Vergil's Achaemenides and the Odyssean World of Republican Latin Epic

This paper offers new perspectives on the Achaemenides episode in *Aeneid* 3 by focusing on (1) Vergil's engagement with his Republican epic predecessors and (2) his depiction of Achaemenides as a metapoetic figure. Achaemenides has long puzzled scholars; he is, after all, a fully Vergilian invention (e.g. McKay 1966; Römisch 1976; Ramminger 1991). Nonetheless, many key aspects of his appearance and of his own narrative of Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus remain unexplored. First, this study shows the intertextual resonance of earlier depictions of Polyphemus found in the fragmentary epics of Livius Androniucs and Quintus Ennius. Vergil's Latin predecessors are strikingly present at the precise point in the epic where Aeneas and Odysseus (and therefore Homeric epic) nearly come into physical contact. By so closely connecting each hero's voyage on Sicily, the *Aeneid* explicitly displays the literary processes at work deep within its narrative structure: the palimpsestic geography of the island and its polyvalent historical symbolism form an appropriate setting for the introduction of a character who embodies various layers of the epic past. Papanghelis (1990: 281) has argued that "Achaemenides look[s] like the relic of an archaic past," but what past this is and how the *Aeneid* gets us there require further analysis. While Achaemenides is certainly the bridge between the worlds of Aeneas and Odysseus, I contend that his literary pedigree is not to be found primarily within Homeric epic, but in the *Odusia* and *Annales* of Andronicus and Ennius.

After pointing out the specific allusions that fill the episode, the second part of this paper highlights the way Vergil employs various metapoetic buzzwords and tropes to cast Achaemenides as a 'shaggy' figure emerging from the archaic forests of Vergil's predecessors. The Trojans of Aeneas' tale and even Achaemenides himself are depicted as the subjects of verbs with clear metapoetic meanings: *respicimus* at 3.593 of the Trojans' first perception of

Achaemenides; *relegens* at 3.690 of Achaemenides' (re)reading of his story and explication of the Odyssean landscape the Trojans have entered (on *relegens* see Papanghelis 1990: 284; Nelis 2010: 13-14). Beyond specific verbs, Achaemenides' own body and appearance make up the most developed metapoetic image in the episode. This aspect can be seen in his first appearance at 3.590-95: he emerges *e siluis* and is viewed as *ignoti noua forma uiri*; he is depicted as *miserandaque cultu* and *immissaque barba*; even his clothing speaks of the rustic, archaic past – *consertum tegimen spinis*. Each aspect of his appearance evokes distinct aspects of the Latin epic tradition as well as the more general vocabulary of Roman literary criticism: from the *siluae* of the epic past (see Hinds 1998: 10-14; 111-15) to Ennius' *recusatio* of Naevian poetics as the stuff of *uates* and *fauni* at Skutsch *Ann*. 206-210 (figures Achaemenides is made to resemble). We also encounter the Augustan view of Ennius as the shaggiest of them all in Achaemenides' *horrid* appearance and unkempt beard (cf. Ovid *Trist*. 2.1.259: *nihil est hirsutius*). At 3.594 Vergil's Aeneas tellingly refers to Achaemenides as *at cetera Graius*; while he may be Greek, it is the aspects of his characterization beyond the *cetera* that launch us on a journey into Latin literary history.

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