The Margins of Epic:

Three Studies in an Ovidian Homer

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Arts.
Department of Classics and Ancient History, August 2002.

Word count: 79,777

Abstract

This study has two interrelated objectives: firstly, to examine the sustained allusions to Homer within Ovid's work; and secondly, to reread Homeric epic within the terms and concerns of the poetic idioms of Ovidian verse, in the belief that the perspective on Homer offered us by Ovid's poetic corpus will enrich our own interpretations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. An introduction justifies the rationale behind this investigation's juxtaposition of Ovid and Homer, and establishes the theoretical background to its conception of 'intertextuality'. Chapter 1 proceeds from Ovid's *Heroides* through the concept of 'epistolarity' to examine ways in which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* might be read as 'already' preoccupied with the themes and motifs of Roman love elegy. Chapter 2 explores the *Iliad* from the point of view of the *Metamorphoses*, privileging the themes of 'repetition' and 'belatedness', and suggesting a 'metamorphic' intertextuality through which to explore the resonances between the two texts. The final chapter explores the phenomenology of exile as established in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and explores one specific aspect of Ovid's exilic anxieties, the question of 'credibility', as it might apply to Odysseus' 'exile' in the *Odyssey*. Finally a brief conclusion summarises the themes and the place in scholarship of the studies of the preceding chapters.

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes a great deal to the positive contributions and support of my adviser, Duncan Kennedy, and of a highly congenial and stimulating research environment at Bristol University: both members of staff and my fellow graduate students helped shape my thinking in ways too subtle yet too fundamental to annotate. The project had its genesis in an M.A. dissertation at Durham University, advised by Damien Nelis, who originally suggested the field of study. Funding was provided by a grant from the University of Bristol in the first year, and by the Arts and Humanities Research Board in the second and third years: I am grateful to both my sponsors for their support. The greatest debt of all, however, I owe to my parents, who consistently stressed the value of a good education, and always backed their words with deeds: it is to them that I dedicate these *nugae*.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in the United Kingdom or overseas.

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Contents

Introduction

i. Poets between two worlds: Reconciling Ovid and Homer

It is a *topos* of recent critical idiom, whether explicitly or implicitly voiced, to conceive of Ovid as a poet 'between two worlds'. The phrase originates as the title of Hermann Fränkel's 1945 study of the writer and his work, in which Ovid is portrayed as straddling the boundary between the pagan and Christian eras;[1] but its terms of reference may also be extended to cover such 'liminal' states as the boundary between Golden and Silver age Latin literature,[2] civilized Rome and the yet to be subdued barbarian hinterlands he inhabited in his exile,[3] or most particularly in our own era the conceptual frontier between the intellectual spheres of 'modernity' and 'post-modernity'.[4] Janus-like, Ovid looks both ways: his poetry is acutely conscious of the weight of the past beneath which it labours, yet it also modulates the traditional motifs in such a way as to seem to anticipate future themes and developments in the Western tradition.[5] The concern his poetry exhibits with its predecessors is entirely in accord with our understanding of Roman culture, which aligns itself with models of the past presented both poetically in terms of Greek and Hellenistic forebears, and socially through the historical models of the *mos maiorum*. Yet the way in which Ovid is felt to prefigure future trends and developments in Western thought highlights a second aspect of Ovid's engagement with tradition: the *Nachleben* of his verse in which the concerns of his poetry are constantly adapted to new environments and new contexts results in an Ovid who seems 'already' to some degree to be one of us. Straddling the boundary between fundamentally Roman preoccupations and quintessentially modern concerns, his poetry is both complicated and enriched by the ways in which it presents and reshapes late Augustan cultural concerns as already (but not yet) our own.

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[1] See especially Fränkel (1945) 1-4; and cf. Hughes (1997) vii-xi. Hughes sees in the *Metamorphoses* "a rough register of what it feels like to live in the psychological gulf that opens at the end of an era" (*ibid*, xi). See Hardie (2002a) 2-3 on the correspondences which can be drawn between the poetic careers of Ovid and Ted Hughes: perhaps what Hughes particularly appreciates in Ovid is that which resides on the boundary between the world of ancient Rome and the world of late twentieth century Britain.

[2] See particularly Williams (1978) 52-101.

[3] See Habinek (1998) 151-69.

[4] See e.g. Fowler (2000) 156-67; and cf. Hardie (2002a) 4-5.

In contrast to the dynamic and liminal reception of Ovid, Homeric reception is more frequently marked by centripetal moves which privilege 'inertia' and 'stasis'. On this account, Homer looks neither to present nor to past: he simply 'is', aloof and removed, resistant to any and all attempts to refigure and recontextualise his works. Macrobius' analogising of the relationship between Homer and his imitators well exemplifies this critical conceptualisation:

> Quod quidem summus Homericae laudis cumulus est quod, cum ita a plurimis adversus eum vigilatum sit, coactaeque omnium vires manum contra fecerint, ille veluti pelagi rupes immota resistit.
>
> (Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 6.3.1)

In common with many commentators in the ancient world, Macrobius conceives of Homer as the alpha and omega of literary discourse, comparing him to an unshakeable rock, which his imitators assault, assail and rage around yet never actually succeed in budging. By comparing Homer to a rock, and (by implication) comparing his poetic successors and imitators to the waves of the sea that buffet and batter it, he effects a move which serves to draw an absolute and unbreachable distinction between Homer himself on the one hand, and the remainder of the tradition on the other. Homer is moved out of the realm of interpretability, and is converted instead into an ahistorical, decontextualised essence who not only fails to be *shaken* by the literary tradition, but also conspicuously fails to *affect* it in his own turn. Therefore, even though Macrobius' simile purports to valorize Homer by protecting him from the flux and turbulence which affects all other authors, still the language which he uses to describe this process actually ascribes to Homer a passivity and an isolation which effects a premature closure on the very possibility of interpreting him in the first place. The passive and static formulations *adversus eum vigilatum sit* and *immota resistit* implies that, rather than being open to reconstruction and recontextualisation in the changing conditions of different interpretative climates, Homer is instead powerless either to take the initiative against the attacks of his detractors or to adapt himself to fit in with their ever-changing and ever-fluid forms: he remains always the same, now and forever, both resistant to and incapable of change.

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[5] The essays in Martindale (1988) and, more recently, the monographs by Brown (1999) and Lyne (2001), set out some of the ways in which Ovid 'anticipates' the concerns of his poetic successors. See

The perspective adopted by Macrobius has proven to be exceptionally durable in Homeric criticism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold produced an essay on translating Homer in which he highlighted four 'essential' features of Homeric verse which an ideal translation ought to incorporate: "that he is eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct...both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct...in his matter and ideas; and finally that he is eminently noble."[6] Arnold's moves thus privilege uncomplicated rapidity over detailed reflection; favour simplicity ("plain and direct") over polyvalence and polytropy; and emphasise nobility, or grandeur of manner, at the expense of the freer rhythms and formulations of the ballad style.[7] In similar vein Brooks Otis outlines the 'objectivity' which he sees as characteristic of Homeric epic;[8] in particular, the terms in which he describes Homer's style ("the straightforward rapid narrative of action, the direct discourse of both gods and men, the inimitable combination of familiarity and nobility"[9]) might almost be lifted verbatim from Arnold's own analysis. It must be admitted that the *Odyssey* has proven rather more amenable than the *Iliad* to recuperation within less centripetal critical discourses: in the past two decades in particular, several critics have taken steps towards recuperating the poem in contemporary critic idioms. Seth Schein's appraisal defines the difference between he two epics as follows:

> The *Iliad*...is simpler and more straightforward in its action, its characterisation, its narrative structure, and the clarity of the tragic contradictions in which its characters live and die. The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, like its cunning, shifty, adaptable hero, is harder to get a handle on. Its revision of heroism and generic rivalry with the Iliadic norms are clear enough, yet it leaves in doubt how best to evaluate these revisions. More fundamentally...the *Odyssey* is a kind of epic poetry that leaves itself open to re-vision and re-creation by audiences and readers, whom it challenges to achieve interpretive clarity in the face of formal, narrative, and ethical complexities and uncertainties.[10]

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also Martindale (1993) 55-64; Hinds (1998) 129-42.

[6] Arnold (1896) 10.

[7] These various aspects of the Homeric style are discussed in depth at Arnold (1896) 11-15, 15-31, and 43-63 respectively.

[8] See Otis (1964) 41-61, where Homer's 'objectivity' is developed as a counterpoint to the 'subjective' style of Virgil; the theme is reprised briefly in the context of the *Metamorphoses* at Otis (1970) 317.

[9] Otis (1964) 5.

[10] Schein (1996) 31. Note how his figuration of a "simpler and more straightforward" *Iliad* still gestures faintly towards the model of Arnold (1896).

Schein's analysis, even though it endorses the 'static' and 'straightforward' readings of the *Iliad*, posits in opposition to this a reactionary *Odyssey*, which poises itself on the border between the 'closed' world of the Iliadic past and the more 'dynamic' contexts of its own interpreters and readers. In particular, his stress on "formal, narrative, and ethical *complexities* and *uncertainties*" highlights how the *Odyssey* is particularly open to the kinds of interpretations generally styled as 'postmodern', which foreground themes such as indeterminacy, concealment, and polyvalence.[11] Nevertheless even this partial recuperation of Homeric epic only holds good insofar as the *Odyssey* is generally felt to postdate the *Iliad* and to confront that poem's (already privileged and remote) realisation of the epic mode.[12] In a sense, such analyses only confirm and endorse the traditional scholarly prejudices: even as the *Odyssey* flees, it does so only at the expense of locking the *Iliad* even more tightly into its straitjacket of 'simplicity', 'clarity' and 'plainness'.

A major aim of this project will therefore be to bridge the chasm which separates Homeric criticism from Homer's successors in the classical tradition, to bring him out of critical isolation and recuperate him on the 'margins' of scholarly discourse. A second and associated aim will be to explore some of the areas where Homeric presence in Ovidian poetry is particularly marked: for this is an especially 'marginal' area in Ovidian scholarship. Mid-twentieth century interpretations of the poet found little of merit in Ovid's approach to Homer: Brooks Otis dismissed the Trojan sections of the *Metamorphoses* as "contrived and factitious" and "a quite artificial pastiche of bravura pieces", while Fränkel's verdict on the same passages was equally damning.[13] More recently, however, in line with the general trend of subverting the canon and rehabilitating authors previously on the margins of critical debate, Ovid's works have experienced a minor critical resurgence. For example, Homeric allusions in the *Heroides*, so often overlooked in the rush to condemn the sentimentality and monotony of the collection, have been newly recuperated and appreciated by the more

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[11] See e.g. Murnaghan (1987); Peradotto (1990); Felson-Rubin (1994); and consider how Pucci (1987), ostensibly an account of the intertextual dynamics between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in fact more frequently adopts the Odyssean perspective as closer to its own polytropic and poststructuralist concerns.

[12] On the *Odyssey* as successor to the *Iliad* see especially Kirk (1962) 320-2; Thalmann (1984) 167-70.

[13] See Otis (1970) 278-305 (quotes from 280): also Fränkel (1945) 101, who mourns the demise of Ovid's "enchanting caprice" which gives way from *Metamorphoses* 12 onwards to "an ambition for grandeur".

sensitive readings of recent years. Chapters in book-length studies by Howard Jacobson and Florence Verducci have sought to relate certain of the epistles to their Homeric contexts, and a seminal article by Duncan Kennedy suggested that the letter-form itself is crucial to the playing out of the intertextual dynamics of Penelope's *Heroides* 1.[14] The 'personal' context of exile as developed in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* is less suited to close and sustained allusion of mythological sources: here the critical literature is more limited, but brief discussions by, among others, Helmut Rahn, Harry Evans and Gareth Williams have suggested the importance of Odysseus as a mythological paradigm for Ovid's own exilic experiences.[15] The *Metamorphoses* have not benefited to quite the same degree from the recent liberalising trend, perhaps because the poem did not suffer the strictures of adverse criticism in quite the same severe terms as those met with by the *Tristia* or the *Heroides*. Accordingly, although the poem's engagement with Homer has not gone unrecognised, the sustained treatment of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in books 12-14 has not yet met with an equally sustained treatment in scholarship; rather, the passages have been dealt with in piecemeal form, as if in over-compensation for the poet's besetting fault, *nescit quod bene cessit relinquere* (Seneca, *Contr.* 9.5.17). Lafaye devotes a chapter to Homeric influences on the *Metamorphoses*, though his interest is stimulated more by the motives of *Quellenforschung* than by a desire to explore the literary merit of such passages.[16] In more recent times Otto Due, motivated partly by a desire to make amends for the condescending and dismissive treatments of the preceding generation, devoted a chapter to Ovid's treatment of the Trojan myth, though his decision to privilege the presumed reactions of Ovid's Roman contemporaries as the 'original' audience of the poem means that his observations are necessarily limited and introspective, lacking the 'edge' found in other scholarly treatments of the poet's work.[17] Alessandro Barchiesi has more recently addressed some aspects of the

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[14] Jacobson (1974) 12-21; Verducci (1985) 98-125; and Kennedy (1984) 413-22 respectively. See also Barchiesi (1992) for a commentary on the epistles of Penelope and Briseis; Knox (1995) 140-170 *passim* on the Homeric background of Oenone's epistle to Paris; and Kenney (1996) 86-146 *passim* on the exchange of letters between Paris and Helen.

[15] See Rahn (1958) 115-19; Evans (1983) 40-2, 48-9; Williams (1994) 108-13. Cf. also Hinds (1985) 27-8 on Penelope as a model for Ovid's wife.

[16] See Lafaye (1900) 115-32. Source-hunting is also the primary concern of Ellsworth (1980) and (1988).

[17] Due (1974) 134-57: his introduction (9-14) sets out the rather limited scope of his study. Zumwalt (1977) and Musgrove (1998) also deal with this section of the poem, though with the greater brevity necessitated by the article form.

Metamorphoses' interest in the Homeric Hymns; although this topic lies beyond the scope of the current study, nevertheless the Hymns, concerned as they are with issues such as aetiology and the boundaries between divinity and mortality, represent a particularly 'Ovidian' strand of the archaic poetic tradition, later adapted by Callimachus and the Hellenistic poets, which may partly account for the occlusion of the Homeric strand in *Metamorphoses* criticism in favour of the Callimachean.[18]

It will be seen from the brief discussion above that a thorough discussion of the relationship between Ovid and Homer is still awaited in classical literary criticism. This work does not claim to offer any comprehensive treatment: this is partly through limitations of space, and partly because any such 'definitive' treatment is in danger of 'recentring' Ovid in its turn and thereby occluding the very argument it seeks to endorse. What it will offer is some pointers towards Ovidianising Homer, beginning with the themes and passages covered in the above paragraph. Moreover, rather than recentring Ovid, the objective will be to marginalize Homer; to read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* under the influence of such works as the *Heroides*, the *Metamorphoses*, and the epistles from exile; to recast Homer, in other words, as a poet already, but not yet, 'Ovid'.[19]

If the subject of this study is to be the relationship between Ovid and Homer, however, it still remains to decide how best to approach this topic: for the critical idiom of recent years has produced a wide variety of terms and models for the 'intertextual' relationship between 'source' and 'alluding' texts. Accordingly it is to this question that we will now turn.

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[18] Barchiesi (1999) 112-26; cf. Hinds (1987a) on the use of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* at *Met.*5.250-678 and *Fasti* 4.417-618. The 'Callimachean' aspects of the *Metamorphoses* are much more fully covered than the poem's 'Homeric' affiliations: see particularly Crump (1931); Knox (1986); Myers (1994); Cameron (1995) 359-61.

[19] Galinsky (1996) 261-9 suggests that the Augustan agenda, which privileges "evolution, experimentation, complexity, and transcendence of the times" (261-2), is in fact more closely aligned with Ovid's own concerns than has often been recognised: see also Galinsky (1999) 103-111. Given such a definition of Augustan culture, it is debatable whether this innovative interpretation offers an Ovid 'recentred', or perhaps instead suggests an Augustanism newly 'marginalised' in terms analogous to the topic currently under discussion.

ii. Intertextuality or allusion? Figures, tenors, and tropes

As in other areas, so in the sphere of 'allusion' Latin scholarship has grown increasingly self-conscious with respect to the critical terms it deploys to describe its heuristic practices. One of the most prominent trends of recent years has been the growing acceptance of the term 'intertextuality' to describe the relationships between literary works, and the eclipse of the time-honoured and time-worn term 'allusion'.[20] 'Intertextuality' as a critical concept was originally formulated by Julia Kristeva, not as a precise way to describe the relationship between one text and another, but rather to describe how the general matrix of poetic language forms a resource of poetic meaning upon which any one single text inevitably draws: "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[21] However, the word quickly exceeded the context intended by its creator in the sphere of Marxist poetics and the theoretical works of Saussure and Bakhtin,[22] and in the field of classical studies in particular has accumulated a wide range of connotations, so much so that the term can be used with equal comfort by, for example, post-structuralists such as Pietro Pucci on the one hand, and on the other hand by Oliver Lyne, whose reading practices are rooted in the more traditional philological approaches to the discipline.[23] The vast range of approaches to literature accommodated in this world might be ascribed to a fundamentally 'metacritical' aspect of the term itself. If inter*text*uality is to be disengaged from the radical *text*uality characteristic of French thinking in the late sixties, then it must be incorporated into another frame of reference, whose terms it may then appropriate to describe its own critical practices. This is to say that 'intertextuality' is always to be understood 'intertextually': the language and imagery used to clarify one's critical conception of the term are, sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly, used to signal

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[20] This shift is particularly prominent in works of the last decade. Lyne (1994) 187-204 declares his preference for the supposedly neutral term 'intertextuality' in favour of the intentionalist connotations of 'allusion' (though his Appendix 3 [200-1], in which he disassociates himself from the more radical implications of intertextual poetics, implicitly acknowledges that this term too carries a semantic baggage he finds somewhat distasteful). See also Fowler (1998) 24-34; Hinds (1998) 17-51 and *passim*; Edmunds (2001).

[21] Kristeva (1980) 66.

[22] For a history of Kristeva's theory of intertextuality see Clayton & Rothstein (1990) 18-20 and Allen (2000) 30-47; for a critique of Kristeva from the perspective of Latin literary studies, see Edmunds (2001) 8-16. The distance the term has migrated since its coinage in 1969 is in itself suggestive of the dexterity with which it resists application to one single, static category of 'meaning' or 'theory'.

[23] See Pucci (1987); Lyne (1994).

one's adaptation and taming of the term within the context of one's own critical practices. A range of metaphors, of similes, and of figures of speech is available to the exponent of intertextual criticism to describe the relationship between the two texts she is studying: and each one of these terms will in turn say something about the prejudices on which that critic bases her scholarly practice.[24]

The figure of 'paternity', and such related imagery as 'inheritance', 'heirlooms' and 'succession', offers an instantly recognisable model for the poetic relationship between alluding and alluded poet. Roman poets often figure their concerns about their use of the poetic tradition through a crisis of succession from father to son, or the transmission of an heirloom from one generation to the next: the work of Philip Hardie in particular has spelled out many of the implications of this motif for Roman epic.[25] It is a particularly flexible figure in the space it allows for literary 'cross-fertilisation', as multiple sources combine to procreate one textual successor, or one particularly profligate source breeds a multitude of progeny; on this model texts might be 'cousins', 'half-siblings', or even 'cousins twice removed', a much more complex form of relationship than the mere uncomplicated transmission of a reified 'tradition' from one poem to the next.[26] Its main appeal, however, might be felt to lie in the expressly *personalising* narrative it offers of literary history.[27] In particular, Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* offers an intense dramatisation of the relationship between a poet and his forebears.[28] Bloom's theory of an 'anxiety of influence' is primarily based on psychoanalytical representations of the relationship between fathers and sons; yet the secondary image of his poetic relationship, the notion of 'influence', while almost a dead metaphor for Bloom himself, has long been of service to classical critics and commentators.[29] Bloom sources the poetic connotations

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[24] Cf. Baxandall (1985) 58 for the rich variety of terms available to describe the processes of intertextuality.
[25] See Hardie (1993) 88-119; Hardie (1997) 193-5. The ultimate epic 'heirloom' is the soul of Homer himself, which found its way by stages into the body of Ennius (*Annales* fr.5-13 Skutch) and thence, according to Hardie (1986) 76-83 and Hardie (1995) 204-15 respectively, into the underworld of Virgil *Aeneid* 6 and the Pythagorean discourse of Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15. See also Ricks (1976) 209-40 for a perspective on English poetry's adaptation of this trope.
[26] Cf. Conte (1994a) 5-6.
[27] See Hardie (1993) 116-19.
[28] Bloom (1973).
[29] Hence the term *Quellenforschung*, all but naturalised now in Anglophone classical critical scholarship; and for an ancient perspective cf. Cameron (1995) 273-4 on the iconography of Homer as

of the word 'influence' to the eighteenth century; and in key with his profoundly mantic and prophetic voice, his etymologising relates the notion of 'inflow' inherent in the term to an ethereal emanation descending on mankind from a divine or otherwise occult power: "As first used, to be influenced meant to receive an ethereal fluid flowing in upon one from the stars.... A power...exercised itself, in defiance of all that had seemed voluntary in one."[30] Yet it has often been noted in the context of Bloom's analysis that he is not as self-consciously aware as he might be of his own anxieties and influences. The move he makes to relate criticism to poetry only points up this limitation:[31] his analysis leaves the lingering impression that not only the poets whom he studies, but also he himself suffers in psychological 'thrall' to the era of Milton and his immediate successors.[32]

The language and imagery of 'scholarship' has also made a prominent contribution to the terminology of intertextuality. It is perhaps natural to seek our language first of all in the discourse within which we conduct our professional interactions. In particular the monograph (or the thesis), which quotes directly from ancient and modern authorities by turns and cites in footnotes the texts on which its own arguments and conclusions are based, seems to present itself as a paradigm for the conceit by which 'new' texts are constructed out of reinterpretations and redeployments of the 'old'. Richard Thomas's classic article on "Virgil and the art of reference" evokes just such a mood.[33] Thomas presents himself first of all as a disciple of Giorgio Pasquali, whose article "*Arte allusiva*" is often cited as a landmark in scholarship on classical intertextuality.[34] Pasquali himself was more concerned with the finer nuances of Alexandrian 'allusive' practice than the potentially 'ludic' connotations of his own *arte allusiva*; Thomas, however, is more careful with his terminology, as he states:

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the 'river of Ocean', the world-embracing source of poetic inspiration from which all lesser poets must proceed.

[30] See Bloom (1973) 26-7; and cf. Clayton & Rothstein (1990) 4-5.

[31] See Bloom (1973) 94-5.

[32] On this see particularly Bloom (1973) 32: "the Sphinx who strangles even strong imitators in their cradle: Milton"; and cf. Bloom's selection of Milton's Satan as allegory for the poetic successor's dilemma (Bloom [1973] 20-3).

[33] Thomas (1988).

[34] Pasquali (1951).

> I hope it will become clear in the pages to come that Virgil is not so much "playing" with his models, but constantly intends that his reader be "sent back" to them, consulting them through memory or physically, and that he then return and apply his observation to the Virgilian text; the word 'allusion' has implications far too frivolous to suit this process.[35]

Thomas's account suggests that the ideal interpreter of the Virgilian allusion is patient, perspicacious, prepared to undertake extensive research, and within reach of a large and well-stocked library: the same conditions would satisfy the modern scholarly exegete and the ancient lay reader alike. However, as with the Bloomian metaphor of genealogy, so Thomas' account is also vulnerable to criticism within its very own terms of debate. Thomas seeks to construct a scholarly Virgil: in his concluding remarks he praises his "cleverness" and "erudition", and remarks how thoroughly his poetry is "rooted in the intellectual basis provided by Alexandria".[36] But this is much more an effect of his own approach, 'reducing' the poet, his *modus operandi*, and his presumed aims and intentions to examination within the scholarly context of academia, than it is an objective judgement on the characteristics of Virgilian poetry.[37] A similar bind is evident in Gian Biagio Conte's conception of intertextual practice, which relates 'allusion' to the rhetorical figures of simile and metaphor.[38] By reducing the intertextual gesture to a rhetorical trope, Conte finesses the perspective which views intertextuality as an 'event', a "dynamic destabilization" as it is figured by Barchiesi,[39] and reduces it to a mere one-dimensional "snapshot" of technical merit and dexterity: the role of the reader (whether the reader of this allusive poetry or the reader of Conte's analysis of allusive poetics) is confined to appreciation of the author's command of the intricacies and mechanics of the field within which he works.

Thus the multiplicity of approaches taken by both texts and their readers, along with the intrinsic difficulties which reside within them, suggests that there can be no firm and unimpeachable science of intertextuality – or perhaps more accurately, that if

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[35] Thomas (1988) 172n8, justifying his choice of the term 'reference'.
[36] Thomas (1988) 198. He invokes these notions of 'scholarship' primarily in order to call attention to how expertly Virgil conceals them in the *Georgics*.
[37] Farrell (1991) 18 recognises this very strand in Thomas' critical idiom and assesses it acutely thus: "[His] primary interest is in an aesthetic response, difficult to define, that is closely tied to the excitement of philological discovery and thus accessible only to those who revel in such abstract joys."
[38] See Conte (1986) 52-69.

there is such a thing as a 'science' of intertextuality, that it must take its place as a construct of the scholar alongside a Contean 'rhetoric' of intertextuality, a Bloomian 'genealogy' of intertextuality, and so on. Rather the choice of figure, of metaphor, or of model for a poet's allusive practices is the critic's own choice, and it is a decision which inflects the whole course of her subsequent analysis: in this respect it is slightly disingenuous of Thomas to suggest that "poets such as Catullus, Virgil, and Ovid had an intellect and scholarly capacity comparable with (and in one case superior to) that of their Alexandrian predecessors",[40] since the 'scholarly capacity' these poets may have possessed is in large part a function of the exquisitely erudite and sophisticated readings of Thomas himself. This analysis of critical constructions of intertextuality is equally valid in terms of ancient constructions of allusive figuration as in terms of modern interpretations of the same theme. Even within their own writings ancient authors seem keen to foreground the explicitly allusive aspects of their own gestures towards their poetic predecessors: tropes of 'memory', of 'recognition', or even of mere 'antiquity' may be deployed to signal a text's foregrounding of its allusions.[41] Indeed, not only are such self-conscious gestures as these signals of a text's 'pastness', they also incorporate within themselves a sense of how the text *conceives of* its relationship with its literary 'past': this point has been noted and explored by Stephen Hinds.[42] Thus an 'allusive gesture' tells a story about the text within which it is sited, the text of the so-called 'alluding author'; it tells a story about the text towards which it gestures, the text which acts as the 'influence'; and it tells a story about itself, making suggestions about how it views its gesture of intertextuality and how it conceives of its own gesture as contributing to the 'meaning' both of the 'prior' text and of the 'successor' text. From a text's own construction of its allusive concerns may be recuperated a certain conception of that text's vision of its intertextual relationships.[43]

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[39] See Barchiesi (2001) 142; I borrow the term "snapshot" from the same source.
[40] Thomas (1988) 172-3.
[41] General overviews of this topic may be found at Hinds (1998) 1-16 and Barchiesi (2001) 129-40. The trope of 'memory' is the subject of discussions by Conte (1986) 40-95 and Miller (1993) 153-64. Ross (1975) 78 coins the phrase 'Alexandrian footnote' to describe one specific type of allusive gesture in the Roman neoteric poets: this phrase neatly combines the themes of scholarship, of Hellenization, and of self-consciousness as figures of allusive discourse.
[42] See Hinds (1998) 10-16, 129-144.
[43] A point noted and developed by Hinds (1998) 129: "[S]elf-annotation...is not something exceptional, but rather something always immanent in allusive discourse." Cf. Conte (1986) 67-9; Barchiesi (2001) 142; Edmunds (2001) 163.

Such an understanding of a text's intertextual self-consciousness accords well with the terms of the project currently being formulated, to attempt to modulate Homer beneath the themes and concerns of Ovidian verse. If we attempt to read Homer explicitly from the Ovidian perspective, it would be an unnecessarily complicating move to import imagery for this intertextual relationship from yet a third sphere of meaning, be it 'rhetoric', 'scholarship', or any other resource: the initial terms of intertextual engagement, like all other aspects of this relationship, ought to be established first of all by the Ovidian treatment of the same themes. As the argument of this section has sought to demonstrate, any attempt to establish an analogy for the relationship between texts will inevitably prejudge the very issues which it seeks to prove. Therefore this project will seek out Ovid's text, the poetic forms it selects, the concepts it conveys, and the themes it foregrounds, as its first resource for analogies and figurations of the intertextual relationship thus constructed. This is not in the belief that the texts will offer us a more neutral, less self-interested model of intertextuality (as if the text's own construction of its allusive practices could somehow be less partial than critics' constructions of the same); nor is it prompted by the hope that this strategy will give us access to a 'transcendental' reading of Ovid, of Homer, and of the relationship between the two: but inasmuch as the forthcoming project seeks above all to privilege the 'Ovidian' strand within Homeric poetry, it will proceed from the Ovidian texts, working first of all from the terms and issues these poems foreground both on a verbal and a formal level.

iii. The plan of this project

Accordingly, working within the context of 'intertextual figuration' I have outlined above, the three chapters of my study will each proceed from a specific Ovidian work in order to examine its relationship with Homeric sources through tropes of 'intertextuality' which are suggested or brought to prominence by the Ovidian texts themselves. Chapter One will concern itself with the *Heroides*, in particular the third letter (Briseis to Achilles) and the paired sixteenth and seventeenth letters (the exchange between Paris and Helen). The first half of the analysis will explore Briseis' adaptation of the elegiac *servitium amoris* and *militia amoris* motifs within the epic context of the *Iliad*, and suggest how the *Iliad* is read as 'already' informed by the defining themes of Roman erotic verse. This will lead on to a discussion of *Heroides*

16 and 17 which privileges 'epistolarity' as the master term for allusive patterning within the collection, and explore the manner in which the letter form paradoxically inverts conventional models of 'temporality' in order to suggest both thematic and generic priority for the Ovidian version of events over the Homeric. Chapter 2 will examine the lengthiest and most explicit engagement with Homeric epic within the *Metamorphoses*, namely *Met.* 12.1-13.398, in which the major events of the Trojan War are re-examined through retrospective narratives and modified by the trope of 'belatedness', two of the most prominent aspects of Ovid's handling of the epic form. The chapter will also suggest some ways in which the theme of 'metamorphosis' may be adapted in order to provide a conceptual framework for the intertextual relationship between the *Iliad* and the *Metamorphoses* pursued in these passages. The final chapter will seek to establish a framework for consideration of the phenomenology of exile established by Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and will apply one specific aspect of these exilic anxieties, the question of 'credibility', to Odysseus' 'exile' in the *Odyssey*. By this means I hope to show that Homer, as much as Ovid, is a poet 'between two worlds'.

The Power of Love: Elegy, Epistolarity, and Homeric Epic

i. *Amat Omnis Militans: the campaign of Briseis in* Heroides *3*

We begin, as promised, on the margins of epic discourse with the captured slave-girl Briseis, a character whose significance to the plot of the *Iliad* and close relationship with that poem's protagonist is belied by the brevity and rarity of her appearances in the poem. She is permitted only one brief moment in the limelight, when she steps forward to speak a lament over the body of Patroclus:

> Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,
> ζωὸν μεν σε ἔλειπον ἔγω κλισίηθεν ἰοῦσα,
> νῦν δε σε τεθνηῶτα κιχάνομαι, ὄρναχε λαῶν,
> ἄψ ἀνιοῦσ' · ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί.
> ἄνδρα μεν ᾧ ἐδόσάν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
> εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαϊγμένον ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τούς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,
> κηδείους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσον.
> οὐδε μὲν οὐδέ μ' ἔασκες, ὅτ' ἄνδρ' ἐμὸν ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεὺς
> ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δε πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,
> κλαίειν, ἀλλά μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο
> κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν, ἄξειν τ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν
> ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δε γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.
> τῶ σ' ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα, μείλιχον αἰεί.
>
> (*Iliad* 19.287-300)

The phrase ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί (290) evokes our pity for her desperate plight by articulating the extent of the misfortunes which she has undergone, 'epic' both in martial context (inasmuch as she is one of the victims of the Trojan War) and in style; for epic is the genre of magnitude, and this applies no less to a surfeit of misfortunes than to any other form of excess. She has seen her husband die at the hands of Achilles himself, and her three brothers are also dead (291-4). Her home city has been destroyed (295-6), leaving her a refugee and a slave. The only hope left to her is the promise of Patroclus that she will one day marry Achilles (297-9). This statement encapsulates a double pathos; firstly because Patroclus, who showed her such kindness, is now dead, and secondly because Homer's readers know (and she does not) that Achilles is now doomed to die, and will never take her back to Phthia to marry her. The description of Patroclus which closes the speech, μείλιχον αἰεί, echoes and reinforces Briseis' self-pitying portrayal of herself as suffering κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί: Patroclus' death is one further κακὸν to endure in an endless chain of catastrophes, depriving her of one more source of kindness in an increasingly hostile world.

The speech of Briseis appropriates epic's rhetoric of 'magnitude', more commonly associated with violence, plunder and battle, in order to articulate the alienation and anguish felt by one of the victims of the genre's characteristic bloody excesses; and these emotions are all the more vividly expressed for being voiced by a passive chattel whose views are elsewhere neither solicited nor proffered. Briseis is an outsider for whom there seems to be no space within the values of the heroic domain. Nowhere else in the *Iliad* is she given room to express and develop her character. She is tolerated for her material worth rather than her merits as a human being, objectified and treated as no more than a passive embodiment of Achilles' κλέος; even those readers who champion her cause and draw attention to her significance to the plot of the *Iliad* always implicitly concede the point that her role is ultimately defined by and dependent on the standing of her captor and master Achilles.[44] As Katherine King remarks, "In the *Iliad* Achilles' love for the woman stolen by Agamemnon functions more to round out Achilles' appealingly complex character than to indicate a motive for the hero's desertion of the Greek forces; Briseis is the cause only in her role as γέρας, 'prize of honour,' not as love object."[45] From this perspective, the *Iliad* enforces a rigorous distinction of gender roles within which men actively engage in warfare and contests for prizes and honour, while women, the passive parties, are doomed to a passive dependence on the prowess of their menfolk for their survival and prosperity.

Nevertheless, if Briseis is relegated to the margins of the *Iliad* by a reading of the poem which focuses on masculine bravado and military brutality, she is at the same time open to recuperation within the terms of poetic genres which finesse the theme of 'war' in order to develop more feminised motifs such as love. Elegy in particular is frequently differentiated from epic in just such pointedly gendered terms as these.[46] Epic, the masculine genre *par excellence*, belongs to Mars, celebrating as it does the

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[44] Taplin (1992) 212-18, while asserting that Briseis is "far more than a mere foreign chattel", nevertheless spells out her significance predominantly in terms of the psychological and 'romantic' depth her presence suggests in Achilles: cf. Whitman (1958) 185-7. Similarly Lohmann (1988) 13-32 compares this lament of Briseis with the lament of Achilles which follows immediately afterwards (*Iliad* 19.315-337) and concludes that there are close correspondences in both structure and content between these passages: here too Briseis' intervention might be seen as functionally subordinate to the role of her master and beloved Achilles.

[45] King (1987) 172.

[46] See Farrell (1998) 309-17 on the *Heroides*; Kennedy (1993) 31-33 and Wyke (1995) on elegy in general; and Keith (2000) 1-6 and *passim* on epic.

themes of kings, heroes and battlefields; while elegy (most particularly in Latin literature of the Augustan period) belongs to Venus, empowering the female and placing the male in a position of subservience through the figure of the *servitium amoris*.[47] Within the terms of this distinction, it is in no way surprising that Briseis should find a certain rehabilitation and restoration of her humanity within the setting of Latin love elegy. Propertius tells of her significance in the following terms:

> ille etiam abrepta desertus coniuge Achilles
> cessare in Teucris pertulit arma sua.
> viderat ille fuga stratos in litore Achivos,
> fervere et Hectorea Dorica castra face;
> viderat informem multa Patroclon harena
> porrectum et sparsas caede iacere comas,
> omnia formosam propter Briseida passus:
> tantus in erepto saevit amore dolor.
> at postquam sera captivast reddita poena,
> fortem illum Haemoniis Hectora traxit equis.
> inferior multo cum sim vel matre vel armis,
> mirum, si de me iure triumphat Amor?
>
> (Propertius 2.8.29-40)

Propertius' treatment of the story recasts the 'wrath of Achilles' theme in such terms as to suggest that the hero's decision to withdraw from battle was based exclusively on the love he felt for his captive concubine (*abrepta coniuge*, 29; *omnia formosam propter Briseida passus*, 35). The dramatic context which this poem constructs is one in which the lover has been abandoned by Cynthia for another man (*eripitur nobis iam pridem cara puella*, Propertius 2.8.1): the poet in his grief compares his loss to two literary paradigms of the deserted lover, the tragic hero Haemon (vv.21-28), and now the epic hero Achilles (vv.29-40 above). The final couplet (39-40) suggests a purpose to this latter comparison: if even a warrior as great as the semi-divine Achilles succumbed to love, how can poor mortal Propertius hope to resist?

Thus the erotic relationship between Cynthia and Propertius, in which the woman is the 'dominant' partner and the man is 'subjected' to her through the *servitium amoris* motif, is applied as a model to the relationship between Briseis and Achilles in the *Iliad*. Briseis, slave and concubine in the *Iliad*, is transformed into a powerful *domina*

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[47] For the significance of the *servitium amoris* motif in Latin love elegy see particularly Conte (1994b): cf. also Copley (1947) 285-300; Sabot (1976) 509-11; Lyne (1979) 119-30; Murgatroyd (1981) 589-

in the world of Propertian elegy. The extended series of misfortunes, the κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ which befell her in the *Iliad*, are now transferred to Achilles: he is described as *omnia formosam propter Briseida* ***passus*** (35), and he suffers *tantus...dolor* (36) on account of his absent beloved. Thus the motifs of *servitium* and of victimhood are inverted, as the 'epic' sufferings of Briseis are appropriated as the 'elegiac' sufferings of Achilles the locked-out lover: she who was once a passive victim in the games of war is now retroped as an active manipulator in the games of love.[48]

As Propertius' reading reminds us, it would be mistaken to suppose that Homer's Achilles is hostile or indifferent to Briseis.[49] Achilles elsewhere openly confesses his love for his captive concubine, even comparing it to the love between Menelaus and Helen (*Iliad* 9.337-43);[50] moreover, when we last see Achilles in the poem he is asleep at Briseis' side (*Iliad* 24.676), sure evidence of the consolation he finds in her company after the strenuous emotional and physical exertions of the previous six books. Working from and expanding upon such aspects of the Iliadic Briseis, Propertius 2.8 recasts the Iliadic myth in terms of the *servitium amoris* motif: the poet/lover's subjection to *amor* is related to the subjection of the still more powerful Achilles, an epic hero who is yet vulnerable to an erotic 'slavery' in an elegiac world.

The motif of the *servitium amoris* is particularly ironic when it is applied to the relationship between Achilles and Briseis. The concept of 'slavery' is already firmly inscribed into the world of epic, in the sense (often called 'literal') that the losers of epic verse are subjected to the slavery and domination of their conquerors; in the course of the *Iliad*, for example, Briseis is subjected in turn to two masters, Achilles and Agamemnon. The double frame of reference of the *servitium* motif is particularly prominent in the critical reception of Ovid's *Heroides* 3. The *epistulae Heroidum*, the

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[48] Cf. the reading of Papanghelis (1987) 128-30: "In 2.8. ll.29ff. reveal female *forma* both as *casus belli* and as war's casualty" (130).

[49] Granted, Achilles expresses the ill-tempered wish at *Iliad* 19.56-60 that Briseis had died the day her city fell. Taplin (1992) 216 excuses Achilles by suggesting that his shame at having let down Patroclus is more powerful than his love for Briseis: "However strongly Achilles may feel about her [Briseis], Patroklos was still more important. He would rather she were dead than have regained her at this price"; yet this wish may be attributed more to his shame at deserting his comrades in general, and Patroclus in particular, than any deep-seated hatred of her. We may note that both the lovers and beloveds of elegy are given to expressing their emotions in exaggerated or violent terms which they later regret: cf. Propertius 3.8, 4.8; Ovid *Amores* 1.7, 2.14; and Cahoon (1988).

[50] Cf. Papanghelis (1987) 118-19 for the use that Propertius makes of this passage.

collection of love letters of which this piece forms a part, all deal with mythology from the woman's perspective; in this way they provide a counterbalance to the strongly 'masculine'-oriented genres of epic and tragedy from which the majority of mythological material is derived. In terms of content *Heroides* 3 draws almost exclusively on Iliadic material, as Howard Jacobson has shown;[51] yet in formal terms this poem, along with the others in the collection of *Heroides* within which it is placed, aligns itself with the traditions of erotic elegy. This twofold set of literary allegiances is reflected in the handling of the *servitium amoris* theme in scholarship on the poem: critical readings begin with the 'metaphorical' *servitium* of Briseis' enslavement in love to Achilles, and move on to examine the relationship between these erotic motifs and the 'literal' *servitium*, involving capture and loss of liberty, which is so much a part of her personal history in the *Iliad*.[52] She closes this letter with an appeal to Achilles in which both meanings of the term are combined:

> me modo, sive paras inpellere remige classem,
> sive manes, domini iure venire iube!
> (*Heroides* 3.153-4)

Achilles is invoked as Briseis' *dominus*, 'master' (*domini iure*, 154). This is an accurate representation of their relationship in epic terms, for Briseis is his own possession by right of conquest. However, the language of *dominus* and *servus* is also a prominent feature of the *servitium amoris* motif of Latin love elegy, inasmuch as it conveys the unequal nature of the relationship between lover (*servus*) and beloved (*domina*). Thus if Briseis addresses Achilles by his right as master (*domini iure*), this reflects as much a desire of Briseis to play the role of lover opposite Achilles the beloved – elegiac *servitium* – as it does the sociological aspects of the master-slave relationship, or epic *servitium*. Briseis' invocation of Achilles as her *dominus* at the end of the letter picks up on the terms in which she addresses him towards the beginning of the epistle:

> si mi pauca queri de te dominoque viroque
> fas est, de domino pauca viroque querar.
> (*Heroides* 3.5-6)

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[51] See Jacobson (1974) 12-21; and cf. Kennedy (1984) 419 and n.17.
[52] See Verducci (1985) 98-121; Barchiesi (1992) 26-8; Spoth (1992) 67-76.

The juxtaposition of the word *dominus* with the word *vir*, 'husband', is particularly suggestive the erotic elegiac connotations of *dominus*, especially in the presence of the verb *queri*: elegy was long thought to have originated with lament (*querella*). By having Briseis voice *querella de domino*, Ovid neatly links the origins of elegy as a poetic form with the epic and elegiac interplay of the master-slave relationship.

It is precisely this crossover between the 'metaphorical' and 'literal' spheres of *servitium* which Florence Verducci feels casts doubt over the whole question of the elegiac decorum of the poem. In examining the equilibrium between Briseis' social status as *serva*, and her amatory status in *servitium amoris* to Achilles, she finds that the former role far outweighs the latter, an imbalance which for her entirely overpowers the amatory pathos of Briseis' appeal:

> [W]hat is interesting about this poem...is that even Briseis' erotic world is not intact. Her erotic appeal to Achilles and her erotic understanding, or misunderstanding, of his motivation are themselves complicated, inhibited and deflected by her position as a slave...Briseis is wrong, yes, but she is not even free to be wrong in the right way.[53]

The implications of this analysis are clear. If "erotic understanding", by which we may understand her 'metaphorical' *servitium amoris*, can be inhibited by her (entirely 'literal') position as a slave, then the 'literal' meaning of *servitium* exacts an ineluctable semantic authority over its 'metaphorical' counterpart, which means that whenever the two aspects of the *servitium* figure are brought together the 'metaphorical' erotic connotations are of necessity overpowered by the sheer awful 'reality' of slavery. It is certainly true that Briseis is acutely aware of her servitude, the sheer materiality of her position, and that this awareness pervades the whole epistle. According to Jacobson Ovid emphasises the passivity and helplessness of Briseis, firstly by making her the subject of a substantial number of passive verb forms, and secondly by frequent use of the oblique personal pronouns *me* and *mihi*.[54] As he observes, this manipulation of language induces the reader to think of Briseis less as an active participant in these events and more as "a tool, a pawn in the affairs

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[53] Verducci (1985) 106.
[54] See Jacobson (1974) 37-8.

of others."[55] Further and more poignant evidence of her self-abasement may be seen in the following passage:

> si tibi iam reditusque placent patriique Penates,
> non ego sum classi sarcina magna tuae.
> victorem captiva sequar, non nupta maritum.
> (*Heroides* 3.67-9)

If Briseis cannot fulfil her desire to follow Achilles back to Phthia as his wife, she is willing to follow even as a *captiva*. But what is most surprising is that she should describe herself, a *captiva* travelling with Achilles' fleet, as mere *sarcina*. There is no more forceful way for her to convey her lack of self-worth, no further she can stoop than to objectify herself as a mere item of cargo. If Briseis in the *Iliad* is a synecdochic representation of the prizes of the heroic life (or, as Verducci more succinctly puts it, a "talking γέρας"[56]), then Verducci would have us believe that Ovid's Briseis, utilising the elegiac figure of the *servitium amoris*, draws out the darkest, most terrifying aspects of this soulless existence, and in so doing exposes the utter extinction of her personality; or, as she sums up:

> The image of the woman perished for love takes on a new dimension in Briseis' epistle. It is because she is at once so colorlessly material and so tentative, even cringing, that Briseis' letter is unpalatable, especially since such a plea as hers must, almost by definition, be assertive. It makes certain claims, presumes upon certain rights, requires that certain demands be met. Yet a slave (similarly, almost by definition) is permitted no such claims, rights, and demands. Briseis *is* a *serva*; Achilles *is* her *dominus*.[57]

Verducci here claims something abstract and idealised within the concept of an erotic plea, something that "almost by definition" implies that the pleader must come from a position of strength; likewise, a slave is "almost by definition" alienated from just such a position. These closural 'definitions' are reinforced by the emphatic italicisations: Briseis *is* a *serva*, we are told, and Achilles *is* her *dominus*, and there the matter should rest. She raises the question of whether the 'real' *servitium* is to be found in the sufferings of a prisoner of war or the distress of a victim of love, and answers it emphatically in favour of the physical and emotional suffering of the prisoner of war, a verdict which implicitly relegates the posturings of the elegiac

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[55] Jacobson (1974) 37.
[56] Verducci (1985) 120.
[57] Verducci (1985) 119.

lover, 'tortured' by the trivial iniquities of a capricious lover, to no more than a game played out on the margins of significance. Verducci's analysis reflects the general trend of scholarship on *Heroides* 3. For example, Frederick Spoth likewise draws a distinction between the 'real' meaning of *servitium*, which he locates within the social structure of heroic society, and the 'metaphorical' sense, which he dismisses as an offshoot of and subordinate to the original form: "Indem die *Metapher* sich wieder mit der *sozialen Realität*, aus der sie herstammt, verbindet".[58] Alessandro Barchiesi's comments are in a similar vein: "La degradazione *simbolica* dell'amante elegiaco è sostituita da una soggezione *concreta e brutale*."[59] Here likewise we see elegiac servitude dismissed as "simbolica", an imperfect first-remove mimesis of an ideal form, while the servitude suffered by Briseis is reified and privileged, even held in awe, as "concreta e brutale."

The rhetoric of an analysis which describes Briseis' epic *servitium* as "concreta" relates the slavery of war with what is solid and tangible; thus by associating epic *servitium* with the physical, material world it implies that epic's perception of the world is somehow closer to the 'true' picture of reality. Themes of warfare are frequently appropriated by elegy to serve as metaphors for the contests of love.[60] Ovid himself often draws comparisons between the lover and the soldier – *militat omnis amans*, as he writes to Atticus at *Amores* 1.9.1 to introduce one of the most elaborate and extensive interpretations of the conceit. Yet such themes are rarely taken seriously in their own terms: instead, the more 'powerful' forms of discourse which are embodied by the *militia amoris* motif intrude upon interpretations of love-elegy and reappropriate them in terms of their own perspectives and purposes. Gian Biagio Conte's discussion of elegy's appropriation of military themes, sensitive though it is to the terms within which the genre operates, is a case in point:

> [Elegy's] refusal of war pertains only to the system of meaning within which war is inscribed – not only the degradations that the recent past had associated with the idea of war (ambition, careerism, greed), but also for a heroism of love, an

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[58] Spoth (1992) 68; emphasis mine.
[59] Barchiesi (1992) 27; emphasis mine.
[60] Murgatroyd (1975) 59-79 traces the history of *militia amoris* from the earliest Greek lyric and elegiac; cf. also Lyne (1980) 71-8 for the general provenance and use of the figure, and Thomas (1964) 151-65 and Sabot (1976) 491-502 for Ovid's use of the theme. See also Kennedy (1993) 55-6, within the context of a discussion of the tropes of elegiac poetry which seeks to destabilise the relationship between the 'literal' and 'metaphorical' uses of figuration.

> almost infinite capacity for enduring sufferings and outrages for love's sake, an offering up of oneself in the name of love which can go all the way to death. Indeed, the faithful lover will even be granted *gloria*. As is well known, the genre of elegy 'delights' by drawing upon the metaphorical complex of *militia amoris*: the metaphor...is a way to convert (to transcodify) those values for which the elegiac poet would otherwise feel nostalgia.[61]

This excerpt from Conte concisely reprises the terms of the discussion so far. On the one hand, he asserts that elegy recuperates and renegotiates the 'heroic' world within the constraints of 'love', refiguring the active campaigns of the hero and the soldier in terms of a campaign of love, the *militia amoris*. Yet nevertheless he persists in treating the *militia amoris* motif as a secondary, derivative aspect of the theme of 'war' in literature, in the sense that he sees elegy's treatment of military motifs as always and ever beholden to more authoritative images and modes of discourse. For example, his historical contextualisation of Latin love elegy casts it in reactionary terms, a disgusted response to the "degradations" of the "ambition, careerism, [and] greed" of the Civil War period.[62] Similarly the literary contextualisation which he applies here privileges the poetic primacy of the *epic* genre, and inflects elegiac themes from the paradigm of that mode. Thus the "*gloria*" which will be granted to the faithful lover seems to be no more than a pale shadow of the κλέος awarded to the military champions of epic verse; and indeed, the very idea that the epic poet should feel "nostalgia" (etymologically, a pain at a lost νόστος, or homecoming), is thematically suggestive of exile, implying that the elegiac poet has been relegated to the margins of significance and suggesting that his recodifications of themes of war and battle in terms of amatory pursuits represent but pale shadows of the 'real' motifs, which find their 'true' expression in the poetically dominant form of epic verse.

The figures of *servitium amoris* and *militia amoris* represent two of the most prominent manifestations of the generic tension which is a prominent feature of the Latin love-elegy, though Conte and other readers reductively resolve it by ascribing

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[61] Conte (1994b) 38.

[62] Cf. Lyne (1980) 71-8 on the 'pacifist' stance of Tibullus and Propertius. Elegy's reaction to contemporary society can be read in terms other than political. In particular its choice of a life of *otium* among degenerate courtesans over the traditional aristocratic pursuit of political and military honours is often interpreted as a reaction against the conservatism of contemporary Roman society: in this case it is a *sociological* norm against which elegy measures itself. See particularly Veyne (1988) 85-100 on "the charms of transgression". Ovid himself makes this the defining gesture of his poetical career, as he claims in his poetic 'autobiography' (*Tristia* 4.10.35-40) to have abandoned a senatorial career in order to write love-elegy.

elegiac verse an essentially subordinate and epigonal role: it is as if the form's self-abasing gestures were taken to inform not only its subject matter but also its critical reception, and the *servitium amoris* motif were retroped metagenerically as a *servitium generis*. On this reading elegiac poetry is a literary 'game' enjoyed by dissident playboy aristocrats; while 'serious' forms of suffering are celebrated in more 'weighty' forms of verse such as the inherently profound tragic and epic forms.

However, the particular literary form of the mythological verse epistle suggests a strategy for recuperating the significance of the *servitium amoris* motif. For alongside the voice of the 'historical' author of these poems, Ovid, there is a second speaker in these letters voicing a second point of view: the mythical heroine to whom the authorship of the epistle is ascribed.[63] If Ovid is to be criticized for his insincerity and his distancing from 'genuine' forms of suffering, it is altogether more difficult to condemn Briseis in the same terms: to the elegiac author who knows *servitium* as a trope of love she brings the knowledge of *servitium* as a trope of warfare, and so suggests a way in which the 'serious' background of the motif might both inform and be informed by its supposedly more 'frivolous' treatment in elegiac poetry. It is from the dialogue between the voice of 'Ovid' and the voice of 'Briseis' that we may develop a model of the intratextual and intertextual dynamics of this poem. As an example of how these complex interrelationships might work, let us consider the opening couplet of the poem:

> Quam legis a rapta Briseide littera venit,
> vix bene barbarica Graeca notata manu.
> (*Heroides* 3.1-2)

On the one hand, within the mythical world of the poem, Briseis is writing a *Graeca littera* to Achilles: she confesses some difficulty in this, since her native language is not Greek (*barbarica manu*). On the other hand, this same letter is being written by Ovid himself; he concedes his debt to Homer by reminding us that the source for this letter is a Greek text (*littera Graeca*), yet reminds us that he, the 'real' author of this

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[63] Cf. Smith (1994) 267-8 for the importance of acknowledging the presence of the heroine, and Farrell (1998) 329-37 on the interplay between the two 'authors' in the *Heroides*. Some insightful readings have proceeded from an acknowledgement of the significance of the heroine's voice in the collection. See especially Verducci (1985) 98-121 on how states of mind specific to slavery inform the Briseis of *Heroides* 3, and also the more general discussion at Jacobson (1974) 349-62.

letter, is writing the letter in Latin (*barbarica manu*).[64] This articulate play on words deftly focuses our attention on the complex play of voices articulated within the letter: in momentarily bridging the gap between the voice of 'Ovid' and the voice of 'Briseis', and drawing together the worlds of Homeric epic and Latin love elegy, it makes a programmatic declaration of the significance that *both* voices, and the interaction *between* them, will carry in the exposition of meaning in the epistle. In Barchiesi's terms, this is a "reflexive allusion", a moment where the text, in gesturing towards its poetic ancestry, reminds us self-reflexively of its own origins in the tradition.[65] Ovid's text exposes the fundamental arbitrariness of its poetic form in order that we may acknowledge that it *is* a text, that we are dealing with a self-conscious piece of writing inscribing a place and a role for itself within the literary tradition.

The tension between the historical author of this poem and the mythical character through whom the events are focused may be defined in other terms. Ovid takes pains to remind us that Briseis' character and situation are effectively an authorial construct; in other words, that she is a *puella scripta*. On the other hand, the role which she herself may be felt to play in memorialising the events of the *Iliad* suggest an important role for Briseis herself in authoring this letter as a *puella scriptrix*. She is 'author' of this letter in the sense that she is envisioned as putting material pen to material paper, as one sense of lines 1-2 reminds us. She is also the 'author' of this letter simply by being Briseis, an Iliadic character in a pre-Iliadic literary tradition, and Ovid's power to 'write' her is matched against her power to 'write' Ovid (and indeed, as we shall see, to write 'Homer'). As a character of the *Iliad* she is inextricably linked with the themes and context of the Homeric text; as a voice in *Heroides* 3 she is both synecdoche of the *Iliad* itself, and a conduit through which the feminised and eroticised tradition of Latin love elegy may make its presence felt in the heroic world. The dynamic between the epic and elegiac voices may be roughly summarised as follows. As *puella scriptrix*, she brings into the *Heroides* her Iliadic status as concubine and slave to Achilles and Agamemnon; as *puella scripta*, she experiences the remoulding of these two motifs through the elegiac filter of the

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[64] This point is made by Jacobson (1974) 23; cf. for a translation from Latin into Greek Plautus, *Trinummus* 19, *Philemo scripsit, Plautus vortit* ***barbare***.
[65] Barchiesi (1993) 350-3; see also Hinds (1998) 1-16.

servitium amoris; and finally, as *puella scriptrix* again, she, writing a letter which utilises the elegiac motif of *servitium amoris* at the beginning of the Heroic Age, produces a text which can claim both temporal and thematic priority over Homeric epic. The tension thus produced between *puella scripta* and *puella scriptrix* calls into question the assumption that the sociological slavery of epic poetry has a 'natural' precedence over the allegedly 'symbolic' erotic slavery of love elegy. It is not so much the case that Homer's portrayal of slavery underpins the elegiac conceit of the *servitium amoris*, but rather that the elegiac portrayal of the 'slave of love' underpins the epic conceit of slavery seen in terms of prisoners of war and concubines; this is the *coup de grace*, that Briseis ends up writing Homer's text as much as she does writing Ovid's.[66]

One point of contact between the voices of *scriptrix* and *scripta* may be seen in Ovid's reworking of Homer's catalogue of gifts. Odysseus in *Iliad* 9 relates the range of valuable articles and other signifiers of wealth and status for the future which Agamemnon will offer Achilles if he returns to battle (*Iliad* 9.122-57, 264-99). In Ovid we see the salient details of this catalogue rehearsed with accuracy (*Heroides* 3.31-8), although certain aspects are suppressed (such as an assurance of the choice of spoil when Troy falls at *Iliad* 9.137-40, 279-82, and the promise of "seven well-peopled cities" at *Iliad* 9.149-56, 291-8), presumably for reasons of space and efficiency. These omissions make it all the more surprising that the following promise should be conveyed:

> quodque supervacuum est, forma praestante puellae
> Lesbides, eversa corpora capta domo,
> cumque tot his - sed non opus est tibi coniuge - coniunx
> ex Agamemnoniis una puella tribus.
> (*Heroides* 3.35-8)

Briseis relates the catalogue of gifts as if they were her dowry (cf. *quamvis veniam dotata*, 55). This is consistent with her ultimate hope of marriage to Achilles. So why does she feel it necessary to relate Agamemnon's promise of a number of beautiful

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[66] Cf. Barchiesi (1993) 333-5 on the interplay between literary historical time and mythological time in the *Heroides*. "The idea that characters can have a future that has already been written down ... calls for constant negotiation between author and reader ... The literary tradition - a source of power, control and anxiety, a perfect analogy for the past in everyone's life - is now displaced, and a potential for irony opens up." (334). (This will be discussed further in section iii below.) See also Casali (1995b) 505-11.

slave girls and a prestigious marriage connection? If she wanted she could exclude them from her catalogue, just as she has excluded Agamemnon's promise of seven cities to rule and the pick of the spoil when Troy falls. It is clearly both incongruous and detrimental to her argument that she should be 'dowered' by a harem of slave girls and the pledge of a marriage alliance.[67] However, the rationale behind this curiously expressed plea might be better understood when it is set within a Homeric context as well as the context of the world of Ovidian elegy. In the terms of the κλέος- and τιμή-driven world of the *Iliad*, Briseis is comparable to the Lesbian women, captives taken from a fallen city (35-6): she is a mere mark of wealth, part of the currency of the Homeric poems. Hence it is on one level appropriate for Briseis to argue: "Here you are; what a fine return on your investment! Not one girl, but several; and a prestigious marriage alliance to boot!" Furthermore, the Lesbian women are also victims of war, as Briseis points out at line 36 (*eversa corpora capta domo*); in this respect they elicit a certain amount of sympathy from her, as captive women sharing the plight of 'epic' *servitium*.[68] In this respect the story of the *Iliad* 'writes' Ovid's poem: the circumstances of capture, slavery and materialism are part of the story which Briseis perforce brings into *Heroides* 3 as *scriptrix*. Yet against this, she is also *scripta* into the traditions of elegiac verse, which make her see these girls as her rivals (*quod supervacuum est*, 35; *non opus est tibi coniuge*, 39). The epic and elegiac voices intermingle to produce a compound which is certainly not pretty on any 'romantic' notion of an erotic plea; yet what is important about this appeal is precisely the way it draws in and combines both strands of the poetic tradition. 'Briseis' writes both as an outgrowth of epic verse, in her interest in material value and the plight of slavery; and as a development of the amatory themes of the elegiac tradition, in her naked jealousy and fear of rivals for the affection of Achilles. We might say that this passage shows Homer still recognisably Homeric, but now enriched by the addition of the erotic elements which love-elegy's construction of the *servitium amoris* motif contributes to the theme. The result may offend post-romantic twenty-first century sensibilities, but in terms of the intertextual relationship between the *Heroides* and the *Iliad* it demonstrates great versatility in the way it exploits Briseis as a conduit

[67] Or at least such is the opinion of Verducci (1985) 108.
[68] Cf. Jacobson (1974) 29.

between epic topics and the supposedly diametrically opposite aesthetic of elegiac verse.

Critics also view the following passage as evidence that Briseis' 'literal' slavery forestalls the full development of the pathos of her *servitium amoris*:

> Dirute Marte tuo Lyrnesia moenia vidi -
> et fueram patriae pars ego magna meae;
> vidi consortes pariter generisque necisque
> tres cecidisse, quibus, quae mihi, mater erat;
> vidi, quantus erat, fusum tellure cruenta
> pectora iactantem sanguinolenta virum.
> tot tamen amissis te conpensavimus unum;
> tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater eras.
> (*Heroides* 3.45-52)

The general thrust of these lines is clear enough: having lost her home and family, Briseis has no one else to call upon, no one in the world to protect her, except for Achilles. The sentiment is based on a similar expression to Hector by Andromache in the *Iliad*:

> Ἕκτορ, ἀτὰρ σύ μοί ἐσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
> ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης.
> (*Iliad* 6.429-30)

The reader of the *Iliad* will not be surprised that Andromache should be expressing such sentiments to Hector. Andromache's family has been killed by Achilles and her home city destroyed (*Iliad* 6.414, 422), leaving her with no other relation apart from Hector. The moment is especially poignant because, unknown to both parties, this scene will be their final farewell: Hector will never return alive to Troy. The divisions between friends and enemies are therefore clearly demarcated. Hector, to Andromache, is her husband, her friend and her family, the sole bedrock, while Achilles, who slaughtered her family and will soon kill Hector too, is clearly the enemy. As for Briseis, she too has seen her family fall to Achilles (*Marte tuo*, 45). That she should, as a direct consequence of this, address Achilles, their 'murderer', as *tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater* (52) therefore stirs deep feelings of discomfort on a psychological level. Verducci articulates the problem as follows:

> It is not doubtful that Ovid goes back directly to Homer here, but what is he after? Why should he care to call Briseis so deeply into question? Why place her in the distorted and foreshortened foreground against so luminous a backdrop, the delicate and tragic domesticity of one of the most famous moments in the literature of antiquity, *Iliad* 6.429-30, Andromache's final parting from Hector? Can Ovid have intended a comparison of the two scenes, one of which surely highlights the tarnished shabbiness and mimic triviality of his own creation?[69]

In line with her own interpretive concerns, she answers this question in the positive, declaring, "Again and again in [Briseis'] appeal, moments in the *Iliad* in which characters wake to a lucent consciousness or independence are blurred and sullied by Briseis' adoption of them. Ovid unflaggingly enlists those moments to enlarge upon Briseis' incomprehension, lovelessness, and servility."[70] Verducci's tone is nothing out of the ordinary; it is not uncommon for readers of this passage to seize upon the "luminous backdrop" of Andromache's moment of "lucent consciousness" in the *Iliad* and use it to bring out the "tarnished shabbiness" and "lovelessness" of Briseis.[71] Once again, however, the analysis of Verducci and others is skewed towards the aesthetics of *epic*: the elegiac voice is again shouted down by the more powerful cry of the epic code. Verducci's assertion of the differences which separate the two passages only serves to obscure the similarities between them, most particularly their shared manipulation of the *servitium amoris* motif. Perhaps Briseis' exclamation is "shabby" compared to that of Andromache. This is hardly Briseis' fault. She is, after all, an inhabitant and victim of the epic world; she is now a slave, Achilles is now her master, and so it is a basic reflection of her situation that Achilles, and Achilles alone, is the dominant figure – the *dominus*, indeed – in her life. There is effectively no other figure as important to Briseis as Achilles: in this respect she is perfectly entitled to address him as *tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater* without a qualm.

If an epic slave can address her master in such terms, it is not surprising to find the same language being applied to an elegiac situation under the pretext of the *servitium amoris*; thus Propertius, an elegiac slave, addresses his mistress in similar language:

> tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes.
> (Propertius 1.11.23)

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[69] Verducci (1985) 110.
[70] Verducci (1985) 111.
[71] E.g. Sabot (1976) 304 "Elle est tombée dans les bras du meutrier"; Mack (1988) 75 "Can one fall lower than to love the killer of one's closest kin?". Cf. also Spoth (1992) 82; Barchiesi (1992) *ad loc.*

Therefore we see that the 'reality' of Briseis' social status as a slave and the 'metaphor' of her subjection to Achilles under the elegiac *servitium amoris* are united around the same '*tu mihi solus...*' *topos*. One and the same phrase is used to blend epic and elegiac motifs in a seamless continuum. Not only do we now read Briseis' anguished elegiac wail as a 'tarnished' offshoot of her epic impotence; we now read Andromache's declaration to Hector as 'enhanced' by the elegiac tradition of *servitium amoris*, which elevates the pathos of her own appeal, thus enriching the *Iliad* as well as the *Heroides*.

The use which Briseis and Ovid make of the story of Meleager is also significant to the handling of the *servitium amoris* motif as a conduit between *Heroides* 3 and the *Iliad*. In Homer the tale of Meleager is related by Achilles' aged retainer Phoenix as a warning to Achilles of the evil fate which will befall him if he does not return to battle. He conveys the moral of the tale as follows:

καὶ τότε δὴ Μελέαγρον ἐΰζωνος παράκοιτις
λίσσετ' ὀδυρομένη, καί οἱ κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα
κήδε', ὅσ' ἀνθρώποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστυ ἁλώῃ·
ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει,
τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναίκας.
τοῦ δ' ὠπίνετο θυμὸς ἀκούοντος κακὰ ἔργα,
βῆ δ' ἰέναι, χροῒ δ' ἔντε' ἐδύσετο παμφανόωντα.
ὣς ὁ μὲν Αἰτωλοῖσιν ἀπήμυνεν κακὸν ἦμαρ
εἰξας ᾧ θυμῷ· τῷ δ' οὐκέτι δῶρ' ἐτέλεσσαν
πολλά τε καὶ χαρίεντα, κακὸν δ' ἤμυνε καὶ αὖτως.
ἀλλὰ σύ μή μοι ταῦτα νόει φρεσί, μηδέ σε δαίμων
ἐνταῦθα τρέψειε, φίλος· κάκιον δέ κεν εἴη
νηυσὶν καιομένῃσιν ἀμυνέμεν· ἀλλ' ἐπὶ δώρων
ἔρχεο· ἶσον γάρ σε θεῷ τίσουσιν Ἀχαιοί.
εἰ δὲ κ' ἄτερ δώρων πόλεμον φθισήνορα δύῃς,
οὐκέθ' ὁμῶς τιμῆς ἔσεαι πόλεμόν περ ἀλαλκών.
(*Iliad* 9.590-605)

Phoenix has altered some of the traditional elements of the Meleager myth in order to make Meleager's situation conform more closely to the circumstances of Achilles.[72] Thus the situation Meleager finds himself in is as follows. His city is under attack from the Curetes, but he himself, angry at his mother for cursing him, is refusing to fight; instead he lies at home with his wife Cleopatra. The city elders have made a lucrative offer in an attempt to persuade him to fight, but without success; and the invocations of his father, mother and friends have also met with failure. This is the point at which we pick up the story in the above extract. Phoenix claims that

Cleopatra convinced Meleager to join the fight at the last possible moment: she persuaded him by warning him of the dreadful fate suffered by the inhabitants of a fallen city (590-4), dwelling particularly on the iniquities inflicted on the women and children (594). Meleager returns and averts disaster (595-6), but does not receive the lavish gifts the Aetolian elders promised him (597-9). Phoenix then spells out the moral of this tale: he must return while Agamemnon is still prepared to reward him (600-3), because if he chooses to return independently at a more desperate stage of the battle, he will not receive any gifts and consequently will be honoured the less by the Greeks (604-5). Thus Phoenix nicely pitches his appeal towards the desire for a reward equal to his effort expressed by Achilles at *Iliad* 1.163-8. Cleopatra's desperate appeal to Meleager has no purpose beyond indicating the extreme urgency of the situation; Meleager's entry into battle at her behest would be equivalent to Achilles' return when the ships are already ablaze (*νηυσὶν καιομένῃσιν*, 602). Thus the point of this *exemplum*, as it is generally understood,[73] is that if Achilles, like Meleager, returns for personal reasons (to save his friends) in preference to endorsing a public acknowledgement of his worth, his *κλέος* – the insult to which prompted him to quit battle in the first place – will suffer another devastating blow.

Briseis, however, ignores the materialistic aspects of Phoenix's appeal, and concentrates instead on the erotic aspects of Cleopatra's decisive intervention:

> nec tibi turpe puta precibus succumbere nostris;
> coniugis Oenides versus in arma prece est.
> res audita mihi, nota est tibi. fratribus orba
> devovit nati spemque caputque parens.
> bellum erat; ille ferox positis secessit ab armis
> et patriae rigida mente negavit opem.
> sola virum coniunx flexit: felicior illa!
> at mea pro nullo pondere verba cadunt.
> (*Heroides* 3.91-8)

Note first the phrase, *res audita mihi, nota est tibi* (93). In this expression the voices of 'Briseis' and 'Ovid' are in accord in gesturing in metaliterary terms towards the Iliadic account of the tale. For Briseis this phrase has the sense, "I have only heard of this story, but you are much more familiar with it"; that is, we should imagine that

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[72] Kakridis (1949) 18-27; see also Willcock (1964) 147-53; Swain (1988) 271-6.
[73] See Kakridis (1949) 18-27; Lohmann (1970) 255-60; Brenk (1986) 82-3; Swain (1988) 274.

Briseis has somehow heard the story of the embassy to Achilles, including Phoenix's relation of the story of Meleager, and has decided to rework this tale herself in order to strengthen her appeal. Ovid, meanwhile, uses this phrase as an acknowledgement of the derivation of his material (that is, *res audita mihi* means "I have heard this story [from the Homeric text]"): it is a metapoetical indicator by which he signals his intention of both borrowing from and reworking his source text. Whether we hear this line in the voice of Briseis or the voice of Ovid, in either case this phrase suggests the significance of the Homeric model in the immediate context, and suggests a further point of interconnection between the voices of the epic and elegiac genres: an intertextual 'dialogue' is set up in terms which may almost be described as 'literal'.

As to the particulars of Briseis' interpretation of the Meleager and Cleopatra tale, she reads this story in the terms of an elegiac *exemplum*, a rhetorical paradigm drawn from myth in order to reinforce an amatory plea. In so doing, she foregrounds the erotic aspects of Cleopatra's appeal and retropes the 'epic' aspects of her speech in terms of the 'elegiac' connotations of the *servitium* motif. Epic *servitium* does seem to lie at the heart of Cleopatra's pleadings in the Homeric account, as she persuaded her husband to return to battle by drawing on the epic imagery of a fallen city and the sufferings undergone by the captive women:

> καί οἱ κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα
> κήδε', ὅσ' ἀνθρώποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστυ ἁλώῃ·
> ἄνδρας μεν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει,
> τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναίκας.
> (*Iliad* 9.591-4)

Cleopatra's description of the sacking of a city represents only a fear for the future; but for Briseis this fear has already been realised, as we learn from her lament for Patroclus:

> ἄνδρα μεν ᾧ ἔδοσάν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
> εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαϊγμένον ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τούς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,
> κηδείους, οἳ πάντες ὁλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσον.
> (*Iliad* 19.291-4)

The sufferings which Cleopatra dreads – menfolk killed, children enslaved, women raped – are part of Briseis' personal history both in the *Iliad* and in *Heroides* 3. Yet

these 'epic' aspects of the *servitium* motif which lie at the heart of Cleopatra's appeal are passed over in Briseis' representation of the tale: she prefers instead to draw the elegiac moral that it is not unseemly for a man to be persuaded by the pleas of a woman. The moral which she draws from the tale, *sola virum coniunx flexit*, encapsulates this move from epic to elegy in highly economical terms. *Sola* invokes the solitude and the lonely pre-eminence of the hero of epic verse; yet *this* hero is not a man, but a woman, and a woman who attains her goal by playing upon her *erotic* relationship with her husband. The outcome of Cleopatra's appeal is that the husband yields to the wife: thus the language and imagery of epic are translated into the sphere of elegiac verse, in which the gender balance of epic is typically inverted and the female is granted authority over the male. It is this aspect of Cleopatra's appeal which is foregrounded in Briseis' narration of the myth. Her account might gesture faintly at the 'epic' sufferings and the 'epic' *servitium* which Cleopatra fears in the *Iliad*'s construction of events; yet it emphatically rejects this monolithically 'epic' aspect of *servitium* in order to highlight the erotic aspects of her plea, the relationship between lover and beloved and the subjection of one to the beseeching of the other. Cleopatra's plea to Meleager may be the more vivid for its deployment of the imagery of *servitium* suffered by the womenfolk of a fallen city; yet its rhetorical effectiveness also depends on the amatory relationship between suppliant and supplicated, the *servitium amoris*, and Briseis' tacit rejection of the *epic* aspects of the *servitium* motif simultaneously draws attention to the *erotic* aspects which are present in the Homeric rendition of the motif.

The shift between epic and elegy is given a further metapoetic twist on the following line in the phrase *mea pro nullo pondere verba cadunt*. The pun depends on the application of the word *pondus* to two spheres of meaning, common to both English and Latin diction: the language of *pondus* may be applied to an argument, to describe the rhetorical 'weight' it possesses, or to the distinction between epic and non-epic poetry, the former being the 'weighty' genre, and the latter preferring to treat 'lighter' themes. Therefore, as an elegiac mistress, Briseis fails to put *pondus* into her words because she is writing in the *levis* genre of love elegy; as the epic prisoner of war, an insignificant and backgrounded character, who is not even a wife to Achilles (cf. 97, above), her speech lacks *pondus* because of its fundamental inability to influence

events.[74] The combination of the rhetoric of epic and elegiac 'weight' gives a special emphasis to the phrase *mea verba* ***cadunt***: not only do Briseis' words 'fall', rhythmically speaking, in the regular cadence of the elegiac couplet, they also 'fall' because of her lack of social status in the epic world. The characteristic self-abasement of the elegiac genre is vividly actualised within the social hierarchy of epic for the purpose of emphasising Briseis' absolute impotence; the voices of Briseis the elegiac *puella scripta* and Briseis the epic *puella scriptrix*, although worlds apart in generic terms, utilise the same rhetoric and the same imagery towards the same end. Some feel that the tone of helplessness lent Briseis by the *Iliad* does detriment to her argument at this point.[75] Yet it should not be forgotten that Ovid also interprets the insignificance of Homer's Briseis retrospectively in terms of the pervasive self-abasement of the elegiac genre; if we follow to its obvious conclusion the effect of this backwash of amatory themes into the *Iliad*, we find that we have now opened up a reading of Meleager's Cleopatra as an elegiac *domina* and Phoenix appealing to Achilles with a variant on the elegiac mythological *exemplum*. The tenor of significance runs both ways: elegiac forms and motifs may exert an influence on the meaning and direction of the Homeric text.

Clearly much of the meaning in the relationship between *Heroides* 3 and the *Iliad* lies in Ovid's exploitation of the potential amatory significance of certain imagery and motifs related to epic, and his retrospective application of these erotic terms onto the Homeric text. This brings us back to our initial discussion of the manner in which elegy borrows and reworks certain of the themes of epic within the field of *amor*. We have already examined the ramifications of the theme of *servitium amoris* in the letter; let us now expand the discussion to consider the related figure of *militia amoris*. Briseis reacts to the news that Achilles is considering sailing home as follows:

> Quod scelus ut pavidas miserae mihi contigit aures,
> sanguinis atque animi pectus inane fuit.
> (*Heroides* 3.59-60)

Later on, fearing that Achilles is now bored with her, she begs for her own death:

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[74] Cf. the more fortunate (*felicior*, 97) Cleopatra: her words had weight both in epic terms, because she spoke in the 'weightier' genre of epic, and in elegiac terms, because she shares a bed with Meleager (cf. *Iliad* 9.556) and is therefore able to influence him through her position as his wife (*coniunx*, 97).
[75] See e.g. Verducci (1985) 114.

abiit corpusque colorque;
sustinet hoc animae spes tamen una tui.
qua si destituor, repetam fratresque virumque -
nec tibi magnificum femina iussa mori.
cur autem iubeas? stricto pete corpora ferro;
est mihi qui fosso pectore sanguis eat.
me petat ille tuus, qui, si dea passa fuisset,
ensis in Atridae pectus iturus erat!
(*Heroides* 3.141-8)

The general thrust of the imagery in both these passages is clear. At line 60, she describes the news of Achilles' imminent departure as if it were a wound to her flesh: the report is imagined as piercing her chest (*pectus*) and drawing blood (*sanguinis*). It is certainly appropriate that when an epic warrior such as Achilles ventures into a love relationship, his activities should be described by the figure of *militia amoris*. Thus Ovid describes the erotic *vulnus* Achilles has inflicted on Briseis in terms of the epic *vulnera* he inflicts in the battles he fights in the *Iliad*.

However, there is a subtle twist which has been applied to the familiar tropes. When we turn to lines 141-8 we find Briseis applying the same imagery to herself at line 146 (*est mihi qui fosso **pectore sanguis** eat*); yet the context here suggests a rather more physical bloodshed. Firstly, Briseis speaks of a real sword (3.147-8), the very sword with which Achilles would have run through Agamemnon had Athena not appeared to persuade him against it (*Iliad* 1.206-14).[76] Similarly she makes mention of rejoining her brothers and husband (*repetam fratresque virumque*, 143). We already know from *Iliad* 19.291-4 that Briseis' brothers and husband died in the sack of Lyrnesus, that is, that they all fell to a physical death at the hands of a material sword; and now, if we refer back to the context of Briseis' amatory wound at 59-60, we see that just prior to this couplet comes Ovid's representation of the deaths of her family:

[76] Ovid might seem here to have read the *Iliad* rather carelessly, since Homer clearly states that Athene appears to Achilles alone, and is visible to no one else (τῶν δ'ἄλλων οὔ τις ὁρᾶτο, *Iliad* 1.198). Knox (1995) 19 cites this passage as evidence that Briseis has 'read' the *Iliad*; I would also like to add the suggestion that it is necessary for Ovid to emphasise that Briseis is speaking not of a 'metaphorical' sword, but of a 'literal' one.

dirute Marte tuo Lyrnesia moenia vidi -
et fueram patriae pars ego magna meae;
vidi consortes pariter generisque necisque
tres cecidisse, quibus, quae mihi, mater erat;
vidi, quantus erat, fusum tellure cruenta
pectora iactantem sanguinolenta virum.
(*Heroides* 3.45-50)

Again Ovid utilises the imagery of a bleeding breast (*pectora...sanguinolenta*, 50) to describe a wound, this time unambiguously physical. And who is responsible for these wounds, for all these deaths? Achilles himself is blamed (*Marte tuo*, 45). Thus between lines 45 and 60 Ovid sets up a contrast between, on the one hand Briseis' husband and brothers and their literal wounds at the hands of Achilles, and on the other hand Briseis herself and her figurative wound of love, also at the hands of Achilles. But by the time we reach the end of the poem, at lines 141-8, the distinction between Briseis and her brothers becomes rather more blurred: Ovid prefers not to maintain the distinction between the 'figurative' wound of love and the 'literal' wound of battle, and underscores this ambiguity by linking Briseis' 'figurative' wound with the 'literal' sword with which Achilles came close to killing Agamemnon. Further complicating affairs here is the possibility that the 'literal' sword is also meant to represent a 'metaphorical' erotic weapon, since there is surely a hint of innuendo in the phrases *stricto pete corpora ferro* (145) and *me petat ille tuus...ensis* (147-8): the parallelism between weaponry and the male member is too obvious to need enlarging upon here.[77]

Of course, the reason Ovid refuses to distinguish between figurative and literal language here is his constant concern in the letter with exploring the overlap between elegiac and epic language. Whether Achilles plunges cold steel into the breasts of his Trojan foes, or cold words into the heart of Briseis, his activities may be described through the same vocabulary of *vulnus*, *pectus* and *sanguis*. Likewise, whether bloodlust drives him against his enemies, or erotic lust into the arms of Briseis, the vocabulary of *gladius* and *corpora* is equally appropriate. What Ovid demonstrates is not so much the *difference* of elegiac and epic language, as rather its fundamental *sameness*.

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[77] But if scholarly references are required, then see Adams (1982) 19-22; and cf. *Ars Amatoria* 2.711-14.

ii. Conclusion: the Iliad *enslaved*

Verducci rounds off her analysis of *servitium amoris* in *Heroides* 3 by reading her findings back onto the *Iliad* as follows:

> No one, I think, after reading this epistle will read the *Iliad* again in quite the same way, with quite the same trust in the comprehensive illusion of a world it creates. That world does not include the Briseis who here, in Ovid's poem, so pathetically, so cruelly desires the servitude she has suffered. If I have seemed to discuss too seriously the nature of Ovid's literary parody and creative deformation of his Homeric model...it is because despite Ovid's moments of travesty, Briseis is a creature whose suffering and whose deformation are so coherently, convincingly realised that when we do smile at her, that smile becomes, inevitably, a wince, a reflex at once of sympathy and of recoil.[78]

Verducci is right to point out the effect of a reading of *Heroides* 3 on its Homeric source. The world of the *Iliad* already marginalises and objectifies Briseis; readings of pathos and humility, suffering and deformation are already present in Homer's poem without the influence of Ovid's appropriation. But Verducci's reading, as I have shown, is the necessary result of accepting *ipso facto* the temporal and thematic priority of epic: if Homer always 'came first', then any text which attempts to manipulate Homeric material will inevitably suffer distortion under the terms of its poetic antecedent. I have for the purposes of this discussion accepted the literary historical timescale which naturally privileges Homer over Ovid; however, I have balanced this by separating the authorial 'voices' of Ovid and Briseis, introducing a mythical literary timescale in which Briseis writes *prior to* the composition of the *Iliad*, and according to which poetic figures such as weaponry and slavery are *ipso facto* the property of love elegy rather than of epic.

Ovid's sleight of hand here suggests that the difference between epic and elegy is not so much a question of mutually irreconcilable perspectives on life, but rather an artificial distinction maintained for the purposes of poetic creativity. Our argument began by discussing the twofold strands of 'masculine' warfare and 'feminine' eroticism in epic and elegiac verse respectively; *Heroides* 3 now closes the gap between these traditions, and in so doing suggests that epic and elegy are never quite the distinct entities we pretend them to be, but rather that the epic poetry of the *Iliad*

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[78] Verducci (1985) 120-1.

already foreshadows, even if it does not yet fully realise, the imagery, values and poetic self-consciousness of a late Augustan elegiac poet. If Verducci and Barchiesi consider that the *Iliad*'s association with the *Heroides* places strong emphasis on what is *epic* within the language and imagery of the *elegiac*, let it be remembered that this road runs downhill both ways: the *Iliad*'s association with themes of *servitium* and *militia amoris* retrospectively recasts that poem in terms of the elegiac preoccupation with love, allowing Ovid to show us that the language and imagery of the epic are 'already' (even if 'not yet') the language and imagery of the elegiac world also. No longer marginalised by the exclusively masculine warrior cliques of the heroic world, Briseis is returned to centre stage in the poem as a genuine heroine whose too often ignored feminine charms have a significant, even decisive influence on events.

For an epilogue to this discussion of the relationship between epic and elegy, let us return to Achilles. The *Iliad* sees him facing the crisis of his life, having to choose between two options which he describes as follows:

> μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
> διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλοσδε.
> εἰ μέν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
> ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
> εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
> ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.
>
> (*Iliad* 9. 410-16)

How are we to represent the choice between long life in Phthia (414-16) and a young but glorious death at Troy (412-13) in terms of poetic genre? It would be most natural to relate κλέος at Troy to epic poetry, and to associate a life of *otium* with the 'anti-military' rhetoric of elegiac verse. However, this reading is not available to us in *Heroides* 3: the presence of Briseis adds an extra dimension of complexity to the choice. If Achilles abandons the epic glory available in fighting Troy, he also abandons Briseis to Agamemnon and thus forfeits any claim on the elegiac glory available in a love relationship with her. Conversely, if he accepts the erotic blandishments of Briseis, this choice inevitably involves a return to the battlefield to fight the Trojans. Part of Briseis' appeal to Achilles involves a long plea to the effect that he should forget about the temptations of peacetime activities and arm himself once more against the enemy (*Heroides* 3.113-26). Jacobson feels that this call to

arms furnishes us with a vivid indication of how Ovid steers clear of amatory elements in his description of Briseis:

> In these lines Briseis tries to shame Achilles into returning to the battle by accusing him of unseemly behaviour...preferring these activities because they are safer than warfare, for whose glory and honor he no longer cares. Could one get further from the carefree world of love elegy?...A true *puella* of elegy would never want her lover to go off to war and fight. Briseis, however, must call upon war, the enemy of love, to reestablish her relationship with Achilles.[79]

But of course Jacobson's analysis depends on the artificial maintenance of a distinction between the spheres of love and war. Briseis knows, and Ovid knows, that there is no way to reunite Achilles with his mistress without simultaneously evoking the sphere of war. Therefore, by breaking down the distinction between epic and elegiac verse, Ovid shows that Achilles' decision is not so much a choice between two essentially opposed lifestyles; instead, he locates the choice on a much more fundamental level. If Achilles quits Briseis, quits Troy, and returns to a quiet life at his father's palace, he will abandon not only the κλέος available on the battlefield but also the κλέος available in participating in a love story famous throughout antiquity. Ovid therefore shows that epic and elegy are not irreconcilable opposites, but rather two aspects of the one road to Homeric κλέος, a commodity so precious to Achilles, it seems, that he is willing to sacrifice his life for it.

iii. Researching the arts of love: Paris and Helen in Heroides *16 and 17*

When Achilles displays his concern with κλέος ἀφθιτον, an 'undying fame', he reflects the preoccupations of most of the characters in the *Iliad*. The warriors at Troy are confronted daily with the inevitability of death, and the certain knowledge that one's physical being will some day meet its end brings with it the concomitant necessity of ensuring a vicarious, non-corporeal, survival in the minds of others; this is the concept to which Homer applies the word κλέος, translated variously as 'glory', 'renown' or a similar synonym. Thus Homeric κλέος represents an 'identity' of the hero which does not depend upon his physical presence, a representation of a man's deeds that can transcend even death. Gregory Nagy's survey of the use of the word in the Homeric poems demonstrates that the power of κλέος to confer immortality on heroes is related

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[79] Jacobson (1974) 36-7.

to the craft of the poet: *κλέος* is a hero's 'reputation' as transferred through the tales of the singer.[80] That is to say, the identity of the hero is not conveyed so much through actual deeds of physical prowess on the battlefield; rather, it is something conveyed through 'stories' and wholly dependent on the power of the bard.

We have already seen in the case of Achilles that *κλέος* is not limited solely to the battlefield, but can also be expressed in terms of poetry of love; likewise it is not limited to the sphere of the male warrior alone, but may also be applicable to the interests and desires of females, as we learn from the following speech of Helen:

> *Δᾶερ ἐμεῖο κυνὸς κακομηχάνου ὀκρυοέσσης,*
> *ὥς μ' ὄφελ' ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ*
> *οἴκεσθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα*
> *εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,*
> *ἔνθα με κῦμ' ἀπόερσε πάρος τάδε ἔργα γενέσθαι.*
> *αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάδε γ' ὧδε θεοὶ κακὰ τεκμήραντο,*
> *ἀνδρὸς ἔπειτ' ὤφελλον ἀμείνονος εἶναι ἄκοιτις,*
> *ὃς ἤδη νέμεσίν τε καὶ αἴσχεα πολλ' ἀνθρώπων.*
> *τούτῳ δ' οὔτ' ἄρ νῦν φρένες ἔμπεδοι οὔτ' ἄρ ὀπίσσω*
> *ἔσσονται· τῷ καί μιν ἐμπαυρήσεσθαι ὀίω.*
> *ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν εἰσελθε καὶ ἕζεο τῷδ' ἐπὶ δίφρῳ,*
> *δᾶερ, ἐπεί σε μάλιστα πόνος φρένας ἀμφιβέβηκεν*
> *εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο κυνὸς καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἕνεκ' ἄτης,*
> *οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω*
> *ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι.*
>
> (*Iliad* 6.344-58)

The tone of this speech is typical of her gestures self-reproach throughout the poem. She begins by comparing herself to a dog (344), following this not at all flattering simile with a variation on the familiar theme that it is better for mortals not to be born (345-8); having finished with her own shortcomings she proceeds to reprove her foppish husband (349-52), before turning to Hector with a desultory gesture of conciliation and apology (353-6). She then caps this litany of woes with the revealing climax: *οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι* (357-8). Against all the woes, all the misfortune she suffers, she contrasts the right to be celebrated in verse. Helen therefore shows an awareness of her position as a 'subject of song', already self-consciously locating herself in the poetic tradition. Nor does Helen's poetic self-awareness stop with the *Iliad*: a careful reading of Ovid's *Heroides* 16 and 17 will demonstrate that Ovid (re)writes Homer's Helen and Paris with the focus less on the danger they pose to the integrity of Troy and the lives

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[80] Nagy (1974) 229-61.

of the Achaean and Trojan youth, and more on their combined knowledge of their significance as figures of poetry: their letters abound with a sense of the power of 'writing' and a self-conscious harnessing of the potentialities inherent in the written word.

The dense rhetorical nature of this pair of epistles and the others in the collection has led many to connect them with formal rhetorical exercises, in particular the *ethopoeia* and *suasoria*.[81] The old view that Ovid's *Heroides* are '*suasoriae* in verse' is no longer prevalent;[82] nevertheless we must not underestimate the importance of rhetorical technique, if not formal rhetorical influence, on these poems. The function of the orator is to persuade his audience: his speech must bridge a gap between the speaker and the addressee by verbal means alone. The rhetorician's words therefore effect the joining of his own intentions and thought processes with those of his audience. The lover is in a similar position to the orator, in that his first resource of seduction is the power of the word – whether written or spoken – to convey his feelings to his beloved and attempt to convince her in turn.

However, when critics apply the epithet 'rhetorical' to the *Heroides*, they generally do so not through an appreciation of the heroines' power to persuade, but rather as a means of drawing attention to Ovid's 'rhetorical wit' which he exercises, we are told, at the expense of the 'pathos' of the appeals of his heroines.[83] We discussed above the critical significance of acknowledging the voice of the 'heroine' in these poems, yet this carries its own dangers at the opposite extreme: for the incongruity of the occasional intrusion of the voice of 'Ovid' draws the reader's attention away from the illusion of a self-contained world inhabited by the heroine towards the purely artificial nature of the epistolary form. Consider the following lines from Ariadne's letter to Theseus:

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[81] See Wilkinson (1955) 95-7; Sabot (1981) 2590-2624; Gross (1985), esp. 114-20.
[82] For a refutation of the idea that the *Heroides* are based on these rhetorical school exercises, see Jacobson (1974) 325-30; cf. also Farrell (1998) 317-23, who argues that the intensity and complexity of the rhetoric figures the intense passion of the heroines.
[83] The most famous criticism is that of John Dryden, in the preface to his translation of the *Heroides*: "I will confess that the copiousness of his Wit was such, that he often writ too pointedly for his Subject, and made his persons speak more Eloquently than the violence of their Passion would admit: so that he is frequently witty out of season: leaving the imitation of nature and the cooler dictates of his judgement for the false applause of Fancy." See also Wilkinson (1955) 83-117; and cf. Sabot (1981) 2590-2624 for a judgement which rules in favour of 'pathos' over 'wit'.

quae legis, ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto
unde tuam sine me vela tulere ratem.
(*Heroides* 10.3-4)

Quite how Ariadne has managed to find pen, paper and postman in such a deserted spot, we are not told; accordingly, the suggestion that Theseus is actually going to 'read' this letter raises as many questions as it answers. Hypermestra's letter touches on a similar problem for the imagined author:

clausa domo teneor gravibusque coercita vinclis;
est mihi supplicii cause fuisse piam.
(*Heroides* 14.3-4)

scribere plura licet, sed pondere lapsa catenae
est manus, et vires subtrahit ipse timor.
(*Heroides 14.131-2*)

Her devotion is to be applauded, since it is no mean feat to write 132 lines with your hands impeded by shackles; however, it is hard to imagine how she will manage to deliver it to Lynceus, given that she is confined to her home (*clausa domo*, 3) Is the pathos of Hypermestra's appeal lost in the manifest implausibility of the fact that she should be expressing her feelings to Lynceus by *writing a letter*?

Focusing on the manner in which the dramatic context of the heroine's letter-writing stretches the credulity of the reader is a commonplace in *Heroides* criticism,[84] but represents a stiflingly superficial approach to the collection (ironically, the very charge which until recent years was so often levelled at Ovid's poetry). I would suggest that a less restrictive way of framing the question, one rarely posed in analyses of the above letters, might be: What *other* way is there for the abandoned lover to contact her beloved? How *else* might Ariadne, deserted and alone on Naxos, convey her feelings to Theseus? What *other* method might Hypermestra use to make her appeal to Lynceus? Shut up in her room and shackled hand and foot, she certainly cannot contrive a face-to-face meeting with her lover; since there is no hope of bringing about a physical encounter, the only route open to her is the contrivance of a surrogate tryst through the means of a letter. Herein lies the power of a specifically epistolary discourse, that it is not limited by distance or such physical barriers as

[84] E.g. Mendell (1965) 228-9; Otis (1970) 17; Frécaut (1972) 194-5; Anderson (1973) 66.

confine the lover to her cell: the very obstacles which stand in the way of a physical encounter between Hypermestra and Lynceus actually *empower* the epistolary form, which is able to show up the limitations inherent in mere face-to-face discourse.[85] In erotic terms, the letter is able to effect a 'textual consummation' between two characters who are prevented from meeting any other way. The power inherent in the letter form to bridge that physical gap between writer and recipient makes it a highly suitable form for Ovid's would-be seducers to pursue.[86]

In such wise, early in *Heroides* 16 Paris expresses a desire to identify the letter he is writing with the physical body of the man who is sending it:

> iamdudum gratum est quod epistula nostra recepta
> spem facit hoc recipi me quoque posse.
> (*Heroides* 16.13-14)

The very fact that Helen has received his letter and is now reading these words leads Paris to anticipate that she will be amenable to receiving him in person. Helen's reply seems to bear out the identification Paris makes between their verbal union and a physical consummation:

> nunc oculos tua cum violarit epistula nostros,
> non rescribendi gloria visa levis.
> (*Heroides* 17.1-2)

Helen alleges that 'your letter has outraged my eyes'; yet the Latin word *violare*, like English 'outrage', can also carry the meaning of 'sexual outrage', as in rape.[87] Thus Helen identifies Paris' letter with unwanted sexual advances, using the double meaning of *violare* to break down the barrier between bodily and verbal seduction. The same direction of thought is evident in her reply to Paris' request (*Heroides* 16.283-4) for a *tête-à-tête* to talk the matter over:

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[85] Cf. Kennedy (1984) 413-6 on how the best epistolary fiction utilises the letter-form as a natural and organic element of the tale it tells.

[86] Cf. Altman (1982) 43: "Because of its 'both-and,' 'either-or' nature, the letter is an extremely flexible tool in the hands of the epistolary author. Since the letter contains within itself its own negation, epistolary narrators regularly make it emphasise alternately, or even simultaneously, presence and absence, candor and dissimulation, mania and cure, bridge and barrier;" and see her ch.1 in general on the particular nature of epistolary mediation.

[87] See Adams (1982) 199, 223.

quod petis ut furtim praesentes ista loquamur,
scimus quid captes colloquiumque voces.
(*Heroides* 17.261-2)

Here again the boundary between verbal and physical seduction is breached: Helen knows that when Paris is asking for a secret *colloquium* he is really hoping for an opportunity to make physical his affections, yet it is difficult to resist the further implication that these letters, which themselves represent a *colloquium* of sorts between Helen and Paris, are also a surrogate for the sexual union of the couple.[88]

As a step forward from the literary communion which the epistolary form allows them towards the physical consummation he desires, Paris proposes that Helen's maids Clymene and Aethra should be pressed into service as intermediaries:

et comitum primas, Clymenen Aethramque, tuarum
ausus sum blandis nuper adire sonis.
(*Heroides* 16.259-60)

In closing her reply, Helen picks up on Paris' offer, accepting that her maids will continue working at effacing the barriers which impede a face-to-face encounter:

Cetera per socias Clymenen Aethramque loquamur,
quae mihi sunt comites consiliumque duae.
(*Heroides* 17.267-8)

The job which the letters began – mediating contact between Paris and Helen – will now be continued by Clymene and Aethra. The baton has been passed on: now that the letters have effected the first job of mediation, the lovers will communicate (cf. *loquamur*, 17.267; *blandis sonis*, 16.260) through the intermediaries of Helen's handmaids. It is striking that Ovid should name specifically Clymene and Aethra for this purpose. Their names are found in Homer: they appear by Helen's side at *Iliad* 3.144, dismissed in a single line, satellites of their radiant and extremely beautiful mistress. Rand comments on the poems' strategy in appropriating these Homeric characters thus:

[88] We might also compare Helen's *et iam sermone coimus* (*Heroides* 17.181): *coire* does duty as a relatively polite synonym for the act of coitus. See Adams (1982) 178-9.

> Incomparable audacity, the radiant attendants of Helen of the *Iliad* degraded to the circle of Corinna's maids! Bernard Shaw could not shock us more. It were unforgivable, were it not a logical conclusion from the Homeric Helen's acts.[89]

The affected protestations of "incomparable audacity" serve to underscore an important point. Does not the *praeceptor amoris* tell us in the *Ars Amatoria*:

> Sed prius ancillam captandae nosse puellae
> cura sit: accessus molliet illa tuos
> (*Ars Amatoria* 1.351-2)

Paris is therefore relying upon a trick advocated by the *Ars Amatoria* as part of the general strategy of his seduction attempt.[90] Out of the *Iliad*, in which Paris and Helen are portrayed as a quasi-married couple, *Heroides* 16 and 17 are extrapolating an 'elegiac' past, a tale of courtship to serve as prelude to Homer's account of their married life. There would have been no *Iliad* if Helen had not been wooed by Paris: for Homer's poem to exist at all, Paris must of necessity have been successful in utilising the seductive strategies of the *Ars Amatoria*. Accordingly, if Helen's past is rooted in elegiac seduction, it is not surprising that her maids, supposedly 'radiant', have 'degraded' to the level of elegiac poetry: Clymene and Aethra are adapted to the world of elegy as part of a more general eroticising movement wherein the story of the *Iliad* is traced back to its elegiac origins in the teachings of the great Roman *praeceptor amoris*.

Further potential for 'elegising' the Homeric poems comes with Paris' description of his feelings while at dinner with Helen and Menelaus (*Heroides* 16.217-58). This passage reflects one of the most frequently recurring formulaic episodes of the *Odyssey*, the hospitality scene, where a guest is recognised, welcomed and entertained; this in turn forms part of the poem's wider theme of *ξείνια*, involving the proprieties of both the host's and the guest's standards of behaviour.[91] But of course feasts and dinner parties do not belong exclusively to the world of epic. We have already seen Clymene and Aethra plucked from the *Iliad* and 'rewritten' according to the precepts of the *Ars Amatoria*. Similarly, the dining room scene in *Heroides* 16

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[89] Rand (1925) 31-2.
[90] As Farrell (1998) 319n21 suggests, "the women of the *Heroides* implicitly 'misread' the *Ars*": in this first of the double-letters, Paris appears equally well versed in Ovidian erotodidaxis.

adapts the elements of the Homeric theme of hospitality within the context of Ovid's amatory teachings, most particularly his advice that the hopeful suitor should make sure to attend dinner parties, as these are fertile grounds for amatory intrigue (*Ars Amatoria* 1.229-44).[92] First of all, Paris invokes and manipulates the Homeric standards of *ξείνια* when he says to Helen:

> neclegis absentis, testor, mandata mariti!
> cura tibi non est hospitis ulla tui.
> (*Heroides* 16.305-6)

By complaining that Helen is refusing his advances, Paris implies that sexual favours fall within the remit of a host's duties! This statement, by which he hopes to justify his seemingly offensive actions, also provides an answer to the prayer of Menelaus in *Iliad* 3 for vengeance on Paris:

> *Ζεῦ ἄνα, δός τίσασθαι ὅ με πρότερος κάκ' ἔοργε,*
> *δῖον Ἀλέξανδρον, καὶ ἐμῆς ὑπὸ χερσὶ δάμασσον,*
> *ὄφρα τις ἐρρίγῃσι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων*
> *ξεινοδόκον κακὰ ῥέξαι, ὅ κεν φιλότητα παράσχῃ.*
> (*Iliad* 3.351-5)

Menelaus calls on Zeus in his role as guardian of the proprieties of the *ξείνια* relationship. However, in terms of the relationship between the lover and the mistress in Roman love-elegy, Menelaus would stand for the boorish stickler of a husband who stands prudishly in the way of his wife's affair; this character-type is traditionally a hate figure in elegiac poems.[93] Paris would therefore justify his actions in the same way as Ovid does at *Amores* 3.4, pleading with the *nimium rusticus* (cf. *Amores* 3.4.37) husband not to stand in the way of a healthy, fulfilling love affair: thus the proprieties of Homeric *ξείνια* are paradoxically inverted in order to justify the actions of Paris and denounce the lack of manners and erotic sophistication on the part of his host.

Menelaus also appears in the role of entertainer in *Odyssey* 4, when he receives Telemachus and Peisistratus. He is a keen and excessive host, offering at one point to take Telemachus on a year-long 'Grand Tour' of mainland Greece (*Odyssey* 15.80-5).

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[91] For a general survey of this theme, see Reece (1993); also Murnaghan (1987) ch.3 in the context of the themes of disguise and identity.
[92] Cf. e.g. Ovid, *Amores* 1.4.
[93] See e.g. Ovid, *Amores* 1.4, 3.4.

Although Telemachus rightly refuses the proposal, as he is concerned about the effect of his long absence from Ithaca, Menelaus' offer is symptomatic of a larger design in this section of the poem to draw parallels between Telemachus and his absent father Odysseus: if Telemachus is taken off on a long tour of Hellas, he will be effectively in the same position as his father, exiled from his home and compelled to wander far and wide, dependent on the hospitality of others for his well-being.[94] As for Paris, when he arrives at Sparta, he too is taken off by Menelaus on a sightseeing tour:

> ille quidem ostendit, quidquid Lacedaemone tota
> ostendi dignum conspicuumque fuit;
> sed mihi laudatam cupienti cernere formam
> lumina nil aliud quo caperentur erat.
> (*Heroides* 16.131-4)

There may be a literary joke in *ostendi dignum conspicuumque*, based on Thucydides' assessment of the comparative artistic and architectural merits of Athens and Sparta (Thucydides 1.10.2); it would hardly come as a surprise that Paris is more impressed by Helen than by the city's meagre tourist attractions! Yet it seems that there is also a subtle reference to the opening of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus' activities during his wanderings are there described as follows:

> πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω.
> (*Odyssey* 1.3)

Odysseus, who "saw many cities of men and came to know their minds", and who therefore has a claim to being the very first tourist in literary history, has in fact been upstaged by Paris! We are therefore drawn to contemplate Paris' similarity with the most famous *spectator* of the mythological world in two distinct and complimentary ways: firstly through the evocation of Menelaus' offer to tour Greece with Telemachus, which is itself based on the narrative of Odysseus' wanderings, and secondly through this direct reference to the travels and experiences of the man himself.

The comparison between Paris and Odysseus also returns us to a major theme of this pair of epistles, the power of 'stories' and of fictive narrative. One of Odysseus' most familiar characteristics is his habit, when asked to identify himself, of giving a false

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[94] For further details see Reece (1993) 75-6; Fenik (1974) 5-60; Austin (1975) 181-200.

name and underpinning this identity with a story about his background and his relationship to Odysseus.[95] Compare this with the behaviour of Paris:

> a, quotiens lacrimis venientibus ora reflexi,
> ne causam fletus quaereret ille mei!
> a, quotiens aliquem narravi potus amorem,
> ad vulnus referens singula verba meum,
> indiciumque mei ficto sub nomine feci!
> ille ego, si nescis, verus amator eram.
> quin etiam, ut possem verbis petulantius uti,
> non semel ebrietas est simulata mihi.
> (*Heroides* 16.243-8)

The concealed weeping may recall the behaviour of Odysseus among the Phaeacians, listening to the lays of Demodocus (*Odyssey* 8.83-5,521-31); but also, while he is disguised as a beggar and telling his story to Penelope, the mention of the name Odysseus causes Penelope to weep; and Odysseus in turn must steel himself to conceal his own tears:

> *θυμῷ μεν γοόωσαν ἐὴν ἐλέαιρε γυναῖκα,*
> *ὀφθαλμοὶ δ' ὡς εἰ κέρα ἔστασαν ἠέ σίδερος*
> *ἀτρέμας ἐν βλεφάροισι· δόλῳ δ' ὅ γε δάκρυα κεῦθεν.*
> (*Odyssey* 19.210-12)

Here, Odysseus bites back tears because he is so close to a reunion with his wife, yet cannot reveal himself or make his move too early; likewise Paris, so near to Helen, the object of his desire, has so far been unable to declare his suit, and the inaccessible proximity of his beloved drives him to tears. There is a further correspondence: Penelope weeps at the story of Odysseus, who is narrating a made-up tale, just as Paris is telling a story about himself *ficto sub nomine* at *Heroides* 16.245. Therefore, as well as emphasising the similar erotic motives of Paris and Odysseus – both have travelled from Troy with the intention of finding a wife, and both find their beloved at present inaccessible – these lines draw attention to the importance of tales and narrative in Paris' seduction attempt: like Odysseus, he recognises the power of storytelling, which he directs primarily for its amatory effect. Thus he tells the story of the Judgement on Ida (*Heroides* 16.53-144), emphasising that Helen was promised him by no less a figure than Venus herself (16.83-8); although Helen, perhaps keyed in to his admission of telling stories *ficto sub nomine*, feels her credulity is stretched

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[95] See e.g. *Odyssey* 9.364-7 (to the Cyclops), 13.256-86 (to Athena); 14.199-359 (to Eumaeus); 19.165-

by this unlikely tale (*Heroides* 17.119-22), there is no doubt that she is flattered by the content of the story (*Prima mea est igitur **Veneri placuisse voluptas***, 17.131; *ergo **ego sum virtus, ego sum tibi nobile regnum!***, 17.135).

Moreover, Paris uses many other tricks which, while not relying on the power of storytelling as such, use the power of 'the word' to bridge a physical barrier. The peculiar circumstances of the banquet force him to these ploys, for when he is closest to Helen, at the dining table, the embraces of Menelaus (*Heroides* 16.221-8) are a graphic reminder that he is bodily as far from her as ever before. Thus, for example, he traces AMO on the table for Helen to read (*Heroides* 17.87-8); and he directs towards her subtle nods and winks (*nutum*, *Heroides* 16.258), gestures which, as Helen will remind us (*supercilio **paene loquenti***, *Heroides* 17.82), are but another way of 'speaking'. These stratagems too are based on the advice of the *Ars Amatoria*:[96] for Ovid there speaks of *digitis per quos arcana **loqueris*** (1.137), and *per **nutus** accipienda nota est* (1.138).

There is therefore a clear general design whereby Paris leans on the *Ars Amatoria* to provide the basis for the general strategy of his seduction attempt.[97] This is hardly surprising: since elegiac poetry is traditionally related to themes of love, it is only natural that Paris should turn to Ovid's manual of elegiac seduction. Nor is it Paris alone who draws on the advice of the *praeceptor amoris*. Elizabeth Belfiore shows that Helen makes much use of *Ars Amatoria* book 3 – the woman's guide to seduction – as the basis for her coquettish encouragements of Paris,[98] and attempts to use this in order to locate the poem's idealisation of Helen's womanly charms in the context of the larger interplay between epic and elegiac verse:

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202 (to Penelope).

[96] As well as Ovid's love poetry: see *Amores* 1.4.17, 2.5.15-16, 3.11.23-4.

[97] Even Paris' choice of the epistolary form is based on the advice of the *Ars Amatoria*, where Ovid advises the would-be suitor:

> Cera **vadum temptet**, rasis infusa tabellis:
> cera tuae primum conscia mentis eat.
> (*Ars Amatoria* 1.437-8)

The first resource of the suitor, we are told, is the letter: the metaphor of *cera vadum temptet* again emphasises both the physical gap between the man and the woman, and the power of the written word (*cera*, the wax which seals the letter, standing as representative of the letter as a whole) to bridge that gulf.

[98] See Belfiore (1980-81) 139-45.

> Ovid ... strikes at ... the epic concept of feminine excellence. For the author of the *Amores*, the feminine ideal does indeed include charm and beauty, but does not necessarily include chastity. Ovid values intelligence, warmth of feeling and strength of character more than the conventional virtue of chastity. He judges motives rather than mere acts, and admires the ability to see beyond the restrictions of a narrow tradition and custom. The Helen he portrays in *Heroides* 16-17 possesses these virtues rather than the conventional excellence of chastity; she is a heroine of elegy rather than epic.[99]

She elucidates this description by pointing out Helen's choice between *fama* (the good repute afforded to one of modest character) and *laus* (the quality which allows one to be celebrated in verse).[100] She even relates Helen's fame to that of Achilles by comparing the comforts they must forfeit in order to attain *laus*:

> Helen's choice is not unlike that of Achilles. She also chooses glory and danger over a secure obscurity. Achilles is heroic because he deliberately sacrifices conventional happiness, long life, to eternal glory. Helen, correspondingly, sacrifices that which convention holds dearer than a woman's life, chastity, to eternal praise in song.[101]

Helen is therefore compared and contrasted with Achilles as the respective ideals of their poetic genres. This approach is fruitful and yields an interesting analysis of Helen's search for *laus*; but the wedge Belfiore drives between epic and elegy appears to be somewhat forced. If we are to describe epic's idea of feminine virtue as "the conventional excellence of chastity" we must turn a blind eye to the substantial role Helen plays in both the Homeric poems. Equally Penelope, who is the very archetype of the chaste heroine, is frequently held up in elegiac poetry as a model for the poet's mistress.[102]

Nevertheless Belfiore has a case in attempting to read a self-conscious statement of poetic intentions into Helen: it has been demonstrated that many, if not all, of Helen's appearances in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are related in some way to poetry and the representational arts.[103] Indeed, on her first appearance in the *Iliad* she is found by Iris weaving a tapestry of battle-scenes:

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[99] Belfiore (1980-81) 139.
[100] Belfiore (1980-81) 146-7; for the nuances of this distinction, see Pichon (1966) s.vv. *laus* and *fama*.
[101] Belfiore (1980-81) 147.
[102] See Propertius 2.9, 3.12.37-8, 3.13.23-4, 4.5.7; Ovid, *Amores* 3.4.23-4.
[103] See Clader (1976) 6-12, 33-35; Suzuki (1989) 67-70.

ἡ δε μέγαν ἱστὸν ὕφαινε,
δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους
Τρώων θ' ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
οὓς ἕθεν εἵνεκ' ἔπασχον ὑπ'' Αρηος παλαμάων.
(*Iliad* 3.125-8)

In this passage, which shows Helen 'weaving' scenes from the battles outside Troy, many have seen a thematic connection between the act of weaving and the act of poetic composition.[104] Such a metapoetic reading would suggest that Helen understands the nature of the struggle between the Greeks and Trojans as not reducible primarily to nationalistic or militaristic concerns, but rather as above all a question of *art*: her weaving perceives the Trojan War as an issue above all of narrative and of the poetic tradition, and consequently interprets her own role as the cause of the war (ἕθεν εἵνεκα, 128) in artistic, rather than political or military, terms. Accordingly, whether she is weaving a tapestry or writing a letter to Paris, Helen's understanding of her role in the poetic tradition – as a future 'subject of song' – is a significant factor in Ovid's treatment of the myth. Her poetic self-awareness lends a particular prominence to the dynamic between *puella scripta* and *puella scriptrix* in the *Heroides*; for she is at one and the same time composing the elegiac poem *Heroides* 17, the act of a *scriptrix*, and paving the way towards her role as a subject of elegiac poetry in her cautious welcome to the seductive advances of Paris, the act of a *scripta*. For example, at one point Paris refers to her in the following terms:

magna quidem de te rumor praeconia fecit,
nullaque de facie nescia terra tua est;
nec tibi par usquam Phrygiae nec solis ab ortu
inter formosas altera nomen habet!
(*Heroides* 16.141-4)[105]

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[104] See Durante (1960); Clader (1976) 6-9; Kennedy (1986); Collins (1988) 42-3; and cf. also Scheid & Svenbro (1996) 111-55. This passage will be discussed in greater depth and from a slightly different perspective in chapter 2, section iv.

[105] There is a textual difficulty in line 143, which the one surviving manuscript witness gives as *nec tibi par usquam Phrygia nec solis ab ortu* .... Kenney (1996) *ad loc.* follows Naugerius in emending *Phrygia* to *Phrygiae*, and proposes a lacuna between lines 143-4, in which is contained "the complementary half of a polar expression 'from east to west'," but summarises somewhat pessimistically, "The text here printed is a *pis aller*. What Ovid wrote is past recovery." I do not concur with this fatalistic judgement. After all, why should not Phrygia in westernmost Asia Minor represent the westernmost boundary of Paris' geographical knowledge? Perhaps we may postulate that Ovid is exercising his wit on the familiar rhetorical *topos* of "from easternmost to westernmost": having spent most of his life as a herdsman on Ida, Paris has scarcely had the opportunity to expand his horizons to encompass the Mediterranean world, and adapts the elegiac commonplace accordingly.

As these lines show, Helen is already the subject of various tales (*rumor praeconia fecit*) on account of her surpassing beauty (even if she is 'not yet' the Helen of Trojan cycle legend): by emphasising her high stature among women Paris can both pay a fine compliment to Helen's good looks, and anticipate her final choice to elope, a decision which will provoke ten years of fighting in the Trojan War. The tales spread by *rumor* therefore express both the 'elegiac' role of Helen as the supreme example of human beauty, and her 'epic' role as the *casus belli* between the Greeks and the Trojans, which will ultimately be celebrated in the *Iliad* of Homer and in the related works of the epic cycle. Compare now her reply, where she protests of her fidelity to Menelaus:

> Si non est ficto tristis mihi vultus in ore
> nec sedeo duris torva superciliis,
> fama tamen clara est, et adhuc sine crimine vixi,
> et **laudem de me** nullus adulter habet.
> (*Heroides* 17.15-18)

The idea that no one has yet received *laus* from Helen is revealing, for it anticipates Helen's role in the *Iliad* as the ultimate focus of the fighting, whose agency will make it possible for so many heroes to win *laus* – Greek, κλέος - for themselves, and who will herself win *laus* for her escapade with Paris. Even though she is still morally unimpeachable (and the language of *ficto ore*, 15, suggests that her present state of integrity will not last for long), yet her and Paris' language clearly anticipates the poetic self-consciousness inherent in the Helen of the *Iliad*; it is as if her decision has already been made, that she will yield to the onset of *rumor* and *laus* in order to become the *puella scripta* of poetic legend. After all, even the letter which she is presently writing as *puella scriptrix*, insofar as it is a work of elegiac verse responding to the seductive advances of Paris, is in some sense granting her wooer poetic *laus* as a reward for his daring deed. Whether she intends it or not, Helen is already enmeshed in the complexities of literary self-reflexivity.

In expressing her apprehension at what the future will hold, Helen reminds the reader of the brutal consequences of her choice:

> ... vatum timeo monitus, quos igne Pelasgo
> Ilion arsurum praemonuisse ferunt.
> utque favet Cytherea tibi, quia vicit habetque

parta per arbitrium bina tropea tuum,
sic illas vereor, quae, si tua gloria vera est,
iudice te causam non tenere duae.
nec dubito, quin, te si prosequar, arma parentur.
ibit per gladios, ei mihi!, noster amor.
(*Heroides* 17.239-46)

Responding to the blithe optimism of Paris, who considers it unlikely that the Greeks will go to war to win her back (*Heroides* 16.341-52), Helen points out that, although Venus won the Judgement on Ida, against that are to be reckoned the two goddesses who lost out (241-4); this anticipates the important role which Athena and Hera will play in assisting the Greek forces in the *Iliad*, as well as the general ineffectual interventions of Aphrodite. As for the burning of Troy, although this is found first hand only in the Epic Cycle (the *Iliupersis*) and, much later, in *Aeneid* 2, nevertheless the destruction of the city by fire will be forecast by Hector at *Iliad* 6.447-9 and guaranteed by his own death in *Iliad* 22.

Therefore, even if the seductive ploys of the *Ars Amatoria* as adapted to a Homeric context lie behind the strategy of Paris, yet Helen's role as cause of the war and the fall of the city in the *Iliad* also play an important part in these poems. This shows that it is difficult to exclude from these 'elegiac' epistles the 'epic' carnage at Troy which Helen's decision foreshadows; equally, *Heroides* 16 and 17 remind us that the *Iliad*, first and greatest of 'epic' poems, is predicated on the 'elegiac' background of Paris' seduction of Helen.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the letters demonstrate a craftily wrought amalgam of the rhetoric of love and of war; and equally, that they read the interconnection between themes of elegy and themes of epic back onto the *Iliad*. For example, Paris' epistle draws time and time again on the imagery of 'fire' and 'burning'.[106] In the opening lines he describes his love as follows:

Eloquar, an flammae non est opus indice notae,
et plus quam vellem iam meus extat amor?
ille quidem lateat malim, dum tempora dentur
laetitiae mixtos non habitura metus,
sed male dissimulo; quis enim celaverit ignem,

[106] Thus Sabot (1981) 2613 n.106 counts 27 allusions to fire in *Heroides* 16.

lumine qui semper proditur ipse suo?
si tamen expectas, vocem quoque rebus ut addam –
uror! habes animi nuntia verba mei.
(*Heroides* 16.3-10)

Paris begins by speaking of a *notae flammae* (3): the reference to *amor* in line 4 shows that this is clearly a reference to the 'fire' of love. He justifies his failure to control his emotions with the rhetorical question *quis enim celaverit ignem* (7), and caps his declaration with the emphatically positioned *uror* (10). He therefore sets the tone for the rest of his letter in speaking of his love three times in terms of fire and burning.

The most intensve deployment of this imagery is in a report he gives Helen of one of his mother's dreams:

matris adhuc utero partu remorante tenebar;
iam gravidus iusto pondere venter erat.
illa sibi ingentem visa est sub imagine somni
flammiferam pleno reddere ventre facem.
territa consurgit metuendaque noctis opacae
visa seni Priamo; vatibus ille refert.
arsurum Paridis vates canit Ilion igni –
pectoris, ut nunc est, fax fuit ille mihi!
(*Heroides* 16.43-50)

Paris' reading of the prophecy (***pectoris**, ut nunc est, fax fuit ille mihi,* 50) is an 'elegiac' reading: he interprets the flames as an elegiac figuration of love, and deploys this reading of Hecuba's dream as part of his strategy of justifying his seductive advances towards Helen. She, by contrast, interprets the vision as follows:

Fax quoque me terret, quam se peperisse cruentam
ante diem partus est tua visa parens;
et vatum timeo monitus, quos igne Pelasgo
Ilion arsurum praemonuisse ferunt.
(*Heroides* 17.237-40)

Helen's interpretation of the dream relates the burning brand to the future destruction of Troy (*Ilion arsurum*, 240): her reading is therefore based on an 'epic' definition of the flames to which Hecuba dreamt she gave birth. Both the 'epic' and 'elegiac' elements of the future of the relationship between Helen and Paris are therefore implicit in the imagery of the flames. We are thus presented a twofold vision of the

state of things to come: is their future 'elegiac', portending their elopement and marriage, or is it future 'epic', portending the sack of Troy? What is the vision of the future which the prophets foresee?

To answer the above questions we must first move outwards to examine the more general issue of temporality raised by the prophecies. The predictions of the *vates* serve to remind us that the story of Helen and Paris has an existence outside of the tightly focused world of *Heroides* 16 and 17: these characters have a literary future which extends from their elopement and marriage through their years living under siege in Troy up to and beyond the destruction of the city. Their fates are already 'written', so to speak, and this vision of the future is communicated to the reader as a 'foreshadowing' of events to come in the Trojan cycle.

The trope of foreshadowing, as discussed by Gary Saul Morson in his study on the issues of temporality in literature, is a phenomenon more easily accessible in the literary world, where the future is self-evidently already written on the subsequent page, than in everyday life, in which time is experienced always in the same direction and at the same rate.[107] Foreshadowing only makes sense in terms of a 'future' which has in some sense already occurred exerting an influence on the 'present' in order to make manifest signs of impending events.[108] The real-life equivalent of 'foreshadowing', for people who belief in an ineluctable and predestined future, is the 'omen':

> For those who believe in omens, the future leaves its mark on the present, much as a thunderstorm in a novel may occur *in order to* indicate a catastrophe to come. If the event caused by the future is detectable only by the reader, we speak of foreshadowing. If it is recognised as a sign by the character, he will have discovered an omen. Conversely, those people in real life who belief in omens are implicitly treating real time the way we would treat time in a narrative. For good reason, the already written book or scroll is a standard metaphor for fatalism.[109]

Therefore, since *Heroides* 16 and 17 are written from the subjective first person perspective, they represent the foreshadowing of the marriage of Paris and Helen and the fate that will subsequently befall Troy as an 'omen'. We the readers already know

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[107] See Morson (1994) 17-20, 43-7.
[108] Morson (1994) 45-7.

the ultimate destinies of Helen and Paris; they themselves, living their lives as the story unfolds around them, can only access their futures through the vatic utterances of prophets. This gives rise to a cunning word play by which we may glimpse the bipartite nature of the authority on which the prophet pronounces his vision of the future:

> arsurum Paridis vates canit Ilion igni
> (*Heroides* 16.49)

Vates canit: "the prophet pronounces", but also, utilising the dual meaning of *vates* so popular among Augustan writers, "the *poet sings*." In discussing foreshadowing and omen, Morson concretises his appeals to the notion of a "future which has already happened" by utilising the metaphor of the written word: "[T]he already written book or scroll is a standard metaphor for fatalism." This is a convenient metaphor to use in discussing the primarily literary phenomenon of foreshadowing. A novel which draws on the strategy of foreshadowing exploits the fact that the characters' futures are always already written: "The author and rereader have access to the whole of a character's life, which cannot be experienced from within.".[110] If the idea of an 'already written' future is applicable to a single self-contained literary text such as the novel, how much more powerfully must it apply in the sphere of Greco-Roman mythology, where every story has been thoroughly worked and reworked by a succession of authors in a variety of generic codes and contexts. It makes little difference whether a character's future is written in one's own text or in that of one's predecessor: foreshadowing is as much an intertextual as a textual phenomenon. Here, for example, when he tropes 'foreshadowing' as 'omen', Ovid knows that the events foreshadowed – the marriage of Paris and Helen, and the fall of Troy – are depicted and ratified in Homer:[111] the play on meanings inherent in *vates canit* and in the corresponding phrase in Helen's reply, *vatum timeo monitus* (*Heroides* 17.249), marks the fact that the love affair of Paris and Helen and the subsequent cataclysmic destruction of Troy is a predestined part of these characters' lives only because the Trojan cycle in general, and the Homeric poems in particular, reveal it to be so.

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[109] Morson (1994) 63.
[110] Morson (1994) 45.

One way of reading this omen is therefore to interpret it in intertextual terms, and to explain what is portended in terms of poetry and generic codes. The differing interpretations of Paris and Helen stand for the different types of poetry which may be used to speak about their love affair. For example, Helen sees their relationship in terms of the poetics of epic; for her, the *flammae* in the prophecy are the 'epic' flames which will raze Troy, as Hector foresees in *Iliad* 6.447-9 and as are described in *Aeneid* 2 and the minor poems of the Trojan cycle. However, Paris sees their dalliance in terms of the rhetoric of elegy; he sees the flames as alluding to the *flammae* which torment the elegiac lover. The omen, alluding at once to two different poetical traditions and uniting them in the shared imagery of *flamma*, declares that this love affair will provide the impetus for two very different kinds of poetry and can be spoken of in more than one generic code.

So far I have conducted my analysis of the omens in *Heroides* 16 and 17 on the presumption that the 'omen' is the primary field of signification which requires elucidation, and themes of 'intertextuality' are applied as a way of glossing the imagery and drawing out meaning and significance from these portents. But the trope does not just have to work one way: another way of examining the relationship between omens and intertexts is to suggest that the language of 'omen' contributes to our understanding of the way that 'intertextuality' is made to work in these poems.[112] Thus the rhetoric of temporality bridges the gap between narratives of poetic discourse and narratives of literary history. The modern *locus classicus* for the intertextual significance which lies latent in the language of temporality is Conte's discussion of the relationship between the story of Ariadne in Catullus 64 and Ovid's 'sequel' to the same tale in *Fasti* 3. Consider the following verse:

> dicebam, *memini*, "peiure et perfide Theseu!"
> (*Fasti* 3.473)

Conte's discussion of this line is articulated around the various connotations, both narrative and metapoetic, of the word *memini*. 'Memory' may on the one hand refer to the simple feat of mental recollection by which Ariadne recalls her desperate

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[111] Homer touches on the marriage of Paris and Helen at *Iliad* 3.443-6; Hector (*Iliad* 6.447-9) predicts the ravaging of Troy, and his own death in *Iliad* 22 functions as a guarantee of the doom of the city.
[112] Cf. the methodology of Hinds (1998) 10-16, from which this discussion takes its cue.

lamentations on Naxos; but it also functions on a metapoetic level as a trope for Ovid's own poetic 'recall' of his Catullan source material: "'Memini' (I remember), which signals that remembering, marks the gap between present and distant past .... From the viewpoint of Ovid's Ariadne, reality lies in the existence 'lived' by her in Catullus' text, whereas for her creator, Ovid, Catullus's world is fiction – fine literature."[113] Accordingly the language of *memory* locates the allusion firmly in the *past*, both in mythological terms with respect to the progression of Ariadne's life story and in historical terms of the development of the Latin poetic tradition: "The gap here is...between the fictitious reality created by poetic discourse and an external reality that establishes an opposition with it, forcing it to leave the shelter of its imaginative illusion".[114] Note also that the imperfect tense of *dicebam* enhances the retrospective bearings of the intertextual annotation: poetic discourse characteristically gestures towards the *past* in order to ground itself within the tradition.[115]

In a case such as that of the Ovidian Ariadne 'recollecting' her past as the Catullan Ariadne, tropes of memory and the 'past' are extremely appropriate for the relationship between poetic discourse and literary history. With respect to this point a particularly interesting observation is made by Miller. He picks out one example of the use of the figure of 'memory' to signal an allusion, at *Fasti* 4.193, where the Muses are invoked as *mandati memores*, proceeding to suggest that since the Muses are daughters of Mnemosyne ("Memory") it is highly apposite that they should be invoked as the patron goddesses of 'intertext' as well as of 'text'.[116] However, the Muses are not the only divinities with an interest in poetry. Apollo too has a stake in the world of 'literature'. His attributes are summed up in his role as *vates*: he unites the two fields of prophecy and poetry. If the daughters of Memory can be exploited as an *aetion* to explain the poetic tradition's overarching concern with the *past*, surely Apollo with his prophetic powers furnishes an equally valid *aetion* for an intertextual relationship which gestures towards the *future*. Figures of memory or of general antiquity may function as self-conscious markers of an intertextual relationship which

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[113] Conte (1986) 61-2.
[114] Conte (1986) 63.
[115] Conte's analysis spells out a strategy which underlies a number of metapoetically-focused studies of the rhetoric of memory and the past within intertextual discourse: see especially Barchiesi (1993) 333-65; Miller (1993) 153-64; Hinds (1998) 3-16.
[116] See Miller (1993) 159-60.

is interested in a character's past; by the same token, the language of prophecy is here used to mark an allusion which gestures intertextually towards the characters' future.[117] The word *vates*, frequently found in the Augustan poets as a synonym for *poeta*, is used here (*Heroides* 16.49; 17.239) to unify the two roles of the poet, as author of the text and as the mystic 'interpreter' of the 'future'.[118]

An example of the intertextual ramifications of Apollo's vatic powers may be seen in the following couplet of Paris' epistle:

> Ilion adspices firmataque turribus altis
> moenia, Phoebeae structa canore lyrae.
> (*Heroides* 16.181-2)

The walls of Troy are described as "built by the song of the lyre of Apollo." The construction of the walls of Troy by Poseidon and Apollo is mentioned at *Iliad* 7.451-3 and 21.436-60: thus a metapoetical reading would render this line as "built *in the song of* the lyre of Apollo," playing on the potential for ambiguity in the respective phrases *structa canore* (built *by* a song, or *in* a song?) and *Phoebeae lyrae* (the lyre of Phoebus himself, or the lyre of his most famous mortal disciple, Homer?). However, the story of the construction of the walls of Troy also contains a 'foreshadowing' of the future doom of the city. As Poseidon reminds us at *Iliad* 21.436-60, Laomedon, who commissioned the gods to build the city walls, refused to honour his part of the contract when the work was finally completed. This act of hubris is often seized upon by Augustan poets as the ultimate cause of the future doom of Troy.[119] Accordingly, in the words of Kenney, we find in Paris' reference to the construction of the walls of Troy "another *ominous* allusion."[120] The story of the treachery of Laomedon functions as a 'foreshadowing' of the future doom of Troy, metapoetically annotating Ovid's reference 'forwards' to his poetic 'antecedent', Homer; perhaps the presence of Apollo in these lines also evokes that god's *prophetic* powers, adding divine ratification to the literary fulfilment of this foreshadowing.[121]

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[117] Cf. Casali (1995b) 505: "Ironic prefiguration in *Heroides* is normally realised through intertextual anticipation: the future events that are prefigured are present in the texts of the model epic or tragedy."
[118] For the significance of *vates* in Augustan poetry, see Newman (1967).
[119] E.g. Virgil, *Georgics* 1.501-2, *Aeneid* 4.451-2; Horace, *Odes* 3.3.18-24.
[120] Kenney (1996) 107; emphasis mine.
[121] The reference to Apollo in the context of epic poetry is also suggestive of the 'divine' power in epic; for the tension between theological and literary authority in epic verse see Feeney (1991).

The term '*ante*cedent' above is expressed with due care and distancing, because this manner of "conjugating an allusion in the future tense"[122] problematises the very questions of temporality and of poetic priority. On this way of reading literary history we may well ask: just who *does* come first? One response to the problem may be found in Casali's interpretation of the dynamics of the relationship between an elegiac epistle (*Heroides* 9) and its tragic model (Sophocles' *Trachiniae*):

> Elegiac rewriting does not cancel the tragic nature of the events. Indeed, just where the reader seems to be 'turned away' from tragedy by means of a particular concentration of elegiac language and imagery ..., precisely there he is made to recall with attention the model text (and its continuation): a bitter return to anti-elegiac events.[123]

Casali reads elegy on the one hand, and tragedy on the other, as diametrically opposed entities: tragedy is somehow inherently "anti-elegiac", and also implicitly more powerful than elegy, for it seems that wherever elegy and tragedy collide the reader is forced to "recall with attention the model [sc., *tragic*] text."[124] Substitute 'epic' for 'tragic', and we have the framework of a possible reading of the omen in *Heroides* 16 and 17: Paris wishes to evoke *elegiac* love through his reference to the *flammae* of his passion, yet precisely at this moment the omen portends the *epic* destruction of Troy by fire and sword. If we accept the general terms of Casali's interpretation, we would have no option but to accept that the *epic* figurations of this omen will overpower the *elegiac* motifs; Helen would be 'right', after all, and the elements of the love story would be drowned out by the portents of epic doom.

However, it is also possible to expand upon Casali's discussion of the 'ironic prefigurations' inherent in this manner of reading, and to pursue some further ramifications of the way in which this manner of reading radically revolutionizes our conceptions concerning issues of 'priority' and 'epigonality' in both mythological and literary history. The latent assumption in Casali's analysis is that since *Heroides* 9 has already been treated in the 'grand' style by Sophocles, Ovid the latecomer lacks the

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[122] This suggestive phrase is coined by Barchiesi (1993) 336.
[123] Casali (1995b) 506.
[124] See also Casali (1995a) 1-3 on *Heroides* 4; and cf. Barchiesi (1993) 340-3, a reading of *Heroides* 9 which makes comparable deference to the ultimate 'tragic' fate of Deianira. Barchiesi's article, which sets out and exemplifies some strategies for reading the intertextual relationship between the *Heroides* and the 'source texts' which both precede and post-date them, has had a particularly profound influence on my thinking on these poems.

poetic authority to override this earlier treatment of the myth. But when Ovid inserts himself into the story *prior* to the moment it is taken up by Sophocles – or indeed Euripides, or Virgil, or Homer – then our ideas about literary 'progression' and about the 'priority' we should grant the earlier authors are turned upside down. For example, just as *Heroides* 16 and 17 capture the *first* moments in the relationship of Paris and Helen, so they also stake a metapoetic claim to thematic *priority* over their source text. Ovid's elegiac discourse becomes the *fons et origo* of the Trojan legend; and as he figures his relationship with Homer through the language of prophecy and foreshadowing, so he suggests that his poems 'foreshadow' or 'anticipate' Homer. In terms of the diachronic development of literary history, Homer is part of the background of Ovid, an integral component of the literary system and tradition within which he works; but here, when Ovid's poems speak of their relationship with Homer by making gestures towards the *future*, then (as Barchiesi notes) our whole concept of the development of the history of literature undergoes an "identity crisis".[125] In Contean terms, his poems transgress the boundary between the timescale of "external reality" and the timescale of the "fictitious reality of poetic discourse" in order to trump the priority and the originary status of Homer.[126] To put it this way: the language of *memini* and related words of antiquity and the past suggest belatedness, a plunge into nostalgia, a gesture of defeat; the vatic language of *moneo* conversely celebrates 'priority', and paradoxically reinterprets literary history so that it is Homer who is belated, Homer who is left to fill in the gaps in the story, and Ovid who presents himself as the fountainhead of the Trojan legend. Is it really epic which is the *summum genus*, which contains the seeds of elegiac poetry and of all other genres of poetic discourse? Or is it *elegiac* poetry which is now 'totalised' and privileged inasmuch as it contains the seeds of the language and imagery of epic and of all other genres? Paris' claim that the 'flames' which the omen portended burn with the ardour of his passion is open to a reading, not of "derivativeness", but of "primariness."[127]

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[125] See Barchiesi (1993) 333-5 and *passim*.

[126] As at Conte (1986) 63, discussed above.

[127] Cf. *Heroides* 5.29-30:

> cum Paris Oenone poterit spirare relicta
> Ad fontem Xanthi versa recurret aqua!

This elegiac couplet, which Paris carves on a poplar tree to express his love for Oenone, may be seen as constructing a myth of origins of elegiac poetry: the 'first' elegiac poet is none other than Paris himself. The veracity of this myth is 'validated' at *Iliad* 21.233-382 when the river Xanthus fulfils his ironic vow by turning in its course. See Jacobson (1974) 183n.18; Farrell (1998) 327-8; Kennedy (2002) 224-5.

Thus the trope of 'prophecy' is manipulated in order to make a daring statement of temporal and generic priority.

In broader terms, the paradoxical 'priority' which *Heroides* 16 and 17 claim on behalf of their elegiac treatment of the myth is backed up by the poems' constant manipulation of the language and imagery of epic in terms of the world-view of elegiac poetry. In particular, Paris' reliance on the seductive strategies of the *Ars Amatoria*, as described above, demonstrates that the Trojan War – that most epic of literary themes – could not have come about if Paris had not been well versed in the practicalities of Ovid's handbook of elegiac love. Epic 'warfare' becomes subordinate to and dependant on the elegiac 'warfare' fought between Paris and Helen. Compare Paris' reference to the abduction of Helen by Theseus, which he relates as follows:

> ergo arsit merito, qui noverat omnia, Theseus,
> et visa es tanto digna rapina viro,
> more tuae gentis nitida dum nuda palaestra
> ludis et es nudis femina mixta viris.
> quod rapuit, laudo; miror, quod reddidit umquam.
> tam bona constanter praeda tenenda fuit ...
> (*Heroides* 16.149-54)

He begins by identifying himself with Theseus through the shared motif of *arsit*, the imagery of the 'flames' of love discussed above. Furthermore, in talking of Helen as *digna rapina* (150), he describes Helen in terms of the prizes a warrior gains for prowess in sacking a city: using the figure of the *militia amoris*, he implies that just as Helen was once 'spoil' to Theseus, so she will be 'spoil' now to Paris. (The reference in the following couplet to the Spartan tradition of naked gymnastics clearly indicates that it is this kind of 'spoil' which Paris has in mind.) He then praises Theseus' audacity with the word *laudo*. As we have already seen, *laus* is a common Latin equivalent for the Greek term κλέος, which is used to refers to fame in terms of its depiction in poetry. Accordingly Paris discusses the 'literary fame' which attends Helen in terms of the κλέος of love elegy, rather than the κλέος of warfare: he stakes a claim for the priority of Helen's poetic role as a subject of seduction and of lovemaking, rather than the prize for whom the Trojan War will be fought.

In a similar vein, Paris later expresses the hope:

> Di facerent, pretium magni certaminis esses,
> teque suo posset victor habere toro!
> (*Heroides* 16.263-4)

In one respect Paris will get his wish in *Iliad* 3, when the Achaeans and Trojans agree that Paris and Menelaus shall meet in a duel, the winner to keep Helen as his wife. The two aspects of the *militia amoris*, the figure of warfare and the goal of erotic fulfilment (as displayed here in *suo toro*, 264), are therefore cleverly juxtaposed through the single Iliadic episode of the heroes fighting in order to win a woman. The word *victor* is, as Kenney points out, particularly ironic here: for Paris is decisively beaten in *Iliad* 3 to such an extent that he requires the intervention of Aphrodite in order to escape with his life (*Iliad* 3.380-2), yet even so he later enjoys the embraces of Helen just as if he were the *victor* on the field (*Iliad* 3.447).[128] Yet even though he is a distant second in the *militia* of warfare, Paris is the clear winner when it comes to the *militia amoris*: having successfully seduced Helen he can now enjoy her charms by right of amatory 'conquest'. Ovid's reading of *Iliad* 3 hints perhaps at an alternative way of reading the duel. The Homeric account acknowledges the 'precedence' of Ovid in treating Paris in the sphere of love poetry; hence it introduces Aphrodite – who, in her Roman guise as Venus, is the patron goddess of Ovid's elegiac verse[129] – in order to spirit him away to the more 'appropriate' sphere of the bedchamber. He shows us Paris enjoying the spoils of victory which, strictly speaking, he has not earned; perhaps we may read him as 'deferring' to Ovid's prior characterisation of Paris as a soldier in the service of Love, and accordingly conceding that in the field of amatory warfare, at least, Menelaus is no match for Paris.

The interplay between 'love' and 'war' is also evident in the letter's several references to archery. For example, Paris pleads that his infatuation with Helen results from being struck by an arrow:

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[128] See Kenney (1996) 114.
[129] See e.g. *Amores* 3.15; *Fasti* 4.1-16.

Nec tamen est mirum, si sic cum polleat arcus,
missilibus telis eminus ictus amo.
(*Heroides* 16.39-40)

This of course is a variation on the familiar elegiac image which describes how Cupid causes someone to fall in love.[130] The 'arrows of love' are further evoked through a prophecy of Cassandra, which Paris relates later in his letter:

Non mea sunt summa leviter destricta sagitta
pectora; descendit vulnus ad ossa meum.
hoc mihi – nam repeto – fore, ut a caeleste sagitta
figar, erat verax vaticinata soror.
(*Heroides* 16.277-80)

Of course the *caelestis sagitta* of 279 not only encompasses a reference to the heavenly darts of Cupid, but also presages the manner of Paris' death, pierced by an arrow of Philoctetes. However, the reference to *vaticinata* (280) should serve as a warning. As discussed above, the language of 'prophecy' not only foreshadows (or repeats – as in *repeto*, 279?) events which have been (will be?) related in earlier (later?) poets, but also enacts a claim to *priority* on behalf of Ovid's poem. Accordingly the epic connotations of this foreshadowing of Paris' death are in some sense undermined by the *prior* claim on the prophecy of Paris' *elegiac* exploits.

The references to bow and arrow remind us that in the *Iliad* Paris' own military speciality is archery. He boasts of his prowess to Helen in the following passage:

Finge tamen, si vis, ingens consurgere bellum –
et mihi sunt vires, et mea tela nocent.
nec minor est Asiae quam vestra copia terrae;
illa viris dives, dives abundat equis.
nec plus Atreides animi Menelaus habebit
quam Paris aut armis anteferendus erit.
paene puer caesis abducta armenta recipi,
hostibus et causam nominis inde tuli;
paene puer iuvenes vario certamine vici,
in quibus Ilioneus Deiphobusque fuit;
neve putes, non me nisi comminus esse timendum,
figitur in iusso nostra sagitta loco.
(*Heroides* 16.353-64)

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[130] For references see Pichon (1966) *s.vv.* '*saggitae*' and '*tela*'.

It is unusual to find a hero boasting of his skill with the bow, as Paris does at lines 354 (*et mea tela nocent*) and 364 (*figitur in iusso nostra saggita loco*); the archers of the *Iliad* usually have little to be proud of, perhaps because their craft deals death at a distance and with little personal risk.[131] Indeed, one of the best Trojan archers, Pandarus, explicitly repents of his skill at *Iliad* 5.204-16; he is frustrated that he has so far struck both Menelaus and Diomedes without significantly wounding either, and confesses to Hector that if he ever returns home he will break his bow with his own hands and throw it on the fire. Paris himself manages to hit Diomedes at one point, only to be faced with a derogatory taunt reviling him for his effeminacy and unwarlike nature (*Iliad* 11.385-95). His distaste for matters martial often leaves him open to rebuke; in *Iliad* 3, Helen chastises him in similar terms to Diomedes:

> ἦλυθες ἐκ πολέμου· ὡς ὄφελες αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι,
> ἀνδρὶ δαμεὶς κρατερῷ, ὃς ἐμὸς πρότερος πόσις ἦεν.
> ἦ μὲν δὴ πρίν γ' εὔκε' ἀρηϊφίλου Μενελάου
> σῇ τε βίῃ καὶ χερσὶ καὶ ἔγχεϊ φέρτερος εἶναι.
> ἀλλ' ἴθι νῦν προκάλεσσαι ἀρηϊφίλον Μενέλαον
> ἐξαῦτις μαχέσασθαι ἐναντίον· ἀλλά σ' ἐγώ γε
> παύεσθαι κέλομαι, μηδε ξανθῷ Μενελάῳ
> ἀντίβιον πόλεμον πολεμίζειν ἠδε μάχεσθαι
> ἀφραδέως, μή πως τάχ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ δουρὶ δαμήῃς.
>
> (*Iliad* 3.428-36)

At this point Paris has just returned from his duel with Menelaus, having escaped death only through the timely intervention of Aphrodite. In the quoted passage Helen then chastises her husband for his incompetence, and especially so for the exaggerated boasts he once made (430-1); she continues with heavy sarcasm, warning him not to attempt to fight Menelaus again, or he will surely come to harm (432-6). Picking up on her statement that Paris once *σῇ τε βίῃ καὶ χερσὶ καὶ ἔγχεϊ φέρτερος εἶναι* (431), Ovid has 'filled in' this gap in the story, providing us with the very words of his boast at *Heroides* 16.354-64. Some scholars highlight the sarcasm and bitterness in this speech;[132] yet a quite different tone is evident in her response to the same boast in *Heroides* 17:

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[131] Cf. the manner of Teucros' fighting at *Iliad* 8.266-72: he crouches for shelter behind Ajax's shield, emerges briefly to shoot an arrow, and quickly returns to cover "like a child hiding beneath his mother."

[132] E.g. Willcock (1990) *ad loc* describes the speech as "heavily sarcastic", while Stanley (1993) 65 refers to this "spiteful" wish.

Quod bene te iactes et fortia facta loqueris,
a verbis facies dissidet ista tuis.
apta magis Veneri, quam sunt tua corpora Marti.
bella gerant fortes, tu, Pari, semper ama!
Hectora, quem laudas, pro te pungare iubeto;
militia est operis altera digna tuis.
(*Heroides* 17.251-6)

Thus Ovid's version demonstrates that Helen's sentiments convey not so much a disaffection with Paris, as some might claim, but the incipient pangs of love; she wants to protect Paris, which is why she dissuades him from fighting too keenly. She would prefer him to "make love, not war" (*bella gerant fortes, tu, Pari, semper ama*, 254); and that is exactly what the couple do at *Iliad* 3.448, immediately after Helen's speech. Ovid therefore recasts her chastising words to Paris in order to bring out a Helen, not disillusioned by the martial incompetence of her husband, but rather exhibiting a wifely concern with the safety and well-being of her husband.[133] In terms of the tension between literary and mythic chronologies in *Heroides* 16 and 17, we might say that although Homer picks up and develops Paris' boast at *Heroides* 16.354-64 and Helen's reply at *Heroides* 17.251-6 in terms of epic warfare, he is unable to escape the influence of the temporally 'prior', more powerful elegiac code; and so, in a apologetic gesture of epigonality, he defers to the originality of the poetry of 'love' in treating these characters, bringing them instead to an erotic union in an act of homage to Ovidian elegy. Ovid's reconfiguration of the balance of power between epic and elegy therefore exerts great influence over the *Iliad*.

As well as chastising Paris for his martial endeavours, the Helen of the *Iliad* also complains of her own unenviable status among the Trojans. For example, at the very end of the poem, she delivers the following lines as part of her lament over the body of Hector:

ἤδη γὰρ νῦν μοι τόδ' ἐεικοστὸν ἔτος ἐστὶν
ἐξ οὗ κεῖθεν ἔβην καὶ ἐμῆς ἀπελήλυθα πάτρης·
ἀλλ' οὔ πω σεῦ ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ' ἀσύφηλον·
ἀλλ' εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι
δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,
ἢ ἑκυρή - ἑκυρὸς δὲ πατὴρ ὡς ἤπιος αἰεί -,
ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες,
σῇ τ' ἀγανοφροσύνῃ καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσι.

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[133] Cf. the judgement of Taplin (1992) 101: "Some audiences may hear this as straight sarcastic hostility ... but others may detect her love despite herself for Paris. I find myself, like Helen herself perhaps, caught between hearing a wish for his death and a desire to have him alive"; see also Kirk (1985) *ad loc.*

τῷ σέ θ' ἅμα κλαίω καὶ ἐμ' ἄμμορον ἀχνυμένη κῆρ·
οὐ γάρ τίς μοι ἔτ' ἄλλος ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
ἤπιος οὐδὲ φίλος, πάντες δέ με πεφρίκασιν.
(*Iliad* 24.765-75)

Hector's death means that Priam alone of the Trojans (770) remains to provide her with friendship; everywhere else she meets with reproach (768-9) or revulsion (πεφρίκασιν, 775). Yet in *Heroides* 17 she shows that she did not enter into her relationship with Paris unaware of the prospect of this kind of calumny:

Ipse malo metus est; iam nunc confundor, et omnes
in nostris oculos vultibus esse reor.
nec reor hoc falso; sensi mala murmura vulgi,
et quasdam voces rettulit Aethra mihi.
(*Heroides* 17.147-50)

Non ita contemno volucris praeconia famae,
ut probis terras inpleat illa meis.
quid de me poterit Sparte, quid Achaia tota,
quid gentes Asiae, quid tua Troia loqui?
quid Priamus de me, Priami quid sentiet uxor,
totque tui fratres Dardanidesque nurus?
(*Heroides* 17.207-10)

For the *mali murmura vulgi* (17.149), we might compare not only Helen's lament of Hector, but also the passage in which she tries and fails to spot her brothers Castor and Pollux from the battlements of Troy:

δοιὼ δ' οὐ δύναμαι ἰδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν,
Κάστορά θ' ἱππόδαμον καὶ πὺξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα,
αὐτοκασιγνήτω, τώ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ.
ἦ οὐχ ἑσπέσθην Λακεδαίμονος ἐξ ἐρατεινῆς,
ἦ δεῦρω μεν ἕποντο νέεσσ' ἔνι ποντοπόροισι,
νῦν αὖτ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσι μάχην καταδύμεναι ἀνδρῶν,
αἴσχεα δειδιότες καὶ ὀνείδεα πόλλ' ἅ μοί ἐστιν.
(*Iliad* 3.236-42)

There is certainly a note of pathos in the fact that, unknown to Helen, her brothers are already dead, as Homer tells the reader at *Iliad* 3.243-4. However, our concern with this passage in relation to *Heroides* 17 would focus more closely on the reason why Helen suspects Castor and Pollux are not present: that is, their aversion to hearing the Achaean soldiers level coarse reproaches against their sister (241-2). Helen's fears here are scarcely borne out by the remainder of the poem: for although she never misses an opportunity to chastise herself in the poem, yet the only characters who

actually comment on her or her behaviour are the Trojan elders who see her passing by on her way to Priam:

> *οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς*
> *τοιῇδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν·*
> *αἰνῶς ἀθανάτῃσι θεῇς εἰς ὦπα ἔοικεν·*
> *ἀλλὰ καὶ ὣς τοίη περ ἐοῦσ' ἐν νηυσὶ νεέσθω,*
> *μηδ' ἡμῖν τεκέεσσί τ' ὀπίσσω πῆμα λίποιτο.*
>
> (*Iliad* 3.156-60)

Although they are rightly apprehensive of the evils Helen has brought in her train, it is clear that they do not feel resentful towards her or criticise her behaviour. Indeed, it is significant that the speech should begin with the words *οὐ νέμεσις*. The word *νεμεθαι* often appears in the context of Helen's self-reproaches,[134] yet these criticisms are never voiced by any characters save for Helen herself.

We must therefore be inclined to doubt the veracity of Helen's self-criticism and laments on her isolation. They are clearly not related to her condition at Troy as conveyed in the *Iliad*; in fact her pretensions are exposed by Aphrodite, who says to her:

> *μή μ' ἔρεθε, σχετλίη, μὴ χωσαμένη σε μεθείω,*
> *τὼς δέ σ' ἀπεχθήρω ὡς νῦν ἔκπαγλα φίλησα,*
> *μέσσῳ δ' ἀμφοτέρων μητίσομαι ἔχθεα λυγρὰ,*
> *Τρώων καὶ Δαναῶν, σὺ δέ κεν κακὸν οἶτον ὄληαι.*
>
> (*Iliad* 3.414-17)

Aphrodite reminds Helen that if she did not have her protection as her patron goddess, she soon would meet an unpleasant end; as it is, there is a clear implication that conditions are at present none too unfavourable to Helen. Perhaps there is an implication that she is following Ovid's advice in the *Ars Amatoria*:

> Sed neque te facilem iuveni promitte roganti
> nec tamen e duro quod petit ille dura.
>
> (*Ars Amatoria* 3.475-6)

The *praeceptor amoris* warns women here and at *Ars Amatoria* 3.579-610 that it is as well not to be *too* forward in offering oneself to men: Helen may therefore be taking steps to protect her reputation by affecting a smokescreen of shame and paranoia. Another outlet for this simulated prudishness is seen in Helen's repeated descriptions

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[134] See e.g. *Iliad* 3.410, 6.335, 6.351.

of herself as a *rustica* wife. The image of rusticity is often found in Latin love poetry to suggest a backwards and undesirable lover,[135] and is a particular favourite of Ovid in both the *Amores* and his amatory didactic.[136] The essence of the *rusticitas* imagery is a conception of the city as the hub of human life, fast-paced, cutting edge and liberal, while the slower-paced countryside is 'backwards' and excessively prudish in its morals and customs. There may here be a subtle literary joke at the expense of the *Aeneid* in appropriating Troy to Rome, not so much in its role as the ancestor of the city which now rules most of the known world, but rather as the metropolis which provides the stage against which lovers such as Ovid's erotic *persona* may sport: the erotic libertarianism of Paris and Helen predicates and reflects the libertine society of Roman lovers as portrayed in the *Ars Amatoria* and other Latin love elegy.

iv. Conclusion: an epistolary intertextuality

Studies such as those of Clader and Suzuki have foregrounded the paramount importance of literary self-awareness in the Homeric characterisation of Helen.[137] Similarly in *Heroides* 16 and 17 Helen's self-consciousness is reworked in terms of a particularly 'Ovidian' poetic self-consciousness: the Homeric Helen is reinterpreted in order that she might accommodate themes of elegiac love and exhibit the appropriate elegiac behaviour. The temporal 'paradox' by which Ovid's *Heroides* purport to situate themselves chronologically *anterior* to their poetic models opens up a model of reading through which we may interpret these elegiac intrusions into the world of Homeric epic in terms of an Ovidian poetic programme to appropriate and usurp epic on its own terms: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* yield their positions at the fountainhead of the Greco-Roman literary tradition to the *Heroides*, and as they do this they simultaneously cede their claim to poetic authority and 'originality'. No longer is elegy 'belated' or 'derivative', but rather by its links with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* it

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[135] E.g. Virgil *Ecl.*2.56; Tibullus 2.3.4; Propertius 2.5.25. For *rusticus* with a negative tone, but in a non-amatory context, cf. Catullus 54.2; Virgil *Ecl.*3.84; Horace *Sat.* 1.3.31, *Ep.*1.2.42, 1.7.83, 2.2.39, *Ars* 213; Propertius 4.1.12.

[136] E.g. *Amores* 1.8.44, 2.4.13, 2.4.19, 2.8.3, 2.16.35, 3.1.43, 3.4.37, 3.6.88, 3.10.18; *Ars* 1.607, 1.672, 2.184, 2.264, 2.369, 2.566, 3.128, 3.305; *Remedia* 189, 329, 330. Myerowitz (1985) 41-72 discusses the use of *rusticitas* in the *Ars* in terms of *cultus*, postulating that Ovid contrasts primitive 'rusticity', raw and unadulterated, with 'culture', which is modern, sophisticated, and subject to restraint and self-control. See also Leach (1964) 142-54; Ramage (1973) 89-98, esp. 97-8 on *Heroides* 16 and 17; Watson (1982) 237-44.

[137] See Clader (1976) 6-12, 33-5; Suzuki (1989) 67-70.

highlights its allegiance with the core values and the canonical works of the ancient literary tradition.

It is the epistolary form, which encapsulates one single moment in time, yet accommodates references to both future (through foreshadowing) and past (through narrative), that allows Ovid to explore the gaps in the chronology of myth and literary tradition. He manipulates the Homeric material and imagery and reformats it within the context of the elegiac epistolary form. Thus the epistle not only succeeds in effecting a temporal consummation between sender and recipient, between wooer and wooed; but also in intertextual terms it works to efface the temporal and linguistic barriers between Ovid and Homer, effecting a poetic communion between the Roman author and his archaic model.

Belatedness: Metamorphosis and the *Iliad*

i.Innovation made old: epic and the traditional past

> In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
> corpora: di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
> adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
> ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.
> (*Metamorphoses* 1.1-4)

The first four words of the *Metamorphoses*, *in nova fert animus*, form a separate syntactical unit comprehensible, on a first reading, independently of the remainder of the sentence.[138] As is typical of an epic prologue, the main weight of programmatic emphasis falls at the beginning of the first verse; thus the first words of the poem, *in nova*, convey the sense that the author is being driven to write on entirely *new* topics. Hence the phrase *in nova fert animus*, which holds the provisional meaning "My mind carries me on to new things", suggests a clear break with the past and implies that what follows will be an entirely self-motivated and original poem proceeding down hitherto unexplored literary avenues. In short, these words serve to enact Ovid's version of epic poetry's (entirely characteristic) claim to uniqueness, a bold declaration of artistic autonomy and a statement of intent to carve out an independent niche in the epic tradition.

Yet the promise of novelty broadcast at the outset is somewhat at odds with the remainder of this brief proem, since the provisional meaning conveyed by these four words is at once undermined by their reconfiguration within a longer sentence of rather more ambiguous import. As Stephen Wheeler relates, once one encounters the fifth word of the poem, *mutatas*, all one's expectations as to the meaning of the first four words are destabilised; the term, a perfect passive participle expressing the concept of 'transformation', is also the pivot upon which the *meaning* of the sentence transforms, from "My mind carries me on to new things" to "My mind moves me to tell of forms changed into new bodies".[139] The emphasis thus shifts from *nova* to the *mutatas formas*; the reader's attention is diverted away from the 'new bodies' and the concept of innovation, and towards the 'changed forms' which provide the initial

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[138] See especially Kenney (1976) 46-7; Wheeler (1999) 8-13.
[139] See Wheeler (1999) 11-13.

basis from which the new metamorphosed bodies are able to develop. This syntactical change is the very first 'metamorphosis' of the *Metamorphoses*; and it mirrors the way the figure of metamorphosis itself operates within the poem, not by producing entirely new bodies *ex nihilo*, but by extrapolating and exaggerating qualities already present within the old, so that the changed body exhibits in physical form metaphorical or psychological qualities of the old being.[140] Hence the four words *in nova fert animus* which initially enact the strongest possible claim to *innovation* are suddenly withdrawn and redeployed within a proclamation which highlights the *derivative* nature of all new bodies, of their reliance upon *mutatas* (and presumably therefore '*veteres*') *formas*. In this way emphasis is laid not so much upon the *nova corpora*, the *new* bodies, as on the *mutatas formas*, the *old* shapes which the 'new bodies' formerly occupied: Ovid's 'innovative' poetic paradigm shows itself to contain a strong streak of 'conservatism'.

And indeed, just as the *nova corpora* produced by metamorphosis are not wholly 'new', but in fact are produced out of pre-existent *formae*, so Ovid's assertion of poetic innovation here implicitly rests on an intense, tightly organised and all but impenetrable network of allusions and appropriations of earlier literature, a claim to 'novelty' which is seemingly undercut by its heavy dependence on material which has already been written. Consider in particular the manner in which Ovid negotiates the shift from elegiac couplets, the metre of all his previous poetic publications, to continuous hexameter verse. Up to the main caesura on line two the verse runs as follows:

> Īn nŏvă / fĕrt ănĭ/mūs mūt/ātās / dīcĕrĕ / fōrmās
> cōrpŏră: / dī, cōe/ptīs ...

So far the metre conforms to the conventional patterns of an elegiac couplet: we begin with a line of hexameter verse, which is followed by two and a half dactylic feet and a strong sense break, the hemiepes which forms the first half of a pentameter line. At this point, the listener whose ear is accustomed to the elegiac couplets of Ovid's earlier work will be anticipating a further hemiepes of two and a half feet to conclude

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[140] The model of such a metamorphosis is the transformation of the savage Lycaon (or "Wolf-Man") into a wolf (*Metamorphoses* 1.232-9): see Barkan (1986) 24-7 and section iv below.

the line according to the strict requirements of the pentameter; and he will expect that, true to the practices of the elegists, the remainder of the line will complete the sentence begun by *di, coeptis*, so that the couplet will consist of a self-contained unit of meaning.[141] Yet as the line continues, both metre and sense are broken:

...(nām / vōs mūt/āstĭs ĕt / īllă)

Suddenly Ovid turns away to address the gods in a brief aside, a parenthesis which forces the completion of the sentence begun by *di, coeptis* forward to the beginning of the third line ("*adspirate meis*"). This enjambment, which would be absolute anathema to an elegiac poet, serves to highlight the metrical transformation being enacted here. As Stephen Heyworth points out, the moment Ovid addresses the gods (*vōs*, at the beginning of the fourth foot) the anticipated metrical pattern (– ⏑ ⏑ / – ⏑ ⏑ / –) is broken: and therefore, at the very moment the change in metre and genre is made manifest, the responsibility of the *gods* for this transformation is forcefully emphasised.[142] The conceit of a metrical change at the start of a poem which is provoked by a divine being is a quite familiar phenomenon to the reader of Ovid; for it appears at the outset of his very first published work, the *Amores*:[143]

> Arma gravi numero violentiaque bella parabam
> edere, materia conveniente modis.
> par erat inferior versus; risisse Cupido
> dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.
> (*Amores* 1.1.1-4)

Just as at *Metamorphoses* 1.2 the gods intervene to change Ovid's poetry into the form of continuous hexameters, so at *Amores* 1.1.4 Cupid snatches away one foot of his verse in order to convert a six-foot hexameter into a five-foot pentameter line. We are therefore encouraged to see a connection, through the themes of metrical change and divine intervention, between the openings of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Amores*. In this way, the affirmation of 'novelty' is at once undercut by the metrical and

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[141] See Raven (1965) 104 for this characteristic of the elegiac couplet.
[142] See Heyworth (1995) 75. The reading of *illa* for the MSS *illas*, as endorsed by Kenney (1976) 46-50 and Kovacs (1987) 458-63, further underscores the role of the gods in perpetrating this transformation: it is the very 'beginnings' of his poem that the gods are credited with changing.

conceptual links with the programmatic preface of Ovid's very first poetic publication. Indeed, the emphasis *Metamorphoses* 1.1-4 lays on undercutting claims of *primacy* by a demonstration of *derivativeness* highlights the fact that even *Amores* 1.1, for all that it heads Ovid's poetic corpus, defines itself by relation to the poem he first *intended* to write (*arma gravi numero violentiaque bella parabam edere*) before he fell under the influence of Cupid.[144] Hence even at the very beginning of his career, Ovid was already drawing attention to his 'epigonal' status: his very first published work presents itself as belated, already secondary, a 'successor' or 'substitute' for some earlier projected opus, and the pervasive influence of this derivativeness prevents even the *Metamorphoses* from breaking out of its spell.

So if Ovid's claim to 'primacy' is brought into dispute as early as the second line of the poem, then this invites a rather more jaundiced appraisal of his prayer that his poem be brought down *prima...ab origine mundi ad mea...tempora* (3-4). As he requests the gods to lead his poem through the whole scope of human history, from Creation to the present day, Ovid appears at first to be deploying the characteristic epic claim of comprehensiveness of subject matter, its right to provide the *first* and the *last* word on any and all issues. Yet the phrase *mea ... tempora* may suggest an alternative meaning more in tune with derivative allusiveness than the supposed insular self-confidence of epic. According to Alessandro Barchiesi, the phrase *mea tempora* can also be taken to refer to the opening words of Ovid's poem on the Roman calendar, the *Fasti*: ***Tempora** cum causis Latium digesta per annum* (*Fasti* 1.1).[145] Thus when Ovid requests the gods to bring the poem down as far as *mea tempora*, he both expresses a desire that the poem should come down as far as his own times, comprehensively encompassing all of history, and simultaneously conveys the

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[143] Not to mention the broader *topos* of divine intervention to change or redirect a poetic project: cf. particularly Callimachus *Aetia* fr.1 Pfeiffer 21-8 (generally regarded as the archetype); Virgil, *Eclogue* 6.3-5. See McKeown (1989) 7-11.

[144] Cf. *Amores* 2.1.11-18, another prefatory poem, where Ovid describes how he began to compose a gigantomachy, only to discover that the themes and subjects were gradually absorbed into the discourse of love elegy. The first word, *arma*, may also be taken as an allusion to the *arma virumque* of Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.1. Note also that the epigram to *Amores* 1 implies that the collection itself once existed in a more expansive form (*qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli, tres sumus*): whether or not there actually existed a 'first edition' of the *Amores* in five books, it is intriguing in the context of my argument that Ovid should choose to draw attention to a *prior* work as a means of introducing his 'first' collection of poems. See Conte (1986) 84-7; McKeown (1989) 1-6; Barchiesi (2001) 159-61.

contrary impression that the *Metamorphoses* is intended as no more than a 'prequel' to his own *Fasti*, no longer an independent work of literature, but limited to the role of providing an introduction to *another* poem, Ovid's work on the Roman calendar. The 'endpoint', too, is not unequivocally an *ending*, but the *beginning* of another literary text.[146]

Moreover, at the other end of the chronological scale, Ovid's announcement of his starting point (*prima...ab origine mundi*), far from reinforcing the now somewhat discredited claim to originality made in the first line, in fact echoes closely Lucretius' philosophical description of the origins of the earth and air (*sed pariter **prima concepta ab origine mundi**, DRN* 5.548), thus suggesting that the subsequent cosmogony (*Metamorphoses* 1.5-89) owes much to its Lucretian equivalent.[147] Lucretius lays an implicit claim to originality through the tautologous expression *prima ab origine* (a 'first origin'); Ovid's cosmogony, which claims to be a *prima origo* yet when read alongside its Lucretian model is quite evidently *secunda*, takes the issue one step further by suggesting the 'secondariness' which is inherent in any conventional claim to 'primacy'.[148]

Further possible models for the poem are suggested by the phrase *perpetuum deducite...carmen* (4), surely one of the most thoroughly debated expressions in the entire *Metamorphoses*. Stephen Wheeler understands *perpetuum carmen* to refer to the theme of 'universal history' and specifically to put the reader in mind of the *Annales* of Ennius, a 'continuous poem' on Latin history that ran from the foundation of the city to the poet's own day.[149] Yet the phrase also recalls Callimachus' ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκές (*Aetia* fr.1.3), the "single continuous poem" which he refuses to write:

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[145] See Barchiesi (1991) 6, 19n13, referring to the synecdoche whereby a literary work can be referred to by its opening word or line: "Like *arma* and *Cynthia*, *tempora* is not only a metonymy for the whole work, but also a representation of it". See also Hinds (1987b) 21; Wheeler (1999) 24-5.

[146] See Barchiesi (1997a) 188: not only for the relationship of the end of the *Metamorphoses* to the start of the *Fasti*, but also for an analysis of the way strategies of 'closure' in general are undermined throughout *Metamorphoses* 15. Cf. also Hardie (1993) 13, Hardie (1997) 139-46.

[147] The connection is noted by Myers (1994) 6 and Wheeler (1999) 20-1, who both read the allusion as programmatic for the philosophical direction taken by the poem; cf. also Wheeler (1999) 30-1. Apart from Lucretius, other prominent models for the cosmology include Virgil, *Eclogue* 6.31-5 (the 'Song of Silenus') and Homer, *Iliad* 18.483-608 (the 'Shield of Achilles'): see Helzle (1993) 123-34 and Wheeler (1995) 95-121 respectively.

[148] Cf. Sharrock (1994) 213; and for another angle on the issue Hinds (1998) 52-63.

Callimachus prefers to compose λεπταλέῃν verse (*Aetia* fr.1.24), famously translated by Virgil as *carmen deductum* (*Eclogue* 6.4). Ovid's prayer to the gods, *deducite carmen*, has been read by many as an explicit reference to the poetic programmes expounded by the Virgilian and Callimachean passages,[150] and indeed the paradoxical nature of the invocation, "please lead down (i.e. 'in Callimachean fashion') a continuous (i.e. 'un-Callimachean') poem", has for a long time provoked dissension between those who argue that Ovid's composition of epic verse entails an abandonment of the poetic principles of Callimachus, and those who believe that the poem in actual fact endorses a less large-scale version of epic more in tune with the Callimachean 'ideal poem'.[151] Indeed, the very *deductum carmen* which Virgil narrates in *Eclogue* 6, the 'Song of Silenus', is so similar in tone to the *Metamorphoses* as a whole – consisting of a cosmogonical prologue, followed by a disjointed series of mythological tableaux – that some have been led to postulate, either that the *Metamorphoses* is envisioned as a *direct* rendition of that very narrative which Virgil related *indirectly* through his character Silenus, or more broadly that it expresses an actualisation of the Alexandrian *Dichtungsideal*, the 'model poem' consisting of a cosmogony followed by a rich and varied catalogue of mythological narratives.[152]

In brief, modern scholarship has teased out so many echoes of and references to earlier works in this brief declaration of poetic intent that, even if we are far from

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[149] See Wheeler (1999) 22-4; cf. Hofmann (1985) 223-6 and Hardie (1993) 13, 106 on the links between Ovid and Ennius.

[150] See Knox (1986) 11-12; Helzle (1993) 123-5. In addition, the motif of 'divine epiphany' is a common element in programmatic passages, as e.g. Theocritus 7, Callimachus *Aetia* fr.1.21-5, Virgil *Eclogue* 6.3-5 and Ovid *Amores* 1.1.1 as well as *Metamorphoses* 1.2 above. See further Williams (1971) 137-45; Cameron (1995) 421-2.

[151] This was perhaps one of the biggest issues in *Metamorphoses* interpretation of the last thirty years, though the question of generic affiliation is almost a century old: cf. Heinze (1919=1960), Kroll (1924) 202-24, and Crump (1931) 205-16. Due (1974) 95 and Kenney (1976) 51-2, followed by Knox (1986) 9-23 draw out and emphasise the Alexandrian poetic ideology they claim is implicit in the term *deducite*; Cameron (1995) 328-31 denies that Callimachus' use of the word shows any polemical stance vis-à-vis epic poetry; while Hinds (1987a), followed in different ways by Farrell (1992) and Myers (1994), demonstrates how the tension between 'Alexandrian' and 'epic' elements is vital to the dynamic of the poem. Harrison (2002) 87-9 concisely summarises the arguments. The question has now to some extent been appropriated and eclipsed by studies on intertextuality: e.g. Hinds (1998) 123-44 posits a 'do-it-yourself' model of generic tradition within which each poet 'creates' a genre out of his own preferred models. (See also Edmunds [2001] 148-50.) Thus my own stance takes Ovid's 'epic' qualities as a given and works back from the *Metamorphoses* to examine the poem's re-creation of Homeric epic, rather than exploring how the poem seeks to fit itself into an already reified and inflexible generic category.

[152] Helzle (1993) 123-6 argues for the former proposition; Knox (1986) 9-13 for the latter.

perceiving any clear consensus on the programmatic direction of these allusions, we may at any rate sense that the impact of the initial declaration of originality, *in nova fert animus*, is somewhat diminished by the subsequent reliance on allusive and conventional formulations. Try though he might to introduce fresh themes and new heroes to the epic tradition, yet time and again Ovid finds himself drawn back towards the old, traditional stories. His claim to innovation is, if not quite an outright deceit, certainly an enabling fiction – with the emphasis squarely on the 'fiction' – of his epic narrative. Responding to the brevity of the proem, Kenney suggests that "we should expect that not a word will be wasted".[153] This is true in one respect: every syllable is carefully weighed, every phrase is chosen with an eye on its programmatic implications, and every word draws deeply on the resources of an extensive literary heritage. Yet the proem's very allusiveness means that in another respect *every* word is wasted: there is nothing in Ovid we cannot find elsewhere, and every claim to literary 'originality' the poem puts forward has been advanced before in one form or another. Despite the initial brash optimism of his claims to poetic novelty, he ends up relapsing tamely into the language and conventions of an already-present literary tradition.

Ovid's attempts to come to terms with his literary heritage by confronting the tension between 'repetition' and 'innovation' have an analogue in a recent reading of an epic poem. In *Epic and Empire*, David Quint examines the mode of 'repetition' with respect to the *Aeneid*:[154] according to his interpretation, the plot of Virgil's poem is organised around the issue of encountering and coming to terms with a powerful and repressive past. Quint posits two types of repetition which occur in the poem, the first, in *Aeneid* 1-6, involving the Trojans' passive and obsessive replication of the defeats and losses they have suffered the past, and the second, in *Aeneid* 7-12, encompassing the series of confrontations by which they finally succeed in overcoming the burdens of their earlier reverses, establishing a *telos* which gives meaning to their travails in the establishment of a new nation in Italy.[155] Hence he sees epic repetition as teleologically organised structure: a 'strong' series of repetitions establishes a master-

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[153] Kenney (1976) 46.
[154] Quint (1994).
[155] See Quint (1994) 50-96; and cf. Kennedy (1997) 145-55.

term from which the rest of the narrative takes its bearings and obtains meaning.[156] Quint's model is inherently confrontational, presenting 'repetition' as the strategy by which the 'past' is put into contention with the 'present', and it adapts its antipathetical tendencies well to the ideological and political connotations of a book titled *Epic and Empire*:

> If, in the first half of the poem, the Trojans actively sought to return to versions of Troy and consequently fell into a traumatic, obstructing repetition of their past history as *losers*, here, in the second half, ...the Iliadic war in Italy allows them to reexperience that past as *winners* and to move forward to found the future Rome, history's big *winner*.[157]

The terminology of 'winners' and 'losers' (emphasised in the above quote) to describe the agents of respective forms of repetition is a prominent feature of Quint's rhetoric and emphasises the antagonistic nature of his reading of epic: the 'winners' of narrative, who succeed in mastering the past, are identified with the 'winners' of history (in this instance, Augustan Rome), those who succeed in framing themselves and their achievements as the ideological "end of history". His analysis therefore foregrounds the agonistic issue inherent in repetition by applying it to an ideological context, a field in which the ramifications of conflict are immediately apparent and far-reaching and in which differences between contesting parties are highlighted in stark contrast. But this same mode of analysis which Quint applies to the level of plot may also be applied metapoetically to the act of epic composition: that is, just as an epic *hero* deploys and reiterates historical motifs so as to present himself as the *telos* of his version of history, so also the epic *poet* reorganises and reiterates traditional themes from the vantage-point of his poem and shows that his version of the past is the acme of the versions of his predecessors, the 'last word' which retrospectively defines and gives order to the whole epic tradition. By privileging the issue of political conflict, Quint's narrative of literary history foregrounds issues which are as relevant to the relationships between epic poets as they are to the relationships between their characters.[158] Granted, perhaps, that battlefields yield more blood, more

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[156] His argument here is developed from Brooks (1984) 99-100: "An event gains meaning by its repetition, which is both the recall of an earlier moment and a variation of it: the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement."

[157] Quint (1994) 66-7.

[158] This is a move which Quint himself never makes. Despite the fact that his interpretive practices are rooted in psychoanalytical approaches, including Brooks (1984) and Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the*

human suffering and give rise to greater and more powerful authority than can ever be found in a library, yet the issues involved are to a large extent identical: the struggle to maintain a personal identity against the intrusions of outsiders, and the right actively to write and belong to the histories, rather than be passively written into the narrative at one's conqueror's pleasure. Accordingly, just as in geopolitical terms the Trojan remnant, overthrown by the Greeks, must (partly by reprising the role of 'winners' played by their conquerors[159]) supplant the indigenous Italians in turn in order to win a space to reassert its own identity and authority, so in literary terms the author of epic, be he Ovid, Virgil, or indeed Homer himself, must work as much within as against the literary tradition in order to assert his 'newness'; indeed, on these terms, the very idea of 'newness' is a paradox, for an 'innovative' epic project, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* sets itself up to be, can only carve out a space for itself by meeting and confronting earlier works and validating itself by repeating and surpassing their own claims to precedence.

On this reading, epic is a genre of confrontation at every level, whether it involves ethnic conflict between Greeks and Trojans, Trojans and Italians, Romans and Carthaginians; or personal feuds between the likes of Agamemnon and Achilles, or Odysseus and the Suitors, or Aeneas and Turnus; or even the ritual ceremony of the heroic games where the contest is for prizes and accolades rather than an outright issue of life and death. And if the poetic tradition is organised around the master-term of 'confrontation', then literature is a game of winners and losers, with epic poets playing for the highest stakes of all. It is therefore an important issue to decide where to impose the teleology of literary histories: whose claim to 'primariness' will be accepted, which 'repetition' should we privilege as the master-term of the series and the reference point for interpretations of the poetic tradition?

The predominant response, at least in the interpretation of Ovid, appears to be the subordination of the *Metamorphoses* to its chronologically prior precursors. Ovidian

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Pleasure Principle, he works instead to occlude the individual poet's presence behind the master-narratives of ideology and politics. Cf. Quint (1994) 52: "But the political context of Virgil's poem should make us aware that its psychological depth may already be doing ideological work: it universalises the particular, and, in what is one of ideology's central operations, it makes a given political and social arrangement appear to be *the* given, as if it were inevitable and somehow predetermined."

intertextuality is most commonly viewed, even by his most sympathetic exegetes, as a 'weak' iteration of his predecessor's terms: the *Aeneid* in particular, and the motifs of Virgil and Homer in general, are allowed to set the terms of debate. For example, Galinsky contends that "the *Metamorphoses* cannot be properly understood without the realisation that they were meant to be Ovid's answer to Virgil's *Aeneid*," and follows up this claim with an analysis of how Ovid reacts to Virgilian profundity with a contrary emphasis on the particularly *narrative* qualities of myth.[160] Solodow adopts a similar perspective: "Virgil offers more than a convenient text for bringing out the distinctive features of Ovid...[Ovid], moreover, reveals a steady, conscious engagement with the language and the episodes of his predecessor, as well as with the view of the world which they presuppose."[161] In the same tradition, Philip Hardie's *Epic Successors of Virgil* gestures towards Quint's *Epic and Empire* in its analysis of repetition of the *Aeneid* as the master term for interpretations of imperial epic.[162] Hardie organises his discussion around the figure of Virgil as the poetic 'father' for the following generation of epicists and explores the ways in which his successors reiterate and develop motifs present in the *Aeneid.* Although Hardie claims in his introduction that "[t]he successors to Virgil...constructed a space for themselves through a 'creative imitation' that exploited the energies and tensions called up by not finally expanded or resolved in the *Aeneid*",[163] his exegetical technique of first exploring the presence of a motif in the *Aeneid,* then examining its progression through Ovid, Lucan, and the Flavian epicists, implicitly anchors the debate around the patriarch of the tradition, Virgil. Hardie's analysis therefore reflects in its discussion of Latin epic the handicap of coming 'last' upon a tradition: 'belatedness' is the ineluctable master-term for a poetic successor, who is constricted by his more powerful precursors, in this case Virgil and Homer. 'Teleology' is paradoxically linked with 'primacy': whoever comes first is assumed to exert an overbearing control over the terms of the tradition, leaving latecomers to compose themselves as best they may within the limited space their precursors allow.

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[159] See Anderson (1957) 17-30; Quint (1994) 65-74.
[160] Galinsky (1975) 15; 15-25.
[161] Solodow (1988) 4.
[162] See Hardie (1993) 1-18.
[163] Hardie (1993) xi.

In line with such an approach, Ovid seems to acknowledge the power of the tradition in shaping his poem, and simultaneously expresses his own 'impotence' with respect to his predecessors' works. 'Belatedness' intrudes at every level of the *Metamorphoses*, affecting the characters' performance of their traditional roles just as much as it affects the poet's execution of his art. Just as it is impossible for the poet to write without the impetus of a tradition whose poetic paradigms he can inflect, so it is impossible for his characters to act, to perform deeds which have 'meaning', without the deeds having been 'performed' before: everything in epic discourse is always and already 'after' itself. As Peter Brooks states, "[n]arrative...must ever present itself as a repetition of events that have already happened."[164] Consider the very first individual metamorphosis of the poem, that of Lycaon, from man into wolf. His tale is introduced as follows, as Jupiter watches the world from heaven and reflects on the assorted depravities of mankind:

> Quae pater ut summa vidit Saturnius arce,
> ingemit et facto nondum vulgata recenti
> foeda Lycaoniae referens convivia mensae
> ingentes animo et dignas Iove concipit iras
> conciliumque vocat: tenuit mora nulla vocatos.
> (*Metamorphoses* 1.163-7)

The phrase *nondum vulgata* on line 164 forms part of a by now familiar pattern, of innovation modulated by the refrain of 'belatedness'. It is of course appropriate for Ovid to begin his epic of bodies changed into ***nova corpora*** with an entirely *new* (*nondum vulgata*) tale. But why should it be that this tale is introduced and narrated, not in full live action, but through edited highlights presented by an internal character? The fact that this is an original story, one which has not yet been told, is offset by the fact that it has already taken place: rather than hear this 'new' story related first hand as it happens, we will hear the events *narrated* at second hand by Jupiter. Moreover the poet's tardiness stands in ironic contrast to the behaviour of the delegates to the divine council, who allow *mora nulla* to hold them back (167). Therefore the manner of the tale's presentation – depicting the *very first* metamorphosis of the poem in a *retrospective* narrative of the past, prompted by Jupiter's recall (*referens*, 165) of a past incident – reminds us of Ovid's 'belatedness'

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[164] Brooks (1984) 99.

with respect to the literary tradition: just as here he 'repeats' word-for-word the tale as narrated by Jupiter, so throughout the poem his plots and narratives are heavily dependent on the 'repetition' of the tales of his poetic precursors. Further examples of 'belatedness' evoked through the introduction of an internal narrator might include *Metamorphoses* 4.772-86, where Perseus relates briefly and disinterestedly in *oratio obliqua* his battle with Medusa and acquisition of the Gorgon's head; *Metamorphoses* 7.433-50, where Theseus enters into the poem and is at once serenaded by a chorus of inebriated Athenians extolling his already accomplished heroic feats, his victory over the Cretan bull and his clearing of the road between Troezen and Athens; and *Metamorphoses* 15.493-546, where Hippolytus/Virbius narrates the tale (already familiar from Euripides) of his own death and rebirth.[165] Besides 'belatedness' evoked through the technique of retrospective narrative, the 'lateness' may often be more emphatically literary, as Ovid draws upon a tale familiar from his predecessors in the narration of an ostensibly unrelated myth: for example, Philip Hardie has interpreted the whole of the Theban narrative (*Metamorphoses* 3.1-4.603) as an 'anti-*Aeneid*' on account of its treatment of the themes of foundation familiar from Virgil's epic;[166] and within this very episode Cadmus' adventures with the serpent's teeth and the sown men (*Metamorphoses* 3.50-130) offers a reprise of one of Jason's Argonautic experiences (cf. Apollonius *Argonautica* 3.1176-90, 1326-1407).[167] Indeed, there are several passages which offer tangential developments of stories already familiar from Homer, which fall out of the scope of the present discussion but remain worthy of note: for example, the battle between Perseus and Phineus (*Metamorphoses* 5.1-235) reworks elements of Odysseus' battle with the suitors at *Odyssey* 21, while the tale of the entertainments of Philemon and Baucis (*Metamorphoses* 8.618-724) alludes to the simple but wholesome hospitality Eumaeus shows to the disguised Odysseus (*Odyssey* 14-17).

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[165] Wheeler (1999) 162-4 notes the high proportion of tales narrated by the poem's characters, and *ibid.* 207-10 catalogues all the stories told by internal narrators. See also the discussions of fictional narrators in the poem at Nagle (1988) 23-39 and Barchiesi (2002) 182-5.

[166] See Hardie (1990) 224-35.

[167] Similarly Mack (1988) 136-41 describes how how the story of Theseus (touched on at various points between books 7 and 9) is 'told' without actually being *narrated*, except in fragments which focus on the hero performing a trivial action and depart before he does anything 'heroic'. Note also that analyses such as those of Ludwig (1965), Otis (1970) or Coleman (1971) 461-77, which seek (and 'find') unity in the coherence of various thematic clusters spread throughout the poem, shed an oblique light on Ovid's ability to 'retell' the same story, be it a 'Divine Comedy' or a 'Vengeance of the Gods', from a variety of perspectives and through a range of narrative techniques.

Yet although 'belatedness' ought to be an all but insurmountable handicap to Ovid's epic aspirations, it seems that he treats his status as 'latecomer' with a certain amount of aplomb: for he demonstrates through his handling of the traditional material that without 'belatedness' it would not be possible to narrate at all. This is apparent in his handling of the very first subject treated by the poem, the original and pre-existent Chaos:

> Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
> unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
> quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles
> nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
> non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.
> nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan,
> nec nova crescendo reparabat cornua Phoebe,
> nec circumfuso pendebat in aere Tellus
> ponderibus librata suis, nec bracchia longo
> margine terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite;
> utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer,
> sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,
> lucis egens aer; nulli sua forma manebat.
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 1.5-17)

Here (***ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum***) we have a topic which falls outside any conceivable chronological range and which seems at first to offer an unclaimed space in which the poet may exercise true originality and innovation. Yet Ovid spurns the opportunity, lapsing instead into a rhetoric of natural science heavily dependent on such poetic cosmologists as Lucretius and Apollonius. The manner in which he describes the as yet non-existent cosmos in terms of metonyms (Titan, line 10; Phoebe, line 11; Tellus, line 12; and Amphitrite, line 14, for the sun, moon, earth and sea respectively), a recurrent trope in Latin poetry,[168] is also significant: the *absence* of Titan, Phoebe, Tellus and Amphitrite implies that the universe before Creation is a cosmos which is actively *hostile* to the presence of the gods of mythology, a world which exists in absolute denial of the whole Graeco-Roman tradition of narrative poetry. Such an impression of a world of antithesis, which is defined only in terms of what it *cannot* contain, is reinforced by the abundance of negatives throughout the passage: indeed, each of lines 8 to 12 begins with a negative

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[168] Cf. 'Titan' for the sun, Virgil *Aeneid* 4.119; 'Diana' (the Roman *Phoebe*) for the moon, *Metamorphoses* 15.196; 'Tellus' for the earth, Propertius 1.19.16 & Virgil *Aeneid* 4.166; and 'Amphitrite' for the sea, Catullus 64.11.

expression (*nec...non...nullus...nec...nec*), which emphatically expresses the difficulties inherent in making any sort of positive portrayal of a state of being which is, quite literally, *indescribable*.[169] Alongside *instabilis tellus* and *innabilis unda* (16) one is almost tempted to add, *innarrabilis fabula*: for if epic discourse is built around the repetition and reconstitution of one's precursors, then how can one possibly construct an epic narrative in a place where there is absolutely *nothing* to repeat?

What lies *outside* epic discourse, then, is Chaos: when Ovid tries to speak of this world which is not a world, his very language fails him. He can find *no way* adequately to describe a world *outside* of the ambit of the tradition, save by defining it in terms of its opposites *within* the tradition: not a world amenable to the Titans, Phoebes, Telluses and Amphitrites of mythological narratives, nor a world in which Apollonius or Lucretius or Virgil could compose their poetic cosmogonies. The very act of discovering and describing antitheses is itself a mode of repetition, and assimilates a world which was previously chaotic and unnarratable to the confines of epic discourse: the demiurge's act of creation which organises and arranges the elements to give meaning and structure to the world (*Metamorphoses* 1.21-31) parallels the poet's act of epic composition, marshalling and organising his sources in order to 'create' a past for his poem and present himself in the light of his literary heritage. Ovid demonstrates that his poetry is incapable of operating *outside* the realms of the 'traditional'; it is an inherently 'intertextual' discourse, relying on importing and transforming meanings appropriated from earlier writers, and Midas-style it glorifies everything it touches with the lustre of the epic mode. He can do nothing, narrate nothing, recount nothing that has not already in some way been touched by a predecessor. If Ovid's tales draw time and again on the themes and legends favoured by his predecessors, this shows that 'belatedness' is neither hindrance nor handicap to Ovid's epic aesthetic: it is the very lifeblood of his poem, for it is only through coming 'late' on tales that his tales can tap such extensive resources of significance. 'Belatedness' therefore functions on a metaliterary level as

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[169] Cf. Ovid's depiction of the Golden Age (*Metamorphoses* 1.89-112): here too a string of negatives is deployed to describe the period primarily in terms of what it does *not* offer, and what it doesn't offer seems, in the main, to be any narrative prospects (what can an age which lacks travel, and warfare, and agriculture, contribute to the epic tradition?). It is interesting to contrast Ovid's narrative of the Myth of Ages with narratives of the 'Golden' and 'Silver' ages of Latin verse: to Ovid, the Golden Age is an

the enabling factor behind epic narrative: Ovid can only write poetry because he is always 'too late'. It is repetition itself, reiteration of the already-written epic tradition, which gives his poem meaning.[170]

My intention in this chapter, therefore, is to examine the way the *Metamorphoses*, working alongside the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, moderates the relationship between Ovid and Homer in the light of the master-term of 'belatedness', both in terms of the two poets' stance on 'traditional' material adapted from literary histories and mythologies, and in terms of how the characters themselves observe their position at the 'end' of literary history and valorise themselves through repetition and mastery of the literary 'past'. One limited aspect of this approach would incorporate a consideration of how Ovid valorises his own poem by incorporating 'repetitions' (on various levels) of the perceived grandsire and precursor of the epic tradition, Homer: as Otto Due remarks of the *Metamorphoses*, "Homer would be a model of reading not only in cases of close imitation or special allusions but also in a varying degree throughout the whole poem, simply because the *Metamorphoses* was an epic poem and Homer was *the* epic poet."[171] However, I also wish to escape from the chronocentric and patriarchal approach which automatically privileges Homer by virtue merely of his temporal priority, granting him, by virtue of sheer longevity, a handicap on such a scale as permanently to debilitate all potential challengers.[172] I would hope to see the confrontation between Homer and Ovid as a meeting in the best tradition of the epic duel, an encounter which enriches the κλέος of each combatant alike: to consider the effects of this encounter as much on Homer as on Ovid, and to consider how Homer, too, copes with his and his characters' 'belatedness', which he himself may deploy as both disabler and enabler of heroic discourse, a recurrent interrogation and manifestation of his own claim to epic supremacy.

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unbearably tedious period of negativity and stasis, and it is only *after* the 'fall' that his poem really begins to exhibit verve and pace!

[170] A point seemingly acknowledged by Bloom (1973) 30, though he confines its import to the post-Renaissance period: "The history of fruitful poetic influence...is a history of anxiety and self-serving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism *without which modern poetry as such could not exist*" (my emphasis).

[171] Due (1974) 23. Where such an approach is taken, Ovid is generally found wanting: see the sources cited in note 174 below.

[172] For recent analogues to this approach in Ovidian scholarship cf. Hinds (1998) 99-122 and Smith (1997), both of whom have produced comparative readings of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Aeneid* which question the priority typically accorded the Vergilian version.

ii. Belated Iliads: *the Fall of Troy*

As the course of his poem proceeds closer and closer to his own day, Ovid begins to encroach upon the themes of the narratives of the canonical ancient epicists, Homer and Virgil. The primacy of Homer and Virgil is taken for granted throughout this section of the *Metamorphoses*, as from the middle of book 11 onwards critics seem to sense a gradual decline in the quality of the poem. Fränkel rues his supposed decision to let "entertaining caprice give way to an ambition for grandeur", while Wilkinson's aesthetic judgement is that "[t]he first eleven books are the best, when Ovid's fancy is freer. As soon as he begins to aspire to epic seriousness, he comes into competition with poets who surpass him in this vein".[173] Yet Ovid takes care, here as throughout the poem, not to adhere too closely to the plots and themes of his predecessors.[174] Neither his '*Iliad*' (the Trojan War passages, *Metamorphoses* 12.1-13.622) nor his '*Odyssey*'[175] (*Metamorphoses* 13.623-14.608) ever confronts and re-presents a familiar Homeric passage detail for detail: we see no quarrel of the Greek leaders, no confrontation between Hector and Achilles, no Odysseus outwitting the Cyclops or overmastering the unruly Suitors. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that we do not see these events represented *directly*. We have become accustomed through the preceding books of the poem to seeing canonical events of ancient myth portrayed from oblique angles, either in retrospect, or in prophecy and foreshadowing, or reincorporated thematically as motifs included in another, entirely different, story: and it is in such a manner that Ovid treats the incidents of the Trojan War.

The war itself is narrated directly, more or less in chronological order. Ovid brings us to Aulis and the assembly of the Greek fleet (*Metamorphoses* 12.10) with rare punctuality, and (with one notable exception, to be discussed in Section v below) does not take us away from Troy until we join the departing Aeneas at *Metamorphoses* 13.624. However, within this broad general outline Ovid's version of the tale works

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[173] Quotes are taken from Fränkel (1945) 101; Wilkinson (1955) 237-8. Cf. also Otis (1970) 280-3: his disappointment with Ovid's shortcomings are conveyed not only through the contempt with which he scorns Ovid's "external and superficial" plan and his "careless" handling of the material, but also by his devotion of a mere four pages to the twelfth book of the poem.

[174] Cf. Galinsky (1975) 217-9, Tarrant (1997) 61-3 and Hinds (1998) 104-122 on Ovid's creative reworking of the Aeneas myth.

[175] Usually called "Ovid's '*Aeneid*'" on account of both the prominence of Aeneas and the long shadow of Virgil's epic; I follow Ellsworth (1988) 333 in the alternative nomenclature in order to highlight the presence of the Homeric epic behind the Virgilian.

hard to keep its distance from the specifically 'Homeric' tales of the *Iliad*. An example of the relationship the *Metamorphoses* seeks to establish with its epic predecessor may be seen in the following quote, depicting a scene from the very first battle of the war:

> Et iam Sigea rubebant
> litora, iam leto proles Neptunia, Cycnus,
> mille viros dederat, iam curru instabat Achilles
> totaque Peliacae sternebat cuspidis ictu
> agmina perque acies aut Cycnum aut Hectora quaerens
> congreditur Cycno (decimum dilatus in annum
> Hector erat).
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.71-7)

Achilles rages through the Trojan lines, seeking a worthy match (*aut Cycnum aut Hectora*) for his martial prowess. The scene contains all that might be hoped for in an epic battle: oceans of blood (*Sigea rubebant litora*), slaughter by the thousand (*leto...mille viros*) and the flourish of mighty weapons (*cuspidis ictu*). Yet even though it might match up in sheer quantity to a Homeric fray, Ovid's equivalent battle narrative seems to concede its shortcomings in quality: the meeting between Achilles and Cycnus to which this passage is leading up is presented apologetically as an alternative to the duel between Achilles and Hector which crowns the *Iliad* (*decimum dilatus in annum Hector erat*). Hence Solodow reads this scene as confirmation of the vast difference which separates Ovid and Homer: "Ovid's relationship to the *Iliad*, near yet utterly removed, is most aptly expressed in his mention of the confrontation between Hector and Achilles.... The climactic event of the *Iliad* is relegated to nothing more than a casual parenthesis."[176] However, it would be imprudent to push Solodow's interpretation too far and cite this passage to argue for the complete *disassociation* of the *Metamorphoses* from Homeric epic. We have already seen in Ovid's handling of primeval Chaos and the cosmogony that *absolute* originality is an impossibility, and that the 'tradition', far from hampering the production of literature, actually serves as the most basic possible validation of meaning through the technique of repetition. Thus the very citation of Hector in the above passage functions as an *enabler* of heroic discourse: it offers a paradigm for reading the duel between Achilles

[176] Solodow (1988) 32. Cf. Musgrove (1998) 225: "The blatant attempt to substitute Cygnus for Hector only makes the unHomeric and unheroic nature of the Cygnus episode more apparent."

and Cycnus, both as substitute of and as alternative to the clash between Achilles and Hector in *Iliad* 22. The very fact that Ovid stresses the difference between Hector and Cycnus suggests the importance of the Homeric battle in his own narrative of epic combat.

Those who do see a relationship between Homer and Ovid at this point typically interpret it as parodic. For example, Due remarks that "[t]he confrontation of the greatest killer with the invulnerable man gives occasion for such paradoxes that make the story extremely un-Homeric, regardless of all loans"; Bömer speaks of Ovid's grotesque over-elevation (*Überhöhung*) of the epic style; and Frécaut meets 'bombast' with bombast, summarising the episode's content as "gesticulations, fanfarronades, poursuites vaines, beau mime en vérité!"[177] Such rhetoric involves a naturalisation of the Homeric mode and a determination to approach Ovid's material only as a 'weak' iteration of his precursor's terms. Homer is always and forever prioritised as the originator of epic style and technique, which condemns his successor to a role on the fringes: in Quint's terms, it is a repetition in thrall to the dominance of the past, a 'romantic' episode which fails to impose its own closure on the tradition.

Yet the 'normalisation' of Homer implied in appeals to tropes of parody and bombast is, in part, precisely what this passage brings into question through its manipulation of mythic chronology. Ovid advertises the deferment of the clash between Hector and Achilles in the following terms:

> (decimum **dilatus** in annum
> Hector erat).
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.76-7)

The perfect passive participle *dilatus* – implying that Achilles' duel with Hector is *postponed* until the tenth year of the war – admits in its chronological imagery of a literary historical reading which destabilises the assumption of Homeric *priority*. The technique utilised here is closely allied to that which we have seen deployed in the *Heroides*.[178] Epistles such as those of Briseis or Helen located themselves at one specific moment in the middle of the heroine's story; hence the letter-form, by

[177] Quotes from Due (1974) 149; Bömer (1982) 33; and Frécaut (1972) 125 respectively.

positing the Homeric version of the story as lying in the character's *future*, could deploy tropes of foreshadowing and prophecy in order to give the impression that Ovid's version of the story 'predated' that of Homer, and could invite the reader to reappraise the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as supplementary to and influenced by its own handling of the material. Likewise here in the *Metamorphoses* the temporal exigencies of the *carmen perpetuum* are exploited in order to destabilise the chronologies of literary history and bring Ovid onto a more level footing with Homer. The poem may be 'belated' in the chronologies of literary history, as it insinuates in its frequently tardy progressions through ancient mythology, yet by virtue of its very expansiveness it embraces the literary tradition from beginning to end: and so its entry into the Trojan War in a position prior to Homer allows it, firstly, to allege its position of 'priority' to Homer, to claim by virtue of chronological preeminence a 'closure' for its own version of the myth, and secondly, to infer that Homeric epic relies on the same staple moves of repetition and belatedness that underpin the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, as the battles of the *Iliad* reiterate at a late stage all the major occurrences of the early years of the war.

Though the duel between Achilles and Hector is the final and climactic combat scene of the *Iliad*, and hence the most prominent reference point for Ovid's battle narrative (signalled by the explicit mention of Hector at *Metamorphoses* 12.75), the whole episode (*Metamorphoses* 12.71-145) draws on and conflates motifs of many of the most fully developed Homeric combat scenes. Two duels frame the battles of the *Iliad*, the fight between Menelaus and Paris (*Iliad* 3.340-82) and that between Achilles and Hector (*Iliad* 22.131-366). A range of formal links draws attention to the similarities between these two passages. There is the structural symmetry by which the former duel is almost as far from the poem's beginning, 1828 lines, as the latter is from its end, 1851 lines. There is the narrative economy by which Homer incorporates ten years of war within forty-nine days of narrative: the battle between Menelaus and Paris is frequently understood as a throwback to the first year of the war, when such a meeting would have been more natural, while the battle between Achilles and Hector contains foreshadowings of both the death of Achilles (e.g. *Iliad* 22.356-60) and the

[178] See chapter 1 above.

ultimate fall of Troy (e.g. *Iliad* 22.59-76).[179] And finally, there is the 'formalised' nature of the fighting: Menelaus meets Paris in an official duel, in which there is a space marked out for combat (*Iliad* 3.314-5) and an official casting of lots for the first throw (*Iliad* 3.316-7); while although Achilles' meeting with Hector is not a formalised duel with the same ceremonial and ritual elements, it is at least understood to differ markedly from the typical one-to-one combat thrown up in a full scale general engagement.[180] A third formal duel is incorporated into the narrative structure: the encounter between Ajax and Hector which fills *Iliad* 7.43-312. Though the full contribution of this episode to the plot of the poem has so far defied the best efforts of Homer's modern readers,[181] it incorporates various allusions to Achilles which suggest the validity of reading this duel also as a prelude to his confrontation with Hector in book 22.[182] For example, when Hector voices his initial challenge to the Greek host he does so in the following words:

> *ὑμῖν δ' ἐν γὰρ ἔασιν ἀριστῆες Παναχαιῶν·*
> *τῶν νῦν ὅν τινα θυμὸς ἐμοὶ μαχέσασθαι ἀνώγει,*
> *δεῦρ' ἴτω ἐκ πάντων πρόμος ἔμμεναι Ἕκτορι δίῳ.*
> (*Iliad* 7.73-5)

He refers to the Greek leaders as *ἀριστῆες Παναχαιῶν* and asks one of them to step forward as their champion (πρόμος). The reference to *ἀριστῆες Παναχαιῶν* reminds us of Achilles' parting shot at *Iliad* 1.243-4, where he sneers at Agamemnon: *σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις χωόμενος ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας*. Achilles, the "best of the Achaeans", has withdrawn from the fighting for the present; hence it is not surprising that in the absence of their natural champion the rest of the Greek commanders should demur for so long (*ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ· αἰδέσθεν μὲν ἀνήνασθαι, δείσαν δ' ὑποδέχθαι*, *Iliad* 7.92-3). Finally Ajax is chosen by lot; and as he steps forward to confront Hector he refers to the absent Achilles as follows:

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[179] For allusions to the first years of the war in the early books of the *Iliad* see Whitman (1958) 268-9; Taplin (1992) 83-109. The relationship between the final books of the poem and the end of the war is discussed further below.

[180] For further discussion of comparisons between the two scenes see Richardson (1993) 8, 116.

[181] See Kirk (1990) 230; Morrison (1992) 55-56; Stanley (1993) 95. Leaf (1900) 118 and 296-7 considers that the Menelaus-Paris duel was imported from an earlier point in the tale of the war and stands in the natural position of the Ajax-Hector duel; Kirk (1978) 18-40, responding to Leaf, argues that the two duels are too closely integrated to each other and the wider context for either to be a doublet of the other, and suggests that the passages were composed alongside each other as parallel instances of the traditional 'duel' motif.

[182] For example, Nagy (1979) 31-2 reads the Ajax-Hector duel as presaging Hector's later defeat at the hands of Achilles: if he cannot overcome a man so often presented as "best *after* Achilles", how can he hope to surpass Ajax's superior in *Iliad* 22?

Ἕκτορ, νῦν μὲν δὴ σάφα εἴσεαι οἰόθεν οἶος
οἷοι καὶ Δαναοῖσι ἀριστῆες μετέασι,
καὶ μετ' Ἀχιλλῆα ῥηξήνορα θυμολέοντα.
(*Iliad* 7.226-8)

Ajax effectively proclaims himself a 'substitute' for Achilles. If he *were* present, then he would be the automatic choice as 'best of the Achaeans'; but since he is not fighting, it is the responsibility of Ajax to show the mettle of the other commanders, who are *ἀριστῆες...μετ' Ἀχιλλῆα* ("the best *after* Achilles").[183] The focus on Achilles temporarily diverts attention away from *this* duel to the duel which is *not* taking place, which is impossible on current narrative logic, but which will eventually transpire in 22 – the *ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν* against the best of the Trojans, Achilles against Hector.[184]

Ovid's narrative recognises all three of these duels as forming a series and repeats elements common to the sequence in his Achilles-Cycnus battle narrative. The manner of Cycnus' death and metamorphosis provides one example of his appropriation and conflation of the Homeric sources:

Tum clipeo genibusque premens praecordia duris
vincla trahit galeae, quae presso subdita mento
elidunt fauces et respiramen iterque
eripiunt animae. victum spoliare parabat:
arma relicta videt; corpus deus aequoris albam
contulit in volucrem, cuius modo nomen habebat.
(*Metamorphoses* 12.140-5)

In attributing Cycnus' death to asphyxiation, Ovid's account gestures primarily towards the downfall of Paris at the hands of Menelaus. Having exhausted (like Achilles) the possibilities of the conventional weapons of spear and sword, Menelaus leaps on Paris and drags him backwards by the helmet:

Ἦ, καὶ ἐπαίξας κόρυθος λάβεν ἱπποδασείης,
ἕλκε δ' ἐπιστρέψας μετ' εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιούς.
ἄγχε δέ μιν πολύκεστος ἱμὰς ἀπαλὴν ὑπὸ δειρήν,
ὅς οἱ ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνος ὀχεὺς τέτατο τρυφαλείης.
καί νύ κεν εἴρυσσέν τε καὶ ἄσπετον ἤρατο κῦδος,
εἰ μὴ ἀρ' ὀξὺ νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη,

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[183] At *Iliad* 17.279-80 Ajax is explicitly described as the best of the Greeks *μετ' ἀμύμονα Πηλεϊωνα*.
[184] See Nagy (1979) 31-2. Kirk (1990) 243 argues that the foreshadowing is "not sufficiently stressed" to be a credible motive for the inclusion of the duel; nevertheless, I feel that the various references to the absent Achilles throughout the episode suggest that the emphasis of the scene is directed towards the *absent* Achaean hero, rather than the substitute who fights in his place.

ἥ οἱ ῥῆξεν ἰμάντα βοὸς ἶφι κταμένοιο·
κεινὴ δὲ τρυφάλεια ἅμ' ἕσπετο χειρὶ παχείῃ.
(*Iliad* 3.369-76)

As we have seen, Achilles throttles Cycnus by seizing his helmet straps (*praecordia...vincla trahit galeae*, 140-1) and pulling them tightly under his throat (*quae presso subdita mento*, 141-2) to cut off the passage of air. Menelaus is not so deliberate, intending only to drag his opponent back towards the Achaean lines (ἕλκε δ' ἐπιστρέψας μετ' εὐκνήμιδας Ἀχαιούς, 370); but such nuances of intention are of no concern to Paris, who finds himself threatened with the same fate as Cycnus as the straps of his helmet cut into his chin and hinder his breathing (ἄγχε δέ μιν πολύκεστος ἱμὰς ἀπαλὴν ὑπὸ δειρήν, ὅς οἱ ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνος ὀχεὺς τέτατο τρυφαλείης, 371-2). Though strangulation is not the method of choice for either Ajax or Achilles, a wound to the neck is a feature of the other two duels in the sequence. Ajax also nicks Hector in the neck (τμήδην δ' αἰχέν' ἐπῆλθε, μέλαν δ' ἀνεκήκιεν αἷμα, *Iliad* 7.262), the only time either combatant draws blood in this battle; the wound inflicted here foreshadows the fatal wound he is dealt by Achilles through the throat at *Iliad* 22.324-7. Injuries to the neck of one sort or another are therefore a common element to the Homeric sequence, as well as to the battle narrative of Ovid.

Another element common to every duel is the motif of divine intervention on behalf of the Trojan hero. Having killed Cycnus, Achilles then turns to the corpse, only to find that the armour is now empty and that his foe has been transformed into a swan by the grace of Neptune: *corpus deus aequoris albam contulit in volucrem* (*Met.*12.144-5). Aphrodite intervenes in a similar fashion to rescue Paris from imminent death (καί νύ κεν εἴρυσσέν τε καὶ ἀσπετον ἤρατο κῦδος, εἰ μὴ ἀρ' ὀξὺ νόησε Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη, *Iliad* 3.373-4). Hector's tutelary deity is Apollo, who rescues him from under the impact of a stone thrown by Ajax:

δεύτερος αὖτ' Αἴας πολὺ μείζονα λᾶαν ἀείρας
ἦκ' ἐπιδινήσας, ἐπέρεισε δὲ ἶν' ἀπέλεθρον,
εἴσω δ' ἀσπίδ' ἔαξε βαλὼν μυλοειδεῖ πέτρῳ,
βλάψε δέ οἱ φίλα γούναθ'· ὁ δ' ὕπτιος ἐξετανύσθη
ἀσπίδι ἐγχριμφθείς· τὸν δ' αἶψ' ὤρθωσεν Ἀπόλλων.
(*Iliad* 7.268-72)

Apollo's intervention comes as Hector is sent reeling backwards by a stone thrown by Ajax. In the *Metamorphoses* battle Cycnus, retreating under pressure from Achilles, trips backwards over a stone (*retroque ferenti aversos passus medio* ***lapis obstitit***

arvo, *Met.*12.136-7); in similar fashion Hector, having been hit by a throw from Ajax, lies sprawling under the force of the impact (*ὁ δ' ὕπτιος ἐξετανύσθη ἀσπίδι ἐγχριμφθείς*, *Iliad* 7.270-1) At this point the narratives diverge, as Hector is rescued by Apollo (*τὸν δ' αἶψ' ὤρθωσεν Ἀπόλλων*, 272) while Cycnus, prone and helpless, succumbs to his death (*Met.*12.140-5, quoted above). Apollo's powers are more thoroughly tested at *Iliad* 20-22 as he tries to save Hector from the onslaught of Achilles: first he dissuades him from immediately seeking out his enemy (*Iliad* 20.376-8); then, when Hector ignores his advice and steps out to confront him at *Iliad* 20.419-37, he spirits him away beneath the cover of a thick mist (*Iliad* 20.443-4); he distracts Achilles' attention by assuming the shape of the Trojan hero Agenor and leading him on a chase (*Iliad* 21.596-22.13); and finally, as Hector flees Achilles, Apollo intervenes to boost his flagging strength (*Iliad* 22.202-4). Though Hector must die, Apollo does everything he can to postpone the fateful meeting for as long as possible.[185] Divine intervention therefore forms another feature *which is common to all three Homeric* duels and reiterated in the battle narrative of Ovid.

We see that within the *Iliad* the duel between Hector and Achilles stands as the climax and culmination of a repeated sequence of formal duels; this, the last episode in the series, repeats many of the motifs in former episodes but this time carries them through to a definitive conclusion in the Trojan champion's death. In this way, by inflicting the cruellest closure of all, it establishes a *telos* to authorise its stature as the reference point from which all the other elements in the sequence take their terms. Paris comes off the worse in his encounter with Menelaus, but is rescued at *Iliad* 3.373-4; Ajax is ahead of Hector on points, but unable to find an opportunity to make a decisive breakthrough, when the heralds intervene and declare a draw (*Iliad* 7.279-82). These heroes may have their virtues, but they are prevented from dealing the final, fatal blow. It is only in the duel of Achilles and Hector that the Greek hero finds the capacity to circumvent his Trojan opponent's divine protection and bring the narrative to a *telos* by inflicting death.[186]

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[185] Cf. Morrison (1992) 45-6: "Three times [in *Iliad* 20] the narrator explicitly anticipates the meeting between Achilles and Hector. The movement to such a climax is repeatedly brought to a standstill with the intervention of Apollo." Apollo's last intervention (*Iliad* 22.202-4) is followed immediately by the *kerostasia*, after which he leaves Hector to his fate (*Iliad* 22.213).

[186] To appropriate the terminology of Quint (1994) and apply it on a microcosmic level to a plot motif, this is a series of 'strong' repetitions in which the final term is dominant and reshapes others within its

However, applying the Ovidian model to the above analysis of the Homeric sequence of battles destabilises the initial assumption that the duel of Achilles and Hector forms the *telos* to the series. Earlier I described Ovid's narrative of the battle between Achilles and Cycnus as a "conflation" of all the major Homeric duels: the term, which is commonplace in discussions of poetic allusion,[187] imputes to Ovid a strong aspect of 'derivativeness', implying that his narrative is no more than a 'belated' and weak reiteration of the Homeric accounts. Yet if we recall again the chronological sequencing of Ovid, the narrative sleight of hand by which he inserts himself into the story at a point ten years earlier than Homer, we see that 'derivativeness' belongs as much to the Homeric version of events as to the Ovidian. As well as being in literary historical terms a *conflation* of all the Homeric battles, the Achilles-Cycnus duel is, within the timescale of the Trojan War, the *prototype* of all duels and skirmishes, the 'Ur-battle' from which all others take their terms. If elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* Ovid's narrative comes 'too late' on many of the most significant events of literary history, here the 'belatedness' is displaced onto his predecessor Homer. The meeting of Achilles and Cycnus carries great weight as a 'prototype' Homeric battle, dictating the terms of heroic duels for the remainder of the war: and by assimilating the themes and motifs of the major Homeric battles, Ovid shows how Homer comes to reflect (in terms of 'belatedness') the themes of the Achilles and Cycnus fight.

Not only is the significance of Hector's death at the hands of Achilles undermined by Ovid's attribution of 'belatedness': its stature as the climactic and most significant battle of the *Iliad* is also brought into question. The series of battles climaxing in the death of Hector at the hands of Achilles belongs to the plan of Zeus for the final third of the poem, which he outlines to Hera as follows:

> Ἕκτορα δ' ὀτρύνῃσι μάχην ἐς Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
> αὖτις δ' ἐμπνεύσῃσι μένος, λελάθῃ δ' ὀδυνάων
> αἳ νῦν μιν τείρουσι κατὰ φρένας, αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὺς
> αὖτις ἀποστρέψῃσιν ἀνάλκιδα φύζαν ἐνόρσας,
> φεύγοντες δ' ἐν νηυσὶ πολυκλήισι πέσωσι
> Πηληείδεω Ἀχιλῆος· ὁ δ' ἀνστήσει ὃν ἑταῖρον
> Πάτροκλον· τὸν δὲ κτενεῖ ἔγχεϊ φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ
> Ἰλίου προπάροιθε, πολέας ὀλέσαντ' αἰθηοὺς

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ambit. The duel between Hector and Achilles repeats-with-change – the Greek hero 'wins' by inflicting death upon his opponent, which his predecessors failed to do – and so this 'strong' repetition of the motif both serves as the 'culmination' of the repeated episodes and intrudes forcefully upon our interpretation of its predecessors.

[187] See especially Thomas (1986) 193-8.

τοὺς ἄλλους, μετὰ δ' υἱὸν ἐμὸν Σαρπηδόνα δῖον.
τοῦ δὲ χολωσάμενος κτενεῖ Ἕκτορα δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
(*Iliad* 15.59-68)

According to the decree of Zeus, the narrative is organised around a series of killings which will culminate, within the poem, in Hector's death at the hands of Achilles (κτενεῖ Ἕκτορα δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς, 68). We have seen how the duels between Menelaus and Paris, and Ajax and Hector, both anticipate the final battle scene of the poem; now Zeus incorporates Patroclus' *aristeia* (15.66-7, narrated at *Iliad* 16.394-697) and Hector's slaying of Patroclus (15.65, narrated at *Iliad* 16.777-863) within the same narrative teleology. However, it is clear that Zeus does not regard the death of Hector as the defining *telos* of his plan: for he continues his decree as follows:

ἐκ τοῦ δ' ἄν τοι ἔπειτα παλίωξιν παρὰ νηῶν
αἰὲν ἐγὼ τεύξοιμι διαμπερές, εἰς ὅ κ' Ἀχαιοὶ
Ἴλιον αἰπὺ ἕλοιεν Ἀθηναίης διὰ βουλάς.
(*Iliad* 15.69-71)

The path of events is therefore directed, not so much towards the death of Hector, but towards the fall of Troy, an event *outside* the scope of the *Iliad.* Hector's death, far from forming a self-sufficient *telos* to the poem, actually 'borrows' its closural significance from the traditional event of the fall of Troy.[188] For example, when his body is dragged round the city behind Achilles' chariot, the people's grief is compared in a simile to the sack of the city:

ὤμωξεν δ' ἐλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
κωκυτῷ τ' εἴχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ.
τῷ δὲ μάλιστ' ἄρ' ἔην ἐναλίγκιον, ὡς εἰ ἅπασα
Ἴλιος ὀφρυόεσσα πυρὶ σμύχοιτο κατ' ἄκρης.
(*Iliad* 22.408-11).

By equating Hector's death with the burning of the city itself, this comparison appropriates the teleological significance of the forthcoming fall of Troy in order to enhance the 'closural' importance of the hero's demise. The death of Hector is attributed meaning, not on its *own* account as the 'climax' of the *Iliad*, but because it *foreshadows* an event which will occur outside the scope of the poem. Hector's death is further linked to the fall of Troy through the pleadings of Priam (*Iliad* 22.38-76), who attempts to deter Hector from fighting by evoking the pitiable image of a conquered people's sufferings; and through the lament of Andromache (*Iliad* 24.725-

[188] See Griffin (1980) 1 and Taplin (1992) 249-50 on the equivalence between the death of Hector and the fall of Troy.

45), who imagines the imminent fate of the women of the city, condemned to a life of slavery now that their greatest protector is dead. Indeed, the imminent destruction of the city forms a motif underlying much of the poem. Trojan guilt is replayed through the breaking of the truce of *Iliad* 3 (by Pandarus at *Iliad* 4.85-140: cf. *Iliad* 3.298-301; 4.158-68, 235-39, 269-71), which reemphasises the justice of the city's eventual fall,[189] and Hector himself refers to the inevitability of ultimate defeat at *Iliad* 6.447-65. If the battle scenes of the *Iliad* are teleologically organised and directed towards an overarching, validating conclusion, then it is the sack of Troy, even more than the death of Hector, which retrospectively grants them an ultimate significance.[190]

The fall of Troy lies outside Homer's poem, a traditional element which is beyond his power to control, and if Hector's death stands at the climax of the *Iliad*, it is only because his downfall anticipates this much wider-reaching catastrophe. On this reading, Hector's demise is no more than a waypoint in the narrative's progression towards the fall of Troy, the *telos* of the action in the *Iliad*. It is true that the heroic battles form a repeated sequence, but the *final* element, the one which retrospectively gives them meaning, falls *outside* Homer's narrative: the *Iliad* locates itself on the fringes of the Trojan tradition, conceding to others the closure of the story. The decree of Zeus therefore implies a certain 'belatedness' for the *Iliad*, which shirks the 'already told' story of the fall of Troy. Furthermore, it also implies 'priority' for the version presented by the *Metamorphoses*: for Ovid assumes a more secure hold over the teleology of the Homeric battles, narrating the fall of the city, the final term which retrospectively grants significance to the ten years of fighting, in its due place at *Metamorphoses* 13.399-428. Ovid avoids narrating the middle terms in the sequence of repeated battles and duels, such as the *aristeia* of Achilles with his long tally of conquests, or the duels between Menelaus and Paris, and Hector and Achilles: he concentrates on the *first* term, the meeting of Cycnus and Achilles, and the *final* term, the fall of Troy. Ovid's poem therefore completes the sequence of events predicted by Zeus: his Trojan narrative brings the story as far as its *telos*, the fall of the city, and retrospectively subordinates the *Iliad* to its own far more comprehensive account of events. Homer's plot is *constricted* by the presence of the tradition, while Ovid's

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[189] See Taplin (1992) 103-9.
[190] For a full list of references to the fall of Troy in the *Iliad*, see the chart at Haft (1990) 56.

version, by incorporating the closural elements which limit the terms of the Homeric account, adopts the posture of 'constricting' him.

Hence the battles and duels of the *Iliad* do not form a self-sufficient narrative whole, but rather locate themselves in the larger tradition of "the story of Troy". Although this tradition is extrinsic to the poem and incidental to the declared theme of the 'wrath of Achilles', it casts its long shadow over Homer's plot and restricts his ability to make moves with his material. An awareness of 'fate', that which the tradition has already determined, is intrinsic to the composition of the *Iliad.* It is true that to a certain extent the *Iliad* explores alternatives to the epic tradition, suggesting that the given story may have turned out very differently. James Morrison has analysed various episodes in the poem in which 'canonical' mythical events such as the fall of Troy and the death of Achilles are temporarily brought into doubt, and concludes that the poem's exploration of potential variants to the traditional account is an artistic strength:

> By presenting alternatives to the tradition and thus challenging the audience's complacency, Homer achieves something remarkable in such a traditional enterprise: he is able to offer a new angle upon the tale of the Trojan War.[191]

Thus Morrison links Homer's exploration of alternatives to the Trojan War with the poetic virtue of 'innovation': the poet's readiness to explore potential alternatives to the previously told versions of events is a sign of 'creativity'. Yet how could a story proceed in which, say, Troy did not fall and Achilles remained alive? Without the traditional pattern for narration, there is no framework against which the poem might gain 'meaning'. Significantly, and despite its various gestures towards possible 'untraditional' directions for the narrative, the *Iliad* always returns at the last to the security of the traditional version of events. Morrison contends that it is significant that the poem should incorporate even the *possibility* of a break from the tradition:

> It is noteworthy that the poet raises the possibility of untraditional events at all. Homer pulls back each time, but he does so in an extremely self-conscious manner, showing how the traditional story might have been changed. Homer disrupts the natural flow at the last minute, but by sketching out how such a scenario would proceed, he makes it obvious that he could have continued.[192]

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[191] Morrison (1992) 112.
[192] Morrison (1992) 113.

However, I draw the opposite inference here: far from making it obvious that he could have *continued* narrating an untraditional alternative of events, Homer, by returning at the last minute to the told and trusted versions of myth, demonstrates his *impotence* as regards the possibility of changing the fundamental, traditionally-validated forms of the story. In an analogue to the way Ovid's account of Creation (*Metamorphoses* 1.5-89) falters until a kindly divinity intervenes to order the narrative within the terms of earlier cosmological narratives, Homer's narrative at several points attempts to break free from the limitations of the canonical myth, yet finds at the last that as well as *restricting* narrative, tradition is the basic *enabler*, without which he could not tell *any* story *at all*. In these terms, Homer's presentation of the Trojan war suffers from the characteristic latecomer's complaint of 'belatedness'; the story of Troy is always already written, and the poem fights to make its own space by an Ovidian tactic of repetition and avoidance of traditional elements. If 'repetition' is a keyword of the epic tradition, then epic poetry is always at risk of being subjected to an external teleology, of being reincorporated within a broader and more 'definitive' reiteration of the traditional events: Homer's account, far from being the self-sufficient and canonical version of the Trojan myth, is itself seen to be vulnerable to the vagaries of appropriation and the charge of 'belatedness'.

iii. Belated Iliads*: the death of Achilles*

Above we touched on the motif of divine intervention as a common element to the three Homeric duels and the Ovidian battle scene, a strand which I now wish to follow further. We begin with the boast of Cycnus to Achilles:

> Est aliquid non esse satum Nereide, sed qui
> Nereaque et natas et totum temperat aequor.
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.93-4)

Cycnus lays claim to superiority over Achilles on the grounds of parentage: Achilles is the son of a mere daughter of Nereus (*satum Nereide*), while Cycnus' father is the god who rules Nereus and the whole sea besides, Neptune himself. His boasts about his superior ancestry will avail him nothing when Achilles is at his throat, but Neptune is at least prepared to make a late intervention to protect his corpse from the plundering of his conqueror:

Victum spoliare parabat:
arma relicta videt; corpus deus aequoris albam
contulit in volucrem, cuius modo nomen habet.
(*Metamorphoses* 12.143-5)

At line 94 Cycnus made the boast that his father was the god who rules *totum aequor*; now the *deus aequoris* (144) steps in and rescues his son by means of a metamorphosis. We see that Cycnus' bragging is more than empty pretension: at the last moment Neptune steps in to make good his son's boasts and exalt him in his demise.

The motif of a god intervening to protect a cherished mortal is widespread in the *Iliad*; we touched on three prominent examples of the theme above. However, in the case of Paris and Aphrodite, or Hector and Apollo, the care was merely tutelary, and there was no 'family' interest involved. Few Iliadic heroes can claim to be the direct offspring of a god, as Cycnus is; of this select band, one of the more prominent in the fighting is Aeneas son of Aphrodite. In *Iliad* 20, as Achilles reenters the fray and begins his search for Hector, the first Trojan hero he encounters is Aeneas:

Ὣς οἱ μὲν θεοὶ ἄντα θεῶν ἴσαν. αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
Ἕκτορος ἄντα μάλιστα λιλαίετο δῦναι ὅμιλον
Πριαμίδεω· τοῦ γάρ ῥα μάλιστα ἑ θυμὸς ἀνώγει
αἵματος ἆσαι Ἄρηα ταλαύρινον πολεμιστήν.
Αἰνείαν δ' ἰθὺς λαοσσόος ὦρσεν Ἀπόλλων
ἀντία Πηλείωνος, ἐνῆκε δέ οἱ μένος ἠύ·
(*Iliad* 20.75-80)

Note the similarity with *Metamorphoses* 12.75-6 (*perque acies aut Cycnum aut Hectora quaerens/congreditur Cycno*): again Achilles seeks out Hector (Ἕκτορος ἄντα μάλιστα λιλαίετο δῦναι, 76), but is compelled to settle for an alternative foe, in this case Aeneas (79). As a further point of similarity, Aeneas, like Cycnus, is not shy about his genetic superiority to Achilles:[193]

φασὶ σὲ μὲν Πηλῆος ἀμύμονος ἔκγονον εἶναι,
μητρὸς δ' ἐκ Θέτιδος καλλιπλοκάμου ἁλοσύδνης·
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν υἱὸς μεγαλήτορος Ἀγχίσαο
εὔχομαι ἐκγεγάμεν, μήτηρ δέ μοί ἐστ' Ἀφροδίτη.
(*Iliad* 20.206-10)

[193] He is reminded of this divine superiority through the words of another god, Apollo (*Iliad* 20.104-9), who was instrumental in persuading him to stand up to Achilles in the first place.

This claim is echoed in the *Metamorphoses* battle, as Cycnus taunts Achilles with his superior birth (*Metamorphoses* 12.93-4, quoted above). Aeneas' claim is broader than that of Cycnus: Cycnus concentrates on the relative claims to power of the divine parent alone (Thetis against Neptune), while Aeneas also expands on his human lineage and demonstrates that his father is descended from Zeus (*Iliad* 20.213-40).[194] Neptune validated his son's boast at *Met.*12.144-5 by effecting his metamorphosis into a swan; Aphrodite has a chance to better him, to save her son's life (as opposed to merely exalting him in death), when Aeneas finds himself in difficulties:

> αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
> ἐμμεμαὼς ἐπόρουσεν ἐρυσσάμενος ξίφος ὀξύ,
> σμερδαλέα ἰάχων· ὁ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρὶ
> Αἰνείας, μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὐ δύο γ' ἄνδρε φέροιεν,
> οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσ'· ὁ δέ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἷος,
> ἔνθα κεν Αἰνείας μὲν ἐπεσσύμενον βάλε πέτρῳ
> ἢ κόρυθ' ἠὲ σάκος, τό οἱ ἤρκεσε λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον,
> τὸν δέ κε Πηλεΐδης σχεδὸν ἄορι θυμὸν ἀπηύρα,
> εἰ μὴ ...
>
> (*Iliad* 20.283-91)

The danger is clearly spelled out: if events are allowed to follow to their natural conclusion, then Aeneas' cast, although it will hit Achilles, will fail to cause any damage of consequence (288-9), while all the time Achilles draws closer to deliver a fatal blow with his sword (290). However, κεν on line 288 signals that these events merely form part of an unfulfilled condition, whose protasis is introduced by εἰ μὴ on line 291, thus alleviating the tension and inferring that salvation is on the way. Given the confidence which Aeneas expressed in Aphrodite at *Iliad* 20.206-10 (quoted above), we must surely expect that it is she who will intervene. Sadly, however, Aeneas' confidence in his mother proves ill founded. Throughout the poem Aphrodite has been a marginal figure to the fighting, more comfortable in the boudoir than on the battlefield; although she successfully saved Paris from certain death (*Iliad* 3.374-5) her next venture onto the battlefield ended disastrously when she suffered a painful scratch at the hands of Diomedes (*Iliad* 5.311-17). This happened when she was carrying the wounded body of Aeneas out of the battle, and it fell to Apollo to finish the job in her place (*Iliad* 5.344-5). Likewise, here it is not Aphrodite who brings aid to her son:

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[194] Aeneas' boasts here are discussed by Nagy (1979) 265-75 and Martin (1989) 16.

εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὀξὺ νόησε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων
(*Iliad* 20.291)

Contrary to our expectations, the god who intervenes to rescue Aeneas is neither his mother Aphrodite, nor even one of the pro-Trojan party such as Apollo, but Poseidon, of all gods, the champion of the Achaeans throughout the poem and instigator of their brief rally at *Iliad* 14.361-522. Gregory Nagy points out the peculiarity of the fact that Aeneas is rescued by a traditionally pro-Greek god instead of one of the conventional Trojan allies.[195] He answers this problem by proposing that since Aeneas is prominent in the post-Trojan tradition, rising so far as to become king of the Trojan remnant, the act of rescuing him is not a partisan gesture of support but in fact a venture to save the entire Aeneas tradition: "[T]he rescue by Poseidon puts the act *above* taking sides; the figure of Aeneas thus transcends the war of the Trojans and Achaeans."[196] Nagy's appeal to the sanctity of the tradition is plausible enough, especially if we accept the implications of Homer's 'belated' pose with respect to the canon of Trojan War myth; but there is typically some persuasive narrative logic to provide an extra determining factor, such as Aphrodite's championing of Paris, or Apollo's well-known adherence to the Trojan cause. But why should such a conspicuous supporter of the Greeks as Poseidon switch sides? At this point he should be displaying his support for the Achaeans more vigorously than ever: Zeus has just granted the gods his permission, long withheld, to enter the fighting on whichever side they choose (*Iliad* 20.20-30),[197] and Poseidon joins with Athena, Hera and Hermes, the other Achaean partisans (*Iliad* 20.33-5). In such circumstances, it appears most peculiar that his first intervention should be on behalf of one of the most noted heroes of the Trojan side.

Although I cannot claim to possess an answer to this difficulty, I would like to expand upon the development of this theme in Ovid. Just as Poseidon intervenes to save Aeneas in the *Iliad*, it is he (in his Roman guise as Neptune) who steps in on behalf of his son in the *Metamorphoses*:

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[195] See Nagy (1979) 265-9.
[196] Nagy (1979) 268.
[197] This prompts Nagy to suggest a second (narrative) motivation for Poseidon's intervention: if a pro-Trojan entered at this early stage, the chain reaction of divine interventions and reactions throughout the *Theomachia* would begin at too early a point. See Nagy (1979) 268.

corpus deus aequoris albam
contulit in volucrem, cuius modo nomen habet.
(*Metamorphoses* 12.144-5)

The god who rules *totum aequor* (cf. *Metamorphoses* 12.93-4) now intervenes as the *deus aequoris* to make good Cycnus' boasts and exalt his son through metamorphosis. In this respect the Cycnus episode is actually developed in more 'coherent' terms than the Aeneas episode. Firstly, while Aeneas' boasts about his divine mother were not justified by subsequent events, Cycnus' father Neptune intervenes decisively to validate his son's claim at the end of the episode. And secondly, even though Neptune is here intruding on the 'wrong' side – the side of the Trojan hero – at least in Ovid's version he has an unimpeachable motive for his intervention, the paternal duty owed to his son. What is an inconsistency in a Homeric battle narrative is integral to the development of the theme in Ovid: Homer may nod, but Ovid winks.

Ovid even extends the motif of Neptune's involvement by attributing to him the role of instigator of Achilles' death towards the ends of the war. According to Homer's version of events, it was the death of Hector which precipitated the death of Achilles; at *Iliad* 18.88-93 Achilles vows to kill Hector, and Thetis replies that this will seal his own fate:

ὠκύμορος δή μοι, τέκος, ἔσσεαι, οἷ' ἀγορεύεις·
αὐτίκα γάρ τοι ἔπειτα μεθ'" Εκτορα πότμος ἑτοῖμος.
(*Iliad* 18.95-6)

Thetis' reply demonstrates that in the *Iliad* Achilles' destiny is closely related to that of Hector: as Hector dies, Achilles will soon follow. Hector's death therefore does not form a *climax* to the action of the poem, but rather offers a *foreshadowing* of Achilles' own imminent death. Indeed, Hector's dying words to Achilles acknowledge the imminence of his conqueror's fate:

Ἦ σ' εὖ γιγνώσκων προτιόσσομαι, οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλον
πείσειν· ἦ γὰρ σοί γε σιδήρεος ἐν φρεσὶ θυμός,
φράζεο νῦν, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι
ἤματι τῷ ὅτε κέν σε Πάρις καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
ἐσθλὸν ἐόντ' ὀλέσωσιν ἐνὶ Σκαιῇσι πύλῃσιν.
(*Iliad* 22.356-60)

With his last breath he prophesies with grim precision the *next* death in this particular sequence, that of Achilles himself, shot by Paris (with Apollo's help) at the Skaian

gate.[198] It is through such prophecies and foreshadowings that we learn that Achilles' death, like the fall of Troy, is an inevitable *telos* of the action of the *Iliad*. It is true that when the embassy visited him in Book 9, Achilles spoke of the choice he was given between a long, ignoble life and an early but glorious death (*Iliad* 9.410-16); but the first alternative, however much it may evoke the audience's pathos in entertaining a gap between its own foreknowledge of the story and Achilles' hope of an alternative outcome,[199] never offered a feasible path for the poem to take, as the epic tradition *demands* the death of Achilles at Troy.[200] From the start of the poem to the finish, Achilles' days are numbered: he is, as Thetis tells him, an ὠκύμορος hero. Even in the first book of the poem, as he complains to Thetis of Agamemnon's insults, he describes himself as "destined to live briefly" (μινυνθάδιον, *Iliad* 1.352); she replies mournfully, νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' ὠκύμορος καὶ ὀϊθυρὸς περὶ πάντων ἔπλεο (*Iliad* 1.417), and when she later conveys his prayer to Zeus, she requests that it should be granted on the grounds that Achilles is ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων (*Iliad* 1.505). Although he is still alive as the poem closes, the last books are replete with foreshadowings of his future death.[201] The death of Achilles is the inescapable conclusion of the *Iliad*: yet even as the poem broaches its possibilities, skirts its implications, and chronicles the acquiescence of the hero in his imminent fate, it draws short of chronicling the dread moment itself: the death of Achilles.

The *Iliad*'s diffidence in narrating Achilles' death offers an opportunity for Ovid's account to renegotiate the Homeric teleology. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid attributes the cause of Achilles' death to his slaying of *Cycnus*, rather than Hector: Neptune kills

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[198] Given that the death of Hector leads directly to the death of Achilles, it is ironic that the action in book 22 should begin at the Skaian Gate: cf. *Iliad* 22.6.

[199] Cf. Morrison (1992) 101-3.

[200] Morrison (1997) 280n15 argues that Achilles' *freedom* to choose, the fact that he *might* yet select the latter alternative of long life and lost honour, is essential to the design of the poem at this point: "If Achilles does not have any sort of freedom..., the seemingly pivotal decisions in Book 9 mean very little. This would be a failure of Homer as a poet." Yet 'loss of meaning' and 'failure' are the very charges levelled at Ovid in similar circumstances of indebtedness to a poetic tradition. The very fact that Homer *cannot* vary the traditional components of Achilles' story does indeed suggest his 'failure' as a poet, but it is a self-conscious, enabling 'failure': for without the tradition constricting the plot-line there would be no 'story' at all. Far from "meaning very little", Homer's apologetic adherence to the traditional storyline is precisely what gives the *Iliad* its meaning.

[201] See Taplin (1992) 194-201. Cf. also *Iliad* 18.328-32, 19.420-3, 21.108-13 (Achilles' references to the imminence of his own death); *Iliad* 20.127-8 (Achilles' death referred to by Hera); *Iliad* 23.80-1 (the shade of Patroclus reminds Achilles of his fate); *Iliad* 24.83-4 (Thetis weeps for her doomed son).

Achilles in revenge for the death of his son. Late in book 12 we find him brooding over Cycnus' untimely demise:

> At deus, aequoreas qui cuspide temperat undas,
> in volucrem corpus nati Phaethontida versum
> mente dolet patria saevumque perosus Achillem
> exercet memores plus quam civiliter iras.
> iamque fere tracto duo per quinquennia bello
> talibus intonsum conpellat Sminthea dictis...
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.580-5)

Traditionally Apollo is the divine agent responsible for Achilles' death,[202] yet here in Ovid he is portrayed as acting on orders from Neptune (*conpellat Sminthea*, 585). Line 583 (*memores plus quam civiliter iras*) seems to highlight the curiously ambivalent allegiances of Neptune. His wrath, which he has nurtured through ten years of war (*fere tracto duo per quinquennia bello*, 584) is glossed as "more than civilly mindful" (*plus quam civiliter*): the use of *civiliter* alludes to the *bellum civile*, in which allegiances are inverted and former allies find themselves on opposite sides.[203] In this respect Neptune's wrath is "more than civil", in that it is directed against an *ally* on his *own* side, Achilles. Ovid's account therefore highlights Neptune's role in the death of Achilles by drawing attention to the fact that he intervenes on behalf of the 'wrong' side. In stressing the peculiarity of Neptune's responsibility for effecting the death of Achilles, Ovid's account draws attention to its usurpation of the Homeric version which links Hector and Achilles in a fatal symmetry.

Thus the *Iliad* may end with the funeral of Hector in *Iliad* 24, but in no real sense does the *story* stop at that point. It may be granted that the funeral is a potent signifier of 'closure', marking the physical demise of the hero and the 'end' of the narrative of his life in ritualistic fashion. Yet the ritual of obsequy may be interpreted as something other than a mark of the community's acknowledgement of a unique and irreplaceable loss: its very 'ritualism', its status as a ceremony which has been discharged countless times before for countless other 'irreplaceable' heroes, is a mark of Hector's

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[202] Cf. *Cypria* fr.1: *τρεψάμενος δ' Ἀχιλλεὺς τοὺς Τρῶας καὶ εἰς τὴν πόλιν συνεισπεσὼν ὑπὸ Πάριδος ἀναιρεῖται καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος*; see also Apollodorus 5.3.

'belatedness' as much as of his 'uniqueness'. As Thomas Greene writes on the subject of the epic funeral:

> [I]t demonstrates [of a man], however great the honor due his valor, that his loss is not unique, that his is the last in a series of losses which the community has always known how to deal with.... Even as the women lament Hector's uniqueness in the poem's closing lines, they lament within a containing social context that is like other contexts for other laments.[204]

From Greene, then, we draw the implication that while Hector's death and funeral may in one sense form a climax to the *Iliad*, yet in another sense the ritual of the obsequies, a repetition of the ritual which is granted to both Patroclus (*Iliad* 23.108-261) and the massed ranks of the soldiery (*Iliad* 7.421-32) within the scope of the poem, and which is the right of any deceased hero, strips his death of any unique significance. At the end of the poem he is, at last, dead and buried, but still the war continues without him: he *is* entombed, but Troy is not yet fallen and there are many more battles yet to come.[205] Hector is only one among many fallen heroes at Troy: his demise both gains and loses significance by its incorporation in a long series of repeated heroic deaths. Ovid bypasses even the ephemeral significance of the death of Hector in paving the way for the subsequent demise of Achilles: his version of events relegates the duel of Achilles and Hector to one of the long sequence of middle terms, and attributes the 'ultimate' cause of Achilles' death to the demise of Cycnus in the very first battle of the war.

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[203] The connotations of this phrase are felt all the more keenly on account of its later, more prominent appearance in the proem to Lucan's Civil War epic: ***bella per Emathios plus quam civilia*** *campos* (*Pharsalia* 1.1).

[204] Greene (1966) 48. Cf. Hardie (1997) 143-4, reminding us that Homeric epic traditionally ends with *ritual*, whether this be the ritual to be followed after death (the *Iliad*), or the ritual to be followed after bloodshed (the *Odyssey*); and see also the discussion of the funeral rituals of *Iliad* 23 and 24 in Redfield (1975) 204-18.

[205] So some ancient critics seem to have read the *Iliad*: an alternative 'ending' to the poem is preserved by a scholion to *Iliad* 24.804 (*Aethiopis* fr.2), which adapts the ending of the poem to the beginning of its sequel in the Epic Cycle, the *Aethiopis*:

> ὣς οἵ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἕκτορος, ἦλθε δ' Ἀμαζὼν
> Ἄρηος θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο...

Hector's funeral here serves as a direct transition into the *Aethiopis*: as one hero fades away, another (Penthesilea) moves out to take centre stage. The significance of Hector is challenged by this smooth transition: his death is no decisive *telos* to the Trojan story, but leads easily and naturally into the tale of the *next* hero in the sequence, Penthesilea leader of the Amazons. Davies (1989) 61 protests that "it passes belief that an epic could ever have opened in such a casual and off-hand way"; but what he reads as 'casual' and 'off-hand' treatment may also be symptomatic of a self-conscious 'belatedness': it is at any rate interesting that an ancient scholar should have read the Epic Cycle in such a way.

The 'closure' is applied, not by Homer, who only forecasts Achilles' death intermittently and through the tropes of prophecy and foreshadowing, but by Ovid:

> ostendens sternentem Troica ferro
> corpora Peliden, arcus obvertit in illum
> certaque letifera derexit spicula dextra.
> quod Priamus gaudere senex post Hectora posset,
> hoc fuit; ille igitur tantorum victor, Achille,
> victus es a timido Graiae raptore maritae!
> at si femineo fuerat tibi Marte cadendum,
> Thermodontiaca malles cecidisse bipenni.
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.604-11)

At 12.580-3 Ovid, by attributing the cause of Achilles' death to Neptune's wrath at the death of his son Cycnus, alleviated much of the import of Hector's death in contributing to Achilles' fate.[206] Here he describes the death of Achilles – territory never broached by the *Iliad* – and uses the description as a way of further reinforcing his appropriation and subjugation of Homer, as he subordinates the Homeric elements to his own narrative teleology. Priam's mourning in *Iliad* 24 is capped by his joy (*gaudere*, 607) at Achilles' demise, while the reference to the Amazon queen Penthesilea (610-11) further detracts from the significance of Hector by focusing on the of the first part of the *Aethiopis*, the Epic Cycle sequel to the *Iliad*. Furthermore, Paris, the killer of Achilles, is described as fighting in 'womanly' style (*femineo...Marte*, 610): the charge of effeminacy recalls a rebuke Priam deals out to his surviving sons in *Iliad* 24:

> ὤ μοι ἐγὼ πανάποτμος, ἐπεὶ τέκον υἷας ἀρίστους
> Τροίῃ ἐν εὐρείῃ, τῶν δ' οὔ τινά φημι λελεῖφθαιμ
> Μήστορά τ' ἀντίθεον καὶ Τρωΐλον ἱππιοχάρμην
> Ἕκτορά θ', ὃς θεὸς ἔσκε μετ' ἀνδράσιν, οὐδὲ ἐώκει
> ἀνδρός γε θνητοῦ πάις ἔμμεναι, ἀλλὰ θεοῖο·
> τοὺς μὲν ἀπώλεσ' Ἄρης, τὰ δ' ἐλέγχεα πάντα λέλειπται,
> ψεῦσταί τ' ὀρχησταί τε, χοροιτυπίῃσιν ἄριστοι,
> ἀρνῶν ἠδ' ἐρίφων ἐπιδήμιοι ἁρπακτῆρες.
>
> (*Iliad* 24.255-62)

Priam recalls with affection his favourite sons, the martially inclined Hector and the equally warlike Mestor and Troilus (255-9); he then turns and criticises his remaining sons as more interested in dancing than warfare (ὀρχησταί...χοροιτυπίῃσιν ἄριστοι, 261).

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[206] This impression is reinforced when Neptune passes briskly over the death of Hector as a matter of little consequence:

> ecquid, ne persequar omnes,
> Hectoris umbra subit circum sua Pergama tracti?
>
> (*Met.*12.590-1)

Far from being a martial pursuit, dancing is regarded as unwarlike and effeminate: it is ironic that while warriors become ἄριστοι through famous deeds in battle, Paris and his brothers attain this 'exalted' status through their skill at the dance. Yet the rebuke of Priam is a very different speech with and without Ovidian influence renegotiating the teleology. Without Ovid's intervention, Hector's death appears as the climax of the poem; the Trojan cause collapses with the fall of Hector, whose demise marks the beginning of the end for the city. On this reading, Priam's lament is a signifier of Troy's lost past and symbol of her lack of hope for the future: for Troy is now no more than a city of feminised men (ἀρνῶν ἥδ' ἐρίφων ἐπιδήμιοι ἁρπακτῆρες, 262), already, but not yet, fallen. Ovid's version, however, reminds us of everything Homer leaves unsaid: for even after Hector dies there is still a great deal of incident left to relate in the war. By focusing on the effeminate Paris' success in slaying Achilles and bringing *joy* to Priam (*quod Priamus* ***gaudere*** *posset post Hector posset/hoc fuit*, *Metamorphoses* 12.607-8), Ovid redefines and mitigates Priam's reproaches at *Iliad* 24.261-2. Likewise, his reference to the female warrior Penthesilea (*Thermodontiaca*, *Metamorphoses* 12.611), queen of the Amazon contingent, implies that the semiotics of gender in epic warfare cannot be reduced to the simplistic dichotomy of 'masculine' vigour versus 'feminine' frailty: for even though Troy is reduced to a city of effeminate fighters, Ovid's version, by focusing on the 'feminine' Paris as slayer of Achilles, and making an aside to Penthesilea and her Amazon cohorts, suggests that even as a 'feminised' city Troy's martial resources are not yet fully exhausted.[207] The 'effeminacy' of Paris and his brothers, which initially in Homer seems to be a mark of reproach, now foreshadows the most significant events of the final year of the war: the arrival of the Amazons, and the death of the greatest of the Achaean heroes, Achilles. Hence Ovid's intervention mitigates the force of Priam's rebuke, showing that his reproaches are not fully deserved, as even the hyper-effeminate Paris will have his part to play in the fighting of the latter days of the war. Even as the *Iliad* draws to a close, it throws out such foreshadowings to remind us that the Trojan story as a whole is far from fully completed: Ovid has reopened the 'closure' of the *Iliad*, renegotiating

[207] Note also that Nestor's tale of the *aristeia* and apotheosis of Caeneus/Caenis (*Metamorphoses* 12.189-535), transformed from maiden into man, foreshadows this scene's concern with the transgression of gender boundaries: see section iv below, and Keith (2000) 81-6 for a discussion of the complex interplay of gender-based signifiers here and elsewhere in Ovid's battle-scenes.

the teleology to valorise his own ending and emphasise Homer's 'belatedness' with respect to the tradition.

Achilles' final fate, like the fall of Troy, stands *outside* the purlieu of the *Iliad*, whose stated concern is limited to the narration of his wrath (*μῆνιν...'Αχιλῆος*, *Iliad* 1.1). Homer's poem shuns the larger events in the history of Troy, such as the death of Achilles and the very fall of the city. His sequence is expanded at both beginning and end by the account of Ovid, who redirects the emphasis to fall on events outside the *Iliad* and thus makes his own claim to controlling the teleology of the passage, in the process reinterpreting Homer as a diffident and wavering 'latecomer' to the already-written *Iliad* tradition. Ovid's Trojan narrative suggests that Homer was not the full poet of the Trojan war that he is sometimes made out to be: his story is not absolutely self-sufficient, but an 'apologetic' offshoot of a wider and more powerful 'Tradition'. Homer might affect to incorporate the 'whole' of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*; but it is Ovid who expands his limited terms into a full and meaningful sequence. Brooks Otis complained of Ovid's *Iliad* that "Ovid displays great skill in relating the Trojan War without really touching any of the major episodes":[208] how much more is this reproach applicable to the rendition offered by Homer, whose account steers clear of both the cause and conclusion of the war, and restricts itself to a forty-nine day period in the middle of the final year. If much of Ovid's epic is self-consciously 'belated', betraying an anxiety about the possibility of opening for itself a place in the epic tradition, Homer is equally diffident and demurring: concerns about 'belatedness' are not the sole preserve of the latecomer, but are simultaneously an enabling and disabling feature of the whole epic mode.[209]

iv. The metamorphosis of epic: a poetics of 'aperture'

As we have seen in his account of the duel of Achilles and Cycnus and its aftermath, Ovid's manipulations of Homeric teleology have served to redefine the *Iliad* as a poem of 'belatedness': they have incorporated it within a series of 'repetitions' whose *telos* can be renegotiated to incorporate either the conclusion of the *Iliad*, the death of Hector, or the alternative conclusions offered by Ovid, the death of Achilles and the

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[208] Otis (1970) 282.

fall of Troy. This reading of the epic tradition implicates the *Iliad* in a series of temporal layerings, an openness to the influx of both past and future, that is heavily at odds with some influential critical assessments of the epic style. For example, Mikhail Bakhtin, in his essay "Epic and Novel", seeks to establish for the epic form a self-contained temporal enclave absolutely disassociated from present or contemporary concerns; he describes his conception of the epic world as follows:

> The world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of "beginnings" and "peak times" in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests." The important point here is not that the past constitutes the content of the epic. The formally constitutive feature of the epic as a genre is rather the transferral of a represented world into the past, and the degree to which this world participates in the past. The epic was never a poem about the present, about its own time (one that became a poem about the past only for those who came later). The epic, as the specific genre known to us today, *has been from the beginning a poem about the past.*[210]

Bakhtin's analysis as it is exemplified in this quote does not seem to constitute an *invitation* to interpret, but rather suggests that the epic genre *defies* any attempt at interpretation, inasmuch as it attempts to impress on its reader the distance which separates both epic author and, most particularly, epic audiences from the world of which the epic author sings. Bakhtin does not envisage the epic 'past' as a world which was once (for its original singers) a 'present'; for inscribing the epic world within a 'historical' narrative which leads teleologically to our own day would offer a clear and convenient interpretive tenor between 'present' and 'past' worlds which would deny the past its absoluteness, its haughty independence from present-day concerns. Rather, epic has *always* been about the past, *always* concerned with a world which is 'other' than the world of the poet and his audience. Hence Bakhtin visualises the relationship between epic 'past' and 'present' time, not through conjunctive imagery such as that of 'tenor' or 'teleology', 'dialogue' or 'dynamic', but through the segregating terminology of 'boundaries' and 'barriers':

> The epic past is called the "absolute past" for good reason: it is both monochronic and valorized (hierarchical); it lacks any relativity, that is, any gradual, purely temporal progressions that might connect it with the present. It is *walled off absolutely* from all subsequent times, and above all from those times in which the

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[209] Cf. Kennedy (1997) 153: "in so far as any interpretation makes its totalising claim to truth, to be the last word, it will be a version of *epos*."
[210] Bakhtin (1981) 13; emphasis mine.

> singer and his listeners are located. *This boundary*, consequently, is immanent in the form of the epic itself and is felt and heard in its every word.[211]

Epic lacks "gradual, purely temporal progressions" to negotiate the space between epic and contemporary worlds; rather it comes down to us "*walled off absolutely*...from those times in which the singer and his listeners are located," sheltered by the unbreachable "*boundary*" which divides present and past. If the epic world is, as we saw Bakhtin suggest above, a world of 'beginnings' and 'peak times', then it takes great care to preserve its unique status by sequestering itself within this a solipsistic, monolithic and self-sufficient literary form. Lurking beneath the rhetoric of 'firsts' and 'bests' is the rhetoric of 'the one and only': the more primal, the more elevated that epic's characters are, the more aloof they hold themselves from us and the further they distance themselves from any prospect of interpretation by the contemporary mindset.

Similarly, Erich Auerbach's study of Homeric narrative technique in *Mimesis*, far from asserting any co-dependent relationship of present and the past in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, actually argues for the complete *disassociation* of the various temporal strata in the two poems. The passage which Auerbach takes for his example is the introduction to the tale of Odysseus' scar in *Odyssey* 19:

> αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ἷζεν ἐπ' ἐσχαρόφιν, ποτὶ δὲ σκότον ἐτράπετ' αἶψα·
> αὐτίκα γὰρ κατὰ θυμὸν ὀΐσατο, μή ἑ λαβοῦσα
> οὐλὴν ἀμφράσσαιτο καὶ ἀμφαδὰ ἔργα γένοιτο.
> νίζε δ' ἄρ' ἆσσον ἰοῦσα ἄναχθ' ἑόν· αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
> οὐλήν, τήν ποτε ...
>
> (*Odyssey* 19.388-93)

Sitting by the fire waiting to be bathed, Odysseus suddenly recalls his scar; fearing that it will serve as a token of his true identity, he shrinks into the darkness (388-91). Eurycleia, however, immediately recognises the mark (392); and the next seventy lines (*Odyssey* 19.393-466) are devoted to an explanation of how Odysseus sustained the wound and why it serves as such a clear signifier of his identity. Against the supposition that the introduction of this tale might serve to heighten suspense, Auerbach points out that the digression is delayed for two lines (the *first* mention of

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[211] Bakhtin (1981) 15-16; emphases mine.

the scar is at 391, and the tale is not begun until its *second* mention on line 393), and further argues:

> An episode that will increase suspense by retarding the action must be so constructed that it will not fill the present entirely, will not put the crisis, whose resolution is being awaited, entirely out of the reader's mind, and thereby destroy the mood of suspense; the crisis and suspense must continue, must remain vibrant in the background. But Homer...knows no background. What he narrates is for the time being the only present, and fills both the stage and the reader's mind completely.[212]

For Auerbach, the 'past' is not invoked on account of the connotations or significance it might bring to the present moment: on the contrary, for as long as this tale from Odysseus' childhood is being narrated, it entirely supplants the episode of Odysseus' bath, itself becoming effectively the 'present moment' on which the narrative is focused ("What he narrates is for the time being *the only present*"). He explains his conception of Homer's mindset as follows: "The more original cause [of Homer's digressions] must have lain in the basic impulse of the Homeric style: to represent phenomena in a fully externalised form, visible and palpable in all their parts, and completely fixed in their spatial and temporal relationship."[213] Thus he considers the greatest aspect of Homer's literary achievement to be the manner in which he focuses on one specific moment and expands it into a full and ubiquitous 'totality': his later references to the "*fully externalised* forms" of phenomena "*completely* fixed in their spatial and temporal relationships" demonstrate his belief that its concentration on the 'present moment' is what gives Homeric epic its claim to a transcendent universality.[214] A veritable Parmenides *redux* in Homeric criticism, Auerbach asserts that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are open neither to 'what was' nor to 'what will be', but focus only upon "the present moment" as an eternal and changeless ἐστί: Homeric epic achieves 'totality' through its full and unadulterated concentration upon the exigencies of the present moment.

This perspective is reflected in a number of studies of the relationship between 'present' and 'past' in Homeric poetry. For example, Paolo Vivante in *The Homeric*

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212 Auerbach (1953) 4.
213 Auerbach (1953) 6.
214 Auerbach (1953) 6.

Imagination echoes such concerns as Bakhtin's image of a "walled-off past" and Auerbach's emphasis on "the present moment" as follows:

> The action of the Homeric poems takes place outside the bounds of historical chronology. A drama is here enacted whose antecedents sink back into an obscure mythical past and whose sequel bears no relationship to the actual story. The characters are thus caught, as it were, in an *absolute moment of existence*, their past almost forgotten, their destiny immediately at stake, *once and for all.*[215]

Like Auerbach, Vivante speaks of Homer in a totalising language of superlatives and absolutes: he supposes Homeric narration to centre on an "absolute moment of existence", in which the characters' destinies are at stake "once and for all". And just as Auerbach dismissed the 'digression' on Odysseus' scar as effectively a 'present moment' in its own right, so also Vivante dismisses the Homeric poems' references to mythology by identifying such references as "large-scale similes", stories chosen not for the meaning they themselves bear but manipulated and assimilated into the 'present moment' that is the concern of the immediate narrative context: "the mythical allusion is so stripped of all literal and mythical connotations that nothing is left but an imagery that can only be explained on the strength of the Homeric context itself".[216] Where Bakhtin and Auerbach sought a decisive *dissolution* of the relationship between the past and the present, Vivante by contrast seeks a total *assimilation* of the past to the terms of the present; yet the effect is in each case the same, the rejection of any dialogic relationship between present and past, and the attribution to Homer of an ambition to *totalise* the whole of the literary and mythical tradition within *one* chronological instant, an imperialistic expansiveness seeking to annex the past and future to the authoritative rule of the 'present moment'.[217]

Accordingly, what Bakhtin calls the "absolute past", what Auerbach calls the "present moment", and what Vivante calls the "absolute moment of existence" have this in common: that they view the epic aesthetic, not as part of a teleological progression towards our own day, or a stage in the process of development of a character, or a literature, or a nation; *they* consider the epic form to be complete both in and of itself. In fact, they impose on the epic form a closure which is so assertive and so emphatic

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[215] Vivante (1970) 120 (emphasis his).
[216] See Vivante (1970) 18-25; quotes from 19 and 21.

that it denies not only narrative continuation, in terms of a progression towards either prefigured events in the mythic tradition or themes and issues important to our contemporary world: it also denies interpretative development, it dictates its own terms to the reader, finessing our present-day concerns and interests, and leaves us intellectually high and dry, absolutely incapable of formulating a coherent and comprehensibe response to the challenges it poses. Epic – or at least, *this* kind of epic – is both the *beginning* and the *end* of literary debate. The very word which the Greek language uses to describe the genre – *to epos*, 'the word' – serves to emphasise this point: epic as these critics see it is not just *a* word, or *a* form of literature, it is *the* form of literature, both one word and every word, but most of all the *last* word on any and every subject it cares to encompass.

Øivind Andersen's assessment of the relationship between 'past' and 'present' in the *Iliad* seems at first to proceed along similar lines. Although Andersen begins by reifying his conception of the 'past' as an objective, extratextual object, stating "my concern is with what the past facts *were*, not with what they *mean* to the characters who interpret them", he develops his argument in such a direction that he concludes that the 'past', inasmuch as it exists in the Homeric poems at all, does not represent a clearly-defined extratextual canon of 'fact', but is rather subject to rewriting and reappropriation under the pressure of the concerns of the moment: "The past is exposed...to the changing circumstances of time and place and so is prone to be adapted and geared continually to suit the present".[218] Andersen's final contention, that the poem does not base itself *upon* a tradition, but rather *represents* it (that is, that what we conceive of as the 'tradition' is in fact no more and no less than the picture of

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[217] Similar approaches to the 'past' in the Homeric poems may be found at Finley (1981) 164; Walsh (1984) 13-14; Kirk (1990) 251.

[218] Quotes from Andersen (1990) 25, 42 (emphasis his). Cf. 41n28 for his refutation of the relevance of the notion of 'objective truth' in the *Iliad*'s representation of the past; and contrast Willcock (1964) 141-54 and Jones (1992) 74-90. Similar to Andersen's approach is that of Austin (1966) 295-312, who argues that "the obliquity of its [the *Iliad*'s] style with its gradual revelation of the present and future give a greater depth and perspective than Auerbach would allow" (299); however, his interpretation of the digressions in the *Iliad* centres on their *paradeigmatic* value, which again serve to manipulate the past, the better for it to give 'examples' to a reified, authorising and ever-present present. From another perspective, Lang (1983) 140-64, while coining the term 'reverberation' in order to stress the *two-way* relationship between the *Iliad* and material in the contemporary epic tradition, applies this mode of analysis only to the composition of the historical *Iliad* without exploring the possible wider ramifications of the term within the sphere of critical readings and interpretations of the poem: what she grants to the text (the possibility of a dynamic relationship with the source material of the literary

the 'past' conveyed by the poem) recalls Vivante's dismissal of the mythological references in the Homeric poems as mere "similes": in the oral tradition, the ephemerality of the medium of presentation coupled with the lack of an 'objective' textual record exposes the past, denied of any secure basis upon which to validate itself, to appropriation by present values and concerns. Andersen, again, finds epic 'totality' to reside in the 'present moment': in the Homeric poems, the 'now' seems to be always and forever the 'all'.

Yet Andersen's approach here also suggests some ways to open up a broader perspective on the temporal aspects of Homeric 'totality'. Certainly Andersen is more alive than Auerbach or Vivante to the rich potential of a conception of the 'past' as fluid and dynamic, holding itself open to reappropriation within the context of the issues of the present moment; however, his overriding concern with the *oral* context of Homeric poetry seems to close him to the awareness that the 'past' might bring its own issues and concerns to bear upon the 'present moment', breaking through its façade of self-centred 'presentness' and drawing it into a bipartite dialogue.[219] Such a perspective of the relationship between 'present' and 'past' can be found in Michael Lynn-George's reading of the tale of Odysseus' scar.[220] Taking issue with Auerbach's proposition that fetishisation of the 'present moment' is the essential feature of Homeric style, Lynn-George offers an alternative reading of *Odyssey* 19.388-93 which emphasises the importance of the content and placing of the tale to the dramatic development of the scene, and indeed to the conception of the *Odyssey*'s epic vision as a whole.[221] Central to Lynn-George's analysis is the two-line gap between the first reference to Odysseus' scar (*μή ἑ λαβοῦσα οὐλὴν ἀμφράσσαιτο*, *Odyssey* 19.390-1) and Homer's introduction of the tale of how he acquired it (*οὐλήν, τήν ποτε...*, *Odyssey* 19.393). Auerbach had argued that the delay between the first mention of the scar and the tale of its sustaining ruined the dramatic effect of the story: he would have preferred Eurycleia's recognition of the scar to be told at once without this diverting

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traditional 'past') she denies to its interpreters (the privilege of a two-way exchange of meaning with a contemporary 'present').

[219] Cf. Andersen (1990) 41-5.

[220] See Lynn-George (1988) ch.1.

[221] Lynn-George (1988) 18-24.

aside which entirely overrides the present narrative concerns.[222] However, Lynn-George prefers to account for the delay in another fashion:

> Auerbach calls for the story at once, at this point of the first mention of the scar; the epic defers. Where the epic pauses and states Odysseus' apprehension of the suspended possibility that the story of his return and identity might be revealed, Auerbach wants an immediate telling of the tale.... Instead the epic withholds the tale, thereby accentuating the collision and the break between 'at once' and 'once long ago', the immediate present and the distant past onto which it opens.[223]

Explicitly taking issue with Auerbach, he argues that the two line gap between the introduction and narration of the tale holds the narrative in a conspicuous tension *between* 'present' and 'past'. At this point in the tale, there are two moments, not one, at issue: there is the moment on which the narrative is currently focusing, when Odysseus, a stranger in his own household, is attempting to conceal his identity in preparation for his showdown with the suitors; and there is the past time, the time at which Odysseus sustained his scar, whose sudden introduction nurtures the prospect of a premature revelation of Odysseus' identity. The postponement of the telling, even as the poet lets us know that there is something to be told, highlights what for Lynn-George are vital features of Homeric poetry in general: the significance of 'delay' and the importance of timing to epic narrative, coupled with the suspicion that there is much more to say than the text permits to be revealed at any one moment.[224]

Lynn-George's conception of the complicity between 'past' and 'present' in Homeric narration is further exemplified by his reading of the Trojan scenes of *Iliad* 3. Speaking of the τειχοσκοπιά (in which, despite the fact we are in the final year of the war, the poet presents the Trojan chieftains observing their Achaean counterparts as if they had only just arrived on their shores), he remarks:

> In its subtle sense of strangeness, the *Teichoskopia* possesses a structural ambivalence which has a general significance for the narrative beginnings of the epic. It is not that the narrative naïvely disregards any sense of a past in a presentation as if for the first time. In 'as if for the first time' the narrative evokes

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[222] See Auerbach (1968) 7.
[223] Lynn-George (1988) 19-20.
[224] Cf. Goldhill (1988) 1-31 on "juxtaposition" in the Homeric poems: "Homer's paratactic, juxtapositional compositional method is often regarded as part of Homer's 'transparency', 'simplicity', 'directness'.... The example considered here suggests that 'juxtaposition' can be seen rather as a source of intriguing openness of meaning, a complex suggestiveness of sense and representation." (24)

> the distance of past time, emphasising an extended past in which all has already begun.[225]

Lynn-George therefore shows himself to be responsive to the tension between the 'present moment' of the narrative, an isolated scene in the tenth year of the war, and the 'history' of Trojan-Achaean encounters which stretches back through a whole decade of epic conflict. He raises the question of the very point at which an epic can be said to 'begin'. Does the *Iliad* blithely proceed under the assumption that its own beginning is coterminous with the beginning of the Trojan War, and thus narrate the first few books as if it were telling of events in the first, rather than the ninth year, of the conflict? Or does it not rather acknowledge that behind its own beginning lie yet more epic 'beginnings', thus establishing its own narrative's claim to a certain sense of 'primacy', while also simultaneously acknowledging that behind the start of *this* story lie many more 'beginnings' in the tales of the Trojan cycle ("...an extended past in which *all has already begun*"). Hence in *Iliad* 3 the poem is 'held open' to the influx of the history of the early years of the war. The epic invokes the 'first contact' between Achaeans and Trojans,[226] laying a claim to a certain kind of totality in incorporating this assertion of 'primacy' (for the poem encompasses, through retrospectives and foreshadowings, the whole of the Trojan War), and simultaneously, in its invocation of the spectre of alternative points of origin, other points from which the tale could have been taken up,[227] acknowledges 'belatedly' that there is more to the Trojan cycle than can be included within the forty-nine day period related in the poem. However, this does not mean that the poem resigns its claim to total coverage, to that claim to absolute narrative authority which is a characteristic assertion of epic discourse. Although in one sense it acknowledges its entry into the literary tradition comes 'too late', yet it succeeds in turning this vulnerability into a declaration of strength by proclaiming its willingness to *absorb* the influence of the past in one respect, and to *appropriate* it, to influence it in its own terms, in another respect. 'Belatedness' (or *in medias res*, as this phenomenon is sometimes described in epic

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[225] Lynn-George (1988) 30-1.

[226] See e.g. Clader (1976) 9-10 on the relationship between the τειχοσκοπιά and the gathering of Helen's suitors; also Taplin (1992) 96-103.

[227] When Demodocus narrates the tale of the Wooden Horse at the request of Odysseus in *Odyssey* 8, he takes up the tale from the point when (ἔνθεν ἑλὼν, 8.500) the Argives had departed: ἔνθεν ἑλὼν is in this respect an intriguing concept to apply to the interpretation of Homeric epic: for it contains both a gesture of 'belatedness' in its acknowledgement that the epic tradition contains more than could

criticism) is in this respect a totalising gesture entirely characteristic of epic: the present, by acknowledging what has gone before, both stakes its own claim upon and opens itself up to the literary resources of the 'past'.[228] Hence epic totality could also be said to be attained through a poem's *deficiency*, as well as through its expansiveness: classical epic presents itself in terms too exalted and comprehensive to suffer confinement within the cramped boundaries of "the present moment". The epics of Homer and Ovid find their expanse, their universality, their breadth of outlook, in their acknowledgement that there is always *something further* to be said.

The form of epic which Lynn-George elucidates here is best understood in Bakhtinian terms not through Bakhtin's distant and inaccessible reading of the 'epic' past, but rather in terms of the literary form which Bakhtin *opposes* to the epic: that is, the novel. Just as Bakhtin saw epic as the genre of the remote *past*, he sees the novel as the genre of *contemporary* times, that is, a literary form which belongs as much to the present day and modern concerns as to a self-contained and inaccessible literary domain; or as he himself insists: "The novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present; this is what keeps the genre from congealing."[229] Moreover, he sees the novel not so much as an independent, self-contained genre – what could be less in keeping with the spirit of a literature which seeks explicitly to navigate the tenor between present and past? – but rather as a *mode* of literature which pervades the more archaic 'epic' forms, breaking down their inaccessibility and drawing them into more free-form and more open-ended interpretative contexts. This is the process which Bakhtin describes as the 'novelisation' of literature, a process which he elucidates as follows:

> The novelization of literature does not imply attaching to already completed genres a generic canon that is alien to them, not theirs. The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is plasticity itself.... Therefore, the novelization of other genres does not imply their subjection to an alien generic canon; on the contrary, novelization implies their liberation from all that serves as a brake on their unique development.[230]

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possibly be narrated in any one poem, and an assertion than *this* story, the one which it is beginning to tell, is the most significant and relevant to present circumstances.

228 For similar approaches cf. Notopoulous (1951) 91-7; Davis (1986) 69-75.

229 Bakhtin (1981) 27.

230 Bakhtin (1981) 39.

The phrase "plasticity itself" which Bakhtin uses to describe the novel in this excerpt is revealing in terms of this argument, since it suggests that in contrast to the rigidity of the *epic*, the *novel*-form is a much more pliable and accessible – perhaps even 'metamorphic' – genre. It breaks out of the 'absolute past' by mediating between that past and contemporaneity: that is to say, it incorporates within itself not *one* world, the world of the literary work, but *two* worlds, the world of the novel and the world of its readers and writers, and it brings these together into a species of 'ubertext', as it were: a genre which is at once pliable and innovative, and which is prepared both to adapt itself to the changing circumstances of the present, and to impart its own dynamic impetus on the no-longer 'changeless' features of the past. In this respect, Bakhtin's exploration of the novel form's negotiation between 'present' and 'past' and its willingness to adapt itself to the influences of both these polar extremes bears a suggestive likeness to a prominent consititutive feature of Ovidian epic, its titular theme of 'metamorphosis'. As is evident from much of the work done on the *Metamorphoses* in the past thirty years, the motif of transformation in the poem need not only be read as a thematic connection between the various narrative episodes (that is, that every tale contains an example, be it ever so insignificant, of physical change): it can be taken also to serve as an active principle underlying any and every aspect of Ovid's universe.[231] We may already have seen such scholars as Auerbach and Bakhtin elucidating the genre of ancient epic as a mode of discourse which seeks to lock itself into a 'single moment' in a 'remote past'; yet this mode of reading, this manner of interpretation, is not possible in a metamorphic universe: because nothing in the world of the *Metamorphoses* is allowed to remain constant, but everything and everyone is always caught up in a process of flux and transformation. Metamorphosis treats of not *one* form, but *two*; and most crucially of all, it involves the privileging *neither* of the earlier form *nor* of the later, but rather it negotiates between *both* forms, and neither form is fully comprehensible or fully interpretable without the influence of the other. In this respect, metamorphosis does not so much concern two self-contained poles,

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[231] As Galinsky (1975) 61-70: "[Ovid] emancipated metamorphosis from being an actual subject and made it into a functional principle that is operative in all essential aspects of the poem" (*ibid*, 69). The wide-ranging and thorough discussion of Barkan (1986) 19-93 covers many of the most prominent facets of the metamorphosis theme. Cf. also Altieri (1973), who argues that metamorphic 'flux' underlies a world-vision based on fiction and the imagination as opposed to a metaphysical 'truth'; Skulsky (1981) 24-61, for a discussion of some of the psychological aspects of metamorphosis; and Tissol (1997) for an interpretation of Ovid's predilection for puns and other forms of wordplay, 'metamorphosis' operative on a semantic level.

but concentrates rather on what is produced by the *modulation* between these two extremes. Hence even as it emphasises the *differences* between the earlier and the later forms (as the readings of Auerbach and Bakhtin emphasise the 'absolute' and 'self-contained' nature of the epic form), metamorphosis also at the same time foregrounds the *similarities* which remain (as in Lynn-George's location of the genre within "an extended past in which all has already begun"). The *locus classicus* of this aspect of metamorphosis is the transformation of Lycaon in Book 1:

> territus ipse fugit nactusque silentia ruris
> exululat frustraque loqui conatur: ab ipso
> colligit os rabiem **solitaeque cupidine caedis**
> vertitur in pecudes et **nunc quoque** sanguine gaudet.
> in villos abeunt vestes, in crura lacerti:
> fit lupus et veteris servat vestigia formae;
> canities **eadem** est, **eadem** violentia vultus,
> **idem** oculi lucent, **eadem** feritatis imago est.
> (*Metamorphoses* 1.232-9)

There are many elements of the language of this passage which highlight the similarity between Lycaon's old and new forms. For example, the phrases *solitae cupidine caedis* (234) and *nunc quoque sanguine gaudet* (235) foreground the psychological continuity between Lycaon the man and Lycaon the wolf, both bloodthirsty and rejoicing in savage slaughter; while the repetition of *eadem/idem* on lines 238-9 serves to emphasise that even *after* the transformation has occurred there are a great many elements even of Lycaon's physical appearance – the grey hair, the fierce look, the glint in the eyes – which are shared between his human and lupine forms. As Leonard Barkan writes, "Jupiter does not produce the rabid wolf; the god merely hurls his thunderbolt, and Lycaon himself takes care of the rest because his own character is so intrinsically rabid and wolflike from the start."[232]

What this list of similarities implies, then, is that metamorphosis always involves a *nunc quoque*: its function in negotiating between two forms is as much to highlight similarity as it is to play up terms of difference. Hence to posit intertextuality in a

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[232] Barkan (1986) 25. His analysis of the Lycaon tale in fact focuses on continuity-within-change on several levels: as well as the physical and psychological aspects of the transformation, he touches on such elements as the role of metamorphosis in reifying metaphor ("the artistic effect of metamorphosis is to transform human identities into images," 26) and the similarities between religious ritual and brutish savagery ("the important distinction...between sacrifice and cannibalism is blurred," 27)

metamorphic universe, whereas Bakhtin and Auerbach originally sought to lock the epic genre into an explicitly self-contained universe of *firsts* and *bests*, a world of *the one and only*, metamorphosis, by contrast, strives to re*open* the epic world to the influences of later literary 'transformations' and alternative, contemporary interpretive paradigms. If Bakhtin saw epic as the genre of the absolute past, then Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, inasmuch as it deploys the trope of transformation in a way which highlights the 'similarities' always present in an assertion of 'difference', suggests ways in which even the 'epic' itself may be 'novelised', and a process by which that wall which separates the 'absolute past' from its present readers and authors may be breached. Metamorphosis does not involve merely the remote past, but it reaches out to modulate this past against a present form; it unlocks the epic genre from its absolute, unchangeable 'pastness' and reappropriates it in terms of subsequent, later, transformations. In the same way, in this 'metamorphic' vision of intertextuality, the later poem both *rereads* and *rewrites* its predecessor; it both opens *itself* out to the influence of the earlier work, and itself seizes on and works out apertures in the *earlier* work of literature, modifying it as if through the trope of metamorphosis in order to highlight the interplay of 'similarities' and 'differences' between the two works. 'Holding oneself open' to the possibilities of transformation is the primary perquisite of a metamorphic literature. And what this means for Ovid is that the *Metamorphoses*, a poem which comes at the end of the classical epic tradition, succeeds in turning its position as latecomer into a position of strength by proclaiming its willingness to *absorb* the influence of the past in one respect, and to *appropriate* it, to metamorphose it and influence it in its own terms, in another respect. Epic as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* envisages the genre achieves its totalising perspective less by revelling in the insularity of 'the present moment' – because after all, what could be more 'ephemeral' than this? – than by 'holding itself open' to the past, acknowledging the very dependence of the 'present' upon the influx of the past and the future within the matrix of the literary tradition.

This tension between an open and fluid 'belatedness' on the one hand, and a 'totality' both closed and dictatorial in its self-sufficiency on the other, is reflected in the work

of several of the artists whose achievements are narrated in the *Metamorphoses*.[233] One such passage describes the weaving contest between Arachne and Minerva (*Metamorphoses* 6.1-145). Minerva goes first: her tapestry centres (*Metamorphoses* 6.83-100) on four scenes of men who strove unsuccessfully against the gods, a choice of theme which attempts wholly to pre-empt a balanced judgement of this contest between mortal and divinity, and functions as an assertion of the timeless and static power of the heavenly realm. There is no slippage between 'appearance' and 'actuality', no possibility of misreading or reappropriation, as each of the gods is introduced in a context appropriate to his traditional attributes: the Olympians are presented in the timeless and eternal setting of heaven, each captured in the 'true' pose of the 'present' (eternal) moment.[234] And at *Metamorphoses* 6.101-2 (*circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras/(is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem*) the border of olive wreaths sets a *finis*, a stable mark of 'closure', to a work which attempts to impose firm boundaries on mortal presumption and to forestall contest by appealing to the authority inherent in her divine power.[235]

By contrast, Arachne's work narrates a catalogue of deceits of the gods (*Metamorphoses* 6.104-26), opening up the issue of the legitimacy of divine power and questioning the very authority whose insularity and self-imposed 'closure' form the centrepiece of her opponent's work. Minerva's tapestry is static, representing an insular, self-contained and inherently 'totalised' picture of divine authority; Arachne's depicts the gods in a series of fluid and dynamic poses, portraying them reanimated by the impetus of erotic desire, subject to slippage between 'representation' and 'reality'

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[233] See particularly Leach (1974), Lateiner (1984) and Hofmann (1985) for how such passages can be read as encapsulating a 'manifesto' of Ovidian poetics. Especially significant discussions of particular programmatic episodes include Brown (1987) 211-20 on the gates of the palace of the Sun (*Metamorphoses* 2.1-18); Hinds (1987a) (after Heinze [1919=1960]) on the singing contest between Pierids and Muses (*Metamorphoses* 5.294-678); and Helzle (1993) 123-34 and Wheeler (1995) 95-121 on the Creation-narrative (*Metamorphoses* 1.5-88).

[234] See Leach (1974) 116; Lateiner (1984) 15; Feeney (1990) 191; Smith (1997) 60-1. Anderson (1972) 161 notes that Minerva's tapestry closely follows the subject matter of the Parthenon frieze; Leach's development of this point nicely captures the link between the motionless figures on the stone monument and the upright, monolithic gods of the tapestry: "In his outline of the composition, Ovid has captured the cold aloofness of that same monumental pediment that places the gods so far above the reach of man." (*op.cit.*)

[235] Cf. Smith (1997) 58: "The point of the tapestry is not, therefore, that Arachne should study it and recant, but rather that she should behold it and know she has sinned."

as they hold themselves open to the impetus of erotic desire.[236] Jupiter is successively a bull, an eagle, a swan, a satyr, Amphitryo, a golden shower, a flame, a shepherd, and a snake; Neptune assumes the figures of a bull, Enipeus, a ram, a horse, a bird, a dolphin; Phoebus is a farmer, a hawk, a lion; Bacchus, a bunch of grapes; Saturn, a horse: there is no fixed form, no recourse to an inherent and insular authority, only an adaptation to the exigencies of the moment and a dependence upon the ever-volatile impulses of *amor*. The border of delicate ivy leaves which frames her composition (*ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo, nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos*, *Metamorphoses* 6.126-7) indicates, in contrast to the dominant and authoritative 'closure' set upon Minerva's tapestry, allegiance to the self-consciously 'epigonal' themes of Alexandrian poetic principles.[237] It is true that Arachne owes her skill as a weaver to the providence of Minerva (*scires a Pallade doctam*, *Metamorphoses* 6.23): however, as an artist she proclaims her intention not to yield to the pre-eminence of her teacher as a given, but rather to 'open up' the theme of the power of the Olympians so prevalent in Minerva's work and to adapt it to the perspective of mortal artists and mortal concerns. Just as Arachne seeks to challenge the mastery of Minerva in the weaving contest, thus breaking down the divisions between men and gods, so her tapestry breaks down the authority and supremacy which Minerva's tapestry proclaimed to be immanent in divinity. Arachne's 'crime' is not so much that she has challenged her divine mistress Minerva, as that she has revealed the potential for alternative, 'belated' readings of Minerva's unilateral declaration of an authoritative and insular artistic manifesto.

Since Minerva and Arachne are set in competition against each other, we are implicitly challenged to make a judgement on whose manifesto of artistic values seems to represent more closely the guiding principle of the poetics of metamorphic epic. The blind prejudice of Minerva ought to act as a warning against a wholehearted and closed-minded endorsement of *either* contender's contribution to the debate, yet we cannot ignore the inference that an epic programme founded on the principles of

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[236] Harries (1990) 75 compares the formal structures of the two tapestries, relating Arachne's looser and more formless composition to the plan of the *Metamorphoses*. Feeney (1991) 190-194 interprets the passage as exemplary of the poem's oscillation between the extremes of fixity (Minerva) and flux (Arachne). See also Anderson (1972) 160; Leach (1974) 117-8; Feldherr (2002) 174-5.

[237] See Smith (1997) 58-60; cf. also Hofmann (1985) 230-4, contrasting Minerva's (Ennian) *ingenium* with Arachne's (Callimachean) *ars*, and Rosati (1999) 247-53.

'belatedness' and 'reiteration' is closer in spirit to Arachne's celebration of transience and her openness to alternative, 'epigonal' perceptions of authority and power than Minerva's assertion of the uncomplicated power of divinity and the 'eternal moment' of Olympian authority.[238] It should also be noted that the very critical move which relates descriptive ecphrastic passages to the concerns of the wider work in which they play a part is an Arachnean, not a Minervan, move, privileging as it does an openness to interpretations based upon factors imported from external authorities, rather than an insular, 'self-sufficient' reading dictated by the terms of the text itself. The *Metamorphoses* as read through Arachne's tapestry shows more affinity with the ethos of 'aperture' evident in Lynn-George's exposure of temporal layering in the *Iliad* than it does with the fetishisation of the 'present moment' enjoyed by Auerbach. Arachne achieves her epic vision not through the univocal expression of an immanent and introspective authority, but precisely through the exploitation of her humble mortal perspective in order to 'open up' such insular and self-contained discourses. Just as 'appearance' trumps 'reality' in Arachne's depiction of the divine amours of the gods, so Ovid's epic discourse reopens (the usual critical term is 'undermines') the closure on the epic tradition applied by such 'masters' of the form as Homer and Virgil by showing them to be vulnerable to fluidity, transience, and a perpetual succession of reappropriations.

The critical move which seeks poetic 'manifestos' in the ecphrastic artworks of the *Metamorphoses* is also often applied in Homeric criticism. In particular, Phemius and Demodocus, the bards of the *Odyssey*, are frequently associated with the figure of Homer himself, either in the social context of bardic performance or on account of their privileged role as producers and disseminators of *κλέος*.[239] Especially notable in the context of our reading of the *Metamorphoses* is the song of the Sirens (*Odyssey* 12.184-96). Charles Segal compares the Sirens' interpretation of traditions of heroic poetry to the heroic tradition which Demodocus relates to the Phaeacians: "it shows

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[238] This is an opinion shared by all those who read the *Metamorphoses* under the terms of 'fluidity' and 'dynamism': see Lateiner (1984) 15-17; Hofmann (1985) 230-4; Barkan (1986) 3-5; Harries (1990) 67-71; Feeney (1991) 193; Wheeler (1999) 159-60; Rosati (1999) 248-53; Feldherr (2002) 174-5. Those who endorse Minerva's artistry tend to interpret the poem within the framework of a more rigid and uncompromising structure: see Otis (1970) 146; Bömer (1976) 35-6. Leach (1974) 103-4, 117-8 treads a delicate path between the two extremes, arguing that the poem incorporates both the (fixed) Minervan and the (fluid) Arachnean viewpoints in its portrayal of divine and poetic power.

heroic adventure as something frozen and crystallized into lifeless, static form, something dead and past, a subject for song and nothing more."[240] Similarly Pietro Pucci suggests through an analysis of the diction and themes of their song that the Sirens represent an exclusively *Iliad*-centred perspective of the epic tradition: his analysis therefore seems to imply that their intention is to 'close off' Odysseus to any literary tradition save the Iliadic.[241] In Ovidian terms, the Sirens' song shows allegiance to Minervan poetic values, static, insular, rejecting progress and seeking to impose an immediate foreclosure on the narrative; while Odysseus, by failing to succumb to the lure of the 'eternal moment' of egotistical self-celebration promised by the song, demonstrates an 'openness' which empowers him to remain an active hero in a continually fluid and developing tradition.

The *Iliad* is generally understood to be a less self-conscious and reflexive poem than the *Odyssey*; yet it too contains descriptions of various artists and the works they are engaged in producing, prominent among which is the web of Helen in book 3:

> ἡ δὲ μέγαν ἱστὸν ὕφαινε,
> δίπλακα πορφυρέην, πολέας δ' ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους
> Τρώων θ' ἱπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
> οὓς ἕθεν εἵνεκ' ἔπασχον ὑπ' Ἄρηος παλαμάων
> (*Ιλιαδ* 3.125-8)

Helen incorporates into her tapestry images of the battles between the Trojans and the Achaeans (127-8); in this respect her work reflects the martial subject matter of the *Iliad*, thus suggesting that the web could be read in terms of metapoetic commentary on the poem in which it is described. As in the Ovidian weaving contest between Arachne and Minerva, the correlation of *text*iles and *text*uality offers the possibility of interpreting a tapestry as if it were a literary composition.[242] Yet as George Kennedy

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[239] See e.g. Walsh (1984) 3-21; Lloyd (1987) 85-90; Pucci (1987) 214-27; Ford (1992) 90-130; Segal (1994) 113-41; Latacz (1996) 30-32.

[240] Segal (1983) 38-43; quote from 38. Cf. Ford (1992) 84: "In the Sirens...the enchantment of poetry reveals its sinister side: their song is a binding spell for Odysseus, for the price of listening to it is to be fixed fast." The Sirens are a threat because the unconditional surrender to 'song' which they represent forecloses on any further possibilty of 'action'.

[241] See Pucci (1998) 1-9.

[242] On the relationship between weaving and literary composition in the Arachne episode see Hofmann (1985) 230-1: for the same themes at work in *Iliad* 3.125-8 see Clader (1976) 6-9; Collins (1988) 42-3. Scheid & Svenbro (1996) 112-17 resist this self-consciously metatextual reading on the grounds that Homer himself never applies the metaphor of 'weaving' to artistic comprehension; and that the speakers who are privileged by an explicit association with the weaver's art are not singers, but diplomats, such as Odysseus and Menelaus (*Iliad* 3.212), who must take particular care to interweave their pro-Argive arguments with tactful acknowledgements of the Trojan point of view (the 'woof' and

suggests, as much as the text here seems to invite comparison between the activities of Homer and Helen, in that both are composing works of art on the subject of the conflict between Greeks and Trojans, there are also fundamental formal differences between the media of literature and of tapestry brought out by the narrative context.[243] Having been at work on her web, Helen now proceeds to the city walls in order to watch the duel between Paris and Menelaus: this leads to the famous τειχοσκοπιά scene, in which she relates her knowledge and memories of the leading Greek heroes to Priam. Kennedy proposes that the picture of the war on Helen's tapestry – static, immobile, bound by the limitations of the visual medium – is intended to contrast with the images portrayed in the dialogue between Helen and Priam as they converse about the appearance and abilities of the Greek heroes. He suggests that the poet asserts the superiority of the literary medium, which is capable of portraying dynamism and change and representing the past as well as the present, over the static and immobile representations of visual art forms.[244] According to Kennedy, "the *Iliad* is eminently *scriptible*, a text constantly inviting the creation of new texts":[245] ostentatiously rejecting the tapestry's exclusive and restricted visualisation of the 'present moment', the poem invokes the influence of past and future events and the dynamism of the poetic form in manifesting its own more dynamic artistic vision. Combined with Lynn-George's reading of the Trojan scenes in *Iliad* 3, in which he shows that the narration encompasses many temporal layerings stretching back to and beyond the beginning of the war,[246] Kennedy's interpretation invites a similarly 'Arachnean' interpretation of the poetic values of the *Iliad*. That is, the poem shuns insularity and stasis and moves instead towards a more dynamic and 'resonant' poetics, permanently open to the influx of the past and the future, alluding to texts already written as well as texts not yet written in its celebration of an open-ended 'belatedness'. The vista which opens up before Helen as she stands atop the city wall spreads further than the spectacle of the Greek army lined up for battle: it covers the whole perspective of the Trojan War cycle, from the gathering of her suitors to the

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'warp' of diplomatic discourse, in Scheid and Svenbro's curious yet effective simile). Their appeal to intentionalism is convincing on its own terms; yet I would hope to show in the remainder of this discussion that artists can match their rhetorical cousins in the way they interweave strands of the 'traditional past' in order to produce a convincing poetic fiction.

[243] See Kennedy (1986)

[244] Kennedy (1986) 9-13.

[245] Kennedy (1986) 13-14.

[246] See Lynn-George (1988) 27-37.

ultimate fall of the city, and in doing so it appeals to literary representations as diverse as the *Cypria* and its Epic Cycle predecessors, *Aeneid* 2 (Aeneas' account of the last night of Troy), or *Heroides* 16-17 in its openness to poetic allusion and appropriation.[247] Epic, for Helen as much as for Odysseus or Arachne, means that one is perpetually *held open* to the influx of outside themes and the pressures of the future and the past.

v. Aperture and Nestor: the Lapiths and Centaurs

Of course, although the previous section's aside on the chronological interplay of Homeric and Ovidian poetics could be read in Auerbachan terms as a celebration of the 'present moment', revelling in the impulse to explore the theme fully and unreservedly in a whimsical and self-contained digression, it can also be seen as serving a function in the wider context of my argument, in that it exploits a retrospective survey of the Homeric poems and the *Metamorphoses* in order to open up our current concerns to the influx of a wider literary (and scholarly) tradition. For we have now reached that point in the *Metamorphoses*, immediately following the death and resurrection of Cycnus, at which Nestor enters the scene with his expansive and curiously motivated narrative of the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs. Few regard this passage (*Metamorphoses* 12.189-535) as one of the highlights of the poem. Not only are the battle scenes monotonously repulsive with their emphasis on rivers of blood and showers of brain matter; worse even than this, the Centaurs with their grotesque hybrid natures reflect what many see as the incongruous intrusion of martial epic themes into a poem whose prime concern is love.[248] The poetics of digression are frequently invoked in the search for significance in this passage. One supposedly damning judgement is that of 'irrelevance', often linked with the 'senility' of the internal narrator, garrulous old Nestor, lost in his recollections of a youth which belongs to the distant past and absolutely incapable of coming to terms with the

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[247] See Clader (1976) 9-10; Lynn-George (1988) 29; Taplin (1992) 96-103; and above.

[248] The digression on the love-affair of Cyllarus and Hylonome (*Metamorphoses* 12.393-428) is particularly revealing of critical attitudes in this context: e.g. Due (1974) 150-1 considers that Ovid is using this insert tale to demonstrate "how far the poetic value of love and passion exceeds that of war, traditionally the highest theme of narrative poetry". See also Frécaut (1972) 257; Galinsky (1975) 127-8 ("...it is a travesty of the genre [of love poetry] instead of an evocation of genuine sympathy"); Solodow (1988) 87-8 ("Still, as often in Ovid, the tender is tinged with the grotesque.").

prevailing conditions of the contemporary age.[249] Thus his interjections are read as if they could be isolated and interpreted in their own terms, detached not only from the context of the surrounding narrative but also from the literary tradition and any poetic models to which the text may be related. Similarly in the *Iliad*, Nestor's 'irrelevant' and 'over-expansive' digressions are frequently quarantined from the rest of the poem and excused on the grounds of senility. For example, Caroline Querbach suggests that Nestor talks at such length in order to compensate for the loss of his youthful physical prowess: by contrast, the younger warriors have no need to justify their worth through loquacity, because they are still useful in other (martial) contexts.[250] Thomas Falkner, too, qualifies his appeal to Nestor's *discursive* authority by anchoring it in *physical* factors, asserting that Nestor's authority is validated primarily by his robust physique which is still just about capable of measuring up to younger men in certain limited aspects of heroic endeavour.[251]

Yet readings of the Iliadic Nestor which validate his narrative authority by an appeal to his youthful physical prowess appear to be inappropriate to the epic form: partly because bodily strength, far from being a transcendent signifier of personal identity, is as transitory and fleeting as the 'present moment' of youth, and partly because epic poetry itself, which celebrates *physical* supremacy by adapting it to a *literary* mode, seems to imply that might is meaningless unless it can be celebrated in heroic verse. Nestor's function in the *Iliad* is anything but physical: this is well demonstrated by his helplessness against the approach of Hector at *Iliad* 8.78-111.[252] His role rests rather on his very loquacity, the one attribute in which he can still compete on level terms with his comrades, and especially on the manner in which his speeches continually compel his fellow heroes to interact with the 'epic' heritage bequeathed by their

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[249] Thus Otis (1970) 283 labels the tale "tedious and otiose" before quickly passing on to more 'interesting' passages, while Mack (1988) 129-30 chides Nestor's obsessive-compulsive attention to detail and the manner in which he effaces the pathos of war behind an over-extensive catalogue of gruesome deaths.

[250] See Querbach (1976) 55-9; and cf. Dickson (1992) 340.

[251] Falkner (1989) 30-33, referring to *Iliad* 4.313-16; 10.73-9, 164-7; 11.632-7; and cf. Austin (1966) 299-303.

[252] Note that Ovid, too, declines to provide us with an example of the youthful Nestor's epic prowess: the only occasion in which he appears as participant rather than narrator, the Calydonian boar hunt in book 8, sees him using his mighty spear to vault out of the animal's reach into the nearest tree (*Metamorphoses* 8.365-8).

traditional predecessors.[253] Physically Nestor may be 'belated', prevented by his age from playing a significant role in the fighting; but to the Achaeans, Nestor's discourses serve as a reminder of their own heroic 'belatedness', most especially in terms of their inferiority to the warriors of earlier generations.[254] Here in the *Metamorphoses*, he plays a similar role: he contemptuously downplays the recent achievement of Achilles in overcoming the invulnerable Cycnus by using the theme as a springboard from which to launch his own tale of an even greater epic hero:

> Proxima praecipue domito victoria Cycno
> in sermone fuit: visum mirabile cunctis,
> quod iuveni corpus nullo penetrabile telo
> invictumque a vulnere erat ferrumque terebat.
> hoc ipse Aeacides, hoc mirabantur Achivi,
> cum sic Nestor ait: "vestro fuit unicus aevo
> contemptor ferri nulloque forabilis ictu
> Cycnus. at ipse olim patientem vulnera mille
> corpore non laeso Perrhaebum Caenea vidi,
> Caenea Perrhaebum, qui factis inclitus Othryn
> incoluit, quoque id mirum magis esset in illo,
> femina natus erat."
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.164-75)

In contrast to the others Achaeans, who are wondering at the miracle of the invulnerable warrior (165-9), Nestor contemptuously retorts that there was such a hero in *his* day as well, Caeneus. Nestor's invocation of the priority of the 'past' shames Ovid as much as the Achaean heroes: for it demonstrates that Ovid is constrained by his 'belatedness' in terms of the Homeric poems, which inhibits him from providing an account of the Trojan War and forces him to turn to an alternative (and, by implication, inferior) theme. Yet it could also be argued that Nestor's

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[253] See Martin (1989) 101-9. That Nestor's prowess in counsel is valued no less than the other heroes' skills in the fray is signified by the share he receives in the spoils of Tenedos (the maiden Hecamede, *Iliad* 11.624-7) and the special prize Achilles awards him at Patroclus' funeral games (*Iliad* 23.615-23).

[254] Cf. Menestheus' entry in the Catalogue of Ships:

> τῶν αὖθ' ἡγεμόνευ' υἱὸς Πετεῶο Μενεσθεύς.
> Τῷ δ' οὔ πω τις ὁμοῖος ἐπιχθόνιος γένετ' ἀνὴρ
> κοσμῆσαι ἵππους τε καὶ ἀνέρας ἀσπιδιώτας.
> Νέστωρ οἷος ἔριζεν· ὁ γὰρ προγενέστερος ἦεν.
>
> (*Iliad* 2.552-5)

Although at first Menestheus is described as the greatest cavalry marshal to walk the earth (553-4), his pre-eminence is at once qualified by a reminder of the equivalent capabilities of Nestor (Νέστωρ οἷος ἔριζεν, 555). And on what is Nestor's claim founded? The fact that προγενέστερος ἦεν – he belongs to an *earlier* generation! Zenodotus apparantly athetized these lines (*schol.Arn ad Il.*2.553) on the grounds that nothing is said elsewhere in the *Iliad* of Menestheus' skill as a cavalry marshal. But of course, as long as Nestor remains in the world of the *Iliad*, there is simply no space for him to exercise his

digression here serves to enhance Ovid's claim to epic primacy, rather than expose his belatedness. His selection of the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs as a theme for his tale in the *Metamorphoses* is reminiscent of one particular rebuke Nestor directs against the Achaeans, and Achilles and Agamemnon in particular:

> *ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ καὶ ἀρείσσιν ἠέ περ ὑμῖν*
> *ἀνδράσιν ὡμίλησα, καὶ οὔ ποτέ μ' οἵ γ' ἀθέριζον.*
> *οὐ γάρ πω τοίους ἴδον ἀνέρας οὐδὲ ἴδωμαι,*
> *οἷον Πειρίθοόν τε Δρύαντά τε, ποιμένα λαῶν,*
> *Καινέα τ' Ἐξάδιόν τε καὶ ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον,*
> *Θησέα τ' Αἰγείδην, ἐπιείκελον ἀθανάτοισιν.*
> *κάρτιστοι δὴ κεῖνοι ἐπιχθονίων τράφεν ἀνδρῶν·*
> *κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις ἐμάχοντο,*
> *φηρσὶν ὀρεσκῴοισι, καὶ ἐκπλάγως ἀπόλεσσαν.*
> *καὶ μὲν τοῖσιν ἐγὼ μεθομίλεον ἐκ Πύλου ἐλθών,*
> *τηλόθεν ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης· καλέσαντο γὰρ αὐτοί.*
> *καὶ μαχόμην κατ' ἔμ' αὐτὸν ἐγώ· κείνοισι δ' ἂν οὔ τις*
> *τῶν οἳ νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο·*
> *καὶ μέν μευ βουλέων ξύνιεν πείθοντό τε μύθῳ.*
> *ἀλλὰ πίθεσθε καὶ ὔμμες, ἐπεὶ πείθεσθαι ἄμεινον.*
>
> (*Iliad* 1.260-74)

As the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon reaches its climax, Nestor rises and calls for calm (*Iliad* 1.254-84). Here he justifies his assumption of authority by invoking the precedent of earlier heroes who acknowledged the validity of his advice, the Lapiths as they fought the Centaurs (263-8). On that occasion, he argues, the Lapith heroes sought out and followed his advice (273); hence Achilles and Agamemnon should also take heed of his instructions (274). The force of this precedent rests upon the superior heroism of the Lapith warriors, whose superlative epic prowess is invoked several times: they are *κάρτιστοι ἀνδρῶν* (266), their heroic credentials survive a thorough examination in their combat with the *καρτίστοις ...φηρσὶν ὀρεσκῴοισι* (267-8), and none of today's men could match up to them on the battlefield (*κείνοισι δ' ἂν οὔ τις τῶν οἳ νῦν βροτοί εἰσιν ἐπιχθόνιοι μαχέοιτο*, 271-2). Compared to such paragons of heroic strength, the Achaean leaders are humbled and denigrated (*ἀρείσσιν ἠέ περ ὑμῖν ἀνδράσιν*, 260-1): they are effectively 'belated' in their inferiority to their traditional predecessors.

Already in the *Metamorphoses* we see Nestor disparaging the Homeric warriors and the hero of the Homeric age, Cycnus, while aggrandising his Lapith comrade Caeneus. For Nestor, Cycnus is the sole representative of his type in contemporary

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prowess. Menestheus is overwhelmed by the weight of his renowned predecessor: he is *belated*,

times, almost an aberration (*unicus*, 169); by contrast, Caeneus is described in a hyper-epic language of multiples and superlatives (*patientem vulnera **mille***, 171) so extravagant that it appears inadequate to mention even his name and lineage only the once (*Perrhaebum Caenea...Caenea Perrhaebum*, 172-3). If all this were not enough to establish Caeneus' credentials as an epic warrior *par excellence*, he was even born a woman (174-5). Gender identities are especially prominently foregrounded in Nestor's tale: the Lapiths are exalted by being thrown into combat with the 'hyper-masculine' Centaurs, while Caeneus the hero, far from her original incarnation as a maiden unprotected against the erotic advances of Neptune (*Metamorphoses* 12.189-209), is now infused with such a surfeit of 'masculinity' to the extent that he is impenetrable by any manner of weapon.[255] Thus the tale Nestor tells expands on the theme of 'hyper-epic' he invoked in his introduction, harking back to a more 'epic' age of extravagant battles on a gargantuan scale and heroes of superlative martial virtue. In claiming the primacy of the past over the present, in shaming the contemporary age by exposing its frailty and insignificance, Nestor's tale applies 'epic by numbers', a literature which claims primacy by the invocation of sheer quantity.[256] Hence the tale of the Trojan War is usurped and thrust into the background by another narrative of martial epic which not only takes on many of the elements (such as a stolen wife and the ferocious battles which ensue) of the cycle of Trojan myth,[257] but also does so in a substantially more inflated and expansive 'epic' manner. The Greek heroes' 'belatedness' in terms of the heroes of the generation among which Nestor fought implies that their tale, the story of the Trojan War, is a poor substitute for those stories to which Nestor makes reference in the *Iliad*; and so Nestor's interjections serve to endorse Ovid's choice of the Lapiths and Centaurs myth as a superior subject to the tales of the Trojan cycle. Now, furthermore, in the *last* year of the war, Nestor's rebuke assumes extra significance for the reader of Ovid, who may reflect that Nestor has already told the tale of the Lapiths and Centaurs at great length in response to an event in the *first* year of the war. The inferiority of the Achaean leaders is no longer even 'news'; even this accusation of

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prevented from making his mark by the presence of Nestor, a past master in the field.

[255] See Keith (2000) 82-5 for a discussion of the play of gender identifiers in Nestor's tale; and cf. DuBois (1982) 31-2 on the 'masculinity' of the Centaurs.

[256] *Metamorphoses* 12.210-535 narrates 58 deaths (plus the fate of Caeneus) in 426 lines, as opposed to 201 (by my count) in 15693 verses of the *Iliad*. If epic is measured strictly by numbers, Ovid's proportional supremacy is telling.

'belatedness' is belated. Here too, then, the tenor of 'belatedness' is operative in both directions. Ovid's position as latecomer to the epic tradition closes off the more famous aspects of the Trojan War tradition, which have already been covered by earlier writers, and constrains him instead to tell the less widely-known myth of Lapiths and Centaurs; yet the very impulse which propels him towards myths and heroes at the margins of epic verse also recuperates for him an alternative claim to 'primacy', in the way he reappropriates and expands upon the very tales which Homer's Nestor deploys in order to chastise and expose the 'belatedness' of the Greek heroes at Troy.

One respect in which Nestor's digression in the *Metamorphoses* sustains an epic tone is in the sheer quantity and frequency of the deaths which it narrates; and many readers have been turned away from this passage through a distaste for carnage in such quantity. Critical readings which alternately recoil from or revel in Ovid's supposed 'bloodlust' construe Nestor's tale as if it sought the transitory effect of the 'present moment';[258] but these interpretations would of course fit epic into the Auerbachan model of the 'present moment' with its transient and momentary effect, whereas Nestor's concern in bringing the past into dialogue with the present seems to call for an analysis closer in approach to Lynn-George's exposure of the bipartite dialogue between past and present in the epic tradition. And if the tension between past and present is a vital feature of the epic style, then no hero embodies this dynamic better than Nestor, witness to the heroic deeds of no fewer than three generations of men. Nestor's function in the *Metamorphoses* is related to his function in the *Iliad*, providing a means of 'holding open' the poem to the influx of the past in order both to assert and to call into question the primacy of traditional heroes and narratives. Hence there emerges the possibility of taking *both past and present*

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[257] Cf. Keith (2000) 83.

[258] See Due (1974) 150; Galinsky (1975) 126-8; Mack (1988) 130. A common sentiment runs through all these discussions: though they maintain an awareness that the tale may appeal to the tastes of some of Ovid's contemporaries, they share a sense of wonder that *anyone* could find such bloodthirsty tales attractive. Cf. Galinsky (1975) 138: "Ovid's many gleeful and grotesque descriptions of human death and suffering are a salutary reminder that besides the rediscovered modernity of many of our classical authors...they also reflect a mentality that was too deeply engrained in the context of their times to stand easy transference." This is a style of scholarship which refuses to 'hold itself open': it attributes the aesthetically unappealing to an alien 'other', exploring the 'past' only on its own terms (or allowing only a limited window to present-day concerns in the case of Galinksy's "rediscovered modernity"), without attempting to establish a tenor to contemporary interests or any other possible contexts of interpretation.

together, of a Homer who encounters a body of myth and shapes it to his purpose at the same time as he himself undergoes transformation under its influence. Straddling both the *Iliad* and the *Metamorphoses*, Nestor serves to 'hold open' both poems, simultaneously questioning and validating their claims to a place in the epic canon. By negotiating an opening in Homer's Trojan War epic for tales of earlier heroic adventures and by entertaining the prospect of alternative and superior recipients of heroic κλέος, he chides the Achaean heroes whom the poem celebrates into a continual re-vindication of their right to a place alongside the champions of prior generations. In telling stories of his own, Nestor offers his audience the chance to match their own deeds against the prowess of previous generations; his tales both assert the supremacy of earlier generations, and hold out the prospect of heroic κλέος to anyone who is prepared to match himself against those deeds. In effect, in relating the tales of previous generations and in offering the same prospect of transcendent heroic fame to his contemporary audience, he takes on the role of the bard, guardian and conveyor of heroic identity in the Homeric world.[259] Not only does he preserve the memory of the generation of Theseus and Heracles by seizing every opportunity to assert its superiority to the generation of present day heroes: he also holds out the prospect of posterity for the heroes of the *Iliad* by entertaining their deeds alongside those which have already passed into the tradition. Nestor's criticism of the timidity of the Achaean leaders as they shrink from meeting the challenge of Hector serves as an example of his invocation of the past in order both to shame and to valorise the heroes of the present:

> Ὤ πόποι, ἦ μέγα πένθος Ἀχαιΐδα γαῖαν ἱκάνει.
> ἦ κε μέγ' οἰμώξειε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεύς,
> ἐσθλὸς Μυρμιδόνων βουληφόρος ἠδ' ἀγορητής,
> ὅς ποτέ μ' εἰρόμενος μέγ' ἐγήθεεν ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,
> πάντων Ἀργείων ἐρέων γενεήν τε τόκον τε.
> τοὺς νῦν εἰ πτώσσοντας ὑφ' Ἕκτορι πάντας ἀκούσαι,
> πολλά κεν ἀθανάτοισι φίλας ἀνὰ χεῖρας ἀείραι,
> θυμὸν ἀπὸ μελέων δῦναι δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω.
>
> (*Iliad* 7.124-31)

I argued above that Achaean reticence is connected with the temporary absence of their natural champion Achilles: Nestor's invocation of Achilles' father Peleus (125-31) highlights the absence of the leading Greek fighter from this scene. Moreover, as

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[259] Cf. Martin (1989) 108; Dickson (1992) 339-46. At *Iliad* 10.212, Nestor actually explicitly promises κλέος to any volunteer prepared to undergo the hazard of a night raid on the Trojan camp: see Martin (1989) 105.

he recollects how Peleus used to question him on the lineage and birth of the Greek heroes (*γενεήν τε τόκον τε*, 128), his invocation of the motif of genealogy draws an implicit comparison between the present Greek heroes and their eminent ancestors, in which the timorous warriors of the present day fail to measure up to the standards of the past. Peleus' imagined reaction to this event is a lamentation and desire for death (129-31). Nestor, however, rejects this overtly finalised judgement of the relationship between the generations: he prefers to explore the contrast between present and past in greater detail by recounting one of his youthful heroic achievements, his victory over the leading Arcadian warrior Ereuthalion in single combat (*Iliad* 7.132-57). It is fortunate for the Greeks that it is Nestor who is present to make the rebuke, rather than Peleus. Instead of expressing an intemperate desire for death and thus making a final and unanswerable judgement on the inadequacy of the present generation, Nestor keeps the channels of communication open by drawing an extended comparison between the present situation and an incident from his own youth. His rebuke does not wholly prejudge the heroic aptitude of the moderns and deny their claim to prowess: even by telling this tale, Nestor offers a point of comparison, a model for the Achaean heroes to follow as they attempt to win themselves a place in the traditions of heroic verse. For the challenge Ereuthalion laid down to the Pylians offers several points of comparison with the challenge laid down by Hector to the Achaeans:

> *τοῦ ὅ γε τεύχε' ἔχων προκαλίζετο πάντας ἀρίστους*
> *οἱ δὲ μάλ' ἐτρόμεον καὶ ἐδείδισαν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη.*
> *ἀλλ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἀνῆκε πολυτλήμων πολεμίζειν*
> *θάρσεϊ ᾧ· γενεῇ δὲ νεώτατος ἔσκον ἁπάντων.*
> (*Iliad* 7.150-3)

Then as now, a mighty warrior had challenged the opposing side to produce a champion to fight in single combat; most of them hold back in fear (151: cf. *Iliad* 7.92-3) before Nestor steps forward to face the challenger (152-3). Therefore although Nestor tells this story ostensibly to *deny* the Greeks access to the heroism of the past, yet he entertains the prospect that they might yet *retrieve* their honour by following the example he himself has set. By modelling their actions on the actions of Nestor, the Achaean chieftains can both rehabilitate themselves against the model of the past he has offered, and win *κλέος* of their own to match the *κλέος* of Nestor's youthful endeavours. The past functions both as a paradigm for the present and as a resource for heroic *κλέος*. This is evident in the effect it has on the Achaean leaders: immediately Nestor finishes speaking, no fewer than nine of them come forward to

take up Hector's challenge (*Iliad* 7.160). They are motivated not only by their shame at failing to measure up to the epic heroes of the past, but also by the prospect of winning glory by matching themselves against the prowess of the youthful Nestor. Thus Nestor's invocation of past precedent rescues the *Iliad* from the danger of collapsing into an Auerbachan insularity, holding it open to the influx of other mythic contexts and placing it in the broader scope of the whole continuum of the heroic tradition.

Nestor's crucial interjection here demonstrates the power of discourse and the tradition in keeping epic narrative open and dynamic, open both to the authority of the past and the prospect of κλέος in the future. Physical prowess is transient (and nowhere is this more deeply inscribed than in the bodies of the aged); but discourse, which has the power to hold itself open to past and future ages, can transcend the present moment and offer itself both as a paradigm to be imitated and a model for one's own entry into the literary tradition. In this respect even the physical achievements of epic heroism are dependent in the last resort on the intervention of epic narrators: physical achievements are transitory and for the moment, and it is only the poet who has the power to 'eternalise' these deeds by incorporating them into the matrix of literary accounts of heroic prowess. Hence the theme of nostalgia is more than a stale cliché, just as the king of Pylos is more than the senile old fool some take him for. Nestor's age – in particular, inasmuch as it links him to several generations of heroes – validates his quasi-bardic role at the same time as it opens up perspectives beyond the *Iliad* to a wider mythical context. Richard Martin's analysis of the speeches of Nestor in the *Iliad* draws out particularly the central role which *memory* plays in underpinning his discourse:[260] throughout the poem, Nestor's interventions are authorised by his invocation of the past, bringing the heroic tradition into the *Iliad* in a twofold gesture encapsulating both an apologetic submission to the priority of the tradition and an ambition to modulate that tradition by surveying one's present concerns and achievements within its wider context.

Nestor expresses his own opinion of his narratorial authority in the preamble to the tale of Caeneus:

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[260] See Martin (1989) 101-9.

tum senior: "quamvis obstet mihi tarda vetustas,
multaque me fugiant primis spectata sub annis,
plura tamen memini. nec quae magis haereat ulla
pectore res nostro est inter bellique domique
acta tot, ac si quem potuit spatiosa senectus
spectatorem operum multorum reddere, vixi
annos bis centum; nunc tertia vivitur aetas."
(*Metamorphoses* 12.182-8)

He begins by acknowledging the principal limitation of old age, the gradual loss of one's memory (182-3) – *tarda vetustas* perhaps implies a link between the 'belatedness' of contemporary heroes when compared with their eminent predecessors and Nestor's own insecure grasp on his memories of those long-gone days. His admission provides critics with an easy premise for undermining Nestor's narrative authority and, by extension, grounds for alleging Ovid's own scepticism regarding the expansive and improbable claims to truth made by epic's internal narrators.[261] Yet *plura tamen memini*: and Nestor follows his apologetic introduction with an assertion of the *power* of old age, for the memories which he has retained provide his audience with one highly accessible aperture into an otherwise vanishing past. Line 186 ends *senectus*, while the opening word of line 187 is *spectatorem*: the juxtaposition of these words in the emphatic positions, combined with the repetition of *s* and *ct* sounds,[262] emphasises the link between the concepts of 'old age' and 'spectatorship' which Nestor seeks to draw out here. Old age is presented as the medium through which we 'see' the past, a window, as it were, through which to watch the events and heroes of long-gone days. The eyes of the old survey both present and past time, and serve therefore to bring present and past into juxtaposition and to allow events within the poem's narrative to be 'seen' in the context of the tradition as a whole.

Nestor makes a similar play on words in the *Iliad* when expounding the benefits of old age to Agamemnon:

Ἀτρεϊδη, μάλα μέν τοι ἐγὼν ἐθέλοιμι καὶ αὐτὸς
ὡς ἔμεν ὡς ὅτε δῖον Ἐρευθαλίωνα κατέκταν.
ἀλλ' οὔ πως ἅμα πάντα θεοὶ δόσαν ἀνθρώποισιν·
εἰ τότε κοῦρος ἔα, νῦν αὖτε με γῆρας ὀπαζει.
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἱππεῦσι μετέσσομαι ἠδὲ κελεύσω
βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισι· τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ γερόντων.
(*Iliad* 4.318-23)

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[261] See Zumwalt (1977) 215-7; Musgrove (1998) 226-9.
[262] Cf. Ahl (1985) for similar soundplay in the *Metamorphoses*.

Although he an old man, beset by γῆρας (321), Nestor's privilege is to give instruction to the younger fighters through "advice and speeches" (βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισι, 323): this is the γέρας of the old (323). The pun on γῆρας and γέρας suggests that closely allied to the condition of 'old age' is the 'benefit' it brings to the young: that is, the βουλαί and μύθοι, narratives telling of and endorsed by traditional heroic achievements, which the old tell the young in bidding them locate themselves within the wider heroic and literary traditions. Thus in both Ovid and Homer the condition of 'old age' is rescued from narrative irrelevance through a wordplay which emphasises the benefits brought by the elderly to epic heroes and epic verse. It is through its senior characters that epic holds itself open to the vista of the past, both as spectators of heroic deeds, preserving them for later generations and allowing posterity a glimpse of former greatness, and as providers of κλέος for the contemporary heroes celebrated within the poem, who are exalted by being brought into comparison with the great men of previous ages.

Nestor's confession of amnesia is picked up again in the epilogue to the tale, when Tlepolemus chastises him for forgetting to include the exploits of his father Heracles:

> Haec inter Lapithas et semihomines Centauros
> proelia Tlepolemus Pylio referente dolorem
> praeteriti Alicidae tacito non pertulit ore
> atque ait: "Herculeae mirum est oblivia laudis
> acta tibi, senior; certe mihi saepe referre
> nubigenas domitos a se pater esse solebat."
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.536-41)

In chiding the old man with the words *Herculeae mirum est **oblivia** laudis acta tibi* (139) Tlepolemus seems to be responding to Nestor's earlier admission of memory loss at *Metamorphoses* 12.182-3. Thus he exposes what are for many the crippling inadequacies of Nestor as a narrator. Wheeler, for example, speaks of the "ironic distance" which Ovid sets up between himself and the unreliable internal storyteller, while Mack notes a characteristically Ovidian bathos in the following of such a lengthy and graphic heroic narrative with an immediate deflation of its truth-claims.[263] However, just as Nestor's confession of amnesia is immediately followed by his claim upon an alternative source of narrative authority, the tenor between *senectus* and *spectator*, so now Nestor takes it upon himself to respond to Tlepolemus' accusation

[263] See Wheeler (1999) 189 and Mack (1988) 30-1 respectively.

with an appeal to a different criterion of 'truth'. The old men of epic are links to the past, the last surviving windows on earlier generations; and this role empowers them not only as *givers* of κλέος, but also as its *withholders*. In this case the narrator has cogent personal reasons not to celebrate the accomplishments of Heracles: for it was he who was responsible for the deaths of all eleven of Nestor's brothers (*Metamorphoses* 12.549-72). Nestor explains his refusal to allow Hector a place in the Centauromachy narrative as follows:

> tristis ad haec Pylius: "quid me meminisse malorum
> cogis et obductos annis rescindere luctus
> inque tuum genitorem odium offensasque fateri?
> ille quidem maiora fide, di! gessit et orbem
> inplevit meritis, quod mallem posse negare;
> sed neque Deiphobum nec Pulydamanta nec ipsum
> Hectora laudamus: quis enim laudaverit hostem?"
> (*Metamorphoses* 12.542-8)

Nestor's hatred of Heracles is not expressed in a desire to take revenge on either Heracles himself or his descendants such as Tlepolemus by putting them to the sword in heroic fashion: indeed, he tells Tlepolemus, *solida est mihi gratia tecum* (*Metamorphoses* 12.572). His enmity manifests itself rather in narrative form, in declining to celebrate the deeds of his enemy, in denying Heracles access to heroic κλέος. *Quis enim laudaverit hostem*? he asks (548), a rhetorical question serving in metapoetic terms to express as much his desire to deny Hercules the κλέος (*laus*) of having one's deeds repeated in poetry; and he declares that if only he were able, he would deny every last one of Heracles' heroic deeds (*quod mallem posse negare*, 546). Nor can there can be any doubting the efficacy of Nestor's vengeance: for although no mythical tradition associates Heracles with the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs,[264] this only serves to underline the success of Nestor's withholding of heroic κλέος.[265] Discursive as he may be, this garrulous old man has great powers of both aperture and closure.

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[264] Hesiod *Sc.* 178-90 depicts the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs; here too Heracles is not present.
[265] There is a tradition which relates a battle between Heracles and the Centaurs at Pholoë: see Euripides, *Herc.* 182-2, 364-74, and cf. Bömer (1982) 77. The conflict between Heracles and Nessus which led to his death is also well attested, not least in the *Metamorphoses* itself: see *Metamorphoses* 9.101-33. However, given that Nestor's theme is the battle between Lapiths and Centaurs at the wedding of Pirithous, and not a more general description of the demise of the race of Centaurs, I understand Tlepolemus to be referring to Heracles' participation in this specific event.

vi.Aperture and Achilles: the Judgement of Arms

Following the death of Achilles, book 13 opens with the rhetorical competition between Ajax and Ulysses for the prize of his shield and weapons, a passage known as the *Armorum Iudicium*. This episode takes the form of a pair of opposing debates between Ajax and Ulysses as each of them rehearses his claim to be regarded as the greatest of the Achaean heroes and a worthy inheritor of the arms of Achilles. Ovid's rhetorical training is presumed to have informed his composition of this passage, as the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses seem to draw either on the exercise of the *controversia*, an imaginary lawsuit in which opposing speakers argue each case before a jury, or on the *suasoria*, in which a historical or mythical character is given advice on how he should react to a particular situation.[266] Wilkinson rejects the notion that this passage is based on a *controversia*; he proposes instead that the piece resembles "a tragic *agon* extended till it resembles a pair of opposing *Suasoriae*", and examines both arguments to find that "Ulysses won heavily on points".[267] It would be otiose, however, to examine the formal rhetorical affiliations of this passage in any great depth: while the speeches exhibit elements of both *controversia* and *suasoria* exercises, the effect which is produced is dependent as much on the Homeric material which the speakers transform as the manner in which they present it. Thus Otto Steen Due argues that the rhetorical treatment of Iliadic material is intended to forestall the impression that the poet seeks to compete with Homer, while seizing the opportunity to showground his own special talent for oratorical display; while Thierry Duc reads the passages in terms of the familiar distinction between 'epic' and 'Alexandrian' poetics, and concludes that Ajax's speech adheres to the traditions of 'martial epic', while Ulysses' alludes to the 'witty' and 'learned' Hellenistic style of poetry.[268]

Both Due and Duc find in the victory of Ulysses over Ajax an assertion of the poet's triumph over Homer, Due in his rhetorical treatment of the theme, and Duc in his assertion of the supremacy of 'Alexandrian' poetics. Yet in so doing they also occlude

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[266] Seneca *Controv.*2.2.8 recollects Ovid's rhetorical training, and tells us that *Met.*13.131-2 (*arma viri fortis medios mittantur in hostes*) draws on a *sententia* of Porcius Latro, whom Ovid admired in his youth (*mittamus arma in hostis et petamus*). Juvenal 7.115 (which parodies Ovid's speech of Ajax) seems to imply that the *Armorum Iudicium* was a favourite theme in the rhetorical schools: see Courtney (1980) 364-5. See also Galinsky (1975) 41; Solodow (1988) 19-20.
[267] See Wilkinson (1955) 228-35; quotes from 230.
[268] See Due (1974) 151-2; Duc (1994) 130.

the specifically *Homeric* ramifications of this episode; in particular, the 'epic', or 'heroic', implications of the prize for which the warriors are competing. The *Iliad* represents at one level a struggle for the title of 'the best of the Achaeans':[269] Agamemnon declares his intention to seize Briseis *ὄφρ' ἐὺ εἰδῇς ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν* (*Iliad* 1.185-6), and Achilles responds with the taunt *σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις χωόμενος ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας*, (*Iliad* 1.243-4). It is Achilles' claim to supremacy which is finally borne out by the events of the *Iliad*; here, however, he is dead, and in a reification of one of the most potent metaphors of epic 'heredity' his arms are made available as an objective representation of the vacant title *ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν*.[270] Thus the agonistic form of the *Metamorphoses* passage – the debate between the two leading Greek heroes over who has the greater right to bear Odysseus' arms – also negotiates between two poles of 'heroism' and two different ways in which a warrior might be understood to be 'best of the Achaeans'. Moreover, the strategy chosen by both Ajax and Ulysses to rehearse their claims to this title involves their retelling – in flashback form – many of the major military episodes of the *Iliad*. In this respect, the decision to have Ajax and Ulysses relate their Iliadic exploits in direct speech also recalls the internal narrators who throng the *Metamorphoses*, not least Nestor himself, whose long tale of Lapiths and Centaurs formed the centrepiece of the previous book. Accordingly, as much as the style of the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses may flaunt the Ovid's rhetorical technique, yet the content (a quarrel over who is the *ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν*) also establishes an epic tenor with the content of the *Iliad*; and in a context, that of retrospective narration of traditional material, characteristic of the context of Ovid's engagements with Homer and other poetic predecessors elsewhere in the poem. Therefore Ajax's and Ulysses' treatment of Iliadic material reflects the strategy which the *Metamorphoses* is employing with respect to the *Iliad* in this passage: namely, reworking the 'traditional past' and opening it out in terms of the interests and exigencies of the 'contemporary present'. Just as Ovid attempts to appropriate and recast the *Iliad* along 'metamorphic' lines, so Ajax and Ulysses attempt to appropriate Achilles, as it were, so as to demonstrate that

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[269] See Nagy (1979); and cf.Hardie (1993) 3-4.

[270] *Arma* also stand as a symbol of metatextual literary heredity at *Aeneid* 1.1, where they represent the poet Virgil's appropriation of the *Iliad*-tradition of martial epic; and at *Amores* 1.1.1, where they suggest Ovid's adaptation of these same epic themes within the scope of the *militia amoris*. The *armorum iudicium* passage in the *Metamorphoses* thus enacts in 'literal' terms one of the core 'metaphors' for the Augustan poets' treatment of their literary heritage.

they themselves are best capable of representing the model of heroism which he provides; and thus to appropriate to themselves the mantle of epic 'primacy' and validate their claim to be the new *ἄριστος Ἀχαιων*.

The first speaker is Ajax; and the most striking feature of his discourse is his relentless self-centred egotism. Time and again he draws a contrast between himself and his heroic counterparts, isolating himself from his comrades and presenting himself in a lonely pre-eminence. Every heroic deed that he is involved in, he attributes the success to himself alone; and he shuns the virtues of teamwork and co-operation in order to underscore his point that he is the foremost and greatest, of the Achaean warriors. In this respect he is a very 'Bakhtinian' kind of epic hero, in the terms we discussed above:[271] because of his achievements he is entirely at home in a world of 'firsts' and 'bests'; yet also, because he is a hero of such a remote and aloof character, these very achievements set him irrevocably apart from his comrades-at-arms. For example, when he describes his duel with Hector (*Iliad* 7.43-312), he boasts:

> hunc ego poscentem, cum quo concurreret, unus
> sustinui: sortemque meam vovistis, Achivi,
> et vestrae valuere preces.
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.87-9).

Ajax's version of events misrepresents the *Iliad* in order to enhance his credentials as the 'best' Achaean fighter. It is true that Ajax alone (*unus*, 87) came out meet Hector's challenge, but as *Iliad* 7.162-9 makes clear, he was chosen by lot out of no fewer than nine volunteers (Agamemnon, Diomedes, Ajax himself and his lesser namesake, Idomeneus and Meriones, Eurypylus, Thoas, and Odysseus). It is not even true to the *Iliad* to claim that Ajax was the first preference of the rank and file in the lottery, as is implied by *sortem meam vovistis* (88); for the soldiers had other Greek heroes in their prayers at the same time:

> *λαοὶ δ' ἠρήσαντο, θεοῖσι δὲ χεῖρας ἀνέσχον.*
> *ὧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν εὐρύν·*
> *Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἢ Αἴαντα λαχεῖν, ἢ Τυδέος υἱόν,*
> *ἢ αὐτὸν βασιλῆα πολυχρύσοιο Μυκήνης.*
>
> (*Iliad* 7.177-80)

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[271] Bakhtin (1981) 13, 15-16: see above, section iv.

The Achaeans may have had Ajax in mind as *one* of their favourites to meet Hector in the duel: but Diomedes and Agamemnon held no less a place in their hearts, and it is implied that the selection of any of these three would have met with their approval. Ajax's selection in these circumstances can hardly be taken as a wholehearted endorsement of supremacy; yet in his speech in the *Metamorphoses* he expands this provisional claim to a temporary primacy into an all-embracing, unilateral declaration of heroic independence.

When he comes to relate his battle to defend the Achaean ships in *Iliad* 15, he portrays his deeds in similar terms:

> nempe **ego** *mille* meo protexi pectore puppes,
> spem vestri reditus: date pro *tot* navibus **arma**.
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.93-4)

Ajax's rhetorical strategy here is to draw a contrast between himself (*ego*), *one* individual, and the *thousand* ships (*mille*) he saved by his actions on the wall; in risking his own breast (*meo pectore*) he saved the life and the homecoming of all his comrades (*vestri reditus*). Ajax now demands the reward for this deed, and suggests that since he saved so many ships (*tot navibus*) the *arma* of Achilles are really not so much in comparison. The chiastic word-order enhances the contrasts Ajax draws in this distich; I have sought to bring these out by emphasising *ego* and *arma* in boldface, italicising *mille* and *tot*, and underlining *meo pectore* and *vestri reditus*. Thus Ajax strives to emphasise his isolation and his uniqueness by the comparison between the vast fleet on the one hand, and he himself as their solitary defender on the other; by contrasting his one life with the lives of all the Greek soldiers who depended on his bravery; and by comparing the great prize he hopes to win – Achilles' arms – with the great hero – himself – who has performed such deeds.[272] Such dexterity of expression belies his self-professed ingenuousness (*nec mihi dicere promptum*, *Metamorphoses* 13.10);[273] behind this elaborate rhetorical façade Ajax is seeking to construct another misleading representation of the *Iliad*. However, Ulysses is not

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[272] Cf. Hardie (1993) 3-10, who elaborates upon the importance of the dynamic between the 'one' and the 'many' in ancient epic.

[273] Wilkinson (1955) 231 and Due (1974) 153 note the contrast between Ajax's reputation and his uncharacteristically eloquent speech. Duc (1994) 127-8 contrasts the linear and balanced speech of Ajax with the discursive and haphazardly structured speech of Ulysses, and contends that, according to the classical rules of rhetoric, Ajax's speech is the better.

taken in, and devotes part of his own speech to a rebuttal of Ajax's partial account of this episode:

> Sed ne communia solus
> occupet atque aliquem vobis quoque reddat honorem,
> reppulit Actorides sub imagine tutus Achillis
> Troas ab arsuris cum defensore carinis.
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.271-4)

Whereas Ajax sought to contrast himself (*ego*; *meo pectore*) and the thousand ships he saved (*mille puppes; vestri reditus*), Ulysses breaks down these distinctions and reaffirms the role of Ajax's comrades in the defence of the ships. He denies Ajax sole claim (*solus*, 271) on the honour of victory, and suggests that the repulse of the Trojans from the ships was a deed achieved by communal effort (*communia*, 271). He reminds his audience of the role of Patroclus (*Actorides*, 273), whose efforts at the head of the Myrmidons were crucial to the Achaean rally at *Iliad* 16.124-867. Patroclus' intervention came not a moment too soon: for, as Ulysses goes on to say, the Trojans were on the point of burning the fleet even despite the best efforts of Ajax (*arsuris cum defensore carinis*, 274). Ulysses' account of events is borne out by the version given in the *Iliad*, where, after a long defensive action, Ajax is finally forced to give way to Hector, who proceeds to set fire to the first of the Achaean ships:

> Ἕκτωρ Αἴαντος δόρυ μείλινον ἄγχι παραστὰς
> πλῆξ' ἄορι μεγάλῳ, αἰχμῆς παρὰ καυλὸν ὄπισθεν,
> ἄντικρὺ δ' ἀπάραξε· τὸ μὲν Τελαμώνιος Αἴας
> πῆλ' αὖτως ἐν χειρὶ κόλον δόρυ, τῆλε δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ
> αἰχμὴ χαλκείη χαμάδις βόμβησε πεσοῦσα.
> γνῶ δ' Αἴας κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονα ῥίγησέν τε
> ἔργα θεῶν, ὅ ῥα πάγχυ μάχης ἐπὶ μήδεα κεῖρε
> Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, Τρώεσσι δὲ βούλετο νίκην·
> χάζετο δ' ἐκ βελέων. τοὶ δ' ἔμβαλον ἀκάματον πῦρ
> νηῒ θοῇ· τῆς δ' αἶψα κατ' ἀσβέστη κέχυτο φλόξ.
> ὣς τὴν μὲν πρύμνην πῦρ ἄμφεσεν.
> (*Iliad* 16.114-24)

Ajax's behaviour here gives the lie to his brash boasts at *Metamorphoses* 13.93-4. This passage stands at the climax of his heroic rearguard action which began at *Iliad* 15.415 when the Trojans breached the Achaean wall. Now, at last, Hector renders him impotent by shearing the point off his spear: recognising that he can no longer thwart the combined forces of divine will and human force, Ajax beats a retreat. Despite his efforts to hold Hector back – the efficacy of which he is not shy of boasting in the *Metamorphoses* – the fleet is, all the same, left defenceless and vulnerable to the

torches of the encroaching Trojan army. It is at this point (*Iliad* 16.124) that the saviour steps forward – *not* Ajax, who has given way with the rest of the Achaean leaders, but Patroclus, who has finally persuaded Achilles to intervene and who now, decisively, enters the fray at the head of the Myrmidons. Ulysses' intervention confounds the exaggerated and egotistical boasts of Ajax, and reminds the audience that the successful defence of the ships was a shared endeavour in which Patroclus, no less than Ajax himself, had a significant part to play: once again Ajax 'rewrites' the *Iliad* in order to efface the prowess of his comrades and present himself, remote and aloof, as the "sole saviour" of the Achaean army.

Finally, in the peroration of his speech Ajax demands that words should be forgotten, and that the decision should be based on a physical contest on the battlefield:

> Denique (quid verbis opus est?) spectemur agendo!
> arma viri fortis medios mittantur in hostes:
> inde iubete peti et referentem ornate relatis.
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.120-2)

This brief conclusion, which almost effaces itself in its vigorous denunciation of rhetoric prowess, suggests that the measure of heroic endeavour is to be found in a *singular* action (*agendo*) rather than in *plural* words (*verbis*); and consequently implies that Ajax's version of heroism privileges deeds which gain a momentary advantage without looking to the past history of his actions or comprehending the future developments and advantages which may accrue.[274] This contrasts strongly with the position taken by Ulysses, the second speaker in the debate. His position as the respondent already gives him a natural advantage in this 'metamorphic' argument. Ajax, who spoke first, had little choice but to argue on his own terms and to emphasis his own deeds and achievements. But Ulysses, speaking after him, is able to reconfigure Ajax's arguments in a style which suits himself and not his antagonist; he

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[274] Ajax's closing words also refer back to the opening lines of his speech, in which he chides Ulysses for not daring to stand before the advance of Hector, and concludes, *tutius est igitur fictis contendere verbis* (*Metamorphoses* 13.9). Such a deed – throwing one's standards into the midsts of the enemy in order to encourage an attack – is not without precedent in Roman myth or history: see Hopkinson (2000) 105-6, and Oakley (1997) 462-3 with further references. However, due to the inherent high risk involved, this stratagem is generally reserved for the moments of greatest danger: as Oakley (1997) 463 notes on this *topos*, "Naturally, it was particularly in moments of crisis that the commander went into the front line in an attempt to restore a dangerous situation." Thus Ajax's selfish desire to use this ploy merely in order to settle an intramural issue of precedence serves as another indication of his egotism and disregard for his comrades.

metamorphoses Ajax's 'closed' and self-contained vision of heroism in terms of the wider influence and ramifications of his own actions and the more pervasive and wide-ranging authority that can be achieved by a hero with a mastery of the metamorphic universe. Ulysses does not close the debate off within the confines of his own achievements and his own personal claim to the arms and the inheritance of Achilles; but rather he manipulates the agenda, holding open a tenor between his own achievements and their standing within the heroic community, and from this basis actively seeks to establish a model of heroism which bases itself on holding itself *open* to the exigencies and demands of an ever-changing situation, which seeks to *manipulate* the world rather than *isolate* itself from it, and which relies on the ethos of *co-operation* and *communion*, rather than Ajax's assertion of an unmitigated and unbreachable *difference*.

Ulysses' speech therefore presents itself, not as an assertion of heroic endeavour in its own terms, but rather as a response to and rebuttal of the naïve and solipsistic arguments of his opponent. For example, Ajax seeks to denigrate Ulysses through the slur that he performed no heroic deeds individually, but always acted in concert with a comrade, most particularly Diomedes.[275] Ulysses responds to this smear as follows:

> Denique de Danais quis te laudatque petitve?
> at sua Tydides mecum communicat acta,
> me probat et socio semper confidit Ulixe.
> est aliquid, de tot Graiorum militibus unum
> a Diomede legi!
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.238-42)

We see that Ulysses is as ready as Ajax to mobilize a contrast between himself (*unum*) and the many (*tot*). However, in Ajax's speech the one (*ego*) was *contrasted* with the many (*mille*): the powerful, unique individual sought to disassociate himself from the ineffectual and passive multitude. Ajax asserts his individuality, his uniqueness, only for the purpose of divorcing himself and his heroic valour from his impotent and inadequate comrades. With Ulysses, though, the claim to pre-eminence he asserts through describing himself as *unum* he asserts not on *his own* account – not by *contrasting* himself with his comrades, or shunning their company as *unworthy* and

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[275] At *Met.*13.100: *nihil est [sc.gestum] Diomede remoto.*

beneath him – but by pointing out the *similarities* he shares with the other heroes in the Greek camp; he presents his pre-eminence not in itself and on its terms, but rather as a subspecies of heroism which is continually 'held open' to the contending claims and the constantly mutable opinions of his fellow Greeks. It is precisely because his comrades themselves, and Diomedes not the least, play their part in martial prowess, that Ulysses considers it such a great honour to be singled out amongst such eminent company: *his* heroism is all the more 'open' in that it is continually re-enacted, and much more significantly, re-*acknowledged* by the community within which he participates.

Another example of the two heroes' differing attitudes to the mythology and symbolism they inherit, the metamorphic openness of Ulysses the one hand, and the aloof closure of Ajax on the other, may be found in their contrasting attitudes to one particular Homeric artefact, the artwork on the Shield of Achilles. The famous passage at *Iliad* 18.483-608 describes Hephaestus' crafting of this shield, and lists in extensive details the scenes of the cosmos which are engraved upon it. It is because of these artistic and ecphrastic motifs that the Shield's critical significance far surpasses its practical function in battle.[276] As the allegorical tradition has it, the Shield is not just a defensive implement to be used to ward off arrows and spear thrusts, but also serves as a locus of critical and interpretive issues in the *Iliad.* In this respect the manner of Ajax's reference to the imagery on the shield is particularly revealing:

> nec clipeus vasti caelatus imagine mundi
> conveniet timidae nataeque ad furta sinistrae.
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.110-11)

Ajax argues that the vast shield, engraved with the image of the cosmos, will be too heavy for a timid weakling such as Ulysses. Clearly, then, he sees the *imago mundi* in exclusively physical terms; it is as if Ulysses would have to carry, not only the Shield itself, but also the whole of the universe which is represented upon it. The interpretative and allegorical resonances of the *imago mundi* are subsumed entirely by

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[276] The decorative patterning inscribed by Hephaestus on Achilles' shield was frequently subjected to scrutiny by allegorial exegetes of antiquity: see Buffière (1956) 155-68 and Hardie (1985) for discussion of the interpretive issues involved. Allusions to the Shield in epic poets of antiquity are enriched by their incorporation of aspects of this allegorial tradition: see especially Hardie (1986) 336-76 and Nelis (2001) 339-45 on the Shield of Aeneas, and cf. Wheeler (1995) on the Ovidian cosmology.

the *physicality* of the shield: Ajax sees it only as a defensive implement, an object in and of itself with no interpretative or literary significance, and his reading of the cosmic imagery closes it off within his own, exclusively physical, model of heroism.

By contrast, Ulysses' reading of the Shield exposes the 'closedness' and the 'aloofness' in Ajax's expressly 'physical' stance, and takes a position which is far more open to the interpretative issues posed by this *objet d'art*:

> scilicet idcirco pro nato caerula mater
> ambitiosa suo fuit, ut caelestia dona,
> artis opus tantae, rudis et sine pectore miles
> indueret? neque enim clipei caelamina novit,
> Oceanum et terras cumque alto sidera caelo
> Pleiadasque Hyadasque inmunemque aequoris Arcton
> diversosque orbes nitidumque Orionis ensem.
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.288-94)

The key to Ulysses' interpretation is the wordplay on *caerula*, *caelamina* and *caelum*. *caelum*, Latin for 'sky', refers to the image of the Universe which fills so much of the shield; *caerula*, meaning "sea-blue", is the epithet applied to Thetis, the goddess who procures the shield as a gift for her son; while *caelamina*, Latin for 'engravings', refers to the act of the craftsman Hephaestus in engraving these images of the *caelum* on the shield. If we look back at Ajax's reference to the shield, we see that *he* describes its decorative engravings through the passive participle form *caelatus*, from the verb *caelo/caelare* 'to engrave';[277] so what Ulysses does is to bring out a *further* meaning in this verb by relating it to the *alto caelo* on line 292 and the ***caerula*** goddess who donates this gift on line 288. The ***caelamina*** which we see ***caelata*** on the shield, and the gift of a ***caerula*** goddess, are the very ***caelum*** itself. By developing this point through just such an elaborate and multi-faceted word-play, Ulysses underscores the main thrust of his argument here, that Ajax's reading of the Shield is monolithic and insular, restricted to one interpretative level alone; in contrast to which, he suggests, he himself is better capable of interpreting, exploring and manipulating the interpretative resonances *both* of the Arms of Achilles in particular, *and* of their relationship to the imagery, signifiers and divine occupants of the cosmos

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[277] The manuscripts *HEA* read *concretus* for *caelatus* at *Metamorphoses* 13.110, a reading defended by Hardie (1985) 16-17. I follow Hopkinson (2000) 103-4 in preferring the majority reading, in the belief

in general. Here too Ulysses proves himself the more *open* reader of the *Iliad*, one who is able to negotiate between various levels of meaning and hold each of them open to the influences of the others. Again he demonstrates that he is by far the better qualified to inherit a metamorphic literary tradition which shuns fixity and closure in favour of the ethos of 'holding oneself open'. It seems only natural, then, that the man of words – the man with the power to *shape* and *metamorphose* actions – should win out over the man of 'mere' deeds.

Ajax's suicide follows promptly upon this judgement. Traditionally his death is connected with a form of madness which overtook him after defeat in the Judgement.[278] However, Ovid's version of events finesses the theme of insanity in order to present his choice to take his own life as a rational decision, based on his humiliation at being overcome by so obviously inferior an opponent.[279] The deliberation with which Ajax falls on his sword makes his suicide the ultimate act of solipsism; in effect, it represents a declaration that his own self-esteem overrides any claim his colleagues have on his aid and service. This is entirely in keeping with the position he adopted in his speech: he based his claim to the arms of Achilles on his own acts of heroism and his own personal valour, effacing and obliterating the heroic achievements of his comrades, and in consequence it is only appropriate that his final act should be so self-centred and narcissistic. Even in his dying words he expresses his egotistical refusal to acknowledge being worsted by another:

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that Ulysses is 'correcting' Ajax's simplistic understanding of the markings on the Shield through this repeated play on words.

[278] See *Ilias Parva* fr.1 Αἴας δ' ἐμμανὴς γενόμενος τήν τε λείαν τῶν Ἀχαιῶν λυμαίνεται καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀναιρεῖ; and cf. Davies (1989) 65. The fullest treatment of Ajax's madness is Sophocles, *Ajax* 51-117; Ajax's suicide is presented in this play as a rational decision, yet prompted by shame at his earlier berserk frenzy.

[279] The theme of *unus* against *multi* is also extended ironically to the narrative of Ajax's death:

> Hectora qui solus, qui ferrum ignesque Iovemque
> sustinuit totiens, unam non sustinet iram.
>
> (*Metamorphoses* 13.383-4)

Ajax the *solitary* hero (*solus*, 383), able to resist *so many* attacks (*totiens*, 384) and even the onslaught of the gods themselves, is brought down by *a single* act of wrath (*unam...iram*, 384): the cause of his death is therefore ironically appropriate to the manner in which he lived. Hopkinson (2000) 160 suggests that *unam iram*, along with the phrase *vicit dolor* on the following line, are "delicate and ambiguous allusions to the fact that madness overcame Ajax's mind": if this is so, it is a madness which seems firmly rooted in his remorseless and reductive take on the heroic life.

arripit ensem
et "meus hic certe est! an et hunc sibi poscit Ulixes?
hoc" ait "utendum est in me mihi, quique cruore
saepe Phrygum maduit, domini nunc caede madebit,
ne quisquam Aiacem possit superare nisi Aiax."
(*Metamorphoses* 13.386-90)

Ajax's third-person references to himself (*Aiacem...Aiax*, 390) highlight his solipsistic and introspective gaze. It would be unthinkable if any could overpower Ajax save Ajax himself (390), and so Ajax effects his own death as the unanswerable and definitive closure upon his life and his heroic endeavours. But alas! his hopes of attaining a clean end are thwarted, as from his blood the ground produces an emblem of his death which both contrasts with and reopens the figure of the solipsistic suicide:

rubefactaque sanguine tellus
purpureum viridi genuit de caespite florem,
qui prius Oebalio fuerat de vulnere natus;
littera communis mediis pueroque viroque
inscripta est foliis, haec nominis, illa querellae.
(*Metamorphoses* 13.394-8)

Even though Ajax may have desired a solitary death and a lasting, and *unique*, memorial of his solitary epic deeds, the metamorphosis instigated by his death denies his hope for this kind of monolithic univocal immortality. Instead he finds himself sharing a commemorative emblem with Apollo's beloved Hyacinthus, whose death and metamorphosis were narrated *prius*: that is, earlier in the poem, at *Metamorphoses* 10.182-219. The similarity which the metamorphosis highlights is to be found in the markings on the petals of the hyacinth: *aiai*, the Greek letters alpha-iota-alpha-iota. This is the *littera* which is inscribed on the flowers, symbolising one's name (*nominis*) and the other's cry of pain (*querellae*). Hence the *epic* grandeur of Ajax is reappropriated through the trope of metamorphosis along the lines of the *querellae* characteristic of elegiac poetry; and Ajax is subjugated by being memorialised through a signifier, not of masculine warfare, but of feminised homoerotic love.[280] Accordingly as much as Ajax attempts to invoke a final and unbreachable *closure* on his own life, the metamorphosis *holds him open* to recontextualisation through the tragic story of Hyacinthus and Apollo: in a final irony,

[280] Musgrove (1998) 230 draws attention to the contrast between the "impersonal violence" of epic and the "pathos" of elegy drawn both here and elsewhere in the final books of the *Metamorphoses*.

the hero who sought to argue his supremacy by boasting of his aloofness and incomparability is proven to be as vulnerable as anyone else to the dynamic processes of physical and literary transformation.

By winning the arms of Achilles in the contest, Ulysses has metonymically proven himself to be the 'heir' to Achilles, and by implication has shown that his form of heroism is the more fitting to this metamorphic epic tradition. It would be tempting to yield to the pathos inspired by Ajax's death and reflexively censure the supposed 'injustice' he has just suffered. Ovid himself remarks, *fortis...viri tulit arma disertus* (*Metamorphoses* 13.383): the contrast between the *fortis* Achilles and his *disertus* successor seems to encourage a reading of the *Armorum Iudicium* which highlights the paradox inherent in Ulysses' assumption of Achilles' heroic primacy.[281] Yet according to the tenets of metamorphosis, we should rather perhaps be encouraged to look for similarities between the heroic paradigms under which Ulysses and Achilles operate, in order to explore the aspects of Achilles' heroic behaviour which are most appropriate to a metamorphic universe; and consequently, we might be encouraged examine in what ways Ulysses is the *right* kind of hero to carry on the Iliadic tradition, and in particular to assume the heroic primacy which Achilles has vacated.

Such an approach to the *Iliad* is, of course, far removed from the orthodox critical position on the relationship between Ulysses and Achilles. The customary way of reading these two characters in Homeric epic is to contrast them under the two terms μῆτις and βίη: Achilles is the hero of βίη, brute force, while Odysseus is the hero of μῆτις, or subtle cunning.[282] This distinction divides not only Achilles and Odysseus, but also the texts in which they enact their heroic models, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* respectively: just as the mantle of heroic primacy passes late in the Trojan War from Achilles to Odysseus, so the *Odyssey* itself is by now generally understood to react to the βίη-based model of 'heroism' presented in the *Iliad* and re-present it in its own μῆτις-oriented terms. The first lay of Demodocus in *Odyssey* lays the foundations for this move:

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[281] Due (1974) 151-4 suggests that Ovid's account does not come down unambiguously in favour of Ulysses; cf. also Hopkinson (2000) 159-60, who suggests that *disertus* in this context has faintly derogatory connotations.
[282] See Nagy (1979) 26-42; Heubeck, West & Hainsworth (1988) 351; Goldhill (1991) 93-4.

μοῦσ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸν ἀνῆκεν ἀειδέμεναι κλέα ἀνδρῶν,
οἵμης τῆς τότ' ἄρα κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἵκανε,
νεῖκος Ὀδυσσῆος καὶ Πηλεΐδεω Ἀχιλῆος,
ὡς ποτε δηρίσαντο θεῶν ἐν δαιτὶ θαλείῃ
ἐκπάγλοις ἐπέεσσιν, ἄναξ δ' ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνων
χαῖρε νόῳ, ὅ τ' ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριόωντο.
ὡς γὰρ οἱ χρείων μυθήσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
Πυθοῖ ἐν ἡγαθέῃ, ὅθ' ὑπέρβη λάινον οὐδὸν.
(*Odyssey* 8.73-80)

Although the subject of their quarrel is not explicitly recorded, the oracular prediction ὅ τ' ἄριστοι Ἀχαιῶν δηριόωντο invoked on line 78 seems to suggest a particular connotation to this quarrel similar to the terms of the debate between Ajax and Ulysses in the *Metamorphoses*: that is, that just as Ajax and Odysseus debate the title 'best of the Achaeans' from their opposing perspectives of individual martial valour and benefit to the community at large, likewise here Odysseus and Achilles are arguing over the relative merits of μῆτις and βίη as modes of heroic endeavour. This is the line taken by the scholia, which suggest that the precise subject of the dispute is the best strategy to adopt for the taking of Troy: Achilles proposes a strategy based on ἀνδρεία, while Odysseus argues for σύνεσις.[283] Thus this reference to a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles sets up an implicit tension between the competing values of σύνεσις and ἀνδρεία, which is not resolved until the third of the lays of Demodocus, at *Odyssey* 8.499-520. This song is performed at the request of Odysseus himself, on the subject of the stratagem of the Trojan Horse and the fall of Troy. This trick, which was the brainchild of Odysseus himself, may be claimed to represent the final triumph of μῆτις over βίη, and the vindication of Odysseus' σύνεσις -based mode of heroism as the best strategy to adopt in order to capture Troy. The climax to this lay (reported by Homer in *oratio obliqua*) is as follows:

ἄλλον δ' ἄλλῃ ἄειδε πόλιν κεραΐζέμεν αἰπήν,
αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσῆα προτὶ δώματα Δηιφόβοιο
βήμεναι, ἠύτ' Ἄρηα σὺν ἀντιθέῳ Μενελάῳ.
κεῖθι δὴ αἰνότατον πόλεμον φάτο τολμήσαντα
νικῆσαι καὶ ἔπειτα διὰ μεγάθυμον Ἀθήνην.
(*Odyssey* 8.516-20)

These lines describe the final moments of the war, as Helen, the original *casus belli*, is recovered for Menelaus, while her third husband Deiphobus meets his end at the hands of Odysseus. The lay culminates with the αἰνότατον πόλεμον of Odysseus and his triumph with the aid of Athena. Menelaus is present in this scene, but entirely

eclipsed by Odysseus; it is appropriate that the man whose plans brought the war to an end should be present at the moment of final resolution. Certainly there is dramatic irony in this pointed and over-determined reference to the heroism of Odysseus, given that he himself requested the tale and now sits listening to it *incognito* in the Phaeacian court. But it also picks up on the *μῆτις/βίη* (*ἀνδρεία/σύνεσις*) antithesis in the *first* song of the bard, while now emphatically delivering the judgement in favour of Odyssean *μῆτις*: the brave warrior Achilles may have initially been invoked as a potential model for epic heroism, yet in this third and last lay of Demodocus he is emphatically discarded in favour of the wily trickster Odysseus.

Given that Ovid's *Judgement of Arms* passage is situated chronologically on the cusp between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, at the point where the epic of Achilles gives way and the epic of Ulysses prepares to take centre stage, it seems at first easy enough to recuperate Ovid's version of the myth within the terms of this same critical orthodoxy, and to contend that the move from Ajax's deed-based model of heroism to Ulysses' more rhetorical and metamorphic position reflects the shift from *βίη* to *μῆτις* in which is felt to reside the particular difference between these two epics. In fact, insofar as *Metamorphoses* criticism ever finds a place for the *Armorum Iudicium*, it is usually conceded that Ovid's own *facundia* is an important factor in his preference for the sly trickster Ulysses.[284] However, the critical strategy of pursuing the implications of the *μῆτις/βίη* contrast places the emphasis squarely on 'difference', and seeks to make an unbreachable distinction between the heroism of Achilles and the heroism of Ulysses. Against this, the principles of *metamorphosis*, and the intertextual ethos developed in this discussion which seeks to 'hold texts open' to the influences and dynamics of past and future readings, might suggest that we attempt to explore the *similarities* between these characters and look at what in the Homeric picture of Achilles might suggest that the Ulysses of the *Metamorphoses* is an *appropriate* inheritor of his heroic mantle. Accordingly, this section will conclude with a brief attempt to open up our reading of Achilles under the influence of the Ovidian Ulysses, and to see to what extent the heroic principles of this Ulysses, the principles of

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[283] Scholia ad *Od.*8.75. See also Nagy (1979) 42-58; Murnaghan (1987) 170-1.
[284] E.g. Otis (1970) 284-5; Solodow (1988) 19-20; Hopkinson (2000) 18. It is noteworthy in this respect that Ovid's refusal to present Ulysses in a negative light runs counter to the traditional portrayal of the wily hero: cf. Stanford (1968) 138-141.

'openness' and 'aperture', might be seen to be 'already', even if 'not yet', incorporated within the themes and concerns of the principal hero of the *Iliad.*

One particular point of comparison between Ulysses and Achilles is their interest in acquiring material confirmation of their heroic worth. The prizes which the hero seeks, whether Ulysses in the *Metamorphoses* or Achilles in the *Iliad*, represent on one level the community's acknowledgement of the hero's value to them; in particular, the fact that Ulysses and Ajax debate the issue of the arms of Achilles in front of a full assembly of the Achaean army, with a panel of chiefs staffing the jury (this is described at *Metamorphoses* 12.626-8), emphasises that heroic glory is not something that can be won in its own terms and on its own account, but only acquires its significance in being acknowledged by the heroic community at large. In this respect, the hero of a metamorphic epic world strives *not* for a solitary pre-eminence, but for a *collective* endorsement of the worth he represents to the community at large. And of course, it is a dispute over prizes which provokes the original quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1; because when Agamemnon threatens to take away Achilles' prize, Briseïs, in compensation for his own lost Chryseïs, Achilles retorts that the prizes he is assigned are *never* commensurate with the effort he puts in on the battlefield:

> *οὐ μὲν σοί ποτε ἶσον ἔχω γέρας, ὁππότ' Ἀχαιοὶ*
> *Τρώων ἐκπέρσωσ' εὐ ναιόμενον πτολίεθρον·*
> *ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πλεῖον πολυαικος πολέμοιο*
> *χεῖρες ἐμαὶ διέπουσ', ἀτὰρ ἤν ποτε δασμὸς ἵκηται,*
> *σοὶ τὸ γέρας πολὺ μεῖζον, ἐγὼ δ' ὀλίγον τε φίλον τε*
> *ἔρχομ' ἔχων ἐπὶ νῆας, ἐπεί κε κάμω πολεμίζων.*
> *νῦν δ' εἶμι Φθίηνδ', ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερόν ἐστιν*
> *οἴκαδ' ἴμεν σὺν νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν, οὐδέ σ' οἴω*
> *ἐνθάδ' ἄτιμος ἐὼν ἄφενος καὶ πλοῦτον ἀφύξειν.*
>
> (*Iliad* 1.163-71)

All that Achilles asks for here is an acknowledgement from the community and from its leader Agamemnon of the extent to which it depends upon his prowess in battle. Despite putting in the *most* effort on the battlefield (*πλεῖον πολυάικος πολέμοιο*, 165: the alliteration and assonances highlight the fact that the hero who succeeds in *πόλεμος* is inherently entitled to a share of the spoil that is *πόλυ*) he still receives by far the *lesser* share of the plunder for his own (*ὀλίγον τε φίλον τε*, 167); and so it is the failure of the community to reward him to the extent that he considers his right that prompts his first instinct to withdraw from battle.

But it is a pattern which only goes so far. This is because although his decision to *withdraw* from the battle is taken on the grounds that the community no longer values his prowess in appropriate terms, his decision to *return* is made, not on the grounds that the community has chosen at last to reward him with his due, but out of grief and guilt at the death of Patroclus. In other words, at this point he collapses into an 'Ajax'-style model of heroism, prompted by egotistical emotional goals. Ajax's desire for 'prizes', for the reward of the *arma*, was incompatible with the kind of heroism he pursued, in his role as a remote, aloof warrior seeking a lonely pre-eminence; and after the death of Patroclus Achilles, too, holds himself aloof, no longer seeking the approbation of the Achaean community, and even rejecting offers of material conciliation from Agamemnon above and beyond those he had rejected when offered by the embassy in *Iliad* 9. Thus at the assembly following Patroclus' death he addresses Agamemnon as follows:

> Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον,
> δῶρα μὲν αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃσθα παρασχέμεν, ὡς ἐπιεικές.
> (*Iliad* 19.146-7)

His sole motive at *this* point is revenge on Hector; and at this point he cares not about his status within the community, as reflected in gifts or otherwise, nor about his imminent death, as all his efforts are concentrated on gain in the *present moment*, and he no longer cares to heed what else the future may bring.[285]

Yet if this momentary lapse into self-centred egotism ultimately costs Achilles his life, it is a lapse that he eventually comes to regret when brought into the world and concerns of the *Odyssey*. When the shade of Achilles meets and converses with Odysseus in the course of the latter's *katabasis* in *Odyssey* 11, he expresses regret for the unfortunate choices he made after the death of Patroclus, and proclaims his desire for a lifestyle which more closely reflects the heroism of Odysseus than the stance he himself adopted in the final books of the *Iliad*:

> "μὴ δή μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.
> βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ,
> ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίοτος πολὺς εἴη,
> ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.
> ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τοῦ παιδὸς ἀγαυοῦ μῦθον ἐνίσπες,

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[285] Witness particularly also his refusal to eat until Patroclus is buried, despite the pragmatic suggestion of Odysseus (*Iliad* 19.155-237).

ἦ ἔπετ' ἐς πόλεμον πρόμος ἔμμεναι, ἦε καὶ οὐκί.
εἰπὲ δέ μοι Πηλῆος ἀμύμονος, εἴ τι πέπυσσαι,
ἦ ἔτ' ἔχει τιμὴν πολέσιν μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσιν,
ἦ μιν ἀτιμάζουσιν ἀν' Ἑλλάδα τε Φθίην τε,
οὐνεκά μιν κατὰ γῆρας ἔχει χεῖράς τε πόδας τε.
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπαρωγὸς ὑπ' αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο,
τοῖος ἐών, οἷός ποτ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ εὐρείῃ
πέφνον λαὸν ἄριστον, ἀμύμων Ἀργείοισιν·
εἰ τοιόσδ' ἔλθοιμι μίννυθά περ ἐς πατέρος δῶ·
τῷ κέ τεῳ στύξαιμι μένος καὶ χεῖρας ἀάπτους,
οἳ κεῖνον βιόωνται ἐέργουσίν τ' ἀπὸ τιμῆς."

(*Odyssey* 11.488-503)

He begins this speech by invoking his desire to return to life, no matter how ignominious his existence might be: he declares that he would prefer even the status of an ἐπάρουρος (489) to the present empty celebrity he enjoys in the world of the dead. The stance he takes in this speech represents the position he adopted in *Iliad* 9 and later abandoned after the death of Patroclus. In the course of the *Iliad*'s embassy scene he informed the ambassadors of his twofold choice of fates – short life and long renown, or long life and ignominy – and gave notice of his desire to choose the latter course.[286] As he said to Odysseus:

οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ ψυχῆς ἀντάξιον οὐδ' ὅσα φασὶν
Ἴλιον ἐκτῆσθαι, εὐ ναιόμενον πτολίεθρον,
τὸ πρὶν ἐπ' εἰρήνης, πρὶν ἐλθεῖν υἷας Ἀχαιῶν,
οὐδ' ὅσα λάινος οὐδὸς ἀφήτορος ἐντὸς ἔέργει,
Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος, Πυθοῖ ἔνι πετρηέσσῃ.
λῃστοὶ μὲν γάρ τε βόες καὶ ἴφια μήλα,
κτητοὶ δὲ τρίποδές τε καὶ ἵππων ξανθὰ κάρηνα·
ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λεϊστὴ
οὔθ' ἑλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων.
μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλοσδε.
εἰ μέν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.

(*Iliad* 9.401-16)

This section of Achilles' long speech anticipates his pathetic lament in *Odyssey* 11 through several contextual and thematic links. Firstly and most obviously, both these speeches are directed to Odysseus; and the style of heroism endorsed by Achilles in

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[286] Clay (1983) 108-111 suggests that Achilles' speech here constitutes a reversal of his original choice in the *Iliad*: this reading would be in line with the general antithesis between Odyssean *μῆτις* and Iliadic *βίη*. However, Edwards (1984) 51 notes that "nowhere in the poem does he state a preference for *κλέος* over a *νόστος*", and consequently argues that Achilles' stance represents a *continuation* of his Iliadic position, rather than an outright recantation of his earlier view: this perspective seems to me a better reflection of the ways in which the Iliadic Achilles anticipates, without ever fully realising, the potential of the Odyssean heroic model.

both this passages, which rejects epic *κλέος* bought at the cost of an untimely death and privileges 'homecoming' and the prominence of family relationships, reflects the central concerns of the very hero whom he addresses. On both occasions, the first move made by Achilles is to endorse the supreme value of human life, which cannot be measured against any standard of financial or material reward. In these terms, his declaration at *Iliad* 9.408-9 that *ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λεϊστὴ οὔθ' ἑλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων* is echoed and emphasised by his assertion at *Odyssey* 11.489-90 that *βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ, ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίοτος πολὺς εἴη*: if human life exceeds any objective standard of valuation, then it follows that even the most ignominious and poverty-stricken existence is superior to the dismal existence of the underworld realm.

The concern of the second half of these speech is the possibility of a *νόστος* for Achilles, a return to his homeland and reunion with his family. This concern reflects the goal of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and the primary objective of his heroism. Indeed, Achilles at *Iliad* 9.410-16 anticipates a *successful* homecoming, a return to his aged father in Phthia, in such terms as to present himself as a very Odysseus *avant la lettre*. However, this bold claim is undermined by his subsequent behaviour, his willing desire to embrace an early death. Thus at *Odyssey* 11.494-505 he is left to mourn the consequences of this decision: no longer is he capable of achieving a *νόστος*, no longer can he bring comfort and security to his aged father Peleus. This pathetic lament anticipates the final and climactic reunion of the *Odyssey*, the recognition scene between Odysseus and his aged father Laertes (*Odyssey* 24.321-6): Achilles' thwarted desire is brought to fruition in the achievements of his heroic counterpart and superior. The filial duties of the two heroes are matched by their paternal impulses. A second prominent theme of the homecoming of Odysseus is his reunion with his son Telemachus, in the course of which he recognises and encourages the boy's maturation as a hero in the mould of his father. Achilles, again, is denied this privilege, and is reduced to asking Odysseus (*Odyssey* 11.492-3) for news of his son's

progress:[287] both as sons and as fathers, the conflict between these 'open' and 'closed' exemplars of heroism is reflected in their familial relationships.[288]

The mournful tone of Achilles' speech therefore highlights the contrast between the two heroes, suggesting once again the differences between the *μῆτις*- and *βίη*- centred models of heroism. Odysseus' pragmatic, metamorphic model of heroism succeeds, whereas Achilles' fixation in the latter books of the *Iliad* on the short-term, self-centred goals of revenge and pre-eminence on the battlefield have, in the long run, failed him: he is denied *νόστος*, closed off for ever from an 'Odyssean' reunion with his family and doomed to an isolated, aloof pre-eminence in the realm of the dead.

Achilles' lament for Peleus calls to mind particularly the entreaty of Priam in *Iliad* 24, as he invokes the image of the aged Peleus in begging Achilles to return the body of Hector:

> *τὸν καὶ λισσόμενος Πρίαμος πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε·*
> *"μνῆσαι πατρὸς σοῖο, θεῖος ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,*
> *τηλίκου ὥς περ ἐγών, ὀλοῷ ἐπὶ γήραος οὐδῷ·*
> *καὶ μέν που κεῖνον περιναιέται ἀμφὶς ἐόντες*
> *τείρουσ', οὐδέ τις ἔστιν ἀρὴν καὶ λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι.*
> *ἀλλ' ἦ τοι κεῖνος γε σέθεν ζώοντος ἀκούων*
> *χαίρει τ' ἐν θυμῷ, ἐπί τ' ἔλπεται ἤματα πάντα*
> *ὄψεσθαι φίλον υἱον ἀπὸ Τροίηθεν ἰόντα."*
>
> (*Iliad* 24.485-92)

The irony of Priam's entreaty is already evident in the *Iliad*, since Achilles knows that by killing Hector he has sealed his fate and will die at Troy. But the pathos in this speech is brought out even more fully by Achilles' lament in *Odyssey* 11. Whereas once he brought joy to his father Peleus, now Peleus – like Priam – is left without a son to look after him in his old age. Like Laertes, he is vulnerable to the taunts and the insults of younger and stronger men; unlike Laertes, he has no hope of an end to his sufferings, as Achilles has now lost all hope of a homecoming, a *nostos*. So Achilles' underworld lament represents a refutation of his stance in the closing books of the *Iliad*, which embraced the Ajax-model of heroism – lonely pre-eminence, approbation as the 'first and best' of the Achaeans – without considering the longer-term

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[287] Cf. Edwards (1984) 59-67.

[288] Cf. Goldhill (1991) 106: "When Odysseus, Telemachus and Laertes stand together against the suitors' relatives, it offers a paradigm of generational reciprocal support and continuity that reverses the result of Achilles' choice in the *Iliad*."

implications of this decision, without establishing tenors with the past and the future, in short, rejecting the metamorphic model of heroism embraced so successfully by Ulysses in *Metamorphoses* 13. Anticipating and pre-empting Odysseus' concerns with *nostos* at *Iliad* 9.401-16, he nevertheless yields to the pressures of self-centred emotional and personal goals, and ultimately pays the price

The *Metamorphoses*, with its Ulyssean model of heroism and its Ulyssean appropriation of Achilles, brings out the limitations of Achilles as a metamorphic hero, and in consequence promotes Ulysses himself as the full and complete exemplar of a mode of 'metamorphic' heroism which Achilles in the *Iliad* only partly follows, and in the *Odyssey* rues his very failure to achieve. Thus this Iliadic model of heroism is metamorphosed in Ovid's *Armorum Iudicium* in order to expose those very frailties and limitations which lead Achilles to collapse at the end of the poem into the model of a 'Bakhtinian' hero, remote and unreachable in a walled-off epic enclave, and which Ulysses is able to surmount through his mastery of the trope of metamorphosis and his willingness to hold himself open to the influences of the epic past and future. Achilles in the *Iliad* is 'already', but 'not yet', Ulysses: his brand of heroism contains the genesis of the Odyssean hero, but it is a heroic type which is only brought to full fruition in the more 'metamorphic' and 'open' achievements of his poetic successor and superior.

vii. Conclusion: epic and the poetics of 'aperture'

Metamorphoses 12.1-13.393 consists of a lengthy and sustained engagement with the *Iliad* unprecedented in the first eleven books of the poem.[289] The section begins with an excursus describing the home of the goddess Fama:

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[289] See Ellsworth (1980) 23-29; Zumwalt (1977) 209-22. The only other comparable section of the poem is the *Aeneid*-style narrative of the wanderings of Aeneas from *Metamorphoses* 13.623-14.582, discussed at Hinds (1988) 103-22; yet even this section of the poem incorporates many and extensive gestures towards the *Odyssey*: see Ellsworth (1988) 333-40.

Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque
caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi;
unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit,
inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures:
Fama tenet summaque domum sibi leget in arce,
innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis
addidit et nullis inclusit limina portis;
nocte dieque patet.

(*Metamorphoses* 13.39-46)

Fama, or κλέος, has been a recurrent motif in our discussion of epic both from the Ovidian and the Homeric viewpoints, and is a particularly central concern within the terms of Ovid's appropriation of the *Iliad*.[290] In this context it may be noted that the picture of Fama's house which Ovid constructs here is entirely appropriate to the discursive concerns of his own, metamorphic brand of epic. The location of her abode *inter terrasque fretumque/caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi* (39-40) recalls the Ovidian cosmogony, in which the demiurge repeatedly draws divisions between the elements only to see these distinctions immediately compromised or breached. Again, just as the *Metamorphoses* endorses internal narration as the primary narrative mode of a 'belated' epic, so Fama herself endeavours to spread her tales throughout the whole world: *penetratque cavas vox omnis ad aures*. And finally, just as Ovid's brand of metamorphic heroism is centred on 'aperture', the strategy of 'holding oneself open' to the limitless narrative fluxes of a metamorphic universe, so Fama's dwelling lies open (*nocte dieque patet*, 46) to the influx of rumour from all the corners of the world, perpetually ready to adapt and propagate a fresh rumour: *innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis/ addidit et nullis inclusit limina portis* (44-45).

Thus in treating *fama* it also 'metamorphoses' the notion of epic κλέος to fit its own metamorphic agenda. Ovidian epic heroism constructs itself around the terms of 'belatedness' and of 'aperture': and so, 'belated' though it may be, it empowers itself through its very epigonal status to metamorphose the central concerns and themes of Homer's epic in its own turn. The *Iliad* as read through the *Metamorphoses* is in one respect a very much less self-confident poem. Its central hero, Achilles, is denied the heroic significance which a monolithic reading of the *Iliad* might suggest for him, and

[290] Cf. particularly Zumwalt (1977) 209-10 and *passim*; Feeney (1991) 247-9; and Barchiesi (2002) 195-6; who all suggest that Ovid's House of Fama serves an important programmatic function for his treatment of traditional epic themes.

is suggestively portrayed as a mere precursor to the 'metamorphic' concerns of Odysseus. Its other characters are presented as in thrall to the past, a past embodied in the poem through the figure of Nestor, who invokes the prerogative of the aged in claiming that everything was always done better in the old days (as if there were ever a period, ever, indeed, an epic poem, *without* a 'past' to shackle and emasculate it).

Indeed the problems faced by epic heroes also pose a permanent threat to the poet, as, disingenuously or otherwise, he toys with alternatives to the tale of the Trojan War and the wrath of Achilles on which he has chosen to focus. The very *closure* which the poem anticipates in the destruction of Troy is not fulfilled in the course of the poem, but rather reaches its acme and full intensity elsewhere in the epic tradition: the power and pathos which the *Iliad* seeks in its recurring gestures towards the fall of the city are effectively 'borrowed' from other poetic sources, whether the traditions of the Epic Cycle (such as the *Iliupersis* and its precursors), the various narratives of the fall of Troy in the *Odyssey* (such as *Odyssey 4.266-289* or *Odyssey 8.499-520*), or even the narratives of Homer's Latin successors Virgil (*Aeneid* 2) and Ovid. Yet paradoxically, under the 'epigonal' and 'belated' pull of the *Metamorphoses*, the *Iliad* grows in stature as a poem which is already aware of its own 'literariness', written by a poet already aware of his own 'historicity'. It seems, indeed, a peculiarly 'metamorphic' epic.

The *Tristia* of Odysseus: exile and the elegiac voice

i. Ovid and the poetics of exile

Concluding the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid pictures the eternal poetic fame to which he lays claim in the following image:

> Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis
> nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas.
> cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
> ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
> parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
> astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
> quaeque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
> ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
> siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.
> (*Metamorphoses* 15.871-9)

Echoing Horace's famous assertion that his poetry is a monument which will outlast time (*exegi monumentum aere perennius*, *Odes* 3.30.1), Ovid elevates his work above and beyond the reach of the powers which effect metamorphosis (*Iovis ira ... ferrum ... edax vetustas*, 871-2) into a transcendent realm of timeless fame, evoked through the 'ethereal' language of *alta ... astra*. He links the political 'closure' which *pax Romana* has brought to foreign lands (*domitis Romana potentia terris*, 877) with the poetical 'closure' of his poem, implying that in the new Golden Age of the principate ceaseless change has given way to permanent stasis: thus, he asserts, his poetic fame shall remain untouchable now and for all time.

Yet at the same moment that this passage looks *backwards* on the *Metamorphoses* and the earlier achievements of Ovid's poetic career, capturing them once and for all time within a single gesture of timeless celebrity and poetic authority, it also looks *forwards* to the crushing notoriety of exile and the long succession of receptions and interpretations which will seek to reanimate the poet's static, changeless *fama* and metamorphose it into a defiant statement of artistic independence, a proud boast that his present disgrace will be surpassed by the timeless fame of his poetry. The final lines of *Tristia* 4.10, Ovid's 'poetic autobiography', may offer one such appropriation of the *Metamorphoses* passage:

Nec, qui detractat praesentia, Livor iniquo
  ullum de nostris dente momordit opus.
nam tulerint magnos cum saecula nostra poetas,
  non fuit ingenio fama maligna meo,
cumque ego praeponam multos mihi, non minor illis
  dicor et in toto plurimus orbe legor.
si quid habent igitur vatum praesagia veri,
  protinus ut moriar, non ero, terra, tuus.
sive favore tuli, sive hanc ego carmine famam,
  iure tibi grates, candide lector, ago.
(*Tristia* 4.10.123-32)

Specific verbal and conceptual correspondences with *Metamorphoses* 15.871-9 have been emphasised. *Edax vetustas* (*Metamorphoses* 15.872) is evoked through the image of Envy gnawing with her *iniquo dente* (124); recalling his prediction that he would be read by all the people (*ore legar populi*, *Metamorphoses* 15.878), he boasts that he still finds readers the whole world over (*in toto plurimus orbe legor*, 128); and line 129 (*si quid habent igitur vatum praesagia veri*) repeats almost verbatim the final line of the *Metamorphoses* (*si quid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam*). In a sense, this passage looks back on the *vatum praesagia* related at the end of the *Metamorphoses* and reports on their fulfilment – future *legar* (*Metamorphoses* 15.878) now becomes present *legor* (*Tristia* 4.10.128), and the claim to an *indelebile nomen* (*Metamorphoses* 15.876) is backed up by the reputation which Ovid presently enjoys as "not the least" of Roman poets (*non minor illis/dicor*, *Tristia* 4.10.127-8). The final lines of the *Metamorphoses* deal with Ovid's anticipation of an artistic reputation which will outlast his personal survival; given that he frequently equates his life in exile with a state of death,[291] it is a short step to correlate this 'metaphorical' death with the 'literal' death spoken of at *Metamorphoses* 15.873-4, and so to conclude that the books of *Tristia* and *Epistulae* sent from Pontus – to one of which this poem, *Tristia* 4.10, itself provides a *sphragis* – are in fact a vindication of his claim at the end of the *Metamorphoses* and an assertion of the timeless, transcendent power of poetry in contrast to the strictly temporal authority of Augustus.

Accordingly the final lines of the *Metamorphoses*, which on one level *defy* contextualisation in their attempt to situate Ovid's poetry in a timeless ahistorical

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[291] Examples include *Tristia* 3.3, 4.4.83-4, 4.6.50; *Ex Ponto* 1.8.27, 1.9.17, 1.9.55-6, 2.3.44, 3.5.55-6: see also Nagle (1980) 23-32; Claassen (1999) 239-40.

realm, resistant to metamorphosis and untouchable by gods, men, or nature, are yet laid wide open for *re*contextualisation within the terms of the disgrace and banishment which befell Ovid towards the end of his life; and interpretations of *Metamorphoses* 15.871-9 rarely fail to rise to the challenge. Consider for example the *Iovis ira* (*Metamorphoses* 15.871). In the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* we frequently find Jupiter's thunderbolts deployed as an image for the imperial edict of banishment,[292] and the hierarchy of Olympus employed as an image for the Caesarian dynasty;[293] accordingly, various critics have suggested that this phrase is deliberately intended to recall Augustus,[294] and some have even proposed that such imagery proves that the final lines were composed, not at Rome, but rather during a subsequent revision of the poem in Tomis.[295] All this, however, is speculation: it is not necessary to suppose that the concluding verses of the *Metamorphoses* were composed in the physical confines of exile so much as it is helpful to understand that Ovid's banishment provides a context which informs interpretations of the passage. In this respect, Ovid's allusions to the passage in his exile poetry (such as *Tristia* 4.10.123-32 above) form an explicit appeal to the professed transhistorical power of literature in order to downplay his 'political' disgrace and stress instead his 'poetic' successes; or, in the words of Gareth Williams:

> In the exilic wilderness, ... Ovid establishes both the outlines of an exilic tradition and a monument for himself within it. He ensures that by consigning him to his 'death' in Tomis partly in punishment for the *Ars Amatoria*, the emperor inadvertently and ironically contributes to the enhancement of the poet's fame .... Augustus is powerless to restrict the 'posthumous' renown which awaits Ovid after his 'death' as a love-elegist.[296]

In suggesting that "Augustus is *powerless*" to control the reception of Ovid's poetry Williams inverts the hierarchy of the political process through which the emperor exiles the poet: Ovid is 'authorised' and 'valorised' through his poetry, while Augustus, though ruler of the whole known world, finds that he can wield no authority over the matter of artistic heritage. The power of poetry is assumed to outrank the power of imperial authority, giving rise to the curious situation whereby

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[292] E.g. *Tristia* 1.1.72, 1.3.11-12, 2.33-8, 3.5.7, 4.9.14; *Ex Ponto* 3.6.17-18.
[293] E.g. *Tristia* 3.1.35-46, 3.10.62; *Ex Ponto* 1.7.49-50, 4.4.34, 4.8.23, 4.9.127-30.
[294] See e.g. Marg (1968) 511; Kovacs (1987) 463-4; Feeney (1991) 222.
[295] See Segal (1968) 260-2; Kovacs (1987) 463.
[296] Williams (1994) 198.

Ovid's relegation to Tomis can be interpreted, not as Augustus punishing Ovid, but as Ovid punishing Augustus.[297]

If there is a fault in this revisionist approach to Ovid's relationship with the political hierarchy in Rome, it is that its invocation of the presence of Augustus – even in the position of villain – is, in some sense, an acknowledgement of our powerlessness to evade the terms of 'Augustan' political discourse when considering the exile poetry. After all, the poet's assertions of permanent artistic renown are scarcely an *escape* from Augustus: rather the power of 'Augustanism' brings such passages to us *already interpreted*, whether we wish to use the political readings to inform our readings of the poetry, as in the works cited in notes 295 and 296 above, or begin from the poetical readings and turn these against the political interpretations of his poetry, as in the quotation from Gareth Williams.[298] In other words, Augustus has won: his power as *princeps*, as *imperator*, and as *pontifex maximus* and patron of the arts carries with it a great weight of political, military and cultural authority which of itself has proven extremely durable in generating interpretations of what is termed, after all, *Augustan* poetry. Likewise, for Ovid, exile in Tomis is a state of defeat: his poetry's pose of self-deprecation and its rhetoric of 'decline' together serve to invite contextualisation beneath the supremacy of 'Augustanism' as the master term authorising interpretations of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. Consider the extensive bibliography of books and articles which explore every reference Ovid makes to his elusive *error* with a view to discovering what the emperor took such extreme measures to suppress.[299] Even his earlier works are scoured for foreshadowings of the poetics of exile[300] or clues to the exact nature of his alleged 'anti-Augustanism'.[301] The poor shivering artist, stuck in his hovel on the fringes of civilisation, is

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[297] Cf. Claassen (1987) 31 and Henderson (1997) 141, who suggest that the *Tristia* might form an attack on the failure of Augustan *clementia*; likewise Williams (2002) 240, who develops the point to suggest that "every plea to the emperor is a test of his legend."

[298] Cf. Kennedy (1992) 26-58 on critical approaches to 'Augustanism'.

[299] See Thibault (1964) for a summary of the ancient evidence for Ovid's *error* and bibliography on the various and speculative modern interpretations.

[300] See Barchiesi (1997b) and Boyle (1997) 7-28 for the *Fasti*; Rosenmeyer (1997) 29-56 and Williams (1997) 113-37 for the *Heroides*. The correspondences are often explained in terms of the 'self-imitation' (on which see Tarrant (2002) 27-9) which is such a pervasive feature of Ovid's work: cf. Hinds (1985) 13-31; Henderson (1997) 147-9.

[301] Cf. Hollis (1973) 351, 368 on the *Ars Amatoria*; Otis (1970) 315, 368 on the *Metamorphoses*; and Phillips (1983) on Ovidian poetry in general. Not even a reader with such a 'literary' bias as Gareth

abandoned to the icy northern blasts and savage Sarmatian tribesmen while largely Romanocentric scholarship concentrates on chasing 'pro-' and 'anti-Augustanisms', interpreting his verse within the restrictive and comfortable confines of Roman palace politics.[302]

In one respect this accusation is slightly unfair, because Ovid himself is caught up in the Romanocentric pull of his exile verse: the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* speak as much about Rome as they do about Tomis. For instance, we often find Ovid calling to mind his addressees going about their daily lives in the city,[303] or daydreaming of Roman holidays and triumphal celebrations.[304] The power of Rome is always present in the exile poetry; as Habinek has shown with regard to the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, the periphery is, indeed, peripheral, in cultural terms as much as in political or geographical, and the artistic authority Ovid asserts from exile rests firmly on the dominance of the Imperial centre: "Ovid's laments and letters from Tomis condition the Roman audience to acquiescence in authorisation from afar while continuing to assert the priority of Rome-centred modes of discourse."[305]

Thus in continually looking back towards Rome and the imperial centre, Ovid's exile poetry betrays its awareness of and acquiescence in its 'peripheral' status. As a mode of writing which is 'marginal' in both geographical and political terms, it stands or falls by its association with and appropriation of more powerful, centripetal modes of discourse. The opening lines of *Tristia* 1.1 show one way in which this may be attempted:

> Parva (nec invideo) sine me, liber, ibis in urbem:
> ei mihi, quod domino non licet ille tuo.
> vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse:
> infelix habitum temporis huius habe.

Williams can come away without a lengthy consideration of Ovid's attitude to Augustus: see Williams (1994) 154-209.

[302] Cf. the 'colonial' reading of the exile poetry put forward by Habinek (1998) 151-69: e.g. "Far from repudiating Augustus or those around him, Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* acknowledge the legitimacy of their dominance and invite its extension over other peoples as well" (164-5).

[303] More frequent in the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, where Ovid allows himself the liberty of naming his addressees; e.g. *Ex Ponto* 1.8.65-8, 2.4.19-22, 4.4.27-42.

[304] Such as *Tristia* 4.2.57-64; *Ex Ponto* 1.8.25-38, 4.4.43-50. See also Evans (1983) ch.3 *passim*; Edwards (1996) 123-5; Williams (2002) 237-8.

[305] Habinek (1998) 153. On a parallel concern with the author's absent homeland as a common characteristic of the literary work of twentieth century exiles, see Gurr (1981) 13-32.

nec te purpureo velent vaccinia fuco:
  non est conveniens luctibus ille color.
nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur,
  candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras.
felices ornent haec instrumenta libellos:
  fortunae memorem te decet esse meae.
nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes,
  hirsutus sparsis ut videare comis.
neve liturarum pudeat. qui viderit illas,
  de lacrimis factas sentiat esse meis.
vade, liber, verbisque meis loca grata saluta:
  contingam certe quo licet illa pede.
(*Tristia* 1.1.1-16)

Bidding his book farewell as it departs from Tomis to Rome, Ovid requests that it should travel *incultus*; this word, which symbolises both the unkempt condition of an exile (cf. *habitum temporis huius*, 4) and the appearance of a rudimentary, uncultivated literary style, combines various images of both physical and literary 'cultivation' in such a way as to suggest that the book's poetic shabbiness will signify to its Roman audience a sense of its absent master's bodily decay in exile.[306] In the remainder of the poem's opening section (5-16) this conceit is extended to the material characteristics of the book. When Ovid tells his text, *nec te purpureo velent vaccinia fuco* (5) and *nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur, candida nec nigra fronte geras* (7-8) he emphasises primarily the physical appearance of the poetic book: its austere dress is a suitable costume to wear when grieving for Ovid (*luctibus*, 6), and hence appropriate for the *elegiac* verse it contains, since the poetry is self-consciously aware both of its 'inferiority' to Ovid's earlier works, and of its duty to parade Ovid's exilic grievances through the streets of Rome. Its pages have not been polished with *fragili...pumice* (11): this phrase at once alludes back to Catullus 1.2 (*arida...pumice expolitum*), in which Catullus utilises the process of polishing papyrus with pumice stone as a metaphor for the 'literary' refinement to which he subjects his work, and reanimates the physical connotations of this metaphor within the present context of the anthropomorphisation of the text: the book's hoariness demonstrates that it is not unaware of its literary shortcomings.[307] And the phrase *neve*

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[306] On literary and amatory *cultus* in the *Ars Amatoria* see Leach (1964) 142-54; Myerowitz (1985) 41-72. It is somewhat ironic that Ovid, poet of *cultus* in the *Ars*, should as a direct result of that work be reduced to deploying *incultus* poetry in order to signify his fallen status.

[307] Rubbing the pages with pumice stone would make them smoother to the touch: cf. *hirsutus*, line 12 above. See Williams (1992) 186; Newlands (1997) 61. *Hirsutus* will later be used as a signifier of

liturarum pudeat (13) draws on a literary conceit already familiar to the fledgling genre of epistolary elegy, that is, that the tears shed by the letter writer as an expression of his or her grief are smeared over the page as *physical* signifiers of the *literary* affiliations of the text.[308] The section is capped at line 16 with the phrase *contingam certe **quo licet illa pede**.* Matching the *incultus* pun at line 3, we now find a second pun playing on the language of bodily appearance and poetic diction, the metric *pes* troped as a human foot with which the book may walk the familiar streets of Rome.[309] Thus the rhetoric of corporeality is invoked in order to signify the 'reality' behind the exile corpus: Ovid's text assumes 'physical' characteristics as a graphic representation of its own author, who of course is banished from the city. The *Tristia*, on this reading, are not mere *literary* representations of 'sorrow', they 'are' sorrow, and they express this misery through their unkempt and tearful appearance: the text is anthropomorphised through images of bodily adornment and dress in order to serve as Ovid's bodily surrogate in Rome, transforming the poet's elegiac *tristia* into vivid physical expressions of mourning and grief.[310]

A further example of the relationship between exile poetry and more 'central' modes of discourse can be found in *Tristia* 1.5, which contains a lengthy point-by-point comparison (57-84) of the experiences of Ovid and Odysseus. The *syncrisis* is introduced by the following passage, in which Ovid complains of his inability to express in words all the *mala* he has suffered:

> Si vox infragilis, pectus mihi firmius aere,
> pluraque cum linguis pluribus ora forent,
> non tamen idcirco complecterer omnia verbis,
> materia vires exsuperante meas.
> (*Tristia* 1.5.53-6)

In one respect we see here no more than a conventional expression signifying uncountability: it is a *topos* which recurs in epic poetry (as Homer, *Iliad* 2.488-90;

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literary 'backwardness': cf. *Tristia* 2.259, *sumpserit Annales (nihil est **hirsutius illis**)*. See also Lygdamus 1.9-10:

> lutea sed nurum involvat membrana libellum,
> **pumex et canas tondeat ante comas.**

[308] Cf. Propertius 4.3.4; Ovid, *Heroides* 3.3, 11.1; and see Williams (1992) 187-8.

[309] On this pun see Hinds (1985) 16-17.

[310] The 'truth' of physical pain and suffering is often felt to transcend the power of language to convey. Cf. Barthes (1979) 173: "By weeping, I give myself an emphatic interlocutor who receives the 'truest' of messages, that of my body, not that of my speech."

Ennius, *Annales* 469-70; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.625-7 and so on). Given that Ovid repeatedly complains of his failing poetic powers in exile, and that elegiac verse freely parades its inadequacy in voicing large-scale, extensive themes, one way of interpreting this passage would be to draw a contrast between the extent and intensity of Ovid's sufferings and the comparative frailty of his current poetic powers.[311] However, Stephen Hinds has sought to demonstrate that beyond employing this platitude as a commonplace means of expressing the inability to convey one's material, Ovid is also engaging with its generic origins at *Iliad* 2.488-90.[312] Thus the *topos* is invoked not so much as an inert cliché within the *recusatio* motif, but rather as a means of invoking the full generic weight of epic while at the same time denying that even this genre contains the power to convey the whole extent of Ovid's sufferings. The deployment of Homeric epic in general, and the myth of Odysseus in particular, serves to emphasise the theme that epic narrative is an inadequate vehicle within which to signify physical pain, a point reiterated in the opening lines of the syncrisis:

> pro duce Neritio docti mala nostra poetae
> scribite: Neritio nam mala plura tuli.
> ille brevi spatio multis erravit in annis
> inter Dulichias Iliacasque domos:
> nos freta sideribus totis distantia mensos
> sors tulit in Geticos Sarmaticosque sinus.
> ille habuit fidamque manum sociosque fideles:
> me profugum comites deseruere mei.
> ille suam laetus patriam victorque petebat:
> a patria fugi victus et exul ego.
> nec mihi Dulichium domus est Ithaceve Samosve,
> poena quibus non est grandis abesse locis:
> sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem
> montibus, imperii Roma deumque locus.
> (*Tristia* 1.5.57-70)

Epic is frequently described as a 'totalising' narrative, surveying vast perspectives of space and time within its wide thematic ambit. Within this context, Ovid's claim to have "borne more woes" (*mala plura tuli*, 58) than Odysseus is of great metapoetic interest, setting the tone for the remainder of this passage, in which the author attempts to prove his superiority to his mythological antecedent in every respect of his

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311 See Luck (1977) *ad loc.*; Evans (1983) 40; Claassen (1999) 232.
312 Hinds (1998) 43-4; cf. Williams (1994) 111-2.

sufferings.[313] Although Ovid concedes the palm to Odysseus in terms of time spent in exile (*multis erravit in annis*, 59), he downplays this by focusing on topography: Odysseus only wandered over a narrow region (*brevi spatio*, 59), while Ovid has traversed the whole expanse of the Mediterranean and beyond, travelling "seas whole constellations apart" (*freta sideribus totis distantia*, 61). Returning from the Trojan War, Odysseus was *laetus* and a *victor* and en route to his homeland besides (65), while Ovid, an involuntary expatriate, has left Rome *victus et exul* (66): hence the implication that Odysseus' toils were the lighter, for all the while he was at least heading back to Ithaca, while Ovid is legally forbidden to return home. Moreover, we are reminded, it would be no great punishment to be kept from Ithaca and its neighbouring islands (68), whereas Ovid's homeland is the capital of the whole world (*totum circumspicit orbem*, 69).

Within the context of Ovid's pre-exilic work, the strategy employed by this passage is particularly familiar. Speaking in the elegist's voice, the poet takes the 'authoritative', 'totalising' rhetoric of epic and demolishes its claim to provide the final word on any given issue: just as soldiers do more than make war, because *militat omnis amans* (*Amores* 1.9.1) and even Mars must disarm before he can enter the elegiac *Fasti* to discuss Roman aetiologies (*Fasti* 3.1-10), so in the sphere of human suffering Odysseus' tribulations during his wanderings are exposed as limited, imperfect, far short of what an exile might be called upon to endure. Ovid invokes epic narrative only so that he may eschew it: there are some topics, he tells us, which the authoritative, 'totalising' voice of epic cannot adequately cover. He calls upon Odysseus' sufferings one by one in order to probe the boundaries of epic's concerns and undermine that genre's claim to provide a comprehensive overview of human experience. As a 'maximising' portrayal of suffering in exile, the *Odyssey*, to Ovid, has failed. It has failed for precisely the reason that its picture of Odysseus' sufferings is not convincing; it is an inadequate vehicle for conveying the pain which lies behind the myth; or, as Ovid himself puts it:

> Adde, quod illius pars maxima ficta laborum:
> ponitur in nostris fabula nulla malis.
> (*Tristia* 1.5.79-80)

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[313] See Williams (1994) 108-13.

A distinction is drawn between the *pars maxima ficta laborum* of Odysseus, and the *mala* of Ovid, within which there resides no myth, only the alleged pure, insuperable truth of human pain. The juxtaposition of *maxima ficta* calls to mind the 'maximising' rhetoric of epic, and, in associating it with poetic fiction, suggests that what epic does best of all is tell *ficta* – lies. Ovid's *mala*, by contrast, are real, not myths, and in them no story, *nulla fabula*, resides. What these verses attempt to convey is that epic poetry is pure fiction, and in the last resort is all "made up", whereas Ovid's elegy, which is rooted in the physical sufferings of a real, physical, historical human being, has a far superior claim to authority and 'totality' in the sphere of human emotions. The pervasiveness of the extent to which this rhetoric of 'reality' has dominated the reception of Ovid's exile poetry can be found in quotes from scholars such as Dickinson, "Tomis was a shock.... His world was turned upside down, and the damage to his temperament was *very real*"[314] or Wilkinson's discussion of *Tristia* 1.3, which describes Ovid's last night in Rome, "It is a *sincere and vivid* record of a *poignant personal experience*, a thing rare in ancient poetry."[315] Contemporary criticism, with its shift towards textuality and away from historical veracity, has proved readier to treat the exile poetry on a literary basis, rather than as expressions of an autobiographical reality, yet even so the descriptions of suffering, whether physical or psychological, provoke pangs of empathy. Stephen Hinds, who reads the exilic oeuvre's emphasis on its decline in terms of a more recent scholarly emphasis on self-conscious literary tropes of 'decay',[316] cautions that "none of the newly appreciated virtuosity in Ovid's framing of his suffering should be allowed to devalue the suffering thus framed."[317] Jo-Marie Claassen's notion of a 'myth' of exile invoked in Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* proceeds along similar lines. Her insistence on the term 'myth' emphasises that Ovid's portrayal of his exile sufferings need not be understood as an unproblematically 'true' account of his way of life in Tomis;[318] nevertheless, ready though she is to downplay the *physical* aspect of the poet's sufferings, she recuperates and magnifies the heartfelt agonies of exile through her

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[314] Dickinson (1973) 157; emphasis mine.
[315] Wilkinson (1955) 312; emphasis mine.
[316] A revisionist interpretation which began with Luck (1961) 243-61, who attempts to show that stylistically there is no significant difference between the exile poetry and Ovid's earlier elegiac verse. Other interpretations include those of Fitton Brown (1985), who puts the case against Ovid ever having set foot in Tomis, and Williams (1994) 3-49, who avails himself of the distancing effect of quotation marks by speaking of the 'unreality' (*sic*) of Ovid's exile poetry.
[317] Hinds (1998) 90.

extensive discussions of the *psychological* aspects of the hardships involved: "He offers a view of a reality which may possibly deviate from literal fact, but transcends it by the truth of its depiction of suffering and survival"; "Better to accept Ovid's portrayal of the horrors of the place as imaginary, as myth; a myth that externalises the internal horror of isolation and carries with it a higher-order truth: that Augustus brought great misery to a Roman citizen, who sustained himself by exercising his persuasive, poetic creativity."[319]

But here perhaps another word of warning is in order. Recent work on Roman elegy has suggested a shift in the terms of debate from the 'romantic' view of love, which reifies *amor* as a first principle of human emotional life, towards the view characterised (after his *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux*) as 'Barthesian', which sees love as a secondary construct, derivative from and wholly dependent upon the language within which it is framed.[320] In accordance with the latter view, it must be noted that, whether acknowledged or not, rhetorical *exempla* play a significant role in constructing and anchoring perspectives on reality in Latin love elegy.[321] Here, for example, Ovid rejects *fabulae* as a means of expression in his exile poetry; yet he constructs his argument primarily through an invocation of ... the *fabula* of Odysseus! Even as he rejects the Homeric myth as a vehicle for his pain, he is compelled to invoke its characters and events as reference points for his own life story.[322] Attempting to distance his 'physical' discomforts from the 'mythological' travails of Odysseus, he ends up deploying precisely this fictional pain as the archetype of his 'real' sufferings. Literary language, by its very 'literariness', is unable to express 'real life' in absolute terms. Therefore it will be better to avoid chasing after these chimerical *Realien*, and instead examine the text's role in envisioning the world it inhabits. In other words, our first priority should be to emphasise the way the *Tristia*

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[318] See Claassen (1988); Claassen (1999) 10, 68-72, 190-7, and *passim*.
[319] Quotes from Claassen (1988) 169; Claassen (1999) 197. Cf. also the Freudian narrative of the exile's psychology in Walker (1997), essentialising "nostalgia" as the crucial psychological 'truth' of exilic verse which directs the emotions of both exile and reader alike: "[O]ur engagement with the exile elegies should serve to remind us that the nostalgia Ovid feels is not solely a feature of exile, but a 'constituent part of human development', governing our efforts to recover/uncover the 'meaning' of the texts we read" (203).
[320] See Barthes (1979); and on Latin elegy, Kennedy (1993) 64-82.
[321] See Feeney (1992) 33-4; cf. also Barthes (1979) 129-30.
[322] Within *Tristia* 1.5, cf. the deployment of Theseus (19), Pylades (21) and Nisus (24) as exemplars of friendship in adversity for Ovid's addressee.

construct the world of Ovid's exile, contemplating above all the self-consciously *literary* nature of this realm. Consider, for example, our discussion of *Tristia* 1.1 above. The rhetoric of corporeality deployed by this poem is no more privileged than the rhetoric of epic in providing an insight into the pain Ovid suffers: for at the same time as the poetic book is personified and develops, courtesy of its author, physical characteristics, Ovid in turn is objectified, and as he empties his physical attributes onto his poetry, so he in turn loses his autonomy and independence as a physical human being. What is Ovid in exile, beyond his poetry? His books develop feet and walk freely through the streets of Rome; but Ovid's feet are now only poetic feet, he loses his physical and corporeal identity, and stripped of all bodily *cultus* he is left to live out his days as nothing more than a literary text.

Accordingly, as much as Ovid the exile may have lamented the inadequacy of the Odysseus myth in conveying the full horror of forced expatriation (and here I pause, lest I too allow the objective sufferings of the exile to intrude upon my subjective reading of the *Tristia*), yet Ovid the elegist revels in the potential offered by the discrepancies it raises between literary language and lived experience. Latin elegy from Catullus onwards presents itself as a self-consciously *fallax opus*, continually balancing outright assertions of mimetic realism against self-conscious confessions of its inherent fictionality. Thus the Catullan mistress writes her words in the wind and running water (Catullus 70.4); Propertius 4.1.135 coins the very phrase *fallax opus* as a description of his elegiac compositions; and Ovid himself, the poet who assures us that "Jupiter scoffs at lovers' oaths" (*Ars* 1.633), repeatedly teases his audience as to the fictiveness or reality of his mistress Corinna. In this context, too, the 'many voices' *topos* of *Tristia* 1.5.53-6 is open for reinterpretation: for as much as its epic origins and development from *Iliad* 2.488-90 through *Aeneid* 6.625-7 and beyond suggest a reading from within the context of the epic mode, its thematic concern – that even the best of poets has not sufficient grasp of his medium to find the perfect match between language and life – is particularly appropriate to an elegiac context, in which poetic discourse is always aware of its fictionality and, rather than attempting to assert its closeness to reality, instead exults in the possibilities of meaning created through the gap between literary rhetoric and 'life-in-itself'.

Furthermore, in recalling the *pars maxima ficta laborum* of Odysseus, Ovid implicates the mythological hero, too, in elegy's games of truth and mistruth. Odysseus' fictive tales form various *fallacia opera* of their own; they, too, exist on the borderline between fiction and veracity. And in denigrating the scope of Odysseus' pains, in denying him epic *totality*, Ovid suggests instead the *limitations* of epic poetry. Read in the poetic context of Ovid's exile works, the *Odyssey* now becomes a more straitened, impotent kind of poem; it is already, but not yet, speaking in the 'elegiac' voice. Moreover, the voice which the *Odyssey* assumes thereby to articulate the experiences of Odysseus is the voice of elegy at its most impotent and pathetic. Firstly, it portrays the frustrations and sterility of unfulfilled desire, whether this be erotic in the sense of pursuing, yet never quite catching, one's beloved, or more widely in the sense of an exile's impossible desire to return home: Odysseus is at once motivated by the prospect of returning to see Penelope (cf. *Odyssey* 5.215-20), and yet diverted into unproductive love affairs with Circe and Calypso. The *servitium amoris*, the elegiac lover's attachment to his beloved, appears as the exile's loss of freedom to return home, whether this be effected by the imperial decree of Augustus or the machinations of Calypso the Concealer who refuses to allow Odysseus to leave Ogygia (*Odyssey* 1.13-15). And elegy's self-professed aetiology in *τό ἐλεεινόν* informs the exile's bouts of self-pity, whether it be Ovid sealing an epistle with his tears (*Tristia* 5.4.5-6), or Odysseus muffling his head in his cloak at the songs of King Alcinous' bard Demodocus (*Odyssey* 8.83-92, 521-31). Ovid's exile poems offer us a way into the *Odyssey* that will obtain fresh insights into the narrative strategies behind the long absence of the hero and his adventures in strange and outlandish regions. Most of all, it will offer us a reading of the *Odyssey* as a story operating from within the confines of a tradition, and a poem which manipulates this tradition both to reveal its own textuality and to demonstrate its hero's implication in the same shifting landscape of mythical variations: for if elegy is, as it claims, an essentially *fallax opus*, then it can find no more appropriate exponent than the deceptive trickster Odysseus.

ii. Exile and 'authority': the absence of Odysseus

Our discussion of *Tristia* 1.1 above sought to open up a distinction between Ovid and his text: the 'text' assumes corporeal form through identification with the physical

letter which travels to Rome, while Ovid, restricted to Tomis and unable to travel home, is gradually divested of his own physicality, becoming no more than a retrospective construct of his own writings. The epistolary form of his letters offers a convenient focus for considering this disjunction, in that the epistle's very *raison d'-être* is founded in the physical and temporal distance between the act of authorship and the act of reading: once the letter has arrived at its point of reception, its author (who is by necessity absent) can only be called to mind through a reading of the text. The epistle is a physical substitute for the writer, who is himself distanced, detached, and understood only through and from his text.[323]

The concept of 'epistolarity' therefore offers a useful starting point from which to begin consideration of the discourse of 'exile'. Just like any letter writer, an exile is always (almost by definition) absent, even if he seeks to elide this absence by sending letters back to his homeland (as does Ovid), or if travellers' tales about him reach his family and friends (as in the case of Odysseus). The protagonist – the exile – is never wholly accessible to the reader, aware as he is of both the distance which comes between them, and the passage of time which may already have rendered some of the contents of the letter obsolete.[324] It will be illuminating to consider the narrative strategy of *Odyssey* 1-4 in this context. For example, many have remarked on the narrator's tardiness in introducing the eponymous hero into his poem. Thoughts on why Odysseus should enter the poem so late tend to fall into two distinct categories. Some follow the 'Analyst' line and attempt to demonstrate through features of language and thought that the books are neither genuine nor integral to the plot of the 'original' Odyssey, belonging instead to a separate poem on Telemachus, and it is only when we reach Odysseus on Ogygia in Book 5 that the original *Odyssey* begins.[325] Woodhouse accepts the linguistic difficulties and concurs that the opening books of the poem are in some sense inferior, yet contends that they are "unintelligible except in relation to the *Odyssey* as a whole";[326] his reading of these books, and of the poem in its entirety, puts particular emphasis upon the character

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[323] See further Altman (1982); and cf. Claassen (1999) 12, who defines letters from exile precisely as *sermo absentis*.
[324] Cf. *Tristia* 4.2.71; *Ex Ponto* 3.4.57-60, 4.11.15-16. Altman (1982) 129-34 discusses this phenomenon, which she terms 'temporal polyvalence'.
[325] E.g. Kirchhof (1879) 238-74; von Wilamowitz-Möllendorf (1927) 122-7.
[326] Woodhouse (1930) 211.

development of Telemachus.[327] The approach of Woodhouse exemplifies the typical 'Unitarian' reading of these books, which is to focus on the transition of Telemachus from boyhood to manhood, following his 'initiation' into the heroic world.[328] This interpretation is as old as Homeric scholarship, being found in the scholia on *Odyssey* 1.284, and has been revivified in recent decades through application of a structuralist methodology which lays particular stress on both liminalities and their transgressions (in this case focusing on the boundary between childhood and adulthood), and actively encourages cross-readings against comparative material in other cultures.[329] For all the concentration on Telemachus, however, especially in the title traditionally applied to these four books collectively (the "Telemachy"), reference to the above reading of Ovid's *Tristia* will remind us that, within an exile's discourse, the subject's *absence* is to be construed as at least as important as his *presence*; indeed, in this mode of writing, the exile himself is *always and ineluctably absent*. At the time the poem opens, Odysseus is an exile, trapped on Ogygia and prevented from returning home; should it be a surprise that the poet does not name him for twenty one verses (*ἀντιθέῳ Ὀδυσῆι πάρος ἣν γαῖαν ἱκέσθαι*, *Odyssey* 1.21), and then only in the context of his homecoming, or is it not rather a formal reflection of his status in exile, the fact that even though he is the subject of this poem he is already distanced from narrator and audience? And if Ovid, in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, finds himself less flesh-and-blood than parchment-and-ink, that is to say, the exile, like the elegist, is a literary phenomenon, a construct developed out of his texts,[330] then surely this must apply to Odysseus as well: for the 'education' of Telemachus expounded in these four books consists primarily of encounters with various characters – Mentes, Phemius, and Nestor among others – who have stories to tell about his father. Let us follow the journey of Telemachus from Ithaca to Sparta, and let us concentrate less on his own character development within and without these scenes than on the portrait of Odysseus which the poet elaborates for us.

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[327] See Woodhouse (1930) 212-14.

[328] See e.g. Rose (1967) 391-8; Austin (1969) 45-63; and Jones (1988) 496-506, who stress that the education of Telemachus concentrates on making him a character more like his father; and cf. also Millar & Carmichael (1954) 58-64; Murnaghan (1987) 34-7.

[329] See e.g. Lord (1960) 158-85; Nagler (1974) 102; Alden (1987) 129-37.

[330] For the importance of 'writing' and literary self-fashioning to the elegiac poets, cf. the recurring theme of the "lost writing tablets": Catullus 42; Propertius 3.23; Ovid, *Amores* 1.12.

Following the proem and the council of gods, the first human scene we encounter in the *Odyssey* is the palace on Ithaca: this, Odysseus' homeland, occupies an equivalent position in his thoughts to the place Rome occupies in the mind of Ovid. At the moment, however, all we perceive is the *absence* of Odysseus and the devastating effects of this absence on his family and household. Regarding the early scenes of the poem, unitarian critics have often spoken of the skill with which Homer plunges *in medias res*, employing the absence of Odysseus as a device for focusing on the growth and education of Telemachus.[331] However, such an approach tends (paradoxically) to reify 'absence' as a narrative stratagem, rather than concentrating on absence *as* 'absence': in particular, there is scope for considering the ways Odysseus' absence from Ithaca is paralleled on a metatextual level by the narrator's exploitation of a void in the expectations of the audience. For there is much in the early books of the *Odyssey* to suggest that readerly expectations are being simultaneously raised and dashed, in that Odysseus' *absence* from Ithaca *forestalls* the development of the narrative. Public affairs in Ithaca are in a state of anarchy: no assembly has been summoned since the army left for Troy (*Odyssey* 2.26-7). His household has been overrun by a gang of unruly suitors, who take advantage of the husband's absence to woo his wife, precipitating domestic chaos, as Telemachus remarks at *Odyssey* 1.160-2. Penelope is constantly being pestered to abandon Odysseus and prepare for remarriage, yet she forestalls them with the ruse of the web (*Odyssey* 2.93-110) and other delaying tactics. In every case the absence of Odysseus – the king, the head of the household, the husband – forestalls all possibility of narrative progress: no new development can occur in public affairs when the assembly is inactive, Penelope is set against remarrying, and even though Telemachus has come of age, the presence of the suitors prevents him from assuming authority in the palace. Perhaps this inaction and frustration drives him to doubts about whether there was such a man as Odysseus who fathered him at all; for he remarks to Mentes (Athena in disguise):

> *μήτηρ μέν τέ μέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε*
> *οὐκ οἶδ· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἓον γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω.*
> *ὡς δὴ ἐγώ γ' ὄφελον μάκαρός νύ τευ ἔμμεναι υἱὸς*
> *ἀνέρος, ὃν κτεάτεσσιν ἑοῖς ἔπι γῆρας ἔτετμε.*

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[331] See note 329 above.

νῦν δ' ὃς ἀποτμότατος γένετο θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
τοῦ μ' ἔκ φασι γενέσθαι, ἐπεὶ σύ με τοῦτ' ἐρεείνεις.
(*Odyssey* 1.215-20)

Note particularly the words *φησι* (215) and *φασι* (220), which inform us that Telemachus has no knowledge of his father from his own experience, and must rely instead on the words and stories of others. *φησι* and *φασι* imply that Telemachus' conception of his father is primarily a *textual* phenomenon. We are reminded of the use of the 'Alexandrian footnote' in Roman literature, that is, the deployment of phrases such as *dicitur* or *fama est* to acknowledge a text's awareness of its traditional status.[332] The vocabulary of 'fame' or 'report' serves in this context to draw attention *outside* the text, locating it within a tradition and simultaneously self-consciously acknowledging its traditionality. While I do not wish to attribute to Homer the same kind of post-Callimachean literary self-awareness which readings of Roman poetry invite, I would like to follow up the metapoetic implications of *φησι* and *φασι* in locating the *Odyssey* within certain traditions of archaic epic verse. Thus Telemachus' speech offers two variants on the tale of his own birth: either, as his mother tells him, he is the son of Odysseus (215), or the matter must remain in doubt, because no one ever truly knows who his own father is (216). Odysseus' absence in exile – his powerlessness to develop his *own* story – renders him particularly vulnerable to this game of competing appropriations, as Telemachus is denied access to the 'authorised' version of his family history and is reduced to these impotent and desperate speculations. Likewise, within *Odyssey* 1-4 as a whole, the variety of tales people tell with reference to Odysseus suggests an open-ended story with a variety of possible outcomes along the lines of a number of paradigmatic myths. Zeus' first speech at the assembly of the gods implies that prominence will be given to one particular tale, the fateful return and death of Agamemnon at the hands of Aegisthus (*Odyssey* 1.32-43): although Athena diverts him from this path (*Odyssey* 1.45-62), the motif of the return of Agamemnon will recur throughout the return of Odysseus;[333] and perhaps the song of Phemius which treats of the *νόστον λυγρόν* of the Achaeans (*Odyssey* 1.326-7) also hints at this possible outcome for the hero's homecoming. The tale which Mentes/Athena tells Telemachus is particularly rich in such allusions:

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[332] See Ross (1975) 78; Hinds (1998) 1-16.
[333] Cf. Menelaus' account of his brother's demise at *Odyssey* 4.512-37; Odysseus' encounter with Agamemnon in the underworld at *Odyssey* 11.385-464; and Agamemnon's response to the *katabasis* of the suitors at *Odyssey* 24.192-202.

εἰ γὰρ νῦν ἐλθὼν δόμου ἐν πρώτῃσι θύρῃσι
σταίη, ἔχων πήληκα καὶ ἀσπίδα καὶ δύο δοῦρε,
τοῖος ἐὼν οἷόν μιν ἐγὼ τὰ πρῶτ' ἐνόησα
οἴκῳ ἐν ἡμετέρῳ πίνοντά τε τερπόμενόν τε,
ἐξ Ἐφύρης ἀνιόντα παρ' Ἰλου Μερμερίδαο.
ᾤκετο γὰρ καὶ κεῖσε θοῇς ἐπὶ νηὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς
φάρμακον ἀνδροφόνον διζήμενος, ὄφρα οἱ εἴη
ἰοὺς χρίεσθαι χαλκήρεας· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν οὔ οἱ
δῶκεν, ἐπεί ῥα θεοὺς νεμεσίζετο αἰὲν ἐόντας,
ἀλλὰ πατήρ οἱ δῶκεν ἐμός· φιλέεκσε γὰρ αἰνῶς.
τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὁμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς·
πάντες κ' ὠκύμοροί τε γενοίατο πικρόγαμοί τε.

(*Odyssey* 1.255-66)

Referring to his principal memory of Odysseus, standing at the door of his house with πήληκα καὶ ἀσπίδα καὶ δύο δοῦρε (256), Mentes/Athena seems to allude to myths concerning Odysseus in which the theme of martial valour is prominent: both the image of weaponry and the concomitant implications of heroic valour in battle evoke a picture of Odysseus similar to that represented in such sources as the *Iliad*.[334] Nestor's reminiscences at *Odyssey* 3.216-22 are in a similar vein, recalling Odysseus' heroic exploits at Troy and the favour shown him by his patron goddess Athena. Both Mentes/Athena and Nestor therefore call to mind traditions of Odysseus which celebrate his martial prowess. Their tales suggest a version of his homecoming in which he triumphs over the suitors by sheer force: for both conclude their stories with a wish that Odysseus should return and dash their hopes of marriage, Mentes/Athena with the words πάντες κ' ὠκύμοροί τε γενοίατο πικρόγαμοί τε (266), and Nestor with the words τῷ κέν τις κείνων γε καὶ ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο (*Odyssey* 3.224).[335]

At the same time, however, Mentes/Athena's reference to the poison which Odysseus sought to smear on his arrows suggests an entirely different species of warrior from that which we find in the traditions of Iliadic heroism. Archers in the *Iliad* are not respected heroes, but objects of derision, and moreover there is no suspicion that any warrior would engage in this kind of chemical warfare: the emphasis is rather on hand-to-hand combat in open battle, and subtlety and trickery is kept to a bare minimum.[336] If we attempt to maintain Homeric standards of decorum and chivalry

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[334] Cf. Stanford (1968) 66: "In the *Iliad* Homer endows him [Odysseus] with the normal qualities of an Achaean hero – princely birth, good physique, strength, skill in athletics and battle, courage, energy, and eloquence."

[335] Both may also reassure us (πικρόγαμοί; ἐκλελάθοιτο γάμοιο) that the poem will *not* include a marriage between Penelope and one of her suitors.

[336] Two exceptions stand out: the night raid of Odysseus and Diomedes on the forces of Rhesus in *Iliad* 10, and Patroclus' hope of fooling the Trojans by the armour of Achilles (*Iliad* 16.41-5). The former, I

the problem posed by this passage is puzzling.[337] The scholia suggest one solution, that it is only with the aid of poison that Odysseus can kill one hundred and ten suitors, each with a single shot.[338] This is a credible assertion, especially given that all the tales in *Odyssey* 1-4 to some degree foreshadow his ultimate triumph over the suitors. Yet this remark also nods towards an *alternative* tradition of Odysseus, a tradition which the *Iliad* suppresses in its endorsement of more martially-oriented manifestations of valour. For Odysseus is not only the shrewd intellectual warrior of the *Iliad* who deploys his knowledge of strategy and psychology at key moments to save the other generals from their more disastrous decisions;[339] he is a 'Wily Lad', an unscrupulous trickster, the man Attic tragedy denigrates and reviles as the bastard "son of Sisyphus". Stanford argues that more negative portrayals of Odysseus original in the lyric tradition, which is particularly concerned with the moral lessons poetry has to teach;[340] yet even among the scanty resources of non-Homeric archaic epic we find allusions to episodes in which Odysseus played a morally dubious role. The *Cypria* in particular seems to have contained references to his feigned madness (fr.1), an attempt to evade service in the Trojan War, and his murder of Palamedes, effected with the connivance of Diomedes (fr.19=Pausanias 10.31.2).

The Odysseus we find in the tales of the *Cypria* is closer to the man related in Mentes/Athena's tale than the heroic warrior of the *Iliad*: though the martial dress (*πήληκα καὶ ἀσπίδα καὶ δύο δοῦρε*, 256) remains, the emphasis is more on subtle cunning than brute force; and it is, after all, as much through disguise and trickery as in open battle that he will outwit the Suitors on his return to Ithaca. The elements of disguise and trickery are much in evidence in two further tales told about Odysseus, those of Helen (*Odyssey* 4.235-64) and Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4.266-89). Helen tells of

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would suggest, both alludes to stories from the Trojan War in which the trickery of Odysseus and his accomplice Diomedes is much more prominent (such as the death of Palamedes) and, in lingering over their cold-blooded slaughter of Rhesus' men (*Iliad* 10.482-97), attributes a negative connotation to such activities. This impression is enhanced later in the poem when Patroclus' ruse with the armour of Achilles fails (cf. *Iliad* 16.830-8).

[337] Mentes/Athena herself implies that the donation of the poison would be a dishonorable deed: *ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν οὔ οἱ δῶκεν, ἐπεί ῥα θεοὺς νεμεσίζετο αἰὲν ἐόντας* (262-3). See also Clay (1983) 71-2.

[338] *προσκατεσκεύασεν, ἵνα μὴ ζητῶμεν πῶς ἀπὸ μιᾶς πληγῆς ἀναιροῦνται οἱ μνηστῆρες* (schol. EQ *ad Odyssey* 1.261).

[339] E.g. at *Iliad* 2.188-206, when Agamemnon's decision to test the army's resolve results in a near-rout, it is Odysseus who stays the retreat and restores order; and at *Iliad* 19.230-5 he ensures that, despite the ardour of Achilles to avenge Patroclus, the men do not go into battle without being fed.

[340] See Stanford (1968) 90-101.

when Odysseus entered Troy dressed as a beggar (*Odyssey* 4.242-50), foreshadowing the transformation which Athena will later effect at *Odyssey* 13.430-5; in both cases the disguise is uncovered when a woman bathes him, Athena in Troy, Eurycleia on Ithaca.[341] Likewise the tale told by Menelaus describes an incident when Helen attempts to expose the Greeks concealed inside the Wooden Horse by imitating the voices of their wives, and Odysseus alone prompts his comrades to retain their resolve (*Odyssey* 4.278-89): this anticipates an incident in his conversation with Penelope at *Odyssey* 19.210-12, when although he is moved by his wife's tears he steels himself to maintain his disguise, for he cannot risk revealing himself too soon.

Thus we see that Odysseus in books 1-4 is the object of a variety of competing appropriations. Zeus and Phemius suggest through references to failed *nostoi* that the hero might not return at all; Nestor and Mentes/Athena allude to the warrior of Trojan War myth, as represented in the *Iliad*; while the latter, in common with Helen and Menelaus, looks towards tales which emphasise Odysseus' unscrupulous guile and penchant for disguise and trickery.

The opening books of the *Odyssey* pose various questions, such as how Odysseus will return, indeed, whether he will he ever come back at all? In the absence of the hero, these questions can only be answered through the indirect agency of a text. For even among Ithacans, even, indeed, for his son, Odysseus is not a flesh and blood human being, but a text – a man, a story, or a memory. As Telemachus travels through the Peloponnese and hears these tales, they come to serve – like Ovid's letters from exile – as a substitute for the man himself; and the very absence of Odysseus from the poem at this stage, his powerlessness to introduce a narrative impetus into his own story, allows the narrator free rein to introduce a number of variations on the traditional hero into the poem.

iii. Fallax opus: the 'margins of credibility'

However, as much as the author can exploit the hero's absence for the purpose of teasing the audience as to the direction the poem will take, the audience itself is confronted with the task of choosing between the alternatives: which one ought it to

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[341] This correspondence is noted by schol.Q ad *Odyssey* 4.242.

believe in, on which version should it confer credibility. Whose account of the return of Odysseus can we accept as *true*? His exile renders the appropriation of authority by which a text confers the quality of 'truth' problematic: for there is no authority at all telling us which of these tales is, for the purposes of the present poem, 'true'. The issue of credibility is particularly central to interpretations of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. These poems are written at some distance from the centre of the Roman literary and political world; perhaps as a consequence, Ovid's relegation to the physical margins of Empire is frequently refigured as a relegation to the 'margins of credibility'. Some modern scholars have argued for the view that Ovid never actually went to Tomis, a theory which is itself of some pedigree.[342] Many more, while not wholly endorsing this approach, go to some lengths to avoid making the assertion that Ovid's exile is an out-and-out historical fact. We have already seen how Claassen attempts to side-step the whole issue of 'historical' truth by speaking of the 'myth' of Ovid's exile;[343] in similar vein, Gareth Williams refers to the exile poetry's sense of "'unreality'" (in inverted commas) as a mark of its interest in portraying a 'literary' rather than 'realistic' depiction of life among the Getans.[344]

Modern receptions therefore demonstrate that Ovid's exile poems have not been wholly successful in convincing readers of the credibility of the hardships he is undergoing. The introduction of witnesses in the later poems to testify to the trials of life in Tomis indicates that Ovid himself is aware of this issue. For example, *Ex Ponto* 4.7 is an account of the heroic exploits of one Vestalis, a *primus pilus* centurion, in a military action up the Danube; the poem begins by appealing for his testimony on the harsh conditions of the Pontic lands:

> Aspicis en praesens, quali iaceamus in arvo,
> nec me testis eris falsa solere queri.
> accedet voci per te non irrita nostrae,
> Alpinis iuvenis regibus orte, fides.
> ipse vides certe glacie concrescere Pontum,
> ipse vides rigido stantia vina gelu;
> ipse vides, onerata ferox ut ducat Iazyx
> per medias Histri plaustra bubuculus aquas.

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342 See further the discussion in Fitton Brown (1985).
343 See references in note 27 above.
344 Williams (1994) 3-49. Cf. also Habinek (1998) 156-69, which considers Ovid's portrayal of the Tomitians in terms of the power of the imperial centre.

aspicis et mitti sub adunco toxica ferro,
et telum causas mortis habere duas.
atque utinam pars haec tantum spectata fuisset,
non etiam proprio cognita Marte tibi!
(*Ex Ponto* 4.7.3-14)

Vestalis is asked to validate Ovid's description of various phenomena of the Pontic region which he gave in *Tristia* 3.10 and 3.12. The icing over of the Black Sea (7) was described at *Tristia* 3.10.35-40; the locals served their wine in frozen chunks (8) at *Tristia* 3.10.23-4; the ploughman drove his cart over the frozen Danube (9-10) at *Tristia* 3.12.29-30; and poisoned arrows (11-12) are mentioned as part of the local tribesman's arsenal at *Tristia* 3.10.64. *Voci ... nostrae* (5) therefore suggests an intertextual reference back to *Tristia* 3.10 and 3.12. Thus we see that this passage offers a variation on the self-allusion characteristic of Ovid's poetry: whereas the *Ars Amatoria*, for example, would have invoked the *Amores* as an 'authority' on the subject of love, here in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* the *Tristia* are quoted, not because of their *authoritative* status as depictions of life in exile, but precisely in order to shore up the *lack* of authority associated with the marginality of an exile's writings.

Ovid needs Vestalis' authority as an eyewitness in order to authenticate the extraordinary assertions he has made in his previous missives from Tomis, and in return for this service, the remainder of the poem (*Ex Ponto* 4.7.15-52) celebrates Vestalis' martial valour in recent military actions along the Danube. Thus, as Gareth Williams points out, a reciprocal relationship is established between the poet and the warrior whereas each deploys his own authority to endorse the otherwise incredible assertions of the other.[345] The twist is that, just as Ovid's picture of the Scythian wasteland in *Tristia* 3.10 and 3.12 represents the geography and climate of the region in literary terms, drawing (as many scholars have noted) primarily on Virgil's description of the region at *Georgics* 3.339-83,[346] so also his account of Vestalis' heroic exploits is heavily indebted to literary sources, drawing on battle-scenes from the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*.[347] Accordingly, far from *endorsing* the remarkable tales each has to tell, Williams concludes that Ovid and Vestalis end up *undercutting* the trustworthiness of each other's assertions:

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345 See Williams (1994) 35-6.
346 Williams (1994) 8-25: see also Martin (1966) 295-6; Evans (1975) 1-9; Claassen (1999) 194.
347 See Williams (1994) 36-40; cf. also Claassen (1999) 69.

> But if...Ovid's dependence on Virgil reduces his credibility as a reporter of environmental conditions in the Pontic region, what faith can we have in his portrayal of Vestalis' exploits? ... [H]is diction abounds with conceits and points of allusion which turn Vestalis into the kind of hero who exists only in the unreal world of martial epic.[348]

To Williams, neither tale attracts "credibility" because both Ovid and Vestalis collude in an essentially "unreal" portrayal of the world which owes more to literary sources than to an objective, journalistic style of 'unmediated' factual rendition (witness most particularly his choice of the word "reporter", which is suggestive of that most realist of texts and self-proclaimed repository of unembellished fact, the daily newspaper). Unlike many recent interpreters, either of the Vestalis poem or of Ovid's description of the Tomitian climate,[349] he is prepared to take a step back from the possibility that any 'objective truth' on Tomis is ultimately accessible from the exile poetry; however, the trouble with this approach is that its simultaneous reification of reality[350] and denial of the power of literature to access this Platonic ideal (as evinced in statements such as "the kind of hero who exists only in the *unreal world of martial epic*") results in a predictably pessimistic, nihilistic reading, in which literature is fundamentally incapable of making any interpretable statements about its contexts. He concludes that "we must take [*Ex*] *P*[*onto*] 4.7 to be *fundamentally ironic*",[351] whereas the fundamental irony lies rather in the relativising approach he takes which foregrounds the ludic aspects of literary representation while simultaneously denying it the power to access objective, reified 'facts'. On Williams' reading, literature itself is the 'exile', forever marginalised, banished from the realms of authoritative 'truth', able to do no more than voice inconsequential laments from the margins of significance.

Yet if we cannot define 'truth' as an honest report of what "really happened" to Ovid (or Vestalis) in Moesia, if we accept that depictions of 'reality' are always already textual, never immanent and pre-existent, it is at least open to us to define 'truth' and

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348 Williams (1994) 36.
349 On the Vestalis poem, cf. Wilkinson (1955) 362; Nagle (1980) 172; Evans (1983) 159. On Tomitian winters, see Martin (1966) 295-6, who suggests that Ovid is paying homage to the accuracy of Virgil's description of Scythia; and cf. also Evans (1975) 5; Gahan (1978) 198-202.
350 As at Williams (1994) 5-8, where he compares Ovid's picture of Tomis with historiographical and epigraphic evidence in order to show that the 'real' Tomis was nothing like the bleak barbarian wilderness envisaged in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. See also Claasen (1990) 65-94; Williams (2002) 234-5.
351 Williams (1994) 41; my emphasis.

'credibility' within the same relativistic terms and to propose that the issue of 'reality' in Ovid's exile poems is less an attempt to convey a 'journalistic' picture of life as an exile in Tomis, more a struggle within and amongst various literary modes and genres to provide the *canonical* version of any particular tale. In other words, rather than asking, "How close to reality is this text?", it would be more helpful to ask, "Which text puts forward the most *authoritative and comprehensive* rendition of these events?" Approaching *Ex Ponto* 4.7 in the light of the latter question rather than the former, we are able both to accept William's relativising move in divorcing Ovid's exile poetry from historical and meteorological 'truths', and at the same time to attempt to assess the relationship it sets up with its Tomitian context. Is his citation of the authority of Vestalis *convincing*? Ovid attempts to harness the voice of the elegist – characteristically subversive, marginal and passive – to that of the epic warrior Vestalis, representative of the form of discourse which carries the most politically authoritative and totalising weight of any of the ancient literary genres; and all the while he invokes the rhetoric of historiography, using the language of autopsy (*aspicis*, 3 and 11; *ipsa vides*, 7, 8 and 9) to allude to one aspect of that genre's appropriation of 'truth', which is based on the author's proximity to the events in question and his rigorous cross-examination of eyewitnesses.[352] Yet for all Ovid's attempts to express his exilic laments through a more authoritative voice, the incredulity with which Williams and others have greeted the exile poetry suggests that it is the context of *exile*, rather than the context of *epic*, which predominates in present-day receptions. Ovid's exile-poetry does not gain authority through its appropriation of epic; rather, the failure of both him and Vestalis to convince their readers demonstrates (as displayed above through our reading of *Tristia* 1.5.57-84) that epic poetry, too, requires an authoritative, centralised context if it is not to end up like the marginal, incredible discourse of exile.

In treating the issue of 'credibility' in Ovid's exile poetry we have moved from an outright reification of truth to an approach where the issue is not so much whether a text is objectively 'true' or not, but rather whether it can convey a 'canonical' picture of the events it depicts. This provides a useful starting-point for an inquiry into the question of 'truth' and 'credibility' in the exile tales of Odysseus: for although few

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[352] Cf. the exposition of his historiographical methodology outlined by Thucydides 1.22.2.

would assert that a 'historical' Odysseus encountered a 'historical' Cyclops and a 'historical' Circe, most scholars speak of the "Lying Tales" he tells between books 13 and 19 without questioning the negative connotations of the epithet; while only a few have ventured to deny the credibility of the tale he relates to the Phaeacians in books 9-12.[353] So, given that the *Odyssey* is not taken to be a mimetic representation of reality, why is a distinction made between 'truth' and 'fiction' in the stories it relates? Scott Richardson suggests that narrative 'truth' in the tales of the *Odyssey* consists of facts which the narrator authenticates: the act of including an episode in his objective third-person narrative is sufficient to validate it as a 'true' fact against which to compare the various versions give by Odysseus.[354] Yet the tales told by Odysseus themselves form part of the narrative of the *Odyssey:* for four books between 9 and 12, and at various points during books 13 to 19, the narrator resigns his mantle to the eponymous hero of the poem. Accordingly Richardson suggests that here, too, the first-person narrator (Odysseus) may 'earn' the trust which we conventionally grant to the third-person narrator (in this case, Homer), and that the 'truth-value' of the world constructed in these internal narratives in its relationship to the main narrative world is less important an issue than the *aesthetic* experience which these songs provide us: "With the...inset stories in the *Odyssey*, we are of course concerned with the factual relationship to the main story, but we can at the same time *fall under the storyteller's spell* and hear the story on its own terms."[355] Just as we may find pleasure in the aesthetic experience of the *Odyssey* without coming to terms with the fact that the events it relates may not have actually happened, so we may enjoy the tales Odysseus tells on Ithaca without asking ourselves, "But is this the *truth* about his years in exile?"[356] Richardson's ultimate criterion of judgement is therefore aesthetic rather than ontological, and his beliefs are shared by a substantial number of commentators.[357] Nevertheless there is always an ontological agenda concealed behind the aesthetic standards, in that although the "Lying Tales" are not taken as

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[353] E.g. Murnaghan (1987) 172-3; Peradotto (1990) 92-3; Alden (1992) 9-14

[354] Richardson (1996) 392-7, following Dolezel (1980) 7-24.

[355] Richardson (1996) 399: emphasis mine.

[356] See Richardson (1996) 400-402.

[357] See Walcot (1977) 9-19, who uses modern Greek examples as a means of demonstrating that lying is a social skill rather than an ethical anathema; Haft (1984) 300-304, who demonstrates that Odysseus' lies are artistically tailored to the circumstances and audiences he encounters; Emlyn-Jones (1986) 1-11, who privileges entertainment over factual truth as the purpose of these stories; and Pratt (1993) 63-94, who focuses particularly on the links between Odysseus and the poet as artistic (τεχνή) tellers of (tall) tales.

'true' in terms of the stories Homer and Odysseus narrate elsewhere in the poem, and indeed the factual content of these stories is most often dismissed as an irrelevance,[358] they are attributed an alternative 'truth-value' *of an aesthetic order*. For example, Hugh Parry describes the "[t]rue past" as "not just a record of what happened; more often than not it is a *demonstration of exemplary values* inherent in what happened",[359] suggesting that, in moral terms, "exemplary values" may be of greater value than a simple factual narrative of the past; while Richardson concludes his analysis of truth-within-fiction in the *Odyssey* by declaring, "The significant 'truth' in a fiction lies in the interplay between the various narrators and the various audiences that comprise the making of a narrative",[360] thus defining his idea of 'truth'[361] as inherent in the practices of literary criticism and aesthetic appreciation. Just as Williams and other scholars tax Ovid's *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* with criteria of *historiographical* truth, so here we see criteria of *aesthetic* truth dominating interpretations of the 'true' and 'lying' tales of the *Odyssey*.

Yet the application of aesthetic standards in studying truth and falsehood in the *Odyssey* carries an even greater risk of misrepresentation than the application of historiographical standards, at least in the field of literary scholarship, whose self-professed *raison d'être* is the exposition and celebration of aesthetic masterpieces. If I were to argue that the *Odyssey* is a *bad* poem, you would be entitled to ask why I was wasting my time writing about it: aesthetic interpretations of the "Lying Tales" are inherently prejudiced, for they must *ipso facto* present the objects of their study as aesthetic *truths*. The standards on which the tales operate are perceived as internal to the speaker and sufficient in and of themselves: they do not admit of contradiction from any external piece of evidence nor do they admit that a speaker – like Ovid or Vestalis in *Ex Ponto* 4.7 – may put forward a certain version tale because he has a

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[358] Cf. Emlyn-Jones (1986) 1: "Listeners may be promised truth and accuracy, but what they want most of all is *to be entertained*"; Pratt (1993) 73, "Archaic poetry holds up for our greatest admiration those lies and acts of deception that create certain effects: those that enchant (*thelgein*) or deceive (*apatan*) their audience so that it at least partially loses its grip on reality."

[359] Parry (1994) 5; emphasis mine.

[360] Richardson (1996) 402.

[361] I retain Richardson's inverted commas around 'truth'. These ironising marks may betray a lingering distaste at the necessity of defining veracity by appealing to aesthetic, rather than ontological, criteria: despite his willingness to consider factors other than strict 'factual' accuracy, he still seems reluctant to abandon the notion of a 'hierarchy' of truth which privileges this 'factual reality' and attributes only a secondary role to aesthetic considerations.

vested interest in seeing it accepted as true.[362] Compare the words of Odysseus, when in his beggar's disguise he asks for a portion of bread from Antinous:

> δός, φίλος· οὐ μέν δοκέεις ὁ κάκιστος Ἀχαιῶν
> ἔμμεναι, ἀλλ' ὤριστος, ἐπεὶ βασιλῆϊ ἔοικας.
> τῷ σε χρὴ δόμεναι καὶ λώϊον ἠέ περ ἄλλοι
> σίτου· ἐγὼ δέ κέ σε κλείω κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.
> (*Odyssey* 17.415-8)

In return for food, Odysseus promises to spread Antinous' κλέος throughout the earth: ἐγὼ δέ κέ σε κλείω κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν (418). Of course, here as elsewhere in the *Odyssey* he is usurping the prerogative of the bard, who is the typical disseminator of κλέος in the Homeric world.[363] Yet he promises to tell tales of Antinous, not out of a disinterested goodwill, nor because the stories will be morally or aesthetically pleasing; he does it first and foremost in exchange for a piece of bread. Louise Pratt raises this point in a footnote,[364] but without considering the implications for either Odysseus' lying tales or the role of the poet in general; yet like the mutual validations Ovid and Vestalis seek from each other in *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.7, this extract shows that poetry and the stories it tells are told, never out of a disinterested desire for 'truth', but always with a motive in mind. Therefore I do not intend to take the "Lying Tales" of *Odyssey* 13-19 at face value and accept their fictionality without question; nor do I feel it is sufficient to dismiss the question of 'truth' with an appeal to aesthetic or ethical values. Instead, I would like to ask: why does Odysseus tell different versions of his experiences in exile to the Phaeacians and to his servants and family on Ithaca? Why does Homer allow him to tell these different stories? And within the fictional world of the *Odyssey*, which of the many variants on offer should be accepted as 'true'?

First of all, the differences between the "Lying Tales" and the Phaeacian apologue are not so pronounced as to be unbridgeable. There are points where the former narratives contain stories which, although they differ in particulars of locality or context, yet

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[362] *Pace* Pratt (1993) 85-93; but although she acknowledges that a lie may be told out of self interest, such as at *Odyssey* 14.467-506, when Odysseus tells a story to Eumaeus in order to wheedle a warm cloak out of him, she still interprets the tale in aesthetic terms: Eumaeus praises the story as "not unseemly" (οὐδέ...παρὰ μοῖραν, *Odyssey* 14.509), and gives Odysseus the cloak not because he has been cheated, but because he appreciates the artistry of Odysseus' request. (Pratt (1993) 89.)

[363] See Nagy (1974) 229-61.

[364] Pratt (1993) 63n14: "This *quid pro quo* arrangement raises questions about the sincerity of the kleos that Odysseus offers to spread abroad."

appear in an almost identical form to an episode related in books 9-12. For example, when speaking to Eumaeus, Odysseus recalls a disastrous raid he led against an Egyptian settlement when his men were allowed to get out of hand:[365]

οἱ δ' ὕβρει εἴξαντες, ἐπισπόμενοι μένεϊ σφῷ,
αἶψα μάλ' Αἰγυπτίων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέας ἀγροὺς
πόρθεον, ἐκ δὲ γυναῖκας ἄγον καὶ νήπια τέκνα,
αὐτούς τ' ἔκτεινον· τάχα δ' ἐς πόλιν ἵκετ' ἀϋτή.
οἱ δὲ βοῆς ἀίοντες ἅμ' ἠοῖ φαινομένηφιν
ἦλθον· πλῆτο δὲ πᾶν πεδίον πεζῶν τε καὶ ἵππων
χαλκοῦ τε στεροπῆς· ἐν δὲ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος
φύζαν ἐμοῖς ἑτάροισι κακὴν βάλεν, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη
μεῖναι ἐναντίβιον· περὶ γὰρ κακὰ πάντοθεν ἔστη.
(*Odyssey* 14.262-70)

The elements which make up this story bear a consistent similarity to the elements which make up the story of Odysseus' encounter with the Cicones at *Odyssey* 9.39-63, the first episode of the tale he tells the Phaeacians. First of all, emphasis is laid on the folly of his comrades (*οἱ δ' ὕβρει εἴξαντες, ἐπισπόμενοι μένεϊ σφῷ* (262), paralleled at *Odyssey* 9.44-6, where he dwells on the drunkenness and voracity of his troops): Odysseus refuses to accept blame for the disaster, which he attributes rather to the men's failure to obey his orders. Next, news of the intrusion reaches the city, and a army arrives to provide relief (265-8): in like manner the Cicones summon their more ferocious inland neighbours to eject the raiders (*Odyssey* 9.47-51). To the subsequent rout Odysseus attributes on both occasions the interference of Zeus; *ἐν δὲ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος φύζαν ἐμοῖς ἑτάροισι κακὴν βάλεν* (268-9) corresponds to the following couplet from the episode of the Cicones:

τότε δή ῥα κακὴ Διὸς αἶσα παρέστη
ἡμῖν αἰνομόροισιν, ἵν' ἄλγεα πολλὰ πάθοιμεν.
(*Odyssey* 9.52-3)

The only significant variation is in the outcome of the respective battles: whereas he tells us that he escapes the Cicones for the loss of only six men per ship, he suffers a far worse reverse at the hands of the Egyptians, to the extent that he loses his whole army and must beg for his own life (*Odyssey* 14.276-80).

Odysseus' beggar persona is also as alert to the dangers of stormy seas as his Phaeacian *alter ego*. To the court on Scheria he tells of how, sailing from Thrinacia, he ran into a storm sent by Zeus as a punishment for his crewmen; the ship went

[365] The tale is repeated at *Odyssey* 17.431-9.

under, and he alone was saved by clinging to the mast (*Odyssey* 12.403-25). Likewise at *Odyssey* 14.300-12, he tells Eumaeus of a storm sent by Zeus against the crew of a ship; he was the one man who survived the wreck, and he owed his salvation to...clinging to the mast. The similarities between these stories are highlighted by various linguistic correspondences:

> *Ζεὺς δ' ἄμυδις βρόντησε καὶ ἔμβαλε νηὶ κεραυνόν·*
> *ἡ δ' ἐλελίχθη πᾶσα Διὸς πληγεῖσα κεραυνῷ,*
> *ἐν δὲ θείοιο πλῆτο·*
>
> (*Odyssey* 12.415-7=14.305-7)

> *οἱ δέ κορώνησιν ἴκελοι περὶ νῆα μέλαιναν*
> *κύμασιν ἐμφορέοντο, θεὸς δ' ἀποαίνυτο νόστον.*
>
> (*Odyssey* 12.418-9=14.308-9)

Pace the post-Milman Parry position on oral poetics which would deny verbal repetitions any significance beyond the purely technical, especially in scenes such as these which portray exactly the same subject matter, the similarities between these two tales are pronounced enough already for the presence of these verbal echoes significantly to emphasise the correspondence. There are several other passages which speak of storms at sea in similar terms. For example, when he reports to Penelope that he saw Odysseus many years ago on Crete when he was on the way to Troy (*Odyssey* 19.185-202), having been driven so far off course by contrary winds off Cape Malea (*Odyssey* 19.187); this reminds us of an incident in *Odyssey* 9, when Odysseus tells his audience that would have made it back home within days of leaving Troy, except that:

> *ἀλλὰ με κῦμα ῥόος τε περιγνάμπτονα Μάλεαιν*
> *καὶ Βορέης ἀπέωσε, παρέπλαγξεν δὲ Κυθήρων.*
>
> (*Odyssey* 9.81-2)

Here too Cape Malea is the site of contrary winds which drive Odysseus off course. Also to Penelope, he tells in the third person (*Odyssey* 19.273-82) an abridged version of the very same story of his shipwreck of Thrinacia and subsequent transition to Scheria which he had earlier told the Phaeacian court (cf. *Odyssey* 12.403-46; 7.267-97), omitting only his adventures with Calypso, we may assume for the sake of propriety.

The similarities between the "Lying Tales" told on Ithaca and the Phaeacian apologue can be explained as a result of either one of two causes. It is possible that, as Fenik

suggests, the false tales developed as a means by which Odysseus could communicate indirectly the 'truth' regarding his long absence.[366] However, this account attributes an unquestioned priority to the tales of *Odyssey* 9-12, which is precisely the implicit assumption we are currently seeking to interrogate. An alternative explanation is that the tales are not parent and son, but cousins: that is, that they represent various divergent stages in the development of a much fuller tradition of the myth of Odysseus' homecoming. That is to say that the "Lying Tales" are not merely the ad-lib inventions of a quick-witted trickster; they are not just containers of 'aesthetic truths', designed to meet the taste of an immediate public; rather they are, like the stories told to Telemachus in *Odyssey* 1-4, *alternative* versions of the homecoming of Odysseus, self-sufficient in their own right and representing a variation, not otherwise preserved, on the tradition presented in the Phaeacian apologue.

The impression that the "Lying Tales" represent an alternative tradition of the hero's return is strengthened by the internal consistency which they exhibit. There is one particular passage, in which he relates news that Odysseus has been active among the Thesprotians and is already preparing to return home, which seems very much in accord with what we already know of his traditional character:

> *καὶ μοι κτήματ' ἔδειξεν ὅσα ξυναγείρατ' Ὀδυσσεύς,...*
> *καί νύ κεν ἐς δεκάτην γενεὴν ἕτερόν γ' ἔτι βόσκοι·*
> *τόσσα οἱ ἐν μεγάροις κειμήλια κεῖτο ἄνακτος.*
> *τὸν δ' ἐς Δωδώνην φάτο βήμεναι, ὄφρα θεοῖο*
> *ἐκ δρυὸς ὑψικόμοιο Διὸς βουλὴν ἐπακούσαι,*
> *ὅππως νοστήσει' Ἰθάκης ἐς πίονα δῆμον*
> *ἤδη δὴν ἀπεών, ἢ ἀμφαδὸν ἦε κρυφηδόν.*
> *ὤμοσε δὲ πρὸς ἔμ' αὐτόν, ἀποσπένδων ἐνὶ οἴκῳ,*
> *νῆα κατειρύσθαι καὶ ἑπαρτέας ἔμμεν ἑταίρους,*
> *οἳ δή μιν πέμφουσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.*
> *ἀλλ' ἐμὲ πρὶν ἀπέπεμψε· τύχησε γὰρ ἐρχομένη νηῦς*
> *ἀνδρῶν Θεσπρωτῶν ἐς Δουλίχιον πολύπυρον.*
>
> (*Odyssey* 14.323,325-35=19.293-99,288-92)

This version of the tale is told to both Eumaeus and Penelope. The story is well-developed in certain aspects of character presentation. For example, the vast pile of treasure Odysseus is alleged to have amassed (*Odyssey* 14.323,325=19.293-4) is consistent, both with his motive for awaiting the return of the Cyclopes expressed at

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[366] Cf. Fenik (1974) 167-71: "It [the Egyptian story, *Odyssey* 14.259-68] is part of the larger network of wandering and νόστος stories in which the real fate of Odysseus lies prefigured, hinted at, half revealed yet concealed."

Odyssey 9.229, that is, the acquisition of guest-gifts, and with a certain characterisation of Odysseus often found in the extra-Homeric tradition, which lays emphasis on his avaricious greed.[367] Another consistent element in these tales is their setting on Crete. The persona assumed by Odysseus for these tales is invariably a Cretan, and connected in some way with Idomeneus: at *Odyssey* 13.256-70 he claims to have slaughtered Idomeneus' son Orchilochus, at *Odyssey* 14.216-42 to have served as his trusted lieutenant at Troy, and at *Odyssey* 19.172-84 to have been his very brother. Furthermore, he claims on this last occasion actually to have *seen* Odysseus on Crete while *en route* to Troy. From this Steve Reece deduces the existence of a "Cretan Odyssey", an alternative version of the return of Odysseus which comprised, instead of fantastic wanderings among mythical beasts, a number of episodes centred on Crete and culminating in the discovery of Odysseus by Telemachus.[368] We may extend this hypothesis and propose a version of the myth incorporating the version related in the passage given above: a "Thesprotian Odyssey" where Odysseus returned home under conveyance from King Pheidon and vanquished the suitors according to the advice of the oracle at Dodona rather than of Athena. Alternatively, we may hypothesise the existence of an "Egyptian Odyssey" in which Odysseus loses his men, not to divine punishment in a shipwreck, but in battle in Egypt, according to the tales related at *Odyssey* 14.245-86 and 17.424-39. It is not so important to my argument whether or not these versions existed in previous variants of the tradition; but the fact that Homer plays with various versions of the homecoming myth, allowing us to see that it need not have happened quite the way Odysseus describes it in *Odyssey* 9-12, suggests that what we are accustomed to call the "Lying Tales" represent more a flirtation with alternative versions of the story than out-and-out fictions.

If the differing versions of Odysseus' homecoming are the result of an interplay between various strands of the mythic tradition, rather than an outright confrontation between truth and falsehood, it still remains to answer why receptions of the poem have united in an unquestioning acceptance of the version narrated in *Odyssey* 9-12

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[367] Cf. Stanford (1968) 67-9. On a related note, Odysseus' gluttony is condemned at Plato, *Rep.*390B; Athenaeus, *Deip.*412B-D, 513A-D; and see also *Iliad* 4.343-6, where Agamemnon accuses him of being quicker to respond to an invitation to a feast than the call to arms.

and dismissed the alternative renditions as unconditional fictions. One possible route into this question would follow the approach we took to the tales of Odysseus told between books 1 and 4. In these books the narrator exploits the hero's absence in exile: since he was a *textual* construct, appearing to Telemachus and the readers of the poem as the subject of a number of stories, rather than as a character in his own right, Homer could play with our expectations to put forth a number of 'textual' Odysseuses and suggest that at this early stage any single one of them might be developed as the subject of *this* poem. And how is the tension resolved, how is the ambiguity clarified to allow the narrative to develop? Only in Odysseus' *return* from exile, in his νόστος. It is only in *coming home* that he can provide validation for one of these variants: it is from the perspective of Odysseus' return home, to the 'authorising centre' of the narrative, that he is able retrospectively to 'authorise' one specific version from among the many traditions with which Homer presents us at the start of the poem – that is, the version given in the tales of Helen and Menelaus, which emphasis the theme of disguise in Odysseus' assumption of the role of a beggar, and of trickery in the stratagems Odysseus deploys to maintain his disguise while inside the Wooden Horse, not allowing himself or others to be distracted by sentimental considerations.

Here, too, the difference between the tales he tells in books 13 to 19 and that which he tells the Phaeacians in books 9-12 lies not so much in their content – if anything, his adventures and mishaps in Crete and Egypt are more 'realistic', and hence more plausible *per se*, than tales of one-eyed giants and immortal enchantresses. Rather, the difference lies in the context. When Odysseus and Penelope, reunited at last, are exchanging their news, Odysseus repeats to Penelope the very same tale he told the Phaeacians, omitting none of the episodes (*Odysseus* 23.310-43). By having him relate this particular version of his return to Penelope *in propria persona*, from the perspective of his successful return and the abandonment of his beggar's disguise, Homer confers on that particular tale a retrospective authoritative validation. Although he has allowed an alternative view of the tradition into his poem, that is, the "Cretan Odyssey" and concomitant myths centring on Egypt and Thesprotia, yet his attribution of *this* version to the disguised beggar, who has not yet fully completed his

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[368] Reece (1994) 157-73. Cf. Woodhouse (1930) 126-36, who attempts to relate the "Lying Tales" to the *real* homecoming of a *historical* Odysseus.

νόστος and is therefore still, in some sense, an exile, withholds from it a certain amount of authority. The myth narrated in *Odyssey* 9-12 is canonical, because it is told from the context of a successful homecoming; the myths narrated between *Odyssey* 13 and 19 are taken to be fictive, because they are told from the marginal, subversive, fallacious context of exile.

iv. Conclusion: Homer's coming home

Like the Augustan authors who employ the technique of *oppositio in imitando*, Homer asserts his poem's superiority over other versions of the Odysseus-myth (whether extant, or only potential) by including and superseding them in his own poem: if Odysseus the beggar knows how to tell ψεύδεα πολλὰ ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα (*Odyssey* 19.203), the 'truths' which they resemble stand metapoetically for earlier essays at the theme of his νόστος, decisively supplanted now and for ever more. His poem has reached us as the 'authorised' version of that small fragment of the Trojan cycle of myth which narrates the protracted return of Odysseus from a long war and the problems he subsequently encounters in recovering his position in his household. Its survival from the archaic epoch to become one of the two Greek national texts and the foundation of the ancient educational curriculum; its subsequent appropriation by Virgil for one half of the great Roman national epic and cornerstone of the Western tradition; and its enduring popularity in the twentieth century for authors as divergent in style and appeal as James Joyce and Derek Walcott: all these factors have combined to make the myth of Odysseus as canonical and unalterable as the tales of the Bible to the Western reader. It seems difficult to imagine that he could make his return without ever encountering the Cyclops or the Sirens, or that he might have overcome the suitors by sheer force of arms without recourse to guile or trickery, or even that he might never have come back at all. Yet reading the *Odyssey* through the elegising lens of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and particularly the way modern interpretations of Latin elegy imbue it with a 'Barthesian' flavour of perpetual slippage and subversive fallacy, we do not so much see an ideal, static, changeless text: rather, we are primed with an awareness of the way a concept such as 'canonical truth' is created in the first instance by texts and therefore always wholly available for appropriation by a more 'authoritative' mode of discourse, and so we come to acknowledge and appreciate the multiplicity of alternative – and no less true –

traditions which lie behind the return of Odysseus narrated in Homer's poem. If 'exile' is a textual phenomenon, if on encountering an exile's discourse we are always aware of the distance between ourselves and the author, always aware that his texts can be brought to mean something different, then Odysseus' exile above all, on this new reading of the *Odyssey*, must be an icon of the struggle for canonisation within a tradition in which various versions of a tale engage. Which of the differing versions of his exile will be taken as 'true'? Only the one which Homer has authorised and brought 'home' to the centre of the Western tradition.

Summary and epilogue

This study has attempted to explore the poetics of intertextuality from a revamped perspective in which the 'alluding' poet is granted thematic and interpretive priority. Although few scholars have attempted to make much headway in this field, two names at least stand out: Pierre Menard and Persse McGarrigle. It says something about the preconceptions with which this subject is loaded that these, its two most illustrious exponents, are fictional characters: Menard, subject of Jorge Luis Borges' fable "Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*", and McGarrigle, the romantic hero of David Lodge's campus novel *Small World*.[369] Lodge's McGarrigle is introduced as the author of an M.A. thesis on the influence of Shakespeare on T.S.Eliot, a traditional and somewhat hackneyed project. Faced, however, with the cocksure arrogance of an obnoxious professor of linguistics who claims to be able to produce the same results via microcomputer, he attempts to reassert himself by turning the terms of his dissertation upside down:

> "But my thesis isn't about that," said Persse. "It's about the influence of T.S.Eliot on Shakespeare."
> "That sounds rather Irish, if I may say so," said Dempsey, with a loud guffaw. His little eyes looked anxiously round for support.[370]

The sense of farce which surrounds this exchange – for their verbal jousts are spurred on by a desire to impress the novel's luscious heroine – is enhanced by the dénouement of the episode, as a publisher who is listening in on this conversation breaks in and offers to publish McGarrigle's notional 'thesis': thus he is landed with the job of writing up a project he only conceived in a fit of pique and romantic jealousy. Dempsey's reaction to McGarrigle's statement further develops the comic connotations of the scene. It is entirely in keeping with his boorish and insensitive nature to belittle McGarrigle by invoking the stereotypical figure of the dim-witted Irishman; yet this very association also helps point up the comic, even picaresque, aspects of his experiences in the remainder of the novel.[371] His romantic odyssey, the

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[369] Borges (1998) and Lodge (1984) respectively. Menard is invoked by Martindale (1993) 85-6; Hinds (1998) 120 and n37; Allen (2000) 111; and Edmunds (2001) 151-2. McGarrigle is mentioned by Lyne (1994) 200-1, and seems to be briefly alluded to by Fowler (1998) 27.
[370] Lodge (1984) 51.
[371] These somewhat subversive connotations are allowed to persist. Later in the novel, offered McGarrigle's work for review, another disagreeable character harrumphs, "Why should he think I

misadventures he suffers in pursuit of the object of his desire, the farcical episode in which his thesis is plagiarised by a German professor, all these scenes come together to construct a picture of an amiable, put-upon, but slightly ridiculous figure whose offbeat critical notions accord perfectly with his eccentric and dreamy character.

Borges' Menard is a much more sophisticated figure, but quite as ludicrous in his own way as Lodge's McGarrigle. Menard was a French author of the early twentieth century, who conceived a great ambition to compose the *Quixote*:

> Pierre Menard did not want to compose *another* Quixote, which surely is easy enough – he wanted to compose *the* Quixote. Nor, surely, need one be obliged to note that his goal was never a mechanical transcription of the original; he had no intention of *copying* it. His admirable ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes.[372]

Not only does he reject "mechanical transcription" of Cervantes' text, but Menard also rejects the course of replicating in himself the language and experiences of Cervantes, preferring to produce a work entirely stimulated by his own context and concerns: "To be a popular novelist of the seventeenth century in the twentieth seemed to Menard to be a diminution. Being, somehow, Cervantes, and arriving thereby at the Quixote – that looked to Menard less challenging (and therefore less interesting) than continuing to be Pierre Menard and coming to the Quixote *through the experiences of Pierre Menard.*"[373] Menard only produced two full chapters, plus fragments of a third, but the ramifications of his undertaking were much further-reaching; for leafing through his copy of the *Quixote*, the anonymous narrator who is Borges' mouthpiece for the tale finds his understanding constantly modified and enriched by his knowledge of Menard's project: "Shall I confess that I often imagine that he did complete it, and that I read the Quixote – the *entire* Quixote – as if Menard had conceived it?"[374]

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would want to read some totally unknown bog-Irishman's ramblings?" (Lodge [1984] 157). Nor does it help McGarrigle to be based at University College *Limerick*, a town whose closest connection with literature is its eponymous association with five-line nonsense verse.

[372] Borges (1998) 91.

[373] Borges (1998) 91; emphasis his.

[374] Borges (1998) 92.

The crowning joke is that the labour undertaken by Menard turns out, preposterously, to have been entirely unnecessary. What made the *Quixote* new, as Lowell Edmunds has so perspicaciously pointed out, was the way it was *read*, rather than the curious circumstances of its composition:[375] this is what the tale's narrator finally comes to apprehend in the closing paragraphs of the fable, as he concludes with the realisation that he has discovered an entirely new technique of reading, "[which] encourages us to read the *Odyssey* as though it came after the *Aeneid*, to read Mme.Henri Bachelier's *Le jardin du Centaure* as though it were written by Mme. Henri Bachelier."[376] Menard's extensive and largely fruitless labours are shown to be futile: it matters not one whit that he failed to reproduce the whole *Quixote* cover to cover, for Cervantes' own text is itself immeasurably enriched by its now inevitable association with his own name.

The mode of reading which privileges the successor-poet in an intertextual relationship is therefore itself 'marginalised' in literary discourse by its relegation to the fringe territory of fable and comedy: in Lodge and Borges in particular, its status is signalled by its association with two characters who are, in their own differing ways, very much figures of fun. Such a gesture would suggest the difficulty of approaching intertextuality from this perspective with wholly serious intentions. Don Fowler, for example, for all his sincerity in urging upon his readers to accept that intertextuality can work in both directions, chooses to illustrate this point with an example drawn from the universe of *Star Trek*: "Are our views of the opposition between rationality and emotion in the *Aeneid* really the same after Captain Kirk and Mr Spock?".[377] Even Stephen Hinds' groundbreaking analysis of Ovid's *Aeneid* and Virgil's *Metamorphoses* is hedged about with an ironic acknowledgement of the

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[375] See Edmunds (2001) 153. Edmunds wishes to privilege the act of 'reading' over the act of 'authorship' within his own conception of intertextuality, whence his desire to impress upon his own readers this particular aspect of Borges' tale. Cf. also Martindale (1993) 85n6: "The irony, impossible to identify, is radically destabilizing; but if Menard's project is taken either with entire po-faced seriousness or as merely mad, the story might have little point."

[376] Borges (1998) 95. The formulation – particularly the second half – suggests that reading is *always*, to some degree, 'intertextual': even a *soi-disant* 'basic' reading of a text works perforce on the assumption that it *is* a text, that it possesses an author and a context of production against which to triangulate interpretations, and proceeds accordingly.

[377] Fowler (1998) 28. The gesture may only be in line with his characteristic invocation of paradigms and parallels in popular culture; but given that the whole point of Fowler's argument here is to encourage modes of interpretation which situate texts *outside* an intentionalist framework, it would be

slightly 'eccentric' nature of such an undertaking: "What Ovid's mock-pedantic correction is really designed to do, I think, is to show his enjoyment of a very (*dare I say it?*) Ovidian moment in his predecessor"; "*Against all the odds*, one of the most famous speeches in Virgil's *Aeneid* has become, for just a moment, *pre-Ovidian*".[378]

My own analysis cannot itself be said to have broken out of this bind. Yet in terms of the style of interpretation undertaken this is surely not such a grievous fault. The stated objective was to 'decentre' Homer, to finesse his time-honoured 'isolation' and relocate him on the 'margins' of interpretive discourse; such a scheme, especially inasmuch as it privileges 'Ovidian' concerns, cannot help but be marked by moves which privilege ironic self-consciousness and by a growing awareness of the problems and opportunities presented by a sustained engagement with past and future traditions. Homer has been recuperated as a 'proto-elegist', already aware of the distinctions and similarities between love and war. From the perspective of the epic mode the *Iliad* has been demonstrated to be acutely aware of the weight of the traditions within which it participates, both crippled and enabled by the necessity of coming to terms with a collection of myth and poetic resource which is already canonical, already, in some sense, 'complete'. And finally, the *Odyssey* has been foregrounded as a poem of exile, juggling with alternatives to the canonical tradition (the tradition, indeed, which it is felt itself to 'canonize'), and playing with questions of veracity and credibility. All these 'Homers' appear as more ludic authors, conscious of their responsibility to the traditions of the past, yet simultaneously prepared to pursue questions on the periphery of literature and the canon. Marginal the mode of interpretation pursued by this study may be, but it is ever on the 'margins' that meanings are made and unmade.

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obtuse to privilege his own presumed 'intention' at the expense of pursing the flippant connotations of this *exemplum*.

[378] Hinds (1998) 104-122: quotes, with emphasis added, are from 109 and 119.

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