

DECEPTION AND THEODICY IN *AENEID* 1-4

by

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To my patient parents and somewhat faithful dog.

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## ABSTRACT

The theme of deception, or *dolus*, is undeniably central to the *Aeneid*, both as a frequent vehicle for the unfolding narrative and as a means by which the poet explores more complex themes. Ultimately, this thesis aims to shed light on a specific thread of subversive imagery in the *Aeneid* through an exploration of the widespread imagery of deception, which is often connected more broadly to the ongoing theme of divine justice, or theodicy.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

*Aen.* Virgil, *Aeneid*.

Serv. Servius, *Grammatici In Vergilii Aeneidos Commentarius*.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The theme of deception, or *dolus*, is undeniably central to the *Aeneid*, both as a frequent vehicle for the unfolding narrative and as a means by which the poet explores more complex themes. Although discrete examples appear throughout the poem, they are largely condensed in the first half of the epic. To name but a few: Juno deceives Aeolus into unleashing the winds; Pygmalion, feigning love for his sister, murders Sychaeus; Cupid, disguised as Ascanius, impels Dido to fall in love with Aeneas; Sinon cons the Trojans into letting the Greeks through their gates; Juno misleads Dido into thinking she and Aeneas are married; and many more besides.

Yet in addition to the importance of deception to the narrative itself, this theme also appears to play an important role in the poem's structural metanarrative. Quint, for example, has observed how the poet's extensive use of chiasmus leads to what he calls a 'double crossing' of the reader, by inverting their expectations through rhetorical reversal.<sup>1</sup> Putnam, similarly, has illustrated the ways in which Virgil employs the use of unreliable third party narrators, whose interpretations are often at odds with reality and serve to mislead readers about the true meaning of a scene.<sup>2</sup> O'Hara, on the other hand, has written extensively on what he calls the 'deceptive optimism' of prophecy, namely the way in which the gods often soften, or omit entirely, the negative outcomes of their predictions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quint 2011. See most significantly how Aeneas himself becomes equated to Juno at the end of the epic through a reversal of adjectival attribution.

<sup>2</sup> Putnam 1998.

<sup>3</sup> O'Hara 1990.

Ultimately, I aim to shed light on a specific thread of subversive imagery in the *Aeneid* through an exploration of the widespread theme of deception (*dolus*), which is often connected more broadly to the ongoing theme of divine justice, or theodicy. Because much of the debate around the subversive quality of the *Aeneid* has centered on the latter half of the epic, and in particular on the death of Turnus, I have chosen to focus my attention instead on the first half of the poem. My purpose in doing so is to illustrate that the subversive sentiments of the text are pervasive from the very beginning, and that they form a traceable and consistent thematic thread that serves to foreshadow and anticipate the epic's controversial conclusion.

In order to situate my reading of Virgil's *Aeneid* within the larger conversation of scholarship to which it belongs, it is first necessary to speak to the interpretive tradition which influenced its perspective. Modern interpretation of the *Aeneid* can be roughly divided into two separate and distinct schools of thought. The so called European school, in the tradition of Pöschl and Heinze, interprets the story of the *Aeneid* as representing Aeneas' personal victory over the irrational cosmic forces of anger (*ira*) and rage (*furor*).<sup>4</sup> The story culminates in the slaying of Turnus, an agent of these irrational forces who stands in opposition to Rome's imperial future, and thus completes Aeneas' embodiment of the ideal Roman virtue of *pietas*, or duty. Because this reading posits the victory of a stable empire (*imperium*) over irrational nature (*ira, furor, saevum*), it views the text as an inherently positive example of pro-Augustan literature. In this way, the European interpretation is considered fundamentally optimistic.

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<sup>4</sup> For the major seminal works see Heinze 1903; Pöschl 1962; Otis 1964; Hardie 1986.



The interpretation of the Harvard school, conversely, is largely influenced by the work of Parry and Clausen,<sup>5</sup> and sees a distinctive, at times contradictory voice of subversion in the poem that runs concurrent to the themes outlined above. Importantly, it views Aeneas' own behaviour, when held up to detailed scrutiny, as inconsistent with the ideal Roman virtues often ascribed to him. In particular, Aeneas' slaying of Turnus is a major point of contention due to the disparity between the hero's final act of *inclementia* and Anchises' earlier injunction that the ideal Roman ought to instead grant mercy to the conquered.<sup>6</sup> In short, the Harvard school believes that the message of the *Aeneid* is more complicated than its attribution as a work of imperial propaganda would suggest. Because the school is concerned with the way in which the poet "creates a friction between loyalist and subversive ways of understanding [the *Aeneid*'s] meaning,"<sup>7</sup> this interpretation is considered pessimistic in contrast with the reading above.

My view of the poem is heavily influenced by the pessimistic tradition. The dichotomy between optimistic and pessimistic readings is of course an oversimplification, however. Supporters of the Harvard school, such as Johnson, point out that their intention is not to deny the presence of positive sentiment in the *Aeneid*, but rather to acknowledge the simultaneous presence of nuanced and conflicting meaning,<sup>8</sup> nor would any optimistic reader of the poem deny Aeneas' human fallibility.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Parry 1963; Clausen 1964; See also Putnam 1965 and Johnson 1976.

<sup>6</sup> See in particular Putnam 2011, which focuses exclusively on this subject (though the death of Turnus is an ongoing concern throughout Putnam's work).

<sup>7</sup> Putnam 1995: 2.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson 1974.

<sup>9</sup> Kallendorf 2007: vii.

The main charge levelled against the Harvard school, however, is that such subversive interpretations of the text are either the result of projecting an anachronistic, post-colonial bias onto the ancient work,<sup>10</sup> or that the narrative inconsistencies can simply be explained away by the fact that the poet was unable to put the finishing touches on the epic as a whole. Surely, the argument goes, the poet would have eliminated any instances of interpretive ambiguity had he only the time to do so.<sup>11</sup>

While other scholars such as Thomas (2001) and Kallendorf (2007) have concerned themselves with disproving the notion that pessimistic readings of the *Aeneid* are inherently ahistorical by tracing the chronological trajectory of critical interpretations of the text, I do not wish to engage with the question of anachronism here. Rather, my goal is to challenge the idea that the problematic or otherwise ambiguous moments in the *Aeneid* ought to be waved aside on the grounds that the work is unfinished, which would be to suggest, in other words, that such moments of ambiguity do not have a proper place within the thematic structure of the poem.

It is my intention to outline some of the ways in which such ambiguity is, on the contrary, central to the organization of the *Aeneid*. First, I will show how the poet in Book 1 utilizes the theme of deception to suggest a programme of cosmic ambivalence; second, I will explore the *dolus* of Sinon, and the crisis of theodicy which arises from the fall of Troy; third, I will analyze the wandering of Aeneas and the connection between *dolus*, human suffering, and the anger of Juno and Apollo; fourth, I will examine Juno

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<sup>10</sup> On this subject see Kallendorf 2007: viii-x.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Austin 1964: xxi, commenting on *Aen.* 2.603-24; Austin views the vision of *divum inclementia* as so inconsistent with his own interpretation of the poem that he claims the poet would have necessarily excised it.

and Venus' role in the tragic fortune of Dido—in whom the theme of *dolus* is most centralized—and discuss the problematic theological consequences of their actions; finally, because Book 6 is fundamentally concerned with looking forward rather than back, I will conclude with a treatment of the Daedalian *ekphrasis* at Cumae in order to suggest the implications of my reading as the poem moves into its second act.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The decision to focus on *Aeneid* 1-4 in particular owes largely to the fact that it represents a discrete narrative unit, unified by the figure of Dido. Book 5 offers a break in the narrative, and although it contains episodes that are relevant to my subject, I believe that they ultimately serve the same thematic and rhetorical purpose as other *exempla* which I will be outlining in the first four books. Of particular note is Palinurus, who represents another deceptive prophecy and another symbol of human sacrifice. In addition to this, it is noteworthy that an instance of cheating plays a central role in the funeral games themselves. It is my belief that the snake, which Aeneas interprets as either a guardian spirit or the ghost of Anchises, is actually Iris herself in disguise. Note the similarity between Iris at the end of Book 4 (*ergo Iris croceis per caulum roscia pennis | mille trahens **varios adverso sole colores** | devolat et supra caput astitit*; *Aen.* 4.700-2) and the snake of Book 5 (*caeruleae cui terga notae maculosus et auro | squamam incendebat fulgor, ceu nubibus arcus | mille iacit **varios adverso solo colores***; *Aen.* 5.87-9). That Iris appears later on in the book (also in disguise) to trick the Trojan women into burning their ships is telling.

## CHAPTER 2. *LATE AEQUARA TUTA SILENT*

H.L. Tracy (1950) suggests that the basic thematic development of *Aen. 1* is a movement from helplessness to hope, owing to the gradual abatement of the storm at sea and the convivial welcome that Aeneas and his men finally receive at Dido's court. I would add, however, that this development is framed by a broader thematic movement from chaos to order, a movement that at once encompasses the divine, natural, and political spheres and as such situates the particularity of *Aen. 1*'s human suffering within the greater context of universal cosmic order. Upon careful inspection, however, there is something troubling about this development, and I believe that the hopefulness observed by Tracy and others is misplaced.<sup>13</sup> The foremost purpose of this section is to analyze the way in which the poet utilizes the imagery and language of deception and misrepresentation in order to foster an outlook of cosmic ambivalence, which ultimately undermines the book's seemingly optimistic resolution

From the very beginning, as Perkell (1992: 31) observes, Virgil deviates from Homeric precedent by calling into question the justice of the gods. While the *Odyssey* opens with the affirmation of cosmic justice and assigns the suffering of men to their own recklessness (1.7), Virgil offers no such view. On the contrary, Aeneas is a man distinguished by his piety (*insignem pietate*; 1.10), whose undeserved suffering leads the poet to ask what W.R. Johnson sees as the central lingering question of the *Aeneid* as a whole: *tantaene animis caelestibus irae* (1.11)?<sup>14</sup> The *ira* of Juno, juxtaposed in the

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<sup>13</sup> See also Pöschl 1962; Hardie 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson 1992.

opening lines with the *pietas* of Aeneas, is at the center of Virgil's initial problematization of cosmic justice.

The figure of Aeolus represents the first significant image of order in *Aen.* I, which is notable also as the first time that political *imperium* is associated with cosmic stability:

*Hic vasto rex Aeolus antro  
luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras  
imperio premit ac vinclis et carcere frenat.  
Illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis  
circum claustra fremunt; celsa sedet Aeolus arce  
sceptra tenens, mollitque animos et temperat iras* (1.52-57).<sup>15</sup>

Hardie (1986: 92) persuasively argues that we are intended to note *Gigantomachic* overtones in the description of the winds, who are enclosed beneath the earth just as the giants who threatened to overturn the order of the cosmos in the mythic past. Indeed, Virgil is clear that were it not for the *imperium* of Aeolus, who mollifies the destructive *ira* of the winds, then the balance of nature itself would be threatened: *Ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum | quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras* (1.57-58). What is it at stake in Juno's persuasion of Aeolus, just as in the question raised at the conclusion of the proem, is nothing short of cosmic order. In the subsequent passages the irrationality of Juno's *ira* threatens to undermine the stability of cosmic *imperium*.

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<sup>15</sup> Note that the Latin text cited throughout is representative of the Oxford Classical Text (Virgil. *Opera*. Ed. Roger Mynors. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 1969). All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. "Here in a vast cave the king Aeolus suppresses the struggling winds and the sonorous tempests by his authority and checks them with chains and a prison. Those indignant ones, with a great murmur of the mountain, rage around their confines. Aeolus sits upon his high citadel holding the scepter, and both softens their spirits and tempers their ire." (1.52-57).

Juno exploits both Aeolus' irrational sexual desire and her own power over the constitution of marriage by offering the god the hand of the nymph Deiopea in exchange for unleashing the winds upon Aeneas and his fleet. Aeolus' claim, *mihi iussa capessere fas est* (1.77), is most certainly ironic for Juno has no rightful authority over Aeolus, whose orders ought to rather come from Jupiter and Neptune. Juno's false authority over Aeolus (Neptune will explicitly call her persuasions *doli* at *Aen.* 1.130) leads to the violent storm scene where we are first introduced to our hero Aeneas, a scene that is notable for its evocation of primordial chaos.

All of the primordial elements are present in the ensuing storm, and all are turned against the Trojans: *praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem* (1.91). The winds rage (*ruunt*), fire flashes in the sky (*crebris micat ignibus aether*; 1.90), waves crash against the Phrygian ships, and sandbanks threaten destruction (*tris Eurys ab alto | in brevia et Syrtis urget*; 1.110-11). In the confusion, the distinctions of natural order and cosmic boundaries are lost. Day turns to night (*Eripiunt subito nubes caelumque diemque | Teucrorum ex oculis*; 1.88-9), waves touch the stars (*fluctusque ad sidera tollit*; 1.103), and the earth appears incongruously amidst the waters (*his unda dehiscens | terram inter fluctus aperit*; 1.106-7). Virgil emphasizes the *nefas* of this scene through imagery of human sacrifice. As the winds dash the Trojan fleet against immense rocks known as the altars (*Tris Notus abreptas in saxa latentia torquet— | saxa vocant Itali mediis quae in fluctibus aras*; 1.108-9) the irony of Aeolus' claim to *fas* is laid bare.

Perceiving this disturbance, however, Neptune intervenes and simultaneously calms the seas (*tumida aequora placat*; 1.142), sets the clouds to flight, and banishes the darkness (*fugat nubes, solemque reducit*; 1.143). The intervention of Neptune marks the

first major simile of the poem, in which the god of the sea is likened to a political leader who soothes a raging crowd by his words:

*Ac veluti magno in populo cum saepe coorta est  
seditio, saevitque animis ignobile volgus,  
iamque faces et saxa volant – furor arma ministrat;  
tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem  
conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant;  
ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet (1.148-53).<sup>16</sup>*

Diverging once again from Homeric precedent, Virgil's first simile is unique for its use of political rather than natural comparison.<sup>17</sup> The pervading interpretation of this simile has been influenced heavily by Pöschl, who claims that the scene "serves to show that nature is a symbol of political organization," and that "the connecting simile becomes an expression of the symbolic relation between nature and politics, myth and history, which is at the heart of the *Aeneid*."<sup>18</sup> At first glance, then, Neptune's quelling of the winds seems to represent the restitution of divine, natural, and political order, which Juno's machinations had so gravely threatened. Yet, a close reading suggests that there is perhaps more to this simile than meets the eye, and that all is not as it seems.

Quint (2011) believes that Pöschl's influence has led scholars to miss the essential character of the simile: that it is inherently chiasmic.<sup>19</sup> Although Neptune initially seems

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<sup>16</sup> "And just as when in a large population sedition often arises, and the ignoble crowd rages in spirit, and at last let fly torches and rocks – Furor administers arms; then, if by chance they see a man who is heavy with piety and merit, they are silent, and they stand with raised ears. That man rules their spirits with his words, and softens their hearts." (1.148-53).

<sup>17</sup> Perkell 1992:38. Note the first similes of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, which liken Odysseus among the suitors as a lion among deer, and those summoned by Agamemnon to war as a swarm of bees respectively.

<sup>18</sup> 1962: 23.

<sup>19</sup> Chiasmus being a literary device in which concepts, words, or themes are subject to a rhetorical reversal in order or meaning.

to resemble the calm statesmen (*summa placidum caput extulit unda*; 1.127), his words ultimately fail him as his anger rises (*quos ego*; 1.135). By the end of the simile, the god of the sea, on the contrary, has more in common with the unruly crowd than the serene politician. For as Quint (2011: 290-91) observes, Virgil—with a rhetorical reversal—transfers the attributive savageness of the crowd (*saevit*) to Neptune himself, who reminds the winds that *he* is the one who holds the *saevumque tridentem*. Rage,<sup>20</sup> which has by this point in the narrative been explicitly established as a force of cosmic instability, nevertheless lurks in the background of Neptune's action in the form of his savage trident; if we are to view this as a stabilizing act of cosmic justice, then this irrational presence is indeed troubling.

Following the storm at sea, imagery of deception, delusion, and misconception pervades the remainder of *Aen.* 1. Aeneas feigns courage to his men, Venus (herself disguised) tells Aeneas of Pygmalion's deception of Dido, Aeneas misinterprets the frieze of Juno's temple, Venus and Juno replace Ascanius with a disguised Cupid, and the depiction of the cosmos offered by the bard Iopas at Dido's court seems incongruent with the cosmic realities expressed up to that point in the narrative.

Indeed, the tragic overtones that accompany Aeneas' landing on Libya belie the order of the recently placated sea. As Aeneas and his men enter a sheltered bay the water is still (*late aequora tuta silent*; 1.163-4), and sand, which had previously been a cause of destruction (1.111-12), is now the object of the wearied Trojans' desire (*optata harena*; 1.172). At first, all seems to be set to rights. Yet the physical description of this bay bears a striking resemblance to an amphitheater, replete with its own *scaena* formed by the tree

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<sup>20</sup> Be it *ira*, *furor*, or *saevitia*.



line, which casts ominous shadows (*horrenti umbra*) from above (1.159-165).<sup>21</sup> The bay offers only a delusory sense of order and a false sense of safety; the respite found by the Trojans will be fleeting, and the geography of the harbor itself necessarily points towards the tragedy to follow.

The illusion of order is signified further by the description of the Trojans' meal preparations and the following hunting scene. The elemental relationship between the wet and the dry was thrown into confusion in the previous storm, and was only restored (though perhaps problematically) by Neptune's intervention. The meal shared by the Trojans upon reaching the shore seems to represent a similar reconstitution of order on the human level, bringing together the wet and dry elements (wine and grain) at the very foundation of human civic custom. Yet Virgil's depiction of the grain as *corruptam* (1.177), having been spoiled by the sea, perhaps already implies that something is amiss.

Notably, an image of disrupted order immediately follows as Aeneas and Achates sight a herd of deer wandering the shore:

*...tris litore cervos  
prospicit errantis; hos tota armenta sequuntur  
a tergo, et longum per vallis pascitur agmen.  
Constitit hic, arcumque manu celerisque sagittas  
corripuit, fidus quae tela gerebat Achates;  
ductoresque ipsos primum, capita alta ferentis  
cornibus arboreis, sternit, tum volgus, et omnem  
miscet agens telis nemora inter frondea turbam (1.184-91).<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> *Est in secessu longo locus: insula portum | efficit obiectu laterum, quibus omnis ab alto | frangitur inque sinus scindit sese unda reductos. | Hinc atque hinc vastae rupes geminique minantur | in caelum scopuli, quorum sub vertice late | aequora tuta silent; tum silvis scaena coruscis | desuper horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra (1.159-165).*

<sup>22</sup> "He sees three stags wandering upon the shore; a whole herd follows these ones from behind, and in a long line grazes through the valley. Here he stood firm, and seized in his hand the bow and swift arrows, weapons which faithful Achates was carrying; First he lays low the leaders, their high heads bearing tree-like antlers, then the common mass,

The initial image of the herd is one of ordered stability. Three *ductores* stand at the front and the masses graze peacefully from behind in an ordered line. Yet at the death of their leaders, disorder erupts. The organized *agmen* is thrown into confusion (*miscet*) by Aeneas' arrows, and transforms into an unruly *turba*,<sup>23</sup> an image which suggests the tenuousness of the present calm and seems to foreshadow the disruptive political consequences of Aeneas' arrival in Carthage.<sup>24</sup>

In Aeneas' subsequent speech (1.198-207), the hesitant leader is forced to conceal his own fear for the sake of rousing the spirits of his companions. The fact that Virgil's hero must deceive his men here—in stark contrast with the genuine confidence of Odysseus in the speech's Homeric analogue—is striking.<sup>25</sup> Through this reversal, the poet highlights Aeneas' uncertainty, and his fundamental inability to reconcile the reality of his present suffering with the hitherto vague promises of fate.

As if in response to such uncertainty, the following passages are marked by Jupiter's reassurance of Venus that *fatum* will transcend the particularity of Aeneas' present circumstances and that his promise of a positive resolution remains unchanged. As Perkell notes, however, the precise veracity of the poem's prophecies have been called into question by scholars due to frequent discrepancies among them, and O'Hara

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and driving the whole crowd among the leafy groves, he throws them into confusion with his arrows." (1.184-91).

<sup>23</sup> I am convinced that this scene must be significant in relation to *Aen.* 7. Note the ramifications of the slaughter of Silva's stag. For a general discussion on the thematic symmetry of *Aen.* 1 and 7 see Pöschl 1962.

<sup>24</sup> By this I mean the *discordia* wrought by Dido's eventual suicide. See Staley 1990 for an alternate interpretation.

<sup>25</sup> Perkell 1992: 42.

has written extensively on what he calls the ‘delusive optimism’ of Virgilian prophecy.<sup>26</sup> To what extent is Jupiter’s prophecy a rhetorical *consolatio*?<sup>27</sup> Should we view Jupiter here as a paragon of transcendent moral authority or an individual with his own agenda who, as Johnson puts it, “has merely disguised himself in a more cosmopolitan and philosophically sophisticated costume, whether he has, though remaining as biased and as aggressive as he ever was, put on the mask of eternity and universality?”<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, one cannot help but notice similarities between Aeneas’ deceptive speech of consolation to his men and the conciliatory prophecies that follow it, not only Jupiter’s placation of Venus, but also Venus’ own encouragement of Aeneas. For in yet another deception scene, Venus appears to her son disguised as a huntress, and informs him of the current situation in Libya, where she reassures him by pointing out six swans happily playing as they reach the shore. The goddess correlates this favorable omen with the safe return of Aeneas’ fleet, which had been scattered by the storm. Yet according to O’Hara, it is not merely Venus’ appearance here that is deceptive, but also the prophecy itself.

O’Hara argues that Venus’s omen is deceptively optimistic. Firstly, the goddess conspicuously omits any mention of Juno’s involvement in Aeneas’ hardships: *Quisquis es, haud, credo, invisus caelestibus auras vitalis carpis* (1.387-388).<sup>29</sup> While it is true that Aeneas is not hated by the *gods* (plural), he is assuredly hated by a *particular god*, whose anger is in fact the primary cause of his current situation. Secondly, Venus also omits the

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<sup>26</sup> See O’Hara 1990.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the formal categorization of speeches in the *Aeneid*, see Hight 1972.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson 1990: 61. Such a question is of utmost importance for interpreting the work as a whole, and we shall treat it in detail further on.

<sup>29</sup> “Whoever you are, I believe that you are certainly not hated by the gods, while enjoying your vital breath.” (*Aen.*1.387-8).

destruction of Orontes' ship, an omission which Achates explicitly draws the reader's attention to in a later passage: *Unus abest, medio in fluctu quem vidimus ipsi | submersum; dictis respondent cetera matris* (1.584-5).<sup>30</sup> This prophecy, according to O'Hara, is thus clearly rhetorical, designed for persuasion rather than accuracy, and functions to raise Aeneas' spirits and conviction, and to urge him to move forward (*perge modo*) despite the fact that Carthage will soon be the cause of further suffering for our hero.

Even the poet's choice of words, I would argue, suggests the deceptiveness of the omen. Virgil importantly uses the verb *ludo* here to describe the swans (*reduces illi ludunt stridentibus alis*; 1.397), a verb that of course most commonly means to play. Although this is the surface meaning of Venus' words, we cannot forget that *ludo* can also mean 'to deceive'.<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that, directly prior to this, Venus uses the verb *ludo* to describe Pygmalion's deception of Dido (*factumque diu celavit, et aegram, | multa malus simulans, vana spe lusit amantem*; 1.351-2) and, directly following, Aeneas himself uses the verb to admonish Venus' own deception when her guise falls away and her true form is revealed (*falsis ludis imaginibus*; 1.407). By framing the omen of the playing swans with two examples of deception, both of which utilize the alternate meaning of *ludo*, Virgil demands the reader to consider the deceptive nature of the omen through his wordplay.

In summation, Venus presents the prophecy as positive precisely through omission, omission both of the circumstances of the immediate past and of what lies

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<sup>30</sup> "One is missing, whom we ourselves saw submerged in the waves; the rest corresponds with your mother's words." (*Aen.* 1.584-5).

<sup>31</sup> We have a similar idiom in English, i.e. "He played me".

ahead in the immediate future; to this extent, her prophecy is deceptive. Aeneas may not be hated by all the gods, but what about Juno? Six of Aeneas' ships are now returning, but what of the seventh? Aeneas will follow his mother's advice to carry on towards the city and its queen, but at what cost? As Aeneas rebukes his mother for her deceits, the reader is once again left pondering the cruelty of the gods: *Quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis | ludis imaginibus? Cur dextrae iungere dextram | non datur, ac versa audire et reddere voces* (1.406-8)?

Soon after this scene, we arrive at Carthage and are treated to the poem's first example of *ekphrasis*.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, the doors of Juno's temple, which are wrought with scenes from the Trojan War, are not interpreted by the poem's narrator, however, but rather through the eyes of Aeneas himself. Aeneas' remark *sunt lacrimae rerum et mortalia mentem tangunt* (1.462) illustrates his fixation on the commonality of human suffering. As Putnam puts it, Aeneas views these depictions "as evidence for the enormous sorrow such happenings engendered as they occurred and now arouse again at the moment of retrospection, and therefore of Dido's compassion."<sup>33</sup> In other words, Aeneas believes that the doors depict a sympathetic commemoration of his people's *labor*. Yet Aeneas is surely mistaken about the true meaning of the frieze, deceived both by the emotions engendered by his past experience and a strong sense of nostalgia<sup>34</sup> for

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<sup>32</sup> Literally meaning "a speaking out," ekphrasis is a literary device in which physical objects (generally works of art) are described through words.

<sup>33</sup> Putnam 1998: 24.

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the word nostalgia is unfairly anachronistic. The Romans would have likely understood the phenomenon as a form of *desiderium*. For a discussion on this very point, see Bettini 1997.

his lost *patria*, sentiments which are expanded upon in the subsequent self-narration of Books 2 and 3.

As Putnam and others have observed, such sympathy towards Trojan suffering would be entirely out of place on the temple of a goddess who is so opposed to the Trojan cause. What is truly depicted on this frieze, then, is not a lamentation of human suffering, but more likely a celebration of Juno's victory, and by extension her cruelty. The fact that Aeneas is unable to understand this not only speaks to his lingering emotional connection with the past, but also to the sheer incomprehensibility of divine *ira*. Aeneas' expectations of Dido and her city are therefore colored by this false interpretation, by what Virgil calls an empty image (*pictura... inani*; 1.464); accordingly, he walks blindly into Juno's trap—a ploy made no less cruel by the joint plotting of Venus.

When Aeneas first lays eyes upon the queen of Carthage, already influenced by the apparent symbols of her compassion, she seems to resemble the virginal Diana, leading her retinue of nymphs through the mountains (1.494-504). Virgil here is drawing inspiration from Homer's description of Nausicaa in Book 6 of the *Odyssey*, and in comparison with its source material, commentators have long since criticized Virgil's simile for being particularly inapt.<sup>35</sup> Unlike Nausicaa, Dido is no maiden, and if her previous marriage to Sychaeus were not enough to complicate such a comparison, there is also the matter of the impending breach of her current vow of chastity for the sake of Aeneas. I am inclined to agree with Perkell, however, in suggesting that the inappropriateness of this simile may be its very point.<sup>36</sup> For as I have shown above, Virgil

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<sup>35</sup> This discussion goes back as far as Probus and Servius. For a brief summary on this topic see Austin 1961: 166-67. For more see Perkell 1991: 47-49.

<sup>36</sup> Perkell 1991: 47.

is keen throughout Book 1 to establish a disjunction between what seems to be (both from the point of view of Aeneas, and the reader) and what actually is.

A feast punctuates both the Trojans' welcome into Dido's court and the action of Book I as a whole, and the disjunction between appearance and reality becomes more evident as the festivities progress. Indeed, after a libation has been poured, the queen is the first to raise the cup of wine, but notably she does not drink: *primaque libato summo tenus attigit ore* (1.737). On the contrary, Dido merely touches the cup to the tip of her lips, a description which Servius informs us is a customary display of modesty:

*Verecundiam reginae ostendit et morem Romanum: nam apud maiores nostros feminae non utebantur vino nisi sacrorum causa certis diebus* (Serv. 1.737).<sup>37</sup> Yet just as so many images of order are immediately undermined throughout the course of Book 1, so too here. For as soon as Dido passes the cup to Bitias, the pretense of Dido's measured court is shattered when the noble gluttonously drains the cup, drenching himself with wine in the process: *Bitiae dedit increpitans; ille impiger hausit spumantem pateram, et pleno se proluit auro post alii proceres* (1.738-740).

The didactic song of the bard Iopas concludes the banquet in a similar way. Perkell argues that what is particularly significant about this song is how it treats the origin of storms, a treatment which notably omits the influence of the gods and therefore misrepresents the cosmic reality expressed through Juno's role in the violent tempest that begins the poem. She writes,

Through these omissions Vergil suggests the limitations of human knowledge, rationality, and good intentions. To an observer ignorant of Juno's vengefulness

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<sup>37</sup> "This illustrates the modesty of the queen: for women would not partake in wine in the presence of their elders except in the case of sacred rites on specifically allotted days." (Serv. 1.737).

and of Venus' machinations – ignorant, in short, of the divine purposes that circumscribe human lives – this banquet, with its opulence and its art, would seem to epitomize ordered, rational control and high civilization... But this image is soon revealed as delusive, for Dido is... a portrait of *furor* only temporarily contained.<sup>38</sup>

If Perkell's interpretation is correct, then Iopas' song continues the above trend of deceptive misrepresentation, and further emphasizes the limitations of human reason and its incapacity to account for the contradictory and problematic force of divine *ira*. The restraint of Dido and her ordered court is therefore presented as just as delusory as the temporary stability achieved by Neptune in the poem's first simile. Likewise, just as Juno's deception of Aeolus unleashed the literal storm that began Book 1, so too is the double dealing of Juno and Venus the cause of the metaphorical storm already brewing in Carthage at the book's close, a storm which will manifest literally in the eventual hunting scene of Book 4, and whose aftermath will be no less destructive.

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<sup>38</sup> Perkell 1991: 49.



### CHAPTER 3. *DOLUS AN VIRTUS, QUIS IN HOSTE REQUIRAT?*

I argued above that the theme of deception plays a large role in *Aen.* 1, both in terms of the plot's direct action and the widespread presence of unreliable description and comparison, by which the narrator subtly inverts the reader's expectations. All of this, I suggested, works together to establish an atmosphere of uncertainty and *aporeia*. It is appropriate, then, that the uncertain picture of the cosmos that concludes Book 1 should give way in Book 2 to the uncertain self-narration of Aeneas,<sup>39</sup> where Virgil importantly chooses to focalize his treatment of deception. Whereas Book 1 featured multiple discrete examples of the theme, the driving force behind the second book's action is an overwhelmingly singular act of deceit: the stratagem of the Trojan horse. Just as Aeneas instructs his intent audience to learn the nature of all Greeks from the model of one man's crime (*crimine ab uno | disce omnis*; 2.65-6), so too does the treachery of Sinon stand as an *exemplum* for the reader, from which far reaching questions of both morality and theodicy arise.

In his very first speech of the poem, Aeneas wishes that he had died on the battlefields of Troy:

*...O terque quaterque beati,  
quis ante ora partum Troiae sub moenibus altis  
contigit oppetere! O Danaum fortissimo gentis  
Tydide! Mene Iliacis occumbere campis  
non potuisse, tuaque animam hanc effundere dextra,  
saevus ubi Aeacidae telo iacet Hector, ubi ingens  
Sarpedon, ubi tot Simois correpta sub undis*

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<sup>39</sup> It is interesting, once again, to note the degree of difference between Aeneas here and Odysseus, who begins a similar retrospective narrative in Book 9 of the *Odyssey*, but one characterized rather by an air of self-assurance.

*scuta virum gelesque et fortia corpora volvit* (1.94-101)?<sup>40</sup>

Through Aeneas' lament in the opening lines of the work, Virgil already hints at what will become one of the major tensions of Book 2: the disparity between individualistic Homeric heroism and the necessary self-sacrifice of the ideal Roman, who according to a new paradigm of heroism, must subsume his own needs and individuality for the sake of the collective whole. Thus in Book 2, Virgil in many ways rebrands the epic hero, and as Aeneas struggles to overcome his Homeric impulse for death and personal glory, the reader gradually learns the terms of Virgil's particularly Roman brand of epic. Nevertheless, as much as Book 2 reveals about the terms of the *Aeneid's* cosmos, it also obscures, and presents the reader with a number of interpretive challenges.

One of the main poetic images in *Aen.* 2 is that of the serpent, which was first analyzed in detail by Bernard Knox (1950) in his seminal essay *The Serpent and the Flame*. From the twin snakes that devour Laocoon and his children to the hissing of the flames that consume the homes of Troy, the serpent in Book 2 is largely a symbol of deception and destruction. Knox suggests, however, that by tracing the thread of serpentine imagery beyond its associations with deceit and ruin, we are ultimately left with the snake as a symbol of rebirth and revitalization.<sup>41</sup> For Knox, the fall of Troy can

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<sup>40</sup> "O three times and four times blessed are those for whom it befell to die before the faces of their fathers beneath the high walls of Troy! O Diomedes, strongest of the Danaan race, would that I were able to have fallen upon the Ilian fields, and to have poured out this life blood by your right hand, where savage Hector lies by the spear of Achilles, and where the Simois rolls together the shields, helmets, and strong bodies of men, which have all been snatched beneath her waves." (*Aen.* 1.94-101).

<sup>41</sup> The common association between the snake and revitalization derives from the animal's habit of molting its skin.

be understood, if not justified, by the promise of Aeneas' future; it is enough, in other words, that Troy's destruction also signals the birth of Rome.

Johnson (1992), on the other hand, is not so easily satisfied, and in *Dis Aliter Visum* expresses his concern that the complicity of the gods in such large scale suffering presents a fundamental problem of theodicy. Although the terms of Virgil's Roman heroism predicate that it is proper for Aeneas to struggle on behalf of a cause greater than himself, why, asks Johnson, does all this suffering need to happen in the first place?<sup>42</sup> As we analyze the role of deceit in Book 2 and its fatal consequences, we will return to this important question.

The Greeks are described by Aeneas as dealers in duplicity: under the pretense of giving up the long war, they build a large wooden horse, which they falsely represent as a votive offering for their safe return home (*votum pro reditu simulant*; 2.17); in reality, they conceal a small group within the cavernous belly of the beast (*includunt caeco lateri*; 2.19) while their main force is hidden away upon the deserted shores of the island Tenedos. This island, which was once a prosperous port before the war, by now is merely a dangerous and untrustworthy harbor for ships (*statio male fida carinis*; 2.23); this is an apt hiding place for the similarly untrustworthy Greeks, who send their comrade Sinon, posing as an escaped sacrificial victim, in order to persuade the Trojans to accept their fatal gift.

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<sup>42</sup> Johnson argues that Homeric theodicy, although not completely understandable from the perspective of the characters and the reader, is at the very least intelligible in a general sense. The *Aeneid*, however, frequently raises the question of theodicy, but never answers it.

Virgil draws a strong moral contrast between the pious and merciful Trojans, who welcome Sinon as one of their own and accept what they believe to be a religious offering into their walls, and the deceptive Greeks, who go so far as to embellish their own impiety through a fabricated story of human sacrifice, as if playing on the Trojan's innate sense of *fas*. Yet the moral criticism of the general Greek character is complicated from the outset by the presence of a divine coconspirator. Indeed, it is only by the aid of Pallas (*divina Palladis arte*; 2.15) that the Greeks are able to construct their machine of war, and the goddess will similarly play no small role in persuading the Trojans of Sinon's story when it is challenged by the priest Laocoon.

At first, the Trojans do not know what to make of the towering structure that has appeared before their gates. According to Aeneas, the first man to speak up is Thymoetes, whose immediate advice is to lead the horse within the walls and to place it upon the citadel: *primusque Thymoetes | duci intra muros hortatur et arce locari, | sive dolo seu iam Troiae sic fata ferebant* (2.32-34).<sup>43</sup> What is most interesting about this account is that, in the moment of reflection, Aeneas questions whether Thymoetes' advice had stemmed from trickery, or whether *fatum* was already guiding the Trojans along a path of ruin. Leaving aside the question of whether '*dolo*' in this passage refers to the overarching deception of the Greeks, or to Thymoetes' personal involvement in their plan,<sup>44</sup> Aeneas' comment is notable for the fact that he is unable to properly distinguish

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<sup>43</sup> "And first Thymoetes urges that it be led within our walls and placed upon the citadel, whether on account of treachery, or because the fate of Troy was already tending in that direction." (2.32-34).

<sup>44</sup> Servius writes that there is a story in the mythological tradition in which Priam hears an oracle from Thymoetes' son, who was a prophet. The prophecy foretells that the wives of both Priam and Thymoetes would one day give birth to a son at the same time, and that one of the children would eventually be responsible for Troy's destruction. In an attempt

between treachery on the one hand, and fate on the other. This is perhaps a more significant line than it seems at first glance. What does it mean that, from Aeneas' admittedly limited mortal perspective, deception and fate appear in this moment to be indistinguishable?

Up until this point, although the general theme of deception is prevalent, the word *dolus* itself appears only four times. The first refers to Juno's trickery over Aelous (1.13), and the remaining three refer to Venus and Cupids' plan to enflame Dido with desire for Aeneas (1.673; 1.682; 1.684). Juno's *dolus* leads directly to a storm that invokes primordial chaos; Venus' *dolus*, though its full consequences are not seen until Book 4, transforms the modest queen into an irrational lover, who is ruled by her passions, and whose suicide throws Carthage into disarray. Up until now, in other words, *dolus* has been associated with themes of instability and disorder. If *fatum* is to be understood as a fixed principle in the cosmos, through which order is maintained by the omnipotent will of Jupiter, then the appearance of deception (an irrational force) as an instrument of fate (a supposedly rational principle) presents a serious challenge, which is only complicated further by the events that follow.

Whatever Virgil's sources were for the conflicting speeches of Laocoon and Sinon, they have long since been lost.<sup>45</sup> It is possible, however, that setting the two

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to prevent the prophecy, Priam sentences Thymoetes' wife and son to death. Thus Servius contends: *inde ergo nunc dicit 'sive dolo', quia iustam causam proditiōnis habere videbatur* ("Therefore [Aeneas] says "sive dolo", because [Thymoetes] seems to have just cause for treachery."; Serv. 2.32). Servius adds, however, that other commentators assert that 'dolo' may refer simply to general Greek deception: *Alii volunt 'dolo' Graecorum, quo omnes decepti sunt* (Serv. 2.32).

<sup>45</sup> Hight (1972: 274), however, theorizes that Virgil must have drawn upon Attic tragedy, at least for the speech of Sinon (Sophocles composed a *Sinon*, and all 3 surviving Athenian tragedians composed a *Palamedes*); other influences, according to

parties against one another in dramatic opposition is a Virgilian invention. As John P. Lynch (1980: 170) points out, according to Demodokos in *Odyssey* 8, the debate amongst the Trojan camp occurs only after the Trojans have brought the horse within their walls, and there is nothing to suggest a direct contest between the two characters. Why then, asks Lynch, does Virgil both focus on and slowly draw out this conflict as he does, in a book which is otherwise noteworthy for the swift pace of its action? Lynch believes that the answer lies in an examination of the two figures' oratorical styles, and what this says about their moral characters.

Laocoon, Lynch observes, is portrayed as a man of spontaneity and vigor (*validis, viribus*; 2.50). He rushes down from the citadel (*decurrit*; 1.41) ahead of all others (*ante omnis*; 2.40), and does not even wait until he has reached the crowd before beginning his impassioned speech (*procul*; 2.43). Perhaps most importantly, however, is that Laocoon's words and actions are one. No sooner has the priest of Neptune let his opinion be heard than he hurls his spear in the direction of the horse (*sic fatus ualidis ingentem viribus hastam | in latus inque feri curvam compagibus alvum | contorsit*; 2.50-52). As evidenced by his blunt and simple style, heavy use of assonance, short rhetorical questions (*Creditis avectos hostis? Aut ulla putatis | dona carere dolis Danaum? Sic Nota Ulixes?* 2.43-44), and aphoristic phrases (*Quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis*; 2.49), Lynch contends that "Laocoon is very much an old Republican figure, a paradigm of virtue and commitment, recalling specifically the prototype of the old Roman, Cato the Elder."<sup>46</sup>

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Highet, likely include the *Little Iliad*, Arctinius' *Sack of Troy*, and the lost introduction to Euripides' *Philoctetes*.

<sup>46</sup> 1980: 171.

In contrast with the natural, almost artless style of Laocoon's speech, Sinon's address to the Trojans is a meticulously crafted piece of rhetorical oratory. Indeed, with its carefully arranged structure, tri-colon crescendos, and strategic appeals to the Trojans' sense of law and family, it is clear, according to Lynch, that Sinon's speech is meant to resemble the formal Greek style of rhetoric that would have been popular in the time of Cicero. The most striking difference between the two men, however, is that for all his rhetorical nuance, Sinon is a man of empty words only:

*Talibus insidiis periurique arte Sinonis  
credita res, captique dolis lacrimisque coactis  
quos neque Tydides nec Larisaeus Achilles,  
non anni domuere decem, non mille carinae* (2.195-198).<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately for the Trojans, they learn only too late the nature of Sinon's overwrought artistry.

Lynch thus concludes that Virgil's motivations for staging the episode as he does are largely moralistic. He writes,

The reminiscence of Cato gives a moral dimension to the conflict between oratorical styles, linking Laocoon to a pristine form of Romanness and Sinon to a decadent form of Greekness. The effect of these associations is to make the Trojan character more sympathetic and palatable to a Roman audience –despite such uncomfortable facts as that... they were defeated militarily by the Greeks, and that the gods were acting against Laocoon and Troy.<sup>48</sup>

If Lynch is to be believed, then the main intention behind the dramatic contest of Laocoon and Sinon is to establish the Trojans in general, and Laocoon in particular, as sympathetic figures by merit of their virtue, in sharp contrast with the largely amoral

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<sup>47</sup> “By such insidious words, and by the artistry of treacherous Sinon, the matter is believed, and we are defeated by deception and forced tears, we whom neither Diomedes, nor Larissean Achilles, nor ten years, nor a thousand ships could conquer.” (*Aen.* 2.195-198).

<sup>48</sup> 1980: 177.

Greeks. Lynch argues, however, that this is merely done in order to make the Trojans seem more palatable to the Roman reader, despite a number of ‘uncomfortable facts’ that muddle what would otherwise be a simple moral distinction. On the contrary, I would counter that Virgil does not characterize the Trojans as virtuous *despite* these ‘uncomfortable facts’, but rather precisely in order to *highlight* them, not least of all the fact that—from a purely moralistic standpoint—the gods appear to be backing the wrong horse. In other words, Virgil presents Laocoon as virtuous in order to reinforce exactly the same sentiment that pervades Book 1: the contradictory nature of divine justice.

Why else should Virgil choose to linger as he does on Laocoon’s pitiable death, sparing no gruesome detail? From the moment that the interjection *ecce* interrupts the action, the reader’s attention is drawn away from Laocoon and the sacrifice that he is preparing, and is instead drawn towards the distant island of Tenedos, where we watch with horrible trepidation as two monstrous serpents make a straight line for the shore, devouring both of Laocoon’s sons in front of his very eyes, before moving on to the priest himself.<sup>49</sup> For twenty-five long lines Virgil painstakingly develops this horrendous

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<sup>49</sup> “Behold, however, as twin snakes from Tenedos, with immense coils (I shudder to remember), sink into the sea and together seek the shore through the tranquil waters; whose erect backs and blood-red crests rise up amidst the waves, as one part traces a line upon the sea from behind and the other part curves the immense backs into a coil. A din erupts from the foaming salt; and already they were touching the soil, their burning eyes suffused with fire and venom, and they were licking their hissing jaws with pulsing tongues. Pale with horror, we flee at the sight. They seek Laocoon in a certain course; and first each serpent envelops the small bodies of Laocoon's twin sons, and both wrap around them and feed upon their miserable limbs with a single bite; after this they seize Laocoon himself, who is approaching to aid his children, enraged, and carrying weapons; they bind him with massive coils, and twice they encircle his waist, twice they raise their scaly backs around his collar with their high necks and heads. At the same time, having drenched his priestly fillet in gore and black venom, he endeavors to break the knots with his bare hands, and at the same time he raises a blood-curdling scream to the stars: just as the bellowing when a bull flees the altar, and throws off the uncertain axe lodged in its



scene. When the dust has settled, the fictive human sacrifice of Sinon's tale has given way to one that is genuine, as the priest Laocoon—in the midst of preparing a bull for the altar—himself becomes the victim. Only then do the snakes, with their bloody task accomplished, finally seek shelter beneath the feet of Minerva's effigy, revealing the divine hand behind the slaughter.

To the unwitting Trojans, the death of Laocoon appears to corroborate Sinon's story, for it seems clear that he has angered the goddess by striking the horse with his spear.<sup>50</sup> Yet for the reader who is privy to Sinon's deceit from the beginning, it is impossible not to question the reason behind Laocoon's sympathetic death. S.V. Tracy attempts to solve this problem by assigning to Laocoon an external sin, one which does not relate to the striking of the horse.<sup>51</sup> This would have the effect of transforming his death into a justified act of divine retribution, one which only convinces the Trojans of Sinon's tale by mere coincidence.

This theory, it must be said, is not without precedent. Servius indeed mentions an alternate tradition from Eurphorion in which Laocoon angers the gods by making love to his wife before a divine image (Serv. 2.201). The evidence to support the interpretation that Virgil's Laocoon is guilty of a similar sin, however, is tangential at best.<sup>52</sup> What is

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neck. Meanwhile, the twin serpents with a slither flee to the highest temples and seek the citadel of savage Tritonia, and are sheltered beneath the feet of the goddess and beneath the orb of her shield." (*Aen.* 2.202-227).

<sup>50</sup>Austin argues that this aspect of Laocoon's death appears to be unique to Virgil. In the earliest version of his death (which is from Arctinus), the horse is already within Troy's walls, and the death is interpreted as a portent for the fall of Troy. See Austin 1964:106 for more.

<sup>51</sup> 1980.

<sup>52</sup> Tracy places much importance on the fact that Laocoon, as opposed to his more common associations with Apollo, is a priest of Neptune in the *Aeneid's* account, which would seem to connect Virgil's Laocoon with Euphorion's. This is not particularly

more noteworthy, in my view, is that despite the fact that such a tradition existed, and despite the fact that a reference to such a tradition might have corrected an implicit problem of theodicy, Virgil chooses to leave the reasons behind Laocoon's death ambiguous. The poet, in fact, does not provide *any* hint that Laocoon may be guilty of some external crime, but on the contrary, depicts him as a paradigm of virtue, whose religious and familial piety are both directly emphasized prior to his death.<sup>53</sup> To put it another way, Virgil appears to *intentionally* accentuate the polemical nature of the scene.

Indeed, what is ultimately most troubling about the above episode is the unambiguous agency of Minerva. It is one thing for Virgil simply to question the moral integrity of Sinon and his ilk, but through Minerva's direct intervention, the moral integrity of the gods themselves, by necessity, falls under the purview of the self-same criticism. As an orchestrator of destructive deceit, this indeed places Minerva in the same disconcerting company as Juno; it is no surprise, then, that in this moment she is similarly described by Aeneas as *saevae* (2.226). But the key difference between Juno and Minerva, and it is a significant one, is that Juno is working against fate, and not on its behalf. Why then, does Laocoon have to die? The only answer seems to be that, despite his virtue, despite his piety, despite the simple fact that he is *right*, Laocoon is opposed to fate. Consequently, the priest becomes a symbol for the fall of Troy itself.

Following the divine sanction of Greek deception, the distinction between vice and virtue appears to be confused. After the enemy has breached the walls, Aeneas and

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compelling evidence. See Tracy (1980) for more on the sources (most of them post-Virgilian) for Laocoon's death.

<sup>53</sup> In addition to his associations with Cato, as noted above, we cannot forget that Laocoon is in the process of preparing a sacrifice when the snakes begin their assault, and that he is ultimately killed trying to protect his children.

his men gather together in order to launch a futile counter attack, and Coroebus decides that the Trojans' best hope is to beat the Greeks at their own game:

*o socii, qua prima inquit Fortuna salutis  
monstrat iter, quaque ostendit se dextra, sequamur:  
mutemus clipeos Danaumque insignia nobis  
aptemus. dolus an virtus, quis in hoste requirat (2.385-390)?*

Coroebus suggests that the Trojans adorn themselves with the equipment of their fallen enemies, in order to take them by surprise on the battlefield. Importantly, he justifies his plan by questioning whether *dolus*, if directed against the enemy, is any different from *virtus*. As James C. Abbott argues, this question is extremely significant, not only because it invites us to reflect upon the moral character of the preceding events, but also because its implications stretch well beyond the confines of Book 2; what Coroebus is *really* asking, according to Abbott, is whether or not there is such a thing as *bonus dolus*, or virtuous deceit. For our purposes, the answer to this question will have far reaching significance on how we interpret the grander role of deception in the poem as a whole. In Book 2, despite the fact that the question is left somewhat ambiguously, it is worth noting that after the initial success of Coroebus' plan, Aeneas' men are ultimately targeted by their own comrades, who mistake them for Greeks from their position atop the Trojan defensive turrets; this tragic outcome perhaps already suggests Virgil's answer to Coroebus' question.<sup>54</sup>

As the action continues, we are left once again pondering the inquiry of Johnson: why does all this suffering need to happen? When Venus confronts her father about the suffering of Aeneas in Book 1, her pointed question is in the same vein: *Hic pietatis*

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<sup>54</sup> See Abbott 2000; We will return to the topic of Coroebus' question in Chapter 4.

*honos* (1.253)?<sup>55</sup> Jupiter reassures her, however, that *fatum* will indeed provide Aeneas with due reward for his piety. Yet as we witness the deaths of figures like Rhipheus, a man of unparalleled justice, or perhaps more pointedly the death of Panthus, whose great piety and priestly office—just like Laocoon’s—avail him nothing, we cannot help but wonder at the justice of the gods. By the time that Priam himself is killed as a suppliant at the altar, Virgil invites, nay even demands, that we echo Venus’ question: *Hic pietatis honos?*

It is noteworthy that, as Aeneas recalls the destructive force of *fatum* sweeping through Troy, the carnage seems no different to him than Juno’s baleful storm in Book 1:

*et gemini Atridae Dolopumque exercitus omnis:  
adversi rupto ceu quondam turbine venti  
confligunt, Zephyrusque Notusque et laetus Eois  
Eurus equis; stridunt silvae saevitque tridenti<sup>56</sup>  
spumeus atque imo Nereus ciet aequora fundo* (2.415-420).

In the first book of the *Aeneid*, the winds rushing forth from their confines are described as being similar to an army rushing through a hole in their enemy’s defenses (*ac venti, velut agmine facto, | qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine perflant*; 1.82-83).

Accordingly, in Book 2 we have the converse, as the Greek forces are described as hastening through the Trojan gates as if they were the personification of the violent storm winds themselves. This clear verbal connection between the destruction of Troy and the storm of Book 1, both brought on by acts of *dolus*, ascribes a troublingly irrational quality to the fulfillment of *fatum*.

Perhaps nowhere is this sentiment better observed, however, than in the vision afforded to Aeneas by his mother Venus, who wishes to convince her son to forget about

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<sup>55</sup> “Is this the reward for piety?” (*Aen.* 1.253).

<sup>56</sup> Note: *saevitque tridenti*, although referring to Nereus here, undoubtedly harkens back to Neptune of Book 1 and his *saevumque tridentem*.

his desire for futile revenge against Helen and the Greeks, and to instead seek his family and flee the burning city. In contrast to her deceptive actions in Book 1, Venus here reveals to Aeneas the terrifying and unmitigated truth: an apocalyptic vision of all the gods mercilessly tearing down the foundations of Troy, while Jupiter himself goads them to action; it is not the Greeks who are to blame for Trojan suffering, Aeneas learns, but the cruel *divum inclementia* (2.602).

This scene has caused numerous interpretive problems for certain scholars, not least because it appears to conflict with their vision of the end goal of the *Aeneid*: to promote *pietas* and to ultimately express the rationality of the divine. Thus Austin, in the introduction to his commentary on Book 2, is unable to reconcile the implications of this scene with his interpretation of the *Aeneid* at large:

An obedient faith in divine guidance, blindly manifested after that apocalypse of devils, is more than incongruous: it is irrational. The conclusion is irresistible that the whole Venus-scene was an afterthought... it is as if he had suddenly, blindingly, seen that human *pietas* –the linch-pin of the whole structure of the *Aeneid*–has no protection against the arbitrary ruthlessness of the gods, no necessary recognition from them: there is no appeal against *divum inclementia*... Perhaps here more than in anything else, lies the ultimate reason for his wish that the *Aeneid* should be destroyed.<sup>57</sup>

Austin's response to the devilish vision of divine cruelty is to see it as an afterthought, a later addition scribed by the poet, which threatens to undermine the work's carefully crafted structure. But what Austin fails to consider is that this scene is not incongruous with the structure of the *Aeneid* at all; on the contrary, Virgil has in fact been preparing us for such a scene from the very beginning. When the duplicity is unraveled, and Venus

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<sup>57</sup> Austin 1964: xxi.

finally pulls back the curtain, is the irrational and ruthless truth really such a surprise?

Have we not, after all, been asking this whole time *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*

#### CHAPTER 4. *POSTQUAM RES ASIAE PRIAMIQUE EVERTERE GENTEM*

As Aeneas leaves a smoldering Troy behind him, so too does the poet leave behind the narrowly focused emotional intensity of the preceding book. Despite the fact that Book 3 represents a continuation of Aeneas' self-narration to Dido, Virgil here transitions from an *Iliadic* to an *Odyssean* model, and in so doing initiates a striking change in pacing and tone. Gone is the singular set piece of Troy, and in its place instead are a dizzying array of locales and encounters as Aeneas recounts his wanderings across the Mediterranean in search of a new and elusive *patria*. In this respect, Book 3 is largely transitional; not only does Aeneas literally transition through geographical space, bringing us from Troy to Libya with many stops in between, but also through time. Aeneas' story communicates, both to Dido and to the reader, the missing background information affected by the poem's introduction *in medias res*, and by its conclusion the narrative will have returned from the past to the present. For Aeneas himself, however, leaving the past behind is not so simple. Time and time again the memory of Troy will inform the decisions of the Trojan refugees and—together with a series of misleading directives from the gods—confuse and obfuscate the path to Italy.

The charge that Book 3 represents largely filler content, as Putnam summarizes it, intended to provide Aeneas with necessary information “spread out to cover an embarrassingly large itinerary”<sup>58</sup> is perhaps an unfair accusation. For although Book 3's episodic narrative structure is a departure from what precedes it, the poet nevertheless maintains an obvious extension of prior themes. The goal of this section, therefore, is not to offer a comprehensive interpretation of Book 3's diverse action; rather, I wish to focus

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<sup>58</sup> Putnam 1995: 50.

in particular on the thematic continuity of deception and theodicy, and the way in which these themes help to unify and contextualize the disparate episodes that follow.

For the purposes of our discussion, the significance of Troy's downfall cannot be overstated; it is the fulcrum upon which Aeneas' character rests, an event which encapsulates the tense juncture between the old and the new. For just as Troy's destruction paves the way for the promised future of Rome, so too does its memory persistently draw the mind of Aeneas back into the past. This painful memory of Troy, which Bettini likens to a form of nostalgia,<sup>59</sup> will indeed represent a serious challenge to Aeneas' *pietas* and the destiny of Rome.<sup>60</sup>

It is perhaps significant, then, that Book 3 begins with the temporal conjunction *postquam*: *Postquam res Asiae Priamique evertere gentem | immeritam visum superis, ceciditque superbum | Ilium et omnis humo fumat Neptunia Troia* (3.1-3).<sup>61</sup> The conjunction here, given pride of place as the first word of the book, immediately establishes Troy as a focal point: there is now a time before the fall of Troy, and there is a time *after*. In this sense, *postquam* anticipates the progressive narrative movement away from the fallen city and into the mytho-historical future. At the same time, however, the subsequent lament for Troy *in memoria* casts a contrastingly regressive gaze in the opposite direction. This forward and backward tension is at the heart of *Aen.* 3's thematic

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<sup>59</sup> Bettini 1997.

<sup>60</sup> It must be noted that Juno, too, is negatively preoccupied by memories of the past; her inability to let go of former Trojan transgressions is the very source of her problematic *ira* (1.23-28).

<sup>61</sup> "After it seemed just to the gods to overturn the state of Asia and the underserving race of Priam, and lofty Ilium had fallen, and all of Neptunian Troy was smoking from the ground" (3.1-3).



action, and is reflected both through the ongoing struggle between the old and the new, and more literally through the twisting geographical course of Aeneas' own odyssey.

Yet as seen previously in Book 2, the fall of Troy also represents a serious problem of theodicy. This unresolved issue is reintroduced at the onset of Book 3, and functions to link together the thematic concerns of the two books, even as their structural models diverge. If we return to Aeneas' opening lament, which we briefly treated above, we can see that the hero imparts a certain cosmic weight to Troy's destruction by mourning the city on a universal scale. First he mourns the political entity (*res Asiae*), followed by the human population (*Priami gentem*), and thirdly the physical city itself (*Ilium, Troia*). This universalizing lament, however, also points back – through verbal reminiscence – to a particular instance of individual human suffering. The poet's use of the impersonal construction *evertere visum superis* immediately calls to mind the undeserving death of Rhipheus in *Aen. 2*, whose virtue seemed otherwise to the gods (*dis aliter visum*; 2.426-28), and whose singular demise served as a synecdoche for the cosmic injustice of Troy writ large. The Trojan people, like Rhipheus, are undeserving of their fate (*immeritam*), and in both examples it is significant that Aeneas employs the same impersonal construction to cast judgement on divine action.<sup>62</sup>

This sentiment is further echoed by looking more closely at the structure of these opening lines. We have already seen how in *Aen. 1* the poet employed disruptive cosmic

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<sup>62</sup> Note, however, that Virgil here uses a positive rather than negative construction, which grants a more emphatic force to the criticism. The phrase *dis aliter visum* is, indeed, something of a circumlocution. That is, Aeneas does not directly state what seems to be present in the divine mind, only that it is contrary to his own judgement of Rhipheus' character. In Book 3, however, Aeneas is much more forward, and the grammar of the statement directly equates Troy's destruction, through the verb *evertere*, with the apparent approval of the gods.

imagery to emphasize the *nefas* of Aeolus' storm. So too here does Virgil's careful interplay of vocabulary suggest, from Aeneas' perspective, the apparent *nefas* of Troy's destruction. This effect is achieved largely through the juxtaposition of adjectival meaning and verbal action. Here, lofty Ilium has fallen low (*ceciditque superbum Ilium*), and thus the verbal force of the clause (*cecidit*) directly contrasts the adjectival description (*superbum*) of its subject. In the same way, Neptunian Troy is described to be smoking from the ground: *fumat Neptunia Troia*. Although the attribution of the adjective *Neptunia* to the city ostensibly refers to Neptune's mythical role as the builder of her walls, the word also invokes associations with the sea through metonymy, and therefore suggests a dichotomous tension between the elements of water (*Neptunia*) and fire (*fumat*). Through such contradictory vocabulary, the poet evokes a general sense of disorder which, together with a direct criticism of divine judgement (*evertere visum superis*), invites us to interpret the subsequent action of the book with the destruction of Troy – and all the cosmic tension that it implies – fresh in our minds.

It is thus with equal parts uncertainty and sadness (*incerti, lacrimans*; 3.7-10) that the Trojans disembark from their native shores, and that Anchises urges them to grant their sails to fate (3.9).<sup>63</sup> As fate would have it, the Trojans land first in nearby Thrace, and it is here that Aeneas attempts to found his first city.<sup>64</sup> Fate, however, ultimately

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<sup>63</sup> Significantly, it is Anchises who commands the fleet to depart, and not Aeneas himself. As Quint (1982: 30-31) observes, Aeneas' willing deference to Anchises' judgement is exemplary of his filial piety, yet at the same time emblemizes the ongoing thematic tension between the past and the future that characterizes the book. Anchises, as we shall see, will be responsible for the majority of the Trojans' decisions in the early stages of their journey, and Aeneas will struggle not only with moving beyond the memory of Troy but also with the eventual loss of his father's guidance.

<sup>64</sup> Aeneas' decision to found the city in his own name (*Aeneadae*) suggests a lingering (and by now outdated) Homeric tendency towards personal glory, not dissimilar to his

proves to be unfavorable: *Feror huc et litore curvo | moenia prima loco, fatis ingressus iniquis | Aeneadasque meo nomen de nomine fingo* (3.16-18). Virgil's choice of the adjective *iniquis* here is worth noting, for its shade of meaning extends beyond simple disfavor, and may also suggest notions of injustice and unfairness.<sup>65</sup> The *unfavorable* fate of Aeneas' undertaking thus serves to foreshadow the *unjust* fate of Priam's son Polydurus, who in a markedly strange episode soon appears to Aeneas before a bleeding myrtle bush.

The shade of Polydurus explains to Aeneas that he was sent to allied Thrace at the outset of Trojan war to ensure his safety, but was ultimately murdered by his wardens in exchange for gold when it became clear that the Greeks were nearing victory: *res Agamemnonias victriciaque arma secutus | fas omne abrumpit* (3.54-55). The first stop on the journey to Italy thus also presents us with our first reminder of Troy, where the unjust death of a son evokes the unjust death of his father. For just as Priam was killed as a suppliant at the altar in violation of divine law, so too did the Thracians murder their charge Polydurus, and in so doing trampled upon the sacred laws of hospitality; here the war has claimed another victim, and here too appears another monument to *nefas*.<sup>66</sup>

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desire for a heroic death at Troy (1.94-97; 2.347-354). Such self-interest is of course at odds with the selfless tenets of Roman *pietas*, and highlights in another way the struggle between the past and the future that typifies Book 3.

<sup>65</sup> In *Aen.* 1, *iniquus* is used to describe both the odious Juno (*Iunonis iniquae*; 1.668) and the unsympathetic eyes of Athena, as she is being supplicated by the Trojan women on the frieze of Juno's temple (1.479-480).

<sup>66</sup> This episode also suggests the first presence of a secondary theme of hunger, greed, famine, and pestilence that runs a current through the book. The danger of self-interest, which is reflected in the name of Aeneas' first city, is also suggested by the driving force behind Polydurus' murder, gold: *Quid non mortalia pectora cogis | auri sacra fames?* (3.56.57). Interestingly, this relationship between greed and *scelus* is reminiscent of Pygmalion in *Aen.* 1, who similarly murders Dido's husband Sychaeus out of a blind love for gold: *atque auri caecus amore* (1.349). We cannot discount the possibility, therefore,

Thrace's primary narrative function, therefore, seems to be to further strengthen the problematic characterization of the Trojan war, and in turn the tacit approval of the gods.

Disturbed by the above events, and not wishing to remain in a land corrupted by such crimes, the Trojans next set sail for Delos in order to seek guidance from Apollo. With such a clear emphasis on the problem of theodicy, it is perhaps unsurprising that the first encounter with the divine in Book 3 turns proves complicated. What follows is the first of three major prophecies in the book, all of which, significantly, are in some way deceptive.<sup>67</sup> As Heyworth has shown, Virgil takes as his model for Apollo's oracle a hymn from Callimachus, where the original context is the uncertain birthplace of Jupiter.<sup>68</sup> Virgil, however, applies that same air of dubiety to a new subject, not Jupiter's birthplace but the birthplace of the Trojan race.

Apollo informs the refugees that they must seek the ancient motherland of their ancestors (*antiquam exquirite matrem*; 3. 97), a customarily ambiguous oracle which leaves the Trojans initially uncertain of their destination: *cuncti quae sint ea moenia, quaerunt, | quo Phoebus vocet errantis iubeatque reverti*.<sup>69</sup> As Heyworth observes, the double meaning of the participle *errantis* foreshadows the error that is about to be made,<sup>70</sup> for when Anchises takes charge and interprets the oracle on behalf of the

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that Aeneas here (being a guest himself at Dido's court) is at least partially intending to ameliorate himself to his host through this story, and to remind her of the importance of proper hospitality.

<sup>67</sup> I do not include in this list the appearance of the Penates in Aeneas' dream, for the simple reason that this does not represent a distinct oracle, but rather a clarification of Apollo's original decree.

<sup>68</sup> Heyworth 1993: 256. There is, of course, a long standing tradition of conflicting myths concerning the birthplace of Jupiter.

<sup>69</sup> "All ask what walls these might be, and where Phoebus calls those who are wandering, and where he commends them to be returned." (3. 100-02).

<sup>70</sup> Heyworth 1993: 256.

Trojans, he inevitably misses the mark and believes their target to be Crete, where Teucer first established his kingdom.

When the Trojans arrive at Crete, however, their efforts prove ill-fated once more. As if reinvigorated by ancestral ties to the land, and with his mind still fixated firmly on the past, Aeneas names his second establishment not after himself, but after his former city: *ergo avidus muros optatae molior urbis | Pergameamque voco, et laetam cognomina gentem | hortor amare focos arcemque atollere tectis* (3.132-34).<sup>71</sup> In this way, Aeneas' preoccupation with the past, and his eagerness to see Troy rise again, distracts him from his rightful duty. His destiny is not to found a second Pergamum (the futility of which will become abundantly clear in the later visit to Helenus and Andromache's *parva Troia* at Buthrotom), and nor is Crete the *antiquam matrem* which the Trojans seek.

But where, then, did Anchises go wrong? When he first attempts to unravel the oracle, he appears to derive authority from his own memory: *si rite audita recordor* (3.107). Yet Anchises' account of Teucer's history on Crete turns out to be *factually* correct, and Heyworth thus observes that "the problem is not Anchises' false recall of what he has heard, but rather a failure of interpretation."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, according to Heyworth, Anchises' only fault is that he chooses the wrong ancestor, and mistakenly traces the Trojan stock through Teucer rather than Dardanus. Yet Heyworth's own error, I would argue, is that he places the blame solely on Anchises, for in so doing he neglects

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<sup>71</sup> "Thus eagerly I build up the walls of the longed for city and call it Pergamum, and urge my people, who are delighted by the name, to love their hearths and to raise up a citadel and dwellings." (3.132-34).

<sup>72</sup> Heyworth 1993: 256.

to acknowledge the divine hand which ultimately directs Anchises' decision. In fact, the problem does not rest with Anchises at all.

When Anchises hears that the Penates have visited Aeneas and have revealed to them their true destination, he comes to a sudden realization:

*agnovit prolem ambiguam geminosque parentes,  
seque novo veterum deceptum errore locorum.  
tum memorat: 'nate, Iliacis exercite fatis,  
sola mihi talis casus Cassandra canebat.  
nunc repeto haec generi portendere debita nostro,  
et saepe Hesperiam, saepe Itala regna vocare.  
sed quis ad Hesperiae venturos litora Teucros  
crederet? Aut quem tum vates Cassandra moveret (179-187)?<sup>73</sup>*

This is not a throwaway line, intended simply to impart erudite color to the scene through frivolous mythological reference, but on the contrary has significant implications for how we are to interpret Anchises' *novo errore*. Unlike Anchises and Aeneas, the reader possesses privileged knowledge of Cassandra's plight through her well-established mythological tradition, and is therefore aware of the curse placed upon the priestess, never to be believed, for spurning the advances of Apollo. According to this new information, it is clear that Anchises does not choose incorrectly due to a simple failure of interpretation, as Heyworth would have us believe, but because knowledge of the correct path was expressly denied to him as a result of Apollo's former vindictive

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<sup>73</sup> "He recognized the ambiguous progeny and the dual parentage, and that he had been deceived by a new error concerning the ancient lands, then he remembered: 'Son, you who have been vexed by the fate of Ilium, Cassandra alone used to foretell to me such misfortunes. Now I recall that she revealed these things to be owed to our race, and often named both Hesperia and the Italian kingdom. But who would believe that the Teucrians would come to Hesperian shores? Whom then could the prophetess Cassandra persuade?'" (3.179-187).

punishment of Cassandra; here, in Junonian fashion, Apollo's own divine *ira* is the inadvertent—but nevertheless clear—cause of Anchises' deception.

Thus when the Trojans eventually land upon the bay of Actium, after a brief quarrel with a band of meddlesome harpies,<sup>74</sup> it is with great irony that they make offerings and establish a monument at the nearby shrine of Apollo, unaware that he was ultimately responsible for leading them astray. This is a curious scene, not least because it is unique as the only stop in Book 3 where the Trojans do not receive any directions,<sup>75</sup> but also because both its structural position at the center of the book and the contemporary political importance of its geographical location suggest a level of significance belied by the scene's brevity.<sup>76</sup>

Actium was of course the famous staging ground for the pivotal naval battle that swung the tide in Octavian's favor during the twilight of the civil war against Marc Antony and Cleopatra. Although Actium was Octavian's greatest military victory, even in Augustus' own lifetime the public perception of the battle was complex. Virgil's contemporary Horace thus subtly alludes to Actium when he decries the impiety of civil war in *Odes* 2.1 (*Quod mare Dauniae | non decoloravere caedes? | Quae caret ora cruore nostro? (Odes 2.1.33-35)*),<sup>77</sup> and again in *Epodes* 7 (*Parumne campis atque Neptuno super | fusum est Latini sanguinis... | acerba fata Romanos agunt | scelusque*

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<sup>74</sup> The harpies of the Strophades provide the second major prophecy of Book 3, warning the Trojans that they will reach Italy, but not before they suffer such hunger that they will consume their own tables. This prophecy is curiously the only one in the poem that turns out to be deceptively *pessimistic*, as the 'tables' of course turn out to be bread (7.109).

<sup>75</sup> for more on this see Fletcher 2014: 122.

<sup>76</sup> For a structural analysis see Lloyd 1957; for the political significance of the Actium seen see Stahl 1998.

<sup>77</sup> "What seas have the Daunian dead not discolored? What shores are free from our blood?" (*Odes* 2.1.33-35).

*fraternae necis* (*Epodes* 7.3-19).<sup>78</sup> Virgil likewise draws attention to the excessiveness of the carnage in Book 8, where a depiction of the battle appears on Aeneas' shield and the waters of Actium have been dyed red with blood (*caede rubescunt*; 8.695). In short, at the same time as Actium was a symbol of the triumph of Augustus, it also stood as a testament to the impiety and *nefas* of civil strife.<sup>79</sup>

It is interesting to note, therefore, that the monument raised by Aeneas at Actium is itself a morally problematic symbol of war: *aere cavo clipeum, magnis gestamen Abantis, | positbus adversis figo et rem carmine signo: | AENEAS HAEC DE DANAIS VICTORIBUS ARMA* (3.286-88).<sup>80</sup> Significantly, if we recall our discussion in Chapter 3, this shield is an ill-gotten trophy, presumably a remnant of the collection of arms stolen and adorned by the Trojans at the behest of Coroebus,<sup>81</sup> who convinces them to use the Greeks' own deceptive tactics against them (*dolus an virtus, qui in hoste requirat?*; 2.390). Just as Coroebus invites the reader to question the virtue of such trickery, so too does the later reference to the arms invite us to carefully consider the nature of the monument itself. Furthermore, by calling to mind Coroebus in particular, Virgil indirectly

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<sup>78</sup> "Has Latin blood not been sufficiently poured over the fields and sea... a bitter fate drives the Romans and the crime of fraternal slaughter." (*Epodes* 7.3-19).

<sup>79</sup> For more on Actium and Virgil, see Otis 1964.

<sup>80</sup> "I fix to the opposite posts a shield of hollow brass, the burden of great Abas, and sign it with a verse: THESE ARMS AENEAS FROM VICTORIOUS GREEKS." (2.286-88).

<sup>81</sup> The precise identity of 'great Abas' is a matter of debate; Servius offers up Abas of Argos, well known for his impressive shield, although modern scholars note the absence of any reference to a confrontation between this figure and Aeneas, and more importantly the fact that according to myth Abas lived before the time of the Trojan War. Miller (1993: 45-50) agrees with Forbiger that the shield was more likely being carried by a *descendent* of Abas. My assertion that this shield was claimed as part of the Trojans' operation of subterfuge is justified in simple terms: it is the only moment in Book 2 where the Trojans strip Greek soldiers of their shields (*mutemus clipeos Danumque insignia nobis | aptemus*; 3.389-390).



reminds us once again of the pitiable fate of Cassandra, who was Coroebus' betrothed before the war and the sole reason for his presence at Troy.

Aeneas thus establishes a monument to *dolus*, a shield that symbolizes deception, at the temple of a god who, inadvertently or otherwise, has just deceived the Trojans through his prophecy. The cause of this deception, the spiteful punishment of Cassandra, is obliquely alluded to through Coroebus' connection to the shield, and in this way the poet emphasizes Apollo and his problematic act of vengeance.

Interestingly, upon the ekphrastic shield of Aeneas in Book 8, it is Apollo who appears most prominently fighting at the side of Octavian at the battle of Actium; it is Apollo, in other words, who joins in on the impious kindred bloodshed that Horace found so vexing, even as Virgil avoids directly addressing this truth<sup>82</sup> by stressing the foreign contingent of Antony's army and deemphasizing the presence and slaughter of fellow Romans: *Actius haec cernens arcum intendebat Apollo | desuper: omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi, | omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaci* (8.704-07).<sup>83</sup> Yet is this depiction of the gods on Aeneas' shield, directly engaging in the battle of Actium, not reminiscent of Aeneas' own vision in Book 2 where—from an alternate perspective—the gods appear as if devils delighting in the destruction of Troy (2.602-20)? From the perspective of the Roman countrymen who fought on the opposing side of the war, would the gods appear dissimilar? To put it in another way, it is the same problem of theodicy,

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<sup>82</sup> There are, of course, many obvious political reasons that would explain this given the poet's patronage, but we also must bear in mind that Virgil here is describing a piece of ekphrastic art, and not making an authoritative comment on Actium himself. The fact that ekphrastic art in the Aeneid can be biased, misleading, and open to interpretation has already been discussed in Chapter 2. For more on this subject see Putnam 1998.

<sup>83</sup> "Actian Apollo, perceiving these things, was aiming his bow from above: from which all Egypt and India, all Arabs and Sabaeans turned their backs in terror." (8.704-7).

the *divum inclementia* (2.602) and the human suffering it brings, that appears to symbolically bridge the Actium of *Aen.* 3 to the historical Actium of Octavian and Antony.

Indeed, this link is only made more clear when we examine the shield's association with civil war itself. Abbott uses the example of Coroebus to argue that *dolus*, because it erodes trust, is inherently antisocial; a community that "justifies deceit on the grounds that the intended victim is an enemy and therefore beyond moral bounds," he writes, "may tend to consign an increasingly large number of people to that category."<sup>84</sup> For this reason, Abbott contends that Virgil wishes to draw a clear connection between the act of *dolus* and the theme of civil strife:

Coroebus' *dolus* has turned a conventional war into civil war, as counterfeit Greeks fight Greeks, and disguised Trojans are slaughtered by Trojans... As in the Coroebus episode, [the trickery of Sinon] leads to an apparent change of identity, as the Greek deceiver, armed only with *doli*, is accepted into the ranks of the Trojans. The new Trojan, in an act of "civil strife," subsequently betrays his own people.<sup>85</sup>

It is my contention that the shield of Abas, in so far as it is caught up in a web of symbolic civil discord on the sides of both the Trojan and Greek communities alike, can therefore also be seen to subversively foreshadow the uncomfortable reality of Octavian's victory over his fellow countrymen at Actium, even as the poet is careful not to overtly express this reality on the ekphrasis of Aeneas' own shield in Book 8.

Apollo's deceptive prophecy at Delos, however, gives way to yet another deceptive prophecy at Burthrotum, where a shadow of the tragic past collides with the misleading promise of a hopeful future. Following the death of Neoptolemus, Helenus

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<sup>84</sup> Abbott 2000: 79.

<sup>85</sup> Abbott 2000: 66-68

and Andromache succeed in creating the city that Aeneas himself failed to establish at Crete: a *novum Pergamum*. The Trojans unsurprisingly are delighted by this second Troy (*nec non et Teucris socia simul urbe fruuntur*; 3.352), yet from the very first description of the city, it is clear that it is but a shade of its former self.

Our first impression of Buthrotum is in a grove outside the city proper:

*Progredior portu, classis et litora linquens,  
sollemnis cum forte dapes et tristia dona  
ante urbem in luco falsi Simoentis ad undam  
libabat cineri Andromache, Manisque vocabat  
Hectoreum ad tumulum, viridi quem caespitem inanem  
et geminas, causam lacrimis, sacraverat aras* (3.300-05).<sup>86</sup>

Here, Andromache has dedicated a tomb to Hector next to Buthrotum's own Simois river, yet the choice of adjectives used to describe this scene already hints at the nature of the city itself. This Simois is significantly *falsi*, and the emptiness (*inanem*) of the tomb is both figurative and literal; not only does it lack a physical corpse, but just as Aeneas is not truly granted any measure of sustenance by the images of the past in Juno's Temple at Carthage (*animum pictura pascit inani*; 1.464), nor is Andromache's grief satiated by this insubstantial mound.

When Aeneas reaches the city itself, we see that this emptiness stands for Buthrotum as a whole:

*Procedo et parvam Troiam simulataque magnis  
Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomina rivum  
agnosco, Scaetaeque aplector limina portae.*

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<sup>86</sup> "I approached from the harbor, leaving behind both the shore and my fleet, when by chance Andromache was offering the annual feasts and funerary gifts to the dust in a grove outside the city before the waters of a false Simois, and was calling the shade to the Hectorean tomb, which she had consecrated, empty with green turf, along with twin altars for the sake of her grief." (3.300-05).

*Nec non et Teucri socia simul urbe fruuntur* (3.349-351).<sup>87</sup>

The entire city is inauthentic; in direct contrast to the lofty Troy of the past (*superbum Ilium*; 3.2), this settlement is small (*parvam*), its citadel is a mere counterfeit (*simulata*), and its Xanthus is hardly a river at all (*arentem rivum*). The emptiness of Buthrotum goes beyond the physical city itself, however, and extends even to her population. As many modern scholars have observed, the portrayal of Buthrotum is reminiscent of the underworld, its inhabitants more akin to the dead than the living, while the structure of Aeneas's visit likewise mirrors a traditional *anabasis*.<sup>88</sup> There is nothing to be gained, the poet seems to be suggesting, by dwelling in the past.

Yet it is out of fear for the future, and in particular the dire warnings of the harpy Celaeno, that Aeneas seeks guidance from the prophet Helenus. In contrast to Celaeno's deceptively pessimistic prediction of hunger and suffering, however, O'Hara contends that Helenus' prophecy, through the omission of key information, provides a deceptively optimistic vision of the future, similar to Venus' omen of the swans in Book 1.<sup>89</sup>

Although Helenus' prophecy does warn of the dangers of Scylla and Charybdis, and hints at the wars to come in Italy, its tone is largely conciliatory in nature, functioning to assuage Aeneas' fears for the future. Helenus begins, for example, by emphasizing Aeneas' safety and offering the promise of future rest (*Quo tutior hospita lustres | aequora et Ausonio possis considerare portu*; 3.388). He then, significantly, directly addresses the source of Aeneas' worry, and advises him not to fear Celaeno's

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<sup>87</sup> "I proceeded and recognized a little Troy and a Pergamum copied from the great one, and a dry river by the name of Xanthus, and I embraced the threshold of a Scaean gate." (3.349-51).

<sup>88</sup> See: Nelson 1961; Bright 1981; Quint 1982; Bettini 1997.

<sup>89</sup> O'Hara 1990: 29

prophecy (*nec tu mensarum morsus horresce futuros; | fata viam invenient aderitque vocatus Apollo*; 3.394-5). Next, Helenus foretells Aeneas arriving in Italy as a victor (*sic denique victor | Tinacri finis Italos mittere relictas*; 3.439-40), and finally that his journey will be a favorable one (*cursusque dabit venerate secundos*; 3.460). The events that Helenus does *not* foretell, however, include both the death of Anchises and the impending storm of *Aen.* 1, events which are highlighted all the more by their absence.

In fact, when Aeneas suffers the loss of his father later in Book 3, he wonders why neither Celaeno (in her anger), nor Helenus had warned him of such a grievous loss:

*heu, genitorem, omnis curae casusque levamen,  
amitto Anchisen. Hic me, pater optime, fessum  
deseris, heu, tantis nequiquam erepte periclis!  
nec vates Helenus, cum multa horrenda moneret,  
hos mihi praedixit luctus, non dira Celaeno (3.709-13).*<sup>90</sup>

Yet, curiously, Helenus *does* inform Aeneas before he begins that the information he is permitted to offer is limited, both by the Fates and more significantly by Juno: *Pauca tibi e multis... | expediam dictis; prohibent nam cetera Parcae | scire Helenum farique vetat Saturnia Iuno* (3.377-80). The suggestion that the unfolding of prophetic vision can in certain ways be controlled by particular gods, for good or for ill, has interesting implications. As Servius offers, this prohibition seems to indicate that Juno withholds the knowledge of Anchises' death from Aeneas intentionally, so that it will be unexpected and thus all the more painful: *Prohibit autem scire mortem patris ad augendum*

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<sup>90</sup> “Alas, I part with my father Anchises, the consoler of all my cares and misfortunes. Here, greatest father, you deserted me, exhausted, alas, after being saved in vain from so many perils! Neither the prophet Helenus, although he warned of many horrible things, nor the dire Celaeno foretold to me this sorrow.” (3.709-13).

*inopinatum dolorum*.<sup>91</sup> In other words, the deceptive optimism of Helenus' prophecy is directly intended by Juno to cause Aeneas further suffering.

Helenus' second major omission, the storm at sea, is perhaps even more noteworthy, for as O'Hara observes, at the moment in which Helenus might mention the storm, he instead tells Aeneas only that he must offer sacrifice to Juno:

Helenus tells Aeneas that Juno's opposition is important, but, after a *si non vana* disclaimer, says that Aeneas can overcome her with suppliant offerings. This is misleading. Aeneas sacrifices to Juno (3.546-47), but her response is to send the storm that threatens to kill him in Book 1... Aeneas himself will never win over Juno, and his offerings to her here and elsewhere are useless, or at least inadequate.<sup>92</sup>

While O'Hara is correct here to highlight the misleading nature of Helenus' advice, in so far as traditional sacrifice is ineffectual, he fails to take the implications suggested during the storm scene itself to their logical conclusion: that Juno does not demand traditional gifts from the Trojans, but the sacrifice of human life.

If we recall our discussion on Book 1, the death of Orontes, upon a group of rocks known as the altars (1.108-17), helped to symbolize the *nefas* of Aelolus' storm through the indirect suggestion of human sacrifice. Yet, owing to the non-linear narrative structure of *Aen.* 1-3, this scene is initially presented to the reader out of context. By revisiting the beginning of the text, we find the truth behind Helenus' seemingly deceptive advice to supplicate to Juno. In other words, it is only in hindsight that we can see the death of Orontes for what it really is: not the mere suggestion of human sacrifice, but an actual one.

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<sup>91</sup> Serv. 3.709-13.

<sup>92</sup> 1990: 29.

Book 3 emphasizes the problem of theodicy represented by the Trojan War in part by illustrating the geographical breadth of the human suffering necessitated by Troy's destruction. As Aeneas remarks upon seeing the reliefs on Juno's temple at Carthage, *quae regio in terris nostra non plena laboris* (1.460)? Such painful reminders of the past are indeed constant companions for the Trojans as they travel across the Mediterranean, but as the *parva Troia* at Buthrotum illustrates, to live in the past is akin to an act of self-deception, more befitting the life of a shade.

Perhaps more significant are the jointly deceptive prophecies of Apollo and Helenus. While the deceptiveness of Apollo's prophecy is indirect, its root cause is the punishment of Cassandra, an act of divine *ira* that begets yet more suffering, for the Trojans endure both lost time and plague as the cost for their error. Helenus' prophecy, on the other hand, suggests Juno's intentional manipulation of information in order to cause Aeneas greater suffering at the death of his father. Furthermore, the retrospective implications of Orontes' fate as a sacrificial victim only work to strengthen the problematic characterization of baleful Juno.

Just as the Parcae to Helenus, so too does Virgil—by beginning his work *in medias res*—choose to withhold certain information from the reader. By the end of Book 3, however, we are able to look upon the events of *Aen.* 1 in a new context. Yet, rather than help to mollify the poet's concerns over divine *ira*, these questions are only tempered as the reader comes to learn additional information, not only about the nature Juno, but of the *caelestis mens* generally.

## CHAPTER 5. *UNA DOLO DIVUM SI FEMINA VICTA DUORUM EST*

Through the symbolic *scaena* of the Libyan bay (1.164) and the emphatic construction of the theatre at Carthage, which is tellingly described to be setting the stage for scenes to come (*scaenis futuris*; 1.429), Virgil already anticipates in *Aen.* 1 the subsequent dramatic action of Book 4. The hitherto Homeric precedent is here superseded by yet another literary model, indeed a new genre entirely, as the poet draws his inspiration next from the great tradition of Greek and Roman tragedy. DeWitt (1907), one of the first modern scholars to comprehensively analyze the theatrical structure of the book, thus remarks on Dido's heroic character—her strong-willed decisiveness and noble lineage, every bit as worthy of the tragic stage as Medea, Clytemnestra, or Antigone; the unity of place for the unfolding action; the stable of stock genre characters, such as the sister and the nurse; the lyrical nature of the book's scenes; and finally the strong presence of tragic irony.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to such generic analyses, much ink has also been spilled on the inherently philosophical quality of Book 4. Although the apparent tension between certain Epicurean elements of Dido's character and the stoic inclinations of Aeneas have been noted as far back as Servius, modern scholars have focused in particular on analyzing Virgil's frequent use of Lucretian vocabulary in order to contextualize the Epicurean sentiments of the book within the larger intertextual tradition.<sup>94</sup> Note, for instance, Dido's very first words of the poem, which are meant to reassure Aeneas and

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<sup>93</sup> For a more recent perspective see Panoussi 2009.

<sup>94</sup> See for example Hardie 1986; Lyne 1994; Dyson 1996; see also Gordon 1998, who supplements the Lucretian elements with an analysis of further allusions to Homer and Apollonius of Rhodes.



his men of their safety in her court: *Solvite cordum metum, Teucrici, secludite curas* (1.561).<sup>95</sup> As Dyson observes, Dido's first speech offers up a clear echo of Lucretius' Epicurean ideal, which preaches that the greatest good for man is the intellectual freedom from fear and care, which can only be achieved by acknowledging the essential apathy of the gods towards human affairs.<sup>96</sup>

While there is much that can be said about Dido's Epicurean associations, it is perhaps more useful for the sake of our discussion to focus on one significant way in which she *deviates* from Lucretius' model. We will remember, for example, that the kindly disposition which Dido exhibits towards the Trojans is influenced both by Mercury and by Venus. On this point, Dyson's insight is helpful:

The emotional quietude so coveted by the Epicureans, a state predicated on divine indifference to human affairs, has in Dido's case been implanted by gods obeying the dictates of Fate; the pathological care and fear she is soon to experience will also be induced by the gods' poison. By echoing Lucretius' words in Dido's first line, Virgil may be hinting already at the impossibility of Epicurean tranquility in the world of the *Aeneid*.<sup>97</sup>

In other words, although Virgil alludes to Lucretian concepts, he ultimately offers a contrary view of the divine influence on human life. For in the *Aeneid*, the activity of the gods is inextricably linked to mortal affairs, and this involvement has very real, at times dire, consequences for the men and women whose lives they circumscribe.

By drawing such a distinction, Virgil demands the reader of Book 4 to consider the problematic collusion of Juno and Venus and their ultimate role in the pitiable fate of *infelix* Dido. Nevertheless, the poet's complex implementation of double motivation

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<sup>95</sup> "Release the fear from your hearts, Teucricians, and put aside your cares." (1.561).

<sup>96</sup> 1996: 205-6.

<sup>97</sup> 1996: 206.

muddies the question of *culpa*, which continues to be an ongoing subject of scholarly debate.<sup>98</sup> For my part, I wish to focus instead on unraveling the cloud of deception that accompanies Dido's character, from her introduction all the way to her final curtain call. For perhaps more than anywhere else in the *Aeneid*, the concept of *dolus* is centralized in the character of Dido, who suffers multiple instances of trickery and betrayal at the hands of both mortals and gods alike: First, the murder of Sychaeus by her brother Pygmalion; second, the forced passion for Aeneas instilled by Venus and Cupid; third the 'wedding' in the cave orchestrated by Juno; and fourth, Aeneas' eventual rejection.

In contrast to the martial stratagems of Book 2, it is important to note that all of the *doli* suffered by Dido are unwaveringly connected to the realm of love. Even in the case of her brother Pygmalion, who takes up arms against her husband, the crime is primarily conceived of as a betrayal of *amor*.<sup>99</sup> For this reason, it is appropriate that Venus—whose divine sphere of influence encompasses both *amor* and *cupido*—should be in some way related to Dido's fortunes, and the goddess' motivations for involving herself in Dido's affairs are worth analyzing in detail.

Speaking to Cupid in Book 1, Venus clearly outlines her rationale for interfering directly in Dido's life. Namely, she recognizes the potential danger that Carthage represents for her son, and fears above all else the intercession of Juno and her questionable *hospitium*. Venus thus plans to act first by sending Cupid, disguised as

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<sup>98</sup> Perhaps more than any other subject, the question of Dido's guilt has been of central concern to modern scholars: Are the gods to blame? Is Dido herself? Is Aeneas? On this subject, see Desmond 1994: 24-45; Horsfall 1996: 126.

<sup>99</sup> Pygmalion's love for his sister is feigned (*Iusit amantem*; 1.352), while his actions are in truth motivated by a blind love for gold (*auri caecus amore*; 1.349).

Ascanius, to infect the queen with an insatiable desire for Aeneas in order to ensure his safety:

*quocirca capere ante dolis et cingere flamma  
reginam meditor, ne quo se numine mutet,  
sed magno Aeneae mecum teneatur amore (1.673-75).*<sup>100</sup>

In short, Venus justifies her use of *dolus* by making an appeal to the protection of her son. In so far as Juno represents a threat to Aeneas—and is therefore by necessity prefigured as an enemy in this circumstance—Venus’ position is ultimately no different than Coroebus’ in Book 2 (*dolus an virtus? Quis in hoste requirat?*; 2.390), who likewise defends the use of deception when used against an enemy.

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, Abbot believes that Coroebus’ rhetorical question—to which I would add Venus’ justification above—asks whether *dolus* committed in the name of the greater good (such as against one’s foe) might be considered ethically *bonus*.<sup>101</sup> And, as we saw in Chapter 4, his eventual conclusion is no: there can be no *dolus bonus* in the world of the *Aeneid* because by its very nature deception decays the bonds of *fides*, and this deterioration of trust, Abbot argues, is a fundamental source of civic unrest.<sup>102</sup> Abbot’s thesis, while compelling, is nevertheless limited, however, because it only accounts for *dolus* on the human level. For if we are to accept his conclusions, and in turn extend his line of reasoning to the *dolus* of the gods, then the implications become far more troubling.

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<sup>100</sup>“Therefore, before this happens I plan to take hold of the queen through deceit and to bind her with flames, nor will she be able to alter herself by any divine assistance, but will be held with me by a great love of Aeneas.” (1.673-75).

<sup>101</sup> I would also add that Juno’s own use of *dolus* can be justified in similar terms, for she views the entire Trojan race as her enemy on account of perceived insults to her divine authority.

<sup>102</sup> Abbot 2000: 65.

Although I am hesitant to call the conflict between Juno and Venus an outright symbol of civil war, it nevertheless appears to corroborate Abbot's argument about *dolus* and the erosion of *fides* if we are to extend his connection of deception not simply to civil strife but to the concept of *discordia* in general. First, it is precisely a lack of *fides* that leads to Venus' action against Dido and her subsequent conflict with Juno. On the one hand, Venus does not trust Juno's *hospitium*, and on the other hand she does not trust Dido herself, because she perceives both the queen and her people to be inherently duplicitous (*quippe domum timet ambiguum Tyriosque bilinguis*; 1.661).<sup>103</sup> It is furthermore under the false pretenses of a truce, because both parties are equally distrustful of the other's *doli*, that Venus and Juno decide to work together to contrive a marriage for Dido and Aeneas, while the queen's life hangs in the balance: *Magnum et memorabile numen | una dolo divum si femina victa duorum est* (4.94-5).<sup>104</sup> It is telling that Virgil should offer this singular act of *dolus*—and the loss of trust resulting from Aeneas' departure—as the aetiological cause for the future *discordia* between Carthage and Rome.

Accordingly, just as war has a destabilizing effect on human society, Virgil portrays the underhanded struggle between Juno and Venus, on the divine level, as a symbol of cosmic *discordia* by thematically linking the subsequent hunting scene to the storm of Book 1.<sup>105</sup> Both storm scenes are significantly preceded by a rhetorical entreaty

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<sup>103</sup> For a detailed discussion on the history of the Roman perception of Carthaginians as untrustworthy, see Gruen 2012: 129-32 on the topic of *Punica fides*. It is nevertheless deeply ironic that Dido, who is the victim of more deceit than anyone else in the *Aeneid*, should herself be mistrusted here for fear of duplicity.

<sup>104</sup> "Great and worthy of memory is your godhead if a woman is conquered by the trick of two gods." (4.94-5).

<sup>105</sup> Refer to Chapter 2 for a discussion of the cosmic implications of the storm at sea.

by Juno in which she attempts to persuade a relevant party of her plan by leveraging her authority over the institution of marriage.<sup>106</sup> When Aeolus replies to Juno's plea to unleash the winds on Aeneas and his men, he ironically agrees to her demands on the grounds of *fas* (*mihi iussa capessere fas est*; 1.77).<sup>107</sup> Venus will also importantly make an appeal to *fas* when she feigns acceptance of Juno's marriage proposal: *tu coniunx; tibi fas animum temptare precando* (4.113).<sup>108</sup> Venus' remark here, while equally as ironic as Aeolus', is markedly more self-aware. For although she claims that it is *fas* for a wife to attempt to alter her husband's mind through supplication and entreaty, Venus knows that this is *not* what Juno is planning to do. Indeed, her statement calls attention to the fact that only Venus, and not Juno herself, has entreated Jupiter up to this point in the narrative. The disparity between Venus' definition of a proper *coniunx* and Juno's contrastingly direct opposition to Jupiter and *fatum* suggests the *nefas* of her actions, and foreshadows the corruption and incredibility of the forthcoming marriage.

The description of the storm itself, despite its brevity, shares a number of verbal similarities to the preceding storm of Book 1:

*Interea magno misceri murmure caelum  
incipit; insequitur commixta grandine nimbus  
et Tyrii comites passim et Troiana iuventus  
Dardaniusque nepos Veneris diversa per agros  
tecta metu petiere: ruunt de montibus amnes.  
Speluncam Dido dux et Troianus eandem* (4.160-165).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> See Panoussi 2009: 92-6 for a discussion on the rhetorical force of Venus and Juno's pact, and how both parties corrupt and conflate the proper ritual procedures of *amor* and *coniubium*.

<sup>107</sup> As discussed already in Chapter 2, Aeolus has no obligation of *fas* to carry out the commands of Juno, but rather should answer only to Jupiter and Neptune.

<sup>108</sup> "You are his wife; it is proper for you to attempt to change his mind through supplication." (4.133).

<sup>109</sup> "Meanwhile the sky begins to be mixed with a great murmur and rain clouds follow, mixed with hail. The Tyrian attendants scatter in all directions, and in fear the Trojan

The first line directly mirrors the disturbed ocean discovered by Neptune (*interea magno misceri mumure pontum*; 1.124), replacing only the word *pontum* with *caelum*. This immediately establishes a connection between the two scenes, which is only enhanced by further verbal reminiscences. Note that the Trojan youth are scattered in various directions through the fields, in much the same way the Trojans had been scattered across the sea in Book 1 (*diversa per aequora vectos*; 1.374),<sup>110</sup> while the verb *ruunt* used to describe the torrent of water is similarly used to describe the force of the winds (1.85;183). Lastly, the imagery of rivers flowing from the mountains represents a disintegration of the cosmic boundaries between earth and water, similar to the description of the seabed visible through the waves at *Aen.* 1.106-7, but more directly reminiscent of the ‘mountains of water’ which threatened the Trojan ships (*Insequitur cumulo praeruptus aquae mons*; 1.105).<sup>111</sup> In this way, the poet frames the hunting scene within the context of cosmic disorder, which serves as an important backdrop against which Juno’s false wedding takes place.<sup>112</sup>

Caldwell interprets the entire hunting scene, in fact, from the perspective of a *deductio*, the formal Roman marriage procession in which a bride is paraded from her thalamus only to return to her bedchamber accompanied by her new husband after the

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youth, scattered through the fields, seek shelter together with the Dardanian grandson of Venus: rivers rush down from the mountains, and Dido and the Trojan leader arrive in the same cave.” (4.160-65).

<sup>110</sup> Note also: *Aut age diversos et disiice ponto* (*Aen.* 1.70).

<sup>111</sup> There is also a way in which the storm of Book 4 inverts the power dynamic of the preceding hunt. The thunderous storm scatters the Trojans, as if flushing game, and leads Dido and Aeneas, having become Juno’s prey, into a carefully laid trap.

<sup>112</sup> See Monti 1981 for the contrary argument that a true marriage takes place, with the intention of arguing for Aeneas’ failure of *pietas*.

requisite nuptial ceremonies have been completed. For Caldwell, the authenticity of Dido and Aeneas' marriage is undermined, however, by the fact that the traditional return to the thalamus is replaced instead by the shelter of the cave. For not only does the cave shelter Aeneas and Dido from the storm, but it also significantly shelters them from public view. Caldwell writes:

In using wedding imagery to highlight the ambiguous relationship of Dido and Aeneas, Vergil also touches on a peculiar social concern at Rome: the difficulty of verifying the inception and continued existence of a marriage. Roman marriage had almost no legal "process" requirements: a marriage was confirmed by the verbal agreement of the parties, but needed no formal licensing, written documents, or ceremony. As a result, in the absence of witnesses to the agreement, a relationship could be misunderstood by outsiders and, in theory, even by the couple themselves. The ceremony served to preclude such misunderstandings. In emphasizing the lack of public ceremony for Dido and Aeneas, Vergil exploits the potential for confusion that was built into the declaration of Roman marriage.<sup>113</sup>

Because relationships could be ambiguous in the absence of formal legal conventions, public ceremony, Caldwell suggests, was an important factor in identifying a marriage as legitimate, which would have been particularly important for individuals of higher social standing such as Dido and Aeneas. For the contemporary reader, the absence of a public ceremony would therefore be all the more conspicuous.<sup>114</sup>

More damning than this, however, is the description of the cave scene itself, which represents the fulfillment of Juno's earlier promise of a wedding (*hic Hymnaenus erit*; 4.127):

*Speluncam Dido Dux et Troianus eandem  
deveniunt. Prima et Tellus et pronuba Juno  
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether  
conubiis summoque uluarunt vertice Nymphae.  
ille dies primus leti primusque malorum*

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<sup>113</sup> 2008: 431.

<sup>114</sup> Caldwell 2008: 433.

*causa fuit; neque enim specie famave movetur  
nec iam furtivum Dido meditator amorem:  
coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam* (4.165-72).<sup>115</sup>

Virgil goes to great lengths to describe this scene with all the conventional trappings of a Roman nuptial ceremony: Juno and primal Earth serve as witnesses, the stars represent the nuptial torches, and Nymphs ululate from the hills in place of celebrants. Yet, the fundamental problem with this ceremony is that Juno has replaced the institutional, civic elements of the traditional wedding with the chthonic, irrational forces of nature. In sum, Dido and Aeneas' wedding represents a perversion of the rational institution of marriage— isolated as it is from the city itself—and functions only to mislead Dido about the nature of her relationship with Aeneas.

Indeed, although Dido is convinced that their marriage is genuine, it is clear that the citizens of Carthage (due to the lack of a public ceremony; 4.170-72) and Aeneas himself (for similar, legalistic reasons; 4.339) do not. The resulting tension between Aeneas' duty to a greater fate and his perceived obligations to Dido are a direct result of the ambiguous nature of their relationship.

Dido herself, importantly, calls attention to the theological quandary presented by her false wedding:

*...Iam iam nec maxima Iuno  
nec Saturnis haec oculis pater aspicit aequis.  
Nusquam tuta fides* (3.370-73).<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> “Dido and the Trojan leader arrive at the same cave. First primal Earth and nuptial Juno give the sign; lights flash and the sky bears witness to their union, and Nymphs ululate from the hill. That was the first day of her ruin and the first cause of her suffering; indeed no longer was she moved by appearance or rumour, nor did Dido contrive her love in secret: she called it marriage and by this name shrouded the blame.” (4.165-72).

<sup>116</sup> Now, oh now, neither greatest Juno nor the Saturnian father look upon these things with just eyes; nowhere is faith safe.” (3.370-73).



Although the queen is unaware of Juno's true role in the preceding events, her feelings of betrayal (she addresses Aeneas as *perfidus* on no less than 3 separate occasions)<sup>117</sup> are nevertheless strong enough that they lead her to question the legitimacy of marriage itself as a divinely ordained institution, and question her trust in the gods entirely. Even if the doubt which she levels against the gods here is intended primarily for rhetorical effect (for she will later invoke the aid of the gods in her curse of Aeneas at 4.609-10), the reader cannot help but notice the problematic implications suggested by Dido's remark: that the *dolus* of the gods directly undermines the notion of divine justice.<sup>118</sup>

Through the figure of Dido, we see that *dolus* comes at the cost of great personal *dolor*. In her conversation with Anna at the beginning of the book, the queen obscurely equates the loss of her husband Sychaeus with suffering an act of deception: *Postquam primus amor deceptam morte fefellit* (4.17).<sup>119</sup> This remark suggests that in some way the queen perceives Sychaeus to have cheated her by his death, which prompts the reader to reevaluate the meaning of Aeneas' own loss of Creusa at 2.743-4 (*una... fefellit*). The relationship between *dolus* and personal loss comes full circle when Anna discovers the body of Dido upon the funeral pyre and immediately accuses her sister of treachery: *me fraude petebas?* (4.675).<sup>120</sup> This lamentable scene of individual human suffering is

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<sup>117</sup> 4.305; 366; 421.

<sup>118</sup> Here prefigured by the use of the adjective *aequis*. Notice, also, that this provides another connection between *dolus* and the deterioration of *fides*.

<sup>119</sup> This remark is ambiguous for multiple reasons. First, the verb *fefellit* has two primary meanings: it can either mean to elude, as in the case of Creusa at 2.744, or more commonly it can imply deception and trickery. Second, the agent or instrument of the passive participle *deceptam* is unclear. The ablative *morte* could be taken with either verb, while either Sychaeus or Pygmalion (due to context) could be supplied as a possible agent.

<sup>120</sup> "Were you seeking me with your treachery?" (4.675).

immediately granted larger significance, however, when one realizes the symbolic meaning of Dido's death: that like Orontes, Laocoon, Priam, and Polydorus before her, Dido represents yet another example of human sacrifice in the apparent name of divine justice.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> See Spence 1999: 84-5 for a discussion of how Dido's role as a sacrificial victim is foreshadowed throughout the book, before her literal burning on the pyre.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The *Aeneid* begins with a question: *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (1.11). In Book 1, the *ira* of Juno manifests as a storm of cosmic proportions, which she unleashes upon Aeneas and his fleet through an act of *dolus*.<sup>122</sup> Order is restored by the intervention of Neptune, however, and the calm seas and happy portents of Venus suggest the promise of an optimistic future, despite the present suffering. Or so the interpretation of Pöschl and Tracy would have us believe. Nevertheless, the poet himself seems to complicate such an interpretation through language and symbolism that undermines and subverts the surface meaning of the book's message. The simile that likens Neptune to a calm statesman—who soothes a savage crowd with his words—immediately undercuts itself through reference to Neptune's own *saevem tridentem*; the calm waters and inviting safety of the Libyan bay are accompanied by *horrenti umbra* (1.165), which frame a foreboding scene (*scaena*; 1.164); and Venus' interpretation of the omen of the swans leaves out important details, like the problematic death of Orontes.

In Book 2, the central episode revolves around the death of Laocoon, Sinon's treachery, and the Trojan horse. Here, the themes of *dolus*, *dolor*, and theodicy coalesce. Indeed, in Book 2 Virgil begins to elaborate on the problematic nature of *dolus* and its consequences. The desperate Trojans, for example, emulate Greek tactics by switching arms with the enemy at the behest of Coroebus: *dolus an virtus? Quis in hoste requirat* (2.390)? Coroebus' question, in essence, demands the reader to consider whether deception in the name of the greater good can ever be virtuous. As Abbot observes,

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<sup>122</sup> *nec latuere doli fratrem iunonis et irae* (1.130).

however, the disastrous outcome of the plan implies a link between *dolus* and civil war,<sup>123</sup> to which I would add a connection between *dolus* and *discordia* generally.

Laocoon's death upon the altar, similar to the fate of Orontes upon the rocks in Book 1, is bookended by another nefarious death: that of Priam himself, who is cut down by Neoptolemus while seeking refuge as a suppliant; yet ultimately it is the undeserving death of Rhipeus that leads Aeneas to directly question the justice of the gods (*dis aliter visum*), and whose death serves as a symbol for the injustice of Troy's destruction as a whole.

Indeed, the tacit approval of the gods in the destruction of Troy presents a significant problem of theodicy, and in Book 3 we find the hero caught in a struggle between painful memories of the past and an arduous duty to the future. Apollo's own Junonian *ira* inadvertently causes the Trojans to misinterpret his prophecy, yet they will later give ironic thanks to the god at Actium. Here, Aeneas establishes a monument out of a shield which had been previously looted from a Greek soldier during Coroebus' plan; in other words, Aeneas establishes a monument to *dolus* with a shield that, as Abbot has shown, also symbolizes civil strife. In this way, Virgil both problematizes the *ira* of Apollo while offering subtle criticism of Augustus' own future victory at Actium, where so much fraternal blood would be spilled.

At Buthrotum, Helenus and Andromache appear to have built for themselves a living replica of Troy, yet closer inspection reveals it to be nothing more than a hollow,

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<sup>123</sup> See Chapter 3: Sinon, after being accepted into the Trojan community, ultimately betrays his new people; the Trojans, after assuming Greek identities, fall upon the Greeks; and finally, the Trojans themselves are killed by their own people, who mistake them for the enemy.

insubstantial façade; Here, Juno manipulates the content of Helenus' prophecy in order to cause Aeneas further suffering by omitting knowledge of the death of his father. More importantly, however, is that Helenus urges the Trojans to give sacrifice to Juno in order to appease her wrath. Yet Aeneas' later offerings in supplication to the goddess are ineffectual, and on the contrary Juno's response is to send the storm that almost destroys the Trojan fleet in Book 1. It is only in hindsight that the true cost of the prophesied sacrifice is made clear: the life of Orontes.

The above themes are subsequently reinforced and emphasized in the figure of Dido, whose deception at the hands of Juno and Venus leads to yet another cosmically disruptive storm, the consequences of which extend beyond the individual *dolor* of Dido herself, but which also serve as the mythological cause for the future historical *discordia* between Carthage and Rome. Yet, like Orontes, Laocoon, Priam, and Polydorus before her, Dido represents another human life sacrificed in the name of a greater destiny. As an enraged Dido curses the descendants of Aeneas, herself a mirror of Junonian *ira* even as she is her victim, we inevitably find ourselves back where we started: *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?*

We thus see how the poet utilizes the theme of deception in order to emphasize and explore complex, at times irreconcilable problems between personal, civil, and theological tensions in *Aeneid* 1-4. We have also seen the ways in which the poet himself often 'deceives' the reader by establishing and subsequently undermining both the surface meaning of the text and the reader's own expectations, as in the statesmen simile

and the sacrifice of Orontes.<sup>124</sup> It is my belief that Books 1-4, when read in this way, help to anticipate and contextualize the episodes that follow.

At the beginning of Book 6, Virgil introduces the story of Daedalus as Aeneas awaits the Sybil at Cumae. Daedalus' story, wrought on the doors of Apollo's temple, is notably told through the use of *ekphrasis*. I would like to examine this passage now both as a way to reflect on our discussion above, and in the context of extending the implications of my interpretation to the epic's second half. For as Putnam suggests, "As art describes art, we linger, not to escape the story's flow but to deepen our understanding of its meaning, to watch metaphor operating on a grand scale where epic text and one of its grandest synecdoches work as didactic complements to each other."<sup>125</sup>

Let us therefore look more closely at the tableaux depicted on the temple.

Virgil presents the story like this:

As tradition has it, Daedalus, fleeing from the kingdom of Minos and having dared to entrust himself to the sky on swift wings, swam on his strange way to the cold Bears and at last nimbly rested above the Chalcidian hill. Restored here first to earth, he dedicated to you, Phoebus, the oarage of his wings and built a huge temple. On the doors [is] the death of Androgeos; then the offspring of Cecrops, ordered, sad deed, to pay each year as penalty seven bodies of their sons; there the urn stands with the lots drawn. Opposite, rising from the sea, faces the land of Crete: here is the cruel love for the bull, Pasiphae, mated by craft and the Minotaur, a mongrel breed and two-formed offspring, record of forbidden love. Here that house of toil and inextricable maze; but, having taken pity on the princess' deep love, Daedalus himself unwound the deceits and tangles of the palace, guiding the blind tracks with a thread. You also, Icarus, would have a large share in such a work, were grief to allow; twice he attempted to fashion your fall in gold, twice fell the father's hands. Indeed, they would have scanned everything with their eyes had not Achates, sent on ahead, now returned and together with him the priestess of Phoebus and Trivia, Deiphobe the daughter of Glaucus, who speaks thus to the king: "The moment does not demand for itself these sights." (6.14-37).<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> For more on this subject, see Quint 1982.

<sup>125</sup> Putnam 1998: ix.

<sup>126</sup> Trans. C.J. Putnam.

The myth of Daedalus here is divided into five sections: First, Daedalus' landfall in Italy; second, the mythic past of Athens and the murder of Androgeos; third, Crete and the unnatural love of Pasiphae and the bull; fourth, the labyrinth, together with Ariadne, for whom Daedalus unravels the secrets of his creation with thread; and finally, the address to Icarus marks the climax of the story, where the empty panel represents the artist's grief and the consequent failure to depict the death of his son.

Pöschl sees Daedalus as a metaphorical reflection of Aeneas himself, and interprets his story therefore as an aesthetic representation of the *Aeneid*'s central themes. Daedalus, like Aeneas,<sup>127</sup> is an exile and "this alone," writes Pöschl, "relates him to Aeneas and connects his fate most intimately with the main theme of the poem—the search for a new home."<sup>128</sup> Yet more important is what Pöschl fails to address: the overwhelming presence of sacrifice and loss that is depicted on the panels. For indeed, the sacrifice of the seven Athenians, as well as the death of Icarus, point back to the many sacrificial losses enumerated above, at the same time as they anticipate those, such as Pallas, that are yet to come. In particular, the figure of Ariadne, another deserted *regina*, draws a particularly clear parallel to the figure of Dido, and it is no accident that in the final moments of epic's first half, Virgil should ask us to reflect upon and consider the great personal cost of the destiny of Rome.

Putnam, in contrast, places utmost importance on Daedalus' status as an artist. In fact, he observes that the *ekphrasis* in *Aeneid* 6 is the only extant example in ancient

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<sup>127</sup> And many others in the poem: See: Antenor, Diomedes, Andromache, Helenus, Dido, and Evander.

<sup>128</sup> 1964: 150.

literature where an artist is depicted as constructing the biography of his own life, and thus interprets it not just as a literal biography, but a spiritual and psychic one, which acts “as a metaphor for the progress of *any* artist, for his imaginative diary.”<sup>129</sup> Daedalus’ artistic progress is charted as moving from a creator of duplicity<sup>130</sup> to a man moved by pity who unravels the deceits of his own art by guiding Ariadne with thread through the labyrinth. Finally, he is struck with the death of his son, and *dolor*, as Putnam phrases it, “renders the artist artless.”<sup>131</sup>

In the underworld, Aeneas learns from Anchises what will be the political artistry of the Romans: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* “to war down the proud and to spare the conquered.” (6.53) Yet the *Aeneid* concludes, against expectations, not with the sparing of Turnus, not with reconciliation, but with a final savage act driven by *dolor* and *ira*. The *Aeneid*’s abrupt ending, as the spirit of Turnus flees indignantly to the shades and Aeneas, in a brilliant chiasmic reversal, takes on the character of Juno herself, leaves tensions on the human level utterly unresolved. From the standpoint of generic tradition, it is equivalent to the *Iliad* ending with the death of Hector, and therefore gives the

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<sup>129</sup> Putnam 1998: 174.

<sup>130</sup> The most well-known of Daedalus’ creations are, above all, works of duplicity. By this I mean both ‘double-sided’, and deceptive. Daedalus, as Putnam observes, is a creator of hybrids. He manufactures an artificial cow to conceal a real human, and in so doing caters to the furtive desire of its recipient Pasiphae, which in turn begets a further hybrid in the form of the Minotaur (Putnam 1998: 176); his greatest work, the labyrinth, is designed specifically to confuse, mislead and deceive; the wax bound wings which he constructs to flee Crete not only confuse the distinction between man and animal, but to the onlookers in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, even between man and god. The inherently deceptive character of art is a problem that both Virgil and Ovid seem particularly concerned with, and artistic innovation is suggested by both poets to come at a great cost.

<sup>131</sup> Putnam 1998: 182.



impression, like Daedalus' tableaux on the temple of Apollo, that the *Aeneid* is an unfinished work.

Yet, it is my contention that my interpretation above anticipates this final, problematic moment. For in the end, is this not the same 'double crossing' of the reader, the same reversal of expectations, the same subversive message that the poet has been employing, from both a structural and thematic level, since Book 1? Does the reappearance of *dolor* and *ira* here, during the foundational act of Rome, not once again bring us back to where we started?

Putnam puts it aptly when he claims that, "Aeneas' attack of *dolor* proves the impossibility of realizing in fact Anchises' exhortation. In this case to complete is to idealize, to idealize is to dream untruths."<sup>132</sup> If Putnam is correct then Virgil, just as Daedalus with Ariadne's thread, undoes the deceptive idealism of his own art:

For a poet of consummate honesty the truths of nature, Virgil would seem to say, are ever triumphant over the soothing trickery of art, however seductively its practitioners pattern their wares. For the art that supplants deceit with honesty, that composes life's imperfections, that unthreads its own labyrinthine text, not piety, or even pity, is possible, only the final, perfecting deficiencies of anger and sorrow.<sup>133</sup>

In other words, even as Virgil 'deceives' the reader, his subversive thematic threads, centered so often as they are around *dolus* in the *Aeneid*, nevertheless guide the reader to a more truthful, even if a more pessimistic, view of the cosmos.

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<sup>132</sup> Putnam 1998: 193.

<sup>133</sup> Putnam 1998: 198.

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