Fama and Fiction in Vergil's Aeneid

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How to Do Things with Birds

I discussed in chapter 1.1 how generalizations and similes call the reader to look for links between the story world and perceptions originating outside the narrative. These seams of fiction allow us to feel the joins between two different fabrics in the text. In this closing chapter I explore an episode in the *Aeneid* centering on a partly misleading omen. This omen works as another of those seams, allowing readers to feel out the ways that new imaginings are persuasively blended into recognizable circumstances.

In classical epic divine signs (*monstra*) stud the text as characteristically as the generalizations that punctuate the traditional novel—or as the carefully structured similes of epic narrative.[1] Cybele's imperatives to the Trojans (*ne trepidate,* 9.114) and ships (*ite deae pelagi,* 9.117) do not directly tell their recipients what to see, but just such a command is implied by the transformation (*mirabile monstrum,* 9.120) the goddess effects. Divine signs call out "look!" for characters within the epic's fiction much as similes and generalizations do for readers of epic and novel. They do

1. Latin and Greek narratives revel in an explicit framework for extended comparisons, with carefully balanced correlatives, but this occurs rarely enough in English prose fiction to be marked as a classicizing device, as in Henry Fielding's epic parodies.

this even without grammatical imperatives like those through which Venus, Allecto, and Cybele perform their transformatory revelations in Books 2, 7, and 9.

Signs sent by gods not only employ the same analogical rhetoric as similes, and claim an insight into truths that might otherwise go unobserved, as generalizations do. They also resemble similes and generalizations in their roles as boundary crossers. All three break through from one category of experience into another. They invite their interpreters to observe the connections between the different categories, so as to see how "this" is "that"—or could become "that."

Perceptual boundary crossing is crucial for the fictive knowledge offered by epic, with its vatic visions of the gods. These visions help the poem bring to the present freshly imagined "memories" of the past. But even when narratives actively disdain such vatic authority, this perceptual boundary-crossing prevents fictional worlds from being constructed as self-contained entities; it gives all fictions the potential to take on at least some of the persuasive authority and memory-making efficacy of myths.

At the end of the *Aeneid,* Turnus' defeat is hurried on by his weakening fear, which comes from an omen that makes him face up to Jupiter's hostility. But Jupiter aims the sign at Turnus' sister Juturna. He entrusts his communication to an assistant Fury (*Dira*), who appears as an ill-omened bird; she attacks Turnus so as to remind the nymph Juturna of her brother's mortality, and to show her that Jupiter wills his imminent death.[2] She recognizes the screech and flap of the *Dira*-turned-owl and speaks a searing lament in acknowledgment of the sign. Facing the Fury's omen makes brother and sister aware that they are confronting simultaneously the forces of the underworld and Olympus: what terrifies them is the authority of Jupiter, here embodied in the person of the Fury, who is only partly disguised.

The nymph, who was once mortal, recognizes the limitations of her own power—or rather, she defines her divinity precisely in terms of the lack of power it brings her. She can no longer use her art to prolong her brother's existence, as she has been using it ever since being urged on by Juno (12.138–60). Her own existence is to be unending, a reward and penalty for having been raped by Jupiter. The undying remembrance which Juturna's

2. See Johnson 1976, 127–34 for a detailed exploration of Jupiter's use of the *Dira* and the importance of how Vergil "boldly—even recklessly locates [her] at the foot of Jupiter's throne" (128).

unwanted immortality will confer on Turnus means undying pain for her, as she anticipates a future that will set no limit to her mourning.

This chapter looks in detail at some of Juturna's art, examining how she uses her precarious divine status to try to loosen the bounds set by Turnus' mortality, after Juno encourages her to delay or even prevent her brother's death. I focus not on Jupiter's demonic bird sign, but on the one Juturna contrives earlier in Book 12, which reopens the fighting between Trojans and Italians. In Jupiter's sign, the maddening powers of the *Dira*-owl increase their force when Juturna and Turnus correctly identify the sign as both a command and threat issued by Jupiter. Juturna's bird sign, by contrast, works through a means of persuasion that is fictive in more senses than one: it breaks down any boundaries that divide reality (within the *Aeneid*'s story world) from an imagined past, present, and future; and it does so partly by enlisting Jupiter's supreme authority through its rhetorical structure.

By the end of Book 11, the Trojans and their allies have nearly defeated the Italians; at the start of Book 12 Turnus agrees to a truce and to a single combat with Aeneas, so that they can decide the outcome of the war without any more bloodshed for the armies. During the ceremonials ratifying the truce and leading towards the combat, Juno turns to Turnus' sister for help. Stirred up by Juno, Juturna alters the course of events when she changes Italian perceptions of the coming fight. Her incitement of the Rutulians to forestall Turnus' single combat depends on a perfectly successful piece of visual rhetoric in the creation of her sign.

Juturna employs an analogy that unites so self-evidently the Rutulians' perception of the conflict with what they see in the sky that the analogy itself induces in the spectators misleading assumptions about its authorship. Her bird omen purports to depict what will occur if—or rather when—the Italians break the truce just made by Latinus and Aeneas. Juturna engineers a struggle between a swan, an eagle, and a mass of smaller shore birds, in which the massed birds rescue the swan from the eagle's attack.

First, however, she uses the expectation of poetic *fama* to manipulate the ways that the Rutulians and their allies interpret what they see, so that the birds will achieve what she needs them to. Speaking in disguise as one of the men, she presents Turnus' situation to the Italians in words that lend extra vividness to an analogy showing him as a swan in a cruel eagle's clutches. The poem does not specify exactly how far their sense of recognition, based on what they have already experienced, depends on the preparatory rumors set flying by Juturna in disguise as a Rutulian fighter. But the Italians respond to Juturna's bird imagery with an interpretation that is based on what they believe about Turnus and Aeneas' situation, and on what they believe about

the divine authority supporting bird omens. They are convinced that they will succeed in saving Turnus' life, as the massed shore birds save the swan. They are unaware that the omen has been sent by a nymph—one who has little knowledge of or control over the future, who is putting all her efforts into preventing her brother's death, but who cannot know whether she will succeed in saving him.

The Italians' assumptions about divine authority come more from the figurative structure of the omen Juturna creates than from any sure knowledge about its divine source. The eagle's swooping upon a swan and his defeat by the massing of the other shore birds form a read-it-yourself omen, one so clearly based on a structure of resemblance that any nonspecialist spectator would get the point (and a spectator who had some acquaintance with epic similes could not fail to grasp the message).[3]

For the poem's readers, the episode provides one of the seams of fiction, but within the poem, Juturna uses the birds to tell a story that seamlessly weaves a newly imagined scenario into a recognizable depiction of events that her audience has experienced. The Rutulians confuse a visual narrative shaped by Juturna's hopeful imagination with a different kind of storytelling, one that would depict an actuality to come. Thanks to the Rutulians' sense of recognition, Juturna's work of imagination takes on a particular rhetorical efficacy, and precipitates events that turn it into, in part, a correct prediction. The force of recognition appears so strong that it can dissolve the line between two different kinds of representation. Juturna's bird sign uses metaphor to achieve this blend.

8.1 Rumors

Before she begins her ornithological manipulations, Juturna makes sure that the Rutulians will notice just how much their situation looks like the events in the story she tells with birds. In Book 7 the Trojans recognized that they

3. This ease of comprehension distinguishes this omen from the bird omen that Halitherses explains in *Odyssey* 2.146–82, for example. When Eurymachus denies divine intent for that eagle, he provides a sure sign that he will come to a sticky end: he's a character in an epic, so *of course* the squabbling eagles are not just any birds having a fight. Here Tolumnius voices the opinion of all the spectators, rather than helping them in their puzzlement as Halitherses does. See also Bushnell 1982, 3ff. Struck 2004, 95 considers these questions of perception within a broader cultural (and epistemological) framework: "a bird might just be a bird, and a chance meeting becomes a coincidence with meaning only when a god's hand is behind it. [. . .] The ancient habit of seeing just these crystallizations of randomness as the ultrasignificant language of the divine dramatically points to a certain willful resistance to nonsense, an assertion of sense where none is by any logical definition possible."

had fulfilled a prophecy dealing with table eating at the point when Iulus put their flatbread eating into words: his joke showed them how they had, in a sense, swallowed tables. Juturna, too, verbally manufactures the Rutulians' recognition of how they stand in relation to Turnus and Aeneas, though she also uses other means to set the stage. To bring about this recognition, Juturna exploits the fluid motion by which human observation and talk become quasi-divine *fama.*

She waits for just the right moment, when Turnus' own men are evaluating the two heroes side by side and see that Aeneas is plainly stronger than Turnus. Turnus stops being the towering giant that he had appeared next to a boy like Pallas. With his youthful cheeks and the pallor of fear visible on his young body, Turnus now joins the series of vulnerable young men who have been killed in the war up to this point (Euryalus, Nisus, Pallas, and Lausus, as well as the young fighters whose stories are told only in passing as they die). By echoing its descriptions of those other dead young men the poem allows their *fama* to elide with the perception of Turnus here, both for the Rutulians within the story world and for readers.

> At uero Rutulis impar ea pugna uideri
> iamdudum et uario misceri pectora motu,
> tum magis ut propius cernunt non uiribus aequos.
> adiuuat incessu tacito progressus et aram
> suppliciter uenerans demisso lumine Turnus
> pubentesque genae et iuuenali in corpore pallor.
>
> But indeed in the Rutulians' eyes this combat has begun to seem imbalanced
> for some time now, and their feelings are affected by shifting emotions,
> all the more as they perceive more closely that the men are not equal in their strength.
> This feeling is strengthened by Turnus, as he moves forward with silent tread and humbly
> does reverence to the altar with downcast gaze,
> as well as by his youthful downy cheeks and the pallor on his young body. (*Aen.* 12.216–21)

Coming right after the sacrificial slaughter that ratifies the truce, the view of Turnus walking submissively towards the altar encourages the Rutulians to see him as a willing sacrificial victim—a view that the disguised Juturna will soon voice explicitly in words.

At this point, Juturna notices that pity and resentment at the unequal fight is growing into talk (*sermo*) among the crowd. The crowd is depicted with the shifting indecisiveness familiar from so much literature of the time. Aristocratic ideology demands that dangerously mobile groups of people find a leader (as in the famous storm-calming simile of Book 1). Juturna provides that leadership, but she chooses a persona that will blend into the crowd, as well as giving her authority among the soldiers. She scatters her rumors (*rumores,* 12.228) in disguise as an Italian warrior called Camers.

> quem simul ac Iuturna soror crebrescere uidit
> sermonem et uulgi uariare labantia corda,
> in medias acies formam adsimulata Camerti,
> cui genus a proauis ingens clarumque paternae
> nomen erat uirtutis, et ipse acerrimus armis,
> in medias dat sese acies haud nescia rerum
> rumoresque serit uarios ac talia fatur:
>
> As soon as his sister Juturna saw this talk
> grow and the wavering spirits of the crowd shift,
> into the midst of the ranks, after making herself look like Camers,
> whose family, stretching back, was mighty, and who had a name
> distinguished for his father's excellence, and he too was an energetic
>   fighter,
> into the mist of the ranks she plunges, and fully aware of the state of
>   things,
> she sows motley rumors, and says things like this: (*Aen.* 12.222–28)

She selects a man famous among the Rutulians for his family background and for his courage. Both of these qualities will enhance Camers' speech, as they do Turnus', whose persuasiveness often relies on his glamour as a young fighting man (for instance, 7.472–74, where his looks, ancestry, and military achievements induce the Rutulians to fill out the gaps in his abbreviated oratory with their own mutual exhortation).

At the same time, in changing her gender to make herself resemble Camers, Juturna makes herself just one among the crowd whom she's aiming to persuade. Her version of events will take on its own apparently authorless momentum with the anonymity of gossip.[4] Although he wields some per-

4. The shift in gender is emphasized by the verse: the same phrase that conveys her knowledge, explaining her success in carrying out persuasion, also draws the reader's attention to her difference from the men she is persuading. The feminine adjective and genitive pair *haud nescia rerum* is in the

sonal authority because of his family's and his own reputation for courage, it is also appropriate for her purposes that within the framework of the poem as a whole Camers is only one step away from being unknown.[5] When she puts on this disguise, Juturna takes advantage of her divine ability to change her appearance at will and create a quasi-fictive persona, but she immerses herself completely in ordinary human talk. Divinities in the *Aeneid* who disguise themselves as mortals usually set the seal on their communications as divine by revealing themselves on departure. Juturna is unusual in that the poem emphasizes how her talk itself retains its disguise, so that her divine speech mingles indiscernibly with mortal language, the indistinguishable *murmur* stealing through the armed men.[6]

Another difference between Juturna and the other divine characters who actively intervene in the poem is that her identity as a nymph who was once mortal mingles humanity with divinity, even when she is undisguised. Her perceptions and language are strongly colored by this combination; she suffers the emotions of a mortal without the limit set by death. Completely impervious to the starriness of immortality herself, she willingly exploits for her own purposes the paradox-fueled energy of *fama.*

Juturna–Camers crystallizes the fighting-men's expectations of *fama* and their anxieties about how *fama* can be enhanced or damaged by the talk of the community. The forward-looking *talia* in 12.228 (quoted above), though regularly used to introduce speeches, seems carefully imprecise here.[7] It is picked up by *talibus dictis* in 12.238, because it is important that the particular speech that the narrative presents here should blend in with all the other unspecified talk that is set in motion:

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same position as the masculine adjective and ablative pair *acerrimus armis* in the line above, so that the "real" masculine Camers and the female who adopts his identity confront one another in successive lines.

5. Readers receive no hint from the poem as to whether we should think of Juturna as stealing the identity of a Camers mentioned in 10.562, who was last seen being chased by Aeneas—neither his survival nor his death is considered worth mentioning in Book 10. Williams 1973 *ad loc.* is neutral; Harrison 1991, 214 assumes that they are different.

6. Knauer 1964 connects this scene with Athena's disguise and her manipulation of Pandarus when she instigates the truce breaking in *Iliad* 4, though Juturna's means of persuasion are far more elaborate, both in her rumor mongering and in the bird sign. Turnus eventually tells his sister that he recognized her at an early stage in the proceedings (12.632), but the narrative never suggests that any of his people share this recognition.

7. In 12.229 Juturna–Camers employs *talibus* in a very different sense, which is colored by its uses a line earlier and in 12.238; *pro cunctis talibus* expresses confidence in the Rutulians as fighters, of course ("for all such men"), but its position amidst the other uses of *talis* brings another implication, which is to liken the listeners to Turnus—Turnus is just one such man as all of you, so why are you letting him do your work and appropriate your *fama?*

> 'non pudet, o Rutuli, pro cunctis talibus unam
> obiectare animam? numerone an uiribus aequi
> non sumus? en, omnes et Troes et Arcades hi sunt,
> fatalisque manus, infensa Etruria Turno:
> uix hostem, alterni si congrediamur, habemus.
> ille quidem ad superos, quorum se deuouet aris,
> succedet fama uiuusque per ora feretur;
> nos patria amissa dominis parere superbis
> cogemur, qui nunc lenti consedimus aruis.'
> Talibus incensa est iuuenum sententia dictis
> iam magis atque magis, serpitque per agmina murmur:
> ipsi Laurentes mutati ipsique Latini.
> qui sibi iam requiem pugnae rebusque salutem
> sperabant, nunc arma uolunt foedusque precantur
> infectum et Turni sortem miserantur iniquam.

> "Isn't it shaming, Rutulians, to thrust forward just one
> life for all, and for such men as you? Are we not equal
> in number and strength? Look—all the Trojans *and* the Arcadians are just these ones here,
> and the bands ordained by fate, Turnus' enemy Etruria:
> scarcely an enemy apiece we have, even if only half of us were to come to grips with them.
> He indeed will mount, through his *fama,* to the gods above,
> at whose altars he dedicates himself, and he'll be sustained alive on men's lips;
> we will lose our ancestral home and we'll be forced to obey arrogant
> masters, since we now sit around sluggishly on our fields."
> By such words as these the young men's judgment was inflamed
> more and more, and a murmuring creeps through the ranks:
> even the Laurentians and the Latins are transformed.
> Those who just now were hoping for a respite from battle and
> for security, now want arms, and pray for the treaty to be
> unmade, and pity the unequal lot dealt to Turnus. (*Aen.* 12.229–43)

Turnus' self-sacrifice, she says, will make him famous. She speaks of the fight as Turnus had presented it in Book 11 and at the start of Book 12, a struggle by one man on behalf of them all (unlike Drances in Book 11, who saw Turnus as exposing his countrymen's lives to danger for the sake of his own personal ends). She puts this in terms that make the Rutulians

responsible for the arrangement, with Turnus' life merely the object of their decision (*non pudet, o Rutuli, pro cunctis talibus unam / obiectare animam?* 12.229–30). The rituals binding the treaty become rituals of *deuotio,* the altars become figuratively altars for human sacrifice.[8]

The self-sacrifice will give Turnus a form of immortality granted by unauthored *fama,* but associated for readers of Latin poetry with authorial power: *ille quidem ad superos, quorum se deuouet aris, / succedet fama uiuusque per ora feretur* (12.234–35). The Ennian reference (*uolito uiuus per ora uirum,* "I fly alive on the lips of men"), echoed in *Georgics* 3.9, *uictorque uirum uolitare per ora* ("and victorious fly on the lips of men"), exploits the notion that the telling of stories about heroes leads to a new form of heroism through authorship.

The connection between heroism and authorship will now be reversed again, however, as the hero Turnus will live through *fama.* The discourse that will take Turnus up to the gods is one that may be generated by particular authors, but that is sustained in human societies independently of those authors. So Juturna's talk depicts a process that reflects precisely the one that she herself carries out, when she scatters rumors and sets moving among the Italian armies an apparently unauthored utterance—talk that seems to arise directly from the circumstances, rather than from an individual—which glorifies Turnus as sacrificial hero, to be both envied and rescued from the imminent sacrifice.

According to the notion Camers/Juturna spreads, the deeds themselves produce immortal remembrance; heroic reputation does not depend on the art of the particular poet who creates a persuasive representation of the hero's acts. She gets her audience thinking about their own strength as fighting men *en masse.* Encouraging confidence in the transparency of information that comes from looking directly at a scene, she boosts the Italians' awareness of their power to intervene by pointing out how greatly they outnumber their enemies: "Look, all of the Trojans *and* the Arcadians are just these few

8. See Livy *Ab urbe condita* 8.9. Juturna's sacrificial language marks in advance the duel as transgressive regardless of the emotions that will accompany the actual killing of Turnus. She echoes Turnus' own words (11.440–42; see Hardie 1993, 28–29), but when she helps set up the language of sacrifice, she categorizes the human sacrifices as disordered and shameful, not as something that can establish a new order. On sacrifice in the *Aeneid,* see Hardie 1993, 19–35, though he focuses less on how Turnus and Juturna present the significance of the single combat as it approaches, and more on the substitution for the "institutionally sanctioned sacrifice of animals" (at 12.161–215 when the treaty is drawn up) by the sacrifice of Turnus at the very end of the poem. Hardie argues: "As 'sacrifice' the death of Turnus represents a reimposition of order; but as uncontrolled rage [. . .] it retains its potential to repeat itself in fresh outbursts of chaotic anger (the dreary catalogue of vengeance-killings of Roman civil war)" (21). See also Putnam 1965, 165.

men here [. . .]: scarcely an enemy apiece we have, even if only half of us were to come to grips with them" (12.231–33). As a concomitant to their ceding control over language by withdrawing from the search for glory, she threatens the waiting Rutulian spectators with a surrender of personal control to the point of becoming slaves to the victors: "He indeed will mount, through his *fama,* to the gods above, at whose altars he dedicates himself, and will be sustained alive on men's lips; we will lose our ancestral home and be forced to obey arrogant masters, since we now sit around sluggishly on our fields" (12.234–37).

Juturna's talk sets ablaze the feeling of the troops as it merges with their own conversations, as the murmur slithers its way through the armed men. Not only the Rutulians are convinced, who were already particularly moved by the sight of their young leader, but even the Laurentians and Latins are altered, *mutati* (12.240). Their state of mind and perceptions are transformed.[9]

Readers of the *Aeneid* are not told whether to imagine Juturna's words adding an entirely new perspective to the pity-driven talk of the Rutulians, or whether the speech mirrors and distils what is already in circulation. Either way, through her identification with the Rutulians, she strengthens both their identification with Turnus, and their sense that he is unique. They no longer want safety; they pity Turnus' unjust lot (*Turni sortem miserantur iniquam,* 12.243).

The *Aeneid*'s readers have seen something like this before, in Book 2, when Sinon had worked on a mixture of Trojan pity for him as victim and concern for themselves. In 2.199–200 the decisive moment comes when an omen, whose origin is never explained in the epic's narrative, follows hard upon Sinon's words and appears to confirm them by destroying Laocoon: *his aliud maius* [. . .] *obicitur.*[10] Although the phrase here in *Aeneid* 12 (*his aliud maius Iuturna adiungit,* "to these Juturna adds something else still greater," 12.244) almost repeats the line from Book 2, this time the poet has not delegated the role of narrator to the puzzled Aeneas. An active verb (*adiungit*) prominently assigns an author to the omen in question, though

9. *talibus incensa est iuuenum sententia dictis / iam magis atque magis, serpitque per agmina murmur: / ipsi Laurentes mutati ipsique Latini* (12.238–40). The vocabulary here recalls the work of the fury Allecto; her snaky, fiery power steals into Amata's body and mind (7.346–56), before the Fury inflames Turnus by revealing the full extent of that power.

10. The verb is passive, the agent unmentioned; all we know are the divergent traditions mentioned by commentators. In Book 2, the narrator is Aeneas, who knows more of divine matters than his fellow mortals only at particular moments of revelation, unlike the considerably better-informed poet who speaks into existence the work as a whole.

of course it is only the *Aeneid*'s readers, not the Rutulians, who are made aware of this author.

In the bird omen itself, Juturna exploits the same transparent relation between signs and deeds that she established in her verbal manipulation of the Italian soldiery's desire for fame. After the Italians have been prepared for the omen by the talk they themselves have shared in, they will be all the more ready to be swayed by what she does with birds, both because of the way she has presented Turnus' vulnerability to the violent eagle Aeneas, and because she has encouraged them to regard signs—whether visual or verbal—as providing a window directly onto actuality.

8.2 *Accipio agnoscoque deos*

We have seen how Juturna as Camers has ensured that the Rutulians, Latins, and Laurentians perceive their experience in a way that will match her bird omen and add to its emotional force. The eagle endangers all the birds (248–49), but fastens in particular on the swan, a creature known for its beauty and for its associations with poetry. The spectators' attention is riveted by this part of the action (12.250–52). The veracity of the first part of the analogy is proven, in their view. The next stage of the omen, when the eagle Aeneas will metaphorically take the swan-Turnus in his talons, is occurring now, as Turnus places himself in the more powerful warrior's grip by submitting to single combat. The spectators are accordingly invited to see the final stage, when the smaller birds' large numbers and solidarity defeat the predator, as truth-telling in the same way.

The spectators easily grasp the allegorical positions of Aeneas as "Jupiter's bird," and Turnus as outstanding swan. Tolumnius, whose position as augur would make him especially alert to the things birds get up to, has been hoping for just such a sign. The message is all the less enigmatic for him because he already has a "that" with which to match the "this" presented by the birds: "'This was it,' he said, 'this was what I have often sought in my prayers. I welcome and I recognize the gods'" (12.259–60).

Truth is so clearly on display here that the spectators expand it to embrace the second stage of the omen, the prediction of the future, which cannot be compared with their own experience. While Tolumnius and the other viewers behave like practiced simile readers, they have not had the opportunities for developing epic-derived expertise which would have taught them the different levels of confidence that are justified for different

divinities. It is not enough to recognize that gods are at work without specifying which gods. A nymph who was mortal before being raped by Jupiter and is supported in her actions by Juno has the divine power to metamorphose herself so that she appears as a Rutulian man, but she is trespassing on the territory of more powerful gods when she directs the movements of eagle and swan. In case we should forget this, the eagle is described as *Iouis ales* ("Jupiter's bird," 12.247).

One way to think about Juturna's work on Turnus' people and their allies is to return to Austin's speech acts.[11] Her omen is visually equivalent to a speech genre that in its illocutionary force blends statement, promise, threat, and command, much as we saw in chapter 4 that two very similar statements of the future could serve either as a threat spoken by Celaeno or as a promise and command spoken by Anchises.[12]

Juturna's omen may be understood on one level as an "unhappy" or "infelicitous" performative, which "misfires" for reasons similar to Austin's unhappy ship naming:

> Suppose, for example, I see a vessel on the stocks, walk up and smash the bottle hung at the stem, proclaim "I name this ship the *Mr. Stalin*" and for good measure kick away the chocks: but the trouble is, I was not the person chosen to name it (whether or not—an additional complication—*Mr. Stalin* was the destined name; perhaps in a way it is even more of a shame if it was). We can all agree
>
> (1) that the ship was not thereby named;
> (2) that it is an infernal shame.
>
> One could say that I "went through a form of" naming the vessel but that my "action" was "void" or "without effect," because I was not a proper person, had not the "capacity," to perform it.[13]

11. See chapter 6.2. Her sign steps beyond the normal bounds of Austin's discussion of speech acts, of course; Austin's exploration is concerned with the (verbal and visual) utterances of human society, not with the imagined communications of gods.

12. Austin considers nonverbal forms of communication relevant to any consideration of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, as he shows when discussing conventions, consequences, and effects in terms apposite to Juturna's story: "Acts of *both* kinds can be performed—or, more accurately, acts called by the same name (for example, acts equivalent to the illocutionary act of warning or the perlocutionary act of convincing)—can be brought off non-verbally; but even then to deserve the name of an illocutionary act, for example a warning, it must be a *conventional* non-verbal act: but perlocutionary acts are not conventional, though conventional acts may be made use of in order to bring off the perlocutionary act" (1975, 121–22). Juturna's sign is a conventional, nonverbal illocutionary act.

13. Austin 1975, 23.

The bird sign appeals to conventions that imply that its author is a god with the power to know the truth, to fulfill threats and promises, and to enforce commands.

But although we the readers know that as a performative it could be seen as "unhappy," and that in relation to its author it fully operates only as a wish, its recipients within the epic are unable to evaluate it as such. They cannot separate out the element that is recognizable as constative, that can be assessed as true or false in relation to their previous experience, from the element that brings into sight an imagined future. One of the key differences (apart from comedy value) between Juturna's omen and the *Mr. Stalin* example is uptake (i.e., the recognition by the audience or spectators of the conventions cited). Austin's ship naming fails not only because he has not been appointed to name the ship, but because the naming seems to be done in isolation. There is no context or audience to make meaningful the conventions he does successfully cite in smashing the bottle and speaking the proclamation.

The role of citation in Austin's theory, together with the complex interaction between illocutionary and perlocutionary force, gives room for maneuver. A speech act or its equivalent may be efficacious, even when by some measures it would be counted a "misfire" in that the subject performing the act and citing its conventions has not been granted the authority to do so. Butler has negotiated between Derrida's and Bourdieu's readings of Austin to make the most of a space in which citation enables change in the ways power is distributed in a society.[14] Its inherent citationality helps Butler show how the structure of the speech act allows an otherwise marginalized speaker to *claim* authority, as Juturna does, by expropriating "the dominant 'authorized' discourse."[15]

One of the important things about the illocutionary force of an utterance is that as speech alone it transforms the state of affairs in the world. Once a statement has been felicitously made, for example, something has happened: its recipients have taken an utterance as an expression of belief about some aspect of the world.[16] In making a promise, a speaker raises the expectation of further action. And the expectations which result from most forms of illocutionary act seem to invite some further response on the part

14. Derrida (1972/1977/1988, 17), Fish (1989, esp. 46–57), and Butler (1993, 226–27; 1995; 1997, chap. 4 passim) are especially emphatic about the citational aspect of speech acts, which relies on what Derrida refers to as "iterability."

15. Butler 1997, 157.

16. It is above all in the illocutionary act of stating that Austin shows the collapse of the categories of the constative and the performative (1975, 140–47).

of the recipient. This is why, although Austin lays out the notion of the perlocutionary chiefly in order to show what the illocutionary *is not,* the perlocutionary force of language is closely bound to the illocutionary.

Because the Rutulians and their allies see the omen as either a statement or a promise of divine intention, they are persuaded to obey its implicit command and act in a way that will blend still more thoroughly what is stated with what is imagined. One cannot normally be "appointed" a powerful god.[17] In this respect divine communications stand outside the social conventions that operate in Austin's framework. But a nymph can cite the conventions used by Jupiter.

The circumstances of Juturna's bird story allow for the apparent performance of the act of prophesying. In turn, because the story is *perceived* as prophetic by its spectators, the bird story brings at least some of the consequences that it predicts, and ceases to be merely an apparent prophecy or an "unhappy" performative. Juturna takes on Jupiter's authority, and although she is not "authorized" she performs her expropriation with at least partial success.

> his aliud maius Iuturna adiungit et alto
> dat signum caelo, quo non praesentius ullum
> turbauit mentes Italas monstroque fefellit.
> namque uolans rubra fuluus Iouis ales in aethra
> litoreas agitabat auis turbamque sonantem
> agminis aligeri, subito cum lapsus ad undas
> cycnum excellentem pedibus rapit improbus uncis.
> arrexere animos Itali, cunctaeque uolucres
> conuertunt clamore fugam (mirabile uisu),
> aetheraque obscurant pennis hostemque per auras
> facta nube premunt, donec ui uictus et ipso
> pondere defecit praedamque ex unguibus ales
> proiecit fluuio, penitusque in nubila fugit.
> Tum uero augurium Rutuli clamore salutant
> expediuntque manus, primusque Tolumnius augur
> 'hoc erat, hoc uotis' inquit 'quod saepe petiui.
> accipio agnoscoque deos; me, me duce ferrum
> corripite, o miseri, quos improbus aduena bello
> territat inualidas ut auis, et litora uestra

17. But both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* use epic conventions to explore the mechanisms by which Roman political systems claim some of that imagined power to "appoint" divinities.

ui populat. petet ille fugam penitusque profundo
uela dabit. uos unanimi densete cateruas
et regem uobis pugna defendite raptum.'

To this Juturna adds something else still greater, and in the high
air gives a sign than which no other more powerfully
has shaken Italian minds and deceived them with an omen.
For in fact flying into the reddening skies a tawny bird of Jupiter
was harrying the shore birds and a shrieking mass
of a feathered throng, when, suddenly dropping to the waves
he brutally snatches with his hooked feet an outstanding swan.
The Italians pricked up their spirits and all the birds
with a shrieking sound change the direction of their flight (a marvel to see),
and darken the sky with their wings and, forming a cloud,
press the enemy through the breezes, until, defeated by force and by
their very weight, the bird failed, and cast his spoil from his talons
into the river, and fled deep into the clouds.
Then indeed the Rutulians greet the omen with a shout
and ready themselves for fighting, and first of all Tolumnius, the augur:
"This was it," he says, "this was what I have often sought in my prayers.
I welcome and I recognize the gods; with me, me as leader grasp
your steel, unhappy men, whom in war the brutal foreigner
terrorizes like feeble birds, and ravages your shores
with force. He will make off in flight and set sail far off
into the deep. But you, united in spirit, cluster your thronging troops
and fight to defend the king who has been snatched from you."
(*Aen.* 12.244–65)

Juturna, then, cites the conventions of omen-generation, and in getting the spectators to *take up* her story as an omen (with the illocutionary force of statement, promise, and command) she turns it into a partly accurate statement of the future, because of the perlocutionary effects that follow this uptake. She does not have much authority in the divine hierarchy; we discover as we see her act in Book 12 that her power lies in verbal and visual communication. The reality of that power is both revealed and comes into being through the force of her communication itself. The knowledge Juturna communicates bears comparison with the fictive knowledge of epic *fama.* Considering Juturna's omen in relation to this fictive knowledge raises further questions about what is happening when Juturna's birds bring about a performative that is both infelicitous and efficacious.

Thinking about *fama* in terms of performativity, however, is a matter of noticing illocutionary acts that help create the discourse of *fama,* rather than analyzing *fama* in itself as a speech act. The versatility of *fama* makes it much more than even a many-layered and multi-faceted act of communication. The language of *fama* in the *Aeneid* does not limit itself to "talk," but stretches speech-related vocabulary (as J. L. Austin does) to include communication through writing and images. *Fama* can be reckoned as the content of a specific story or, more diffusely, a set of beliefs; and, as Hardie reminds us, at times *fama* is conceived as a narrator.[18] *Fama* may also denote the impact of a story or beliefs on the people who hold those beliefs or hear the story. So it is not just that *fama* avoids separating the creation of truths—or untruths—from reporting beliefs, truths, and lies. *Fama* also melds together particular acts of communication with the cumulative effects of many communications on a society or on an individual.

Illocutionary force emerges from a dynamic interaction between words, conventions, and nonverbal structures of power in society. This interaction itself continually alters the relationship between verbal and social forms of authority. Thinking in terms of Austinian speech acts is useful when investigating the *Aeneid*'s discourse of *fama* partly because the epic's rhetorical stance relies on neither stating nor rejecting referential truth claims.

The inclusiveness of *fama*'s discourse in this sense parallels the variety of ways fictive knowledge can be offered within one text, in different texts, and in different genres of fiction. Like Juturna as the "speaker" of an illocutionary act uttered through the visual language of a bird omen, epic establishes the force of its *fama* partly by citing conventions that it associates with divine authority. But in its versatility and diffuseness *fama* escapes beyond the reach of any analysis that would ascertain a particular source as *auctor.* So the *Aeneid* figuratively borrows the power and authority of gods for its *fama*—yet it does so partly by envisaging divine power as in turn wielded through a mixture of imagination, persuasion, and violence. This combination itself calls into question what it means to situate the basis of epic's fictive knowledge in an imagined divine realm.

The importance of authorship in Juturna's genre blurring is signaled by the word *praesens,* which is applied twice in its comparative form to Juturna's omen. When Juno instigates Juturna's intervention in the truce, she tells her: *tu pro germano si quid praesentius audes, / perge; decet. forsan miseros meliora sequentur* ("As for you, if you dare anything more immediate

18. Hardie 2009a, 555–56. As Hardie points out, *fama* can serve as an intradiegetic narrator, a character (of sorts) within the text, as well as an extradiegetic one.

on your brother's behalf, go ahead. Perhaps for those who are unhappy a better future will follow," 12.152–53). Soon afterwards the narrator introduces Juturna's omen: *his aliud maius Iuturna adiungit et alto / dat signum caelo, quo non praesentius ullum turbauit / mentes Italas monstroque fefellit* ("Juturna gave a sign than which no other more powerfully shook Italian minds and deceived them with an omen," 12.244–46). *Praesens* is a strange adjective to join with the verb *fallo* ("deceive"). Commentators on the poem suggest that *praesentius* should be taken as "more powerful" at 12.245, and at 12.152 as "more effective."[19] If we bear in mind the sense of "bodily present" in the way that *praesens* is often applied to divinities, however, the term *praesentius* begins to combine the senses of "effective" with "divinely powerful" because of the direct involvement of the goddess.[20] Juno suggests that Juturna's divine presence in the midst of the battle may help her brother; perhaps she will be able to reshape the future using even her limited divine strength (12.153). In 12.245 the *signum* is both deceptive and loaded with divine authority. Juturna's divine strength, in fact, lies in her ability to disturb Italian perceptions (*mentes Italas,* 12.246) through her sign.

Although this sign tricks the Italians with what it shows (as a *monstrum*), it does so with Juturna's full commitment. She hopes (backed by Juno's encouragement) that changing men's minds will change their actions, and that changing their actions will provide a new plot. Her story can reasonably be regarded as depicting Juturna's honest opinion about what will follow if the truce is broken.

But there is a hitch. Juturna's audience does not regard her omen as truth telling in the ordinary mortal sense. A sign from the gods is not supposed to convey an honest but possibly misguided opinion—that is not what divine intimations are all about, and that is not what the adjective *praesens* would normally suggest. "I accept and recognize the gods," says the augur Tolumnius (*accipio agnoscoque deos, Aen.* 12.260), apparently unaware not only that gods sometimes intend deceit, but also that the lower reaches of the divine hierarchy may not have much authority to predict the future.

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19. Williams 1973 *ad loc.*; Thilo-Hagen 1986; Conington and Nettleship 1963.

20. See especially Hardie 2002b, 4–5 and passim. *Praesentes diui* are, as Hardie puts it, "gods who vouchsafe their presence to help mankind." The term reflects, on the one hand, the power and willingness of a god to benefit mortals, and on the other, the success of the poet in realizing divine presence, of putting divinities before the eyes of readers through *enargeia.* The speaker of the *Georgics* invokes *agrestum praesentia numina* (1.10) among the list of deities who are to bolster his didactic authority: the implication is that the Fauni he calls on will not only help the didactic poet with his verses, but will also make his teachings effective by favoring the actual rural activities presented in the poem.

8.3 Juturna's fictional truth

Michael Riffaterre, introducing a theory of "fictional truth" centered on the nineteenth-century novel, has declared apothegmatically that "fiction is a genre whereas lies are not."[21] Riffaterre's whole investigation has as its premise the idea that there is a certain paradox in the way that readers expect fictions on some level to be true. His elegantly decisive separation of lies from fiction relies nevertheless on limiting the force of this contradiction, equating "truth" with verisimilitude, and distinguishing "fiction" sharply from other forms of persuasive discourse. But the distinction between lies and fiction (like many distinctions between genres) is less clearly marked than this.

Riffaterre sets out to *solve* the paradox of "fictional truth," while I am interested in understanding whether the paradox may maintain its full power to express the way that fictions not only tell truths, but in some sense bring them into being. Riffaterre argues that fiction "must somehow be true to hold the interest of its readers, to tell them about experiences at once imaginary and relevant to their own lives."[22] His focus on what is recognizable in fiction pinpoints some of the reasons why readers have hailed certain kinds of fiction as "truthful." Like Barthes in *S/Z,* he locates this persuasive efficacy in the way that a reader matches up the contents of a specific fiction with the language-based codes that have been generated and reinforced by a whole range of cultural artifacts.

But if "truth-in-fiction" is a paradox, as Riffaterre (convincingly) says it is, "truth" must go beyond this kind of relevance-based and self-contained discursive persuasiveness.[23] He expands on his demarcation between fiction and lies: "Being a genre, [fiction] rests on conventions, of which the first and perhaps only one is that fiction specifically, but not always explicitly, excludes the intention to deceive. A novel always contains signs whose function is to remind readers that the tale they are being told is imaginary."[24] Riffaterre in *Fictional Truth* shows how strategies for achieving persuasive verisimilitude in many nineteenth-century novels are among the very same means by which the artifice involved in narrative fiction is put on display.

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21. Riffaterre 1990, 1.

22. Ibid., xii.

23. Ibid., xiii.

24. Ibid., 1. His observation hovers between a descriptive statement (many or perhaps most novels do contain such signs) and a legislative assertion (if a text does not contain such signs, we should not treat it as fiction). But diagnosing a need to legislate on what counts as a "novel" or "fiction" is precisely what undermines the attempt to do so. See also Cohn 1999, 3.

I cheerfully follow Riffaterre (and, for example, Barthes in *S/Z*) along one line of thought in this kind of inquiry: references to a "given" that is external to a specific text are verifiable according to an "accepted idea of reality."[25] This would apply to the referentiality we find both in overtly fictional genres and in genres, such as historiography, which aim for a more pervasive kind of reference to a world outside the text. We perceive what we treat as reality through our senses, but these perceptions are mediated by the interpretive framework provided by our cultural experience, which of course includes fictions. However, I am far more interested than Riffaterre in the way that each individual reader has her own specific "accepted idea of reality"—one that is not wholly "grammatical," that does not fully conform to a "consensus about reality, a consensus already encoded in language."[26]

In the famous generalizing simile from *Middlemarch* that I quoted in chapter 1.1, the appearance of concentric circles around a lighted candle's reflection is likened to a character's view of her position in the world:

> An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. [. . .] These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent—of Miss Vincy, for example.[27]

Is this truth "fictional," and if so, in what sense? Where does the imagined world in which we met Miss Vincy leave off? Where does a reader's perception of actuality begin? When it claims control over the ways that you perceive "your ugly furniture," the *Middlemarch* "parable" does something very like Juturna's omen. From now on, we are at liberty not only to notice how light gives the illusion that random scratches on polished steel form circles; we are free not only to compare that illusion with the "egoism of any person now absent"—we are also invited to perceive both polished steel and egoism in terms of the particular imagined character who is being discussed here, that is, Rosamund Vincy. So once we have read the novel, our familiarity with the imagined Rosamund will inform both the way we look

25. Riffaterre 1990, xiv.
26. Ibid.
27. Eliot 1994, 264.

at scratches in reflective surfaces and the way we understand egoism. Different individual responses to the novel, of course, will determine how—and whether—these effects occur.

Our encounter with this parable may reshape our perceptions, so that we no longer know for sure how different layers of cognition interact. Are we matching up experience that has been imagined within the novel to our own, clearly distinct, prior experience? Have we been taught something altogether new? Or have we been persuaded to perceive both polished steel and egoism in a particular way, blending new imaginings into our experience, just as Juturna does in manipulating the Italians? We do not need to believe that Rosamund Vincy ever existed as a flesh-and-blood human being outside the world of *Middlemarch* for her story to become integral to our perceptions of what we consider reality.[28]

Eliot's "serene light of science" is the quintessentially secular and impersonal force of authority that she establishes for her anti-epic/epic novel. In that sense being asked by Eliot's narrator to "look!" may seem quite distinct from receiving the imperative of an epic, which uses its discourse of *fama* to blend poetic creation with the works of imagination and revelation performed by Venus, Allecto, Jupiter, and other divinities within its story world.

Juturna's bird story, instead of offering any "signs whose function is to remind readers that the tale they are being told is imaginary," exploits reading conventions that serve the opposite purpose. Juturna makes sure that the birds' exploits appear unmistakably omen-like in the story they tell for her, with its self-evident likeness to the Italians' present situation. As we have seen, Juturna's omen takes the form of a visual simile. This inverts a narrative simile earlier in the poem, in which readers of the *Aeneid* saw Turnus himself figured as an eagle (*Iouis armiger,* 9.564) attacking a swan during the fighting in Book 9.[29] The conviction that they are learning something new from the bird fight depends on the ability of the Rutulians and their

28. Feeney 1993, 230–31 raises questions very similar to those I address here in his epilogue to Gill and Wiseman, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World:* "What do we mean when we say 'Evander, or Chloe, or Little Dorrit, did this or that' [. . .]? What are we doing when we even act upon these beliefs, visiting, for example, the Palatine Hill, or the Cobb at Lyme Regis, or the sights of London or Bath, imagining in all these places the scenes taking place which we first imagined when we read Dickens, Jane Austen, or Vergil? The very existence of a *Blue Guide to Literary Britain and Ireland* is a thought provoking phenomenon."

29. This analogy for Turnus (in isolation, in the midst of his *aristeia*) is one of those protean comparisons that incorporates the shifting perceptions of battle into the narrative; we see his prey first as a hare, then a swan; next the prey turns into a lamb, and Turnus shifts from a Jovian eagle to a wolf of Mars (9.561–66).

allies to match up the sky-borne activity with what they already know about Turnus' situation. At the same time, the kinds of cultural and aesthetic perceptions of swans invoked by the *Aeneid*'s earlier simile are entwined with his followers' emotional reaction to Turnus' beauty, vulnerability and potential fame.

The story Juturna tells is deceptive only in as much as it is "generically" (to use Riffaterre's term) blurred. This blurring arises from the nymph's citing conventions that grant her visual language a form of authority apparently sustained by the sheer power of the "speaker." Although the story of the *Aeneid* itself ends with Turnus as a dying swan (so to speak), the story laid out in Juturna's omen does come true if we follow its parallel only up to the point when Aeneas is driven from the battlefield with a wound (12.311–27). Juturna's tale is incomplete, not wholly false. Tolumnius' interpretation makes the end of the bird story more final than is warranted, as he assumes that the eagle's departure into the clouds is equivalent to a departure from Italy, not from the battlefield. The *Aeneid*'s narrator, it is true, does not (like Tolumnius) depict Aeneas as running away from the field of battle when his wound incapacitates him, but this is a question of viewpoint. Hardie assumes that Tolumnius misreads the omen, but O'Hara is equally sure that he gets it right and that it is only the omen itself that is misleading.[30] Such a sharp difference of opinion nicely illustrates the difficulty of interpretation for readers of the epic as well as in the epic's story world. The nymph makes sure it is transparently omen-like, but as with poetic similes the possible parallels are manifold and therefore ambiguous.

Kendall Walton, who is concerned with what it *means* for something to be fictional, argues that "fictionality has nothing essentially to do with what is or is not real or true or factual; [. . .] it is perfectly compatible with assertion and communication [. . .], yet entirely independent of them."[31] Coming from a different perspective, to test suppositions that speech-act theory might distinguish fiction from other kinds of discourse, Stanley Fish has argued that "[r]ather than occupying a position of centrality in relation to

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30. See Hardie 1987a and O'Hara 1990, 86. Both read the omen in close conjunction with Venus' swan-omen in Book 1.

31. Walton 1990, 102. This conviction that fiction is not to be defined in terms of assertion or the lack of assertion leads him (as well as Fish 1980) to reject the aid of speech-act theories (at least as employed by Searle and others) in addressing "the basic question of what fiction is, how works of fiction are to be differentiated from other things" (Walton, 76). I agree with this verdict; it has helped me see clearly that my own interest is not in ascertaining this "basic question of what fiction is," but rather in exploring how common perceptions about categories such as assertion, truth, and falsehood play a part in allowing fictive knowledge to take a wide variety of forms and wield many different effects on readers.

which other uses of language are derivative and parasitic, constative speech acts are like all others in that the condition of their possibility (the condition of always operating within a dimension of assessment or interpretive community) forever removes them from any contact with an unmediated presence. By Austin's own argument, then," Fish continues, "the exclusion of stage and other etiolated utterances as deviations from ordinary circumstances loses its warrant."[32]

Both these assessments are convincing, but (reasonably enough, since they are concerned with different questions) do not address the problem that as readers we often *behave* as if the status of fictions—or the status of particular utterances within a work of fiction—has a great deal to do with what is or is not real or true or factual. Conventional distinctions between the real and the imagined, knowledge and belief, truth and falsehood, the constative and the performative, and the authorized and unauthorized regularly break down under scrutiny. But the ways we view such distinctions as operative in any given utterance may play a crucial role in the perlocutionary force of fictions, as they do in any other kind of discourse. This is why Riffaterre's pithy "Fiction is a genre, lies are not" expresses a familiar strategy. As "readers" (broadly defined, since fictions come in many media) many of us set boundaries around "fiction" and try to keep it epistemologically and ontologically self-contained. But these very attempts at containment may play a vital role in eroding those boundaries.

There is, of course, a long history of fear that fiction, like other forms of persuasion, may deceive its recipients. This is not necessarily a fear that engrossing narratives actually confuse us by making us think that people or events are real when they are not (though in some contexts this fear may itself become quite potent, even without the involvement of a reader who is unusually naive, or who steps so far out of conventional systems of perception as to be categorized "insane"). Although *being* fictional is independent of what is or is not real or true or factual, the *force* of fiction (its ability to reshape experience and give rise to new sequences of events) may depend on how readers decide what we may assess as true or false, real or unreal.[33]

Reading fiction allows us to acquire new knowledge and new memories, which are sometimes partly or wholly imaginative creations. We enter into a dynamic interaction with a text: new fictive knowledge is filtered through

32. Fish 1989, 61.

33. I follow Austin in adopting the term "force": the slipperiness of the word builds a bridge between power enacted through violence and a more mysterious power, akin to narrative's ability to fascinate reader and listeners, but also embodied in the world of the *Aeneid* by the power of the gods over mortals.

previous perceptions, but our views of reality are in turn constantly reshaped by this fictive knowledge. Ideologically, the effects of this dynamism are indeterminate. Beliefs may be either reinforced or challenged by encounters with fiction.[34] The traditional English novel is sometimes regarded as both distinctive and exemplary in the ways its genre establishes fictionality. But in their abilities to conjure specific new memories that confuse the boundaries between a world regarded as "real" and a variety of story worlds, both epic and novel in different ways may serve as mythmakers.

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34. Ricoeur 1984, 79–80 addresses this ideological indeterminacy, arguing that "[. . .] reading poses anew the problem of the fusion of two horizons, that of the text and that of the reader, and hence the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader." Ricoeur continues: "We might try to deny the problem, and take the question of the impact of literature on everyday experience as not relevant. But then we paradoxically ratify the positivism we generally fight against [. . .]. We also enclose literature within a world of its own and break off the subversive point it turns against the moral and social orders. [. . .] A whole range of cases is opened by this phenomenon of interaction: from ideological confirmation of the established order [. . .] to social criticism [. . .]."