

## THE HARPIES EPISODE IN AENEID 3

Although the themes of *hospitium* and *pietas* are common to all the main episodes of *Aeneid* 3, there seems to be a particularly interesting relationship between the episodes involving the Harpies and Achaemenides respectively, since in both of them the Trojans deal with an enemy but do so in dramatically different ways. An exploration of various aspects of *hospitium* and *pietas* would be helpful in assessing the morality of the Trojans in the two episodes and may thus provide a clue to the 'political' relationship between them. The present article considers the Harpies episode; the Achaemenides episode will be examined in a further article.

Like Polyphemus and the Cyclops, the Harpies are marginal creatures who cannot be neatly slotted into this or that category. Polyphemus is at once anthropomorphic and blatantly bestial. The Harpies hover at one moment between man and beast, between being girls and birds of prey with talons for hands (*Aen.* 3.216-217: *virginei volucrum vultus.../ uncaeque manus*), and at another between god and beast, with the Trojans uncertain whether they are goddesses or ill-omened, filthy birds (262: *sive deae seu sint dirae obscenaque volucres*). The Harpies are impious and unholy, a *monstrum* and a *pestis et ira deum*, "a curse and sign of divine anger" (3.214f.) Their provenance is the Underworld, the waters of the river Styx (*Stygiis... undis*, 3.215; cf. 6.289 where they are at the entrance to the Underworld). *Dirus*, reflecting the anger of Heaven, is several times used of the Harpies, underlining their unholy nature: *dira Celaeno* at 3.211 and 713; *vox... dira* (228); *dira... gente* (235); *dirae obscenaque volucres* (262). Like Polyphemus also, the Harpies violate the laws of *hospitium*, denying Aeneas and his men unmolested enjoyment of a meal (225f.). Moreover, the hunger-motif, representing the opposite of meal-sharing and *hospitium*, is projected into the future also through the curse of Celaeno: that the Trojans will first suffer a dreadful famine and even "eat their tables" before succeeding in building their walled city in Italy (247f.; esp. 253-257)<sup>1</sup>.

It has been suggested that Aeneas in the Harpies-episode is less than *pius*; that e.g. he invades a peaceful, 'golden age' setting as aggressor and wilfully misappropriates the cattle of the Harpies. Thus e.g. E. E. Kinsey in his article *The Achaemenides Episode in Virgil's Aeneid* 3, in "Latomus" 38, 1979, 110-124 seems (p. 118f.) to accept Celaeno's accusations against Aeneas and the Trojans (247-249) as also Vergil's. In Kinsey's opinion, the

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the supernatural and unholy aspects of the Harpies, see esp. W. Hübner, *Dirae im römischen Epos*, Hildesheim/New York 1970, p. 64f.

Trojans "behave like freebooters" (p. 119); this conduct is "unjustifiable" (p. 120). And he finds (*ibid.*) that "Aeneas who organises the fight against the Harpies, goes temporarily along the wrong road...". Kinsey considers the Trojans' behaviour in the Harpies-episode as a setback along the road to a future non-aggressive role seen in the Achaemenides-tale (*art. cit.*, p. 120). Similarly negative assessments of the Harpies-episode are made by e.g. William R. Nethercut, *Invasion in the Aeneid*, in "Greece and Rome" 15, 1968, 82-95, esp. p. 89f., and M.C.J. Putnam, *The Third Book of the Aeneid: From Homer to Rome*, in *Essays on Latin Lyric, Elegy and Epic*, Princeton N.J. 1982, p. 267-287, esp. p. 270f. Does the Harpies-episode really reflect unjustifiable aggression on the part of the Trojans? Does Aeneas fail here in *pietas* and the pursuit of his mission?

At *Aen.* 3.247f., the Harpies level a series of charges against Aeneas and the Trojans. They misappropriate and slaughter the cattle of the Harpies and then follow this up, not with compensation, but with aggression and war. The Trojans, disparagingly dubbed *Laomedontiadae* (248), "descendants of Laomedon", seem to be perpetuating the latter's notoriously deceitful and unfair ways. The Trojans are not simply waging an unjustified war but attempting to drive the innocent Harpies out of their ancestral kingdom: *et patrio Harpyias insontis pellere regno* (249).

With regard to the Trojan's declaration of war against the Harpies<sup>2</sup>, it needs to be stressed that the decision is made only after the Trojans suffer two successive attacks by the Harpies (225f. and 232f.). Aeneas and the Trojans are hardly spoiling for a fight: their initial reaction is to practise tactics of evasion. After being attacked out in the open on the sea-shore at 223f. (*litore curvo*), they try to avoid the Harpies by withdrawing to a secluded and sheltered place at 229 (*rursum in secessu longo sub rupe cavata*). It is only when they are assaulted here also that Aeneas resorts to arms and declares war: *sociis tunc arma capessant/ edico, et dira bellum cum gente gerendum* (234-235). Aeneas' war on the Harpies is quite clearly portrayed as one of defence rather than aggression.

Furthermore, there is no hint in the narrative that the Trojans want to oust the Harpies from their ancestral lands. In Thrace, soon after landing, the Trojans begin to build city-walls: *feror huc et litore curvo/ moenia prima loco* (3.16-17). Even in Crete, where they are afflicted with a plague, the Trojans leave a handful of settlers behind (*paucisque relictis*, 190) in the Pergamum they had founded there (*Pergameamque [urbem] voco*, 133). On the Strophades, by contrast, there is not the slightest attempt to settle or displace the Harpies permanently. The charge that the Trojans are seeking "to expel

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g. Nethercut, p. 89f.



the Harpies from their ancestral kingdom" is no more than a rhetorical exaggeration of the Trojans' self-defensive measures to repel an attack. In addition, Celaeno's claim of innocence for the Harpies (*insontis*, 249) seems to be seriously undermined by her conveniently ignoring any duty to allow the Trojans the hospitality of the sea-shore and of sustenance after the trials of a storm (192f.) that had left even the dutiful Palinurus at a loss to discern night from day or identify their location (201f.) But this is, of course exactly what we might expect of the Harpies, hungry monsters, proverbially rapacious (as their name itself suggests), the very opposite of the kindness, generosity and sharing that constitute *hospitium*.

Some critics emphasize that Aeneas is impious in his behaviour, that he rudely intrudes upon the peacefulness of a golden age setting, and that he all too hastily declares war on the Harpies. Thus e.g. E. L. Harrison, "Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar" 5, 1985, 131f. speaks of "the impiety of the Trojans" (p. 150), "Trojan impiety" (p. 151), their "impious attack" (p. 154). Already Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 270 had called attention to "at least one reminiscence of a golden age. Rich cattle are everywhere about with no guardian" (*nullo custode* at 3.221). The point is expanded on by Harrison with the observation (p. 150): "Indeed, their killing and eating of these farm animals, and their speedy recourse to warfare, are the very actions that characterize the behaviour of that *impia gens* of *Georgics* 2 whose arrival on the scene brings to an end the Golden Age of Saturn"<sup>3</sup>.

It has already been stressed above that there is no "speedy recourse to warfare" on the part of the Trojans; and the other accusations also prove to be, on closer inspection, equally groundless.

The absence of guards for the cattle at *Aen.* 3.221 may well betoken golden age conditions, but this (*pace* Putnam) does not necessarily imply disruptive and unjust action on Aeneas' part. There is another side to *nullo custode* that is left unmentioned by Putnam, but which completely vindicates Aeneas' behaviour. It is a standard feature of the golden age that everybody owns everything in common<sup>4</sup>. There is no private property. Seeing that the cattle – 'farm animals' that can normally be expected to be under guard – in fact have no guard, Aeneas can well believe that they are nobody's private property and therefore quite legitimately available to him (as indeed to anybody else) as food. (We may contrast the Cattle of the Sun episode in *Od.* 12.131f. where custodians are explicitly mentioned, *viz.* the nymphs

<sup>3</sup> He compares *Aen.* 3.222, *Aen.* 3.224 and 3.239f. with *Geo.* 2.536f.

<sup>4</sup> On communism in the golden age, see e.g. Tib. 1.2.43-44; Vergil *Geo.* 1.125f.; Ovid *Met.* 1.135f., Seneca *Epist.* 90.36. Further refs. in P. Murgatroyd, *Commentary on Tibullus Book 1*, Pietermaritzburg 1980, p. 114; K. F. Smith's ed., p. 249.

Phaethusa and Lampetie, daughters of Helios and Neaera). It is therefore quite unfair of Putnam to say that the Trojans fall upon the animals "without hesitation or hint of concern over the legality of their act" (*op. cit.*, p. 270). If they do so, it is precisely because the fact that there is no guard on the scene suggests to them that they could not possibly be encroaching upon anybody else's legal rights.

Now there is, admittedly, a superficial impression that the Trojans have invaded the peacefulness of a golden age setting. Certain features in *Aen.* 3.220f. appear to point in that direction. The cattle are emphatically called *laeta*, "happy", first word in 220; they roam at will in carefree fashion, *passim* (220); they are not guarded by anyone, *nullo custode* (221). *Armenta*, "herds", in 220 does not produce resonances of *arma*, "arms/weapons", here as it does in Anchises' interpretation of the omen of the four white horses at *Aen.* 3.537f. The idea of invasion is nonetheless vividly expressed in the military terminology of *inruimus ferro*, "we rush in upon them with our swords", at the opening of 221. But we attain a truer perspective, and the significance of the passage becomes quite different, when it is assessed in its larger context, and particularly in relationship with the immediately preceding lines, 209f. Before attempting such an assessment, however, we may profitably look at *Aen.* 1.180f. which is closely enough related to our *Aen.* 3 context for it to shed some light on the latter.

After Aeneas and his men are thrown up by the Juno-instigated storm on to the shores of Carthage in *Aen.* 1, they are in dire need of meat to go with the bread which they have salvaged from the ships. Lines 180-193 run:

<i>Aeneas scopulum interea conscendit, et omnem</i>	180
<i>prospectum late pelago petit, Anthea si quem</i>	
<i>iactatum vento videat Phygiasque biremis</i>	
<i>aut Capyn aut celsis in puppibus arma Caici.</i>	
<i>Navem in conspectu nullam, tris litore cervos</i>	
<i>prospicit errantis; hos tota armenta sequuntur</i>	185
<i>a tergo et longum per vallis pascitur agmen.</i>	
<i>Constitit hic arcumque manu celerisque sagittas</i>	
<i>corripuit fidus quae tela gerebat Achates,</i>	
<i>ductoresque ipsos primum capita alta ferentis</i>	
<i>cornibus arboreis sternit, tum vulgus et omnem</i>	190
<i>miscet agens telis nemora inter frondea turbam;</i>	
<i>nec prius abstinit quam septem ingentia victor</i>	
<i>corpora fundat humi et numerum cum navibus aequet</i>	

"While they did so, Aeneas climbed on a rock commanding a wide unbroken view far across the sea in the hope of sighting some Trojan ships, wind-battered but afloat, the ship perhaps of Antheus, or of Capys or Caicus with



her high, blazoned stern. But there was not a ship to be seen. He could see, however, three stags straying on the shore, and behind them in a long line their whole herd, grazing in a valley. Abruptly he stopped; and quickly he gripped a bow and some arrows, swift to fly, which his faithful Achates had been carrying. His first shots brought the leaders to the ground, stags with tall antlers like tree-branches. Next he turned on the herd, and his arrows stampeded them in confusion among the green forest trees. Aeneas only ceased shooting when he had triumphantly laid on the earth seven weighty carcasses, in number equal to the surviving ships" (Penguin transl., p. 33)

Here also, as in *Aen.* 3, Aeneas comes across animals grazing peacefully, wandering at will, *cervos... errantis* (184-185) as in a golden age settling and, since they are wild animals, there is of course no mention of guards. Here also the Trojans, exhausted after a storm, help themselves to the food at their disposal. It should be noted that the entire operation and the vocabulary used for it would be quite at home in descriptions of warfare. There is the initial ascent to a look-out post. We may note the pointed correspondence between *prospectum* (181) and *prospicit* (185), both at verse-opening. The stags wander like stragglers in a military context (184-185). But whole herds follow them: *armenta* (185) in the present context does perhaps suggest *arma* (cf. *Aen.* 3.537f.). *Agmen* (186) is equally appropriate for a column of soldiers on the march. Aeneas' preparation for the attack with bow and arrow is mentioned in 187. In 188 we find *tela*, "weapons", repeated in *telis* at 191. In 189 the herds have "leaders", *ductores*. The slaughter of the animals is expressed by a verb applicable to enemy troops also, *sternit* (190), "fells", "lays low". Aeneas emerges as *victor* in 192, and the "number of the slain" motif occurs in 192-193. And yet, these military resonances are by no means intended as an indictment of Aeneas' behaviour and a portrayal of unjustified aggression. Seen in context, their import is altogether different. The military resonances lend a certain vividness but, much more importantly, they provide a heartening and heroic tone for Aeneas' activity at a time when his epic fortunes are at a distressingly low ebb.

With *Aen.* 3.219f. also, reading the passage in context makes all the difference; for it corrects our initial impression that the Trojans have wantonly invaded a peaceful landscape and are behaving like freebooters. The full (and true) effect of the passage can hardly be felt unless it is read in sequence, i.e. after Aeneas' immediately preceding experiences and within the larger context. It has been emphasized by E. L. Harrison (*art. cit.*, p. 147-148) that the episodes of *Aen.* 3 exhibit an alternating rhythm of hardship and relief, hope and despair, sadness and joy, etc. Such a pattern is also visible in the stretch that leads up to the passage under consideration, lines 219f.

Dark and light, pessimism and optimism alternate, as the Trojans are first caught in a dreadful storm after leaving Crete (192-204), then find relief and a happier mood when the skies clear and they eventually reach land (205-210). The mood becomes gloomier again with a description of the Harpies at 210-218, then rises sharply to a lighter level with the slaughter of the cattle and the feast (219-224). There follow the rapid ups and downs of clashes with the Harpies and countermeasures against them (225f.). The relief of having repulsed them (243-244) is dramatically undercut and offset by the demoralizing curse of Celaeno (245-257) and the resultant panic, prayers and flight from the islands (258-269). The stretch most relevant to our present purpose extends from the storm (192f.) to the feasting of the Trojans (224). A more detailed look at some of its features would be helpful in our evaluation of the slaughter-and-feasting scene (219f.) within the scheme of contrasts.

In the violent storm soon after they leave Crete (*Aen.* 3.190f.), the Trojans are driven off course and drift for three days and nights. The storm is heavily charged with images of darkness and gloom: *caeruleus... imber* (194); *noctem... tenebris* spanning line 195; *nox* (198); *caecis... in undis* (200); *caeca caligine* (203); *noctes* (204). There is a symbolic foreshadowing of the Harpies-episode. The Harpies are personified storm-winds. The name Podarge (Swiftfoot) is found at *Iliad* 16.150; Aello (Whirlwind) and Ocypete (Swiftwing) occur at Hesiod *Theogony* 267. The Harpies are often closely associated or identified with the Erinyes/Furies<sup>5</sup>. The Erinyes/Furies are by their very nature closely linked with storms. As early as Homer, we find references to the "Fury who walks in a dark cloud" (*Il.* 9.571 and 19.87). Furthermore, in *Aen.* 3.198-199, the dark storm-clouds are shot through by flashes of lightning: *involvere diem nimbi et nox umida caelum/ abstulit, ingeminant abruptis nubibus ignes*. This is precisely the phenomenon reflected in the standard representation of the Erinyes/Furies as clad in black and carrying torches. Thus there may well be, in this aspect of the storm also, an anticipation of the figure of Celaeno whose very name means "black" (Gk.: κελαινός) and is *Furiarum... maxima* at *Aen.* 3.252<sup>6</sup>.

On the fourth day the Trojans at long last gain release from disorientation and from the encompassing darkness. To the sight of land is added the cheerful intimation of homeliness and warmth in the smoke rising from the mountains (*Aen.* 3.205-208). The image of smoke curling upwards to the

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. R. D. Williams on *Aen.* 3.252: Oxford ed., p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> See W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 1.1, Leipzig 1884-1890, s.v. *Erinyes*, col. 1310f.; for the torch as a symbol of lightning, see esp. col. 1313.61f. Cf. also vol. 1.2, s.v. *Furiae*, col. 1559f.



sky (*volvere fumum*, 206) can be a powerfully evocative one. It is used with reference to Ulysses who resists the seductive talk of Calypso whose captive he is, and wishes only that he could some day see the smoke rising from the houses on his island home of Ithaca (*Od.* 1.55-59)<sup>7</sup>. But smoke need indicate nothing more than human activity, without any real assurance of kindness and hospitality to outsiders. Thus e.g. the sight of smoke heralds Ulysses' encounters with the Laestrygonians (*Od.* 10.99f.) and the Cyclopes (9.167), but in both cases the inhabitants turn out to be monstrous cannibals. For Aeneas and his Trojans, the rising smoke at *Aen.* 3.206 would seem a comforting signal after the storm, with hopes of hospitality; for the reader of the *Aeneid* who brings with him knowledge of the *Odyssey*, those hopes might well be tempered by a sense of foreboding. The first mention of the Strophades (209), dry land after the storm, is understandably optimistic: its shores (*litora*, 209) are personified, cast in the role of a rescuer of Aeneas from the waves. Line 209 opens emphatically with *servatum ex undis*, Aeneas saved from the waves; the sentence ends at the opening of the next line with the equally emphatic *excipiunt* (210), the shores of the Strophades welcoming the hero.

The tone of optimism changes abruptly: the Strophades, first mentioned in line 209 in a context of salvation and welcome for Aeneas, are again mentioned in the very next line, 210, but this time in order to introduce Celaeno and the Harpies, creatures as unwholesome as they are unholy. *Ionio in magno* (211), the location of the Strophades in the Ionian sea is, to be sure, an objective, geographical statement; but it is worth remembering that Ionia was proverbial for its luxury and softness: *mollis Ionia* at Prop. 1.6.31<sup>8</sup>. At an associative level, therefore, the location of the Strophades *Ionio in magno* might well raise some slight expectation of luxury and of charming, feminine company for the storm-tossed Trojans. Any such expectation swiftly evaporates. Instead, we find the dread Celaeno, *dira Celaeno*, emphatically concluding 211, and *Harpyiaequae* emphatically opening 212. Now the Harpies are not women in the true sense of the word. They are monstrous, predatory birds with women's faces. But they are nonetheless women, – of sorts. We may therefore compare them with 'normal' women. The physical description of the Harpies is limited to three features, viz. stomach (*venter*, 216), hands (*manus*, 217), and face (*ora*, 218). These items quite naturally figure in descriptions of female beauty<sup>9</sup>. In the case of the Harpies, we have

<sup>7</sup> Cf. W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme*, Oxford 1954, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Otto, *Sprichwörter*, s.v. *Iones*, p. 177.

<sup>9</sup> On the catalogue of charms, see e.g. Nisbet-Hubbard on Horace *Odes* 2.3.21; J. C. McKeown on Ovid *Am.* 1.5.19-22, vol. 2, 1989, Commentary on *Amores* Book 1, p.

a much-compressed but highly evocative, inverse catalogue of physical charms.

The attractiveness of a female stomach that is flat or smooth and un-wrinkled is mentioned at Ovid *Am.* 1.5.21-22: *quam... planus... venter*. The bellies of the Harpies exude a foul discharge, *foedissima ventris/ proluviae* (216-217). This perhaps goes beyond mere physical description and is meant to suggest a grotesque and lustful, female sexuality. At Catullus 43.3, Ameana is criticized for not having long fingers and a mouth that does not dribble: *nec longis digitis nec ore sicco*. The hands of the Harpies are ugly and crooked, *uncaequae manus* (217), suited to their rapacious ways. At Ovid *Am.* 3.3.6, we find praise for a rosy blush on snow-white cheeks: *niveo lu-cet in ore rubor*. The faces of the Harpies are not fair-complexioned and healthy, but pale with hunger, a feature that makes them not only unattractive as women, but also an inauspicious sign for the Trojans.

This description of the physical attributes of the Harpies, as monstrous, unsightly and repulsive female creatures, brings to mind the aeschrological and grotesque treatment of such matters in catalogues of faded charms (cf. the *vetula olim pulchra* theme, the "former beauty now turned hag") and the zoological precision with which such topics are sometimes pursued<sup>10</sup>. But the iambographic resonances in the description of the Harpy-women do not damage the epic tone. The ugliness of the Harpies and their filth are inextricably tied in with their unholy nature, an aspect underlined by *dira* (211), *monstrum* (214), *pestis et ira deum* (215) and their underworld provenance: *Stygiis sese extulit undis* (215). And this aspect, aligning the Harpies as it does with other anti-Jupiter forces opposed to Aeneas and to Augustan values, brings the iambographic elements quite comfortably within the ambit of elevated epic.

The failure of the Harpies to extend *hospitium* to the Trojans is foreshadowed by their *impietas*, by their grimness (*tristius*, 214), their cruelty (*saevior*, 214), their rapacity (*uncaequae manus*, 217), and by the ineradicable pallor of hunger in their faces (*pallida semper/ ora fame*, 217-218). Furthermore, the theme of the Trojans being prevented from hospitality, i.e. from the enjoyment of their meal, is prefigured in the past history of the Harpies themselves. They too were once debarred from hospitality when Phineus' house was closed against them and they were constrained by fear to abandon their former feasts: *clausa domus mensasque metu liquere priores*

116f.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Horace *Epodes* 8 and 12, and the analysis by Victor Grassmann, *Die erotischen Epoden des Horaz*, München 1966, esp. p. 47f.; also E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford 1957, p. 58-59, and the discussion of *Odes* 4.13 on p. 415-416.



(213). The Harpies, by driving the Trojans away from their meal, inflict upon them the hardships they themselves have undergone. We may usefully contrast the kindness and hospitality shown by Dido whose experience of misfortune has taught her to be sympathetic and helpful to fellow-sufferers: *non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco* (Aen. 1.630).

As far as the action is concerned, the landing on the Strophades is followed without a break by the cattle-slaughter and feasting. The statement about the Strophades, the Harpy-inhabitants, their past history and their nature (210-218) disrupts the run of events and intervenes conspicuously between the arrival and the cattle-scene. The passage is inserted in the manner of a descriptive digression or ἔκφρασις. This is underscored by the way in which the arrival of Aeneas and the Trojans, first mentioned in 209-210a, is again taken up in 219, *huc ubi delati portus intravimus*, thereby enframing the Harpies-description. The structural self-sufficiency of the passage enhances the evocative impact of its content.

One effect of this description has already been noticed: we have seen how the lack of *pietas* and *hospitium* on the part of the Harpies towards the Trojans is foreshadowed in lines 210-218. But the assault by the Harpies on the Trojans is yet to come. It is the cattle-scene that follows immediately (219f.); what effect does the Harpies-description have on this scene? The gloomy revelations concerning the Harpies serve as a very effective foil for the enthusiastic and expansive mood that ensues when the Trojans discover the herds of oxen and goats, a welcome source of sustenance after their trials at sea. Since the Harpies-description comes immediately before the cattle-scene of 219f., the maximum of tonal contrast between the two passages is thereby achieved.

It is with surprise, and a buoyant sense of relief, that the storm-tossed Trojans set eyes on the rich herds grazing on islands associated with the hunger of the inhospitable Harpies: *ecce/ laeta boum passim campis armenta videmus* (219-220). Their sheer surprise is effectively conveyed by *ecce*, emphatically opening its sentence but last word in its verse (219), and the pleasant quality of the surprise is underlined by the immediately following *laeta*, "happy", first word in 220 and posing a start contrast to *tristius* (... *monstrum*), referring to the gloomy and ill-omened Harpies, at the opening of 214. Furthermore, the *clausa domus* theme of 213 (hospitality denied to the Harpies by Phineus) and the hunger-theme of 218, *fames*, are now replaced by abundance of food, *passim* (220), and unimpeded access to it, *nullo custode* (221).

It is worth stressing that this very effective scheme of contrasts is in fact a matter of plot, i.e. of narrative technique, rather than of story-line. By disrupting the run of events, i.e. the sequence beginning with the arrival of the

Trojans and continuing with the sighting of the cattle, etc. and inserting between them the Harpies-description, the narrator seeks to impose on the reader a certain view of the cattle-scene, one in fact favourable to the Trojans. How does he achieve this manipulation of reader-response?

Let us note first of all that there is no indication that Aeneas and the Trojans know the identity of their landfall when they first reach the shores of the Strophades. Their complete disorientation in the preceding storm, emphasized in 202, *nec meminisse viae media Palinurus in unda*, speaks against such knowledge. It seems reasonable to assume that the Trojans come to realize where they are only after the first attack by the Harpies at 225f. The identification of the place as in fact the Strophades, and the reference to its inhabitants as Harpies in the preface to the episode (209-218) would then be, to give the passage its full dramatic force, a retrospective account of facts now known to Aeneas as he tells his tale (i.e. *Aen.* 2 and 3) at Dido's court, but which became available to him only at a later stage of the Harpies-episode itself (225f.).

As the Trojans emerge from the darkness and disorientation of the storm into daylight and the discovery of land, there is an obvious movement from melancholy to joy (205-210a). That joy continues, though at a more intense level, when they catch sight of the oxen and goats at 219f. But, in order to separate these two levels of joy (i.e. the arrival, then the prospect of a rich feast), and in order to intensify the latter as much as possible, the narrator (i.e. Aeneas-Vergil) inserts the gloomy Harpies-description before the joyful cattle-scene. The reader has to make his way through the repulsive and un-savoury description of the Harpies, cruel, filthy, unholy and starving, before reaching the brighter atmosphere of 219f., with its joy and relief, its food and feasting, graciously shared with Jupiter (222-223) rather than ruined by loathsome creatures from Hell.

By first taking the reader through the depressing atmosphere of the Harpies-description and then offering him the powerfully contrasting relief and happier atmosphere of the cattle-scene (219f.), the narrator invites the reader to empathize with the Trojans, to share the sense of relief and exhilaration felt by them as the prospect of food comes into sight after their trying experiences at sea. Thus both Aeneas in his dramatic address to the banqueters at Carthage, and Vergil in his textual confrontation with the reader, seek to engage sympathy on behalf of the Trojans. In sum: lines 219f., when read within the larger context, do not encourage the reader to feel that Aeneas and the Trojans are insensitively invading a privileged landscape and behaving like irresponsible freebooters.

Turning now to Celaeno's use of the term *Laomedontiadae*, "descendants of Laomedon", at *Aen.* 3.248, we should be on our guard against equating



Vergil's own attitude to the Trojans with that of Celaeno, and of basing such an opinion on allusions to Laomedon's well-known, deceitful ways (cf. e.g. *Geo.* 1.502 *Laomedontae... periuria Troiae*; Kinsey, *art. cit.*, p. 118). Celaeno, to be sure, refers to the Trojans unflatteringly as *Laomedontiadae* and the allusion is equally uncomplimentary in Dido's self-reproach at *Aen.* 4.541-542: *nescis heu, perdita, necdum/ Laomedontae sentis periuria gentis*. Dido means that Aeneas' treachery should not come as a surprise, since his own behaviour is simply running true to ancestral form. It should be noted however that, in the *Aeneid*, references to Laomedon are uncomplimentary only when they fall from the lips of Aeneas' opponents. At *Aen.* 8.158, we find an honorific reference to Priam in the phrase *Laomedontiaden Priamum*, and this is taken up again a few lines later in 161-162: *ipsum/ Laomedontiaden*. The speaker here is Evander and his aim is to be kind and complimentary to Aeneas. At *Aen.* 7.105, Vergil, in his own authorial voice, uses the expression *Laomedontia pubes* simply to refer to the "Trojan young men", without the slightest hint of reproach.

The guiltlessness of Aeneas is underscored at the very outset through his invitation to the gods and to Jupiter himself to share in the feast of the slaughtered cattle: *inruimus ferro et divos ipsumque vocamus/ in partem praedamque Iovem* (*Aen.* 3.222f.). This gesture imparts a truly sacral dimension to the meal and it exonerates Aeneas from blame. Aeneas' innocence is also perspicuously clear when we compare the Vergilian situation (as Nethercut advises us to do, *art. cit.*, p. 84) with the relevant Homeric source, the Cattle of the Sun incident at *Odyssey* 12.260f. This episode is important enough to be mentioned as early as the prologue to *Odyssey* 1, at lines 6-9. Warnings against killing these cattle are already given at *Od.* 11.104-111 (by Teiresias) and at 12.127-141 (by Circe). The prohibition is mentioned several times within the episode itself. Ulysses, reminded of the warnings by the sound of lowing cattle as they approach the island (*Od.* 12.264f.), tries to put his men on their guard and advises avoidance of the island at 12.271-276. At 12.297-303, he makes his men take an oath not to eat the cattle. At 12.320-323, he exhorts them to keep away from the cattle lest dire harm befall them. Against this background, Eurylochus' advice to sacrifice the cattle to the gods, eat the meat, and build a temple to the sun-god on their return to Ithaca (343f.) is a clever but unavailing subterfuge: "the distortion is characteristic of a demagogue" (thus Heubeck<sup>11</sup>). There is really no comparison (*pace* Kinsey, *art. cit.*, p. 118) with the genuine piety shown by Aeneas at *Aen.* 3.222f.

<sup>11</sup> In *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, ed. A. Heubeck/A. Hoekstra, vol. 2, Oxford 1989, p. 137.

Furthermore, after the slaughtering of the cattle in the *Odyssey*, uncanny and frightening omens occur, e.g. the crawling of the hides on the ground, the lowing of both cooked and uncooked meat (*Od.* 12.394-396). The emphasis given to the Cattle of the Sun incident in the prologue to the *Odyssey*, the elaborate design of insistent disapproval through warnings that precede it, and omens that follow, leave no room for doubt that the killing of the cattle is sacrilege. In the *Aeneid*-episode, scant faith can be put in Celaeno's hostile and biased accusations at 3.247f., and there is no indication whatever that Aeneas has been in any way deficient in *pietas*.

Comparison with the other epic source of the Harpies-episode, i.e. the Phineus-story at Apollonius Rhodius 2.178f. (and esp. 262f.), also leaves us with an impression of Aeneas' unimpaired *pietas*. As in Homer, so also in Apollonius, the reader is quite explicitly told that the incident is one of transgression and divine retribution. At the very outset (178-190), Phineus is introduced as formerly blessed with the gift of prophecy by Apollo, but without sufficient reverence for Zeus whose purposes he did not scruple to disclose in full. Punishment duly follows: a lingering old age, blindness and, through the agency of the greedy Harpies, deprivation of food to such an extent that he could only just survive.

In Apollonius, there is considerable emphasis on the scruples felt by Zetes and Calais in helping Phineus, a victim of divine wrath, against the Harpies, the instruments of Zeus' punishment. Only after an explicit statement under oath from Phineus that they will not incur divine displeasure do Zetes and Calais consent to driving off the Harpies (Ap. Rhod. 2.244-253). The privileged status of the Harpies as the "hounds of almighty Zeus" is further underlined by the intervention of Iris to prevent their coming to harm when Zetes and Calais almost catch them (278-287).

Thus, both in the *Odyssey* with regard to the killing of the Cattle of the Sun, and in the *Argonautica* with regard to the repelling of the Harpies, explicit mention is made of divine protection, extended to the cattle in the first case, and to the Harpies in the second. This aspect of divine protection is altogether absent from Vergil. Also, the accusations against Aeneas lose credibility inasmuch as made by the Fury Celaeno who is a representative of anti-Aeneas forces opposed to Jupiter's will and to Aeneas' mission. The Harpies, described as the "hounds of almighty Zeus" and under divine protection in Apollonius, do indeed at one point in *Aen.* 3 arouse speculation that they may be *deae*, "goddesses" (262); but that does not alter the fact that they are essentially 'ungodly' since they come from the Underworld, and they threaten Aeneas and his mission in a much more direct way than they do the Argonauts in Apollonius.

In Apollonius, the threat posed by the Harpies is directed against Phineus



rather than the Argonauts. In Homer, the impiety of Ulysses' companions brings about their death while the hero alone survives. Such a distinction between men and leader cannot be drawn in the *Aeneid*, where the accomplishment of Aeneas' mission, i.e. establishing the Trojans in Italy as a base for world-rule, requires the survival not only of Aeneas himself, but also of an armed force large and competent enough to beat down any opposition in Italy. (Cf. the elite fighting force taken to Italy after the loss of a part of the fleet in Sicily: *lectos iuvenes, fortissima corda* at *Aen.* 5.729). Aeneas, as well as his men, must observe the *pietas* that makes them worthy agents of their divinely sanctioned mission, and a sufficient number of them must survive for its fulfilment.

This consideration is connected with the question of the Trojans' food-supply. In Homer *Od.* 12, the enjoyment of 'forbidden *hospitium*' coupled with *impietas* on the part of the hero's companions destroys the latter to a man, but the culmination of the epic in Ulysses' survival and his reunion with his wife remains intact. The food-crisis does not prevent the successful return of the hero himself. In Apollonius, the restoration to Phineus of the *hospitium* offered by his clients (i.e. the dainties given him by those requesting prophecies from him) could have endangered the *pietas* of Jason and his men: they needed to refrain from destroying the Harpies. But there is no obvious threat to the food-supply of the Argonauts themselves. In the *Aeneid*-episode, by contrast, it is the Trojans, the bearers of the heroic mission themselves, who are repeatedly denied their food by the attacks of the Harpies. If they cannot eat, they cannot survive; their mission fails. Admittedly, the Harpies are not given the programmatic prominence accorded to the Cattle of the Sun mentioned in the *Odyssey*-prologue, but they pose a problem for Aeneas that strikes at the very heart of his heroic mission. It therefore seems something of a miscalculation to say of the episode, as Nethercut does, that "it cannot properly be termed a critical juncture in the action of the story" (*art. cit.*, p. 90). The food-supply of the Trojans in the Harpies-episode is an aspect all too easily overlooked, but it should not be minimized. Food is no less necessary for the success of the mission than is an adequate fleet for transporting them to Italy.

The importance of food for the survival of the Trojans and the fulfilment of their mission was perhaps, for all its fundamental relevance, too obvious an idea to be dramatized by Vergil. Indeed, he chooses to dramatize vividly the nervousness, fright and demoralization felt by the men as well as by Anchises when Celaeno unleashes against them the curse/prophecy concerning the "eating of the tables". At *Aen.* 3.259-266, we read:

*At sociis subita gelidus formidine sanguis  
deriguit: cecidere animi, nec iam amplius armis,* 260

*sed votis precibusque iubent exposcere pacem,  
sive deae seu sint dirae obscenaeque volucres.  
Et pater Anchises passis de litore palmis  
numina magna vocat meritosque indicit honores:  
'di, prohibete minas; di, talem advertite casum        265  
et placidi servate pios'.*

"At this my comrades' blood chilled and froze in sudden dread. Their spirits sank and they advised me to rely for our deliverance not on weapons but on prayers and vows, whether the Harpies were goddesses or only sinister, filthy birds. My father Anchises, standing on the beach, stretched forth his opened hands and called upon the High Powers. He appointed for us the required rites of worship, and prayed: 'Gods, forbend this menace and avert all such calamities. Be gracious and preserve righteous men'." (Penguin transl., p. 83).

The 'political' fact, openly conceded by Celaeno, that the Trojans will indeed eventually succeed in establishing their longed-for city and its walls (3.253-257) does not have the least steadying or consolatory effect on the Trojans. They are utterly shaken by the prospect of famine, reacting convincingly as ordinary human beings rather than as agents of a political programme. But here also there seems to be a fairly clear indication of Vergil's moral assessment of the Trojans.

At the close of Anchises' prayer, we read: *et placidi servate pios* (266). The emphasis on *pios*, the final word, should not be missed: the gods are called upon to be favourable and save the Trojans from famine, *because* they are righteous, *pios*. That famine is the deprivation of *hospitium* predicted for the future by the queen of the impious Harpies. But there is also an unmistakable suggestion that since the Trojans are *pii*, righteous, they do not deserve to be deprived of food and *hospitium* in the present episode either. The fact that it is the venerable Anchises, *pater familias* and head-of-family in charge of sacral matters, who makes this final comment on the Harpies-episode, seems to provide as much confirmation as we can hope for that Vergil is here encouraging us to come down firmly on the side of Aeneas and the Trojans as upholders of *pietas* in their actual conduct and not simply in their intentions, as suggested by Kinsey (*art. cit.*, p. 120, note 28).

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