or "belated" relation to the epic and tragic tradition which preceded it. It is ambivalent also about whether the limitations of its form are desir-

⁶⁹Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," College English 34, No. 3 (1972), p. 353.

able or not. Pastoral poetry thus tries to resolve or balance the many oppositions at play within each poem;⁷⁰ its chief goal is to achieve a kind of suspension between opposites,⁷¹ and insofar as it succeeds, the balancing agents which draw all together are the forms of art themselves.

The mythic episodes in the *Odyssey* are not pastoral episodes (although parts of the Cyclops and Circe episodes come close to being proto-pastoral episodes), but the comparison helps to suggest how alien the perspective embodied in these mythic worlds is in an heroic world. If such mythic episodes are to become actual events within the heroic plot of an epic, as occurs when the Iliadic plot and counterplot are merged in the *Odyssey*, then they must be distanced in some way: either set in a past made irrevocable at some point in the action, or set in narrative spots inaccessible to the main action and made to seem fictional.

(iv) Odysseus in Rural Ithaca

Phaeacia is an idealized world in which even such mundane work as washing laundry is transformed into the play of the gods; on Ithaca, rural labor is idealized and made into an important metaphor for heroic effort. As we have seen, Odysseus responds to a challenge

⁷⁰For some of these oppositions, see Harold Tolliver, Pastoral Forms and Attitudes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 1-19, and esp. p. 3.

⁷¹Paul Alpers, The Singer of the "Eclogues": A Study of Virgilian Pastoral (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 90, 103.

made by Eurymachus by implicitly equating competition in the fields and competition in arms (xviii,366-80).⁷² To assimilate cutting long meadow grass or plowing and heroic battle is to suggest that rural labor provides a close analogy to the heroic world. Odysseus must respond to Eurymachus' challenge because the poem idealizes labor, both rural and heroic, and opposes it to the unproductive ease of the suitors. The Phaeacians hardly labor or struggle for anything, and their idealized life ultimately seems enervating.⁷³

The Odyssey, then, rejects as a heroic possibility any dalliance or lack of direction and purpose. This kind of idyllic retreat is precisely what Odysseus leaves behind on Ogygia and Aeaea, and although they do some work, the Phaeacians seem to dwell in a softer idealized world. Eumaeus, in contrast, lives a life of hard labor. Odysseus finds him sitting in an enclosure which he had built to

⁷²See above p.115 where this passage is quoted. In Works and Days (ii,11-26) Hesiod also describes two kinds of strife. In the opening of his poem he tells how the gods added to the strife of battle the strife of competition and labor in order to urge the lazy on. But to Hesiod, the strife of battle has only evil results; only the strife engendered by competitiveness or desire has wholesome results.

⁷³We also see the distance separating Odysseus and the Phaeacians in the simile used to describe his eagerness to reach home:

as a man makes for his dinner, when all day
long his wine-colored oxen have dragged the compact plow for him
across the field, and the sun's setting is welcome for bringing
the time to go to his dinner, and as his knees fail him;
thus welcome to Odysseus now was the sun going under.
(xiii,31-5)

This simile, too, conflates heroic action and agricultural labor, for Odysseus' long journey home, soon to end, is compared implicitly to the farmer's hard day at plowing. The simile stands out in Phaeacia, where no one is thinking of work.

guard his master's swine:

He made it
with stones from the field, and topped it off with shrubbery.

Outside
he had driven posts in a full circle, to close it on all sides,
set close together and thick, the dark of the oak, split out
from the logs. Inside the enclosure he made twelve pig pens
next to each other, for his sows to sleep in, and in each of them
fifty pigs who sleep on the ground were confined....

(xiv,11-6)

The poet stresses his hard work by describing how he made the field
hut and pens.

It is easier, then, to combine heroic and non-heroic labor than
it is to combine heroism with idyllic dalliance, so the world of
Eumaeus seems to be the right place for Odysseus to begin his last
heroic task. But the conflict between an idealized life and a heroic
life does not disappear so easily, for a great deal of the poet's
idealization of Eumaeus comes in his descriptions of his labor and his
hard life. Eumaeus covers the ground for his visitor with the same
shaggy goatskin that he himself sleeps on; he spreads the meal of
lean pork sprinkled with barley and wine before Odysseus while ex-
plaining that all the best meat has been consumed by the suitors (xiv,
72-82). The humble details serve to develop the idealized quality of
the scene, for it is admirable that such honor should persist when the
conditions of life are hard. In Eumaeus, then, Odysseus finds a host
comparable in generosity to Alcinous, but this generosity is made to
seem even more admirable since Eumaeus is so poor. In his "hard primi-
tive" world,⁷⁴ the comforts are meagre, but his loyalty and his pre-

⁷⁴For the distinction between "hard" and "soft" primitivism see
A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas, A Documentary History of Primitivism and
Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), pp.

servicing energy makes his life seem almost a part of the golden ages in the past.

Eumaeus' idealized childhood on the island of Syria (xv,403-11) adds to the idealization of the scenes in the swinehut, for the presence of such a character in a humble rural world only serves to idealize that world as well. The rural world in Ithaca is thus shown to be a place where old values are still adhered to. A hospitable host who comes from a mythic world, Eumaeus is clearly assimilated into the mythic paradigms of the poem. In fact, a mythic tone recurs throughout the Ithacan section of the poem (see xxiii,241-2, for example).

In the Iliad the warriors at Troy have left their rural past behind forever. The sense of loss is great, but it is largely felt in the poet's comments where the comparison of war to rural life remains a concern. For the warriors the rural past is completely divorced from the heroic present. From the point of view of the warriors, myth, too, exists largely in the past (for example, the divine conception of certain heroes); even Achilles' fate is ultimately not much altered by his mythic ties. In the Odyssey the rural and idealized past of Odysseus is made the basis of his successful return. Odysseus goes to the world of the counterplot when he returns home as well as during his mythic voyages. Turning for support to Eumaeus and Philoetius,

9-11. The argument presented here essentially suggests that the distinction between "hard" and "soft" primitivism is hard to maintain since "hard" primitivism is usually idealized and thus shifts easily into the "soft."

characters who would have appeared in the Iliadic counterplot, Odysseus finds important resources in this idealized rural world.

Odysseus, then, has the task of bringing the past into the present, for he makes this rural past the basis of his present identity. This task is made difficult by the fact that those characters he meets who admire the past seem almost to be living in it. Eumaeus, for example, seems only to look towards the past; he thinks with nostalgia of Syria and of Odysseus' reign, and changing this nostalgia into hope for the future (which alone would make action possible) is the main obstacle Odysseus must overcome. Thus nostalgia itself is a danger associated with Eumaeus' idealized clearing, and the nostalgia of Eumaeus mirrors a nostalgia in the poet's voice for these idealized worlds. The poet's admiration for these (and other) idealized worlds potentially conflicts with his decision to present heroic action. Like Odysseus, the poet must find a way to make these rural scenes, typical of the counterplot, fit into an heroic story. The touches of nostalgia in the poem thus suggest how the merging of plot and counterplot can create a doubleness or ambivalence in the voice of the poet himself. As in the scene on Ogygia, in the scenes with Eumaeus, the poet sometimes seems more divided than his hero.

Eumaeus reveals his nostalgia in the way he speaks of Odysseus' reign and in his total inability to conceive of Odysseus' return. He will not believe his guest's prophecy of the return of Odysseus:

you will not persuade me
in your talk about Odysseus. Why should such a man as you are
lie recklessly to me?

(xiv, 363-6)

After listening to a tale illustrating Odysseus' cunning in the Tro-

jan war, Eumaeus is still unrelenting in his pessimism, though he does praise Odysseus' skill as a story-teller (xiv,508-9).

Odysseus' meeting with Eumaeus is a doublet of the meeting with Penelope in book xix.⁷⁵ The question of belief and recognition predominates in both scenes, and her failure of belief (if it is not feigned) follows the pattern of Eumaeus' pessimism. For example, she believes the literal description of Odysseus (xix,249-50) but not the "true" story of his Phaeacian adventures (xix,277ff). Eumaeus and Penelope both believe all the false parts of the stories, but refuse to accept the one certain point the stories make.⁷⁶ Penelope, too, seems to look back at the past with nostalgia. She feels that all her arete, all her excellence in beauty and figure, was lost when her husband left for war (xviii,251-3). She also dreams of Odysseus "as he was when he went off with the army" (xx,89), and the dream makes her heart happy. The Odysseus she remembers, of course, is twenty years younger. Odysseus needs to stop her from thinking of him as he was twenty years ago: he must overcome her tendency to look to the past if he wants her to recognize him.⁷⁷

⁷⁵See Fenik, pp. 155-6, for a detailed list of these similarities.

⁷⁶The suitors also fail to hear the truth in the beggar's stories, but they certainly are not nostalgic for the past order. Not all failures of belief, of course, arise out of nostalgic feelings. Nonetheless, there is reason to think that in the cases of Eumaeus and Penelope nostalgia is indeed the reigning emotion.

⁷⁷Many theories have been advanced suggesting that Penelope recognizes Odysseus before book xxiii, and the question of when she does recognize him is still much debated. See Anne Amory, "The Reunion of Odysseus and Penelope," in Essays on the Odyssey, ed. C.H. Taylor, Jr. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 100-20),

Not all the loyal servants and family doubt the possibility of Odysseus' return. Philoetius takes the opposite position from Eumaeus, a character with whom he is otherwise paired.⁷⁸ Although the suitors are squandering all he has worked for, Philoetius is not overcome by grief as Penelope and Eumaeus are. He still hopes Odysseus will return:

yet I still think of that luckless man, how he may come back
and all throughout the house may cause the suitors to scatter.
(xx,224-5)

The contrast of his point of view helps to emphasize the degree of Eumaeus' pessimism.

Nostalgia, as Laurence Lerner has written, is "the basic emotion of pastoral."⁷⁹ He describes the way nostalgia can provide the structure of a poem by positing two different times, a present and a longed-for past, and can build the poem on the contrast between the two.⁸⁰ The scene in Eumaeus' hut and Odysseus' fireside discussion with Penelope, in particular, seem to share this double structure, in which emotion is expressed through the contrast of the present with a longed-for past. Moreover, the scene in Eumaeus' hut also fits into

for the view that, while Penelope may recognize Odysseus in book xix, she is not emotionally ready to accept that conclusion. Her dream in book xx, in any case, suggests that she is still drawn to the image of him as he was in the past.

⁷⁸See Bernard Fenik, pp. 172ff, for a discussion of these two as "doublets."

⁷⁹Laurence Lerner, The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), p. 41.

⁸⁰Lerner, p. 44.

the category of what Lerner calls "provincial mediated" poetry.⁸¹ By "provincial" Lerner means "rural" and "non-metropolitan," and he uses the term to describe any poem which situates itself far from the centers of political, social, or artistic power; by "mediated" he means "indirect" or "oblique in presentation," and he uses the term especially for poems which include a frame story or which distance themselves from their subject matter. He defines pastoral poetry as "provincial mediated" poetry which is "positive" in its outlook on its setting.⁸²

The section of the poem devoted to Odysseus' stay with Eumaeus can hardly be called pastoral, but it is significant that several traits which will be typical of pastoral poetry do appear here. The indirection or obliqueness of presentation typical of pastoral is found in Odysseus' disguise. Odysseus is not implicated in Eumaeus' nostalgia for the past because he knows the one fact which renders that nostalgia irrelevant. Instead of looking nostalgically to the past, he challenges the nostalgic stance. Like the pastoral poet he is both within the situation and outside it looking in. Odysseus is the actor/artist, who views all the action as part of a plot which he himself must direct, and he treats all his conversation with Eumaeus as an aesthetic event.

⁸¹Lerner, p. 21.

⁸²Lerner, p. 21. According to the two axes which Lerner sets up of centric-provincial and direct-mediated, epic poetry would be classified as centric-direct, a distinction which, while hardly being sufficient to define epic, suggests why pastoral poetry seems to be opposite to epic in poetic stance.

The similarities between the poetic strategies in the scenes in the swineherd's hut and those in pastoral poetry help show the ambivalence in Odysseus' own position in rural Ithaca. On the one hand, he turns to Eumaeus for aid, and in the scene with his father, he depends on the rural world to establish his identity. On the other hand, he seems always to stand partly outside the natural scenes in which he finds himself. He takes on a disguise; he manipulates those whom he wants to recognize him. Odysseus' knowledge that the truth can sometimes be best told with a lie makes him fit oddly into these simple worlds; neither Eumaeus nor Laertes is a Penelope who has the capacity to interpret his stories and who knows from the beginning that the truth about the visiting stranger is more complex than it seems.

Odysseus' wiliness seems particularly inappropriate when he visits his father's farm because the identity to which appeals in the final book is precisely that unchanging identity which he himself had abandoned when he took on his disguise.⁸³ With all his manipulations and role-playing, he acts as if he thinks that identity is flexible or fluid, and in his conversation with his father he is still playing his testing, evasive role. When his father does not believe who he is, Odysseus' use of the farmer's idiom to identify himself is a striking gesture of dependence on the rural world. To prove that he is

⁸³On the question of the ending of the *Odyssey* and the genuineness of book xxiv see Carroll Moulton, "The End of the *Odyssey*," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974) 153-69; W.B. Stanford, "The Ending of the *Odyssey*: An Ethical Approach," *Hermathena* 100 (1965) 5-20; and J.A. Scott, "The Close of the *Odyssey*," *Classical Journal* 12 (1917) 397-405. We are told in the scholia that Aristophanes and Aristarchus believed the ending of the *Odyssey* to be at xxiii, 296, but modern critics, especially "unitarians," have challenged that view.

Odysseus, he first points to the boar scar (the sign of his early victory over the natural world) and then identifies the trees and vines of his father's farm:

let me tell you of the trees in the well-worked
orchard, which you gave me once. I asked you of each one,
when I was a child, following you through the garden. We went
among the trees, and you named them all and told me what each one
was, and you gave me thirteen pear trees, and ten apple trees,
and forty fig trees; and so also you named the fifty
vines you would give.

(xxiv,336-342)

His knowledge of the trees and the vines, like the scar and the bedpost of olive trunk, represents the unchanging core of his identity. But throughout the Ithacan sections of the poem he has been manipulating this stable identity, changing his outward appearances and playing unusual roles. Now he needs something certain, not a role, to establish his identity: fiction and story-telling is not sufficient. In spite of the poet's efforts towards the end of the poem to conflate truth and fiction, Odysseus is forced by his father's lack of recognition to reestablish his identity with some non-fictional signs.

The recognition scene between Laertes and Odysseus particularly brings out the act in Odysseus. As Odysseus comes upon his father, the poet describes the years of labor that Laertes has put into the farm (xxiv,245-7). Laertes' solitary figure, wasted by years and grief, resembles the old beggar whose shape Athena had given Odysseus:

he had a squalid tunic upon him,
patched together and ugly, and on his legs he had oxhide
gaiters fastened and patched together, to prevent scratching,
and gloves on his hands because of the bushes, and he was wearing
a cap of goatskin on his head, to increase his misery.

(xxiv,227-31)

Why Laertes has chosen this life of rural retreat, and why he chooses

to dress in ragged peasant's clothing, remain mysteries.⁸⁴ Odysseus sheds a few brief tears at finding his father in this state, but then decides that it is better to test him. Odysseus' motivation in this scene also remains obscure, but his cruelty to his father is quite apparent. After telling his father that the farm is well kept up, he goes on to say:

But I will also tell you this; do not take it as cause for anger. You yourself are ill cared for; together with dismal old age, which is yours, you are squalid and wear foul clothing upon you. (xxiv,248-50)

In this indirect and unpleasant manner he asks his father to explain his sorrow, but even then he does not reveal himself. Instead he tells his father another lying tale, one which is much more pessimistic about the possibility of Odysseus' return than any of the other tales he tells.⁸⁵ All his other stories on Ithaca are designed to convince the listener that Odysseus may well return, and may even be already present. The story of Eperitos includes, however, the news that he has not seen Odysseus for five years (xxiv,309-311). At this news "the black cloud of sorrow closed on Laertes./In both hands he caught up the grimy dust and poured it/over his face and grizzled head, groaning incessantly" (xxiv,315-7). Suddenly Laertes is in the position of Priam, bitterly mourning his son's death (XXIV,160-5).

⁸⁴As G.S. Kirk puts it, "That a true Achaean king, or even a true heroic king...could have had a father who dressed, behaved and lived like a peasant seems inconceivable; yet this is what is in the poem," Homer and the Oral Tradition, p. 12.

⁸⁵As Fenik points out, p. 49.

Why should Odysseus want to put his father in this position? The final book of the Odyssey gives us no real answer except perhaps that it simply is in Odysseus' character to be cruel: wiliness may bring a kind of cruelty with it. But the scene seems too divided to be accounted for simply as a demonstration of Odysseus' character. Instead it pulls apart at the seams, as though the poet were trying to accomplish several things at once and is not able to do so. The scene merges an absolute statement about Odysseus' identity with an extreme example of his role-playing, but what emerges is the cruelty of the aesthetic stance. Although he feels sorrow at seeing his father in such a sad state, Odysseus, like an actor or like an artist designing a scene, is sufficiently detached to manipulate his father's feelings for the sake of effect. The recognition scene between Odysseus and Laertes, then, brings out our discomfort with Odysseus' lies, a discomfort which is suppressed but nonetheless aroused by many of the Ithacan scenes.

Odysseus does not, in fact, have many different identities: on the contrary, he is one of the most unchanging and persistent of epic heroes. The claim here is rather that the joining of the Iliadic plot and counterplot puts the hero in an ambiguous position. The roles of artist and hero, as they have been understood here, do not weave together easily, and so the story shows some of that strain. Cedric Whitman describes this strain or discomfort in the story as the way in which Homer's presentation sometimes seems to fall between two stools,⁸⁶

⁸⁶Whitman, p. 306.

and emphasizes the uncertainty in the poem about how Odysseus' character is affected by the many worlds he visits:

By contrast (to the Iliad), the life-consciousness of the Odyssey involves a vastly different view of the individual soul. In and of himself, the hero is a fixed personality, confronted by no hopeless division in himself; he is equipped as if by magic with every skill which any situation might require.... He is himself--at least if viewed from one point of view. Yet from another point of view, the matter is more mysterious. Life's paradox now appears not in the man, but in his external experience, and the adventures of Odysseus, both on the sea and in Ithaca, cast upon him a constantly shifting cloud of disguise.... By contact with 'the limits of the earth,' Odysseus defines, rather than discovers, himself, each experience involving, and at last dissipating, a particular shade of anonymity which hangs over a man until his context is complete.⁸⁷

In the final scene, Odysseus completes this definition of his identity, and he does so in part by establishing a tie to the natural world through knowledge. By identifying himself through naming the trees and vines, he establishes an intermediate tie in which man is neither completely one with the natural world nor so alienated from it that it represents only what he is not.

Once Odysseus gives up his disguise, the role he plays is no longer that complex blending of the hero and the artist. In the final moments of the poem, he is only the warrior, ready to destroy his neighbors if necessary. Here too the plot seems somewhat uncertain of its direction, and the appearance of Athena reminds us that the concluding peace depends on divine dispensation. As the primary agent of the plot, Athena certainly has the right to conclude the story. Since the conclusion she provides, however, is one that seems completely un-

⁸⁷Whitman, pp. 296-7.

motivated within the human drama, her intervention can only be described as a movement towards romance. The artistic form provides a solution to a human situation which otherwise might have ended in death for the majority of the Ithacans.⁸⁸

The scene with Laertes clarifies the extent to which Odysseus' lying tales can be cruel, and it suggests a basic discomfort in the poem with the blending of truth and falsehood (or fiction). Odysseus' discovery that truth can sometimes be better conveyed by lies makes him a success but also puts him in an odd position. He is indeed the man of many turnings, or, poetically, the man of many twists and turns of phrase. As on Scheria, on Ithaca Odysseus is compared to a bard. Eumaeus introduces him to Penelope as a story-teller and singer:

Three nights I had him with me...
but he has not yet told the story of all his suffering.
But as when a man looks to a singer, who has been given
from the gods the skill with which he sings for delight of mortals,
and they are impassioned and strain to hear it when he sings to
them,
so he enchanted me in the halls as he sat beside me.
(xvii, 515, 517-21)

The stories that Eumaeus praises are fictions (though they include elements of the truth). The poet comments on Odysseus' lies, pointing out that "he knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings" (xix, 203).⁸⁹ While this capacity makes Odysseus great and

⁸⁸G.S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 250, is less kind: "the ending is ludicrous," he writes.

⁸⁹The poet's comment here closely resembles the claim of Hesiod in the *Theogony* (11.26-8) that the Muses know how to tell lies masked as truth; with this claim Hesiod undermined the claim of Homeric epic to historical truth. See Beye, p. 204.

separates him from other men, it also adds an ambiguity to his role.⁹⁰

Odysseus' role as story-teller or bard culminates in the test of the bow. As Odysseus strings his old weapon, the poet compares him to a harper:

but now resourceful Odysseus,
once he had taken up the great bow and looked it all over,
as when a man, who well understands the lyre and singing,
easily, holding it on either side, pulls the strongly twisted
cord of sheep's gut, so as to slip it over a new peg,
so without any strain, Odysseus strung the great bow.
Then plucking it in his right hand he tested the bowstring,
and it gave him back an excellent sound like the voice of a swallow.
(xxi,404-11)

Now Odysseus the story-teller and Odysseus the warrior become one.

This merging of the two suggests that singing, or, in Odysseus' case, story-telling, is a deadly business, and indeed Odysseus' ability to deceive brings death to the suitors. The simile suggests that artistic control can be an aspect of military success, as it is in the story of Odysseus.

But can the stringing of a lyre and the stringing of a bow be so easily compared? The detail of the swallow's note reminds us of Athena's metamorphoses into a swallow and her support of Odysseus; the motif of Odysseus as singer is joined indirectly with the theme of divine aid.⁹¹ The union of hero and artist comes about in part through divine aid. As in other parts of Odysseus' adventures on

⁹⁰Penelope also demonstrates this capacity in the course of the poem.

⁹¹See Moulton, Similes in the Homeric Poems, pp. 151-2, for a careful treatment of the blending of art and war in this simile. Moulton, p. 152, also points out the connection of the motif of Odysseus as singer and the theme of divine aid.

Ithaca, the poet leads us to concentrate on Odysseus' talent at deception and to turn away from its results. The moment of stringing the bow is dramatic; it marks the culmination of Odyssey's redefinition of heroism. Nonetheless, even in this moment some strain begins to show for singing songs to a lyre is ultimately not at all the same thing as getting bloody revenge on your enemies. Thus in some ways, at the moment in which the poem is placing a new value on poetry and art and presenting them as central to heroic success, the Iliadic counterplot begins to reassert itself.

The use of this potentially contrastive simile in the Odyssey is quite different, however, from the poet's use of the counterplot in the Iliad. For one thing, the comparison does not fall outside the range of Odysseus' own attitudes or preoccupations. Secondly, whereas in the Iliad the poet held things apart by the very act of comparison, here the poet strongly affirms the fairness of the comparison so that we are not justified in seeing it as part of a counterplot. The poet has merged the plot and the counterplot, and the moment of stringing the bow is a major example of that merging. Once again the Odyssey shifts our attention away from the facts of death, whether deserved or undeserved, and presents the event from an aesthetic standpoint which is not far from a divine perspective.

A similar moment occurs as Odysseus and his men blind the Cyclops: a simile taken from the world of craftsmen is used to describe violent action (ix,391-4). Cyclops, however, is an inhuman monster who more than deserved his end, and so the ironic contrast in the simile between what Odysseus and his men are doing and the world of crafts which it evokes serves only to develop our feeling that

Odysseus and his men represent civilization as it conquers savagery by craft. Although the poet continually likens the suitors to Cyclops, he has a more difficult task making the suitors appear wholly evil. Here the folk-tale material and the epic story may be insufficiently synthesized.⁹² As Cedric Whitman puts it, "when it comes to their annihilation, they must all, after Antinous and Eurymachus, fall back into the shadows of the old tale, mere wrong men doomed from the first, yet now a little too real to be taken as such."⁹³

Even in his moment of triumph, then, Odysseus' position as warrior and artist seems slightly strained. The poem is able to evade the central fact of death by insisting on this union, but when we look at the story, we discover that Odysseus, once he has strung the bow, seems much more the avenging warrior and very little the artist. The plan to get revenge, carried out with merciless precision, does not fit easily with the idea that this revenge is somehow like singing of a song. Odysseus the artist seems nowhere present except in his apparent detachment from the violence: by taking an aesthetic stance, he can distance himself from the events at hand sufficiently to be even more merciless than he might otherwise have been.

It is not the point of this chapter to chastize Odysseus for his

⁹²For the folklore background of the Odyssey see Denys Page, Folktales in Homer's Odyssey (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973). Also see A.B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, pp. 242-9, for a discussion of the traditional device of the return as a beggar. See also his appendix of return songs of which three involve the husband returning disguised as a beggar.

⁹³Whitman, p. 307.

actions. The argument here is rather that the two major purposes of the Odyssey--to tell the heroic tale of Odysseus' homecoming, and to redefine and expand the heroic ethos to include the strategies of the artist as well as of the warrior--sometimes conflict with one another, and that this conflict either slightly undermines the hero himself or creates a certain ambivalence or evasiveness in the story. This conflict of ends is reflected in the many conflicting views of the poem. The Phaeacians and their world, for example, are sometimes taken to represent the central matrix of values in the poem, the central representatives of the values of the civilization which the poem affirms and embodies.⁹⁴ Alternatively, the Phaeacians are seen to represent an over-refinement or an effeteness brought on by too much civilization, while Odysseus is interpreted as the tough hero who knows the rougher ways of the world and who may even look down on his graceful but excessively refined hosts.⁹⁵ Similarly, some see the Odyssey as a poem whose hero embodies the ideals of the Christian tradition, or at least those values of family and hospitality which inform the domestic scenes, while others see the poem as little more than adventure story, the hero of which is an old pirate.⁹⁶ The argument presented in this chapter,

⁹⁴O'Loughlin's The Garlands of Repose best exemplifies this approach.

⁹⁵See Greene, The Descent from Heaven, p. 67, for example.

⁹⁶George Def. Lord, "The Odyssey and the Western World," in Essays on the Odyssey, ed. C.H. Taylor, Jr., (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 36-7, argues that "the Odyssey presents through the experiences of its hero the birth of personal and social ideals which are remarkably close to those of the Christian tradition." Lord cites as examples of the opposite view Thomas Blackwell, "who calls him a pirate," T.S. Eliot and C.S. Lewis (p. 39).

however, is that the poem in fact does try to be all these things, and that the story, for all its power, at times shows the strain of this great synthetic effort.

In conclusion, the merging of the Iliadic plot and counterplot in the Odyssey is found to create an ambiguity in the story and in the hero. As the poetic strategies of the counterplot are transported into the main story, the story itself takes on a doubleness which is also felt in its hero. Some of the poetic strategies typical of the Iliadic counterplot which now have become strategies of the heroic plot itself are the aestheticizing of experience (which allows the poet to evade the centrality of death) and the distancing of death by expansive gesture. The tension between the plot and the counterplot as they are merged reveals, among other things, the cruelty of the aesthetic stance when it is taken by a hero in an heroic story. This cruelty, which resembles the cruelty (or lack of seriousness) of the gods in some scenes of the Iliad, stands in contrast to the proclaimed values of much of the poem.

A secondary result of the merging of the plot and counterplot in the Odyssey is that overtly mythic episodes are found to be impossible to include in an heroic story without some kind of distance--narrative or ironic--being placed between the heroic story and the myths. One way to include parts of the counterplot in an epic story is to use narrative structure to recreate distance between the final heroic conflict and the world of the counterplot. This strategy of using narrative structure to recreate the epic distance seems to have influenced later epic writers.

Odysseus, then, is the mediator between the plot and the counter-

plot; he is the agent of their merging, and ultimately his greatness comes from the union of the two. His valor and courage combine with his wit and artistry to create a richness of identity. Nonetheless, he also loses a certain honesty about the meaning of the events he is involved in, an honesty which, whatever else they lack, the heroes of the Iliad seemed always to have. In a radical sense, the Odyssey does seem concerned to explore "the extent to which song that gives present pleasure can confront and, if not transform and celebrate, then accept and reconcile man to the stresses of his situation."⁹⁷ But, since the central heroic story concerns precisely the fact that song cannot reconcile man to the reality or stresses of his situation (Odysseus, for example, is not easily reconciled by song to the presence of the suitors in his house), the poem may explore this possibility at the cost of a certain loss of moral integrity.

⁹⁷ Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," p. 353. See above note 69.

CHAPTER THREE

EPIC AND BUCOLIC STRAINS IN THEOCRITUS AND VIRGIL

"The epic poet is audible in the bucolic poems, the bucolic in the epic."

A.S.F. Gow, "Introduction" to
Theocritus

"From where do genres come? Why, quite simply, from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination."

Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origins of Genres"

(i) Theocritus: From Epic to Bucolic Poetry

Theocritus' idylls take up the Homeric counterplot and make it their main focus.¹ They invert the proportion between the plot and the counterplot which was typical of the Iliad: they expand the counterplot to such an extent that it seems to enclose and even to limit the heroic plot itself (thereby adding to the expansion of the counterplot already brought about by the Odyssey). The type of characters and the range of subjects in the idylls echo those of the Homeric counterplot, and in the idylls Theocritus explores the implications of the

¹References to the works of Theocritus are taken from Theocritus, ed. with translation and commentary by A.S.F. Gow, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952).

opposition between heroic plot and non-heroic counterplot. In his poetry the solutions and evasions of the counterplot are laid bare with irony and wit, for the self-consciousness which marked the introduction of the counterplot in the epics becomes even more evident in the bucolic poems. The doubleness brought to the epic by the counterplot thus becomes the central concern of the bucolic poems which organize themselves through contrasts.² Recent critics have described Theocritus' bucolic as a poetry of oppositions, whether of the opposition between the real and ideal worlds,³ between realism and artificiality,⁴ between country and city, or between the sophisticated and the naive.⁵ These oppositions arise in part from the poet's exploring of the strategies

²The amoeban dialogue, for example, often sets two opposing points of view against each other. The frequent frames or settings around the bucolic songs also indicate their tendency to organize themselves by opposites. Some kind of frame exists around the cup and song in Idyll 1, the incantation in Idyll 2, the serenade in Idyll 3, the singing contest in Idyll 5, the exchanges in disguise of Idyll 6, and the songs of Idyll 7, to name a few examples.

³As Gilbert Lawall puts it, in Theocritus' Coan Pastorals: A Poetry Book (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 5.

⁴As Charles Segal puts it, in "Landscape into Myth: Theocritus' Bucolic Poetry," Ramus 4 (1975), 115.

⁵William Empson in Some Versions of Pastoral (New York: New Directions, 1974; first published 1935), p. 22, describes the pastoral process as that of "putting the complex into the simple." Broad-ranging as it is, Empson's theory of pastoral lies behind most modern definitions of the genre. For a list of the many oppositions which have been found in pastoral poetry, see Harold Tolliver, Pastoral Forms and Attitudes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 3. For a study of oppositions as constitutive of Theocritus' poetry, see U. Ott, Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirten-
gedichten, Spudasmata, 22 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969).

and evasions of the epic counterplot.

In Idyll 7, Lycidas, an incarnation of the bucolic spirit, exclaims against writers of epic poetry:

For much I hate the builder who seeks to rise his house as high as the peak of Mount Oromedon, and much those cocks of the Muses who lose their toil with crowing against the bard of Chios. But come, let us straight begin our country song (boukolikas... aoidas, 1.49), Simichidas.

(VII,45-50)

Here Theocritus suggests that his bucolic poetry takes a poetic stance opposed to epic aspiration.⁶ The "country song," referred to in the introduction of this passage by a verb ("let us make country song," 1.36: boukoliastomestha), is usually taken as a generic definition, for Simichidas (at least in part a stand-in for Theocritus) invites Lycidas to join in and describes this "country song" as the kind of song he can sing.⁷

In Idyll 16 Theocritus also defines his poetry by opposition to epic poetry. He is writing poems like epic poems, he implies, but smaller and emphasizing different themes and characters (see XVI, 1-4). He distinguishes himself from Homer by implication (XVI, 20), but also suggests that he does in small what Homer does in large. Describing the power of Homer's poetry, Theocritus typically adds one or two examples from the counterplot to his list of immortal

⁶"The bard of Chios" (Chion aoidon) is identified by Theocritus in XXII,218, and XVI,57. See Gow II,143.

⁷See John Van Sickle, "Theocritus and the Development of the Conception of Bucolic Genre," Ramus 5 (1976), 23. Van Sickle analyzes the way in which boukolikas aoidas acquires a generic sense in the seventh idyll, and points out that the verb boukoliastomestha, which Theocritus appears to have coined, seems to mean "to sing in bucolic exchange."

scenes from the epic:

Never had Odysseus won lasting fame, who wandered six score months through all the world, and came alive to farthest Hades, and escaped from the cave of the baleful Cyclops; never would the swineherd Eumaeus have been named, nor Philoetius, busied with the cattle of the herd, nor the great-hearted Laertes himself, had not the minstrelsy of an Ionian bard profited them.

(XVI, 51-7)

Here Theocritus implies that his own poetry fits in on the far end of the epic continuum (from heroes to herdsmen). He will stress those episodes left more in shadows by epic poets, and will turn to episodes of the counterplot in the Iliad or to those parts of the Odyssey in which the counterplot is brought to the fore.⁸

In Idyll 16 (and in Idyll 22) Theocritus implies that his poetry is a small, more modest kind of epic poetry. Can the same claim be made for all of his idylls? Although the epyllia treat heroes and mythic subjects, it has been argued recently that all of the idylls present themselves as small epics and invoke the same Callimachean aesthetic of smallness (leptotes).⁹ While not depending solely on

⁸See also the conclusion to Idyll 22, in which Theocritus again seems to distinguish his poetry from epic while suggesting that it presents smaller versions of epic concerns (XXII, 218-23).

⁹See John Van Sickle, "Theocritus and the Development of the Conception of Bucolic Genre," 19-25, and "Epic and Bucolic," Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica 19 (1975), 53-61.

Van Sickle along with many recent critics unites all of Theocritus' poetry under the category of "bucolic" and thereby sidesteps the debate over which of the idylls should be termed "pastoral." Gow had identified Idylls 1, 3-7, 10 and 11 as the "bucolic idylls" (I, xxvii). These idylls, according to the view of Van Sickle, have more in common with the rest of Theocritus' oeuvre than with later pastoral poetry: all present themselves as small epics within the Callimachean tradition (see Callimachus' Aitia fr.1.11Pf. where the poet calls for epic poetry to be written "kata lepton"). Theocritus himself and ancient commenta-

references within epyllia or other "non-pastoral" idylls, critics have felt that a general congruence of taste and aesthetics obtains between Theocritus' statements about epic poetry in idylls as different as Idyll 7 and Idylls 16 or 22.

From the aesthetic claims made in the idylls, then, it seems fair to conclude that Theocritus saw his poetry as making use of the characters and situations from the epic tradition, and that those which he makes the center of his attention in the Idylls once labeled "pastoral" tend to be characters or situations taken from the epic counter-

tors after him used the term "bucolic" for his poetry. See David Halperin, "Theocritus and the Ancient Definition of Bucolic Poetry," Diss. Stanford 1979, p. 24. Halperin cites (among others) Athenaeus speaking of an eidos or genre of poetry called boukoliasmos (14.619ab), and argues that "the only literary term that could refer specifically to the Idylls of Theocritus...throughout both the ancient and medieval periods was bucolic" (p.26). This dissertation will refer to the corpus of Theocritus' poetry as "bucolic" in accordance with the direction of modern scholarship; and it will reserve the word "pastoral" for Virgil's transformation of "bucolic" poetry in his Eclogues and for the later poetry which imitates Virgil's Eclogues.

Van Sickle would go so far as to insist that Virgil's Eclogues also should be classed as "bucolic": see John Van Sickle, The Design of Virgil's Bucolics (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo e Bizzarri, 1978). This dissertation will not follow his lead in this definition, however, for it is useful to be able to distinguish Virgil's poetry (and poetry which imitates it) from Theocritus' idylls. Some of the difficulties which arise from failing to distinguish the genre of Theocritus' poetry from the genre of pastoral poetry can be seen in Thomas Rosenmeyer's thorough study of the relationship of Theocritus to the European pastoral tradition. In The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), Rosenmeyer continually has to exempt Virgil (and, by implication, much poetry which follows Virgil) from his definitions of pastoral norms (definitions based on Theocritus' idylls). See pp. 15, 24, 58, 60, 126-7, 183, 208, 213-4, 221, 260-1, 268, and most of chapter 11 (pp. 232-46) for instances in which Rosenmeyer has had to admit that Virgil stands outside the norms of pastoral as he is defining them. "Bucolic" and "pastoral" poetry do have many features in common, of course. It is to be understood that comments about the relation of bucolic and epic poetry will apply in most instances to pastoral poems as well.

plot. Partly in jest, he himself identifies Eumaeus and Philoetius as characters which it is appropriate for epic poetry to immortalize, and his transformation of the Cyclops story in Idyll 11 also suggests his tendency to write about minor or unusual parts of the epic story. In fact, Theocritus' bucolic poetry makes use not only of the characters and themes of the Homeric counterplot, but also of its poetic stance and the ambiguities and doubleness of structure and feeling which come with it. Theocritus' expansion of the Homeric counterplot helps explain how he saw his poetry as being at once within the epic genre (as a small version of it) and in opposition to it.

Many other poetic traditions also contributed to Theocritus' "invention" of bucolic poetry. Already in the nineteenth century a sizable body of scholarly literature attempted to prove that the origins of Theocritus's bucolic poetry lay in a continuous poetic tradition originating in the Ancient Near East and transmitted to Sicily by the Phoenician colony at Carthage.¹⁰ Scholars also have pointed to the influence of Hesiod's Works and Days, of certain fifth century tragedies,¹¹ and of Plato's dialogues, especially the Phaedrus.¹²

¹⁰See Halperin, pp. 130-77. See also Emile Egger, Mémoire sur la poésie pastorale avant les poètes bucoliques (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1859), pp. 7ff, and William Berg, Early Virgil (London: The Athlone Press, 1974), pp. 15-22. Examples of pre-Theocritean proto-pastoral poems or episodes include the Education of Enkidu in Gilgamesh (II,iii,1-25), the lament "My Heart plays a Reed Pipe" and "Dumuzi's Dream," an elegiac text.

¹¹As, for example, Euripides' Cyclops or his Alcestis. See Halperin, p. 256.

¹²See Clyde Murley, "Plato's Phaedrus and Theocritean Pastoral," Transactions of the American Philological Association 71 (1940), 281-95, and Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," Yale Classical Studies 15 (1957), 16-9.

Scholars have also stressed that Theocritus' "invention" of bucolic poetry responds to the Alexandrian taste for what Kroll has called the crossing of genres ("die Kreuzung der Gattungen").¹³ The Alexandrian practice of combining genres is now thought to constitute one of the defining features of Hellenistic (and Roman) poetry. Kroll's influential study begins with a discussion of the influence of mimes on bucolic poetry, but he goes on to survey the range of the Alexandrian taste for mingled literary forms. Even before Kroll, this idea had been developed in the context of Theocritus' poetry by Legrand (see the chapter entitled "La confusion des genres" in his Etude sur Théocrite).¹⁴ More recently, L.E. Rossi has further studied the crossing of genres in Theocritus' poetry and has come up with a lengthy list showing how Theocritus drew on many of the poetic forms of his time.¹⁵

Another approach, however, has led scholars to turn back to

¹³See Wilhelm Kroll, "Die Kreuzung der Gattungen," Studien zum Verständnis der Römischen Literatur (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche, 1924), pp. 202-24.

¹⁴Ph.-E. Legrand, Etude sur Théocrite (Paris: Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1898), pp. 413-36. Cited by Halperin, p. 303.

¹⁵L.E. Rossi, "I generi letterari e le loro leggi scritte e non scritte nelle letterature classiche," Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 18 (1971), 84-5. See also Francis Cairns, Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972). It is to be noted that the notion of genre applied by Cairns (lists of topoi and stock situations) is completely distinct from that applied in this dissertation.

reconsider the epic roots of Theocritus' new genre.¹⁶ These scholars agree that Theocritus' bucolic poetry should be seen as growing out of a Callimachean taste for small epics (epyllia) and mixed genres, but they use this identification as a starting point from which to analyze Theocritus' relation to the epic tradition.

These scholars locate Theocritus' originality in the way he plays off the epic tradition in particular. In doing so, they define bucolic poetry as a sub-genre of epic poetry itself. Thus David Halperin, for example, in the conclusion to a description of the many ways Theocritus' poetry defines itself by opposition to the epic tradition, defines bucolic poetry in this way:

bucolic should be viewed not as an autonomous genre but as a kind of epos that distinguished itself from the heroic and mythological narratives of Homer and Hesiod. . .and from the discontinuous and didactic epics of Hesiod and the Alexandrians. Bucolic poetry is differentiated from these other varieties of epos first of all by its themes, which are selected in opposition to the major traditional heroic and mythological subjects of earlier Greek epic, and by the comic or ironic manner in which these themes are related.¹⁷

The evidence for seeing Theocritus' poems as consciously defining themselves as a sub-genre of epic set in opposition to the conventions of the heroic plot lies principally in the works themselves, although these scholars also find support for their theories in later classical

¹⁶ John Van Sickle (see above notes 7 and 9) has taken the lead in this approach. See also U. Ott (see note 5 above), especially pp. 100-5 on Theocritus' use of epic ecphrases.

¹⁷ Halperin, p. 375.

theoretical writing on genre.¹⁸

Readers of Theocritus have always heard echoes of Homer in the bucolic poems. Gianfranco Fabiano, who has studied Theocritus' style, has concluded that, although the dialects shift from idyll to idyll, "Theocritus's language, no matter what the dialect, is almost always made dynamic in a series of oppositions between Homerisms and rough Doric forms, high artificiality and colloquialisms, realism in some details and refusal of a consistent realistic poetics...."¹⁹ In language and meter, Theocritus' poems identify themselves as part of the epic tradition.

In Idyll 1, for example, Daphnis evokes battle scenes in heroic language as he challenges Aphrodite (I,112-3) and his call to battle (113) reveals, as Charles Segal has put it, "a spirit at variance with the happy limits of style and setting" in the rest of the idyll.²⁰ But echoes of Homeric vocabulary and epithets are also heard in the words of Thyrsis and the goatherd. Segal has argued that Thyrsis' description of "the mighty stream of Anapus" and "the sacred rill of Acis" (I,68-9) echoes Homeric epithets, as the description of the

¹⁸ Ancient literary critics often based their inclusion of Theocritus' poems within the category of epic primarily on Theocritus' choice of dactylic hexameter, the epic meter. Quintillian, for example, places Theocritus' poems among the Hellenistic epics. See Institutio Oratoria 10.1.55. See also Longinus, On the Sublime 33.

¹⁹ Gianfranco Fabiano, "Fluctuation in Theocritus' Style," Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies 12 (1971), 533n. Cited by Halperin, p. 227.

²⁰ Charles Segal, "'Since Daphnis Dies': The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," Museum Helveticum 31 (1974), 17.

vineyard and the "dark" grapes on the cup echoes the description of the vineyard with its black grapes on the shield of Achilles.²¹ The opening description of the sweetly falling water at the beginning of Idyll 1 (7-8) itself reminds us of the description of the fountain of sweet running water surrounded by poplars where Melantheus comes upon Odysseus and Eumaeus (see Odyssey xvii,209-10 and also Theogony 785-7).²² Not only Daphnis, then, but the idyll as a whole invokes epic language, though the epic language in the frame comes mostly from scenes in the counterplot.²³

Furthermore, many of the most common bucolic rhetorical figures and tropes are versions of epic ones which they mimic in small. Both epic and bucolic poetry favor similes and comparisons, for example. While the similes in the epic frequently compare the heroic action to the non-heroic world of the audience, the comparisons in the bucolic

²¹Segal, "Landscape into Myth," p. 118.

²²Segal, "Landscape into Myth," p. 125.

²³The word kissybion (I,27) provides another example of Theocritus' use of Homeric vocabulary. In a study of the literary background of this word, Halperin points out that it is used in the Odyssey of the bowl out of which Odysseus persuades Cyclops to drink (ix,545-6). Two other Odyssean contexts also connect kissybion with rustic life, for both involve the hospitality of Eumaeus (xiv,78-9, and xvi,52-3). See Halperin, pp. 252-3. The word reappears in Callimachus Aitia (fr. 178, 7-12Pf) where its humble connotations are stressed. In spite of Theocritus' new explanation of the word (I,29-30), it clearly has a literary origin and represents that tendency of Theocritus (and Callimachus) to draw material from "the most unpretentious parts of epic narratives, from homely details, from unheroic moments, humble or humorous circumstances and forgotten episodes" (Halperin, p. 261), in other words, from the episodes or scenes of the counterplot.

poems often evoke the heroic world (e.g. VII,147-57).²⁴

Another typical epic figure, the catalogue, takes new form and reappears, as Rosenmeyer has adeptly shown, in the serial listings, inventories and use of priamel in the bucolic poems.²⁵ One example of the list or catalogue in Theocritus appears in Lycidas' song in Idyll 7. Lycidas says that, lying on his couch thinking of Ageanax, he will listen to shepherds piping:

and close at hand Tityrus shall sing how once Daphnis the neat-herd loved Xenea, and how the hill was sorrowful about him and the oaktrees which grow upon the river Himeras' banks sang his dirge, when he was wasting away like any snow under Haemus or Athos or Rhodope or remotest Caucasus.

(VII,72-7)

The story of Daphnis is distanced here by the narrative frame and by the self-reflective reference to Idyll 1, so his emotion and his wasting away seem less direct. The catalogue, which moves our eye outward and reminds us of a world of epic scope, also distances the emotions of Daphnis. Like the similes of the counterplot in the Iliad, this simile with its included catalogue removes us from the scene of suffering; in Theocritus' poem, however, this distancing effect and

²⁴The similes and final image which make up the ending of the Thalysia refer explicitly to the epic tradition in language as well as in theme and figure. Gow, II,168, notes that in the Odyssey Cyclops also uses the word nektar. The reference to the winnowing-shovel (ptuon, l. 156) also echoes not only several Iliadic similes about threshing in which the same word is used (see Iliad XIII,588, for example) but Teiresias' prophecy to Odysseus in book 11 of the Odyssey (xi,127-34, though there the word used is athereloigon (chaff-destroyer), l.128). The fixing of the oar mistaken for a winnowing-fan marks the end of the Odyssean last voyage, just as here it marks the repose at the end of the bucolic journey of Simichidas. See Segal, "Landscape into Myth," p. 127.

²⁵See Rosenmeyer, pp. 257-61 and 144-6.

the shift of our focus from the suffering hero onto the landscape become the central point of the image.

In this brief passage, then, Theocritus explores the stance which the epic poet takes in the counterplot: Theocritus takes seriously the comparison of man to nature, a comparison which acted out its own limits in the Homeric context, and he distances and aestheticizes the pain in the story until it is hardly felt at all. The contrast between the violent and painful subject matter and the calm beauty and form of the poetry itself--a contrast also typical of epic poetry--is intensified in the bucolic poems which partly shield the audience from the suffering they enclose. Since this shielding can never be completely successful, the bucolic poems often dramatize the failure to escape suffering through art.

A brief look at the interplay of counterplot and plot in Idyll 1 suggests the complexity of Theocritus' inversion of the epic paradigm. Here too the suffering of Daphnis is set in a narrative frame: we are distanced from the story not only by the fact that it is sung by someone else in a beautiful setting, but also because the refrain helps to frame the story fragments and Daphnis' own words. Daphnis lives in a world where time progresses linearly, a fact dramatically represented by his death, but the refrain with its unchanging repetitions suggests an iterative world in which one moment is not distinctly different from the next. As Charles Segal puts it, these bucolic strategies for creating distance result in "an antithesis between the joyfulness of the singer who belongs to the bucolic frame and the sad plaints of Daphnis within the song....(Thyrsis') art may embrace sorrow and frustration,

but in itself it is sweet and joyful."²⁶

Thyrsis' song begins with the claim that jackals, wolves, lions, kine, heifers and calves all lamented Daphnis along with the herdsmen and the gods who come to his call. It thus begins by moving outwards from the suffering shepherd; by implying that man can somehow be integrated into a natural world which will lament his death, it also uses the larger world to cushion the grief expressed. Three basic bucolic strategies for limiting the power of death (or the grief over death) are evident in Thyrsis' song: the desire to insulate us aesthetically, represented by the artifice of the song and by the repeated stylized refrain; the desire to distance us from the suffering depicted by extending our sympathetic response to include a broad natural and mythic world; and the desire to dramatize the pathos of suffering by focusing attention on the grief of the natural world itself rather than on the dying hero. In this last case we are touched by the suffering while we are removed from involvement by the consoling suggestion that the gap between man and nature is not so great and that the dying man somehow fits into a larger natural perspective.²⁷ All three of these strategies derive from the epic counterplot.

Daphnis, however, does not seem much consoled by the laments of nature. His hyperbolic call for everything to reverse itself at his death (panta, 1.134: everything) takes the comparison between men and nature more seriously than the song in which it is encased will allow:

²⁶Segal, "The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," p. 9.

²⁷See Rosenmeyer, pp. 113-9, for a helpful description of pastoral uses of distance and aesthetic insulation.

Now violets bear, ye brambles, and ye thorns, bear violets,
and let the fair narcissus bloom on the juniper. Let all be
changed, and let the pine bear pears since Daphnis is dying.
(I,132-5)

These words are set in the form of an adynaton, an appeal or assertion via impossibilities, which is another example of serial listing in the bucolic poems. Rosenmeyer, who generally prefers not to see a literary background for most bucolic tropes, "has to admit" that Theocritus' use of adynata is literary, and probably modeled on the epic tradition.²⁸ Rosenmeyer is disturbed by the hubristic, unpastoral quality of Daphnis' challenges to nature, and he suggests that Theocritus allows his herdsmen to use epic tropes like adynata to establish the bucolic desire for distance and self-depreciation. Figures like the adynaton, he feels, hint at mock-epic pretensions. He argues that the adynaton is meant to grate on our senses and be noticed as a foreign element, and that as such it endorses the disengagement which he finds central to Theocritean poetry.²⁹

Whether or not Thyrsis (or Theocritus) views Daphnis' challenges to nature ironically, Daphnis does not. While we may be further distanced from Daphnis by his hyperbolic demands, his words represent his final challenge to the poetic point of view which Thyrsis represents. For what Daphnis asks is indeed impossible, and there is no sign in the song or in its setting that nature has in fact been turned upside-down by the death of Daphnis. Even the world of myth represented by

²⁸Rosenmeyer, p. 264.

²⁹Rosenmeyer, pp. 266-7.

Aphrodite, the Nymphs and the Muses cannot prevent Daphnis' death: "Aphrodite would have raised him up again, but all the thread the Fates assigned was run, and Daphnis went to the stream" (I,138-40). Daphnis speaks and acts as if he lived in an heroic world, and he dies unaffected by the consolations of myth or nature.

Daphnis' challenges to nature, then, should not be understood as a desire for sympathy from the natural world. Rather, his challenge is a statement that the pain of death can be expressed only in hyperbolic language and by the radical inversions of the sweeping mythical landscape. This hyperbolic language clashes with the plainer language of Thyrsis, a clash which is brought out by the unemotional half-line following Daphnis' death: "so much he said and ended" (138) concludes both Daphnis' speech and his life. Daphnis' suffering can be contained only within a calm rhetoric: his hyperboles must be banished in order for the grief of the song to be transmuted into a containing form. His hyperboles point out the limits of the poem's own strategies, however, since his words remind us that the natural world does not mirror man's situation, that the sympathy of nature, like the consolation of myth, is a fiction which has no force at the moment of death. The poem thus dramatizes the inadequacy of its own strategies for the containment of death, strategies which derive from those of the counterplot.

The world of Thyrsis and the goatherd has the same timelessness of the rural scenes in the Iliadic counterplot: their meeting takes place at noon (I,15), that time of rural rest which was marked out in the Iliad by a simile dramatizing the difference between time in the plot and in the counterplot (see also Idyll VI,4). Their meeting, as

the analogy of the iterative Iliadic simile suggests, could happen any day; their exchange could be repeated over and over.

This iterative time scheme is further represented by the fact that Thyrsis is in the act of repeating Daphnis' words, which are changed utterly in this new context. Daphnis knows nothing of Thyrsis' song just as the heroes in the Iliad knew nothing of the comparisons of the counterplot. Thyrsis' point of view is represented within Daphnis' own story as myth, but Daphnis remains ignorant of the harmony or unity found in the frame story. He becomes an element in the poem's larger resolution or balancing of opposites, but he knows nothing of this. His story represents a small unit of heroic plot enclosed by the counterplot which tries to reconcile him to the limits it places on him.

In Thyrsis' song there is an unresolvable clash between Daphnis' mortality and the immortality of Aphrodite, the Nymphs and the Muses (an immortality which includes art itself). The natural world, which remains unchanged for all its lamenting, is also made to seem a timeless backdrop against which Daphnis' death seems all the more shocking. The timelessness of the bucolic song is assimilated into the timelessness of the mythic world in the song, and both seem to contrast with mortal Daphnis. This clash between a mortal point of view and the consolations of immortality offered by myth or nature reenacts the clash between the plot and the counterplot as it was worked out in the Iliad, only here the proportion of plot to counterplot has been reversed. In the bucolic poem the strategies of the counterplot are found to include and enclose the events of the heroic story.

Thyrsis and the goatherd partake of this timelessness, but only in a limited sense. Ultimately, they are, as the goatherd reminds

Thyrsis, as mortal as Daphnis: "of a surety thou canst not carry thy singing to Hades that brings forgetfulness of all things" (I,62-3). Thyrsis should sing, the goatherd argues, because now he is alive; at the moment of Thyrsis' death, his song will help him no more than it does Daphnis. We do not concentrate on the mortality of the singer, however, because the poem does not focus on it. The poem presents one brief glimpse of Thyrsis' life, but it does not include in its small scope the shape of Thyrsis' life story. The limited circumstances of the singers and their world, and the limited scope of the song, protect them for the time being from the fate of Daphnis. The poem draws our attention away from the fact that they are as mortal as Daphnis at the same time as it includes a dramatic representation of the power of death. As in the similes of the Iliadic counterplot, in Idyll 1 the poem itself turns away from the fact of mortality in the rural scene.

Idyll 1, then, dramatizes the clash between the epic plot and counterplot. It translates this clash into its own terms, so that the opposition between the two reappears in the various oppositions which make up bucolic poetry. It also reverses the proportions between the plot and the counterplot, so that the counterplot is made to frame the heroic plot and thus to qualify the bitterness of its truths. Bucolic poetry takes as its central subject matter the question of whether the strategies of the counterplot are ever adequate to the human condition. Within the story of Daphnis, they are found not to be sufficient, and Thyrsis' song laments its own inability to convince its stubborn hero that many of the solutions of the counterplot (such as the merging with nature symbolized by nature's grief; myth itself; or the expansive gestures of sympathy which create a community of sympathy

around the dying Daphnis) can offer genuine consolations.

As Charles Segal has suggested, the contrast between Daphnis and the two herdsmen of the frame story is made most explicit by Daphnis' challenge to Aphrodite.³⁰ Daphnis dies for mysterious reasons;³¹ the only thing the poem chooses to tell about the death of Daphnis is that it was somehow caused by a challenge to Aphrodite:

And to her at length Daphnis made answer: 'Cypris, grievous to bear, wrathful Cypris, Cypris detested by mortals, thinkest thou, then, that all my suns are set already? Even in Hades shall Daphnis be a bitter grief to Love.

(I,100-3)

Daphnis then challenges Aphrodite in even more explicitly heroic language: "Go set thyself again before Diomedes and say, 'I am the vanquisher of Daphnis, the neatherd; come fight with me'" (I,112-3). Here Daphnis explicitly replaces epic struggle with erotic struggle, and in this case erotic struggle is represented as a battle with Aphrodite herself, a battle which Daphnis loses. His loss does not calm his hubristic pride, however, and he dies driven to Hades by Love (130). Like the scene on the cup in which two men "contend from either side in alternate speech" (34-5) for a woman's favor, Daphnis' shift from struggle in battle to struggle with Aphrodite represents a typical bucolic move. In Daphnis' case, however, this is erotic struggle at its extreme, for his is a struggle with love itself.

What does it mean to challenge Aphrodite? As Segal has argued,

³⁰See Segal, "The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," pp. 16-22. As is apparent, this dissertation follows Segal's argument quite closely here.

³¹See Gow, II,1-2, for a listing of the many hypotheses which have been suggested to explain Daphnis' death.

this challenge represents Daphnis' alienation "from the spirit of life and sexual energy" which Thyrsis and the Goatherd accept.³²

The 'springs of the Seasons' and the rutting goats of the end assert the victory of nature's powers, self-contained and indifferent, over the fevered emotionality of the mortal who defies them. Yet these lines also affirm a more positive vitality, accessible to those less recalcitrant, less violent singers who know the ways of goats, but can also speak of mythological life-giving forces. Daphnis may die, but other, happier dwellers in this rustic world remain to inherit the whispering pines by the spring.... Their songs can incorporate the 'sorrows of Daphnis' (19); but they themselves go beyond this suffering, death-bent pathos in a more inclusive and more affirmative vision of the relation between art and nature.³³

Thus Thyrsis and the Goatherd live on, it might be argued, because they accept and represent in their art precisely this life force which Daphnis rejects.

David Halperin has argued that the description of the Goatherd's cup, an epic ecphrasis, can be seen as summing up the concerns of Theocritus' bucolic poetry. The cup, in Halperin's view, unfolds Theocritus' "programme of epic revisionism." In his view, the first scene (of the men contending for the woman) stands for Theocritus' most original contribution to epic themes: the erotic. "Love replaces war as the foremost subject of the new bucolic epos.... Theocritus' peculiar emphasis on erotic frustration can even be seen as a corollary to the traditional emphasis on agony of mortal struggle in heroic epic."³⁴

³²Segal, "The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," p. 16.

³³Segal, "The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," p. 17.

³⁴See Halperin, p. 353. Both the quotations in this paragraph appear on this page.

To sum up, Halperin concludes,

the first scene on the cup represents a reversal of traditional epic subjects (the substitution of erotic for heroic themes), the second a reversal of traditional epic society (the replacement of princes with paupers) and the third a reversal of traditional epic tone and mode of presentation (comic irony preferred to high seriousness).... What is unique to Theocritus is the creation of an entire genre--one might even call it a counter-genre--by the device of oppositio in imitando.³⁵

If this argument is correct, then Daphnis' challenge to Aphrodite may also be seen as a challenge to a typical bucolic shift of theme and focus.

Although Halperin seems justified in stressing the way bucolic poetry grew up in opposition to the heroic plot of epic poetry, some difficulties still ensue from his interpretation. In Idyll 1 erotic struggle is shown to be as mortal as heroic struggle. On the cup the picture of amorous contention is one of frustration: "but now she looks on one and smiles, and now to the other she shifts her thought, while they, long hollow-eyed from love, labour to no purpose" (36-8). Neither lover is forced to accept loss, because the woman's alternating favors match their alternating speeches. This picture is one of eros frozen in time before the moment of decision; this struggle will go on forever, like the pastoral song in which the alternating sides may be endlessly repeated. But whenever eros is not frozen in time, a resolution can bring loss as permanent and as destructive as the heroic loss which the erotic topic displaced. Daphnis' challenge to Aphrodite and his subsequent death perhaps best illustrates the fact that erotic struggle, when not distanced or contained by art, can still

³⁵Halperin, pp. 354-5.

destroy the individual. The scene on the cup could be said to represent the underside of amoeban discourse, where the only solution to an erotic opposition is endless frustration, frustration which is viewed comically by the carver of the cup but which nonetheless holds within it the seeds of the song of Daphnis.

The shift to erotic struggle, in other words, does not absolve the bucolic poem of the need to resolve conflict. The epic stance is one which demands victory: two sides oppose one another, or two warriors face one another, and one wins. Either Achilles or Hector must win; either Odysseus or the suitors will have possession of Penelope and Odysseus' household. An epic poem dramatizes the experience of losing in battle (and especially of facing death), and it suggests that even the winner shares this experience. Epic poems are therefore not about shared space; they are about occupying armies or scenes of invasion. Epic armies do not sit down side by side and agree to divide up the land (though epic heroes may occasionally think that their enemies can be bought off, as Hector does in Book XXII).

Bucolic poetry, on the other hand, and the pastoral poetry which grew out of it, takes as its primary aim the creation of shared space. Two herdsmen accidentally encounter one another and agree to sit down together to share the shade. This sharing of the space is paralleled by their alternating song: here struggle is metamorphosed into singing competition, but each side is well-balanced against the other, and (as in the scene on the cup in which neither wooer wins) in these competitions there is rarely a clear winner.³⁶ A tie between the

³⁶Virgil's seventh eclogue is an exception.

competitors is more common, or at least some exchange of gifts to indicate that each has profited by the other's artistry. The ending of Idyll 6 is paradigmatic of the bucolic tie between competitors: as Daphnis and Damoetas end their match, Theocritus comments that "neither won the victory, but invincible they proved" ("nike men oudallos anessatoi d' egenonto," VI,46).³⁷

Erotic struggle, however, unless it is frozen into some artistic scheme, does not lead to such a resolution or suspension of opposing parties in a peaceful scene. It must be distanced or contained for the bucolic poem to achieve its particular ironic pleasure in the human condition. Hence the bucolic song which tells of erotic struggle is concerned to transform or at least distance the frustration (just as the counterplot transformed or distanced heroic strife). Rosenmeyer has commented that love in pastoral poetry "needs to be sublimated and de-natured if it is to be acceptable to Pan," and he suggests that passion and the pain it brings usually are neutralized via parody or via embalment (usually an embalment in art itself).³⁸ On the surface this remark may seem a strange one, for not only is the shift to erotic themes and situations typical of bucolic poetry, but later

³⁷See Rosenmeyer, p. 95, who sees "bucolic symmetry" and in particular amoeban echoing song in which the second singer uses the paradigms of the first as paradigmatic of pastoral. He also writes that "symmetrization absorbs all structural instincts in pastoral" (p.47), and argues that the refrains and use of anaphora contributes to this symmetry by blocking all sense of progression (p.94).

³⁸See Rosenmeyer, pp. 78, 82. The first comment is made in reference to Marvell's "Clorinda and Damon" which Rosenmeyer takes as a pastoral archetype in its treatment of eroticism.

pastoral poetry often centers around the representation of free love.³⁹ But Rosenmeyer's insight points to a deeper truth about bucolic and pastoral poetry, for they are uncomfortable with erotic conflict whenever it cannot be resolved and they usually find a way to resolve it through art (the cup in Idyll 1, for example, or the magical incantation of Virgil's Eclogue 8). While erotic satisfaction may play a role in a bucolic poem, erotic conflict and frustration (the most typical result of erotic conflict) must be distanced and contained. Erotic struggle thus plays an analogous role in bucolic poems to that of the main heroic plot in epic, and the counterplot similarly works to contain, purge or distance it.

A clear example of the way erotic frustration is metamorphosed by art in Theocritus' idylls can be seen in Idyll 11. In the frame story of this idyll, the letter to Nicias the doctor, Theocritus sets himself apart from the comic love story he is telling. This letter, as E. W. Spofford puts it, "in a rare moment for Theocritus, presents directly the cultivated world from which the rural scenes are viewed and appreciated."⁴⁰ The poem wittily suggests how the Muses can provide a better (and cheaper) cure for lovesickness than all unguents, salves or other medical remedies (pharmakon, lines 1 and 17, takes the primary, medical sense). The poet maintains his ironic distance from his

³⁹For a study of the different representations of love and sexuality in pastoral poetry see Laurence Lerner, "Sex in Arcadia," in The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), pp. 81-104.

⁴⁰E.W. Spofford, "Theocritus and Polyphemus," American Journal of Philology 90 (1969), p. 23.

subject throughout the poem partly by quoting the comic self-descriptions of Polyphemus and partly by making ironic references to the future arrival of Odysseus. These ironic references strike us as grotesque and yet funny, since Cyclops is completely unaware of them (and thus unaware of his status as a literary character). Poetry thus proves the remedy for love in two senses: not only does the Cyclops "lead his love..." with minstrelsy, but the ironic voice of the poet keeps us from serious involvement with his plight.

The poet and his hero, however, are not as opposed as they might seem. Polyphemus too wants to find a remedy for love. Both he and his poet want to find some kind of compromise with love, and, as Anne Brooke puts it, "the dominant movement of the song is not of wooing but of disengagement, the conversion of courtship into cure."⁴¹ The poet is partly involved in Polyphemus' adventure: he stands somewhere in between the position of the ironic observer and that of a participant in the song. By taking this intermediate position, the poet can write a love song at the same time as he is writing a cure for love.

Theocritus' light ironic touch and his playful self-limitation allow him to remain in the middle position where he is neither swept into the action nor completely detached from it. He does not ultimately try to reconcile the two positions: the wit of his poem is to hold the two together in mind without claiming any achieved unity between them. Thus, while Theocritus' poetry may control or guide love, and while Polyphemus may guide or purge his love with minstrelsy, we

⁴¹Anne Brooke, "Theocritus' Idyll 11: A Study in Pastoral," Arethusa 4 (1971), 75.

are as aware of the differences between these two cures for love as we are amused by the similarities. The two stand side by side as two separate examples placed at different degrees of seriousness, but they do not blend: in Idyll 11 to shepherd a flock does not serve simply as a trope for writing poetry as it will in later pastoral poetry.⁴² We still feel the comedy and the wit of the poet's juxtaposition of Polyphemus' lament and his own poetry, and even the idea that a shepherd (much less a Cyclops, a race known for its lack of interest in art) would compose poetry at all is a comic one.

Idyll 11, then, represents one Theocritean paradigm for the treatment of eros in a bucolic poem. The poetry itself on several levels purges the poem of the erotic impulse until even the love-struck shepherd turns back to his sheep. Erotic impulse leads to frustration, so retreat, wittily argued for, is the only solution. The bucolic poem steps back from the erotic scene because it seems most often to be a scene of struggle or loss. The fate of Daphnis in Idyll 1 suggests what happens when a character or poem does not step back from the scene of erotic conflict. Although eroticism enters the bucolic scene

⁴²Gordon Williams, in "A Version of Pastoral: Virgil, Eclogue 4," in Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry, ed. Tony Woodman and David West (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 140, notes that Virgil often uses "the basic symbolism which equates 'writing pastoral poetry' with 'being a shepherd.'" This equation remains fundamental in pastoral poetry following Virgil.

in many idylls, the poems always find some way to contain it.⁴³

Heroic struggle or strife, then, is distanced in the bucolic poems in a number of ways. It is transformed into erotic struggle and into aesthetic competition. The imitation of heroic struggle in the singing contest seems to serve as an outlet for aggressive instinct: because rivalry is acted out in art, the poems suggest, it does not have to be acted out in life. Thus the frame stories are usually free of the rivalry which the songs enact, and this freedom from aggressive instincts is furthered by the tendency of these contests to end in a draw.

In the case of erotic struggle, rivalry is not so easily turned aside, so the bucolic poems tend to represent erotic struggle frozen in the moment of frustration. When someone is victorious in the erotic struggle, the poem is usually on the side of the loser and is concerned to display either the destruction caused by love or the lover's solution to his predicament (as in Idyll 11). The erotic scenes in Theocritus' idylls thus reveal the limits to the balancing of opposites which the aestheticism of the poem allows: whereas bucolic songs may endlessly alternate one with another, endless alternation or endless uncertainty in the erotic realm is hardly a desirable end. Erotic scenes imply limits to the strategy of distancing and aestheti-

⁴³When the bucolic singers have any direct erotic experience, as they do more often in Theocritus' idylls than in Virgil's eclogues, it tends to enter the poem as a past memory which is a source of present contention. In Idyll 5, for example, Comatas uses his claim of once having conquered Lacon sexually as part of his competitive strategy in the singing contest (see V, 116-7). This entire idyll is pervaded by a rivalry atypical of the idylls as a group.

cizing pain, for they remind us, albeit indirectly, that erotic frustration and rivalry cannot be easily contained by ironic detachment or by aesthetic formalism.

Theocritus' bucolic poems, then, aestheticize and distance the suffering which comes from strife (even erotic strife) as the scenes in the Iliadic counterplot often do. This distancing or aestheticizing gesture, which includes the bucolic use of frames and the tendency of bucolic singers to sing songs which are not their own, allows grief to come to the surface without disrupting the sense of harmony created by the poem as a whole. Theocritus also limits the degree of resolution created by bucolic aestheticism, however, by contrasting it with the response of a character who resists being treated as an aesthetic object. Thus although the bucolic poems do not ultimately reject the solutions of the counterplot, as the epic poems do, they nonetheless dramatize the limits of the poetic strategies on which they rely.

The idylls also intensify the comparison to nature typical of the counterplot by making nature appear sympathetic to man; when the sympathy of nature makes no difference, the poems then lament the limitations of that strategy. The use of a sympathetic landscape which echoes or responds directly to human suffering is also extended to include myths which embody such a notion of sympathy. The bucolic landscape is a mythical landscape, although the use of myth takes two forms. Mythical figures occasionally appear directly, as the Nymphs and Aphrodite do in Idyll 1. They represent directly the timelessness of the natural landscape and the consolations of myth. More often, myth is embodied in the landscape itself, and thus somewhat distanced from the main action of the poem. The landscape is infused with a

mythical aura and a sense of sympathetic power, but no goddess steps forth from the springs or shadows to offer immortality in person. The bucolic landscape, like the natural scenes in the Iliadic counterplot, takes on a mythical sense of timelessness, but it thereby also seems more fictional.

In the harmonious ending of Idyll 7, for example, Simichidas describes the "sacred water from the cave of the Nymphs" (VII, 136-7) splashing nearby, but he turns to rhetorical questions to evoke the scene's mythic aura: "Nymphs of Castalia that haunt the steep of Parnassus, was it such a bowl as this that old Chiron served to Heracles in Pholus's rocky cave?" (VII,148-50). Simichidas affirms a mythical presence in the wine, but only after making the reader pause before another rhetorical question. His affirmation, when it finally comes, has taken on a fictional force, for we understand that he means it metaphorically. As the rhetorical questions are repeated, we see that they are at base genuine questions. The speaker does not have any certain answers to them, so he must find an answer in his own metaphorical powers, which he does as the poem ends. Was it, he asks,

such nectar as ye Nymphs mingled for us to drink that day by
the altar of Demeter of the Threshing-floor. On her heap
may I plant again the great winnow-shovel while she smiles
on us with sheaves and poppies in either hand. (VII,153-7)

The vision of Demeter ends the poem, and yet it is a vision superbly qualified by the passage which precedes it so that she seems both present and yet fictional. It is in this sense that myth and the poet's own powers of imagination begin to blend in the idylls, so that it is not always easy to tell whether he is discovering a mythical aura in

the landscape or setting or creating one.⁴⁴

The landscape in Theocritus' idylls always has this mythical power, though he draws on it differently in different idylls. Nowhere does he as clearly represent the relation of myth and the imagination as he does here in Idyll 7, however, an idyll noted for its self-consciousness about methods and styles of composing poetry. Theocritus' ability to give the landscape a mythical immanence parallels the use of myth in the Homeric counterplot. Just as the epic balances counterplot with plot, the idylls suggest that this mythical immanence may be only fiction; the idylls thus play the powers of myth off against its limits as fiction.

Like the epics, only inversely, the Idylls also contrast the timelessness of the mythical scenes and characters with the mortality of the human singers, but they do so more evasively. Myths and songs have a timeless dimension; singers, however, do not. The idylls disguise this fact by distancing us from the singers themselves and by presenting their encounters as events which could be repeated at any time. Nonetheless the singers belong to the world of death, and art can only temporarily fix them in time. The idylls usually represent some figure whose loss cannot be fully accommodated by the strategies

⁴⁴A similar confusion is created by the references to the nymphs (ll. 137, 148, and 154). Are the nymphs addressed directly in line 154 the same as those referred to in either of the previous references? The nymphs of line 137 seem merely to form part of the straightforward description of the setting; they are the nymphs of some fountain on the farm where Simichidas is a guest. By the end of the poem, however, these Sicilian nymphs have blended in the poet's mind with the nymphs of poetic inspiration. See Gow II, 168, for a description of the different theories explaining the blending of Sicilian, Castalian and Parnassian nymphs.

of art, and thus juxtapose artistic power to bring immortality with loss of that power. The singers of the songs never feel grief, but, as in the case of the Iliadic counterplot, this purgation of grief felt in the harmonies of the songs has little effect on the characters suffering from it. Thus Daphnis dies, unconsolated by the powers of myth and unaware of the pastoral song to be made about him.

This surrounding of the plot by the counterplot, in which the counterplot temporarily seems able to transform or at least to contain the experience of loss or death, brings a doubleness of tone and meaning to Theocritus' idylls. The idylls join these opposites by juxtaposing them, but they do not unite them. The elements of the heroic plot remain in the poems to criticize and limit the aesthetic solutions offered by the counterplot; similarly, the rhetorical force of the counterplot is powerful enough to limit but not to end the experience of death and loss. By distancing the reader and the singer from such loss, the counterplot is able to create a new aesthetic harmony which has its own joys. The juxtaposition of the two, then, brings ambiguity into the idylls and sometimes they take as their subject the difficulty of reconciling these opposing tendencies. The main device which makes this juxtaposition or balancing possible is the ironic stance of the poet. Also, the poems are kept as small things, and because they are so brief, the implications of their opposing poetic strategies need not be followed through to their logical and divisive conclusion.

The irony of the poet is particularly felt in the split between the poet and the persona of his bucolic singer. This split in the very character of the poetic voice defines the double perspective of

the idylls. The poet clearly views his speakers ironically, and yet he allows them to make his most serious points, saving for himself only dismissive rhetorical gestures. Unlike the epic poet, whose point of view unifies the opposing tendencies of his poem and makes of them a distinct, continuous line of action, the bucolic poet reflects in his own voice the opposition between the heroic plot and the counterplot. The bucolic poet is always the mediator or the balancer of two opposing positions, and the split in his own voice is what allows him to contain both tendencies without transforming one into the other. But this split also brings a doubleness to the poems: they oscillate between their opposing poetic strategies but find no final resolution. Theocritus demonstrates his wit by inverting and transforming epic topoi and situations, and in these inversions the counterplot comes into its own. But the poet's irony directs itself even towards the rhetorical strategies which make his poems work; this ironic stance reveals the ambivalence and uncertainty of the tendency to aestheticism and distance (out of which the ironic stance itself grows). Thus, by taking an ironic stance towards the heroic tradition and towards themselves, Theocritus' bucolic poems dramatize and glory in their fall from epic.

(ii) Virgil's Eclogues: Shading The Sources

In the Eclogues, Virgil looks back self-consciously to Theocritean bucolic poetry and to its epic forebears, a double heritage which intensifies the doubleness of form and meaning already

typical of Theocritus' idylls.⁴⁵ Like the idylls, the Eclogues join the plot and the counterplot so that the counterplot and its poetic strategies appear to surround and enclose the heroic plot. To this Theocritean situation, Virgil adds a myth of temporal progression which suggests that, while the solutions of the counterplot may be adequate for a brief while, ultimately they will not be satisfactory. As John Coolidge has written (referring to the Eclogues), "In Virgil the impulse to retreat is not so much juxtaposed as involved with the impulse to move forward, for the small things of the pastoral world both offer a refuge from the heroic and imply great things to come."⁴⁶ By adding a temporal dimension to his pastoral world and to the myth of his own poetic development, Virgil shifts the balance between plot and counterplot and reminds his readers that the pastoral solutions have a carefully delimited, brief validity. He temporalizes the interplay of plot and counterplot, suggesting that the counterplot predominates in the earlier poetry and the plot in the later. The pastoral poems, then, imply the epic to come, but the connection also works the

⁴⁵The edition of the Eclogues used throughout this dissertation is Vergil, Eclogues, ed. Robert Coleman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). References to the poems by eclogue and line number are included within the text; references to Coleman's commentary are included by page number within these notes. The translations are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition of Virgil, Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6, translated by H.R. Fairclough, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935). The author apologizes for the occasional archaisms in these translations.

⁴⁶John S. Coolidge, "Great Things and Small: The Virgilian Progression," Comparative Literature 17 (1965), 10-11. The interpretation of Virgil's Eclogues presented above is indebted to Coolidge's careful study of Virgil's transformation of his own poetic career into a myth of poetic development.

other way: the epic will often look back to the pastoral poems and seek a way to incorporate the pastoral stance in the larger epic story.⁴⁷

Throughout the Eclogues hints of a submerged heroic story continue to appear. The openings of Eclogue 4 and 6 (IV,1-3; VI,1-8) explicitly raise the question of a higher style, and both eclogues, in spite of the fiction of their humility, go on to treat broader top-

⁴⁷ Eleanor Winsor Leach, in Vergil's "Eclogues": Landscapes of Experience (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), uses "foreground" and "background," terms taken from painting, to describe the relation in the Eclogues of the pastoral and the larger heroic world. Leach's spatial metaphors are useful since the pastoral poems imply a continuous landscape which unites the smaller and the bigger world. Gordon Williams, in Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), uses a logical metaphor to describe the different fields of meaning which the Eclogues create. He argues that the poems can be divided into a primary field (generally though not always associated with the pastoral fiction) and a secondary field (often representing political or poetic issues). Williams sees these "fields" as related metonymically and thus stresses the disjunctive character of pastoral oppositions and pastoral poetry itself. John Van Sickle uses a temporal metaphor to describe the doubleness at the heart of the pastoral tradition. In "Studies of Dialectical Methodology in Virgil," Modern Language Notes 85 (1970) 884-928, and in The Design of Vergil's Bucolics, Van Sickle argues that Virgil's Eclogues progress dialectically from one poetic stance to another, finally to arrive at a synthesis of "Tityran" and "Menalcan" tendencies, a synthesis he calls "Arcadian." All three of these works have influenced the present study, for the opposition of plot-counterplot has a spatial, temporal and logical dimension.

The list of important works on Virgilian pastoral is too long to append here. The following are works which have also been helpful in formulating the interpretations offered above but are not listed elsewhere in these notes: Marie Desport, L'incantation virgilienne: Essai sur les mythes du poète enchanteur et leur influence dans l'oeuvre de Virgile (Bordeaux: n.p., 1952); J. Perret, Virgile: Les Bucoliques, 2nd edition (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1970); Viktor Pöschl, Die Hirtendichtung Virgils (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1964); Michael Putnam, Virgil's Pastoral Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) and P.L. Smith, "Lentus in umbra: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's Eclogues," Phoenix 19 (1965), 298-304. Other works to which the author owes more specific debts will be listed below in individual notes.

ics.⁴⁸ The political subjects of Eclogues 1 and 9, in particular, re-incorporate the larger heroic world which the pastoral poems appear to bound out.⁴⁹

In Eclogue 1 the pastoral ease of Tityrus, often defined as the archetypal example of the otium of the pastoral world, is shown to be dependent on a journey to the city and thus on the political world. The pastoral world, we gather from the contrast between Tityrus' and Meliboeus' fates, must either actively seek the protection of the political world or be destroyed by it. The pastoral ideal is represented almost entirely through the perspective of Meliboeus, for whom it is lost forever. Tityrus, the character who seems to enjoy the pastoral ease, speaks of it in an entirely different vein. Meliboeus describes Tityrus' state in the poetic terms of the counterplot, but his own life has rendered that poetics irrelevant, for himself at least. In each of their cases, a particular relation of the pastoral stance to the world of force is implied: Meliboeus' version of pastoral, in which the pastoral world seems completely at odds with the world of force (and in fact is destroyed by it), is associated with the dispossessed and the powerless, while Tityrus' version of pastoral, in which the pastoral world is accommodated to the heroic world and made to depend on it, is made to seem an enabling or liberating stance (Tityrus gains not only

⁴⁸On the relation of pastoral and epic, see Charles Segal's informative article on "Vergil's Sixth Eclogue and the Problem of Evil," Transactions of the American Philological Association 100 (1969), 407-35.

⁴⁹See Charles Segal, "Tamen Cantabit, Arcades--Exile and Arcadia in Eclogues One and Nine," Arion 4 (1965), 237-66.

his land but his freedom).⁵⁰

In Eclogue 9 the poem itself leads in urbem (IX,1) as it illustrates the fact that "carmina tantum/nostra ualent...tela inter Martia, quantum/Chaonia...aquila ueniente columbas," ("amid the weapons of war...our songs avail as much as the doves of Chaonia when the eagle comes") (IX,11-3).⁵¹ Pastoral song is now shown to be powerless in the face of military power, and the pastoral world itself is invaded by time. Moeris and Lycidas, making explicit reference to earlier eclogues and to Theocritus' idylls (IX,39-43, echoes Idyll XII), complain of their loss of memory: "Omnia fert aetas, animum quoque" ("Time robs us of all, even of memory") (IX, 51). Pastoral song is limited by political power and by time, and the many fragments of song which make up Eclogue 9 represent this disintegration iconically. In Eclogue 9, then, the pastoral poem seems to take as its subject its own limitations or impossibility. Theocritus had contained the ambivalence or strain resulting from his enclosure of the plot in the counterplot by his use of aesthetic distance and irony. Virgil uses these strategies also, but he sometimes, as here in Eclogue 9, dramatizes the failure of that aesthetic balancing act.

⁵⁰On Eclogue 1 see B.F. Dick, "Virgil's Pastoral Poetic: A Reading of the First Eclogue," American Journal of Philology 91 (1970), 227-93; Michael Putnam, "Virgil's First Eclogue: Poetics of Enclosure," Ramus 4 (1975), 163-88; and especially Paul Alpers, "Eclogue 1: An Introduction to Virgilian Pastoral," in The Singer of the Eclogues: A Study of Virgilian Pastoral (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 65-95.

⁵¹Coleman, p. 259, points out that the eagle is explicitly the symbol of Rome.

A particular generic self-consciousness arises from the shifts in poetic stance and in the balance of plot and counterplot throughout the Eclogues. Virgil quotes passages from one eclogue in another to refer to the particular balance achieved there or to suggest that the former position has become untenable. In Eclogue 5, for example, Menalcas gives Mopsus the reed that taught him Eclogues 2 and 3 (see V,85-7). As mentioned above, Eclogue 9 is filled with references to earlier eclogues (IX,20 echoes V,40; IX,50 echoes I,45; for example), and the close of Eclogue 10, referring to the umbra in which Tityrus first appears in Eclogue 1, seems to complete the circle. Now that same umbra, so pleasing to Meliboeus, is found to be harmful to singers (X,75). The Georgics too end with a reference to the Eclogues, characterizing them as arts of inglorious ease ("ignobilis oti," Georgics IV,564) sung under the covering of the spreading beech. Since the last line of the Georgics explicitly echoes the first line of the Eclogues, another circle is completed. Such instances of self-indexing suggest that the pastoral situation has become a figure for an entire poetic stance, that is, for an entire poetic genre. Thus when Virgil makes brief reference to his earlier poetry at the end of the Georgics, the reference includes by implication the entire set of situations and poetic strategies embodied in the Eclogues.

The unusual self-consciousness about genre suggested by Virgil's self-quotations and self-references indicates that the Eclogues are conceived as a distinct and independent genre.⁵² The self-indexing

⁵²For some thoughts on how one genre develops from another, see Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origins of Genres," New Literary History 8 (1976), 159-70. Todorov sees genres as originating in speech acts

suggests that throughout Virgil's poetry brief episodes or allusions can be indexed by the genre to which they seem to belong.⁵³ This self-indexing and creating of a generic position to which the poet can refer with the briefest of gestures is itself another form of aestheticism: in itself this constant secondary level of concern (concern about the interplay of poetic genres and the consequent willingness to use those genres symbolically) distances the poet and the readers from the ostensible subject matter of the poems and removes them to a plane on which larger aesthetic questions (such as the power of different kinds of poetry) are the central issue.

The counterplot, then, takes a prominent position in Virgil's pastoral poems, as it did in Theocritus' Idylls, and the tension be-

which are amplified and transformed by a range of devices including inversion, narrativization, specification, repetition, and variation (p. 166). See also Alastair Fowler's provocative article on "The Life and Death of Literary Forms," in New Directions in Literary History, ed. Ralph Cohen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 77-94. Fowler seeks to expand the distinction of "primary" and "secondary" genres to include a third type, a "tertiary" genre. He sees the tertiary phase as including burlesque and antithesis as well as symbolic modulation of the secondary phase (pp. 90-1). Fowler points out that the three phases are not necessarily distinct and may occur within the same work. He also sees the progression as tending towards abstraction, for "genre tends to mode" (p. 92). In Fowler's terms, Virgil's Eclogues constitute secondary pastoral poetry, consciously based on Theocritus' (in his terms) primary pastoral poetry. Theocritus' idylls themselves are secondary forms, however; in the terms of this study, Theocritus' poetry can be characterized as secondary or even tertiary epic.

⁵³This notion of generic indexing derives from that of Rosalie Colie in The Resources of Kind: Genre-Theory in the Renaissance, ed. Barbara Lewalski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). See also Frances Muecke, "Virgil and the Genre of Pastoral," Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association 44 (1975), 174-5, who discusses Virgil's self-quotation as a sign of generic self-consciousness.

tween the counterplot and the heroic plot reappears in the many oppositions which structure pastoral poems.⁵⁴ While Theocritus creates by wit and irony an alliance between the oppositions in his idylls (but never suggests that they can actually be merged--hence the comedy of some of his combinations), Virgil finds a way to suggest a resolution, though it is of a very limited kind.

The ending of Eclogue 1 suggests the way that Virgil suspends the differences between the two opposite points of view in the poem in order to reach some resolution. Though to some readers of Eclogue 1, Tityrus seems insensitive to Meliboeus' plight, he nonetheless invites Meliboeus to stay the night:⁵⁵

Hic tamen hanc mecum poteris requiescere noctem
fronde super uiridi.
(I,79-80)

Yet this night you might have rested here with me on the green leafage.

Tityrus' invitation blends with the evening shadows, and itself seems

⁵⁴ Most modern critics define pastoral as poetry based on a number of constitutive oppositions. As early as 1906, W.W. Greg described pastoral as including "the recognition of a contrast implicit or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type of civilization." See Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959; 1st published, 1906), pp. 4-5. In Pastoral Forms and Attitudes, Harold Tolliver elaborates this theory of contrasts into a set of four oppositions depending on historical period: Nature/Society; Nature/Art; Idyllic Nature/Antipastoral Nature; and Nature/Celestial Paradise (p. 3). See above note 5.

⁵⁵ For an example of a reader who sees Tityrus as selfish, see Renato Poggioli, "Naboth's Vineyard: The Pastoral View of the Social Order," in The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975; essay first published, 1963), pp. 196-7. As Coleman comments, "the imperfect poteras properly implies an unreal condition: 'you could have, had you wished,' but it is used to make a somewhat apologetic invitation at Horace S.2.1.16...!" (p. 88).

to stand in its vagueness and uncertainty for the suspension at the end of the poem. In his conclusion the peaceful evening scene in the background seems to enfold the two speakers within it:

et iam summa procul uillarum culmina fumant
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.
(I,82-3)

Even now the house-tops yonder are smoking and longer shadows fall from the mountain-heights.

As the point of view broadens to include a wider background scene, which sweeps from the houses at a distance to the heights of the mountains, the differences between the speakers seem less distinct.⁵⁶ As the similes of the Iliadic counterplot often distance the pain of death by broadening the poem's perspective to include the calm passage of natural seasons, so this final description broadens the perspective of the Eclogue until the oppositions seem to be resolved. The harmony of the evening scene is enhanced by the repeated l, u and nasal sounds until the harmonious picture and the harmonies of the verse seem one and the same. The beauty of the ending also helps to hold the opposite experiences of Meliboeus and Tityrus in suspension since it draws our attention not to their differences but to the beauty of the scene as we

⁵⁶Although Leach's terminology is applied here, she herself reads this poem quite differently: "At the end of the poem, there is no synthesis of the two versions of experience and no reconciliation of order and disorder. This failure of understanding, and the resultant inconclusiveness of the poem, signify that the full possibilities of Vergil's re-awakening of the pastoral await further development" (p. 117).

experience it in the beauty of the verse.⁵⁷ This distancing by the broadening of perspective and the aestheticism that allows us to see their experiences as parts of an aesthetic whole are typical strategies of the counterplot.

Paul Alpers has identified the suspension in this final moment of Eclogue 1 as a defining trait of Virgil's pastoral poetry: "'suspension,'" he writes,

seems to me the best word to use for such moments, because it suggests a poised and secure contemplation of things disparate or ironically related, and yet at the same time does not imply that disparities or conflicts are fully resolved.⁵⁸

Alpers argues that Virgil's development of the Theocritean bucolic stance

enabled him to hold in suspension or mediate between what could have been the polar oppositions of public and private, high and low, epic and lyric.⁵⁹

The Eclogues in dialogue, and especially those in which we overhear an amoeban song contest, suspend the differences between the two points of view represented by the two speakers or by the alternate songs.

This suspension of opposites constitutes no real merging of opposites: the alternatives hang in suspension, or in solution, so

⁵⁷ Erwin Panofsky, in his influential essay "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in Meaning in the Visual Arts (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955; essay first published, 1936), pp. 295-300, was perhaps the first in the modern period to stress the beauty of the ending of the first eclogue. For Panofsky, the melancholy calm of this moment is paradigmatic of the Eclogues as a whole.

⁵⁸ Alpers, The Singer of the Eclogues, p. 103.

⁵⁹ Alpers, The Singer of the Eclogues, p. 114.

that both help to make up the meaning of a poem. Critics thus argue endlessly about which "side" to take in each Eclogue, but Alpers seems quite right to insist that choosing sides is not the point. The poems tend to be too carefully balanced to allow us to come down fully on one side or another, and although there is sometimes a winner of the pastoral song contests (e.g., Eclogue VII,69-70), we rarely feel that the alternative vision has been eradicated. Often at the conclusion of a singing contest, the judge will decide that he cannot decide, as Palaemon does at the end of Eclogue 3:⁶⁰

Non nostrum inter uos tantas componere lites:
et uitula tu dignus et hic et quisquis amores
aut metuet dulcis aut experietur amarus.
(III,108-10)

It is not for me to settle so high a contest between you.
You deserve the heifer, and he also--and whoever shall
fear the sweets or taste the bitters of love.

Even if one singer seems to be the winner over the other, gifts are usually exchanged, as occurs at the end of Eclogue 5, where Mopsus, after his hubristic beginning, has been humbled by Menalcas' song.

In the Eclogues which are narrated, Alpers argues, the narrative frame usually contrasts with the story told within the frame; the poems work to suspend these differences so that, while we are aware of the antitheses they imply, we see the two views as making up a suspended whole. Whether in imagery or structure, verse or figures, the Eclogues leave opposites in suspension, and they can even be des-

⁶⁰See Charles Segal, "Vergil's *Caelatum Opus*: An Interpretation of the 3rd Eclogue," *American Journal of Philology* 88 (1967), 302, and passim, on the ending of this eclogue as exemplifying Virgilian suspension.

cribed in formal terms as suspended between dramatic and lyric poetry.⁶¹ To put this in plot terms, the characteristic pastoral gesture can be described as an invitation, and in particular an invitation to live side by side, to share in one community.⁶² The pastoral stance, whether applied to verse structures, characters or plot, claims that no decision about who wins need be made; rivals or competitors can live side by side, for the only mediation needed is the mock strife of a singing contest. Since the basic epic plot, especially as we see it in the Iliad, concerns strife, the pastoral invitation and political/rhetorical stance can be described as opposing the epic assumption that strife is necessary.

Virgil's Eclogues thus take up a middle position by which they seem to suspend the opposites which constitute them: life and death are made to seem less different than they ordinarily appear (Ec. 5); home and exile can be bound into one evening scene (Ec. 1); country and city can be shown to be mutually dependent; and even the power of poetry to transform man's situation can be reconciled with the discovery of the lack of that power by a song which, serving as entertainment to pass the time, succeeds briefly in transforming the moment at hand (Ec. 9). Even timelessness and time, progression and stasis are made friends by the Eclogues, for as a group the Eclogues appear

⁶¹See Alpers, The Singer of the Eclogues, pp. 76-9, who describes how Virgil's pastoral poems exist on a middle ground between the dramatic and the nondramatic.

⁶²See Alpers, The Singer of the Eclogues, pp. 125-7, on the importance of the human community created in the Eclogues.

to present a development or progression in their poetics but often reveal instead that a static or frozen dialectic holds the differing positions of each Eclogue apart.⁶³

Unlike Theocritus' ironic balancing of opposites, Virgil's suspension of opposites presents itself as a harmonious, if brief, resolution. Though many elements within the suspensions point to their fragility, the suspensions nonetheless seem briefly to make the differences of opinion irrelevant. Thus Virgilian pastoral poetry creates within itself a problematic of belief and disbelief quite different from anything in Theocritus: in Virgil's pastoral poems it is possible to speak of being lulled by the pastoral harmony out of a state of wariness or needful activity. Already in Virgil's Eclogues pastoral poetry begins to problematize its own state of retreat (thereby paving the way for Renaissance pastoral and its many moral dilemmas). The Eclogues are thus often about the limits to the suspension they are able to create, and hint at the dangers of accepting the pastoral harmony as stable. An ambivalence, deeper than is felt in Theocritus' idylls, characterizes them; grief, especially grief about the limits of poetic power, defines much of their tone and meaning.

⁶³John Van Sickle, in The Design of Virgil's Bucolics, especially pp. 2-37, argues strongly against the view that the Eclogues represent either a frozen dialectic or a static pattern. But his claims for dialectical progression through the Eclogues meet with obstacles in the poems themselves. Although a narrative order is hinted at in places, it nonetheless remains shadowy: Virgil teases the readers with the possibility of narrative progression, only to eliminate that possibility as each poem begins again. The very general progression of the poet who is ready to leave the shade by the end of Eclogue 10 is contradicted by the lack of clear progression from poem to poem. The Eclogues are suspended between moment and narrative; their order finally is metonymic.

The pastoral "suspension" is achieved largely through two means: the distancing of death or suffering by the inclusion of a broader perspective or community, and the aestheticizing effect of the poetry itself (and sometimes of the characters within the poetry). Eclogue 5 provides an example of these techniques at work to create a central suspension.⁶⁴ Mopsus' song, which represents Daphnis' death as absolute, is balanced with Menalcas' song which shows that song can conquer death and raise Daphnis "ad astra" ("to the stars") (V,51).

The poem diminishes the differences between these two opposite points of view by making them both seem fictional (the multiple framing reminds us that both are just songs sung in another context). It also suspends the two points of view by broadening the perspective on death until its power seems to be contained by the presence of a continuing community. Instead of placing the dying Daphnis in this setting to remind us of how little difference the mourning makes (as Theocritus does), Mopsus' song begins after Daphnis has died and treats only the mourning it causes. The poem focuses our attention on the effects of this death on the community: nature produces thistles and thorns, the shepherds a tomb.⁶⁵ The aestheticizing impulse, represented especially

⁶⁴See Brooks Otis, Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 128-30, on the centrality of the fifth eclogue. See also pp. 128-43, for Otis' theory about the symmetrical arrangement of the "Eclogue Book" and its significance.

⁶⁵Ellen Zambert, in Placing Sorrow: A Study of the Pastoral Elegy Convention from Theocritus to Milton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), pp. 43-4, argues that in the fifth eclogue, the pastoral world itself dies with Daphnis. Zambert is concerned to describe the consolations provided by place and setting in the pastoral elegy, but, in the case of Eclogue 5, she undermines her own interpretation by implying that the pastoral world cannot sustain itself in the face of loss.

by the concern to transform experience into song, is everywhere present. In an unusual reference to literacy in the Eclogues, Mopsus tells Menalcas that he has carved his song onto a tree (V,13-14). Within the fiction of his song, the shepherds carve one of Daphnis' verses onto his tomb ("tumulo superaddite carmen," "on the tomb...place this verse," V,42). In this moment the verse and the tomb no longer seem clearly distinguishable, and the transformation of pain into poetry has begun.

Menalcas picks up Mopsus' attempt to aestheticize Daphnis' death and extends it beyond the natural setting. As the broadening of perspective in the counterplot ultimately implied a divine view of events, so Daphnis now is represented as having precisely that divine view (V,56-7). Because Daphnis has this view ("ergo," 1.58), the woods are filled with glee, and a golden age sets in (60-1). Here Menalcas glosses the key pastoral concepts of otium (see I,6) and the re-echoing woods (see I,5): both are shown to depend on divine intervention. His song converts Daphnis' death into the source of yearly rites to purify the fields (74-5). These yearly rites serve to bind the community together and symbolize the harmony established between man and nature by man's own arts and ceremonies. Menalcas' song, in other words, converts Daphnis' death into a myth of immortality, and it presents this myth as having the power to regenerate the fields, to unite the human community and to re-establish harmony with the gods (when Daphnis died, Apollo and Pales had left the fields, 35, but now Apollo has returned and is worshipped with Daphnis, 66). Mopsus' song describes the rituals of mourning by which the pastoral community tries to contain or purge grief; Menalcas' song converts these rituals of

mourning into fertility rites.

The songs of Mopsus and Menalcas are held in suspension by the common device of shifting our focus from the moment of grief or death to the broader world of those affected. Menalcas' song is more radical in its use of this technique, since it transfers this broader perspective onto the dead Daphnis himself and thus reveals that the source of such a larger view is ultimately divine. Although the two songs suggest very different views of poetry, they are held within one focus by the fact that they both create an aesthetic community ultimately more important than the fact of suffering itself. The expansive gestures which each song enacts, gestures typical of the counterplot, thus bring to this eclogue the Virgilian suspension of opposites.

This suspension itself is fictional, however: although it presents itself as if it were permanent, it is only a temporary suspension. The limited or fictional quality of Virgilian pastoral suspension is best indicated in the ending of Eclogue 1, for there we know that in the morning Meliboeus will begin his exile. The calm evening scene is only a brief moment; the special fragility of many of the scenes in the Eclogues underlines our sense of their transiency. In Eclogue 5 the briefness of the suspension between the two points of view is indicated by the fact that their encounter is a chance encounter which ends as the eclogue ends. The briefness of the eclogue indicates the briefness of the suspension. Secondly, the exchange of gifts at the end, while it suggests the temporary suspension of opposites also looks forward to the splitting of these two points of view. Menalcas gives Mopsus the frail pipe made of hemlock stalk ("cicuta"), the pipe which had taught him Eclogues 2 and 3, while

Menalcas receives the shepherd's crook. Mopsus, this exchange suggests, will now proceed to sing more of the pastoral songs he has been singing, while Menalcas turns back to the more serious side of shepherding as his greater song suggests he already has done.⁶⁶

Whether or not we see the exchange as symbolic of two different poetic styles which the two will go on to use, certainly it prefigures the parting of their ways.⁶⁷

A final way in which the briefness or fragility of the pastoral suspension is hinted at in the two eclogues lies in the use of the word umbra. As we know from Eclogue 10, umbrae can sometimes be harmful to singers (X,75). In the beginning of Eclogues 1 and 5, the shadows are comfortable retreats from the hot sun (1,4; V,5), yet by the end of Eclogue 1 the shadows are the shadows of evening, hinting in its calm serenity that a human life is as brief as the life of a day. The broader perspective in which the differences between Tityrus and Meliboeus seem minor may finally be the perspective of death itself in which all oppositions are indeed resolved.

In Eclogue 5 the shades also hint at the darker sense of umbrae. Menalcas suggests that they sit and sing under the trees, but Mopsus

⁶⁶If we take Daphnis' deification as an allegory of Julius Caesar's deification (see Otis, pp. 133-6), then Menalcas' song appears even more concerned with the "greater" world than it appears to be in a more straightforward interpretation.

⁶⁷See Van Sickle, "Studies of Dialectical Methodology in the Virgilian Tradition," pp. 904-15, especially pp. 911-14, for a lively allegorical reading of the exchange at the end of Eclogue 5. Or see Van Sickle, The Design of Virgil's Bucolics, pp. 141-2. For Van Sickle the exchange prefigures the new union of singers and kinds of poetry which will eventually come to be the "Arcadian" mode by the end of Eclogue 10.

seems uncomfortable with this suggestion: he poses an alternative to moving "sub incertas...umbras" (V,5). The shadows are incertas ("unsteady" or "uncertain") because the branches are moving in the wind, but the more symbolic sense of the word hovers in the background. Mopsus, we learn as he sings his song, has been thinking about the connection of shadows and death. Part of the shepherd's ritual of mourning for Daphnis is to lead the shades to the springs: "spargite humum foliis, inducite fontibus umbras," ("strew the turf with leaves,...curtain the springs with shade") (V,40) Mopsus asks the shepherds. What are these shades that are drawn over the springs? The shepherds apparently will strew branches and foliage over the springs as part of a ritual of mourning. But the image also suggests the more metaphorical sense of both key terms, as though it were describing the way in which death shrouds or at least darkens the springs of inspiration. This sense of mortality hovers behind the encounter of the two shepherds and lodges without their intending it to in the deeper recesses of their words. Thus Menalcas praises Mopsus by telling him that "tu nunc eris alter ab illo" ("now you will be next after him") (V,49): ostensibly a statement pointing to Mopsus' skill as a pastoral singer, this line nonetheless contains a darker meaning.⁶⁸

Virgil's Eclogues, then, achieve a suspension of opposites largely by limiting the scope of his poems and the claims of resolution. The suspension lasts just the length of these brief poems; it

⁶⁸See Coleman, p. 165, for the reasoning behind the assumption that magistrum, l. 48, refers to Daphnis.

represents no solution that can last, and its fragility symbolizes the fragility of the pastoral stance itself. The poems seem to capture a timeless moment, but, because the suspension is so unstable, the briefness of the timeless moment only figures its end. Virgil sets limits on his poems both in length and in style, and he enacts those limits on the level of the plot by setting social limits on the characters who are either poor farmers or slaves ("pueri"). As Putnam has suggested, in Eclogue 1 the enclosure of Tityrus' farm, which is mirrored by the enclosure of the poem, is what makes the echoing of his song possible; suffering and exile is defined as leaving that enclosure.⁶⁹

The most important limit Virgil sets on his Eclogues, besides for the briefness of the poems and the non-heroic style, is a limit on the understanding of causality. Just as death is either covered over or transformed into myth, so the reasons for death (or for political events, whether exile or the freeing of slaves) are always hidden. The mysterious tone of the poems, in which events mysteriously unfold outside the poems' perimeter and are referred to elliptically, is explained by this pastoral turning away from causes. Thus in Eclogue 1 Tityrus' "explanation" of why his situation is better than Meliboeus' is hardly an explanation at all. Instead of identifying the "god" who helped him, Tityrus tells only of a youth ("iuvenem," 1,42) who is worshipped as a god. The whole of the apparently political story shifts into myth. The difference between Meliboeus' and Tityrus' fates is thereby made to seem arbitrary.

⁶⁹ See Putnam, "Virgil's First Eclogue: Poetics of Enclosure," pp. 163-8.

Similarly, in Eclogue 9, in which the ostensible story is again a political one, we learn nothing of why Menalcas had needed to save "omnia" (IX,10) nor do we learn why his songs were ineffective (or for that matter why anyone ever thought they would be effective). Moeris here describes how the pastoral setting of limits merges with the pastoral strategy of evasion:

quod nisi me quacumque nouas incidere lites
ante sinistra caua monuisset ab ilice cornix,
nec tuus hic Moeris nec uiueret ipse Menalcas.
(IX,14-6)

So, had not a raven on the left first warned me from the hollow oak to cut short, as best I might, this new dispute, neither your Moeris here nor Menalcas himself would be alive.

Life is saved by cutting short the dispute (lites suggests lawsuits); since incidere can mean both "cut into" (as "inscribe" or "carve," see Eclogue X,53) and "cut short," the word itself suggests the cutting short of dispute by the carving or inscribing of it into a song. The briefness of the Eclogues and their mysterious tone similarly allow a retreat from dispute and from explanation of the causes of dispute.

Another example of this turning away from causes may be seen in Eclogue 5 in a line examined above in a different context. Mourning for the death of Daphnis, the shepherds are called upon to draw shadows over the springs (V,40). A less literal interpretation of this line suggests that the shepherds are also covering the source itself. While primarily signifying a natural spring, fons can also take the figurative sense of "source" or "origin."⁷⁰ The shepherds, then,

⁷⁰C.T. Lewis and C. Short, A Latin Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 766.

cover over the source or cause of death. This "source" is also Theocritus' Idyll 1, for the reasons for Daphnis' death, suggested vaguely but at least suggested by Theocritus, are indeed covered over completely in Virgil's version. Why does Daphnis die in Eclogue 5? We are told only that he is "extinctum...crudeli funere" ("cut off by a cruel death," V,20). Daphnis' grieving mother cries out against the cruelty of the gods and of the stars (V,23); her turn to the gods as explanation exemplifies the transformation of cause into myth in the Eclogues.⁷¹ The same process is at work in Eclogue 1, where political reality is metamorphosed into myth. The myths in the Eclogues are not used to reveal causes, but to cover them; they are not etiological (as they are in the Georgics, for example).

A final example of the transformation of cause into something which hides it may be seen in Eclogue 7 in which lack of causality is figured as mere chance or as freedom from consequence. Eclogue 7 begins with the word "forte", and all the events it describes seem to have occurred by chance. Chance is emphasized as the head of the flock strays into the pastoral setting and suddenly Daphnis appears:

huc mihi, dum teneras defendo a frigore murtos,
uir gregis ipse caper deerauerat atque ego Daphnin
aspicio.

(VII,6-8)

To this place, while I sheltered my tender myrtles from the cold,
my he-goat, the lord of the flock himself, had strayed; and lo!
I catch sight of Daphnis.

John Van Sickle points out that the verse at the moment of the Epiphany of Daphnis is iconic: the last pluperfect of the introduction,

⁷¹See Coleman, p. 159.

deerauerat, he argues,

completes the narration of prior circumstances and trails off into an exemplary bucolic diaeresis, providing thus a stylistic analogue for the arrival of the goat in a generic locus. Virgil's language, as so often, becomes iconic. Abruptly, the narrative shifts to the historical present: ego Daphnim.... Across the bucolic diaeresis appears Daphnis, the bucolic hero.⁷²

Van Sickle's description of how the poet evokes a sense of bucolic foreground (or in the terms of Putnam, of pastoral enclosure) emphasizes that this setting is constructed to stand for pastoral poetry itself. The arrival of Daphnis, in an archetypal pastoral setting and timeless moment, is carefully framed by two chance events so that, along with the sense of timeless present and setting we associate chance and wandering with pastoral poetry itself.

Chance encounters are paradigmatic of the Eclogues, since all events are represented either as determined by chance or as arbitrary. The characters thus have no responsibility for them: when threatened, they must withdraw or cut short the dispute, and in extreme cases depart altogether. They do not cause actions, for actions, according to the fiction, are not caused. Epic poetry takes the opposite position: it begins by inquiring into causes. Virgil, for example, opens the invocation of his epic poem with the words "Musa, mihi causas memora" ("Tell me, O Muse, the cause," Aeneid I,8).⁷³ Picking up

⁷²Van Sickle, The Design of Virgil's Bucolics, pp. 167-8.

⁷³The edition of the Aeneid used throughout this dissertation is that of R.D. Williams, The Aeneid of Virgil, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1972). The translation quoted here is that of the Loeb Classical Library Edition (see above note 45). Where not otherwise marked, translations from the Aeneid are taken from the translation of W.F. Jackson-Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958).

these words, Milton puts it briefly in English: "Say first what cause."⁷⁴ Epic poems also generally explore the degree of the hero's responsibility for the main events of the poem, an investigation usually concluded with an insistence that, whatever the larger forces in the world, the hero finally is responsible for the shape of his life. Virgil's Eclogues shield their characters from responsibility for action, but at the cost of making them unable to change an unsatisfying situation or even to protect themselves from threat.

To import the terminology of Roland Barthes, Virgil's Eclogues might be said to draw our attention particularly to the "code herméneutique" precisely because no answers are ever given to the questions which the poems make us ask.⁷⁵ Answers are suspended in the non-discovery of causes which the Eclogues present. To use Barthes' terminology is to reveal the lack of narrative progress in the Eclogues: these poems are not like a short story, for they pose a series of basic questions which they never answer. We never discover the connections between the characters (or the poems), and just as we feel we may have discovered a certain connection, a new enigma is proposed by the text. The Eclogues use many of the strategies of evasion which Barthes outlines, but never finally conclude the long "phrase herméneutique"⁷⁶ and thus never sound the "voix de la vérité". Since

⁷⁴John Milton, Paradise Lost (I,28) in Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merrit Y. Hughes (Indianapolis and New York: Odyssey Press, 1957).

⁷⁵Roland Barthes, S/Z (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970), pp. 215-6 and p. 267.

⁷⁶Barthes, S/Z, p. 215.

the epic is concerned precisely with concluding the hermeneutic sentence, with finding a way to voice truth, with explaining the meanings of its enigmas and the causes of its mysteries, this pastoral emphasis on the "code herméneutique" again opposes the epic position.

Suppressing causes and creating enigmas does not seem a sufficient means of limiting the disruptiveness of erotic desire in the Eclogues, for even the presentation of erotic desire can threaten the harmony achieved. More than Theocritus, Virgil seems concerned to purge erotic elements from his poems. In Virgil's Eclogue 2, partly an imitation of Idyll 11 which suppresses the more comic and grotesque aspects of its model, Corydon asks "quis enim modus adsit amori?" ("what bound can be set to love?") (II,68). Having discovered that love goes beyond all measure, Corydon begins to talk himself out of his love as Cyclops did before him. Ostensibly Corydon turns back to the practical world: at least ("saltem") he might make something useful, even if he doesn't return to working on the vines. This useful woven thing can perhaps be understood as symbolic of art, even of the poem itself, for throughout the Eclogues Virgil describes his own poetic activity as braiding or weaving (see X,70-2, for example). Since Virgil interweaves his words in particularly dense patterns in the Eclogues (as suggested by the frequency of the "golden line" word order), the basket woven of slender hibiscus (X,71) describes his poem appropriately. Corydon in Eclogue 2 can be said to turn metaphorically to pastoral poetry for consolation for his failure in the erotic realm. The poem does not let Corydon remain in his state of painful frustration. As in the case of Cyclops, poetry proves a good remedy for erotic frustration.

In Eclogue 5, we have seen how Virgil suppresses the causes for Daphnis' death. In this context, suppression of cause means the removal of Aphrodite from the scene and the elimination of Daphnis' challenge to her. Virgil fairly consistently mutes the erotic material in his sources. Eclogue 8 balances the power of song to bring about the desired end (even in the erotic realm) with its absolute lack of power (which seems to lead to suicide) (VIII,58-60). In either case the state of erotic longing is ended as the poem ends, and the singers are distanced and insulated from the erotic situation: these are not their own songs they are singing; neither has any personal concern about the erotic stories they tell. The audience is even further removed from the erotic scene since we hear these songs not from the two singers but from Virgil via the Pastoral Muses. The harmony of the two points of view is achieved precisely because this is a singing contest which takes place one day in the meadows and not a reenacting of any actual erotic scene or experience.

The most prominent example of Virgil's purging of eros from his pastoral poems is Eclogue 10, which presents erotic longing as disruptive of all pastoral harmonies and as clearly allied with the larger political or heroic world. In a recent interpretation of this eclogue, Gordon Williams has suggested that the "primary field" of Eclogue 10 is constituted by events and relationships that belong to real life, that is, the erotic relationship between C. Cornelius Gallus and Volumnia Cytheris (or Lycoris as she appears here and as Gallus apparently called her in his verse) and the friendship between

Virgil and Gallus.⁷⁷ Williams sees the "secondary" or "unspoken field" or Eclogue 10 as concerning the relationship between the poetic genres of pastoral and elegy, and he argues that the poem represents Gallus as transposing the theme of love "into the pastoral mode, but finding the exigencies of his experience driving him back to elegy: pastoral will not accommodate that destructive passion."⁷⁸ All the Arcadians are shocked by Gallus' destructive passion. As Williams notes, they should be astonished: "they have never seen love like that--of course they have not, since it is elegiac."⁷⁹ Pan, the Arcadian god, asks the typical pastoral question: "ecquis erit modus?" ("Will there be no end?") (X,28). He uses modus, "measure, bound, limit," as did Corydon in Eclogue 2 (II,68). The pastoral world desires to find some limit to erotic love (especially tragic love) because it is destructive of the harmonies of that world (which depend on its limits).

Gallus attempts to find a pastoral solution to his love (50-4), but as he slips off into a dream of echoing groves (58), his pain breaks in. He is forced to admit that "iam neque Hamadryades rursum nec carmina nobis/ ipsa placent" ("Now once more, nor Hamadryads nor even songs have charms for me") (X,62-3). He is forced to submit to love. Williams comments that, in the ending of Eclogue 10, "the

⁷⁷See Williams, Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry, pp. 231-6. As is apparent, the interpretation presented above relies on Williams' reading of the eclogue.

⁷⁸Williams, Figures of Thought, p. 232.

⁷⁹Williams, Figures of Thought, p. 235.

secondary field, constituted by the confrontation between pastoral poetry and elegiac love-poetry, reaches a climax in the failure of pastoral to accommodate the theme of tragic love...Arcadia has nothing to offer in this predicament...."⁸⁰ Gallus will abandon the pastoral world, but the effect is also inversely to purge the pastoral world of manifestations of the erotic theme, at least in its tragic dimension.

The playfulness in the eclogue about the two poetic genres (the generic questions are explicit in X,50-1) changes our sense of the tone of the poem. Like Idyll 1, on which the inscribed song of Gallus is partly modeled, Eclogue 10 surrounds anguished words of the main character with a lighter frame. While Gallus finds the pastoral world has nothing to offer him in his distress, in the frame story (a perfectly symmetrical frame of 8 lines of either end of Gallus' story) Gallus' suffering from love is indeed transformed into a witty, literary joke. The pastoral poet fits comfortably into the world which Gallus must abandon, and the love he feels for Gallus also fits this pastoral world: "Gallo, quous amor tantum mihi crescit in horas/ quantum vere nouo uiridis se subicit alnus" ("Gallus, for whom my love grows hour by hour as fast as in the dawn of spring shoots up the green alder") (X,73-4). As Williams suggests, the two types of love--the destructive passion of Gallus for Lycoris, the calm affection of Virgil for his friend--are genre-differentiated.⁸¹ The calm love

⁸⁰Williams, Figures of Thought, p. 236.

⁸¹Williams, Figures of Thought, p. 233.

which does grow with the natural world reminds us of Gallus' unsuccessful attempt to imagine his love growing in such a way: he speaks of carving his love on trees and watching it grow (a reference to Eclogue 5), but this vision of the pastoral union of man and natural scene becomes parodic in Gallus' version since it points out so clearly that while the tree may grow the affection of Lycoris does not.

Like Idyll 1, Eclogue 10 presents the world of the counterplot confronted with a character quite alien to it. In both cases this opposition exists both within the inscribed story and in the contrast between the calm world of the pastoral frame and the inscribed song itself. The shift from the challenge to Aphrodite represented in Idyll 11 to the submission to Amor represented in Eclogue 10 suggests a major difference between Theocritus' Idylls and Virgil's Eclogues. Theocritus' Idylls shift the emphasis from heroic to erotic topics and then find various ways to accommodate the erotic scene in the bucolic world. His techniques include ironic distancing, the use of humor and the transformation of eros into art. Virgil's pastoral poems sometimes use these Theocritean techniques, but they also purge or suppress the erotic material.

Even an early eclogue such as Eclogue 3 acts out this passage from Theocritus' comic treatment of erotic topics. In spite of the opening banter between Damoetas and Menalcas, the more explicit sexual references of Theocritus' Idyll 5 are suppressed. The aesthetic interests of the singing contest dominate any progression or loyalty to beloved (although generally Menalcas seems to remain loyal to his homosexual love Amyntas while Damoetas' heterosexual flame Galatea is forgotten almost immediately). Both singers shift from the beloved,

searching more for the perfectly symmetrical answer than for any expression of feelings. In spite of Damoetas' references to Galatea (and Amaryllis) and Menalcas' to Amyntas, Menalcas' concluding lines (III,106-7) suggest that both have an interest in Phyllis, who seems to be Iollas' sweetheart. The switching of allegiance and playful echoing does not suggest erotic involvement: Virgil's Eclogue 3 distances itself from its subtext Idyll 5 precisely by implying that erotic involvement, unless it is a source of aesthetic play, has no place in his pastoral world. When erotic involvement is genuine, as in Eclogues 2 and 10, Virgil treats it as tragic, and either finds a way to purge the lover of his feelings or concludes that the lover himself must leave the pastoral world which cannot accommodate his destructive passion.⁸²

Mortality, political loss and eroticism, then, represent the main forces which disrupt the pastoral harmony. The Eclogues try to contain or insulate them by artistic means, but they achieve only a limited success. Throughout Virgil's poetry, erotic involvement will represent a threat as serious as death itself, and in fact he is often more able to treat death or political failure as aesthetic events than to transform erotic entanglement into something less destructive. The limitations of the counterplot are felt particularly strongly whenever

⁸²Paul Alpers has argued for a similar interpretation of the role of eros in Virgil's Eclogues: "Virgil in the Eclogues recreates the Theocritean mode and at the same time tests its validity and scope," he writes. "His treatment of passionate love reveals his purposes and achievements.... Virgil's point is uniformly that passionate love is destructive of pastoral experience. But in acknowledging it as a force, he encompasses and controls it by turning it into song." See Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," College English 34 (1972), 358.

Virgil tries to contain or control eroticism. In the Aeneid, in particular, eroticism most often figures as the disrupter of idyllic harmony. In the Eclogues, Virgil (like Theocritus) uses strategies of the counterplot to distance or contain the elements of the heroic plot which keep surfacing, though he also reminds us of their limitations. In the epic, these limitations become a main focus of attention.

Virgil's Eclogues display a doubleness of structure and meaning which is more extreme because Virgil attempts to suppress it or to cover it over. While Theocritus' poems balance the opposing forces in them through irony, Virgil appears to offer the possibility that opposites can be suspended. To create the pastoral suspension he purges the more extreme forms of erotic desire and of political force, but to do so is also to render his poems and their characters relatively powerless. While the Eclogues appear to suspend differences between the plot and the counterplot, the strategies they use to do so also drive them apart and reveal the inadequacy of those suspensions, at least as any permanent solution. Thus as Paul Alpers has written, the hallmark of Virgilian pastoral poetry is "a sense of the contingency of human utterance: that it is always dependent on the speaker's (or singer's) situation, powers, and limitations."⁸³

Analyzing the many oppositions in the Eclogues by applying the terms "plot" and "counterplot" allows the connections between the Eclogues and the epic tradition to become more apparent. If intertextuality is "the transposition of one or more systems of signs into

⁸³Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," p. 355.

another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position,"⁸⁴ then the study of plot and counterplot provides a means of discussing the intertextuality in all these poems. The terms also allow for a variety of approaches, for they each have metaphorically a spatial and a temporal dimension.⁸⁵ Like independent

⁸⁴ Julia Kristeva, Desire and Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, ed. Leon Rondiez, trans. Th. Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon Rondiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 15.

⁸⁵ Temporal and spatial metaphors are often used to describe the function of pastoral scenes in larger works. Renato Poggioli, in The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), especially in the title essay pp. 1-43, speaks of pastoral oases as structuring many types of larger works. Similarly, Claudio Guillén refers to pastoral "interludes" which serve an antithetical role and hence act as the "countergenre." See Guillén's "Literature as Historical Contradiction: El Abencerraje, the Moorish Novel, and the Eclogue," in Literature as System: Essays Towards the Theory of Literary History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), especially p. 179. Herbert Lindenberger combines temporal and spatial metaphors to describe pastoral moments in larger works. In "The Idyllic Moment: On Pastoral and Romanticism," in College English 34 (1972), p. 338, he defines pastoral in this way:

Let us say of pastoral, first, that it takes the form of an isolated moment, a kind of island in time, and one which gains its meaning and intensity through the tensions it creates with the historical world; further, that it uses the devices of language to exhibit itself as achieved and triumphant; yet that the very self-consciousness of its language betrays its essential precariousness and ultimately forces it to give way to another mode of reality; finally, that the reader maintains a shifting and often ambivalent attitude toward the idyllic moment and the speaker who gives voice to it.

Lindenberger also argues for the temporalization of the pastoral convention in longer Romantic poems. He suggests that these islands of time "order themselves as stages within a poem" (pp. 347-8). This tracing of the pastoral stages in a poem is analogous to the tracing of different ways of using the counterplot, the method of analysis proposed above.

genres, plot and counterplot can also be said each to have its own "inner form" or poetic stance.⁸⁶

The opposition of plot and counterplot may also contribute

⁸⁶Modern genre theorists generally agree that generic definitions must depend on something more than formal characteristics. Whether describing ideological stance or a set of values which informs a work, scholars have included some concept of what was once called "inner form" in their generic definitions. See, for example, Claudio Guillén's "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque," in Literature as System, especially pp. 75-81. According to René Wellek, in A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), I, 107, 203, 232, the term derives from the works of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, an early 18th century neo-platonist aesthete who influenced Goethe and Schiller. Goethe seems to have been the first to make "inner form" a key concept (I, 203) (see his "Naturformen der Dichtkunst"), but it is Friedrich von Schiller, in Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung (1795-6), who most explicitly categorizes poetry on the basis of Empfindungsweisen or "ways of feeling or perceiving." For Schiller, primitive or "naive" man functioned "as an undivided sensuous unity and as a unifying whole" (see Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime trans. Julius Elias (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co., 1966), p. 111). But "once man has passed into the state of civilization...that sensuous harmony in him is withdrawn, and he can now express himself only as a moral unity, i.e. as a striving after unity" (p. 111). The naive poet represents actuality, but the sentimental poet reflects upon the impressions that objects make, and grounds poetic emotion in that reflection. Thus Schiller concludes that "the sentimental poet is always involved with two conflicting representations and perceptions--with actuality as a limit and with his idea as infinitude; and the mixed feelings he excites will always testify to this dual source" (p. 116). Schiller goes on to define the idyll as a subcategory of elegiac sentimental poetry, always basing his definitions on the poet's modes of feeling.

In the modern period concern for "inner form" unites critics as diverse as Kenneth Burke (see "Poetic Categories" in Attitudes towards History, 2nd rev. ed. (Los Altos, California: Hermes Publications, 1959; 1st published 1937), pp. 34-43), K. Viëtor (see Geist und Form (Bern: A. Franckel, 1952), pp. 292-309), and Hans Robert Jauss (see "Littérature médiévale et théorie des genres," Poétique 1 (1970), 83-4). Moreover, the interest in "mode" evidenced in the works of Northrop Frye also represents a belief in some concept of "inner form." The difficulty with "inner form," of course, is that it is hard to know how to recognize it or to define it, a difficulty which perhaps derives from the concept's neo-platonist heritage. For Shaftesbury's use of the idea, see Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, A

towards the generic definitions of "epic" and "pastoral" poetry: epic poetry may be defined as that narrative poetry in which the heroic plot is of central concern, and the counterplot present but subordinate (and perhaps eventually eradicated); pastoral poetry may be defined as poetry in which the counterplot surrounds or contains the plot, which is subordinate (and sometimes bounded out completely by the end of the poem). Since these two genres contain the plot and the counterplot in inverse proportion to one another, perhaps the terms "genre" and "countergenre" may be used to describe them.⁸⁷ While both epic and pastoral poetry clearly stand on their own as independent genres, their close generic (and historical) relationship suggests that they profit from being read against each other: each outlines the other's contradictions and limitations, and reveals the extent of the other's achievement.

After Virgil's Eclogues, the relation between plot and counterplot in the epic is complicated by the introduction of episodes or moments which are "pastoral" in tone and often in origin. Applying the terms "plot" and "counterplot" still seems the most useful method of analyzing such poems, for they allow us to see the connections between the overtly "pastoral" places or moments in the epic and other places or moments which are not overtly pastoral but clearly exemplify the

Notion of the historical draught or tablature of the Judgment of Hercules according to Prodicus (n.p., 1713; Brit. Art. ND 1150 54).

⁸⁷ These terms are Claudio Guillén's. See "Genre and Counter-genre: The Discovery of the Picaresque," in Literature as System, pp. 135-58.

counterplot. "Pastoral" parts of epic poem, in other words, represent a subset of the episodes of the counterplot, though a subset of particular importance because the opposition of plot and counterplot is highlighted in those moments. Thus it will be useful while studying the opposition of plot and counterplot to show also how certain generic markers identify an image or scene as being of pastoral origin. For example, certain qualities deriving from the way the Eclogues contain the plot within the counterplot become generic traits of Virgilian pastoral poetry. When an image or scene in the Aeneid echoes the Eclogues, it also transports into the epic the particular strategies or qualities which were worked out and given symbolic status in the earlier poems.

Pastoral images or scenes in the epic bring the doubleness or ambivalence of the pastoral poems into the epic. The pastoral suspension, never intended to last, breaks apart easily, so that pastoral images often are sources of discomfort or duality in the epic. Certain pastoral solutions to grief and to political loss--such as the suppression of causality, or the balancing of faith in art's transformative power with lack of that faith--represent temptations in the epic, which is concerned to reveal that those solutions are inadequate. The doubleness or strain in the heroic character, felt in epics from the Odyssey on, thus appears particularly in those scenes which resemble pastoral settings, in those moments when the countergenre is transferred entirely into the epic genre.

The doubleness of the pastoral stance, and the ambivalence which it creates, can be useful to the epic poet, however, for it provides a means of mediating many of the oppositions in the epic. Opposites

which seem irreconcilable can be temporarily suspended by the use of a pastoral image or scene, yet that pastoral suspension also dramatizes the instability of the very mediation which it provides. The pastoral suspension is valuable to Virgil because it suggests a way to bring the strategies of the counterplot into the heroic story; it also adds ambivalence to the epic, however, for it implies that some resolution has been found when none can exist. The pastoral imagery suggests that some balance has been achieved, while reminding us that such balance, by its nature fragile and precarious, is apt to collapse at any moment. Trapped in this collapsing suspension, the hero is often less safe in the seeming calm of pastoral settings than he is in the midst of battle.

(iii) High Groves and Sweet Shade in Aeneid I

One example of the overlap of pastoral imagery and the counterplot can be seen in the description of the way Dido falls in love with Aeneas in the end of Book 1 of the Aeneid.⁸⁸ Virgil's explanation of

⁸⁸The edition of the Aeneid used throughout this dissertation is R.D. Williams' The Aeneid of Virgil, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1972). Identifications of the quotations by book and line number are included parenthetically in the text. References to Williams' commentary by volume and page number are included in these notes. Other commentaries which have proved useful are: Aeneidos Liber Primus, with commentary by R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Aeneidos Liber Secundus, with commentary by R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Aeneidos Liber Quartus, with commentary by R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955; Aeneid VI, with commentary by Sir Frank Fletcher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948; 1st edition 1941); and Aeneid VIII, ed. K.W. Grandson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). References to these commentaries are included in these notes by author's name and page number (in the case of Austin, the volume number is added). Unless otherwise noted, translations are taken from The Aeneid, translated by W.F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958). In cases in which a more literal translation was pre-

her love has often disturbed his readers.⁸⁹

Since Jupiter had already dispatched Mercury to Carthage to ensure Aeneas' safety (I,297f), Venus' actions here seem particularly needless.⁹⁰ She almost seems to be working on the side of Juno, for Dido's love, the result of her plot, ultimately delays Aeneas and

ferable, the Loeb translation (see above note 45) has been substituted and the change noted.

⁸⁹ Gordon Williams, for example, in Tradition and Individuality in Roman Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 376, notes that it comes as a surprise to hear that Venus is suspicious of Dido; see pp. 374-8 for his treatment of Venus' schemes. Similarly Kenneth Quinn, in Vergil's "Aeneid": A Critical Description (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 109, comments on the disturbing aspects of this episode.

Other works which have influenced this study of the Aeneid include: Mario di Cesare, The Altar and the City: A Reading of Vergil's Aeneid (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Thomas M. Greene, The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); W.R. Johnson, Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's Aeneid (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); F. Klingner, "Die Einheit des Vergilischen Lebenswerkes," in Römische Geisteswelt, 3rd edition (Munich: Heinrich Ellermann, 1956; article 1st published, 1930), pp. 274-92; F. Klingner, Vergil: Bucolica, Georgica, Aeneis (Zurich: Artemis, 1967); Brooks Otis, Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Vergil's Aeneid," in Vergil: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Steele Commager (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966; article 1st published, 1963), pp. 107-23; Jacques Perret, "Optimisme et tragédie dans l'Eneide," Revue des Etudes Latines 45 (1967), 342-62; Viktor Pöschl, The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the Aeneid, trans. Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); Michael Putnam, The Poetry of the Aeneid: Four Studies in Imaginative Unity and Design (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965).

⁹⁰ Venus' actions seems especially unmotivated when contrasted with those of Hera and Athena in the Argonautica. They persuade Aphrodite to arrange for her son to shoot Medea; Medea's falling in love is essential for the success of Jason and thus for the movement of the plot. See Ap. Rh. 3.83ff.

causes him pain. Following Homer, Virgil often includes a divine explanation for acts or emotions which he also motivates on the human level, and such double or parallel motivation is certainly at work in this scene.⁹¹ Virgil gives several reasons why Dido falls in love with Aeneas--she pities, admires and identifies with him--while also suggesting that the charm of his son affects her (IV,84-5, if this is the "real" Ascanius). The boy may strike a sympathetic chord in her heart by reminding her of the son she would have liked to have had (see IV,328-29).

The picture of Dido as she falls in love reflects the complexity of the parallel motivation. She is moved by the boy and by the gifts alike ("pariter puero donisque movetur," I,714), and when Cupid seeks (petit)⁹² her after embracing, deluding and satisfying his father, she clings to him:

haec oculis, haec pectore toto
haeret et interdum gremio fovet inscia Dido
insidat quantus miserae deus.
(I,717-9)

She with her eyes, and with all her heart clings to him and soon fondles him in her bosom, not knowing, poor Dido, how great a god settles there to her sorrow.⁹³

The idea of clinging or holding fast, or becoming fixed or riveted (haeret 718) with the eyes and heart combines the physical and the

⁹¹See Quinn, "Parallel Divine and Psychological Motivation," in Vergil's Aeneid, pp. 316-20.

⁹²Petit also has the secondary sense of "attack," a military metaphor noted by Austin, I,214.

⁹³This is the Loeb translation. See above note 45.

emotional in the same way that the double motivation suggests that the love comes from within and from without at the same time. This half-physical riveting of her attention and thoughts on the boy also fits with the lightly sexual implications of holding and caressing the boy in her lap ("gremio fovet", I,718).

The confusion of the everyday physical scene (boy on lap) with emotions figured as gods (love settling in and taking over her heart) is extended by the verb insidat, which also carries a sexual suggestion. The reference to a great god conjures up an image of a force possessing the soul or taking over the whole being rather than an image of a boy sitting on the lap. In some sense both things are happening at once, although Dido is inscia both about the force of the power that is overtaking her and about her unhappy future. Quinn points out also that the reader's foreknowledge of the trap Venus has laid for Dido touches off associations of insido with insideo and insidiae as well, suggesting the secondary meaning, supported by the dative miserae, of "unaware how great the god that lays seige to unhappy Dido."⁹⁴ Virgil's many proleptic laments in this section (infelix [712], inscia [718], miserae [to her sorrow] [719]) add extra weight to the odd imagery, so that this moment is stressed rhetorically in the text.

Venus had told Cupid that events would come to pass in just this way, although, typically, she had blithely referred only to Dido's present happiness:

⁹⁴Quinn, p. 401. Insidere also has the secondary meaning of "to occupy," and thus carries on the military metaphor begun with petit.

cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,
occultum inspiret ignem fallasque veneno.

(I, 685-8)

Then, during the royal entertainment, when the wine is flowing, and Dido in her great happiness clasps you to her, embracing you and planting on you her sweet kisses, you shall breathe into her invisible fire, and poison her, without her knowing.

Venus' laetissima contrasts sharply with the poet's miseræ, but otherwise the scene she describes is the same as the one we see. The image of Cupid breathing in, inspiring, a hidden fire in Dido glosses the later image of him settling into Dido; again the event is made to seem both internal and external.

A real boy could be imagined metaphorically as breathing love into an affectionate woman; Cupid does more than this, however, for he also tricks her with poison. This latter formulation foregrounds Dido's ignorance of the power of the emotion overtaking her. One effect of Virgil's decision to use this dense, ambiguous imagery to represent Dido falling in love is that Dido is shown not to be fully responsible for the events which set her tragedy in motion. On the other hand, the picture is psychologically complex enough that we do not absolve her of responsibility completely (and, of course, even while feeling the ravages of love, she makes it quite clear that she had wanted to remain univira and that whatever actions she takes to satisfy her desire to be with Aeneas in fact amount to--or she sees them as amounting to--a culpa (IV,19), a betrayal of Sychaeus (IV,16-19, 24-29)). We remain in some doubt about whether this description of how she falls in love should be understood fully on the level of the divine machinery

or not. The episode, then, partakes of the uncanny, since we remain uncertain about whether to understand it on the natural or the supernatural plane.⁹⁵

But what happens to Ascanius while Cupid, his double, is being fondled on Dido's lap in his place? Venus tells Cupid:

hunc ego sopitum somno super alta Cythera
aut super Idalium sacrata sede recondam,
ne qua scire dolos mediusve occurrere possit.
(I,680-2)

I shall lull him into a profound sleep, and then hide him away in my hallowed precinct high up on Cythera or at Idalium; for otherwise he might learn of the trick or appear suddenly while it is being played.

Venus takes Ascanius to the Idalian Groves while Love walks joyously (gaudens) with the step of Iulus. But Virgil describes the situation somewhat differently when he narrates it directly:

at Venus Ascanio placidam per membra quietem
inrigat, et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos
Idaliae lucos, ubi mollis amaracus illum
floribus et dulci aspirans complectitur umbra.
(I,691-4)

Venus now poured delicious and pervasive sleep into Iulus, and holding him closely and caressingly she carried him by her divine power to Idalium's wooded upland, where soft amaracus guarded him amid flowers and shade, and spread sweetness with the perfume which it breathed.

Ascanius is fotum gremio, warmed or fondled in Venus' bosom, as Cupid was warmed or fondled in Dido's lap (gremio fovet, 718). Once again, the strict sense of gremio is extended: Venus' lap almost becomes the bower itself. Although in her description Venus had said she would

⁹⁵This definition of the uncanny is derived from that of Tzvetan Todorov in Introduction à la littérature fantastique (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

put Ascanius to sleep, Virgil describes this act in a slightly different way: on one level, she pours a soothing sleep over his limbs, but quietem could also imply merely rest from labor or calm. Presumably, in plot terms, we assume that Venus puts Ascanius to sleep to keep him out of the way,⁹⁶ but we do not know exactly what happens to him in this high grove. The narrator's imagery is over-abundant; it exceeds Venus' own brief description and even its own ostensible purpose. Venus' practical, straightforward plotting thus contrasts with Virgil's more nostalgic evocation of her grove. In its over-abundance the poetic imagery surround us also with the soothing sensual pleasures the poet imagines to be enwrapping Ascanius.

Commentators gloss the soft marjoram (mollis amaracus) by reference to Catullus 61,6, which reminds us that marjoram was associated with weddings. Austin comments also that Lucretius (4,1179) "names its juice as used by the exclusus amator to anoint the doorposts of his love."⁹⁷ This love potion or token, which enwraps Ascanius, is analogous to the poison with which Cupid betrays Dido in the earthly story. But why would Ascanius be enwrapped in this way? The image of someone enwrapped in the fragrance of love's flower would seem to be more appropriate for Dido, who is indeed in the process of having sensuality and eroticism breathed back into her, or even for Aeneas. The flower is certainly appropriate for Venus, and perhaps this connection

⁹⁶ Austin (I,207-8) and Gordon Williams, Tradition and Originality (p. 696) comment on earlier uses of inrigo in this sense and on the concept of sleep as a refreshing dew poured over the limbs.

⁹⁷
Austin, I,208.

is all that we should have in mind. But the image reminds us that being in the bower of the goddess of love is an experience with an erotic component (if hidden), even if that erotic component is displaced onto the landscape and the flowers.

What is the nature of this picture of Ascanius in Venus' Idalian groves? Does Ascanius know that he has been lulled to sleep in Venus' bower? Does the description of his sensual bliss in Venus' bower indirectly mirror the situation as Dido sees it? Is the description of Ascanius in Venus' bower an example of the counterplot at work? These questions can be answered both affirmatively and negatively. According to the fiction, Ascanius visits the Idalian groves in an episode suggesting a meeting of mortal and myth such as occurs in the Odyssey. Yet Ascanius never shows any signs of having been on this voyage. The description of him in Venus' sacred groves represents a perspective which reflects the viewpoints of the characters in various ways, yet none of them actively seem to know about it.

This description of Ascanius in Venus' high precinct, then, forms part of the counterplot in the Aeneid, and it illustrates the Virgilian complication of this device. The characters both know and do not know about the scenes and point of view which the poet brings into the poem by means of the counterplot. The counterplot partly represents Virgil's higher viewpoint on the action, but he also uses it to suggest indirectly psychological traits or desires (perhaps desires unacknowledged by the characters themselves). While Virgil does not confront his hero with the mythical realm to the same degree as did the poet of the Odyssey, he nonetheless begins his poem by blurring the boundaries between plot and counterplot. The blurring of boundar-

ies never becomes a complete merging of plot and counterplot, as was the case in the Odyssey, but some connection or confusion between the two is often suggested.

By paralleling Ascanius and Cupid, Virgil combines two of his most typical narrative devices: parallel and suspended narration.⁹⁸ Virgil often narrates sequentially events which, according to the order of the plot, take place simultaneously (the most striking example is Books VIII and IX). He often marks the parallel narration with words like interea; in the double Ascanius episode we find the transition from one level of narration to the parallel strand marked clearly with Iamque (695). The two imperfects (ibat, portabat) in this transitional sentence remind us that Cupid has already started off with the gifts for Dido when the Idalian scene begins. The logic of the episodes suggests that Cupid's carrying of the gifts should be read as if it happened simultaneously with the first part of Ascanius' trip to the bower, while Ascanius' sleep in the bower should be understood to occur at the same time as Cupid's poisoning of Dido. Since we never hear how Ascanius returned from the Idalian groves (one of the many details of plot which the reader of the Aeneid is expected to supply), we must consider the moment when Virgil shifts his attention to Cupid to be an example of suspended narration.

To use the terminology of Genette (although his analysis is notoriously weak precisely for any "double plot" or parallel narration: one must always make certain which is the main plot, a diffi-

⁹⁸See Quinn, pp. 84-7.

cult task for many parts of the Aeneid), the description of Ascanius in the bower can be characterized as an accelerated narrative which begins as a summary and then becomes an ellipse.⁹⁹ That is to say, the time span we imagine as having occurred in the histoire (the basic order of the signified or narrative content) is much greater than the time devoted to it in the récit (the énoncé, the discourse or narrative text itself--what Todorov calls the discours).¹⁰⁰ An ellipse occurs when the time devoted to the narrative event in the récit is zero, while the event is imagined to have taken up an appreciable amount of time. The ellipse at the end of the story of Ascanius would be what Genette calls an undetermined ellipse since we are not told how much time is elided.

Thus, although Ascanius is in the bower for only a few lines, while Cupid is with Dido and Aeneas for many more, the episodes can nonetheless be understood (on the level of the histoire) to take up the same amount of time. This equal matching is implied in the fiction since Cupid is indeed a stand-in for Ascanius, so Ascanius must be away for the same amount of time that Cupid is present in Carthage. This temporal parallelism is supported by the similar terminology used for Ascanius' sojourn in the Idalian groves and Cupid's seige of Dido: 2

⁹⁹Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), pp. 130-41.

¹⁰⁰See Shlomith Rimón, "A Comprehensive Theory of Narrative: Genette's Figures III and the Structuralist Study of Fiction," PTL I (1976), 40, explains the shifting terminology for recit and histoire among the French structuralists. See also Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 15-31.

both are warmed or fondled in the lady's lap (fotum gremio, 692; gremio foveat, 718).

What is elided in the ellipse? All narratives are made of ellipses: the writer cannot tell each step in the story, for there are an infinite number of them. The reader easily fills most of them in. But occasionally key events are in fact elided, as, for example, is the case during Odysseus' seven year stay with Calypso, a visit shrouded in mystery. In the case of the double Ascanius episode, Virgil elides the return of Ascanius, and in so doing he avoids giving a clear explanation of the level of reality of the events described.

Little in the poem suggests that Ascanius' trip to the Idalian groves should be understood as literally having taken place. Other supernatural events occur in the Aeneid: the mist with which Venus surrounds Aeneas as he goes into Carthage may serve as an example for comparison. In that episode the mist can be interpreted as in part representing Aeneas' psychological distance from the events he sees, the aspect of his personality which allows him to hold himself at a remove.¹⁰¹ The mist can be understood coherently on a supernatural level (Venus makes it disappear when Aeneas learns he is safe) and on a naturalistic/psychological level. Both interpretations seem to be true at once, though without the psychological explanation the episode would be less moving.

Unlike Aeneas, who sees and marvels at the mist, Ascanius shows no sign of knowing that he has been to the Idalian groves. His father

¹⁰¹See Otis, pp. 237-8, for a similar interpretation of the mist.

is not only deceived by Cupid, but his love for his son is somehow satisfied by him:

ille ubi complexu Aeneae colloque pependit
et magnum falsi implevit genitoris amorem
reginam petit.

(I,715-7)

he, when he has hung in embrace on Aeneas' neck and satisfied the deluded father's deep love, goes to the queen.¹⁰²

Here "falsi genitoris" seems to have the primary meaning of "the father that was not his own," though falsi can also mean "deceived" (as indicated in the translation above). Implevit is another word whose primary meaning is physical ("to fill in, fill up; to fill or satiate, hence satisfy; to impregnate"), but which is used here in a metaphorical sense. Something in Cupid seems to be satisfying to Aeneas. But what does it mean to satisfy a father's love? The phrase implies something more significant or intense than the action described actually involves: perhaps this extra quotient of intensity is displaced from the growing feelings of Dido (or even Aeneas) onto the boy.

Aeneas mistakes Cupid for Ascanius, much as the confused parents of twins have difficulty distinguishing them. As Austin suggests, this ingenious description from Book 10 fits with Aeneas' experience here: the twins are

simillima proles,
indiscreta suis gratusque parentibus error.
(X,391-2)

so exactly alike that their own parents, in their sweet bewilderment, could not distinguish them.

Only death marks these two twins as different, and Virgil calls the

¹⁰²This is the Loeb translation. See above note 45.

discriminating marks of death the dura discrimina (X,393) (one has his head cut off, the other his hand). But in life there are no hard dividing lines between the two. In the case of the double Ascanius, one must wonder even more seriously if there are dividing lines at all.

Do Ascanius and Cupid function as separate characters in this scene? Can not the replacement of Ascanius by Cupid be understood as a figurative representation of the effects of Ascanius on Dido in particular? According to this reading, it is Ascanius who sits on Dido's lap, and the event which the text describes is Dido fondling Ascanius in her lap as she falls in love. To say that it is Cupid and not Ascanius is to remind us of the Cupid in all young sons, or the fact that a childless widow would be likely to respond to a young son of a guest as though he were Cupid.

W.R. Johnson describes the effect of the double Ascanius passage as "fantastic, abstract, impressionistic, and realistic," and he locates the complexity of the episode in Virgil's inability to represent the inner world by means of the outer. Indeed, he comments, "what happens outside obscures our understanding of what happens in the inner world, though the confusions and the obscurities of the outer world can (must) help to picture, though they cannot explain, the confusions and the obscurities within."¹⁰³ Johnson well describes the double interpretation that the episode seems to require:

In a sense the rendering of Dido's infatuation is naturalistic because it is Ascanius' resemblance to his father, combined with his display of physical affection to her, that causes the infatuation. But this naturalism is weakened not only because Ascanius

¹⁰³W.R. Johnson, p. 44.

is in fact Amor but also because, in a way that we are not shown, in a way that remains mysterious and is sinister and almost macabre, Amor does poison and wound Dido. The mystery (and its horror) exists in the exact proportion as the infection of Dido is not or cannot be rendered by plausible images.¹⁰⁴

Here Johnson describes a tension between two interpretations of one event, a tension the narrative does not resolve. Virgil's way of picturing the unpicturable effect of the growth of love is to create a double portrait of the same event. If this interpretation is fair, then the episode of the double Ascanius exemplifies Genette's category of the "récit répétitif," in which the writer tells several times an event which only happened once.¹⁰⁵ Reading the double Ascanius episode as a "récit répétitif" we can interpret the picture of Ascanius enwrapped in Venus' fragrance and the sweet shade as being another version of the event pictured as the delightful child caressed on Dido's lap.

Freud's theory of the workings of dreams suggests some analogies to the narrative doubling described above. In The Interpretation of Dreams he suggests that dreams don't allow for the either-or construction which characterizes waking thought. Rather, "both of the alternatives are usually inserted in the text of the dream as though they were equally valid.... In such cases the rule for interpretation is: treat the two apparent alternatives as of equal validity and link them

¹⁰⁴W.R. Johnson, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵See Genette, Figures III, p. 147.

together with an 'and'."¹⁰⁶ Freud goes on to explain the relation of contraries in dreams:

Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary; so there is no way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary¹⁰⁷ is present in the dream thoughts as a positive or as a negative.

Here Freud stresses that opposites are often related to one another, and that contraries may often be understood as versions of one another. According to his theory, these versions are needed because, without an alternative disguise, the wish would not make it past the censorship at the gate of the preconscious. Thus dreams often include a purged or transformed version of the main dream thought--purged versions such as the pleasurable and holy Idalian bower, which Virgil presents along with the darker reality. In dream analysis it is through the purged or alternative version that we reach an understanding of the disguised wishes that lie behind the dream.

Freud describes the necessary relation of opposites in particular in the context of opposite "affect" in dreams. By "affect" he means the emotional feeling or energy in the dream, which creates the mood of the dream, and which he finds to be quite separate from its ideational content. The dream work can overlay different sources of "affect" one on another so that the mood of the dream is overdetermined; it can allow the "affect" to enter the dream; it can suppress the "affect" totally; or, most important for Virgil, "it can turn

¹⁰⁶Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965; 1st published in German, 1900), pp. 351-2.

¹⁰⁷Freud, p. 353.

[an "affect"] into [its] opposite."¹⁰⁸ Freud concludes his analysis of "Affects in Dreams" by pointing out that

the more intense and dominating a part is played in the dream-thoughts by the distressing mood, the more certain it becomes that the most strongly suppressed wishful impulses will make use of the opportunity in order to achieve representation.¹⁰⁹

The turning of one mood into its opposite, while retaining the basic situation or setting, characterizes the relation in the Aeneid of idyllic episodes such as Ascanius in Venus' groves and their more threatening opposites, such as erotic poisoning of Dido by Cupid, the great god on her lap.

Freud's definition of repression depends on this notion of how dreams turn an "affect" into its opposite: "it is precisely the transformation of affect which constitutes the essence of what we term repression."¹¹⁰ Freud's primary example of the workings of repression through transformation of "affect" concerns the way that the adult treats infantile sexual wishes which are no longer acceptable to the developed mind. As the repression goes to work, what once seemed desirable seems undesirable to the same degree that it was once hoped for. If the analogy to the workings of Virgil's narrative holds, horrific scenes or events may represent experiences which are intensely desired on another level. The Freudian analogy suggests another way of looking at the narrative doubling brought about by the merging of

¹⁰⁸Freud, p. 508.

¹⁰⁹Freud, p. 525.

¹¹⁰Freud, p. 643.

plot and counterplot. It suggests one reason why many scenes of horror in the Aeneid differ from their idyllic counterparts only in mood and why the horrific and the idyllic are often paired. As Angus Fletcher, whose work on allegory has a Freudian basis, has suggested, in allegories at least "we should not assume the polar opposites are really separated by any distance."¹¹¹ Fletcher's observations apply to Virgil's epic also, although it is not an allegory in the sense that Fletcher means, because Virgil sets his story up on a symbolic plane as a conflict of two opposed forces (forces which later reveal themselves to be not so clearly distinguishable). Fletcher stresses the emotive and symbolic ambivalence typical of works displaying the double structure found in the picture of Dido falling in love.¹¹²

What are the differences, then, between the two versions which Virgil gives us of the one event? Mischievous Cupid in fact plays a sinister role in this scene: he is to kindle the queen to madness and

¹¹¹ Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 224.

¹¹² The same doubleness that Freud sees as typical of the dream work has been characterized as a basic human response to the difficulty of life by Melanie Klein and her associates. See New Directions in Psycho-Analysis: The Significance of Infant Conflict in the Pattern of Adult Behavior, eds. Melanie Klein, Paula Heimann, R.E. Money-Kyrle (New York: Basic Books, 1955). In that collection see in particular Hanna Segal's article "A Psycho-Analytical Approach to Aesthetics," pp. 384-405, for possible applications of these psycho-analytic insights to art. Klein argues that a baby begins early on to divide his or her world into that which satisfies (symbolized in the baby's head, according to Klein, as the "good breast") and that which denies or frustrates (symbolized, according to Klein, as the "bad breast"). The discovery that the two are one and the same sends the infant into his or her first neurotic position. Klein's theories suggest that the dividing of experience into the satisfying and the frustrating, of which the second is seen as threatening while the first is not, may be typical of human mental ordering. See also Laurence Lerner, pp. 55-62.

to send the flame into her very marrow, "furentem/incendat reginam
atque ossibus implicet ignem" (I,659-60). He brings Helen's veil, an
ominous gift (I,649-52) which stands for Helen's unlawful marriage,
"inconcessos hymenaeos," and which proleptically warns of the unlaw-
ful "marriage" Dido will convince herself that she and Aeneas have
agreed to. The sexual overtones of the picture of Cupid as the great
god settling in Dido's lap have already been suggested. To sum up,
Cupid with Dido and Aeneas figures sexuality, eroticism, betrayal, and
manipulation (by Venus, and by the forces of eroticism); Cupid makes
Dido furens and infelix though she doesn't know it. From this point
on, the idyllic quality of the first meeting of Dido and Aeneas chan-
ges dramatically, and for the rest of the Carthage episode the narra-
tive is infused with the poet's laments.¹¹³

The Ascanius version of the event suggests that to sit on Dido's
lap is to be enwrapped in the flowery fragrance of Venus' idyllic and
holy groves. Viewed in this setting, the shades of love are sweet,
the smells flowery. Yet eroticism itself has been purged in this ver-
sion of the story or at least displaced onto the landscape itself. The
only stance the human being can take in this world is a completely pas-
sive one; for all its warmth and sensuality, Venus' bower has a
chilling quality, and to stay there long would be debilitating. In
the double "mimesis of erotic compulsion,"¹¹⁴ then, Virgil splits the

¹¹³See Otis, p. 239, who sees this episode as transitional.
See also Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, pp. 71-2.

¹¹⁴The phrase is taken from W.R. Johnson, p. 37.

erotic event into two parts: the idyllic version presents all that is desirable and pleasurable in a sensual setting, but it excludes overt human eroticism or sexuality (which would presumably not be placidam, soothing) and thus also seems to exclude any real activity. The bower incorporates all the sweetness of the erotic moment while it excludes eroticism itself, the fury that always accompanies it in Virgil's poetry, and any other threatening aspect of the loss of rational control that erotic compulsion implies. Though purged of the threatening aspects, the Idalian version of the story still presents the human being as out of his own control, but here this loss of control is seen as pleasant and even reassuring.

Virgil's description of the Idalian groves exemplifies many strategies of the counterplot. The move towards myth extends our perspective to include a wider world, and the natural scene described represents a timeless or mythical spot. The capacity of this scenery to soothe comes partly from its timelessness, for from this point on time presses hard on the characters in Carthage. The beauty of the description turns the scene into an aesthetic space, so that Ascanius seems to be enlaced in artifice as much as in natural beauty. The fact that the scene renders him completely passive is not emphasized while the beauty and the comfort of the scene is held before our eyes. In this sense, Venus' bower resembles the Odyssean Elysium, also a place of soothing natural beauty which offers a mythical life that is like death to mortals.

The double narration of the scene, moreover, openly displays the evasions of the counterplot, for the trip to the Idalian groves is explicitly designed by Venus to fool Ascanius (and Dido and Aeneas). As

in the Iliad the scenes in the counterplot serve to direct our attention away from battle, from mortality and from the linear direction of the mortal plot, so in this ending to Book 1 of the Aeneid the description of Ascanius in Venus' groves momentarily directs our attention away from the poisoning of Dido in Carthage. This movement away from the Carthaginian scene is explicitly described as a trick; the narrative doubling thus lays bare the significance of the counterplot in the moment that the poet represents his own and his characters' need for it. While in the Iliad the poet himself turned to the counterplot to find a way to make meaning out of war and eventually abandoned it having found its strategies to be inadequate, in the Aeneid, by making it unclear what level of reality or what degree of involvement by the characters should be understood, the poet suggests a parallel between his own and his characters' need for the illusions of the counterplot. This blurring of symbolic levels is the Virgilian counterpart to the merging of plot and counterplot. By representing the strategies of the counterplot as tricks, the narrative prefigures its own need to abandon those strategies or at least to distance them from the main heroic story.

Virgil's description of Ascanius in the sacred precinct of Venus can also be glossed by reference to the Eclogues. Each of the key words describing the Idalian groves and the manner in which the words are intertwined can be characterized as generic markers.¹¹⁵ The last lines of the description are quite complex:

¹¹⁵See above note 53.

et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos
Idaliae lucos, ubi mollis amaracus illum
floribus et dulci aspirans complectitur umbra.
(I,692-4)

R.D. Williams translates these lines: "where soft marjoram breathes its fragrance over him and wraps him round with its blossoms and sweet shade."¹¹⁶ But as Austin notes, floribus and umbra are both dependent on both aspirans and complectitur, "an ingenious arrangement which hints at the entwining embrace of the mesh of flowers."¹¹⁷ The intertwining of the boy and the breathing (thus slightly personified) flowers in which shade cannot be completely distinguished from fragrance, nor flowers from fragrance, has a pastoral tone. Words like mollis, dulcis, umbra, and even lucos characterize the pastoral landscape as Virgil describes it in the Eclogues. Dulcis gets its pastoral context right away in the first Eclogue, for Meliboeus calls the fields he is leaving dulcia arua, "sweet fields" (I,3). "Lentus in umbra," Meliboeus' description of Tityrus in Eclogue 1 (5) has been described as the basic pastoral situation¹¹⁸ and in the course of the Eclogues Virgil clearly makes the word umbra resonate with symbolic meanings.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶R.D. Williams, I,201.

¹¹⁷Austin, I,208.

¹¹⁸See, for example, P.L. Smith, "Lentus in umbra: A Symbolic Pattern in Vergil's Eclogues," Phoenix 19 (1965), 298-304.

¹¹⁹For the several meanings of umbra in the Eclogues, see John S. Coolidge, pp. 9-13. Coolidge sees umbra as beginning by symbolizing "all the complex feelings of a littérature déçagée," but in his view this disengagement carries the seeds of its own negation, and umbra eventually comes to stand for what the poet must leave behind him. In its changing meanings it enacts in small the "Virgilian progression."

As these examples suggest, these words are generic tags marking this episode as pastoral.

Individual eclogues contain many analogues to the scene described in the Aeneid. In Eclogue 2, for example, the stress on Alexis' beauty ("formosum," 1.1; "o formose puer," 1.45) reminds us of the lovely boys Venus and Dido are fondling in their laps. The flower catalogue in Eclogue 2 (although it does not include amaracus) also almost overwhelms its subject in flowers: its over-abundance oddly helps to represent the futility of Corydon's attachment, and the turning point of the poem ("Corydon, rusticus es," 1.56) immediately follows the climactic apostrophe to the laurels and the myrtle whose blended fragrance concludes the catalogue. These "suavis miscetis odores" (II,55) have the same luxurious sensuality as the blended flowers and shade do in the much more compressed passage in the Aeneid.

At the end of Eclogue 2, Corydon turns away from love and sets about weaving something that might be useful out of twigs and pliant rushes: "uiminibus mollique paras detexere iunco" (II,72). Here mollis is combined with detexere (meaning to braid or to plait to the end): braiding and weaving imagery also typify both the pastoral scenes and descriptions of the poetry. Corydon's comment here refers, as suggested above, to the conclusion of the Eclogues in which Virgil describes his own weaving of a basket of slender hibiscus: "gracili fiscellam textit hibisco" (X,71). Weaving thus characterizes and represents pastoral poetry in the Eclogues: the lines of poetry themselves are interwoven (as are Aeneid I,693-4), and the figures in the poem often seem woven into the background in which they are set, just as Ascanius cannot be easily distinguished from the landscape in which

he is set.¹²⁰

A final example from Eclogue 9 can stand as an emblem of the way weaving becomes a generic marker for pastoral poetry and the pastoral situations described in the poems. Moeris quotes a fragment in which an anonymous shepherd calls to Galatea to leave the water and enjoy the beautiful spring on earth:

huc ades, o Galatea; quis est nam ludus in undis?
hic uer purpureum, varios hic flumina circum
fundit humus flores, hic candida populus antro
imminet et lentae texunt umbracula vites:
huc ades; insani feriant sine litora fluctus.
(IX,39-43)

Come to me Galatea! What sport can there be in the waves? Here is rosy spring; here, by the streams, Earth scatters her varied flowers; here the white poplar bends over the cave, and the clinging vines weave shady bowers. Come to me; let the wild waves lash the shore.

Here the pliant vines or branches are presented as weaving the shade, an image that Virgil imitates from Theocritus who wrote, in the opening of the *Thalysia* (VII,7-9), of poplars and elms weaving a shady precinct.¹²¹

These examples suggest that in pastoral poetry images of weaving

¹²⁰For other images of weaving in the Eclogues see V,31; VII, 12; and VIII,77-8. In V,31, the description of Daphnis' contribution to pastoral society is perfectly iconic since the line interweaves the words into an ABXAB pattern: "et foliis lentas intexere mollibus hastas" ("to entwine in soft leaves the tough spears"). At VII,12 the river "hic uiridis tenera praetexit harundine ripas" ("fringes his green banks with waving reeds"); *praetexere* means "to weave before or in front of, to edge, to border" and even "to disguise." The interwoven line may bring the primary meaning of "weaving" to the forefront. V,31, and VII,12, exemplify Virgil's iconic technique in the Eclogues, and suggest how "weaving" even with words can be understood as a marker of pastoral loci in an imagined landscape or in poetry itself.

¹²¹The whole fragment, of course, is imitated from Theocritus.

(and of woven shade) stand as generic markers. Though the connection is metaphorical, complectitur in the passage on Venus' sweet shady bower (A.I.694) captures this sense of pastoral weaving. Complector carries the primary meaning of "to fold in or about oneself" or just "to embrace." Thus Ascanius is folded into the flowers, or embraced by the soft marjoram. But the etymological sense of conplecto [where plecto (from Greek pleko means interweave or plait)] suggests that the entwining of boy and natural scene should be understood as a pastoral interweaving.

The word umbra ends the description of the Idalian groves, and, as suggested above, shade and shadings are used within the Eclogues themselves as generic markers (see I,4; V,40-1; IX,19-20; and X,75-7). Virgil's use of umbra in the concluding lines of the Eclogues brings out a contrast in the word which is implied throughout: umbrae are lovely, comfortable, and desirable, yet they also sap the strength. The suggestion that shade may bring peril to singers allows a sense of the uncanny to enter the scene; we feel a similar discomfort as Ascanius is swept into Venus' bower. In the bower he is surrounded by luxurious sensuality, but he becomes completely inactive, unable to influence the course of events, either asleep or quietly passive. The sweet shades in which Ascanius is wrapped, then, should be read as pastoral images, both pleasing and yet subtly threatening.

The sweetness of the shadows also can be contextualized through reference to the Eclogues (see I,3, and IV,30). Sweetness, honey and the bees that produce it are Virgil's inheritance from the Theocritean bucolic scene. The first word of the first Idyll is "sweet," "hadu," a quality again associated with the whispered natural music

of the setting. Sweetness is treated by Theocritus as the quality which unifies the bucolic singer and the landscape; the goatherd, in answer to Thyrsis, outdoes his companion precisely by praising the sweetness of the shepherd's singing:

Sweeter, shepherd, falls thy song than yonder stream that
tumbles plashing from the rocks.

(Idyll I, 7-8)

Here the bucolic singer outdoes the sweetness of nature's music, associated with the running of water. As he ends his song, Thyrsis promises, "A sweeter song hereafter will I sing you" (145), and the goatherd answers, "Filled may thy fair mouth be with honey, Thyrsis and with the honeycomb" (146-47) and he offers the sweet pastoral cup (149). From these references alone, one could conclude that "sweet," "bees" and "honey" are not only generic markers but that they summarize or enact the joining of the human being and the natural world, of song and the whispers of nature, a myth evoked and explored in bucolic and pastoral poetry.¹²²

¹²²The pipe that Daphnis gives to Pan is "fragrant of honey from its compacted wax" (I, 128-9) and Pan himself was associated with bees. He is called "melissosos" (Protector of bees) (Zonas, A.P. 9.226.6) and in Idyll 5 (58-9) milk and honey are offered him. See Coleman, p. 284. Bees seem often to be described in conjunction with sacred places of the gods. See, for example, Callimachus' "Hymn to Apollo," 108-12, where the Melissae, "bees," are the priestesses of Demeter (Deo). Perhaps because honey is one of the few natural products which comes into human hands with little human effort, bees and their honey also are often used to represent the golden age when nature produced for man of its own volition (see Eclogue IV, 29-30; Georgics I, 131-2; and Horace's Epode XVI, 41-8).

Bees, of course, make up part of the idyllic scene in the Ithacan harbor in Odyssey 13. Having been described as bringing honey to the Cave of the Naiads, the bees were doomed forever to participate in such idyllic natural scenes. In Porphyry, and in the Neo platonic tradition, honey becomes a philosophical symbol for "the

The preceding pages have suggested that the scene in which Ascanius is swept away to Venus' Idalian groves may be interpreted as a pastoral scene in the Aeneid. All of the images in this brief passage can be glossed as pastoral images; most (mollis, flores, dulcis, umbra) are also used by Virgil himself in the Eclogues to point to or to distinguish pastoral poetry. In theme, imagery, poetic stance, verse structure, tone, and even in its double structure, the story of the double Ascanius has a pastoral quality. It imports into the epic not only the images but their symbolic meaning as established in the Eclogues.

As an example of the way such intertextual (or inter-generic) glossing can work, consider the significance of dulci umbra in the Aeneid. To whom is Idalia's shade sweet? Presumably to Ascanius, though the only hint we get about Ascanius' response is hidden in the word placidam, soothing, for, as Austin comments, "perhaps Ascanius was a little frightened at the strange happenings."¹²³ Elsewhere we hear nothing about his reactions, and, given the close parallelism between what happens to Ascanius and what happens to Cupid, we question whether Ascanius has in fact (in any way that can be made sense of in

pleasure arising from generation." This same emblematic tradition of reading bees or honey as symbols is still understood by a poet like Yeats (see his note to "Among School Children" in The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, Definitive Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 455-6). The pastoral imagery of sweetness (and bees) falls in between the Homeric usage and the philosophical allegory. On sweetness as a generic motif of Virgil's pastoral poetry, see E.A. Schmidt, Poetische Reflexion: Vergils Bukolik (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), pp. 29-32.

¹²³Austin, I, 207.

plot terms) been to the Idalian groves. Rather than being a setting that affects Ascanius, who may sleep through his visit there, the shade seems sweet particularly to the poet, who, like Meliboeus in Eclogue I, easily describes as sweet a setting denied or lost to him. Secondly, the sweetness of the shade may be said to describe, by analogy, the way Aeneas feels about Dido's realm or would feel about the idea of resting in a lovely shady grove. In the beginning of Book IV, Ascanius serves as Aeneas' stand-in, at least in Dido's mind:

illum absens absentem auditque videtque,
aut gremio Ascanium genitoris imagine capta
detinet, infandum si fallere possit amorem.
(IV,83-5)

He was away now, out of sight and hearing, but she still saw him and still heard his voice. Sometimes she held Ascanius close to her, under the spell of his resemblance to his father, and trying hard to escape from the love which she dared not tell.

Perhaps Virgil uses Ascanius as a stand-in for his father in this scene in Book I as well.

Our main response to Venus' sweet shade is wariness, however. We are made uncomfortable by the numbing quality of the imagery. The smooth gentle rhythms, and the many mutes and liquids, lull us, yet we know that at the same instant Cupid is breathing poison into Dido. There is something disturbing about this alternative version of the story, where the innocent boy lounges in perfect peace in the woman's lap, innocently enwrapped (enshrouded?) by flowery fragrance. In the first book of the Aeneid, umbra (especially combined with sweet) carries the same double, ambiguous value which it conveyed in the

Eclogues.¹²⁴

The description of Ascanius in Venus' groves imports a pastoral suspension into the epic poem, a suspension which appears in two forms. First of all, the episode itself is divided in half. The idyllic picture of the boy fondled on a woman's lap balances the darker picture; the poem does not join these two pictures into one, but implies that the meaning of the episode is suspended between the two versions. The suspension allows the two versions briefly to co-exist so that Virgil is able to say two things at once about Dido's love. By marking the darker picture as the earthly story and leaving the idyllic picture mythic, however, he also implies that this suspension cannot last. The darker picture in which the boy on the lap poisons the woman who fondles him is labeled as event, and the idyllic version is labeled as evasion or disguise of this darker reality. The doubleness of the double Ascanius episode, then, prefigures the collapse of the pastoral suspension by representing one version as the "true" interpretation of events and the other as the wish.

The pastoral description of Venus' Idalian groves also suspends several sets of opposites within itself. Even a single word, like umbra, suspends within itself several quite different meanings (and

¹²⁴The pastoral setting of the Idalian grove is one of Virgil's additions to the story Apollonius tells, for nothing in the Argonautica (III, 88ff) can be compared to it. Aphrodite comes upon Eros with Ganymede in "the fruitful orchard of Zeus" (III, 114 and 158), but this setting only serves as a vague background and is soon left behind. Something quite different occurs in the Aeneid, where the poet's main interest and poetic energy shift momentarily onto the description of the setting in which Ascanius is hidden. In Virgil's treatment of the story certain actions happen through the setting which are never described in the main action of the poem.

in the case of umbra, as we have seen, the opposing meanings are the same as those associated with the word in the Eclogues). The description of Ascanius in the Idalian groves blurs the distinctions between life and death, human being and natural setting, mortal and god. Ascanius is a mortal transported by a goddess' powers to her sacred precinct; the poem does not merge man and immortal, however, for Ascanius does not recognize this experience. Rather, the two are held together in suspension; we see them within a single focus but they remain two distinct realities. The setting itself represents all the lushness of nature abetted by the powers of Venus, but Venus' groves, otherwise a source of fertility, seem here only to lull the mortal into lifelessness. The fertility and the lifelessness are again held together in suspension; they do not blend together, though they strain the fragile suspension with the weight of their opposition to each other. It is a dark view which sees danger and death in fertility itself.

The pastoral suspension, then, brings an ambivalence into the epic, for the epic is not content with unresolved suspensions as solutions to human predicaments. The ambivalence hints at a resolution; it suggests that one version is the more serious one, the other the fantasy. While it briefly appears that life and death, fertility and lifelessness, are balanced or suspended, the epic reveals that this suspension is collapsing: for the mortal, the suspension of life and death means death, and any more time in Venus' groves would render Ascanius incapable of becoming his father's heir. Submersion in such a natural scene is presented as idyllic, but the ambivalence in the imagery suggests that it is also destructive. Just as Odysseus had

to leave such natural/mythic paradises, so Ascanius does not belong in the sacred precinct of Venus. The degree of Virgil's inability to reconcile the idyllic scene with epic requirements is indicated by the fact that no reference to Ascanius' trip is ever made by a human character. Although technically an example of the merging of plot and counterplot, in fact this episode functions only as a part of the counterplot.

The ambivalence caused by the suspension within the idyllic scene suggests why this part of the story is divided into two irreconcilable parts: the two opposed images of a boy fondled in a woman's lap are developed versions of the antitheses which make up the idyllic scene itself. The doubleness of the narrative organization, then, which prefigures and hints at its own collapse, also suggests the collapse of the suspensions within the idyllic scene. The doubleness in the narrative arises from Virgil's inability to harmonize the strategies of the counterplot with the epic story. What results is the strange half-merging of plot and counterplot characteristic of the Aeneid.

In this example, the Virgilian counterplot begins to distinguish itself from the main plot. It imports pastoral imagery and a pastoral suspension into the epic story. The scene in the Idalian groves represents a human being in harmony with responsive nature; to be enwrapped in this idyllic setting is also pictured as being warmed in Venus' bosom. In a poem in which one generally glimpses divinity as it disappears (I,406), the counterplot represents a human character being transported to and dwelling in an immortal world. The Venus who transports the boy is purged of her erotic associations, which in turn

are displaced onto the landscape. Although in the main plot a story of "erotic compulsion" is being told, the version of the event presented in the counterplot contains only vague hints of eroticism. In the counterplot, the picture is one of serenity, in which the undependable source of erotic feeling is now figured as a mother carrying a boy in her arms. In contrast to the Homeric counterplot, then, the counterplot in the Aeneid represents scenes purged of eroticism (and purged of the kinds of human energies--irrational passion, but also vitality--that eroticism brings with it).

As suggested in section two, eroticism is consistently represented as a cause of misery in Virgil's poetry, and in the Eclogues he also purges it or tries to contain it. In the Aeneid, he presents the violent and destructive side of eroticism and protects his hero from falling prey to it completely. Aeneas is permitted to fall in love partly but not fully; he can dally in an erotic affair but he cannot allow it to become an entanglement. The desire of the poet to dramatize an erotic affair and yet keep it from seeming too attractive may in part explain the double Ascanius passage. The more general description of the desirability of the bower (to whom is it sweet? to the poet, to us, to all people?) disperses the power of erotic sweetness, allowing it to enter the world of the poem, but not to contaminate it. Being reminded of the sweetness of Venus' precinct may also indirectly make us more sympathetic to Dido. But by using the double focus, Virgil distinguishes Dido's erotic feelings from the sweetness in the bower. There is no sweetness in love for Dido; all is fury, loss, and ultimate disintegration. Given this picture of love, we do not as easily condemn Aeneas.

To present love only as madness and destructive passion is to suppress the pleasure of erotic love and to deny to erotic involvement its seriousness. Whether he intended to or not, Virgil does not treat erotic love only as another example of furor impius. He represents the moments of erotic compulsion purged entirely of its sweetness or its idyllic qualities, but these qualities escape and enter the poem in the more displaced form of the picture of sweetness in Venus' Idalian groves.

The narrative doubling, which implies that the two descriptions (of Ascanius and of Cupid) are descriptions of a single event, reveals the limits to Virgil's ability to remove all touches of erotic sweetness from the main plot and to purge the idyllic scene of erotic qualities. If the two descriptions do represent the same event, then one does not exist without the other. The idyllic version does not exist in this instance apart from the poisonous, destructive eroticism represented by Cupid. By showing that both form part of Venus' plot, and ultimately are manipulated by her, Virgil makes it clear that in this instance the idyllic is a false and misleading alternative to the passionately erotic scene. Or, to put it in another way, the idyllic is not an alternative to the erotic scene: it is the erotic scene represented in different terms.

This connection between the idyllic and the erotic or passionate affects Virgil's poetry in several ways. The connection proves dangerous and debilitating, as here, when the two versions are presented as simultaneous, for then the tie between the two ultimately destroys the idyllic and the values it represents. If simultaneous, the idyllic and the passionate become allegories for each other, and each imbues the other with its respective qualities, while the event

itself is figured by the composite of the two. When their close relation is severed, however, so that the idyllic is not presented as a simultaneous alternative to the main plot, but rather is placed in the future, in the past, or is spatially set aside, then the idyllic world can stand as a genuine alternative. Even so, it remains an unstable alternative, and must be kept at distance from the violent forces which it excludes or compresses into poetry.

This more restorative relation between the idyllic and the passionate, in which the close tie between the two is cut, is made to work at a cost--the cost of purging erotic passion and the violent emotions which it brings with it. Without this passionate side of his nature, the epic hero risks losing vitality and begins to fade in our minds. After the Dido episode, Virgil begins to purge Aeneas of whatever erotic leanings he may have had, but he does not succeed at freeing Aeneas from anger and desire for vengeance. Towards the ending of the poem, the presence of these violent emotions in Aeneas may even provide the energy and vitality of the story--vitality which might otherwise have been lost in the effort to purge an epic hero of precisely that passion which, in part, qualifies him for the leading role in his poem.

Throughout the Aeneid Virgil continues to divide episodes and to separate the violent and the passionate from the peaceful and idyllic. He does not always represent his efforts at separating these forces as successful, however. The description of Ascanius in the Idalian groves represents an idyllic setting seemingly purged of the erotic, violent forces that destroyed Troy, will destroy Carthage, and will ravage the landscape of Latium, but this purging does not succeed. The double structure of the description, which balances idyllic and

passionate versions of experience, reveals that the idyllic has not been separated from the passionate. Throughout the Aeneid the idyllic appears in the counterplot or in that strange merging of plot and counterplot created in this episode. The double structure suggests, however, that only by fully detaching the counterplot from the plot can idyllic scenes be represented as genuinely free from eroticism or passion.

The narrative doubling in the moment of Dido's falling in love (a half-merging of plot and counterplot) characterizes much of the Carthage section of the Aeneid (Books 1 to 4). Idyllic spots seem inviting, but in the course of the story are revealed to be threatening. The idyllic thus serves as an unsuccessful cover for the erotic or threatening events. In the second third of the poem, Virgil structurally separates these two aspects of experience, so that, on one level at least, Aeneas as epic hero is able to incorporate into his identity values represented by an idyllic world. But this incorporation is at a cost, which becomes apparent in the last third of the poem.¹²⁵

In the first half of the poem, the plot and counterplot partly

¹²⁵ On the structure of the Aeneid, see Otis, pp. 215-22ff, for his argument that the Aeneid divides into two halves, the "Odyssean" Aeneid (Books 1-6) and the "Iliadic" Aeneid (Books 7-12). See also Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, pp. 24-33, for a careful paralleling of the opening scenes of Books 1 and 7. The poem is also often divided into thirds: the first third, the tragedy of Dido, balances the last third, the tragedy of Turnus, while the middle third contrasts with the other two. Pöschl describes the movement between these three parts as a movement from dark to light to dark again, a sequence of moods which he sees as characteristic of large and small segments of the poem (see Pöschl, pp. 171-2). He argues that this "chiaroscurotic rhythm...governs the whole epic" (p. 172). For more elaborate structural analyses, see also G.E. Duckworth, Structural Patterns and Proportions in Vergil's Aeneid (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962).

merge in the ambiguous way described above. The trip through the underworld perhaps best represents this ambiguous merging of plot and counterplot, since Aeneas sees the spirits of the future and visits the Elysian fields and yet cannot fully understand what they represent. The uncertainty about the nature of the journey (is it a dream? is it an initiation? is it a private inner journey of discovery?) and the fact that it does not seem to change Aeneas (as in the case of the shield, he remains ignorant of what he has seen) can be explained by this ambiguous merging of plot and counterplot.¹²⁶ In the "Odyssean" section of the Aeneid, then, Virgil does mirror the Odyssean blending of plot and counterplot, but he does so in a characteristically ambivalent and clouded way so that almost all the episodes in which the blending is evident also seem uncanny (we never know what level of reality should be attributed to them).

After the visit to the underworld, Virgil's narrative strategies begin to change. Episodes exemplifying the Virgilian blending of plot and counterplot are still included in Books 7 and 8, but in these books the counterplot is heard more and more often. In the last third of the poem, the split between plot and counterplot grows to such an extent that the merging (even an ambivalent merging) is no longer possible. Thus in the "Iliadic" conclusion of the Aeneid, Virgil does turn to a more and more Iliadic style of narration. The significance

¹²⁶See Otis, pp. 208-9, for a different interpretation of Aeneas' descent to the underworld: according to Otis, "the important fact... is that he does undergo an experience of death and resurrection or its psychological equivalent, and emerges from the underworld as a new man" (p. 308).

of this Iliadic narration and of the counterplot differs in the Aeneid, however, for the counterplot emerges as completely distinct only after the poet has tried to merge it with the plot. Unlike in the Iliad, in the Aeneid the creation of a distinct counterplot suggests the failure of that merging, along with a new role for the poet and a new relation between poet and hero. For Virgil, the return of the counterplot represents a kind of poetic discipline, for it means that he no longer can blur the edges of certainty about how much characters know and don't know. The poet's voice begins to aestheticize and distance the events and to take over the larger divine perspective of which the characters become less and less aware. But the poet laments the growing distance between what he is able to perceive and feel and the attitudes of the main characters (especially Aeneas). Thus in its return the counterplot is particularly a voice of lament which removes us from the battle scenes only to dramatize its own weakness in the face of the violence erupting in the main plot.¹²⁷

¹²⁷The distinction suggested here is analogous to the distinction between "a public voice of triumph" and "a private voice of regret" which Adam Parry analyzes in "The Two Voices of Virgil's Aeneid," p. 121 and passim. The author wishes to acknowledge a particular debt to this essay by Adam Parry.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PURGING OF PASTORAL AND THE RISE OF THE COUNTERPLOT

IN VIRGIL'S "AENEID"

"Let him undertake the task of idyll so as to display that pastoral innocence even in creatures of civilization and under all the conditions of the most active and vigorous life, of expansive thought, of the subtlest art, the highest social refinement, which, in a word, leads man who cannot go back to Arcady forward to Elysium."

Friedrich Schiller,
Naive and Sentimental Poetry

"agnovit prolem ambiguum geminosque
parentis"

Virgil, Aeneid III,180

(i) Narrative Doubling in the Story of Dido and Aeneas

Throughout Book 1 Aeneas views Dido's realm as a peaceful retreat from the storms and troubles in which he has been tossed since he left Troy.¹ The merging of idyllic images of Dido and her city with the

¹See above Chapter 3, section 3, note 88, for the edition and commentaries used in this dissertation. In addition to the critical works listed in note 89 of that section, the following works have been particularly useful for the opening books of the Aeneid: Wendell Clausen, "An Interpretation of the Aeneid," in Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Steele Commager (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966; article 1st published, 1964), pp. 75-88; Steele Commager, "Fateful Words: Some Conversations in Aeneid 4," Arethusa 14 (1981), 101-14; John W. Hunt, Forms of Glory: Structure and Sense of Virgil's Aeneid (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973); Charles Segal, "Art and the Hero: Participation, Detachment,

heroic story represents a merging of plot and counterplot. This union is found to be untenable, however. All of the idealizing imagery in fact has the double structure of the scene in which Dido falls in love, but this double structure is hidden, if hinted at by the poet's warning voice. The covering over of the darker reality (or of the dangers to both Dido and Aeneas in their love affair) creates in Book 1 a narrative doubling similar to that in the Odyssey in which episodes or images of one kind seem to contain buried or suppressed within them a darker alternative. Looking back over the story of Dido from its end, we see that this narrative doubling comes to represent the self-delusions of Dido and Aeneas. As the story of Dido ends, the poet begins to separate idealizing gestures from the telling of the heroic story. After Aeneas' sojourn in Carthage, idyllic places are set at a greater distance from the main action, and when Virgil uses idyllic or idealizing imagery he tends more and more to use it as a representation of something outside the experience of the characters. This process of separating the plot and the counterplot is only completed towards the end of the poem, but it begins in Book 1 and occurs throughout in microcosm.

In Book 1 an idyllic, calm surface often hides passionate or violent depths. This surface/depth antithesis may be characterized as the opposition of idyllic and chthonic forces (although chthonic forces or gods are only evoked outrightly in a few passages); alternatively,

and Narrative Point of View in Aeneid I," Arethusa 14 (1981), 67-84; and D. West, "Multiple-Correspondence Similes in the Aeneid," Journal of Roman Studies 59 (1969), 40-9.

it may be characterized as the opposition of pastoral calm and erotic passion. The opening storm scene is emblematic of this opposition; as Pöschl has argued (although in a sense different from that which he may have intended), it can also be said to prefigure the structure of the rest of the poem.² At the opening of the poem, Juno, who will later reach down to the depths of Tartarus to find her agents (see VII,312), reveals herself as a figure of irrationality and violence. The Hellenistic rococo narrative through which we watch her convince Aeolus to release the winds presents her as allied with forces that can be called chthonic.³ Juno promises Aeolus sexual rewards (as Hera offered one of the Graces to Sleep--see Iliad XIV,267ff), and with this early example of sexual manipulation in the poem, sexuality is drawn into the sphere of Juno and remains there.⁴ In describing Aeolus' control of the winds, an early image of external calm hiding an inner turbulence, Virgil personifies the winds; Aeolus' land contains "loca feta furentibus Austris" ("tracts teeming with furious blasts") (I,

²See Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, pp. 13-24. Although it reaches different conclusions, this dissertation has benefitted a great deal from Pöschl's analysis of the functioning (and significance) of scenic symbolism in the Aeneid.

³See Mario di Cesare, The Altar and the City, p. 27ff, on Juno's alliance with the chthonic forces. Di Cesare interprets the Aeneid as a retelling of the story of the Olympian victory over the chthonic gods (and thus sees it as a Roman Oresteia). But as W.R. Johnson points out, pp. 128, 144, this interpretation does not explain the fact that it is Jupiter who sends the Dira to preside over Turnus' death.

⁴The first references to sexuality also tie it to anger and violence: the privileges given to ravished Ganymede are cited as causae irarum along with Paris' slight to Juno's beauty and (elliptically) Juno's jealousy of Electra (I,25-8).

51),⁵ and feta, meaning "pregnant" or "teeming," suggests the connection of these lands with Juno. Aeolus' country thus seems to represent Juno's inner landscape: Virgil has just described her brooding mind (I,11); now he presents teeming inner state. This teeming, gusty landscape, and the gloomy cave complete the early identification of Juno with the violent, chthonic forces.

Neptune quiets the storm and smoothes the ocean, but his serene presence does not remove the threat which Juno's stirring up of the storm brings to the story. Virgil offers here a temporal ordering of events which is reassuring: after violent forces go to work, the calm, restorative power of order reasserts itself. This reassuring movement of events (from violence and passion to order and civilization) is not clearly embodied in the plot of the Aeneid, however. It is a fictional ordering, which represents the hopes of the poet, and it finds its thematic embodiment only in his projections of the future. The relation of violence and order in the poem as a whole seems as often to be the opposite of that which Virgil dramatizes in the opening scenes of the poem: in the rest of the Aeneid, calm or ordered life generally gives way to the disordering or destruction caused by violence and passion. If the opening sequence is seen to be emblematic of the whole, then the Aeneid can be described as an unfinished poem, still awaiting the calming and ordering presence which it assures us will appear.

Since the order of the opening sequence seems reversible (in that many episodes in the poem suggest that events move in an opposite

⁵This is the Loeb translation. See above Chapter 3, section 2, note 45.

direction from the civilizing one presented here), the opening scenes can be described as establishing a double structure which merely connects the calm surface to the darker and stormy stirrings of passion found to underlie it. In the fiction a temporal ordering of these two elements asserts the possibility of progress, but the fact that this temporal order is often reversed suggests that the poet is not always as certain of the future as he may seem.

Throughout the Aeneid, Virgil uses different methods to establish a relationship between violence and the ideal that will protect the ideal image of calm and order, and show that history moves from violence to order and peace and not the other way around. Sometimes he asserts that a temporal progression exists, as here in the opening of the poem. This strategy presents the difficulty that, if history is like a pendulum swinging from violence to order, then the reader can easily imagine the pendulum swinging back. The claim that the pendulum will eventually stop in its swing towards order does not keep the reader from noticing the underlying implications of the double structure. Since the Aeneid presents its action as completing itself in the future, it leaves open the possibility of doubt in spite of all the historical catalogues predicting future peace.⁶

⁶The question of whether or not the Aeneid finally offers a vision of order in history has become a dividing line among interpreters of the poem. See W.R. Johnson, pp. 8-22, for a summary of some of the critical positions which have been taken. Pöschl overstates the case, perhaps, when he writes that Virgil "assumes a cosmic and historical continuity in which neither darkness nor light is dominant, but where the contrasts are united in a higher entity. This entity is given as a balance which, though it may be lost, is time and again regained" (see The Art of Vergil, p. 173). Nonetheless, it seems worth stating that alongside the darker vision of the Aeneid, with which this study

Another solution Virgil finds to the problem of violence and passion and their destructive path through history is to distance the violent or passionate forces from those worlds of calm and order which he establishes in the course of his story. This distancing can be geographical or temporal or both, and each strategy has its limitations. Geographical removal from the scene of violence provides no ultimate protection; temporal removal--the placing of an ideal world in the past or future--succeeds in distancing the idyllic world from the ravages of violence portrayed in the main narrative, but does not necessarily protect it from violent events in a different time. Moreover, to remove violence and passion from the portrayal of an idealized world is potentially to sap it of the energy which passion creates. Too much distance will weaken and diminish the ideal world even as it protects it. An idealized setting completely purged of violent forces becomes, as is the case in the portrayal of Ascanius in Venus' grove, as much an image of death (or at least of complete passivity) as of a desirable state.

Virgil explores the deep ties between the idyllic and the violent or passionate by using the device of narrative doubling. Eventually,

is chiefly concerned, is set a powerful affirmation of the belief that history has order and meaning, and that that order is manifested in the pax augustana. See also Jacques Perret, "Optimisme et tragédie dans l'Enéid," pp. 346-55, on the two views of Virgil and how to put them together. Perret proposes that the optimism of the Aeneid is most apparent in the sweeping vision of history at its most general, "la marche de l'univers, l'ordre du cosmos," while "le pessimisme, c'est-à-dire la constatation d'un désordre moral inextricable et scandaleux, s'impose au niveau des individus, des civilisations, des communautés historiques autre que la romaine" (p. 355).

however, this strategy leads him to present the idealizing or idyllic versions of the episodes as delusions or wishes. To find a way to include an idealized world or an idealizing vision as a dramatic reality in his poem, he begins to separate the two strands of the story which are twined together by the device of narrative doubling. A distinct counterplot begins to emerge as Virgil retreats from a more Odyssean narrative strategy. Idyllic scenes purged of violence are in fact settings typical of the counterplot, and as the poem progresses these worlds become less and less accessible to the characters in the present of the poem. Emerging from the poet's inability to unite the plot and the counterplot in a way which does not destroy the values represented in the counterplot, this more Iliadic narrative technique is also a mark of tragedy in the ending of the Aeneid. The poem affirms its belief that some ideals (or idealized places) can resist the ravages of violence and passion, but it laments that those worlds can be visited only by the poet in his mind.

After the storm which Juno raises, and against her designs, Aeneas and his men find a peaceful harbor near Carthage. This episode is set aside from the main sweep of the narrative by a descriptive device: the locus est construction (I,159), which in its many different variations was called ecphrasis by the Hellenistic critics.⁷ Aeneas and his men find refuge from the ocean in a harbor that resembles the harbor on Ithaca to which the Phaeacians conveyed the sleeping

⁷Gordon Williams, in Tradition and Originality, pp. 636-54, discusses the significance of this construction, an inheritance from Greek epic.

Odysseus (Odyssey xiii,93-115; see also ix,136-41 and x,87-94).

The harbor is set in a deep inlet, while the cliffs on either side loom heavenward. These outer barriers may seem somewhat ominous, but the harbor itself is presented as still and sheltered:

tum silvis scaena coruscis
desuper, horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra
fronte sub adversa scopulis pendentibus antrum,
intus aquae dulces vivoque sedilia saxo,
Nympharum domus. hic fessas non vincula navis
ulla tenent, unco non alligat ancora morsu.
(I,164-9)

Beyond the water a curtain of trees with quivering leaves reaches downwards, and behind them is an overhanging forest-clad mountain-side, mysterious and dark. There is a cave directly in front at the foot of the cliffs. Inside it are stalactites and fresh water, and there are seats there, cut in the living rock, for nymphs have their home in the cave. Here a tired ship will never need a cable or an anchor with a fluke to bite and make her fast.

In this description, the harbor is given an idyllic cast; some of the imagery explicitly evokes the imagery of the Eclogues. The shadiness has the typically ambivalent quality of pastoral references to umbra: although the black shadows seem slightly sinister, the main feeling evoked is that of a mysterious retreat. The sense that this place is welcoming, a natural harbor, is furthered by the slight personification of the cliff (fronte, "brow," 1.166) and by the mention of sweet waters (aquae dulces, 1.167). The idea that the ships hold themselves in this harbor by themselves is also reassuring, for it suggests freedom from threat or danger and echoes the many pastoral evocations of an idealized world where nature produces by itself, flocks guard themselves, and man's efforts are made irrelevant by nature's spontaneity. The personification of the ships (fessas, "weary," 1.168) also furthers the sense that this is a place in which man is in har-

mony with the outer world while reminding us of the weariness of Aeneas and his men (Defessi Aeneadae, 1.157).

Furthermore, Virgil's original addition, the theatrical metaphor (silvis scaena), adds a touch of the self-consciousness about artifice typical of the Eclogues; it suggests that this harbor and the land behind it may be the scene of a dramatic performance, while reminding us of the author's more distant point of view on the action (he knows what kind of performance it will be). The mysteriousness of the harbor, the nymphs haunting the background of the scene, and the references to a mythical world all help develop the idyllic mood. The description makes the harbor sound like a pastoral setting surrounded by threat. Whether or not the description evokes imagery from the Eclogues, it certainly echoes previous scenes in the counterplot (such as the harbor in Ithaca to which the description of the seats of living stone refers directly)⁸ and presents the harbor as an idyllic retreat. The touches of pastoral imagery only intensify the idyllic quality of the scene while hinting at the ambivalences which are submerged in the description.

In describing the harbor, however, Virgil carefully locates the dark shadows within the sheltered world as well as beyond it. The idyllic setting here is compounded with its opposite: the pastoral shadows remain, but now they are bristling, dreadful. From the two opposite pictures of the safe harbor and of the threatening overhang-

⁸Virgil has naturalized the Homeric scene to some extent. The seats in living stone (unlike the stone winebowls and stone looms in Homer) may refer simply to the natural way one could sit on a stone, and thus the passages may joke slightly with its Homeric subtext.

ing shadows, Virgil creates one image that seems suspended between the two: the harbor is both idyllic and threatening. It thus becomes a threshold symbol representing the dual function of Dido's realm in the story of Aeneas.⁹ This suspension of opposites temporarily allows the idyllic version to remain a part of the poem. This suspension is unstable, however, and soon breaks down to reveal that the idyllic interpretation was a deluded or misleading one.

Throughout Book 1 Aeneas interprets Dido's realm as an idyllic retreat, though narrative doubling in many scenes suggests a very different interpretation. The well-known comparison of the Carthaginians as they build their city to bees represents one example of Aeneas' idealizing point of view. Here Virgil takes an image from the Georgics (see Georgics IV,162ff) and colors it with an idyllic glow:

qualis apes aestate nova per florea rura
exercet sub sole labor, cum gentis adultos
educunt fetus, aut cum liquentia mella
stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas,
aut onera accipiunt venientum, aut agmine facto
ignavum fucos pecus a praesepibus arcent;
fervet opus redolentque thymo fragrantia mella.

It was like the work which keeps the bees hard at their tasks about the flowering countryside as the sun shines in the calm of early summer, when they escort their new generation, now full grown, into the open air, or squeeze clear honey into bulging cells, packing them with sweet nectar; or else take over loads brought by their foragers; or sometimes form up to drive a flock of lazy drones from their farmstead. All is a ferment of activity; and the scent of honey rises with the perfume of thyme.

Because of their secure, orderly labor, the bees seem to have a highly

⁹For the concept of "threshold symbol," see E. Honig, Dark Con-
ceit: The Making of Allegory (Providence: Brown University Press,
1959), pp. 71-4.

desirable life. The georgic world itself seems idyllic to one excluded from it,¹⁰ and the poet's emphasis on the flowery fields," "rura florea" (430), the liquid honey, "liquentia mella," the sweetness of the nectar, "dulci...nectare" (433), and the fragrant honey

¹⁰There is no clear boundary between the world described in the Georgics and that of the Eclogues. Agricultural labor is referred to in the Eclogues (for some examples, see I,33-4; I,56; II,10; II,70-2; V,36-7; V,80; IX,61; X,36), as is hunting (see II,29; III,12-3; III,74-5; VII,29-30; X,56; X,59-60). See Rosenmeyer, pp. 23-4, for some examples of how small amounts of ponos are brought into the pastoral world to toughen it (though Rosenmeyer notes, p. 24, that the distinction is less clear in Virgil). Not only are there "georgic" sections of the Eclogues (see Van Sickle, The Design of Virgil's Bucolics, for readings of the eclogues that play off the "georgic" moments against the more "pastoral" ones), but there are "pastoral" sections of the Georgics (for some examples, see I,125ff; II,136ff (Laudes Italiae); II,458ff).

Nonetheless, there are real differences between the two, even if an absolute boundary line cannot be drawn. One major difference is the temporality of each. Although time enters Virgil's pastoral world, its main fiction (like that of the Homeric counterplot) is that it represents a timeless world. A corollary of this pastoral timelessness (which is represented in part by the youth of so many of the shepherds--to introduce an aging shepherd is already to problematize the pastoral situation) is the denial of causality: the shepherds are never responsible for the events going on around them. In the georgic world, "fugit irreparabile tempus" (III,284); time presses, and all things decay if work is not done to protect or nurture them. While Moeris remarks in Eclogue 9 that "omnia fert aetas" (IX,51), this is a rare situation in the Eclogues and represents the degree of underlying unity which can be discovered in all of Virgil's work.

One final way in which the Georgics and the Eclogues differ concerns the degree of fictionality of the poet's persona. In the Eclogues, Virgil speaks through the voice of a shepherd: the distance between the implied author and the narrator or speaker is great. To use the terms of Gordon Williams, in the Eclogues, the primary field concerns the world of shepherds while the secondary field almost always concerns the poet and his urbane readers. The distance between primary and secondary fields in the Eclogues is greater than that in the Georgics, where in the primary field the poet takes on the role of teacher of the agricolae, while in the secondary field he is teacher of the Romans.

sweet with thyme, "redolentque thymo fragrantia mella" (436) creates a pastoral mood. Some of these lines (such as 436) and images come directly from the Georgics though the reference to the sweetness of the honey and the early summer has been added here, while Virgil has not chosen to include as much of the extended military or civil analogy, which is used to describe Dido's people but not the bees. Thus the simile paints a picture of work which is so delightful that it can hardly be called work. The setting of the early summer, appropriate for Dido's city in its beginnings and summing up the hope for the future, also adds a pastoral tone: pastoral poems are often set in this season since it is the season in which natural threats seem at greatest remove.

As Pöschl has said, "Virgil's similes are transparent signs for inner events."¹¹ This simile characterizes Aeneas even more than it does the Carthaginians, for it presents his view of them. To him Carthage seems an idyllic place where all human, creative potential will find its fulfillment. He views Carthage through an idealizing lens. Given the pastoral connotations of a stress on sweetness, the partly idyllic harbor scene, the scene in the sacred grove which immediately follows this passage, and Aeneas' emotional response to seeing the city walls rise, "O fortunati, quorum iam moenia surgunt!" ("Ah, fortunate people...for your walls are already rising!") (I,437) this bee simile can be interpreted as a pastoral simile which conveys

¹¹Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, p. 85.

the nostalgic slant of Aeneas' mind at this point in the story.¹²

The first bee simile in epic poetry compares the Achaean warriors to bees:

Like the swarms of clustering bees that issue forever
in fresh bursts from the hollow in the stone, and
hang like
bunched grapes as they hover beneath the flowers in
springtime
fluttering in swarms together this way and that,
so the many nations of men from the ships and the
shelters
along the front of the deep sea beach marched in
order....

(Iliad II,87-92)

A good example of a simile of the counterplot, this simile clearly contrasts the bees and their idyllic world with the soldiers. The timeless, idyllic scene stands as a reminder of all that the world of war is not. The simile represents the poet's comment on the war, not the point of view of the soldiers.

From the Iliad on, bee similes in epic seem to evoke a world set apart from the epic struggles, often a world to which the characters in the poem have no access. Apollonius Rhodius, for example, uses a bee simile to characterize the women of Lemnos. Aiming his remarks

¹²The difference between this simile and a georgic simile can be seen by comparing the bees and the ants in IV,402-7 (to which Virgil compares Aeneas' men as they prepare to leave Carthage). The context of the other bee similes in the Aeneid (see VI,707ff and XII,587ff) also suggest that this image should be understood as having a strong pastoral coloration. The image of the souls in Elysium hovering in meadows like bees is a pastoral image, as is the simile in Book 12, on a primary level at least. See Putnam, The Poetry of the Aeneid, pp. 175-6. See also Roger Hornsby, "The Pastor in the Poetry of Vergil," Classical Journal 63 (1968), 145-52, and William S. Anderson, "Pastor Aeneas: On Pastoral Themes in the Aeneid," Transactions of the American Philological Association 99 (1968), 1-17, for detailed discussion of these similes.

particularly at Jason, Heracles chides the Argonauts for lingering in Lemnos and enjoying the Lemnian women: "no fair renown shall we win by thus tarrying so long with stranger women," he reminds them.¹³ As they make for the harbor, the women, their friends and lovers, come running towards them. The poet compares them to bees:

as when bees hum round fair lilies pouring forth from their
hive in the rock, and all around the dewy meadow rejoices,
and they gather the sweet fruit, flitting from one to another;
even so the women poured eagerly forth, clustering round the
men with loud lament....

(Argonautica, I, 879ff)

Like Homer's comparison, this simile contrasts an idyllic, natural scene with the painful world of the epic heroes and the women they are abandoning. The simile may partly represent the point of view of the women, for their lament suggests that the visit of the men already seems past and has taken on an idyllic tone, but its main effect is one of contrast. In the case of Aeneas, however, the bee simile seems almost entirely to represent his nostalgic and idealizing point of view. Virgil's simile draws on these earlier examples of idyllic similes; they lend support to the view that the primary coloring of the simile in the Aeneid is idyllic and that the simile is being used to represent the contrast in Aeneas' mind between a peaceful settled existence and his own wandering life of exile. Moreover, these earlier examples point out the degree to which the plot and counterplot have been blended in the Virgilian instance.

Following the bee simile and Aeneas' marvelling response, a

¹³See Apollonius Rhodius, The Argonautica, trans. R.C. Seaton, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1912), I, 869-70; pp. 62-3.

locus est (in fact, lucus fuit) ecphrasis again turns the narrative aside (I,441) to describe Juno's sacred grove, "laetissimus umbrae" ('a wealth of shade'). In this grove lies the temple to Juno in which Aeneas finds the pictures of the Trojan war that so touch his heart. Here for the first time Aeneas begins to hope for safety:

hoc primum in luco nova res oblata timorem
leniit, hic primum Aeneas sperare salutem
ausus et adflictis melius confidere rebus.
(I,450-2)

Here among the trees a strange experience met Aeneas; for the first time his fears were allayed, and for the first time he dared to hope for life and to feel some confidence in spite of his distress.

The emotional anaphora of "hoc primum...hic primum" has the incantatory effect of a pastoral anaphora: with it Virgil reveals how Aeneas has begun to lull his doubts to sleep. Virgil reenacts this inner lulling by persuading us through the repetitions to relax and be reassured, even as he is raising the emotional stakes of the episode.

But the context of the scene warns us not to have our fears allayed. Aeneas is, after all, in the temple of his enemy, Juno, and much as it may appear an idyllic spot, the grove must through Juno be connected with darker forces. The primary meaning of these lines about Aeneas' first hope is that he now believes Venus' predictions about the Carthaginians (Venus--o dea certe--another strange sight in a grove), but on a secondary level the poem indicates that his fears have perhaps been put aside too completely. Thus, with a warning voice, the narrator steps into the poem:

sic ait, atque animum pictura pascit inani....
(I,464)

So he spoke. It was only a picture, but sighing deeply he let his thoughts feed on it....

The narrator comments on the dangers of the hero's losing himself in a world of pictures. To Virgil, these pictures are insubstantial first because they are only pictures, and second because they represent a world forever closed to Aeneas, a world for which he still feels nostalgic.

Aeneas is moved by the pictures and takes pleasure in the thought of the broader world which sympathizes with the Trojan plight. His emotions follow the characteristic pattern of the counterplot: from the contemplation of war as art, he thinks of the sympathy of the wider world which partly consoles him for the loss. The pictures in Juno's temple are also insubstantial, then, because they lead Aeneas to assume that the broader perspective and sympathy represented by art constitute a relief from the pain he has experienced. They lead him all the more to view Dido's realm as an idyllic place in which he can find refuge. In this scene, the poet explicitly represents the way expansive gestures of sympathy typical of the counterplot can mislead the hero: the strategies of the counterplot are not easily made to coincide with the heroic story, and Virgil, like the poet of the Odyssey, reconciles the irreconcilable only at a cost. In Virgil's case, the cost is Dido herself and the narrative strategy of mixing plot and counterplot.

A few more examples will suffice to suggest that Dido's realm is pictured as an idyllic retreat in much of Book 1, and that this vision of Carthage represents Aeneas' point of view (Dido herself also seems at times to share it). As in the examples treated above, in each of the following cases, Virgil presents an idyllic scene while hinting that an alternative, more violent version is hidden somewhere in the episode. These hints of the narrative doubling remain quite light

throughout Book 1, however; not until Book 4 can we look back and see that throughout Book 1 a violent or passionate explosion was hidden beneath the idyllic mask.¹⁴

Dido's welcoming stance, for example, can be compared with the characteristic pastoral gesture of invitation. As Aeneas and Achates overlook the scene, Dido welcomes Ilioneus and the Trojans:

vultis et his mecum pariter considerare regnis?
urbem quam statuo, vestra est; subducite navis;
Tros Tyriusque nihi nullo discrimine agetur.
(I,572-4)

Or would you rather settle here in my realm on an equal footing with me? Count as your own this city which I am erecting. Beach your ships. There will be no question of making a distinction between Trojans and Tyrians.

These are unusual words for an epic ruler. They suggest that Dido herself views her realm in an idyllic light. Here she resembles Alcinous in her openness and generosity. Dido has several Homeric analogues, but, as the implicit comparison of Dido and Nausicaa makes clear (see the Artemis similes, Aeneid I,498-504; Odyssey vi,102ff),¹⁵ the parallels between her realm and Phaeacia are the most striking. Like Phaeacia, Dido's realm is presented in idealized terms; both places are the setting in which the hero of the poem tells his story. In both

¹⁴See Gordon Williams, Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry, p. ix-xii and passim, on the importance of "thematic anticipation" and "suspension of judgment" in Roman poetry from Catullus to the death of Horace. Williams argues that during these years Roman poets produced a particularly meditative poetry; the reader of such poetry must return to a previous section of text to reevaluate it after discovering the direction and significance of the poem as a whole. Book 1 of the Aeneid seems to call for precisely this kind of "suspension of judgment."

¹⁵See also Apollonius Rhodius III,876.

cases the generous welcome also threatens the hero's own goals, and in both cases the hero's departure causes some harm to the idealized world he leaves behind although the harm is greatly magnified in the case of Dido. This parallel helps to emphasize that Dido's generous gesture, which moves Virgil's readers as it does Aeneas (I,579), helps to make her domain seem an idyllic retreat where the conditions of heroic life do not fully apply. Virgil's poem moves towards a resolution whereby it can incorporate such civilized gestures, but the story of Dido suggests that this incorporation is impossible in the heroic world as it is presented in this poem: all that such idealized generosity brings is destruction.

Aeneas responds to Dido with warmth, and in his opening speech to her he describes her as if she had been born in a golden age: "quae te tam laeta tulerunt/saecula?" ("What joyous world gave you your life?") (I,605-6), he asks rhetorically. His compliments are based in part on Odysseus' compliments to Nausicaa (vi,154ff), but the catalogue form resembles similar expressive catalogues in the Eclogues (based either on impossibilities (adynata) or on the rustic analogy) even more than it does the remarks of Odysseus. Aeneas' sweeping rhetorical conclusions, hyperbolic and ironic (retrospectively) as they are, have a pastoral tone:

in freta dum fluvii current, dum montibus umbrae
lustrabunt convexa, polus dum sidera pascet,
semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt,
quae me cumque vocant terrae.

(I,607-10)

So long as rivers shall hurry to the sea, so long as shadows shall drift over a mountain's shoulder, and so long as the sky gives pasture to the stars, so long shall live the honor which is your due, your praises, and your name, to whatever land I may be called.

The landscape Aeneas chooses to use to express his point is reminiscent of the pastoral landscape (the shadows in the mountains at the end of Eclogue I, for example, the use of pascet to suggest that the heavens are a pasture for the stars) and the suggestion that human time--the lasting of name and honor--can be compared to natural continuity and can even be guaranteed by that comparison is a basic claim of pastoral poetry. Compare the catalogue at the end of Eclogue 5 from which Virgil took line 609:

dum iuga montis aper, fluxios dum piscis amabit,
dumque thymo pascentur apes, dum rore cicadae,
semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt.
(Ec. V, 76-8)

Long as the boar loves the mountain ridges, as the fish the streams;
long as the bees feed on thyme and the cicadas on dew,
so long shall thy honor and name and glories abide.
(Ec. V, 78=A. I, 609)

Not only is the imagery parallel, though Aeneas' comparisons are dressed up a bit for court (heavens and stars vs. bees and cicadas) but the incantatory effect of the catalogue form with its repetitions of dum is analogous. In Eclogue 5, however, these lines conclude a poem which demonstrates in a pastoral vein how poetry can bring an immortality resembling that of nature's processes, whereas Aeneas not only will not sing Dido's praise after her death so as to raise her from the dead but he will be the direct cause of her loss of honor and her death.

Although Aeneas wants to win Dido's favor in these opening speeches, his language cannot be explained simply by the conventions of rhetorical flattery. Much more than Odysseus in Alcinous' court, whose words seem almost entirely motivated by his schemes for aid, Aeneas' words suggest a deeper longing, a nostalgia, for the world he

imagines Dido represents. His speeches to her suggest that he views her and her city in an idyllic light, and it adds to the growing list of images that help to make her realm seem an idyllic retreat in Book 1. The poem, of course, manifestly shows that Dido was not born in happy ages (see I,340-60), so the idealizing attitude from its inception is represented as a false mode of vision. Aeneas speaks of Dido's world as if it were the embodiment of an ideal world like Phaeacia; the terms he uses make it sound like the embodiment of the counterplot in the heroic story. Aeneas is tempted to remain within this world of the counterplot: unlike Odysseus, he does not immediately reject the idyllic retreat. (Aeneas does not know exactly where he is going. He is the abstract embodiment of epic's linear thrust: he knows that he must go, and that he must go in the direction of epic destiny, but he has little idea what that direction is or means.)

Book 1 thus describes Carthage in such a way as to suggest that Aeneas views it as an idyllic retreat; and, before he is visited by Mercury, Aeneas even seems briefly to have convinced himself that his heroic destiny can be pursued in such a place. But throughout this section of the poem, Virgil, especially by using the strategy of narrative doubling which hints at a darker interpretation, undermines this view of events. The developments reveal more fully the falsity of such an idealizing vision. No stable merging of idyllic and heroic can occur at this point in the Aeneid, for the idyllic has been revealed to be only a mask for passion and violence.

The first line of Book IV echoes an important subtext for the Dido story. By bringing this secondary context to the Aeneid, Virgil undermines any idyllic interpretation of the love affair between Dido

and Aeneas. "At regina gravi iamdudum saucia cura" (IV,1) clearly echoes a line from Catullus 64, a poem essential for understanding Virgil's poetry.¹⁶ The opening of Book 4 is but the first of many reminiscences of Ariadne, whose fate blends with that of Dido in our minds.

After forsaking her father and family to go with Theseus, Ariadne is abandoned on the shores of Dia where in her anguish she curses Theseus. Jupiter hears her cry and assents to the curse: he causes Theseus to bring ruin upon himself and his own, "funestet seque suosque," as Ariadne puts it (LXIV,201).¹⁷ After telling of Theseus' mistake and his father's suicide, Catullus turns momentarily back to Ariadne for a last glimpse of her stranded on the shore:

quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam
multiplices animo uolebat saucia curas.
(LXIV,249-50)

And she the while, gazing out tearfully at the receding ship,
was revolving manifold cares in her wounded heart.

The word order of this last line resembles the structure Virgil uses in his imitation of it: Catullus's word order is ABXBA, a perfectly symmetrical design. The line that Virgil puts at the beginning of Book 4 also echoes the language of this last line about Ariadne in Catullus 64, and the echo suggests that even if she does not know it

¹⁶On Catullus 64, see Gordon Williams, Tradition and Originality, pp. 281ff, 224-9.

¹⁷The edition of Catullus used is that of R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958). The translation is that of the Loeb edition of The Poems of Gaius Valerius Catullus, trans. F.W. Cornish (London: William Heinemann, 1950; 1st published, 1913).

Dido is soon to reach the state of despair in which Ariadne ends. As Ariadne is used by Theseus, so Dido will become a way station on Aeneas' heroic voyage: someone whose help Aeneas needs, but whom he abandons when she is no longer useful to him. The reference to Ariadne clearly indicates the turn towards disaster: it suggests that the love story of Dido and Aeneas is not an idyllic story of innocent love but an erotic and tragic intrigue.

The structure of Aeneas' sojourn with Dido, then, is analogous to the double structure of the double Ascanius incident, another turning point when the idyllic tone of the story disappears and the warning voice of the poet interjects itself. Dido's world seems like an idyllic oasis in which Aeneas and his men can shelter themselves, but after telling his story Aeneas learns that he cannot stay in Dido's world: to stay there he would have to renounce all plans for future journeys. As Dido falls in love, her offer to Aeneas that their people live side by side becomes a demand. The seemingly pastoral stance shifts until it is recognized to be its opposite, and violence sweeps the kingdom. Carthage reveals itself to be that tempestuous world from which Aeneas thought he had found shelter.

As the idyllic scenes are transformed into settings where passion destroys all, certain implications of Virgil's structure become more evident: first he pictures an idyllic world and then he reveals it to be its opposite, a world ruled by passion and violence. He presents the idyllic world as disintegrating from within: unless purged of the erotic, such idyllic settings shift into their opposites. Dido's story represents the capacity of erotic passion to destroy an idyllic world and to render destructive the Odyssean union of plot and

counterplot, of heroic action and timeless retreat from that action.¹⁸

As the idyllic picture of Dido's realm proves to be an illusion, the poet begins to use idyllic imagery in his own voice and to separate it from the world of the characters. This slow emergence of an Iliadic counterplot can be seen in several parts of the Dido story. Whenever the erotic element enters the story most directly, such as in the moment Dido falls in love, Virgil separates the erotic and the idyllic and presents the latter in scenes or comparisons of which the characters seem ignorant. In the ending of Book I this double structure still seems to be a way of merging plot and counterplot, indirect as it is, for the two versions of the moment in which Dido falls in love describe the same event. As the Dido story progresses, however, these two versions become more and more distinct to the point that examples of a counterplot such as exists in the Iliad emerge in the narrative.

The simile in which Dido is compared to a hind wounded by an unknowing shepherd exemplifies an intermediate stage in this movement towards the separation of plot and counterplot:

uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
nescius; illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo.
(IV,68-73)

Poor Dido was afire, and roamed distraught all over the city;
like a doe caught off her guard and pierced by an arrow from

¹⁸Dido thus resembles Gallus of Eclogue 10, another character whose affinity with an idyllic world is destroyed by tormenting love.

some armed shepherd, who from the distance had chased her amid Cretan woods and without knowing it has left in her his winged barb; so that she traverses in her flight forests and mountain tracks on Dicte, with the deadly reed fast in her flesh.

Dido as the innocent hind stands for the pastoral context which has been established for the world of Carthage, a world already in the process of being destroyed. The shepherd, who implicitly stands for Aeneas, is hunting, an odd activity for a pastoral figure. Pöschl points to this simile as one of a number of pathetic scenes which are set before tragic action in the Aeneid in order to lend pathos to what follows, and he shows clearly how the simile functions to reveal Dido's feelings and point of view.¹⁹ The pastor nescius may represent Dido's vague sense of Aeneas as a figure with a pastoral background (see I, 617-18), while the fact that the shepherd is hunting reveals her intuition that Aeneas is somehow doing something out of context.

William Anderson suggests that the main reason Virgil uses the word pastor instead of a more appropriate word like venator is to recall the simile about the pastor inscius from Book II, a simile which Aeneas used to characterize himself as he discovered Troy burning (II,302-8).²⁰ In this simile Aeneas presents himself as a bewildered, unknowing shepherd, whose entire world is being swept away by a natural disaster:

excitior somno et summi fastigia tecti
ascensu supero atque arrectis auribus asto:
in segetem veluti cum flamma furentibus Austris
incidit, aut rapidus montano flumine torrens
sternit agros, sternit sata laeta boumque labores

¹⁹See Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, pp. 79-82.

²⁰See Anderson, "Pastor Aeneas," pp. 9-10.

praecipitisque trahit silvas; stupet inscius alto
accipiens sonitum saxi de vertice pastor.
(II, 302-8)

I was startled out of my sleep, and climbing to the highest point of the roof stood listening keenly. It was like fire catching a cornfield when wild winds are blowing, or like the sweep of a mountain torrent in flood, flattening smiling crops for which oxen had toiled, and bringing whole forests down, while some shepherd standing high on a crag of rock hears the roar in helpless wonder.

Here Aeneas himself uses a simile from the counterplot to represent the destruction of the Trojan world he had known. The world before the fall of Troy now seems to him like a part of the counterplot; as in the Iliad, the world of the Troy which he knew, which now seems idyllic, has been swept away by the disaster of war. The hero uses a simile from the counterplot to illustrate that that world is no longer accessible to him: he was like a pastor inscius while he still believed that Troy could not fall. Anderson points out the irony in the echo of pastor inscius in the poet's words, pastor nescius: in Book 4, he argues, Aeneas is still an unknowing shepherd, but now he is beginning to take part in destructive events similar to those which before he had watched from afar. "How far he has moved into the bitter world of reality from that pastoral innocence!" Anderson comments.²¹

In Book 4, however, it is not Aeneas but Virgil who makes the comparison to an unknowing shepherd. The simile (IV, 68-73) may partly represent Dido's intuitions about what is happening, but it is even more the poet's comment on the action. It suggests that both Dido and Aeneas are innocent characters in a rural world far from the claims of

²¹ Anderson, "Pastor Aeneas," p. 9.

heroic destiny; both are presented as fatefully ignorant of the larger pattern within which they are living. The simile functions partly like a simile of the counterplot in the Iliad, for the characters do not know of their fatal innocence, and in fact the main plot dramatically raises the question of whether either of them can be innocent. The simile suggests that neither Dido nor Aeneas is responsible for the tragedy which ensues, for the hind is hit accidentally and the shepherd is nescius. The poet directs our attention away from questions of responsibility; this turning away from heroic causality is one of the features of the Virgilian counterplot.

One way, then, in which Virgil blends the plot and the counterplot in this part of the poem is by representing Aeneas as both responsible and not responsible for the destruction of Dido. In the simile of the hind wounded by the unknowing shepherd, the counterplot suggests that both characters are innocent, pastoral figures in an idyllic world somehow wrecked by accident or fate. In presenting this version of events, the counterplot indicates a desire on Virgil's part to protect his hero from ultimate responsibility for the events in which he participates: "Italiam non sponte sequor" ("it is not by my choice that I voyage onward to Italy") (IV,361). The simile of the wounded hind functions only partly as a simile of the counterplot, however. As suggested above, it also represents a point of view in some ways analogous to Dido's. In the simile, then, the poet takes one step towards the more divided treatment of the action which will characterize his later narrative strategy.

The complexity of Virgil's blending of plot and counterplot in the Carthage section of the poem is exemplified by the treatment of

Dido and Aeneas' "chance" encounter in the cave during the storm. In this scene, the pathetic fallacy is carried to extremes as Juno "pronuba" (IV,166) solemnizes the pseudo-wedding of Dido and Aeneas. Venus and Juno have conspired to marry Dido and Aeneas, and Virgil presents Dido as believing she is married (as Gordon Williams points out, everywhere Dido or her sister mentions her relationship, it is always marriage that she refers to).²² Here is the marriage scene:

speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem
deveniunt. prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether
conubiis, summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae.
(IV,165-8)

Dido and Troy's chieftain found their way to the same cavern. Primal Earth and Juno, Mistress of the Marriage, gave their sign. The sky connived at the union; the lightning flared; on their mountain-peak nymphs raised their cry.

As Gordon Williams comments, "several elements of a formal wedding are here--except that they are translated into supernatural terms."²³

Austin points out that

the witnesses to the union of Dido and Aeneas are no mortals, but the elements, primeval Earth, Fire, Air; Juno, goddess of marriage, is there taking the place of pronuba, the matron who was in charge of the wedding-ceremony on the bride's side and gave her to her husband.... Prima tellus represents the bread of the marriage-rite, the lightning is the marriage torch (taeda, cf. 18) and the air is the witness (consciis); the wedding-chant is sung (ulularunt) by the mountain nymphs Virgil thus makes the wedding ritually correct, as one would expect him to. But it remains a supernatural ceremony, and an uncanny one for all its seeming correctness....²⁴

²²See Aeneid IV,16-8; 33; 48; 59; 307ff; 314ff; 324; 339; 431; 495; 548; 597; 648; 650; 659; a list of references supplied by Gordon Williams in Tradition and Originality, p. 381.

²³Williams, Tradition and Originality, p. 379.

²⁴Austin, IV, -69.

The uncanny enters the scene in part because Aeneas does not seem to notice that a wedding has taken place while Dido is convinced that her desires and emotions are seconded not only by nature but by the gods standing behind and manipulating the elements. If Aeneas seems to have a naturalistic understanding of the storm, while Dido clearly views it as a supernatural assent to her marriage to Aeneas, then not only is the episode uncanny for us, divided as we are between these two views, but it is uncanny within the context of the story although neither of the characters realizes it. Neither Dido nor Aeneas seems to recognize that there is another interpretation of events. Virgil leads us to side with Dido in this scene, for the narrator himself describes the storm in the terms of a Roman wedding (in other words, he does not say, 'Dido saw it as...', but rather 'it was...'). Nonetheless, the poet builds into his poem a great deal of uncertainty about the level of reality of the "wedding" in the cave.

Juno tells us clearly that Dido and Aeneas' union in the cave will be a sure marriage ("conubio...stabili," IV,126), a "hymenaeus" (IV,127). But Juno, it seems, does not have the power to make a true marriage on the human level, for all we see (and all Aeneas later seems to have seen) are two lovers in a cave with a storm raging. There are no witnesses, no human participants; the marriage does not take place within a human community or context. It is a wild act performed in the wild, and Dido's desire that it be marriage leads her to interpret the participation of the elements (arranged by Juno) as a divine sanction and legalization of her desires. But the fact that Aeneas, who is so often victim of supernatural visions, does not see

the event as a supernatural confirmation of a wedding, and the fact that the narrator enters the text immediately thereafter with a very different voice suggests that Virgil narrates the storm-wedding from Dido's point of view.

For as Virgil continues the passage quoted above, he shifts into his familiar admonitory tones and tells proleptically of the disaster to come:

ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
causa fuit; neque enim specie famave movetur
nec iam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem;
coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.
(IV,169-72)

On that day were sown the seeds of suffering and death. Henceforth Dido cared no more for appearances or her good name, and ceased to take any thought for secrecy in her love. She called it marriage; she used this word to screen her sin.

In what seems a sudden turnabout, Virgil suggests that Dido's interpretation of the events in the cave as marriage was a misinterpretation, and he treats the eroticism which now defines the relationship of Dido and Aeneas as a kind of original sin. This conclusion to the description of the supernatural events has always caused trouble for commentators on the Aeneid, since it implies that Dido had just pretended to think it was marriage or that she knows all along that this is just her view of events. A different interpretation, proposed by Gordon Williams, helps to solve this difficulty: "what Dido was doing was culpable, but this fact was concealed by her regarding it as marriage."²⁵ The fact that Dido thought it was marriage does not, in

²⁵Williams, Tradition and Originality, p. 379.

this view, erase her guilt for having broken her vows to Sychaeus, vows which she herself takes very seriously earlier in the book (IV, 15-9; 24-9).

From Dido's point of view, the primary level of experience is that of an erotic encounter for which she feels guilt and remorse; on a secondary level, however, she intuits the fact that larger forces represented by the natural world are standing witness to a marriage and giving assent to the union. The secondary level, then, from Dido's point of view, absolves her of guilt, while the primary events, according to her own claims earlier and later, suggest her own responsibility. In the terms of plot and counterplot, Dido could be said to intuit the existence of the counterplot, in which the natural and supernatural worlds respond to human beings, sympathize with their needs, and absolve them of responsibility for their actions.

Dido's intuition of the meaning of the natural scene could be described as a projection of her emotions or wishes onto the landscape since she is comforted by the idea that nature and the gods behind nature consent to her union with Aeneas. We know, however, that this "projection" is accurate according to the fiction of the poem: Dido's mistake seems to lie in her capacity to intuit the larger reality represented by the counterplot. A hero or heroine in an epic plot, the episode implies, does better to ignore any temptations to interpret his or her experience as taking place in the world of the counterplot. Nature should not be interpreted as if it were sympathetic or responsive to human needs and desires; by denying responsibility for one's own deeds, one ultimately destroys oneself. This is what Dido does when she interprets the larger forces of nature and the gods as assent-

ing to her sexual union with Aeneas.

The entire episode seems uncanny and threatening to the reader, though neither Dido nor Aeneas is aware of this hovering darkness. We hover between a supernatural and a naturalistic explanation of events because Aeneas never suggests at any point in the poem that he interpreted the storm as a supernatural sign and because the narrator himself steps back and undermines the version of events which he himself had presented. To the readers the scene in the cave represents another example of narrative doubling in which two different versions of one event are rolled together in the telling. Dido takes the view that the events of the counterplot do involve, explain and alter the events in the plot; Aeneas, apparently ignorant of the counterplot, sees only the causal linear story which relates the first moments of an erotic affair. The conflict of perspective between Dido and Aeneas mirrors the poet's own ambivalent method of narrating the story.

Once rejected, Dido succumbs to all the violence she feels within her. Her frustrated erotic desire marks the difference between the innocent Dido, ruler of an idyllic realm, and the passionate Dido who worships the furies and does sacrifice to the chthonic gods (see IV,609-10; 638).²⁶ As in the moment when Cupid doubles for Ascanius, in Book 4 Cupid also separates the two images of Dido and makes them opposites of one another. The order of events suggests that any idyllic world must be purged of eroticism if it is to represent a valid alternative to the heroic world of fury and tur-

²⁶See Di Cesare, p. 26, for an interpretation of Dido's suicide as "an act of worship to the chthonic deities."

moil. In Dido's story, fury and turmoil seem to be all that erotic love creates, so that erotic love is paralleled to war, while any peaceful, idyllic world stands in opposition to them both.²⁷

By making eroticism the destroyer of the idyllic world of Dido, Virgil avoids implying that any idyllic world must prove destructive. Aeneas goes on to discover other idyllic worlds which will help him recover the pastoral innocence at the root of his identity, but these worlds will exclude eroticism. Thus William Anderson seems quite right to point out that pastoral simplicity and political innocence not only "constitute a crucial value against which much of the action in the Aeneid is measured" but are also key determinants in our judgment of Aeneas' character.²⁸ In order to avoid presenting Aeneas as rejecting and destroying those values themselves, Virgil presents the idyllic world as shattering itself because it provided no control for passion, especially erotic passion and the anger resulting from its frustration. Aeneas then is partly responsible for Dido's downfall and partly not responsible.

Virgil's use of the technique of narrative doubling, then, allows him to convey simultaneously two opposed versions of the story of Dido. Many moments of Books 1 and 4 have this double aspect: an idyllic scene purged of eroticism is contrasted with or paired with a scene of erotic passion. When the two scenes are presented as simultaneous alternatives, as in the double Ascanius episode, the idyllic is drained

²⁷In the Georgics, too, violence is seen as having an erotic origin: see III, 215-23.

²⁸William Anderson, "Pastor Aeneas," p. 1.

of all energy by the forceful division of the episode into two; eroticism, in this case driven into the Cupid version of the story, seems to be necessary for vitality, and without it the idyllic world, which seems soporific and enervating, engenders only passivity. The narrative of the Dido story has a similar structure, but it is extended over time. Here the idyllic version of the scene comes first and is presented as slowly disintegrating into its opposite because of uncontrolled erotic forces within it.

In either form, narrative doubling does not leave much room for an idyllic world. But by evoking idyllic worlds in his own voice the poet can protect them from the ravages of their dark opposites and still find a way to include them within his poem. The counterplot, separated completely from the plot, thus serves to incorporate the values of an idyllic world without subjecting it to the pressures of the epic plot. Such examples of idyllic worlds or values evoked by the voice of the poet but not dramatically available to the characters can seem fleeting or insubstantial; in their tendency to aestheticize and distance the pain of the main story, they also seem uncanny. We feel uncomfortable because the poet openly turns away from the primary reality of his story, and his tones of lament, which often color these evocations, suggest his own grief at not being able to represent idyllic scenes as part of the dramatic world of his fiction.

The descent of Iris upon Dido's death provides an example of the evocation of an idyllic world solely within the counterplot. No character in the poem (except Dido, who is at the moment of death) knows about Iris' descent; rather, Iris provides a fiction according to which Virgil can begin to diminish the tragic effects of Dido's

death. Iris' appearance is marked by a sudden shift in tone. She seems beautiful and free as she flits through the air trailing a thousand shifting tints, "mille trahens varios...colores" (IV,701). With her rainbow entrance she brings the process of aestheticizing death, a movement typical of the counterplot and of pastoral poems. We, too, are relieved by the arrival of Iris and enjoy the aesthetic flair with which she prepares Dido for death. We feel uncomfortable, however, about Virgil's way of relieving the tension and of turning our attention to aesthetic matters since the tendency to aestheticize experience, and the freedom which Iris offers Dido (IV,703), are revealed as masks for death. This implied connection between aestheticizing tendencies and death itself suggests that idyllic moments in this poem may inescapably represent the darker forces they seem to exclude.²⁹

To look beyond Book 4 briefly, the death of Palinurus also represents an uncanny moment in which idyllic calm leads to death. Since no other mortal character learns of the cause of Palinurus' death, the description may be said to be part of the counterplot.³⁰ Somnus

²⁹See W.R. Johnson, pp. 66-9, for an analogous interpretation of Dido's death. As Johnson points out, a striking aspect of Iris' descent is that she is sent by "Iuno omnipotens" (693); since only Juno could conclude that she is "omnipotens," he concludes that from lines 693-9, we enter the mind of Juno. The connection of Iris and Juno makes us all the more uncomfortable, he argues; the splendor that Iris brings "throws a beautiful yet sinister screen between us and what we assumed we were meant to see" (p. 69).

³⁰In VI,341-54, Palinurus tells Aeneas a somewhat different version of his death. Probably Virgil intended to change one of the versions so that this inconsistency would not remain. Nonetheless, it seems appropriate that Palinurus does not tell Aeneas the story of Somnus, and the fact that he does not makes the episode even more an example of the counterplot.

(Sleep) tries to convince Palinurus that he is living in a mythical world where all is calm and the seas of themselves will direct the ship ("ferunt ipsa aequora classem," V,843). Palinurus, however, knows that he lives in an heroic world in which the myth of nature's spontaneous sympathy for man can only be a dangerous illusion:

mene salis placidi vultum fluctusque quietos
ignorare iubes? mene huic confidere monstro?
Aeneam credam (quid enim?) fallacibus auris
et caelo, totiens deceptus fraude sereni?
(V,548-51)

Do you ask me, of all men, to be misled by the countenance of the salt sea's calm and of waves at rest? Would you have me put faith in such a demon? For see, am I, who have been deluded so often by a clear sky's treachery, to entrust Aeneas to deceitful winds?

Palinurus' speech takes apart the pseudo-pastoral euphemisms of Somnus and rips aside the veil.

Palinurus nonetheless is forced to die a calm, quiet death, and a familiar pattern reveals itself. Somnus seems peaceful and reassuring with his dripping bough, but as soon as he coaxes Palinurus into relaxation, this seemingly gentle figure brings death. The oddest part of this story, however, is that Somnus turns out to be right about the boat. Despite the loss of the helmsman, "currit iter tutum non setius aequore classis/promissisque patris Neptuni interrita fertur" ("the fleet ran safely on, just as before, forging ahead with no fear, for so Father Neptune had promised") (V,862-3). As the boat glides safely but uncannily on, we are forced to rethink the episode. Palinurus seems to have been right about himself (for Somnus is no protective deity to him), but wrong about the larger consequences. The death of Palinurus can perhaps be interpreted as a fiction which explains the role of pastoral or idyllic episodes in Virgil's epic. It suggests that something must

be sacrificed to assure that smooth glide over the calm waters: the episode illuminates the way that idyllic description can cover destruction and loss with myth and drowsy sleep, but it also reveals the cost of producing the idyllic calm.

These examples suggest the complexity of Virgil's use of pastoral imagery and of narrative doubling in the first part of the Aeneid. In Books 1 to 4, Virgil indicts pastoral imagery by revealing that it hides a more violent opposite; he briefly resurrects idyllic imagery in certain moments of the counterplot, the only place in which a purged idyllic world can last in his story. Virgil's laments over the loss of innocence and the destruction of Dido's world suggest, however, that he longs to find a way to incorporate the values represented by the idyllic scenes more directly into his epic story (and thus to rediscover them in Roman history). As his hints in the Third Georgic about his plans to write an epic suggest (see Georgics III,10-36), "the construction of an epic symbolizes the building of the Roman empire,"³¹ so the question motivating Virgil's poetic choices may have been the question of whether Roman history, Roman politics, and the Roman militaristic spirit can be harmonized with Roman values like pietas, iustitia, and clementia, which have their base in the odd mixture of hard and soft primitivism so characteristically Roman. The poem continues to find the analogy of the city to the idyllic, rural world the best and most satisfying analogy. But it also asks whether the analogy has any truth, and, if not, whether believing in it will

³¹Eugene Vance, "Warfare and the Structure of Thought in Virgil's Aeneid," Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica 15 (1973), 12.

retard the progress of civilization.

(ii) Emblems of Duality in Aeneid III

Throughout Book 3 of the Aeneid, Virgil uses the technique of narrative doubling to reveal the deeper connections between apparently idyllic natural scenes and their dangerous, violent opposites. The pattern of the Carthage section of the poem is repeated here in several briefer episodes: an apparently inviting and seductive spot turns out to be the port of entry to a dangerous or threatening world which almost prevents Aeneas and his men from making it to Italy. In places the book also seems to reflect the more specific conventions of pastoral poetry, for in several cases the narrative doubling is accomplished by treating pastoral tropes or conventions as if they had come to life. The imitation "Troy" of Andromache and Helenus can also be characterized as a world apparently offering a calm haven but in fact dramatizing the debilitating effect of the rest it offers. But it is particularly through the landscape that a pattern of hope leading to the shocking recognition of horror is established. Virgil takes this pattern from the Odyssey, but Odysseus, unlike Aeneas, finally comes upon a truly idyllic world. For Aeneas it will not be so easy.

These several examples of the double structure which also informs the Dido story (within which Aeneas' narration is set as a flashback) emphasize the difficulty Virgil saw in finding or creating an idyllic world not threatened by its darker opposite. Throughout Book 3, as in the story of Dido and Aeneas, Virgil rarely can separate the idyllic from the violent or passionate. The technique of narrative doubling which allows the poet to represent the ties between these opposed ver-

sions of each event also indicates the merging of plot and counterplot. Like Odysseus on his voyages, Aeneas confronts a mythic world but in the Aeneid it is figured as threatening and not restorative. These examples of doubleness thus also suggest that the merging of plot and counterplot leads only to destructive doubling, a fatal ambivalence.

The Polydorus episode, which Virgil added to the Aeneas legend, exemplifies Virgilian narrative doubling.³² It can be interpreted as a horrible exaggeration of pastoral conventions. By chance (forte, III,22), as if he were a pastoral character, Aeneas comes upon a myrtle mound, and, needing some boughs for his altar, pulls hard at one. His efforts result in a "horrendum...monstrum" ("a horrible...miracle") (III,26), for the tree begins to bleed. He pulls on the branch two more times before the tree finally cries out. Aeneas and his company had viewed this land as a seat for their new city, but Polydorus tells them the land is accursed: "heu! fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum," ("Ah, make haste to flee these coasts of avarice, this land of savagery!") (III,44), he urges Aeneas. In this picture of Polydorus as tree Virgil presents the pastoral myth of a sympathetic and responsive nature as if it were a physical reality of the scene. While in Book 1 Aeneas may be comforted when he finds nature has a human face (as the cliff in the harbor does), he presumably would have felt his hair stand up and his voice cleave to his throat had he discovered that it was in fact human. By treating the convention of a responsive nature as if it were a physical reality of the scene, Virgil trans-

³²See R.D. Williams, I,269-70.

forms it into a figure of horror. This transformation emphasizes the importance of the fictionality and of self-consciousness about fictionality in poetry which uses this convention.

In Eclogue 1, to pick one example among many of the pathetic fallacy, as Ruskin named it,³³ Meliboeus tells Tityrus that while he was away in Rome, his farm missed him:

ipsae te, Tityre, pinus,
ipsi te fontes, ipsa haec arbusta uocabant.
(Ec. I, 38-39)

The very pines, Tityrus, the very springs, the very orchards
here were calling for you!

Here the tricolon anaphora of ipse (emphasized by the repetition of te) brings to the poem the incantatory qualities of pastoral while mimicking the supposed calls of the trees and the springs. There is also a joke hidden behind these lines: as Coleman puts it, "a realistic description of the signs of neglect on the farm has been transformed into the sympathy figure."³⁴ Because nobody picked the apples while Tityrus was away in Rome, the orchards are said to be calling for their master. Meliboeus' words transform the landscape into a receptive setting, sensitive to man; this is the world which he will miss in his exile. The echo in uocabant of uocares (36) also suggests an everyday translation of the figure: Amaryllis, lonely, called sadly for Tityrus, and the woods echoed her calls. Both because of the presence of the

³³John Ruskin, Modern Painters (New York: Merrill and Baker, 1885? 1st published, 1856), III, 152-67. For a useful treatment of the pathetic fallacy in Theocritus and Virgil, see Bernard Dick, "Ancient Pastoral and the Pathetic Fallacy," Comparative Literature 20 (1968), 27-44. For other examples of the pathetic fallacy in the Eclogues, see Eclogues VII, 53-60 and X, 13-5.

³⁴Coleman, p. 80.

beloved, and because of the homey suggestion of work that had been left undone on the farm (both details of emotional significance to Meliboeus), the landscape is personalized and felt to be responsive. Pastoral poetry figuratively renders a responsive, sympathetic landscape, but it always remains highly conscious of the metaphorical status of its claims. Surely Meliboeus would have been horrified had he actually heard the pines and the orchards calling for Tityrus.

By Virgil's time bucolic echo was already seen as a typical feature of pastoral poetry.³⁵ In the second century Moschus writes of Pan's love for Echo; Echo figures also in the "Lament for Bion": she is said to be bereft without the poet's voice (30). Bucolic echo had become a sufficiently constant feature of the pastoral landscape by the time Lucretius was writing that he takes the time to debunk the myth. In Book IV of De Rerum Natura Lucretius comments on echoes in the hills:

haec loca capripedes satyros nymphasque tenere
finitimi fingunt et faunos esse loquuntur
quorum noctivago strepitu ludoque iocanti
adfirmant vulgo taciturna silentia rumpi;
chordarumque sonos fieri dulcisque querellas,
tibia quas fundit digitis pulsata canentum;
et genus agricolum late sentiscere, cum Pan
pineae semiferi capitis velamina quassans
unco saepe labro calamos percurrit hiantis,
fistula silvestrem ne cesset fundere musam.
cetera de genere hoc monstra ac portenta loquuntur,
ne loca deserta ab divis quoque forte putentur
sola tenere. ideo iactant miracula dictis

³⁵On the differing associations of Echo (with Pan and with Narcissus), and on Echo's role in pastoral poetry, see John Hollander, The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 6-15. On pastoral echoing, see also Rosenmeyer, pp. 148-50, 185-6.

aut aliqua ratione alia ducuntur, ut omne
humanum genus est avidum nimis auricularum.
(IV,580-94)

Such places the dwellers around fancy to be the haunt of goat-footed satyrs and nymphs, and they say that there are fauns, by whose clamor spreading through the night and sportive revels they declare that the dumb silence is often broken; and that the sounds of strings are awakened, and sweet, sad melodies, which the pipe pours forth, stopped by the fingers of players; and that the race of country folk hears far and wide, when Pan, tossing the piny covering of his half-monstrous head, oftentimes with curling lip runs over the open roads, so that the pipe ceases not to pour forth woodland music. All other marvels and prodigies of this kind they tell, lest by chance they be thought to live in lonely places deserted even of the gods. Therefore they boast such wonders in discourse, or else are led on in some other way, even as the whole race of man is over greedy to win attention.³⁶

Although Lucretius falls prey here to the "mimetic theory" of the origins of pastoral poetry,³⁷ and so refers to country people and their superstitions, his comments also reflect on pastoral conventions.

Virgil clearly recognizes these comments as referring to pastoral poetry, for he echoes Lucretius' term for the woodland muse ("silvestrem musam") in the opening lines of Eclogue 1. Meliboeus defines Tityrus' activity (and his poetry) as meditating on slender reed "silvestrem...musam" (I,2). Tityrus' main task, as Meliboeus sees it, is to teach the woods to re-echo 'fair Amaryllis'; "tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra/formonsam resonare doces Amaryllida siluas" (I,5). Here Virgil rehabilitates bucolic echo almost in explicit answer to the Lucretian

³⁶The edition of De Rerum Natura cited above is that of Cyril Bailey, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947). The translation is his also.

³⁷For the "mimetic theory" of pastoral origins, see John Van Sickle, "Theocritus and the Development of the Conception of Bucolic Genre," Ramus 5 (1976), 18-44.

criticism of the trope,³⁸ and in the Eclogues the echoing woods represent not only the sympathy of nature but the capacity of man, the artist, like Orpheus, to "coax nature into a closer union with himself."³⁹

In Book 3 of the Aeneid, especially in the Polydorus episode, Virgil uses the convention of the pathetic fallacy (in which category all figures claiming close ties or identity between man and nature can be grouped) as if he wanted to suggest the danger of taking this figure too literally. Polydorus becomes, in this horrific transformation, half-man and half-nature. He is a monstrum, a prodigy, as Lucretius described the superstitions of the rural people (see line 590). He is the realization of the threat hidden in idyllic imagery: if human beings were to merge with natural processes, they would no longer be human. There is no hint in Virgil's imagery of the restorative transformations which Ovid would later describe.

Aeneas' visit to the Strophades also illustrates the Virgilian use of narrative doubling to reveal a story of horror within an idyllic scene. The sailors row eagerly to shore when they see the curling smoke rising above the distant mountains (see Eclogue I, 82-83). They see lovely herds of cattle which they immediately butcher, taking only

³⁸ John Van Sickle, in "Epic and Bucolic," Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica 19 (1975), 66-7, also discusses Virgil's rehabilitation of bucolic echo.

³⁹ Dick, p. 34. See also Marie Desport, "L'echo de la nature et la poésie dans les Bucoliques de Virgile," Revue des Etudes Anciennes 43 (1941), 270, on the aim of pastoral poetry to evoke echoes. See also her book-length study of the Orphic powers of the poet, L'incantation virgilienne, p. 38, where she argues that the echo is a defining trait of pastoral poetry.

a moment's thought for the needed sacrifices to the gods. The fearful harpies swoop down and befoul their food: that which was the source of pleasure is suddenly revealed to be repellent. The double bodies of the harpies are emblems for the double structure of this episode (which typifies much of Aeneid 1-4):

tristius haud illis monstrum, nec saevior ulla
pestis et ira deum Stygis sese extulit undis.
virginei volucrum voltus, foedissima ventris,
proluvies, uncaequae manus, et pallida semper
ora fame.

(III,214-18)

No monster is more grim than the Harpies; no stroke of divine wrath was ever more cruel, and no wicked demon ever soared upwards from the waters of Styx. They are birds with girls' countenances, and a disgusting outflow from their bellies. Their hands have talons and their faces are always pallid with hunger.

These harpies have a double nature in two senses. They harrass Aeneas and his men on their voyage, yet, as the reference to the Stygian waves suggests, they also have a place at the entrance to the underworld (see VI,289). They are also monstra like Polydorus who unite human and subhuman forms in a horrifying union. Like Polydorus, they (through Calaeno) give Aeneas and his company prophetic advice: although they are creatures of the underworld, they have knowledge of the higher fates. These monstra thus imply the deeper connections between the serene rule of order and the violent passion which so often overtakes it.

Like the harpies Scylla is a double creature who also finds a place among the horrifying shapes at the entrance of the underworld (see VI,286). Helenus describes her to Aeneas in order to warn him to avoid her:

prima hominis facies et pulchro pectore virgo
pube tenus, postrema immani corpore pistris,

delphinum caudas utero commissa luporum.
(III,426-8)

Her upper half, as far as the groin, is human in shape as of a maid with a fair breast, but her lower part is a monstrous whale with many dolphin-tails growing from wolves' bellies.

Like the harpies, Scylla serves as an emblem for the duality which brings horror throughout this part of the Aeneid, and, like them, her shape also implies that the root of this duality and horror is female sexuality or eroticism itself.⁴⁰ Since the entrance of eroticism was precisely what divided the idyllic from the violent and passionate scenes in the story of Dido, these female monsters may even stand as emblems for the double function of Dido herself (though Aeneas at this point would not intend them in this way). They symbolize the structure of this part of the poem, for they stand as a figure for the union of the desirable and the hellish. Their double place in the poem (here and in the underworld) further extends our sense that they adumbrate a fundamental connection for the poem, the connection between the desirable and the horrific which these episodes posit.

Scylla also appears in Eclogue 6, a poem which has much in common with the Aeneid. As Charles Segal puts it, "The sixth Eclogue especially casts into the terms of pastoral something of that correlation between disorder in the universe and evil within man which is so

⁴⁰See A.A. Barb, "Antaura, The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 29 (1966), 1-23, for the ancient history, significance and iconography of the mermaid and related creatures.

richly developed in the Aeneid."⁴¹ The story of Scylla as Virgil tells it in the eclogue is a compressed allusive tale which combines two quite different myths:

Quid loquar aut Scyllam Nisi, quam fama secuta est
candida succinctam latrantibus inguina monstris
Dulichias uexasse rates at gurgite in alto,
a, timidos nautas canibus laterasse marinis...?
(VI,74-7)

Why tell how he sang of Scylla, daughter of Nisus, of whom is still told the story that, with howling monsters girt about her white waist, she harried the Ithakan barques, and in the swirling depths, alas! tore asunder the trembling sailors with her sea-dogs?

As in the Aeneid, Scylla combines the Mergarian Scylla with the monster of the Straits of Messina. Scylla, the sea-monster, was the offspring of equally monstrous parents--Hades and a Gorgoness. By identifying her with Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, who fell in love with Minos and betrayed her father to him, Virgil makes Scylla's story seem much more horrific. According to legend, Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, "was subsequently turned into a sea-bird, the ciris, and her father into a sea-eagle."⁴² Virgil then replaces this happier transformation with the more horrific punishment that overtakes Scylla because of her deceitful love. In this way he reintroduces the story of

⁴¹ Charles Segal, "Virgil's Sixth Eclogue and the Problem of Evil," Transactions of the American Philological Society 100 (1969), p. 409. Segal notes that by including the myths of Hylas, Phaeton and Tereus along with those of Pasiphae and Scylla, Virgil distributes guilt somewhat evenly among the sexes. This distribution seems less even in the Aeneid.

⁴² See Coleman, pp. 198-9. The version of this myth in Georgics I,404-9, does not mix the two stories.

Scylla as a tragic story of unhappy love,⁴³ and suggests that an erotic cause underlies such horrors. That she tears the sailors with her sea-dogs, which are girt about her inguina (groin, private parts), emblemizes her sexual threat.

By transforming the story of Scylla, Virgil creates a character with whom one sympathizes even at the moment of horror. This unexpected dimension of sympathy is expressed by Virgil's "a" ("alas") which seems to apply both to her helpless victims and to her. This incongruous double emotion resembles the uncanny double feelings characteristically created by narrative doubling.

In her horrible transformation, Scylla, like the other tragic exempla in the eclogue, symbolizes a destructive relation to the natural world. A.B. Dick suggests how, in contrast to many of the other eclogues in which Virgil "develops the pathetic fallacy as a manifestation of a cosmic force that lies somewhere in between Stoic providence and Epicurean apathy,"⁴⁴ here Virgil presents a catalogue of characters who try to cross the bridge that separates them from their environment: "they seek total immersion in nature, only to be destroyed in the process."⁴⁵ Thus in Eclogue 6 Scylla, along with others, seems to participate in this inversion of the trope of sympathetic nature: Silenus sings a myth of world unity, in which the

⁴³This interpretation was suggested by Gordon Williams in a lecture on April 20, 1979.

⁴⁴Dick, p. 43.

⁴⁵Dick, p. 39.

characters become so enamored of nature that they seek total union with it. The story of Scylla is another reminder that immersion in sexuality (or giving way to sexual forces within) can best be figured, according to Virgil, as a radical and horrifying immersion in the non-human. Thus the Eclogue shows the inverse side of the pastoral trope of the pathetic fallacy: "if humans cast off reason and attempt to recapture an impossible oneness with [nature], their Edenic frolicking becomes grotesque, and nature is powerless to avert their inevitable destruction."⁴⁶ The Eclogue also makes clear, then, the essential role of fictionality in the convention of the pathetic fallacy: characters who fail to remember that the pathetic fallacy is a trope for a figurative relationship to the non-human world are easily swallowed up by it.

Having survived Charybdis, Aeneas and company lose their way and drift up to the Cyclops' coast. After a horrible night they meet Achaemenides, who is followed shortly by Polyphemus himself. As in the Odyssey, Polyphemus' deepest affections seem to be for his sheep. An odd pathos emerges from this portrait of the maimed shepherd; an incongruous double attitude towards the subject again results from the narrative doubling. As Cyclops stumbles along the shore holding a lopped pine tree as a stick to steady himself, Virgil comments that

lanigeras comitantur oves; ea sola voluptas
solamenque mali.

(III, 660-1)

the fleecy ewes which went with him were his sole joy and now his only consolation.

⁴⁶Dick, p. 44.

The entire idea of presenting a character from the Odyssey only a few short months after Odysseus left him behind, or of presenting the Cyclops washing his wound and groaning in testimony to the visit of Odysseus, has a witty quality typical of Theocritean bucolic poetry in its constant game-playing with the epic tradition. The suggestion that Polyphemus might need solace also reminds us of Theocritus' treatment of this Odyssean character in Idyll 11. Some of the pathos in the Virgilian scene probably echoes Theocritus' odd sympathy for this character, of whom he also makes fun at a different level of his text.

Like the harpies and Scylla, the Cyclops is a grotesque monster which seems half-human and half-beast. Living around and under Aetna, whose volcanic explosions sound through the night, he has a clear tie to the darker worlds which idyllic scenes supposedly exclude. This joining of the horrible half-human beast with the gentle shepherd--an incongruity very much to Theocritus' taste--figures once again the way that idyllic imagery cannot be divided from its darker opposite. All of the episodes of Aeneas' wanderings, then, suggest an inherent connection between the apparently idyllic and the violent or monstrous in nature.

As Aeneas' boat pulls away from the shore with Achaemenides aboard, the Cyclops roars and his countrymen rush out of the woods to join him at the harbor. Virgil represents these Aetnean brothers as trees in a surprising simile which, as in the Polydorus episode, enacts pastoral poetic figures as if they described a physical reality:

cernimus astantis nequiquam lumine torvo
Aetnaeos fratres caelo capita alta ferentis,
concilium horrendum: quales cum vertice celso
aeriae quercus aut coniferae cyparissi
constiterunt, silva alta Iovis lucusve Dianae.
(III,677-81)

We could see them standing there, that brotherhood of Etna, helpless for all their grim eyes and heads towering to the sky; a horrifying assembly, like so many oak-trees growing in Jupiter's forest on mountain crests and lifting heads high in air; or like a group of cypress-conifers in Diana's stately grove.

In this simile the Cyclops seem so much like the trees that we step back and begin to wonder about the level of reality of the story. As dwellers in primitive lands, they are impotent when faced with an epic hero, and once their threat is diminished they blend into the landscape. They seem like trees, their high tops waving. But the fear that Aeneas and Achaemenides feel does not easily translate into this natural scene: the threat that the Cyclops represented is transformed by the simile into the elegiac mood with which the poem bids them farewell. The duality of response evoked by this episode is captured in part by the sudden shift from the depths of Aetna to the heights of Jupiter's high forest and Diana's grove: the simile connects these creatures who live in and under Aetna with high holy groves to create a composite image in which depths and heights are united.

These scenes all take place in wild spots far from civilization. As Aeneas and his men arrive in these places, they try to fit them into the models of humanized landscapes in their minds: they interpret them as loci amoeni only to discover that they are in fact wild forests in which half-human monsters wander.⁴⁷ Their mistake is a natural one,

⁴⁷ In his chapter on "The Ideal Landscape," E.R. Curtius distinguishes the grove or "mixed forest" and the "locus amoenus," and he suggests that it is only in medieval Romance poetry that "the locus amoenus is embedded in the wild forest." See European Literature and the Middle Ages, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973; 1st published 1948), p. 202. Such a clear distinction hardly seems ever to have existed, however: there are clearly loci amoeni embedded in wild forests in the Odyssey.

for pastoral places often provide the intermediate spaces between the wild and the civilized.⁴⁸ Pastoral poetry provides a fiction which describes nature as a civilized setting in which man can find his true home. In the Aeneid, however, the nearness of idyllic places to the wilderness symbolizes the danger they seem to represent. Until the violence and the ambivalence (the monstra) are somehow contained or purged, idyllic episodes will continue to be merely masks for their opposites.

In the first third of Aeneid, apparently idyllic scenes seem almost always to lead to horror. This instability or ambivalence, which is brought out by the technique of narrative doubling, explains why idyllic moments in epic poems are often threatening or destructive. The technique of narrative doubling implies that idyllic settings will serve only as disguises for the violence present in the landscape or the characters. In the Aeneid, the merging of plot and counterplot leads to the inescapable duality of settings which at one time or an-

⁴⁸Understanding idyllic settings as intermediate places standing between wilderness and civilization may also help to explain the distinctive mixture of "hard" and "soft" primitivism in Virgil's poetry, for both can serve as intermediaries between the city and the wilderness. For definitions of "hard" and "soft" primitivism, see Lovejoy and Boas, pp. 9-11. For a good discussion of the limitations of those terms, see Paul Alpers, "The Eclogue Tradition and the Nature of Pastoral," College English 34 (1972) 352-3. In a study of Virgil's philosophy of primitivism Margaret Taylor is forced to conclude that "it is the poet's fusion of the two strains (of "hard" and "soft" primitivism) which...needs emphasis." See Margaret Taylor, "Primitivism in Virgil," American Journal of Philology 76 (1955), p. 275. As was suggested above in the discussion of the way Eumaeus' "hard" primitivism was softened by the poet's idealizing vision, "hard" and "soft" primitivism probably cannot be separated into distinct categories. Certainly Virgil's blending of the two implies that he saw an underlying connection between them.

other seem both idyllic and dangerous.

Geography in the Aeneid is "moralized,"⁴⁹ but this symbolic structure brings with it the difficulty of discovering what the landscape symbolizes. Are the woods nearby benign or threatening? When the poet seems to double every element of his poem and pair it with its opposite, it is difficult to tell the two doubles apart. The technique of narrative doubling, and the merging of plot and counter-plot which gives rise to it, renders moral or symbolic distinctions problematic. Thus woods, for example, often seem to stand for warfare, darkness, and violence. Aeneas and his men come upon one horrifying monster after another in the woods, Dido abandons her queenly responsibilities in the woods, Ascanius (to look ahead briefly) kills Silvia's pet deer in the woods, and Allecto, the spirit of fury, finds the door back to the underworld in the valley of Amsanctus in a dense, dark grove. As Michael Putnam points out, the woods of Book 6 are portentous, and he quotes Servius' allegorizing of the phrase "tenent media omnia silvae" ("along the whole way stand clustering forests") (VI,131) which describes the woods of the underworld:

nam per silvas tenebras et lustra significat, in
quibus feritas et libido dominatur.

for by the woods he means dens of darkness, in which rage and
lust hold sway.⁵⁰

Feritas implies not only "rage" but all "wildness" and "savagery."

But Putnam fails to point out that not all the woods in the Aeneid

⁴⁹Vance, "Warfare and the Structure of Thought in Virgil's Aeneid,"
p. 120.

⁵⁰Putnam, The Poetry of the Aeneid, pp. 58-9. This is Putnam's
translation.

stand for wildness. In the underworld itself shortly after the section on which Servius is commenting, woods are used to represent an idyllic state of peace and harmony. Dante, who tells us that he learned so much from Virgil, knew that if there is a "selva oscura" ("dark forest") (Inferno I,2) there must also be a "divina foresta spessa e viva" ("divine forest dense and alive") (Purgatorio XXVIII, 2) which he also calls the "selva antica" ("ancient wood") (Purgatorio XXVIII,23), echoing the opening wood of the Inferno. The problem in the Aeneid seems to be that it is hard to tell one from the other.

In a recent article on "Warfare and the Structure of Thought in Virgil's Aeneid," Eugene Vance suggests that "Virgil's mind tends to be binary."⁵¹ Vance posits a set of oppositions which he sees as structuring the Aeneid.⁵² It seems more accurate, however, to say that Virgil often wished the world (or his mind) were binary, but generally found that it was not. Rather than being certain that the world divides into clear categories, Virgil strives to find a way to divide these categories definitively. But his poem constantly reveals

⁵¹Vance, p. 116.

⁵²Here is Vance's list of oppositions (see p. 125):

A	B
Rome	Troy
City	Woods
Male	Female
Jupiter	Juno
Light	Dark
Reason	Passion
Art	Nature
Calm	Storm
History	Moment

the ultimate inseparability of the many opposites at play in it. The complexity and beauty of Virgil's style derives in large part from his capacity to capture and express the deeper connections between light and darkness, reason and passion, history and the passing, disordered moments of one life; the greatness of his poem lies in part in the fact that it portrays this deep and unavoidable connection and tries to find in it a source of hope.

Little in the action of his poem suggests that any certain division can be found. Juno and Jupiter are married, for instance, and the Dirae ("the dread ones") (XII,845ff) stand by the throne of love as well as by the throne of the grim monarch of the underworld (XII, 849). In fact, Roman religion tended to divide its deities so that one god or goddess might have an Olympian as well as a chthonic (or Tartarean) aspect.⁵³ In Book 6, for example, Proserpina is called "Itoni infernae" ("nether Juno") (VI,138). Diana also has several aspects. She took the form of Hecate in the underworld: as the Oxford Classical Dictionary puts it, Hecate's "associations with Artemis are so close and frequent that it is not always easy to tell to which of them a particular function or title belongs originally."⁵⁴ Virgil has Aeneas enter the Sibyl's shrine through the grove of Trivia (VI,13), which Fletcher explains as follows:

Trivia, the "Threeways-goddess" is a translation of a Greek epithet for Hecate, the lower-world deity with whom Artemis, sister of Apollo, the 'Delos-born' prophet-god, was associated.

⁵³See Cyril Bailey, Religion in Virgil (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1935), pp. 157-8 and 250-3.

⁵⁴"Hecate," Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd edition, p. 490.

When the Roman Diana was identified with Artemis she was credited also with the attributes of Hecate.⁵⁵

As these examples suggest, Roman religion itself describes the relation of Olympian and chthonic gods. These few examples are cited to suggest the degree to which apparent opposites are blended or distinctions blurred by the action of the poem.

Rather than being binary, then, the world of the Aeneid might be characterized as equivocal, shifting, uncertain, double. As he attempts to discover the reason for the complexity of so many episodes in the Aeneid, Jacques Perret describes the dramatic difference between this shifting world and the certain historical plan which the poem conveys:

Plus on s'attache à analyser la construction des principaux épisodes, plus apparaît avec évidence le caractère équivoque, partagé, insaisissable à tout jugement simple, des situations à travers lesquelles Virgile a voulu que se réalisât le dessein de l'Enéide, ce grand dessein historique qui est lui-même tout à fait simple et bon.⁵⁶

The emblems of duality described above express one aspect of this shifting, equivocal world, for the capacity of an apparently idyllic world or creature to turn into its opposite is the extreme form of the blurring of boundaries of meaning and certainty which occurs less evidently in many episodes of the Aeneid.

The preceding examples suggest the fragile or uncertain balance of opposites brought about by idyllic settings and scenes. The intermediate position is an ambivalent one: until the idyllic setting is

⁵⁵Fletcher, VI, p. 31.

⁵⁶Perret, "Optimisme et tragédie dans l'Enéide," p. 346.

purged of erotic and violent forces, it will serve merely as a mask for darker urgings. By blending plot and counterplot Virgil is able to capture the complexity of the world through which his hero travels. But this narrative strategy also makes it difficult to represent an idyllic setting (or the values which it might imply) which does not also contain or lead to its opposite. Since Virgil sought to describe the founding of a city which would base its values on rural simplicity and innocence, the constant blending of idyllic and passionate, of idealized and violent versions of experience represents his pessimism. Only by separating out these strands of experience can he create a hero (and a society) who would mirror the peaceful as well as the martial values of Rome itself.

The story of Andromache and Helenus reveals the dangers that lie in the purging of the passionate from the idyllic world. Andromache's world seems an idyllic one to Aeneas. At Buthrotum she and Helenus have built a miniature "Troy" (parvam Troiam, III,349). Aeneas first finds her near the city in a grove which is described as a locus amoenus. Aeneas tells Dido how he advanced from the harbor:

sollemnis cum forte dapes et tristia dona
ante urbem in luco falsi Simoentis as undam
libabat cineri Andromache, manisque vocabat
Hectoreum ad tumulum, viridi quem caespite inanem
et geminas, causam lacrimis, sacraverat aras.
(III, 301-5)

(I chanced on) Andromache herself, sorrowfully pouring a drink offering in a ritual of sacrifice to Hector's ashes. In a wood near her city by a river named after the Simois she was calling on Hector's spirit at his cenotaph of green turf, where she had reverently set up two altars as a place for her mourning.

The mood of this passage is dark although Aeneas sees Andromache and Helenus as enjoying a happiness and a rest which he himself is not to

know. The false Simois introduces the imitation world that Andromache and Helenus have built. Aeneas soon sees the whole city:

procedo et parvam Troiam simulataque magnis
Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine rivum
agnosco, Scaeeaeque amplector limina portae.
(III,349-51)

As I walked onwards I recognized this little "Troy," with its citadel built to resemble the old citadel, and a dry water-course called "Xanthus"; I even saluted the threshold of a "Scaean Gate."

Both he and his men enjoy (frumtur, 352) the city, but his words still convey a sense of sadness: Andromache's and Helenus' city is neither the real Troy nor a new city with its own identity. The motif of the copy diminishes the value of the city to Aeneas, who now realizes at least indirectly that when he founds Troy his new city must not be merely a replica of the old. Buthrotum seems only to mirror the past and reveal the inadequacies of the present.

Aeneas clearly feels two ways about this backward-looking world. As we know from his account of his actions on the night of Troy's fall, he too finds it hard to look to the future, and he finds their miniature nostalgic "Troy" congenial in some ways. When he set forth from Troy, he seems to have understood his own destiny in similar terms. He begins his journey expecting to lay out the foundations of a new Troy (see III,86-7; III,132-3). He explicitly tells Dido that, when founding his new City on Crete, he named it Pergamum, and that the people rejoiced in the old name (III,133).

When Aeneas bids farewell to Andromache and Helenus, his words suggest that he envies them their calm life:

vivite felices, quibus est fortuna peracta
iam sua: nos alia ex aliis in fata vocamur.
vobis parta quies; nullum maris aequor arandum,

arva neque Ausoniae semper credentia retro
quaerenda. effigiem Xanthi Troiamque videtis
quam vestrae fecere manus, melioribus, opto.
auspiciis, et quae fuerit minus obvia Graiis.
(III,493-9)

Live and prosper, for all your adventures are past. We are called ever onwards from destiny to destiny. For you, your rest is won. You have no expanse of sea to plow, no land of Italy seeming always to recede before you, as your quest. You may look at your copy of the river Xanthus, and at a Troy built by your own hands, with fairer prospects, I hope, and no more fear of danger from the Greeks.

Part of Aeneas clearly longs for the rest which Helenus and Andromache enjoy: to him they are, in more than a simply formulaic way, felices.⁵⁷ His words dramatically capture his sense that his quest is unending, his goal always more and more distant. His ignorance of the larger perspective makes his longing for rest even more understandable: he has been given glimpses of the larger story in which he plays a role, but he understands little of it.

His farewell speech also indicates, however, his discomfort with the imitation world they have created. His words indicate that Andromache and Helenus have no stake in the future.⁵⁸ He gently describes their consolation--"effigiem Xanthi Troiamque videtis"--and then moves on to speak of his hope of future arrival in Italy. As the speech (which is not quoted in full above) ends, it becomes more evident that

⁵⁷See Lowry Nelson, Jr., "Baudelaire and Virgil: A Reading of 'Le Cygne,'" Comparative Literature 13 (1961), p. 335. As the following notes indicate, the interpretation presented here is indebted to Lowry Nelson's reading.

⁵⁸See R.D. Williams, I,309, who comments on line 494 (quoting Page): "The speaker places those he is addressing among a class of men, viz. those whose toils are over. Every man has his destiny (fortuna sua) to work out, and, until it is worked out, he cannot rest."

his references to the imitation Troy are partly ironic. He sympathizes with Andromache, and perhaps also longs to rest, but nonetheless senses the danger of living in the past. As Lowry Nelson has argued, for Andromache "life is now stasis, meaningful only in communion with the past and with the dead," for "her cult of the past is, as it were, an instinctive recognition that she is now among the living dead."⁵⁹ Andromache and Helenus live in a world in which ongoing time has no significance; they will not play a part in the world of the future. Buthrotum, to Andromache at least, can thus be seen as representing an extreme form of the apparent timelessness of so many peaceful scenes in the counterplot. Living outside of time is revealed in Buthrotum to mean leading a life not significantly different from death itself.

Moreover, in the course of the visit to Buthrotum, the word quies takes on dark overtones. Helenus tells Aeneas that he will eventually find the place where Rome is to be founded: "is locus urbis erit, requies ea certa laborum" ("that place shall be the site for your city, and there you shall find sure repose from your tribulations") (III,393). Some kind of rest awaits Aeneas, but, knowing the plot of the Aeneid, we wonder what kind of rest this might be. As Lowry Nelson has suggested, "that emphatic requies means, more than anything, a significant death; it certainly does not mean suburban ease."⁶⁰ Rest is opposed to labores,

⁵⁹Lowry Nelson, Jr., pp. 334-5.

⁶⁰Lowry Nelson, Jr., p. 335.

the labor of the journey and of historical destiny. But when such labor ends, what kind of life remains?

Aeneas' visit to Buthrotum reveals that Andromache and Helenus have created a copy without life. As he departs, we see that the episode as a whole has a double structure. What appears at first to provide secure harbor and rest slowly seems less and less appealing. Aeneas' parting words contrast the world of rest and the world of labor much in the same way as Meliboeus in Eclogue 1 contrasts Tityrus' ease and rest with his own exile.⁶¹ But in the Aeneid the poem moves beyond the peaceful and small world of rest, which it reveals to be only a type of death itself. As the description of Ascanius sleeping in Venus' groves, this version of rest is disquieting to the reader (and to some extent to Aeneas) because it shows so clearly that rest comes only to those whose destiny has been worked out to its end. Aeneas' visit to Andromache and Helenus again poses the question of whether a world of calm can exist as anything more than an image of death.

We see clearly, and Aeneas partly sees, that Andromache and Helenus could never create a new civilization from the ruins of the old; Aeneas, without ever fully understanding his mission, will do so.

⁶¹This setting has something in common with pastoral poetry both in its description of the grove in which Aeneas finds Andromache and in its interest in miniaturizing. The scene at Buthrotum can be described as a literal rendering of some of the conventions of pastoral poetry: they have created a miniature in life rather than, as the miniature scenes in pastoral poetry suggest, in art. In life, this mimicking with no gesture toward change figures death.

In the course of Book 3, Aeneas begins to see more clearly what it means to look to the future and to expect the full realization of his ideals only in a time beyond the span of his life. In describing the limitations of idyllic poetry which looks towards the past, Schiller describes beautifully the value and the limitations of what Helenus and Andromache have achieved in building their little Troy:

Unhappily they place that purpose behind us, toward which they should, however, lead us, and hence they imbue us only with a sad feeling of loss, not with joyous feelings of hope. Since they can only attain their purpose by the denial of all art, and only by the simplification of human nature, they possess together with the utmost value for the heart, all too little for the spirit, and their narrow range is soon exhausted. Therefore we can love them and seek them out when we stand in need of peace, but not when our forces are striving for motion and activity.⁶²

One solution which Virgil finds to the backward-looking idyll of Andromache and Helenus is the projection of the rest for which Aeneas longs into the future: like Italy, it is ever-receding. But this projection also means that the promised rest cannot be represented within the poem.

As the poem progresses, Virgil presents fewer and fewer emblems of duality, and uses the technique of narrative doubling more and more rarely. Instead, he begins to divide his imagery, finding structural ways to separate the idyllic and the passionate versions of experience. When he succeeds in purging an idyllic scene of the forces of passion or violence, however, the vitality in that world often disappears. The imitation world of Buthrotum stands as an example of

⁶²Friedrich von Schiller, Naive and Sentimental Poetry and On the Sublime, trans. Julius Elias (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966), p. 149. Schiller originally published the essay in 1795-6.

the dangers of the nostalgic stance and of the escapism to which it leads. It represents the likely end of any idyllic world placed in the epic landscape.

(iii) Forward to Elysium

Book 5, like those that precede it, is characterized by the merging of plot and counterplot, for not only is the setting of the games typical of scenes in the counterplot, but those similes and comments by the poet of which the characters are ignorant, examples of a separate counterplot, also represent points of view which the characters themselves might have on the action. As Aeneas and his men turn aside to engage in commemorative games for Anchises, idyllic imagery and an idyllic mood, typical of the counterplot, appear in the main narrative. This idyllic mood is soon destroyed, however, as the grief of the women (intensified by Iris) bursts forth. The pattern of ambivalence or duality established earlier in the poem reemerges as the idyllic setting disintegrates into its opposite. The episode posits no direct connection between the idyllic setting and the burning of the fleet, however. The merging of plot and counterplot does not cause the burning of the boats though it makes it possible; the narrative logic suggests that until the idyllic world is completely separated from the violence of the heroic world it will always be vulnerable. Eventually, idyllic settings will find their place only in a separate counterplot, no longer merged with the main story.

Virgil separates the idyllic settings of the games from the burning of the fleet, and he mitigates the effect of the narrative connection of the two events by saving all but four of the boats. Nonethe-

less, structurally the episode reenacts a pattern which connects idyllic scenes and the passionate, destructive forces within human beings. The games are not contaminated by the violence of Juno, but they are stopped by it; the episode suggests that the world is too dangerous to allow the dropping of one's guard or the momentary relaxation depicted in the games. In Book 6, Virgil will separate idyllic settings even more completely from the scene of violence, though this more complete separation also has its costs.

The idyllic context is established as soon as Aeneas reaches Sicily.⁶³ Acestes happily welcomes the weary travelers with rustic treasures ("gaza laetus agresti/ excipit," V,40-1), and a calm, restful atmosphere settles over the book. This sense of calm is beautifully captured in Virgil's description of the boundary rock which marks the turning point in the boat race: in stormy weather the waves overwhelm the rock, but

tranquillo silet immotaque attollitur unda
campus et apricis statio gratissima mergis.
(V,127-8)

in calm weather it was quiet. There was level ground on it, raised above a motionless sea, and it was a favorite place for gulls to stand and sun themselves.

Book 5 begins in tranquillity, and for a short span this rock can serve the bound out the wilder seas.

The epic games have several pastoral traits which intensify the idyllic mood. The games seem pastoral in their playful mood, in their

⁶³For interesting historical and archeological evidence concerning the legend of the Trojans in Sicily, see G. Karl Galinsky, "The Trojan Landing in Sicily," Aeneas, Sicily, and Rome (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 63-102.

lack of serious consequence, in the exchanges both of gifts and good will, and in representing the imitation of a combat, an imitation found to purge aggressive instincts. The wit involved in comparing small things to large in the epic games could also be described as a pastoral wit. In describing the games, Virgil distances himself from the stronger emotions which he has previously evoked; he too seems to enjoy this brief respite from more serious narration. Other pastoral traits of the games include the setting itself and some of the similes. The echoing woodlands, for example, have a pastoral quality, and the poet takes time to emphasize them (V,148-50). After the boat race, the athletes retire to an even more enclosed spot, a natural athletic ground, a woody theater (V,286-9).

The dove simile also conveys the pastoral atmosphere while exemplifying the merging of plot and counterplot in this episode. Virgil uses this simile to describe Mnestheus' boat, yet the simile could easily have been spoken by Aeneas. The dove starts out frightened but is soon calmed and glides on the air in a lovely image of grace and movement without effort: "mox aere lapsa quieto/ radit iter liquidum celeris neque commovet alas" ("she is presently seen gliding through still air, skimming her way in clear light without any movement of her swift pinions") (V,216-7). Here even the air is at rest or peaceful: such idyllic natural imagery conveys the grace of the competition. Throughout the games Virgil treats the competitors almost as aesthetic objects; this aestheticizing mood also helps to extend the analogy between the games and pastoral events.

A final example of how the similes make the games seem idyllic is found during the lusus Troiae. As the boys gallop at each other and

charge, interweaving back and forth, they ride in the pattern of a labyrinth. In adult life such a labyrinth usually figures error and loss, but here the dangers of the labyrinth are controlled by the art of the game:

haud alio Teucrum nati vestigia cursu
impediunt texuntque fugas et proelia ludo,
delphinum similes qui per maria umida nando
Carpathium Libycumque secant (luduntque per undas).
(V, 592-5)

By just such a course the sons of the Trojans knotted their paths, weaving in play their fleeing and their fighting, like dolphins that swim through the salt-sea water, cutting the Carpathian or African straits and playing as they cross the waves.

The image of the dolphins helps to erase whatever ominous shadows arise at the mention of the labyrinth: this is a labyrinth the boys are not lost in, one which is only an image or a fiction of labyrinthine entanglement, hence a delight.⁶⁴

In a similar display of control over the dangers that elsewhere threaten Aeneas and his men, Virgil gives all the contending boats in

⁶⁴Dolphins are also depicted on the Shield of Heracles (see Hesiod, Scut. 209f) and by Apollonius. The dolphin simile in Apollonius creates an even more explicitly idyllic context. Having passed Scylla and Carybdis, Jason and Medea are met by the Nereids, and Thetis takes hold of their rudder to guide them. The divinely guided ship symbolizes nature spontaneously sympathetic and helpful to men. Apollonius compares the Nereids to dolphins:

And as when in fair weather herds of dolphins come up from the depths and sport in circles round a ship as it speeds along, now seen in front, now behind, now again at the side--and delight comes to the sailors; so the Nereids darted upwards and circled round the ship Argo, while Thetis guided its course.
(IV, 932-8)

The delight of the sailors combines with the safe ocean and divine aid to make this an idyllic picture of man and nature in harmony.

the boat race the names of monsters: the Leviathan or Sea-Monster, the Chimera, the Centaur and the Scylla.⁶⁵ Here these monstrous forms have been tamed. The games subvert the dangers they represent, and the monstrous names add only an exotic flavor to the scene. Both the labyrinth and the monstrous names are confidently raised by Virgil here as if to dramatize that the darker forces have been temporarily banished. Since the games are interrupted shortly after the lusus Troiae, these confident gestures seem somewhat misplaced. Monsters and labyrinths may temporarily be under control in the male world, but the women in their grief and anger represent the continuing power of that darker reality.

Virgil's confident assertions that the monstrous has temporarily been contained, along with the consistent development of an idyllic mood in the descriptions of the games, serve nonetheless to further the sense that the idyllic setting is distinct from the scene of passion and violence in which the fleet is set afire. This separation is possible partly because eroticism itself has little role in Aeneas' story after Book 4 ends. Having left Dido, Aeneas devotes himself to all-male games to commemorate his father, games which exclude the women and perhaps in this small way lead to the burning of the ships. In Book 5 the women still cause problems, but Aeneas himself is no longer entangled in any erotic labyrinths. Erotic love is replaced by love of family and love of father, and for the rest of the poem Aeneas will

⁶⁵The Sea-dragon echoes the description of the real Scylla (III, 427) while the Chimera finds two other places in the Aeneid: on the border of the underworld (VI, 288) and on Turnus' helmet (VII, 785).

move in largely male worlds. In the Aeneid, scenes which are genuinely idyllic (and not undermined by a darker reality) are characterized by a similar purging of eroticism.

In Book 5, then, Virgil represents an idyllic scene which is not completely undermined by the discovery of a passionate or violent alternative within it. The idyllic moment is cut short, however, by destructive events which are figured as coming from outside the idyllic setting. In Book 6 Virgil will set the idyllic scene aside more completely. In Book 5, as the separation of the idyllic and the violent begins to be felt, Virgil also hints at another kind of separation which would remove the idyllic scenes from the temporal world of the main narrative altogether.

In the games Virgil provides myths of origins for great Roman families and customs (for example, the Memmian, Sergian, Geganian and Mnesthean houses, and most dramatically, the lusus Troiae). This dimension of the story is not one of which the characters are aware. Virgil establishes a special relationship with his Augustan readers as he makes these references, and the pleasure in the games felt by such readers comes at least in part from these proleptic references. Here Virgil strikingly combines an idyllic scene with historic references. The mood of the episode is unusually optimistic in part because these references to the future assure the readers of the ultimate success of Aeneas' mission. By being attached in the readers' minds to the Roman institution of the lusus Troiae, the equestrian stunts of the boys described in the narrative are partly removed from the context of Aeneas' journey and made to seem timeless. Because of the historical references, then, the games are even

more detached from the violent scene on the beach; their image is protected from the violent action of the main narrative in part by being given an historical dimension. These proleptic comments represent a portion of the counterplot which will become a more significant feature of the narrative when Aeneas reaches Latium.

Book 6 contains the first example of an idyllic setting which is not destroyed by violence arising from within or from outside it. Here too proleptic references are set within an idyllic context. Elysium is pictured in pastoral terms, a context made possible by the purging of eroticism represented partly in the primacy of the filial tie (Aeneas wishes to descend to the underworld particularly to see his father, VI,108-17)⁶⁶ and partly in the structure of the book. In Book 6 Virgil faces the chthonic powers directly. He invokes the gods and spirits of the underworld, not the muses (VI,264-7), and uses the force they give him to lead his hero through the underworld to a place from which the forces of violence are excluded by their own power. The visit to the underworld is too complex to be treated with sufficient thoroughness here. Only a general argument about the structure of the book is mapped out below in order to give some context for an interpretation of the scenes in Elysium.⁶⁷

⁶⁶The importance of the filial tie is also indicated by Virgil's choice of the father as the guide through much of Elysium. This choice was probably influenced by Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in which the dead father is also the guide who reveals the secrets of the other world and where goodness is identified with patriotism and the service of the state. See Sir Frank Fletcher, p. xxvii.

⁶⁷On the varieties of interpretation appropriate to the descent to the underworld, see L.A. MacKay, "Three Levels of Meaning in Aeneid VI," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 86 (1955), 180-9.

Like Book 5, Book 6 is characterized by a merging of plot and counterplot. The episode is made to seem uncanny not only because of the subject matter, but because the readers never know exactly on what level of reality the action should be understood. The action is represented according to the fiction of a journey, yet at its ending Virgil hints that perhaps it should be understood as a dream or as something like a dream, perhaps a vision (VI,893-8).⁶⁸ References to daylight and time passing on earth (for example, VI,535-7) even make it seem uncertain whether Aeneas has in fact descended to an underworld; in fact, it has been suggested that the episode represents the action of an initiation into a mystery cult.⁶⁹ These contradictory references make the readers uncertain whether Aeneas should be understood as having had a supernatural experience or not. Virgil joins several different stories in the tale of this journey, and does not choose to provide his readers with the means to sort them out.

Ambivalent images and settings, which are capable of containing two opposed meanings, characterize the episode, and evidence of the narrative doubling abounds even in the introductory scenes. The description of the tree on which the golden bough grows exemplifies this ambivalent imagery. The Sibyl's description of the tree recalls previous images of shade and shadows and intensifies them: its shade

⁶⁸Sleep does indeed seem to be the realm of the underworld. Not only does Aeneas exit through the gates of sleep ("Somni portae," 893) but in the descent Aeneas passes Sleep the brother of Death ("consanguineus Leti Sopor," 278). The association of sleep and death is traditional, and is made explicit in the account of Palinurus' death in Book 5.

⁶⁹For background on the mysteries as they may relate to Book 6, see Sir Frank Fletcher, pp. xii-xiv.

seems at once beneficent and harmful, the way in which the tree hides the bough both ominous and protecting:

latet arbore opaca
aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus,
Iunoni infernae dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis
lucus et obscuris claudunt convallibus umbrae.
(VI,136-9)

Hiding in a tree's thick shade there is a bough, and it is golden, with both leaves and pliant stem of gold. It is dedicated as sacred to Juno of the Lower World. All the forest gives it protection, and it is enclosed by shadows within a valley of little light.

The oxymoronic branch of this tree combines stiff gold and a pliant stem. It symbolizes the spontaneous regenerative forces of nature, for when it is broken off, another branch immediately springs up to take its place: the stress on the branch coming "of itself" ("ipse volens," 147) ties this image to pastoral treatments of nature's spontaneous generosity to men and to myths of the golden age. The branch then symbolizes, as Robert Brooks has explained, the union of life and death which will be represented in the underworld and the despairing consolations which this otherworldly philosophy offers.⁷⁰

⁷⁰See Robert Brooks, "Discolor Aura: Reflections on the Golden Bough," in Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Steele Commager (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1966; article 1st published, 1953), pp. 143-63. Brooks summarizes previous views of the bough to show the degree to which the bough is a multivalent symbol:

Servius suggested the rites of Proserpina and interjected that famous publica opinio about the grove of Nemi which was to lead Frazer forth on his massive pursuit of the tree-spirit and the sacrificial king. Heyne suggested, among other origins, the golden apples of Juno and the Hesperides, the pomegranate of Proserpina, the branch of the suppliant, the aurae virga of Mercury as psychagogue, and the golden fleece. Conington thought of the mysteries of Isis. Frazer ended with the derivation of the bough from folk beliefs concerning the properties of the mistletoe. Norden too approached the image through the mistletoe simile, but added the concept of the bough of myrtle or

The bough is natural and artificial at once; it is pastoral and infernal. Like Aeneas (see IV,441-9), the tree on which the bough grows has its roots in the underworld while it lifts its head into the light. The tree and the bough stand as emblems for the double significance of most seemingly idyllic settings up to this point in the poem, for they symbolize, among other things, the connection between the restorative and the destructive forces of nature. Virgil calls the tree "gemina" meaning "two-fold" or "double-natured,"⁷¹ a name which suggests its dual significance as both a tree of the underworld and a tree of life, and the ominous yet hopeful mood of the passage conveys the ambivalent truth (represented by the tree and its bough) that life and death, idyll and violence, are in the long view intimately related.

In plot terms, the bough is the munus ("gift, public tribute, service") which Proserpina ordains (VI,142). It makes up the appointed gifts (praecepta...dona, 632) which allow Aeneas to pass into Elysium. Aeneas will leave this bough on the threshold of Elysium, the first idyllic locale in the poem not completely undermined by its violent opposite. He does not, however, completely leave behind the doubleness that the bough represents, for, although within Elysium the

olive brought as a gift to the goddess Proserpina/Kore and as a symbol of life and rebirth in the mystery rituals (p. 152).

⁷¹See R.D. Williams, p. 471. There is a textual variant here, geminae, which would refer to the two doves. Sir Frank Fletcher, p. 45, agrees with R.D. Williams here that the preferred reading is gemina.

idyllic setting is not destroyed, Elysium is still placed within the underworld and thus has a somewhat ambivalent significance.

After crossing the Styx and before the branching of the road, Aeneas meets Dido and Deiphobus. The order of his journey suggests that Aeneas somehow must leave behind his erotic feelings for Dido and his Trojan past in order to reach Elysium. Although the episode resists allegorization, a symbolic interpretation of the narrative order seems justified because Elysium does appear to be purged both of eroticism and of aggression; the passing of the horrors on the way, and the farewell to Dido and Deiphobus may make the idyll of Elysium poetically possible.

Whether or not Aeneas' farewells to Dido and Deiphobus are interpreted symbolically, Elysium does seem to exclude both eroticism and violence. Although the heroes of the Trojan war are present, along with of the ancestors of the Trojan line, the time for war has past: lances are stuck in the ground and the horses wander freely (VI,652-3). It is evident that eroticism is irrelevant to these souls. One further support for the idea that eroticism has been purged to make this idyll possible lies in the fact that there are no women mentioned directly in Elysium. Although the peoples and tribes unnumbered (706) which hover above the Lethe must include some female souls, this is the only reference which is capable of such an interpretation. Otherwise, Elysium seems to be a male haven; certainly as far as Aeneas is concerned, erotic passion is no longer at issue.

The structure of the underworld also explains why Elysium can exclude the violent and passionate forces which disrupted previous idyllic settings. As Otis has suggested in his map of the underworld,

Tartarus and Elysium are balanced and set in opposition to one another.⁷² Aeneas is told about Tartarus in clear terms (577-9) and glimpses Phlegethon (548-59) but then is hurried along to Elysium. In the underworld the idyllic and the violent are held apart, still in opposition to one another, but now eternally distant and not characterized by the ambivalent blending typical of human experience as this poem presents it. Elysium appears to be completely disassociated from the darker world in which it is set.

Virgil makes this division of the underworld convincing by drawing on a complex philosophical tradition which claimed a clear distinction between the two worlds,⁷³ though he also alters that tradition substantially by placing Elysium in the underworld.⁷⁴ In terms of Aeneas' experience, he makes the division convincing by presenting Aeneas first as having to face the horrors of the underworld and then, as if purged, being able to meet the souls in Elysium. The figure of the journey serves to support the claim that Elysium excludes the horrors which Aeneas encounters outside of it. Virgil thus succeeds, finally, in depicting a genuinely idyllic landscape by placing all the threats to it outside of it. Aeneas cannot remain in this idyllic

⁷²See Otis, p. 289.

⁷³See Gorgias 524a and Phaedo 113e, for example, on the parting of the ways. See R.D. Williams, pp. 498-9.

⁷⁴See Odyssey iv, 561ff where Elysium is distanced geographically but not placed in an underworld. Virgil's decision to put Elysium in the underworld necessitated the invention of the imitation sun and stars.

setting, however; an examination of the way idyllic imagery is used in the episode suggests some reasons why he must return to the mortal world.

The scenes in Elysium are pastoral in conception and imagery.⁷⁵ Elysium is pictured, as tradition dictated, as "locos laetos et amoena virecta/ fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas" ("the Land of Joy, the pleasant green places in the Fortunate Woods, where are the Homes of the Blest") (VI,638-9). In its rural setting (as distinct from the castle of Phlegethon), Elysium takes on pastoral tone by being a place of games, of song, and of dance. Aeneas finds Orpheus, Musaeus, and the pii vates ("pious bards") in Elysium, for it is also pictured as a place of poetry. Musaeus stands in Elysium as "optime vates" ("best of bards") (VI,669), and it is he who sums up the pastoral condition of the blest souls and sends Aeneas and the Sibyl on to Anchises. Musaeus describes existence in Elysium as a wandering in a gentle natural setting:

nulli certa domus; lucis habitamus opacis
riparumque toros et prata recentia rivis
incolimus. (VI,673-5)

No one has a fixed home. We live in shady woods and lie here on soft river-banks, or dwell in meadows which the streamlets keep forever fresh.

Here the freedom of pastoral wandering has finally found its true home; the shady grove carries no ominous overtones, and there is no threat hidden in the landscape. In this setting the way to one's father is "facili tramite" ("an easy pathway") (676).

They find Anchises deep within a green vale (679), and in an

⁷⁵Curtius, p. 192, also identifies Elysium as a prime example of the locus amoenus.

even more withdrawn vale Aeneas sees the river of Lethe (703-5). The rustling thickets by the river are described as "sonantia" (704), filled with sounds, like a pastoral landscape. Aeneas keeps moving more and more inward towards some interior of absolute peace. Here at the banks of the Lethe, the souls seem like bees:

hunc circum innumerae gentes populiue volabant:
ac velut in pratis ubi apes aestate serena
floribus insidunt variis et candida circum
lilia funduntur, strepit omnis murmure campus.
(VI,706-9)

About this river, like bees in a meadow on a fine summer day settling on flowers of every kind, when lilies gleaming white are sprinkled everywhere and all the fields are noisy with the hum, the souls of countless tribes and nations were flitting.

Evoking the cloudless summertime, and drawing on the strong pastoral association of bees, this simile fully evokes a pastoral world. As the hedge in Eclogue 1 is marked by the buzzing of bees, so here the fields murmur. The simile represents Aeneas' point of view at least in part, for shortly after this sight, he says that he cannot imagine any soul which enjoyed such bliss ever wanting to return to the world above (719-21).

The simile of the bees is touched slightly with melancholy, however. The world described is lost to these souls, lovely as their idyllic resting place must be. The images of the flowers, and especially the lilies, may even convey a slightly elegiac tone, like the flower catalogue in Eclogue 2. There Corydon assures his beloved "tibi lilia plenis/ecce ferunt Nymphae calathis" ("for you the nymphs bring lilies in heaped-up baskets") (II,45-6). In Eclogue 2, the beauty and the abundance of the flowers stand inversely for the hopelessness of Corydon's cause. In Elysium the beauty of the flowers in

the image remind the readers that these souls are permanently separated from such natural beauty. Lowry Nelson has suggested a reason for this melancholy: even the souls in Elysium are described with a kind of pathos, he remarks,

for they are no longer in a state of becoming, but have reached the end where nothing further can add to their essence. Except for those who will be granted purgation and forgetfulness and be reborn, they have perforce taken up their stance to all eternity, exiled from the process of life.⁷⁶

The process of life is precisely what the simile of the bees depicts most vividly; the contrast is subtle but felt.

The scenes in Elysium are in fact colored throughout by this sense of regret. Anchises' pastoral lament for Marcellus makes this dimension of the poem most explicit:

heu, miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas!
tu Marcellus eris. manibus date lilia plenis
purpureos spargam flores animamque nepotis
his saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani
munere.

(VI,882-6)

Piteous boy, if somehow you can break through your harsh destiny, you also shall be Marcellus.... Give lilies from full hands! I too shall scatter scarlet flowers, that at least in the gift of these I may be generous to my grandson's soul, and perform an ineffectual duty.

The purple flowers, which perhaps should be understood in apposition to the lilies,⁷⁷ recall the odd atmosphere of Elysium: "largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit/ purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt" ("Here an ampler ether clothes the meads with roseate light,

⁷⁶Lowry Nelson, Jr., p. 333.

⁷⁷See R.D. Williams, p. 516.

and they know their own sun, and stars of their own") (VI,640-1).⁷⁸
Elysium is an imitation world, like Buthrotum, with its own imitation sun. Scattering the purple or reddish flowers, Marcellus strews the future Marcellus with the consolations of Elysium, flowers which recall the flowers of earth from which Marcellus will be excluded all too soon.⁷⁹

Lamenting over the soul of someone to be dead in the future is a slightly macabre act, and it might seem out of context in Elysium. It serves to remind the readers, however, of the importance of life, for all the souls in Elysium have died, and many will not return to earth again. Life is the standard against which all values in Elysium are weighed. So Anchises laments the state of all the souls when he grieves over Marcellus, the state in which they can no longer contribute to human history or the growth of civilization. They can reenact the gestures of civilization, but they cannot change the unrolling of history. That which is to be lamented in Marcellus' case is his brief stay on earth; that briefness of life should evoke such laments from Anchises belies the reassuring philosophy of Elysium and makes the calm of Elysium seem melancholic.

The knowledge that earthly beauty and hope passes away quickly

⁷⁸This is the Loeb translation by H.R. Fairclough.

⁷⁹As Otis comments, "The Marcellus passage, though obviously subsequent to his death in 23 B.C., is no mere appendage. Virgil would almost certainly have conveyed the same idea through another exemplum, had not Marcellus died when he did.... For he did not wish to close on a note of triumph and exultation" (p. 303). Anchises' lament has always struck readers powerfully. Dante testifies to the power of his lines when he quotes them in the Purgatorio (XXX,21) at the moment that Virgil himself is fading from the scene.

should not prove so devastating given the philosophical consolations of the eternity of the souls, the perpetuation in cycles of human lives and the existence of justice in the underworld. If the cycles are always renewing themselves, then even the most beautiful or the most needed should not seem irreplaceable; all things are part of a process larger than they themselves. The poet in Virgil does not seem as convinced by this view as he claims, however, and he consistently dramatizes the individual loss. His sense of the waste in history is great; the large, anonymous patterns of historical growth do not make up the difference. The intensity of Anchises' grief over Marcellus expresses the suppressed grief of all the souls in Elysium, grief which is denied by the mythology of the place. Anchises' sense of the emptiness of his gesture is telling: history provides larger consolations in the course of time, but cannot accommodate the expression of grief over individual death. How successful, then, is Virgil's attempt to separate the idyllic scene from the violent world which surrounds it? Elysium too is shadowed with the melancholy of the dead if not with threats from violence. Its idyllic setting represents pastoral stasis at its extreme; the souls without memory or identity embody the ultimate pastoral suspension, for they are suspended between one identity and the next, or they are suspended between life and death, being neither dead nor truly alive. With double emotional pull, seeming both desirable and enervating, Elysium does not escape from the doubleness which characterizes the underworld as a whole. Since Elysium is in the underworld, its geography represents the deep tie between the green pleasantries and the castle of torture: they are alternate images of death, one infinitely preferable, but still an image of death.

Virgil employs the pastoral imagery in part to demonstrate that the pastoral setting and attitude taken to the extreme represents a stance which only the dead could adopt.

In Elysium Aeneas first learns in detail about the future greatness of his line. The historical catalogue in common with Elysium describes human lives from a distant perspective. Elysium seems idyllic as long as it is viewed from a distance; it succeeds at seeming pleasant only by suppressing grief at the individual loss of life. The catalogue also presents a hopeful picture of future as long as it is viewed in the general. Focusing on the individual, as is dramatized with the appearance of the soul of the future Marcellus, brings only grief, which cannot be assuaged by knowledge of the larger perspective. Thus Virgil's unusual juxtaposition of history and idyll reveals a truth about them both: both depend on aestheticizing gestures which ultimately mean a distancing of perspective; neither provides room for the individual to suffer grief or to change the tide of events.

One odd quality of Virgil's underworld is the lack of emphasis on cause or choice in the placing of the souls. Whereas in most of Virgil's sources a judge determines where each soul goes, Virgil's underworld lacks such a determining principle.⁸⁰ Although the Sibyl says that the wicked are sent to Tartarus (542-3), she does not explain how or when the judgment is made. The pastoral conclusion to Virgil's underworld may provide some explanation for this apparent covering over

⁸⁰See Phaedo 113-4; Gorgias, 524-5; and Republic 614-21 (The Myth of Er) which is most explicitly dedicated to the theme of the judgment in the afterlife and the choices it implies. See also Sir Frank Fletcher, pp. xvii-xxiii, for a summary and selection from these sources.

of the causal principles of the underworld. Pastoral poetry, as was suggested above, seems often to cover over reasons or causes. It is concerned to dramatize limits: characters must learn what the limits are, and respect them. Pastoral poems continually suggest that responsibility for decision and action lies beyond the realm of the characters.

A similar doubtfulness about the degree of personal responsibility characterizes Virgil's treatment of his hero in the Aeneid. Aeneas' heroism seems to lie in part in his resignation to the fact that he cannot be fully responsible. Perhaps in this sense he can be seen as taking on certain pastoral characteristics, for in the scenes in Elysium pastoral "chance" is revealed simply to be fate itself, and pastoral freedom simply freedom from all choice or responsibility. The unusual merging of pastoral scenery and historical catalogue in Elysium, then, parallels and makes possible Virgil's distinctive merging of history and myth. In Elysium, history itself is presented as the myth which covers over individual explanations or causes.

In Virgil's Eclogue 1, political force affects the pastoral world in two ways: through the eyes of Meliboeus, political force takes the form of unavoidable (and disastrous) fate; through the eyes of Tityrus, political action is seen as myth, a divine gesture of accommodation. In either case, politics enters the pastoral world as a force that men do not cause and cannot influence; it may work for the good, or it may work for evil, but in either case whatever happens is

beyond the influence of the characters.⁸¹ These two views reappear in Elysium where the political events of history are given a mythical coloring by Anchises, who presents them as the "gloria" (757) to which Aeneas and his descendants can look forward while lamenting the inevitability of the loss of Marcellus. Placed in a pastoral setting, history becomes catalogue; the aesthetic form and the wide perspective of time hold the violence of the historical process at a distance. The scenes in Elysium provide this timeless glimpse of history while implying that such a distanced perspective is not one which any living human being can have. The point of view from which all of history can be swept into one vision is necessarily a point of view beyond the human; it is the perspective of the gods or of the dead.

The Homer of the Iliad never turns his eyes away from the fact of his hero's responsibility for the actions in which he is involved, but the poet of the Odyssey occasionally averts his eyes. Virgil's ambivalence about Aeneas' degree of personal responsibility carries this turning away from causes a step further; Virgil gives his hero a mythical-historical explanation for his own lack of personal responsibility. This doubtfulness about the degree of Aeneas' responsibility prevents the Aeneid from being fully tragic even in its bleakest moments, for it

⁸¹Tityrus does save up his peculium and take the action of going to Rome to buy his freedom. Nonetheless, his "explanation" shrouds these events in mystery and describes the political act of freeing slaves and assuring their farms as a divine gesture of generosity. He does not describe his own actions as if they were important. Although he is lucky that he now has a better mistress, the poem is not a moral poem about how to save a farm and gain freedom even if such issues are hinted at in the secondary field of the poem.

is a doubtfulness that pervades the poem.⁸² Thus when Iris comes to "release" Dido, the poet retreats from presenting Dido's death as tragic; when Palinurus' dies, the poem is uncertain about whether the "necessary" sacrifice of the helmsman should be viewed as tragic, and the incomplete revision of Palinurus' death stands as an emblem for Virgil's poetic uncertainty. Aeneas too often insists that he cannot be held personally responsible. He tries to convince Dido of this point of view again in Book 6: "invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi" ("it was not by my own will, your Majesty, that I departed from your shores") (VI,460). Fate drives him on, but Dido remains unconvinced.

Elysium, then, is presented as a pastoral oasis within which Aeneas receives an important vision of the future, but it is not fully freed from the shadows which surround it.⁸³ For one thing, the discovery of this seemingly idyllic afterlife makes Aeneas think that the life spirit itself is a mad longing: "quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido?" (721) he asks Anchises. The dangers of other lulling idyllic places are summarized here. This seemingly unthreatening idyllic world offers a vision to the hero and it may also offer him a defense against the pain of what he will experience; but at a deeper level, the idyllic scene in Elysium represents death, a version of death but still death. To long for Elysium can be nothing other than to wish to give up human life.

⁸²See Thomas Greene, pp. 88-93, for a more detailed treatment of Virgil's withdrawal from tragedy in the Aeneid.

⁸³The term "pastoral oasis" is taken from Renato Poggioli who uses it to describe the temporary retirement of the hero in a pastoral world. See "The Oaten Flute," p. 12.

In Book 6, then, Virgil portrays a setting which appears genuinely idyllic, but by setting it in the underworld he suggests that such an idyll can only be a representation of death itself. By placing the historical catalogue in this setting he also suggests that there is a gap between the kind of understanding that human beings have as they go about their lives and the kind of historical vision granted to Aeneas. That larger picture is ultimately one that only the gods or the dead can see. Some of the ambivalence of Virgil's characterization of Aeneas following the trip to the underworld (for example, does Aeneas learn anything in the underworld?) may arise from the strain put on the epic story of having given the hero a glimpse of the larger perspective on events usually seen only by the gods and the poet.⁸⁴

The strain or ambivalence in the epic story results from this unusual blending of plot and counterplot. After the trip to the underworld, Virgil continues to use the technique of narrative doubling to some extent, but he also begins to separate the counterplot more and

⁸⁴There is much debate about how much Aeneas learns from the vision of Roman history which his father provides. For Otis (pp. 299-304) the catalogue of Roman history completes Aeneas' education as the ideal Roman hero, so that, when he is called "Roman" (VI,851), he can be understood to have earned the name. But many readers are disturbed by the fact that, when confronted with his shield in Book 8, Aeneas does not seem to recognize the deeds or the people inscribed and indeed is said to be ignorant of them. Since Aeneas leaves the underworld through the gate of ivory, Virgil has been interpreted as undermining slightly the truth of the vision, at least to the extent of suggesting that the whole journey was merely a dream. Virgil also presents Aeneas almost without reaction before the catalogue of future Romans, and afterwards he never suggests that Aeneas thinks of what he has seen, so the burden of proof seems to fall on those who would show that Aeneas is dramatically changed by what he sees in the underworld. This issue will be treated in more detail in the next section.

more from the plot. Never again is Aeneas exposed to the point of view represented by the counterplot to the extent that he is in the underworld. Instead, he is left to act more on his own, while Virgil comments on that action in passages which have no reality in the world of Aeneas. Virgil thus reestablishes a more Iliadic counterplot in the last books of his poem, in part, perhaps, to diminish the strain on the characterization of the hero created by the merging of plot and counterplot in the first part of the poem. Like the poet of the Odyssey, who brings his hero home from mythical realms but does not remove the mythical dimension of the story altogether, Virgil largely but not entirely removes the mythical dimension from the main narrative, the level of action of which the characters are aware, as he begins to turn to a separate counterplot in the last books of the poem.

(iv) Italia Humilis

Aeneas' first view of Latium suggests that he has finally come to a truly idyllic land. In the light of dawn comes a sudden calm, and he sees the Tiber "fluvio...amoeno" (VII,30) flowing through an immense forest to the sea. The dawn's light, the many-colored birds which caress the air with song ("aethera mulcebant cantu," 34), the plentiful, yellow sand, and the shadiness of the river ("fluvio..opaco," 36) all give this inviting scene a pastoral tone.⁸⁵ To this vision of natural harmony Aeneas and his men respond joyfully, and they turn

⁸⁵Vance, in "The Structure of Thought in Virgil's Aeneid," p. 141, interprets the yellow sand as symbolizing the golden ages.

towards land.

The pattern familiar from the first half of the poem soon reasserts itself, however.⁸⁶ Virgil himself immediately interrupts the calm to rouse Erato and to tell of the grim wars to which this scene is a preface (VII,41-2), and indeed Latinus' kingdom turns out to be another seemingly idyllic place which rapidly becomes a setting in which the most irrational and deeply passionate feelings and fears can be acted out. Latinus tells Aeneas that the Latins are

Saturni gentem haud vinclo nec legibus aequam,
sponte sua veterisque dei se more tenentem.
(VII,203-4)

Saturn's kin who need no bond of law to keep them just, but are just by their own free will and hold to the way of their ancient God.

But in the context of the rapid disintegration of his rule which Book 7 dramatizes, these lines are deeply ironic. The golden ages are long gone, and living without laws as if in some ideal world leads only to disaster.

The opening image of Circe is perhaps a more apt symbol for the kingdom of Latinus as it is presented in Book 7. The description of Circe falls into two halves. In the first half of this description, her lands seem idyllic (see VII,10-14). Her groves echo with song; she

⁸⁶See K.J. Reckford, "Latent Tragedy in Aeneid VII," American Journal of Philology 82 (1961), 254ff, on the sinister implications of Aeneas' arrival at the Tiber. On Aeneid VII see also E. Fraenkel, "Some Aspects of the Structure of Aeneid VII," Journal of Roman Studies 35 (1945), 1-14. On the second half of the Aeneid, see W.H. Alexander, "'Maius opus': Aeneid 7-12," University of California Publications in Classical Philology 14 (1951), 193-214, and W.S. Anderson, "Vergil's Second Iliad," Transactions of the American Philological Association 88 (1957), 17-30.

herself is pictured as burning fragrant cedar and weaving. Only in the second half of the description (15-20) does Virgil reveal the horror lying behind this apparently appealing island: the growls of the angry beasts, once men, remind the unwary that Circe is a "dea saeva" (19) who transforms men into half-human, half-bestial monstrosities. Circe's island symbolizes the close connection of the idyllic and the horrific in the Aeneid, and it can serve as an emblem of the action in Book 7.⁸⁷ Circe's ambivalence here, as in the Odyssey, arises from the merging of the plot and counterplot: in describing her, two different versions of experience are woven into one. Book 7, like most of the earlier books of the Aeneid, is characterized by a similar narrative doubling.

Erotic feelings stand behind Amata's passionate resistance to Latinus' first invitation to Aeneas (VII,56-7). Although Allecto is represented as stirring up these passions externally, the passions themselves existed before her arrival. Similarly, Turnus' motivation for fighting Aeneas is shown to be partly based on feelings of rivalry and erotic competitiveness (see especially XII,64-70). As in the story of Dido, then, eroticism and lack of self-restraint are presented as the immediate causes of the disintegration of order in a seemingly idyllic kingdom. Juno's decision to call Allecto up from the underworld (see VII,312 and 323-6), and the genealogy of Allecto who

⁸⁷ If Circe is interpreted as standing for lust, as Spenser and Milton seem to have interpreted her, then the episode even more strikingly depicts the power of uncontrolled erotic passion to destroy the idyllic. On Circe, and her importance for Book 7, see M.C.J. Putnam, "Aeneid VII and the Aeneid," American Journal of Philology 91 (1970), 408-30, especially 412-5.

is dreadful even to Pluto, her father, and a hateful monster to her Tartarean sisters (327-8), serve to represent on the supernatural plane the connection of the erotic passions of Turnus and Amata with the dark forces of the underworld. Once again, a seemingly idyllic world disintegrates as erotic violence, identified with the powers of the underworld, wells up from within it.

A secondary reason for the overflow of anger and violence in Latinus' kingdom is also given. Aeneas and his men disrupt the harmony of the Italian landscape, though they do so unwittingly. The damage they do to the land itself is prefigured by Ascanius' wounding of Sylvia's pet stag; Virgil tells us that this deed first enflamed the spirit of the country people to war (482). This tame stag who, when wounded, crawls home to lament as a human being would, represents the harmonious relationship between man and the natural world which existed in parts of Latinus' kingdom before the coming of Aeneas and his men. The stag even takes on slightly pastoral qualities as he wanders freely in the woods (errabat, 491; errantem, 493) coming home of his own free will, with Sylvia's soft garlands woven in and out (intexens, 488) of his horns. The wounding of this stag stands in part as a symbol of the destructive effect of heroic action on a pastoral scene. In the course of the war, Aeneas and his men destroy some of the countryside, cutting trees to make space for fighting; physically and metaphorically, they disrupt whatever natural harmony existed before they arrived, and they even occasionally ignore the mythical and religious bonds between men and places (see XII,766-71).

As a domesticated animal who appears to be wild, the stag combines two categories, and this ambiguity brings about his end. Although

Allecto inspires Ascanius' hounds with the fury to make them chase the stag, it is Ascanius' ignorance of the fact that the stag is a pet and his own desire for honor that lead him to shoot the stag. Throughout the poem other emblems of duality have suggested that combining the human and the natural world is dangerous, a way of opening the door to darker forces. The stag too seems to be an emblem of a kind of duality dangerous to the Italian people, a symbol of the deep ties to nature which, without laws to contain or direct them, cause the outburst of violence.⁸⁸

Thus although Aeneas and Ascanius are partly responsible for the disruption of Latinus' kingdom, Virgil makes certain that the main causes of its disintegration well up from within it. When Allecto blows the shepherds' horn ("de culmine summo/ pastorale canit signum cornuque recurvo/ Tartaream intendit vocem," 512-4), the poem once again presents a symbol of the deep connections between seemingly idyllic places and the forces of violence.

The harmonious vision of the Tiber, then, is a misleading introduction to the land of Latinus, and as such it appears to reestablish the narrative pattern of the first part of the poem. It is not such an inappropriate introduction to Pallanteum, however. Symbolically, the landing at the Tiber introduces the Roman future, though little of this future can be seen in the action of the poem. The one episode which does bring something of this ideal future into the poem is Aeneas'

⁸⁸This interpretation has gained a great deal from that of Eugene Vance (although he comes to different conclusions) in "Sylvia's Pet Stag: Wilderness and Domesticity in Virgil's Aeneid," Arethusa 14 (1981), 127-37.

visit to Evander's kingdom. At its beginning, the journey to Evander's kingdom is surrounded in mystery. The dream vision of Tiberinus represents a beneficent connection between Aeneas and the landscape of Italy, and is the first example of an idyllic natural scene which does not prove to be destructive.⁸⁹ The idyllic atmosphere is furthered by the calm which descends on the Tiber after the vision, so that there is no need for Aeneas' men to toil at the oars (VIII,86-9). The sense of wonder and mystery is beautifully captured by the description of the woods and the waves marvelling as the boats slide effortlessly over the water (91-3). The calm river scene with its shady trees and reflected green woods (95-6) seems the fulfillment of the idyllic landing at the mouth of the Tiber. Aeneas here moves in a world in which time seems suspended; symbolically he is moving towards the future.

This dream-like introduction helps to set Evander's kingdom outside of the main action of the poem.⁹⁰ Geographically it is distanced, and it is also distanced by the partly supernatural voyage which Aeneas and his men undertake to reach it. The sense of removal is further established when they reach Pallanteum, for they arrive on a day of ritual celebration. Aeneas is thus immersed in past history, while the episode itself also turns towards the future. Because of the

⁸⁹On the magical quality of Aeneas' trip upstream see Theodore W. Andersson, Early Epic Scenery: Homer, Virgil and the Medieval Legacy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 90-2.

⁹⁰On Book 8 this argument has benefited also from the aid of P.T. Eden's lengthy commentary, A Commentary on Book VIII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

mythical beginning of the voyage, because there is a timelessness to ritual celebrations, and because of the odd mixture of time schemes in the episode, Evander's kingdom is made to seem a timeless world set quite apart from the war in Latium.⁹¹ This timelessness intensifies the sense of geographical removal.

As Evander tells the history of his land, the reasons that this idyllic place has survived become clear. The golden ages, in Evander's version, were characterized in particular by the laws which Saturn gave to the race of tree-sprung men ("leges...dedit," 322). Evander's stress on the importance of laws stands in direct contrast to Latinus' insistence that his people never needed laws, and recalls not only Anchises' words in the underworld ("paci...imponere morem," VI,852), but the image on Aeneas' shield of Cato giving laws to the good ("secretosque pios, his dantem iura Catonem," 670). On the shield the picture of Cato and the good is balanced by the picture of Tartarus with Catiline trembling before the Furies (666-9). This division by law of the violent and the righteous not only symbolizes the importance of law and pietas in Roman values but also explains how the purging of the

⁹¹On the temporal scheme of Book 8, see Otis, pp. 330-42, who interprets the first day in Pallanteum as representing the past, the second day the present, and the third day (on which Aeneas receives the shield) the future. This scheme has its limitations, as the present argument tries to suggest, for all three of these levels at times are present. For a detailed treatment of the temporal schemes of Book 8, see Edward Vincent George, Aeneid VIII and the Aitia of Callimachus (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 70-88. A chart of the temporal scheme of Aeneid 8 is found on p. 74. George argues that Virgil follows Callimachus in mixing many different times together, but orders the relationship of these different time periods more carefully (and with reference to two particular historical periods) than Callimachus did. In the Aitia he finds no significant relationship between the time of the origin-story and the time of its telling (p. 75).

violent from the places of the blessed comes about. A similar kind of purging has taken place in Evander's land.

That Evander's reference to the laws brought by Saturn should be interpreted as a kind of purging is further supported by the story of Hercules and Cacus. Cacus symbolizes the evil and violent forces of the earth.⁹² He is described as "semihominis" (194); he is a monstrum (198) like those of the underworld. The opening description of his cave suggests a connection between Cacus and the underworld which is fully developed as his cave is torn open by Hercules:

at specus et Caci detecta apparuit ingens
regia, et umbrosae penitus patuere cavernae,
non secus ac si qua penitus vi terra dehiscens
infernās reseret sedes et regna recludat
pallida, dis invisā, superque immane barathrum
cernatur, trepidant immisso lumine Manes.
(VIII,241-6)

At once all Cacus' den, his monstrous castle, was uncovered and clear to view, and its shadowy recesses stood exposed; as if the earth through some convulsion had gaped apart, unlocking the deepest dwellings of the infernal world, and had flung wide open on the pallid Empire hated of the gods, till the horrifying abyss comes into view from above and ghosts shudder at the inrush of light.

Cacus stands for the violent chthonic forces which, throughout the poem, erupt in the midst of idyllic calm, and the purging of those forces is here shown to be the essential requirement for preserving

⁹²See G. Karl Galinsky, "The Hercules-Cacus Episode in Aeneid VIII," American Journal of Philology 87 (1966), 18-51. The argument presented above follows the general interpretation presented by Galinsky. Cacus' allegorical name makes this episode seem particularly emblematic. Virgil also intensifies the symbolic value of the story by making Cacus more than a man. According to Galinsky, p. 37, he was the first to do so.

such a calm.⁹³ This myth of a primal purging explains the existence of this idyllic world in which "hard" and "soft" primitivism blend to create an emblem of key Roman values.

Evander's kingdom is also purged of the eroticism which causes the downfall of Dido and of Amata and Turnus. In order to insure the peace of Evander's kingdom, Virgil clears it of any significant female figures. As in Elysium, so in Evander's kingdom filial love and piety, intensified in the special relationship of trust established between Aeneas and Pallas, replaces any heterosexual erotic ties. The intense emotional attachment of Aeneas to Pallas, so important in the ending of the poem, takes the place of any romantic attachment. That this substitution has taken place is implied by Aeneas' decision at Pallas' funeral to give the dead boy the two robes which Dido had woven for him (XI,72-5). In the ending of the poem, this emotional relationship proves to have a power similar to that of erotic attachments to evoke anger and cause irrational deeds; nonetheless, the removal of eroticism is a second chief cause of the idyllic calm of Evander's world. The degree to which eroticism is purged in Book 8 is made particularly clear by the love scenes between Vulcan (the father of Cacus) and Venus which contrast so dramatically with the poor, humble and unerotic world of Evander. As Venus fondles Vulcan in a soft embrace, he catches the accustomed flame ("solitam flammam,"

⁹³Galinsky, in "The Hercules-Cacus Episode," provides many more examples of images which connect Cacus and the underworld. The description of Cacus as his cave is torn open also resembles the description of the howling beasts of Circe (compare VIII,248 and VII,16), a parallel which supports the view that in conquering Cacus, Hercules is conquering the forces of darkness which have been shown to be disruptive elsewhere in the poem.

389) as Dido does at the arrival of Aeneas (IV,23). No one in Pallanteum catches on fire with love.⁹⁴

In the kingdom of Evander, then, Virgil presents an embodiment of the world of the counterplot, a purged pastoral set aside geographically and temporally from the main action.⁹⁵ It is presented as a place of myth, of song, and later of lament; in its humility, it has a weakness and a frailty suggested by the fate of Pallas. In its distance from the war, in the value laid by Evander and his people on art, ritual, myth and religion (all connected in the worship of Hercules), in the idyllic rural setting (emphasized by the near-mythic voyage of Aeneas to reach it), in the examples of poverty and humility, and in the sense of community created in the scenes of hymn singing and sacrifice, Pallanteum resembles scenes depicted in the Homeric counterplot. Like Odysseus, then, Aeneas goes to the world of the counterplot to find allies for his final fight. For all that he may learn in Pallanteum about austerity and humility (see VIII,362-8), Aeneas is no more an Arcadian himself than Hercules was.

⁹⁴In being purged both of the violence and chthonic power represented by Cacus and of eroticism, Evander's kingdom resembles Elysium. Otis argues, p. 311, that the parallelism between Aeneid VI and VIII is essential to a full understanding of VIII. See also Galinsky, "The Hercules-Cacus Episode," p. 20, and W.A. Camps, "A Note on the Structure of the Aeneid," Classical Quarterly, n.s. 4 (1954), 214-5, who also argues for a close connection between VI and VIII.

⁹⁵See M.C.J. Putnam, The Poetry of the Aeneid, pp. 105-50, and especially pp. 122-34, where Putnam argues that Evander's kingdom represents a pastoral kingdom into which Aeneas withdraws to receive new light and to absorb new values. The interpretation offered above is generally consonant with Putnam's except in its disagreement with Putnam's claim that Aeneas is changed dramatically by his visit to Pallanteum.

As the story of Pallas suggests, the distancing of Evander's kingdom is not complete. Pallas does go off to war and is killed, and thus in an important way the hopes of Pallanteum (and of Evander in particular) for the future are muted if not destroyed. As Turnus kills Pallas, he cries that he is repaying the Arcadians for having been hosts to Aeneas (X,491-5). As R.D. Williams points out, Turnus' use of the word hospitium recalls Dido's generous hospitality: "Aeneas seems destined to bring disaster to his hosts."⁹⁶ The wounding of the Italian landscape and the destruction of many of the Italian people thus also affects Pallanteum; symbolically, the losses of Italy are associated with the loss of Pallas himself, young, innocent, entrusted to Aeneas. Symbolically, then, Pallanteum is associated with the rest of Latium in suffering and in loss.

Nonetheless, Pallanteum is not destroyed by the war; it survives to become the future site of Rome. The geographical and temporal distancing has some effect; Virgil succeeds in protecting it from the war, but at the cost of setting it so far from the action that it becomes almost irrelevant to it. At the death of Pallas, Pallanteum becomes a place of lament, and the last vision of it in the poem is that of Evander crying for revenge and exclaiming "non vitae gaudia quaero/nec fas, sed nato manis perferre sub imos" ("I do not seek joy in life--nor would it be right--but to take the news to my son in the underworld below") (XI,180-1).⁹⁷ Evander can think only of the dead

⁹⁶R.D. Williams, II,353.

⁹⁷R.D. Williams, II,393.

and of the past; he is not part of the future world which Aeneas will create. Pallanteum seems more a place of weakness than of strength; the values it represents may be the values for which Aeneas is fighting, but they are not the values which Aeneas himself embodies.

Aeneas is more like Hercules than he is like a humble Arcadian. Hercules is pictured as being violently angry upon discovering Cacus' theft. Hearing the heifer call from inside of the cave, "Alcidae furiis exarserat atro/felle dolor" ("Hercules' indignation blazed forth in one flash of venomous black rage") (VIII,219-20). As he attacks the entrance of the cave, his fury again blazes forth: "ecce furens animis aderat Tirynthius" (VIII,228). Searching for the entrance, he is again described as being hot with rage ("fervidus ira," 230). Finally, as he bursts open the cave and sees Cacus, his temper flares once more: "non tulit Alcides animis, seque ipse per ignem/ praecipiti iecit saltu..." (256-7). When Aeneas kills Turnus, he too is infused with a violent anger: "furiis accensus et ira/terribilis" ("his fury kindled, and terrible in his rage") (XII,946-7). Aeneas claims that he is sacrificing Turnus in the name of Pallas, but the word "immolat" (949) recalls Aeneas' other human sacrifices and thus does not suggest a rational control behind the gesture. The poem stresses this point by mentioning Aeneas' rage again after the hero utters his last words in the poem: "hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit/fervidus" ("Saying this, and boiling with rage, he buried his blade full in Turnus' breast") (XII,950-1). Imagistically and symbolically, in rage as well as in effect, Aeneas is linked to Hercules

as Cacus is to Turnus.⁹⁸ Whatever the moral significance of Aeneas' last action, the poem represents the avenger or purger as having as much in common with those he destroys as with the innocent bystanders who benefit from his deeds. It seems arguable, then, that by the end of the Aeneid, the idyllic world of Pallanteum and the values it represents are no longer embodied in the central character of the poem, important as they may be for the future.⁹⁹

The geographical distancing, then, is only partially successful, but it is not the only way in which Pallanteum is distanced from the war. The most important way in which Virgil disassociates Pallanteum from the war is through a complex temporal distancing. Within the fiction, Pallanteum is represented metaphorically as a timeless realm, and Virgil intensifies this timeless quality through a narrative strategy which separates the plot and the counterplot. Book 8, as suggested above, appears to represent a merging of the plot and the counterplot whereby the hero, communing with a god, is taken to an idyllic world which transcends time through its destiny.

It is worth considering, however, how much Aeneas in fact understands of the sweeping picture of future greatness which is presented to him in the landscape of Pallanteum as well as on his shield. Al-

⁹⁸Galinsky, in "The Hercules-Cacus Episode," pp. 35-7 and 47-9, develops the connections between Cacus and Turnus. He also notes that "Turnus was a chthonian deity in southern Latium connected with fire," pp. 36-7.

⁹⁹See G. Karl Galinsky, "Pius Aeneas," in Aeneas, Sicily and Rome, pp. 3-61, on the legends of Aeneas. Before Virgil's treatment of the legend, pietas was not the outstanding characteristic of Aeneas; rather he was treated primarily as a great warrior.

though the book begins with the vision of Tiberinus and the mysterious glide up the river, both of which are characterized by a blending of plot and counterplot, in the course of the book a new version of the counterplot arises and begins to distinguish itself from the main plot.

The primary purpose of the story of Hercules' defeat of Cacus, for example, is to provide an aetiology of the annual festival of Hercules at the Ara Maxima and of the founding of the Ara Maxima itself. Of this future significance Evander has some inkling (VIII,271-2) but the chief value of the story can be gathered only by the poet and his Augustan readers. Aeneas is charmed by Pallanteum (311), but from Evander he learns only of its ancient history. References to Virgil's contemporary Rome and to the Augustan building project are made by the poet but this future greatness is felt by the characters only in an occasional vague sense of mystery and immanence. Thus in the walk through Pallanteum Aeneas is shown a grotto beneath a rock bearing the name of Lycaean Pan; the reader, however, is shown the Lupercal in its primitive state. The Lupercal, "the grotto of Faunus-Lupercus, was at the foot of the Palatine; it was restored by Augustus.... The Lupercalia in February was one of Rome's chief festivals...."¹⁰⁰ Of this Augustan significance of the grotto, Aeneas, of course, knows nothing.

As Aeneas and Evander reach the Capitol, Virgil's narrative strategy becomes more evident:

hinc ad Tarpeiam sedem et Capitolia ducit,
aurea nunc, olim silvestribus horrida dumis.
(VIII,347-8)

¹⁰⁰R.D. Williams, II,250.

From there he conducted him to Tarpeia's Place and the Capitol, which is now all gold, but was once wild and ragged, covered with woodland undergrowth.

Here Virgil reminds his readers that the true present tense is the Roman present shared by poet and readers. Aeneas and Evander know nothing of the golden Capitol, though Evander explains that the hill inspires awe and appears to be the dwelling place of a god (351-4). Evander and Aeneas can at most intuit the future greatness of the places they see; the poet's comments are directed only to the reader and do not represent any dramatic reality within the world of the characters. The readers can contrast the simple origins of Rome with its golden greatness in the Augustan age; seeing this contrast they can also notice that the city most like Augustan Rome is Lavinium, which also is described as having some Roman customs. This is not a contrast which has significance within the world of Aeneas.¹⁰¹

Virgil's narrative strategy has a playfulness here. He describes Evander and Aeneas as seeing that which only the readers of the poem can see: "passinque armenta videbant/ Romanoque Foro et lautis mugire Carinis" ("and they saw cattle all about, lowing in the Roman Forum and the brilliant Carinae") (VIII,360-1).¹⁰² These lines exemplify the trope of metalepsis, whereby, in the midst of a phrase, the poet shifts fictional levels of the poem. Aeneas and Evander see only cattle lowing through the grassy meadows of the small city of Pallanteum; the reader realizes that these cattle are lowing in the sites

¹⁰¹For historical allegory in Aeneid VIII, see Gerhard Binder, Aeneas und Augustus: Interpretationen zum 8. Buch der Aeneis (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1971).

¹⁰²This is the Loeb translation by H.R. Fairclough.

which one day will be occupied by the Roman Forum and the elegant quarter of Carinae, a fashionable area in Virgil's time.¹⁰³ The contrast between the current riches and elegance of Rome and its austere origins is again a comparison made by the reader and the poet, not by the characters.

In these proleptic references to Augustan Rome, which now turn out to be the true present of the poem, Virgil establishes a special relation with his readers: it is the readers who can fully understand the connection between myth and history which he creates in Book 8, it is they who must live by the values which the poem embodies, and it is they for whom the lengthy meditation on the meaning of Roman history can have the most significance. The poetic power of Book 8 comes almost entirely from Virgil's direct and indirect evocations of the Roman future, of which the characters have only a vague understanding. This strange interplay of temporal schemes also has the effect of protecting Pallanteum and setting it aside from the ravages of the war: metaphorically speaking, one might say that Pallanteum is set in the future; or, from the point of view of Roman readers, it takes on the quality of a discreet flashback. That which is most important about Pallanteum is set in a different time from the action of the war.

Whether or not the many proleptic comments of Virgil are seen as setting much of Book 8 in the future, the number of comments by the narrator directed solely towards the readers certainly increase dramatically in this book. Virgil's turn to the readers in Book 8 distances

¹⁰³R.D. Williams, II,251.

the action in which Aeneas is involved while intensifying and redefining the counterplot itself. As Aeneas withdraws into this protected idyllic world, the narrator begins to separate the plot and the counterplot and to direct more and more comments over Aeneas' head to his readers. The effect of this narrative strategy is to merge in the readers' minds the idealized rural world and the references in the counterplot to future Roman history. By associating Pallanteum with the future as represented in an idealizing counterplot, Virgil protects it even more completely from the action of the war in Latium. Whatever the fragility of the fictional world of Pallanteum itself, this idyllic place and the values it represents are separated from the action of the poem by being set in a separate counterplot.

Seeing the way in which the narrator's proleptic historical comments constitute a part of the counterplot helps to suggest how separate the poem's historical scheme is from the main heroic action. The characters have little knowledge of this larger order in which their lives take on a new meaning. Aeneas knows that he has a great destiny, but he seems to have only a faint idea of what that destiny will mean.

Venus' presentation of the shield appears to constitute a moment in which the plot and the counterplot are once again merged, for like the shield of Achilles, the shield of Aeneas forms part of the counterplot. Like Achilles, however, Aeneas does not seem to be changed by the pictures represented on the shield. He is happy to receive the gift and sensible of the honor which it represents, and he does examine the carved scenes (VIII,617-22). But Virgil adds nothing to suggest that he understands anything of what the shield conveys. He says that Aeneas admires the scenes and enjoys them although he is ignorant of

them: "rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet" (VIII,730). Ignarus in this context is a strong word; it means "ignorant," "unacquainted," "inexperienced," or "unaware." Aeneas should not be so ignorant of the scenes on the shield, for he has met many of the characters before in his father's catalogue of the future leaders of Rome. But there too Virgil leaves his readers in doubt about how much Aeneas understands of what he sees. The only reaction that he attributes directly to Aeneas is not one which suggests any real knowledge of what the future will mean: he tells us that Achises "incenditque animum famae venientis amore" ("kindled his imagination with a passion for the glory to be") (VI,889). Aeneas admires ("miratur," 730) the shield, just as he admires ("miratur," 310) the sights of Pallanteum, but in both cases he has only a vague sense of the significance of what he sees.

From the evidence Virgil provides, it seems fair to conclude that Aeneas does not understand much of what his shield represents, and that the pictures on it form a part of the counterplot. When he lifts on his shoulders the glory and destiny of his descendants, it is quite explicitly not his own. In fact, his heroism lies particularly in his willingness to shoulder an unknown destiny, to act heroically in the face of ignorance. Even if it is assumed that Aeneas understands more of his destiny than this interpretation implies, the picture of Roman virtues on the shield clearly has a greater significance for the readers than it can have for Aeneas; the readers are the only ones who understand these historical representations in full. In this section of the poem Virgil describes few of Aeneas' reactions and so shifts his emphasis towards his readers. Even if Aeneas is interpreted as understanding some of the images on his shield, Virgil makes it clear from his shift

of emphasis and from the small amount of information that he gives about Aeneas' reactions that it is the understanding of the readers which is most important and most complete.

If the shield of Aeneas is a part of the Virgilian counterplot, it is important to establish what it represents, for the knowledge of history that informs it is not accessible to the characters. The shield makes certain claims about the nature of Roman history which the characters in the poem cannot understand and certainly cannot verify. It has three principal arguments. The first is a moral argument about the nature of Roman history and Roman society; it suggests that values such as fides, pietas, and severitas have led to Roman success.¹⁰⁴ It suggests that Roman history has been characterized by faithfulness to gods and laws; early examples of the making of a covenant ("feodera," 641) and of Roman devotion to freedom (648) show how far back these values can be traced. Each of the scenes from Roman history deserves to be analyzed in more detail, and many scholars have undertaken this task.¹⁰⁵ But the general moral argument can be understood by examining the two scenes in the underworld. The shield does not deny the violence in Roman history, but it argues that there is a moral order. As in the underworld pictured on the shield the good and the evil are divided, and the evil punished, so in the course of Roman history the virtuous have been victorious. The moral argument of the shield, in

¹⁰⁴This interpretation is indebted to that presented by Gordon Williams in a lecture on November 16, 1979.

¹⁰⁵See Otis, pp. 341-2; Putnam, The Poetry of the Aeneid, pp. 147-50; Binder, pp. 150-281, for some examples.

short, sums up Augustan values and the Augustan theory of history.

Its most Augustan section is its portrayal in the three central scenes of Augustus' victory at Actium. This battle, the final victory of the pious over the forces of wildness and exoticism, is pictured as a purging of the multiform, the ambivalent and the monstrous (698). The victory of Augustus is thus represented as the last in a series of great battles in Roman history in which the barbaric, the wild and the monstrous are conquered, a series which begins with Hercules' victory over Cacus and includes Aeneas' over Turnus. Augustus' triple triumph thus serves as the victory procession and celebration not only for the victory at Actium but for all the Roman victories over the barbarian, and it provides the only victory celebration for Aeneas within the poem.

Besides representing the Augustan moral program, the shield of Aeneas makes a more general point about Roman history. It argues that Roman history has a clear order and a meaning; all of the past is presented as leading up to the reestablishment of peace and pietas under Caesar Augustus. A corollary of this grand, ordered view of historical progress is that there is a direct link between Aeneas and the pictured scenes of Roman greatness. Aeneas is told that this link will exist, but it holds only a shadowy meaning for him; he is told that history will take on an order and a shape, but he can only glimpse the beginnings of the shape of time. In many ways the values which motivate Aeneas are prototypes of Augustan values, and although he may fail to live up to them, he can at least be said to understand them. But he has no assurance that these values explain or give order to Roman history; he cannot know that future Roman success will depend on them. His own life story provides little evidence for thinking that they

will prevail. The shield thus represents a certainty about the meaning of history, and hence about its importance, which Aeneas can never have. While for the readers Augustus' victory celebration stands for the celebration of Aeneas' victory which is left out of the poem, for Aeneas it cannot have this significance. The readers see that his actions form part of a larger pattern which gives them meaning; he senses only the vague outlines of this pattern.

The third argument of the shield is an aesthetic one, for, like many scenes in the Homeric counterplot, the scenes on the shield distance the events they portray by treating them as aesthetic objects. Throughout the description of the shield Virgil takes care to remind his readers of its status as an artistic object. Like Homer, he frequently refers to the materials of the shield (for example, in 659-60), and he also gives the scenes a visual clarity so that the reader can easily imagine them. Even Aeneas is said to be pleased by the images of these deeds ("imagine gaudet," 730), and Virgil emphasizes that the shield is the sort of art work which pleases the eye.

The description of the dolphins in the sea, which flows among the historical scenes and surrounds the centerpiece, can stand as an example of the aestheticizing quality of the shield:

haec inter tumidi late maris ibat imago
aurea, sed fluctu spumabant caerulea cano,
et circum argento clari delphines in orbem
aequora verrebant caudis aestumque secabant.
(VIII, 671-4)

Between the scenes in a broad band ran a representation in gold of the swelling sea, but with the surface showing blue, and white wave-crests of foam. Around, circling dolphins, shining white in silver, cut through the surge, sweeping the sea's surface with their tails.

Here Virgil is concerned not only to remind his readers of the mater-

ials of which the shield is made but also to show how these flowing scenes of sea and dolphins set each scene apart and emphasize the centerpiece ("in orbem," presumably refers to a circle made around the central scenes). This background organizes and unifies all the pictures into a single patterned whole.¹⁰⁶

Virgil's treatment of the shield as aesthetic object is an argument in itself: it suggests that the order of history is like an aesthetic order, the creator of this order being Jupiter or Fate itself (in the case of the shield, Vulcan is the artist, of course, but he is "haud vatam ignarus," 627; he has divine vision and can see into the design of the future). Like an aesthetic order, then, history can be analyzed and interpreted; those who look at it from the outside can perceive its patterns of meaning. The gods view human history from just such a distant perspective, and thus can easily see the meaning of the whole story. Because he sets the historical endpoint in his own era, Virgil and his readers look back over the sweep of his history from a similarly distant perspective. One major effect of the Virgilian counterplot, then, is to aestheticize and thereby distance the events of history and to bring the resulting sense of an ordered

¹⁰⁶In the two other places in the Aeneid in which Virgil uses the image of dolphins, they also form part of a context in which events are aestheticized and removed from the more rigid constraints of reality. The first example is the simile of the dolphins in the lusus Troiae (V,588-94), treated above in section 3. The second reference occurs in Book 9. When the voice of Cybele bursts through the air and tells the nymphs in the shape of boats to free themselves, the boats are said to dive to the water's depths like dolphins (IX,119). The dolphins are associated with the moment of liberation; they are used to characterize a moment in which normal causality is transcended by the power of Cybele.

whole into the poem.

A distanced perspective on the events of the main narrative is thus added to the poem by the Virgilian counterplot just as it is by the counterplot in the Iliad. It represents a point of view which the characters do not have on the actions in which they participate. In this way the Aeneid divides itself into two parts, the story of the individuals and the larger picture of which the individual actions form a part. In the last books of the Aeneid, as the counterplot becomes more and more separate from the plot, there is little overlap between these two parts of the Virgilian epic plan.

The distanced perspective of Virgil is also shared by his readers, to whom the shield is particularly addressed. (The address to the reader in line 691 ("credas") only dramatizes the special relation between author and reader.) The shield, like the other catalogues of Roman history, creates a sense of community between author and readers, for it shows how the actions in the poem are connected to the Augustan present. In its emphasis on this larger community which by its existence provides a certain solace for individual loss, the Virgilian counterplot follows the lead of the Iliadic counterplot. Virgil also uses the counterplot to dramatize the fact that the main character of the poem is cut off from this community. The consolations it offers (represented in part by the promise of the greatness of his descendants) are only a remote comfort to Aeneas. They do not enter his world, and they do not change the circumstances in which he must live.

(v) The Virgilian Counterplot

The Virgilian counterplot takes three main forms, all of which overlap considerably. The counterplot can function primarily to aestheticize the experience narrated in the main plot; in this case, the counterplot distances the readers from the perspective of the characters. The counterplot can also present the historical vision of the Aeneid; in this case, the manipulations of the gods, which insure the fulfillment of the historical pattern, come into the scope of the counterplot. Lastly, the counterplot can become a voice of lament, in which values and attitudes held by the poet are contrasted with the scenes portrayed. This third function of the counterplot is particularly evident in the Italian books of the Aeneid. In each of its forms the counterplot represents a point of view on the action of which the characters are ignorant; it brings into the poem meanings and interpretations which alter the tone and significance of the action for the readers but not for the characters, and thereby dramatizes their isolation from the larger certainties which the poem embodies.

An absolute distinction between plot and counterplot is never clearly maintained by Virgil. As the first three sections of this chapter indicate, he begins the poem using an Odyssean narrative strategy by which he merges the plot and counterplot. In the first six books examples of a completely separate counterplot occasionally emerge; of these the most prominent is Jupiter's catalogue of Roman history (I, 257-96), the most optimistic survey of history in the poem but one of which no human character is made aware. Nonetheless, in the first half of the Aeneid, the narrative strategy which Virgil adopts

is generally one of merging plot and counterplot, and consequently narrative doubling and ambivalence of imagery and mood characterize most of the episodes.

In the second half of the poem, by contrast, and particularly in the course of Book 8, Virgil does separate the plot and the counterplot to a substantial degree, and his narrative strategy in the last four books of the poem can no longer be characterized as narrative doubling. The division is never absolute, for Virgil somewhat mitigates the bleakness of the Italian war by occasionally allowing his characters to glimpse the larger perspective and powers represented in the counterplot. Nonetheless, in the main, the counterplot remains separate from the plot in the last four books of the poem, and an interpretation of the ending must take this division into account. Before the effect of Virgil's dissociation of plot and counterplot can be determined, the major functions of the counterplot in the Aeneid must be briefly surveyed.

In the first case, the counterplot often serves to aestheticize and thereby distance the experience narrated in the main plot. The way in which Iris transforms the death of Dido into an aesthetic event figured as a liberation exemplifies the aestheticizing function of the counterplot. The shield of Aeneas also illustrates this function, for it treats history itself as an ordered whole which the poet and readers, distanced in perspective, can analyze and understand. An example from the last third of the poem, the story of the deaths of Nisus and Euryalus, provides another example of the way the counterplot aestheticizes violent action.

Even before these two "fortunate" lovers meet their deaths their story

is shifted in mood away from a plainer heroic narration towards the pathetic and aestheticizing tone of the ending by the poet's prophetic warning (IX,312-3) and by his partly allegorical treatment of the shining helmet and the woods in which Euryalus is caught (373-4; 381-5; 392). The description of Euryalus' death, like the descriptions of Gorgythion's death on which it is partly based, depends on a simile of the counterplot:

volvitur Euryalus leto, pulchrosque per artus
it cruor inque umeros cervix conlapsa recumbit:
purpureus veluti cum flos succisus aratro
languescit moriens, lassove papavera collo
demisere caput pluvia cum forte gravantur.
(IX,433-7)

he rolled writhing in death, the blood spread over the lovely limbs, and his neck, relaxing, sank on his shoulder. He was like a bright flower shorn by the plough, languishing and dying, or poppies weighted by a sudden shower of rain, drooping their heads on tired necks.

The striking compression in this description, and the double literary reference (to Homer and to Catullus) transform the violence in the scene and make Euryalus' death seem beautiful.¹⁰⁷ The poet seems

¹⁰⁷The Catullan subtext (XI,22-4) represents a situation quite different from that of Nisus and Euryalus. The flower stands for the love itself which the speaker claims has been destroyed by the lecherous activities of the girl. The tone is ironic (the irony possibly even directed towards the speaker himself) and even slightly cynical. After the hyperbolic imagery of the first four stanzas, and the cynicism of the fifth, the lyrical ending of the poem enacts the passing of love by reminding the readers of the delicacy and understatement typical of imagery in a genuine love lyric. According to this interpretation, the flower stands for the lover, and for the type of imagery which can capture love, both of which are cut off as the poem ends. In his echo of the final image of Catullus' poem, Virgil may be providing a sentimental answer to its cynical speaker. Now it is the life of the beloved himself which is cut off like the flower, as if to suggest that the only way in which love can be made to last is by death itself.

In describing the death of Pallas, another scene in which the

momentarily to turn away from the telling of an heroic tale towards a lyricism which intensifies the pathos. The narrator's stress on the beauty of Euryalus' limbs as the blood runs over them also intensifies the pathos while distancing the scene by making it a part of an aesthetic whole. Nisus is not struck by the beauty of his friend's death, as he rushes to his own destruction. The point of view which can reveal beauty in destruction is far from the point of view of those being destroyed.¹⁰⁸

Virgil's apostrophe to the lovers (446-9) removes him even further from a perspective they might share. According to the apostrophe, the only happiness to be hoped for is to die with one's beloved, and they are lucky to have found such happiness. It is unlikely that Nisus, as he rushes to his death, thinks that he has found happiness. The attitude expressed in the apostrophe is quite different not only from that of Nisus but also from that of Aeneas or of Virgil himself in his treatment of Aeneas and his heroic destiny.¹⁰⁹

death of a young man is aestheticized, Virgil also alludes to Catullus. Not only do Aeneas' last words to Pallas echo Catullus' lament at his brother's tomb (CI,10), but the image of the flower is reminiscent of Catullus XI,22ff and LXII,43ff. On Virgil's use of Catullan subtexts, see R.D. Williams, II,381.

¹⁰⁸This interpretation has been influenced by the interpretation of W.R. Johnson, but diverges from it in the claim that the narrator's point of view is quite distinct from that of the characters. See W.R. Johnson, pp. 66, for the view that "we see the death of Euryalus through the eyes of a narrator whose vision is colored by the terror and the passion of Nisus."

¹⁰⁹The degree of Virgil's sincerity in this apostrophe is hard to judge. Presumably he is sincere at some level, yet his statement is melodramatic and self-dramatizing. W.R. Johnson sums up the mixed reactions which the passage calls forth:

We may feel sympathy for the young men...; or we may

Throughout the last four books of the poem Virgil makes frequent comments by which he lets the readers know in advance what will happen. He announces the certainty of Camilla's death, for example, before presenting it, just as he predicts the end of Nisus' and Euryalus' exploit long before that end is reached. These proleptic comments also form part of the counterplot and indicate its aestheticizing function, for they distance the readers from the events being described by reminding them that all the action forms part of a larger ordered whole, the plot of which is already determined. They increase the pathos of the scenes, for the readers know better than the characters the significance of each of their deeds. The characters neither see themselves as pathetic nor see the larger pattern to which their actions contribute. They do not pity themselves in the way that Virgil pities them. Their point of view is more limited, more dignified, and lacking in the consolations of the counterplot.

These examples show how the counterplot removes the readers from experiencing the bleakness of the heroic world as Aeneas or others know it. Nisus and Euryalus do not interpret their own experience as a semi-allegorical morality tale which shifts in its last moments into a slightly macabre love lyric. The readers are distanced from the emo-

decide that Nisus and Euryalus have been deliberately sentimentalized and that the Doloneia has been carefully travestied in order to stress the nature of vainglory and to challenge the foundations of the epic sensibility.... the death of Euryalus...signals a retreat from Homeric mimesis by its mannered conflation of Homeric imagery and Catullan imagery, and it annihilates the possibility of our finding in these deaths a tragic statement about the necessity that governs human existence... (p. 62).

tions of despair and fear which the characters feel, for the readers see the larger significance of the action. In contrast to the characters, the poet and his readers see the events of the epic as part of the larger schemes of Roman history; they have an understanding of the action similar to that of Jupiter as he unrolls the future history of Rome in Book 1.

The presentation of an historical vision, the second function of the counterplot, is thus closely allied to its aestheticizing effect. The point of view of the gods, which the poet and his readers partly share, puts all the events of Roman history in focus and gives them order and meaning. The divine perspective makes possible the aestheticizing of experience, and, in particular, the aestheticizing of violence, for from violent events it creates an artistic order which allows the readers to learn from the violent events of the past. This dimension of the poem is not available to the characters, however. History, or at least the grand Augustan theory of history, is the counterplot, as the poem shows that this grand scheme depends on the aestheticizing perspective of the poet or the gods.

To describe the counterplot (and the theory of history it dramatizes) as creating an aesthetic order out of the violent events of the past is to suggest that the Aeneid itself may have a double structure resembling that of the moment Dido falls in love. The main plot depicts painful, chaotic and often destructive events in which the limits or dangers of love, the weakness of moral values in the face of passion or violence, and human mortality are prominent motifs. The counterplot, in contrast, suggests that the values championed by the poem will in the course of time give order to history and that the individual can

find comfort in the longevity of his or her line and the historical significance of his or her actions.

In the moment in which Dido falls in love, the idyllic version of experience appears to be a betrayal, a cover for the violence of the primary version. The counterplot, in other words, does not appear in this instance to represent a reality, but seems to be a wish or mask which disguises the degree of horror represented by Cupid's poisoning of Dido in the main narrative. The ambivalence about the truth of the idyllic version derives from the narrative doubling in the episode. In spite of the apparent division into a plot and a counterplot, the narrative strategy is characterized by a blending of these two strains because the two seem to represent two versions of one event. Throughout the first half of the poem, this blending, resulting in ambivalent imagery and an apparently inescapable duality in experience, is the dominant mode of narration.

If the analogy to the double structure of the moment of Dido's poisoning holds true, perhaps the entire counterplot should similarly be viewed as a mask for or a disguise of the historical horror presented in the main narrative. Does the tension between the plot and the counterplot bring to the Aeneid as a whole the kind of ambivalence figured as doubleness in Book 1? The recent critical history of the poem suggests that many readers find it to be characterized by a discomfort with the Augustan historical scheme which on another level it celebrates. There is little to indicate, however, that Virgil sought to conclude his poem ambivalently. Unlike in the story of Dido and Cupid, in the fiction of the Aeneid, the plot and counterplot do not represent two versions of one event. For the most part, they des-

cribe quite separate events. Whenever the counterplot is kept quite separate from the events of the main narrative, there seems to be little question of Virgil's intention to represent its claims as valid in their own sphere. Virgil's references to the landmarks of Augustan Rome, for example, are seriously intended to point to the glory of Roman accomplishments. Whatever strain may exist between the plot and counterplot in the Aeneid, Virgil accords a serious respect to Augustan values and to the Augustan interpretation of history. The difficulty he presents, according to the argument presented here, lies rather in finding a way to reconcile the two versions of experience represented in the plot and counterplot.

In the course of the last third of the poem, Virgil separates the plot and counterplot more completely than he does in earlier episodes, and by the ending of the poem he no longer seems able to find a very convincing way of relating the two. Before the degree of separation which he does achieve is considered, the third function of the counterplot, that of lament, must briefly be presented.

As many readers have remarked, Virgil's voice of lament becomes stronger and stronger as the poem progresses. He laments, as Adam Parry eloquently points out, the destruction brought about by historical progress, particularly the loss of the pastoral or idyllic world of primitive Italy and of those characters most clearly rooted in that world.¹¹⁰ The values of this idyllic world (especially those represented in Pallanteum) are enshrined by the poem in an idealized future,

¹¹⁰See Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Virgil's Aeneid," p. 110.

but many of its immediate representatives are killed in the course of the war. He also laments that this idyllic world can no longer be represented as part of the dramatic reality of his fictional Latium at the end of the poem. He regrets the loss of connection between the two versions of experience represented by the plot and counterplot.

The many similes and descriptions which fill the catalogue of Italian forces in Book 7 exemplify the way the counterplot can become a vehicle of lament. As the idyllic Italian world disappears in the main plot, Virgil resurrects it in the counterplot. This resurrection is exemplified in his comments on Umbro (VII,753-60). The thorough analysis of these lines presented by Adam Parry may be supplemented by three points. First, Virgil's evocation (emotionally intensified by apostrophe and anaphora) of a landscape which weeps over the death of a man is a pastoral evocation. It depends on the pastoral convention of a sympathetic landscape. In the apostrophe, Virgil's love of the Italian landscape merges with a desire to suggest a deeper harmony between man and nature than that which is evidenced in the main story. The pathetic fallacy in the counterplot, not rendered literally in the fiction, represents no threat or dangerous ambivalence. Secondly, the pastoral evocation of the weeping landscape and the proleptic announcement of Umbro's fate form part of the counterplot. The characters are not thinking regretfully of their ties to the land, nor do they foresee their deaths. The proleptic lament, as all of Virgil's proleptic laments, increases the reader's sense of an aesthetic design being completed. Thirdly, although the lament may represent a personal view, it is not, as Parry argues, private. As a part of the counterplot, it is understood by the readers and valued by them. Not offering any con-

solation to the characters involved, it nevertheless changes the readers' perception of the poem's meaning and gives a humanizing touch to the vision of historical progress which it embodies.

Throughout the catalogue of Italian forces, similes and descriptions in the counterplot draw together images of an idyllic natural world with occasional pastoral and mythic evocations. The treatment of Camilla, for example, blends the physical strength and hardiness of the Italians with the "ethereal grace of a nymph of Diana...and the remoteness of a mythical age."¹¹¹ Camilla unites the tougher qualities of the Italians with the pastoral strain evoked throughout the catalogue: this combination is beautifully summed up in the description of her weapon which also ends the catalogue: "pastoralem praefixa cuspidem myrtum" ("a shepherd's myrtle-staff with a lance's head") (VII,817). The description of Camilla as able to walk on blades of corn without bruising the ears makes her seem like a spirit of nature. The cumulative effect of such imagery is to contrast the world of war in the main narrative with the image of a pastoral or mythic Italy in the counterplot. In keeping with his presentation of the war in Latium as a civil war, Virgil does not limit the evocation of a lost idyllic world to his treatment of the Italians. Trojans too are given a rural background; rural similes comparing warriors to scenes of calm in nature typify the treatment of both sides.¹¹² By evoking a peace-

¹¹¹Margaret Taylor, p. 273.

¹¹²See for example IX,672-4 and 679-82 (Pandarus and Bitias); X,189-93 (story of Cycnus); X,803-8 (Aeneas); XI,67-71 (Pallas); and XI,456-8 (the Laurentians). The loss of an idyllic world is also

ful rural world in the counterplot, these similes lament the irrelevance of that world in time of war.

In the last four books Virgil turns to the counterplot to dramatize the destructiveness of the war more rarely than might be expected. The majority of rural or natural similes in these books are not similes of the counterplot, for they do not establish a contrast between the scene they depict and the war. Not only does he separate the counterplot from the plot more completely in these books than in earlier books, but he diminishes the amount of space devoted to the counterplot.

The degree to which the plot and counterplot have been divided in the final four books can be seen in a brief summary of how rarely the characters are given a glimpse of the divine manipulations or reconciliations. In these last books human characters usually recognize the action of a god only after he or she has disappeared. For example, when Juno "saves" Turnus from the battle by creating the phantom Aeneas, Turnus never understands what happened. When the image disappears and he is left on the ship in the middle of a storm, Turnus perceives that the gods are somehow responsible for the position in which he finds himself; nevertheless he remains "ignarus rerum ingratusque salutis" ("mystified by his plight and little grateful for his escape") (X,666).

The human characters know slightly more in the case of Apollo's

suggested in the two similes which describe Aeneas and Pallas as shepherds (X,405-9, and XII,587-92). On the simile comparing Aeneas to a shepherd smoking out bees, see W.S. Anderson, "Pastor Aeneas," pp. 10-15.

descent to warn Ascanius to stay out of the war after his first success. No one recognizes Apollo in his disguise as Butes (IX,646-7), but as he vanishes into the air, they discover his divinity:

agnovere deum proceres divinaque tela
Dardanidae pharetramque fuga sensere sonantem.
(IX,659-60)

But some Dardan chieftains recognized the God, for they heard the rattle of his quiver as he sped away and knew the divine weapons.

In this case the mortals understand something of the divine action, but only after it has ended. While this episode resembles that of the appearance of Venus to Aeneas in Book 1, there the goddess identifies herself slightly earlier in the scene and Aeneas is thus granted a vision of her before she departs. The general pattern of Book 1 is now intensified: in the last books, the god is known, if at all, only as he or she departs.

As these examples suggest, Virgil does not completely separate the counterplot and plot in these last four books. He veers away from such an austere conclusion. Two further examples, in which plot and counterplot briefly merge, suggest that Virgil did not wish to dissociate his main story completely from the divine sanctions and explanations of fate presented in the counterplot. When Aeneas is wounded in Book 12, Iapyx' knowledge of the silent art of healing (XII,397) is insufficient to cure him, and Venus decides to come to the rescue. She plucks from Ida a stalk of dittany, described as a natural cure for wounds (XII,414-5). Brought by the power of Venus, the herb is both natural and supernatural at once, and it momentarily brings to the battlefield the world of the counterplot. Venus secretly puts this herb, along with some ambrosia to give the mixture

an immortal touch, into the water that Iapyx uses to wash Aeneas' wound. Suddenly all the pain disappears (421-2). As romance briefly enters his world, Aeneas leaps up, his strength renewed: "novae rediere in pristina vires" ("Aeneas' strength, fresh as of old, returned to him") (XII,424). While Iapyx immediately recognizes that some god must have cured Aeneas, there is no evidence that Aeneas concurs. He excitedly rushes off to war after saying a quick farewell to Ascanius: "disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem,/ fortunam ex alijs" ("From me, my son, you may learn what is valour and what is strenuous toil: as for what good fortune is, others must teach you that") (XII,435-6). While most readers would agree that Aeneas' life is not generally filled with "good fortune," these words are surprising coming from one who has just been miraculously cured. Nonetheless, since he is cured and does return to battle, the episode can be interpreted as an instance in which the plot and counterplot merge again briefly.

Juturna's efforts on her brother's behalf provide a second example of a brief merging of plot and counterplot in the ending of the poem. During much of the time that Turnus is accompanied by his sister, he does not appear to recognize her. But eventually he tells her that he has recognized her from the first (XII,632-4). Neither her presence nor his recognition of her can change the course of events, however, as each of them acknowledges.

Although Turnus recognizes Juturna, the other characters do not, and she is the vehicle by which Virgil introduces doubt about the value of prophecy itself into the main narrative. Juturna causes a false portent to be put in the air to mislead the Italians:

dat signum caelo, quo non praesentius ullum
turbavit mentes Italas monstroque fefellit.
(XII, 245-6)

She displayed, aloft in the sky, a sign peculiarly calculated to confuse Italian minds and lead them astray by its meaning.

These words emphasize the characters' ignorance, and serve as a reminder that almost none of the divine acts, including the final reconciliation between Jupiter and Juno, are known by the characters.¹¹³

A few uncanny moments, then, like the healing of Aeneas and the last scenes between Juturna and Turnus, are present in the last books of the poem. They reassert the reality and significance of the counterplot. Virgil continues to remind the readers of the larger significance of the war, and occasionally the characters are given a glimpse of it. But by its ending, his poem suggests little relation between the lives of the characters and that larger significance.

The distance between plot and counterplot in these final books changes the presentation of Aeneas' character. The main plot lays personal responsibility for the outcome of events on his shoulders, and in his grief over the death of Pallas, he himself seems to accept it. The counterplot, in contrast, suggests that Aeneas cannot be held personally responsible for the outcome of events. It distances his story by treating it as part of a larger pattern. This treatment of one life as part of a larger aesthetic whole is ultimately dehumanizing, however,

¹¹³The nymphs who were boats provide an important example of the limitations of the interpretation suggested above, for their transformation, seen by many of the characters, represents an example of a complete merging of plot and counterplot in the last third of the poem. Gordon Williams suggests one way to explain the presence of the nymphs: Virgil, he argues, asks that the episode be read allegorically (see IX, 79).

so the separation of plot and counterplot towards the end of the poem gives Aeneas' actions a high seriousness which they could not have when plot and counterplot were merged. This separation also makes the readers somewhat suspicious of the grand historical scheme which excludes the possibility of individual heroic responsibility.

Another effect of the growing distance between plot and counterplot in the last third of the Aeneid is that the human characters, living in their limited world and largely ignorant of the historical scheme which makes sense of their suffering, take on a special dignity. The separation of plot and counterplot allows Virgil to dramatize the experience of living within an historical context but not being able to perceive or understand it. It allows him to present the pain caused by the limits of human vision. The unrelenting presentation of human ignorance and smallness in the scope of time dramatizes for the reader the austerity and harshness of the world in which the main plot of the poem unfolds.

The lack of genuine connection between the individual perspective and the poet's vision of history is mirrored, then, in the narrative strategy of separating plot and counterplot which emerges in the last third of the Aeneid. This separation means that the historical and moral certainties of the poem cannot be made dramatically real within the world of the characters. The poem clearly shows the gap between personal loss and historical order. Ultimately in the Aeneid there is no certain tie between the individual and the larger aesthetic or historical order.

The separation of plot and counterplot also allows the poet to make certain discoveries about the nature of the ideology he is com-

memorating without his having to abandon it. In Book 7, Virgil describes Lavinia, her hair and crown on fire, scattering fire throughout the palace, and he tells of the interpretation of this portent:

namque fore inlustrem fama fatisque canebant
ipsam, sed populo magnum portendere bellum.
(VII, 79-80)

The prophets announced that she would be renowned for her glorious destiny, but that for the nation this sign portended a terrible war.

As in Iliad, in the Aeneid a glorious destiny is linked to the necessity of war.

In the course of narrating the events of the war, the poet becomes more and more cognizant of the destruction glory brings. The vision of history which the poem incarnates treats an invasion as a necessity; it prophesies a felicitous blending of races, and lends its authority to the violence needed to bring this blending about. These facts become more and more apparent in the course of the war in Latium as the separation of the plot and counterplot becomes more complete. In these final books Virgil laments the necessity of history even as he portrays it. Dividing the plot and the counterplot provides him with the means of exposing that historical vision while still dramatizing it. "Incedunt victae longo ordine gentes, / quam variae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis" ("The conquered peoples move in long array, as diverse in fashion of dress and arms as in tongues") (VIII, 722-3).¹¹⁴ Virgil sees to the depth of the Augustan vision of history, and, while not abandoning it, reveals that it ultimately relies on finding a way to beautify violence and call it the means to peace.

¹¹⁴This is the Loeb translation by H.R. Fairclough.

CHAPTER FIVE

ALLEGORY, THE EPIC COUNTERPLOT AND NARRATIVE

DISTANCING IN SPENSER'S "FAERIE QUEENE"

"Oft cruel fights well pictured forth
do please."

Sir Philip Sidney, Astrophei and
Stella 34

"I ne wotte/Whether reioyce or weepe
for great constrainte."

Edmund Spenser, November Eclogue

(i) The Spenserian Counterplot

In Spenser's Faerie Queene the epic counterplot, defined as those images, beliefs and points of view significant in the poem but not available within the world of the characters, takes three main forms.¹ First, the story of the poet himself, the plot of the writing of the poem, forms part of the counterplot. This story, of which the characters are unaware, includes the proems, the invocations which begin many cantos, references to the landscape of Britain or to the politics of Spenser's time, the poet's many addresses to the readers and his allegorical and moral comments on the action. It also includes his

¹Quotations from the Faerie Queene and from other works by Spenser are taken from The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition, ed. E. Greenlaw, C.G. Osgood, F.M. Padelford, R. Heffner, et al., 11 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1932-66). References to the Faerie Queene by book, canto and stanza number will be included parenthetically within the text.

Ariostan addresses to his characters (III,viii,43, for example), since these do not enter the fiction or change the course of events.²

Secondly, epic similes which establish a contrast between tenor and vehicle and thereby bring into the narrative a perspective separate from that of the characters also form part of the counterplot. Often these similes can be associated with the poet's moral(izing) or interpretive comments, so this second category of the counterplot overlaps significantly with the first. Thirdly, places within the landscape of Faeryland which none of the characters visit form a part of the counterplot. These places may be set in etiological digressions, or they may exist on a separate level of the fiction from that of the principal characters. The most prominent example of this third category of the counterplot is the Garden of Adonis, but the fictional dwelling places of characters who are gods or like gods, dwelling places which are often set on a fictional level distinct (or largely distinct) from the primary story, also form part of the counterplot.

As the example of the Garden of Adonis suggests, the distinction between the primary story and the counterplot is never absolute in the Faerie Queene. Amoret was raised in the Garden of Adonis (III,vi,51-2), and although her upbringing under the guidance of Psyche has an allegorical ring to it which hints that she may not have visited the Garden of Adonis in quite the way that the poet and readers have, the Garden of Adonis is clearly a place partly accessible in the world of the

²For Spenser's use of an Ariostan narrator, see Robert M. Durling, The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965).

world of the characters. Similarly, Belpheobe seems to dwell in a separate level of the story from that of the principal characters, although her world occasionally overlaps with theirs. When Braggadochio and Trompart encounter her in the woods (in a parody of Aeneas' glimpse of Venus in Aeneid I), Trompart calls her a goddess (II,iii,33) and Spenser treats her appearance as a vision of a realm beyond theirs (II,iii,21-31). Timias too assumes she is "Angell or Goddesse" (III,v,35), though Belpheobe herself asserts that she is mortal:

Nor Goddesse I, nor Angell, but the Mayd,
And daughter of a woody Nympe....
We mortall wights, whose liues and fortunes bee
To commun accidents stil open layd,
Are bound with commun bond of frailtee....
(III,v,36)

Nonetheless Spenser treats her as a character set aside from others, and he likens her fair pavilion in the woods to an earthly paradise (III,v,40). When Timias and Arthur are finally reunited after Timias' sojourn with and loss of Belpheobe, Timias finds he cannot speak of his experience (VI,v,24). Timias has been to a separate world, and he cannot bring that world easily back into the principal story. His sojourn with her constitutes a partial merging of plot and counterplot.

Spenser's mythopoeic tableaux and landscapes (or seascapes) also form part of the counterplot. The bower of Cymoent, "deepe in the bottome of the sea" (III,iv,43), for example, is set outside the main narrative, although Marinell is taken there. Similarly, Proteus' hall "in the bottome of the maine" (III,viii,37) is located in the counterplot although Florimell spends fourteen cantos there. Both Proteus' hall and Cymoent's bower are places which the mortal characters cannot visit without the aid of the god or nymph, and so represent a realm of

action not part of the main narrative.

To describe the poet's moralizing comments about his art and about the action as a part of the counterplot is to suggest that the division between the counterplot and plot itself gives rise to allegory.³ The comments to the reader which claim one meaning for the action do not necessarily represent something intrinsic in it. Though many of the poet's comments find justification and fulfillment in the narrative, many do not. The division between plot and counterplot reveals that the characters themselves do not necessarily know themselves as embodiments of forces or virtues (though they may recognize that they are intensely devoted to one object or goal);⁴ they do not necessarily see themselves as being educated within one virtue or another. As an illustration of this distinction, Spenser's description of Malbecco's transformation into Gealosie is instructive: when a character is transformed into an allegorical image, he necessarily loses his

³Since "allegory" is necessarily divided within itself to some extent, it is not surprising that a structural division within the poem might complicate and extend this division. The interpretation of Spenser presented above is particularly indebted to Angus Fletcher's Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964). On allegory in the Faerie Queene, see also Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery: Some Medieval Books and their Posterity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 362-70, and A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). Paul Alpers, in The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), also suggests a division in the text by describing the way the poetry foregrounds rhetoric. The Spenserian stanza, as Alpers notes, is itself often divided: in the terms presented above, the alexandrines can often be described as belonging to the counterplot.

⁴On character in allegory as compulsive or "possessed," see Angus Fletcher, pp. 25-69 and 279-303.

status as human character. Spenser concludes Malbecco's story by commenting that "he has quight/Forgot he was a man, and Gealosie is hight" (III,x,60). Spenser begins the next canto by banishing Gealosie (III,xi,1) as if to stress that in transforming himself into Gealosie, Malbecco has moved onto a different fictional level, the fictional level of the abstractions and concepts with which the poet moralizes his song, and away from the level on which the characters live.

In many simpler allegories this division of character and allegorical symbolism does not exist. In Prudentius' Psychomachia, the characters are only what they stand for and certainly are aware of this symbolism. Even in an allegory as complex as Dante's Commedia, the characters understand something of their significance in the larger order of things. Spenser, however, combines fiction and fictional characters with allegory: the richness of his technique is that each infuses the other with meaning and subtlety. But this technique also brings a new ambivalence to allegory, an ambivalence created in large part through the tension between what the plot shows and what the counterplot claims.⁵

To the structural definition of the Spenserian counterplot a thematic one may also be added. Because Spenser's counterplot includes the story of the poet, it also is the home of the debate which runs throughout the Faerie Queene about the power and efficacy of art.

⁵For a stimulating, deconstructive approach to the problem of Spenser's narrative ambivalence, see Jonathan Goldberg, Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). Although Goldberg is concerned with the reversibility of the text, and with the threat (or fact) of endless substitution, he is not concerned with the kind of division in the text described above.

These questions are acted out in the plot, but the relevance of each episode to Spenser's own creation is made clear only in the counterplot.

The counterplot is also the location of some of Spenser's more self-conscious plays with genre as well as of the Neoplatonism partly embodied in his mythic places.⁶ Spenser protects his poetic visions by placing them in the counterplot. Since both Neoplatonism and the pastoral genre provided conventions of which a visionary poetry could avail itself, the descriptions of mythic places in the counterplot often draw on these conventions.

As these examples suggest, the Spenserian counterplot, like the counterplot in classical epic, serves to aestheticize and to distance the events of the main plot. The creation of the allegorical meaning of the poem, or the addition of the extra allegorical level of meaning to the symbolic meaning already created by the action, the direct references to the poetry and to the poet's hopes for his poetry all remind the readers of the poem's artifice. The self-consciousness of the poet, brought into the poem by the counterplot, creates a self-consciousness in the readers; like Virgil's, Spenser's counterplot creates a special community of understanding among the poet and his readers. As in the Aeneid, in the Faerie Queene, the reader's understanding is the most complete; the education of the reader is only partly paralleled by the development or discoveries of any individual character. It is the readers whom Spenser had in mind when he wrote to

⁶On Spenser's use of Neoplatonism see Robert Ellrodt, Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960).

Raleigh that "the generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous or gentle discipline."⁷

In its aestheticizing function, the counterplot contributes to the complexity and ambiguity of meaning in the Faerie Queene. Spenser's explanations of the action, usually at a higher degree of generality than the explanation arising out of the action itself, do not influence the narrative events as far as the characters are concerned. The question of the adequacy of his versions of experience is often raised both by the contrast between the clarity of his explanation and the lack of clarity in the action itself and more explicitly by him in his proems and asides to the readers. Spenser's complaints about his lack of eloquence and verbal power and his frequent fears about the adequacy of his art are often remarked upon.⁸ In the proem to Book 1, he may seem to protest too much, but by the ending of Book 6 those protests take on a special meaning. It is clear that Spenser's doubts about the

⁷The Variorum Spenser I,167. It is hardly a new idea that Spenser emphasizes the education of the reader. Not only is this a common claim of Renaissance writers wishing to apply the Horatian "dulce et utile" to their works, but it is a common theme in Spenser criticism. The point here is simply that the plot/counterplot division makes this relationship with the reader possible, and may even necessitate it; historically, this structure grows out of Virgil's development of the Homeric counterplot into a prophetic device which shifted the emphasis of his poem onto communication with the readers.

⁸See A.B. Giamatti, Play of Double Senses (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1975), pp. 86-93, 106-17. Giamatti's stress on "the dual impulse within epic, the ambiguous nature of pageantry" and on the way "the poem proposes divisions and strives to reconcile them" (p. 106) reveals Spenser's deep uncertainties about the power of art to overcome duality and reconcile division.

power of art both to defend its vision and to change the world were genuine: the rending of Colin's vision on Mt. Acidale is only the most evident example of his fears that art will in the end prove insufficient even to protect itself.

In the context of the ending of the poem, Spenser's protests about the inadequacy of art fully to express its subject can be taken more seriously. In the proem to Book 1 Spenser writes, "Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song." The doubtful grammar in the line immediately calls attention to the difficulty not only of telling the story at all (the ostensible concern of Proem 1) but of "moralizing" the story.⁹ The first alexandrine of the Faerie Queene suggests that the author himself is uncertain whether he and his song will "moralize" the fierce wars and faithful loves of which he tells, or whether the subject matter itself will provide the moral for his song.

Throughout the poem Spenser comments (seemingly invoking the inexpressibility topos) on his own inability to describe or convey the beauty or transcendent excellence of some characters and scenes. He interrupts his elegant description of Belphoebe, for example, to point to his own verbal limits:

So glorious mirrhour of celestiall grace,
And soueraine monument of mortall vowes,

⁹See Jonathan Goldberg, p. 14, for an analogous interpretation of this line. Goldberg sees the double meaning of "moralize," but does not stress the ambiguous grammar of the sentence. He emphasizes that "fierce warres and faithful loves" suggest other texts, and thus does not see the central ambiguity of the line as arising from a conflict between Spenser's moralizing and the "moral" which might arise from the action itself. The Oxford English Dictionary entry for "moralize" indicates that both meanings were in use in Spenser's day.

How shall fraile pen descriue her heauenly face,
For feare through want of skill her beauty to disgrace?
(II,iii,25)

Since this protest interrupts such an elegant description, it is often taken as merely conventional. But when in the proem to Book 3 Spenser once again speaks of the limits of his art, his protests seem more sincere. Virtue, he insists, finds its exemplar in his "Soueraines brest" (Proem III,1), so to portray it the poet needs to present "the pourtraict of her hart." But what might such a portrait be? Spenser argues that it is beyond the scope of "any living art":

But liuing art may not least part expresse,
Nor life-resembling pencill it can paint,
All were it Zeuxis or Praxiteles:
His daedale hand would faile, and greatly faint,
And her perfections with his error taint:
Ne poets wit, that passeth Painter farre
In picturing the parts of beautie daint,
So hard a workmanship aduenture darre,
For feare through want of words her excellence to marre.
(Proem III,2)

In this proem (unlike in the description of Belphoebe in Book 2) Spenser's concern grows directly out of his need to embody abstractions. It is not his Sovereign's beauty which he is doubtful of portraying, but her heart, that home of virtue, and, especially, chastity. A concern that he will mar the excellence of the virtue or taint perfection motivates his protest. While the proem may simply be read as an elaborate compliment to Elizabeth (as in part it certainly is), it also forms a part of the poet's own story and as such clarifies many of his other comments about the limits of his art: it is the moralizing of the song that is uncertain, not the telling of a good story; in the case of Book 3, it is the definition of chastity, the portrait of the virtue itself which the book must somehow provide, which is the im-

possibility, while the story of the stubborn, faithful and amorous Britomart is not in question.

Spenser's comments in Book 2 about his inability to describe the beauty of Belphoebe can be taken more seriously if the proem to Book 3 is taken into account. In the context of his protests there, his stress on the words "heauenly" and "celestiaII" in his description of Belphoebe seems more significant: Belphoebe is a "moniment of mortall vowes." What sort of visual image can such a monument be given? Spenser is concerned about how to embody the abstractions which give his poem meaning. He can portray Belphoebe's physical beauty; it is her celestial grace that he cannot be sure of conveying.

Spenser's concern about the limits of his art, expressed in his frequent use of the inexpressibility topos, is generally directed towards the question of whether he can "moralize" his song. This doubt, which partly arises from the nature of language, also derives in this case from the divided structure of the poem. One further support for the view that Spenser's comments on the inadequacy of his artistic powers are concerned primarily with the poet's desire to embody meaning (especially particular morals that he wants to instill in his readers) in a narrative story can be found in the proem to Book 5. Here Spenser describes the decline of the times, and along with this decline he (conventionally) sees a confusion of meaning:

For that which all men then did vertue call,
Is now cald vice; and that which vice was hight,
Is now hight vertue, and so vs'd of all:
Right now is wrong, and wrong that was is right,
As all things else in time are changed quight.
Ne wonder; for the heavens reuolution
Is wandred farre from, where it first was pight,
And so doe make contrarie constitution
Of all this lower world, toward his dissolution.
(Proem V,4)

Spenser argues that his examples come from "the antique vse" (Proem V,3), and some of his language also draws its strength from older usage. But much of it does not, and Spenser, in "Englising" the epic tradition, was also bringing older literature back to life in modern guise. The proem of Book 5 does not make it clear which of the two sets of meanings his own poem invokes: the story is taken from "the antique rolles" which the Muse helps him unroll in the opening of the poem (Proem I,2), but the words must partly come from his own time or he would not be understood. Like the "error" which he fears may taint the "perfection" of chastity or virtue as it is portrayed, the wandering of the heavens has the most dire effect on the abstractions which matter most: virtue and vice, right and wrong. By the time the proems of Books 3 and 5 are reached, both "error" and "wandering" have been given the dark glosses of Book 1: the idea that the artist may bring "error" into his portrait of virtue, or wander off the track by calling virtue vice, seriously undermines any certainty that the poem can embody abstractions or teach moral lessons.

The ambiguity which these proems describe is created in part by the division of the poem: the issues which concern the poet in the counterplot and his most complete representations (in mythopoeic tableaux) of the values which animate the poem do not penetrate the more cloudy and confusing world of the characters. Much of the pleasure of reading Spenser also arises from this division: no simple definition of any virtue or value is given by the poem, and the reader is welcomed to synthesize and create his or her own definition of that virtue out of the symbolism in the story and the narrator's comments. But this openness of meaning also creates uncertainty about the poem's

final significance, an uncertainty that, at least in the fiction of the poems, the poet regrets. Thus the epic counterplot brings into the Faerie Queene a doubleness of meaning similar to that which it created in the Odyssey and the Aeneid, both of which are also poems which depend for their meaning in part on transporting the values or the powers represented in the counterplot into the main heroic story. In all three cases, the poem leaves the reader (or audience) uncertain of the degree of success of this merging: can Odysseus' heroic acts be treated as if they were aesthetic events? Does the larger historical plan posited in the Virgilian counterplot justify the violence represented in the story of Aeneas? To what extent does Spenser's larger moral order offer solace or aid to the characters whom he has elected to represent it?

As the arena in which Spenser calls attention to the artifice of the poem, the counterplot also contributes to creating something permanent out of the stories of pain and confusion represented on the main fictional level. Art's capacity to render permanent the impermanent is another conventional topic, and a favorite one with Spenser; the counterplot joins this aestheticizing treatment of the main action (by which it is turned into an artwork) with the mythic power it represents, and thus renders this conventional claim of art all the more convincing. The merging of these two functions of the counterplot is exemplified in the simile comparing the ladies dancing on Acidale to Ariadne's crown:

Looke how the Crowne, which Ariadne wore
Vpon her yuory forehead that same day,
That Theseus her vnto his bridale bore,
When the bold Centaures made that bloody fray
With the fierce Lapithes, which did them dismay;

Being now placed in the firmament,
Through the bright heauen doth her beams display,
And is vnto the starres an ornament,
Which round about her moue in order excellent.
(VI,x,13)

The direct address to the readers makes the position of this simile in the counterplot dramatically evident. The simile conflates several myths, but in spite of the conflation it clearly contrasts the violence of "that bloody fray" with the "order excellent" of the stars. The conflation, intended or not, serves to emphasize that Ariadne's story is one "of repeated and undeserved suffering, of desertion even by the god who saved her when Theseus sailed away."¹⁰ The placing of the crown in the firmament indicates the restorative power of poetry, its power to provide some consolation; the simile suggests that if moments of social grace and ceremony are broken on earth by savagery, they can be made permanent in another realm, whether the heavens or poetry.¹¹

The action of the simile is partly mythic and aesthetic: the crown becomes an ornament to the stars. It joins the "order excellent" of the heavens and the heavens can "display" it. That this simile illustrates the blending of aesthetic and mythic power to immortalize is further suggested by the address to the reader. Where is Spenser directing his readers to "looke"? What is the time referred to by the "now" of the stanza? In part, he is telling his readers to look at the

¹⁰Kathleen Williams, Spenser's World of Glass (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 217.

¹¹On this simile, see also Donald Cheney, Spenser's Images of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in "The Faerie Queene" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 232-5.

page, as they imagine the stars which he is describing. The art which renders Ariadne's crown immortal is his own art, which exists "now" as the readers read it.

In many ways the counterplot helps to aestheticize the stories contained in the main fictions of the Faerie Queene: it reminds the readers of the moment of reading, it connects the poetic work itself with larger myths and it makes the reader's own self-consciousness an important part of the meaning of the poem. In its aestheticizing function, the counterplot also brings an ambivalence to the poem, for the impulse to aestheticize has its dangers as well as its rewards. If one immortalizes human experience, is it human any longer? If one renders permanent the fleeting, can the art still be called "living art"? The poem wants to be both permanent and impermanent, and as narrative it can to a certain extent succeed in this contradictory effort. One way in which Spenser succeeds in joining this particular set of opposites is by representing the permanent in the counterplot and transient experience in the main narrative. That some connection can be found between these two levels of the fiction is the central claim of the poem and the central challenge to the poet.

Spenser shows his self-consciousness about the dangers of the aesthetic stance in his many portrayals of artists or artworks which perversely transform experience into art. The House of Busyrane, for example, is a place characterized almost exclusively by its eponym's capacity to aestheticize violence.¹² The horror of the stasis which

¹²On the House of Busyrane, see Harry Berger, Jr., "Busirane and the War between the Sexes: An Interpretation of The Faerie Queene III,

art brings is represented in the plight of Amoret who has temporarily, like all the characters in the House, been turned into an object of art. In the Masque of Cupid and behind the scenes, Amoret, with dagger in chest and heart in silver basin (III,xii,20-1), illustrates in a literal and static fashion the conventions of courtly love poetry, a poetry revealed as an art form which depends on the aestheticizing of violence.¹³ Busyrane is presented as an artist who enjoys the pain which his art creates, an abuser of the power of art to render what is (and should be fleeting) as a permanent and inescapable condition. Busyrane abuses the immortalizing power of art by debasing it: in his hands art only transforms life into deadly stasis.

The transformation of violence or suffering into art, the poem implies, must be undertaken with care. By treating violence or pain aesthetically the poet risks failing to render them in all their seriousness, but as poet he has no alternative but to treat them in this way. In canto 4 of Book 3, for example, Spenser is presented with three grieving characters. Britomart laments that she is in a "huge sea of sorrow and tempestuous griefe.../Far from the hoped hauen of reliefe" (III,iv,8); shortly thereafter Cymoent laments what she thinks is the death of her son ("So life is losse, and death felicitie," III, iv,38). The canto ends with Arthur's complaint against the night ("Thou art the root and nurse of bitter cares... Our life is day, but

xi-xii," English Literary Renaissance 1 (1971), 99-121. See also C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 340-5 on Britomart as an enemy of Courtly Love. ~

¹³ On the House of Busyrane as a world of Petrarchan sonnets come to life, see Mark Rose, Heroic Love: Studies in Sidney and Spenser (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 121-5.

death with darknesse doth begin," III,iv,57-9). Not only are these laments beautifully expressive, but they form a pattern of which the readers are aware but the characters ignorant. The division of the plot and the counterplot allows Spenser to represent the anguish of his characters faithfully but also to create an artistic whole out of their suffering which comes to mean more than the suffering itself. The counterplot thus provides a needed distinction while bringing a degree of ambivalence into the poem: the characters, not benefiting from the larger perspective which suggests that their grief will be solaced, seem all the more alone, and the possibility of solace seems all the more doubtful. While Britomart finally meets Artegall, and Cymoent succeeds in curing her son, Arthur does not find the Faery Queen within the poem. The larger pattern represented in the counterplot assures us that his reunion with her will occur when "iust time" expires (I,ix,14). Nonetheless, the decision to place that reunion outside of the poem contributes to the ambiguity of the Faerie Queene by undermining the certainty of the mythic vision presented in the counterplot.

The rendering of violence or suffering in art can also cause difficulties for the artist by undermining peaceful scenes and the presentation of peaceful values. Thematically, this point is evident: if a poet includes brigands in his poem, they will invade his pastoral world and murder his shepherds (as they do in Book 6). Spenser's subject matter forces him to make use of the counterplot to distance those visions of heavenly or idealized places which he wishes to lodge in the fictional landscape of his poem. Those idealized places which are not carefully set aside from the main thrust of the narrative are

destroyed by it.

These places are distanced within the fiction (geographically, for instance, or temporally), but they are also distanced by being set in the counterplot. The distancing function of the counterplot provides Spenser with an essential device for making the larger pattern and assurances of the aesthetic whole present in the fictional landscape, but it also brings with it ambivalence and ambiguity of meaning.

(ii) "Strange waies, where neuer foote did vse" (Proem VI,2)

These two types of distancing often come together, so that the poem gives a fictional explanation for the distancing which results from the division between plot and counterplot. Certain narrative tropes, such as analepsis and prolepsis, the chronology-distorting anachronies of retrospection and anticipation, seem particularly useful to the poet in introducing the counterplot. In the Letter to Raleigh, Spenser describes retrospection and prophecy as his main narrative figures:

For an Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to the thinges forepaste, and diuining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.¹⁴

His story will not be a linear, unfigured account; rather, it will be an analysis which will mingle different and often unconnected parts of the story and different fictional levels to produce a "continued Allegory, or darke conceit."¹⁵

¹⁴The Variorum Spenser, I,168-9.

¹⁵The Variorum Spenser, I,167.

Spenser also uses geographical metaphors to describe his narrative technique:

The waies, through which my weary steps I guyde,
In this delightfull land of Faery,
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
And sprinckled with such sweet variety,
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
That I nigh raiisht with rare thoughts delight,
My tedious trauell doe forget thereby;
And when I gin to feele decay of might,
It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright.
(Proem VI,1)

The spacious landscape of Faeryland with its many different gardens and pathways is the poem itself, and the different "waies" are the different narrative strands Spenser chooses to follow at one time or another. The geographical trope for the poem most clearly shows how one chosen road can lead to gardens, forests, houses, or courts distinct from the places to which another road would have led. The different places are not clearly set on separate fictional levels, but they are carefully distinguished. Scenes in the counterplot are sometimes placed fictionally within the landscape of the poem, but distanced geographically from the main action. The geographical metaphor raises the question of whether or not "waies" exist between the places of the plot and those of the counterplot.

In the Proem to Book 6 Spenser links the counterplot with places that are distanced or hidden in the landscape. He calls on the Muses:

Reuele to me the sacred nursery
Of vertue, which with you doth there remaine,
Where it in siluer bowre does hidden ly
From view of men, and wicked worlds disdainie.
Since it at first was by the Gods with paine
Planted in earth....

(Proem VI,3)

In this stanza "there" refers to Parnassus, a place which is on earth

but is the home of the muses. The image of the silver bower hidden away from the world's disdain but still planted on earth describes the way that Spenser locates the counterplot within the fictional landscape of his poem while hiding it away from the human characters and the danger of destruction. Spenser underlines the geographical metaphor by asking to be guided

In these strange waies, where neuer foote did vse,
Ne none can find, but who was taught them by the Muse.
(Proem VI,2)

These "strange waies" are set within the fictional landscape of his poem, but they are still "strange" in that they are untraveled.

Spenser uses the geographical metaphor to describe his own process of inspiration: the muses lead him along hidden paths in his poem, and these hidden paths are the counterplot.

The importance of the distancing provided by the counterplot is made apparent in the "Mutabilitie Cantos," which themselves form part of the counterplot. Within the "Mutabilitie Cantos" the digression of Faunus and Diana is set at another degree of removal, for it is set in the past of "of old" when Arlo was still "the best and fairest hill" (VII,vi,37). Though more recent than the digression, the main action of the "Mutabilitie Cantos" is also placed in the distant past, "farre past memory of man" (VII,vii,2). Thus Spenser sets his picture of un-fallen nature doubly far from the fictional present: it is distanced from the main story which itself happened long before the action of the poem or the poet's writing. The different temporal levels act as trees in a forest which protects the bathing Diana from view.

If Diana sometimes figures heroic labor,¹⁶ here Spenser makes it clear that he catches her in a moment of idyllic rest:

In her sweet streames, Diana vsed oft
(After her sweatie chace and toilesome play)
To bathe her selfe; and after, on the soft
And downy grasse, her dainty limbes to lay
In couert shade, where none behold her may.
(VII,vi,42)

The sweat and toil of hunting, her life's game, become merely a parenthetical aside in the description of the goddess enjoying a locus amoenus far from well-trodden paths; sweat and toil are placed in the past. Diana enjoys an unfallen relation to the natural world; such a golden world, or the use of an idyllic scene to represent an unfallen world is a typical feature of the counterplot.

The story of Faunus' desire to see Diana is a pastoral version of the fall.¹⁷ It represents fictionally the risks Spenser runs by placing scenes in the counterplot within the fictional landscape of the poem, for if "planted in earth" such scenes can always be stumbled upon by a Faunus. The readers and poet are distanced from the vision of Diana in a way that Faunus is not: his story suggests that direct vision will bring about the fall (VII,vi,55). The episode reveals the fragility of these visions of unfallen nature, the fragility of the counterplot when placed in the fictional landscape of the poem, and its

¹⁶For an archetypal summary of the heroic stance by Belphoebe, see II,iii,40-41.

¹⁷Some generic markers which suggest that the digression is pastoral include the choice of the god Faunus as the Actaeon and Satan figure, and the reference to the Mole river "whom Shepherds quill/ Renowned hath with hymnes fit for a rural skill" (VII,vi,36). By alluding to his own pastoral poetry (it is in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again" that the Mole appears) and by referring to a "rural skill," Spenser hints at the pastoral coloring in the digression.

potential ineffectiveness in transporting harmony into the heroic narrative.

Nonetheless, even Faunus' forbidden glimpse does not have the dire consequences to be expected in the main narrative. As Humphrey Tonkin points out, "the outcome of Faunus' action is comic. Unlike Actaeon, Faunus runs faster than Diana's hounds and escapes, and Molanna, albeit whelmed with stones, marries 'her beloved Franchin' as a result of the intercessions of Faunus on her behalf."¹⁸ Like the poet's imaginative glance at the pleasant scene, Faunus' desire to look has a fortunate end: the "pleasant Plaine" and the "one faire riuer" (VII,vi,53) of Fanchin and Molanna remind us that nature's fertility, and even some of earth's pleasant spots, remain after Diana's curse ruins Arlo Hill. By the marriage of the rivers, Spenser transports elements of the counterplot down onto the plain. Coming right before Diana's curse on the land, the pastoral description of the rivers stands for the poet's hopes that the fertility of nature will outlast Mutabilitie and that, through the cycles of generation, all things will "worke their owne perfection" (VII,vii,58). Within the "Mutabilitie Cantos," the tragedy of the fall is mitigated by the pastoral mode.

In some ways, Faunus' desire matches that of the poet, but Spenser here pulls back from suggesting his own delinquency. As

¹⁸ Humphrey Tonkin, Spenser's Courteous Pastoral: Book Six of the Faerie Queene (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 309. James Nohrnberg, in The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 775, makes a similar point, for he suggests that Faunus seems part of "some larger preservative principle."

though to underscore the innocence of the episode, he does not depict Diana bathing in any detail (as he does, for example, describe the naked Serena in VI,viii,41-43). Instead, he uses a homely simile of a housewife who "with busie care/Thinks of her Dairie to make wondrous gaine" (VII,vi,48). This georgic image represents Diana catching Faunus as a dairymaid catches some wicked beast "that breakes into her Dayr'house, there doth draine/Her creaming pannes, and frustrate all her paine" (VII,vi,48) also connects the idyllic scene on Arlo Hill with a world of productivity and increase that remains after Arlo Hill is despoiled. Thus the conclusion of the digression suggests that some aspects of the counterplot can be located in the main narrative, at least in a metaphorical way.

Faunus' desire nonetheless destroys the beauty of Arlo Hill and brings about a pastoral version of the fall. The digression shows, then, that this idyllic spot needed to be set at a greater distance from his world. The importance of such distancing is explained in thematic terms by Spenser's description of Nature in the main narrative of the "Mutabilitie Cantos." Nature is veiled because of the action described in the digression. She is covered so that no one knew "whether she man or woman inly were" (VII,vii,5), yet in spite of her veil, Nature is visible to all. She is the union of contraries that her veil makes possible: "euer young, yet full of old;/Still moouing, yet vnmoued from her sted;/Vnseene of any, yet of all beheld" (VII,vii, 13). Though she is hidden, all creatures try to guess her doom by "looking in her face" (VII,vii,57). Her veil, like the narrative distancing of the story of the fall, seems not to hide but to reveal.

Nature is veiled to make it possible for human beings to see her

(VII,vii,6): like the moral truths allegory conveys, or like the glory of Elizabeth (VI,Proem,6), Nature can only be seen through images and reflections. The poet can only represent her figuratively; he veils her to emphasize that he presents truth only through figures. Nature's veil is the veil of allegory that Spenser described in his Letter to Raleigh: his method will displease some, he says, who are uncomfortable if "good discipline" is "thus cloudily enwrapped in Allegorical deuises."¹⁹ Nature's veil is also the veil provided by dense narrative figures, for Spenser's narrative complexity is one with his allegorical method.

In the next stanza the poet claims to have been present himself on Arlo Hill:

That well may seemen true: for, well I weene
That this same day, when she on Arlo sat,
Her garment was so bright and wondrous sheene,
That my fraile wit cannot deuize to what
It to compare, nor finde like stuffe to that,
As those three sacred Saints, though else most wise,
Yet on mount Thabor quite their wits forgat,
When they their glorious Lord in strange disguise
Transfigur'd sawe; his garments so did daze their eyes.
(VII,vii,7)

He cites the transfiguration as proof that we can see only in a glass. But even the transfiguration, always the source for transforming vision, appears only in a simile. Within the setting of the "Mutabilitie Cantos," already a part of the counterplot, the transfiguration does not contribute to the set of meanings at play in the fiction itself. Spenser cannot compare the brightness of Nature's gown to

¹⁹The Variorum Spenser, I,168.

anything: he can only compare the frailty of his wit with the lost wits of the saints. The comparison between Nature and Christ remains only an implication.

In the Faerie Queene visions cannot be presented directly; they can only be presented figuratively, by simile and image. Dame Nature cannot be viewed directly, but through conflicting figures, her significance is adumbrated. Throughout the Faerie Queene Spenser is concerned "to enfold/In couert vele, and wrap in shadowes light" (Proem II,5) the truths that the poem contains. In his terms, the fall was a fall into allegory and into the resulting uncertainty of meaning.

Not only does the division of plot and counterplot create two levels of meaning which are often at odds with one another, but the scenes in the counterplot, as the picture of veiled nature and the frequent appeals to myth suggest, often emphasize thematically the need for indirect vision. The scenes in the counterplot emphasize that whatever connection exists between the meaning posited in the counterplot and that which arises out of the action must be metaphorical. There is no direct connection, or when there is, it tends to be disruptive and even destructive of the mythic scene in the counterplot itself.²⁰

²⁰The role of the counterplot in adding other dimensions of meaning to the poem may explain why many parts of the Spenserian counterplot are pastoral or evoke pastoral conventions. Pastoral itself, especially the way Spenser uses it in The Shepherd's Calendar, was a genre particularly concerned with figurative expression; it was defined as a genre which called attention to fictionality, and made its own figurative status a central theme. Puttenham, in The Arte of English Poesie (1589) describes the sense in which pastoral was defined as the genre which is about something else. He writes that in pastoral poetry the poet is

In Book III Spenser provides another example of narrative distancing whereby the poet moves from the main fictional level through several levels to a distanced place set in the background of the landscape and in the counterplot. The larger symmetrical narrative pattern emphasizes the fictional distance at which the Garden of Adonis is set. The central pattern, of which Britomart is ignorant because she is absent from the central cantos of her book, shows how important visions of the counterplot can be veiled from the characters themselves.²¹

Spenser moves the narrative focus from Britomart by playfully turning our attention first to the parting of Timias and Arthur, then

able "vnder the vaile of homely persons, and in rude speeches to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters, and such as perchance had not bene safe to have bene disclosed in any other sort...." See George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, ed. Edward Arber (1598; rpt. of facsimile rpt., London: Constable and Co., 1906, by Kent English Reprints, ed. and intro. Baxter Hathaway, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1970), p. 53. The first quality of pastoral poetry, Puttenham suggests, is its figurative nature, and consequently the pastoral genre easily comes to stand for the poetic process itself. The pastoral kind of "other speaking" fit well with Spenser's allegorical method and with the aims of the counterplot. On Spenser's use of the allegorical and symbolic qualities of pastoral to demonstrate the need for an imagined world kept separate from physical reality, see Isabel MacCaffrey, "Allegory and Pastoral in The Shepheardes Calendar," English Literary History 36 (1969), 88-109. For the self-consciousness of the artist in pastoral poetry, see Richard Mallette, "Spenser's Portrait of the Artist in The Shepheardes Calendar and Colin Clouts Come Home Againe," Studies in English Literature 19 (1979), 19-41.

²¹See Alastair Fowler, Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 62-124, and esp. pp. 110-2, and Marjorie Hope Nicolson, "The Circle of Perfection," in The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the 'New Science' upon Seventeenth Century Poetry, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 47-80, for discussions of the importance of the center and of the circle in Renaissance poetry.

to Arthur, and then to Timias' chase. The presentation of Belpheobe and her forest home, which Timias finds instead of the "wicked foster," are part of a movement towards the center that culminates in the Garden of Adonis. Belpheobe and her nymphs are seen only by Timias;²² no one but the poet and his readers follows Venus to Diana's bathing spot or to her own bower. The stages by which the mind is removed to this golden world are several: the poet moves from the idealized bower of Belpheobe to a digression on her past. The canto begins with an address to the readers which stresses the fictional quality of the vision: "it were a goodly storie" (III,vi,5), Spenser writes, to tell of the twins' conception and birth. A series of narrative breaks--beginning with the shift to the story of Venus and Diana in stanza eleven and including the references "were it not, that Time their troubler is" (III,vi,41) and "there yet, some say" (III,vi,46)--remove the paradise further and further from the fictive action and from any sense of direct narration. The paradise is thus moored more and more deeply in the recesses of the mind, a mooring figured by the narrative density.

Venus and Diana appear to us in a forest bounded on one side by Belpheobe's magic lands, which have dimension within the fiction, and on the other by the Garden of Adonis, which we "no where can...find" (II,ix,7) but which is the allegorical core of the book. In this distanced landscape Spenser presents the only direct vision of the two

²²Timias is the only one to see her in this section of the narrative. Braggadochio and Trompart see her, of course, in Book 2.

goddesses whose images people the poem. The Garden of Adonis, then, is placed in a "narrative loop" far from the action of the poem.²³ The narrative veils the vision of the bower: it is unavailable to any of the characters save Amoret, who must leave the bower when she reaches adulthood. As MacCaffrey suggests, "the Garden of Adonis is a legitimate paradise because it is visited only by the poet, or the imagination."²⁴ The successive stages of removal allow this idealization to be in but not of this world, and the narrative ordering increases the credibility of the ideal.

The readers follow Venus to Diana's private retreat in the woods, and her search for Cupid figures Spenser's own search for a poetic form in which to write heroic love poetry about chastity and fertility. Venus' vain search for Cupid first in the Court, then in the Cities, and finally in the Country amounts to a comment by Spenser on the different poetic genres which he dismisses as inadequate in this sweeping narrative gesture.²⁵ The generic markers in each case are clear, and it is typical of Spenser to set up this poetic problem in geographical terms. Venus "First...him sought in Court" (III,vi, 13) where she encounters the nobility complaining in the tropes of courtly love poetry:

²³The term "narrative loop" is taken from the excellent discussion by Isabel MacCaffrey in Spenser's Allegory: The Anatomy of the Imagination (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 424.

²⁴MacCaffrey, Spenser's Allegory, p. 424.

²⁵This interpretation is indebted to suggestions made by John Hollander.

Ladies and Lords she euery where mote heare
Complayning, how with his empoysned shot
Their wofull harts he wounded had whyleare
And so had left them languishing twixt hope and feare.
(III,vi,13)

The union of the opposites, hope and fear, stands synecdochically for courtly poetry and especially the Petrarchan sonnet. Long before Wyatt had played on the pun of "the hertes forest" in "The Longe love, that in my thought I harber," the heart (and hart) and its wounds had become a commonplace in courtly love poetry, and Spenser uses it to recall that poetry here.²⁶

In the Cities Venus again finds evidence of Cupid's cruelty, but there his aggression is figured in military and civil terms ("sharpe darts and whot artillerie," III,vi,14). The main complaint of the citizens is that Cupid

Was the disturber of all ciuill life,
The enemy of peace, and author of all strife.
(III,vi,14)

In the city Cupid's failings are described along the lines of the typical themes of satire. In the country Venus finds that the shepherds too have suffered from Cupid's venom. Spenser uses conventional pastoral images to describe the scene:

And eke the gentle shepheard swaynes, which sat
Keeping their fleecie flockes, as they were hyred,
She sweetly heard complaine, both how and what
Her some had to them doen; yet she did smile thereat.
(III,vi,15)

The shepherds make poetry out of their pain, but it is "sweet" poetry,

²⁶For a description of a woefully wounded heart, see III,xii, 21.

and as if to point to the figurative nature of pain in pastoral poetry, Venus smiles at their woes. The episode of Venus' search, then, describes the limitations for Spenser of three conventional poetic modes: neither courtly love poetry, nor satire, nor conventional pastoral poetry suffices to define or convey the significance of the Garden of Adonis. Spenser goes beyond these conventional genres by writing an heroic pastoral which draws from the figural strategies of each kind of poetry to produce his own mythopoeic epic poem. By drawing attention to poetic conventions, Spenser blends the mythic and the aesthetic themes of the counterplot and further distances the story of Venus by marking it as artifice about artifice.

Critics of the times occasionally alluded to such a mapping of genres onto geographical locations. Puttenham, for example, associated pastoral poetry with shepherds in their "common fields and forests"²⁷ and historical poetry (his word for epic and heroic poetry) with Princes (and thus by analogy with the court).²⁸ The city brings to his mind epigrams, "the manner of Poesie by which they uttered their bitter taunts, and privy nips, or witty scoffes and other merry conceits."²⁹ He speaks of how epigrams help "civill ordinance" to prevail just as Spenser's citizens had been concerned about Cupid's disruption of civic order. Puttenham clearly imagines the city as the proper location for this kind of poetry:

²⁷Puttenham, I,18; p. 52.

²⁸Puttenham, I,19.

²⁹Puttenham, I,27; p. 68

For this Epigramme is but an inscription or writting made as it were vpon a table, or in a windowe, or vpon the wall or mantell of a chimney in some place of common resort, where it was allowed euery man might come, or be fitting to chat and prate, as now in our tauernes and common tabling houses, where many merry heads meete, and scribe with ynke, with chalke or with a cole such matters as they would euery many should know, and descant vpon.³⁰

A writer who comes closest to using Spenser's geographical generic markers, however, is Hobbes in his Letter to Davenant in Answer to the Preface to Gondibert (written in 1650). There he not only ties kinds of poetry to court, city and country, but also to philosophical regional distinctions:

As philosophers have divided the universe, their subject, into three regions, celestial, aerial, and terrestrial; so the poets... have lodged themselves in three regions of mankind, court, city, and country, correspondent, in some proportion, to those three regions of the world. For there is in princes, and men of conspicuous power, anciently called heroes, a lustre and influence upon the rest of men, resembling that of the heavens; and an insincereness, inconstancy, and troublesome humour in those that dwell in populous cities, like the mobility, blustering, and impurity of the air; and a plainness, and, though dull, yet a nutritive faculty in rural people, that endures a comparison with the earth they labor. From hence have proceeded three sorts of poesy, heroic, scommatic, and pastoral.³¹

Hobbes does not consider epigrams or lyric poems, so his system is far from complete, but his use of the word "scommatic" (from the Greek skomma, "a flout or scoff"; meaning "derisive") implies a sympathetic tie between his idea of city poetry and Puttenham's "privy nips or witty scoffes." Hobbes writes after Spenser's time, but his

³⁰Puttenham, I,27; p. 68.

³¹Thomas Hobbes, "The Answer to the Preface to Gondibert," in Works, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London: n.p., 1839; letter dated, January 10, 1650), IV,443-4.

words sum up a long-standing tradition in which genres are marked by brief geographical or locational references.

When Venus leaves the shepherds in their cottages, she stops in "the salvage woods and forests wyde" (III,vi,16), a landscape which resembles the woods of Arlo Hill.³² As in the Arlo Hill digression, Spenser's picture of the nymphs resting in a locus amoenus with the "dustie sweat,/and soyle" (III,vi,17) in the past takes on a pastoral hue. Here too Diana and her nymphs are resting "after late chace of their embrewed game,/Sitting beside a fountain in a rew" (III,vi,17). Venus does not find Cupid here either, but the search ends, as if the discovery of the twins satisfied Venus' need for her son. In stanza 18 the readers see Diana bathing as Faunus will never see her:

She hauing hong vpon a bough on high
Her bow and painted quiuer, had vnlaste
Her siluer buskins from her nimble thigh,
And her lancke loynes vngirt, and brests vnbraste,
After her heat the breathing cold to taste;
Her golden lockes, that late in tresses bright
Embreaded were for hindring of her haste,
New loose about her shoulders hong vndight,
And were with sweet Ambrosia all besprinckled light.
(III,vi,18)

In the Arlo Hill digression Spenser describes only Faunus' voyeuristic laugh, and adds that the brook was guilty, but here there is no betrayal. Here Spenser paints an erotic picture of Diana disarmed; it is the same redeemed eroticism which the Garden of Adonis embodies. The ambrosia sprinkled and glittering in her hair, and the sense of light which the image conveys (the light in the stanza is intensified by her

³²See Humphrey Tonkin, p. 309, on the many similarities between these two paradisaical spots.

golden locks; the stanza ends on "light" with its two meanings) suggest that there is no trespass here. Diana is "asham'd to be so loose surprized" (III,vi,19), yet, in spite of the attribute "loose," that cautionary Spenserian epithet, Venus and Diana are shortly reconciled to one another and set off to look for Cupid.

The argument of Venus and Diana represents the confrontation and largely miraculous reconciliation of these two opposed female archetypes. It also represents the clash between two ways of interpreting love poetry and the forging of a new method. At first Diana is scornful and scoffing, and she implies a criticism of poetry about love's light "disports" (III,vi,21). Venus in turn criticizes Diana for being prideful: Diana's love of "glory," an heroic trait, is equated by Venus with her own delight in "ioyfulnesse" since each is ordained by "heauens beheasts" (III,vi,22). This is the first step towards joining these two genres, but Phoebe is still angry, and says of Cupid,

we scorne his foolish ioy,
Ne lend we leisure to his idle toy:
But if I catch him in this company...
He clip his wanton wings, that he no more shall fly.
(III,vi,24)

Diana characterizes courtly love poetry as idle and foolish: it would be a Cupid without his wantonness who would fit into the hunting world, just as it is a Venus without Cupid who is able to assuage Diana's anger. Thus the reconciliation of the two goddesses comes about, as C.S. Lewis has noted, after an unusually frank statement of the claims

and values of each.³³ That their dialogue is largely about kinds of poetry again distances their story by reminding the readers of the artifice of the poet who is self-consciously creating in this encounter a new kind of love poetry. The aesthetic emphasis of the counterplot here magnifies its distancing effect.

Hidden in an ellipsis in the text are the arguments that win Diana's favor. Spenser says only that

her she soone appeased,
With sugred words and gentle blandishment,
Which as a fountaine from her sweete lips went,
And welled goodly forth, that in short space
She was well pleasd....

(III,vi,25)

The fountain of Venus' sugared words blurs into the fountain "in a rew" where Diana is bathing. Thus the reconciliation itself functions as a constitutive element of the locus amoenus. This fountain covers an ellipsis, another kind of turning away from the main action; this narrative figure suggests that the source of the harmony represented in the counterplot must be well-covered.

The meeting of Venus and Diana is recounted in a digression which takes our attention away from the story of poor Chrysogone (the digression runs from stanzas 11-26), so the image of Diana bathing and the reconciliation of the two goddesses are sheltered from the narrative present. The story of Chrysogone itself is an etiological digression which explains how Belpheobe can figure forth so many "great perfections" (III,vi,1), so, like the Arlo Hill digression,

³³C.S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, pp. 342-3.

the story of Venus' meeting with Diana is doubly distanced in time from the main action of the Faerie Queene. The counterplot once again is lodged in narrative recesses.

The central stanzas of canto six (26,27,28) contain the discovery of Chrysogone by Venus and Diana and the taking of the two children.³⁴ The central stanza depicts the miraculous birth: these children who spring from the warmth and moisture of nature itself are born without pain. Their story shows a prelapsarian natural birth, and the book as a whole draws resonance from this central example of natural fertility. The miraculous yet natural birth of Belphoebe and Amoret defines a central claim of the counterplot. At the center of the canto, it also delineates the ideal relation of living creature and time in which time becomes regenerative. From their birth and conception, Belphoebe and Amoret are associated with perfect timeliness: Belphoebe is "trayned vp from time to time" (III,vi,3) while Amoret grows to "perfect ripenesse" in the Garden and then is given to "the worldes vew" to be the "Lodestarre of all chaste affectione" (III,vi, 52).

The story of Venus and Diana and the picture of the Garden of Adonis provides the background for Belphoebe and introduces Amoret. Amoret's home, the Garden of Adonis, is a Neoplatonic myth told in a partly pastoral mode. The Garden of Adonis, Spenser reports, excels "all other pleasant places" (III,vi,29). Spenser unites an anatomical

³⁴The counting here is done by the 1596 edition. A similar point can be made by counting in the 1590 edition. See Paul Alpers, The Poetry of "The Faerie Queene", pp. 40-1, for a detailed reading of stanzas 26 and 27.

landscape, a mythopoeic paradise that describes the source of poetic forms, and the myth of the golden age in a mythopoeic tour de force. The Garden of Adonis thus provides a particularly dense statement of the claims of the counterplot.³⁵

Several types of narrative distancing work to make this tableau successful as an image of the unfallen world. The narrative patterns of digression, noted above, protect the goddesses and the garden from the eyes of Faunus-like voyeurs within the story. The narrative recesses help to insure the deeply imaginative quality of these scenes. The symmetrical balancing and the artifice of emphasizing an event by placing it in the central stanza suggest that Spenser's narrative strategy here is more spatial than linear. The reader must step back from the whole in order to perceive the balancing of episode against episode, or the pattern made by contrasting the center with the periphery. Canto six, as many other cantos in the Faerie Queene, may be seen as a diptych whose two halves elucidate one another. A concentric and spatial narrative design calls for a special kind of removal on the part of the reader, and it conflicts with the aspect of the narrative which points towards the ending. The spatial narrative de-

³⁵On the Garden of Adonis see Charles Osgood's summary of older views in the Variorum commentary (III, 340-52), which includes Josephine Waters Bennett's "Spenser's Garden of Adonis," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America (henceforth P.M.L.A.) 47 (1932), 46-80 (defender of the Neoplatonic interpretation), and Brent Stirling's "The Philosophy of Spenser's Garden of Adonis," P.M.L.A. 49 (1934), 501-38. For more recent views see A. Bartlett Giamatti, The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 284-90, and especially James Nohrnberg's exhaustive account of the Garden of Adonis as "Garden of Pleasure" and "Seminarium Mundi" in The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene", pp. 502-68.

sign in Book 3, canto 6, then, also distances this summary of the counterplot from the teleological force of the main narrative line.

The structure of Book 3 allows a generalization about the two types of narrative design united here. On the one hand, Spenser tells a largely linear story which focuses on Britomart who begins and ends the book; on the other hand, he steps back from the plot to perceive the spatial designs that lend emphasis to the center of the book. This tension between linear or final and central claims on our attention runs throughout the Faerie Queene.³⁶ A.C. Hamilton has described this centralizing impulse in Spenser's allegory as an inward movement "penetrating ever more deeply until we reach some vision of perfection at the center."³⁷ Baybak, Delany and Hieatt have shown how the phrase "in the midst" marks the center of Books 1, 2, and 3 (counting by the 1590 edition).³⁸ This phrase points to the central event of each book which takes place in a locus amoenus. In the Garden of Adonis, the phrase points to a central object, the mons veneris, that piece of anatomical landscape responsible for generation and for the miracle of Adonis, eterne in mutability.

Baybak, Delany and Hieatt suggest further that "both the central

³⁶See Humphrey Tonkin, p. 182, and p. 284, on the significance of concentric circles as structural devices. See also A.B. Giamatti, Play of Double Senses, pp. 75-6.

³⁷A.C. Hamilton, The Structure of Allegory in "The Faerie Queene," p. 24.

³⁸Michael Baybak, Paul Delany and A. Kent Hieatt, "Placement 'in the midst' in The Faerie Queene," in Essential Articles for the Study of Edmund Spenser, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972; article 1st published, 1969), pp. 389-94.

mount and the idea of a central harmony contrasted with a peripheral disorder provide a keystone for the structure of Book III."³⁹ They argue that, though no characters are present in this central vision of natural harmony, all are affected by the natural fertility which wells up in the center of the book. Yet the division of the plot and the counterplot makes this connection uncertain: setting the counterplot aside from the main narrative allows Spenser to protect his ideal place, but it also distances it from the action of the poem and renders its connection with the main characters problematic.

In Book 6 Spenser merges the plot and counterplot more completely. The pastoral world of Arcadia is clearly set aside from the heroic world: it is in the fiction the "sacred nursery of vertue" which Spenser describes in the proem to Book 6. Arcadia is also geographically distanced from the heroic action of the Book, but the story of Calidore's pastoral sojourn indicates that geographical distancing is not sufficient to protect the fragile vision of harmony and courtesy represented in the world of the shepherds.⁴⁰

Calidore's path to Arcadia follows the path Venus takes to the Garden of Adonis. More frantically and repetitively, he races from court to country:

Him first from court he to the citties coursed,
And from the citties to the townes him prest,

³⁹ Baybak, Delany and Heatt, p. 393.

⁴⁰ The interpretation of Book 6 presented above is indebted to the article by Harry Berger, Jr., "A Secret Discipline: The Faerie Queene Book VI," in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser, ed. William Nelson (New York, Columbia University Press, 1961), pp. 35-75.

And from the townes into the countrie forsed,
And from the country back to priuate farmes he scorsed.

From thence into the open fields he fled,
Whereas the Heardes were keeping of their neat,
And shepheards singing to their flockes, that fed,
Layes of sweete loue and youthes delightfull heat:
Him thether eke for all his fearfull threat
He followed fast, and chaced him so nie,
That to the folds, where sheepe at night doe seat,
And to the litle cots, where shepherds lie
In winters wrathfull time, he forced him to flie.

(VI,ix,3-4)

In the first part of this description, the generic markers are compressed to the point of becoming only geographical details. Calidore's chase parodies the devices of narrative distancing dramatized in Venus' search for Cupid, while indicating that the chase from court to country has become a trope for Spenser's geographical distancing of scenes set in the counterplot. In keeping with its parodic quality, however, Calidore's chase does not successfully distance the shepherd's world: Arcadia is set on the edge of the heroic world, and Mount Acidale is therefore further distanced within the fictional landscape.

To reach Mount Acidale, Calidore goes out for a hike:

One day he did raunge the fields abroad,
Whilst his fair Pastorella was elsewhere,
He chaunst to come, far from all peoples troad,
Vnto a place, whose pleasaunce did appere
To passe all others, on the earth which were.

(VI,x,5)

Acidale is a hill "of matchlesse hight" (6); it is another piece of anatomical landscape representing a golden age where trees "did all winter as in sommer bud" (6), and it surpasses all other loci amoeni. Thus it is placed outside or above the fallen natural world of the poem and constitutes another redeemed mythic locale in which the counterplot is discovered lodged within the fictional landscape. Not only

are the nymphs and waters in perfect harmony (7) but no wild beasts or "ruder clowne" (7) like Faunus can approach this place--at least until the poet begins telling his story. Like Arlo Hill, Acidale is the resort of the gods, but here it is Venus, not Diana, who plays and sports with the graces (9).

Canto ten shows in narrative terms the dangers of such a merging of plot and counterplot. Rapidly and dramatically it exposes the fragility of the counterplot and reveals the failure of poetic inspiration to sustain itself in the face of reality. Analogously, it presents the failure of the pastoral world to defend itself against violence. The double structure of the canto, which suggests the connection between the breaking of the vision and the destruction of Arcadia, delineates the limits of the poetic imagination and of the values represented in Arcadia.⁴¹

On Mount Acidale, Calidore discovers "an hundred naked maidens lilly white/All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight" (VI,x,11) to the piping of a shepherd. This vision embodies the heart of the poet's inspiration, for the epic poet identifies with Colin, his pastoral persona from The Shepheardes Calendar and "Colin Clout's Come Home Again." The image of the concentric circles of grace, an emblem of inspired art, exists on a different fictional level from Calidore:

All they without were raunged in a ring,
And daunced round; but in the midst of them
Three other Ladies did both daunce and sing,

⁴¹See Harry Berger, Jr., "The Prospect of Imagination: Spenser and the Limits of Poetry," Studies in English Literature 1 (1961), 93-120, for speculation on the significance of the narrative's self-referentiality, especially in the last half of the Faerie Queene.

The whilest the rest them round about did hemme,
And like a girlond did in compasse stemme:
And in the midst of those same three, was placed
Another Damzell, as a precious gemme,
Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.
(VI,x,12)

The very anonymity of the fourth maiden covers her like a veil.
Though Colin avows that "yet was she certes but a countrey lasse" (x,
25), she too vanishes with the graces.⁴²

This country girl stands for the inspiration at the center of
Colin's pastoral vision:

But that faire one,
That in the midst was placed parauaunt,
Was she to whom that shepheard pypt alone,
That made him pipe so merrily, as neuer none.

She was to weete that iolly Shepheards lasse,
Which pipe there vnto that merry rout,
That iolly shepheard, which there piped, was
Poore Colin Clout, (who knowes not Colin Clout?)
He pypt apace, whilest they him daunst about.
Pype iolly shepheard, pype thou now apace
Vnto thy loue, that made thee low to lout;
Thy loue is present there with thee in place,
Thy loue is there aduaunst to be another Grace.
(VI,x,15-16)

The center of Colin's pastoral inspiration is Rosalind, Colin's be-
loved.

By addressing Colin directly, Spenser skips fictional levels.⁴³

The apostrophe shifts the episode momentarily from the past tense of

⁴²See Humphrey Tonkin, pp. 259-64, and the commentary in the Variorum Spenser III, 252-4, for the identity of the fourth maiden. She can be associated with Elizabeth, the poet's wife; she is also associated by analogy with Pastorella and with Queen Elizabeth (Proem VI,7).

⁴³Gérard Genette, in Figures III, pp. 241-5, names the narrative trope of jumping fictional levels "metalepsis." His definition of the term will be used above.

narration to the present tense of the moment of writing or reading. This metaleptic moment emphasizes the point that the vision itself exists within the counterplot. The entire episode is characterized by metalepses (such as the simile of Ariadne's crown which follows shortly), for one of the purposes of the episode is to dramatize that the counterplot must remain at a different fictional level. Even in a distanced spot, far from the world of violence, and in a fictional form, it is still destroyed by contact with the heroic world.

Throughout the episode, in keeping with the effect of bringing the counterplot fictionally into the main narrative, Spenser also emphasizes the aestheticizing effect of Colin's vision. Colin's beloved, for example, is "richly well enchaced" in the ring of dancers, just as Ariadne's crown could be said to be "enchaced" in the sky. The notion of an "enchaced" pattern recalls the pastoral use of ecphrasis. Spenser uses the word "enchaced" in the August Eclogue to describe the way a pastoral poem protects itself from violence by making violent scenes into artefacts. Willy describes his pledge in the pastoral contest as pastoral vines.

A mazer ywrought of the Maple warre:
Wherein is enchaced many a fayre sight
Of Beres and Tygres, that maken fiers warre:
And ouer them spred a goodly wild vine,
Entrailed with a wanton yuie twine.
("August," 26-30)

The rhyme of "warre," the knob or protuberance on a tree, and "warre," the strife of bears and tigers that pastoral calls "fair," stands for that pastoral effort to turn aggression into art, and the engraving covers the scene with

In the Faerie Queene Spenser uses "enchaced" to convey the

9/1

double meaning of Colin's vision. The word makes the dancers into an artefact, but it also contains the pun on "chase" or "enchase" meaning to "hunt for" or to "drive away." Earlier in Book VI, Calidore had used "enchase" when he gave Matilda the baby he saved from the bear (VI,iv,35); in that context the figure of engraving or setting stands for nurture, for Matilda can educate the child, or "enchace/what euer formes" (VI,iv,35) she desires on his "sweete and louely face." Thus the word "enchase" folds into itself both a connotation of the artifice and nurture that holds society together and the undermining threat of the epic chase, and the figural strategy of the poem suggests that Colin's beloved must be "enchased" to be saved from the chase.

The triple repetition of the phrase "in the midst" (stanzas 12 and 16) in Spenser's description of the imagined Rosalind stresses the concentric organization of the vision. The concentric rings of grace act like the narrative rings around the Garden of Adonis: they veil the woman, and fold the vision of the counterplot into an artistic retreat.⁴⁴ The counterplot, this image suggests, needs to be sheltered by such defensive narrative devices; it must be protected from the narrative drives which would undo its foundation and reveal its lack of power in the face of violence.

Courtesy is based on the mutuality of giving, receiving, and re-

⁴⁴Like the Garden of Adonis, the vision of the graces on Mount Acidale draws its power partly from Neoplatonic sources. As words like "rapt" and "astonished" suggest, the Acidalian vision "anticipates or imitates the rapture of the mystical experience at the top of the Platonic ladder," as MacCaffrey puts it in *Spenser's Allegory*, p. 392. The Neoplatonic quest, Berger writes in "A Secret Discipline," p. 57, "is a reversion of the divine source--a recovery within the forms of human consciousness of the creative purpose."

turning which is figured in the ordered exchange of the three graces in their conventional stance: "That two of them still froward seem'd to bee,/But one still towards show'd her selfe afore;/That good should from vs goe, then come in greater store" (VI,x,24).⁴⁵ They are the source of social virtue, who "to men all gifts of grace do graunt" (15), and they teach those "friendly offices that bynde" (23). As Grace in religion depends upon revelation by the Word, so human grace manifests itself only through words. The legend of Courtesy therefore leads to the poet himself: the quest of Courtesy finds, as Frye has said, "the word of man as the integrating force of the human community."⁴⁶ This is the claim of the counterplot, which shows Venus at the center of the dance, a transfigured Rosalind, as the source of both reciprocal social relations and the writing of poetry. Love, poetry and grace are united by the counterplot, and this union is presented at the moment when its efficacy is most radically to be questioned.

Calidore's predicament on Mount Acidale adumbrates our own quandary as readers: he sees the dance and wonders whether it is real. In order to know for certain, he steps forward, but this step causes the image to dissolve before his eyes:

Much wondred Calidore at this straunge sight,
Whose like before his eye had neuer seene,

⁴⁵See Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), pp. 28ff. See also Humphrey Tonkin's critique of Wind's reading of the graces, pp. 232-5.

⁴⁶Northrop Frye, The Secular Scripture (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 188.

And standing long astonished in spright,
And rapt with pleasaunce, wist not what to weene;
Whether it were the traine of beauties Queene,
Or Nymphes, or Faeries, or enchanted show,
With which his eyes mote have deluded beene.
Therefore resolving, what it was, to know,
Out of the wood he rose, and toward them did go.

But soone as he appeared to their vew,
They vanisht all away out of his sight
And cleane were gone, which way he neuer knew.

(VI,x,17-18)

Calidore's step forward figures the invasion of the counterplot by a character who exists only on the level of the main narrative. His step forward is thus a metaleptic step by which he jumps fictional levels: he steps into the counterplot, and this step destroys it. Calidore's desire to know for certain and its result implies that this story is also an oblique analogue of the fall. Commenting that he had "rashly sought that, which (he) mote not see" (IV,x,29), Calidore resembles Faunus. Colin, in response to Calidore's bumbling "Haile iolly shepherd" (19) responds, "Not I so happy...as thou vnhappy" (2), as if to stress Calidore's loss.

Yet Calidore has little choice, or so the poetics of the Faerie Queene suggest, for throughout the poem, knights learn the dangers of not insisting first on the difference between truth and falsehood, of not investigating apparent duplicity. Calidore's urge to step forward springs from the source of heroic energy; ultimately, his gesture is an heroic one which shatters the vision of the counterplot in order to render it understandable. Only after he has caused the figures to vanish does he learn that such vision cannot be possessed, at least not literally. Calidore's step forward thus dramatically represents the impossibility of imbedding the counterplot in the main heroic nar-

rative, though the values and moralizing provided in the counterplot may be the wellspring of the heroic story.

Calidore tries to possess or to trespass into a vision not rightly his own. It is Colin Clout, the poet, who dreams of the graces dancing, and this vision was going on without Calidore before he stumbled upon it. Calidore then learns, as the readers already knew, that the vision functions on a different fictional level from his own story. When Calidore tries to make his vision real, he crosses fictional levels or boundaries. Since Spenser's trope is geographical, perhaps narrative trespassing or transgressing can serve as a term to describe this metaleptic switching of narrative levels.

The crossing of fictional boundaries, whether by writer or character, calls attention to the artistic act itself and makes the reader stand back from the story. The episode thus suggests both a need for a metaphorical, non-literalistic response to art and the real limits of any metaphorical understanding.

Calidore's trespassing on Mount Acidale is connected by the sequence of events to the disasters which overtake the shepherds of Arcadia. The narrative structure of canto ten impels its readers and its characters onwards. Four stanzas after Calidore leaves Mount Acidale,

A Tigre out of the wood did rise,
That with fell claws full of fierce gourmandize,
And greedy mouth, wide gaping like hell gate
Did runne at Pastorell her to surprize.

(VI,x,34)

In the fight with the tiger, Calidore, who "had no weapon, but his shepherds hooke" (VI,x,36), begins to act like shepherd and knight, while cowardly Coridon runs away. The action of this canto calls for

such a union of shepherd and knight, and Calidore assumes this new identity completely in canto eleven (36 and 42).

The episode of the tiger should have warned Calidore, but the narrative tempo continues to take him by surprise: two stanzas after he rescues Pastorella from the tiger,

A lawlesse people, Brigants hight of yore,
That neuer vsde to liue by plough nor spade,
But fed on spoile and booty, which they made
Vpon their neighbours, which did nigh them border,
The dwelling of these shepheards did inuade,
And spoyld their houses, and them selues did murder;
And droue away their flocks, with other much disorder.
(VI,x,39)

In discourteous habits and in lawlessness, the Brigants remind us of the Salvage Nation. The two surround the pastoral land, and thus Spenser indicates by geography the limitation of its ideals. The second half of the canto comments on the vision: the narrative structure suggests that even while Colin is piping, villages are being burned.

By structural analogy, Spenser compares Calidore's trespassing on Mount Acidale and his generic trespassing into Arcadia. Not only the vision, but all the pastoral world is destroyed before his eyes:

He sought the plaines; but could no tydings heare.
The woods did nought but ecchoes vaine rebound;
The playnes all waste and emptie did appeare:
Where went the shepheards oft their pypes resound,
And feed an hundred flocks, there now not one he found.
(VI,xi,26)

By joining the shattering of the vision to the destruction of Arcadia, Spenser comments on his own technique of intermingling plot and counterplot, and shows how a transgression of poetic levels can destroy the vision of the counterplot. When the Blatant Beast breaks out at the end of Book 6 and attacks the poem, he trespasses into other fic-

tional levels even more blatantly than does Calidore or the poet himself (see VI,xii,40-1). This final narrative transgression or metalepsis dramatizes the fact that the counterplot can never be completely separated from the plot or completely protected from the dangers the plot represents.

(iii) "Nought but pressed grass" (I,ix,15)

"But why when I them saw, fled they away from me?" (VI,x,19)

Calidore's cry echoes the complaints of Spenser's other visionary heroes. His vanishing vision resembles Arthur's dream of the Faery Queen, also an example of a metaleptic moment in which a character is given a glimpse of the heart of poetic inspiration which does not exist on the plane of his fictional life. The Faery Queen, according to the fiction, inspired the creation of the world in which Arthur finds himself. For him, and for the readers, she will never take on immediate form; an absent center, she reveals that the whole poem constitutes an ellipsis which figures her meaning by representing her absence.

Arthur's dream vision is placed in the narrative past. It is the etiological myth which explains all his actions. "Raunging the forest wide on courser free" (I,ix,12), like other characters who stumble into scenes of the counterplot, Arthur finds that the natural world echoes his thoughts and promises the satisfaction of his desires. Describing the harmony between human being and nature which is evidenced only in the counterplot, Arthur tells Una that

The fields, the floods, the heauens with one consent
Did seeme to laugh on me, and fauour mine intent.
(I,ix,12)

Sleeping on the "verdant gras," Arthur loses his heart while "euery

sence the humour sweet embayd" (I,ix,13). The paradisaical pleasure Arthur experiences in the natural scene and in the vision recalls the earthly paradises imaged in the counterplot. The pressed grass, which is all that remains of the dream when he awakes, also figures visionary poetry which leaves only traces of the golden images it presents. As in the Aeneid, in the Faerie Queene the ideal is known as often by its loss as by its presence.

The Faery Queen promised that she would appear again "when iust time expired" (I,ix,14), so Arthur's vision directs his eyes to the future. His spontaneous love for her, which in a larger context must be called inspiration or faith, is a necessary ingredient for the heroic response to vision. "But whether dreames delude, or true it were,/Was neuer hart so rausht with delight" (I,ix,14): Arthur does not question whether his dream is trustworthy. For him, that face is divine (15). He decides to "seeke her out with labour and long tyne" (15) and not to rest until he finds her: a glimpse of a figure in the counterplot is antecedent to a long quest. Like Virgil, Spenser puts fulfillment in the future, located somewhere outside of the poem (a poetic device which provides an analogy to the Christian view of human life and its rewards after death). This is the pattern of the whole poem: visions of the counterplot can be the "nursery" of heroic deeds, yet they themselves must be protected, distanced in the narrative whence they can point to an unfolding of their significance outside of the poem.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ See Patricia Parker, Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poet-

Arthur's predicament illustrates the difficulties created by Spenser's way of protecting the ideals at the core of his inspiration. Spenser suggests that the counterplot can be seen in only the briefest glimpses. But these brief glimpses leave the characters uncertain of exactly what they have seen. Arthur, for example, does not remember the vision of the Faery Queen precisely, for in Book 3 Spenser presents him as wishing the Faery Queen might turn out to be Florimell:

Oft did he wish, that Lady faire mote bee
His Faery Queene, for whom he did complaine:
Or that his Faery Queene were such, as shee:
And euer hastie Night he blamed bitterlie.
(III, iv, 54)

Arthur's vision, like other metaleptic moments in the story, brings hope and purpose into the main narrative, but because the vision is kept at such a distance it also brings a certain ambiguity. As the Arlo Hill digression suggests, the Fall comes about because the plot and counterplot are not kept sufficiently distanced; after the fall, the counterplot, in order to survive, must be separated from the heroic narrative. But once it is separated from the heroic narrative, the values and consolations it offers can only be metaphorically available within the world of the characters.⁴⁸

Thus a major function of the aestheticizing and distancing of

ics of a Mode (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), for a definition of "romance" as a form which simultaneously seeks and postpones a particular end or revelation, a definition which fits the Faerie Queene.

⁴⁸See Paul Alpers, "Narration in The Faerie Queene," English Literary History 44 (1977), 19-39, for a description of the doubleness in Spenserian narrative. Alpers defines Spenserian narrative as creating ambiguity while still asserting that some certain meaning can be embodied, even in highly provisional statements.

the counterplot is to stress the need for non-literal interpretation. The counterplot, by emphasizing its separation from the main narrative, raises questions about the possibility of interpretation. The fictional need to separate the two suggests that no close connection can be found between them. The distancing provided by the counterplot also protects the visionary tableaux of the poem, and the readers are urged to see the metaphorical connections between them and the action going on in the main narrative. Spenser's decision to set Arthur's reunion with the Faery Queen in the future exemplifies the call for a metaphorical understanding: the union of the plot and counterplot can only occur outside the poem in an idealized, imaginary future. The separation of the plot and counterplot thus brings into the poem ambivalence about whether any of the values the counterplot represents, or the significance in the action that it claims, can be understood or enjoyed from the position of those within the story.

There is a paradox in Spenser's efforts to lead his readers towards a more metaphorical, less literalistic way of reading, for his poem shows that heroism springs from the desire to step forward and grasp the vision. Within the world of the characters, there is no way to separate the imaginative from the literal. Arthur is the poem's paradigm: for all his visionary faith, he seeks an actual reunion (not in dream) with the Faery Queen. He desires to grasp the ideal with the same intensity that Calidore desires it. Hope that Arthur's quest will not meet the same end can be maintained largely because that end is infinitely postponed.

Spenser cannot fully dissociate the plot and the counterplot,

for then no embodiment of the poem's values would exist within the world of the characters. By lodging the counterplot in the main narrative, however, he risks seeing it dispelled. Moreover, the very urge which might lead a character to disrupt a vision is fundamental to the heroic spirit as the poem represents it. The poem defines heroic action as a search for certain knowledge and for a vision which can be realized. The poem is thus caught in a contradiction which reveals the limits to the meaning it can impose on the narrative events.

The fact of human mortality divides the Faerie Queene as it did the Iliad. Since the characters are mortal, any promise of order or final significance (whether mythic, visionary, or artistic) must remain metaphorical.⁴⁹ Since promises of future significance do not alter the fact of mortality for the individual, the transcendent vision represented on a separate fictional plane cannot provide much consolation within the world of the characters. The limitations of the mythic realm and of the ideal are thus dramatically revealed by the division of the plot and counterplot. For the characters it is not sufficient that the imaginary realm of grace remain imaginary or be represented on a separate fictional plane. They continue to search for union with the ideal, even if this search means destroying its metaphorical embodiment. Spenser turns the Faerie Queene back towards the experience of the mortal characters by representing that desire for union with the ideal, for all its destructiveness and for all the dis-

⁴⁹The argument of the counterplot as defined here resembles the argument of The Shepheardes Calendar as Isabel MacCaffrey defines it in "Allegory and Pastoral in The Shepheardes Calendar."

illusionment it may bring, as the heart of heroic striving and the source of heroic will.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: THE EPIC COUNTERPLOT

"Our inclination to stillness and tranquillity is seldom much lessened by long knowledge of the busy and tumultuary part of the world."

Dr. Johnson, Rambler #36
Saturday, 21 July, 1750

The epic counterplot creates an image of a larger community to which poet and audience or readers belong. This community is evoked by references to the peaceful world shared by poet and audience of the Iliad, by references to an understanding of Roman history commonly held by poet and readers of the Aeneid, or by references to a set of values and beliefs shared by poet and readers of the Faerie Queene. In the counterplot, this larger community is united through imagery and analogy with the natural cycles of the seasons and the apparent immortality of the natural world to emphasize that human communities also provide a kind of continuity. While individuals die, society lives on, and in these poems individuals often die (or suffer) so that society may live on. The counterplot, by emphasizing and reasserting the importance of this continuing community while the heroic story is being told, moves towards redefining the heroic experience from this larger perspective.

Whether by emphasizing the capacity of art to provide some form of immortality (or to create order and meaning out of events), or by stressing that human society provides that continuity, or both, the

counterplot gives the hero's experience a meaning which he or she may not see. It thus attempts to incorporate heroic experience into a larger whole (whether society or art) which denies two fundamental aspects of that experience as it is felt by the character. The larger perspective suggests that there is some greater significance to be drawn from the death of an individual, and thus provides some consolation for that death, but this consolation is not available to the individual. Thus the aesthetic perspective diminishes the importance of death, which for the individual character is at the center of heroic experience. The counterplot also makes the limits of the hero's vision clear by conveying to the readers its larger significance, of which he or she is unaware. In redefining heroic experience, then, the counterplot downplays the two aspects of that experience made most clear within the main fiction: the certainty of death and the doubt of any larger pattern of significance which can make death (or the events which lead up to it) meaningful.

In the Iliad the counterplot presents the world of peace which the warriors have left behind, and suggests that peaceful human society, like the natural scenes of calm and beauty to which it is compared, mitigates the pain of heroic loss by its very existence. Although Trojan society will not continue, and the Achaean world seems equally doomed, the counterplot portrays the continuity of the larger human community. By keeping counterplot and plot separate and by turning away from the counterplot as a vision which can explain heroic experience, the Iliad shows that the world presented in the counterplot does not mitigate the pain of death. The poem suggests that to turn to the counterplot is to falsify the nature of heroic experience, and

finally it turns away from it to dramatize the centrality of death within the lives of the characters.

In the Odyssey heroic action is made consonant with the values and perspectives embodied in the counterplot, but at the cost of falsifying the nature of heroic experience and treating it as if it were art. In order to treat heroic action like aesthetic experience, the Odyssey de-emphasizes the role of violence and the consequent fact of death in the hero's own life and in his effects on others. It thus diminishes the dignity of the characters in order to blur the boundaries of the heroic and aesthetic points of view.

In the Aeneid Virgil transforms the Homeric counterplot into a vehicle for his historical vision. This shift is one of degree rather than kind, for even in the Iliad the counterplot establishes and reaffirms the community between poet (or bard) and audience. Virgil historicizes this concept of community, and places the fulfillment of the counterplot in the Augustan future (which is his and his readers' present). Thus the claims of community and order are more removed from the heroic world portrayed in the poem even while they are causally linked to it.

Spenser too uses the counterplot to present a larger vision of order and significance. This order is partly the larger pattern of his poem (including its "moralized" meaning), and partly the visionary or metaphysical order adumbrated in his use of mythology (especially Neoplatonic mythology) and suggested by the Christian analogy to the experience he describes. Like Virgil, Spenser puts the fulfillment of the larger pattern in the future, outside of the time scheme of the poem, although this postponement of the vision forms part of a transcen-

dental rather than an historical order. In the Faerie Queene the larger focus is visionary and transcendental, but once again it creates a community of author and reader who sees these larger truths and finds that they give meaning to the action. Spenser's use of the counterplot for visionary purposes is not as different from Homer and Virgil's use of it as it might seem, for even in the Iliad the larger perspective taken by poet and audience (or readers) is the perspective of the gods.

In both the Aeneid and the Faerie Queene, the vision of order revealed in the counterplot is shown to be an aesthetic order, or at least to be analogous to an aesthetic order. One effect of joining the aesthetic focus of the counterplot with the poem's claim of larger meaning or order (whether historical or moral) is to suggest that this larger order is an aesthetic construct. These historical schemes or systems of value are shown by the division of plot and counterplot to be made up of words which do not fit the actions described very closely. The counterplot is concerned with words and the strategies, alternatives, and comforts they offer, while the plot is concerned with deeds and the strategies, alternatives and comforts they offer. The poet needs to show that the two can be related in order to suggest the validity of the schemes of values or beliefs which inform his poem. Virgil, for example, wishes to show his hero's deeds as civilized and civilizing, but he is sometimes reduced to showing how the poet's words can recreate the community that the hero's deeds have almost destroyed.

Both Virgil and Spenser connect the counterplot and the plot to some extent in order to show that the poet's words can give meaning and shape to the events of the main narrative. For both Virgil and

Spenser this connection provides a crucial nexus of values within the poem. Both poets also limit the connections between the two, however, for lodging the counterplot within the main fictional narrative has dangers as well as benefits. The benefits are evident: connecting the two makes the values and larger perspective of the counterplot partly available within the world of the characters. Unfortunately, it also brings uncertainty into the narrative about which level of events is the more real and hence an ambivalence about meaning itself. Such moments in which plot and counterplot are merged thus not only lead to the technique of narrative doubling, whereby two opposed versions of an event are joined in one account of it, but undermine the claims of the counterplot itself by making the readers question its vision of order and significance. This threat to the values represented in the counterplot exists whenever the counterplot is lodged within the fictional landscape of the poem, but it is demonstrated most explicitly within the fiction when Calidore steps forward and dispels Colin's vision of the graces on Mount Acidale.

Virgil and Spenser keep the plot and counterplot more separate than Homer does in the Odyssey, although they occasionally use Odyssean narrative techniques to bring the counterplot briefly into the fictional world of their poems. The Aeneid and the Faerie Queene both show that the counterplot is most effectively integrated into the heroic story when it is connected to that story most digressively or when it is placed apart in the distant past or future. Keeping the counterplot at some distance from the main heroic narrative allows the heroic story to remain untouched by the visionary claims of the counterplot. Virgil's story is one of violence, conquest and mortality, a story

which gains seriousness by being separated from the historical and artistic order which appears to justify it. Spenser's story too concerns the effects of violence and how best to suffer them, and his particular emphasis is on the ease with which visions of a transcendent order are lost. Dividing the plot and counterplot allows him to present the difficulty of finding evidence of moral order and the need to learn how to act in this context while providing an image of that order for the readers, an image which "moralizes" the story.

Keeping plot and counterplot separate allows an epic poet to include within his poem a larger system of meaning and values which creates a larger community without abandoning the narrow and limited perspective of the hero in his austere world and without compromising the hero's strength or nobility. But if the poet puts the counterplot at too great a distance from the main narrative, the values and perspective it offers come to seem uncertain, inaccessible, illusory. Some connection between the counterplot and the main narrative must be found. When the counterplot is joined with the plot, however, and its values are made significant in the main action, this very connection can serve to expose its limitations.

The efforts of Calidore to know for certain whether or not Colin's vision of the Graces is real, or the efforts of Arthur to achieve union with the ideal, bring hope into the world of the characters, but they also dramatize the insubstantiality and complete inaccessibility of the ideal. Calidore's step forward can be compared to Spenser's decision to lodge the counterplot somewhere in the fictional landscape of his poem. In order to have any reality within the fiction it must have some physical presence, but, once made present,

it risks being destroyed. To avoid losing the vision (whether of the future or of some transcendent moral order) both Spenser and Virgil maintain a greater degree of separation between the plot and the counterplot than their own system of values called for. As a result, their poems, in spite of the many romance conventions on which they draw, turn back towards the darker vision of human experience and heroic strife presented in the Iliad.

The subject of classical epic may largely explain the use that Homer and Virgil make of this internal structural division in their poems. The classical epic takes the heroic ethos as its central subject and dramatizes its significance for the individual warrior and his society. Classical epics thus necessarily concern war and describe aggressive, hostile and even imperialistic acts on the part of the warriors. The division between plot and counterplot allows the epic poet to present the violence of the primary story directly and to show its effect on the hero. The violence imposed by the nature of the story is shown to take its toll, even when it is presented as necessary. The counterplot diminishes the impression that the story centers on violent acts and on the effect of violence, and suggests that these deeds should be understood as part of a larger context. It provides a rationale within which the violence of the main story can be made to seem acceptable and even heroic. The division of plot and counterplot thus allows the epic poet to be clear about the sometimes contradictory implications of the system of values which the epic poem itself commemorates.

Spenser also uses this structural division to reveal the implications of the values his poem embodies. A central subject of his

poem is the need for heroic action (as defined by the fiction of the Faerie Queene) to be based on an inner certainty about value and to proceed by means of careful interpretation of the signs of the larger order which this inner certainty suggests must be present. The division of plot and counterplot makes the reading of these signs difficult, however, for the characters can never know for certain that they have made the right interpretation. Spenser thereby implies that the values of his poem depend for their proof on a revelation which can only occur outside the poem and which is indefinitely postponed. The dissociation of the two narrative levels darkens the world of the characters more than the values of the poem might suggest. In this interpretation, Spenser's Faerie Queene is less of a romance and more of an epic in the line of the classical epics, for it presents little hope for certain vision within human life. The perspectives of the counterplot are not allowed to mitigate the experience of loss or suffering within the main heroic narrative.

This study suggests that each of the epic poems considered uses the division of plot and counterplot, kept separate to differing degrees and with differing effects, to illuminate the complexities of its system of values.¹ The division of plot and counterplot allows

¹A stress on the internal oppositions in epic poetry can help to suggest a definition of the epic genre responsive to the ambiguities and multiplicities of the form. Frederic Jameson has recently described the need for a genre criticism which can accommodate both the "semantic" (concern for "mode" and "inner form") and the "syntactic" or "structural" analysis of genre. He argues that, to be alert both to complexity of form and to historical or ideological significance of form, critics must subject apparently unified forms "to a kind of x-ray technique designed to reveal the layered or marbled structure

the importation of different values and perspectives into the heroic narrative and thereby permits the poem to expose the limitations of its primary set of values. Honesty about the implications of heroic action thus characterizes each of these poems.

This honesty does not prevent the poems from arguing for the importance of the point of view established in the counterplot. But, except in the Odyssey, the main narrative always stands out, stark against the colorful background of the counterplot, to remind the readers that the limitations of human vision and death itself are the defining terms of the plot. No amount of artistic manipulation, whether at a distance in the counterplot or uncomfortably merged with the heroic narrative, can alter that fact, and the Odyssey reveals the contradictions inherent in presenting a story that tries to do so. The other poems make the choice of Achilles by turning away from the counterplot and making the plot of mortality their central story.

of the text according to what we will call generic discontinuities" (his emphasis). See "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism," in The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 144. The approach used in this study is an analogous one. Jameson also argues that "genre theory must always in some way or another project a model of the co-existence or tension between several generic modes or strains" (p. 141). Analyzing the degree of opposition of plot and counterplot in epic poetry can make possible such a double reading. Epic poetry, as examined here, embraces the contradictions of the heroic ethos, and uses its own structural divisions to make them manifest.

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