

ROMAN EPIC THEATRE? RECEPTION, PERFORMANCE, AND THE POET IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*

I

Past responses to ancient literature and the reading practices of previous centuries are of central relevance to the contemporary exegesis of Greek and Roman authors. Professional classicists have at last come to recognise this.¹ However, accounts of reception still tend to engage in a traditional form of *Nachleben*, as they unselfconsciously describe the extent of classical influences on later literary production. This process of influence is not as straightforward as it may first seem. It is often taken for granted in practice, if not in theory, that the movement is in one direction only – from antiquity to some later point – and also that the ancient text which ‘impacts on’ the culture of a later period is the same ancient text that we apprehend today. Of course it is *never* the same text, even leaving aside the problems of transmission.² The interaction between a text and its reception in another place, in another time, in another text, is really a dynamic two-way process. That interaction (which has much in common with intertextuality) involves, or is rather constituted by, our own interpretation of it.³

This discussion will attempt to go in the direction that is less customary: by moving ‘backwards’ from two separate and disparate points of reception (the theory of Epic Theatre developed by Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamim, and La Cerda’s seventeenth-century commentary on Virgil) towards the *Aeneid*.⁴ But this movement cannot be completely uni-directional, and simply because the approach here *is* purportedly self-conscious, there is no point in concealing the fact that traffic between a text and its reception inevitably goes both ways. In addition to accomplishing a

¹ Charles Martindale has consistently made a good case for this: see Martindale (1993), (1996), and his rebuttal of David West’s dismissal of reception in Martindale (1997) 7–10; cf. De Smet (1999) and (2001) which show the importance of Renaissance humanism for contemporary scholars of antiquity. Thomas (2001) selectively considers political readings of Virgil in specific periods.

² Todorov (1982) distinguished ‘texts of departure’ and ‘texts of arrival’: cf. Porter (2002) 13: ‘Can we hope to arrive at a solution by treating “The Poem Itself” (the title to Part I) as something distinct from “Our Lucretius” (Part II)? Traditions of reception are dynamic processes that flow in two directions at once, both forward and backward.’

³ Cf. Laird (1999) 38–9 on suspension of chronology, and Fowler (2000) 130: ‘intertextuality works both ways.’

⁴ This approach relates to the common poetics, if not the stated principles, of historiography, as well as to the study of reception. Historians tend to examine events ‘in the light of’ their consequences: cf. Nicholls (1989) 14–15, a study which embraces ‘writing history backwards’, and Nietzsche (1980), a neglected essay originally published in 1874.

general exploration of this process, the argument to follow has a further objective, that bears on the fundamentals of poetics and performance. This objective is to show that the categorical distinction between the discourse of the poet-narrator and discourse of a character – often regarded as self-evident, absolute, and universal – need not apply unconditionally to all phases of the *Aeneid*'s reception.⁵

The words of a character can, in many different ways, be regarded as the words of the poet himself. What a character says is in fact what the poet says he says. Some ways of reading the *Aeneid* from antiquity onwards seem to have operated on this principle.⁶ The principle may be connected with the practice of recitation. To *hear* one and the same human voice take the part of the narrator and of the embedded speakers could prompt interpretations which efface distinctions between the poet-narrator's discourse and the discourse of a character. Equally, the kinds of performance which are enacted through *silent reading* (especially of manuscripts or early printed texts of the poem without quotation marks) can also efface the distinctions between 'character text' and 'narrator text'.⁷

Although neither Brechtian theory nor La Cerda's Virgilian commentary specifically equate narrator with character, both forms of reception emphasise the poet's own role as performer, and indicate that distinctions between poet-narrator and character need not be as hard as fast as they are now assumed to be. Consideration, if not demonstration, of this principle might reframe, at least in part, current scholarly assumptions about the performance of the poem.⁸ And the sections to follow will also yield insights on particular passages of the *Aeneid*, on its portrayal of characters, especially Aeneas, and on some aspects of the poem's complicated relation to tragedy.⁹

The next part of this discussion will consider some implications of Bertolt Brecht's explicitly anti-Aristotelian poetics for how the *Aeneid* might be read. The aim there is not so much to assess Brecht's personal views of Virgil (though he evidently held them).¹⁰ Instead Epic Theatre can point to some relatively neglected features of Virgil's poem which accentuate the poet-narrator's rôle as performer in the story. The subsequent section, in reviewing the positive application of principles derived from

⁵ This distinction, fundamental to the narratology between 'character text' and 'narrator text' – cf. Genette (1980) 162, and De Jong (1987) – goes back to the discrimination between *diegesis* and *mimesis* made in Plato, *Rep.* 392d5–93b5.

⁶ Early commentators including Servius, Tiberius Donatus, and Fulgentius attribute to Virgil diction which 'technically' belongs to characters. Development of the cento might be involved with this slippage. Medieval Christian writers credit Virgil with sentiments of his characters; for an example from modern commentary cf. Fowler (1990) 47–9 on the comments in Austin (1964) on *Aen.* 2.427: Fowler says the slippage is 'invited by the text'.

⁷ The terminology is from De Jong (1987). On ancient reading practices cf. Schenkeveld (1992).

⁸ By 'performance' I mean the (ongoing) actualisation of the relation between a text, spoken or written, and its interpreters, cf. n. 22 below.

⁹ Hardie (1996) is an important general account, with further bibliography: cf. Hardie (1993) 20–6, and Hardie (1997).

¹⁰ Brecht's impact on many forms of twentieth-century and contemporary theatre and cinema, as well as on individual playwrights – notably Beckett – and directors is well attested: cf. n. 13 below. For Brecht's characterisation of Virgil, see end of II below.

Aristotle's *Poetics* to the *Aeneid* in La Cerda's magisterial commentary, will then show how 'Virgil' himself might again be discerned as a kind of agent in the poem.¹¹

The lines of approach to be adopted in each of these two sections – inferences from Brechtian theory on the one hand and a more descriptive exposition of La Cerda's critical observations on the other – reflect the different nature of the material each section respectively treats. Whilst the aspects of the *Aeneid* that are magnified by twentieth-century Epic Theatre are more implicit, La Cerda's observations on the poem can be presented directly: two passages from the end of his commentary will be quoted at some length. Broader contexts for the points of theoretical community between the two main parts of this discussion will be suggested in the concluding section.

II

It is not just the word 'Epic' that prompts associations between Brecht and the *Aeneid*, but also the terms 'empathy' and 'subjectivity' – terms which have been long-standing touchstones of Virgil criticism.¹² A principal characteristic of Epic Theatre was its reaction *against* the notion of empathy (*Einfühlung*):

The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing the experience the spectator must come to grips with things.¹³

Epic Theatre had its origin in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('new objectivity' or 'new matter of factness'), a pan-artistic movement which emerged in Germany in the 1920s as a reaction against the extravagances of Expressionism. Brecht took up the concept of Epic Theatre in 1926.¹⁴ In dealing with social and political themes, and in using linear narration to stimulate the audience's reason rather than empathy, he sought to present events as if quoting something already seen and heard.¹⁵ Brecht regarded this form of theatre as fundamentally 'non-Aristotelian' – it was 'epic' in so far as it abandoned the

¹¹ Contemporary commentaries (e.g. Clausen (1994), Harrison (1991) and Horsfall (2000) at ix) testify to La Cerda's sustained and ongoing influence on Virgilian scholarship. For bibliography on La Cerda see notes 42–4 and 49 below.

¹² Fowler (1990) sketches a history of critics' perceptions, from Richard Heinze's *Empfindung* and its adoption by Brooks Otis as 'empathy' to its reception by Italian Latinists.

¹³ Brecht 'Schwierigkeiten des epischen Theaters' from *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Literaturblatt), 27 November 1927, translated in Willett (1964) 23. The *Messingkauf dialogues* (dating from 1937) contains further expression of these views: Brecht (1965). Brecht's influence on post-war culture is not to be underrated: cf. Keller (1975); Reinelt (1994); Thomson and Sacks (1994).

¹⁴ Already in 1924, Erwin Piscator had produced a play by Alfons Paquet as a 'dramatic novel' subtitled 'epic'. Using projected texts, film and a treadmill stage, Piscator inaugurated a new kind of 'Documentary' drama. The painting of G. F. Hartlaub and Otto Dix and the music of Kurt Weill are representative of this tendency. See further Willet (1964) 17.

¹⁵ See Brecht on 'Indirect impact of the Epic Theatre' (extracts from the Notes to *Die Mutter*) in Willett (1964) 57–61.

Aristotelian unities of classical drama, and sought to present a story in a sequential fashion, more like Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* than anything like the recognitions, resolutions and realisations of *The Tempest* or *Measure for Measure*.¹⁶

Epic Theatre spotlights some features of classical epic (as the latter had developed by the time of the production of the *Aeneid*) that can broadly be conceived in terms of form, content, and performance. The first two categories will be treated very briefly here; my consideration of performance will be given the most emphasis because it has a specific bearing on Virgil. Where *form* is concerned, epic poetry is characterised by evenly-paced serial narration.¹⁷ Brecht insists that the actor in his form of theatre should 'present a report':

He does not have to make us forget that the text isn't spontaneous, but has been memorized, is a fixed quantity; the fact doesn't matter, as we anyway assume that the report is not about himself but about others. His attitude would be the same as if he were simply speaking from his own memory.¹⁸

This draws attention to the fact that traditional epics mediate their content to the audience *indirectly*: the subjects of *kleos* or *fama* in ancient epic narrative were always, inevitably, remote – even from the world in which those narratives were produced.¹⁹

In terms of *content*, Epic Theatre highlights the commitment to history and to the societal (more than to the individual interest) that is a feature of traditional *epos*. A perception of the national past as the subject of epic would have reached Brecht through his reading of Schiller and Goethe; and Epic Theatre champions the strong elements of didacticism which are contained in classical epic.²⁰ (The presence of specifically *political* didacticism discerned by readers of Virgil's Augustan epic, are endorsed by Brecht's conception of epic as well.)²¹

Consideration of *performance* brings to prominence some further characteristics that are more particular to the *Aeneid*. Whilst reliable information about the conditions in

¹⁶ This is all related in Willett (1964) *passim*. Brecht's notes and essays entitled 'On a non-Aristotelian drama' are found in his *Versuche*: Brecht (1930). On Brecht and Aristotle's *Poetics* see Silk (2001).

¹⁷ This is at least seen to be the case if Homer's epics are taken as a control: 'epyllion' narrative clearly does not exhibit this property. Crump (1931) is a standard discussion; the divergences between the two kinds of narrative are exposed in Ovid: cf. Otis (1964) and the discussion of the Arachne episode in the *Met.* 6.1–145 in Feeney (1991) 190–4.

¹⁸ These remarks are from Brecht's 1940 essay 'Short description of a new technique of acting which produces an alienation effect', which is translated in Brecht (1965) 136–47 (at 142).

¹⁹ *Iliad* 2.484–90, *Aen.* 7.646. Cf. Bakhtin (1981) 13: 'an absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives.' The discussion of epic mimesis in Plato, *Rep.* 392–5 also has implications for Epic Theatre – some are pursued by Walter Benjamin in his 1934 essay 'The author as producer': Benjamin (1998a).

²⁰ Goethe, 'Über epische und dramatische Dichtung', in *Sämtliche Werke* (1902–7), vol. 36, 149–52. The essay was co-signed by Schiller.

²¹ Whilst Heinze (1999), 373–5 subordinates the political to the general moral elements in Virgil, Lessing (1766) 96–7 (*Laocoon*, ch. 18) had already been aware of Virgil's political inclination: 'the shield of Aeneas is ... intended solely to flatter the national pride of the Romans.' For modern views of Virgil's politics see the essays in Stahl (1998).

which Virgil's epic would have been heard or read is notoriously deficient, Epic Theatre can at least prompt speculation about ways in which Virgil's poem might be read and interpreted which resist current orthodoxies.²² Brecht's friend and contemporary, Walter Benjamin, addressed the matter of performance in Epic Theatre like this:

If we imagine someone attending a dramatic spectacle ... we see someone who, with every fibre of his being, is intently following a process. The concept of epic theatre (developed by Brecht as the theoretician of his own poetic praxis) implies, above all, that the audience which this theatre desires to attract is a relaxed one, following the play in a relaxed manner. True, such an audience will always occur as a collective, unlike the reader of a novel alone with his text. Furthermore, in most cases this audience – again, as a collective will quickly feel impelled to take up an attitude towards what it sees. But this attitude, Brecht thinks, should be a considered and therefore a relaxed one.²³

In this regard, Aeneas' own epic narration to a royal court in *Aeneid* 2 and 3 could serve as paradigm for the delivery of the larger poem in which it appears. Hellenists have, after all, sought to draw inferences from the embedded recitals of Phemius and Demodocus in the *Odyssey* to hypothesise about the nature of the reception and performance of Homeric poetry.²⁴ And, as with Odysseus' narration to the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 9–12, there are analogies in Virgil between the character and poet-narrator.²⁵ Important proemic evocations in Aeneas' recitation can be found at the beginning of *Aeneid* 2, and that performance itself succeeds the recitation of didactic *epos* by the Carthaginian poet Iopas (1.740–7).²⁶ The end of Aeneas' performance might reveal something about the kind of performer he is:²⁷

hinc Drepani me portus et inlaetabilis ora
accipit. hic pelagi tot tempestatibus actus
heu, genitorem, omnis curae casusque leuamen,
amitto Anchisen. hic me, pater optime, fessum
deseris, heu, tantis nequiquam erepte periclis!
nec uates Helenus, cum multa horrenda moneret,
hos mihi praedixit luctus, non dira Celaeno.
hic labor extremus, longarum haec meta uiarum,
hinc me digressum uestris deus appulit oris.

Aeneid 3.707–15

²² On performance of Virgil, Goold (1992) is very speculative; Wiseman (1982) and Vogt-Spira (1990) are useful treatments. Horsfall (1995) 19 treats recitation.

²³ This is from his 1939 essay 'What is epic theatre? [second version]': Benjamin (1998c) 15.

²⁴ Murray (1981); Macleod (1983); Segal (1992).

²⁵ Felson (1994) 125–44 connects identification of Homeric narrator with Odysseus' account to θεέλις.

²⁶ Cf. *Ilias Parva* F1 and Hom. *Il.* 1.1–2.

²⁷ The fact that Aeneas' spoken text – unlike Odysseus' account to the Phaeacians – is not interrupted also has important meta-literary implications for the solemnity and authority of Virgil's own epic discourse, cf. Laird (1999) 199–205.

I then put into Drepanum, but had little joy of that shore. Here, driven by so many storms at sea, alas, I lose my father, Anchises, my relief in every trial and turmoil. Here you left me, weary as I was, O best of fathers, whom I rescued from so many dangers, and all to no purpose. Neither Helenus for all his fearsome predictions nor the Harpy Celaeno gave me any warning of these sorrows. This was the last of my labours. With this my long course was run. From here I sailed and God drove me upon your shores.

Parallels with the ends of other epics or even with the end of the *Aeneid* itself are suggested by these words: Celaeno evoking the *Dira* who appears in Book 12; the role of filial and paternal love here and in that final scene; the general sense of movement towards abandonment and futility, which also closes the whole work. More importantly, there is inevitably a greater coincidence at this point between Aeneas as *actor* and Aeneas as *auctor* than there was at the beginning of his account in Book 2. This is because of a simple principle of narratology: at the beginning of the account, Aeneas the narrator was further away from Aeneas the agent; by the end of it, Aeneas in his own story comes to merge with the Aeneas who is telling that story. Here the coming together is also underlined thematically: the account is closed with the motif of grief with which it began: Aeneas' 'sorrows' (*luctus*) that neither Helenus nor Celaeno could express in prophecy (3.712–13) recall his 'unspeakable grief' (*Infandum ... dolorem*) in 2.3.²⁸

The nature of this coincidence between Aeneas as narrator and Aeneas as agent can be seen in terms of Brecht's conception of 'acting' – one of the ways in which his form of theatre can become didactic:

The actor must show his subject and he must show himself. Of course, he shows his subject by showing himself, and he shows himself by showing his subject. Although the two coincide, they must not coincide in such a way that the difference between the two tasks disappears.²⁹

At certain points in the *Aeneid* Aeneas the character seems not quite to coincide with the Aeneas who relates to us his purpose and role in history: his valedictory speech to Dido in 4.333–61, for instance, is as celebrated for being dramatically *unsatisfactory* as it is for being thematically informative about Aeneas' mission in the poem.³⁰ That tension is epitomised in the climactic unfinished line *Italiam non sponte sequor* (4.361). The comment also has a narratorial significance: it can be read from a perspective outside the immediate action of this scene – in terms of the poem's programmatic opening, for example. Another passage which could be read in this way occurs in the scene when Aeneas introduces himself to Venus (whose identity is concealed by her disguise as a Tyrian huntress):

²⁸ I owe this observation to Alison Sharrock.

²⁹ Brecht quoted in Benjamin (1973) 150 = (in Bostock's translation) Benjamin (1998c) 21.

³⁰ Cf. Feeney (1983) on this speech.

sum pius Aeneas, raptos qui ex hoste penates
 classe ueho mecum, fama super aethera notus;
 Italiam quaero patriam, et genus ab Ioue summo.
 bis denis Phrygium conscendi nauibus aequor,
 matre dea monstrante uiam data fata secutus;
 uix septem conuulsae undis Euroque supersunt.
 ipse ignotus, egens, Libyae deserta peragro,
 Europa atque Asia pulsus.

Aeneid 1.378–85

I am pious Aeneas who carries with me on my ships the Penates, snatched from my enemies and my fame has reached beyond the skies. I am searching for my fatherland in Italy. My descent is from highest Jupiter. With my goddess mother to show the way, I embarked upon the Phrygian sea with twenty ships, following the destiny which had been given to me, and now a bare seven of them remain, and these torn to pieces by wind and wave. I am a helpless stranger, driven out of Europe and out of Asia, tramping the desert wastes of Libya.

One could see these as rehearsed lines spoken by someone who has to play this role, weary of playing it, and with no way out. But the orchestration of this speech conforms, still more perfectly, to Brecht's prescription that subject and actor should not coincide to the degree that the difference between them is effaced. The conjunction of references to Troy and Italy and the glamorising ('he who...') relative clause evoke the opening lines of the *Aeneid* itself:

Arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
 Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit
 litora

Aeneid 1.1–3

I sing of arms and the man who first from the coast of Troy came as an exile by fate to Italy and the Lavinian shores

The evocation of this proem in 1.378f. might be more than an ornamental *mise en abyme*. This is how Walter Benjamin glosses Brecht's remarks, quoted above, about his conception of acting:

In other words an actor should reserve for himself the possibility of stepping out of character artistically. At the proper moment he should insist on playing a man who reflects about his part. It would be erroneous at such a moment to think of Romantic Irony ... That irony has no didactic aim. Basically it demonstrates only the philosophic sophistication of the author who, in writing plays, always remembers that in the end the world may turn out to be a theatre.³¹

³¹ Translation from Benjamin (1973) 150 = (in Bostock's translation) Benjamin (1998c) 21–2. On 'romantic irony' see Fowler (2000) 5–35.

Such reflections lead us from actors to the figure of the author, and incline us to make extensions from Aeneas' performance in the poem, to that of the epic poet. When the poet addresses the Muses for instance, the actual discourse of his poem is bound to be foregrounded, thematised – and thus its content is in a sense *removed* from the audience. That quality of epic narrative is helpfully emphasised by the explicit mission of Epic Theatre: to present events as if quoting something already seen and heard. This can be taken further.

The *Aeneid* contains a number of other well-known evocations of its own proem.³² These evocations, whenever they occur, call attention to the intricate relation between the poet and his subject-matter of arms, the man, and Italy – a relation in which the audience cannot be so directly involved as the poet himself.³³ As a consequence, the audience is compelled to reflect upon this relation: indeed without 'arms and the man' – a title for the *Aeneid* in antiquity – there would be no song, singer, or audience. A sense of history as an ongoing dialectic in which poet and audience cannot help but be involved is no longer so far away. Although such evocations might add to the case against the brief Incipit to the poem quoted below, these prefatory verses would infuse the entire narrative to follow with a persona that specifically belongs to *Virgil*:³⁴

ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus auena
carmen, et egressus siluis uicina coegi
ut quamuis auido parent arua colono
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis
Arma uirumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris

I am he who once played pastoral songs on a slender reed, but then coming from the woods, I urged the fields nearby to obey their owner, however demanding he was. That was a work which delighted farmers but now I sing of Mars' bristling arms *and the man who first from the coast of Troy*.

This early document of the *Aeneid*'s reception endows the poet-narrator with a dramatic and historical incarnation: he becomes identifiable with the poet of the *Bucolics* and

³² Evocations of *Aeneid* 1.1 include: 7.641–6, 10.163–5, 9.774–7; 6.559–62 and 9.77–9 recall 1.8–11; cf. Laird (2002a).

³³ The audience *a priori* cannot have the same level of involvement with the subject-matter signified in these evocations (*arma, uirum*, etc.) as the poet simply because such evocations enforce and bring to prominence the relationship between the audience (or reader) and the poet (or text). The state of affairs is similar to the kind of dramatic condition engineered by apostrophe, identified in Culler (1981) 135: 'apostrophes may complicate or disrupt the circuit of communication, raising questions about who is the addressee, but above all they are embarrassing: embarrassing to me and embarrassing to you.' Some 'disruption of enthrallment' achieved by theatre or by narrative is bound to accompany this sensation of embarrassment: Taplin (1986) shows how self-reference in performance is one thing which helps to define Attic comedy in opposition to tragedy.

³⁴ Austin (1968) is a useful statement of the conventional position, now superseded by Gamberale (1991). Koster (1988) fails to defend these lines as Virgil's own, but succeeds in highlighting their literary interest.

Georgics.³⁵ Critics have failed to note the carefully sequenced lexical and syntactical resemblances the Incipit has to the authentic opening verses (*Aeneid* 1.1–4), along with the parallels of word order. These resemblances and parallels conspire to construct an implicit parallel between Virgil and Aeneas himself:

*ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus auena
carmen, et egressus siluis uicina coegi
ut quamuis auido parerent arua colono
gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis
arma uirumque cano, qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Lauiniaque uenit
litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
ui superum, saeuae memorem Iunonis ob iram*

I am *he who once* played pastoral songs on a slender reed, but then *coming from* the woods, I urged *the fields nearby* to obey their owner, however demanding he was. That was a work which delighted farmers but now I sing of *Mars' bristling arms* and the *man who first* from the coast of Troy *came* as an exile by fate to Italy and the *Lavinian shores*, thrown about on land and sea by the force of those above, through the unforgiving *wrath* of cruel *Juno ...*

But even disregarding the performative interpretation of the Virgilian text offered by *ille ego qui quondam ...*, the epic poet of course still has a dramatic presence – a presence which would be embodied at the occasion of a *recitatio*, and which also puts the actions and speeches of the poem's characters at a remove.

Brecht's practice of making thinkers or wise people the 'heroes' of his plays, sometimes involved in the plot, sometimes less so – as dispassionate observers, can be compared to this potentially performative effect of the *Aeneid*. Such a practice has some precedents in ancient literature: Socrates can be at once actor and narrator in certain Platonic dialogues.³⁶ More telling still is the *Alexandreid* of Lycophron, whose whole relation to Virgil and Roman literature merits further exploration.³⁷ Although the *Alexandreid* is written in iambic trimeters, it presents a dramatised Cassandra, who effectively turns into an epic narrator for all but 50 of 1,474 verses: she sings of the fall of Troy, the sufferings of the Greeks, the wanderings of Aeneas and the Trojans, and the struggling between Europe and Asia which leads to the supremacy of Rome. Virgil in performance might, like Aeneas, be regarded as both *actor* and *auctor*, protagonist as well as narrator.

³⁵ The poet's 'autobiographical' coda to the *Georgics* which signals his authorship of the *Bucolics* is interestingly comparable.

³⁶ Compare Benjamin (1998c) 17: 'In his dialogues, [Plato] took the sage to the very threshold of drama – in the *Phaedo*, to the threshold of the passion play.'

³⁷ For recent commentary see Fusillo, Hurst, and Paduano (1991); cf. Hutchinson (1988) 257–64 and West (1983).

Characters like Aeneas, Anchises, and even Jupiter, can conform to the Brechtian blueprint for the ‘untragic hero’ in so far as they provide effective asides from the dramatic progress of the story, but it is Virgil’s own theatrical presence which could be the important thing. And that presence of course extends beyond what is strictly ‘narrator text’: Anchises’ idealisation of the Roman character in *Aeneid* 6, for instance, has often been read as Virgil’s estimate by readers of the poem since the Renaissance.³⁸ Virgil’s epic is not a play presented to us by a number of actors, but a dramatic monologue delivered by one solitary speaker. The fact that Brecht himself entertained such a reading of the *Aeneid* is indicated by a remark he made to Benjamin about the ‘nonchalance of Virgil’s ... basic attitude.’ Here Brecht seems to have regarded the poet’s own presence in his work as highly prominent when he characterises Virgil (along with Dante) as a *promeneur*:

On 22 June I arrived at Brecht’s.

Brecht speaks of the elegance and nonchalance of Virgil’s and Dante’s basic attitude, which, he says forms the backdrop to Virgil’s majestic *gestus*. He calls both Virgil and Dante ‘*promeneurs*’. Emphasising the classic rank of the *Inferno*, he says: ‘You can read it out of doors.’³⁹

Brecht did not generally adorn his German with tags from French. That word *promeneur* specifically evokes Rousseau’s *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782) – essays which conveyed social and political thought through the medium of stylised, leisurely monologue.⁴⁰ The relation of the *Aeneid*’s narrative to its historical subject-matter noted earlier might, in addition, allow its plot to conform to Brecht’s conception, as summarised by Walter Benjamin:

Epic theatre and tragic theatre have a very different kind of alliance with the passing of time. Because the suspense concerns less the ending than the separate events, epic theatre can cover very extensive spans of time.⁴¹

³⁸ For instance, Petrarch and Cristoforo Landino instinctively endowed Anchises’ words in *Aeneid* 6 with the authority of Virgil: cf. Kallendorf (1989) 26–8, 138–45. La Cerda puts an interesting twist on 6.847–53: see n. 50 below.

³⁹ Benjamin, ‘Conversations with Brecht’ (1938) now in Benjamin (1998b) 114. Brecht’s estimation of Virgil contrasts sharply with his verdict on Horace, *Ars Poetica* 99–103 in Willett (1964) 270: ‘I must say there is only one word for such an operation: barbaric’.

⁴⁰ Rousseau objected to emotional reaction in the theatre on the grounds that it risks jeopardising action in the real life of the community, cf. *Le contrat social*: Rousseau (1975) 141. This supports my conjecture. Lada (1996) 413 n. 54 notes a further connection – between Rousseau’s *Lettre à M. D’Alembert* and Brecht, *Messingkauf dialogues* in Willett (1964) 27.

⁴¹ Benjamin (1998c) 16–17. To go further and argue that the *Aeneid* produces ‘mild astonishment’ in its audience rather than empathy would be perverse. Brecht’s tenet that ‘instead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function’ does not square with *de facto* responses to the *Aeneid*, ancient or modern. Although I cannot subscribe to such a counter-intuitive position myself, I note that it could be defended by appealing to (i) the text – in which the dramatic presence of the poet, who by himself mediating all the events, actions,

III

Probably the best, and indisputably, the most thorough commentary on the complete works of Virgil is that of the Spanish Jesuit humanist Juan Luis de La Cerda (1558–1643).⁴² The three volumes, consisting of 1,760 folio pages run to nearly three million words. La Cerda's compendious work still commands the attention of serious Virgilian scholars.⁴³ The format of the commentary is a familiar one – a section of usually eight or so verses from the poem, followed by the *Argumentum*, a brief summary of the excerpt, a sustained passage of *Explicatio* which elaborates on its meaning, and then a series of lengthy *Notae* on particular lemmata from the passage. These Notes adduce a variety of sources, comparanda, testimonies from scholars, as well as historical, stylistic and etymological observations.

The treatment of the final verses of the poem presents a deviation from La Cerda's standard practice.⁴⁴ The *Argumentum* given for this passage (12.940–52) is not, as it usually is, a straight summary: it also contains an element of interpretation and evaluation:

Mors Turni ueluti in Pallantis uictimam, quo nobili obitu clauditur illustrissimum opus Aeneidos.

The death of Turnus as a victim of Pallas: with this noble passing the most eminent work of the *Aeneid* is brought to a close.

The eminence of the *Aeneid* seems to be related to the noble way in which it ends. The notion of Turnus as a *victima* is elaborated in the *Explicatio* on verses 12.940–52, with a quotation from Scaliger's *Poetics*: 'It is as though he is offered as a victim in a sacrifice for the dead, not as an enemy in war, not as a rival for his wife, not as a ravager of his fortunes who keeps him from his fated kingdom.' The point is further emphasised in this discursive *Explicatio*:

Geminatio illa *Pallas*, *Pallas*, indicat indignationem Aeneae, & *scelerato ex sanguine* quasi scel' admiserit Turnus in pueri Pallantis caede. Iustissimus est ergo, ut ab scelerato homine poenas repetat etiam pius. hoc enim a pietate non est.

characters and speeches in fact renders them somewhat remote; to (ii) general principle – we must suppose that responses were no more uniform in antiquity than they are now; to (iii) ancient critics: Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 4.6.11–12 on *addubitatio* in Virgil could imply that the pathos engineered by the device is *embedded* rather than affective, given that Macrobius regards all aporetic *quid agat?*-type questions as being voiced by the poet. Fornara (1983) 126 suggests that *surprise* was the specific pleasurable emotion induced by history according to the peripatetic historian Duris of Samos.

⁴² The first volume of his commentary – on the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* – was published in 1608; the second and third on the *Aeneid* were first published in 1617. Further editions followed. See Caro (1950) 270–8, and Lawrance (1994).

⁴³ For recent Virgilian commentaries which have explicitly made use of La Cerda see n. 11 above; cf. Van Sickle (1995). Heyne (1729–1812) himself characterised La Cerda's endeavours as *disertissimos, eruditissimos et luculentissimos* (Lemaire's edn., vol. 7, 493).

⁴⁴ Cf. Laird (2002b).

That twinning of ‘Pallas, Pallas’ indicates the *indignatio* of Aeneas and ‘*from his villainous blood*’ suggests Turnus should admit his crime in the murder of Pallas. He is most righteous in that even a pious man should exact punishment from a criminal. This is not straying from *pietas*.

Iustissimus est (‘He is most righteous’) here applies to Aeneas. But that moral value-judgment will be extended to Virgil. That link between hero and poet becomes more obvious and acquires more significance as La Cerda’s reading of the end of poem is developed in the two further excerpts quoted below.

A further Note (12) on *Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas immolat*, provides a series of parallels and precedents of sacrificial killing from ancient literature. These include Livy 3 (Verginius’ ‘consecration’ of Appius at 3.348), and, still more significantly, Euripides’ *Herakles*. These observations have some correspondence with the Girardian interpretation of the *Aeneid*’s close offered by Philip Hardie in *The epic successors of Virgil*:

In Aeneas’ final outburst of violence and anger the institutionally sanctioned sacrifice of animals is replaced with (substituted by) the more powerful sacrifice of a man. *Finis*. Within *Aeneid* 12 we are shown the violence that results from the breakdown of an established sacrificial order, leading to a chaos that is only resolved through the ‘victimization’ of one of the parties to that violence. We have, in other words, an almost too neatly schematic dramatization of René Girard’s theory of the ‘sacrificial crisis’ ...⁴⁵

Hardie’s explanation of Girard’s analysis – developed largely through an interpretation of Greek tragedy – coincides quite remarkably with La Cerda’s Euripidean comparison, but there the analogy stops. For Hardie, the state of affairs is far from agreeable:

Virgil narrates a senseless vengeance-killing, which is masked in the words of the killer as a sacrifice, but whose true nature many readers experience as quite other. As sacrifice the death of Turnus represents a reimposition of order; but as uncontrolled rage, revenge pure and simple rather than the judicial retribution envisaged by the terms of the treaty, it retains its potential to repeat itself in fresh outbursts of chaotic anger ...⁴⁶

La Cerda, on the other hand is sanguine about the despatching of Turnus, although he is aware that readers before him have had trouble with it: ‘Several critics worry about this question: should Aeneas as a most pious man have shown such rage against his prostrate enemy or should he have rather spared him?’ he asks, opening his note on verse 950 (*Ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit*). His firm response makes another recourse to tragedy – this time to Aristotle’s theory of tragedy in the *Poetics*:⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Hardie (1993) 20–1.

⁴⁶ Hardie (1993) 21.

⁴⁷ La Cerda here makes reference to Aristotle’s discussion of excellence in tragedy with respect to plot in *Poetics* 13–14: 1453a–54a.

puto nulla in re admirabiliorem fuisse Virgilium, quam in Turni caede. Epica omnis (quale est opus Virgilianum) ad Tragicam refertur, imo ipsa Epica mera est Tragoedia, auctore Aristotele, Inde est, ut e duabus principibus personis (in Homero sunt Achilles, atque Hector; in Virgilio Aeneas, ac Turnus) altera debeat cadere in necessario acie ad explicandam perfectam Tragicam. Ita uero in re hac se gessit Virgilius, ut satis nequeam mirari. Tragica omnis destinatur ad affectus mouendos, & excitanda πάθη. Hinc est, ut Turnum descripserit in toto opere nobilissimum, fortissimum, generosissimum, pulcherrimum, magna aggredientem, & maiora molientem, ut cum postea in acie cadat, permoueatur qui legit, horreatque ad atrocem caedem, & indignam tanto Principe fortunam: nam nisi, qui cadit, abundet bonis animi aut corporis, nullum excitabitur πάθη. Sed considerandum diligentissime, ut ita affectus hic excitetur, ut qui cadit non dignior iudicetur uictore ipso: hoc enim iam esset monstrum in Tragica, aut Epica. Hinc est, ut Aeneas Virg. intulerit in toto opere non solum nobilissimum, fortissimum, generosissimum, pulcherrimum ut Turnum sed insuper dederit Aeneae pietatem, religionem, prudentiam, iustitiam, fidem, & uirtutes reliquas, quae sparsae in tota Aeneide ... Dignus erat Turnus uita, sed Aeneas dignior ...

I do not think Virgil has ever been more worthy of admiration than he is here in the killing of Turnus. All Epic (such is Virgil's work) bears on Tragedy; indeed epic is part tragedy according to Aristotle. Hence it is the case that from the two leading characters (in Homer, Achilles and Hector; in Virgil, Aeneas and Turnus) one must inevitably fall in battle for the complete tragedy to be unfolded. Virgil has so conducted himself that I cannot be amazed enough. All tragedy is supposed to arouse emotions and excite *pathe*. So it is the case that he should have described Turnus throughout the work as most noble, most brave, generous, beautiful, advancing on great endeavours and struggling against greater ones, so that when he afterwards falls in battle, any reader is moved and shudders at his grim death and fate unworthy of such a great leader: for if the character who dies is not endowed with a good physique and spirit, no *pathe* will be aroused. But one should consider very carefully how this emotion is to be aroused, as the one who dies should not be deemed worthier than the victor himself – for this would be grotesque, whether in tragedy or in epic. So it is that Virgil throughout his poem has not only made Aeneas very noble, brave, generous, and beautiful like Turnus, but over and above he has given Aeneas piety, religion, prudence, justice, loyalty and those other virtues which are strewn through the *Aeneid* ... Turnus is worthy of life, but Aeneas more worthy...

There is a familiar paradox: this commentator talks of *pathe* and emotions being aroused but the arousal leads to *admiratio* and a story that is well told. This is reminiscent of Aristotle's use of the word ἡδονή (pleasure) to denote the tragic effect in the

Poetics.⁴⁸ Meanwhile Virgil is to be admired (*admirabilioem*) for the way he has *acted* by ending the poem in this way (*in re hac se gessit Virgilius*). Both that paradox and the characterisation of Virgil are illuminated by the next stage of the argument. This brings to further prominence La Cerda's concern with the *poet's* important rôle in the poem, as well as that of the characters:

Aduoco ad exemplum duos uiros, qui errarunt, ut inde teneas prudentiam Maronis. In uno peccauit Hom. in altero Ludo Ariost. Vir alioquin admirabilis Hom. ergo cum assumpserit Achillem atque Hectorem, etiamnum post tot secula Lector dubitat, uter dignior uita fuerit, &, si me consulis, dignior certe Hector. Nam Achilles saepe impius inducitur, & etiam supra modum mollis, cum lachrymis praeter decorum, aliquando uecors, temerarius, furiosus, praeceps, factitans digna indignaque, fanda & infanda: cum contra Hector prius sit & religiosus, nunquam mollis, non lacrymabundus temperatus, mitis, & prudens, ac iustus: in fortitudine uero certe pares, ac proinde dignior uita Hector iudicabatur, & Homeri fabula non est bene morata. Pergo ad alterum. Debet Epica definere in Tragicam, & caedem ad promouendum affectum, quem nullum mouet Ariostus. Nam quale est, ut ad extremam caedem seruauerit Rodamontum, quem Ruggierus interficit, hominem temerarium, praecipitem, stupratorem uirginum, impium, abominandum ac nulla praeditum uirtute, tantum belluinis uiribus praestantem? Hoc tantum abest ab excitando affectu, ut potius, qui legunt, gaudeant tantam pestem abolitam. Vide, ut ab utro scopulo Virgilius cauerit.

I invoke as an example two men who have erred, so that you may comprehend Virgil's prudence. Homer has sinned in one way, Ariosto in another. Homer is otherwise admirable so when he takes up Achilles and Hector, even after so many centuries, the reader is in doubt as to which of the two is more worthy of life, and if you ask me, Hector is certainly more deserving. For Achilles is often presented as impious, soft beyond the limit, with tears that are beyond acceptability, sometimes silly, rash, frenzied, hasty, constantly doing things worthy and unworthy, speakable and unspeakable, whilst Hector is mainly dutiful, never soft, not prone to tears, temperate, gentle, prudent, and just. In bravery Hector is certainly equal to Achilles, and thus Hector was judged worthier of life and Homer's story is not well resolved.

I move to the other case. Epic should end in tragedy and the death should prompt emotion, which Ariosto does not produce. For what kind of poem is it that saves for the final kill Rodamonto, whom Ruggiero slays, a man who is rash, impulsive, a corruptor of virgins, impious, hated, endowed with no virtue, and excelling in monstrous strength. That ending is so far from arousing emotion that those who read it are delighted that such a nuisance has been wiped out. See how Virgil has been careful to avoid either of these crags.

⁴⁸ *Poetics* 4:1448b on mimesis and pleasure. 6:1449b on catharsis, and 7–9:1450b–51a on pleasure in relation to plot.

It is the *uirtus* of *Virgil* that is celebrated here. The poet is figured not just as a moral agent, who has clung to an Aristotelian mean, avoiding the excesses perpetrated by Homer in the *Iliad* on the one hand and by the Italian Ariosto in *Orlando Furioso* on the other, but as a kind of epic hero who has navigated successfully between two rocks (*ab utro scopulo Virgilius cauerit*). La Cerda's peroration, on the snug closing of the poem with a sacrifice, is decisive:

non Aeneas, sed te Pallas immolat. Nihil blandius mortalium excogitabunt ingenia. Nam illud, parcere prostrato, contra legem est Epicae in extremo actu. Deinde fractori foederis, ac pacis turbatori parcere, contra leges est humanas ac diuinas. Quid ille, si uiueret? nonne iterum arderent belli incendia? Ergo fas fuit, ius fuit illum interfici. Quid tu uolebas, qui Virgilio detrahis? an ut Turnus febricitans in lecto moreretur? Quis comprimeret illam belli scintillam praesertim cum uideret delicias suas Lauiniam in alterius sinu? Certe si uiuus Turnus euaderet, neque Aeneas bello suo, neque Virgilius suo operi finem adhibuisset.

It is not Aeneas but Pallas who sacrifices you. Mortal talents will never come up with anything more delightful than this. For that idea of *sparing the fallen* is against the law of Epic in its final act. To spare a treaty-breaker, a disruptor of peace is also against human and divine law. And what if Turnus were to live? Surely the flames of war would burn again? So it was right, just, for him to be killed. What did you want, you who criticise Virgil? For Turnus to linger on, sick in bed? What man would suppress the spark of war especially when he saw his darling Lavinia in someone else's lap? Surely if Turnus ended up alive, Aeneas would not have found an end to his war, nor Virgil to his work.

Such a cheerful view of the ending of the *Aeneid* can be explained (at least in part) by its situation in the imperialist Spanish Golden Age: La Cerda was the Professor of Rhetoric in the court of Philip III.⁴⁹ The comments he makes on Anchises' articulation of the *Pax Augusta* at the end of *Aeneid* 6 could imply that comparison of his own role to a writer in Augustus' circle has not escaped him.⁵⁰ Perusing this commentary as a whole, it becomes clear that a great deal of careful emphasis is given to the notion of *uirtus*: Aeneas possesses it, Virgil possesses it, but Turnus, for all his good qualities, does not. And, significantly, in a rare passage where he makes an unusually explicit

⁴⁹ For biographical details cf. Stevens (1945) and Simón-Díaz (1944).

⁵⁰ *Explicatio* on *Aen.* 6.847–53 *Arrogat Romanis artem imperandi, pacificandi uniuersa, parcendi subiectis, superbos debellandi. Quod procul dubio fecit suo adulans Augusto, qui claruit his artibus, non quod reuera gentes aliae in aliis artibus superarent Romanos.* ('He attributes to the Romans the art of ruling, of pacifying all realms, of sparing the subjected, of making war on the proud. It is more than clear he did this to flatter his dear Augustus, who was pre-eminent in these arts, not because [he thought] other peoples really outdid the Romans in the other arts.')

reference to his own time, La Cerda attributes *uirtus* specifically to the Spaniards. This is part of a Note on the first *Georgic*:⁵¹

Hanc [terram] magno errore putauerunt ueteres esse inhabitabilem. Otiosi sit contrarium probare in tanto luce huius aevi, cum praesertim constant omnibus nauigationes Hispanorum, qui uere nunc terrarum domini, perlustrato ab ipsis et perdomito orbe nouo, enauigatis nouis aequoribus et usque in hoc aeuum inaccessibleis: adeo gens nostra labore pertinax, praestans uirtute, cui qui inuident uirtuti inuident.

La Cerda on *Georgics* 1.234, Nota 3

The ancients to their great error thought this land was uninhabitable. It is otiose to prove the contrary in the great light of this age, when all agree that the voyages of the Spaniards, who are really masters of the earth, have thoroughly illuminated and thoroughly subdued the new world, navigating new seas utterly unreached right up to this age: our people so persistent in their endeavours and excelling in *uirtus*. Those who envy that envy *uirtus* itself.

Modern ‘pessimistic’ readings of Virgil (or even some relatively recent ‘optimistic’ readings), which find anxiety and ambiguity in the message of the *Aeneid* can equally be explained, in part, by the situation of the anxieties and ambiguities of liberal humanism itself in a post-colonial era.⁵²

However, La Cerda’s kind of reading may be better protected in that it acknowledges the *embedded* theatricality of the poem. La Cerda’s emphases at the end of the *Aeneid*, on the intradiegetic element of sacrifice and on the extradiegetic element of Virgil’s agency, resolve for us the paradox of a finale which elicits tragic emotions and which is at the same time *admirabilis*; a poem whose ending contains a brutal killing but which at the same time could not be more delightful (*nihil blandius*). The paradox is perhaps more visible to contemporary readers. This is not just because of the ideological horizons of our own climate of reception, mentioned above. The paradox is also more visible because of the pervasiveness, in our own climate of reception, of a presupposition about poetics to which I drew attention at the opening of this discussion. The imposition of a categorical division between narrator and character has obscured our realisation that in reading the *Aeneid* we are not directly apprehending a tragedy. This division was less conspicuous to La Cerda, as his remarks clearly indicate. For him, the tragedy is mediated to us indirectly by Virgil, practitioner of *uirtus*, and it is closed and contained by Virgil. For La Cerda, Virgil is an *actor* as well as an *auctor*.

⁵¹ *Geo.* 1.233–4: *quinque tenent caelum zonae; quarum una corusco | semper sole rubens et torrida semper ab igni* (‘Five zones are under heaven: of them one is always red with the blistering sun and always scorched by fire.’)

⁵² Cf. Quint (1993); Thomas (2001); Clausen (1995). A book in progress by Craig Kallendorf will make a case for Virgilian pessimism in neo-Latin Columbus epics and Ercilla’s *La Araucana*.

IV

The review of parts of the *Aeneid* in relation to Brechtian theory offered earlier and the account of La Cerda's critical verdicts given above are not tidily convergent. However, it should be clear that striking communities emerge between the very different perspectives outlined in the two preceding sections:

(i) Both perspectives involve a specific way of reading the poem as drama. La Cerda stands in contrast to Brecht, by valuing Aristotelian theory and by presupposing its application to epic. However, it is very clear that La Cerda is not so concerned with the dramaturgical dimension of tragedy, as he is with the theory of plot-construction in the *Poetics*. Pragmatically, La Cerda uses Aristotle to adumbrate an interpretation of the *Aeneid* which in the end appeals, as Brecht does, to its readers' sense of reason rather than to their emotions.

(ii) Both perspectives have an affinity in giving prominence to the involvement or agency of the poet-narrator in the story of the *Aeneid*. The Brechtian reading offered earlier indicates the extent to which the poet can merge with his characters, and with Aeneas in particular, to enjoy a kind of dramatic presence; La Cerda figures the Virgilian narrator as a kind of performer whose *uirtus* is more than implicitly paralleled to Aeneas' – and whose conduct, like Aeneas', can be judged accordingly.

One or two details of literary history hint that these parallels may be more than coincidental. In his second version of 'What is Epic Theatre?' (1939), Walter Benjamin outlines the precursors of Brecht's experimental drama.⁵³ Along with the emergence of the mystery play, Benjamin cites the Baroque drama of Calderón as a key step in the evolution of Epic Theatre.⁵⁴ Calderón de la Barca (1600–81) belonged to the generation after La Cerda: the substantial influence of Virgil – and of Latin diction – on this generation of Spanish poets is well attested.⁵⁵

But the connections between these perspectives can also be underlined by considering the evolution of a tradition in ancient poetics, in relation to the reading of Virgil. Servius' comments on *Bucolic* 3.1 must be the *locus classicus* in the history of Virgilian interpretation for an unequivocal distinction between poet-narrator and character:

nouimus autem tres characteres hos esse dicendi: unum, in quo tantum poeta loquitur, ut est in tribus libris georgicorum; alium dramaticum, in quo nusquam poeta loquitur, ut est in comoediis et tragoediis; tertium, mixtum, ut est in Aeneide: nam et poeta illic et introductae personae loquuntur.

⁵³ Benjamin (1998c) 17.

⁵⁴ Benjamin's only book on a single subject was not specifically a work of theory or philosophy, but *The origin of German tragic drama* (Benjamin (1977)), a study of medieval *Trauerspiel*: this taste for antiquarian theatre-studies, as well as shared Communist sympathies, cemented his literary partnership with Brecht.

⁵⁵ Cf. Curtius (1953) 333, and Laird (2002c).

We are aware of three types of [poetic] expression. In the first, only the poet speaks – this is the case in three books of the *Georgics*. The second type is dramatic in which the poet never speaks – this is the case in comedies and tragedies. The third type is mixed, as is the case in the *Aeneid*. For there, the characters who are introduced speak, as well as the poet.

These comments are well known for bequeathing to late antiquity and to later Europe a schema (found in Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a 19–28, in Plato, *Republic* 394b–c, as well as in the third-century AD grammarian Diomedes) for distinguishing between genres.⁵⁶ But it is also possible that the commentator on *Bucolic* 3 made these remarks not merely to rehearse a conventional dictum, but to dissuade his readers from conceiving of the entire Virgilian corpus as being spoken by the poet himself. Even though Plato provided the ultimate source for this discrimination, Servius' position is actually quite different: the Platonic Socrates notoriously regarded a character speaking as the poet 'pretending to be someone else' (and as reason to exclude him from his republic).⁵⁷ The wide dissemination of Aristotle's *Poetics* from the end of the fifteenth century was probably what caused the Servian–Aristotelian version of the position to prevail in Virgilian reception.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, this protocol of Platonic literary theory and – in the case of the *Republic* itself at least – Plato's own narrative practice is worth considering. Where the *Aeneid* is concerned, the distinctions between drama and epic are effaced and the poem's emotional impact is inevitably rendered more indirect, as readers and audience become aware of the mediation of the poet. This protocol must have a bearing on the two perspectives on the *Aeneid*, derived from Brecht and La Cerda, which have been presented here.⁵⁹ The inclination of modern critics of the *Aeneid* from Heinze onwards to probe the relation between the poet-narrator and his characters – in terms of *Empfindung*, empathy, or focalisation – is more remotely related to that Platonic protocol.⁶⁰ For the most part, however, modern Virgilian scholarship has continued to present the epic poet as a kind of dramatist whose narrative directly conveys the emotions and feelings of his characters in order to affect his audience.⁶¹ This presentation is of course valuable, but it is worth emphasising that Virgil is not

⁵⁶ Curtius (1953) 440–1.

⁵⁷ *Rep.* 393c.

⁵⁸ In the 1480s Barbaro and Poliziano used the *Poetics*; Valla's 1498 Latin translation was reprinted in 1515; Erasmus' Greek text was published in 1532 – from then on commentaries and translations, into Latin and the vernacular abounded. Cf. Cooper and Gudeman (1928) and Cranz (1971).

⁵⁹ For Benjamin and Brecht see notes 19 and 36 above; the influence of Plato on La Cerda is extensive, but often more implicit than explicit: cf. n. 47 for influence of Aristotle.

⁶⁰ See n. 12 above.

⁶¹ Cf. Hardie (1993) and (1997); Wigodsky (1972) contains material on Roman drama in the *Aeneid*; Fenik (1960), Muecke (1983). Conte (1986) 161–2 offers another perspective on the *Aeneid*'s dramatic quality.

just a playwright: he also has a complementary role as a performer in his own Epic Theatre.⁶²

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⁶² I am grateful to Ellen Finkelpearl, Ed Gutting, Philip Hardie, Michael Putnam, Alison Sharrock, and especially David Konstan for valuable help and criticism. Earlier versions of this argument were presented to the Celtic Classical Conference in September 2000 at UCI Maynooth, Ireland and to the Classics Departments of Brown University and UCLA in 2001. I would like to thank the Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati for the award of a Margo Tytus Fellowship in 2001–2, which enabled me to develop this paper.

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