

Breaking and Entering  
*Metalepsis in Classical Literature*

Classics in Theory

EDITED BY SEBASTIAN MATZNER AND GAIL TRIMBLE

## *Acknowledgements*

To be added.

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## *Abbreviations*

Classical authors and works are usually abbreviated following the practice of the *OLD* and *LSJ*, and journals according to that of *L'Année Philologique*.

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## Metalepsis, Grief, and Narrative in *Aeneid* 2

*Helen Lovatt*

*Aeneid* 2 is a book of intense emotion. It is also a book of great narrative complexity: the first person narrative of Aeneas slips in and out of focus, and Sinon tells his own story.<sup>1</sup> With so many narrative levels, the potential for metalepsis is high. Further, epic as a genre, with its typical focus on the objective distance of the narrator, perhaps tends towards metaleptic moments in negotiating extended first person narratives.<sup>2</sup> I am interested in the interactions between metalepsis and emotional responses to reading: for me, metalepsis is a phenomenon which requires and is open to interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Readers must decide what constitutes a break between narrative levels and what effects these jarring moments can have.<sup>4</sup> Virgil's *Aeneid* is a good text

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\* Many thanks to Gail Trimble and Sebastian Matzner for organising the conference, including me in the volume, giving extremely constructive comments and being patient in waiting for this contribution.

<sup>1</sup> The figure of Aeneas as narrator has received a certain amount of attention, but the concept of metalepsis has not yet been used to explore narrative in *Aeneid* 2, nor has the relationship between metalepsis and emotional response been much examined. On Aeneas as narrator see Casali (2003), Bowie (2008), Powell (2011). Bowie (2008) and Horsfall (2008) recognize many of the same moments as jarring, but neither discuss the connection between intense emotion and narratorial inconsistency. On inconsistency and reading Latin epic, see also O'Hara (2007). There is as ever much secondary literature on every aspect of Virgil. I will only skim the surface here and mention the pieces I have found most useful.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps generic expectations are as important for ancient readers as ontological expectations are for modern readers?

<sup>3</sup> Bell and Alber (2012) discuss the importance of interpretation in construing metalepsis; they are more interested in ontological metalepses, in which authors or characters are represented as not just looking or intruding into other narrative levels, but actually moving between them. So even Le Guin's *Lavinia* (2008) in which Virgil communicates with his character Lavinia through dreams and visions would not properly constitute metalepsis. The question of what counts as jarring is difficult, and culturally constructed: gods intervening in the action would appear metaleptic in a modern realist novel, but not at all in ancient epic. Similarly, transfictional metalepsis (a character from one story appearing in another) does not work in the ancient world, where story worlds are not securely separated off from each other or from historical 'reality'. Yet Diomedes' appearance in the *Aeneid* does feel to a certain extent transfictional, in that he is marked as the *Iliadic* Diomedes.

<sup>4</sup> It is likely that different readers will respond differently to features that have the potential to be metaleptic (on this question of reader response cf. Matzner in this volume). As a reader, I have changed a great deal: I remember with nostalgia childhood experiences of extreme immersion, in which not just the act of turning pages but the entire world disappeared around me as I read. Now, perhaps through

in which to explore these phenomena, because of its rich and varied tradition of readers and reading, and *Aeneid 2* is one of the most frequently read and famous books.<sup>5</sup> This chapter addresses the question of the emotional functions of metalepsis: does narrative complexity intensify emotional engagement or make it bearable through moments of withdrawal?<sup>6</sup> How does metalepsis contribute to the representation of grief? Is there something metaleptic about intense emotion, especially grief, which can create a numbness or shock that separates the sufferer from a sense of reality?

The chapter begins with an examination of narrators and narrating in *Aeneid 2*. Both Aeneas and Sinon are fascinatingly complex narrators, who use their grief to establish authority and create a positive reception. This complexity encourages constant interplay between narrative levels, which creates dissonances for readers, but ultimately intensifies the emotional response of the various levels of audience. If Dido models Virgil's ideal response, he was not intending to turn us off. The narrator's constant presence, in counterfactuals that remind us we are in the pre-determined world of myth, the operation of hindsight which activates lament, and the irony more often associated with tragedy, do not alienate but draw us in.

The second section tackles narrative transition: ends of scenes and sequences and changes of setting are often characterized by emotional intensity and lack of narrative realism. Metalepsis often occurs at the edges of narrative, including problematization of the narrator's knowledge of events, anachronism and focus on the narrator's physical location. The chapter then examines the epic voice of Aeneas, beginning with similes, which also often feature at the ends of sections both as emotional high points and moments of self-conscious reflection for narrator and narratees. In many ways, Aeneas as narrator takes on the epic voice of the primary narrator, and Aeneas' narrative as well as that of the primary narrator shows through the other narrative

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training as an academic, or through a visual impairment which has radically slowed my reading speed, I get into a narrative with difficulty and remain constantly aware of its artificiality. Everything is metaleptic for me. It would be useful to have reading experience studies that focused on metalepsis.

<sup>5</sup> I will only be able to touch on these histories of reading, via the commentary tradition, due to lack of space.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fulkerson in this volume on metalepsis and emotion in elegiac contexts.

levels.<sup>7</sup> When Polites dies *ante ora parentum* ('before the face of his fathers') he is an image of the universality of epic death, and connects to Aeneas' own desire to die in the storm of book 1. This tendency of epic to speak across time and space as well as audience levels is reinforced by puns and intertextual references, which one would expect to create distance, but which can also serve to enhance immediacy. Most strikingly of all, when Priam is described as a headless body on the shore, the author intrudes with a reference to contemporary Rome and Pompey's death in the civil wars. This too claims the universality and contemporary relevance of mythic storytelling and seems likely to intensify engagement. Finally, I look briefly at Genette's phrase 'Virgil "has Dido die"' and how the death of Dido fits into these ideas about grief and narrative.

### **Narrators in *Aeneid* 2: Aeneas and Sinon**

*Aeneid* book 2 sets a story within a story within a story: the primary narrator, telling posterity about the adventures of Aeneas, gives way to the first-person narrative of the hero himself, to Dido at a Carthaginian banquet, which contains the story of Sinon, set up to deceive the Trojans into bringing in the Trojan horse. It is a book that is fundamentally concerned with the breaking of boundaries: spear violating horse, horse violating city, Greeks penetrating ever further into the innermost heart of Trojan power. It is also a book of deep and powerful emotional engagement, grief and trauma. When Aeneas agrees reluctantly to tell the story, he figures the process as an act of reliving and recreating his own pain:

*conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant.  
inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto:  
'infandum, regina, iubes renouare dolorem,  
Troianas ut opes et lamentabile regnum  
eruerint Danaï, quaeque ipse miserrima uidi  
et quorum pars magna fui. quis talia fando  
Myrmidonum Dolopumue aut duri miles Vlixī  
temperet a lacrimis? et iam nox umida caelo*

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<sup>7</sup> Bowie (2008: 48) feels 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.'

*praecipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos.  
sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros  
et breuiter Troiae supremum audire laborem,  
quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit,  
incipiam.* (Aen. 2.1–13)

All grew silent and held their faces intently,  
and from there on his high couch, father Aeneas began thus:  
'Unspeakable is the sorrow, O queen, your order me to recreate,  
how the Danaans overturned Trojan wealth and the kingdom  
deserving lament, those most wretched events which I myself saw  
and of which I was a great part. Which one, in speaking such things,  
of the Myrmidons or the Dolopes or even which soldier of hard Ulysses,  
could refrain from tears? And now the damp night falls headlong  
in the sky and the falling stars encourage sleep.  
But if you have so great a love to recognize our downfall  
and to hear in a short time the final labour of Troy,  
although my mind shudders to remember and flees back from grief,  
I will begin.'<sup>8</sup>

The inclusion of lines 1–2 reminds the reader that this is a first person narrative within a third person narrative poem, emphasising the circumstances of telling and dramatising the high expectations of the internal audience. Lines 3–13 in contrast have many features of the proem of an epyllion: a dedication to the speaker's sponsoring audience, a statement of the subject matter, a claim of his own authority as narrator.<sup>9</sup> Discussion of metalepsis, as Matzner argues,<sup>10</sup> requires a sense of the frames which are set up to be broken. These lines establish the narrating context of *Aeneid* 2, and have a particular focus on grief. Line 3 defines the story of book 2 as an *infandum . . . dolorem* ('unspeakable grief'). The two words bracket the line, taking the key positions in it, and defining the act of narrative as essentially paradoxical: the act of story-telling re-creates a situation so horrifically painful that it should not be spoken.<sup>11</sup> Aeneas is a reluctant narrator, acting on the orders of Dido (*iubes*). Most importantly, he presents himself as not just telling, but re-living the experience in the

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<sup>8</sup> The text of the *Aeneid* is that of Conte (2009); translations are my own, with no pretensions to elegance, but an attempt to show how I read the Latin.

<sup>9</sup> On Aeneas' proem, see Gasti (2006). Powell (2011: 195) shows that this beginning functions as an *exordium* to a persuasive speech.

<sup>10</sup> Matzner in this volume, p. 000.

<sup>11</sup> See Thorne (forthcoming) on trauma and unspeakable narration.

verb *renouare* ('renew'). The whole Trojan story has now become a cause of lament (*lamentabile*, 4), even if the various audiences can position themselves temporally before the downfall. Throughout this first person narrative Aeneas will play with the double temporal perspective created by his position as both character and narrator, in a way that seems metaleptic to me. This is reinforced by generic expectations, in which epic is characterized as a third person, omniscient genre, in which the gods participate as characters. The tensions between Aeneas' role as epic narrator and his limited perspective as a mortal frequently surface in book 2, continually putting the seams of epic on display. This too is anticipated in the proem, which does not invoke the gods, but instead presents Dido as inspiration and audience, driven by desire for knowledge. Instead Aeneas emphasizes his own authority as both witness and participant: *quaeque ipse miserrima uidi | et quorum pars magna fui* ('those most wretched events which I myself saw | and of which I was a great part', 5–6). Similarly, tensions between acting and viewing will surface, which might potentially lay the narrator open to criticism, and invite the narratees, both internal and external, to exercise the evaluative function which is often an aspect of the narrator's intrusion into the narrative, by evaluating the narrator himself.<sup>12</sup> If he is watching, why was he not acting? If he was acting, why was he acting in that way?<sup>13</sup> Aeneas' narrative continually questions his own reliability as narrator in a way that reminds us of its status as rhetoric. This is already implicitly happening in the proem: *quis talia fando | Myrmidonum Dolopumue aut duri miles Vlixi | temperet a lacrimis?* ('Which one, in speaking such things, | of the Myrmidons or the Dolopes or even which soldier of hard Ulysses, | could refrain from tears?', 6–8). On the surface, this is a claim that even the direst enemies of Aeneas would be moved by the story, a claim for universal emotional impact, emotional authenticity so overwhelming that it transcends even the bitterest enmity. But it also implicitly emphasizes the bi-partisan nature of the conflict, that there might be a very different story if told by a Greek. In particular, this sentence evokes the most obvious previous model for Aeneas, the *apologia* of Odysseus in

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<sup>12</sup> On the evaluative function of the narrator see Culler (1981: 185); Labov (1972: 366–75).

<sup>13</sup> Powell (2011) brilliantly outlines the apologetic functions of books 2 and 3 of the *Aeneid* and their workings as a speech of self-justification.

*Odyssey* 9–12.<sup>14</sup> Odysseus' story, too, is told in the context of his grief, as he reacts to Demodocus' song of the Trojan horse like a woman lamenting her dead husband and captured city (*Od.* 8.523–30), and Alkinoos asks him to explain himself. This is his opportunity to persuade the Phaeacians to help him, even at the risk of divine punishment themselves. As he starts his story he is described as πολύμητις ('wily', *Od.* 9.1), and he begins by focusing on his desire to return to Ithaca (9.21–36). For Odysseus the act of listening is traumatic, while the act of telling is therapeutic.<sup>15</sup> Aeneas represents the act of telling itself as traumatic. This perhaps serves to underline his difference from Odysseus, his trustworthiness in comparison to Odysseus' clever manipulations of his audience. But the comparison always threatens to collapse into similarity rather than difference. If the epic audience should expect a slippery and complex narrative, is Aeneas' sincerity jarring? His final prefatory gesture is towards the incommensurability of narrative and reality: what he tells now in the space of a night will only be a brief (*breuiter*) retelling in comparison to the enormity of the grief and destruction, both final and climactic (*supremum*) toil/achievement (*laborem*).<sup>16</sup> The work of telling the story cannot match the sublimity of living through the events. Aeneas' mind flees again (*refugit*) just as his body actually did, horrified by the memory and the prospect of remembering. All of this functions as a teaser for the audience, a trailer, a claim of the importance and drama of the story to come. The proem sets up the frame of Aeneas' narrative, but also begins the play on first and third person, speaking of the unspeakable, Aeneas as poet versus Aeneas as participant, and the temporal dislocations of multiple narratees which characterize the narrative as a whole. Although it can be read on the surface as perfectly naturalistic and appropriate for its context, the proem invites readers to see metaleptic moves that highlight the artificiality of the narrative and are calculated precisely to increase the emotional impact of the narrative on the various levels of narratees, from Dido to Augustus to posterity.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> On reading Odysseus as liar: Parry (1994).

<sup>15</sup> On therapy in Phaeacia, see Race (2014).

<sup>16</sup> Powell (2011: 195) marks this as a rhetorical trope.

<sup>17</sup> A metapoetic reading is possible without creating metaleptic effects, and not every reader need take the metapoetic path. However, the close association between Aeneas as narrator and Virgil as poet does create some moments in the narrative that are more obviously metaleptic in their effects.

Aeneas is a subjective narrator who frequently reminds us of his presence in the text.<sup>18</sup> Although he is not omniscient he does have the benefit of hindsight, and takes on the role of epic narrator in his style and attitude. Aeneas' narrative interjections often work on more than one level: so at 54–6, he reflects that Laocoon's spear throw could have and should have revealed the truth about the Trojan horse.

*et, si fata deum, si mens non laeua fuisset,  
impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras,  
Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres. (Aen. 2.54–6)*

And if the fates of the gods, if the controlling mind had not been unfavourable,  
he would have compelled us to violate the Greek concealment with iron,  
and Troy would now stand, and the citadel of Priam on high would now remain.

On the surface this passage represents the natural denial of the bereaved narrator. He desperately longs to tell a story with a different outcome. On another level, however, the equivalence between *fata* and *mens* in this passage could be taken to imply that the embedded narrator here is complaining about the choices of the poet. *Mens* is generally taken to refer to the attitude of the Trojan people who did not believe Laocoon, but it could also suggest a controlling providence, perhaps the mind of Jupiter.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately neither Virgil nor Aeneas can change myth enough to prevent the fall of Troy. Aeneas as narrator can only remind his audiences that everything could have been different, bringing out the tragic irony of the Trojans' lack of knowledge and understanding, the tiny changes of causation which lead to massive outcomes, but the ultimate inevitability of myth and history.<sup>20</sup> This counterfactual certainly heightens emotional engagement and evokes lament: it also reminds us that

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<sup>18</sup> Virgil as subjective narrator: Heinze (1993); on Virgil's polycentric narrative: Conte (2007).

<sup>19</sup> See Powell (2011: 197), Horsfall (2008: 91–2) for a summary of this debate.

<sup>20</sup> Horsfall (2008: 198) shows how Aeneas creates degrees of identification and detachment from the Trojan perspective through his use of first person and third person plural verbs.

this is a story being told by a character who was actually there, but now can no longer intervene.<sup>21</sup> Counterfactuals bring out the inner workings of myth as narrative.<sup>22</sup>

*Aeneid* 2 plays around even further with the mechanics of narration, going beyond the *Odyssey*, since Aeneas' narrative contains an inset narrative from a deliberately deceptive narrator, the Greek Sinon, who persuades the Trojans to bring the horse into Troy. The introduction of a false narrator inevitably reflects on the primary internal narrator and on narrative as an act of persuasion. The existence of Sinon to take on the role of 'lying Odysseus' could protect Aeneas by contrast from the accusation of inhabiting that role, or it could contaminate both the external and internal narrators with its problematization of narrative. Either way, narratees both internal and external must become more aware of the close connection between narrative and persuasion. Sinon also serves as object of blame, a way of grounding the inevitable anger of grief. When Aeneas introduces Sinon, he does so in didactic and evaluative mode, as an *exemplum* of Greek perjury:

*accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno  
disce omnis.  
namque ut conspectu in medio turbatus, inermis,  
constitit atque oculis Phrygia agmina circumspexit,  
'heu! quae nunc tellus,' inquit, 'quae me aequora possunt  
accipere?'* (Aen. 2.65–70)

Hear now the treacheries of the Danaas and from one crime  
learn all.

For as he stood in the sight of all, disturbed, unarmed,  
and looked around with his eyes at the Phrygian columns,  
'Alas! What land now,' he said, 'what sea can receive  
me now?'

Aeneas as narrator makes his hindsight clear, along with his judgement and evaluation. Telling the story is equated to teaching, listening to learning. The very explicit narratorial push jars and invites resistance. But what do we learn? That

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<sup>21</sup> Aeneas has a slightly Lucanian narrative voice, which is fundamentally a grieving voice, in that he desires to undo the story he is telling. He does not go as far as Lucan in viewing himself as actually recreating the events that he loathes, as in the *poeta creator* motif, explored by Lieberg (1982), but he does show some elements of the 'split voice', as discussed in Masters (1993). Narratives of grief, then, tend towards metalepsis.

<sup>22</sup> On counterfactuals see Cowan (2010).



vulnerability can be a position of strength, and suffering can be used to validate and persuade. Sinon's visibility should make him powerless, but he takes control of the gaze by assessing his audience (*circumspexit*, 'he looked around', 68). He begins by performing lament. More specifically, he uses his grief for Palamedes, and Palamedes' epic fame, to authenticate his own fictions:

*'cuncta equidem tibi, rex, fuerit quodcumque, fatebor  
uera,' inquit; 'neque me Argolica de gente negabo.  
hoc primum; nec, si miserum Fortuna Sinonem  
finxit, uanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.  
fando aliquod si forte tuas peruenit ad auris  
Belidae nomen Palamedis et incluta fama  
gloria, quem falsa sub prodicione Pelasgi  
insontem infando indicio, quia bella uetabat,  
demisere neci, nunc cassum lumine lugent: (Aen. 2.77–85)*

'I will confess all the things indeed to you, O king, whatever will have happened, truthfully,' he said; 'nor will I deny that I am from the Argive race. This first: if Fortune has modelled Sinon as wretched, she will not also model him wickedly as empty and lying. If something by chance has reached your ears from speech, the name of Palamedes son of Belus and the fame of his renowned glory, whom through deceitful betrayal the Pelasgians sent down to death, innocent, in an unspeakable indictment, because he forbade the war, now they grieve for the light in vain.'

The densely packed words of speaking, confession and fiction (*fatebor, negabo, finxit, finget, fando, fama, infando*) insist that the narratees be on the look-out for word play. Everything in this speech demands to be read on (at least) two levels, reminding us throughout that the speech is created by Sinon, Aeneas and Virgil. First Sinon claims he will confess the truth, but the next clause underpins this claim with the sophistic argument that if Sinon is wretched he cannot also be a liar. The secondary internal (Carthaginian) and external audiences in fact know that Sinon is not wretched, but is a liar, while the immediate Trojan audience can take the statement at face value. Sinon uses his performance of grief to authenticate what he says and persuade the Trojans, but Aeneas uses his word-play on the next level up of the narrative to play a trick for the audience to see through. Secondary narratees must read this speech

differently from primary narratees. This interplay of different audience levels is created by Aeneas' hindsight and is almost certainly metaleptic for external narratees.

Later Sinon breaks off his speech to make sure that his audience are irrevocably hooked:

*sed quid ego haec autem nequiquam ingrata reuoluo,  
quidue moror? si omnis uno ordine habetis Achiuos,  
idque audire sat est, iamdudum sumite poenas:  
hoc Ithacus uelit et magno mercentur Atridae.'  
Tum uero ardemus scitari et quaerere causas,  
ignari scelerum tantorum artisque Pelasgae.  
prosequitur pauitans et ficto pectore fatur: (Aen. 2.101–7)*

But why do I unroll this unwelcome tale in vain,  
why do I delay? If you hold all Achaeans in one rank,  
it is enough to hear that, take your punishment now:  
the Ithacan wants this and the sons of Atreus are greatly rewarded.'  
Then indeed we burn to know more and seek the causes,  
unaware of such great crimes and Pelasgian skill.  
He pursues panicking and speaks with deceitful heart:

The act of breaking off the story symbolizes the breaking of its frame,<sup>23</sup> and the self-consciousness of Sinon's narrating tends towards narratorial metalepsis, bringing out the guiding presence of both Aeneas and Virgil. First he represents himself as a Roman reader winding back the roll (*reuoluo*).<sup>24</sup> Then *si omnis uno ordine habetis Achiuos* ('if you hold all Achaeans in one rank', 102) clearly echoes Aeneas' introduction *accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno | disce omnis*. ('Hear now the treacheries of the Danaans and from one crime | learn all.' 65–6), as *ficto pectore* from the internal narrator evokes the key repetition of *finxit . . . finget* (80) at the beginning of Sinon's speech.<sup>25</sup> Sinon thus slips into the role of self-conscious reader of the poem, while

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<sup>23</sup> A similar break characterizes the transition from ekphrasis back into narrative at the end of the description of the gates at Cumae (6.30–39). Daedalus' depiction broke off with his inability to recreate the death of his own son; at the same moment of intensity, Aeneas' viewing is broken off by the Sibyl's intervention. Here too the movement between inset ekphrasis and framing narrative functions to draw back from and intensify emotional engagement. See Fitzgerald (1984).

<sup>24</sup> Horsfall (2008: 124) notes this metaphor.

<sup>25</sup> Possibly *ficto pectore* might reverse Aeneas' own ability to suppress emotions and fake for the sake of persuasion: *spem uultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem* ('he pretends hope on his face, and presses grief deep in his heart', 209). While Sinon pretends to be in a state of grief but is actually hopeful, Aeneas pretends to be hopeful when he is actually grieving.

Aeneas uses Sinon's speech to reinforce his narrative evaluations for the reader.<sup>26</sup> There could also be a double meaning in his phrase *sumite poenas* ('take punishment', 103), which on the surface encourages the Trojans to extract punishment from Sinon, but might also imply procuring their own punishment by believing him.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, what Odysseus, Agamemnon and Menelaus want is precisely that the Trojans should believe him, not that they should punish him. The heavy irony and wordplay throughout Sinon's speech continually blurs the boundary between levels of narrative. A further level of irony exists for the external narratee, who can also see parallels between Aeneas and Sinon, Dido and the Trojans. As the Trojans react with desire to know (*ardemus*, 'we burn') both levels of irony are activated: the city of Troy will burn, as will Dido (both emotionally and literally). The pleasure and horror of Aeneas' narrative lies precisely in the way his knowledge as narrator is overlaid on his experience as character. The *ars* of this speech is not just that of Sinon's Greek cunning, but also Aeneas as narrator and Virgil as poet, further brought out by the imitation of Sinon's stammering in *prosequitur pauitans*. The extreme artifice of the story-teller has as powerful an effect on the internal and external narratees as Sinon had on the Trojans. When Sinon literally breaks off his story he also breaks the frame of his story, and every word that he says keeps on breaking it. This irony is more characteristic of tragedy than epic, but cannot really be said to jar against the expectations of the external audience, given the story and the narrator.<sup>28</sup> Movement between narrative levels, rhetorical and ironic, here at least, is clearly an intensifier: in Carthage, Dido identifies intensely with Aeneas (but is this true of the other Carthaginians?); Roman readers and readers down the ages identify in a different way with Aeneas by doing the intellectual work to appreciate his double perspective. Heavy irony complicates and creates paradoxes, makes us desire more, just as the Trojans do. I'm a little in love with Aeneas myself at the moment. And Virgil.

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<sup>26</sup> Or as Horsfall (2008: 128) following Servius puts it 'V[irgil] is careful to remind his readers that they are still in the middle of a tissue of lies.'

<sup>27</sup> *OLD* 6a 'to take money, resources etc from a source, get procure', is juxtaposed with 6b 'to exact (punishment or retribution)'.  
<sup>28</sup> Mythical material encourages self-conscious reading, because readers always know in advance what the outcome is supposed to be and are always aware of different possible levels of reading it. The rhetorical education of ancient readers would also lend itself towards a heightened sensitivity to narrating situations. If the dominance of the realist novel as a narrative form creates the category of metalepsis, metalepsis must function differently in the rhetorical, mythical ancient world.

## Scene Changes and Metaleptic Moments

Metalepsis often occurs at the beginnings and ends of scenes or narrative units. As the story moves from one setting and group of characters to another, it is particularly noticeable that the narrative does not straightforwardly replicate reality. The choices of the narrator are particularly apparent. Fludernik discusses scene changes in novels, and the category of ‘discourse metalepsis’ or the deliberate filling of narrative time with narrator intervention that is particularly associated with temporal disjunctions or simultaneity: ‘dear reader, while the characters walk, let us view the new setting’.<sup>29</sup> For me, this metaleptic move in realist fiction bears a close family resemblance to the use of ekphrasis at moments of narrative transition in ancient epic, particularly prevalent in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>30</sup> But how metaleptic are these moments? Do we in fact expect a certain narrative tremor, as it were, at the edges of a narrative unit? *Aeneid* 2 has some striking scene changes and the book's most metaleptic moments come at the end of sequences. The counterfactual narrative interjection we have just examined comes at the end of the first Laocoon scene just before the arrival of Sinon is heralded with an *ecce* (‘Behold!’).<sup>31</sup> At 429–37 Aeneas and the scene move from a generalized battle in the streets of Troy, to the sequence of events at Priam's palace:

*nec te tua plurima, Panthu,  
labentem pietas nec Apollinis infula textit.  
Iliaci cineres et flamma extrema meorum,  
testor, in occasu uestro nec tela nec ullas  
uitauisse uices, Danaum et, si fata fuissent  
ut caderem, meruisse, manu. diuellimur inde,  
Iphitus et Pelias mecum (quorum Iphitus aevo  
iam grauior, Pelias et uulnere tardus Vlxi),  
protinus ad sedes Priami clamore uocati. (Aen. 2.429–37)*

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<sup>29</sup> Fludernik (2003a).

<sup>30</sup> On Ovid, transition and ekphrasis see Lovatt (2013: 177–80). On duality of irony and empathy in the ekphrasis of Juno's temple, see Amir (2009).

<sup>31</sup> On scene changes in Virgil and Statius, see Lovatt (forthcoming). This is a moderate scene change, part of the longer Trojan horse sequence, in the same location, but a significant change of direction with the entrance of Sinon. The word *ecce* signifies a sudden or ‘quick cut’ scene change. On the ‘quick cut’ in Tacitus see Waddell (2013).

Nor did your many kindnesses, Panthus,  
 protect you as you slip away nor the fillet of Apollo.  
 Ashes of Ilium and final flames of my own city,  
 I call you to witness, that in your fall I did not avoid any weapons  
 or any dangers, and if the fates had been that I should  
 fall by the hand of the Greeks, I deserved it. We are torn away from there,  
 Iphitus and Pelias along with me (of whom Iphitus was now  
 heavier through age, and Pelias slow through a wound from Ulysses),  
 immediately we were called by the shouting to the palace of Priam.

This passage has several metaleptic features: the apostrophe of Panthus as he dies is a fairly standard epic feature, which the epic narrator uses to heighten the emotional connection with minor characters.<sup>32</sup> But this apostrophe is also in the voice of Aeneas, who can literally call on a friend from his past.<sup>33</sup> Further, it develops into a much more unusual address to the events themselves to prove the truth of Aeneas' narrative, which I think must have been jarring even in the context of ancient epic poetry in which apostrophe was much more common than in modern literature.<sup>34</sup> The apostrophes also mark an attempt by Aeneas the narrator to connect with the actions of his past self, at the same time that he justifies himself to his audience, displaying the guilt of the bereaved.<sup>35</sup> The change from the past tense of Panthus' death and the perfect infinitives of Aeneas' reflections on his past actions into the present passive of *diuellimur* suggests a resubmersion of Aeneas the narrator as character in the narrative, brought back to normal in the past tense of *vocati*, while the sense of *diuellimur* ('we are torn away') carries the opposite implication, creating a further paradox of immersion and alienation.<sup>36</sup> Emotion seems to intensify at the moment of rupture: perhaps emotion causes the narrator to break the narrative illusion in order to engage with his own guilt.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. de Jong and Trimble in this volume on apostrophe, as well as Matzner in this volume on cultural-historically specific frameworks for any assessment of the impact of metalepses.

<sup>33</sup> Thanks to Gail Trimble for this point, and a possible connection with the shared lamentation at *Aen.* 1.217–22 where Aeneas and his men call on their lost comrades. Virgil's language suggests speaking to and calling on the dead: *amissos longo socios sermone requirunt* ('They search for their lost allies with long speech', 1.217); *nec iam exaudire uocatos* ('no longer hear when they are called', 1.219). Aeneas is presented here as using typically epic epithets to address the dead: along with *pius Aeneas* ('dutiful Aeneas') we have *acris Oronti* ('fierce Orontes', 1.220) and *fortem Gyan* ('strong Gyan', 1.222).

<sup>34</sup> On apostrophe in the *Aeneid* D'Alessandro Behr (2005); on apostrophe as a trope of Roman epic: Georgacopoulou (2005), D'Alessandro Behr (2007).

<sup>35</sup> On typical stages and emotions of bereavement, see Parkes (1986).

<sup>36</sup> Thanks to Gail Trimble for this point.

After the physical movement from one place to another, the huge battle at Priam's palace is described, including an anachronistic *testudine* ('tortoise formation', 441). Is this anachronism designed to create 'immediacy', as Horsfall suggests?<sup>37</sup> If this detail makes the fall of the city feel more familiar to a Roman audience, can it be felt to be metaleptic?<sup>38</sup> But the explicit involvement of the narrator's emotions is also a realistic representation of what it is like to hear someone telling a story. It is not at all clear that making the seams of story-telling visible distances rather than involves readers.

The transition to the next sequence, the climactic deaths of Polites and Priam, is completed at 453–9, with a brief ekphrasis and a change of perspective:

*limen erat caecaeque fores et peruius usus  
 tectorum inter se Priami postesque relict  
 a tergo, infelix qua se, dum regna manebant,  
 saepius Andromache ferre incommitata solebat  
 ad soceros et auo puerum Astyanacta trahebat.  
 euado ad summi fastigia culminis, unde  
 tela manu miseri iactabant inrita Teuceri. (Aen. 2.453–9)*

There was a threshold and dark doors and a way through  
 between the halls of Priam, an entrance abandoned  
 at the back, through which unfortunate Andromache, while  
 the kingdom was still standing, often took herself unaccompanied  
 to her parents-in-law and dragged the boy Astyanax to his grandfather.  
 I escape to the gables of the high roof, from where  
 wretched Trojans were throwing weapons from their hands in vain.

Here Aeneas takes the bird's-eye view of the omniscient epic narrator, but then literalizes that vertical perspective by claiming that he can see these events unfold from the roof of the palace. The shift to the roof is unexplained, and arguably jarring: Austin comments (*ad loc.*) 'Indeed one of the very few things in this Book that can be criticized is the amount of time spent by Aeneas on roofs'. Aeneas is claiming the ability to see into previously unseen spaces (hence *caecae* 'blind', used for 'secret') and rationalising the poet's decision to allow his narrator to see a number of key

<sup>37</sup> Horsfall (2008: 342). Cf. Bing in this volume on anachronism.

<sup>38</sup> This example emphasizes the way that metalepsis is a matter of interpretation: if a reader stopped to think about whether or not tortoise formations were an appropriate thing to find in a narrative of the fall of Troy, that would inevitably break the frame of Aeneas' narrative and remind the external reader that this is in fact a fiction created by a Roman. But if they did not notice this as an anachronism, it would have the opposite effect by making them feel that ancient Trojans were more like them.

events which he probably would not have seen. This authorial metalepsis is muddled by Aeneas' explicit focalization through his narrating self, in which he connects the location with Andromache, soon to be widowed, and Astyanax, soon to be murdered, bringing out the dramatic irony of his position as both character and narrator, emphasized further by calling the Trojans *miseri* ('wretched') and their weapons *inrita* ('in vain'). The tensions between the traditional third person narrative of epic and the first person narrative of Aeneas are particularly evident in this passage.

There follows a description of Pyrrhus breaking into the palace, coming to a climax with Aeneas' listing of the famous moments of destruction that follow:

*uidi ipse furentem  
caede Neoptolemum geminosque in limine Atridas,  
uidi Hecubam centumque nurus Priamumque per aras  
sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacrauerat ignis.  
quingenta illi thalami, spes tanta nepotum,  
barbarico postes auro spoliisque superbi  
procubuere; tenent Danai, qua deficit ignis.  
Forsitan et, Priami fuerint quae fata, requiras. (Aen. 2.499–506)*

I myself saw Neoptolemus  
raging in the slaughter and the twin sons of Atreus on the threshold,  
I saw Hecuba and her hundred daughters-in-law and Priam befouling  
the altars with blood, the altars which he himself consecrated with fire.  
Those fifty bed-chambers, such great hope of descendants,  
the door-posts proud with barbarian gold and spoils  
all fell; the Danaans hold them, where the fire fails.  
Perhaps also you might ask what was the fate of Priam.

Here the scene of general destruction in the palace of Priam moves into specific focus on Priam's death. Aeneas (and Virgil) bring this overview to a climax with the repetition of Aeneas' emphatic witnessing: *uidi ipse . . . uidi* ('I myself saw . . . I saw', 499, 501) and a roll-call of the famous events in a nutshell: the key Greek aggressors, Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, Agamemnon and Menelaus; Hecuba and Priam with their wealth and prolific family, all about to be wiped out. Priam's death is anticipated, out of narrative sequence, along with the ritual pollution and sacrilege of his death on the altars. The passage finishes with a change to the present tense, as if describing an image rather than narrating a sequence of events. The next scene is initiated with a

move back to the perspective and experience of the internal narrator and audience, Aeneas anticipating questions from Dido, which can also, of course, function as a standard rhetorical question from author to reader, and is designed to move from summary and overview to the specific scene of Priam's death. It does break the rhythm of the preceding passage, but I am not sure whether that variation has a metaleptic effect.

We have certainly seen that the narrator comes to the surface at moments of transition, and that the ends of scenes are associated with high emotional intensity, although it is difficult to assess whether such climactic passages are distancing or suturing. It is possible that emotional intensity and immediacy allow the narrator (and author) to take greater liberties with narratee and audience expectations. In the heat of battle, as it were, the odd tortoise escapes notice.

### **Death and Epic: Polites and Priam**

Scenes in epic often end with a simile. Similes are a key feature of epic style, and Aeneas uses them frequently, in a way that brings out the similarity of his first person narrative to the main epic narrative.<sup>39</sup> I would argue that similes have a weak metaleptic effect, by causing a pause in the narrative, and putting thematic and symbolic dimensions of interpretation at the forefront. Quite often, Aeneas' similes have additional twists of self-consciousness that increase this effect: at 304–8 the Greek overthrow of Troy, watched by Aeneas from his father's roof, is compared to both a forest fire and a river in flood (as if incorporating a battle of the elements), with the additional touch of an internal spectator: *stupet inscius alto | accipiens sonitum saxi de uertice pastor* ('shocked and unaware a shepherd hears the sound from the high peak of a rock', 307–8). The comparison of the band of young Trojans resisting to a pack of wolves defending their cubs at 355–60 reverses normal expectations of wolf similes, where a pack of wolves is normally predatory, not defensive. Further, Aeneas follows this simile with the typical epic *topos* of narratorial inadequacy in the face of

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<sup>39</sup> Horsfall (2008: xvii) argues that the total of 9 (or 10) similes in the section 223–631 is significant, although books 9, 10 and 12 have higher total numbers. Book 2, of course, is a book of battle narrative.



his material: *quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando | explicet aut possit lacrimis aequare labores?* ('Who might untangle the disaster of that night and the deaths by speaking, or who could equal the labours with his tears?' 361–2). Grief and confusion go hand in hand in this narratorial intervention, which both establishes Aeneas' authority as epic narrator, claims the sublimity of his subject matter and emphasizes the overwhelming panic and grief which make any narrative ultimately an artificial reconstruction. At 376–83 a double reversal compares the Greek Androgeos realising that he has been attacked by disguised Trojans to a man who steps on a snake without knowing it. The Trojans are assimilated to snakes, and the internal observer represents the Greek character: yet both snake and man are in danger of being destroyed. Similes do not create simple emotional identification: like anachronism they are seen as aiding immediacy, yet they require a step away from the narrative context and an act of (complex) interpretation. Further, at 416–9, the Trojans are caught up in attacks from all sides which are compared to multiple storm winds creating a cosmic disturbance. This simile too goes beyond the normal equation of battle with storm, and evokes the magnitude and turbulence of the storm in *Aeneid* 1 (1.84–6 also mentions *Eurusque Notusque . . . Africus*; here we have *Zephyrusque Notusque et . . . Eurus*, 417–8). This arguably offers the opportunity to read a weak authorial metalepsis, since Aeneas cannot have known of the description of the storm in which he himself was almost killed, but it is not a jarring connection that demands reader attention. The most important simile in book 2 is probably 624–31 when Venus has given Aeneas temporary access to the divine gaze, allowing him to see the divine action missing from his first-person narrative. The gods however only appear in Venus' speech and through the simile which Aeneas uses to attempt to convey his sublime vision: the city literally subsiding, like a tree cut down by multiple axe-men. The additional frisson of first-person narrative adds slightly more metaleptic force to epic similes, which both generate emotional power and create distance, play and complexity. Aeneas' simile of the gods as axe-men brings to a climax his narrative of the city's initial destruction, his resistance and witnessing, before the next sequence in which he persuades Anchises to escape from the city.

An even more metaleptic moment brings to an end the section describing the death of Priam. Priam's death is initiated by that of Polites, which also has metaleptic features:

*ecce autem elapsus Pyrrhi de caede Polites,  
unus natorum Priami, per tela, per hostis,  
**porticibus longis fugit et uacua atria** lustrat  
saucius. illum ardens infesto uulnere Pyrrhus  
insequitur, iam iamque manu tenet et premit  
hasta. ut tandem **ante oculos** euasit et **ora parentum**,  
concidit ac multo uitam cum sanguine **fudit.** (Aen. 2.526–32)*

But look! Slipped away from the slaughter of Pyrrhus, Polites, one of the sons of Priam, through the weapons, through the enemies, *he flees through the long porticoes and looks around the empty atria* wounded. Him, burning, hostile because of the wound, Pyrrhus pursues, and now, now he has him by the hand and presses with the spear. When at last he came out *before the eyes and faces of his parents*, he fell and *poured out* his life with much blood.

Polites' sudden appearance creates a quick cut and models Aeneas' visual experience as witness. Nearly every word of this passage creates immediacy: the repetition of *per* shows him passing through one obstacle after another; the verbs in the present tense (*fugit, lustrat*) display his panic as he searches for some sort of escape; the enjambment of *insequitur* mimics the pursuit of Pyrrhus, and *iam iamque* winds up the intensity still further. *Tenet* and *premit* give quick short movements, and the spear itself penetrates the next line. The moment of death is marked by a change back into the past tense. Yet even in this frenzy of action there is alienation and distancing. Pyrrhus is *ardens*, not just because he is very enthusiastic about killing Polites, but also because it is a pun on his name (Greek for fiery), which I would count as a weak authorial metalepsis.<sup>40</sup> The focalization moves from Aeneas to Polites (looking around) to Pyrrhus (desiring to kill) and finally back out to the whole scenario, with the epic audience watching the parents viewing as their son dies. The phrase *ante ora*

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<sup>40</sup> O'Hara (1996: 133). The self-consciousness of the pun is in contrast to the pace and immediacy of the surrounding narrative, and this contrast can work to remind us of the layers of narrating in operation here. Although Aeneas *could* make a pun on Pyrrhus' name, since he knows all the information required to do so (unless he is speaking Trojan, of course), the pun does seem much more in keeping with the narrative mode of the primary narrator, who is not reliving his own past trauma, but presenting a work of art.

*parentum* is loaded with gnomic and tragic significance: children should not die before their parents, in time and especially not in space.<sup>41</sup> Horsfall points out a number of occurrences of the phrase, and similar phrases, but not the connection that sprang first to my mind.<sup>42</sup> Aeneas himself at 1.95 wishes, in his first appearance during the storm, that he had died *ante ora patrum Troiae sub moenibus altis* ('before the faces of the fathers under the high walls of Troy', *Aen.* 1.95), and that he had 'poured out his life' (*animam effundere*, 98) at the right hand of Diomedes. While the death of Polites is unnatural, even criminal, because it takes place at the heart of his house and literally before the eyes of his parents, Aeneas longs for an appropriate epic death in battle, at home, protecting his father and his ancestral city. The long view of epic poetry requires that both ancestors and descendants are always watching, and this awareness of nested spectators never quite allows complete immersion in the moment.<sup>43</sup> The more intense the emotional impact, the higher the awareness that all those down the ages have been and will be watching.

With the death of Priam himself this metaleptic effect goes a stage further. The final lines of the section sum up the horror of Priam's death, but end with a jarring reference to the world outside the text:

*haec finis Priami fatorum; hic exitus illum  
 sorte tulit, Troiam incensam et prolapsa uidentem  
 Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum  
 regnatorem Asiae. iacet ingens litore truncus,  
 auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus.  
 at me tum primum saeuus circumstetit horror.  
 obstipui; subiit cari genitoris imago,  
 ut regem aequaevum crudeli uulnere uidi  
 uitam exhalantem;* (Aen. 2.554–62)

This was the end of the fate of Priam; this death brought to him by lot, as he sees Troy burnt and Pergamum collapsed, once proud ruler of so many peoples and lands in Asia. He lies a huge trunk on the shore

<sup>41</sup> O'Sullivan (2009) explores the possible metapoetic resonances of the phrase.

<sup>42</sup> Horsfall (2008: 406) on this phrase plus *ante ora patris* and *ora parentum*: *Georgics* 4.477; *Aen.* 2.263; 2.681; 5.553; 5.576; 6.308; 11.887. The idea is found in Greek epigram and Greek literature about Roman civil war (Plut. *Sull.* 31; Cassius Dio 51.2.6).

<sup>43</sup> A macabre twist on the expansive epic audience are the ghosts of Amycus' victims watching his defeat at Valerius Flaccus 4.258–60, recapitulated with a ghostly audience for the duel of Polynices and Eteocles at Statius *Thebaid* 11.420–3.

head torn from his shoulders and a body without a name.  
But savage horror then for the first time surrounded me.  
I was stupefied: the image of my dear father came to me,  
as I saw the equal-aged king with his cruel wound  
breathing out his life.

Priam has just been killed on the altar; why is he now suddenly a headless body? He was in the middle of his palace in Troy.<sup>44</sup> Why is he now suddenly lying on the shore? Servius gives an ancient explanation of the lines: '*Pompei tangit historiam, cum "ingens" dicit non "magnus"*' ('This touches on the story of Pompey, since he says "huge" instead of "great."')<sup>45</sup> This pun on Pompey's epithet *Magnus* is metaleptic: there is no reason to think that Priam, an old man, was physically huge, although the significance of his death clearly was. Bowie calls this 'a remarkable example of narrative dislocation'.<sup>46</sup> Servius also found the need to explain *litus*, not very convincingly, as a way of saying 'ground'.<sup>47</sup> Further arguments, following Bowie, for understanding this climactic description as a reference to the death of Pompey include the fact that Pompey and Priam are paired as examples of the fall of great men elsewhere in Roman discourse;<sup>48</sup> Priam is called *regnatorem Asiae* ('ruler of Asia'), where Pompey had his most significant victories; Pompey was renowned for his pride, brought out by the word *superbum*; Lucan seems to have made this connection in his description of the death of Pompey at *BC* 8.698–710. If we accept that these otherwise confusing lines are a reference to the death of Pompey, and current orthodoxy in the form of the most recent commentary by Horsfall does so, if rather grudgingly, then this is a convincing authorial metalepsis. The author breaks into Aeneas' narrative to sum up the moral lesson of the fall of Troy, and draw the attention of his Roman readers to recent parallels in their own history, which emphasize the contingency of

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<sup>44</sup> Bowie (1990).

<sup>45</sup> Servius' interpretation evokes the rhetorical sense of metalepsis as a reference through the transferred meaning of words. See Matzner in this volume.

<sup>46</sup> Bowie (1990: 473).

<sup>47</sup> There was a tradition, according to Servius, from Pacuvius, in which Priam was killed by Pyrrhus at the tomb of Achilles by the shore. But the narrative of *Aeneid* 2 focuses on the alternative tradition in which he dies at the altars in the palace in the middle of Troy. There are no hints to the alternative tradition to signpost a change to it: and even if this is the explanation for the confusing location of Priam's death, this too would be metaleptic since it would require readers to remember that there are multiple mythic traditions of the same event, and Aeneas as internal narrator does not and cannot know these traditions, so it would again make the primary narrator break into the secondary narrative. On Pacuvius in this episode see Horsfall (2010).

<sup>48</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 1.85–6; *Div.* 2.22; Manilius 4.50–65; Juvenal 10.258–72, 283–6.

history. At the emotional climax of Aeneas' story, the end of the sequence and the moment of his greatest pain so far, the narrative draws back from the immediate context to survey the wider implications of the fall of empires, and its relevance for contemporary Roman history. This metalepsis increases the sense of significance and universality for the narrative, as well as drawing on the emotional engagement of the Roman audience with their own recent involvement in civil war, violence in the city, and the death of a much-loved and admired historical figure. Grief tends to figure the personal as universal, and to create stronger empathy with similar situations: this drawing together of the tragedy of Troy with the tragedy of the Roman civil war surely increases the emotional power of Virgil's poetry.

### The Death of Dido

Genette uses the death of Dido as a key example of metalepsis. He cites Fontanier's commentary on Dumarsais' *Tropes* for the idea that the poet 'himself brings about the effects he celebrates' as for instance 'when we say Virgil "has Dido die" in book IV of the *Aeneid*'.<sup>49</sup> If we look at the description of Dido's death, it is not clear in what sense 'Virgil has Dido die'. Dido is on the point of death, in Anna's arms at 690–2, when the perspective shifts to that of Juno:

*tum Iuno omnipotens, longum miserata dolorem  
difficilisque obitus, Irim demisit Olympo,  
quae luctantem animam nexosque resolveret artus.  
nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,  
sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore,  
nondum illi flauum Proserpina uertice crinem  
abstulerat Stygioque caput damnauerat Orco.  
ergo Iris croceis per caelum roscida pinnis,  
mille trahens uarios aduerso sole colores,  
deuolat et supra caput adstitit. 'hunc ego Diti*

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<sup>49</sup> Fludernik (2003a: 396 n.2); Genette (1972 = 1980: 234 n.49). Genette's phrase is taken as referring to the author actually killing off his characters: see, for instance, on David Lodge, Morace (1989: 184). The section cited in Fontanier/Dumarsais does not mention Virgil or Dido, although there is an interesting discussion of Dido's death in the section on 'hypallage', about whether Virgil removes her soul from her body, or her body from her soul: Fontanier (1818: 233–6). See also the discussions of Genette's phrase by Matzner and Kearey in this volume.

*sacrum iussa fero teque isto corpore soluo':  
sic ait et dextra crinem secat; omnis et una  
dilapsus calor atque in uentos uita recessit. (Aen. 4.693–705)*

Then almighty Juno, pitying her long agony and painful dying, sent Iris down from heaven to release her struggling soul from the prison of her flesh. For since she perished neither in the course of fate nor by a death she had earned, but wretchedly before her day, in the heat of sudden frenzy, not yet had Proserpine taken from her head the golden lock and consigned her to the Stygian underworld. So Iris on dewy saffron wings flits down through the sky, trailing athwart the sun a thousand shifting tints, and halted above her head. 'This offering, sacred to Dis, I take as bidden, and from your body set you free': so she speaks and with her hand severs the lock; and therewith all the warmth passed away, and the life vanished into the winds. (Trans. Fairclough)

We would not perhaps expect an explicit reference to Virgil as poet deciding that Dido should die. The idea that 'Virgil has Dido die' comes rather from the tradition, possibly the oral tradition, of reading Virgil. In fact, it is Juno who makes that decision, so one would need to make an assumption that Juno is a figure for the poet here to read an authorial metalepsis. Iris has been ordered, against fate, and before the day when Dido should have died, to release her from her suffering: but she has been ordered by Juno. There is certainly imagery of rupture here, of going beyond what is expected, but we know too little about earlier versions of the Dido myth (say that of Naevius) to be sure that her death was in fact unexpected, even if it was not elsewhere caused by Aeneas.<sup>50</sup>

Was this passage felt to be jarring by readers of Virgil? How does the potentially metaleptic effect of Dido's death relate to the potential emotional effects? We can begin by noting that this is a key transitional moment in the text: the end of the first tetrad, corresponding to the triumph of Augustus in the shield at the end of book 8, and the death of Turnus at the end of book 12. Aeneas finally finishes his wanderings and arrives in Italy. Dido's death is described in this way: *nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat, sed misera ante diem* ('for since she perished neither by fate nor by a deserved death, but wretched before her day'). Commentators have written at length on these lines: already Servius found the contradiction between this line and *Aen.* 10.467 troubling. In that line Jupiter tells Hercules that his protégé Pallas is fated

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<sup>50</sup> On other versions of the Dido myth see Davidson (1998).

to die (*stat sua cuique dies*, 'his own day stands for each man'), using the example of the death of Sarpedon in the *Iliad* to affirm the inevitability of fate. Servius (*ad loc.*) explains away the contradiction by suggesting that there are two types of fate, decreed and conditional. The death of Dido apparently fits into the latter category, and it is possible to die in contradiction of a conditional fate. Virgil gives no sense, though, that this is a conditional fate, as for instance, Homer does with the choice of Achilles at *Iliad* 9.410–6. Later commentators shy away from the contradiction. Henry (*ad loc.*) is keen to avoid any implication that Virgil arranges Dido's death against the decrees of fate, instead interpreting the phrase *nec fato* to mean 'Neither by a natural death', which he justifies by comparison to various Roman prose writers.<sup>51</sup> Conington (*ad loc.*) follows Henry's distinction between natural and violent death: 'her death was not predestined but sudden', but his *caveat* 'The distinction which Virgil suggests is practical rather than philosophical, and the words employed must not be weighed too nicely' suggests a certain unease.<sup>52</sup> Austin (*ad loc.*) interprets *fato* as 'equivalent to the fulfilment of time', avoiding the question of what Virgil meant without addressing the troubling aspects. Tellingly, Austin finds Dido's death tranquil ('the book ends in tranquillity like a Greek tragedy'), which may say something about the distancing effect of involving Juno and Iris and going from the hissing wound to the relatively tame act of cutting off a lock of hair. Juno's rather distant pity replaces the anguish of Anna. However, Austin also implies, by quoting Henry, that he finds the passage an example of 'ennobling, exalting, purifying contemplation of the grand, the beautiful and the pathetic'. For these four readers of Virgil, the final moments of *Aeneid* 4 are both difficult and sublime. There is then, good evidence that this passage has been found jarring, and the efforts to explain away the narratorial comments *nec fato* and *ante diem* suggest that there is a sense in which the tradition of reading the *Aeneid* feels that Virgil 'has Dido die' here. It is not just the phrase *nec fato* but also the whole scene around it: the image of Iris physically breaking the link between body and soul, rupturing both the plans of fate and the life of Dido.

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<sup>51</sup> Henry (1878). Pliny *Ep.* 1.12 talks of the death of Cornelius Rufus by his own hand as a particularly bitter loss because 'it seems neither from nature nor fated' (*quae non ex natura nec fatalis videtur*). The particular problem, then, with Dido's death, is the choice she made to kill herself.

<sup>52</sup> Conington and Nettleship (1884/1963/2007).

Epic characters do not normally die against the dictates of fate. There are instead many examples of epic characters who must die to keep the narrative on its fated course: this is a staple of the counterfactual in Homeric epic.<sup>53</sup> At *Odyssey* 1.34 Zeus refers to Aegisthus killing Agamemnon ὑπὲρ μόρον (against fate), as an example of what happens if men ignore divine instructions; Aegisthus himself has been killed in return.<sup>54</sup> This story is, of course, famous for its tragic instantiations, while Odysseus survives in accordance with fate. Dido's death, then, is a moment of authorial transgression of the normal rules of epic narrative. The intervention of Iris (and Juno) can equate to the typical tragic ending of the *deus ex machina*, but in the Homeric counterfactuals gods intervene to set fate back on its course; here they intervene to change fate so that it falls in line with the narrative.<sup>55</sup> In epic, gods and author have a close kinship of perspective and power, and we can make a case that here the gods intervene as avatars of author and audience, moved by the character's suffering. Juno's involvement emphasizes the heroic stature of Dido and the disturbing emotional power of her death.

The death of Dido, then, forms the emotional climax of the first third of the *Aeneid*. It has struck readers throughout the centuries as contradictory and confusing, indeed jarring, and it calls into question the relationship between poet, genre, gods and fate. While Genette does not make an explicit claim for this passage, rather than the discourse about it, as metaleptic, the identification of metalepsis here makes sense:

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<sup>53</sup> See Loudon (1993). Henry (1878: 324) suggests that Virgil's *nec fato* might correspond to the Homeric ὑπὲρ μοῖραν. At *Iliad* 20.366 Poseidon warns Aeneas to stop fighting Achilles in case he dies against fate; see also 2.155 (narrator: Argives would have accomplished their return beyond fate if Hera and Athena had not intervened); 6.487 (Hector tells Andromache that no one can kill him unless it is his fate, and no one can avoid their fate); 17.321 (narrator warns that Trojans would have lost too soon to the Achaeans if Apollo had not encouraged Aeneas); 20.30 (Zeus worries that Achilles will take Troy too soon).

<sup>54</sup> While ὑπὲρ μόρον or ὑπὲρ μοῖραν are both used in counterfactuals to mean 'against fate' (*Od.* 2.155, 20.30, 20.336, 21.517), West (1998) (*ad loc.*) argues that 'what is contrary to fate simply cannot happen', and that fate is used here in the sense of 'what is fitting, right or reasonably to be expected', and that the uses at *Od.* 1.34 and 35 contain the idea of 'going beyond the normal limit'. On the difficulties of the term 'fate' in Homer, see Sarischoulis (2008); for an illuminating discussion of Zeus, fate and narrative in the *Iliad*, see Myers (forthcoming).

<sup>55</sup> The relationship between fate and narrative in the *Aeneid* is complex and paradoxical, as Armstrong (2002: 327) demonstrates; for fate as the immutable destiny of the winning side, see for instance Quint (1993: 92–5).



the removal from the intimacy of death and suffering to the grandeur of gods and fate and the sublimity of the many colours of the rainbow, as in the other examples we have looked at in *Aeneid 2*, both intensifies engagement and alienates readers. This is the fundamental emotional paradox of metalepsis in the *Aeneid*.

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## *Index of Passages*

To be added.

## *General Index*

To be added.