



VARIVM ET MVTABILE SEMPER FEMINA: DIVINE WARNINGS AND HASTY DEPARTURES IN ODYSSEY 15 AND AENEID 4*

ABSTRACT

In his second appearance to Aeneas in Aeneid 4 Mercury drives the hero to flee Carthage with a false allegation that Dido is planning an attack, capping his warning with an infamous sententia about the mutability of female emotion. Building on a previous suggestion that Mercury's first speech to Aeneas is modelled on Athena's admonishment of Telemachus at the opening of Odyssey 15, this article proposes that Mercury's second speech as well is modelled on Athena's warning, in which the goddess uses misdirection about Penelope's intentions and a misogynistic gnōmē about the changeability of women's affections to spur Telemachus' departure from Sparta. After setting out how Virgil divides his imitation of Athena's speech verbally and thematically between Mercury's two speeches, the discussion turns to why both Athena and Mercury adopt these deceptive tactics. The speeches are shown to be culminations of the poets' similar approaches to creating doubt and foreboding around the queens' famed capacities for using δόλος. Common features in the ensuing hasty departures of Telemachus and Aeneas further confirm Virgil's use of Odyssey 15 in devising Aeneas' escape from Carthage.

Keywords: Dido; Penelope; Telemachus; Athena; Mercury; misogyny; *fama*; *dolus*

In *Aeneid* 4 the god Mercury twice appears to Aeneas to urge him to leave Carthage. At their first encounter Mercury finds the hero supervising the construction of Dido's new city. Manifesting undisguised, the god conveys Jupiter's decree that Aeneas must resume his journey to Italy. Stunned by the scolding epiphany, Aeneas prepares to depart (4.219–95). After Dido's confrontation of Aeneas and after her subsequent entreaties fail to shake the Trojan's resolve (4.416–49), the despairing queen prepares for suicide (4.450–552). The poet turns to Aeneas sleeping on his ship. Mercury appears again, this time as a dream (4.560–70):

'nate dea, potes hoc sub casu ducere somnos,
nec quae te circum stent deinde pericula cernis,
demens, nec Zephyros audis spirare secundos?
illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore uersat
certa mori, uariosque irarum concitat aestus.
non fugis hinc praeceps, dum praecipitare potestas?
iam mare turbari trabibus saeuasque uidebis
conlucere faces, iam feruere litora flammis,
si te his attigerit terris Aurora morantem.
heia age, rumpe moras. uarium et mutabile semper
femina.'

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Critics have long regarded these lines as cruel and unjust to Dido. Henry in his *Aeneidea* is indignant: 'Dido in particular was unchangeably and devotedly attached to Aeneas, whom, if she did not pursue with fire and sword, it was not that his inconstancy did not so deserve, but that her magnanimity disdained, and her still-subsisting passion forbade.'¹ Austin agrees: 'But Mercury is lying ... and Virgil makes it clear that his Dido was the sport of the gods. In spite of her wild moods she had no plots against him to do him personal injury.'² Why does Mercury lie about Dido's intentions, bolstering his claims with an infamous concluding line of misogyny?

Perhaps we can find a clue in Homer. Harrison points out that Mercury's second appearance to Aeneas recalls Hermes' second appearance to Priam in *Iliad* 24 (677–92), where the god warns Priam not to wait by Achilles' hut until morning, lest Agamemnon and the other Greeks take him for ransom.³ But Mercury's misogynistic *sententia* is not paralleled in Hermes' speech to Priam. It is characteristic of Virgil, however, to draw simultaneously upon multiple Homeric models in composing his scenes.⁴ I propose that Mercury's misleading and misogynistic warning about Dido is modelled on Athena's address to Telemachus at the opening of *Odyssey* 15, a similar pre-dawn admonishing of a hero that likewise employs falsehood and misogyny to spur a hasty departure. I have argued previously that Mercury's first appearance to Aeneas draws upon this same speech of Athena.⁵ Building upon this suggestion, I will show how Virgil has verbally and thematically split Athena's warning between Mercury's two speeches. The discussion will then turn to why Athena and Mercury adopt these tactics. We will see that both speeches are culminations of the poets' similar approaches to creating doubt and foreboding around the queens' famed capacities for using δόλος. Finally, comparison of the subsequent hasty departures of Telemachus and Aeneas will confirm Virgil's use of *Odyssey* 15 in devising Aeneas' escape from Carthage.

1. ATHENA'S SPEECH TO TELEMACHUS AND MERCURY'S FIRST WARNING TO AENEAS

Virgil models Mercury's journey to Carthage upon Hermes' mission to Ogygia in *Odyssey* 5 to secure Odysseus' release from Calypso.⁶ But Hermes delivers Zeus's command to Calypso, not to the homesick Odysseus sitting on the shore (*Od.* 5.13–15,

¹ J. Henry, *Aeneidea* (Dublin, 1873–1892), 2.803. The text of the *Aeneid* is from R.A.B. Mynors's Oxford edition (1969); the text of the *Odyssey* is from the Oxford edition of T.W. Allen (1917–1919²). Unattributed translations are my own.

² R.G. Austin, *Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Oxford, 1955), 168; see also A.S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* (Cambridge, MA, 1935), 460–1; J.J. O'Hara, *Vergil Aeneid 4* (Newburyport, MA, 2011), 81; D. Feeney, 'Leaving Dido', in M. Burden (ed.), *A Woman Scorn'd: Responses to the Dido Myth* (London, 1998), 105–27, at 121–2; J.H. Starks, 'Fides Aeneia: the transference of Punic stereotypes in the *Aeneid*', *CJ* 94 (1999), 255–83, at 275 n. 48.

³ E.L. Harrison, 'Virgil's Mercury', in A.G. McKay (ed.), *Vergilian Bimillenary Lectures 1982* (Vancouver, 1985), 1–47, at 15, 31–4; A. Schiesaro, 'Furthest voices in Virgil's Dido', *SIFC* 6 (2008), 60–109, 94–245, at 83; S. Casali, 'Crossing the borders: Vergil's intertextual Mercury', in J.F. Miller and J.S. Clay (edd.), *Tracking Hermes, Pursuing Mercury* (Oxford, 2019), 173–90, at 187.

⁴ G. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1979), 58 n. 2. In this, Virgil seems to imitate Apollonius of Rhodes: D. Nelis, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Leeds, 2001), 8–21.

⁵ K. Muse, 'Don't dally in this valley: wordplay in *Odyssey* 15.10 and *Aeneid* 4.271', *CQ* 55 (2005), 646–9.

⁶ Knauer (n. 4), 209–14; Harrison (n. 3), 16, 178–86.

81–4, 151–9). Mercury, on the other hand, addresses Aeneas, not Dido, finding the Trojan in fancy dress and constructing the queen’s city (4.259–65). He immediately lays into the hero (4.265–77):

‘tu nunc Karthaginis altae
 fundamenta locas pulchramque uxorius urbem
 extruis? heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!
 ipse deum tibi me claro demittit Olympo
 regnator, caelum et terras qui numine torquet,
 ipse haec ferre iubet celeris mandata per auras:
 quid struis? aut qua spe Libycis teris otia terris?
 si te nulla mouet tantarum gloria rerum
 [nec super ipse tua moliris laude laborem,]
 respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus
 debetur.’ tali Cyllenius ore locutus
 mortalis uisus medio sermone reliquit
 et procul in tenuem ex oculis euanuit auram.

Mercury’s wordplay in *aut qua spe Libycis teris otia terris* (4.271) resembles a similar pun from Athena at the opening of *Odyssey* 15, where the goddess appears to Telemachus as he lies awake in the *prodomos* of Menelaus’ palace at Sparta (15.10–13):

“Τηλέμαχ’, οὐκέτι καλὰ δόμων ἄπο τῆλ’ ἀλάλησαι,
 κτήματά τε προλιπὼν ἄνδρας τ’ ἐν σοῖσι δόμοισιν
 οὕτω ὑπερφιάλους· μὴ τοι κατὰ πάντα φάγωσι
 κτήματα δασσάμενοι, σὺ δὲ τῆϋσιν ὁδὸν ἔλθης.

Echoing Telemachus’ name, Athena repeats the syllable *τηλ* in her first line, *Τηλέμαχ’, οὐκέτι καλὰ δόμων ἄπο τῆλ’ ἀλάλησαι*, indicating that the ‘far-fighting’ Telemachus is ‘far’ from where he needs to be, a wordplay charmingly rendered by W.H.D. Rouse as ‘Don’t dally in this valley, Telemachus I tell ‘ee’.⁷ Drawing upon an etymology of *terra* current in Virgil’s day (Varro, *Ling.* 5.22), Mercury repeats the syllable *ter*, likewise spelling out the dislocation of Aeneas, who tarries on land when he should be on his way to Italy. Noting the phonetic resemblance between *τηλ* and *ter* and the similar construction and motives of the wordplays, I proposed that Mercury’s jingle imitates Athena’s.⁸ I add here that the puns of both deities involve editorial substitution. Athena’s opening four lines repeat what Nestor says to Telemachus at 3.313–16, but Nestor’s *καὶ σὺ, φίλος, μὴ δηθά* in the first half of line 313 becomes *Τηλέμαχ’ οὐκέτι κάλα*, insuring the jingle with *τῆλ’*. Mercury substitutes *Libycis teris otia terris* for Jupiter’s *inimica in gente moratur* (4.235) in the second half of the first line he renders from Jupiter’s message.⁹

⁷ Muse (n. 5), 647. See W.H.D. Rouse, *The Odyssey: The Story of Odysseus* (Edinburgh, 1937), 169. On Homer’s wordplay, see L.P. Rank, *Etymologiseering en Verwante Verschijnselen bij Homerus* (Assen, 1951), 71 n. 146; J.J. O’Hara, *True Names: Vergil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 2017²), 9 with n. 19; E. Dekel, *Virgil’s Homeric Lens* (New York, 2012), 37–9.

⁸ Muse (n. 5), 648; cited since by S. Casali, ‘Agudezas virgiliae nel commento di La Cerda’, in C. Santini and F. Stok (edd.), *Esegesi dimenticate di autori classici* (Pisa, 2008), 233–61, at 240–1; J.T. Katz, ‘Vergil translates Aratus: *Phaenomena* 1–2 and *Georgics* 1.1–2’, *MD* 60 (2008), 105–23, at 114 n. 3; J.J. O’Hara, *Vergil: Aeneid 4* (Newburyport, MA, 2011), 50; O’Hara (n. 7), xxvii.

⁹ In his treatise *De laboribus Herculis*, unfinished when he died in 1406, Coluccio Salutati attributed Mercury’s alteration of this line to Virgil’s preference for artistic variation in lieu of the verbatim repetition in Homer’s messenger speeches (1.2.7). On Jupiter’s charge to Mercury and the

Both Athena and Mercury warn against the loss of patrimony if the heroes do not depart. Telemachus is neglecting his κτήματα, a word Athena uses twice (15.11, 15.13). Mercury likewise reproaches Aeneas for forgetting his kingdom and his fortunes (4.267 *regni rerumque oblite tuarum*), reminding him that *regnum Italiae Romanae tellus* (4.275) are owed to Ascanius.¹⁰ Like Telemachus, Aeneas lacks his father's guidance. I compared the situation at the opening of Terence's *Andria*, where Simo reports to his freedman Sosia that he has been scrutinizing the behaviour of his son Pamphilus now that he is grown and no longer supervised.¹¹ Despite initial signs of moderation (Ter. *An.* 51–4, 88–102), Pamphilus starts a love affair that threatens Simo's plans for him to marry (119–36, 144–9). I was unaware that A.-M. Guillemin had anticipated my suggestion, observing that, when Anchises and Aeneas are reunited in *Aeneid* 6, Anchises' allusion to Aeneas' affair with Dido, *quam metui ne quid Libyae tibi regna nocerent!* (6.694), echoes Sosia's relief that Pamphilus is in no danger from the recently deceased courtesan Chrysis (Ter. *An.* 106): *ei metui a Chryside*.¹² As Saylor argues, moreover, Fama's charge that Aeneas and Dido are indulging in *luxus* while neglecting their kingdoms (4.193–4; see also 4.221) mirrors the dual harm the prodigal *amator* does to his *fama* and *res* in comedy and satire, a topos Lucretius uses in a passage on the dangers of love affairs that Virgil likely has in mind in his depiction of Aeneas and Dido (Lucr. 4.1123–4): *labitur interea res et Babylonica fiunt, | languent officia atque aegrotat fama uacillans*.¹³ Thus Mercury in effect has come to scold Aeneas for squandering his patrimony—the future of his people—on a mistress.¹⁴

Whereas Penelope's suitors plunder the absent Telemachus' inheritance, Aeneas, the ambiguous quasi-suitor and quasi-husband to Dido, is himself squandering his own fortunes by tarrying with the queen. The alleged *luxus* of Dido and Aeneas points to another likely attraction for Virgil of the spendthrift-son motif, recalling Octavian's propaganda war against Antony's liaison with Cleopatra, a probable reminiscence of which can be found in Propertius' portrayal of Cleopatra as a grasping *meretrix regina* (3.11.39) who demanded from Antony the Roman empire as the price of an illegitimate marriage (3.11.29–32).¹⁵ To extricate his hero from this Antonian fate, Virgil evokes the

latter's interventions, see A. Laird, *Powers of Expression, Expressions of Power* (Oxford, 1999), 264–71 (quoting Salutati [this note], 271) and P. Hardie, *Rumour and Renown. Representations of Fama in Western Literature* (Cambridge, 2012), 92–4.

¹⁰ Muse (n. 5), 648.

¹¹ Muse (n. 5), 649 n. 18.

¹² A.-M. Guillemin, *L'originalité de Virgile: étude sur la méthode littéraire antique* (Paris, 1931), 95. N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 6: A Commentary* (Leiden, 2013), 2.471 notes Guillemin's acumen here.

¹³ C. Saylor, 'The Roman lover in *Aeneid* IV', *Vergilius* 32 (1986), 73–7, at 76. On the conjoined themes of *res* and *fama* in Roman comedy and satire, see also R.D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (Leiden, 1987), 254–5 on Lucr. 4.1123–4. On comic potential in encounters between humans and gods elsewhere in the *Aeneid*, see T. Fuhrer, 'Wenn Götter und Menschen sich begegnen: Komische Szenen in Vergils *Aeneis*?', in S. Freund and M. Vielberg (edd.), *Vergil und das antike Epos: Festschrift Hans Jürgen Tschiedel* (Stuttgart, 2008), 221–36. Virgil's ancient commentators did not hesitate to cite parallels from comedies: see R.B. Lloyd, 'Plautus and Terence in Virgil: a Servian perspective', in R.M. Wilhelm and H. Jones (edd.), *The Two Worlds of the Poet: New Perspectives on Vergil* (Detroit, 1992), 244–53 (at 250 praising Saylor's findings).

¹⁴ Saylor (n. 13), 76–7.

¹⁵ Pliny the Elder (*HN* 9.119) also calls Cleopatra a *regina meretrix* in an excursus on her luxury with Antony. See also J. Linderski, 'Fatalis: a missing *meretrix*', *RhM* 140 (1997), 162–7. Compare Plut. *Ant.* 28.1. On Octavian's propaganda, see R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 270–300 and L. Borgies, *Le conflit propagandiste entre Octavien et Marc Antoine. De l'usage politique de*

comedy of the spendthrift son. Mercury's intervention as *obiurgator* is humorous but not funny. Dissonance blares as a divine comedy envelops Aeneas to shield him from what he has done. Dido will be abandoned to tragedy.

2. ATHENA'S APPEARANCE TO TELEMACHUS AND MERCURY'S SECOND SPEECH TO AENEAS

Athena's next lines to Telemachus provide the model for Mercury's misogynistic warning in his second appearance to Aeneas. Having reminded Telemachus that the suitors are squandering his patrimony, Athena raises the spectre that Penelope herself could precipitate disaster by remarriage and taking some of his property (*Od.* 15.14–23):

ἀλλ' ὄτρυνε τάχιστα βοῆν ἀγαθὸν Μενέλαον
 πεμπέμεν, ὄφρ' ἔτι οἴκοι ἀμύμονα μητέρα τέτμης.
 ἤδη γάρ ῥα πατήρ τε κασίγνητοί τε κέλονται
 Εὐρυμάχῳ γήμασθαι· ὁ γάρ περιβάλλει ἅπαντας
 μνηστήρας δῶροισι καὶ ἐξώφελλεν ἔεδνα·
 μή νύ τι σεῦ ἀέκητι δόμων ἐκ κτήμα φέρηται.
οἴσθα γὰρ οἴος θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι γυναικός·
 κείνου βούλεται οἶκον ὀφέλλειν ὅς κεν ὀπύη,
 παίδων δὲ προτέρων καὶ κουριδίῳ φίλοιῳ
 οὐκέτι μένηται τεθνηκότος οὐδὲ μεταλλῶ.

When we juxtapose this passage with Mercury's second speech to Aeneas, most striking is how both deities picture disasters caused by the queen's change of heart, which they underline with *gnōmai* about the fickleness of woman's nature. Athena's *gnōmē* about the changeableness of a woman's affections begins with οἴσθα γὰρ οἴος θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι γυναικός, corresponding to Mercury's dictum *uarium et mutabile semper | femina*, both sentences ending emphatically with 'woman'. The change in each case, furthermore, is concealed within the woman's breast. Thus Mercury's *illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore uersat* (4.557) a few lines before his infamous concluding *sententia* corresponds to Athena's οἴος θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι γυναικός. Like Mercury, Athena also warns of an ambush (15.27–30). But she assures Telemachus that the suitors will fail (15.31–42). It is her first warning, namely that Penelope could take property and forget him, that truly alarms him. When Telemachus asks Menelaus for permission to leave, he pleads the vulnerability of his possessions, omitting the suitors' plot (*Od.* 15.86–91).

Virgil has thus divided Athena's warning into two. Athena sounds the alarm that Telemachus is out of place and warns him of the danger to his patrimony. Mercury in his first speech does the same, scolding Aeneas for neglecting his *regnum* and *res* and condemning his inaction as he wastes time on land when he should be at sea. Athena then warns Telemachus of the threat to his patrimony posed by Penelope owing to the changeable nature of a woman's heart and of the suitors' plot to ambush him. Mercury's second speech likewise warns of a surprise attack and the fickleness of

la vituperatio entre 44 et 30 a. C. n. (Brussels, 2016), 273–80. See also Pease (n. 2), 23–8; W. Suerbaum, *Vergils Aeneis: Epos zwischen Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1999), 233–6; S. Bertman, 'Cleopatra and Antony as models for Dido and Aeneas', *EMC* 44 n.s. 19 (2000), 395–8; L. Weeda, *Vergil's Political Commentary in the Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid* (Berlin, 2015), 115–19.

women. Such use of a single Homeric model for more than one scene has several parallels in the *Aeneid*.¹⁶ In each of Mercury's warnings, moreover, Virgil has imitated one of Athena's memorable rhetorical devices. The first speech features the paronomasia *teris otia terris* warning of dislocation. The second contains the misogynistic *sententia* instilling doubt and panic, preceded in the line before by an echo of the wordplay from the first speech (4.568 *si te his attigerit terris Aurora morantem*). With these effects Mercury's warnings escalate. His first speech rings with the moral danger to Aeneas, the second with the mortal one.

How Athena and Mercury manifest and how they depart from the heroes' vision enhance the startling effect in both cases. It is unusual that Athena appears undisguised to Telemachus.¹⁷ Kirchhof and Wilamowitz attributed this oddity to an inferior *Bearbeiter*.¹⁸ In a similar scene in *Odyssey* 20, by contrast, Athena appears to the sleepless Odysseus in the guise of a woman (20.31): δέμας δ' ἤϊκτο γυναικί.¹⁹ Whatever the reason why the poet omits to disguise Athena at the opening of *Odyssey* 15, Virgil seems to have found the lack of disguise appropriate for the crisis of *Aeneid* 4, putting Mercury before Aeneas the first time undisguised and in daylight. When Aeneas reports this vision to Dido (4.356–9), she responds with scornful disbelief (4.376–80). Mercury is undisguised in the dream-epiphany as well (4.558 *omnia Mercurio similis*), though Aeneas disclaims certainty about the god's identity in his exhortation to his crew (4.574–9).²⁰ Underscoring the urgency, both Mercury and Athena depart abruptly within a single line (*Aen.* 4.570 *sic fatus, nocti se immiscuit atrae*; *Od.* 15.43 ἡ μὲν ἄρ' ὧς εἰποῦσ' ἀπέβη πρὸς μακρὸν Ὀλυμπόν). Knauer records only one other Homeric parallel, the departure of Agamemnon's dream at *Il.* 2.35.²¹

3. PENELOPE AND DIDO: ΚΛΕΟΣ AND *FAMA*, ΔΟΛΟΣ AND *DOLVS*

To understand why Athena and Mercury resort to misogyny, we begin with the remarkably similar reactions of learned readers to their speeches. As noted at the beginning, modern critics of the *Aeneid* have decried Mercury's characterization of Dido's intentions as a lie. His claim that Dido is contemplating deceptions and a terrible crime is true only in the sense that she has deceived Anna about the purpose of the pyre and is now bent on suicide. Her monologue just before Mercury appears to Aeneas is a self-condemnation, giving no indication that she plans to ambush the hero. Dido's panic when she sees Aeneas' fleet underway shows that she is caught unprepared for attacking him. She calls for fire and ships, but then she catches herself, asking: *quid loquor? aut ubi sum? quae mentem insania mutat?*—her last question

¹⁶ See Knauer (n. 4), 147, 32 with n. 2, 128–9 and the index entry at 545: '1 homer. Sz. beeinflusst 2. vergil.'

¹⁷ A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey. Volume II, Books IX–XVI* (Oxford, 1989), 232; I.J.F. de Jong, *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey* (Cambridge, 2001), 364.

¹⁸ A. Kirchhof, *Die homerische Odyssee*² (Berlin, 1879), 504 on *Od.* 15.9; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Homerische Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1884), 92–3.

¹⁹ R.B. Rutherford, *Homer Odyssey Books XIX and XX* (Cambridge, 1992), 207, citing J.S. Clay, 'Demas and aude: the nature of divine transformation in Homer', *Hermes* 102 (1974), 129–36; also A.M. Bowie, *Homer Odyssey XIII and XIV* (Cambridge, 2013), 145 on *Od.* 13.288.

²⁰ On Aeneas' uncertainty, see Feeney (n. 2), 121–2.

²¹ Knauer (n. 4), 388, 522, citing S. Clarke, *Homeri Odyssea* (London, 1740), 2.404.

indicating that she has not planned to attack Aeneas, and that she is not so *mutabilis* as to give in to sudden impulse (4.595). She then gives rein to dark fantasies of what she could have done with Aeneas from the start (4.596–606) and issues her terrible curse (4.607–29). One might see all this as confirmation of Mercury’s forebodings.²² But Dido’s defenders will reply that her violent thoughts are a response to Aeneas’ departure, not a matter of premeditation as Mercury’s warning implies.

Critics of the *Odyssey* have expressed similar misgivings about Athena’s warning to Telemachus. Athena pulls from thin air the notion that Penelope is on the verge of marrying Eurymachus for his gifts and taking some of Telemachus’ property.²³ The Oxford commentary calls Athena’s claim that Icarus and Penelope’s brothers are pressuring her ‘a white lie’.²⁴ Repelled by the *σικρολογία* imputed to Penelope, Aristophanes of Byzantium athetized Athena’s warning that Penelope might take property (15.19).²⁵ Concurring with Kirchhof that this scene is the work of a clumsy interpolator, Wilamowitz laments Athena’s ‘pointless lies’ (‘ihre zwecklosen Lügen’).²⁶

The indignation of critics in both cases is understandable. Having no evidence, Athena and Mercury resort to misogynistic *gnōmai* to manipulate the heroes’ fears. Worse, the misogyny strikes at the nobility and resolve of the heroines. Athena’s assertion contradicts what we know of Penelope’s constancy and makes for a cruel and ironic intertext for the tragedy of Dido, whose devotion to her dead husband fades only through divine intervention (*Aen.* 1.719–22). It is thus surprising that the misdirection and misogyny of the two speeches have not been considered side-by-side, especially in view of the many other parallels in the stories of the two queens.²⁷

Both are famed for their devotion to the memories of their husbands and for refusing to remarry.²⁸ Both spurn proud suitors despite great pressure and danger. Penelope’s suitors dissipate Odysseus’ wealth and plot to kill Telemachus (*Od.* 4.663–702). Dido’s refusal of marriage leaves her and her fledgling city vulnerable (*Aen.* 4.35–41, 4.534–6).²⁹ And both heroines are renowned for cunning. Penelope’s stratagem of weaving Laertes’ shroud puts off her suitors for years, and the disguised Odysseus finds himself admiring how Penelope extracts gifts from the suitors by means of her

²² Schiesaro (n. 3), 94, 102–4, 220–30; Casali (n. 3), 187–8.

²³ K.F. Ameis, C. Hentze and P. Cauer (edd.), *Homers Odyssee für den Schulgebrauch erklärt* (Leipzig, 1868–1922), 2.1, 60 on 15.18; M.A. Katz, *Penelope’s Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the “Odyssey”* (Princeton, 1991), 60–1; S. Murnaghan, ‘The plan of Athena’, in B. Cohen (ed.), *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer’s Odyssey* (Oxford, 1991), 61–80, at 67–8; H.P. Foley, ‘Penelope as moral agent’, in B. Cohen (ed.), *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer’s Odyssey* (Oxford, 1991), 93–115, at 98; De Jong (n. 17), 365. See also K. Myrsiades, *Reading Homer’s Odyssey* (Lewisberg, PA, 2019), 297 n. 11.

²⁴ Heubeck and Hoekstra (n. 17), 232.

²⁵ W. Dindorf, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam* (Oxford, 1855), 2.605.

²⁶ Kirchhof (n. 18), 504 on *Od.* 15.9; Wilamowitz (n. 18), 92–3. Both quoted by D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford, 1957), 80 n. 5 and by Katz (n. 23), 60–1.

²⁷ On Penelope as a model for Dido, see E.C. Kopff, ‘Dido and Penelope’, *Philologus* 121 (1977), 244–8; G.C. Polk, ‘Vergil’s Penelope: the Diana simile in *Aeneid* 1.498–502’, *Vergilius* 42 (1996), 38–49, at 46–8; R.J. Starr, ‘Weaving delays: Penelope and Dido in Vergil, *Aeneid* IV, 50–3’, *Latomus* 68 (2009), 910–14; see also F. Cairns, *Virgil’s Augustan Epic* (Cambridge, 1989), 134 and 196; T. Schmit-Neuerberg, *Vergils Aeneis und die antike Homerexegese* (Berlin, 1999), 109–11; and J. Farrell, *Juno’s Aeneid: A Battle for Heroic Identity* (Princeton, 2021), 111, 219–20. Arguing against is C. Schmitz, ‘Ist Penelope ein Modell für Vergils Dido? Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer intertextuellen Lektüre’, in S. Freund and M. Vielberg (edd.), *Vergil und das antike Epos: Festschrift Hans Jürgen Tschedel* (Stuttgart, 2008), 85–103.

²⁸ Kopff (n. 27), 246; Schmit-Neuerberg (n. 27), 112; Farrell (n. 27), 219–20.

²⁹ Cairns (n. 27), 131 n. 6.

guile (*Od.* 18.290–303). Dido manages to flee Tyre with the treasure of the greedy Pygmalion, and her *byrsa*-trick secures land enough for a city (1.360–8).³⁰

The most dramatic of Virgil's direct allusions to Penelope is Dido's declaration to Anna that rather than violate her *pudor* she would wish for the earth to swallow her or for Jupiter to strike her down with a lightning bolt (*Aen.* 4.24–9), echoing Penelope's wish to die by Artemis' arrows and meet Odysseus below the earth rather than marry a lesser husband (*Od.* 20.80–2; see also 18.201–5).³¹ Anna's advice to Dido to 'interweave reasons for delay' (*Aen.* 4.51 *causasque innecte morandi*) alludes to Penelope, with an ironic reversal: Penelope weaves Laertes' shroud to delay remarriage, while Anna's proposal is intended to bring marriage about.³²

Penelope wins κλέος by using δόλος to avoid remarriage.³³ Recounting to the Ithacans how she put off the suitors for three years with the ruse of Laertes' shroud, Antinous acknowledges that she has fashioned μέγα κλέος for herself (*Od.* 2.125). Reporting Penelope's triumph to Agamemnon in *Odyssey* 24, Amphinomus attributes the slaughter of the suitors to Penelope's δόλος (24.126–8):

ἦ δ' οὐτ' ἠρνεῖτο στυγερόν γάμον οὔτ' ἔτελεύτα,
ἡμῖν φραζομένη θάνατον καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν,
ἀλλὰ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήριζε.

The last two lines together are reproduced in Mercury's warning that Dido is 'turning over in her breast deceptions and horrid crime' (4.563): *illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore uersat*.³⁴ Upon hearing the news from Amphinomus, Agamemnon praises Penelope for her mindful devotion to Odysseus, proclaiming that her κλέος will never perish (24.194–8).

Penelope succeeds in resisting remarriage, while Dido fails to abide by her oath.³⁵ In her confrontation of Aeneas Dido bitterly reminds him of the loss of her *fama prior*, which had been her sole pathway to the stars (4.321–3): *te propter eundem | extinctus pudor et, qua sola sidera adibam, | fama prior*. Odysseus praises Penelope's κλέος with the same image (19.108): ἦ γὰρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἰκάνει.³⁶ Virgil thus creates both harmonies and dissonances with his allusions to Homer's Penelope.³⁷ Knauer catalogues several such 'Umkehrungen' in Virgil's use of Homer, including the relevant instance mentioned above of Odysseus eagerly leaving Calypso while Aeneas departs

³⁰ Kopff (n. 27), 246.

³¹ Polk (n. 27), 46–8. On the parallel significance of Artemis and Diana for Penelope and Dido, see also Schmit-Neuerberg (n. 27), 109, who neglects to cite Polk (n. 27). Schmitz (n. 27), 91–5 argues against.

³² Starr (n. 27), 914. Starr (n. 27), 913 points out how Anna's metaphor becomes reality in the cloak woven by Dido that Aeneas wears when Mercury first finds him.

³³ On Penelope's κλέος, see Katz (n. 23), especially 4–6, 192–5.

³⁴ While Mercury's line corresponds to Athena's at 15.20 (see above), Virgil has chosen to model it more closely on Amphinomus' imagery, which provides appropriate intensification for the context. On the aptness of Penelope's metaphor of spinning for her deceptions (19.137 οἱ δὲ γάμον σπεύδουσιν, ἐγὼ δὲ δόλους τολυτεύω), see J. Russo, M. Fernandez-Galiano, A. Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey: Volume III, Books XVII–XXIV* (Oxford, 1992), 80–1.

³⁵ Leading Schmitz (n. 27), 92 to dismiss Penelope as a model.

³⁶ Pease (n. 2), 292 on *Aen.* 4.322 buries this parallel in a list without comment.

³⁷ Kopff (n. 27), 244, 247; Polk (n. 27), 49. Hardie (n. 9), 360 notes 'When it comes to feminine *fama*, Dido is the anti-Penelope', but citing Kopff he concedes that 'there are ways in which she models the role of Penelope more positively'.

Carthage with great reluctance, a contrast unfavourable to the Trojan.³⁸ Thus both Penelope and Odysseus hover in the background of *Aeneid* 1 and 4, exemplifying the heroic standards that Dido and Aeneas fail to live up to.

Often overlooked in the discussions of Virgil's allusions to Penelope, however, is the pre-Virgilian tradition about Dido in which Aeneas does not appear and she successfully uses δόλος to evade remarriage.³⁹ The account of the earliest witness, Timaeus (c.350–260 B.C.E.; *OCD* ⁴), is summarized within a later anonymous collection of anecdotes about outstanding women, the *Tractatus de mulieribus*.⁴⁰ After Theiosso (= Dido) finds her city, the king of the Libyans wants to marry her. She refuses, but her citizens insist. Feigning that she will perform a ritual for release from oaths, she builds and lights a massive pyre near her palace and throws herself from her chamber onto the fire. In the more elaborate narrative of the Augustan historian Pompeius Trogus—which is preserved in Justin's epitome (18.4–6)—when the Carthaginians compel Dido to marry Iarbas, she obtains a delay—one thinks of Anna's *causas innecte morandi*—of three months to build a pyre on a far edge of the city on the pretence of appeasing the *manes* of Acharbas (= Sychaeus). Rather than throw herself onto the flames, she climbs the pyre and kills herself with a sword. The tradition's power is evident in post-Virgilian times, when Dido persists as a heroine of marital fidelity, including for Christian authors such as Tertullian and Jerome, whose citations of her legend are likely inspired by her appearance in collections of *exempla* of virtuous women.⁴¹

The pre-Virgilian Dido remains visible in Virgil's poem.⁴² Quint sees Dido's lament for her *fama prior* and Jupiter's observation that Dido and Aeneas are *oblitos famae melioris amantis* (4.221) as ironic allusions to her pre-Virgilian reputation, and notes that when Dido speaks her own epitaph (4.653–8) she recounts the achievements of her traditional self.⁴³ In light of the *fama* Virgil has taken from Dido, Mercury's *uarium et mutabile* is crueller and more painful to read than Athena's affront to Penelope's κλέος.

A facility for δόλος is therefore common to the κλέος of Penelope and the *fama* of Dido. But it has a double edge. Repeatedly telling the story of Agamemnon's

³⁸ Knauer (n. 4), 214; for other examples see also Knauer's index under 'Umkehrung homer. Ereignisse in ihr Gegenteil' at 547.

³⁹ See J. Kowalski, *De Didone Graeca et Latina* (Krakow, 1929); A. Stuibler, 'Dido', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 3 (1957), 1013–16; M.L. Lord, 'Dido as an example of chastity: the influence of example literature', *Harvard Library Bulletin* 17.1 (1969), 22–44 and 17.2 (1969), 216–32; M. Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis, 1994), 24–33; Starks (n. 2), 262–7; K. Haegemans, 'The first queen of Carthage, through Timaeus' eyes', *AncSoc* 30 (2000), 277–91; Weeda (n. 15), 124–7; D. Quint, *Virgil's Double Cross: Design and Meaning in the Aeneid* (Princeton, 2016), 67–81. Whether Naevius brought Aeneas and Dido together in his *Bellum Punicum* remains an unresolved question: R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik* (Leipzig, 1915), 115–17; Pease (n. 2), 18–21; Starks (n. 2), 261 n. 17.

⁴⁰ *FGrHist* 566 F 82. D. Gera, *Warrior Women: The Anonymous Tractatus De Mulieribus* (Leiden, 1997), 7–8, 126–40.

⁴¹ Lord (n. 39), 27–8. In an anonymous epigram (*Anth. Graeca* 16.151) Dido complains about the historical impossibility of an encounter between her and Aeneas and asks the Muses why they 'armed' Virgil to attack her virtue. See also Macrob. *Sat.* 5.17.5–6, available with an excellent translation in the Loeb edition of R.A. Kaster (Cambridge, MA, 2011). Kaster's remark (2.409), however, that 'M. speaks a bit oddly, as though there were a "true" story of Dido independent of the poetic version' overlooks the prose tradition stemming from Timaeus. One cannot conclude from these late authors that Naevius did not depict an affair between Aeneas and Dido. They may not have known Naevius' epic in its entirety: G. Luck, 'Naevius and Virgil', *JCS* 8 (1983), 267–75, at 268–9.

⁴² Heinze (n. 39), 116.

⁴³ Quint (n. 39), 70, 72–3.

homecoming, Homer makes Clytemnestra's δόλος in the service of her seducer Aegisthus a cautionary tale for Odysseus and Telemachus.⁴⁴ The most memorable version is Agamemnon's chilling account to Odysseus of Clytemnestra's role (11.404–34) in Aegisthus' treachery. When recalling how she pitilessly killed Cassandra (11.422), he calls her δολόμητις, an epithet otherwise applied only to Aegisthus.⁴⁵ Odysseus deploras Clytemnestra's δόλος (11.439). Agamemnon assures Odysseus that Penelope will not devise such a plot against him (11.444–6). Suddenly mindful of his own disaster, however, Agamemnon warns Odysseus to put in secretly at Ithaca, since after Clytemnestra there can be no trusting women (11.456): ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι πιστὰ γυναῖξιν. Such misogyny is not commonplace in Homer.⁴⁶ It is not surprising that this line has been proposed as the Homeric model for Mercury's *uarium et mutabile semper femina*.⁴⁷ The misogynistic warnings of Athena and Agamemnon, both concerning Penelope, express the same fear of women's capacity for secretly reversing their feelings and crafting deceptions. Virgil could well have had both warnings in mind when composing his scene. But Athena's admonition to Telemachus, issued in the depth of night by a deity for the purpose of instilling panic in the hero and a haste to depart, accounts for what Agamemnon's warning cannot—namely, why Virgil puts a misogynistic warning into the mouth of Mercury as he appears to Aeneas in a pre-dawn dream urging him to flee from Carthage.

By the time *Odyssey* 15 opens, Telemachus has already heard Nestor tell of Clytemnestra's seduction by Aegisthus (3.253–75). Nestor pointedly says that Clytemnestra at first resisted the advances, 'for she had a noble mind' (φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθῆσι), anticipating and undermining Agamemnon's similar words to Odysseus about Penelope at 11.445. It is just after narrating Orestes' revenge (3.303–10) that Nestor warns Telemachus not to wander for long away from Ithaca (3.313–16), the lines that Athena will repeat to Telemachus. Menelaus too recounts Agamemnon's demise (4.512–47). Athena's warning to Telemachus that his mother might take property with her and forget about him and his father when she remarries is not so horrifying as these recollections of Clytemnestra's treachery, but the latter provide a background against which a more mundane deception by Penelope might seem plausible.⁴⁸

On Homer's use of the story of Agamemnon's murder Olson writes: 'The Mycenaean tales' most basic and repeated function in the epic, in fact, is to create suspense and irony through a series of deceptive hints and foreshadowings, false leads and suggestive dead ends.'⁴⁹ Bednarowski similarly highlights the role of stories of *dolus* in *Aeneid* 2 and 3 'in keeping alive interest in Aeneas's and Dido's affair and in shaping audience expectations going into Book 4', and, quoting Olson's observation, astutely compares Homer's use of the betrayal of Agamemnon to build tension around Penelope, but

⁴⁴ S.D. Olson, 'The stories of Agamemnon in Homer's *Odyssey*', *TAPhA* 120 (1990), 57–71 (with references at 57 n. 1); Katz (n. 23), 21, 30; L.E. Doherty, *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 100–2, 183–5.

⁴⁵ It is notably not used of Odysseus or Penelope: S. Pulleyn, *Homer Odyssey I* (Oxford, 2019), 187 on *Od.* 1.300.

⁴⁶ M.B. Arthur, 'Origins of the western attitude toward women', *Arethusa* 6 (1973), 7–58, at 13; J. Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana, 1994), 68; S. Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (London, 1995), 74.

⁴⁷ Pease (n. 2), 461; Knauer (n. 4), 388.

⁴⁸ See Katz (n. 23), 61.

⁴⁹ Olson (n. 44), 70; also 57.

without extending this insight to the function of Mercury's second speech in *Aeneid* 4.⁵⁰ Virgil's use of Phaedra as a model for Dido at the opening of *Aeneid* 4 raises similar dire possibilities in the reader's mind, as do allusions to a mistress of deception greater than Clytemnestra, Medea, including a nod to Euripides in Mercury's warning that Aeneas must flee before dawn.⁵¹ Just as Athena exploits what Telemachus knows about his mother's cunning and what he has heard in the cautionary tale of Clytemnestra, so too does Mercury capitalize also upon Aeneas' knowledge of Dido's capacity for plotting (*Aen.* 1.360–8) and his experience of her rage and despair (*Aen.* 4.305–30, 4.362–92). For the reader sympathetic to Dido's plight, however, who has just seen Dido turn her anger against herself as she resigns herself to death, the god's falsehoods and misogyny, like Athena's, carry the sting of injustice. Unlike Penelope, Dido cannot overcome the charge implied by Mercury's warning. She will never have the chance.

4. HASTY DEPARTURES

In their haste to leave, both Telemachus and Aeneas feel compelled to run roughshod over the proprieties of *ξενία* and *hospitium*. Saying nothing of Athena's appearance, Telemachus immediately awakens Peisistratus with a kick from his heel and bids him bring the horses and prepare the chariot for departure (15.44–7), forgetting Athena's instruction (15.14) to wake Menelaus.⁵² Peisistratus objects that it is dark and reminds Telemachus to wait for Menelaus to bring gifts and bid them farewell (15.49–55). After Mercury's first appearance Aeneas is quite *mutabilis*. Despite the winter seas, *ardet abire fuga dulcisque relinquere terras* (4.281).⁵³ Conscious that his departure will be a delicate matter, he has his men prepare in secret, that he may await the right opportunity to inform Dido (4.288–94). Undeceived, she confronts him angrily (4.296–306).⁵⁴

Telemachus' leave-taking has two stages. Menelaus graciously accedes to his request to depart, with words that could apply to Calypso but also to the lovesick Dido (15.68–71):

Τηλέμαχ', οὐ τί σ' ἐγώ γε πολὺν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἐρύξω
 ἴεμενον νόστοιο· νεμεσῶμαι δὲ καὶ ἄλλω
 ἀνδρὶ ξεινοδόκῳ, ὅς κ' ἔξοχα μὲν φιλέησιν,
 ἔξοχα δ' ἐχθαίρησιν· ἀμείνω δ' αἴσιμα πάντα.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ K.P. Bednarowski, 'Dido and the motif of deception in *Aeneid* 2 and 3', *TAPhA* 145 (2015), 135–72, at 139.

⁵¹ On Dido and Medea, see Nelis (n. 4), 125–85; on Euripides' *Medea* and the Dido episode, see Schiesaro (n. 3), 60–109, especially at 84, on the echo of Eur. *Med.* 352–4 at *Aen.* 4.568.

⁵² Detecting here too the hand of an incompetent *Bearbeiter*, Wilamowitz (n. 18), 93 scornfully calls Telemachus' impulse to leave without saying goodbye a *polnischer Abschied*. For Wilamowitz's phrase, see H. Frischbier, *Preußisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin, 1882–1883), s.vv. *polnisch, pôlsch*. But Telemachus' haste is also a sign of growing decisiveness: De Jong (n. 17), 366 and Myrsiades (n. 23), 175.

⁵³ See S.F. Wiltshire, *Public & Private in Vergil's Aeneid* (Amherst, 1989), 114.

⁵⁴ Behaviour unbecoming a *hospes*: J.W. Jones, Jr., '*Aeneid* 4.238–78 and the persistence of an allegorical interpretation', *Vergilius* 33 (1987), 29–37, at 36. On Aeneas' obligations of *fides* and *gratia* toward Dido under the conventions of *hospitium*, see R. Monti, *The Dido Episode and the Aeneid: Roman Social and Political Values in the Epic* (Leiden, 1981), 24–6, 28–9.

⁵⁵ On the applicability of Menelaus' wisdom here to the *hospitium* between Dido and Aeneas, see R.K. Gibson, 'Aeneas as *hospes* in Vergil: *Aeneid* 1 and 4', *CQ* 49 (1999), 184–202, at 195 with n. 52.

But as Telemachus and Peisistratus later approach Pylos, Telemachus asks to be dropped off at his ship rather than continue to the city, lest Nestor's hospitality delay him (15.199–201). Peisistratus here confronts on behalf of his friend the same problem that Aeneas faces when weighing how to approach Dido about his departure (*Aen.* 4.283–94). Virgil's line signalling Aeneas' conclusion (4.287 *haec alternanti potior sententia uisa est*), unique in his corpus, is his closest rendition of Homer's formula for the end of Peisistratus' deliberation at *Od.* 15.204: ὥδε δέ οἱ φρονέοντι δοῶσσοτο κέρδιον εἶναι. Although Homer employs this formula several times elsewhere, this is the only passage where it is used of pondering the proprieties of bidding farewell.⁵⁶ Peisistratus agrees that Nestor would keep Telemachus in Pylos and bids him to make haste before Nestor finds out about his leaving, sure he will come down himself and will be angry (*Od.* 15.209–14).

Here, as friends part, we should ponder why Virgil alighted upon *Odyssey* 15 as he devised Aeneas' exit from the stage of Carthage. Telemachus and his short trip abroad do not make for an obvious model. He is taking his first steps beyond Ithaca, searching for his father, with no love affair on the horizon. Aeneas, a seasoned warrior and a widower with a son, has wandered for years, burying his father before arriving in Dido's realm. He should know better than to shirk his duty. It is thus no surprise that Mercury's rebuke is so much harsher than Athena's prompting of Telemachus. But the vulnerability of fatherlessness and the prospect of kingdoms squandered link Aeneas and Telemachus. Bringing these themes to the fore are the queens at the centre of both stories, both famous for fidelity to their husbands and for skills at deception. Exploiting the tension created by Penelope's predicament and Clytemnestra's treachery, Athena issues a *gnōmē* about woman's changeableness to instil panic in Telemachus, heightening the suspense at the end of his journey. But Penelope will triumph all the same. Virgil adapts Homer's stinging device to a devastating end. Driving Aeneas to headlong flight, Mercury's words also signal that the gods too have abandoned the queen.

We can be sure that Peisistratus will placate Nestor on behalf of his young friend. But when Dido catches sight of Aeneas' fleet under sail, astonished that she has given everything to an ungrateful and callous *aduena*, her curse foretells centuries of enmity and decades of cruel war between two great cities (*Aen.* 4.584–629).

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⁵⁶ For the other instances of the formula, see Knauer (n. 4), 387 on *Aen.* 4.287 and R.J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London, 1924), s.v. δοῶσσοτο. Pease (n. 2), 272 neglects *Od.* 15.204 in his list of Homeric parallels for *Aen.* 4.287.