

THE MAKING OF THE SHIELD: INSPIRATION AND REPRESSION IN THE *AENEID**

By SERGIO CASALI

The shield of Aeneas at the end of Book 8 is the culmination of the poem's 'propaganda', the political climax of the *Aeneid*. We can read the ecphrasis in optimistic mode, as Hardie and Binder did, for example;¹ or like Gurval and Putnam we can try to cast a pessimistic light even on this passage that is so obviously encomiastic and 'ideologically sound'.² However, what I shall be concerned with in this paper is not so much the shield itself as what Vergil has to say on his own composition of the shield, on the motivation of the artist in writing this encomiastic passage, on his 'inspiration', or (if you prefer) on the 'constraints' which compel him to deliver the ecphrasis. In my view Vergil gives us not only the 'propaganda' of the shield, its mannered distortion of history, its praise of those in power, together with the critical reactions to that 'propaganda' made out by pessimistic critics; he gives us also some metapropagandistic reflections on his writing of the shield as a piece of 'propaganda' and encomium, an illustration of the forces that drive an artist to write a piece of this sort (that is, his 'inspiration'), and he gives us some thoughts on the nature of the distortion and repression that are in operation here.

* Versions of this paper were presented at Keele University and at the Classical Association Conference 2000 at Bristol, in the panel 'The Constraints of Writing' with Alison Sharrock and John Henderson. I wish to thank my co-panelists, and both audiences for many interesting reactions and suggestions, especially Stephen Heyworth, Alessandro Barchiesi, Monica Gale, Roy Gibson, Philip Hardie, Duncan Kennedy, Carole Newlands. Thanks also to Stephen Scully, Costanza Mastroiacovo, and Irene Seco Serra for their helpful comments. All translations of texts are the author's own.

¹ P. Hardie, *Vergil's Aeneid. Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), 336–76; G. Binder, *Aeneas und Augustus. Interpretationen zum 8. Buch der Aeneis* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1971), 150–282. See also D. Nelis, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Leeds, 2001), 345–59.

² R. A. Gurval, *Actium and Augustus. The Politics and Emotions of Civil War* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 209–47; M. C. J. Putnam, *Vergil's Epic Designs. Ekphrasis in the Aeneid* (New Haven and London, 1998), 119–88.

Vulcan

The shield is the work of Vulcan, the divine artist. In the introduction to the ecphrasis (8.626–9), line 627, *haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aevi* ('not ignorant of the prophets or unaware of the time to come'), has posed a problem since antiquity: Servius says that 'some think this line could have been left out'. In the words of Conington, '*uatum ignarus* has created a good deal of difficulty, as it seems strange to speak of a god as taught by prophets'. He thought the problem could be avoided, however, on the grounds that 'it is evident from other passages that a god was not supposed necessarily to know the future: Venus in Book 1 owes her information to Jupiter; in Book 3 Jupiter delivers a prediction to Apollo, who delivered it in turn to the Harpy Celaeno'.³ But those cases differ from ours, and the oddity of the line may be lessened if we think of how well it applies to Vergil himself. Vulcan, creator of the shield, is like Vergil, the other creator of the shield. If we are a little surprised to find Vulcan described as 'not ignorant of *uates* (= prophets)', we can hardly deny that Vergil is 'not ignorant of *uates* (= poets)' (and he is of course 'not unaware of "future" history'). Vergil's self-annotation is nicely paralleled by a comment in Servius: *sane totus hic locus Ennianus est* ('to be sure all this passage is Ennian').⁴

As it is commonly recognized, the artist Vulcan mirrors the artist Vergil;⁵ he is one of the many 'artistic' characters in the *Aeneid* who function as figures of authorial surrogacy, and I think that in the two scenes in which Vergil narrates the commissioning of the shield and its manufacture he has some interesting things to say about the constraints of writing; and on these I shall now concentrate.

³ J. Conington (ed.), *The Works of Vergil*, vol. 3 (London, 1883³), 145–6.

⁴ Cf. P. Hardie, *Vergil. G&R New Surveys in Classics* no. 28 (Oxford, 1998), 97: 'There is a punning ambiguity in *uatum*, which may also be translated as 'poets'; the Shield of Aeneas presents itself as a visual summary of the Latin epic tradition, and of Ennius' *Annals* in particular. Vulcan knows the future history of Rome — because he has read the poets who will chronicle that history. The authority of the Vergilian text is no more or less than that of the other texts on which it draws, and which it completes'.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Putnam (n. 1), 163: 'Vergil himself, in the process of creation, is like Vulcan-Mulciber...'

The shield is ordered

Venus asks Vulcan for the arms at 8.369–406, during the night that Aeneas spends at Pallanteum. In the Odyssean structure of book 8 Aeneas' night with Evander after the first day at Pallanteum corresponds to Telemachus' night with Nestor (*Odyssey* 3.97 ff.), and Odysseus' with Eumaeus (*Odyssey* 14.520 ff.). Into this Odyssean cloth Vergil weaves an Iliadic episode, reworking the night-time visit of Thetis to Hephaestus and the god's making of armour for Achilles (*Iliad* 18.369 ff.).

In the narrative of the *Aeneid* the scene is apparently marginal: while Achilles has need of a new set of armour, because his is now in the hands of Hector, Aeneas has no such need. On the other hand, the scene is important for the allusive texture of the closing books because it advertises the identification of Aeneas with Achilles, and this will drive the action right up to the final denouement, with the vendetta against Turnus-Hector brought on by the killing of Pallas-Patroclus. The handing over of the arms is the investiture of Aeneas as a new Achilles, and this investiture has repercussions for the other characters in the poem: a new Achilles requires a new Hector, and above all, especially in the context of Pallanteum, a new Patroclus. And to cast Aeneas in the role of Achilles the avenger is to cast him also in the role of Augustus *ultor*, a successor to Hercules, *maximus ultor* ('the supreme avenger') (*Aen.* 8.201). The avenger needs someone to avenge.⁶

However, as far as the requirements of the narrative go, the main thing that the intertextuality with the *Iliad* puts into relief is the gratuitous nature of Venus' intervention in comparison with that of Thetis. Aeneas has no need of arms, since no one has taken his. The introduction of the episode acknowledges that the intervention of Venus is essentially pointless, and emphasizes this in the Freudian manner, by denying it: *At Venus haut animo nequiquam exterrita...* ('But NOT with no reason was Venus terrified...') (8.370) — at the very moment when an unnecessary episode is introduced. At the same time there is someone who wants arms: though the character Aeneas may not need the shield, Augustus does, and he receives a formidable weapon made

⁶ The hidden motif of Aeneas' imminent death flows beneath the text here too: war with Hector means death for Achilles, and Thetis gives tragic embodiment to this knowledge. In the *Aeneid* the equivalent is never explicitly expressed, but it is implied by the Homeric intertext, and it reverberates throughout the narrative of Aeneas' armour.

of words. The encomiastic thrust of the poem requires the ecphrasis in which the shield is described.⁷

In my view, the scene in which Venus requests arms from her craftsman husband can be seen as providing a self-referential representation of 'Augustus' commissioning of the artist Vergil. This suggests that Vergil engaged in a metaliterary reading of the scene in *Iliad* 18 where Thetis approaches Hephaestus for arms for her son. Hephaestus-Vulcan is the prototype of the artist as servant: he works for others and practises his craft in response to a commission. Let us examine how the work is commissioned in the *Aeneid*.

The speech with which Venus approaches Vulcan is modelled on Thetis' request of arms for Achilles at *Iliad* 18.369–467.⁸ The model is explicitly invoked by Venus herself, along with that of Aurora, who sought arms for Memnon in the *Aethiopsis*: *te filia Nerei, | te potuit lacrimis Tithonia flectere coniunx* ('the daughter of Nereus and the spouse of Tithonus did succeed in bending your will') (*Aen.* 8.383–4). This is a very pointed reminder. The circumlocution *filia Nerei* recalls with great precision the beginning of the Thetis episode in *Iliad* 18, where we find the goddess 'sitting in the depths of the sea beside her ancient father ..., and there gathered around her the goddesses, every Nereid there was in the deep sea' (18.35–8; the famous catalogue of Nereids follows). The periphrasis *Tithonia... coniunx* is an appropriate one for use by a wife who is making a request of her husband, but it perhaps also alludes to the connection between Thetis and Aurora, wife of the decrepit Tithonus, which has been anticipated at *Iliad* 18.432–5, where Thetis laments the old age of her mortal husband with words that could be adapted to the mouth of Aurora ('I was the sea nymph whom he picked out from the rest to give in marriage to a mortal, to Peleus son of Aeacus, and I put up with the bed of a man quite against my will; now he lies at home a victim of grim old age; but I suffer further ills besides this'). With the phrase *Tithonia...*

⁷ This is true especially in that Aeneas, that splendid prototype of Augustus, knows how to use the 'power of images', as when he displays the flaming Shield to his enemies at 10.272 ff., and it will not be a matter of chance that the arms of Turnus are destined to shatter against the Vulcanic arms of Aeneas.

⁸ On the fusion in the Vulcan-Venus scene of elements from *Iliad* 14.292–53 (the seduction of Hera by Zeus), *Iliad* 18.369–617 (Thetis and Hephaestus), and *Odyssey* 8.266–366 (Ares and Aphrodite), see G. N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1964), 259–62, 404–6; P. Hardie, 'Cosmological Patterns in the *Aeneid*', *PLLS* 5 (1985), 85–97, at 90–5; and on the interlacing of Homeric and Apollonian models (esp. the meeting of Hera and Athena with Venus at the beginning of *Argonautica* 3, and Eros' assault on Medea), the careful analysis of Nelis (n. 1), 339–45. On the meaning of fire imagery in this episode, see also S. Scully, 'Refining Fire in *Aeneid* 8', *Vergilius* 46 (2000), 93–113.

coniunx Venus seems to grasp the connexion between Thetis and Aurora.

But these details cannot obscure the fact that there is another Homeric model combined with this, one about which Venus keeps quiet, as one can well understand: the seduction of Zeus by Hera in *Iliad* 14.292–53. In the *Iliad* Hephaestus owes Thetis a debt of gratitude and is keen to help her. I believe that Vergil was interested by the metaliterary implications of this: it reminded him of the dynamic of the relations between patron and artist. But he goes further: the artist who is asked to produce the Shield of Aeneas, the Augustan climax of the *Aeneid*, has to be seduced and deceived before he is persuaded to undertake the work.⁹

Venus enters the ‘golden bedroom of her husband’ (*thalamoque... coniugis aureo*, 8.372), and this immediately recalls the story of the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite in the song of Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8.266–366 — this echo affects the whole scene. Venus enters the room and ‘inspires divine love with her words’, *dictis diuinum adspirat amorem* (8.373). The language reveals Venus as the ‘bringer of inspiration’.¹⁰ Above all, the phrase recalls Lucretius, *D.R.N.* 1.28 *quo magis aeternum da dictis, diua, leporem* (‘Therefore all the more give to my speech, goddess, an eternal charm’). Thus we find evoked the scene of love between Venus and Mars in the following lines of the proem (*D.R.N.* 1.29–40); and there will be a reprise of this at the end of the encounter between Venus and Vulcan, in lines 404–6. The presence of the adulterous relationship between Venus and Mars behind this scene of conjugal love underlines the ironic implications of Venus’ request to her husband Vulcan for arms for her illegitimate son, as well as reminding us once more of the narrative of Ares and Aphrodite in *Odyssey* 8. But the intertextuality has other implications: we are reminded not only of Venus as adulteress but also of her role as giver of inspiration. Lucretius calls on Venus ‘mother of the descendants of Aeneas’ to breathe life into the *De rerum natura*. The *dicta* of Lucretius

⁹ The intertextuality of the seduction of Vulcan by Venus with Eros’ assault on Medea in *Argonautica* 3, illustrated by Nelis (n. 1), 339–41, reinforces the picture of Vulcan as a victim of Venus’ power: ‘As she seduces Vulcan (...), Venus recalls Hera, Eros and Aphrodite, the three deities responsible for Medea’s passion. In turn, Vulcan, as victim of erotic power, takes Medea’s role’ (341).

¹⁰ Cf. *Aen.* 9.525 *uos, o Calliope, precor, adspirate canenti* (‘I beg you, Calliope, inspire me with the song’); Ovid, *Met.* 1.2–3 *di, coeptis ... | adspirate meis* (‘gods, inspire my undertaking’), where A. Barchiesi (ed.), *Ovidio. Metamorfosi*, vol. 1, Books 1–2 (Milan, 2005), 140–1, recalls the image of Augustus as ‘protector of the “course” of the work’ in *Georgics* 1.40 *da facilem cursum atque audacibus adnue coeptis* (‘grant me an easy course and support my bold undertaking’).

1.28 are 'my words', the words of Lucretius, which aim at a goal diametrically opposed to that of the *Aeneid*, in particular of the Shield. The reader is sent back to a context in which Venus, *Aeneadum genetrix*, is set up as an opposite of Mars, as a goddess of peace, who asks the god of war to provide the Romans with *placidam pacem* (D.R.N. 1.40). In the *Aeneid* Venus is herself disturbed by the war, and approaches her husband Vulcan for arms. One artist, Lucretius, asks Venus to use her divine power and beauty to assist the composition of a poem that will engender peace. In Vergil it is Venus who uses her divine power and beauty to persuade another artist, Vulcan, to make weapons of war, and so gets the poet Vergil to produce weapons of 'propaganda'. Lucretius summons Venus; Vulcan/Vergil is summoned himself.

Lucretius has a passionate personal interest in the content of his own *dicta*. Vulcan is interested only in the sexual pleasure he receives as payment from Venus. Since antiquity critics have shown unease about this scene. The character Evangelus in Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1.24.6–7) thought the immorality of the passage was one of the reasons why Vergil wanted to burn the *Aeneid*. Readers such as Lyne and Putnam have brought out the tensions here, with the wife seeking armour from her husband for a son fathered by one of her lovers.¹¹ Even more disquieting is what the passage has to say about the motivation of the artist. Vulcan participates actively in the construction of the *Aeneid*. But he does so only after hesitation (*cunctantem*, 388), and to obtain something that has nothing to do with his work. Aeneas will use the divine arms against Turnus (whose sword shatters like ice at 12.731–41: there is no fighting against the flow of the text); he will also in Book 10 (260–2) use the Shield for the power of its images — a true ancestor of Augustus. In turn the *Aeneid* uses the ecphrasis of the Shield as the culmination of its 'propaganda' of power. But Vulcan gets involved so that he can go to bed with Venus: the artist's hesitation is overcome by the promise of a reward.¹² He is inspired by Venus' embrace: the sexual desire that possesses the god is indistinguishable from the poetic inspiration that takes hold of the artist: *ille repente | accepit solitam flammam, notusque medullas | intrauit calor et labefacta per ossa cucurrit* ('suddenly he received the usual flame, and

¹¹ R. O. A. M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1987), 35–44; M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 136–41, and (n. 1), 169–80.

¹² By the way, 'this is the reverse of the situation in love elegy, where poet-craftsmen are in the supplicant position and are forever trying to exchange finished or promised poems for sex (with Cynthia, Corinna, etc.)' (R. Gibson, *per litt.*).

the well-known heat pierced into his marrow, coursing through his weakened bones') (8.388–90). (The image of lightning follows, and this we will come on to.) The inspiration that comes from the patron is a trick: *sensit laeta dolis et formae conscia coniunx* ('his wife knew, happy in her wiles and aware of her beauty') (8.393), with an allusion to the deceit of Hera in *Iliad* 14.329. The artist is seduced and deceived.

We are invited to read the response of Vulcan as the classic (*solitam flammam, notusque ... calor*) response of an artist to the blandishments of power. While the inspirational Venus of Lucretius uses love to conquer the god of war (*aeterno deuictus uulnere amoris*, 'vanquished by the eternal wound of love': *D.R.N.* 1.34), Vergil's Venus inspires the artist to make armour for war: *tum pater aeterno fatur deuinctus amore* ('then Father Vulcan, bound to her by eternal love, replies...') (8.394).¹³ Lucretius invites Venus to be his 'ally' and 'helper' in writing the poem for its addressee 'the son of the Memmii': *te sociam studeo scribendis uersibus esse | quos ego de rerum natura pangere conor | Memmiadae nostro...* ('you I desire as partner in writing the verses, which I am trying to compose on the nature of things, for my friend Memmius...') (*D.R.N.* 1.24–6). To its erotic implication *sociam* adds philosophical and military connotations: in context the military note is highly paradoxical.¹⁴ As Hardie puts it, 'the illuminating and sweetly seductive effects of Venus are precisely those that Lucretius claims for his own expository and poetic powers, which themselves derive from the love and illumination that the poet draws from his philosophical (Epicurus) and poetic (the Muses) deities'.¹⁵ Here too Vulcan in manufacturing the armour and Vergil in composing his anti-*De rerum natura* both want to have Venus as *socia*. But the interest is not so much in what he has to write, as in the relationship with Venus more generally. 'Amor is love for his subject-matter, love for his poetry [...], but also literally sexual love, the subject of the preceding seventy-odd lines': Hardie again, speaking about *Georgics* 3.285.¹⁶ This could still be the case in the didactic poem; but not in the epic vehicle for 'propaganda'. The object of Venus' activity is no longer the god of war, but the craftsman. In the *De rerum natura* the artist invokes Venus to 'conquer' Mars; in the *Aeneid* Venus 'binds' the

¹³ Cf. G. Highet, *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton, 1972), 236.

¹⁴ For *socius* in an erotic sense, cf. J. C. McKeown (Liverpool, 1989), on Ovid, *Amores* 1.9.6.

¹⁵ Hardie (n. 1), 165–6.

¹⁶ Hardie (n. 1), 166.

artist.¹⁷ Inspiration binds, functions as a constraint. The craftsman wants sex before he will do a job in which he had no former interest. At this point the reader of the *Aeneid* might even think of the invocation that marks the second half of the poem, the invocation to Erato, which has always puzzled readers on the grounds that the Muse of love ought not to serve as the inspiration for material (*horrida bella* etc.) which seems to have nothing to do with love. Perhaps love here should be understood as desire, the desire for something quite unconnected with the subject in hand.

Vulcan, 'bound' by the beauty of Venus, says that he would have been willing to provide arms for the Trojans even during the Trojan War, if Venus had asked him. This responds to the words of Venus: during the Trojan War, she did not call upon Vulcan's help to make arms for the Trojans (376–7); but Hephaestus did provide armour to Thetis for Achilles, and to Aurora for Memnon, that is indifferently to a Greek and to an ally of the Trojans. Vergil thus draws attention to the willingness of the artist to put himself at the disposal of any client. In this context, modelled on *Iliad* 18, we should feel in full the paradox that the Homeric Hephaestus might have provided arms to Aphrodite for her son Aeneas. The reader of the *Iliad* knows that there is a very good reason why Hephaestus has not given armour to his wife Aphrodite: in the *Iliad* the wife of Hephaestus is not Aphrodite, but Charis, who welcomes Thetis into her home in the very episode that is the principal model for Vergil here (*Iliad* 18.382 ff.). Charis is chosen as Hephaestus's wife to avoid the awkwardness that would have been caused by having Aphrodite in the role: 'Aphrodite as Hephaistos' wife (as in *Odyssey* 8.269–70) would be an embarrassment here because of her pro-Trojan bias, so "Grace" is substituted, a fitting consort for a craftsman' (M. W. Edwards [Cambridge, 1991] on *Iliad* 18.382). Hephaestus could not have made arms for Achilles and Aeneas at the same time. But the craftsman of the *Aeneid* has no scruples of this kind, being bound by sexual attraction (8.400–4).

While Vulcan is making promises to Venus (*quidquid in arte mea possum promittere curae...*, 'whatever care I can promise you in my art...') (8.401), Vergil is on the point of redeeming the promise he made to Augustus in the poem of *Georgics* 3: *in medio mihi Caesar*

¹⁷ *deuinctus* (*deuictus* is a banalization of *P²* and some recentiores) corresponds precisely to the *deuictus* of Lucretius. In Lucretius Mars, the victorious god of war, is paradoxically 'conquered' by love; in Vergil, Vulcan, the god who in the song of Demodocus 'binds' his adulterous wife and her lover Ares, is here paradoxically 'bound' by love: see Lyne (n. 11), 41.

erit... ('in the middle I will have Caesar...') (*Geo.* 3.16); *in medio... Actia bella... hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar...* ('in the middle... the Actian war..., on one side Augustus Caesar, leading the Italians into battle...') (*Aen.* 8.675–8). The *Aeneid* as a whole is the realization of this promise, but the Shield is so in the most literal manner. The stress given to the Shield as a 'promised gift' (8.401, 530–6, 612) recalls the notion of 'promised verses' (as the title of White's book has it), which are produced by writers bound to imperial power.

The scene of love between Venus and Vulcan is still reminiscent of the Lucretian picture of Venus and Mars as it ends: cf. in particular *coniugis infusus gremio* ('relaxed upon the breast of his wife') (*Aen.* 8.406), and *in gremium qui saepe tuum se | reicit* ('he who often drops onto your breast') (*D.R.N.* 1.33–4); *hunc tu, diua, tuo recubantem corpore sancto | circumfusa super...* ('When, goddess, he rests on your sacred body, you, embracing him...') (*D.R.N.* 1.38–9). In addition the closing *placidumque petiuit | ... soporem* ('he sought peaceful sleep') (*Aen.* 8.406) reworks Lucretius's conclusion, *petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem* ('and ask for the Romans, noble goddess, a quiet peace') (*D.R.N.* 1.40). The adulterous scene in Lucretius closes with Venus 'seeking calm peace' for the Romans; the conjugal encounter in Vergil finishes with Vulcan 'seeking calm sleep' after the embrace.

The scene in which Venus requests arms from her craftsman husband thus gives us a self-reflexive representation of the relationship between Augustan patronage and the poet Vergil. The creation of the shield is also the creation of the eventual ecphrasis. Vulcan is invited to furnish Aeneas with armour; the artist will put on the shield an Augustan vision of Roman history, culminating in the representation of the battle of Actium and of Augustus' triumph. The arms have been promised to Aeneas by Venus; the representation of Augustus' victory has been promised to the *princeps* by Vergil in the proem to *Georgics* 3. The craftsman makes arms for the descendants of Venus. In the night Vulcan spends with Venus Vergil vividly depicts the way in which he has 'got into bed' with the Augustan regime, the way in which he is bound by Augustan power. The artist hesitates, but is seduced and overcome by the offer of payment, described as sexual gratification, but also as a deceit. Venus is no longer the ally invoked by an artist for a poem of peace; now she calls on the artist, and her inspiration is a constraint that exacts a poem of war. The artist had no former

interest in the message of his work, which is executed simply for 'payment'.¹⁸

Let's follow Vulcan into his workshop, where we find a complex image of the laboratory of the epic poet.

The spinning housewife

To illustrate the pre-dawn hour at which Vulcan rises, Vergil describes a scene from everyday life. At the end, in verses 414–15, this turns into a proper simile:

*inde ubi prima quies medio iam noctis abactae
curriculo expulerat somnum, cum femina primum,
cui tolerare colo uitam tenuique Minerua
impositum, cinerem et sopitos suscitāt ignis
noctem addens operi, famulasque ad lumina longo
exercet penso, castum ut seruire cubile
coniugis et possit paruos educere natos:
haud secus ignipotens nec tempore segnior illo
mollibus e stratis opera ad fabrilis surgit.*

Then, in the mid course of the now departing night, when the first rest had driven out sleep, at the time when a woman, whose task it is to support life by means of the distaff and Minerva's slender work, pokes the ashes and the slumbering embers, adding night-time to her labour, and by that lamplight prompts her servants to a long stint, to preserve the chastity of her husband's bed and raise her little children: not otherwise nor more sluggishly than she at that time, the Lord of fire rises from his soft blankets to labour at his forge. Vergil, *Aen.* 8.407–15

The picture is based on three earlier similes:¹⁹ (i) Homer, *Iliad* 12.433–6: the battle between the Achaeans and the Trojans is as evenly balanced, 'as the scales in which an honest working-woman balances the wool against the weights *so she may earn her tiny pittance*

¹⁸ I put 'payment' in inverted commas, but, as the spinning housewife simile may suggest (see below), we might even think that Vergil wants us to reflect on the very concrete advantages court poetry can bring to the compliant artist; for ancient testimonies about Augustus' generosity to Vergil, see P. White, *Promised Verse. Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1993), 276 n. 21 and n. 22. See esp. Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.245–7 with ps.-Acro ad loc., according to which both Vergil and Varius had received 1,000,000 sesterces from Augustus. According to Suetonius-Donatus, *Vita Verg.* 13 at his death Vergil had a patrimony of 10,000,000 sesterces *ex liberalitate amicorum* ('from the generosity of friends'). Again Suetonius-Donatus 12 informs us that Vergil *bona autem cuiusdam exulantis offerente Augusto non sustinuit accipere* ('he did not accept to receive the possessions of a certain exile, which Augustus was offering him'). Martial 8.55 is also a suggestive reading.

¹⁹ Cf. also Nelis (n. 1) 341–2.

for her children' (cf. *ut... possit paruos educere natos*: 8.413). (ii) Apollonius, *Argonautica* 3.291–7: the fire of love that burns in the heart of Medea is like the flame that a night-time spinner is kindling: 'As a working woman, who makes her living by plying wool, *heaps dry kindling over a smouldering log* (cf. *sopitos suscitāt ignis*: 8.410), so she may make the night blaze beneath her roof, *when she has woken early*: the flame rises amazingly from the little log and burns up all the twigs; in just this way terrible Eros crept into her heart and blazed away in secret.' (iii) Apollonius, *Argonautica* 4.1061–7: Medea is in Phaeacia, afraid of the arrival of a delegation of Colchians, and despite the reassurances of the Argonauts she cannot sleep: the anguish of Medea is like the pain of 'a hard-working woman who plies her spindle deep into the night; *her husband is dead and her children whimper around her*, while tears trickle down her cheeks as she thinks how miserable her lot is: so Medea's cheeks were wet, and her heart was tormented by sharp feelings of agony'.²⁰ There are elements of all three similes in Vergil. *Femina* picks up *γυνή* from all three; like the women in (i) and (ii) she is explicitly forced to work for her living; though unlike her predecessors she has servants who work for her. Under the influence of (iii) we might think that the woman is a widow, who 'preserves the chastity of her husband's bed' in choosing not to remarry, in accordance with the Roman ideal of the *uniuira*.²¹ The simile applies to Vulcan with great precision and irony: the woman kindles the fire (*sopitos suscitāt ignes*: 8.410), and then works herself and her slaves hard at spinning, 'to preserve the chastity of her husband's bed and raise her little children'. Vulcan also has something to do with fire (*ignipotens*: 8.414), and works himself and the Cyclopes hard at forging a shield, so that his wife can assist *her* son. Though that son, Aeneas, has been born out of wedlock, Vulcan's own bed is entirely chaste. The picture of the woman spinning also reflects the wider context, the humble welcome that Aeneas is receiving at the hands of the obliging Evander.²² The obvious irony lying in the parallelism between Vulcan the cuckold and the chaste spinning woman, between the 'golden bed' where Vulcan entrapped Mars and Venus and the

²⁰ On the grim dramatic irony in Apollonius 4.1061–7 see B. Pavlock, 'The Hero and the Erotic in *Aeneid* 7–12', *Vergilius* 38 (1992), 72–87, at 81–2, who also comments on its relevance for the interpretation of Vergil's passage.

²¹ Or alternatively, we may think that 'the mention of the husband (*coniugis*) inverts *Argonautica* 4.1064 where the woman is a widow' (Nelis [n. 1], 342).

²² Cf. also G. Williams, *Technique and Ideas in the Aeneid* (New Haven-London, 1983), 126–8 (contrast the spinning woman and Venus); Lyne (n. 11), 42–3 (the simile illustrates the change of sexual role undergone by the erotically humiliated Vulcan).

woman's *castum ... cubile*, furthermore undermines the Augustan meaning which is inscribed into this vignette of sober family work.²³

I would also like to draw attention to some metaliterary implications.

(i) Vulcan is about to produce an object that will be a kind of narrative; cf. *non enarrabile textum* ('an indescribable framework') (8.625); spinning is a frequent metaphor for narration. In addition, *tenui... Minerua* comments on the subtlety of the intertextual tour-de-force created by a typically Alexandrian, Apollonian simile, which is paradoxically incorporated into the Ennian context of the Shield.²⁴

(ii) Further: one model of the Shield of Aeneas will turn out to be the cloak of Jason in Apollonius 1.730–67: a woven artefact. The ecphrasis of the Shield will keep the cloak much in mind;²⁵ but its presence is most felt in the part of the context that we are now considering. The first of the seven scenes on the cloak (the Cyclopes making a thunderbolt for Zeus: *Argonautica* 1.730–4) reappears only slightly reworked in the picture of Vulcan's workshop (8.426–32). The third scene shows us Aphrodite using the shield of her lover Ares as a mirror. If the Venus of Vergil wanted to see herself in Aeneas' Shield, she would not need a reflection: she is there in person, but fighting at Actium alongside Minerva and Mars (8.699); the Venus who pacifies Mars in Apollonius (and Lucretius, as we have seen) has thus been utterly transformed.

The creator of Jason's cloak was Minerva: *tenui... Minerua* thus recalls one of the models for the Shield.

(iii) I have been arguing that Vulcan, 'bound' by the seductive power of Venus, corresponds to Vergil in his role as courtier, 'bound' by the seductions of power, the power of a descendant of Venus. In the simile the woman who must spin is equivalent to Vulcan, who must forge a shield, and in turn to Vergil, who must write the Shield. The burden of making a living has been placed on her (*tolerare coluitam ... | impositum*: 8.409–10), and she has to make her living by spinning, that common image of poetic composition. She works to

²³ Cf. for example B. W. Boyd, 'Vergil's Camilla and the Traditions of Catalogue and Ecphrasis', *AJP* 113 (1992), 213–34, at 217: 'So Vulcan hurries to support Aeneas' case, acting to preserve, Vergil suggests, the Roman *familia* yet to come'; K. W. Gransden (Cambridge, 1976), 138, on 8.408–13: 'the woman's children symbolise the Romans whose history will be shown on the shield'.

²⁴ For *tenuis* recalling the Callimachean λεπτός (Callim. *Epigr.* 27.3 = *A.P.* 9.507.3) and λεπταλέος (Callim. *Aitia* fr. 1.24) ('fine, thin'), cf. e.g. Horace, *Ep.* 2.1.225 *tenui deducta poemata filo* ('poems spun with a fine thread'); P. Fedeli (Bari, 1985), on Propertius, 3.1.8.

²⁵ For a detailed analysis, see Nelis (n. 1), 345–59.

support her family, *ut... possit paruos educere natos*; I see here an insight into the motivation of the artist who puts himself at the disposition of the powerful, *cui tolerare colo uitam... | impositum*; but it is an insight given us with vertiginous self-irony by the man whose service to the regime enables him to become one of the richest men in Italy.²⁶ The climax of the *Aeneid*, this grand representation of cosmos and imperium, is composed by a poet who has been seduced into working for his living.

Vulcan's workshop

The making of the Shield is not described in detail: instead the ecphrasis will follow Aeneas' uninformed gaze when Venus presents him with the arms. But the account of Vulcan's arrival in his workshop, and the description of the work in progress make for a splendidly self-referential picture of the work of the epic poet in composing the *Aeneid*. Vergil feels himself to be the heir of a tradition which saw in the creative labours of the Cyclopes a symbolic representation of poetic composition, a tradition that begins with Homer, or rather with a self-referential reading of Homer, and continues in the poetry of Apollonius and Callimachus. I want now to analyse how Vergil sets himself within this tradition and how, once more, he uses intertextuality with Lucretius to reveal the dynamics of inspiration and repression that characterize the work of a poet who writes 'propaganda'.

Unfinished business

Vulcan descends from the heights of heaven to his workshop at Hiera, just as the young Artemis travels to Lipari to ask the Cyclopes to make bow and arrows for her at Callimachus, *Hymn* 3.46–86. Vulcan finds three Cyclopes busy working with iron, Brontes, Steropes, and Pyracmon (Steropes and Brontes are in Callimachus, but in 8.425 Vergil also alludes to Callimachus' model, Hesiod, *Theogony* 140). They are engaged in the manufacture of a particular object, an object which has not yet been completed, as Vergil tells us: its completion must wait for another time, for Vulcan tells the Cyclopes that they

²⁶ See above, n. 18.

must interrupt all other business so they can make the arms for Aeneas (8.439–41).

The unfinished business in Vergil is a thunderbolt:

*his informatum manibus iam parte polita
fulmen erat, toto Genitor quae plurima caelo
deicit in terras, pars imperfecta manebat.
tris imbris torti radios, tris nubis aquosae
addiderant, rutili tris ignis et alitis Austri.
fulgores nunc terrificos sonitumque metumque
miscebant operi flammisque sequacibus iras.*

They had a thunderbolt roughly shaped by their hands, part already finished, part still incomplete, one of the many which the Father hurls down on to the lands from the whole sky. They had added in it three rays of coiled rain, three of watery cloud, three of ruddy fire and three of winged wind. Now they were blending into the work terrifying flashes, roars and fears, and wrath with pursuing flames. Vergil, *Aen.* 8.426–32

This motif has a complicated and fascinating history. It begins, of course, with Homer. Thetis comes to Hephaestus, and

She found him hard at work, bustling about at the bellows, and covered in sweat; he was making fully twenty tripods [...]. They were almost finished, but their elegant handles still needed fitting. He was getting on with it, hammering out the rivets.

Iliad 18.372–3; 378–9

In Homer the unfinished business is a set of twenty self-propelling hostess-trolleys, destined for meetings of the gods ('to the base of each he had fitted golden wheels, so that they could run to a council of the gods on their own, and then return home again, a wonderful sight': *Il.* 18.375–7). The result of Thetis' visit is the forging of the shield of Achilles, and *Iliad* 18.478–607 gives us a description of its five zones. This ecphrasis is the model for that of the cloak of Jason in Apollonius 1.725–67. The first scene on the cloak is a version of the one that in the *Iliad* leads into the ecphrasis of the shield of Achilles. Apollonius alludes to his model thus:²⁷

On it were the Cyclopes busy with their immortal work, making a thunderbolt for Zeus, the king; it was shining, and already almost finished, and lacked only a single ray, which they were beating out with their iron hammers, as it spurted out a breath of raging fire.

Apollonius, *Arg.* 1.730–4

²⁷ 1.729 δαΐδαλα πολλά ('many ornaments') = *Iliad* 18.482 (same metrical position), marker of the allusion.

The Homeric hostess-trolleys turn into the thunderbolt of Zeus. The reader can reflect on the generic implications of this change: bizarre objects designed for the everyday life of the gods on Olympus turn into the most epic of symbols, yet at the same time the manufacture of Zeus's thunderbolt is woven into the cloak of a hero setting off on an erotic aristeia, into 'a rewriting in amatory mode of an Iliadic arming-scene'.²⁸ (This scene in turn connects with the cosmogony of the song of Orpheus, which ends with an infant Zeus, for whom the Cyclopes have not yet constructed a thunderbolt: *Arg.* 1.496–511.)²⁹

But our exploration of unfinished business is still incomplete. In Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*, the poem to which Vergil has just alluded in the arrival of Vulcan at Hieria, the young goddess finds the Cyclopes once again busy making an object:

Straightway she went to visit the Cyclopes, and she found them on the island of Lipara (Lipara as it is now, but then its name was Meligunis), at the anvils of Hephaestus, standing around a molten mass of metal, for a great work was in train: they were making a horse-trough for Poseidon. Callimachus, *Hymn* 3.46–50

It is impossible to resolve the question of priority between Callimachus and Apollonius. Some connection between the two passages seems probable, even if the arguments in favour of the priority of Callimachus are not in themselves convincing.³⁰ More interesting is Vergil's sense of the relationship between the two. The biographical tradition seems inclined to find in Callimachus a reaction to Apollonius, and this approach, however unfounded, gives a pleasing sense of development to our survey of the motif. The Callimachean Cyclopes are busy with a μέγα ἔργον ('a great work') (*Hymn* 3.49): the expression has self-referential implications, and a 'humorous flavour' according to Bornmann ad loc.: 'the ambiguous μέγα ἔργον [...] raises expectations of something extraordinary and leads into the surprise in the following verse', when this 'great work' is revealed to be nothing more than a drinking-trough for the horses of Poseidon. Callimachus exploits the image of the Cyclopes at work to produce a discourse on poetics. So at the close of the episode, the classic scene of ὀπλοποιία is dashed off in a single line, chopped up into three short sentences ('You spoke. They obeyed. And immediately, goddess, you had your arms!': *Hymn*. 3.86). The whole *Hymn to*

²⁸ R. L. Hunter, *The Argonautica of Apollonius. Literary Studies* (Cambridge, 1993), 52.

²⁹ Cf. Hunter (n. 28), 54.

³⁰ Cf. F. Bornmann (Florence, 1968) on Callimachus, *Hymn* 3.49; Hunter (n. 28), 52 n. 25.

Artemis is an exemplary statement of Callimachus's attitude towards epos.

The metapoetic significance of the trough for Poseidon's horses is reinforced if we set it against Apollonius's thunderbolt. In fact, the overall effect is very similar, as is so often the case with these two poets: the 'Homeric' Cyclopes of Apollonius labour to produce an epic thunderbolt, but in the context of a lover's cloak; the Callimachean Cyclopes are working at a μέγα ἔργον that turns out to be a horse-trough. One can, however, see the drinking-trough as a substitute for the thunderbolt: see *Aitia* fr. 1.19–20 Pf., 'not mine to thunder', nor to make thunderbolts, it seems.

Vergil returns to the epic *fulmen*. The workshop that will produce the Shield of Aeneas is not the place to manufacture robotic hostess-trolleys or horse-troughs; here are made arms with which the gods terrorize and exercise their tyranny over mankind: the terrifying thunderbolt that Jupiter hurls at the earth; the chariot of Mars, and the wheels, by which 'he stirs up men and cities to war' (8.433–4); and the horrifying aegis of Pallas (8.435–8). The Shield of Aeneas belongs with arms of this sort. *Arma acri facienda uiro* ('weapons must be made for a brave hero') (8.440) recalls *arma uirumque cano*, and will be recalled in turn at 12.425 *arma citi properate uiro* ('Bring the hero his weapons, quickly!'), spoken by the doctor Iapyx, another figure of the 'artist' who mirrors Vergil, and who, just like Vulcan, joins in the action in response to Venus' intervention.³¹

In the workshop is not only the forge of epic, but also the forge of epic 'propaganda'. Here, on the orders of the powerful, the artist produces the mythical objects which subjugate mankind, striking them with lightning, rousing them to war, turning them to stone. The unfinished business in the workshop of Vulcan and the Cyclopes is a symbol of the never-ending tradition of epic: every poet takes it up, carries it forward, moulds it to his own poetic ends. In Vergil's workshop are made the *arma* of myth that the poet provides for the regime.

This discourse by Vergil on his own poetics is further defined by the contrasts with Lucretius. The Jupiter who hurls thunderbolts at mortals is one of the more memorable myths that Lucretius destroys in his poem. In the sixth book of the *De rerum natura* Lucretius has explained the nature and cause of thunderbolts rationally. In Vergil the Cyclopes, assistants of Vulcan, make a thunderbolt for Jupiter

³¹ Significantly *omni nunc arte magistra* ('[now there is need] of all the mastery of your art') (8.442) will be recalled in the same speech of Iapyx: *non haec humanis opibus, non arte magistra | proueniunt* ('this is not caused by human power nor by the mastery of art') (12.427).

fulminator. The Cyclopes create the thunderbolt, but so too does Vergil.

With Hardie,³² we might say that the scene with the Cyclopes remythologizes the Lucretian explanation of the origin of the thunderbolt (6.246 ff.), by developing and carrying further the mythological touches that were present in Lucretius, where they are intended to function only by allegorizing the mythology, giving us a *physica ratio*: as when for example Lucretius talks of metaphorical *furnaces* inside clouds, in which the thunderbolt is formed: *insinuatus ibi uertex uersatur in arto | et calidis acuit fulmen fornacibus intus* ('a whirlwind finds its way in there and twists about in the narrow space, sharpening the thunderbolt in the hot furnace within') (*D.R.N.* 6.277–8); cf. *Aen.* 8.421 *fornacibus* and 446 *uasta fornace* (which also echoes Lucretius 6.681 *uastis fornacibus Aetnae*). In 6.148–9 Lucretius uses a simile drawn from metallurgy to describe the effect of a thunderbolt when it falls onto a cloud soaked with water: *ut calidis candens ferrum e fornacibus olim | stridit, ubi in gelidum propere demersimus imbrem* ('if this cloud chances to be soaked with water when it receives the fire, it makes a great noise in destroying it at once, just as white-hot iron from the hot furnace hisses when we plunge it rapidly into cold water'); cf. *Aen.* 8.450–1 (= *Georgics* 4.172–3) *alii stridentia tingunt | aera lacu* ('others plunge hissing metals into water').

Nevertheless, according to Hardie, 'while the scene of operation becomes fully mythological again in Vergil, there is a tendency in the opposite direction in his account of the composition of the *fulmen* (8.429–30)': *tris imbris radios, tris nubis aquosae | addiderant, rutuli tris ignis et alitis Austri*. This is 'a highly elemental thunderbolt, and in this there is a move towards a more scientific view of things, and away from the technological imagery usually applied to the weapons of the gods'. Hardie points to a possible scientific model at *D.R.N.* 6.357 ff., 'in which Lucretius explains that *fulmina* are more frequent in the autumn and spring, owing to the heightened elemental *discordia* at those times'. The conclusion is that 'Reacting against Lucretius, Vergil moves back from the natural to the supernatural, but retains a pseudo-scientific tone in his description of the divine.' However, the scientific tone which can be found in the two lines cited by Hardie is contradicted in an extraordinary manner by the additions that that craftsmen immediately make to the 'elemental' rays: *fulgores nunc terrificos sonitumque metumque | miscebant operi flammisque sequacibus*

³² Hardie (n. 1), 185–7.

iras (8.431–2). *Fulgores... terrificos* recalls Lucretius 6.387–8 *quod si Iuppiter atque alii fulgentia diui | terrifico quatiunt sonitu caelestia templa...* ('But if Jupiter and other gods shake the regions of heaven with terrifying din...'). To the physical constituents of the new rays, the Cyclopes add immaterial elements, among them *metus* and *irae*. The pseudo-scientific explanation is loudly 'undercut' by this addition (and of course the Cyclopes *miscebant* just at the moment when Vergil himself is engaged in mixing science and myth). Moreover this is a new addition to the manufacture that remained incomplete in the text of Apollonius.

My argument is that when he narrates the commissioning of the Shield from Vulcan and describes the artistic activity that takes place in the god's smithy, Vergil is giving us a discourse on the *Aeneid* and on himself, a discourse on his own literary activity that is distanced from that work, and thus matches the utter detachment of Vulcan in producing the Shield. Vergil is not only remythologizing Lucretius; he is *showing* us the duty required of the political poet, that is, to produce myths that will function as weapons. The artist who puts himself at the service of power must in the first place repress the rationality symbolized by Lucretius. Intertextuality with Lucretius means the return of what has been repressed, and that is something we always find 'unheimlich', disquieting. Vergil tells us that he knows Lucretius, that he is aware of the rational approach to reality; but this approach is something he *must* repress. Intertextuality with Lucretius is both repression and subversion: the readings of Hardie and of Lyne, 'subversion by intertextuality',³³ are the two poles of a unique compromise, at once coexistent and contradictory (in Freudian terms, a 'Kompromissbildung'). A self-reflexive scene like that in Vulcan's workshop, the workshop of the epic poet, shows us Vergil at work on the unfinished business of the epic tradition in a way that is, in my judgement, bitterly self-critical.

Vergil knows what the thunderbolt is; but he must obey those who commissioned the work from him, and make *other* thunderbolts in which the Lucretian elements are joined to *fulgores terrificos*, *metum*, *iras*. And yet when the poet wants to illustrate the unforeseen inspiration of the artist in the face of Venus' erotic attraction, he created another type of thunderbolt: Vulcan, he tells us at 8.391–2, received the familiar flame of desire, *haut secus atque olim, tonitru cum rupta*

³³ R. O. A. M. Lyne, 'Vergil's *Aeneid*: Subversion by Intertextuality. Catullus 66.39–40 and Other Examples', *G&R* 41 (1994), 187–204.

corusco | *igne rima micans percurrit lumine nimbos* ('just as when, burst apart by flashing thunder, a fiery crack runs through the clouds glittering with light'). Here Vergil conceives of thunder as a crack (*rima*) which passes through the denser atmosphere of the clouds. Thus he introduces a variation on the Lucretian explanation for the origin of thunder (6.96 ff.), which repeatedly insists that clouds explode (so e.g. 6.138, 203, 283): for Vergil thunder is not something that bursts out via a crack, but is the crack itself. He seems to have in mind particularly Lucretius 6.281–6 (cf. *coruscis*... *luminibus*: 6.283–4). Vergil's is a scientific simile, then, which seems to want to 'correct' Lucretius on his own scientific level. There is a tension between this 'Lucretian' simile and the mythological context in which it is placed. It illustrates the sexual and deceitful power that Venus exercises over the artist, and does so just before the reader follows the artist into the workshop where he manufactures anti-Lucretian thunderbolts. This is the kind of thing Vergil must repress if he wants to become the poet of the *Aeneid*: instead of continuing Lucretius' rational but incomplete explanations of reality, he returns to the unfinished and mythological thunderbolt that he inherits from Apollonius.

The rhythm of the Cyclopes

Final scene: the arms and the Shield of Aeneas are being forged, yet more weapons to terrorize, rouse, and petrify mortals. Jupiter's thunder was *terrificus*; the iron for the arms is *uulnificus* ('bringer of wounds') (8.446). And depicted on it will be Augustus, the figure already seen 'fulminating' beside the anti-Callimachean Euphrates at the end of the Fourth Georgic (the river recurs on the Shield, at 8.726, as ever six lines from the end, just like in Callimachus, *Hymn* 2);³⁴ Augustus will be the figure vomiting flames from his temples at Actium, just like the scene in Book 10, when Aeneas displays the Shield to his enemies (10.260 ff.).

The episode ends with the Cyclopes at work: *illi inter sese multa ui brachia tollunt* | *in numerum uersantque tenaci forcipe massam* ('...the Cyclopes raised their arms with all their strength in time with one another and turned the ore in tongs that did not slip') (8.452–3): a self-referential closure. As Alessandro Barchiesi puts it, Vergil 'shows

³⁴ See R. F. Thomas and R. S. Scodel, 'Vergil and the Euphrates', *AJP* 105 (1984) 339 = R. F. Thomas, *Reading Vergil and His Texts* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 320; R. Jenkyns, 'Vergil and the Euphrates', *AJP* 114 (1993), 115–21.

his Cyclops labouring at the forge, hammering the huge shield into shape and working to a rhythm (8.452–3), just as the epic poet is labouring at his rhythmic lines to shape the forthcoming verbal artwork'.³⁵ *In numerum* renders the obscure adverb ἀμβολαδῖς ('rhythmically?') from Callimachus, *Hymn* 3.61,³⁶ and the last few lines repeat a passage of *Georgics* 4 (170–5), the famous simile that compares the bees to Cyclopes, *si parua licet*. Bees were a classic symbol of poetic activity at least from the time of Pindar, *Pyth.* 10.54; note for example, Callimachus, *Hymn* 2.110–13.³⁷ As I close, then, I would like you to remember the motivation of the poet, his desire to possess, represented by Vulcan's erotic desire for Venus, and his identification with the woman who spins to earn her living; I would like you also to remember the motivation of the Cyclopes-like bees at their labours: *non aliter, si parua licet componere magnis, | Cecropias innatus apes amor urget habendi...* ('just so, if we can compare small things with big ones, an innate passion for possessing urges the Cecropian bees...') (*G.* 4.176–7).

³⁵ A. Barchiesi, 'Vergilian Narrative: Ecphrasis', in C. Martindale (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vergil* (Cambridge, 1997), 278.

³⁶ Cf. G. B. D'Alessio (ed.), *Callimaco. Inni, Epigrammi, Ecloghe* (Milan, 1996), 102 n. 13.

³⁷ Further passages in G. Crane, 'Bees without Honey, and Callimachean Taste', *AJP* 108 (1987), 399–403.