

CHAPTER I

THE DEATH OF PALLAS

Intertextuality and Transformation of the Epic Model

I. TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE *PATROKLEIA*

In the series of slaughters that occupies all of *Aeneid* 10, a compositional project gradually takes shape. Enough material is gathered here to fill several Iliadic books and nearly all the poem's heroes are given their own lengthy *aristeia* punctuated by minor episodes. But still the reader is guided through this chaotic chain of events by a clarifying thread, since a familiar and already assimilated model gives light to navigate it. The tenth book "corresponds to the victorious events of Patroclus, to his death at the hand of Hector and the beginning of Achilles' revenge."¹ Pallas is based on Patroclus, Turnus on Hector, Aeneas on Achilles. Just like Achilles, Aeneas, after the death of his young friend, is driven by overwhelming desire for final vengeance.² As with Hector, Turnus's victory is at once the peak of his success and, without his realizing it, the basis for his defeat. Like Patroclus, Pallas is dragged by desire for valor into a tragic combat against a stronger enemy—and the narrator's passionate participation intentionally balances here the famous qualities of pathos found in Patroclus's episode. But more than analyzing the mere content of the Vergilian debts, which in any case have already been sufficiently traced many times,³ what interests me here now is how the Latin poet goes about transforming a paradigmatic event of heroic epic like the *Patrokleia*.

If a reader finds in the web of the Homeric narrative a “guide” for deciphering the new narrative, this is not just confirmation of her role as epic addressee and witness to the renewal of a tradition: rather it is the first step toward a new, more sophisticated and critical, relationship with the epic action. The two texts present themselves to readers as though in immediate continuity, which makes the system of differences far more conspicuous. This dynamic of transformation—the intertextuality that generates the sense of the text—is not established without the reader’s active cooperation; indeed, it nearly coincides with the process of comprehension that the author envisioned.

A first example may be useful at this point, to sketch in outline the kind of analysis I will develop later. When young Lausus is killed, the poet develops Aeneas’s reaction with unusual psychological depth (*et mentem subiit patriae pietatis imago* [“an image of paternal care struck his mind”], 10.824): the victor groans in sorrow and extends his hand to address the dead as a sign of mourning;⁴ his words pay homage to the young man’s courage; he leaves to him the armor that made him so happy and, finally, not only grants him burial but also takes up the lifeless body in his own arms to return it to his comrades, encouraging them to approach without fear. This scene of great pathos constitutes a systematic reversal of a literary stereotype that the Vergilian text has already established in readers’ memory, both by its insistent repetition and its (“vertical”) appeal to the established typology of Homeric tradition. Epic scenes of death in battle normally entail, with fixed formulae: a triumphal *euchoi* over the fallen body (the victor boasts of his courageous feat, addresses with derision the dead and his companions⁵), the stripping of the armor, sometimes accompanied by the theft and mistreatment of the corpse, and its abandonment to dogs and birds. More specifically, the image of Aeneas lifting the enemy’s body from the ground, unique both in Vergil’s poem and in the Homeric model itself,⁶ vividly symbolizes the concept of *pietas* and *miseri-cordia* as integral parts of a new heroic ideal, one further defined by its very difference from the Homeric predecessor. And the model stands out all the more clearly thanks to the immediate context. A narrative parallel, in fact, clearly links Lausus to a warrior of the enemy camp, Pallas: both are young, valorous, of outstanding

beauty, sons of fathers who love them as their sole comfort, and destined to die young from blows of a stronger and older adversary. The narrator explicitly juxtaposes them, in lines that also serve to foreshadow their fates:

Hinc Pallas instat et urget,
hinc contra Lausus, nec multum discrepat aetas,
egregii forma, sed quis fortuna negarat
in patriam reditus. Ipsos concurrere passus
haud tamen inter se magni regnator Olympi;
mox illos sua fata manent maiore sub hoste (10.433–38).

[Here Pallas hunts and harries, against him Lausus, both about the same age, each fine in form, but fortune denied them their homecoming. Yet the ruler of great Olympus did not suffer them to confront each other; their fates awaited them soon at the hand of a greater foe.]

It is clear now that the parallelism becomes an instrument of contrast: by killing Pallas, Turnus acts as a typical Homeric warrior, a negative counterpoint to Aeneas's humanity.⁷ The juxtaposition of the two fates has a certain affinity with the thematic structure of the *Patrokleia*, where the consecutive deaths of Sarpedon and Patroclus seem to form a single complex marked by their shared tone of pathos. But most decisive is the transformation Vergil achieves by multiplying the cultural values that the text puts in play.

If the functional opposition of these two scenes is readily discernible, and even emphasized by the recurring polarity between the two chief antagonists Aeneas and Turnus, still perhaps a couple of less obvious observations can be made. First, it does not seem that we are meant simply to contrast the attitudes of the two main heroes and trace them back to distinct, opposing paradigms. I take it as given that the correct analysis of characters in a narrative involves comparing each character not with one other character more or less arbitrarily determined, but instead with the entire articulated complex that makes up the system of characters. From this angle, it becomes clear that Turnus's behavior toward the enemy is shared by all the characters involved in the epic action and falls within the

horizon of normal expectations that the text establishes through parallelism and repetitions of events (any battle scene of the *Aeneid* could be cited as example of this), whereas Aeneas's behavior toward Lausus is entirely unique and thus "abnormal." (Naturally it would be easy to jump to conclusions here: for Vergil's Roman readers—the audience Vergil had in mind—if the concept of normality were suddenly overturned by its opposite, Aeneas's abnormality could not but represent the arrival of authentic civility; but we will see momentarily that this may be too hasty a reading.) This observation may be confirmed by the fact that Aeneas's gesture of pity not only contradicts but even lays waste to what Aeneas himself does on the battlefield, even in this very book. Indeed, after Pallas's death Aeneas gives up any self-control and his actions recall, through explicit allusions, Achilles' raging slaughter in the *Iliad* to avenge Patroclus (cf. books 20 and 21). Deaf to supplications, sarcastic and cruelly dismissive even of family bonds (cf. especially 10.595–601), even ready to ritually sacrifice prisoners (517ff.), *pius* Aeneas strides the battlefield like Aegaeon, who dared to challenge Jupiter's thunderbolts, brandishing spears in his hundred arms.

It thus seems arbitrary to emphasize unilaterally the negative value that the *synkrisis* assumes with regard to Turnus alone.⁸ What matters is the construction of a complex system of perspectives that awaken the audience's critical understanding through a continuous adjustment of "narrative distance." In the prospective vision that the Vergilian text makes its readers adopt, the Homeric text acts not only as *literary model* (both as a complex of elements and structures to imitate and as a formal matrix for epic), but it is present also as a *cultural model that has by now become relativized*. (Intertextual significance involves precisely holding these two modes together in a single communicative act.) The Homeric world is not configured as the only possible one (nor, on the other hand, as a place of "uncivilized" values to be rejected), but instead assumes a "precivilized" quality. And indeed it is this intertextual mode that allows Vergil convincingly to evoke the heroes of distant, "primitive" Italy. It is not lost on anyone that Turnus, Mezentius, and Camilla are much more "Homeric" characters than Aeneas. Let us ask the question from the side of the positive protagonist. Contrary to the Homeric heroes—and this is quite a substantial difference—Aeneas is

essentially a founder. If we consider the values of the protagonist and those of the world around him in the poem, we must conclude that Aeneas is a hero of a humanity that does not yet exist. For this reason he pays the price for his ambiguous relation to “barbarity”: in the name of constructive values that are firm but still far away in the future, his duty is to destroy; the darkest and most difficult moment in the process of foundation is reserved for him—the man of peace will instead be, as we can clearly gather, his son Ascanius/Iulus. After all, the nature of Italic barbarity also recalls two different ages at once, the Age of Saturn and the Iron Age, and thus includes both many outmoded values and, at the very same time, many germs of positive virtues.

The literary representation of this conflict could not help but foreshadow a system of disparities between characters in action such that it threatens the integrity of the values typical of archaic epic. In this sense, the orientation of the *Aeneid* toward the Augustan present risks not finding a point of synthesis with the Homeric tradition, since the juggling of values and ideologies was not easily accommodated by the epic form of *horrida bella*. Clearly, we are speaking here of cultural expectations that tend to push to a breaking point the communicative capacity of epic narration, already codified by Homer in the service of other values and quite different expectations.

With these premises, my argument aims to be immediately substantiated by textual evidence. Its main advantage with respect to other possible critical angles (which share a certain initial structural resemblance) seems to consist in being able to get directly into the work’s linguistic texture, in search of a functional nexus between imitation of Homer and poetic signification. In short, my inquiry pays attention to the relation between the transformation of the Homeric model (the moment of origin and construction of the new epic work)⁹ and what the *Aeneid* seeks to convey to its readers; and we might add that it may also involve Vergil’s attempt to construct a radically new “epic addressee.” An area particularly suited to this inquiry is a portion of the text where a maximum of Homeric redundancy occurs with a maximum of purposeful information: the episode of Pallas’s death in book 10, a complex synthesis of Homeric imitation and at the same time a turning point in the plot of the *Aeneid*.

2. HERCULES' TEARS: THE HOMERIC MODEL
AS STRATIFICATION (10.464–73)

By combining a scene of divine counsel with the narration of a duel, the epic poet both pauses the action and—as Homeric scholiasts already observed¹⁰—generates a particular state of expectation in the reader. Using this technique Vergil spotlights and foreshadows the episode of Pallas's death. The youth's prayer to his protector Hercules prior to battle is heard in heaven, but it cannot be fulfilled: hence this Olympian intermission, where Hercules sits silent, suppressing his grief and shedding useless tears, and Jupiter intervenes—father to son—to explain the great laws of fate governing human affairs. Homer had treated with a similar technique two important episodes: the duels between Hector and Achilles and, before that, in *Iliad* 16, between Sarpedon and Patroclus. The two scenes are built on parallel lines: twice Zeus is moved to pity and about to rescue from certain death a warrior (Sarpedon, Hector) to whom he is joined by a special bond. This intervention, analogous to so many others that dot the Trojan landscape, would put the god in conflict not only with the inevitability of *moira* (we know, after all, that in the *Iliad* these fated deaths are not the result of an iron-clad universal necessity, as is the case for Vergil's Fates) but even with his own *boulé*. The conflict would be irreconcilable, since Zeus himself had already predicted the entire series of killings by inserting them into his overall plan: Patroclus will have to kill Sarpedon, son of Zeus, so that Hector will kill Patroclus and finally Achilles kill Hector. Twice, facing this crisis of the divine order, a goddess (Hera, Athena) intervenes and forces Zeus to accept the necessary unfolding of events. The two scenes thus appear to be marked by a theological scandalous motif: the inferiority of Zeus.¹¹

The conflict is particularly acute in the dialogue preceding Sarpedon's death. Twice Zeus has already saved his son from death in battle (*Il.* 5.662; 12.402ff.) by visibly revealing the intensity of his protective love. When in book 16 the god “sees and feels pity for” Sarpedon (431), we are prepared—thanks to the rigidity of the formulaic language—for a repetition of these events. In the *Iliad*, divine help is consistently mediated by ἐλεεῖν (“pity”), which generally involves a wholly private interest and active participation in

the affairs of a mortal motivated by a blood-relation and a special devotion.¹² For an omnipotent being to feel pity normally entails acting in ways that change the course of mortal affairs. So Zeus's words have a surprise in store for us. He pities Sarpedon and suffers for him, but his heart is torn between two irreconcilable alternatives: save his life or respect a predestined "plan." Hera replies with a rhetorically sophisticated argument that sounds like a threat: if he spares Sarpedon's life contrary to Fate, Zeus will be setting an example of insubordination for all the other gods who have seen and will see their own children die on the fields of Troy. It is a moment in which we witness the relative stability of Zeus's power on Olympus and discern his dependence on a divine consensus that could even, in theory, suffer collapse. Thus the god must obey (οὐδ' ἀπιθησε, 16.458): the help denied Sarpedon while alive will be somehow made up for with intervention by Apollo, who will at least prevent any violation to Sarpedon's body. Zeus then rains down blood, bathing the battlefield on which Fate is about to unfold. The event reveals in an exemplary fashion a strong limit to divine power: the inability to completely overcome the death of human beings.¹³

The scene is justly famous, and Vergil's imitation of it is indisputable, blatant even, because of a *reflexive* sort of allusion (. . . *quin occidit una / Sarpedon, mea progenies*, 10.470–71):¹⁴ the poet thus establishes an intertextual relation that provokes comparison between two distinct and opposed entities, without caring in the least bit to hide the sutures binding the "old" text and its new contextualization. But in order to capture precisely this interaction between the two texts, it is necessary to clarify the specific meaning of each one, and so, first, we must reckon with our reading of the Homeric model.

Let's open up one of the standard commentaries on Vergil: "The scene is of course suggested by the celebrated passage . . . where Zeus weeps tears of blood for his son Sarpedon" (Nettleship *ad A.* 10.464ff.). Zeus's "tears of blood" would indeed offer a satisfying parallel to Hercules' *lacrimae inanes* (though amounting to a sort of *Dämpfung*, their reduction to a more human level). But is there a legitimate basis for this connection? In Homer, Zeus sheds on the earth "bloody drops" (αἱματοέσσας . . . ψιάδας, 16.459) to *honor* his son about to die. Surely we know that Zeus suffers (his speech begins with ὦ μοι ἐγών, 433), that his heart is weeping for Sarpedon's

lot (τεὸν δ' ὀλοφύρεται ἤτορ, 450), but the motif of the bloody rain cannot at all be interpreted, along these lines, as a symbol of lament. It is clear, instead, that it is meant as a portent, like the one described at *Il.* 2.45, when Hera and Athena make the heavens rumble to *honor* their protégé Agamemnon, just like, also, the “bloody dew” that Zeus spreads on the earth “because he was about to hurl to Hades many stalwart heads” (11.53–55). We are dealing with a prodigy that has a precise, honorific function,¹⁵ and at the same time serves to anticipate earthly events; according to the same logic Zeus causes dreadful carnage over the body of the son (cf. *Il.* 16.567ff. and 662) as though to compensate for and memorialize his death with a literal bloodbath. “Zeus’s weeping,” which modern critics so often mention,¹⁶ is thus an interpretation almost certainly foreign to the intentions of the Homeric text. And yet, one can show with equal ease that this reading is not extraneous to *Vergil*, since it is rooted already in ancient culture along a line of reception that runs from Plato to the Christians.¹⁷

The representation of extreme grief is harmful—explains Plato in the *Republic*—and thus a certain type of mimetic poetry should be banned from the education of children. It is therefore problematic that Homer describes not only human beings in the throes of this kind of emotion but even the gods. He shows them as ὀδυρομένους, as when Thetis laments for Achilles, or even the father of gods who tortures himself over the death of his beloved Sarpedon (*Rep.* 388B–C). To emphasize the bad effects of such mimesis, Plato tendentiously exaggerates the Homeric scene’s content: even the quotation itself seems manipulated in this direction, producing the impression that Zeus is allowed to fall into a sort of *threnos*.¹⁸ Thus Plato’s criticism has probably radicalized the scandalous effect of the Homeric episode for later readers. It is difficult to think it a coincidence when we learn that Xenodotus deleted from his edition of the *Iliad* the whole dialogue between Zeus and Hera (this is how καθόλου περιγράφει of *schol. Il.* 16.432 [A], 257ff. E. is interpreted).¹⁹ So lodged even in philological practice and in the material constitution of the Homeric text is a widespread critical attitude toward the incoherence of Homeric theology. We can understand then why the quasi-Stoic attempt to rehabilitate this episode through allegory came about: the bloody rain cannot mean that Zeus sheds

tears—for Zeus is ἀκλαυστος—but it is instead an act of *sympatheia*, a general cosmic compassion manifested in the “tears of the ether.”²⁰ The image arises (only to be immediately negated because exegetically inappropriate) of tears of blood: this reading conceals and then keeps hardening over the original text—until it becomes the only valid reading for Christians, who use it polemically to discredit the mythological tradition.²¹ So the model for Hercules’ lament must be sought not on the objective surface of the Homeric text but in the complex history of its “stratified” reception.

But another, more important consideration serves to clarify the relation between the Homeric episode and the new ideological orientation of Vergil’s imitation. In the Iliadic scene it is clear that Zeus could in theory halt the destiny, the *aisa*, of Sarpedon. We are not explicitly told that a mortal’s fate is immutable; Hera’s only objection is that by doing so Zeus will open himself up to criticism from the other gods (v. 443) and will induce them to act likewise in similar cases (v. 445ff.; for an analogous episode, see *Il.* 5.110ff.). The situation changes drastically if this personal and somewhat flexible destiny is replaced by a totalizing understanding of fate as a universal necessity superior to the individual gods’ wills. Subjecting the Homeric theme to this new cultural filter, Cicero illustrates it in this way: *si enim nihil fit extra fatum, nihil levare re divina potest. Hoc sentit Homerus [!], cum querentem Iovem inducit quod Sarpedonem filium a morte contra fatum eripere non posset* (“If nothing happens outside fate, nothing can be alleviated through divine help. This is what Homer realizes, when he has Jupiter lament that he cannot rescue his own son Sarpedon from death against the will of fate.”) (*Div.* 2.25). The dialogue between Zeus and Hera, then, becomes a paradigmatic demonstration of one of the most widespread gnostic sayings: fate is so inescapable that not even gods are free from its laws.²² This interpretation finds its way even into Homeric exegesis, which manages to neutralize the critiques deriving from philosophical sources: “We must not blame the poet. Actually we need either to abandon the idea that gods are bound to humankind, or make statements coherent with this. Furthermore, Zeus’s lament has an educational force, since the poet teaches that even the gods abide by the *heimarmene*: *all the more will human beings need to bear the weight of their destinies with nobility*” (*schol. Il.* 16.433–38, 258 E).

This is exactly the “didactic” content that Vergil’s imitation strives to make explicit: *stat sua cuique dies*, but men must in any case exercise their ennobling *virtus*; even the gods, *even Jupiter*, are subject to this law of fate. Hera’s reasoning:

πολλοὶ γὰρ περὶ ἄστυ μέγα Πριάμοιο μάχονται
υἷες ἀθανάτων, τοῖσιν κότον αἰνὸν ἐνήσεις. (16.448–49)

[For many fighting around the great city of Priam are sons of gods, whose dread anger you will arouse.]

is presented as upside down according to this new direction. No longer is it a matter of what the other gods could do for their sons, but of what Zeus (in the “past” of the *Iliad*) has already agreed to submit to. In this way a dangerous contradiction between divine *pronoia* and *heimarmene*—one that could endanger the ideological framework of Vergil’s epos—is a priori reconciled.²³ The role of the Homeric Zeus is unloaded onto a character of a different status, closer to the human level and open to emotion; Jupiter, on the other hand, can only speak the language of Fate.²⁴ Through a remarkable exchange of roles Jupiter has landed a role somewhat opposed to the one he used to play in the Homeric model: the Zeus admonished by Hera now admonishes Hercules in turn.

In the literary operation I have sought to describe, the *transformation* of Homer cannot be understood without taking into account its *reception*, not only because Vergil, necessarily, started from his personal reading of the model (this aspect, frankly, situates itself in a sort of prehistory of the text, and the analysis would run the risk of devolving into a merely conjectural genetic construction), but most of all because this reception already represents the *system of cultural expectations* with which the work must come to terms in order to attempt its communicative venture. From this point of view, which effectively privileges the addressee as a function inscribed and prefigured in the text, it becomes productive not to limit ourselves to focusing on connections with the *Iliad* but instead to consider the entire system of intertextual meanings that accumulate in the “Homeric” narrative fabric. When, as here, Vergil takes into his text Homeric material—the narrative opposition

between two divinities debating the destiny of a character—the multiplication of cultural codes takes on an interpretive function: its role is to mediate the reader's reactions and to guarantee, by so steering them, a certain type of understanding of the events. To recognize these “additive” meanings now will be the second point of our analysis.

The opposition between Hercules and Jupiter, voice of compassion and voice of Fate, is made concrete in the text through a play of contrasting registers. From Hercules comes a gesture of pity, where suffering is mixed with self-control:

Audiit Alcides iuvenem magnumque sub imo
corde premit gemitum lacrimasque effundit inanis.
(10.465–66)²⁵

[Hercules heard the young man and suppressed a deep groan
in his heart and shed tears in vain.]

The deified hero is still susceptible to human suffering, but must master it within the bounds of decency unavoidable for gods according to a well-known cultural norm: *κατ' ὄσων δ' οὐ θέμις βαλεῖν δάκρυ*, Artemis says in a rather similar tragic situation. The gods are not allowed to weep for human affairs.²⁶ This image of Heracles afflicted is all the more effective when we consider that in ancient tradition he is the exemplar of long-suffering *par excellence* (*ἀστένακτος αἰὲν* in Soph. *Trach.* 1074; *αἰὲν ἄδακρυ* in Theocr. 24.31). For this reason the idea of Heracles weeping underwent literary developments that exploit its surprising and almost paradoxical impact. In Bacchylides' fifth epinician the hero, having returned from Hades, hears the story of the *premature death* of Meleager and is so moved that, for the very first time in his life (says the poet), a tear came to his eye (151ff.). In turn, Sophocles and Euripides repeat the motif in their dramas on Heracles: “I moan and weep like a girl, something nobody has ever seen happen to this man; I've always yielded to misfortunes without a groan”; “I have never shirked any trial, never had tears pour down my eyes, nor ever imagined it coming to this: that a tear would fall from my eyes.”²⁷ This singular instance of Heracles' lament (a

unicum that the poets so often repeat!) is so popular that it even finds its way onto funerary monuments; an inscription commemorating Polystratos reads: “for a friend of Heracles, whose eyes never wept, Heracles has shed a tear and let loose a groan.”²⁸ So Vergil, by deliberately evoking a common traditional motif, strikes a note of sorrowful compassion that serves a narrative purpose for the premature death of Pallas.

Jupiter’s speech has a much greater burden of information that it needs to convey. He has to communicate, with all the authority that the work’s ideological system confers upon him, the fundamental teaching on the need to adapt oneself to Fate—in accord with the standard reading of the Homeric model, as we have seen. But here we have ideological themes that are also essential to narrative development, since by announcing these higher truths Jupiter anticipates and motivates what happens first to Pallas and then to Turnus. For this commenting function to come off, the “didactic” content must be expressed in a proverbial, commanding form, and the written word itself must gain the audience’s consent, by presenting a detached and almost atemporal vision of the narrated world. (Jupiter cannot possibly allow himself to be tainted by human passions like the Homeric gods: he has to set rules.) The highly topical structure of the entire speech thus becomes clear: the programmatic use of predictable and persuasive conceits that permit the audience to decode the epic action in ideological terms. *Stat sua cuique dies, breve et irreparabile tempus / omnibus est vitae; sed famam extendere factis, / hoc virtutis opus* (“Everyone has their day, and a lifetime is short and cannot be turned back; but to spread fame with deeds, this is virtue’s work.”)²⁹ A *sententia* of the most generic sort, expressed in a steady and monumental rhythm, opens the speech, with an opposition between the brevity of life and the endurance of glory gained through deeds of valor. One might be tempted here to go back to the heroic ideology of the *Iliad*: Achilles too, as we know, is faced with the problem of *kleos*, and chooses a short life in exchange for it (cf. *Il.* 9.410–16). But it is, after all, a conscious choice, based on a single specific prophecy. The Vergilian *sententia* is distinct and casts a wider net: it exploits the ideological opposition between immortal glory—gained through *virtus*, which is its necessary complement—and the inevitable brevity of human life, defining it with reference

to Pallas's specific condition of being ἄωρος. The sense of compensation between death and fame is fully achieved in the original stylistic figure *famam extendere factis*: the idea of stretching implied by *extendere* conflicts with the *breve . . . tempus* of Pallas's life, and the tension so created discharges onto *fama*. This novel phrase reveals, even at a level of rhetorical construction, how fame (time that is "spoken" by others) is clearly the only possible surrogate for lived time.³⁰ The theme of transience is therefore no isolated element (just one among countless commonplace reflections on the fleeting nature of time),³¹ but seems instead tied to a more complex motif that is, as it were, already culturally inflected. We must remember that it is essentially a rhetorical motif—not by chance often found in Cicero's work—one articulated around a consistent metaphorical scheme: *etenim, Quirites, exiguum nobis vitae curriculum natura circumscipsit, immensum gloriae* ("Indeed, citizens, nature has circumscribed a narrow course of life for us, but one unbounded in glory.") (*Rab. perd.* 30); *nullam enim virtus aliam mercedem laborum periculorumque desiderat praeter hanc laudis et gloriae; qua quidem detracta, iudices, quid est quod in hoc tam exiguo vitae curriculo et tam brevi tantis nos in laboribus exerceamus?* ("For virtue desires no other reward for its labors and dangers besides praise and glory, which if it is taken away, judges, what is there in this such short and narrow span of life for us to exert ourselves in such labors for?") (*Arch.* 28); *nesciebam vitae brevem esse, cursum, gloriae sempiternum* ("Did I not know that life's span is short but of glory everlasting?") (*Sest.* 47). It is no less suitable also for the didactic and philosophizing prologue of a historiographical work: *quo mihi rectius videtur ingeni quam virium opibus gloriam quaerere et, quoniam vita ipsa, qua fruimur, brevis est, memoriam nostri quam maxime longam efficere* ("For which it seems to me more proper to seek glory with the resources of spirit more than of strength, and since the life we have available is short, to make our memory last as long as possible.") (*Sall. Cat.* 1.3).³² In the Vergilian context this recognizably didactic tone is meant also to console: it shows Pallas's death not only as part of the general human condition—as ancient theorists of consolations prescribed upon the death of ἄωροι: *breve et irreparabile tempus / omnibus est vitae*³³—but as specifically compensated by glory won in battle. It is glory alone, in Cicero's words again, *quae brevitatem vitae posteritatis*

memoria consolaretur (“that can make consolation for life’s brevity with the memory of posterity”) (*Mil.* 97). This anchoring in positive values derived from official Roman ideology balances the intrinsic tragic nature of the events, by introducing a criterion of judgment foreign to the original epic code.

Another great consolatory scheme, and very common, is reminding the grieving person that their loss is not exceptional since others have died and will die;³⁴ similarly, he or she is hardly the first or last person ever to suffer such a hardship.³⁵ Obviously, this rhetoric does not work as well in cases of untimely death: generalizing then becomes problematic, since this specific case does not follow any rule of nature but represents a painful and exceptional violation. One can only resort to a “weak” argument less directly tied to universal laws, the so-called *consolatio per exemplum*. The consoler names great characters carefully chosen from among those who had to succumb to death;³⁶ better still, he or she finds mythic correspondence with the present situation among the *sons of gods* who had to suffer premature death despite the divine power of their parents: *καὶ θεῶν σκόρτιοι φθίνουσι / παῖδες ἐν θανάτῳ* (Eur. *Alc.* 989 f.); *καὶ μακάρων παῖδες ἐνερθεν ἔβαν* (*GV* 2006, 8). It is no accident that we find this melancholy motif less in true attempts to console than in the sort of formulaic expression of grief meant for epitaphs of ἄωροι.³⁷ Sometimes Sarpedon himself serves as the exemplar of untimely death:

οὐδ’ αὖ βροτῶν τε καὶ θεῶν πάντων ἀναξ
Σαρπηδὸν’ οὐκ ἔκλαυσεν, οὐκ ἐκώκυσεν . . . ;³⁸

[Did not the lord of men and gods weep, did he not moan for Sarpedon?]

In Vergil the sequence

Troiae sub moenibus altis
tot gnati cecidere deum, quin occidit una
Sarpedon, mea progenies; etiam sua Turnum
fata vocant metasque dati pervenit ad aevi

[Under Troy's high walls so many sons of gods fell, even Sarpedon among them, my offspring; his fates call Turnus too, and he has reached the goal of the stretch allotted to him]

combines, in the wake of Homeric precedent, the more generic commonplace “others have died and will die” with the specific angle “even the sons of gods, like mortals, must bow to untimely death.” But one immediately notes that the use of such stiff clichés does not cause any inertia on the level of contextual meaning. The example of Sarpedon is chosen to produce an allusive recall that is at once useful for comprehending the whole episode, as we have seen, and rhetorically functional in the narrower context as a persuasive comparison. The future example, Turnus, is required by the economy of the narrative, since the reader needs to be able to anticipate the events that unfold from the death of Pallas—just as the reader of the *Patrokleia* is made to expect the *Death of Hector* that follows. We are now aware that Turnus too is near his end,³⁹ and the following episode will provide new means of anticipation and commentary. Meanwhile Jupiter, his task as mouthpiece of Fate accomplished, can avert his gaze from the forces on the field:⁴⁰ the heroes will clash in full “epic liberty” beneath an empty sky.

3. EFFECTS OF READING: THE THEME OF
THE BALDRIC (*BALTEUS*, 10.474–500)

No device can remain unexploited in the story [*fabula*], no episode can be without consequence for the situation of the story. It was to compositional motivations that Chekhov was referring when he insisted that if at the start of a story . . . we find that a nail has been started into a wall, at the end of the story the hero has to hang himself by that nail.

—B. TOMAŠEVSKIJ (1965, 282)

The duel between Turnus and Pallas cannot be conflated with the many similar episodes crowding the poem's final books with a more than “Iliadic” density: the narrative economy demands that this scene emerge decisively from its immediate context in order then

to be recalled in the final scene. The very legibility of the narrative's resolution is in play, Aeneas's vengeance against Turnus now beaten down and suppliant. So Vergil's textual strategy makes two significant interventions. The autonomy and narrative emphasis that govern the episode—fundamental means to mobilize the reader's attention—result from the “prologue in heaven” just analyzed (the importance of an epic event is often proportional to the Olympian world's involvement in the action), and from a particular way of describing combat. The linguistic treatment of the duel makes it stand out from its context (naturally the minor duels in book 10 are treated less completely, their narrative time far less dilated), and at the same time it appeals to the continuity of epic tradition with unusual force, through the most typical form Homer uses to narrate the strife among his heroes. The details are readily recalled: after exchanging threats and boasts, one fighter—usually the one doomed to die—takes the first shot and misses or only wounds his opponent lightly; then the second warrior strikes back and lays him low. The fall of the defeated to the ground is then described—his death, the victor's reaction (if any), and the stripping of armor.

In reprising this entire “strong performance” of a Homeric duel, Vergil abandons his usual narrative practice: usually his sequences are abbreviated, which leaves it up to the reader's epic competence to integrate; he omits formulaic passages (for example, the slain man's fall to the ground is very often disregarded); or on the contrary, he intensifies unusual particulars, by playing on variation more than continuity. In this duel it seems instead that he presents a montage of fixed or “formulaic” elements, genuine epic brands, where the author's freedom is limited to arranging in context the traditional material, conflating diverse sources, and inserting strictly measured, “subjective” notes within the rigid lattice of epic narration. The overall vision of this literary operation (which condenses into a unified register both Homer and archaic Latin epics) warrants at least an endnote.⁴¹

As always, of course, a sufficiently fine-grained analysis would also demonstrate here Vergil's absolute artistic independence and assert his forceful expressive originality.⁴² But for our purposes a different level of analysis is needed, one that emphasizes not the striking innovation of single lexical or syntactic traits but the overall

attempt to create a “type scene,” which functions as one strong signal of allusion to the epic tradition. The duel stands out as a unified figurative topos with which, in terms of expression, strongly codified and immediately recognizable verbal-rhythmic sequences are associated: Homer, Ennius, and the other Latin epic poets constitute, from this point of view, a single literary system that can be cited collectively. Moreover, here as elsewhere in literature, to downplay the importance and utility of stereotypes would be a dangerous critical error. Traditional clichés are valid at least as genre markers and thus as a necessary premise for the new text’s legibility (whatever the author’s adherence to or respect for the tradition); they produce in the reader not arbitrary and uncontrollable mental associations but processes of constrained understanding that, though transcending the letter of the text, have still been prefigured by the author. They may, for example, serve to reintegrate the cliché within its original boundaries, or else set the cliché in “horizontal” opposition to the context in which it has now been transplanted. (In practice, poets presuppose a literary genre as a communication program, determining the response to the solicitations contained in each single text.) But most importantly—to come to our specific problem—the citation of stereotypes like these Homeric ones has the advantage of creating by itself a system of coordinates that brings into view every possible divergence, however small, from the tradition. It is therefore a highly productive mechanism for generating narrative meaning: all the more effective when the text being cited is strongly codified and even repetitive, and when it is deeply stamped in the cultural memory of the audience. This is not an act of allusion in the “Alexandrian” sense: the Vergilian recasting does not presuppose recognition of any particular expression or theme, but involves on a global level a group of typical, formulaic elements spread widely through the Homeric text (as can easily be seen from the comparisons collected in note 41 earlier). More than a single episode, we find here the general skeleton of the epic duel—and recognizing this is surely easier for readers of “average” competence than tracing back a precise allusion to its source. The system of expectations carefully implanted in this way must be fulfilled by the end of the duel: after the fall of the vanquished comes, in the normative syntax of Homeric narration, the victor’s gesture of placing

his foot on his enemy's corpse, ripping out his spear, and despoiling his armor.

Here is what one prominent critic has found in Vergil's text. Comparing *Il.* 16.503–5, where Patroclus tears his spear from Sarpedon's body and his *phrenes* depart from the hero along with his life, Klingner 1967 observes: "the victorious adversary rips his spear from Sarpedon and from Pallas . . . in a similar manner" (578 n. 1). It seems then that Turnus, like a typical Homeric victor, puts his foot on the body of his enemy, laid low and dying, to recover his own weapon (*Il.* 16.503–4: ὁ δὲ λαξ ἐν στήθεσι βαίνων / ἐκ χροδὸς ἔλκε δόρυ; cf. Hector over Patroclus's corpse at *Il.* 16.862–63). But there is a sort of optical illusion here. In Vergil's story it is not Turnus but Pallas, the defeated, who tears the spear from his own wound; Turnus does place his foot on his conquered enemy's corpse, but to do something else: *et laevo pressit pede . . . exanimem rapiens immania pondera baltei*. It is curious to note that the critic, distracted by the flagrant typicality in Vergil's scene, failed to remember the text by illusorily extending the Homeric structure right where it has ceased to apply; he has fallen prey to a mechanical association, while the text, on the contrary, has programmed a deviation that represents a significant innovation. The two gestures just specified are in fact foreign to the iconographic typology of Homeric tradition⁴³ and cannot be assimilated with the stereotyped duel: Pallas's gesture occurs at the moment of his death, while Turnus's belongs in a different context. It is to this that we now need to turn attention.

Turnus treads upon his enemy's body already dead (*exanimem* is emphasized through enjambement)⁴⁴ and strips his baldric from him, a fateful object on which the narrator places decisive focalization. What in Homer was a neutral gesture lacking implications since it was tied to an eminently practical situation like a victorious warrior's need to recover his weapons and return to combat, has now been detached from its normal context and synchronized with an emphatic turning point in the action. The recurrence of fixed elements deriving from the Homeric battle scene, apparently aimed at a neutral repetition of the epic code, in reality manages to produce a genuine *effect of reading* that does not result from some conspicuous modification but is based on a simple mismatch in the recomposition of events.⁴⁵ One might object that the figurative stereotype

must have a constant significance, guaranteed by the persistence of the epic code as a system of general reference. But it is precisely the code's univocal fixity that is thrown into crisis, for Vergil as for his public. At points like these, the story overpowers the communicative structure of epic, causing slippage in its code of signs.

"And shouldn't you trample on Ajax, even now that he's dead?" Agamemnon asks Odysseus in Sophocles' *Ajax*. The speaker is a tyrannical character conveying obsolete values; Odysseus, expressing the new common moral, answers: "ignoble gain, son of Atreus, brings me no cheer" (1348–49). To trample a conquered enemy, ἐπεμβάλλειν, now denoted, by metaphorical extension, arrogance and violation of rights: Scipio after Zama is praised that "he did not trample the fortune of Hannibal" (Plut. *Flam.* 21.2). Even propaganda and figurative arts in the Hellenistic-Roman world shied away from this image of triumph (which in other civilizations, the Hebraic and Egyptian, is entirely normal): in fact, it becomes a negative model, a reversal of Roman *clementia* and an antithetical image in opposition to Horace's *iacentem lenis in hostem*.⁴⁶

Turnus's gesture thus activates a double intertextual recall, at once maintaining its surface hold on the Homeric model and also producing a new connotative significance, whose plane of expression is constituted by the narrative denotation originally given in the epic code. It is clear that this multiplication of codes of reference yields more information than is transmitted with the poetic text. From this the audience derives an implicit but clear element of judgment about Turnus's behavior, and hence its comprehension of future events is oriented, in accordance with the entire system of cultural expectations.

The brief scene that follows the death of Pallas plays a decisive role in the plot of the *Aeneid*. Just as Hector seals his own fate by killing Patroclus and despoiling his corpse, so Turnus will be killed by Aeneas to avenge Pallas. Hector dons, as a tangible sign of his victory, the divine armor of Achilles he stripped from Patroclus; Turnus stripped Pallas's baldric and wears it as a symbol of triumph. This basic parallelism takes shape in a grand narrative sweep that joins books 10 and 12 of the *Aeneid*, which is made to resemble the relation that ties books 16 ("Patrokleia") and 22 ("Death of Hector")

in Homer. One victim, one killer doomed in his turn, one avenger: but how is this thematic continuity realized concretely between the deed of Hector/Turnus and the vengeance of Achilles/Aeneas? In Vergil the theme of the baldric plays a fundamental role. By stripping it from Pallas's corpse, Turnus unwittingly provokes his own end: its depicted figures flash into Aeneas's eyes like "reminders of wild grief" (12.945) and unleash his fatal vengeance. For this important connection to be read with sufficient clarity, the theme of the baldric needed to be elaborated in advance, from right back at the moment when Turnus, obviously unaware, snatches it as a material symbol of his victory. And the scene, as in the part already seen earlier, is charged with signals that prefigure the narrative development: Turnus's boasting insult *haud illi stabunt Aeneia parvo / hospitia* makes salient the theme of the bond of hospitality and friendship between Aeneas and Pallas and thereby prepares the need for Aeneas's reaction;⁴⁷ the divine scene with Hercules and Jupiter functions as prolepsis to announce the necessary and fatal bond between the ends of Pallas and of his slayer; even the "type scene" of slaying and the *euchos*, as mentioned earlier, conveys an iconic model negatively connotated.⁴⁸ Behind all these individual connections looms a general recall of the *Iliad*, an intertextual script that in itself puts tension on the reader's interpretive freedom (unlimited, if you will, but only in the abstract); in this sense the *Iliad* appears as a single, gigantic exemplum that with its constraining force helps readers choose relevant meanings in Vergil's text and even motivates the very destinies of its characters.

What is more, even the description of the baldric is not simply a moment of deferral in the epic action; it produces a tragic consonance with the narrative situation. As Conte has observed, the slaughter of young men on their marriage night alludes, through cultural metonymy, to the pitiful end of youths like Pallas:⁴⁹ the specific condition of *ἄγαμοι* is only an emotionally charged instance in the general category of *ἄωροι*, youths who die before their time. At the same time, if we look at the connection between the object and Turnus's fate, in addition to the baldric's figurative content, even the language in which it is first mentioned seems relevant and full of implications:

. . . rapiens immania pondera baltei
impressumque nefas . . .

[snatching the baldric's immense weight and the crime inscribed
on it]

The object's introduction is broken up into a neutral, denotative aspect that is nevertheless stylistically solemn (*immania pondera baltei*), and an aspect that valorizes one particular quality of the baldric: the presence on it of a crime, the representation of the Danaids' wedding-night slaughter. With this, Turnus's deed is immediately imbued with a meaning that transcends the context and ironically eludes his own conscious awareness: in stripping the baldric he takes ownership of the *nefas* inscribed upon it—just as Aeneas, by taking upon his shoulders the shield telling Rome's destiny, unknowingly dons *famamque et fata nepotum*. But the *nefas* cannot but call down, as in king Latinus's dark prediction, a corresponding punishment: *te Turne, nefas, te triste manebit / supplicium* (7.596–97). Pallas's baldric, now that it has become a part of the scenery, is predetermined to resurface as a tragic reversal of knowledge, as an *agnorismos*:

. . . infelix umero apparuit alto
balteus et notis fulserunt cingula bullis
Pallantis pueri, victum quem volnere Turnus
straverat atque umeris inimicum insigne gerebat.
Ille, oculis postquam saevi monumenta doloris
exuviasque hausit . . . (12.941–46)

[The unhappy baldric appeared high on his shoulder—the belt of young Pallas gleamed with its familiar ensigns, the one whom Turnus conquered, wounded, and laid low—he wore his enemy's emblem on his shoulders. When his eyes drank deep the spoils, reminders of savage grief . . .]

Aeneas will see at the crucial moment *saevi monumenta doloris / exuviasque*—that is, one more time a single object is split linguistically, in the usual binary mode,⁵⁰ into a flat designation (*exuvia*)

and an accompanying expression characterizing the object according to its function in the story, in relation to the subjectivity of characters. *Infelix balteus, inimicum insigne* are polysemic indications that seal Turnus's fate, by defining it as a recoiling upon himself of Pallas's enmity and wretchedness.⁵¹

The effectiveness in dramatic terms of the "theme of the baldric" offers an obvious analogy with the Iliadic theme of Achilles' armor. But we are not dealing with any simple textual repetition, since Vergil is not drawing on something already fully realized but instead brings to light a potentiality in the *Iliad's* plot that had remained latent and uncertain. It is useful here then to reconsider how the well-known Homeric events are articulated:

- a. Patroclus's armor is stripped by Apollo (16.793–804), leaving him γυμνός (815) when he is struck in the back by Euphorbus: this gives Hector his chance to finish him off as he falls back, wounded. Patroclus himself before dying insists that "Zeus and Apollo" took the armor off his shoulders. By this point what is obviously lacking is the "type scene" of stripping the corpse—inevitably, since exceptionally the fallen is already disarmed!—and we still are not aware of what has happened to Achilles' armor.⁵²
- b. The following episode, the deeds of Menelaus, is a struggle to defend Patroclus's body and his armor (17.91ff.): we suddenly learn afterward, however, that Hector has "taken" the arms of Achilles from Patroclus (17.125), and now Hector boasts that he stripped them "rightfully" from his fallen foe and retires from the fray momentarily in order to don them (184ff.).
- c. Now comes an important point of emphasis: the narrator reiterates that these are the divine arms Peleus gave Achilles and, even more, adds a remark by Zeus, who reveals Hector's fate and deplores his impulsive and ill-considered exultation (17.198–208). Poor Hector does not know his own death is near, as he is donning the mortal armor of a great hero and has slain his valiant comrade and taken the arms οὐ κατὰ κόσμον. Zeus's intervention declares, in the most authoritative way within the Homeric code, the motivation for the events

that occupy the later parts of the *Iliad*, exploiting the “theme of arms” as a means of contrast.

- d. Now we know, after an elaborate preparation not without contradictions, that Achilles will see his own armor turned against him: but then this theme ceases to play any appreciable role in the action.⁵³ The loss Achilles has suffered becomes, if anything, occasion for a delaying episode (“the forging of the shield”), but the lost armor is spoken of only in incidental and unspecific ways (as when his horse, Xanthus, says “the Trojans have taken the armor from Patroclus’s shoulders,” 19.412). Then comes the fatal moment when Achilles is taking aim for the blow that will kill Hector: the desired spot at the base of his neck has been left uncovered by the fine armor “that Hector seized when killing brave Patroclus” (22.323). The expression is reproduced from 17.187, in the scene foretelling Hector’s fate, but it is not enough to provoke an effect of dramatic reversal. Just a single, brief focalization, captured in Achilles’ boast

Ἔκτορ ἀτὰρ που ἔφησ Πάτροκλῆ’ ἐξεναρίζων
σῶς ἔσσεσθ’

[“Hector, surely you claimed while stripping Patroclus that you’d be safe”]

serves, not by chance, as the track for the opening of a crucial boast in Vergil’s poem, the last word of the protagonist Aeneas before the ending: *Tunc hinc spoliis indute meorum / eripiare mihi?* I was referring to this link when I mentioned the “potentiality” of the model that Vergil is putting forward and transforming. The resemblances are evident: *tunc* recalls the emphatic interrogative Ἔκτορ ἀτὰρ που (in the same opening position), and *spoliis indute meorum* is a sort of gloss on ἐξεναρίζων; but the simple Homeric reference, compressed in the common and technical ἐξεναρίζειν (“to strip away the armor / slay”), has become the emotional core of the entire Vergilian scene. On the contrary, the Homeric expression puts no “subjective” emphasis on whose particular arms were stolen. Even later—for instance, when Hector’s body is being stripped—no stress is placed on the fact that the armor belongs to Achilles.

To sum up, the story of Achilles' armor seems strongly rooted in the narrative continuum of the *Iliad* (even the most rigorous of Analysts have never considered it separable from the poem⁵⁴), but it is realized in a very disjointed manner. The only time the fact that Hector dons his enemy's armor is pointedly thematized and tied to the plot development is in Zeus's remark in book 17, contained in a brief episode that seems constructed ad hoc: *before* this scene there is no description whatsoever of how Hector has obtained the arms, and the type scene that should follow the killing is omitted; *later*, when after a rather extended narrative the armor theme might be brought to the foreground (in book 22), it has been reduced to a weak echo. The Vergilian reinvention has begun from this fragmented sequence, and concentrates into a single narrative unity, aptly highlighted in context, what in Homer emerges episodically in the long flux of the story: the killing, the stripping of the body (omitted in the *Iliad*, as we have seen), the victor's triumphant exulting as he dons the spoils,⁵⁵ the comment that reveals his own ruinous blindness. In Homer it is Zeus who, surely by virtue of being the "spirit of the story," unmasking Hector's fate and renders predictable, even necessary, his final destruction. This episode's narrative function is clear enough, but what does not emerge with equal clarity is the moral judgment, the commenting function implicit in Zeus's speech. In the god's words Hector has slain and despoiled Patroclus οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (17.205); this is certainly a negative evaluation, but this completely isolated expression, from which too much has often been gleaned,⁵⁶ does not shed much light on the events. (Perhaps we might take this evaluation along with the rather anomalous circumstances in which Patroclus is slain, as we have seen: a divinity and two warriors collaborate in the deed. But the internal reference, if so, is not among the most explicit.) Unlike the original audience envisioned for Homeric poetry, later readers no longer have access to an anthropological code that makes Zeus's words fully comprehensible. What is more, the context of the *Iliad* does not cooperate in our reading: not only does it lack anything like the "modern" notion of guilt, but in particular a warrior's death and the appropriation of his armor might have been considered as normal heroic behavior, an action that can naturally arouse vengeful reactions, but that no one in the name of heroic morality would dream of condemning. This

will be (residually) the ethic of Mezentius: *nullum in caede nefas* (“there is no crime in slaughter”).

4. HOMERIC COMMENTARY (10.501–505)

Τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἀπάνευθεν ἶδεν νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς
τεύχεσι Πηλεΐδαο κορυσσόμενον θείοιο,
κινήσας ῥά κάρη προτὶ δὴν μυθήσατο θυμόν·
“ἄ δειλ' οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατος καταθύμιός ἐστιν
ὅς δὴ τοι σχεδὸν εἶσι· σὺ δ' ἄμβροτα τεύχεα δύνεις
ἄνδρὸς ἀριστήος, τὸν τε τρομέουσι καὶ ἄλλοι·
τοῦ δὴ ἑταῖρον ἔπεφνες ἐνήεα τε κρατερόν τε,
τεύχεα δ' οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀπὸ κρατός τε καὶ ὤμων
εἴλευ· ἀτάρ τοι νῦν γε μέγα κράτος ἐγγυαλίξω,
τῶν ποιήνῃ ὃ τοι οὐ τι μάχης ἐκνοστήσαντι
δέξεται Ἄνδρομάχη κλυτὰ τεύχεα Πηλεΐωνος.” (Il. 17.198–208)

[But when Zeus who gathers clouds saw from afar {Hector} donning the armor of the godlike son of Peleus, he shook his head and spoke to himself: “Ah wretch, you have no idea of the death that is right upon you, putting on the immortal armor of the best man, who makes others tremble. And you killed his comrade, kind and strong, and stripped the armor from his head and shoulders not according to order; and for now I grant you great strength, a compensation for these things, that you will not return from battle and Andromache will not receive the glorious arms of the son of Peleus.”]

Zeus’s apostrophe from a distance establishes and sanctions the narrative bond between the deaths of Patroclus and Hector; the corresponding element in Vergil is an intervention made directly in the voice of the narrator:

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

[The mind of men is ignorant of fate and coming events, unable to preserve the mean when inflated by favorable affairs! A time will come when Turnus will wish he had paid a great price for Pallas to be untouched, when he will hate that day and those spoils.]

This freedom to offer commentary on events from the outside certainly does not fall within the communicative rules of epic; perhaps for this reason criticism has been more concerned to explain the insertion's contextual function than to track down any possible literary matrix for it. Heinze (1915, 371–72) focused on authorial interventions in Homeric epic with the aim of showing that Vergil fully adheres to and does not depart from epic objectivity except in cases where the Homeric model already offered some “authorization.” This theory, perhaps attempting to exonerate Vergil from Romantic criticism (according to which the epic author can only disappear behind his work “like God in the universe”),⁵⁷ does not find secure support in the *Iliad* itself.⁵⁸ Elsewhere Heinze admits (1915, 226) that this statement *ex persona poetae* is needed to give the episode of Pallas's death the required importance, but at the same time he accuses it of “violating the poetic rule” (*der künstlerischen Regel entgegen*) because it lacks immediate consequences for the action. Here too a normative vision seems to prevail, according to which Homer's paratactic narration is a perfect and unattainable model for all epic. On the contrary, one might observe instead that narrative prolepsis in a wider sense, founded on the narrator's ironic superiority to the characters within the action, is not lacking even in the tight objectivity of Homeric storytelling. If in the *Patrokleia* these foreshadowings are limited to brief pathetic apostrophes fully internal to the development of action, a case of greater narrative distance is nevertheless met with in the *Odyssey*. Turnus dons Pallas's spoils unaware that it is bringing his own death nearer, just as the suitor Antinous hopes in his heart to succeed at stringing Odysseus's bow and so win Penelope in the trial of the axes; “instead he would be first to taste the arrow” from Odysseus's hands, the owner of that weapon that will prove fatal to the Suitors (*Od.* 21.96–99). In both cases a fateful object—the bow, the baldric—is put to use by the poet to swiftly turn the narrative perspective toward a telos still

unpredictable—even if in Homer the relation with the object will not be a specific *cause*, as in Vergil, of the character's death.

More generally, it is clear that the dimension of prophecy and *Nachgeschichte* is not in itself incompatible with epic: the *Iliad* even foretells the death of Achilles, which falls outside the poem's narrated time. But Vergilian prolepsis is not confined to anticipating Turnus's future; it *comments* on it, making him into an exemplum for the human condition. This is why other interpreters have labored to clarify the particular subjectivity of this intervention,⁵⁹ and have abandoned the comparison with epic tradition and resort instead to tragedy, a genre that continually interweaves moral commentary and generalizations into the action with no concern for the limits of "objective" narration. It is said, with some generality, that it is a "choral"⁶⁰ intervention or an "aside."⁶¹ Somewhat greater resemblance exists, I think, with the type of deviation in dramatic discourse that jumps from the concrete situation in order to speak as though the listener is not a character in the scene but a collective, if imagined, entity;⁶² something, that is, falling somewhere between normal stage speech and jokes *ad spectatores*, though this is of course only a lexical analogy. Often such moments of reflection open with an *epiphonema*, which serves to signal a shift in tone and movement to a generic interlocutor, and appeals to universal deficiencies of human nature: ἀλλ' ὦ μάταιοι (Eur. *Suppl.* 549); ὦ κενὸι βροτῶν (ibid., 744); ὦ τάλαιπῶροι βροτῶν (ibid., 949; cf., for example, *El.* 383–84, *Ino* fr. 419 N.²). This is perhaps one root of the sententious opening *nescia mens hominum* in Vergil: it is an intradiegetic intrusion stronger than the usual epic address to characters, but still not such as to break fully the narrative illusion with a different communicative relation that trespasses into a metaliterary dimension (as indeed happens with genuine appeals to the reader).

This narrative prolepsis foretelling Turnus's end by commenting on the lack of moderation and foresight that characterizes mortals could have been achieved through more traditional, Homeric models. In the *Iliad*, Hector's fate is foretold in the voice of other characters both human (like Patroclus as he dies) and divine (the apostrophe of Zeus, which served as Vergil's point of departure): anticipation is given without outside intrusion, without the *story* ceasing to tell itself on its own. In Vergil's text, instead, the story (for

a moment) becomes discourse: as opposed to the ironclad *Tempus-erwartung* that the epic genre cultivates in its readers, we encounter here future events—*Turno tempus erit . . . optaverit*⁶³—managed directly in the narrator’s own voice. This exception has gone unobserved by commentators on the *Aeneid* but is well known in manuals of syntax and in studies of the Latin verb, which tend to see in this isolated instance the first poetic example of a distinct temporal category in its own right (though in truth one fairly heterogeneous)⁶⁴ called the “historic future.” And on closer look, it does not lack the other constituting element that defines the discourse with respect to history: the one speaking—the one in control of the epic narration—refers to the fatal spoils Turnus has gathered up with a demonstrative that automatically evokes a dialogic dimension, *ista*, where we might expect a less discursively marked form of anaphora. It is an ostensive gesture from narrator to audience that founds a direct communication by momentarily halting the course of narrated events. (As one might suppose, *iste* recurs elsewhere in the poem only in the direct discourse of characters.⁶⁵) As such, this incursion of discourse into the narrative is realized with specific language that signals the passage from normal narrative writing to an immediate connection (even if not expressed on the surface) between narrator and audience. Not only does it address the need to reveal the origin of a fundamental line running through the overall narrative plot; more importantly, it also establishes for the audience a cultural norm that enables them to examine critically the characters’ actions. The text’s adoption of this norm is secured by a powerfully evocative means: the surge of *direct* speech from the epic narrator, who possesses an elevated, albeit hidden, level of awareness within the sphere of literary communication. The narrator’s intervention therefore appears as an explicit comment on and motivation for the various forms of implicit commentary already examined: the montage of events, the superimposition of diverse codes of reference, the relay of intertexts. This sort of deterministic relation does not need to be repeated on every occasion (indeed, continual commentary of this sort would be uneconomical and would ill-suit the workings of epic action). What matters is that once, and once and for all, the interpretative process desired by the author has been activated: readers will thereby know how to reproduce it in their reading and

when it occurs will enrich their own referential understanding of the events. This mode of signifying, however, is subjected to an important constraint: the motivation that the text proposes needs to be plausible—that is, it must resonate fully with models that the culture itself, at a certain phase, puts forward. For this, we need to look for evidence outside the text of the *Aeneid*.

Clearly, the value of “*servare modum* in victory” is what the commentary activates and for which it aims to obtain immediate consent from its Roman readers. (It is easy to detect here, beyond a general need to overdetermine the narrative, the imprint of a poetics of plausible realism, one that can no longer settle for bare predestination but rather needs to infuse the structures of ancient epos with novel expectations.) Here it is not necessary to recall the whole philosophical tradition (Aristotle, Panaetius, and so on) that treats moderation in success as a fundamental virtue of the *megalopsychos*, and makes *metriotes* a basic value of human society. More interesting for our purposes are the “average” expressions of this concept, its translation in pragmatic situations at Rome—like the famous beginning of Cato’s *pro Rhodiensibus* (fr. 163 Malc.⁴): *scio solere plerisque hominibus rebus secundis atque prolixis atque prosperis animum excellere atque superbiam atque ferociam augescere atque crescere . . . secundae res laetitia transvorsum trudere solent a recte consulendo atque intellegendo . . .* (“I know most men in success and prosperity become exalted in spirit and grow excessive in pride and haughtiness . . . prosperity is apt to turn men in their joy aside from the path of deliberating and thinking rightly”), where the ethical-political concept of *superbia* is fixed in relation to the dangers of *res secundae*—and in interpretations of contemporary history (on the theme of *res secundae* the proem to Sallust’s *Historiae* readily comes to mind). It is no accident that in Livy (30.42) this virtue is used to explain, and naturally also to celebrate, Rome’s historical victories: *populum Romanum eo invictum esse, quod in secundis rebus sapere et consulere meminert* (“the reason why the Roman people are unconquered is that they have the power to stay sober and wise in favorable times”). The abstract, synchronic model, being highly recognizable and adaptable to any use, was also transformed into a “narrativized” evolutionary scheme: the peril of not knowing how to master one’s own good luck, and thus undergoing moral degeneration, offered

an interpretation of well-known historical events and explained the fate of great personalities that did not in some degree seem to embody its example. I am thinking of the literature on Alexander the Great, the man who, at a very young age, achieved boundless triumphs *sed ignarus quemadmodum rebus secundis uti conveniret* (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.21) and τετυφωμένος ταῖς τοσαύταις εὐτυχίαις (Str. 15.1.5); a man who, at last, *super mensuram iam humanae superbiae tumens* (Sen. *Ben.* 5.6.1), revealed himself to be nothing but *tumidissimum animal* (ibid., 2.16.2);⁶⁶ a most effective paradigm for any future “mirror for princes.” Moving along analogous lines is the figure of Turnus, a captain who appears *tumidus secundo Marte* (10.21–22) and *superbus caede nova* (10.514–15): his description draws on ethical-political language⁶⁷ rather than the warrior ethos and the *mainesthai* of Homeric heroes, thus serving that need for exemplarity so deeply inscribed in the history of Roman epic.

This characteristic trait does not stand in isolation. Excessive elation in success has as its necessary complement another fundamental defect, unrestrained prostration at the onset of the first reversal of fortune: *quem res plus nimio delectavere secundae, / mutatae quant* (*“He who enjoys favorable circumstances too much is crushed when things change”*) (Hor. *Ep.* 1.10.30–31). And again, “the base soul exalts itself in good fortune, abases itself in disgrace.”⁶⁸ The *megalopsychos*, on the contrary, is neither too happy in success nor too afflicted by misfortune, but shows his greatness by holding up equally well in the two opposing conditions.⁶⁹ This paradigmatic association, inscribed in the audience’s system of expectations, resurfaces at intervals in the epic construction of Turnus: after his great successes in battle, the first adverse turn drives him to contemplate suicide (10.677ff.), but new hopes of victory overwhelm him again (*subita spe fervidus ardet*, 12.325) with momentary contentment but then frustration (*iam minus atque minus successu laetus . . .*, 12.616) that leaves him *amens* (12.622) and finally—here the negative model is surpassed, however, in the direction of at least an embryonic form of psychological character development—lucidly determined to die.

The reverse of this model is the Roman ideal of the victorious commander who refuses to imitate the *superbia* of his own enemies: Aemilius Paulus at Pydna, who taught not to *μεγαλαυχεῖν ἐπὶ τοῖς κατορθώμασι* (Plb. 29.20) since *in secundis rebus nihil in quemquam*

superbe ac violenter consulere decet . . . is demum vir erit, cuius animum neque prospera [sc. fortuna] flatu suo efferet, nec adversa infringet (“it is right in favorable circumstances not to treat anyone with pride or violence . . . he will be a man whose mind is neither puffed up in prosperity nor broken in adversity”) (Liv. 45.8.6–7).⁷⁰ In these terms the ideal of “knowing how to conquer” was developed by Caesar after his seizure of power, and then renewed in Augustus’s propaganda about *clementia*.⁷¹

Vergil is therefore able to cite in summary form, through the simple opposition between *res secundae* and *servare modum*, a universally recognized and accepted cultural model: from this an ongoing commentary is cast that allows the reader to ideologize according to his own value system the poem’s “Iliadic” content and participate in foreseeing its developments. Thus commented upon, the action takes on a plausible realism. The narrative produces its *post hoc ergo propter hoc* by construing itself in reading as a necessary concatenation. But this commentary must remain completely incorporated in the narration if it is not to “kill” (as will happen, for example, in Lucan) the free unfolding of epic events by superimposing itself on them. So the Vergilian text cannot help but permit a host of “voices” to coexist within it (voices linking up in various way with the Homeric texts, of which they represent diverse readings and transformations): it accepts the risk of being multivocal and even exploits, for precise communicative ends, the polyphony of its own cultural codes. Perhaps this was the only way to remake Homer without ignoring the distance that inevitably separated it from the complex, civilized world in which the poet lived. Yet this distance is less insurmountable if, once again, we do not consider the Homeric text as a fixed and immutable object but as a layering of historically diverse readings.

Recall now the basic homology linking the two passages quoted at the beginning of this section—the reason why, despite all the differences between them just examined, commentators have always seen that particular Iliadic passage as Vergil’s model.⁷² The act of triumphing is what will unwittingly cost the victor his life,⁷³ but still this death is not foreseeable by the human mind: οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατος καταθύμιός ἐστιν—*nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae*. But this imposes a meaning on the Homeric text that it could not have intended or implied. Homer treats the theme (so dear to archaic

Greek poetry) of the inevitability of fate, but he does not say *why* Hector is doomed to fall, nor does he offer any positive value as a counterpoint to the hero's blindness. The event remains objectively under the sign of *Ate*. Vergil instead speaks of the incapacity to *servare modum*. This reflection, as modern interpreters of the *Aeneid* flatly note, "is not in the spirit of Homer."⁷⁴ To be sure, the norm of moderation as a rule of life had no place in the ideological world of archaic epos, but *Vergil found exactly this concept in current interpretations of his Homeric model*. According to Alexandrian exegesis, as far as we can reconstruct it from the scholia,⁷⁵ Zeus's interjection on Hector's fate has a specific moral/didactic content: σχετλιάζων ἐπὶ τῷ ἐπάρματι τῆς εὐτυχίας (*rebus sublata secundis*) διδάσκει μετριάζειν (*servare modum*) "by deploring the excess caused by good fortune, he teaches moderation."⁷⁶

5. VERGIL'S HOMER

So we come back again, as in the former analysis, to the requirement not to separate the Homeric model "interpreted" by Vergil and the history of its reception (which is useful to represent as a stratification of successive readings). In this way we are able to grasp the link between Vergilian writing and the reading of Homer that this presupposes: two different productions of meaning but inscribable within the same cultural system. At base this way of representing the intertextual relation between Vergil and Homer can be deduced from a more general critical principle, certainly not new, but one found more often stated and put to concrete use: the necessity never to separate, in a given cultural period, the modes of reading and of writing. And hazarding an inference of wider scope, we can add that Vergil's attitude toward his model is not conceivable outside the cultural background in which practices of exegesis and critical commentary had become the sole "authorized" way to gain access to the poetry of the past—which had by then been turned, in the hands of the philologist-poets, into a *literary object*.⁷⁷ This fact becomes particularly apparent, and could be further illustrated with specific examples, when one observes the coincidence between certain adjustments Vergil made to the Homeric contents and the critical categories through which Homer's reception was filtered, categories

that originated in Alexandria and Pergamum (one need only think of the rise of the “probable” and “decorum”).

From this perspective the transformation of the model coincides without rupture with the genesis of the new text: it no longer appears isolated in a sort of prehistory for Vergil’s work (a distant *avant-texte* where the critic is attempting some complicated alchemy)⁷⁸ but instead acts directly as a communicative strategy. In this way one recovers the necessary connection between the intertextual relation—the condensation of literary codes in the text—and the poetry’s orientation toward its audience, real readers who begin from their given context to construct meaning out of it. Indeed, the interpretation the narrator requires of the audience is based on the competence that it already possesses; part of this competence is, by necessity, not an absolute Homer but rather certain particular readings of Homer that have been subjected to the cultural constraints of the period.

This way, the project of the poem is to overcome the partial extinction of the anthropological code that had supported the epic genre in its archaic phase (the original sense, as we know, is very often more fluid and transient than some surface structures); replenishing Homer’s gaps with a new culture means that the play of literary signification has been reopened. Because the audience has already received the events of Hector and Patroclus according to certain mental categories—having very little to do with the genuine intention of the Homeric text, but that is a secondary matter—the textual allusion serves not just to project a “script,” a known field of reference, but also to activate a process of ideological interpretation of the events narrated. From the moment the prodigy of bloody rain had been read as “tears of Zeus,” and received as an extreme symbol of (“Stoic”) subordination of divinity to Fate, Vergil can start from this interpretation, instead of from a literal reading of the model, and propose to his readers a god who has already learned this lesson. (Note then that, paradoxically, the inversion of the model can be its most historically faithful reading.) If, finally, a typical and formulaic gesture in Homeric narrative has long since been given an unavoidable transvalued connotation—ancient culture stigmatizes trampling conquered enemies as a sign of inhumanity, and so this image can no longer be received in some mechanical association with its

original context—the narrative economy of the new text will rely on this very additional meaning to engender wide-ranging implications. (Besides motivating Turnus's death, it reminds readers of the jarring effect of Aeneas's "non-Homeric" behavior toward Lausus).

The competence of the audience is therefore a constituent part of the meaning: reconstructing it is useful for understanding the text. *For us* this involves frequent resort to evidence and clues about ancient Homeric interpretation, but not with the goal of painting the improbable image of a bookish Vergil laboriously tracking down in commentaries and scholia anything he did not already find in Homer. It just means looking for evidence and clues that point toward something else: the general reception of the Homeric text in Roman culture. This is where the system of presuppositions is rooted, and with it the intertextual relation that ensures Vergilian epic its legibility.