

Homer, the Contest of Homer and Hesiod and several other sources. It runs as follows in the *Life of Homer*, 135–40:

χαλκῇ παρθένος εἰμί, Μίδεω δ' ἐπὶ σήματι κείμεαι·
 ἔστ' ἂν ὕδωρ τε ῥέῃ καὶ δένδρεα μακρὰ τεθήλη
 ἡέλιός τ' ἀνίων λάμπη, λαμπρά τε σελήνη,
 καὶ ποταμοὶ γε ῥέωσιν, ἀνακλύζῃ δὲ θάλασσα,
 αὐτοῦ τῇδε μένουσα πολυκλαύτου ἐπὶ τύμβου
 ἀγγελέω παριούσι Μίδης ὅτι τῇδε τεθάπται.

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This epitaph was very familiar, since it is quoted, in whole or in part, by Plato (*Phaedrus* 264c–d), [Longinus] *On the Sublime*, 36.2, Sextus Empiricus (twice), Dio of Prusa, Diogenes Laertius, Libanius, John Philoponus and the Palatine Anthology (7.153). The numerous textual variants, conveniently collected by T. W. Allen in *Homeri Opera* v (Oxford, 1912), pp. 198f., are another index of its early and continuing popularity, with the attendant likelihood of misquotation from memory. Vergil clearly adapts the reading *ποταμοὶ γε ῥέωσιν* (= *fluuii current*), not the reading *ποταμοὶ πλήθωσι* of the *Contest* (p. 235 Allen), which looks like an alteration to remove the repetition of *ῥέω*.

As always, Vergil improves on his model in several ways. He avoids this repetition; he condenses lines 2–4 into only two verses, introducing a fine triple anaphora of *dum*, and arranging the elements in an ascending order (waters, mountains and sky), rather than the chiasitic order of ‘Homer’ (water, trees, sun, moon, rivers, sea). He darkens the passage by alluding to the sun with *umbræ*, and replacing the moon with the stars, in a well-recognised allusion to Lucretius 1.231 (*aether sidera pascit*); and he brings out the connection between the flowing rivers and the sea, which are simply juxtaposed in line 4 of the epitaph, by writing *in freta dum fluuii current*. Moreover the guardian of Midas’ tomb will sit there passively and tell passers-by whose tomb it is, whereas Aeneas will carry Dido’s glory wherever he travels; his phrasing foreshadows the fact that he will leave, but she will stay behind, less than gloriously (*manebunt* echoes *μένουσα*). But it is not enough to detect an allusion; in a consummate poem it should serve a purpose. An echo of a Homeric epitaph on a rich and famous alien ruler is especially apt and ominous here: Aeneas’ very greeting will mean death for Dido, and her death will be immortalised by the Roman Homer, Vergil.

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AENEID 8.573 AND CALLIMACHUS’ HYMN TO ZEUS

In his final words to his son, Pallas, Evander interposes a prayer:

‘At uos, o superi, et diuum tu maxime rector
 Iuppiter, Arcadii, quaeso, miserescite regis...’

Of recent commentators, C. J. Fordyce alone is bothered by the reference to Evander’s Arcadian origin; he reckons that it alludes to his exiled condition and so establishes a claim on Jupiter’s mercy. That may be so, but it is worth suggesting that this is rather a piece of Virgil’s Callimachean learning. For at the opening of his first *Hymn* Callimachus had rejected the story that Zeus was born on Crete in favour of Arcadia (6–7, 10). The Arcadian birth-place was known to Cicero (*De natura deorum* 3.21, 53: *principio Ioues tres numerant...ex quibus primum et secundum natos in Arcadia*). Yet Cicero is less likely to be in Virgil’s mind than Callimachus, from whom

he derived so much learned detail. Evander then is appealing to Jupiter as a fellow Arcadian, *docte*.

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MEZENTIUS' REMORSE

tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas,
ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextrae,
quem genui? tuane haec genitor per vulnera servor
morte tua vivens? heu, nunc misero mihi demum
exitium infelix, nunc alte vulnus adactum!

(*Aeneid* 10.846–50)¹

Mezentius has been exiled because of his savage tyranny ('infandas caedes,...facta tyranni/effera', *A.* 8.483f.) but until now has felt no remorse for his unspeakable crimes. In battle he has been wounded by Aeneas and would have lost his life had his son not heroically come to his rescue. Now at last, as he sees Lausus' corpse brought in, the proof of such unmerited piety moves him. He feels shame that his own love of life should have caused his son's death, and that his barbarity and the resulting disgrace of his exile should have dishonoured the young man's name: 'idem ego, nate, tuum maculavi crimine nomen,/pulsus ob invidiam solio sceptrisque paternis' (*A.* 10.851f.). For the first time, therefore, he feels both the shameful wretchedness of exile and the pain of his wound. At v.850 we should thus read not *exitium*, but *exilium*.

These are the arguments rightly put forward by R. D. Williams.² To them we could add the point that for Mezentius death, far from being *infelix*, is now the only honourable course capable of easing his guilt and grief. Hence his resolve to die: 'nunc vivo neque adhuc homines lucemque relinquo./sed linquam' (*A.* 10.855f.). It could be objected, however, that manuscript evidence for *exilium* is weak. Page,³ for example, declared that *exitium* was 'certainly right' and pointed out that it was 'the reading of the best MSS.'. *Exilium* does seem originally to have stood in *P* before correction⁴ and was also read by Servius, but we should welcome evidence from nearer Virgil's own time. Such evidence is forthcoming. At Statius, *Theb.* 9.49ff., Polynices, another exile, laments his devoted companion Tydeus, who has given his life in his friend's cause. Polynices' situation is essentially the same as Mezentius': although he was in exile before, it is only now that the self-sacrifice of one dear to him makes him feel the full misery of his shameful condition. His words clearly echo those of Mezentius, and he too expresses amazement at such unlooked-for *pietas*, and shame that he lives while Tydeus is dead: as Mezentius' speech was concluded by his resolving to seek death in battle so Polynices' speech is the prelude to an attempt at suicide (9.75ff.). To the passage quoted above compare especially *Theb.* 9.49–53:⁵

hasne tibi, armorum spes o suprema meorum,
Oenide, grates haec praemia digna rependi,
funus ut invisa Cadmi tellure iaceres
sospite me? nunc exul ego aeternumque fugatus,
quando alius misero ac melior mihi frater adeptus.

¹ Text by R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969).

² *CR* 11 (1961), 195ff.

³ T. E. Page, *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books VII–XII* (London, 1900).

⁴ R. D. Williams, art. cit. 196.

⁵ Text by D. E. Hill, *Mnemosyne* Supplement 79 (Leiden, 1983).