

## THE NARRATOR'S VOICE: A NARRATOLOGICAL REAPPRAISAL OF APOSTROPHE IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

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It has been said that an author's ideological traces are apparent not only in the text's open and direct evaluations but also in its silences, in what it subtracts from open view (Pugliatti 1985.203). In this article, I am interested in exploring how the persona of the narrator in the *Aeneid* is used to express the poet's concerns about his political and poetic limitations by using the rhetorical space of apostrophe, i.e., where the fictional narrator talks directly to his characters. The *Aeneid* ascribes to politics the power of fashioning human history into a linear narrative, with Jupiter as the guarantor of its ultimate goodness,<sup>1</sup> and I will argue that it is through the narrator's statements, and silences, in apostrophe that Virgil tries to put this teleological approach in perspective.

A main aim of my inquiry is to make a contribution to the debate over "whether Virgil's 'subjective style' ultimately produces a carefully controlled work with a unified viewpoint to which dissenting voices are carefully subordinated, or instead, offers as conflicting a plethora of voices and views as is found in any modern novel."<sup>2</sup> Many scholars have commented on Virgil's use of apostrophe, arriving at different conclusions. For example, Elizabeth Block sees in Virgil's apostrophes the narrator's sympathy for the victims of a war that he hates and does not believe legitimate, while, on the other hand, G. B. Conte finds a narrator who breaks the

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1 The first consideration belongs to Quint 1993.9, the second to Feeney 1991.137.

2 O'Hara 1997.254. On Virgilian ambiguity, see O'Hara 1997.249–51 and bibliography.

emotional engagement with the defeated created by empathy. From the examples given, it is clear that, among scholars, the treatment of apostrophe is linked to the representation of grief and to closure or narrative coherence:<sup>3</sup> how does the narrator comment on the suffering caused by Aeneas's war in Latium? Does Virgil's use of apostrophe tend to justify that war, helping the reader to accept that suffering and Aeneas's mission, or does he reveal the injustice of that violence? It is crucial to keep in mind that when events are presented in a text, as Mieke Bal warns, they are always given from within a certain perspective. This phenomenon is called by Bal focalization (1985.100–01). In fiction as well as in non-fiction, a narrator might be expressing his own vision or that of another. He can speak with his own voice while inhabiting the point of view of Jupiter or Turnus. Whose vision does Virgil's narrator support in his apostrophes? A narratological approach to this topic might facilitate the task of assessing the *Aeneid*'s degree of polyphony.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand Virgil's use of apostrophe, I will first consider how earlier epic writers, particularly Homer and Apollonius, characterized the poet's voice. This analysis is offered as a review of well-established approaches to these writers and an opportunity to discuss at a narratological level apostrophe's effects on the reader. I will consider how this rhetorical device was developed in the Hellenistic Age as a kind of direct commentary of the narrator, and I hope to make clear how Virgil's predecessors influenced Virgil's own sophisticated use of direct address.

## HOMER

In the Homeric poems, the narrator does not tell us a great deal about himself; he tries to intrude in the narration as little as possible. Homeric "objectivity" is well known and much discussed.<sup>5</sup> Homer, with supreme rhetorical skill, creates an invisible narrator who bestows on the story an almost magical power: the story proceeds by itself, or so it seems,

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3 E.g., Pöschl 1950, Otis 1963, Heinze 1965, Johnson 1976, Rosati 1979, Block 1982, Conte 1986, Hardie 1989, Fowler 1990, Wofford 1992, Quint 1993, Greene 1999. Fowler 1997a provides a good overview of the topic.

4 Basic contributions about narratology and focalization are: Bal 1985, Genette 1980, Pugliatti 1985. Good bibliography on the topic is to be found in Conte 1986.154 n. 10 and Fowler 1990, who points out the difficulty of "surgically" separating coexisting points of view. About the *Aeneid*, see La Penna 1967, Perutelli 1979.

5 Effe 1983.171–86; for a general definition of objectivity, see Benveniste 1971.208.

and we forget that there is someone carefully arranging it.<sup>6</sup> The basic impulse of Homeric style, as Erich Auerbach notes (1953.6 and 13), is to represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their parts, clearly fixed in their spatial and temporal relations.

Auerbach's conclusion is only partially refuted by Irene de Jong, who challenges the idea of Homeric objectivity as we have described it, but only at the level of tertiary focalization (embedded speech). Tertiary focalization occurs when a character introduces the point of view/speech of another character, but far from being faithful to it, exploits it for his or her own purposes.<sup>7</sup> In primary and secondary focalization, on the contrary, she concludes that "the primary narrator does indeed hand over focalization to the characters and only seldom intrudes (and then only to provide factual information to the listener)."<sup>8</sup> In general, a speech reported directly by the primary narrator can be considered a correct quotation of the character's words. The narrator does not manipulate them nor try to interject his point of view.

Ahl and Roisman seem to be more radically opposed to Auerbach's conclusions. Objectivity, they say, should not be confused with simplicity or primitivism as hallmarks of oral poetry. As a matter of fact, Homeric objectivity is paired with *deinotes*, "formidable speech," characterized by compactness, so that the narration relies on the listener to adduce details

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6 In the case of the Homeric poems, this "someone" might not be an individual but a tradition that can shape a text just as much as an individual; Russo and Simon 1968.483–98.

7 de Jong 1987.168–79. "Speaking characters may in their speeches report or even quote the words of other characters" (p. 168). De Jong 1987.37 contains a definition of tertiary focalization: "The internal secondary narrator-focalizer embeds in his character-text the focalization of another character, who thus functions as a tertiary focalizer"; de Jong 2001.xiii–xiv: "Embedded stories can also take the form of embedded focalization . . . they are usually narrated in an allusive, elliptical style, the speaker concentrating on those aspects which are relevant to the message he wants to convey."

8 de Jong 1987.171. Rosati 1979.540 comes to the same conclusion: Virgil's intrusion into the interior of his characters is not authorial violence on their psychology but a way to register the character's state of mind. A summary of different narrative situations and definitions is to be found in de Jong 1987.37: primary focalization is found in a simple narrator-text where "an external narrator/focalizer presents the events/persons. Recipient is an external primary narratee-focalizee." In addition, "there is embedded or secondary focalization when NF1 [the main narrator and focalizer] represents the focalization of one of the characters. In other words the NF1 temporarily hands over focalization (but not narration) to one of the characters who functions as F2 [secondary focalizer], and, thereby, takes a share in the presentation of the story" (de Jong 1987.101).

omitted altogether by the text.<sup>9</sup> Homeric compactness is for these two critics highly allusive, and its reliance on the listener to fill the gaps of the narration is logically at odds with Auerbach's notion of objectivity, since we would have a narrator who implies much while seeming to externalize everything. Reading the *Odyssey*, we become fully aware that the character who speaks controls the narration and constructs it. As Ahl and Roisman write (1996.41): "Heroism in the *Odyssey* is to some degree determined by one's ability to seize and exploit the narrative initiative."

There are a few places where the Homeric narrator intrudes in the first person, either addressing characters or the audience.<sup>10</sup> Block emphasizes a common feature shared by Homeric apostrophes: they are typically directed to characters who exhibit vulnerability and loyalty (1982.16). For example, Patroklos is apostrophized eight times in Book 16, where the unfortunate hero will meet his doom.<sup>11</sup> Homer's sympathy for Menelaus (*Iliad* 4.127, 146; 7.104, etc.) and Patroklos is fully believable in the kind of *kosmos* that the poet creates.<sup>12</sup> In the Homeric world, the winner is not necessarily morally superior to the loser, he is simply stronger. *Fatum* exists, but it does not unfold according to a master plan that guarantees progress and justice, it is a blind force that strikes without a specific rationale.

Through repeated apostrophes, the Homeric narrator articulates his sympathy for the personage in question, and, in so doing, encourages the audience to share his emotional response. The device can be considered a rhetorical strategy of oral poetry: the bard's emotion is manifested to an audience that confronts the same emotion. In this case, the singer's response is shared with the audience rather than being challenged. The audience of an oral performance is, essentially, a feeling, not a judging, participant (Felson 1997.138–39). This was, in fact, the psychological characteristic of mimesis that Plato feared the most.<sup>13</sup> Ancient and modern commentators have noticed

9 *Deinotes*, according to Demetrius's *On Style*, describes compactness (240–45) or an allusive style. See Ahl and Roisman 1996.14ff. and 40.

10 On apostrophe in Homer: Nitzsch 1860, Parry 1972, Yamagata 1989, Grillo 1988.9–67.

11 About the exceptionality of the apostrophe to Patroklos, see Bakker 1997.172–73: "Patroklos, the Iliadic character who is most out of touch with the first action of the *Iliad*, enjoys a special status in its secondary action: he is a listener to the performance like ourselves." Suggestively for my discussion, Bakker reads Homer's address to Patroklos as a way to make him present through silence. As I will explain, this is true for the *Aeneid* only in certain cases. About apostrophe in Homer, see also Kahane 1994.107–13 and 153–55.

12 For a full list of apostrophes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, see Block 1982.11.

13 Plato *Ion* 535c–d; Havelock 1963.

that the “turning” of the discourse from the third person to the second person corresponds to a shift from objective to subjective narration whose most evident result is to guide the listener’s response.<sup>14</sup> The “turning” of the discourse reminds us of what is specific about apostrophe, namely, that it makes its point not by employing the figurative use of a word but by taking advantage of the circuit or situation of communication itself.

Yet this is not the entire picture. The internal audience for the verbal duel between Achilles and Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1 is definitely expected to judge and take sides: Nestor diplomatically defends Achilles (1.254–84), while Thersites aggressively reacts against Agamemnon’s irrational decision to antagonize the Greeks’ most valuable fighter (2.212–41). Furthermore, the idea that oral audiences are led, by apostrophes or other techniques, towards a fairly simple emotional response (pity for or admiration of the heroes) does not easily square with the complexity of the situations and characters presented by the oral text (see Foley 1999).

For instance, in Book 16, it is possible that the intense recourse to apostrophe is triggered not only by the narrator’s desire to elicit the reader’s sympathy for Patroklos, but also by his wish to hide Patroklos’s disregard of Achilles’ explicit instructions and his foolish desire for glory. Achilles, prophetically, had warned his friend to turn back after having scattered the enemy from the ships, even if Zeus was granting success. He had begged Patroklos to put aside further fighting and to check the enthusiasm triggered by victory (16.83–96). But Patroklos did exactly what he had been warned not to do, and the narrator signals his miscalculation at 16.685–87: “And it was a terrible mistake: if he would have listened to the words of the son of Peleus, certainly he would have escaped his destiny and black death.” Thus the rhetoric of the narrator in connection with Patroklos is complex: while his apostrophes have the seemingly clear purpose of eliciting the reader’s compassion, the narrator also wants to signal, and perhaps cover up, blameworthy conduct.

It is noteworthy for the purposes of considering the sophistication of the genre and its apostrophes to point out how, in Homer, the Muse invocations constitute yet another distinct group of passages where the narrator tells us something about himself. In these apostrophes, he augments his prestige by suggesting that his reliability is guaranteed by the cooperation of the Muses, whose authorization underscores his art and professionalism.<sup>15</sup>

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14 Horace *A.P.* 99ff., Cicero *de Or.* 2.189ff., Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 4.1.63.

15 de Jong 1987.226. The problematization of the poet’s relationship with the Muses is suggested later at *Theogony* 26–28; see, recently, Collins 1999.

## HELLENISTIC EPIC AND APOLLONIUS OF RHODES

The interaction among the Muses, the poet, and the audience underwent a fundamental change with the development of writing as a poetic medium.<sup>16</sup> With the Hellenistic age and Apollonius of Rhodes, we witness the emergence of the written word, the spread of literacy and libraries. During the Hellenistic age, writers become obsessed with their literary heritage: “Like the international high modernism of this [first] half of the twentieth century, Alexandrianism produced creative writers who reconstituted the works of their tradition so as to give them a sensibility that was contemporary.”<sup>17</sup> In evoking Homeric epic, Apollonius wanted to show how the relationship between the poet and his predecessors changes not only when the performance is replaced by the book but also in a different cultural environment.<sup>18</sup>

Only on the surface is the *Argonautica* a continuous narrative revolving around Jason’s *kleos* and marked by affinities with the Homeric poems. Apollonius was not interested in presenting gods or heroes by whose actions universal truths could be discerned. He was not a traditionalist, he was the pupil of Callimachus, and, like his teacher, he tried to write epic in a quite different fashion (Briggs 1981.978).

Alan Cameron (endorsing some previous suggestions laid out by Cairns), points out the most important narratological innovation in Callimachean writing: the *Aetia* is basically the same sort of poem as the *Lyde*, Antimachus’s poem in elegiac couplets; both are catalogues of mythical narratives set in a personal frame. The difference lies in the relationship of frame to narrative: while Callimachus did whatever he could to push the person of the narrator into the frame of the narrative itself, Antimachus was apparently content with an invisible narrator.<sup>19</sup> Like Callimachus, Apollonius pushes the person of the narrator from the frame into the narration itself. The readers of the *Argonautica* immediately experience the vitality of Apollonius’s

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16 Havelock 1986, Goody and Watt 1968, de Vet 1996.

17 Beye 1999.272; also Bing 1988, Bulloch 1985. For similar characteristics in Callimachus, see Lombardo 1988.

18 Green 1993.5 with bibliography; see also Cartledge et al. 1997.1–19.

19 Cameron 1993.315. Even if Cameron, on the whole, problematically argues for the traditionalism of Hellenistic poetry rather than for its novelty, he underscores some important similarities between Apollonius’s and Callimachus’s narrators. The innovative qualities of Apollonius’s narrator and narrations are underlined by Bing 1988, DeForest 1994, Paduano 1972 and 1986. On Antimachus, see Matthews 1996.

narrator, "a vitality particularly apparent in the glancing wit and irony—often the mock solemnity of a Hitchcock or Nabokov—with which the narrative progresses" (Beye 1982.10). Apollonius manages to produce a split in the storyline, creating a narrator who does not like the song that has to be sung. Narrator and characters try to move in opposite directions, creating a gap that enhances the irony and calls attention to the fictionality of this work.<sup>20</sup> In the *Argonautica*, devices such as the use of invocation, apostrophes, and the explicit comment are directly connected with the narrator and his agenda.

Books 1, 3, and 4 open with addresses to the Muses or a Muse or to Erato. The goddesses are called to act as interpreters (*hypophetores*) of the song, and it is not always clear whether they are helpers of the poet or his servants. What is certain is that the pervasive hymnal and aetiological concerns of the numerous interventions of the narrator draw a psychological portrait of the narrator himself.<sup>21</sup> The point is simply and effectively put by Culler (1977.63):

Imagine a man standing on a corner in the rain cursing buses, "Come on, damn you! It's been ten minutes!" If he continues apostrophically when other travelers join him on the corner, he makes a spectacle of himself; his apostrophes work less to establish an I-thou relation between him and the absent bus than to dramatize or constitute an image of self. We might posit, then, a third level of reading where the vocative of apostrophe is a device which the poetic voice uses to establish with an object a relationship which helps to institute him.

Keeping in mind these remarks, we can read a most interesting indirect portrait of the narrator in *Argonautica* 4.1–5:

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20 DeForest 1994.37–46. E.g., *Argonautica* 4.982–87: "At the head of the Ionian strait, set in the Keraunian sea, is a large and fertile land, where is buried, so the story goes (your gracious pardon, Muses! It is against my will that I relate a story told by men of earlier generations), the sickle with which Kronos pitilessly cut off his father's genitals," quoted in Hunter 2001.

21 For the idea that writing is directly constitutive of lyric consciousness, see Miller 1994.169–77.

αὐτὴ νῦν κάματόν γε, θεά, καὶ δήνεα κούρης  
 Κολχίδος ἔννεπε Μοῦσα, Διὸς τέκος. ἦ γὰρ ἔμοιγε  
 ἀμφασίῃ νόος ἔνδον ἐλίσσεται, ὄρμαίνοντι,  
 ἡέ μιν ἄτης πῆμα δυσίμερον, ἦ τό γ' ἐνίσπω  
 φύζαν ἀεικελίην, ἦ κάλλιπεν ἔθνεα Κόλχων.<sup>22</sup>

Now you yourself, goddess Muse, daughter of Zeus, tell me of the labor and wiles of the Colchian maiden. For inward with speechless fright, my mind wavers as I ponder whether I should call it the lovesick grief of blind passion or a panic flight with which she left the Colchian people.

The invocation is used not so much to establish a connection between the Muse and the author as to let us understand what kind of narrator is recounting the story. The poet invokes Erato, underlining the prominence of the love theme, but, most of all, unveiling his own doubts and lack of words. The second person of the apostrophe is soon supplanted by the first person. This operation reveals the poet's resolution to talk about himself. In Homer, the ideological domain of the narrator was absolute and tyrannical but never open and explicit; in the *Argonautica*, the narrator's traits are clearly perceptible. We can experience his intellectualism, his pessimism, his desire to penetrate the human psyche, and his dislike of the heroic stance. Comments coming from such an opinionated personage, far from being absolute or objective, depend on his personality and ideological assumptions.

Only when analyzing Medea does the poet change the relationship between narrator and characters. Medea is the only figure in the *Argonautica* allowed to express her point of view with minimal intrusion on the part of the poet. This interruption of generic convention is limited to Book 3, so we can claim that Apollonius's most substantial divergence from the Homeric practice consists in the transformation of the epic narrator from invisible entity into explicit participant. The narration (except in Book 3) is dominated by one point of view, that of the narrator, yet his point of view is revealed as such and therefore personalized and made relative.

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22 For the text, I have used François Vian's edition (Paris 1974–1981). Translations are my own unless indicated.

A further distancing of Apollonius's text from the Homeric mode can be detected in the use of the present tense in the numerous *aitia*.<sup>23</sup> With the present tense, the accent is put, once again, on the speaking persona and on the production of the message (Fusillo 1985.382–83). The frequent aetiological remarks have a deep impact on the structure of the work. In Homer, anticipations are typically introduced by characters in the story (homodiegetic narration).<sup>24</sup> They inform the reader about the future destiny of the heroes or about the end of the story (e.g., the fall of Troy). In Apollonius, the majority of the anticipations are introduced by the narrator, who, explaining particular phenomena, names, or customs still existent during his time, betrays the modes of traditional epic, destroying, above all, the fiction of the remote past. For instance at 1.1058–62 we read:

αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα  
τρὶς περὶ χαλκείοισι σὺν ἔντεσι δινηθέντες  
τύμβῳ ἐνεκτερέιξαν, ἐπειρήσαντό τ' ἀέθλων,  
ἢ θέμις, ὅμι πεδίον Λειμώνιον, ἐνθ' ἔτι νῦν περ  
ἀγκέχυται τόδε σῆμα καὶ ὄψιγόνοισιν ιδέσθαι.

Then three times, with their bronze weapons, they went around the tomb, buried him, and, according to the ritual, celebrated the games on the grassy plain where still today rises the monument to be seen even by future generations.

In the past tense (ἐνεκτερέιξαν, ἐπειρήσαντό), we are told about the funerary games for Cyzicus and his tomb, whose mention is followed by the present tense ἀγκέχυται employed by the narrator to remind the reader that the monument is still standing. The expression καὶ ὄψιγόνοισιν ιδέσθαι (line 1062) echoes the almost formulaic Homeric καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι (“to be known even by future generations”), but while, in Homer, the locution is only extant inside direct speech as a wish for future memory (e.g., at *Od.* 11.76, when Elpenor asks for burial), in the *Argonautica*, it is

23 On the absence of aetiology in Homer, see Murray 1960.30ff. Aetiological stories become a conspicuous and identifiable literary phenomenon only with the Alexandrian age and with Callimachus's work, which also gives center stage to the narrator: Fusillo 1985.139–40.

24 Fusillo 1985.136, employing Genette's terminology.

introduced by an external (heterodiegetic) narrator who, in the aetiological process, is focalizing the action directly from his temporal perspective.<sup>25</sup>

The narrator continuously injects into the plot data that belong to the present of the author, interrupting the narrative flow. In this way, the story cannot be pictured as a continuous line but rather as a conglomerate in which even the natural progression of time is reduced and subordinated to the desires of the narrating persona. The narration is not impersonally bestowed by the Muses and does not mysteriously produce itself, but it is a tale exposed in its formative processes, mirroring and reflecting the doubts and the desires of the person producing it at every turn.

### ROMAN EPIC

Experimentalism, the flexibility of the temporal levels, and the importance of the present as a funnel through which all past events must pass are a vital legacy left by the Hellenistic poets to Roman epos and epyllion.<sup>26</sup> Rome also inherits from the Hellenistic world an interest in hexametric poetry devoted to the praise of monarchs, high themes, and historical exploration.

After Ennius and Naevius, historical events and national values are essential components of Roman epic, so when Virgil decides to deal in the *Aeneid* with the mythical past before the *ktisis* of the Roman nation, he tries to connect it to the present, to establish in what form that past influenced the present. The future (that is, the poet's Augustan present) weighs on the action and conditions the "epic freedom" of the Virgilian hero; the knowledge and burden of future history invest the protagonist and increasingly shape all his decisions.<sup>27</sup>

25 Fusillo 1985.124, 137. At Bal 1985.105, the phenomenon is described as external focalization: "When focalization lies with one character which participates in the fabula as an actor, we could refer to internal focalization. We can then indicate by means of the term external focalization that an anonymous agent, situated outside the fabula, is functioning as a focalizor."

26 Of course the fragmentary state of Naevius's *Bellum Poenicum* and Ennius's *Annales* does not always allow critics to follow the exact development and history of the genre. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that Ennius was absorbed in experimental practices; see Reggiani 1979 and Grillo 1965, esp. 9–90. On the legitimacy of the category of epyllion, see Jackson 1913, contra Allen 1940.1ff, recently, Merriam 2001.

27 Barchiesi and Conte 1989.136; the same idea is in Knauer 1999.110–11 and Goldberg 1995.83–110.

Virgil's vision in the *Aeneid* is teleological. As Charles Segal explains (1999.44):

Virgil's authorial *persona* not only takes in the whole course of the narrated events, but also comprehends the divinely destined course of history, from Rome's small beginnings to its domination of the world. Authorial pre-science is, literally, divine prescience; it implies some measure of identification with Jupiter's grand sweep of knowledge and power over human affairs.

The desire to talk about the present while introducing a legend from the past is a major concern in Hellenistic epic and also in Virgil's sparse but significant use of apostrophe. Yet, as I will show, the Augustan poet is not always consistent in his use of this rhetorical device.

## VIRGIL

Let us glance at the beginning of the *Aeneid* (1.1–4, 8–11):

arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
 Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit  
 litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto  
 vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram  
 . . .  
 Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso  
 quidve dolens regina deum tot volvere casus  
 insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores  
 impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?<sup>28</sup>

I sing of warfare and a man at war.  
 From the sea-coast of Troy in early days  
 He came to Italy by destiny,  
 To our Lavinian western shore,  
 A fugitive, this captain, buffeted  
 Cruelly on land as on the sea

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28 I use the 1978 edition of Paratore.

By blows from powers of the air—behind them  
Baleful Juno in her sleepless rage.

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Tell me the causes now, O Muse, how galled  
In her divine pride, and how sore at heart  
From her old wound, the queen of gods compelled  
him—  
A man apart, devoted to his mission—  
To undergo so many perilous days  
And enter on so many trials. Can anger  
Black as this prey on the minds of heaven?

(trans. Fitzgerald)

The reader notices the similarities with the opening lines of the *Odyssey* and the recapitulative tone of the beginning of the *Iliad*. Importance is given to the first person ‘I sing,’ the signal of the narrator’s control and Apollonian concerns. Only at line 8 is a tribute paid to tradition with the invocation of the Muse, while, at the same time, the power of the narrator is highlighted with the apostrophe to the gods and the request for an explanation (Beye 1993.230). We have, at line 11, an example of what has been considered the hallmark of the *Aeneid*, the so-called “subjective style.”<sup>29</sup> In this rightly famous verse, the narrator openly questions the anger of the gods and the origin of the events that he is about to sing.<sup>30</sup>

I will show that Virgil is not consistent in his use of the narrator’s voice. His intrusions into the narration do not always insinuate complaints and lack of understanding. More often, the narrator seconds the story being narrated with his remarks—or at least seems to do so—and, with his apostrophes, propels and justifies the plot.

Let us try to frame more precisely the narrator’s attitude towards his characters and narration according to the criteria established most systematically by Brooks Otis. Otis sees Virgil’s voice used in two main ways:

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29 Heinze 1993.361–70; he was the first to analyze Virgil in terms of portrayal of psychological attitudes manifested in speeches and to create the term *Subjectivität*. On Heinze’s seminal work, see Perutelli 1973 and, more recently, Hardie 1999b.

30 Cf. Segal 1999.45: “The questioning voice is unexpected, untraditional. There is no precedent in Homer. Homer’s gods, of course, have frequent head-on collisions, but Homer’s omniscient bardic voice never questions the world-order in this way. The closest parallels are the hard demands of justice and meaning by the choruses of Greek tragedy.”

- 1) through the use of apostrophe directed especially to characters destined to be overcome (sympathy).
- 2) through the characters' revelation of their own points of view (empathy).<sup>31</sup>

First, I would like to comment on the second device that, as it gives the narration a very memorable and distinctive flavor, had been noticed already in antiquity (Rosati 1979.539–62). I have already observed that Apollonius in Book 3 used Medea to focalize the story and to explore the intrinsically problematic choice that she was forced to face. Medea was portrayed with sophistication, and attention was given to her psyche in the process of deciding to help the Argonauts. The poet subordinated divine intervention to the psychological determinants of the heroine almost to the point where the Olympians' plans could have been altogether eliminated from the action.<sup>32</sup>

The novelty and significance of the figure of Medea are perceived and reused by Virgil on a larger scale.<sup>33</sup> The poet gives ample space to the points of view of characters other than the protagonist. For instance, he often directs his attention to the views and feelings of the losers, and lets them openly complain about the Gods.<sup>34</sup> Conte, acutely, describes "empathy" as a stylistic device operating in a wide system of signification. He explains that the epic norm, that is, the cultural contents, the ideology, with which a poet in a given society fills the epic code (the objective narrative structure, conventions, expectations defined by epic as a literary genre derived mainly from Homer) traditionally (e.g., in Homer) is governed by its own point of view, but knows how to conceal it.<sup>35</sup> Apollonius is revolutionary in his

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31 Otis 1963. Otis's observations were inspired by Heinze 1965 (trans. 1993). According to Heinze, Virgil's style in the *Aeneid* would encourage emotional identification with points of view other than those of the narrator. Otis's ideas have become widely accepted, e.g., Quinn 1968 and Knight 1971.

32 Paduano 1972.103–04, commenting on *Arg.* 3.818.

33 About Apollonius as a mediator between the *Aeneid* and tragic models, see Hardie 1997.323.

34 E.g., Juturna at *Aen.* 12.870–84, in a fairly long speech, is allowed to criticize Jupiter: "How now, Turnus, will your sister be able to help you . . . I have understood the cruel commands of great-hearted Jupiter. In this way he pays me back after he has taken my virginity? Why did he give me an immortal life? Why did he take away death from me? Now I could put an end to these torments and be a companion of my brother among the ghosts" (12.871, 877–81). Juturna deems her immortality unbearable if her brother Turnus is taken away from her.

35 Conte 1986.97–100 and 141–54.

choice to expose this feature of the epic genre and create in the *Argonautica* a narrator who does not conceal his point of view.

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil is influenced by both Homer and Apollonius. Employing de Jong's very useful model, we could say that, like Homer, he does not allow the level of primary signification, identifiable with the narrator, to "contaminate" the secondary level of signification, that of the characters, whose point of view is therefore faithfully portrayed by the primary narrator. The narrator's knowledge of the will of the gods and *fatum* does not compromise his objectivity, which allows minor characters to speak with their own voice.<sup>36</sup>

Yet Virgil, probably under the influence of Apollonius's characterization of Medea, decides to reveal that the unilateral perspective of the epic genre is fictional. As Conte explains (1986.154):

Virgil introduces multiple points of view as a more powerful interpretative apparatus . . . In the ideology of *epos*, History appears as a flat, static, monistic surface. This is the vision of a reality that has emerged into its final, definitive order . . . But within the strata of History, covered over and pushed far into the background, lie the layers of suppressed crises and anguished, repressed memories, the price exacted by *imperium* and the horrors of civil war. This wealth of lost events, which constitute in fact the linear movement of diachronic succession, is rearranged synchronically by Virgil as a simultaneous plurality of points of view. The absolute point of view of the norm is not obliterated; it is made relative . . . the upshot is not what a character is in the world but what the world is for the character and how he sees himself.<sup>37</sup>

The coexistence of Aeneas's point of view with that of his enemies springs from Virgil's decision to grant to them an autonomous *raison d'être* that the historico-epic code had denied them.

36 Discrepancies in the story confirm this point: e.g., the death of Palinurus told by the narrator (*Aen.* 5.835–71) versus the death of Palinurus told by Palinurus himself (*Aen.* 6.346–62); removal of the golden bough retold by Sybil (*Aen.* 6.136–48) and by the narrator (*Aen.* 6.196–211).

37 See Conte 1986, with his extensive bibliography, on the notion of "point of view" that he believes, in spite of the crisis it faced in the 60s, still useful when applied to the text with the right definition. Conte's definition of point of view is the following: "The semantic position that every character—every active subject—occupies in the text, the structure taken by things as they appear in the text."

According to Richard Heinze, something similar happens in apostrophe. Apostrophe is a manifestation of the narrator's "sympathy" (above, number 1), and can be viewed as responding to the same expressive need manifested in "empathy": the poet is fully participating in the sufferings of the conquered and, emotionally, he is endorsing their points of view. Following Heinze, Block considers the role of apostrophe to be paradigmatic in the deaths of Euryalus, Nisus, and Lausus, whose misfortunes trigger the narrator's sympathy and sorrow. This understanding of the enemy, in her view, challenges the justifiability of the Latin war. Through apostrophe, the narrator can express, at the same time, sorrow for the dead enemies of Rome and his own doubts about the imperial project (Block 1982.22). Block shares Heinze and Otis's view that sympathy and the intrusive narrator, as we noticed for the *Argonautica*, threaten epic objectivity by foreshortening the necessary distance between the subject of the epic and its object.

Conte does not agree with this analysis that merges sympathy and empathy into the same aesthetic need. He maintains that sympathy and empathy are "genetically and functionally distinct and work in opposite directions" (1986.169). While *empathia*, with the multiplication of points of view and the consequent relativization of the epic norm's ideology, destroys epic objectivity, sympathy is Virgil's way to reorganize that fragmentation. Conte argues that apostrophe helps the reader to understand Virgil's concerns while writing the poem (1986.171–72; emphasis in original):

With the truth diffracted into individual, relative images, it is up to the poet to come forward as a "monitor" able to assess the worth of each fragment by relating it to the objectivity of his own overview. That is the role played by the systematic intervention of the poet within the structure of the *Aeneid*: he creates an *objective consciousness* under which the various individual truths are subsumed.

Conte, assumes that, overall, the ideological biases of the epic norm in the *Aeneid* are painfully displayed as relative but, at the same time, accepted. The Virgilian revelation of the agony of the leader and of the conquered can, indeed, be viewed as a type of apology that justifies power.<sup>38</sup> In this perspective, even sympathy becomes a blind closing of the eyes in front of war's

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38 Martindale 1993.35ff., esp. 42.

bitter reality, and the elegiac tone an elegant way out, a surrogate for a more direct and out-spoken protest.<sup>39</sup>

In the following pages, I will examine the most extended apostrophes in the *Aeneid* to show that while some definitely fit Conte's model, others do not. At crucial junctures in the *Aeneid*, the narrator uses apostrophes to focalize our attention on his own voice. In those moments, we are called to reflect on what seems most important to him. What the poet suggests often coincides with what the ghost of Anchises reminds his son and future Roman generations (*Aen.* 6.847–53): Rome will hold forever a just *imperium*.<sup>40</sup> While the narrator as a public mourner and superior interpreter of the future appears in the invocations to Euryalus and Nisus or Pallas and Turnus (*Aen.* 9.446–49, 10.507–09, *Aen.* 10.501–05), he figures as a disappointed interpreter of the gods' will and of his own inability to dutifully lament those who die in the appeal to Icarus (*Aen.* 6.30–33) and in the apostrophe to Jupiter at the beginning of Book 12. He also shares the sorrow and disorientation of the defeated in the apostrophe to Dido. While in the first group of apostrophes, he focalizes the events with the foreknowledge of Jupiter, in the second cluster, he assumes the point of view of the victims.

### “PROVIDENTIAL” APOSTROPHES: NEAR TO THE CONQUEROR

In the apostrophe to Euryalus and Nisus, the narrator's externalized reflections orient our reading and recreate the movement of the plot toward a more unified vision of the poem. Advertising Rome's timeless glory at *Aeneid* 9.446–49, Euryalus and Nisus are praised for their behavior:

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39 Wofford 1992.169–76. She sees that the idyllic tone is a well planned “ideological strategy by which apparent solutions to irresolvable claims can be presented convincingly by the poetry” (Wofford 1992.450 n. 26).

40 *Aen.* 6.847–53: “Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera, / (credo equidem), vivos ducent de marmore voltus, / orabunt causas melius caelique meatus / describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent: / tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos,” “Other people shall more subtly make bronze into breathing creatures, others will draw our living faces from marble, others will plead better their cases at court, with the rod discover the motions of heavens and learn to tell the rising of the stars. But you, o Roman, remember to rule with your power—these are your arts—and to impose the law of peace, to be merciful to the conquered, and to cast down the proud.”

Fortunati ambo! Si quid mea carmina possunt,  
 nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo,  
 dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum  
 accolet, imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.

You both are lucky! If my poetry has some power,  
 no day ever will subtract you to the memory of time,  
 as long as the house of Aeneas dwells on the unshaken  
 rock of the Capitol,  
 and the Roman father maintains his empire.

The narrator entrusts his certitude about Euryalus and Nisus's future immortality not so much to the power of song as to the imperishable *imperium* of the Romans.<sup>41</sup> No matter how terrible and unfair a *mors immatura* might seem, it is the price to be paid for the establishment of the new Roman nation. The adjective *fortunati* contradicts and corrects Nisus's judgment about his friend's and his own lot at 9.427–30, where he begged the Rutulian to spare Euryalus:

me, me! adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum,  
 o Rutuli! mea fraus omnis; nihil iste nec ausus  
 nec potuit (caelum hoc et conscientia sidera testor),  
 tantum *infelicem* nimium dilexit amicum.

No, me! Me! Here I am! I did it! Take  
 Your swords to me, Rutulians. All the trickery  
 Was mine. He had not dared do anything,  
 He could not. Heaven's my witness, and the stars  
 That look down on us, all he did was care  
 Too much for a *luckless* friend. (trans. Fitzgerald)

Yet in the narrator's words, despite their violent deaths, these friends are lucky. Gordon Williams thinks that they are lucky because "loving one another, they died together . . . Euryalus was lucky because he did not die alone and abandoned; Nisus was lucky because he did not outlive his lover, and his death on his lover's behalf was noble" (1983.206). In the adjective

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41 *Dum* with the future marks the transition.

*fortunati*, we have Virgil's recognition that what redeems and ennobles the warriors' final actions is love as a private feeling not directed towards the fatherland but towards each other.

Yet if the main message of the apostrophe is that love as a private feeling is a sufficient reason to bestow glory and praise, lines 448 and 449 contradict this quite non-epic impression. For at 448–49, the narrator links the memory of the couple to the future of Rome. Euryalus and Nisus will be remembered only as long as (*dum*) the city founded by Aeneas is standing. The narrator praises Nisus's action when, as Philip Hardie suggests, this "black hunter" has gained understanding of the importance of fighting as a true soldier in an army: "When Euryalus is captured, Nisus continues to operate from cover, his spearthrows as unseen as any non-hoplite arrow, until the death of his beloved Euryalus forces him into the open to fight fair with his flashing sword" (1997.321).

Conte's conclusions fittingly describe this apostrophe: the poet's intrusion works as a justification of the glory of Rome and an encouragement to be selfless soldiers. The deaths of many Italian soldiers (Camilla, Lausus, and all the young and brave warriors briefly invoked in Book 10) are mourned and justified in the same way.

At *Aeneid* 10.507–09, we have the narrator's invocation to the dead Pallas:

O dolor atque decus magnum rediture parenti!  
haec te prima dies bello dedit, haec eadem aufert,  
cum tamen ingentis Rutulorum linquis acervos.

O you who will come back as sorrow and a great  
ornament of your father!  
This first day brought you to war and took you away  
from it,  
Nevertheless [or even though] you leave behind many  
heaps of Rutulians.

Pallas is the implicit addressee of the invocation (*rediture*). He has obtained his renown, fighting with pride and killing many enemies; he has behaved according to the expectations of his parent as well as of Aeneas and of the epic code. Sorrow and public recognition (*dolor atque decus*) are interestingly juxtaposed, yet grief seems to be subordinated to the celebration of public virtues. Line 509 brings witness to Pallas's many victims (*ingentis*

*acervos*). Williams underscores this line's double entendre: "The glory lies in the slaughter; Pallas and his father could feel that, but the poet insulates himself in the ambiguous tone of *cum tamen*" (1983.92). Williams could be right, the *cum tamen* might refer to the mounds of Rutulians slain by Pallas, but it could alternatively refer to *dies* (in the previous line), the little time available to this youth to gain his fame. If the latter is the case, we have not the revelation of a poet perplexed about the slaughter caused by war, but a poet amazed at the young warrior's ability to kill so many people in so little time.

Confirmation of the second interpretation comes at line 507, where the narrator calls Pallas *reditore*, "the one who will come back." Deceptively, the optimism conveyed by the verb helps the reader to forget that Pallas's resurrection is a trick: his return is granted only as a dead body memorialized in the praise of a poet.<sup>42</sup> The apostrophe is obviously focalized through the omniscient narrator of the *Aeneid*, who can see the future and is able to understand that the deaths of Pallas, Euryalus, and Nisus can be meaningfully situated on the path that leads to possession of Latium, first, and *imperium* after.

As the examples above have shown, the narrator feels the urge to reveal himself especially when someone has been killed. In this matter, his apostrophes resemble miniature lamentations or failed lamentations. If it is true that "lamentation is prototypical of epic as a genre that confers praise" (Murnaghan 1999.204), it is also true that "lament is born from grief for the dead, and though praise is naturally combined with it, grief has the chief place."<sup>43</sup> While in Greek tragedy, personal attachment expressed in lamentation threatens the social order, in Athenian public funeral orations, women's grief is inscribed in praise that minimizes the human cost of war (Loraux 1986.42–50). In Virgil's apostrophes, we find both impulses: on one side, there is a feminine desire to cry over the bodies of the war's victims that calls into question the glorification of death sponsored by a martial community; on the other side, we find the male urge to turn the lamentation into a funeral oration with its public utility. Complaint, when present, is entrusted to

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42 The principal function of *reditore* is to shift the attention of the reader towards what will make the fall of Pallas acceptable. Often the corpses of soldiers, through idyllic tone and their insertion in the natural world, are transformed by Virgil into objects of aesthetic contemplation (e.g., *Aen.* 1.422–36, 6.703–09, 7.30–36, 8.31–67, 11.67–71); see Wofford 1992.169ff.

43 Murnaghan 1999.204 (quoting Bowra 1952.10).

minimally ironic signifiers,<sup>44</sup> and it soon dissolves into the acceptance of the loss.

Thomas Greene suggests (1999.192) that the epic genre's primary concern "is not with heroic achievement in itself as with the affective cost of achievement" and also that "in European cultural history, the pivotal text that alters permanently the epic circle of projection and participation is the *Aeneid*" (1999.197). Grief is dangerous and ambiguous; in Virgil's poem, it is often associated with negative characters (Juno, Dido, Amata, etc.). Furthermore, with Virgil's apostrophes, we have the impression that celebration and lament do not belong together anymore. The narrator seems unwilling to mourn the dead; he does not say a word about Turnus's death.

Instead, he addresses Turnus after he has slaughtered Pallas at *Aeneid* 10.501–05. This invocation is particularly interesting because it is preceded by an address to the minds of men unaware of the future, in clear opposition to the knowing narrator:

Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae  
et servare modum, rebus sublata secundis!  
Turno tempus erit, magno cum optaverit emptum  
intactum Pallanta, et cum spolia ista diemque  
oderit.

O human minds unaware of the future  
and of how to find a balance in times of success!  
A time will come for Turnus when he will desire  
Pallas alive, ransomed at high price,  
and when, with this belt, he will hate this day.

Using the demonstrative *ista*, the narrator points to the *spolia* that Turnus is going to pick up. The demonstrative mimics a gesture, a dialogue between the narrator and the reader.<sup>45</sup> There is here a message delivered not so much to Turnus but to the external audience, the readers of this work and future conquerors of the world. In the apostrophe, we are reminded of the importance of *clementia* (= *servare modum*).

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44 See my comments above on *dum* and *fortunati*.

45 Barchiesi 1984.47, where he also notes that this kind of demonstrative occurs in the *Aeneid* only in direct speech between characters.

The problem of preserving right conduct towards the conquered is one of the central issues in Roman politics between the age of Caesar and that of Augustus, and is particularly prominent in Virgil.<sup>46</sup> While, according to Alessandro Barchiesi, the space of doubt and the contradictions of epic ideology are denounced in the implicit comments the narrator offers to the reader, he often overtly endorses the epic genre with its ideological and literary corollaries.<sup>47</sup> For instance, if Virgil portrays the war between Trojans and Latins, at times, as a civil war, and this image allows us to see the cracks in the communicative structure of the *epos*, his ultimate message, his open comment, preserves the idea of a just war approved by the gods (Barchiesi 1984.86).

### “DISSENTING” APOSTROPHES: NEAR TO THE DEFEATED

Quite differently, in the apostrophe to Icarus (*Aen.* 6.30–33), the narrator's frustrations and the “dialectic of immobility” that Barchiesi has eloquently described<sup>48</sup> are overtly manifested in an explicit comment, and the narrator admits an inability to represent fully the unjust fate of those who are defeated. In Book 6, Virgil seems painfully to acknowledge that his silence is a betrayal of the losing side when he describes Daedalus's comportment. Several scholars have noted a marked identification between the author of the *Aeneid* and the artist Daedalus. Both artists create ambiguous works of art and, although remorseful, are not able to portray the victims of their enterprise.

Daedalus, successful in practically all his undertakings, not only fails as a father, he cannot immortalize his son through his art and “falls” in the attempt—as Icarus had fallen from the sky desperately flailing his imperfect wings (*Aen.* 6.30–33):

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46 Barchiesi 1984.49–52. The theme of the conquered asking for *venia* is recurrent in Augustan official propaganda: *Res Gestae* 3.1: “victorque omnibus veniam petentibus civibus peperci;” Vell. Pat. 2.286.2: *Victoria fuit clementissima*.

47 Barchiesi 1984.39ff. analyzes some forms of implicit comment: overlapping of different epic models, “relais intertestuali,” “montaggio degli eventi” (“construction of the events”) and, as I have pointed out, he discusses the empathic rendering of the characters at Barchiesi 1984.48ff.

48 According to Barchiesi 1984.88, the implicit contradictions that pervade the text foster an ambiguity that “becomes the mirror of an insoluble ideological conflict: not the passive recording of a triumphant ideology, rather the representation of a blocked dialectic, a dialectic of immobility.” (The English translation is mine.)

*Tu quoque magnum  
partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare, haberet;  
bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,  
bis patriae cecidere manus.*

Even you, Icarus,  
*would have a great part in such an accomplishment if  
sorrow permitted it;*  
twice he tried to carve your trials in gold,  
twice the father's hand failed.

No details are offered to explain the accident, everything is condensed into the evocative *casus* and *cecidere* and into the sympathetic apostrophe to the doubly absent Icarus, absent from the life of his father and from his artistic endeavor. As Michael Putnam notices (1998.53):

Both Daedalus within this initial segment of the narrative and the narrator expounding his tale seem in different senses careless . . . Daedalus thinks largely of his invention and the clever manipulation of it, not of its human consequences . . . neither at the start nor at the conclusion of the episode is the actual death of Icarus mentioned, a fact which invites the reader to fill in the text, to exercise his own imagination by re-creating and contemplating the most poignant incident in Daedalus' biography. In his role as a father Daedalus may have been lacking in understanding of his son. As an artist he is a double failure, first incapable of completely imitating nature, then unable to mime the disastrous results of this inadequacy.

With Putnam, Fitzgerald, and Pöschl, I am convinced that, at 6.14, “an artistic work is described in which the artist presents his own story,”<sup>49</sup> and the emphasis is on the artists’ (Virgil’s and Daedalus’s) inability to portray something. So strong is Virgil’s identification with Daedalus that he

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49 “The artistic work” at *Aen.* 6.14ff. is Daedalus’s craft on the doors of Cumae’s temple, about it, see Paschalis 1986.33–43, Fitzgerald 1984.53, and Pöschl 1975. In my reading, “the artistic work” is also Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

replaces the legendary artist and addresses Icarus directly in explanation of Daedalus's failure to carve his dead son in the relief. With this failure, Virgil does not trivialize grief, but points to the difficulty of representing it adequately. As Putnam remarks, the episode is an extraordinary "study in artistic incompleteness." I would add that it serves as a symbol of the writing of the *Aeneid*: Daedalus stands for Virgil and Aeneas successfully accomplishing their journey and celebrating the greatness of Rome but also leaving behind, without much explanation, a train of victims that not only could not be spared, but also cannot be adequately depicted and mourned in a text that strives to deliver a positive message of accomplishment without fully managing the task.<sup>50</sup> If it is true that this epic does not fulfill the reader's expectations of praise for Aeneas, it is also true that there is no adequate and explicit lamentation for those who are vanquished.<sup>51</sup>

The narrator behaves like Hercules when he is asked by Pallas for help against Turnus (*Aen.* 10.460–64): Hercules listens to Pallas's prayers, asks for Jupiter's intervention, but, ultimately, must agree with Jupiter that intervention is not possible. No one can change the fate of the dying youth, so Hercules must suppress his groans and shed "empty tears" (*Aen.* 10.465–73). The hero, in this passage, is a deity, he is with Jupiter on Olympus, so we are reminded that his legendary labors and afflictions were, in the end, rewarded with immortality. As a symbol of suffering rewarded, Hercules accepts Pallas's suffering because he has embraced Jupiter's vision of the future (*fatum*): life is short, and it is the task of virtue to prolong memory on earth (*Aen.* 10.467–68). Somehow, sooner or later, good things will issue even from this pain. Hercules and the narrator approve of Jupiter's plan and do not challenge it as Juturna does in Book 12, where, expressing her skepticism about immortality as an adequate reward for her suffering, she implicitly denounces the unfairness of fate. Juturna not only does all she can to preserve Turnus, she also bitterly laments his death.<sup>52</sup>

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50 Sympathetic readings of Daedalus are to be found in Otis 1963.284–85 and Segal 1965; a more ironic view of how the suppression of details also obliterates guilt is Fitzgerald 1984.51–66, Putnam 1995.73–99, and Leach 1988.356–59. No matter how we read the passage, in it "the narrator has arbitrarily taken over for the artist in order to make emptiness an index of emotional content" (Leach 1999.119).

51 Wofford 1992.199: "Apostrophe suggests, in other words, a fundamental congruence between the sacrificial basis of Virgil's poetic power [the narrator fictionally setting himself in a position that resembles that of the victims] and the politics of the foundation and conquest that the poem narrates."

52 Cf. Barchiesi 1984.16–30 and Barchiesi 1999.326–329, where both episodes are discussed.

Juturna-like, the narrator manifests his limitations and inability to understand what has happened in his address to Jupiter at 12.500–04:

Quis mihi nunc tot acerba deus, quis carmine caedes  
 diversas obitumque ducum, quos aequore toto  
 inque vicem nunc Turnus agit, nunc Troius heros,  
 expediatur? tantum placuit concurrere motu,  
 Iuppiter, aeterna gentis in pace futuras?

What god can help me tell so dread a story?  
 Who could describe that carnage in a song—  
 The captains driven over the plain and killed  
 By Turnus or in turn by Troy's great hero?  
 Was it thy pleasure, Jupiter, that peoples  
 Afterward to live in lasting peace  
 Should rend each other in so black a storm?

(trans. Fitzgerald)

The question to Jupiter recalls the remark about Juno and the anger of the gods at the beginning of the poem (1.8–11). In both apostrophes, to Juno and to Jupiter, Virgil's narrator looks confused and recalls Apollonius's narrator, preoccupied in Book 3 with his retelling of Medea's tragic story. At 12.504, the narrator, even more problematically, questions Jupiter's agency: "Was the war that caused so many deaths really your will?" As in the apostrophe of Book 4, the narrator's omniscience here vanishes: what, in other apostrophes is given as *the will of the gods*, here becomes what is *perhaps* the will of the gods. It is a powerful maneuver that, as Susanne Wofford suggests, "raises the possibility that the epic, rather than representing divine teleology at work in human history, may instead tell an arbitrary story of human violence" (1992.202).

The narrator withdraws his responsibility from the action that he describes as a cruel dance where different captains in turn kill and are killed. He seems unwilling to understand or endorse this story. Yet immediately afterwards (at line 503), he recuperates his knowledge and affirms that the fight between the Trojans and Latins was despicable, especially considering the future peace between the two peoples. The allusion to an *aeterna pax* would not have been wasted on an Augustan reader. The narrator does not know who the creator of *discordia* is, but he capitalizes on this impasse to remind us about the Augustan re-establishment of peace.

How can we explain (here and throughout) the double position of the narrator: all-knowing and ignorant at the same time? Wofford believes that Virgil manages to balance both attitudes: he envelops the reader in rhetorical figures, like apostrophe, that “appear to affirm the ideological defense of Aeneas’s epic mission” and are connected to the omniscience of the narrator while, at the same time, he describes the characters (among whom, occasionally, he includes the narrator himself) as completely ignorant about the causes of the action. I agree with this interpretation that confirms the picture of a Virgil under the influence of Homer as well as of Apollonius, yet it seems to me that, in the economy of the narrative, apostrophe linked to the all-knowing narrator is employed more systematically and with more success than the short and sporadic apostrophes associated with the ignorant narrator.<sup>53</sup>

Apostrophe is used again to draw the reader close to the perspective of the defeated in Book 4; here the narrator seems to forget about Aeneas’s divinely ordained plans, and a sympathetic style is used to bring attention to Dido’s feelings. The apostrophe at 4.408–12 is the only locus in this book in which an indulgent and straight comment is provided about the behavior of the queen. The narrator invokes her name, tries to look at the situation through her eyes, and releases her from responsibility—blaming Amor for the unavoidable events (4.401–05, 408–12):

migrantis *cernas* totaque ex urbe ruentis:  
 ac velut ingentem formicae farris acervum  
 cum populant hiemis memores tectoque reponunt,  
 it nigrum campis agmen praedamque per herbas  
 convectant calle angusto;  
 . . .  
 quis tibi tum, *Dido*, cernenti talia sensus,  
 quosve dabat gemitus, cum litora fervere late  
 prospiceres arce ex summa, totumque videres  
 misceri ante oculos tantis clamoribus aequor!  
 improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis.

And one could see them  
 as, streaming, they rushed down from all the city:

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53 A more successful representation of an “ignorant narrator” is seen in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile*. About Lucan’s narrator as able and unable to see the future, see Bartsch 1997.96.

even as ants, remembering the winter,  
 when they attack a giant stack of spelt  
 to store it in their homes; the black file swarms  
 across the fields; they haul the plunder through  
 the grass on narrow tracks;

...

What were your feelings, Dido, then? What were  
 the sighs you uttered at that sight, when far  
 and wide, from your high citadel, you saw  
 the beaches boil and turmoil take the waters,  
 with such a vast uproar before your eyes?  
 Voracious Love, to what do you not drive  
 the hearts of men? (trans. Mandelbaum)

The narrator addresses the reader, Dido, and, finally, cruel Amor as he strives to understand Dido's feelings and desperation while staring at Aeneas's crew getting ready to leave: the narration (and preparation for the trip!) are interrupted as he tries to penetrate into his heroine's psyche.<sup>54</sup> He does not employ his typical prophetic perspective, but observes the Trojans with the eyes of a regular reader or, perhaps, those of Dido. The Trojans are busy with their ships, and, to a spectator, they might look (*cernas*, 401) like insignificant and weak ants rushing to store food for winter (4.402–07).<sup>55</sup> It is very possible that the gaze of the spectator here merges with the glance of the queen, who is described with the same verb as looking down (*cernenti*) at the Trojans from the distant citadel: "Dido, the audience, and the emotional are each granted the superior position associated in the rest of the epic with power."<sup>56</sup> The verb *populat* is also invested with emotional significance: the ants (as well as the Trojans) consume everything around them; their alacrity appears to Dido meaningless and devastating. In this line, we have what Conte believes missing from apostrophe in the *Aeneid*, a picture of "what the world is for the character."

The passage is striking because, altogether, the content of *Aeneid* 4 reveals the narrator's negative judgment of Dido. At 4.69, she is called *furens*; at 172, she is openly blamed for her conduct (characterized as

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54 About this apostrophe, see Putnam 1998.667–68.

55 The simile was used in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Arg.* 4.1452–56.

56 Spence 1999.93. Fowler 1990.42–63 suggests how it is hard sometimes to understand whose point of view is being described and endorsed in the *Aeneid*.

faulty): “coniugium vocat: hoc praetexit nomine culpam” (“She calls it a marriage: with the name she disguises her guilt”). At 283, again and revealingly, in free indirect discourse, after the Trojan leader has been reproached by Jupiter and exhorted to set sail, the queen is categorized as *furentem* (“heu quid agat! quo nunc reginam ambire *furentem* / audeat adfatu?” 4.283–84).<sup>57</sup> If Virgil prioritizes the destiny of Rome and justifies Aeneas’s conduct (Suzuki 1989.103–22), he does not do it in the apostrophe to Dido in which the trope is used to underline the queen’s feelings and her perception of the events.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the *Aeneid*, the poet is consistent in suppressing his own feelings and introducing the emotions of his characters without forcing his views upon the reader: *empathia* is the Virgilian strategy that allows this “neutral-ity.” Virgil has, for the most part, not allowed the action to retreat into the background or (especially when emotion is being expressed) to come to a standstill.<sup>58</sup> Yet there are important breeches in this wall of objectivity, and they typically occur in apostrophe. As we have seen, in the epic genre apostrophe can perform two rather different roles and, in both roles, it is present in the *Aeneid*.

We find in *Aeneid* 4 apostrophe as Apollonius of Rhodes had fashioned it: a rhetorical strategy to react to a unilateral endorsement of the plot. With this kind of apostrophe, the plot is bent, it is forced to follow the inextricable paths of the human mind and the points of view of minor and dissenting characters. In the address to Dido, apostrophe is the mirror through which the writer and the reader can study and evaluate the events according to Dido’s point of view. Apostrophe, in this section of the story, is used to provide further details that disrupt and complicate the narration and its intelligibility. In Book 4, we are allowed to see Aeneas’s mission through the eyes of Dido; we are reminded of the “dark side” of *pietas*. Lucan will profit from this kind of apostrophe, and he will use it as a vehicle of negative

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57 Free indirect discourse (FID) is a special kind of narration of the type present at 4.283–84, “What should he do?” On the negative characterization of women in the *Aeneid*, see Keith 2000.65–101.

58 Heinze 1993.234. This is what happens, for example, with Catullus’s Ariadne (poem 64) or the lament of Carme in the *Ciris*.

criticism or, rather, as a tool to recover a space for independence and skepticism towards the tyranny of the epic plot and the ideological corollaries of the genre.<sup>59</sup>

Virgil uses apostrophe in a similar fashion in the address to Icarus when he admits that grief, sometimes, gets in the way of representation: the “providential perspective” is momentarily forgotten, and the narrator’s point of view seems to coincide with that of the character addressed. Yet the narrator also admits that silence, or the lack of representation (Icarus’s absence), is all he can accomplish. Lamentation is obliterated or contained in this work, the poet does not indulge in his grief and does not question Jupiter’s plan for too long. Like Aeneas in 6.33–41, he abandons the vain contemplation (*ista spectacula*, 37) of Icarus’s grief and follows the Sibyl, the symbol of future knowledge.

In the apostrophes to Nisus and Euryalus, to Pallas, and to Turnus, this concern for the future is openly displayed. Even if Virgil sometimes insinuates a veiled irony, the Roman cause is upheld and narrative closure achieved. When addressing the young victims of war, the narrator provides directives for the appraisal of events that otherwise would be difficult to assess. In these apostrophes, the polyphony created by the empathic rendering of each character’s point of view is quickly corrected and the *vates* establishes the priority of his interpretation and the justice of the fates willed by Jupiter.

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59 On apostrophe in Lucan, see Leigh 1997, Bartsch 1997.81–113, Narducci 2002.88–107.

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