

Aeneas Narrator

A paper given to the Virgil Society on 22 January 2005

I want to look this afternoon at a topic which I find has also been considered by other scholars, but has not, to my knowledge, actually been much studied, and that is the account of the fall of Troy and of his wanderings which Aeneas gives to Dido and the Carthaginians in Books 2 and 3, and its relationship with the rest of the poem. There are two main questions: the nature of Aeneas' narration itself and then its relationship to the narrations in the rest of the work by the 'first narrator', Virgil: how far, if at all, does Virgil make Aeneas, the 'second narrator', narrate in a style different from his own? We are therefore for the next 50 minutes going to be essentially in the somewhat formal world of narratology. This is obviously a very large topic, which would take a great deal of time to research and condense fully, so what I shall offer this afternoon is no more than a series of soundings and suggestions, concerned more with a *grosso modo* approach to the poem than to fine detail, which I imagine you will all be able to supplement and indeed surpass, if not also subvert, in the discussion afterwards.

First, what sort of narrator is Aeneas? Let us look at the opening of his narration (*Aen.* 2.3-13):

You bid me renew an unspeakable grief, O queen, in telling how the Greeks destroyed the wealth of Troy and its now pitiable kingdom, and all the terrible things I saw and of which I was a major part. What soldier of the Myrmidons or Dolopes or of Odysseus could keep back his tears if he were to tell this story? What's more, damp night is sliding over the sky and the setting stars suggest sleep. But, if you do have a consuming passion to know what happened to us and hear – in brief – the last toil of Troy, though my mind shudders to remember it and recoils in grief, I shall begin.

We can see at once that Aeneas is a skilled orator, who shows a concern for his audience – it is late (*suadentque cadentia sidera somnos*), so perhaps a story is inappropriate; at the same time, he puts the responsibility on to them for the recitation (*si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros*), and even implies that they are asking a bit too much in not letting painful bygones be bygones (*iubes renovare dolorem*). His own importance in the matter is made clear (*quorum pars maxima fui*), but at the same time so is the cost to him (*dolorem, lamentabile, miserrima* – even the Greeks would weep). The story is essentially too tragic to be told (*infandum*) but, like a good guest, he will be brief (*breviter*), hard though it is for him (*quamquam animus meminisse horret*). When Aeneas begins his tale after this passage, it is with

an almost sympathetic picture of the hardships of the Greeks. A master story-teller has thus divested himself of responsibility for the lengthy account he is about to give, promised brevity, ensured that his importance and the sufferings of the Trojans are clear, and given a hint of his objectivity.

Objectivity is indeed a feature of his whole account of the sack of Troy and even of the role of Sinon's trickery in it. Aeneas does not abstain from comment on Sinon's actions, but he is again relatively brief in what he says: *accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno / disce omnis* ('hear now of the tricks of the Greeks and from one scandalous act learn those of a whole people', 2.65-6.), and at the end of Sinon's speech he says *talibus insidiis periurique arte Sinonis / credita res, captique dolis lacrimisque coactis* ('we believed this because of these deceits and the cunning of Sinon who perjured himself; we were taken in by trickery and forced tears', 2.195-6). He does not try to diminish the responsibility of the Trojans for what happens, though he will balance this by also making plain the gods' role. It is the Trojans who are keen to hear more of Sinon's lies (2.105-6), who rush to open the city (2.234), and are mad keen to take the horse in, though it four times sticks on the threshold (*instamus tamen immemores caecique furore*, 'we pressed on nonetheless unmindful and blind with madness', 2.244). It is notable that Aeneas attributes a communal responsibility for what happens to all the Trojans. The use of the second person plural is frequent in these descriptions. Aeneas ends with a statement of the extraordinary irony of the whole business: we were deceived (2.197-8):

*quos neque Tydides nec Larisaeus Achilles,
non anni domuere decem, non mille carinae.*

whom neither Diomedes nor Achilles of Larisa,
nor ten years and a thousand ships had conquered.

Even so, he is measured in his attitude to Sinon, where he might have been ballistic.

It is also notable that in Book 2 Aeneas does not spare himself: the first-person plurals associate him with the errors the Trojans make over the horse, and on a number of occasions he makes no attempt to disguise the fact that he acted in an irrational manner. For instance, there is no reason to believe that he did not agree with the disastrous plan, which his band of Trojans devised during the sack, of changing their armour so as to look like Greeks, which resulted in the deaths of so many of them at the hands of their fellow Trojans. More importantly, even after Hector has commended to him the *sacra tuosque ... Penatis* ('your sacred objects and gods', 2.293), he soon describes his mad dash for war (2.314-7):

*arma amens capio; nec sat rationis in armis,
sed glomerare manum bello ...
... furor iraque mentem
praecipitat, pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis.*

I seized my weapons madly; there was no sense in
fighting, but rage and anger drove my desire to gather
men together to fight, and it seemed splendid to die in battle.

If the passage is genuine, his desire to punish Helen is also presented as pointless but gratifying (2.583-8):

'For though there be no glory in punishing a woman's crime, and such a victory would bring no praise, nonetheless I shall be praised for exterminating an outrage and exacting a just penalty, and it will give me some pleasure to have filled my spirit with the flame of revenge and to have appeased the ashes of my people.' So I raved, and was carried away by my frenzied mind.

Only his mother's intervention stops him here. When his father Anchises has refused to follow him in flight from Troy, he once again decides to plunge back into battle to die, until the fire on his son's head prevents him. Finally, when Creusa is lost, he again threatens the whole future of Rome by dashing back into the city to find her. If he has only the vaguest idea of what the future holds when he is in Troy, by the time he recounts all this it is much clearer to him, so his refusal to hide his potentially disastrous desire to die in Troy speaks much in his favour before his audience. He comes across as one marked by great deeds, but one who is very capable of wrecking the whole venture.

His importance, and also some mitigation of the errors he and the Trojans make, is also conveyed by the way the part played by the gods is stressed. When Thymoetes suggests the horse be taken into the city, Aeneas says he did this *sive dolo seu iam Troiae sic fata ferebant* ('either out of treachery or because now the fates of Troy were moving in that direction', 2.34); and when Laocoon's spear causes the hollow belly of the horse to echo, they would have probed the horse's recesses *si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset* ('if the fates of the gods and our own minds had not been against us', 2.54).¹ Sinon lets the Greeks out of the horse *fatisque deum defensus iniquis* ('protected by the cruel fates of the gods', 2.257). Aeneas makes it clear, in other words, that the gods had obviously decided that Troy should fall, and that the Trojans were almost bound to act in a way that would bring that about.

This objectivity in his narrative and his concern for his audience's view of himself is again noticeable at the very end of his account, in the story of Achaemenides, left behind by Odysseus and his men when they flee the Cyclops. This forms a counterpart to the story of Sinon near the start of Book 2 in that in each story a dishevelled Greek throws himself on the mercy of the Trojans and is given assistance, despite being a Greek (and indeed in each, a monstrous figure, a Horse or a Cyclops, also features). That the experience with Sinon does not lead the Trojans to reject Achaemenides' appeal (or worse) is of course further evidence of the kind of people Aeneas and the Trojans are.

There is a further instance of sympathy in this episode, which is also an important indicator as to the nature of Aeneas' narrative, which we shall come to in the second part of this paper. When he introduces himself, Achaemenides describes himself as *comes infelicis Ulixi* ('companion of unhappy Ulysses', 3.613), and at the end of the episode, Aeneas uses exactly the same words (3.691). That Aeneas should call Ulysses *infelix* is strange. Is it Virgil using ring-composition to mark off the episode from the coda to the book, as Williams suggests? Or is it Aeneas simply 'quoting' Achaemenides' words? Or is it Virgil making a link between his hero and Homer's, reminding us of the parallelism between them? Or, finally, is this perhaps an inkling on Aeneas' part that his old enemy Odysseus and he now have sufficient in common for him to think of Odysseus as *infelix* in having to undergo such hardships as the Cyclops? It is perhaps worth noting here that in Book 2 frequent reference is made to Odysseus, on no less than nine occasions in fact (7, 44, 90, 97, 122ff., 164, 261, 436, 762), and here in Book 3, the episode which closes Aeneas' account concerns Odysseus again. In these cases, of course, the 'speaker' as it were is Virgil, since Aeneas can know nothing of what has or is about to happen to Odysseus (beyond the Cyclops), so that the significance of the parallelism with the *Odyssey* is something which the reader but not the character can appreciate.² The sympathy expressed by Aeneas is striking, all the more so for us because he is unaware of the significance of what he has said. This is a gap, between reader and character, which Virgil exploits quite often, and we shall return to it.

Finally, having looked at the more emotional aspects of his narrative, we can see that Aeneas is also a skilled presenter of it in the technical sense. Not only does he employ a variety of simple devices to make it vivid, such as the use of *ecce* eleven times in the two books (for instance when Sinon is brought in [2.57] or when Hector's ghost visits him [2.270]), or the use of apostrophe to the likes of

Troy (*si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset ... Priamique arx alta maneres*, 2.54-6), or the frequent editorialising, which brings the advantages of hindsight to his narrative. In Book 2, there is also a careful structuring, which begins with the communal actions of the Trojans concerning the horse, moves through Aeneas' actions in the fighting with his comrades, and reaches its climax with the description of what he saw alone as he looked down into the palace (2.453 ff.). In this part, Aeneas changes his manner of narration from one in which he simply narrates what he saw to one where his own sight of the events is emphasised. The climax of the sack is seen very much through his eyes, and Venus enables him to have an especially privileged view at the crucial moment when, having stopped him from harming Helen, she explains what is really happening. Here we have the most remarkable aspect of Aeneas' viewing of the fall of the city (2.604-20):

'Look, I will take away the dank cloud which now surrounds you, dims your mortal sight, and dulls your vision. Do not fear to do what I tell you, and do not refuse to follow my instructions. Here, where you see the shattered buildings, stones torn from stones, and smoke billowing with dust, Neptune shakes the walls and loosened foundations with his great trident, and rips the whole city from its base. Here, Juno, most savage, is first to seize the Scaean Gates, and girded with iron and raving calls an army of allies from the ships. Now, look, Athena is sitting on top of the Acropolis, shining in a cloud and savage-looking with her Gorgon. The father of the gods himself is giving the Greeks courage and strength, he himself rouses the gods against the Trojan forces. Seize the chance to escape, my son, and put an end to your efforts. I shall never be far away and will put you safe on your ancestral threshold'. So she spoke, and hid herself in the thick shadows of night. There appeared to me the awful faces and powers of the gods now hostile to Troy. Then it was that the whole of Ilium seemed to sink into the flames and Neptune's Troy to be turned upside down.

At the very moment when Troy falls, Aeneas sees most clearly what is really happening. I say that Aeneas sees, but it is perhaps noteworthy that he does not himself explicitly say this. The words are all Venus'. She tells him to look (*aspice, respice*) and that she will remove the cloud from his vision, and then directs his gaze with *hic ... hic*. This is a neat device because it means that, just as he describes how Venus then described the divine scene for him and directed his gaze, so now he does the same for his audience and readers: as for him, the scene is laid for us, and the effect is all the more graphic than it would have been if Aeneas had simply described it in his own words. Indeed, it would have meant making an almost unbelievable or arrogant claim to have maintained that he had seen such things. He seems to sense this, restricting himself to a bald line-and-a-half of his own words after Venus has finished: *apparent dirae facies inimicaque Troiae / numina magna deum* ('there appeared the savage faces of the gods and their great powers, hostile to Troy', 2.622-3). It is a very shrewd narrative choice, and produces one of the most striking moments of his whole narration. The effect of all this is once more to lay emphasis upon Aeneas as a special figure, one with divine assistance and a divinely-ordained mission. He then returns to human company and vision, and recounts the final moments of the Trojans in Troy.

Aeneas thus paints himself as a man of sorrows, but also of destiny, as a survivor, though also one capable of upsetting the apple-cart in his emotive reactions to things. He is also a skilled narrator, in command of his tale. This then is Aeneas' picture of himself, for consumption by the Carthaginians, who have saved him from the great storm stirred up by Juno. One might now ask how it relates to the picture of Aeneas in those portions of the work where he is not the narrator. A big topic, but the basic outlines reappear. His impulsiveness and tendency to destructive despair are the very first things we see of him in Book 1.92-101:

Suddenly, Aeneas' limbs were loosened by the cold. He groaned, and, lifting both hands to the skies, he cried: 'O thrice and four-times blest who were able to die before the eyes of their relatives under the high walls of Troy! O Diomedes, greatest of the Greek race, could I not have died on the plains of Troy, and poured out my life at your right hand, when fierce Hector was laid low by Achilles' spear, and great Sarpedon, and the Simois rolled so many shields, helmets and bodies of men in its waves?'

He describes himself as subject to the same *furor* as the rest of the Trojans, and *furor* will possess him at various times, most noticeably in Book 10, where he slays priest and suppliant, and at the very end when he kills Turnus. He notes his own mistakes and misunderstandings in Troy and on his journey, and the way the gods have to correct him, and Virgil will tell of similar mistakes and divine corrections, e.g. in the case of his dalliance with Dido. His *pietas* towards the gods is indicated by his descriptions of the sacrifices he made in various places, and towards men in his treatment of Achaemenides. This is of course a virtue that Virgil makes much of in other books, but it is perhaps worth noting that, though Virgil repeatedly calls him *pius Aeneas* and makes him lay claim himself to *pietas* when he introduces himself to Dido (*sum pius Aeneas*, 1.378, not perhaps the best chat-up line), he never again refers to himself as *pius* and only indirectly to his own *pietas*: the only times he uses that word in his narrative are when he describes how the *pietas* of Panthus did not save him from death (2.430), and when he quotes Helenus' description of his father Anchises as *o felix nati pietate* ('happy in your son's piety', 3.480). This is an important point when we confront those who try to claim that there is a strong element of saccharine in the character of Aeneas, too much goody-two-shoes piety. We can respond that the fault (if fault it is) lies with Virgil, and that his hero makes almost nothing of this quality himself.

At the same time, one can detect some differences. We have seen the sympathy that Aeneas displays towards those who suffer, and his capacity for love, seen so clearly in the case of his wife Creusa or of his father. This is reflected in his affair with Dido, but his treatment of her and especially the 'silences' of Aeneas, so well discussed by Dennis Feeney,³ when Dido confronts him with what she sees as his treachery and ingratitude, seem to suggest a different man, though he has of course just been the recipient of a visit from Mercury, which has made him think. His mercy we have also noted, but his killing of Turnus at the very end, though Turnus has accepted defeat before the assembled armies and acts as a suppliant, will always come as a shock (to me at least) when I read the end of the work. There are, however, elements of this sort of behaviour in his own account, so that essentially there are no major structural discrepancies between author and character in their presentation of Aeneas: we do not have a sense of a completely different man in the rest of the work from the one in Books 2 and 3.

We have looked at the presentation of Aeneas as a character, and our last point introduces the subject of the technical management of narrative and how Aeneas and Venus compare in this. I move now to my second question, of the relationship between author and hero. Narratology concerns itself with the order in which events are told, looking at *analepses* ('flash-backs') to the past and *prolepses* ('flashes-forward') to the future, and being interested in *anachronies*, where the sequence of events is disturbed in the telling. As a narrator, Aeneas in general does not engage in complex use of anachrony, usually recounting events in the order they happened, and where he does look to the past, it is usually in a formalised way through speeches by others rather than simple *analepses* in his own words or in words reported from others. Thus, Sinon's speech, though deceitful, gives us a long account of supposed earlier events in the Greek camp and the construction of the Horse. Anchises, misinterpreting Apollo's oracle, tells of the Trojans' origins in Crete, and later of Cassandra's prophecy about *Hesperia*; Anchises again, reporting Apollo's words, the Harpy Celaeno, and Helenus all make important predictions about the future; Andromache fills in her story from the fall of Troy to her time in Buthrotum, Achaemenides tells the story of the Cyclops, and so on.

For the most part, Virgil too narrates events in their chronological order, without major dislocations (Books 2 and 3 are an obvious exception). There are of course *analepses* to fill in background for reader and characters, but as in the case of Aeneas, these are often given by speakers in the narrative rather than Virgil: there is a key prophecy made by Jupiter early in Book 1 to reassure Venus about Aeneas' coming success (1.254 ff.); Venus gives us the background to Dido when she meets Aeneas (1.335 ff.), as does Diana for Camilla when she speaks to Opis (11.532 ff.); Evander tells Aeneas the story of Hercules and Cacus at the festival that commemorates that tale (8.184 ff.). It is also a feature of the *Aeneid* that Virgil will use physical objects or similar devices to recount the past: the pictures on Dido's temple of Juno depict aspects of Troy and its fall not mentioned elsewhere (1.459 ff.); the doors of Daedalus' temple depict Theseus and the Minotaur (6.14 ff.), and the Shield of Aeneas contains in its orb the future of Rome. In a slightly different manner, in Hades Aeneas sees a parade of heroes depicting the future that depends on him. In each case, the prolepsis or analepsis is woven into the story, as something recounted or depicted internally to the narrative. If we seek a fancy name for this, they are *intradiegetic*, rather than *extradiegetic*. There are exceptions, but the big blocks tend to be of this kind. Similarly, at the very start of the work, after a summary of its subject matter that plays with time in a very complicated way, he gives Juno's reasons for her hatred of the Trojans, but soon modulates into a direct speech, with her giving further reasons. Author and characters are alike therefore in their use of chronological narrative, and in the way that major passages about the past or future tend to be delivered not by the primary narrator but by a character in the story. One might contrast Anchises in the Underworld, whose Parade of Heroes quite ignores chronology, with Virgil's own account of the future on the Shield, which, while selective, does go down through the ages to Augustus.

There is however a notable exception to Virgil's use of characters to convey events before or after the main narrative. In Book 7.600 ff., King Latinus, in despair at the route events are taking, abandons his attempts to control matters. He has however refused to open the Gates of Janus to show that war has been declared, but Juno steps in to do it herself. At this point, Virgil goes into a passage which contains a striking description of how war was declared in ancient Latium and ancient Rome: the two time-periods are strikingly blended together. The passage clearly relates to what happens in the epic, but the details are closer to contemporary Roman than mythical Italian practices (7.601-16):

There was a custom in the Hesperian land of Latium, which the cities of Alba revered as sacred, and now Rome, greatest of all, cultivates, when first men rouse Mars for battle, whether they are preparing to bring tearful war to the Getae or the Hyrcani or the Arabes, or to march against the Indians, following the dawn, and demanding the standards from the Parthians. There are two gates of war (that is the name they use), sanctified by religion and the fear of savage Mars. A hundred bolts of bronze close them and the eternal strength of iron, and Janus, their guardian, never leaves the threshold. These, when the senators have fixed on war, the consul himself, conspicuous in the toga of Quirinus and garbed in the Sabine manner, unbars and they shriek as they open. He calls for war, and then the rest of the people follow him, and the bronze horns blow their shrill agreement.

The dislocation of time here is remarkable: Rome and its epic past are brought brutally together at this moment when war is about to break out, a war which, in its conflict between the Italians and the Trojans, who are ultimately from Italy, is uncomfortably reminiscent of the Civil War from which Rome is only now recovering. The significance of the *Aeneid* to recent contemporary events is firmly emphasised: Augustus closed the Gates of Janus after Actium, and several times thereafter.

Do we find anything like this in Aeneas' narrative? There is, I think, at least one example. As I have tried to argue elsewhere, the death of Priam at the hands of Pyrrhus is full of references to the death of Pompey⁴ The lines of Aeneas' obituary for Priam point to Pompey the Great in a number of ways (2.556-8):

Once the ruler of Asia, proud of so many subject lands and peoples. He lies a great trunk on the shore, his head torn from his shoulders, a corpse without name.

Priam, like Pompey, rules in the east, and Pompey was famous for his *superbia*: he was called ‘king of kings’ and ‘Agamemnon’ by his subordinates,⁵ and Seneca, in a splendid passage, asks:⁶

quid in Mithridaten et Armeniam et omnis Asiae angulos traxit? infinita scilicet cupido crescendi, cum sibi uni parum magnus videretur (Ep. 94.65).

What dragged him against Mithridates and Armenia and every corner of Asia? Why, an infinite desire for increasing power, since to himself alone he seemed insufficiently magnus.

There is also a notable disjunction in the lines just quoted: in the first half of line 557, Priam is lying dead by the altar in the very middle of the palace; in the second half, he is several miles away on the shore, with his head torn off. This sort of dislocation is unusual for Virgil. But it can be explained again with reference to Pompey, who was killed on the shore in Egypt, and then his head was cut off and sent to a disgusted Caesar. Curiously, even the names ‘Neoptolemus’, the less frequent alternative name for Pyrrhus used here, and ‘Achilles’, Neoptolemus’ father, look forward to the names of Pompey’s murderers, Ptolemy (XIV Dionysius) and Achilles. Finally, Priam tells Neoptolemus that Achilles *meque in mea regna remisit* (‘sent me back to my kingdoms’, 2.543), an odd expression for letting him return to the palace with the body of Hector, but again reminiscent of the way in which Pompey had restored to the throne Ptolemy’s father Auletes: the words used by Priam of himself fit rather better with Pompey.

This heavy parallelism between these two great men cannot be without significance: as in the example of the Gates of War just discussed, past and present are violently yoked together. In the former, the parallelism between past and present is brought before our eyes, and this is true in the current example too, but there is something more. I think it is the first place where the *Aeneid* explicitly encourages an allegorical reading of itself specifically in terms of recent Roman history. An allegorical reading of epic (or indeed other texts) was obviously possible and a regular mode of reading,⁷ and Aeneas’ connection with the Julian *gens* would be a further encouragement, but nowhere before this passage has the link between past and present been so explicitly made. Once it has been made, of course, it is much used, not least in Book 3, where, as Stahl has shown with enormous detail, the various places visited by the Trojans are closely connected with aspects of Augustan propaganda: each episode gives ancient sanction to Octavian’s actions and victory.⁸

This intrusion of the contemporary into Aeneas’ words leads us to move from the chronology of and use of time in the narrative to consider whether there are other ways in which Aeneas’ words are imbued with matters of which he could have no inkling. In narratological terms, we move from ‘order’ to ‘voice’. There is a simple example of this in the story of Polydorus, which Aeneas tells in Book 3, when Polydorus reveals himself as the inhabitant of the bush Aeneas tries to pull apart (3.48-57):

I stood amazed, my hair stood up on my head and my voice stuck in my throat. This Polydorus, with a great quantity of gold, wretched Priam had sent in secret to the Thracian king to be raised, when he had begun to lose confidence in the Trojan forces and he saw the city surrounded by a siege. He, when the resources of the Trojans were broken and Fortune left the city, defected to Agamemnon’s side and the winning army, and destroyed all decency: he slaughtered Polydorus and gained the gold by force. O unholy greed for gold, what will you not make mortal hearts do? After the fear left my bones...

I say Aeneas tells the story, but there is the problem of how Aeneas has come about this knowledge of Polymestor’s behaviour. Williams tries to explain this away: ‘He would not have known at the time he

went to Thrace of Polymestor's treachery, but he may now be assumed to know of it so that he can tell Dido the complete story'. But it is not clear what we should base that assumption on. Narratologically, one might almost be better off imagining that the voice of the primary narrator, Virgil, breaks in here. This is an idea that would gain some support from the fact that Aeneas' description of his horrified reaction (3.48) is picked up after the account of Polydorus' death by *postquam pavor ossa reliquit* ('once fear had left his bones', 3.57): the story could thus be taken as Virgil's own addition to his narrator's tale. The expostulation

*quid non mortalia pectora cogis,
auri sacra fames? (3.56-7)*

accursed greed for gold, to what do you not drive men's hearts?

would thus not be (or not solely be), as Williams suggests, a remark made to be 'relevant to Dido's own experience, for Pygmalion had murdered her husband Sychaeus for gold', but a remark intruded by the author: perhaps the Latin archaism in the use of *sacer* to mean 'accursed' also points to a Roman voice.⁹ We would have then an analepsis introduced not, as elsewhere, by the current narrator Aeneas or by a character whom he quotes, but by Virgil. The implication would be that we should not simply take Aeneas' narration as a long story within a story, as a 'realist' text, but as something more complex into which the narrator's voice intrudes, in a manner very reminiscent of Ovid.

One might object that this is a lot to build on a single example and that one must expect such illogicalities in a long work, but there are other examples which would support the idea that Virgil's voice may be heard in Aeneas'. On four occasions in this book, Virgil uses expressions such as *fama volat* (121), *fama occupat auris* (294), *fama est* (578, 694). In some cases, one might accept that, though Aeneas does not trouble to say so, some of the Trojans can be imagined as meeting someone who starts the rumour, as for instance when they reach Buthrotum (3.294-7):

Here an incredible rumour reached our ears, that Helenus, son of Priam, was ruler over
Greek cities, and had won the kingdom and bed of Pyrrhus, descendant of Aeacus, and that
Andromache had again returned to a Trojan husband.

On other occasions, however, it is not so clear that stray locals will explain things. Consider the passage about Ortygia (3.694-6):

The rumour is that the river Alpheus made his secret way here under the sea, and mingles
with the Sicilian waters at your mouth, Arethusa.

How did Aeneas come about this learned myth, when he did not visit Syracuse but merely sailed by, worshipping its *numina*? Is this not the Hellenistic poet Virgil entering his text to give us information that it is all but impossible to imagine his hero obtaining?

Indeed one might say that the whole of this final passage of Book 3 demands a knowledge of Sicilian and Italian geography and learned traditions that Aeneas could not in the time conceivably have discovered. This point was made as early as Servius, who considered it *vitiosum*, 'not without justification', says Williams admiringly. Consider what Aeneas tells us in 692 ff. He knows the name of Plemyrion (that he knows the names of these places is itself rather incredible), but more than that, he knows its derivation from Greek *plemyris* 'tide', and is thus able to produce the punning etymological epithet *undosum*, a Hellenistic move if ever there was one, and this is not an isolated instance of such puns. He knows the tradition of the fatal attempt (long after his time) of the people of Camarina to drain its marsh, and implies a knowledge of the Greek proverb 'don't move Camarina: it is better unmoved'. He knows that Acragas was famous for its horses but, as commentators have

noticed, he says this was true *quondam*, which is problematic. Williams puts it well: ‘if we take this to mean “in the past”, the anachronism coming from the mouth of Aeneas seems very harsh. But we cannot possibly take it to mean “in the future”, because it is an inappropriate piece of prophecy for Aeneas to make, and draws immediate attention to other anachronisms in the passage. It is perhaps a further indication that this passage may have been originally narrative, not a speech by Aeneas’. I do not like this kind of explanation, because it depends upon pure speculation. A narratological explanation, in terms of ‘voices’, seems preferable, since these are not isolated features. This passage is like those elsewhere, where Virgil will drop into his narrative learned facts and etymologies, as when he notes the presence of Capys amongst the Trojan defenders and adds *hinc nomen Campanae ducitur urbi* (‘this is where the Campanian city [of Capua] gets its name’, 10.145). This is where narratology can make a contribution. If we see this as another place where the narrator’s voice breaks in to speak to his learned reader, then we need not consider such passages as *vitiosa*, nor worry about what Aeneas could or could not have known, nor see anachronisms as problematic, nor create stories about the *Aeneid*’s composition. The density of things Aeneas cannot have known is very high here: perhaps appropriately, because the narrating voice is about to pass from hero to poet, and so Virgil gradually turns hero into poet through his apparent knowledge of what only a trained Hellenistic poet could know,

In this context, one could also include the use of intertexts, quotations or references in Aeneas’ words to works of literature written long after his time. The most obvious, of course, are the persistent quotations from Homer, which are plainly in Virgil’s voice not Aeneas’. We have noted already the case of Achaemenides and the echoes of Ulysses which he anchors. But there are many others. For instance, we have looked at the historical intertext of the death of Pompey in the death of Priam, but that is not all. The simile that introduces Pyrrhus (*qualis ubi in lucem coluber mala gramina pastus*, ‘as when a snake, fed on poisonous herbs, comes into the light’, 2.471) imitates Homer’s description of Hector in *Iliad* 22.93-5. The description of the lamentations in the palace are from Ennius’ description of the fall of Alba Longa, and this then modulates into quotation of his *Andromache* in 2.499-505:

I myself saw Neoptolemus frenzied with slaughter, and both Atreus’ sons on the threshold;
I saw Hecuba and her hundred daughters and Priam, at the altars, fouling them, which he
had consecrated himself, with his blood. There were fifty couches, which offered great hope
of heirs, and doorposts proudly decorated with barbarian gold and spoils, all thrown down.
Where the fire had not reached, there were Greeks.

cf. Ennius, *Androm.* 92-101:

O country, country, o house of Priam, temple shut by the high-sounding gate. You I saw
standing magnificently bedecked in barbarian splendour, roofs chased and coffered with gold
and ivory. All of this I saw go up in flames, Priam’s life violently ended, Jove’s altar with
blood befouled.

It would be an enormous task to see whether Aeneas is given more intertexts than Virgil uses himself. To avoid such a (probably futile) task, I simply counted the number of columns which each book occupies in Knauer’s great lists of parallels between *Aeneid* and Homer. To begin with, I thought I had found a great difference between Aeneas and Virgil: Book 1 occupies 15 columns, but 2 and 3 no more than about seven each. This hope was however dashed by the discovery that Book 4 occupies less than seven, so, although 2 and 3, along with 4, 7 and 8, have slightly fewer columns than the other books, the differences are not significant.¹⁰ Being in mathematical mood, I thought too to look at speeches, but again could find no significant differences:

Book	% speech	Speeches	Speakers	Average	Longest
2	35.5	26	13	11	41
3	39.6	21	9	13.5	89
9	31	35	16	7	31
10	29.5	42	12	6.5	45
11	44	25	15	16	62
12	30	31	11	9	33

The percentages and averages for Books 2 and 3 lie within the range of the other books, the numbers of speeches and speakers are comparable, and even the technique of having the longest speech deal with the most important matter in the books is found in all these books. It will be fairly clear that I have not found much in the way of differences between the two narrators. They characterise Aeneas in the same way, and there are many similarities in their handling of things like time and voice, intertexts, references to the future and so on, in the narratives. This is a disappointment perhaps, but may explain why the subject has not been treated very much: there is nothing to find! Indeed, there are a number of other similarities that I could have talked about were there time. Have I simply been wasting your time?

I hope not. What we have now to ask is what the significance of this finding might be. The most obvious explanation is an aesthetic one: Virgil did not want to create a work of which one-sixth was of a very different nature to the rest, so he carried the modes of composition over into Books 2 and 3 that he had used elsewhere; or alternatively, if one agrees with those who think that Book 3 was the first book and an experiment in a new kind of epic, carried over Book 3's methods to the rest of the *Aeneid*. The classical canons of unity would have led him to do this.

But can we do better than this? Can we give a significance to the way that Virgil creates such a close similarity between himself and his secondary narrator, Aeneas? Is there more than a simple desire for stylistic consistency? We have seen that he regularly blurs the boundary between his voice and Aeneas', and between what Aeneas can know and what he himself knows. Is there a point here, something about the nature of history and specifically Roman history? Aeneas' narration, as we have seen, looks forward to significant events in the later history of Rome, such as the death of Pompey, and this is also, of course, a feature of Virgil's whole work. There is furthermore one place which we have not yet considered, where hero and poet are brought especially close together. This is the Trojans' visit on their wanderings to Actium, the site of Augustus' final victory over Antony and Cleopatra. There is therefore an obvious resonance with Augustus' final victory in having Aeneas go there. Indeed, the games the Trojans celebrate there mirror those which Augustus himself put on at Nicopolis. Aeneas also dedicates a shield there, which recalls the *Clipeum Virtutis* given to Augustus by the Senate and people, to mark his 'virtue, clemency, justice and piety towards the gods and his fatherland', as the copy set up in Arles in 26 BC puts it. It is at Actium that Aeneas is finally free from the threat of Greeks and Greek lands (3.282-3), and at Actium that Augustus frees the Roman world from its civil war. The parallels here between Aeneas and Augustus are striking therefore.

But what about Aeneas and Virgil? It is important for our argument that Aeneas does not just dedicate a shield (3.286-8):

I attached to the doors a shield of hollow bronze, the great weapon of Abas, and I marked the event with an inscription/song: 'Aeneas dedicated these arms taken from the victorious Greeks'.

He puts up an inscription, but it is the word that Virgil uses for the inscription that is interesting: *rem carmine signo*. The use of *carmen*, a word for a poem, is notable because it brings Aeneas and Virgil closer together. By using that word, Virgil has Aeneas celebrate Actium with a *carmen*, in exactly the same way that he does himself with the Aeneid, if on a rather larger scale. Furthermore, one of the most striking passages explicitly about Augustus in the poem is the description of the shield of Aeneas. Aeneas therefore seems to become, for a brief time, at this key moment, a poet, marking Actium with a hexameter poem to celebrate it and with a fine and famous shield. Here especially, the boundaries between poet and hero are collapsed. z

We have, therefore, two different narrators telling, in similar styles, stories in which past, present and future are similarly woven together. It is almost as if it were the same narrative, variously fragmented and repeated between the two narrators, each of whom narrates stories which evoke later and contemporary parallels. The similarities in the historical events are matched by similarities in their narrators, whether the mythical Aeneas or first-century Virgil. It is as if there is only one narrative, of the history of Rome, prefigured in the past and with resonances into the future, and it almost does not matter who narrates this history; the narrations of Aeneas and Virgil are given a consistent style as it is the same narrative at bottom that they are narrating. Alongside them are all the other narrators whom they use to tell the tale. Time differences are collapsed in the events which evoke the future, and differences of narrative voice are also effaced by the consistency of style. This consistency and similarity of style would not, therefore, be simply a matter of aesthetics, but convey something of Virgil's concept of history and the way in which events in different periods, whoever narrates them, imitate and illuminate those of other periods. If we wish, as Romans, to understand our own recent history, we need to hear its resonances in the past, and the resonances of the future in the past, in whoever's voice the narrative happens to be.

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NOTES

- 1 It is debated whether *mens* belongs to the Trojans or the gods.
- 2 It is perhaps preferable to consider the passage along these lines rather than worrying about the relative chronologies of the wanderings of Ulysses and Aeneas, as did Servius *auctus* on 590.
- 3 D. Feeney, 'The Taciturnity of Aeneas', CQ 33 (1983) 204-19.
- 4 Cf. A.M. Bowie, 'The Death of Priam: allegory and history in the Aeneid', CQ 40 (1990) 470-81.
- 5 Cf. Appian, BC 2.67.
- 6 Cf. Lucan, 1.125-6 *nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem / Pompeiusve parem*.
- 7 Cf. P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: cosmos and imperium* (Oxford 1986).
- 8 Cf. H.-P. Stahl 'Political stop-overs on a mythological travel route: from battling Harpies to the battle of Actium', in id. (ed.), *Virgil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*, (London, 1998) 37-84.
- 9 Cf. OLD s.v. 2 c.
- 10 The figures for each book are: 15, 7, 7.5, 6.5, 9, 10, 7.5, 8, 13, 15, 10.5, 12.5.