



PROJECT MUSE®

Fama and Fiction in Vergil's Aeneid

Antonia Syson

Published by The Ohio State University Press

Syson, Antonia.

Fama and Fiction in Vergil's Aeneid.

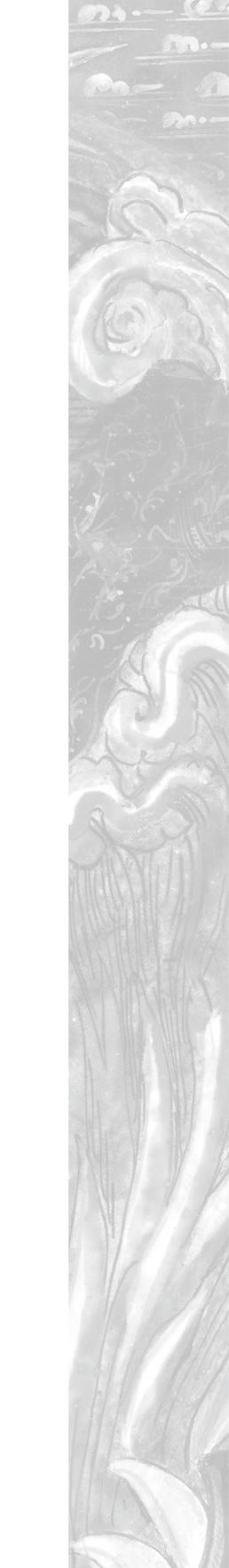
The Ohio State University Press, 2013.

Project MUSE.muse.jhu.edu/book/27708.



➔ For additional information about this book

<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/27708>



6

The Order of Metamorphosis

In the story of Nisus and Euryalus, readers can determine no more confidently than Nisus whether to envisage his *ardor* as given by the gods, or if his own strange yearning is made a god by his imagination (*dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt / Euryale, an sua cuique deus fit dira cupido?* 9.184–85). The gods' pervasive influence during the rest of the *Aeneid*, often undetected by mortals, licenses us to imagine a story world in which perceptions are constantly subject to divine interference, though the *fama* that Nisus longs for is granted by the poem on an entirely human level. The poet calls for no divine assistance when pledging that—if his songs have any power—no day will banish the pair from the remembrance of ages to come (9.446–49). And unlike so many of the mental disturbances suffered in the *Aeneid*, the grief-filled madness that afflicts Euryalus' mother has no stated cause other than the *fama* which slips into her ears (9.473–78). No gods give her orders; none attack her with blazing torches or with poison. But by this point in the poem it is unclear if we are to conceive of anyone involved in the Italian war remaining unaffected by Allecto's contamination, after we have seen the Fury spreading poison through spoken and unspoken commands—through sight, hearing, and touch—in Book 7.

This perceptual and imaginative confusion between divine influence and human experience underlies the *Aeneid's* claim to divine authority for its human rhetoric.¹ It enables the epic to invoke the knowledge of the gods while acknowledging human ignorance. The poem's fictive knowledge brings to life the past while confronting readers with fearsome doubts about what makes up present experience.

Though the term *fama* takes us to the spoken word, the epic imagines *fama* operating through sight and the other senses, as much as through speech.² The work of *fama* within the *Aeneid's* story is bound up in the problems the poem raises about how persuasive authority makes itself felt consciously and unconsciously. If we examine *fama's* operations in the context of these broader questions, we may better understand the blend of recognizably human persuasion and uncanny divine power that the *Aeneid* summons as the defining elements of its rhetoric of fiction.

Readers of Book 1 have already known Venus to use a strange mixture of visual and verbal communication, both reassuring and unnerving her son as she directs him towards Carthage and Dido (I discuss this scene in chapter 7.1). Then in Book 2, we hear directly from Aeneas of earlier commands uttered by his mother. "Look!" Venus tells Aeneas as Troy burns, "I'm about to snatch away all the cloud which now, blocking your view, dulls your mortal sight and dankly blurs your surroundings; as for you, don't be at all frightened of your parent's orders or refuse to obey her instructions."³

Venus' commands repeat previously ineffectual imperatives spoken earlier by the dead Hector in a dream. Hector tells Aeneas to rescue himself and Troy's *sacra*, but his appearance communicates a very different message, and does so more powerfully than his words. The sight of the dead man ignites blazing grief in Aeneas, which makes him all the more susceptible to the infectious *furor* sparked by the sights of burning Troy once he awakes. Aeneas calls on his listeners, too, to "look" at both the flames and the contagious emotions of that night when he speaks out the unspeakable memories of the city's ruin. It is as if Troy's *fama* demands for its sustenance that listeners share in the same imitative *furor* that Aeneas describes as overwhelming Troy and her people.

1. In *Masters of Truth* Détiéne analyzes the relationship between storytelling, divine authority, and social configurations as changing over time through a process of secularization in archaic and classical Greece; he argues for a shift towards "social ratification" (1999, 105) and away from a concept of the poet's truth in which the "truth" established by poetry is enacted through language.

2. The poem generally avoids directly evoking smells and tastes, but many of its descriptions leave it open to readers to imagine the taste of food and the smells of filth and decay.

3. *aspice (namque omnem, quae nunc obducta tuenti / mortalis hebetat uisus tibi et umida circum / caligat, nubem eripiam; tu ne qua parentis / iussa time neu praeceptis parere recusa)* (*Aen.* 2.604–7).

Although the *Aeneid* asks its readers to imagine the gods reaching far beyond human language or understanding, the poem situates that mysterious force within the recognizable frameworks of human rhetoric. Divine power within the *Aeneid*'s story world makes itself felt through many of the same rhetorical means as the medium in which that divine power is imagined—the poetic narrative. That is no more than one would expect. Yet the poem builds not only its storytelling but also many of the developments in its story around this mutually sustaining entanglement between human communication and imagined divine authority.

This entanglement lies at the core of the ways the *Aeneid* presents *fama*'s poetics. It is not just that *Aeneid* figuratively claims the transformative force of divine imperatives for its *fama*. The poem also raises the question of whether to imagine such imperatives as reliant on the same perceptual and rhetorical foundations as commands uttered in human settings. So in the second half of this chapter, I turn again to Book 9. There I explore an imperative whose metamorphic efficacy is unimaginable in purely human terms, though it is prefaced by a careful, collaborative rhetorical analysis by Jupiter and Cybele.

6.1 *Vidi ipse*

On the night of Troy's fall, when his mother gives him a new clarity of vision, Aeneas has already been intently watching his city's destruction. He punctuates his narrative with invitations to his audience to do the same (*ecce*, 2.270, 318, 403, 526). Throughout Book 2, his storytelling shares with the Carthaginians a sense of wonder—not only his horrified wonder at how his home was destroyed, but the wonder he felt on reaching Carthage, when he discovered that the new city already held visual tokens of his people's *fama* and cried to Achates "look!" at Priam in Juno's temple (*en Priamus*, 1.461).⁴ He stresses his double-role of spectator and participant, as he creates a kind of inverted *ekphrasis*. The artistry of that inverted *ekphrasis* is shared between Aeneas' narrative and the collaborative acts of destruction performed by humans and gods.⁵

4. Putnam 1998, 39–40 also emphasizes the strong continuity between Aeneas' grief-filled viewing of the temple pictures and his own storytelling in Book 2.

5. 2.403ff. is especially striking; Aeneas calls to his listeners to "see" Cassandra being dragged off, an event narrated with intertextual echoes of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (Iphigeneia is already verbally associated with Cassandra in the tragedy). The passage echoes the Aeschylean chorus' similar efforts at *enargeia*, and Aeneas' *ecce* does a job comparable to the chorus'

In his narrative Aeneas both relives his experience and distances himself from it as a work of art: *uidi ipse*, he says: “I myself saw,” or, since Latin makes no distinction between aorist and perfect, “I myself have seen,” an intensified version of the repeated *uidi* asserted by Vergil’s didactic poet-farmer in *Georgics* 1.⁶ He demands of his audience that they share his direct, visual recreation of the past, yet his interjections also serve as reminders that his audience has access only to his words, not to the sights he remembers. His listeners cannot see the Trojan past with the mind’s eye, as he can. They can “see” only newly created memories, the new additions to Trojan *fama* that he brings to them, which will merge with their own perceptions.

Until Venus takes command, Aeneas’ perceptions that night direct him towards two conflicting kinds of behavior: imitative *furor*, and a paralyzing awareness of what the raging violence may mean for his home and family. His reminder to the audience that he himself saw these events, *uidi ipse*, introduces the climactic scene where Neoptolemus pollutes and destroys Troy’s imperial power and sacred hearth:

uidi ipse furentem
caede Neoptolemum geminosque in limine Atridas,
uidi Hecubam centumque nurus Priamumque per aras
sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacrauerat ignis.

I myself saw raging
in slaughter Neoptolemus and, doubled-up on the threshold, the Atridae,
I saw Hecuba and their hundred daughters-in-law and Priam among the
altars,
defiling with blood the flames which he himself had consecrated.
(*Aen.* 2.499–502)

While Aeneas describes Priam as the polluter of his own sanctity, in the tale to come Neoptolemus (Pyrrhus) will be the one to contaminate *pietas*, both (as Priam puts it) by defiling a father’s sight with the murder of his son (*patrios foedasti funere uultus*, 2.539), and by seeking a kind of infamous

explicit comparison of Iphigeneia’s appearance to images in paintings (*prepousa tōs in graphais*, *Ag.* 241–42). On Aeneas’ role as both spectator and participant, cf. Smith’s (2005) use of Merleau-Ponty’s *voyant-visible*.

6. *Georgics* 1.193, 197, and 318. As Thomas 1988b, 121–22 emphasizes, the didactic speaker also uses the first person plural (1.451, 472; 2.32, 186–87), as well as the second person singular (1.365). See also Horsfall 2008 on 2.5, 499, and 554–58 for discussions and further bibliography on autopsy in tragic messenger speeches (Athenian and Roman) and in the historiographical tradition.

fama in the world of the dead, when he instructs Priam to be sure and report the full story of his degeneracy to his father Achilles.

Aeneas' whole narrative shows that *furor* is infectious—indeed, that it contaminates through the gaze, as Priam suggests. After watching Priam's death, at first Aeneas is numbed by the thought of his own father, wife, and son, who enter his mind like ghosts; then *furor* distracts him as he turns from his mind's eye to the sights around him; his gaze falls upon Helen before he has begun to make any move towards his home and family. Venus steps in at this point, and shows her son directly why he must give up on the idea of punishing Helen, stop trying to defend his city, and instead start on the journey towards a new Trojan foundation that will set in motion the *Aeneid's* story.

Venus' orders end by repeating almost verbatim what Hector's ghost had already told Aeneas when the fighting in Troy first started, *eripe, nate, fugam finemque impone labori* ("Snatch an escape, my son, and put an end to your toil," 2.619). Hector's first words were *heu fuge, nate dea, teque his* [. . .] *eripe flammis* ("Ah, run, goddess-born, and snatch yourself from these flames!" 2.289). Venus even fills out the logic of Hector's vocative *nate dea*, first by using the vocative *nate* herself, and then in the following line by promising her protective escort (*nusquam abero et tutum patrio te limine sistam*, 2.620). Her echo marks out the ineffectuality of Hector's commands as commands, not only because Aeneas needs to be told twice to save himself, but also because it takes Venus to impose closure on the *labor* that begins with Hector's appearance.

Hector instructs Aeneas to end his work as a defender of Troy itself and to begin his new labor as protector of Troy's *sacra* and founder of a new settlement. Instead of achieving this fresh start, however, his commands mark a renewal of Aeneas' fighting energy and involvement in his present and past life at Troy. Hector explains to Aeneas the uselessness of fighting at this juncture (2.291–92). His instructions are clearly reasoned—if mildly insulting to Aeneas' military prowess—but this reasoning has no effect on Aeneas.

The vision of Hector signals the beginning of a particular madness, which Venus scornfully notes with her question *quid furis?* (2.595). Aeneas asks his listeners to share his confused, nightmarish encounter with Hector: *in somnis, ecce, ante oculos maestissimus Hector / uisus adesse mihi largosque effundere fletus* ("in my sleep, look! before my eyes, in deepest sorrow Hector seemed [or "was seen"] to enter my presence and to pour out generous tears," 2.270–71). His description dwells on the horrible details of Hector's appearance, with all the wounds that make him material for lament in the

Iliad, and soon enough Aeneas is weeping too: *ultra flens ipse uidebar / compellare uirum et maestas expromere uoces* (“Of my own accord, weeping, I myself seemed to greet the man and to utter sorrowful words,” 6.279–80).

The vocabulary of grief is the same for both the dead and the living mourner. Aeneas uses the word *maestus* and forms of *fleo* to report both Hector’s and his own behavior. Hector’s emphatically described filth suggests that this emotional contamination is just one aspect of the death pollution brought by the apparition. At the same time, Aeneas’ narrative leaves it unclear whether he dreams up the sorrow he sees in Hector to equal his own grief, or if Aeneas’ emotions are instigated by Hector’s appearance. Passive forms of *uideo* are used to make sight itself part of the confusion of that turbulent night; here as so often, Latin makes no firm distinction between “seeming” and “being seen.”

While Hector’s instructions have little or no immediate effect as orders, they do serve a poetic function for Aeneas’ narrative and for the *Aeneid*: as part of the *fama* generated by the *Aeneid* they build a bridge towards a Roman future, while for the poem’s hero they spell out the *fama* he claims for himself as *pius Aeneas* (1.378) and *Troius Aeneas* (1.596), a man devoted to his city’s memories and his city’s gods.⁷ By situating these instructions in a series of sights that provoke in him grief, anger, and madness, Aeneas highlights the most prominent function of his *pietas*, which is to guide him as mourner and carrier of memories for his people.

Although being *pius* means being sensitive to divine commands—including care for ritual purity—*pietas* also, in many ways, characterizes the involvement in his city’s suffering that prevents Aeneas from keeping himself clear of contamination.⁸ This contamination partly results in Aeneas being materially polluted by the slaughter he participates in that night (as we are reminded when he tells Anchises that he cannot handle sacred objects because of this death pollution, 2.717–20). Yet it is above all a mental state, conveyed through a series of metaphors that show how emotions are spread through sensory perceptions.

The immediate impact of Hector’s dream visit is to sensitize Aeneas, even before he fully wakes, to the turmoil in the city. While the Greeks destroy

7. Smith 2005, 61 argues that Hector’s apparition is one of those visions from the past that “provide a rationale for Rome’s existence and for the actions that anticipate or preserve that existence.” He admits that “the vision of Hector disorients Aeneas” (68), but nevertheless argues that “vision surpasses words, pointing towards the hero’s destiny and the telos of Rome’s foundation” (61). It is important, however, to acknowledge that the *furor* of Troy’s last hours becomes integral to that telos.

8. See Grillo 2010 on Aeneas’ forgetfulness in Book 2, above all in the sequence of events leading to the loss of Creusa.

Troy from within, Aeneas' perception of the attack is filtered through grief. Troy becomes a city of lament before the specific sounds of battle become distinguishable to Aeneas: *diuerso interea miscentur moenia luctu, / et magis atque magis [. . .] / clarescunt sonitus armorumque ingruit horror* ("With widely scattered grief meanwhile the walls are mingled, and more and more [. . .] the sounds grow clear, and the bristling of arms comes battering," 2.298–301).⁹ After he shakes off sleep, his stupefied confusion continues. Aeneas helps the Carthaginian audience visualize this confusion with an extended simile. The simile begins with fire attacking a wheat field (2.304–5). At that stage the image seems designed simply to help his listeners grasp what is happening to Troy—a few lines later Aeneas describes the fire raging through the city (2.310–12).

But then the simile shifts to a torrent coming from a flooded hill stream, destroying the work of the surrounding community (2.305–7). The focal point of the comparison pivots around the herdsman listening in ignorant bewilderment to the sound of destruction: *stupet inscius alto / accipiens sonitum saxi de uertice pastor* ("There stands dazed in his ignorance, hearing the sound from the topmost summit of a crag, a herdsman," 2.307–8).¹⁰ In the simile, as in this whole section of the narrative, the emphasis falls on what Aeneas can perceive through the senses, and on the difficulties he faces in turning this into guidance as to how he should act.

Next in his narrative, Aeneas tells how his senses fully absorb the sights and sounds of the city in flames; his mind figuratively imitates what he sees and hears.¹¹ Any remaining rationality is defeated by the impulse to join the fighting; his spirits burn:

arma amens capio; nec sat rationis in armis,
sed glomerare manum bello et concurrere in arcem
cum sociis ardent animi; furor iraque mentem
praecipitat, pulchrumque mori succurrit in armis.

Arms, out of my mind, I grab; and it's not so much that fighting is logical,
but rather that my spirits burn to pull together a group for war and
together with my comrades
make a dash for the citadel; frenzy and anger drive my intent
headlong, and the beauty of dying in arms sweeps over me.
(*Aen.* 2.314–17)

9. See Austin 1964 *ad loc.* on why it is so hard to translate *ingruit* adequately here.

10. West's classic 1969 article explores this as one of his multiple-correspondence similes.

11. See Lyne 1989, 22–24 on the verb *ardeo*.

Once the treachery of the Greeks is revealed to him in the light of the burning city (2.308–12), grief and mental paralysis turn to outright madness; the sound of weapons infects Aeneas with the need to take up arms. We have just been told of a man on fire: *iam proximus ardet / Ucalegon*, 2.311–12. When Ucalegon burns, the man's name evidently stands in figuratively for his home, but the figure of speech highlights the fluid interchange between emotion, metaphor, and material destruction. The implications of the earlier simile shift again. Once Aeneas' numbness has passed, the fire and flood become forces of madness.¹²

Well before Venus directly reveals the gods as agents in the destruction of Troy, Aeneas depicts divine powers as agents prompting him to battle. At first this depiction is oblique; he personifies metonymically as Vulcan the fire raging through the city (*Volcano superante*, 2.311), which begins by taking down buildings, and then overwhelms his perceptions. Then he runs into Panthus, the priest of Apollo. Panthus does the work of *fama* (though the word is not used here); he mingles a simple report of what is happening in the city with commemorative lament, and with a report of divine doings that resembles the imaginative insights allowed to epic narrative. He updates Aeneas both about the physical condition of the burning, defeated city and about the gods' decision: Jupiter has surrendered it to the Argives (2.325–27). Panthus at that moment becomes a kind of stand-in for Aeneas at various stages of the Book 2 narrative; as Aeneas will eventually do, he is taking responsibility for gods and family (*sacra manu uictosque deos paruumque nepotem / ipse trahit*, 2.320–21); like Aeneas just then he is *amens* (2.321).¹³ His speech achieves a persuasive efficacy that Hector's lacked: Aeneas says that Panthus' words work alongside the powers of the gods, the grim Fury (*Erinyes*), and the sheer noise to call him into the fire and into the fight.¹⁴ Just then, the roar of battle reaches hyperbolic heights (*sublatus ad aethera*, 2.338), described in a phrase resonant with the sky-reaching language of *fama*. Aeneas explicitly connects the noise with the call of the Fury, who summons him not only to madness, but also to the remembrance of revenge.

12. The flood in the simile draws the woods headlong (*praecipitisque trahit silvas*, 2.307); frenzy and anger drive Aeneas' mind headlong (*furor iraque mentem / praecipitat*, 2.316–17).

13. To confirm the parallels between the two men, Aeneas commemorates Panthus for his *pietas*, which provides no cover for him, any more than the visible tokens of his priesthood do (2.429–30).

14. *talibus Othryadae dictis et numine diuum / in flammis et in arma feror, quo tristic Erinyes, / quo fremitus uocat et sublatus ad aethera clamor* ("By these words of Othryas' son (Panthus) and by the will of the gods, / into flames and into arms I am swept, where the grim Erinyes, / where the roar calls me, the cry raised aloft to the sky," 2.336–38)

The forces of remembrance and vengeful madness come together again—again following a moment of paralysis for Aeneas—later in the cycles of imitative violence driving the Book 2 narrative, after Pyrrhus' attack on Priam's palace. Now Aeneas sees Helen lit up in the glare of the burning city, and is tempted to exact vengeance from her, perceiving her as the shared Fury of Troy and of her own nation: *Troiae et patriae communis Erinys* (2.573).¹⁵ The phrase again expresses the contaminating madness experienced by Aeneas: he sees her both as a hellish agent of destruction for two nations, and as the Fury who prompts him to punish her. That is the point when Venus—at least temporarily—steps in and puts an end to the appeal of the Erinys' call for revenge.

Venus' revelations are not so much a way to help Aeneas understand the meaning of her commands, though they do that too, as to confront him with the full reality of the gods' power.¹⁶ Her instructions are not benevolent maternal advice—they are the orders of a god whose siblings are using their strength alongside the Greeks to tear apart a city built by gods.¹⁷

The clear vision that Venus grants her son in Book 2 is enacted through her words as much as through any other aspect of her divine power. *Aspice*, she commands, and then goes on to describe what he is to see: *hic, ubi disiectas moles auulsaque saxis / saxa uides, [. . .] Neptunus muros magnoque emota tridenti / fundamenta quatit totamque a sedibus urbem / eruit* ("here, where you see scattered masses and rocks torn from rocks, [. . .] Neptune shakes the walls and the foundations stirred by his great trident and tears up the entire city from its roots," 2.608–12). Describing Pallas' fierce effulgence she commands Aeneas again: *respice* (615). After telling him that the father

15. The twin Atridae and Neoptolemus with his *tristia facta* (2.500 and 548) are visualized by Aeneas as Erinys in human form, but this identification emerges from verbal hints rather than an explicit label (for the *geminos . . . in limine Atridas* of 2.500, see the *geminæ . . . cognomine Dirae* at Jupiter's throne in 12.845). This forms part of the famously disputed passage; the reasons why earlier readers would have wished to bracket it seem bound by a very specific understanding of what it means to be Vergilian (or perhaps Virgilian); Conte 1986, 196–207 provides a particularly convincing argument for retention.

16. Hershkowitz 1998, 80–81 sees this scene as much as the beginning of didactic enlightenment as it is an enactment of Venus' divine control. As a whole, my analysis of *furor* and control in the *Aeneid* is indebted to Hershkowitz; I share her view that "the discourses of madness and of divine order, for which *furor* and *fata* serve as key terms, are not wholly distinct, and at times can only be differentiated with difficulty, if at all" (124), but her analysis perhaps overstates the extent to which these discourses can be separated. For instance, she suggests that Aeneas (unlike Turnus, for instance) is depicted as primarily "sane." But that is not something that we can take for granted, given how much time in the poem Aeneas spends possessed by *furor*, or out of his wits with fear and bewilderment.

17. In particular Aeneas stresses that Neptune is tearing down his own work (2.610–12 and 625).

himself (*ipse pater*) is in charge of all this—but not, apparently, granting him a sight of the father—she instructs Aeneas to snatch an escape (*eripe, nate, fugam finemque impone labori*, 615). Preceding the imperatives that instruct her son to flee the city are imperatives that both order and grant a new kind of sight.

On one level, this is simply a useful poetic technique: within the story world Aeneas too is using words to conjure visions for his Carthaginian audience. There are good rhetorical reasons why Venus should tell him exactly what he is to see. But when these visions are themselves loaded with such particular force, a normal storytelling strategy becomes new and strange—a reminder of just how much narrative techniques of this kind can do even in fictions that leave aegis-bearing gods out of the picture.

After recounting Venus' presentation and commands in direct speech, Aeneas expresses what he sees only through analogy. He compares the collapse of Troy to farmers putting their energies to bringing down an ancient ash tree. He vividly elaborates the simile, and he describes the details of watching the gods bring down Troy only through this comparison and through Venus' commands—other than that we are given merely the sketchiest outlines of Aeneas' own vision.

Apparent dirae facies inimicaque Troiae
numina magna deum.
Tum uero omne mihi uisum considerare in ignis
Ilium et ex imo uerti Neptunia Troia:
ac ueluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum
cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant
eruere agricolae certatim, illa usque minatur
et tremefacta comam concusso uertice nutat,
uulneribus donec paulatim euicta supremum
congemuit traxitque iugis auulsa ruinam.

Terrible shapes loom up, set against Troy, the shapes of
Heaven's transcendent will.

Then indeed all Ilium seemed to me to be subsiding
into the flames, and Neptune's Troy quite overthrown.
Imagine a veteran ash tree upon some mountain top,
when woodsmen are working to fell it, with blow upon blow of their axes
vigorously hacking: the tree seems always about to fall;
It nods, and the topmost leaves are shivered by each concussion:
Little by little their wounds master it, till at last

with a great groan it has snapped off and fallen full length on the hillside.
(*Aen.* 2.622–31)¹⁸

So our most direct experience of the sight of Troy's divine destruction comes from the picture presented by Venus, which is embedded in a series of commands, narrated in direct speech by Aeneas. In his simile Aeneas does for his listeners something very like what Venus has done for him. He too projects images for the mind's eye with his words.

Aeneas seems to tell Dido and the other Carthaginians to look directly at reality to picture the felling of a tree, so that they can appreciate through analogy what he saw the gods doing to his city. In this sense he resembles Venus telling him to look at the sight of Troy's destruction. But as Venus frames this sight in terms of the divine imperative that it endorses, so it is by means of Aeneas' words that listeners are both to see the tree-felling and grasp its significance.

The apparently everyday image of the tree is to be overlaid by the divine destruction of Troy. The competitive work of the farmers, the blows of the axes, the groaning sound made by the falling tree: all these could be summoned through imagination or memory from the listeners' existing stock of experience—which may include literary and other imaginative memories. Now Aeneas' listeners and the *Aeneid's* readers are in turn given the opportunity to join future sights (imaginative or actual) of trees and tree-fellings with visions of gods tearing apart their creation. Aeneas' blended vision of tree-felling and city-felling makes itself available for readers' storehouse of memories, becoming part of a new mental reality. This new fictive knowledge elides the memories laid up for us by the poem with future as well as past experiences.¹⁹

Venus' notion of a cloud obscuring the effects of divine power on human lives informs most of the *Aeneid's* plotting. Almost all the significant human action in the poem takes place—either consciously or unconsciously—in some relation to a set of divine commands. The poem both imagines the cloud and lifts it for readers.

18. This translation is a slightly adapted version of C. Day-Lewis (1986); I borrowed it mainly because I found irresistible his substitution of an imperative ("imagine") for *ueluti* in 2.626, but also because he matches so well in English the contrast between the vivid colors of the tree analogy and the very plain language that precedes the simile.

19. Dido's way of absorbing these memories into her perceptions of Aeneas resembles Livy's explanation of Rome's divine origins (*Ab urbe condita* 1.6–7). Like a sophisticated late first-century b.c.e. thinker (though not necessarily the systematic Epicurean described by Dyson 1996 and Adler 2003), she seems to take the story of his divine birth and visions of the gods as a vivid figurative expression of his status (4.12–13, 376–80).

6.2 Cybele and Jupiter's order

In *Aeneid* 9 the great mother (*Magna Mater*) Cybele changes the shape of the Trojan ships and saves them from being burnt by Turnus and his men. She does this by giving an order: *uos ite solutae, / ite deae pelagi; genetrix iubet* ("As for you, go unmoored, go as goddesses of the sea; the mother orders you," 9.116–17). Cybele's command both describes and transmits the divine power that enables her to turn manufactured wood into swimming goddesses. The poem only partly delineates where readers are to imagine this power originating and exactly how Cybele shares it with Jupiter.

The transformation scene in Book 9 stems from a crisis that recalls the inferno of Troy's conflagration in Book 2, and also resembles another Jovian intervention, when the same ships were saved from fire and from out-of-control *furor* among the Trojan women in Sicily in *Aeneid* 5. In Book 9, as in Book 5, Iris as Juno's aide instigates the destruction; in both scenes the poem's usual fire imagery as a metaphor for emotional flare-ups transmutes itself into physical flame, in a reversal of the movement in Book 2, where blazing houses kindle blazing emotions.²⁰ Turnus does not merely carry flames to set alight the Trojan ships—they emanate from him ("ablaze, he fills his grasp with burning pine," *manum pinu flagranti feruidus implet*, 9.72). When he is foiled in his attack on the Trojans by their determination to stick behind a barricade while Aeneas is away, the poem presents his recourse to fire as the direct enactment of his flaming passion. While Turnus gazes at the Trojan fortifications his anger ignites and his resentment burns (*ignescunt irae, duris dolor ossibus ardet*, 9.66). He and his men equip themselves with black firebrands (*facibus* [. . .] *atris*, 9.72); their smoking pine torches—with Vulcan's help again—carry pitchy light and quasi-volcanic ash to the stars (*piceum fert fumida lumen / taeda et commixtam Volcanus ad astra fauillam* 9.75–76). The attack takes on a cosmic dimension as the Rutulians become human embodiments of the forces of hell unleashed by the Fury Allecto in Book 7, when she thrust a torch smoking with black light in Turnus' breast.

So the poet first prepares readers for the cosmic significance of this crisis by making clear that saving the ships from fire means preserving them from this wild demonic force, then involves the Muses in the flashback account of Jupiter's bargain with Cybele and the subsequent transformation. "Speak," the poet demands, "the source of belief for this event is ancient, but its *fama*

20. See Hardie 1994 on 9.66; he connects this with the more general (Lucretian) tendency in the *Aeneid* for figures of speech to be realized in the events narrated, which is discussed by Hardie 1986, 232–33.

is everlasting" (*dicite: prisca fides facta, sed fama perennis*, 9.79). The invocation promises for the episode a special programmatic role in epic's task of establishing memories as perceptual channels that join present, past, and future.

The poet pointedly demands divine involvement in the continuity of *fama* just before showing how Jupiter and Cybele work out the efficacy that may be achieved by figures of speech; they wield their divine power through careful rhetorical analysis. It is striking, also, that this flashback comes at a moment in the narrative when Turnus' flames have just conflated the violence of emotion and of physical destruction.²¹ The poem here triangulates and partly combines material, rhetorical, and divine modes of change.

The *Aeneid's* readers are told that Cybele's ability to perform her transformation has been won long in advance of this moment. When Aeneas was building his ships, a negotiation between the Magna Mater and her son Jupiter culminated in his promise to order the ships to be goddesses: *magnique iubebo / aequoris esse deas* ("I will order them to be goddesses of the sea's great expanse," 9.101–2). The deal that Jupiter has come up with depends on another kind of ordering: he sets in order the ways that figurative language can present and shape the relations between god and mortal. But when the metamorphosis comes, once the Trojans are at war in Italy, Jupiter and Cybele's shared responsibility makes the fantastic occurrence emblematic of the way authority in the *Aeneid* is wielded. Speech, interpretation (conscious and unconscious), and divine force work together.

Cybele and Jupiter's conversation closely examines the relationship between the sacred and the human in ships that have been made by mortals, but from wood cherished by a goddess. Cybele asks that her trees should have a safe journey. Jupiter interprets her open-ended request as a slippery means to make mortal and divine the same. He draws out the full implications of her speech in such a way as to define more fully what he perceives her as asking, and responds by simultaneously limiting and extending the efficacy of her language.

21. Fantham 1990, 104 suggests that Vergil uses the proem to "set the approaching crisis apart." Like Feeney, I take the proem not as a means to detach this episode from the poem, but rather as a way to give the transformation scene programmatic weight. Discussing this assertion of both *fides* and *fama*, Feeney 1991, 186 links the episode with the *Aeneid's* special epic efficacy in its ability to sustain *fama* across time: "The poem faces head-on the fact that it is a fiction, yet one that has its own achieved power, effect, and truth: [. . .] it can flaunt the implausibility of the transformation of the ships (9.77–122), knowingly conceding that such things are no longer to be 'believed,' but asserting that the *fama* of the event has lasted, and will last, through the ages (9.79)." For Feeney, the flagrant implausibility of this metamorphosis (when judged according to everyday, naturalistic standards) works its own active part in making the poem's fiction into a tradition.

Right after summoning the Muses, the poet takes us back to the moment when Troy had just fallen:

tempore quo primum Phrygia formabat in Ida
 Aeneas classem et pelagi petere alta parabat,
 ipsa deum fertur genetrix Berecynthia magnum
 uocibus his adfata Iouem:

At the time when first on Phrygian Ida Aeneas was giving shape to his fleet and was getting ready to head for the depths of the sea, she herself, the Berecynthian mother of the gods, is said with these words to have addressed great Jupiter: (*Aen.* 9.80–83)

With the word *fertur* (“is said”) the poem continues to use the language of *fama*, embedding in tradition the conversation between the gods. These introductory lines signal some of the key themes to come in the negotiation. The verb *formabat* emphasizes the process of giving material shape to the fleet.²² The interwoven word order *genetrix Berecynthia magnum* / [. . .] *adfata Iouem* gives to Jupiter the adjective *magnus* that is often associated with Cybele, but reminds us of the association with the Magna Mater by placing it alongside *genetrix Berecynthia*, hinting at the complexities involved in the division of power between the mother goddess and Jupiter. The verb for Cybele’s speech, *adfari*, often occurs in the *Aeneid* when someone is speaking the poem’s story into existence.

Cybele tells Jupiter that she has given a cherished sacred grove to Aeneas to make his fleet, but that she is fearful for them. She hopes that their birth on her mountain slopes can protect them from being buffeted or overwhelmed in their journey. In telling Jupiter of the fleet’s origins and requesting help for them, Cybele plays on the relationship of tree to ship as part to whole, and uses language that makes it hard to distinguish between living trees and wood that has been made into a fleet. “Timber,” *trabes*, is the word Cybele chooses for the trees that she wants to help, when she speaks of their original position in the grove she cherished. The synecdochal use of *trabes* for ship is so standard a figure of speech that Cybele’s word choice anticipates the changes that the growing trees will shortly experience, once they are cut down and made into ships by Aeneas and his men. She uses the term once to describe her grove as “dark with maple timbers” (*trabibus* [. . .] *obscurus*

22. Fantham 1990, 108 notes that *formabat* and *formam* (9.101) stress “the transitional nature of the ships’ manufactured form.”

acernis, 9.87), and then re-evokes the noun with a demonstrative pronoun (*has*, 9.88) and feminine plurals (*quassatae*, 9.91; *ortas*, 9.92).

At no point does she call the objects of her protection ships, except in that proleptic synecdoche used of the growing trees: instead she uses vague feminine plurals. The word *trabibus* forms a bridge between tree trunk and ship, while the feminine plural *quassatae* refers indeterminately to their state before and after manufacture. In her final plea, when she asks, “Let it help them to have sprung up on my mountains” (*prosit nostris in montibus ortas*, 9.92), *ortas* gives the impression of naturally growing ships.²³

Cybele elides the identity of tree and ship, but we see what such an elision may achieve only when Jupiter replies to her request. She implies that the grove she once cherished on Ida has never really stopped being a collection of sacred trees. Jupiter denies the validity of Cybele’s elision, insisting that there is an important distinction between a living tree trunk and a ship, although the same Latin word can apply to both. Yet Jupiter extends still further the figurative relationship between tree and ship—he decides that the ships should become sea nymphs. The verbal instability in Cybele’s figurative language is to be embodied in a physical metamorphosis—a shift not from living trees to ships, but from ships to nymphs.²⁴

The Great Mother may be vague about the exact nature of ships made out of a sacred grove, but she is precise about the relations between her and her son that oblige him to listen to her.²⁵ She begins her speech by reminding him both of his filial ties to her, and of his power: *da, nate, petenti, / quod tua cara parens domito te poscit Olympo* (“Grant me my request, son; grant what your dear parent requires, now that Olympus has been tamed by you,” 9.83–84). She suggests that granting efficacy to her speech will both accord with his filial duty and reinforce the power he has achieved. She labels her words as prayers, utterances that aspire to special verbal force, but that are effective only because of the desire and ability of a superior being to fulfill them: *solue metus atque hoc precibus sine posse parentem* (“Dissolve my fears and allow a parent to achieve this with her prayers,” 9.90).

Appealing simultaneously to Jupiter’s awareness of his own power and to his awareness of his subordinate position as a son has mixed results. Jupiter

23. Fantham 1990, 107 emphasizes that Cybele’s appeal “avoids any word for ships, substituting two verbs more appropriate for persons.”

24. But in the light of Jupiter’s response Cybele’s language may appear more slippery. Both Fantham 1990 and Hardie 1987b and 1994 have argued that her own words anticipate the transformation from ships into goddesses.

25. Cybele, the *Magna Mater*, is identified with Rhea, the mother of Zeus. The word *genetrix* also links her with Venus (see Stehle 1989 for an argument that Venus and Cybele performed much the same social function for the Romans).

rebukes Cybele by suggesting that she is trying to use speech to deflect the fates, altering the ordained categories of god and mortal: *O genetrix, quo fata uocas?* he asks. He argues that once manufactured by mortals, even sacred trees are constrained by mortality, which precludes the kind of safety that she wants for them. He asks, *mortaline manu factae immortale carinae / fas habeant? certusque incerta pericula lustret | Aeneas? cui tanta deo permissa potestas?* (“Are keels made by mortal hand to have an immortal right? Is it with certainty that Aeneas is to pass through uncertain dangers? To what god has been entrusted power so great?” 9.95–98). To grant the ships a right that belongs to immortals would be tantamount to granting the same right to the men who have manufactured them and who sail in them.²⁶

Jupiter chooses vocabulary that reflects the change made by manufacturing the trees. Where Cybele had chosen a term for ship that relied on a synecdochal relation to its material, Jupiter uses another kind of synecdoche, the word *carina* (“keel”). Like *trabs*, *carina* is often substituted as part for whole to refer to the entire ship, but instead of focusing on the wood from which the ship is built, this word emphasizes how humans have crafted the vessel so that it can take them through water.

Aeneas himself shares with his ships a metonymic connection with divinity, born to a goddess-mother, and intermittently cared for by his *genetrix*—though perhaps *dilectus* would be too strong a word for the attention Aeneas receives from Venus during much of the *Aeneid*. The manufacture of the ships by mortals becomes equivalent to Aeneas’ possession of a mortal father.²⁷ Though divinely born, Aeneas takes his place among humans, not gods, and will reach a celestial sphere only through transformation after death.

Jupiter’s indignant question about the extension of an “immortal right” employs the word *fas* strikingly. *Fas*, through its connection with the verb *fari*, resembles *fatum* as an impersonal expression of divine will, a form of order that correlates with what Jupiter or some other source of divine authority categorizes as “speakable.” But it is very unusual to pair it with a limiting adjective and make it the possession, or potential possession, of a group of ships; it is far more commonly used impersonally. So on the one hand Jupiter sanctions his sense of what is appropriate for mortals or immortals with an abstract noun that separates from his own voice the authorization granted by what is *fas*; on the other hand, he gives that noun

26. Hejduk 2009, 296 argues that Jupiter sees this as an issue of rank.

27. The parallel Jupiter makes between the position of Aeneas and that of his ships is perhaps heightened by the metrical pattern, which puts *fas habeant* and *Aeneas* in the first foot and a half of consecutive lines.

a far more particular meaning than it usually has—he talks of a special *fās* for immortals.

Jupiter pays a precise, almost pedantic attention to the relation between tree and ship, between divine and human. At this point it appears that by interpreting these relations carefully, he can limit their effects in the world. If he prevents rhetorical figures from being used to obscure slippages; if he makes sure that a figurative expression of participation does not become an assertion of identity, his own verbal interpretations and pronouncements will retain their effectiveness more surely. When Jupiter uses rhetorical niceties to adjust the claim that Cybele makes on behalf of Aeneas' fleet, he claims to employ these rhetorical structures as a manifestation of abstract justice. His appeal to verbal structures that are separate from his own role as top god would then be a way to make sure that his well-ordered kingship improves upon his father's tyranny.

But they are also a way to make his supremacy seem natural, because he justifies his administrative decisions by the functions of language itself. Keeping rhetorical figures in order strengthens Jupiter's verbal authority; but his ability to decide which are the verbal relationships that count depends in turn on his supreme divine power. As we saw, Cybele took care to remind him of that power, basing her request not only on her own status, but also on his victory (9.84). Hardie takes this both as an appeal to filial piety and a hint that Jupiter is in his mother's debt ("apparently an indirect reminder of Rhea's services in saving her son Zeus from being swallowed by his father Kronos").²⁸ *Domito te* [. . .] *Olympo* also reaffirms Jupiter's authority—Cybele points out that he is not merely obliged by the ties of reciprocity and parenthood to do what she asks, he is perfectly capable of it, too.

The narrator reminds us of that power after Jupiter finishes speaking. We hear that he fixes this plan with the Stygian oath *and* makes all Olympus tremble with his nod.²⁹ This double ratification of Jupiter's words recurs at 10.113–15, after Jupiter has proclaimed to the divine council his neutrality in the struggle between Trojans and Rutulians. Both speeches are densely packed with ambiguous claims about the balance of power between Jupiter's will, his speech, and the Fates. Jupiter responds helplessly to Cybele, however. *Cui tanta deo permissa potestas?* ("What god has such great power allowed him?" 9.97) he asks—disingenuously, it may seem.

A reason for skepticism may be found in the narrator's description of Jupiter in the divine council of Book 10. The momentous introduction of

28. Hardie 1994 *ad loc.*

29. Hardie 1994 *ad loc.* points out that this description combines two Homeric signs of divine authority (Zeus' nod, e.g., at *Iliad* 1.528–30; the oath by the Styx, e.g., *Iliad* 15.37–38).

his speech (the speech that he ratifies with nod and Stygian oath) asserts Jupiter's supreme power in words that recall the god's own disclaimer in 9.97: *tum pater omnipotens, rerum cui prima potestas* ("Then the all-powerful father, who holds the chief power over the universe . . .," 10.100). The introduction goes on to emphasize the rapt attention of the elements during Jupiter's speech (*eo dicente*, 10.101).³⁰ His control over the universe is implicitly linked with his words, particularly because he himself picks up the verb *dico*: *accipite ergo animis atque haec mea figite dicta* (10.104). His injunction repeats exactly the words with which Celaeno introduces the table prophecy in Book 3, where she cites the "all-powerful father" as the initial speaker of her oracular words: *accipite ergo animis atque haec mea figite dicta, / quae Phoebus pater omnipotens, mihi Phoebus Apollo / praedixit, uobis Furiarum ego maxima pando* ("Well then, take and fix in your thoughts these words of mine, which the almighty father foretold to Phoebus, and which I, the greatest of the Furies, unfold to you," 3.250–52).³¹ The repetition reinforces how little distinction can be made between Jupiter's *dicta* and the *fata* that he occasionally reveals, or allows others to reveal, through prophecy.

In each case the instruction comes at a moment when the speaker is under attack—physical attack for the Harpy Celaeno, verbal for Jupiter in the council of the gods. For both divinities, their *dicta* are a means of reasserting control. Many commentators have been struck by the contrast between the claims for Jupiter's authority that surround his speech in the divine council in Book 10, and the uncertainties of the speech's content.³² Some have suspected that the impersonality of his invocation of fate is an assumed weakness designed to obfuscate the authorship of the *fata*.³³

But the question is not simply whether the *fata* are simply "things spoken" or whether there is an implied agent, the speaker Jupiter. It is equally important to consider what kind of speech *fata* might be. The language denoted by *fata* is on one level a story—one that Jupiter knows either because he is the storyteller, or because he has read or heard it in advance. But it is also persuasive speech, language that can make things happen in the world, causing the events of the story to unfold.

30. See Hardie 1986, 327–35 for a discussion of 10.100–104, and for a more general consideration of control over the elements.

31. Harrison 1991 *ad loc.* points also to 5.304, where Aeneas, presiding over Anchises' funeral games, instructs the competitors: *accipite haec animis laetasque aduertite mentes*. There the emphasis changes: instead of dwelling upon the nature of the speech, Aeneas stresses how the audience is to respond. See Hardie 1986, 205 for a depiction of Jupiter as the ideal statesman.

32. See Feeney 1991, 144–45 for a useful summary of the critical debate.

33. Lyne 1987, 89 describes the speech as "a combination of teasing opacity, disingenuousness, and, I think, mendacity."

Jupiter's declaration of impartiality in the divine council (*rex Iuppiter omnibus idem. / fata uiam inuenient*, 10.112) may be disingenuous, as R. O. A. M. Lyne says, but it amounts to a commitment to prolong the events that are the stuff of stories. This commitment contrasts with the attitude of Venus, who is apparently willing to sacrifice storytelling to the guarantee of safety for Ascanius and the Julian line, 10.46–53.³⁴

Jupiter's anxiety in case Aeneas should be granted *immortale* [. . .] *fas* through his ships stems partly from a determination that his hero must enact the story of his life. This is where the ships are distinguished from the Penates, the Trojan gods, who have a strange double status. Carried by the Aeneadae, instead of carrying the Trojans as the ships do, the Penates are dependent on mortals, yet remain immortal, able to raise Trojan descendants to the stars and to promise their city *imperium* (3.156–59) and, more immediately, able to interpret Apollo's baffling explanation of Jupiter's will (3.159–71).³⁵ Guaranteeing the safety of the ships would give certainty to the story's outcome and constrain the ways it may unfold. The Penates, on the other hand, help the tale move forward through their verbal abilities—as indeed the ships will help in Book 10, though only after they have been transformed into nymphs.

Aeneas' story is to be generated by a multitude of responses—human and divine—to divine statements about how and when that tale should or should not end. Jupiter is one of many characters in the *Aeneid* whose ability to make a sequence of events develop depends on an ability to interpret language that has already been uttered: the interpretation constantly reshapes and regenerates the utterance and its effects.

When the crisis occurs, Cybele will bring about the transformation by giving an order. In this flashback discussion, Jupiter claims control over the metamorphosis: “I shall snatch away their mortal form and I shall order them to be goddesses of the great sea” (*magnique iubebo / aequoris esse deas*, 101–2). It is as if Jupiter's precision with rhetorical figures and their implications can strengthen the force of his speech, of his order, to work the transformation he intends. He rejects Cybele's initial request because he claims that his control is limited. But as we have seen, his reshaping of the relation between mortal and immortal in the ships is one way to show his power.

34. But see Quint 1993, 86, who argues that her speech, “with its specter of a historically victorious Carthage,” is not to be taken wholly seriously. The poem refrains from imagining Venus' intentions, but we see the effect, which is—in combination with Juno's counter-speech—to prompt Jupiter to allow the epic narrative to continue. See also Reckford 1995–96, 29.

35. See Hardie 1986, 301.

The lines of opposition (Juno vs. Jupiter, Juno vs. Venus, Turnus vs. Aeneas, etc.) in the *Aeneid* are drawn up through an alignment of sympathies and interests and through the polarities of gender, but no polarities ever sustain themselves consistently in this poem. In the case of Jupiter and Cybele, whose interests in other respects are not far apart, the contest that Jupiter depicts in terms of verbal and cosmological precision is also a contest between forms of power marked out as masculine and feminine. Jupiter's interpretation wins because of the position from which he speaks. He may be the son, as Cybele reminds him, but he is the son who has defeated his father and "spins the stars of the firmament." Fatherhood must now trump maternity, it seems. Aeneas is mortal and his line of descent vulnerable because of Anchises' mortal paternity: the *genetrix Berecynthia* Cybele cannot be allowed to grant excessive power to Venus' role as *Aeneadum genetrix*.

Jupiter is fully aware of the transformatory possibilities of language, whatever we make of the relation between his speech and what is *fas* or permitted by the *fata*. In his view, Cybele would turn ships into immortals by conflating them verbally. Jupiter controls this rhetorical act not by depriving Cybele of the ability to speak, but by emphasizing the importance of precise interpretation in the effectiveness of speech. This is much the same technique that he uses with Juno in the prolonged struggle that energizes the *Aeneid*. By showing equal interest in his own speech and in interpreting that of others, Jupiter remains in control of the fragmentations of the *Aeneid's* narrative. He absorbs opposition, instead of simply crushing or being crushed by it.

So Jupiter continues to ratify the cosmological force of a synecdochal structure shaping the combination of mortality and immortality in the tree-ship-nymphs. He uses expressions evocative of human death and of apotheosis in promising a divine future for the ships. This emphasizes the human, mortal aspect of the vessels. Then in 9.101–3 Jupiter makes equally prominent the potentially divine aspect of the ships; his promise to "snatch away their mortal shape" (*mortalem eripiam formam*, 101) suggests that divinity, in fact, is their core quality, and their appearance as mortal ships merely a temporary disguise.³⁶ The *forma* that is to be removed is the mortality that they temporarily acquired when Aeneas shaped them into a fleet on Ida (*tempore quo primum Phrygia formabat in Ida / Aeneas classem*, 9.80–81). The impression that the divine wood forms a part of the mortal whole is strengthened by the fact that in her *Homeric Hymn* (a key intertext for the

36. But Hardie 1994 *ad loc.* also reminds us that *rapere* and *eripere* are used of the snatching by Venus of Julius Caesar's soul in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 15.845.

Aeneid) Aphrodite tells Anchises that nymphs will look after their son; she explains to him the connection between mountain nymphs and the pines and oaks with whose lives theirs are intertwined.³⁷

In changing potential Dryads into Nereids, Jupiter adds a metaphorical element to complement the synecdochal structure that he adapted from Cybele, introducing the likeness with a word that often introduces a simile: *qualis Nereia Doto / et Galatea secant spumantem pectore pontum* (“just like the Nereid, Doto, and Galatea, who with their breasts cut the foaming sea,” 9.102–3). Jupiter compares the goddesses that the ships will become to particular examples of existing sea-goddesses, who already exist for readers in literary tradition. So Jupiter’s emphasis on crafting the ships takes a new turn, when we find that one reason they are to become nymphs is because once fashioned by mortal hand, the wood begins to resemble divinities.³⁸

The uncertainties involved in Jupiter’s decision about what kind of protection to give the ships form part of the gods’ modes of intervention right from the start of Aeneas’ journey. When Aeneas in Book 3 describes his departure from Troy with all those for whom he is responsible (father and son, allies, and gods) he mentions in passing the building of the fleet, but he leaves it to his Carthaginian audience to deduce that construction materials must come from the slopes of Ida, where his band of exiles are gathered. We have heard Cybele as a local protector mentioned by the ghost of Aeneas’ wife Creusa near the end of Book 2, when she tries to rein in Aeneas’ wild grief at losing her (*insanus dolor*, 2.776) by telling him that the events of the night are not happening without divine intent (*sine numine diuum*, 2.777).

Creusa gives three reasons why she had to die before Aeneas could set forth on his great journey, without making clear exactly how the three explanations interact:

1. It is not *fas* for him to take Creusa along as a companion (2.778).
2. The ruler of Olympus does not permit it (2.778).
3. The great mother of the gods is keeping her on those shores—Creusa implies that Cybele is protecting her (a descendant of Dardanus and daughter-in-law of Venus) from being lowered to the rank of slave among the Greeks (2.785–788).

37. *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 256–72. These nymphs are not immortal, however, but merely long lived. When they die, their trees perish with them. See also Hardie 1994 on 9.101.

38. Hardie’s comment (1994 *ad loc.*) here too reinforces my view of the rhetorical structure offered by these lines. Describing this relation of resemblance as a “new turn” raises old problems, however, about the extent to which we can distinguish the rhetorical operations of synecdoche and metaphor. Gelley 1995, 3, writing on the rhetoric of exemplarity, gives a particularly clear reminder of the slipperiness of these figurative divisions.

Creusa separates from her information about Jupiter's will and Cybele's protection the question of whether her survival alongside Aeneas would be *fās* or not, but the three ideas overlap in ways that give us a preview of the shifting accountability of Jupiter, Cybele, and a more impersonal form of divine law when the ships are rescued.

In the flashback, Cybele has been characterized as concerned mostly for the tree-ships themselves, while Jupiter shifts the emphasis to problems of how the cosmos fits together. When the narrative returns from the flashback to the scene in the main Book 9 narrative, where Turnus' flames threaten the Trojan ships, the promised metamorphosis becomes a *monstrum*, a means of communication between gods and mortals.

Ergo aderat promissa dies et tempora Parcae
 debita complerant, cum Turni iniuria Matrem
 admonuit ratibus sacris depellere taedas.
 hic primum noua lux oculis offulsit et ingens
 uisus ab Aurora caelum transcurrere nimbus
 Idaeique chori; tum uox horrenda per auras
 excidit et Troum Rutulorumque agmina complet:
 'ne trepitate meas, Teucri, defendere nauis
 neuē armate manus; maria ante exurere Turno
 quam sacras dabitur pinus. uos ite solutae,
 ite deae pelagi; genetrix iubet.' et sua quaeque
 continuo puppes abrumpunt uincola ripis
 delphinumque modo demersis aequore rostris
 ima petunt. hinc uirgineae (mirabile monstrum)
 reddunt se totidem facies pontoque feruntur.

So the promised day was at hand and the Fates had fulfilled the due time, when Turnus' wrong prompted the Mother to fend off torches from the sacred crafts.

Then, first, a strange light glistened into the eyes and a huge cloud was seen to race from the East across the sky, choruses from Ida, too; next a shiversome voice falls through the air and fills the ranks of Trojans and Rutulians: "Don't fret about defending my ships, Teucrians, and do not take up arms: Turnus will sooner be allowed to set ablaze the seas than burn the sacred pines. As for you, go unmoored, go as goddesses of the deep; (your) mother orders you." And

at once the sterns each break their own ropes away from the shore and
 like dolphins, dipping their beaks in the water's surface,
 they make for the depths. Then, an astounding prodigy, virgin forms
 in equal number show themselves and head out to sea. (*Aen.* 9.107–22)

Audience perceptions dominate the way the lead-up to the actual metamorphosis is presented. First, it is Turnus' aggression (described as *iniuria*) that prompts (*admonuit*) Cybele to save the fleet (9.108–9). Then we turn to the human perceptions: a strange light glistens in the eyes (*oculis*), a huge cloud is seen (*uisus*), as well as choruses from Mount Ida. Even Cybele's voice is described with an adjective that directs us towards an appropriate response by her audience—the gerundive *horrenda* suggests that listeners should shiver to hear the goddess' words, and the sound of her voice (9.110–13). The poem explicitly labels the metamorphosis itself a *monstrum* (9.120), something that shows or advises.

Cybele's words follow through on the poem's emphasis on the act of communication. The goddess speaks to the Trojans and the ships in turn, but the poem emphasizes that the Trojans' enemies are also listening: *uox horrenda* [. . .] *Troum Rutulorumque agmina complet* (“a shiversome speech [. . .] fills the ranks of Trojans and Rutulians,” 9.112–13). We are invited to think about what Cybele's information could mean for these Rutulian listeners. The goddess first instructs the Trojans, *ne trepidate meas, Teucrici, defendere nauis / neue armate manus* (“Don't fret about defending my ships, Trojans, and do not take up arms,” 9.114–15). What she gives the Trojans is a reassurance as much as an order, and she follows this with an explanation—Turnus will be allowed to burn up the seas sooner than the sacred pines.

The safety of the ships is presented through Turnus' limitations, and Cybele again uses a term that can conventionally refer either to ship or tree—*pinus*.³⁹ The second divine order repeats the same imperative—*ite*—twice: “go unmoored, go as goddesses of the deep” (9.116–17). This time, instead of getting an explanation of the reasons for this command, the audience

39. Pines became associated with the Magna Mater in the Roman world; Roller 1999, 279 notes that votive pinecones found at her shrine show that in the second century B.C.E. her cult was already associated with the legendary origins of Rome. Hardie 1987b argues that “Virgil repeatedly exploits traditional kinds of metonymy and metaphor to suggest the shifting and paradoxical quality of ships: [. . .] Trans elemental imagery is so standard as often to pass unnoticed: ships ‘fly,’ and they ‘plough’ the barren sea” (164). When the poet later adopts boundary-crossing terms (for example, at 10.222, 227, where the nymphs still appear ship-like), the metaphors take on new resonance because of the debate here in Book 9 about the nature of these particular ships.

hears the speech defined *as* a command, and learns the speaker: *genetrix iubet*—“your mother” or “*the* mother orders you” (9.117). The Great Mother’s power is brought into action through the words she speaks and is conveyed by the voice with which she speaks them.

This section of the narrative echoes the Catullan Attis’ calls to Cybele’s followers: *agite ite ad alta, Gallae, Cybeles nemora* (“Go, Gallae, go to the lofty groves of Cybele,” 63.19). T. P. Wiseman has argued that Virgil presents us with a safe vision of a protective goddess, whose power is carefully contained within civic limits.⁴⁰ But another Cybele is invoked by the striking resemblance between Cybele’s language here and Attis’ frenzied cries. Attis, through his cries, strives to stir the other followers to the same level of frenzy that he is experiencing; Cybele’s power can apparently be conveyed through poetic language. This is not the first time the *Aeneid* has evoked the Catullan goddess. When Anchises, wrongly interpreting the instruction *antiquam exquirite matrem* (“Seek out the ancient mother,” 3.96), leads the Trojans to Crete, he follows a description of the ritual practices that originated there with the call: *ergo agite et diuum ducunt qua iussa sequamur* (“Come, then, and where the gods’ orders lead, let us follow!” 3.114). This reminds us again that if divine commands depend on their verbal force, that force will in turn be diminished or reinforced by its reception. Cybele’s importance for Anchises in Book 3 makes him unable to imagine another interpretation for the term *antiquam matrem*—so he both is, and is not, following divine orders.

The question of whether or how far Vergil rehabilitates Cybele lies parallel with the question of how far Cybele takes over control from Jupiter when she orders the ships’ transformation. The verbal echoes of Catullus may show that the dangerous goddess who inspires Attis’ self-mutilation has been incorporated comfortably into a very different kind of narrative. Or they may show that this disturbing presence persists. Different critical predilections will lead readers to different conclusions.

The combination of sheer verbal efficacy and mysterious force in Cybele’s command belongs to the superhuman uses of language explored within myth and fiction, but the difficulties of disentangling the interaction between

40. Wiseman 1984, 119 suggests that “many Romans in Virgil’s lifetime thought of [Cybele] in terms of madness and high camp—a sinister alien goddess served by a priesthood of contemptible half-men.” But he argues (127): “The details of her Augustan rehabilitation are what we see in Virgil. The Phrygian goddess has become the Trojan goddess, protecting Creusa, providing the fleet; the woods of Ida are no longer Catullus’ place of horror, but the means of safety for the destined ancestor of Rome. [. . .] In the most spectacular of her manifestations, the metamorphosis of her fleet into sea-nymphs, no reader in Virgil’s Rome could fail to recognise Cybele not only as a miracle-worker, but also as the august neighbour of ‘Apollo of the ships.’”

verbal power and other forms of authority become just as pressing among humans. J. L. Austin's theory of performative utterances can help us here, though it is worth acknowledging that by "theory" I mean Austin's constantly shifting exploration of the instances in language where "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which [. . .] would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just' saying something."⁴¹ The provisional quality of each stage of his investigation is carefully marked by Austin even before he reaches the point of showing how constatives (statements that invite assessment as "true" or "false") fall within the broader category of performatives.⁴²

Austin points to the difficulty in separating the force of utterances in themselves as speech acts from the effects on listeners that result from what is said. He concisely summarizes the distinction: "the illocutionary act [. . .] has a certain *force* in saying something; the perlocutionary act [. . .] is the *achieving of certain effects* by saying something."⁴³ But his own explorations make clear how hard it is to distinguish sharply between the illocutionary force of utterances, where the work is done *in* the utterance, and their perlocutionary force, where the effects are achieved *through* speech.

The order serves as an important but troubling paradigm for performative utterances, both in Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* and in later approaches to speech-act theory. One of the ways a performative utterance may "misfire" is in failing to meet the appropriate conventions for the invocation of a particular procedure. Chief among Austin's examples is the case where someone gives an order without meeting the conventional criteria for possessing the authority to command instead of request: "[. . .] on a desert island you may say to me 'Go and pick up wood'; and I may say 'I don't take orders from you' or 'you're not entitled to give me orders'—I do not take orders from you when you try to 'assert your authority' (which I might fall in with but may not) on a desert island, as opposed to the case where

41. Austin 1975, 5.

42. In "With the Compliments of the Author: Reflections on Austin and Derrida," Fish 1989, 67 celebrates the "radical provisionality" of *How to Do Things with Words*: "For Austin, the formal and the pragmatic are neither alternatives to be chosen nor simple opposites to be reconciled, but the components of a dialectic that works itself out in his argument, a tacking back and forth between the commitment to intelligibility and the realization that intelligibility, though always possible, can never be reduced to the operation of a formal mechanism." Miller 2001 also emphasizes Austin's willingness "to bog, by logical stages, down" (Austin 1975, 13).

43. Austin 1975, 121. For instance, in saying "I promise" in normal circumstances I perform the act of making a promise; this is the illocutionary force of those words. By saying "I promise," I may perhaps persuade the recipient of that promise to act in certain ways or to change her beliefs as a result of that pledge—this would be the perlocutionary effect of my words. But both the illocutionary and the perlocutionary force depend on the position from which utterances are spoken.

you are the captain on a ship and therefore genuinely have authority.”⁴⁴ It is not that orders given by a captain on a ship will necessarily bring different results from those given by an individual on a desert island, of course; mutinous sailors or passengers may disobey their captain’s orders, as one individual may ignore another on a desert island.

These reactions would shape the perlocutionary effects of the imperative. The conventional authority and conventional procedure determine the illocutionary force. So on the desert island an individual will be making an abruptly worded request, whereas on the ship its captain will usually have other means at his disposal to enforce his commands—nonverbal means, but means that are built into the order’s illocutionary force. A sequel to Austin’s desert island conversation could also involve nonverbal means of enforcement: the bossy individual may say, “Oh *don’t* you take orders from me? Well then, take *this* instead,” and land a punch.

But in that case the individual will have passed far beyond the conventional bounds where verbal and nonverbal authority are seamlessly joined. A captain’s ability to appeal to physical backing, on the other hand, is further enshrined in naval law. In the captain’s case, when the performative succeeds fully it does so “to the extent that *it draws on and covers over* the constitutive conventions by which it is mobilized,” as Judith Butler puts it.⁴⁵

A number of theorists argue against applying speech-act theory to imperatives issued by gods, such as “let there be light.” Sandy Petrey, for example, points out a serious problem with John Searle’s extension of the theory to the *fiat lux* category of command: “the Austinian vision of what words do in society becomes a suggestion that they do things all by themselves.”⁴⁶ It is important to distinguish between imagined supernatural verbal power and the performativity analyzed by Austin in human language. But the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects analyzed by Austin begin to enter the picture when human conventions for granting authority draw upon the supposed force of a divine command.

In a divine command we are asked to imagine the capacity for enforcement as built into the communication itself by supernatural means, rather

44. Austin 1975, 28.

45. Butler 1993, 227.

46. Petrey 1990, 99. Another diagnosis is that the imperative is being confused with the performative; Gould comments tersely that “it is probably worth pursuing the fact that God does not deal in performatives” (1995, 43 n. 5). Gould is reacting here to the imprecision that sometimes brings all the transformatory effects of utterances in Austinian performativity into one umbrella category. These transformatory effects may include perlocutionary results and illocutionary force, which are not wholly separable, but which are conceptually distinct.

than by social and linguistic convention. This blend of sheer power, unknowable in human terms, with verbal authority can sharpen our perception of the troubling interplay between verbal and social conventions, persuasiveness, and more violent methods of bringing words into effect. Within the *Aeneid's* story world, Cybele's metamorphic command becomes a depiction of divine power—both her own and Jupiter's—as well as being an enactment of that power. An epic poem, no matter what figurative claims it makes to divine authority, lacks the supernatural power to bring about bodily transformations. But one of the questions raised by epic as a genre is whether its figurative appeal to divine authority amounts to asking readers to experience the poem as an extended imperative. Are we invited to hear its *fama* speaking for the gods, as the naval captain speaks out the force of naval law?⁴⁷

Conversely, within the *Aeneid's* story world, Jupiter's ability to remain on top of the order of things—and the disorder of things—becomes still more effective because he takes advantage of the anti-closural vitality of fiction. He incorporates Juno's creative delays into his *fata*, and makes his cosmological analysis of Cybele's rhetoric a creative verbal act on its own account. In Book 9's flashback, Jupiter uses his close attention to the effects of figurative language to ensure that his own words would work as vehicles for his power. He promises to give the order for the ships' transformation. Once the time has come, we hear Cybele take up Jupiter's verb *iubeo*; she follows her imperatives (*ite, ite*) with a correction to his speech—it is not the son, but the mother, who is giving the order. Jupiter drew from Cybele's language the potential for the ships to be animate and immortal beings—now she appropriates the command that will realize that potential.

The metamorphic force of Cybele's language resembles the poem's own transformation of the ships through language: "And the sterns at once each broke their own ropes away from the shore and like dolphins, dipping their beaks in the water's surface, they made for the depths" (9.117–20). The dolphin simile itself performs a metamorphosis, producing a figurative shift from wooden object to living creature, like the figurative shifts that lead up to metamorphoses in Ovid.⁴⁸ The poem's power to set impossible marvels before readers' eyes is assimilated to the miraculous power of Jupiter and Cybele to work physical changes that realign the boundaries between (as Hardie puts it) animate and inanimate nature, and between mortality and

47. Lucan's *Civil War* gives this question still greater prominence by pointedly rejecting the Olympian authority assumed by earlier epics, extending hyperbolically the *Aeneid's* concerns about the ultimate inaccessibility of divine knowledge.

48. See Barkan 1986, 8–9, 20–23; Tissol 1997, *passim*.

immortality.⁴⁹ The episode shows how Jupiter bases his interpretation of and control over *fata* on the same rhetorical basis that sustains the *fama* of epic. At the same time it raises further questions about our own position as readers vis-à-vis Jupiter as an arbiter of meaning, who absorbs all resistance and takes every cross-current into the floodtide of his paternal victory.

Cybele's *monstrum* in Book 9 has the power to entrance—to stun—those who see it, and Jupiter's role in the metamorphosis allows him to incorporate that power within his sphere. Still, the most immediate effects of their jointly authored sign depend on the way that Turnus presents his reading of the strange event. For Turnus words are primarily words, not bearers of uncanny power; their force lies in their own persuasiveness, which he derives from the beliefs in communal circulation, not from the position of the individual speaker.⁵⁰ So he milks the sign for its figurative potential in relation to the narratives of Troy and Latium that are already in circulation.

One discomposing element in the narrator's differentiation between the reactions of Turnus and the other Rutulians is that with the phrase *obstipuere animis Rutuli* ("numb in spirits were the Rutulians," 9.123) the poem repeats the language of another portent, the apparition of arms in the sky at the start of the Italian war. In that earlier episode the only audience member not to be confounded is Aeneas, and he is calm because he *knows* more than the others: *obstipuere animis alii, sed Troius heros / agnouit sonitum et diuae promissa parentis* ("Numb in spirits were the others, but the Trojan hero recognized the sound and the promises of his divine mother," 8.530–31).⁵¹ James O'Hara argues that this verbal echo indicates that both Turnus and Aeneas are equally limited—in their knowledge, and in their ability to read divine signs.⁵² But another way of thinking about the repetition is to notice the extent to which the meaning of an omen typically resides in its interpretation. An active interpretation of divine signs (or even thunderstruck bewilderment) in itself can reshape the future. Both

49. See Hardie 1987b, 164, who observes that the peculiarities of this episode are partly generated by ancient worries about what kind of thing a ship is: "the ancient ship is a boundary crosser: [. . . it] confounds the normal categories that limit human existence (land/sea, city/wilderness, animate/inanimate nature, motion/immobility)."

50. This view is implied by his indifference to Cybele's speech, yet his own status as speaker strengthens his persuasiveness. *'sed uos, o lecti, ferro qui scindere uallum / apparat et mecum inuadit trepidantia castra?'* he calls in 9.146–47, appealing to the sense of honor that this chosen group of men must feel in joining with him in his attack. And while in 9.127 the narrator asserts that Turnus' words raise men's spirits, in 7.471–75 the various aspects of his person (his beauty, youth, ancestry, and fame) are equally important in stirring the Rutulians to fight.

51. Other aspects of Venus' sign also resemble the ship-nymph *monstrum* (a gleaming, a strange cloud, and so on).

52. O'Hara 1990, 49 and 76.

the divine author of the sign and the mortal author of its interpretation are vested with a kind of creative power within the poem.

Turnus believes that even if he cannot set ablaze the sacred pines, he can decide what this episode will do to his own story. He is confident that he can undo the shattering effect of the sign on his fellow Italians, because he believes that he can direct the meaning of the metamorphosis. He acknowledges only the event of the metamorphosis itself as a sign; he ignores the words spoken by Cybele. We do not know, and we do not need to know, whether his speech makes public his own experience as a “reader” of Cybele’s sign, or whether we should imagine him developing this interpretation entirely for the sake of its rhetorical effectiveness as a *cohortatio*. We know that confidence (*fiducia*) has not left him, but we are left free to imagine that his confidence is unshaken either because, thanks to Allecto’s work, he is deluded enough to think that the sign is not hostile to him, or because he thinks he can avert its hostility with words, just as Cybele used words to avert his flames from the ships. He does show how his speech can have its own force: *animos tollit dictis*, the narrator tells us (“he lifts their hearts with words,” 9.127).

In dispelling the overwhelming fears of his men, Turnus averts any intrinsic hostile power the sign might have had to weaken or terrify. His words become temporarily true; in 10.118–21 the poem repeats Turnus’ comment on the Trojans’ loss of their ships (9.131), to say that Rutulians have the Aeneadae trapped behind their palisade: *nec spes ulla fugae* (“and there was no hope of escape”). Before that, in 9.731–35, an even more striking echo of this scene occurs, suggesting that Turnus’ rivalry with Cybele has been partly justified. When he is trapped within the Trojan gates, Turnus becomes for the Aeneadae equivalent to the *monstrum* from Cybele that terrified the Rutulians earlier in the same book: *continuo noua lux oculis effulsit et arma / horrendum sonuere* (9.731).⁵³ The Trojans recognize him and flee in turmoil.

Turnus’ interpretations are molded partly by his wishes and needs, but also by his prior knowledge and beliefs. We are used to this problem. As readers we meet patterns of resemblance and verbal echoes which do not on their own dictate our interpretations, but which fall into line with our already present individual preoccupations and cultural experience. Readers help generate the power of *fama*, but we do so through structures of perception that are partly out of reach.

53. Compare 9.110, 112–13: *hic primum noua lux oculis effulsit* [. . .]; *tum uox horrenda per auras / excidit et Troum Rutulorumque agmina complet*.

Grappling with this inaccessibility means grappling with the immensely complex accumulation of tradition and imagination through which the operations of human power are mystified. In attempting to strip back these layers of mystification, one risks constructing yet new layers. Don Fowler, discussing paternity in the *Aeneid*, once put forward a prospectus for attempting a “task both necessary and impossible—or, as I should prefer to say, impossible and *necessary*.”⁵⁴ His analysis reminds us of how “the gendered opposition in the *Aeneid* of Jupiter and Juno is framed in terms [. . .] of all those Western binaries, ‘culture/nature, truth/error, inside/outside, health/disease, man/woman, procreation/birthing.’ The task,” he suggests, “is not to champion one against the other, but to try to get behind the presuppositions which underlie these genealogies, to try to get back to the point *before* the father has already won.” But this in turn raises the question of *what it would mean* to get back to that point before the father’s victory. Answers to such a question are as necessary, and as impossible, as the task Fowler sets us.

Can we better understand how verbal power participates in establishing these social hierarchies if we face the apparently unfathomable aspects of persuasion, those aspects that resemble the uncanny mysteries of divine power depicted in the *Aeneid*? Or do such analogies between human and divine rhetoric merely collude with the strategies by which concepts of divinity have so often been used to mystify the material basis of human power?

54. Fowler 1996, 43–44; reprinted in Fowler 2000b, 228.