Wild Animals in Roman Epic

Submitted by Laura Joy Hawtree to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics in September 2011.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature:.....

Abstract

Roman epic authors extended, reinvented and created new wild animal representations that stood apart from traditional Greek epic renderings. The treatment of wild animals in seven Roman epics (Virgil's *Aeneid*, Lucan's *Civil War*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Statius' *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, Valerius' *Argonautica* and Silius' *Punica*) forms the basis of this thesis, but the extensive study of other relevant works such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Apollonius' *Argonautica* allows greater insight into traditional Greek renderings and throws Roman developments into starker contrast.

Initial stages of research involved collection and detailed examination of almost 900 epic references to wild animals. The findings from this preliminary research were analysed in the context of Pliny's *Natural History*, Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, and other ancient works that reveal the Greeks' and Romans' views of wild animals. The accumulation of such a range of evidence made it possible for patterns of development to become evident. This thesis focuses on the epic representation of animals and considers a number of questions: 1) How Roman epic authors represented animals' emotions and employed creatures' thought processes. 2) How Roman epic authors examined the difference between wild and tame animals and manipulated the differences and similarities between humans and animals and culture and nature. 3) How wild animals were aligned with scientific and cultural beliefs that were particular to Roman society. 4) How animals were employed to signify foreign countries and how some epic animals came to be symbolic of nations. 5) How Roman epic authors represented particular aspects of animal behaviours with fresh insight, sometimes ignoring traditional representations and historiographic sources.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my PhD Supervisor, Professor Eleanor Dickey, whose assistance throughout the writing of this thesis has been extremely beneficial to me. I am very grateful to her for her time, as well as her many interesting and useful insights. I would also like to thank Professor Daniel Ogden and Dr Rebecca Langlands, who read chapters of this thesis when it was submitted for upgrade.

My thanks goes to the University of Exeter for funding me through my PhD and making this work possible and to the University of St Andrews, for developing my first interest in Classics.

Abbreviations of Ancient Authors and Works

In the great majority of cases abbreviations of ancient texts in **Latin** follow the conventions found in the *OLD*:

Glare, P.G.W. (1984) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

In the great majority of cases abbreviations of ancient texts in **Greek** follow the conventions found in Liddell and Scott:

Jones, H.S. and Mckenzie, R. (1940) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Exceptions are to be found in the following list:

Athen.	Athenaeus
Deip.	*Deipnosophists*
Aug.	Augustus
R.G.	*Res Gestae*
Hist. Aug.	Historia Augusta
Isoc.	Isocrates
Ant.	*Antidosis*

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Argument and its Implications

The study of wild animals in Roman epic enhances our understanding of those epics and allows us to appreciate innovative literary developments. For example, when Ovid describes how Procne killed her son, he compares her to a tigress dragging off a fawn:

nec mora, traxit Ityn, veluti Gangetica cervae
lactentem fetum per silvas tigris opacas,
utque domus altae partem tenuere remotam,
tendentemque manus et iam sua fata videntem
et 'mater, mater' clamantem et colla petentem
ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret,
nec vultum vertit; satis illi ad fata vel unum
vulnus erat, iugulum ferro Philomela resolvit;
vivaque adhuc animaeque aliquid retinentia membra
dilaniant...

Ov. *Met*. 6.636-645.[1]

"She hauled Itys off without delay; just as a tigress by the Ganges drags the unweaned young of a deer through shady woods. Procne reached an isolated part of the high palace while Itys, stretching out his hands now saw his fate. "Mother, mother" he shouted; while he was seeking to reach her neck Procne struck him with a dagger. She cleaved him at the place between the rib and the breast bone but did not turn her face away. One

[1] For more extensive discussion of this passage see section 4.3.

wound sealed his fate well enough: Philomela slit his throat with the dagger, and they tore his limbs apart even while they were still retaining some breath...".[2]

Neither Homer nor Apollonius Rhodius mention tigresses in their epics: tigresses are a Roman epic phenomenon and have their own unique characterisation. The Roman epic tigress is a savage and cruel creature but also displays strong maternal instincts. Thus, Ovid's comparison of Procne with a tigress cleverly highlights her predatory nature while also emphasising the unnatural direction of her predation. Procne kills her own child in the manner that a tigress would kill another's child: in effect Procne is more inhuman than a tigress.

Of course, most animals that appear in Roman epics are also found in Greek epics, but in those cases the Roman conception of the animal often differed from previous representations of the creature. If we do not take Roman views of animals into account, our insight into the epic representations of these creatures and the developments of those representations are sure to be limited. It is clear that Roman readers were aware of the traditional roles various species played in Greek literature, but they also had other, more direct ways of forming their opinions of wild animals: Romans enjoyed access to the arena and could view animals in the Colosseum, they may have seen animals paraded in public during triumphs, and a few even kept wild animals as pets. Some began to see wild animals as creatures with thoughts and feelings and portrayed wild animals smpathetically.

1.2 Wild Animals outside Epic

[2] All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Epic material offers some insight into the perception and treatment of wild animals in the Roman world, but we can gain a more thorough understanding of the epic manipulation of the wild animal by considering it in the context of other sources. Didactic and scientific works root epic wild animals in contemporary beliefs of the day and so help us to understand why epic writers treated wild animals in the way they did. Whereas the epic manipulation of the wild animal is often restricted to similes or appearences that motivate the plot, the depictions of wild animals in less restrictive literary genres offer us more comprehensive overviews and thus allow us to spot innovations and deviations from common beliefs.

The comparison of various sources allows us to understand how much Romans knew or thought they knew about certain species. We can work out how Roman epic perceptions of wild animals developed and how they compared to the perceptions embodied in the Greek epics that pre-dated them. It is vital to consider the wider context of epic animal references in order to discover innovations that were fundamental to the Roman epic authors. Only by doing so may we judge the extent to which the epic author was adapting his material to the genre or complying to the standard account of animal behaviour.

When we consider epic accounts alongside their literary counterparts we can re-evaluate passages that seem corrupt or bizarre in isolation. For example in his epic account Silius compares Hasdrubal to a beaver that bites off his own testicles in order to evade capture (15.485-487). Interestingly Pliny records the belief that beavers actually behaved in this way to escape their captors (*Nat*. 8.47.109), and so this grotesque simile would not have struck Roman readers as ridiculous; rather it highlights Hasdrubal's desperation to escape encirclement and documents Silius' grasp of contemporary animal lore.

Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* and Pliny's *Natural History* offer us valuable insight into the behaviours of a wide range of wild species as perceived by Greek and Roman writers. Anecdotes and humorous sketches of animal behaviour are included by Pliny and afford understanding of the Romans' delight in some animals and dislike for others. Pliny clearly enjoys describing the antics of elephants and monkeys[3] but also appreciates the fact that animals such as moles, frogs and locusts may be highly destructive (*Nat*. 8.43.104). Pliny's work is invaluable in helping us understand the thoughts of the Romans as a whole.

Aristotle includes a similar range of information but often gives more anatomical descriptions and emphasises animals' physical habits, movements and other such biological topics of interest. Both Aristotle and Pliny grapple with mans' relationship with wild animals; Aristotle states that children are not unlike wild animals (*H.A*. 7.1.588a:30-588b:5), while Pliny records that some animals such as elephants have the capacity to fall in love with humans (*Nat*. 8.5.13-14) and judges that elephants possess a level of intelligence closest to man (*Nat*. 8.1.1). The information contained in these two works helps to make the range of wild animal references in epic both more accessible and more intelligible.

Other literary sources also contribute to our understanding of Roman wild animals. Martial's *De spectaculis* refers to animals in the spectacles of the arena and refers to one occasion when a lion turns against its trainer (*Sp*. 12). He appreciates the overwhelming strength and rage of a provoked rhino (Mart. *Sp*. 11) and chooses to interpret the circus trick of the kneeling elephant as a compliment to the Emperor (Mart. *Sp*. 20). Some of Martial's observations make it possible to gain a stylised insight into the workings and level of elaborate showmanship found in the Roman arena.

[3] Plin. *Nat*. 8.2.5, 8.80.216.

Aesop and Phaedrus provide stereotypes of animal behaviour as a by-product of exploring moral topics. Their works are useful in piecing together the most common Classical generalisations concerning animals: the manipulation of animals' characteristics must have been at least loosely based on commonly accepted ideas or they would lose their moral relevance altogether. Lucretius uses wild animals in his explanations of philosophy, and so occasionally provides us with direct insight into Roman thought about animals as an entity in their own right. In all three cases we must be satisfied to extract somewhat fragmented overviews where the realistic representation of wild creatures is not the authors' primary concern.

Other authors such as Grattius, Varro and Cato can also provide useful information. Their contribution is largely coloured by agricultural considerations, but some remarks offer insight into the Roman perception of wild animals as victims of the hunt or as pests. For example, Varro considers the wolf as a predator and addresses the measures that should be taken against the animal, while Grattius discusses the dynamics of hunting practices in relation to the selection of horses and dogs.

1.3 Wild Animals in Roman Epic

There is a high frequency of wild animal references in Roman epic, and these references perform a variety of functions. Epic wild animals may stimulate the plot or contribute to the elaboration of a particular scene; as when Hylas is led astray by hunting down a stag sent by Juno and is then drowned in a lake (V.Fl. 3.545-557). Wild animals may colour the behaviour of a nation or may invoke the remembrance of a particular myth; the ecphrasis displaying the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus in the *Aeneid* demonstrates both these principles (Verg. 8.630-634). Epic wild animals may even be employed in the form of verbal abuse (Verg. *A*. 4.367) or manipulated to heighten a

protective stance: Hannibal is compared to a tigress tracking her young when he hears that Capua is under siege (Sil. 12.458-462). Some beasts predict an occurrence that is to come in the future (Luc. 5.396), while others simultaneously perform a variety of these roles.

In order to gain an overview of wild animal occurrence in epic sources I have completed my own survey of wild animal appearances. The two tables below contain eight species; the occurrence of the lion, tiger, elephant, wolf, deer, snake, eagle and owl have all been calculated and listed in separate columns showing their frequency. The first chart displays the results relevant to the Homeric epics while the second lists a range of Roman epic works. In table two, Statius' *Achilleid*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Lucan's *Civil War*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Silius Italicus' *Punica* and Statius' *Thebaid* have all been included in the numerical survey.

1. Homeric Epics

	Lion	**Tiger**	**Elep.**	**Wolf**	**Deer**	**Snake**	**Eagle**	**Owl**	**Total**[4]
Iliad	48	0	0	10	16	9	11	32	126
Odyssey	14	0	0	2	7	1	10	57	91
Total	62	0	0	12	23	10	21	89	217

2. Roman Epics

	Lion	**Tiger**	**Elep.**	**Wolf**	**Deer**	**Snake**	**Eagle**	**Owl**	**Total**[5]
Achilleid	4	1	0	3	2	1	0	0	11
Aeneid	10	4	0	8	9	11	4	2	48
Arg.	11	4	0	2	3	2	0	0	22
Civil W.	5	3	1	4	2	15	7	3	40
Met.	29	10	0	17	25	98	7	8	194
Punica	13	6	12	5	4	13	7	2	62
Thebaid	22	11	0	9	4	16	1	0	63
Total	94	39	13	48	49	156	26	15	440

[4] The calculated totals include only references to the species listed here (for species selection see 1.4 below).
[5] The calculated totals include only references to the species listed here (for species selection see 1.4 below); the epics also include some references to other species, as well as numerous mentions of wild animals by terms like *ferae* that do not allow one to identify a particular species.

While the above tables should be taken as an indication of the general distribution of wild animal references they will not feature predominantly as a focus of my work. The present thesis is organised in such a way that it considers innovations on the roles of individual epic species. The numerical evidence provides a general overview of the subject.

1.4 Animal Selection

The selection of species included in this thesis has been designed to afford the greatest possible insight into a range of wild animals in both Roman epic and other sources. However, the distribution of wild animal references found in extant Latin literature is not uniform across all species, and where there is a complete lack of information on a particular type of animal this has created some unavoidable limitations.

In an attempt to make the best use of the available material this study has focused on a selection of wild animals that play a prominent role in multiple genres of Latin literature. The lion, tiger, elephant, wolf, snake, deer, eagle and owl are used and discussed in a variety of roles in Latin epic and numerous other Latin written sources.

Such animals as the panther, fox, bear, mouse, lizard, beaver and insect are referenced so infrequently in Latin epic that they do not provide a feasible avenue of further exploration and have not been addressed in the present study.

Despite the fact that this study concentrates on eight different species of wild animal and ignores less familiar epic participants, there are still an abundance of references to animals that play a leading role in this investigation. Owing to the sheer quantity of wild animal references in epic it is impossible to study every passage in the same depth. Instead of offering an exhaustive study of wild animals in Roman epic the present work aims to compare Roman epic treatment of wild animals (with the help of

other Latin sources) with their Greek representation. As a result my argument focuses on those references to wild animals which are most useful for such a comparison.

1.5 What is a Wild Animal?

The Romans were very interested in defining the difference between wild and tame animals. The subject is addressed in Roman law, the *Natural History* of Pliny, the epics of Ovid and Virgil and the fables of Phaedrus. Despite the high level of interest in the concept of wildness it seems that a hard and fast definition was challenging to find. Gaius offers several different interpretations of wildness and affords us with various (and sometimes flawed) examples in an attempt to explain:

At ferae bestiae nec mancipi sunt, uelut ursi, leones, item ea animalia, quae ferarum bestiarum numero sunt, uelut elefanti et cameli, et ideo ad rem non pertinet, quod haec animalia etiam collo dorsoue domari solent; nam ne notitia quidem eorum animalium illo tempore fuit, quo constituebatur quasdam res mancipi esse, quasdam nec mancipi.

Gaius, *Inst*. 2.16.

"Again, wild beasts are not capable of mancipation, such as bears and lions, and also those animals which are to be counted as wild, such as elephants and camels. It is therefore irrelevant that the latter are also commonly broken in for use as beasts of draught or burden; they were not even known about when it was determined that some things were capable of mancipation and some were not."[6]

[6] Translated by Gordon et al. 1988: 131 with minor amendments.

In the eyes of Roman law the wild animal was a creature that could not be claimed as *mancipia*. *mancipia* were essentially the slaves, beasts of burden and Italic lands that belonged to primitive farmers (De Zulueta 1953: 57). In the most theoretical of senses then, the wild animal was not considered as a controllable entity; in its natural form it was devoid of an owner and had free will.

The importance of defining the "wild" animal is tackled by Gaius once again when he tells us:

Gallinarum et anserum non est fera natura: palam est enim alias esse feras gallinas et alios feros anseres. Itaque si quolibet modo anseres mei et gallinae meae turbati turbataeve adeo longius evolaverint, ut ignoremus ubi sint, tamen nihilo minus in nostro dominio tenentur. Qua de causa furti nobis tenebitur, qui quid eorum lucrandi animo adprehenderit.

Gaius, *dig*. 41.1.5.6

"Poultry and geese are not wild by nature; for there obviously exist other species which are wild fowl and wild geese. Hence, if my geese or chickens be disturbed and fly so far away that I do not know where they are, nonetheless they remain my property. Anyone who takes them with a view to gain will be liable to me for theft".[7]

According to Gaius, the owner of the animal not "wild by nature" retained ownership of that animal even if he or she did not know the location of the animal in question. In effect, this definition of tameness relies partly on the identification of a rightful owner. Gaius' statement implies that there are two very separate versions of

[7] Translated by Watson 1998: Book 41 with minor amendments. *Aquisition of Ownership of Things.*

animals. The wild animal is related to the tame creature but belongs to a different conceptual sphere.

Gaius also differentiates between an animal that is 'wild by nature' and an animal that is generally domesticated by referring to bees.

Apium quoque natura fera est: itaque quae in arbore nostra consederint, antequam a nobis Alveo concludantur, non magis nostrae esse intelleguntur quam volucres, quae in nostra arbore nidum fecerint. Ideo si alius eas incluserit, earum dominus erit.

Gaius, *dig*. 41.1.5.2

"Bees, again, are wild by nature, and so those which swarm in our tree are, until housed by us in our hives, no more regarded as ours than birds which have made a nest in our tree. Hence, if another should imprison them, he will be their owner".[8]

This statement appears to suggest that the animal's inherently wild nature continued to be recognised and appreciated wherever they wandered.

Gaius' statutes tend to consider the status of the animal in relation to potential ownership, but other Roman accounts focus on very different defining features. Pliny asserts that animals could occupy an intermediate position between the status of wild and domesticated (*Nat*. 8.82.220-221) and so seems to understand that the definitive categorisation of an animal was not an easy one to make. Meanwhile, in Phaedrus, domesticated animals appear to consider themselves in opposition to wild animals. They view wild animals as cunning; the tame dog suggests that the wolf is wild because it prioritises freedom over all else (Phaed. 3.7).

[8] Translated by Watson 1998: Book 41 with minor amendments. *Aquisition of Ownership of Things.*

It seems that the Roman desire to qualify the terms of wildness was so strong that even writers of epic, such as Virgil and Ovid, offered their own views on the subject. Like Gaius, Virgil (*A*. 7.483-492) seems to define the status of an animal in relationship to the concept of possession. He appears to work along the lines that tameness is a prerequisite to animal ownership. Meanwhile in his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid discusses the human consumption of meat products by narrating with the voice of Pythagoras and makes a further division between the behaviour of wild and domesticated animals. While wild animals enjoy a carnivorous and bloody diet, Ovid (*Met*. 15.83-87) points out that tame animals such as horses, sheep and cattle only consume vegetation.

From a Roman perspective the lion, tiger, elephant, deer, wolf, snake, eagle and owl were considered fundamentally wild; such creatures were brought into the Roman domestic world only on occasion and only as a result of hunting or capture. They were not farmed or domesticated to any significant extent and it is unlikely that such creatures would spontaneously begin to frequent Roman homes without some level of coaxing or intervention. To the best of my knowledge they were not bred captive by the Romans on any large scale.[9]

1.6 Ancient Animals in Modern Scholarship

The sources on the treatment of Classical farmed animals are numerous and have been studied at great length. Macdill (1927) has considered the implications of horse equipment and horse treatment in both Greek and Roman times, and the role of horses

[9] Breeding in captivity is now a standard measure of domesticity in animals (Kalof 2011: 71), but discussion on the nature of domesticity continues. Hediger (1964: 28) writes that free animals will constantly attempt to avoid their enemies, and Bekoff (2004: 513) suggests that domestic animals tend to be less fearful of humans than their wild counterparts and take more interest in novel objects. Bonner (1980: 177) studies animal evolution and theorises that wild animals can transmit defensive behaviour to their wild offspring.

in the Roman world has been investigated more recently by Hyland (1990). Meanwhile Zirkle (1936) has noticed that Homer, Aristotle, Pliny and Silius Italicus all made reference to mares being impregnated by the wind. Frayn (1984) studies the implications of sheep rearing for the Italians, and MacKinnon (2001) considers the popularity, range and distribution of pigs in the Roman world by combining archeological, material and textual evidence.

Studies on animals more commonly found in the ancient household have also proved a subject of great interest; Lilja (1976) has written on dogs in Ancient Greek poetry, and Preston Day (1984) has studied the changing attitudes towards dogs from the Late Bronze age to the Geometric periods and focuses on the burial of canines as companions to their masters in their journeys to the underworld. Brewer (et al. 2001) has also studied dogs in the ancient world. Calder (2011) has recently completed a book on Greek attitudes towards animals that focuses on domesticated and tame species and their reception between 600 and 300BC. Donalson (1999) and Engels (1999) have written on the care, role and representation of domestic cats in Roman times. Lazenby (1949) affords an overview of household animals in Greek and Roman times, and Bodson (2000) examines pet keeping in ancient Rome. More recently Amat (2002) has completed a work that studies a range of working dogs, song birds, parrots, cats and fish in the Roman world. Her work indirectly expresses the sheer range of animals that contributed to the Roman household.

Usefully, Voultsiadou and Tatolas have attempted to give an overview of the types of animals that are included in archaic Greek epic (Homer, Hesiod, and the Homeric hymns). They find that Greek epic literature tends to focus on animals that interact closely with humans (2005: 1875-1882).

To date, the practicalities of wild animal treatment in the ancient world have been dealt with by several hugely influential works. Jennison's (1937) "*Animals for*

Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome" catalogues the Greek and Roman experience of wild animals and considers practicalities such as transportation and the display of creatures in private and public venues. Toynbee's (1973) "*Animals in Roman Life and Art*" documents both the literary and material experience of domestic and wild animals. More recently Coleman (2006) has completed her work on Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum* which, among other subjects, provides insight into the dynamics of animals as contributors to shows and spectacle. Shelton in Kalof's 2011 "*A Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity*" also examines animal spectacles in the ancient world and emphasises the importance of subduing wild animals in the Roman psyche; apparently the destruction of dangerous creatures emphasised the Roman success in conquering and controlling hostile territories (Shelton 2011: 119).

Some research has placed ancient animals in the context of very specific geographical areas. Jashemski and Meyer (2002) have studied the natural history of Pompeii and accumulate information on animals found in material and literary evidence. Others have made a contribution to our understanding of ancient wildlife by considering animals in the context of the wider environment. Redman (1999) considers the ancient human impact on environments, while Hughes (1994) devotes a chapter to wildlife depletion in the ancient world. Among other things he lists commercial hunting, domestication and deforestation as major contributors to the extinction and destruction of some species.

Other works have studied wild animals in the context of Homeric literature (Scott 1974). Scholars such as Lonsdale (1990) have returned to Homer's work to study hunting similes in the *Iliad*, while hunting in the ancient world has been a particular topic of interest to Anderson (1985) and Barringer (2001). Sometimes individual animals have been removed from their epic context in order to allow in depth examination. Staley (1990: 25-38) examines Aeneas' hunting of deer in book 1 of the

Aeneid, and Schell (2009) considers the unusual inclusion of the deer in *Aeneid* 7 when studying internal allusion in the Roman epic.

The relationship between more abstract ancient concepts and animals has also been considered. West (1997) has shown how Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, Statius and Martial express attitudes of sympathy towards animal suffering. Stephen Newmyer's (2006) work on Plutarch and animal rights considers philosophical attitudes towards animals, and Sorabji's book (1993) emphasises the importance of animals in all aspects of Greek and Roman life.

Some works have concentrated on the cultural and material representations of wild animals while others have researched the depictions of animals in literary accounts. Although I can not claim to combine the vast array of findings generated by these works my study investigates a range of epic references in some depth and attempts to place them within the wider context of literary and cultural influences. My examination of epic animal sources and other Latin sources has allowed some comparisons to be drawn that have not been made before. It is my hope that the present study will go some way to bridge the gap between representations of wild animals in epic works and other references that elucidate wider historical and cultural trends.

1.7 Roman Epic Authors

Ennius

Ennius was born in 239 BC and wrote a range of tragedies and an epic describing the progression of the Romans from the destruction of Troy to the time of Cato the Elder. The *Annales*, as they were called, were divided into fifteen books and were composed in dactylic hexameter. Ennius clearly borrowed some ideas from Homer (Aicher 1989: 228)

but also favoured the plays of Euripides. Cicero compared his writings to those of other Roman tragic poets such as Accius and Pacuvius, and the innovations of Livius Andronicus and Naevius may well have influenced his epic. The *Annales* had an influence on Virgil, Ovid, Lucretius and Lucan and so his work is relevant to this thesis in a wider sense. Ennius died in 169 BC, perhaps from gout; his epic was obviously popular as it was still being recited in the time of Hadrian (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 525-6).

Virgil

Born in 70 BC, Virgil left behind three major works: the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. The *Eclogues* are a collection of ten short poems which are united by their pastoral theme, while the *Georgics* is a didactic work describing the cultivation of crops and the tending of farmed animals. Towards the end of his life Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*, an epic influenced by a vast range of sources including Homer, Apollonius Rhodius, Ennius, Greek 'cyclic' epic, Greek and Roman tragedy and Hellenistic poetry (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1605). Virgil manipulates a range of wild animals to provoke the beginnings of war, symbolise the foundation of Rome and to demonstrate the individual traits of characters while chronicling the progress of Aeneas from Troy to the foundations of Rome. The *Aeneid* had a profound effect on the epic authors that followed and was hailed as an innovative text even in Virgil's own day. By the time of Virgil's death in 19 BC the *Aeneid* had become so popular that it was included in the Roman school syllabus (Boyle 1993: 79-80).

Ovid

Born in 43 BC, Ovid was a prolific writer; his works include the *Amores*, the *Heroides*, the *Medicamina Femineae*, the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Remedia Amoris*, the *Metamorphoses*, the *Fasti*, the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto.* Unlike the *Fasti* which takes the format of a calendar, the *Ars Amatoria* which examines the wiles that a suitor may employ to win his heart's desire, and the *Medicamina Femineae* which advises women on improving their appearance, the *Metamorphoses* intertwines a vast range of tales, which have the common theme of transformation. The *Metamorphoses* has been termed as a work about love while others have interpreted it as an epic about rape.[10] There is a high frequency of animal reference, and wild animals play a prominent role not only in the format of simile but also in the dynamics of the plot. It is not easy to treat wild animal references in the *Metamorphoses* on a strictly individual basis because the majority of animal appearances are directly involved in the process of transformation. Influenced by many sources, the *Metamorphoses* is perhaps closest in formation to Callimachus' *Aetia* (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1085). After his completion of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid was banished by Augustus from Rome owing to some indiscretion and never managed to return to the city. He died in exile in 17 AD.

Lucan

Lucan was born in 39 AD (Wilson Joyce 1993: ix). He wrote a significant number of works including the *Catacthonia*, the *Ilicia* and the *Orpheus*, but only fragments of these are still extant; many more titles are recorded but the whole works have been lost (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 94). His epic, *The Civil War*, was begun in 61 AD and is based on the historical events of 49-48 BC. Lucan records the actions of three

[10] The art of storytelling is also predominant as a theme; while many have attempted to read the epic as a series of individual episodes it could also be argued that the poem should be interpreted as a literary continuum (cf. Simpson 2003: 5). Wheeler (1999: 1-5) identifies how important the reader is to the *Metamorphoses* as the author leaves much unsaid and relies on his audience to make the connection between stories.

main characters, Caesar, Pompey and Cato. Documenting their contribution to the fall of the Republic, the epic narrates Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon and also describes the battle of Pharsalus ending with Caesar in Alexandria. The identity of the hero has been much debated in relation to *The Civil War*,[11] and it is in characterising the behaviour of Pompey and Caesar that wild animals truly come into their own. *The Civil War* is heavily indebted to both Virgil and the Homeric tradition and went on to influence later epic works, particularly the *Thebaid* of Statius (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 95). The epicist committed suicide after the Pisonian conspiracy in 65AD, and so his work was left unfinished.

Silius Italicus

Silius based his epic on the Second Punic War. The work is dated between 83 and 96 AD and relied heavily on the evidence of Livy (Conte 1994: 491-3). In writing the *Punica*, Silius continued the thematic line of Virgil's *Aeneid* and continually emphasised the power of the gods despite the more historical tone of his version of events. The influence of Virgil is clear when Silius includes a wild animal ecphrasis depicting the she wolf and Romulus[12] and a passage on the Capuan deer.[13] His inclusion of wild animals is frequent; he lists the types of snakes tamed by the Marsi and makes reference to a variety of other animals including elephants, lions and eagles. His epic is most like that of Ennius in form and structure, yet there is no definitive hero figure (Conte 1994: 493-494). Silius died in 102 having completed the longest poem to be written in Latin (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1407).

Valerius Flaccus

[11] Nutting 1932: 41-52. Discussion dates back to 1932 at least, if not before.
[12] Sil. 5.143-145 may be compared to Verg. *A*. 8.630-634.
[13] Sil. 13.115-137 may be compared to Verg. *A*. 7.483-504.

The *Argonautica* is unfinished, and we know much less about the life of Valerius than those of the other epic authors. The dating of the work is frequently disputed as it could have been composed under the rule of Vespasian, Titus or Domitian (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1578), yet it is generally believed that Valerius died around 92 AD and that the epic on Jason's travels was written to be dedicated to the Emperor Vespasian (Conte 1994: 488). It is thought that Valerius owes much to his predecessor Apollonius Rhodius whose Greek version of Jason and the Golden Fleece had become the accepted standard in the ancient world (Conte 1994: 489). Unlike Apollonius', Valerius' version of the myth prioritises the place of the individual and tends to concentrate on specific episodes sometimes to the detriment of the narrative (Conte 1994: 489). This tendency is apparent in Valerius' use of animals. Although a deer is employed to lead Hylas away from his companions, Valerius also compares individuals to wild animals to further their characterisation: Medea is equated to a dove (V.Fl. 8.32) as well as wolves and lions (V.Fl. 8.453-457). In his version of the epic Valerius reworks such a variety of source materials[14] that his epic sometimes lacks cohesion as a unified whole (Conte 1994: 489). It seems likely that Flaccus completed his epic before Statius and that Statius employed Flaccus' work as a literary resource (Smolenaars 1994: xvii and *passim*).

Statius

Born between 40 and 50 AD (Pollmann 2004: 11), Statius wrote the *Thebaid* between 80 and 92 AD. The epic is a tale of the attack of the seven champions of Argos against the City of Thebes. A second epic, the *Achilleid*, was begun in 94 AD but left

[14] Ovid, Seneca the Younger, Lucan, Virgil and Homer.

unfinished at the time of Statius' death. Ganiban (2007: 2-6) argues that Statius re-evaluates the *Aeneid* and Virgil's conception of one man domination in the *Thebaid*, yet there appears to be little agreement among academics concerning the implications of Statius' interpretation of the *Aeneid*; nor how Statius' manipulation of the Virgilian epic affects the tone of the *Thebaid* itself. When writing the *Thebaid* Statius was probably influenced by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Callimachus' poetry – it is also probable that Statius took Seneca's tragedies into account considering the themes of familial conflict (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1439). It seems possible that Statius' *Thebaid* considers the new regime of the Flavians just as the *Aeneid* commented on Augustus' rule (McNelis 2007: 2-8). After all, both regimes were threatened by civil war, and it is revealing that the majority of the references to wild animals in the *Thebaid* are employed in the context of conflict. According to McNelis (2007: 10, 176) Statius places emphasis on the power of the individual in the *Thebaid* to find their own terms for peace and praises the virtue of *clementia*. The *Achilleid* is more difficult to judge since there is very little of it, but it is generally interpreted as having a more peaceful tone. Statius died around 96 (Conte 1994: 481 and 487).

1.8 Methodology

The conclusions of this study are based on a corpus of nearly 900 references to wild animals in the Roman epics, together with hundreds more passages gathered from Greek epics and from scientific literature in both languages. I collected this corpus by reading systematically through all the epics included in this study, as well as the Homeric poems and significant portions of the works of Aristotle, Pliny, and Plutarch, plus selections from other authors such as Apollonius Rhodius. After all the Roman epic data had been collected and I had spent enough time with the passages to understand the individual

practices of each epicist, I analysed it by species and determined which species would provide insights useful for a broader understanding. For each species treated, the understanding presented is informed by all the passages initially collected, although to enhance clarity and avoid redundancy the discussion focuses only on a relatively small number of passages where the features discussed can be most clearly identified.

Chapter 2: The Lion

2.1 Greek Understanding

The Greeks had limited knowledge about the lion. Basic assumptions about the animal seem to have prevailed in early Greek thought, and the lion was generally perceived as an aggressive animal from the prehistoric period. Greek pottery of the late eighth and seventh centuries BC often represents the lion in the process of attack, and Homeric references to the lion also tend to concentrate on the ferocious characteristics of the beast (Markoe 1989: 92). It appears unlikely that the Greeks experienced the full range of lion behaviours recorded in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* (Alden 2005: 342). Passages describing lions in the *Iliad* may have taken Assyrian reliefs as their inspiration rather than real life encounters (Alden 2005: 340).

If lions were present in early Greece at all they must have been relatively rare. Images of the animal found in Greek art of the fifth and fourth centuries BC seem to have been sketched with domestic cats[15] or dogs as models and perhaps also relied on depictions of lions borrowed from Syria (Vermeule 1972: 51). In contrast third-century depictions of lions seem to have more life-like characteristics - perhaps as a result of improved access to lions in mid-fourth century zoos. Isocrates, 436-338 BC (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 769) records that lions were displayed yearly and could be trained to behave in particular ways.[16] Despite somewhat improved access to the lion Aristotle gives a rather confused insight into the creature's habits and brings together a ramshackle collection of observations. He states that lions drink little (Arist. *H.A*. 7.5.594b:21-22) and suggests that they are at their most aggressive when they have not been fed (Arist. *H.A*. 8.44.629b:8-10). It appears that some of Aristotle's

[15] Even depictions of domestic cats are rare; dogs and birds are much more frequent (Calder 2011: 93).
[16] Isoc. *Ant.* 213 cf. Bliquez 1975: 381.

assumptions were based on ancient Greek epic literature; like Homer (*Il*. 11.554), Aristotle (*H.A*. 8.44.629b:22-24) writes that lions fear fire more than anything else.

The lion could be found in Modern Turkey until the last third of the nineteenth century (Alden 2005: 336), and lions may even have survived in Northern Greece in the Classical Period.[17] Xenophon (*Cyn*. 11) records that lions could be caught around Mount Pangaeus, Cittus and beyond Macedonia but does not ever refer to the animals being trained. Aristotle (*H.A*. 7.28.606b:14-16) states that lions roam in Europe but qualifies his claim by explaining that they are mainly to be found between the Achelous river and Nessus.

2.2 The Romans and the Lion

As a society the Romans were well placed to develop an independent understanding of the lion. Shows displaying lions and other aggressive animals became one of the mainstays of arena entertainment, and the Romans came to favour ever more extravagant and daring performances. The lion was first displayed in Rome in 186 BC by Nobilior (Toynbee 1973: 17), and Pliny (*Nat*. 8.20.53) records that it was less than a century on before Scaevola[18] innovatively exhibited a group of lions together. Pliny (*Nat*. 8.20.53) records that 100 lions were slaughtered by javelin throwers in the Praetorship of Sulla in 93 BC, while in 55 BC Pompey secured a record 600 lions for his show (Plin. *Nat*. 8.20.53). The leaders of the Roman world were keen to manipulate the lion in new ways; Antony amazed spectators when he appeared in a chariot pulled by tame lions accompanied by the actress Cytheris (Plin. *Nat*. 8.21.55), and Commodus even dressed up as Hercules with a lion skin draped from his shoulders (Dowden 1998: 130).

[17] See Hdt. 7.125–6 when Xerxes' camels are attacked by marauding lions cf. Alden 2005: 336.
[18] Probably Mucius Scaevola who held the aedileship in 101 BC (Jennison 1937: 49).

Lions were just as popular a decade later. 400 lions featured in the quadruple triumph of Caesar's games held in 46 BC[19] and Augustus outdid his predecessors by staging a colossal range of beasts in a series of 26 hunts or the *venationes bestiarum Africanarum*. The magnitude of the slaughter during those games was significant, and it is recorded that 3,500 animals perished altogether - a good number of which must have been lions.[20] There were 260 lions shown in the Circus Maximus in 2 BC (D.C. 55.10.7), 200 lions were killed in 12 AD (D.C. 56.27.5) and Nero's bodyguards slaughtered 300 of the animals in the arena (D.C. 61.9.1).

Lions were often procured from those areas that were influenced by the emperor or leader of the time (Jennison 1937: 53). Thus it is likely that Pompey's supply of lions came from both Africa and the East (Jennison 1937: 52), while the lions of Caesar probably came from Syria or Mesopotamia.[21] Likewise, the beasts of Sulla may well have been hunted down and gathered in Mauretania, his area of particular influence.[22] Provincial citizens and inhabitants as well as professional hunters were often charged with the capture of beasts, and it is not inconceivable that the army was also summoned to assist in the hunt.[23] Symmachus refers to specialist wild animal dealers or *negotiatores ursorum*[24] so the numbers of lions and other wild beasts caught must have been significant.

The urban demand for dangerous beasts was sometimes so great that it inconvenienced those in the provinces. If the level of leopard hunting had any bearing on the demand for lions it seems that the gathering of wild animals could cause friction; Cicero (*Fam*. 2.11.2) writes to Caelius and makes excuses for the lack of progress telling him that there are not many leopards to be had; meanwhile his correspondence

[19] Plin. *Nat*. 8.20.53 cf. Toynbee 1973: 18.
[20] Aug. *R.G.* 22. cf. Toynbee 1973: 21.
[21] It is likely that these lions were taken from Cassius (Jennison 1937: 56).
[22] Sulla had nurtured a friendship with the Moorish king Bocchus who could supply him with the animals (Jennison 1937: 53).
[23] Apparently the capture of wild animals was believed to be a useful military training process in its own right (Jennison 1937: 141).
[24] Sm. 5.62 cf. Jennison 1937: 140-141.

(*Att*. 5.21.5) makes it clear that he will not press locals to become involved in the hunt in case he is accused of misconduct. It appears that provincials may have profited from the collection and shipping of wild creatures; Strabo (2.5.33) intimates that the demand for wild animals had advantaged local agricultural output and improved the quality of Numidian farming, and Aelian records that lions could plague local communities; apparently an invasion of lions caused some tribes in Libya to flee from their native lands (Ael. *N.A*. 17.41).

Pliny (*Nat*. 8.21.54) describes the methods of lion capture in some detail; he writes that lions were initially trapped in pits, but that a freak accident in the Principate of Claudius revealed that the lion could be pacified when its head was covered by a cloth. Meanwhile Oppian, writing in the late second century AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1069) gives specific details of lion pit capture; he records that a kid or lamb would be placed on a plinth in the centre of a deep pit, and that the edges of the hole would be surrounded by a fence or some other obstruction. The idea was simple; hearing the bleating of the bait-animal tied to the top of the pillar the lion would jump the fence and would land squarely in the pit. On discovery, hunters would lower a cage into the pit with some tasty morsel inside and thus coax the lion in (Opp. *C*. 4.77-111). It seems that there were some regional variations in hunting techniques; in the area around the Euphrates horsemen would pursue lions and drive them on with lit torches and by banging their shields. It was hoped that the lion, panicked by the flames and the noise, would become so diverted that it would voluntarily dive into pre-positioned curved nets (Opp. *C*. 4.112-139).

Once captured, lions would be transported to Rome. Claudian, born circa 370 AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 337) describes the trepidation of those who had to convey the exotic creatures,

ratibus pars ibat onustis
per freta, per fluuios; exanguis dextera torpet
remigis et propriam metuebat nauita mercem.
per terram pars ducta rotis, longoque morantur
ordine plaustra uias montanis plena triumphis
et fera sollicitis uehitur captiua iuuencis,
explebat quibus ante famem, quotiensque reflexi
conspexere boues, pauidi temone recedunt.

Claudian, *De Consulatu Stilichonis,* 3.325-332.

"One group was travelling on loaded boats across seas and through rivers; the bloodless right hand of the oarsman stiffens and the seaman is apprehensive about his own cargo. Another group were dragged through the land in wheeled wagons. The carts, filled with the result of a triumph over the mountains, obstruct the roads in a long line. The wild beast, taken prisoner, is borne onwards by anxious bullocks; on whom the very same beast previously curbed its hunger. As often as the bullocks turn and catch a glimpse [of the beast] they draw back from the yoke in panic."

Claudian could be exaggerating the scale of the organisation, but it seems that a significant number of vehicles, cages and ships would have been needed to ensure the supply of fresh beasts for the arena if his description is accurate. Roman legislation also indicates that the trade in lions and other wild cats was significant; those conveying felines, or more specifically *leones, leaenae, pardi, leopardi*, *pantherae* "lions,

lionesses, male panthers, leopards and female panthers" were taxed as they travelled over the frontiers of the Empire.[25]

It is evident that the Romans were keen to experiment with the lion both in the arena and in public displays. It is believed that lions were originally trained to draw chariots in processions worshipping Dionysius and Magna Mater, and Amat (2002: 193-194) suggests that Emperors later adopted the same mode of transport in order to align themselves with such deities. Although it was possible to train big cats to draw chariots they were largely reserved for special occasions (Amat 2002: 193). Lucretius (5.1308) records that people experimented with bulls, boars and lions as implements of war but such attempts often ended in disaster when the animals turned against their trainers and ran from the battlefield in pain and fear.

The skill of trained lions was certainly worthy of ancient comment: Martial was impressed that lions in the arena were disciplined enough to snatch up hares, hold them in their jaws and then drop them unharmed. Apparently this particular spectacle was the more astounding because the same lions had slaughtered a number of bulls in a preceding show.[26] Seemingly the trained lion had a majestic and exotic quality that appealed to Roman imagination; the crowds demanded ever more daring feats. Lions were killed in extravagant acrobatic spectacles, and it is possible that such displays were rehearsed and formed part of a longer sequence (Amat 2002: 192).

Initially, lions were not set free in the arena but were restrained by chains (Sen. *Dial*. 13.6); Jennison (1937: 177-179) imagines that there must have been a mechanism for gathering wild animals still alive at the end of an arena show. It must have taken considerable ingenuity to clear the stadium in the morning when there was a tight schedule of various spectacles planned for the afternoon. It is possible that the keepers

[25] Marcianus, *dig*. 39.4.16.7: cf. Jennison 1937: 153.
[26] Mart. *Sp.* 1.48, 1.51, 1.60, 1.104.

may have enticed the thirsty animals with water after they had been exposed to the heat of the midday sun (Jennison 1937: 179).

Although the lion was a dominant presence in the arena some Romans appear to have introduced them to the domestic sphere too. Seneca refers to lions that have a free run of the Roman household (*Dial*. 2.31.6.4-5), and the Emperor Elagabalus would even shock his guests by releasing lions, leopards and bears into their rooms at night as a practical joke (*Hist*. *Aug*. Elagabalus 25.1). It seems that some individual lions could be trained to become remarkably subservient. In the *Silvae* Statius rhetorically questions a lion that is trained to leave its cage and return to it on command:

quid tibi monstrata mansuescere profuit ira?
...quid, quod abire domo rursusque in claustra reverti
suetus et a capta iam sponte recedere praeda
insertasque manus laxo dimittere morsu?

Stat. *Silv*. 2.5.1-6

"What good did it do you to relinquish the rage you had shown and grow tame? ...What good did it do you that you were accustomed to leave your home and return again to your cage, to retreat of your own accord from prey you had already captured and with gentle jaw to release hands put in your mouth?"

This account suggests that the some tame lions were resigned to a routine of imprisonment and temporary release.

2.3 Homer and the Angry Lion

Homer frequently links the lion[27] with the epic hero and rates the animal as one of the most dangerous and wrathful creatures in his works. The brutal cyclops is likened to a lion devouring corpses (*Od*. 9.292-293), and the lion's nature is even compared to that of the wild boar - a mythically aggressive creature.[28] "οὔτ' οὖν παρδάλιος τόσσον μένος οὔτε λέοντος | οὔτε συὸς κάπρου ὀλοόφρονος, οὔ τε μέγιστος | θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι περὶ σθένεϊ βλεμεαίνει, | ὅσσον Πάνθου υἷες ἐϋμμελίαι φρονέουσιν" (Hom. *Il*. 17.20-23) "They say that the courage of neither the leopard nor of the lion nor of the wild boar - whose heart exults most in his chest - is as great as that of the sons of Panthous, who are armed with ashen spears."

The conceptual link between formidable heroes and lions is explored in the context of ecphrases and simile. Hercules is often depicted wearing a lion skin in mythology, and his belt in the *Odyssey* (Hom. 11.609-612) is decorated with flashing-eyed lions. In effect the belt emphasises Hercules' comparable status to Achilles whose shield depicts terrible twin lions who mutilate a bull.[29] The volatile Achilles is likened to a lion in a simile when he faces Aeneas with pent-up rage.

Πηλεϊδης δ' ἑτέρωθεν ἐναντίον ὦρτο λέων ὡς
σίντης, ὅν τε καὶ ἄνδρες ἀποκτάμεναι μεμάασιν
ἀγρόμενοι πᾶς δῆμος· ὃ δὲ πρῶτον μὲν ἀτίζων

[27] In Homeric references the lion is always referred to in the masculine grammatical form (Edwards 1991: 75).
[28] Hercules faced the fearsome Erymanthian boar in his third labour. According to Hornblower and Spawforth, "Many but not all of the labours were already depicted in Greek art of the Geometric and early Archaic periods" (2003: 685). Knapp (1935: 167-168) records a wonderful account of the vicious nature of the wild boar and the difficulties of boar hunting.
[29] Hom. *Il.* 18.582-586. Markoe (1989: 88-89) also makes reference to the representation of lions on warrior shields. He draws attention to the fact that the gods often promote violent and lion-like behaviour in heroes.

ἔρχεται, ἀλλ' ὅτε κέν τις ἀρηϊθόων αἰζηῶν
δουρὶ βάλῃ ἐάλη τε χανών, περί τ' ἀφρὸς ὀδόντας
γίγνεται, ἐν δέ τέ οἱ κραδίῃ στένει ἄλκιμον ἦτορ,
οὐρῇ δὲ πλευράς τε καὶ ἰσχία ἀμφοτέρωθεν
μαστίεται, ἑὲ δ' αὐτὸν ἐποτρύνει μαχέσασθαι,
γλαυκιόων δ' ἰθὺς φέρεται μένει, ἤν τινα πέφνῃ
ἀνδρῶν, ἢ αὐτὸς φθίεται πρώτῳ ἐν ὁμίλῳ·

Hom. *Il*. 20.164-173.

"The son of Peleus rushed against him from the other side, just like a destructive lion which men desire to kill; the whole population comes together; at first the lion walks by regardless, but then a certain brave warrior who is swift in battle hits him with a spear blow. Froth foams around the lion's teeth in its gaping mouth, his stout heart sighs within him and the lion whips his ribs and haunches from both sides and works himself up for the fight. He launches straight on in his bravery, with gleaming eyes; whether he slays one of the men himself or he himself is killed in the first onslaught."

Without doubt, Homer depicts an aggressive and ill-boding animal. This lion is described as murderous - the jaw is set wide, the glaring eyes are pronounced and the lion is foaming at the mouth; a characteristic often associated with great fury. Here the lion is aligned with the most aggressive and wrathful of individuals: the hero Achilles, who is renowned from the start of the *Iliad* for his anger and destructive tendencies (Hom. *Il*. 1.1-3).

The Homeric lion is equally aggressive when it is associated with Hector. In *Iliad* 12 Hector urges his men on and relentlessly attempts to attack the Argives. Although threatened by a formation of armed hunters the lion in the simile displays incredibly resilient characteristics. Instead of beating a hasty retreat the animal repeatedly launches itself at its aggressors.

ὡς δ′ ὅτ′ ἂν ἔν τε κύνεσσι καὶ ἀνδράσι θηρευτῆσι
κάπριος ἠὲ λέων στρέφεται σθένεϊ βλεμεαίνων·
οἳ δέ τε πυργηδὸν σφέας αὐτοὺς ἀρτύναντες
ἀντίον ἵστανται καὶ ἀκοντίζουσι θαμειὰς
αἰχμὰς ἐκ χειρῶν· τοῦ δ′ οὔ ποτε κυδάλιμον κῆρ
ταρβεῖ οὐδὲ φοβεῖται, ἀγηνορίη δέ μιν ἔκτα·
ταρφέα τε στρέφεται στίχας ἀνδρῶν πειρητίζων·
ὅππῃ τ′ ἰθύσῃ τῇ εἴκουσι στίχες ἀνδρῶν

Hom. *Il*. 12.41-48.

“Just as when a wild boar or lion turns around among dogs or hunting men, exulting in his courage. Those men, arranging themselves into a barrier, stand against him and throw closely packed spears from their hands. However he is not alarmed nor is he put to flight; although his arrogance is his very death. On numerous occasions he turns around testing the line of men and at the very place that he rushes towards, the line of men gives way.”

In this Homeric extract the lion displays a fearless attitude and shows little desire to cower and submit. It is interesting that κῆρ "the heart" is related to the temperament of the heroic Greek lion in this extract (Hom. *Il*. 12.45). The frequency of the epithet θυμολέοντα "lion-hearted" is striking in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Penelope describes Odysseus as lion-hearted twice in one book,[30] and Hercules and Achilles are also termed in the same way.[31]

Perhaps it is relevant that Aristotle (*de An*. 403a31-403b) believed that the heart was the seat of all angry passions owing to the blood that boiled there. It seems that the influence of this idea was still prevalent in Roman times; Seneca relates *Volunt itaque quidam ex nostris iram in pectore moveri effervescente circa cor sanguine; causa cur hic potissimum adsignetur irae locus non alia est, quam quod in toto corpore calidissimum pectus est* (*Dial*. 2.19.3) "A certain number of our people therefore want to believe that anger is awakened in one's breast when blood is bubbling around the heart. The reason why the place of anger is attributed here and not elsewhere is because the chest is the warmest part of the whole body".

In the *Iliad* 12 another bold-spirited lion is not dissuaded from attacking a flock of sheep despite the presence of herdsmen. This lion is compared to Sarpedon when he attempts to break down battlements. Particularly revealing is the description "κέλεται δέ έ θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ | μήλων πειρήσοντα καὶ ἐς πυκινὸν δόμον ἐλθεῖν·" (Hom. *Il*. 12.300-301) "his arrogant heart exhorts him to attack the sheep and go into the well-guarded fold". It is as if the Homeric lions' spirit is uncontrollable; a pre-determined and violent nature determines every action. Homer even reiterates the word θυμός in reference to the hero's actions, "ὥς ῥα τότ' ἀντίθεον Σαρπηδόνα θυμὸς ἀνῆκε | τεῖχος ἐπαΐξαι διά τε ῥήξασθαι ἐπάλξεις" (*Il*. 12.307-308) "his heart incites

[30] Hom. *Od*. 4.724, 4.814.
[31] Hom. *Il*. 5.639, 7.228.

godlike Sarpedon to rush against the walls in the same way". The connection between the lion's aggressive drive and the motivation of the hero is very pronounced.

Unsurprisingly the association between the lion's aggressive behaviour and Homeric hero's temperament has not gone unnoticed; Garvie (1994: 115) discusses the persistent symbolism of the lion as representative of the epic hero's powerful attack on an enemy. Scott (1974: 122-3) concentrates on the "hunter-predator theme" of lion use in the *Odyssey* and explains how a sequence of lion similes[32] foreshadows Odysseus' revenge on the suitors. Schnapp-Gourbeillon rates the lion as the most heroic symbol in relation to the Homeric combatant,[33] while Moulton identifies a pattern in the lion *Odyssey* extracts and suggests that they build to "Odysseus' victory in Mnesterophonia".[34] Magrath (1982: 207-208) asserts that the lion develops from an animal that is driven by its bravery and fiery nature in the *Iliad* to a beast ruled by hunger in the *Odyssey*. Both Polyphemus and Odysseus are likened to bloody lions; Polyphemus when he feasts on Odysseus' men (Hom. *Od*. 9.289), and Odysseus when he slaughters the suitors in the banquet hall (Hom. *Od*. 22.402-6). It seems possible that Odysseus' journey has influenced his behaviour: morally, he becomes just like the foul beasts that he has conquered when he returns to Ithaka (Magrath 1982: 211). Finally, Lonsdale (1990: 39-40) comments that lions in Homeric epic are often formulated as "marauding" agressors whose battles with men and guard dogs are descriptive of those of heroic warriors.

In summary Alden (2005: 335) equates at least 28 lion similes in the *Iliad* with heroes' combative behaviour, while Markoe (1989: 89) records 25 Iliadic references to "leonine aggression". Depending on the exact definition of 'aggressive' behaviour I have found at least 30 such incidents in relation to the *Iliad* alone.

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[32] Hom. *Od*. 4.335: 6.130: 17.126: 22.402-5.
[33] Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1981: 39-40 cf. Markoe 1989: 88.
[34] Moulton 1977: 139-141 cf. Glenn 1998: 110.

References to lions under attack in Homeric epic are scarce and when they do occur they often underline the lion's reluctance to retreat. On the few occasions when lions are beaten into withdrawal they are termed ἀέκων (Hom. *Il*. 17.112) "reluctant" or τετιηότι θυμῷ (Hom. *Il*. 11.555) "vexed in spirit". Menelaus is compared to a hungry lion that refuses to give up and keeps attacking a farmstead; when he finally leaves he departs unwillingly (Hom. *Il*. 17.656-664). Hounds are sometimes described as chasing after lions,[35] but the lion is never depicted as a cowering victim.

There is one Homeric reference to the lion which appears quite different from all others. In book 4 of the *Odyssey* Penelope is isolated and has little hope of rescue. She worries for her son but is largely powerless to improve her situation or defend him. In short, the position of Penelope could not be further removed from that of the typical Homeric hero.

ἡ δ' ὑπερῳΐῳ αὖθι περίφρων Πηνελόπεια
κεῖτ' ἄρ' ἄσιτος, ἄπαστος ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος,
ὁρμαίνουσ', ἤ οἱ θάνατον φύγοι υἱὸς ἀμύμων,
ἦ ὅ γ' ὑπὸ μνηστῆρσιν ὑπερφιάλοισι δαμείη.
ὅσσα δὲ μερμήριξε λέων ἀνδρῶν ἐν ὁμίλῳ
δείσας, ὁππότε μιν δόλιον περὶ κύκλον ἄγωσι,
τόσσα μιν ὁρμαίνουσαν ἐπήλυθε νήδυμος ὕπνος

Hom. *Od*. 4.787-793.

[35] Hom. *Il*. 8.338-340, 11.292-295.

"Straightaway, in the upper room of the palace, wise Penelope, not having tasted food nor drink, indeed starving herself, was wondering whether her blameless son might escape death, or would be struck down by the overbearing suitors. Just like a lion in a crowd of men dreads and ponders when hunters have assembled a cunning enclosure around it, just so was she pondering when sweet sleep overcame her."

The decision to compare Penelope with a lion or lioness stands out for two reasons. Lion similes in Homer are normally used in relation to men (Heubeck et al. 1988: 242) and they do not usually portray a lion or a lioness thus cornered. Moulton (1977: 123-124) theorises that the simile of Odysseus as a furious lion (Hom. *Od*. 4.335) balances the simile at 4.787-793 when Penelope is surrounded by enemies. He argues that the manipulation of the two lion similes stresses the importance of the relationship between Penelope and Odysseus. Jones (1988: 44) suggests that Penelope has been aligned with the lion or lioness because she is a heroic woman. However, Dawe (1993: 210) and Heubeck et al. (1988: 242) are not convinced by the application of the comparison and suggest that the simile is rather an odd one. Merry and Riddell (1886: 205) theorise that the lion has been manipulated in this context in order to emphasise not the aggressive traits of the beast, but the cruelty of those who surround it. Thus the lion hunters take on the characterisation of the pushy suitors who rival each other for Penelope's hand in marriage.

Whichever way we interpret the animal simile it is clear that Homer equates a woman stricken with anxiety with a beast that was generally associated with aggressive characteristics. As I shall go on to show, innovations in Roman epic meant that the lion and the lioness were employed to transgress the heroic behaviours of stereotypical male warriors; Roman epic accounts of the beast depict animals with more emotionally refined characteristics.

2.4 Redefining the Heroic Lion

The Roman epic lion often appears as a more discerning animal than its Homeric counterpart. The heroic lion in Virgil sometimes displays brutal behaviour, but it appears that the Virgilian version of the lion is often more restrained than the Homeric lion in its passions.

In *Aeneid* 12 Turnus sees his forces attacked and is spurred onto behave like a rampaging lion. It is Virgil's phrasing *tum demum* that is particularly curious here.

Poenorum qualis in arvis
saucius ille gravi venantum volnere pectus
tum demum movet arma leo gaudetque comantis
excutiens cervice toros fixumque latronis
inpavidus frangit telum et fremit ore cruento:

Verg. *A*. 12.4-9.

"Just as when the lion is hunted in African fields wounded by a fatal blow in the chest; then, at length, the lion rouses himself for the fight and rejoices, shaking the crested muscles around his neck; undaunted he breaks the spear of the hunter that is fixed in his body and roars with a blood-stained mouth."

The phrase *tum demum* suggests that the lion reverts to aggressive behaviour at greater length than its Homeric predecessor. Whereas Virgil's lion only reacts slowly to provocation and is goaded to behave violently, Homer's lions appear to act on impulse and deliberately spur themselves onto greater ferocity. When Achilles is compared to a

lion under attack,[36] the lion does not hesitate to stir itself into a killing frenzy. In *Iliad* 20 (164-173) the Homeric lion actually whips itself with its tail in order to anger itself. While the initial blow may have been struck by an enemy the Homeric lion deliberately provokes itself to further violence.

This is not the only occasion when Virgil appears to emphasise that the lion has been driven to particular aggression owing to infuriating circumstances. Once again, when referring to Turnus, Virgil emphasises that the lion is driven to fury by the goading of its enemies. Turnus' alignment with the lion comes in an unlikely context:

Turnus paulatim excedere pugna
et fluvium petere ac partem, quae cingitur unda;
acrius hoc Teucri clamore incumbere magno
et glomerare manum. ceu saevom turba leonem
cum telis premit infensis, at territus ille,
asper, acerba tuens, retro redit, et neque terga
ira dare aut virtus patitur, nec tendere contra
ille quidem hoc cupiens potis est per tela virosque:
haut aliter retro dubius vestigia Turnus
inproperata refert, et mens exaestuat ira.

Verg. *A*. 9.789-798.

"Gradually Turnus retreats from the battle and seeks the river and the place which is surrounded by water; the Teucrians gain on him the more furiously with a loud shout and they gather their band of men together. Just as when a crowd presses on a ferocious lion with hostile spears, but the lion, frightened, fierce and glaring wildly, steps back;

[36] Hom. *Il*. 20.164-173; see 2.3.

neither anger nor his courage allow him to turn tail, nor, though desiring to, is he even able to attack the spears and the men. Just so the uncertain Turnus retraces his lingering footsteps while his mind boils with rage."

This is not the most obvious of situations demanding a lion simile; in fact the Homeric-heroic stylisation of an all-powerful and aggressive hero is somewhat undermined. The lion simile ironically underlines the fact that Turnus is not quite living up to the Homeric ideal of the warrior. It is revealing that Turnus is in the process of retreat; doubt and confusion are the predominant emotions; anger does contribute to Turnus' emotional state, but both his feelings and his actions are contradictory. The lion is simultaeneously *territus* and *asper*; it steps back but will not turn tail.

The surrounding context makes it clear that Turnus is frustrated but also demonstrates that he is under considerable pressure. The Teucrians bear down on Turnus' heels relentlessly (*incumbere*), and the lion is placed under a similar strain (*premit*). The hunters do not fear the lion; they are armed with spears and have a numerical and strategic advantage over the beast. In fact the men's attitude towards the lion in *Iliad* 12[37] is completely at odds with those who take part in the Virgilian chase. The lion in Homer is implicitly treated as a much more dangerous creature. The men enclosing it in a net fall back when the lion attempts to shove through (Hom. *Il*. 12.48).

In Homer Menelaus and Ajax are compared to lions that are unwilling to retreat from conflict,[38] yet in Virgil Turnus is likened to a lion that is unsure of its strength and suffers from a sheer overload of emotional as well as aggressive impulses.

It is possible that Virgil's lion sees escape as a favourable option, *...nec tendere contra | ille quidem hoc cupiens potis est per tela virosque* "...nor, though desiring to, is he even able to get through the spears and the men" (Verg. *A*. 9.796). Indeed this phrase

[37] Hom. *Il*. 12.41-48; see 2.3.
[38] Hom. *Il*. 17.112, 11.557.

is difficult to interpret as it could mean that Turnus would prefer to avoid conflict altogether, or that he wants desperately to overpower those surrounding him but cannot. The dual meaning of this line may well be designed to be deliberately ambiguous. What is clear is that Virgil is emphasising Turnus' indecision: anger is no longer the key emotion.

Statius' lion is even further removed from the Homeric model. In the *Thebaid* Tydeus is aligned with a lion that is fatigued by excessive killing,

ut leo, qui campis longe custode fugato
Massylas depastus oves, ubi sanguine multo
luxuriata fames cervixque et tabe gravatae
consedere iubae, mediis in caedibus adstat
aeger, hians victusque cibis; nec iam amplius irae
crudescunt: tantum vacuis ferit aera malis
molliaque eiecta delambit vellera lingua.

Stat. *Theb*. 2.675-681.

"Just like the lion which has guzzled down Massylian sheep (when the herdsman has been put to flight a long way from the fields.) When the lion's hunger has run its course in much blood, and his neck and mane have become weighed down and pressed together with gore he stands in the midst of the slaughter; sick, open-mouthed and conquered by food. Now his wrathful urges grow no further; he only snaps the air with empty jaws and licks the soft wool with his thrust-out tongue."

The lion is described as faint and so gorged that it cannot consider further slaughter and merely stands still and licks its mouth. When we compare Statius' image

of the lion to the descriptions of Homeric lions it is clear that the beast has undergone significant development. A more complex being has replaced its raging predecessor.

2.5 The Expressive Lion and Gender Innovation

The Roman epic lion comes to display many more facets of divergent behaviour than its Homeric counterpart in comparison to both heroic and non-heroic figures. In Apollonius' Greek *Argonautica* Amycus challenges the men who have come to his land and offers to fight them in a boxing contest. Amycus is compared to a lion entrapped by huntsmen.

Ὣς φάτ' ἀπηλεγέως. ὁ δ' ἐσέδρακεν ὄμμαθ' ἑλίξας,
ὥστε λέων ὑπ' ἄκοντι τετυμμένος, ὅν τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
ἀνέρες ἀμφιπένονται· ὁ δ' ἰλλόμενός περ ὁμίλῳ
τῶν μὲν ἔτ' οὐκ ἀλέγει, ἐπὶ δ' ὄσσεται οἰόθεν οἷος
ἄνδρα τὸν ὅς μιν ἔτυψε παροίτατος οὐδ' ἐδάμασσεν.

A. R. 2.25-9.

"Polydeuces spoke bluntly. But Amycus, turning around, stared at him with glaring eyes. Just like a lion hit by a spear when men surround it in the mountains. Although it is being pushed by the mob the lion ignores the hunters; instead it gazes at the very man who hit him first but did not kill him."

Once provoked, the lion determines his enemy and singles him out. The animal is not distracted by the pressing attack of the crowding men but prioritises revenge

above all else. The description of the lion's fixed stare exaggerates the fact that the beast is mentally focussed on his initial attacker; this simile shows that the lion is resolutely steadfast in its resolve.

In Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* Aeson is compared to a lion when he considers his position and is uncertain of the best course of action. Valerius' depiction of the lion may echo *Od*.4.787-793 but is at odds with Apollonius' lion representation.

quasi multa leo cunctatur in arta
mole virum rictuque genas et lumina pressit,
sic curae subiere ducem, ferrumne capessat
imbelle...?

V.Fl. 1.757-760.

"Just like a lion in a thick press of men hesitates a lot and with a huge gaping jaw squeezes its cheeks and eyes; thus worries pressed on the king: should he snatch up an unwarlike sword...?".

In such a context we might have expected that Valerius would chose to equate Aeson to a deer or a prey with similar characteristics of anxiety. However, Aeson's indecisive behaviour is not compared to that of a creature of flight but to the lion. Valerius ironically emphasises the lion's wide snarl and thus draws the attention of the reader to the fact that the predatory cat's most lethal weapon - its jaw - is suprisingly inactive. The wording of the simile is unique in itself: Kleywegt (2005: 442) states that *rictuque genas et lumina pressit* seems to have no "exact parallel" in ancient literature.

It is clear that the Greek lion, when associated with the epic symbolism of the aggressive male, has intent to injure those attacking him. In complete contrast the primary emotional response of the Roman epic lion in Valerius is that of bewilderment. This time the animal's eyes express his doubts rather than a resolute sense of attacking purpose.

On this occasion the Roman epic lion does not follow the aggressive characteristics often associated with its Homeric heroic predecessors. The lion delays *cunctatur* and appears to be deep in thought. Meanwhile the surrounding context of the passage suggests unqualified levels of defeat; *curae subiere* emphasises the fact that the king is at a loss as to what to do next, and Valerius ends the scene with a sequence of questions; should Aeson wield a sword or ask elders for their help? (1.759-761).

Unlike the passionate and warring lions associated with the heroes of Homer Valerius' lion is in a position of weakness and does not instinctively adopt the aggressive traits of its Homeric predecessors. Even when presenting Penelope as a lion under attack Homer's attempt at depicting the victimised lion does not go to the same lengths as the description of the beast found in Valerius. Homer (*Od*. 4.787-794) does not refer to the facial expression of the animal in order to exaggerate its anxiety.

In the treatment of the Roman epic lion there is yet a further innovation. In the Homeric references the lion is always referred to in the masculine grammatical form (irrespective of sex); apparently the feminine Greek form "λέαινα" was used first by Aeschylus and Herodotus but did not appear before (Edwards 1991: 75).[39] However in the Latin epics the male hero is sometimes likened specifically to a female lioness that

[39] According to the Homeric Scholia 134-6B Homer did not know about lionesses: οὐκ οἶδε γὰρ Ὅμηρος τὸ λέαινα·

is referred to with the grammatically feminine word: *lea*. As Renehan (2000: 216) suggests there must be a good reason for altering grammatical genders.[40]

When associating the mourning lioness with the Roman epic hero Valerius uses the word *lea* and depicts Hercules seeking fitfully for Hylas. The hero displays uncharacteristic emotion and laments that he is unable to find his young friend. Like a lioness who has lost her young Hercules is dominated by anxiety.

non aliter gemitu quondam lea prolis ademptae
terga dedit: sedet inde viis inclusaque longo
pervigilant castella metu, dolor attrahit orbes
interea et misero manat iuba sordida luctu.

V.Fl. 3.737-740.

"Just as a lioness flees with a sigh once she has been deprived of her young: then she waits on the roads, and the locked strongholds watch all night in enduring fear. Meanwhile grief tires her eyes and her dirty mane hangs down with wretched sorrow."

It is of course relevant that Hercules is a hero whom we would naturally associate with the lion, but the choice of comparison here is telling and does not follow the most obvious course. Firstly, it is poignant that Valerius has chosen to feminise Hercules with comparison to a specifically female lioness. There are similar passages centered on loss and defence in *Iliad* 17 (133-6) when Ajax protects Patroclus and in *Iliad* 18 (318-322) when Achilles mourns for Patroclus, but the lions in both these

[40] Euripides refers to the female lioness in *Helen* (379). Hellenistic authors such as Theocritus (2.66-68) began to use the female grammatical form to refer specifically to the lioness. Theocritus describes the tradition of celebrating Artemis by dancing with animal masks (cf. Lawler 1947: 88). Roman epic authors innovated further and manipulated the symbolism of the female animal to challenge Homeric values of heroism.

Homeric similes are still ready for the fight despite their initial grief. The lion in *Iliad* 17 (135) "ὃ δέ τε σθένεϊ βλεμεαίνει" "exults in his strength", and the beast's predominant reaction in *Iliad* 18 (322) is anger "μάλα γὰρ δριμὺς χόλος αἰρεῖ" "…for ferocious anger takes hold of him". In complete contrast Valerius' grammatically feminine lioness is a picture of dejection from start to end.

The play on gender is striking within Valerius' *Argonautica*. In a comparative passage in book 6 a grammatically specified male lion, *leo* is hemmed in and is forced to protect his cubs from attack. The simile is comparative to the actions of Telamon who guards the dead body of Canthus (V.Fl. 6.346-349). The similarities between these two *Argonautica* passages abound, but the gender alteration marks the reference to Hercules as something quite different. With these Homeric and *Argonautica* references in mind it appears that Valerius has deliberately chosen to shun the epic tradition of employing a grammatically male lion, but why would he chose to make this differentiation?

Perhaps it is that Valerius challenges the traditional Homeric association of the aggressive lion with the violent hero by playing on the comparison of the female lioness with Hercules. By intermingling the sexes of animals and transgressing the most natural comparison of male with male Valerius appears to contradict our expectations of the traditional Homeric hero figure.

Considering the fact that Hercules has previously shown anger when he is compared to a lion in book 3 (V.Fl. 3.587-593) we might expect the lioness in V.Fl. 3.737-740 to react violently when she realises that her cubs have been stolen, but instead the lioness is deeply distressed and affected by grief. In addition, the focus is once again on the facial expression of the lioness; Valerius emphasises the animal's pain by highlighting the drawn eyes and the drooping of the lioness' mane. It seems possible that the concentration on the lioness' face was becoming an increasingly

popular motif in Latin literature.[41] Statius includes a very similar description in the *Silvae*: *tum cunctis cecidere iubae, ...* | *... et totas duxere in lumina frontes* (2.5.14-15) "Then all their manes sank down, and they wrinkled all their brows over their eyes".

In *Thebaid* 10 Dymas is compared to a lioness beset by Numidian hunters. Desperate to give the last rites to his master, Dymas is attacked by Amphion and is undecided whether he should plead for his life or concentrate on his master's body. Like Dymas the lioness is undecided as to the best course of action; should she protect her young or attack her enemies regardless?

ut lea, quam saevo fetam pressere cubili
venantes Numidae, natos erecta superstat,
mente sub incerta torvom ac miserabile frendens;
illa quidem turbare globos et frangere morsu
tela queat, sed prolis amor crudelia vincit[42]
pectora, et a media catulos circumspicit ira.

Stat. *Theb*. 10.414-419.

"...just like a lioness whose offspring are threatened by Numidian hunters in her ferocious den; she stands straight over her young cubs with an uncertain mind - wretchedly and pitifully roaring. She should be able to break the spears with a bite and to charge the hunting masses, but love of her cubs conquers her ferocious heart, and in the midst of her anger she glances around at her cubs."

[41] A fresco from the House of Orpheus in Pompeii (VI.14.20) depicts a lion with very expressive facial features (Zanker 1998: 162, Plate 14.2).
[42] cf. *amor vincit omnia* (Virg. *E*. 10.69).

The reference takes into account the conflicting responsibilities that the lioness and Dymas have in common; they both have a desire to protect those weaker than themselves but they are simultaneously driven by an instinctual urge for battle. In the end it appears that Dymas feels a strong bond with his dead comrade; it is this very loyalty that overpowers his traditional heroic instinct to enter back into the fray irrespective of the welfare of others. As Pollmann (2001: 21-2) emphasises, the moral dilemma inherent in Dymas' decision is not found in any of the comparative passages[43] that are similar to this description. It seems that we have gone full circle: the depiction of the lioness represents how morality overcomes emotions. In effect the simile shows that Dymas' feelings of duty towards his fellow warrior are greater than any impulses to defend or save his own life. This lioness is capable and suseptible to feeling love; *amor crudelia vincit*. In this instance love proves to have a stronger effect than anger; Statius' lioness could hardly be further removed from the traditional Homeric symbolism of what it meant to be a lion.

In *Punica* 10 Moorish hunters attack a lioness and her cubs. The simile likens the efforts of a father and his sons to wound Hannibal to the ineffectual endeavors of cubs to defend themselves against the attack of hunters.

haud secus ac Libyca fetam tellure leaenam
venator premit obsesso cum Maurus in antro,
invadunt rabidi iam dudum et inania temptant
nondum sat firmo catuli certamina dente.[44]

Sil. 10.124-127.

[43] Such as Hom. *Il.* 133-6 and V.Fl. 6.346-7.
[44] cf. Lucr. 5.1310-1322. Lucretius refers to the strength of lions' adult teeth.

"It is no different when a Moorish hunter in the land of Libya bears down on a lioness with her cubs in her besieged lair. Enraged, the new-born cubs now start empty battles and make an attempt [to injure] with teeth that are not yet powerful enough."

Here the cubs of the lioness are used to exaggerate the fragility of the men who face Hannibal. Although the cubs attempt to ward off their attackers it is implicitly understood that they will be unsuccessful. Hannibal goes on to slaughter both the father and the sons; the simile works on the assumption that the cubs will ultimately be destroyed. Homeric heroes are compared to aggressive lions at the peak of their physical maturity, but Silius has likened his soldiers to cubs that are unable to protect themselves let alone launch a successful attack. In effect Silius emphasises the fact that Hannibal's strength diminishes the power of those around him: the father and sons are only cubs in comparison with Hannibal whereas they may well be termed as lions if they were to face a lesser threat.

It is interesting that the Roman epic lion is not only depicted as more capable of emotional suffering than its Homeric counterpart but is also more often involved in situations that place it at a physical and psychological disadvantage. There is a range of references that undermine the strength and ferocity of the animal: Achilles steals lion cubs from their mother and shows little respect for them when he disposes of them; he throws them away thoughtlessly in order to welcome his mother *abicit* (Stat. *Ach.* 1.172). Statius also refers to Achilles amusing himself by playing with the cubs. Dilke points out that the wording of the episode *incitat ungues* suggests that Achilles teases the young lion cubs into showing their small claws.[45] By treating them with such frivolity Achilles emphasises the cub's weakness.

[45] Stat. *Ach.* 1.170 and Dilke 1954: 97.

In *Punica* 7 the lion is treated as a simile for the behaviour of a retreating army (Sil. 7.401-403) while in *Thebaid* 6 (270-271) Hercules appears once more. This time he crushes the lion's frame against his own strong chest while the male lion gasps out its last breath. In *Thebaid* 9 (Stat. 189-195) Tydeus' corpse is mutilated like that of a male lion *sub culmine fixus* "nailed up beneath the roof". The lion also comes under attack in the *Metamorphoses* (Ov. 4.512-515); in a bout of madness Athamas mistakes his wife for a lion and encourages his friends to hunt the beast down. These references demonstrate the sheer diversity of approaches that authors took towards the lion in Roman epic. Whereas Homeric references tend to exaggerate the aggressive nature of the beast Roman authors explored the lion in contexts that emphasised its vulnerability.

With these episodes in mind it is clear that the depiction of the epic lion has undergone some significant changes. Both lions and lionesses are challenged on a diverse range of levels in Latin epic whereas Homeric lions are primarily employed to signify brute strength and anger. It seems that Roman epic writers have deliberately victimised lions and transgressed traditional gender associations; they anthropomorphise lions and ascribe very human facial expressions to them. The alteration in the lion's characterisation often results in a more thorough emotional exploration of the creature.

2.6 Questioning Anger

Homeric epic emphasises the importance of reckless bravery and suggests that heroes must learn to value their personal honour and to overcome feelings of terror and mercy in their pursuit of personal glory (Redfield 1975: 104). Homeric epic examines values that are deeply rooted in heroic codes of conduct, and Homeric anger is often represented as a praise-worthy emotion that spurs warriors to acts of impressive bravery.

Achilles is spurred on by his anger and viciously attacks the corpse of Hector (*Il.* 22.345-54), while Odysseus gives himself the name Eperitus at the end of the *Odyssey* (24.305-6) which is etymogically related to the word "anger" in Sanskrit (Galinsky 1988: 346).

Interest in the implications of anger did not diminish over time; Greek philosophers subsequently examined the place of anger in society and came to influence later Roman epic depictions of the emotion. Galinsky (1988: 330-333) has shown how Aeneas' behaviour at the end of the *Aeneid* (when he kills Turnus) corresponds to conceptions of anger that are found in Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle (*E.N.* 1126a29-30) criticises anger in excess and Stoics such as Seneca took very negative views of the emotion (Fowler in Braund 1997: 24 and 33).

Virgil's reckoning of anger may also have been influenced by the thoughts of Philodemus. The Epicurean makes a differentiation between "vain anger" and "natural anger" and argues that wise men should only feel anger in proportion to the type and extent of provocation suffered. It seems that Virgil initially associated himself with Philodemus' philosophy (Galinsky 1988: 335-6).

Contemporary Roman attitudes to anger show that there had been a considerable shift in thoughts about the emotion. The expression of unwarranted anger was considered a serious vice and could have considerable repercussions. Cicero tells his younger brother to be wary of anger in his governance of the province of Asia:

omnes enim qui istinc veniunt ita de tua virtute, integritate, humanitate commemorant ut in tuis summis laudibus excipiant unam iracundiam. quod vitium cum in hac privata cottidianaque vita levis esse animi atque infirmi videtur, tum vero nihil est tam deforme, quam ad summum imperium etiam acerbitatem naturae adiungere.

Cic. *Q.fr*. 1.1.3.

"All who come from your place mention your excellence, your honesty and your kindness; they only stop short in praising you to the upmost in one respect - your tendency to anger. This vice is not only perceived as the sign of a weak and infirm mind in everyday private life, but more importantly nothing is as repulsive as joining an irascible nature to supreme power."

It seems that the changing characterisation of the epic lion expresses a shift in thinking about heroic behaviour and may even be symptomatic of a reassessment of anger in Roman culture as a whole. Harris (2001: 204) argues that the Romans began to question the moral value of anger as early as the late Roman Republic. By the days of Virgil ideas about heroic codes (cf. Conte 2007: 40), and the place of anger within that heroic code had undergone significant development.

Roman epic authors felt that Homeric displays of rage were ill suited to their writings. The extreme wrath of Achilles was at odds with the Roman nationalistic cause; a continual search for Homeric *kudos* could no longer offer a sufficient paradigm for the new-age Roman hero. Roman epic heros were expected to display civilising traits (Hainsworth 1991: 103); thus by killing Turnus, Aenas acts in the interests of the community, whereas when Achilles kills Hector, he is isolated from the society that he relies on to honour him.[46] The passions of the Homeric hero that remain in Roman epic are not necessarily placed in a favourable light.

2.7 Realism

[46] Redfield 1975: 104-5 cf. Galinsky 1988: 342-3.

In Roman times the lion was viewed in a new context: as the mass captive of the Roman Empire and as an object of entertainment the lion could be seen by the masses in the arena (Dowden 1998: 130), in the circus or even in the street. As such it appears that the Romans became increasingly interested in the training of the lion; they nurtured a desire to understand the intricacies of lion behaviour.

In book 10 of the *Punica* the lion is depicted as a wounded victim in the arena.

immanis ceu, depulsis levioribus hastis
accepit leo cum tandem per pectora ferrum,
stat teli patiens media tremebundus harena
ac manante iubis rictuque et naribus unda
sanguinis, interdum languentia murmura torquens,
effundit patulo spumantem ex ore cruorem.

Sil. 10.241-6.

"Just so a monstrous lion, when the lighter spears have bounced off, yields at last to a sword that has struck through his heart. Quivering, he stands resigned to the blow in the centre of the arena, and blood gushes from his mane, jaws and nostrils. He churns out a weak growl and he drips foam and gore from his wide jaws."

This reference is particularly revealing for it shows that the everyday experience of the Roman arena had found a place in contemporary epic literature. Use of the arena in epic similes is very rare (cf. Spaltenstein 1986: 72-73): there are three such references

to wild animals in the Roman arena in epic, only one of which involves a lion.[47] It seems that Silius was keen to stretch the bounds of epic simile. The use of the arena as a setting for the simile marks Silius' reference to the lion as inherently innovative. Paulus has slaughtered a vast number of enemies but is then struck in the face by a huge stone; the faces of the human and the lion stream with blood. The realistic arena setting imbeds the lion in a context that would have seemed appropriate in the age; the majority of Romans would have viewed the lion in the context of the arena rather than any other.

Latin epic also takes account of the changeability of the lion's nature. Statius (*Ach*. 1.858-863) explores the ability of the lion to revert to violence and depicts a lion cub that eventually turns against the man that has attempted to tame it. This simile obviously has its origins in Aeschylus (*A*. 717-736), but in Statius' version the lion cub only resorts to violence once it has been challenged by the sword: *si semel adverso radiavit lumine ferrum* (*Ach*. 1.861) "if the sword once shines with a hostile light". Meanwhile, Aeschylus' lion kills unprovoked, "...χάριν| γὰρ τροφεῦσιν ἀμείβων | μηλοφόνοισι σὺν ἄταις | δαῖτ' ἀκέλευστος ἔτευξεν·" (*A*.728-731) "...Unbidden, as thanks for those that bought it up, it made a banquet from the deadly slaughter of sheep." The difference in the lion's characterisation is clear: Aeschylus suggests that the lion is inherently driven to violence by its very nature while Statius assumes that the lion requires a catalyst to goad it to savage behaviour. As such, Statius affords his description with a moral dimension that is lacking in Aeschylus' charcaterisation of the lion.

Statius' insight may well have to do with the treatment of the lion in the arena; it seems that lions would have had to be goaded into action. Dio complains that a hundred lions "emerged sluggishly" from their dens when they were put in the arena by the

[47] The others are to be found in Ovid (*Met*. 11.25-27) when Orpheus' demise is compared to that of a stag in the amphitheatre and Lucan (6.220-223) when Scaeva is likened to a bear struck by a missile in the arena.

emperor Probus and writes that they did not put on much of a show (Hopkins et al. 2006: 98). Visual images suggest that big animals were controlled with whips and chains (Hopkins et al. 2006: 100); considering the fact that some animals arrived stressed and emaciated from travel it is no wonder they had to be provoked to fight. No doubt it was necessary for trainers to spur them into action.

Statius' account of the lion may be somewhat indebted to ideas contained in Seneca. Seneca advises that patience be employed to deal with animals and suggests that they are inherently innocent. *quae nullam iniuriam nobis faciunt, quia velle non possunt* (*Dial*. 2.26.4-5) "[animals are the ones] who do us no wrong because they do not have the ability to wish to [do us wrong]". Seneca appreciates that animals react to the way that they are treated and asserts that they can be moulded to behave in a particular way if they are handled correctly. His understanding rests on the theory that animals lack the intent to cause injury.

The concept that lion cubs would be easier to train than older animals is supported in Pliny and Statius. Pliny (*Nat*. 8.17.42) describes the animal's mane as a decisive indication of its maturity and likely behaviour; he identifies that lions who have just grown a mane are particularly high-spirited. It is telling that Statius' lion refuses to be fed by its mother when it feels its mane on its neck. *ut leo, cui parvo mater Gaetula cruentos* | *suggerit ipsa cibos, cum primum crescere sensit* | *colla iubis torvosque novos respexit ad ungues,* | *indignatur ali*,... (*Theb*. 9.739-742) "Just like a lion whose Gaetulian mother heaps bloody nourishment before him when he is little. When he first felt his mane grow on his neck and examined his wild new claws he was indignant to be fed".

It seems that Roman epic writers fostered a new interest in animal realism. Some display a clear desire to place the epic lion in the setting that was most relevant to its contemporary existence, while others attempt to represent the likely behaviours of the

animal in real life. Owing to the fundamental role of the lion in the Roman arena epic writers appear to have been dissatisfied with the traditional representations provided by the Homeric tradition. Homeric lions are the product of a society that had a limited knowledge of the animal; the descriptions of Roman epic lions are indicative of more realistic insights.

2.8 Conclusion

The Homeric lion is symbolic of aggression, anger and heroic spirit: it is aligned with archetypal figures of wrath (such as Achilles), retreats unwillingly from conflict and unrelentingly attacks those that provoke it. We might expect the connection between the aggressive lion and epic hero to remain just as pronounced in later literature. Yet it appears that the characterisation of the lion has altered in Roman epic references. The Roman epic lion changes gender, develops a range of more expressive facial movements and is featured in contexts more relevant to a specifically Roman environment. The Roman epic lion is more often victimised than its Homeric counterpart and is characterised less explicitly by anger. Indeed, in the context of the arena, the lion behaves as a victim in its own right rather than as a one-dimensional symbol of heroic virtue.

It is possible that the image of the Roman epic lion developed in accord with new, more nationalistic ideals. The Romans' perchant for restraint and emotional *gravitas* could have altered the definition of heroism itself and so allowed an alternative interpretation of the epic lion to come to the fore.

Chapter 3: The Deer

3.1 Romanised Deer

Roman epic descriptions of deer sometimes appear to refer back to Greek traditions, yet a number of details are specifically Roman additions. In terms of the physical properties of the stag Aristotle, Virgil, Pliny and Phaedrus all comment on the animal's antlers. Virgil refers to stags, *capita alta ferentis | cornibus arboreis* (Verg. *A*. 1.189-90) "their heads held aloft with branching antlers". This topic is also discussed at considerable length in Pliny, who remarks on the stag's antlers in his narration on the species: *cornua mares habent, solique animalium omnibus annis stato veris tempore amittunt;…indicia quoque aetatis in illis gerunt...* (*Nat*. 8.50. 115-116) "The males have horns and they alone of all animals lose them at an appointed time in spring every year...they also bear evidence of their age on them…".

Perhaps antlers were commonly discussed owing to Roman beliefs about their characteristics. Pliny suggests that the antlers of stags were particularly useful since they possessed medicinal properties: *accensi autem utrius libeat odore comitiales morbi deprehenduntur* "bouts of epilepsy are discouraged by the burnt smell of either horn" and *singulare abigendis serpentibus odor adusto cervino cornu…* (*Nat*. 8.50.115-118) "…the smell from a burnt brown deer horn is something extraordinary in warding off serpents". Phaedrus too concentrates his attention on the antlers of the stag and maintains that the stag is unaware of his true assets. The stag has nimble feet but only fully appreciates their value after being pursued by a hound; the stag's antlers prove to be his downfall since he catches them in trees and falls victim to hungry dogs (Phaed. 1.12.9-11).

An interest in antlers is also emphasised in Aristotle who charts their development, οἱ μὲν οὖν ἐνιαύσιοι οὐ φύουσι κέρατα πλὴν ὥσπερ σημείου

χάριν ἀρχήν τινα· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ βραχὺ καὶ δασύ. Φύουσι δὲ διετεῖς πρῶτον τὰ κέρατα εὐθέα, καθάπερ παττάλους· διὸ καὶ καλοῦσι τότε πατταλίας αὐτούς. τῷ δὲ τρίτῳ ἔτει δίκρουν φύουσι, τῷ δὲ τετάρτῳ τραχύτερον· (Arist. *H.A.* 8.5.611a31-611b1) "[Stags] do not grow horns in their first year – except as a token for the sake of starting, and those first horns are short and rough. After two years stags grow straight horns for the first time, and they are just like pegs; for that reason people call them two-year stags. In their third year stags grow horns that divide; and in the fourth year, horns that are more rugged." The antlers of the stag seem to have been a common starting point when it came to commenting on the animal. However, when we delve more deeply into Roman depictions, it appears that some deer characteristics were not borrowed from Greek findings.

Both Pliny and Virgil suggest that deer naturally herd in lines. This tendency is not referred to in Aristotle, who stays entirely silent on the issue. Pliny remarks, *maria trameant gregatim nantes porrecto ordine* (*Nat*. 8.50.114) "They transverse seas swimming in a crowd in a long line", while Virgil also describes the deer as moving in lines one behind another: *hos tota armenta sequuntur a tergo et longum per vallis pascitur agmen* (Verg. *A*. 1.185-6) "a whole herd followed them at their back and foraged throughout the valley arranged in a thin line."

Similarities between the accounts of Virgil and Pliny are also evident when we compare their understanding of the behaviours of deer under threat. In *Aeneid* 7 (500-502) Silvia's pet stag has been wounded by Iulus' arrow and rushes to its mistress' stable in distress; the stag makes for the human surroundings that are familiar to it in an attempt to seek protection and pity: *saucius at quadripes nota intra tecta refugit | successitque gemens stabulis, questuque cruentus | atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat* (Verg. *A*. 7. 500-502) "But the wounded stag fled inside the well-known dwelling and entered its stable moaning; bloodstained it was filling the whole household

with lamentation as though it were invoking protection". Virgil repeats the word *tecta/tectum* which positions the stag in a very human environment and so emphasises the fact that the stag has become a tame animal; the stag is obviously used to these surroundings and has knowledge of them: *nota*. Interestingly, Pliny tells us that wild deer also have a tendency to seek protection from humans when they are being chased by dogs: *…placidissimo animalium. urgente vi canum ultro confugiunt ad hominem* (*Nat*. 8.50.112) "…[stags] are the most placid of animals. When beset by the violence of dogs they flee for help to humankind of their own accord."

In Virgil, the tamed stag does not hesitate to return to human care when injured. Horsfall (2000: 326ff) comments on *refugit* in line 500, "…V. plays heavily upon the stag's acquired instincts: The Tyrrhidae have given him a home, and he reacts in kind". However, Virgil does not merely emphasise the stag's learned behaviours, but also indirectly elaborates on the Roman understanding of the stag's natural instincts. The account of Pliny suggests that wild deer are not averse to seeking help from humans when under stressful conditions; perhaps Virgil partly chose to include this particular detail concerning the tame deer because Romans expected wild deer to turn to human protection when under attack. This becomes more intriguing in the light of the contrasting statement of Aristotle who asserts that wild deer will often choose to defend themselves in their own lairs when under threat, ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο πέτρα ἀπορρώξ, μίαν ἔχουσα εἴσοδον, οὗ δὴ καὶ ἀμύνεσθαι ἤδη φασὶν ὑπομένουσαν (*H.A*. 8.5.611a21-23) "…there is a steep crag, that only has one entrance, where they say that the deer stands its ground and resists attack." The contradiction between the Greek understanding of the behaviour of deer and the Roman perspective on the same issue suggests that Virgil had utilised Romanised information that was currently accepted in Roman society. In an attempt to render a realistic portrayal of the typical deer behaviour perhaps Virgil made reference to the most commonly held Roman assumptions about

deer. From Pliny's explanations it appears that Romans considered deer more likely to take advantage of human kindness than other wild animals.

Similar broad concepts relating to deer may be found in both genres, but it seems that even the smaller details about deer were being transmitted from antiquarian writings into epic works. In some ways, the reference to a deer in *Punica* 13 echoes specific points found in Pliny's encyclopaedic writing on deer. For example, Silius remarks that the deer had a number of distinguishing features which are not copied from the comparative passage in Virgil.[48] Silius' deer has a snowy white coat[49]: *Cerva fuit, raro terris spectata colore,* | *quae candore nivem, candore anteiret olores* (Sil. 13.115-16) "There was a deer, coloured in a way rarely seen by the world: with the dazzling whiteness of snow, it surpassed the whiteness of the swan" and it enjoyed a long lifetime: *haec, aevi vitaeque tenax felixque senectam* | *mille indefessos viridem duxisse per annos,*| *saeculorum numero Troianis condita tecta* | *aequabat;* (Sil. 13.126-9) "tough and blessed the deer lived through an eternal age of a thousand years, equalling in number the generations by which the Trojans had founded their city."

It is curious that Pliny also tells us that stags have long lives. He writes that there was a certain animal that belonged to Alexander the Great; the stag was found with a necklace around its neck that Alexander had put on it a hundred years before (*Nat*. 8.50.119). He also records: *sunt aliquando et candido colore, qualem fuisse tradunt Q. Sertorii cervam quam esse fatidicam Hispaniae gentibus persuaserat…* (*Nat*. 8.50.117) "Sometimes deer have bright white coats; they report that the deer of Quintus Sertorius was of such a sort, and he had convinced the tribes of Spain that it was prophetic". There seems to be a striking resemblance between information found in Pliny's and Silius' works.

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[48] To some extent Silius modelled his pet deer passage on that of Virgil (Verg. *A*. 7.483-502).
[49] White stags were believed to have magical properties (Cooper 2008).

When we refer to Aristotle's thoughts on such details he tells us that deer did not, in fact, enjoy a long lifespan. Περὶ δὲ τῆς ζωῆς μυθολογεῖται μὲν ὡς ὢν μακρόβιον, οὐ φαίνεται δ' οὔτε τῶν μυθολογουμένων οὐδὲν σαφές, ἥ τε κύησις καὶ ἡ αὔξησις τῶν νεβρῶν συμβαίνει οὐχ ὡς μακροβίου τοῦ ζῷου ὄντος (Arist. *H.A*. 6.29.578b24-6) "Tales are told in myth of its longevity, but the proof of such claims has not come to light; indeed the gestation and growth of the young deer does not correspond to an animal which has longevity". In fact, key deer in the modern world have an average life-expectancy of only 4.5 years (Lopez 2003: 40), and red deer do not normally live beyond 26 years (Putnam 1988: 106). The Roman assessment of the deer's longevity is a Roman mistake that appears to have been spread by the transmission of a myth and does not rely on direct observation. Pliny's account directly contests that of Aristotle and we may suggest that Silius was more in line with contemporary Roman thoughts than with the ancient Greek view on the subject. It is possible that some specifically Roman ideas were being manipulated or transmitted from one literary genre to the other; or perhaps there was even an ongoing and mutual development between the two types of Roman work in relating to deer and their characteristics.

In his epic *Argonautica*, Valerius Flaccus also includes a deer passage. Juno sends a stag for Hylas to chase and the stag serves as a decoy. Hylas is then submerged in a spring by a nymph loyal to Juno.

sic ait et celerem frondosa per avia cervum
suscitat ac iuveni sublimem cornibus offert.
ille animos tardusque fugae longumque resistens
sollicitat suadetque pari contendere cursu.
credit Hylas praedaeque ferox ardore propinquae

insequitur; simul Alcides hortatibus urget

prospiciens. Iamque ex oculis aufertur uterque,

cum puerum instantem quadripes fessaque minantem

tela manu procul ad nitidi spiracula fontis

ducit et intactas levis ipse superfugit undas.

V.Fl. 3.545-554.

"She spoke thus and drove a nimble stag up through the leafy and remote wood, straight into the way of the boy with its majestic antlers. The stag harasses the boy's spirit by coming to a standstill during a long and drawn out escape and urges him to strive on in the unrelenting race. Hylas, fierce with passion for the nearby reward, follows it; meanwhile the watching Alcides encourages him with exhortations. Now both are carried away from view and the boy keeps pursuing while threatening the stag with an arrow directed by a tired hand, but the stag leads on far away to a spring with glittering water and leaps over the waters without touching them."

Valerius implicitly displays knowledge of Virgil's stag episode in the *Aeneid* (7.483-502)[50] but also adds new characteristics to the deer's escape, which are not found in Virgil's deer descriptions.[51] Valerius asserts that the progress of the stag is halted at

[50] cf. Garson 1963: 262.

[51] Zissos (1999: 290) suggests that Valerius was well aware of the various versions of the Hylas myth, and that he mediated between a variety of alternative tales. Most importantly, Zissos considers the relationship between a prophecy made by a seer called Mopsus and the actual circumstances of the disappearance of Hylas in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (A.R. 1.218-20). In Valerius' epic Mopsus prophesises that Hylas will be lost later in the *Argonautica* because he goes to fetch water. But in actual fact, Hylas disappears when chasing a stag at 3. 545-554. "It seems that the confusion that Mopsus generates with his prophecy arises from the fact that his knowledge is not based on a reading of signs and omens, but on a reading of Apollonius' *Argonautica*" (Zissos 1999: 293). In his work Garson compares Apollonius' version of the *Argonautica* with that of Valerius and notes that Valerius makes a number of changes to the original. Whereas Apollonius makes no mention of a stag being involved in the episode Valerius introduced the stag as a decoy (Garson 1963: 260-261). Zissos (1999: 294) argues that Flaccus'

intervals, and suggests that it teases Hylas into pursuing it …*ille animos tardusque fugae longumque resistens*| *sollicitat…* (V.Fl. 3.547-8) "…the stag harasses the boy's spirit by coming to a standstill during a long and drawn out escape…". Pliny also explains that deer have a tendency to halt in the middle of their escape: *et alias semper in fuga adquiescunt stantesque respiciunt, cum prope ventum est rursus fugae praesidia repetentes: hoc fit intestini dolore tam infirmi ut ictu levi rumpatur intus* (*Nat*. 8.50.113-114) "…At other times deer always stop in the course of their escape, and, standing still, look back. When hunters come near they take flight again; this phenomenon comes about owing to pain caused in the gut which is so weak that it is torn at the slightest blow". Aristotle mentions this type of behaviour too and attributes it to some anatomical anomaly of the deer: ἐν δὲ τῷ φεύγειν ἀνάπαυσιν ποιοῦνται τῶν δρόμων, καὶ ὑφιστάμενοι μένουσιν ἕως ἂν πλησίον ἔλθῃ ὁ διώκων· τότε δὲ πάλιν φεύγουσιν. τοῦτο δὲ δοκοῦσι ποιεῖν διὰ τὸ πονεῖν τὰ ἐντός· τὸ γὰρ ἔντερον ἔχει λεπτὸν καὶ ἀσθενὲς οὕτως ὥστ' ἐὰν ἠρέμα τις πατάξῃ, διακόπτεται τοῦ δέρματος ὑγιοῦς ὄντος (Arist. *H.A*. 6.29.579a13-17) "They cease in their escape and standing their ground, wait until the hunter comes near; then they run off again. They appear to behave in this way owing to some internal strain. For the deer has a slender and feeble gut, and if someone were to strike it softly it would break apart – despite the skin being untouched." Perhaps Valerius chose to attribute this behaviour to the teasing nature of the deer because it suited his literary intention, but it seems this is an occasion where Roman didactic literature seems reliant on the Greek understanding.

Both Pliny and Valerius mention that deer are particularly skilled at leaping away from danger: *editos partus exercent cursu et fugam meditari docent, ad praerupta ducunt saltumque demonstrant* (Plin. *Nat*. 8.50.113) "They drill their young in escape at

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inclusion of the stag serves to contradict the prophecy of Mopsus and undermine the trust between the reader and the narrator.

birth and teach them to practise fleeing. They lead them to steep places and show them how to jump." The account of Valerius also supports the idea that the stag can leap impressive distances. The stag manages to escape with his long range jump: *intactas levis ipse superfugit undas* (V.Fl. 3.554) "the stag leaps over the untouched waters with light feet".

It seems that Lucan also utilised information recorded in Pliny in writing his *Civil War*. In book 4 Lucan describes a hunting scene.

Sic, dum pavidos formidine cervos
claudat odoratae metuentes aera pinnae,
aut dum dispositis attollat retia varis,
venator tenet ora levis clamosa Molossi,
Spartanos Cretasque ligat, nec creditur ulli
silva cani, nisi qui presso vestigia rostro
colligit et praeda nescit latrare reperta,
contentus tremulo monstrasse cubilia loro.

Luc. 4.437-444.

"Thus the hunter closes the fearful stags in; they are terrified, dreading the scent of the tainted feathers until he raises up the nets in varied lines; he shuts the the barking jaws of the nimble Molossian pointer and fastens the setters of Sparta and Crete; he does not trust any dog except the one who finds the trail with his muzzle pressed to the tracks. This dog does not bark when his booty is discovered - instead he is satisfied to have pointed out the den by pulling at his collar".

Pliny mentions that the baying of dogs scares deer: *fugiunt autem latratu canum audito secunda semper aura, ut vestigia cum ipsis abeant* (*Nat*. 8.50.114) "…when the barking of dogs is heard [the deer] always use the winds to their advantage so that their tracks disappear with them". It is revealing that Lucan's hound is trained not to make a noise: *praeda nescit latrare reperta* (Luc. 4.442) the dog "does not think to bark when his booty is discovered". In effect, Lucan reflects the "realism" of a trained hunting dog; such detail is nowhere to be found in Aristotle. Once again it seems that there is a strong link between the types of knowledge being displayed in Roman encyclopaedic works and their Roman epic counterparts.

Valerius also narrates a hunting scene in book 6 of the *Argonautica* and suggests that the Colchians were relentless in war. Yet it is not the similarity between Roman encyclopaedic works and the Roman epic description that is of note here but the reference to the hunting dogs as *Umbro* or Umbrian.

haut moti Colchorum animi: neque mittere parcunt
tela, set implicitos miseraque in peste revinctos
confodiunt, ac forma necis non altera surgit
quam cervos ubi non Umbro venator edaci,
non pinna petit, haerentes sed cornibus altis
invenit et caeca constrictos excipit ira.

V.Fl. 6.417-422.

"The Colchians were undisturbed; they did not refrain from throwing their spears but transfixed those that they had conquered and ensnared them in wretched destruction. A form of murder develops just as when a hunter hunts stags not with his Umbrian hound

or with the feather snare, but when he discovers them entangled by their lofty antlers and comes across them enmeshed by their blind rage."

Virgil too makes reference to a further deer hunt in *Aeneid* 12 and also characterises the hunting dogs as *Umber*.

inclusum veluti si quando flumine nactus
cervum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pennae
venator cursu canis et latratibus instat;
ille autem insidiis et ripa territus alta
mille fugit refugitque vias, at vividus Umber
haeret hians, iam iamque tenet similisque tenenti
increpuit malis morsuque elusus inani est…

Verg. *A*. 12.749-755.

"Just like a stag which has stumbled, encircled by some stream or entrapped by the fear of purple feathers and has been pressed by the running and barking of the hunting dog; afraid of the snares and the high bank, the stag flees and runs back again in a thousand directions, but the Umbrian hound, full of life, stays close with gaping jaws and now and then he seems to seize it, but cheated he snaps on emptiness with his mouth".

Paschalis interprets the importance of the term *Umber* in relation to the context of death and the Underworld. "Aeneas presses upon Turnus as an Umbrian hound chases a cornered stag. The jaws of the Umbrian hound ('Vmber…hians') combine Darkness and Yawn. Hunger and Voracity are features of Virgil's Underworld, and the

present scene narrativizes the 'devouring' darkness of death. Terms like 'hio'/'hiatus', 'fauces', and 'guttur' are shared by hungry animals and gaping Underworld openings or monsters; and Darkness and Yawn combine elsewhere only in connection with the Underworld. 'Vmber' invokes 'umbra'; its association with Darkness as a component of Death has a parallel in the name 'Vmbro'" (Paschalis 1997: 397).

The word *umber* could also be interpreted as a Romanising feature. In his *Cynegetica*, dated to the Augustan period, Grattius refers to the Umbrian hound and suggests that it is not the best hound to use in the actual kill of the hunt; instead its strength lies in following the scent of the prey. *at fugit adversos idem quos repperit hostes | Umber: quanta fides utinam et sollertia naris, | tanta foret virtus et tantum vellet in armis!* (Grat. 171-173) "The same Umbrian dog flees from the enemies which it has previously sniffed out. If only the dog had as much courage as he possesses faithful tendencies and a clever nose!"

From Grattius' account it seems that the Umbrian hound was not a breed renowned for its bravery. There appears to be a very real contradiction in the Roman encyclopaedic and Roman epic interpretations of the hound. Grattius tells us that the Umbrian is scared of facing its enemies while Virgil describes the dog as vicious and bloodthirsty, *at vividus Umber | haeret hians* (Verg. *A*. 12.753-754) "but the Umbrian hound, full of life, stays close with gaping jaws". In fact, Grattius (199-206) suggests that a range of other breeds are more suited to the tracking and kill of the hunt. He praises swift Sycambrian and Petronian hounds that make excellent sniffer dogs.

It seems that the two epic references to Umbrian hounds do not take account of the suitability of the hound to the chase; instead the Umbrian hound is added as a Romanising touch. Here, both Virgil and Flaccus have departed from the Greek tradition of mentioning specifically Greek dogs – such as the frequently referred to Molossian or Spartan hounds. Both authors could have described more suitable Roman

dogs but it seems that realism has been sacrificed. In these descriptions Virgil and Flaccus see deer hunts from a characteristically Romanised perspective.

3.2 The Deer: Wild or Tame?

The most powerful depictions of deer in Roman epic (or at least those that have sparked the greatest interest), are arguably those contained within the *Aeneid*. In *Aeneid* 4 Dido is compared to a deer, wounded by love for Aeneas.

uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur
urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,
quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit
pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum
nescius: illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrat
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo.

Verg. *A*. 4.68-73.

"The unfortunate Dido burns, out of her mind as she roams the whole city, just as when a deer is pierced by an arrow, which a shepherd hunting with javelins has struck from afar when she was unheeding among the woods of Crete, but the unaware shepherd leaves the flying barb in her. The deer staggers through the forests and the thickets of Mount Dicte in escape, but the deadly shaft is buried deep in her flank."

Otis suggests that Virgil has combined two passages from Homer and Apollonius in his reworking of the deer motif. "…in Virgil the simile is a device for

heightening or placing his [Virgil's larger scheme of] motifs. The wounded deer simile is an excellent case in point. Its origin, despite the doubts of some commentators, seems clear enough. Virgil here, as elsewhere, is reworking Apollonius by combining him with Homer and by adapting both to his own purpose" (Otis 1964: 72-73). As Otis suggests it seems reasonable to draw a connection between Homer's stag simile, the episode in Apollonius and the deer passage in *Aeneid* 4.

εὗρον ἔπειτ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα διίφιλον· ἀμφὶ δ᾽ἄρ᾽ αὐτὸν
Τρῶες ἕπονθ᾽ ὡς εἴ τε δαφοινοὶ θῶες ὄρεσφιν
ἀμφ᾽ ἔλαφον κεραὸν βεβλημένον, ὅν τ᾽ ἔβαλ᾽ ἀνὴρ
ἰῷ ἀπὸ νευρῆς· τὸν μέν τ᾽ ἤλυξε πόδεσσι
φεύγων, ὄφρ᾽ αἷμα λιαρὸν καὶ γούνατ᾽ ὀρώρῃ·
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸν γε δαμάσσεται ὠκὺς ὀϊστός,
ὠμοφάγοι μιν θῶες ἐν οὔρεσι δαρδάπτουσιν
ἐν νέμεϊ σκιερῷ· ἐπί τε λῖν ἤγαγε δαίμων
σίντην· θῶες μέν τε διέτρεσαν, αὐτὰρ ὁ δάπτει·
ὣς ῥα τότ᾽ ἀμφ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα δαϊφρονα ποικιλομήτην
Τρῶες ἕπον πολλοί τε καὶ ἄλκιμοι, αὐτὰρ ὅ γ᾽ ἥρως
ἀϊσσων ᾧ ἔγχει ἀμύνετο νηλεὲς ἦμαρ.

Hom. *Il*. 11. 473-84.

"Then they found the one dear to Zeus, Odysseus. The Trojans gathered about him just as blood red jackals in the hills strike the antlered stag, a stag which a man has struck

with an arrow from a bowstring. The stag has fled from him with his hooves; for as long as his blood was warm the stag's knees were stirred onward, but when the swift arrow has worn him down the jackals that eat raw flesh devour him in the mountains and in the shady grove. But a divine spirit leads a ravenous lion to that place; the jackals run away, but the lion feasts on the stag. In just such a way the many and courageous Trojans toiled around the clever Odysseus full of wiles, but the hero warded off the pitiless day with the glance of his spear."

It is equally worthwhile to consider Virgil's deer motif in the context of this passage from Apollonius:

τῇ δ' ἀλεγεινότατον κραδίῃ φόβον ἔμβαλεν Ἥρη,
τρέσσεν δ' ἠύτε τις κούφη κεμὰς ἥν τε βαθείς
τάρφεσιν ἐν ξυλόχοιο κυνῶν ἐφόβησεν ὁμοκλή·
αὐτίκα γὰρ νημερτὲς ὀίσσατο μή μιν ἀρωγήν
ληθέμεν, αἶψα δὲ πᾶσαν ἀναπλήσειν κακότητα·

A.R. 4.11-15.

"Hera struck Medea's heart with the most stricken anxiety; just like a swift fawn which the bark of dogs has terrified in the copse of a deep grove. She immediately feared for the help that had not escaped the notice of her father and quickly feared that all else would be overpowered with wickedness."

Although Otis is right to point out the similarities between these passages there are also significant differences. In Homer, the narrative involves not only the wounded

stag, but also jackals and a lion. Predator and prey in Homer are both depicted in their natural confines. The jackals roam in the hills and focus their attention on the stag; meanwhile the lion scares the scavengers away and fulfils expectations of its predatory behaviour. In short, Homer not only concentrates his attention on the stag as a victim but also observes the hierarchy of the natural world and portrays how what was once a scavenger in the role of predator may just as quickly become a scavenger in the role of victim.

Homer's depiction of the stag is relatively brief; the reader is merely informed that the stag is injured and that it initially escapes from harm owing to its endurance. ὄφρ' αἷμα λιαρὸν καὶ γούνατ' ὀρώρῃ· (Hom. *Il.* 11.477) "for as long as his blood was warm the stag's knees were stirred onward." It is the contest between the wild animals that is the most descriptive part of the simile.

All the accounts emphasise that the deer or stag is under threat in a countryside environment. The woodland setting is maintained throughout: In Homer, the jackals are defined twice as a hillside species; they are δαφοινοὶ θῶες ὄρεσφιν (Hom. *Il.* 11.474) "blood red jackals in the hills" and they disembowel their victim in the woodlands, ἐν νέμεϊ σκιερῷ· (Hom. *Il.* 11.480) "in the shady grove." In Apollonius too, the deer is pursued in a forest environment, βαθείς| τάρφεσιν ἐν ξυλόχοιο (A.R. 4.12-13) "in the copse of a deep grove." Even in Virgil, the deer is shot by a shepherd *nemora inter* (Verg. *A*. 4.70) "among the woods"; she not only flees but also attempts to escape under the cover of dense woodland *silvas saltusque peragrat* (Verg. *A*. 4.73) "the deer staggers through the forests and the thickets."

Homer transfers focus from Odysseus to the wild environment in quick succession, but Virgil sets his version of the deer passage more explicitly in an urban context. Immediately preceding the deer simile in *Aeneid* 4 the reader is presented with a picture of Dido wandering through the city *uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur urbe*

furens (Verg. *A*. 4.68-69) "The unfortunate Dido burns, she roams through the whole city out of her mind." Unlike the deer episodes in Homer and Apollonius, Virgil's version of the deer hunt is introduced within a specifically urban environment. The unfortunate Dido is a victim in a similar sense to the deer yet she is portrayed rushing through the city while the deer is depicted fleeing through a wooded environment. This rapid change in location perhaps reminds us of human infringement on nature.

The wild predator versus prey complex of Homer has been lost in Virgil; instead the reader of Virgil is introduced to the forest landscape of the deer only after being reminded of the very artificial environment of mankind. Even at the end of Virgil's deer episode, the reader is immediately plunged back into the urban environment when Dido shows Aeneas the confines of her kingdom: *nunc media Aenean secum per moenia ducit | Sidoniasque ostentat opes urbemque paratam,...* (Verg. *A*. 4.74-75) "Now she leads Aeneas through the city walls with her and she points out her Sidonian riches and the city". Although Apollonius introduces his simile in reference to the emotions of Medea she is not described as being in the city immediately preceding and/or following the reference. Apollonius does not emphasise Medea's location but concentrates on the turbulent emotions that she is subjected to. The place of human in relation to the situation of wild animal is perhaps most explicitly prevalent in Virgil's version of the deer simile.

In *Aeneid* 7 Virgil manipulates the image of the deer once again when Iulus shoots Silvia's pet stag.

cervus erat forma praestanti et cornibus ingens,
Tyrrhidae pueri quem matris ab ubere raptum
nutribant Tyrrhusque pater, cui regia parent
armenta et late custodia credita campi.

adsuetum imperiis soror omni Silvia cura

mollibus intexens ornabat cornua sertis,

pectebatque ferum puroque in fonte lavabat.

ille manum patiens mensaeque adsuetus erili

errabat silvis rursusque ad limina nota

ipse domum sera quamvis se nocte ferebat.

hunc procul errantem rabidae venantis Iuli

commovere canes, fluvio cum forte secundo

deflueret ripaque aestus viridante levaret.

ipse etiam eximiae laudis succensus amore

Ascanius curvo derexit spicula cornu;

nec dextrae erranti deus afuit, actaque multo

perque uterum sonitu perque ilia venit harundo.

saucius at quadripes nota intra tecta refugit

successitque gemens stabulis, questuque cruentus

atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat.

Verg. *A*. 7.483-502.

"The stag was powerful and beautiful with excellent antlers; it had been seized from the teats of its mother. The father Tyrrhus and his sons reared it - Tyrrhus cared for the royal herd and was even entrusted with the guarding of the expansive site. His sister Silvia lavished all types of care on the stag, and it was well accustomed to her calls, she adorned it weaving its horns with soft garlands, grooming and washing the wild animal in a clear spring. The stag became used to trusting the human touch and it gained confidence at its mistress' table; it wandered through the dells and back again to the

door it knew well - returning to the household at a late hour in the night. This stag the vicious dogs of hunting Iulus startled as it was wandering far; when by chance it had floated down on the river and was resting from the heat on the green bank. Burning with desire of renown, Ascanius himself aimed his arrows from a curved bow. A god was present and guided his right hand: once it was driven into swift motion the stake plunged through the flank and the innards of the stag. The wounded stag fled inside the well-known dwelling and entered its stable moaning; bloodstained it was filling the whole household with lamentation as though it were invoking protection."

In this Virgilian episode the location of the deer is constantly changing. Captured from the wilds, *quem matris ab ubere raptum* (Verg. *A*. 7.484) "it had been seized from the teats of its mother". The stag is then cared for in a domestic environment by Silvia; the stag was apparently accustomed to come to the table of its mistress, *ille manum patiens mensaeque adsuetus erili* (Verg. *A*. 7. 490) "The stag became used to trusting the human touch and it gained confidence at its mistress' table". It seems that the stag in *Aeneid* 7 was equally at home in the woods and in man's domain: *errabat silvis rursusque ad limina nota*| *ipse domum sera quamvis se nocte ferebat* (Verg. *A*. 7.491-2) "it wandered through the dells and back again to the door it knew well - returning to the household at a late hour in the night". Unlike the Homeric passage (*Il*. 11.473-81, quoted above), this is not an episode that deals almost solely with the relationship between predator and prey in the wilds. Vance (1981: 127) explains how the original wildness of the stag in *Aeneid* 7 has been perverted by its human carers: "The nourishment of this deer by the custodians of the royal herds suggests further that the art of husbandry described in *Georgic* 3 has been directed toward an improper end and that such impropriety carries a potential for unwelcome political consequences."

Silius also experiments with wild and domestic spheres in his deer description.

Cerva fuit, raro terris spectata colore,

quae candore nivem, candore anteiret olores.

hanc agreste Capys donum, cum moenia sulco

signaret, grato parvae mollitus amore,

nutrierat sensusque hominis donarat alendo.

inde exuta feram docilisque accedere mensis

atque ultro blanda attactu gaudebat erili.

aurato matres assuetae pectine mitem

comere et umenti fluvio revocare colorem.

numen erat iam cerva loci; famulamque Dianae

credebant, ac tura deum de more dabantur.

haec, aevi vitaeque tenax felixque senectam

mille indefessos viridem duxisse per annos,

saeclorum numero Troianis condita tecta

aequabat; sed iam longo nox venerat aevo.

nam, subito incursu saevorum agitata luporum,

qui noctis tenebris urbem – miserabile bello

prodigium – intrarant, primos ad luminis ortus

extulerat sese portis pavidaque petebat

consternata fuga positos ad moenia campos.

exceptam laeto iuvenum certamine ductor

mactat, diva, tibi - tibi enim haec gratissima sacra-

Fulvius atque "adsis," orat, "Latonia, coeptis".

Sil. 13.115-137.

"There was a deer, coloured in a way rarely seen by the world: with the dazzling whiteness of snow, it surpassed the whiteness of the swan. When Capys marked out the city walls with furrows he was softened by the grateful love of that small creature; the gift of the wilds. Training it, Capys reared the animal and gave it perceptions of humankind. Then, drawn away from wildness and easily taught to approach the table of its master, the deer loved his gentle touch. The matrons were well used to grooming the deer with a golden comb and cleaning its coat with running water – now the deer was the deity of the place. The people believed the tale about Diana and according to their custom they gave incense to it as a god; tenacious of life and time the blessed deer lived through a youthful age of a thousand unfatigued years - equalling in number the generations by which the Trojans had founded their city. However, now the night had advanced on its long lifespan; it was suddenly driven away by the approach of savage wolves that entered the city under the cover of shadowy night – a wretched omen in war. The panicked deer left through the gates at the first light of dawn and in a state of alarm it sought the fields lying near the city walls. The young men caught it in a sporting contest and their leader Fulvius gutted it, for you goddess – for you there was this most pleasing sacrifice. Fulvius begged the goddess, "Latonia, stand by me"".

Although Silius has obviously modelled his deer passage in *Punica* 13 on the stag episode in *Aeneid* 7 (Verg. *A*. 483-502, quoted above),[52] there is a significant conceptual difference between the two versions. The stag in *Aeneid* 7 chooses to go out into the woods despite being tame; it leaves the city of its own accord. But in the *Punica*, the deer (similarly tamed) is actually driven out of the city by wolves. The fact that the wolves actually enter the confines of the city is particularly revealing. In Homer (*Il*.

[52] See Pomperoy 2000: 151 on Silius' admiration for Virgil. Silius was a particular fan of Virgil and Cicero – he celebrated Virgil's birthday and went on pilgrimages to his shrine.

11.473-84) the focus is on the hierarchy of the natural world, in *Aeneid* 4 (Verg. 68-73) Virgil sets a topographical contrast between the urban environment of Dido and the wooded setting of the deer, in *Aeneid* 7 Virgil blurs the boundaries between wild and domestic settings and allows the stag to wander freely (Verg. *A*. 7. 483-502), and finally in *Punica* 13 (115-137) Silius brings a representation of the wild predator (the wolf) into the urban setting of the city. It seems that Silius' deer has learned not to go into the woods of its own accord but has to be forced to do so by a malignant wild force. Perhaps we can even speculate that Silius' deer has learned from the negative intertextual example of Virgil's deer.

In Virgil's day it seems that the attempt to categorise wild animals was an ongoing one.[53] Vance (1981: 128) argues "recent classical scholarship has made it clear that domesticity and wildness in the animal kingdom were held to be distinct and opposed categories among Virgil's Greek forebears and his contemporaries". However the qualification of wildness over domestic still seems to be one of some debate when we scrutinise the writings of Pliny. In the case of hares Pliny demonstrates that the distinction is not always an easy one to make: *Hi mansuescunt raro, cum feri dici iure non possint: conplura namque sunt nec placida nec fera, sed mediae inter utrumque naturae, ut in volucribus hirundines, apes, in mari delphini. quo in genere multi et hos incolas domuum posuere mures…* (*Nat*. 8.82.220-221) "These animals (hares) do not often grow tame - but it is not right for them to be called truly wild – for there are a multitude of animals that are neither tame nor wild, but somewhere in the middle. For example the winged species such as swallows and bees, and dolphins in the sea; many people have even placed house mice in this category…".

It seems that Pliny's understanding of what it meant to be wild was somewhat more insightful than the definition discussed by Aristotle. Aristotle provided a more

[53] For previous discussion of this subject see 1.5.

rigid description of the differences between the two states. Καὶ τὰ μὲν νυκτερόβια, οἷον γλαύξ, νυκτερίς, τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ φωτὶ ζῇ. ἔτι δ' ἥμερα καὶ ἄγρια, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἀεὶ [οἷον ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὀρεὺς ἀεὶ ἥμερα, τὰ δ'] ἄγρια, ὥσπερ πάρδαλις καὶ λύκος· τὰ δὲ καὶ ἡμερροῦσθαι δύναται ταχύ, οἷον ἐλέφας·[ἔτι ἄλλον τρόπον·] πάντα γὰρ ὅσα ἥμερά ἐστι γένη, καὶ ἄγριά ἐστιν, οἷον ἵπποι, βόες, ὗες, ἄνθρωποι, πρόβατα, αἶγες, κύνες (*H.A*. 1.1. 488a26-32) "Some animals are nocturnal such as the owl and the bat while others live in the light of day. As yet, some are tame and some are wild. Some are always tame (such as humans and mules), and others are always wild (such as the panther and the wolf). Some are able to be tamed quickly - such as the elephant; for as many animals that there are wild there are just as many that are tame - such as horses, cows, pigs, men, sheep, goats and dogs."

Pliny is not the only Roman writer to discuss the definition of animals; Plutarch too shows a concern to divide animals into their correct categories, Οὐκ ἀγνοῶ δ' ὅτι <τὸ> τῶν παραδειγμάτων ὑμῖν φανεῖταί τι ποικίλον· (Plu. 970 E) "I do not overlook the fact that my examples seem rather random." In the *Moralia* Plutarch deems it necessary to explain that he has not adhered to categorising animals by size. Instead, Plutarch makes it clear that he has arranged his writings in order to emphasise the shared traits of particular animals. Οἶμαι δὲ μὴ ἄκαιρος ὑμῖν φανεῖσθαι τοῖς μύρμηξιν ἐπεισάγων τούς ἐλέφαντας, ἵνα τοῦ νοῦ τὴν φύσιν ἔν τε τοῖς μικροτάτοις ἅμα καὶ μεγίστοις σώμασι κατανοήσωμεν... (Plu. 968B) "I imagine it might seem inopportune to you that I am introducing elephants after ants, but it is so that we may observe the nature of thought in the smallest and biggest bodies at the same time". Plutarch's comments show that he was not only defining animals by their outward appearences but also by their mental capabilities. While Roman authors

had a tendency to anthropomorphise animals it appears that some were capable of drawing on the nuances of creatures' attributes; they were considering the complexities of wild and tame categorisations, observing animal behaviours and not merely listing animals by external appearances.

It appears that Pliny has given some thought to the nature of wildness in opposition to domesticity, and that Plutarch understood the difficulties of qualifying certain species into complex categorisations. Pliny recognised and adhered to conceptual boundaries between wild and domestic animals but did not simply rely on the findings of previous natural historians such as Aristotle in relation to this topic. Aristotle does suggest that there are wild and tame versions of the same animal, but Pliny introduces an entirely new depth of comprehension with his more nuanced comment. Unlike Aristotle, Pliny explicitly allows that there is a third category of variations in what it means to be domesticated. *conplura namque sunt nec placida nec fera, sed mediae inter utrumque naturae* (*Nat*. 8.82.220) "For there are a multitude of animals that are neither wild nor tame, but somewhere in the middle".

Interestingly, Gaius gives us even more insight into the way that Romans defined wildness and usefully theorises on the status of the deer:

Pavonum et columbarum fera natura est nec ad rem pertinet, quod ex consuetudine avolare et revolare solent: nam et apes idem faciunt, quarum constat feram esse naturam: cervos quoque ita quidam mansuetos habent, ut in silvas eant et redeant, quorum et ipsorum feram esse naturam nemo negat. in his autem animalibus, quae consuetudine abire et redire solent, talis regula comprobata est, ut eo usque nostra esse intellegantur, donec revertendi animum habeant, quod si desierint revertendi animum habere, desinant nostra esse et fiant occupantium.

Gaius, *dig*. 41.1.5.5.

"The wild nature of peacocks and doves is not pertinent, because they are accustomed by habit to fly away and fly back: for bees do the same thing, and it is agreed that their nature is wild; and some people have deer that have become so tame that they go into the woods and return, and no one denies that their nature is wild. For these animals, which are accustomed by habit to go away and return, the following rule (*regula*) has been approved, that they are understood to be our property so long as they have the mental instinct to return, but that if they cease to have the instinct of returning, they cease to be our property and become the property of the first to seize them. They are understood to have ceased to have their instinct of returning at the time when they have abandoned the habit of returning (*revertendi consuetudinem*)".[54]

Starr has shown how important this definition of wild and tame in Roman law is to the passage on deer in *Aeneid* 7. "A wild animal, is *res nullius*, the property of no one. It belongs to me when I take physical possession of it (*occupatio*) and generally stops belonging to me when it escapes from my physical possession. Here, then, possession is virtually synonymous with ownership" (Starr 1992: 438). When we apply these findings to Silvia's deer in *Aeneid* 7 it seems that Ascanius would have been guilty of harming the property of another in the legal sense. Because Silvia's stag consistently returned to Silvia the Romans would have considered that the stag concerned was tame and therefore a possession belonging to Silvia. Starr points out that Virgil emphasises the tame nature of the deer by using imperfects to highlight the continuous nature of care given to the animal and the way in which it faithfully returned again and again to its mistress (Starr 1992: 439).

[54] Translated in Starr 1992: 438 with some ammendments.

Concentrating specifically on the role of Silvia's stag in *Aeneid* 7 the themes of domesticity and wildness have been carefully examined by Vance. Vance (1981: 127-38) considers the perversion of the stag's wildness by the Latins in *Aeneid* 7 and summarises his argument "My purpose here is to suggest that this episode, brief though it is, illustrates Virgil's most basic assumptions about the binary opposition between domesticity and wildness, and, by extension, the opposition between the civilization of man and the condition of savage nature." Vance considers the larger relevance of the subject to the previous works of Virgil; he asserts that the rules of effective husbandry once established in the *Georgics* have been ignored and transgressed in the *Aeneid* 7 deer passage. "Virgil is incorporating the moral doctrines of the *Georgics* into the historical trajectory of epic, where such doctrines succumb" (Vance 1981: 134). The concept of pet possession and the subsequent attack on Silvia's deer plays a crucial role in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

In effect, Allecto incites war by encouraging the hounds of Ascanius to chase Silvia's pet stag. If Ascanius had been aware of the stag's tameness he would not have been so likely to shoot it, and war might have been avoided. As it is, Virgil has the herdsmen gather in anger for revenge. By allowing the definition of the stag's status to become blurred, Virgil shows how disaster may result from confusing boundaries between wild and tame.[55]

It seems that there was also a comparative interest in the process of domesticating a wild animal in Roman epic. In their references to deer both Virgil (*A*. 7.490) and Silius (13.120-21) detail the care lavished on the increasingly domesticated animals. Vance (1981: 127) comments that Silvia's behaviour towards the stag is overly extravagant "…this deer had become the object of Silvia's most indulgent love and care. She had decorated its splendid antlers, which are its natural weapons for defense in a

[55] See Griffin 1985: 170-171 for further discussion of the death of Silvia's deer as a convincing *casus belli*.

habitat of wildness". It seems that both epic writers were anxious to experiment with and comment on the behaviour of wild animals in domestic situations.

Meanwhile Amat (2002: 189) has discussed the decoration of stags and suggests that such epic descriptions were not without precedent. Apparently, Alexander the Great adorned stags with necklaces of gold and Calpurnius Siculus refered to such practices in ekphrasis (*Ecl*. 6. 37- 41). The Romans were not alone in keeping pet deer; a chous dated to 425-420 BC depicts a boy riding a deer (Berlin, Antikensammlung F2419), and another dated to 420-410 BC represents a fawn wearing a halter.[56]

Despite the fact that the Greeks after Homer obviously kept pet deer it seems that they did not refer to the animals as pets in epic. In contrast, Roman writers such as Siculus and Ovid make reference to deer that are decorated; the stag of Siculus even carries a talisman (Amat 2002: 190).

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid also makes reference to deer adornment in the myth of Cyparissus. *namque sacer nymphis Carthaea tenentibus arva | ingens cervus erat lateque patentibus altas | ipse suo capiti praebebat cornibus umbras; | cornua fulgebant auro, demissaque in armos | pendebant tereti gemmata monilia collo; | bulla super frontem parvis argentea loris | vincta movebatur parilique aetate, nitebant | auribus e geminis circum cava tempora bacae. | isque metu vacuus naturalique pavore | deposito celebrare domos mulcendaque colla | quamlibet ignotis manibus praebere solebat* (Ov. *Met*. 10. 109-119) "For there was a stately stag, hallowed to the nymphs who dwelt in the Carthaginean countryside; his stretching antlers offered deep shade to his own head. Those same antlers shone with gold and a gem encrusted necklace hung on his shoulders down from his smooth neck; a silvery locket, worn there from young age, swayed on thin thongs from above his forehead, and from both ears about his hollow temples there dangled pearls. He, free of fear and devoid of natural timidity, visited the

[56] Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 10.182 cf. Calder 2011: 93.

abodes of men and was accustomed to offer his charming neck to the hands of strangers."

Amat (2002: 190) suggests that Romans even gilded the horns of pet stags. Martial in an epitaph also refers both to the Cyparissus myth and to the stag of Silvia. *Hic erat ille tuo domitus, Cyparisse, capistro.* | *An magis iste tuus, Silvia, cervus erat?* (Mart. 13.96) "Was this stag the one tamed by your bridle, Cyparissus? Or was that stag yours, Silvia?"

The Romans began to turn deer into decorative objects and tested the limits of wild animal behaviour. Virgil, Silius and Ovid explored the nature of wildness, domestication and the decoration of deer in their works. When we take into account the evidence for deer adornment it seems that the Romans expected and demanded entertainment from wild animals both in the real world and in a variety of literary formats. Virgil, Silius Italicus and Varro refer to the behaviour of animals and the way in which they were cared for or put on show. To some extent, all must have written about wild animals in captivity in order to shock the reader with their extravagant similes and entertaining accounts of reality. However, their accounts were not entirely fantasy but were based on the decadent yet realistic treatment of domesticated deer.

Amat asserts that the pet stag was very much a real element in rich households but also emphasises that deer were frequent victims in the hunt. "*Malgré ses rares qualities, le cerf n'en est pas moins l'animal le plus chassé, après le lièvre*", "In spite of its unusual qualities, the stag was nevertheless the most hunted animal, after the hare" (Amat 2002: 189). It appears that deer had a two-fold role in Roman consciousness; it was both decorated and hunted. Roman epic problematises these concepts and exploits the boundaries between wild and tame for tragic effect.

3.3 The Conscious Deer?

Over time there was a noticeable shift in the representation of deer. Homeric references often concentrate on the role of the hunting action rather than on the behaviour of the victim of the chase. The wild deer is considered as a one dimensional creature that serves no other purpose than to be hunted.

τῇσι δὲ Ναυσικάα λευκώλενος ἄρχετο μολπῆς.
οἵη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ' οὔρεα ἰοχέαιρα,
ἢ κατὰ Τηϋγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον,
τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείῃς ἐλάφοισι·
τῇ δέ θ' ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι·

Hom. *Od*. 6.101-106.

"White armed Nausikaa led the dance; just as Artemis shoots arrows along the mountains either from Taÿgetos or on lofty Erymanthos, delighting in boars and swift footed deer. At the same time her Nymphs, maidens of Zeus of the aegis, play in the countryside."

In the above reference from the *Odyssey*, wild deer are simply represented as creatures that flee. The awareness of the deer is not called into question and the animal merely provides entertainment for the pursuer.

The wild deer is also the victim of the chase in *Iliad* 10.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δή ῥ' ἄπεσαν δουρηνεκὲς ἠ καὶ ἔλασσον,

γνῶ ῥ' ἄνδρας δηϊους, λαιψηρὰ δὲ γούνατ' ἐνώμα

φευγέμεναι· τοὶ δ' αἶψα διώκειν ὁρμήθησαν.

ὡς δ' ὅτε καρχαρόδοντε δύω κύνε, εἰδότε θήρης,

ἢ κεμάδ'ἠὲ λαγωὸν ἐπείγετον ἐμμενὲς αἰεὶ

χῶρον ἀν' ὑλήενθ', ὁ δέ τε προθέῃσι μεμηκώς,

ὣς τὸν Τυδεϊδης ἠδ' ὁ πτολίπορθος Ὀδυσσεὺς

λαοῦ ἀποτμήξαντε διώκετον ἐμμενὲς αἰεί.

Hom. *Il*. 10.357-364

"But when the spear's throw became less, he saw that they were enemy men, and stirred his knees rapidly to escape; those men quickly darted after him in pursuit. Just as when two dogs with sharp teeth have caught sight of a wild beast, a young deer or a hare, and they are stirred on unceasing, always through the gaps in the trees, but the deer runs ahead crying, just so the son of Tydeus and Odysseus sacker of cities pursued him, cutting him off from his people."

In this reference the wild deer recognises that it is under threat and its consciousness is subtly implied. The deer not only attempts to escape but it reacts emotionally to the stimulus of the chase and shrieks: ὁ δέ τε προθέῃσι μεμηκώς (Hom. *Il*. 10.362) "the deer runs ahead crying".

In his deer references, Homer sometimes referred to the suffering of animals that had been wounded. In one passage in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus spears a wild boar. The

boar is afforded a much fuller role in the action than the deer in any of the previous Homeric extracts.

ὁ δ' ἄρα πρώτιστος Ὀδυσσεὺς
ἔσσυτ' ἀνασχόμενος δολιχὸν δόρυ χειρὶ παχείῃ,
οὐτάμεναι μεμαώς· ὁ δέ μιν φθάμενος ἔλασεν σῦς
γουνὸς ὕπερ, πολλὸν δὲ διήφυσε σαρκὸς ὀδόντι
λικριφὶς ἀίξας, οὐδ' ὀστέον ἵκετο φωτός.
τὸν δ' Ὀδυσεὺς οὔτησε τυχὼν κατὰ δεξιὸν ὠμον,
ἀντικρὺ δὲ διῆλθε φαεινοῦ δουρὸς ἀκωκή·
κὰδ δ' ἔπεσ' ἐν κονίῃσι μακών, ἀπὸ δ'ἔπτατο θυμός.

Hom. *Od*. 19.447-454.

"First Odysseus rushed forward holding up his long spear in his bulky hand, eager to lash out, but the wild boar pushed over his knee and ripped much of his flesh, moving fast sideways, with its tusk, but did not touch the bone of the man. Then Odysseus hit it on the right shoulder and the tip of the gleaming spear went through it. Shrieking it fell in the dust and its spirit flew away".

Just as revealing is the point at which Odysseus hunts down and kills a stag.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ σχεδὸν ἦα κιὼν νεὸς ἀμφιελίσσης,
καὶ τότε τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο μοῦνον ἐόντα,
ὅς ῥά μοι ὑψίκερων ἔλαφον μέγαν εἰς ὁδὸν αὐτὴν

ἦκεν · ὁ μὲν ποταμόνδε κατήϊεν ἐκ νομοῦ ὕλης

πιόμενος · δὴ γάρ μιν ἔχεν μένος ἠελίοιο.

τὸν δ′ ἐγὼ ἐκβαίνοντα κατ′ ἄκνηστιν μέσα νῶτα

πλῆξα · τὸ δ′ ἀντικρὺ δόρυ χάλκεον ἐξεπέρησε,

κὰδ δ′ ἔπεσ′ ἐν κονίῃσι μακών, ἀπὸ δ′ἔπτατο θυμός.

Hom. *Od*. 10.156-163.

"But moving on, as I was near to the curved vessel, a certain god felt compassion for me since I was alone and placed a huge stag with lofty antlers on my route. He had come from his region of the forest to the river for a drink, for the blaze of the sun had affected him. When he ventured forward I struck him at the middle point of his back, in the spine. The full impact of the spear forged through. Shrieking he fell in the dust and his spirit flew away."

When we compare these two Homeric extracts, we can see that the suffering of the wild animals is described in a highly formulaic format. The descriptions of the suffering deer and the wild boar are identical: κὰδ δ′ ἔπεσ′ ἐν κονίῃσι μακών, ἀπὸ δ′ἔπτατο θυμός[57] "Shrieking it fell in the dust and its spirit flew away."

In Apollonius' *Argonautica* the wild deer is afforded a similarly brief description when it is compared to Medea's trepidation: τρέσσεν δ′ ἠύτε τις κούφη κεμάς ἥν τε βαθείς | τάρφεσιν ἐν ξυλόχοιο κυνῶν ἐφόβησεν ὁμοκλή· | αὐτίκα γὰρ νημερτὲς ὀίσσατο μή μιν ἀρωγήν | ληθέμεν (A.R. 4.12-15) "just like a swift fawn which the bark of dogs has terrified in the copse of a deep grove she

[57] Hom. *Od*. 10.163 and 19.454.

immediately feared for the help that had not escaped the notice of her father". The adjectives applied are not highly inventive κούφη κεμὰς (A.R. 4.12). Apollonius merely describes the fawn as a swift animal.

When we compare these references to deer to those found in Virgil and later Roman writers of epic we can fully appreciate the alterations and developments in the representation of deer behaviour. At the very end of the deer passage in *Aeneid* 7 Virgil emphasises the suffering of the tamed deer at length, *saucius at quadripes nota intra tecta refugit* | *successitque gemens stabulis, questuque cruentus* | *atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat* (Verg. *A*. 7. 500-502) "But the wounded stag fled to the well-known dwelling and entered its stable moaning, blood-stained it was filling the whole household with lamentation as though it were invoking protection." Horsfall (2000: 326ff) remarks on *gemens*, "A verb used of various animal noises…here though, the stag's reactions are increasingly human in detail and expression".

The appreciation of animal suffering is much more developed in the instance of *Aeneid* 7 (Verg. *A*. 7. 483-502), and it does not seem to be mere coincidence that Virgil has chosen to elaborate on the detail and reaction of the deer in this way. It is important that Virgil is referring to a tamed animal rather than an animal in the wilds; it seems that Virgil may be paying greater attention to the tamed deer's levels of consciousness here in order to provoke greater sympathy for the animal in his reader.

We can tell that Romans were more likely to identify with animals when they displayed human characteristics. Pliny revels in elephants which behave in a human way. Apparently, one particularly clumsy elephant was found practising tricks in the middle of the night (Plin. *Nat*. 8.3.6), while another had learned the alphabet and had perfected its writing skills (Plin. *Nat*. 8.3.6). The fact that Pliny goes into some detail about such instances suggests that the Romans were interested in the spectacle of animals behaving in unexpectedly human ways.

It seems that Virgil has elaborated on the concept of animal suffering at greater length than Homer. In Homer's epic account, deer are largely afforded a broad treatment, and when they are more closely examined, the references to their suffering are not necessarily detailed at length. On the other hand, in *Aeneid* 7, Virgil elaborates on the suffering of the animal and goes into far greater detail.

In his observations on deer, Aristotle tells us:

ἁλίσκονται δὲ θηρευόμεναι αἱ ἔλαφοι συριττόντων καὶ ᾀδόντων, ὥστε καὶ κατακλίνονται ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς. Δύο δ' ὄντων ὁ μὲν Φανερῶς ᾄδει ἢ συρίττει, ὁ δ' ἐκ τοῦ ὄπισθεν βάλλει ὅταν οὗτος σημήνῃ τὸν καιρόν. ἐὰν μὲν οὖν τύχῃ ὀρθὰ τὰ ὦτα ἔχουσα, ὀξὺ ἀκούει καί οὐκ ἔστι λαθεῖν· ἐὰν δὲ καταβεβληκυῖα τύχῃ, λανθάνει.

Arist. *H.A*. 8.5.611b26-32.

"Deer are caught by pipe-playing and singing when they are being hunted. They lie down because they delight in the music. Two hunters approach – the first is clearly visible to the deer and sings or plays, while the second shoots the deer from behind. The second hunter aims when the first gives the appropriate sign. If the deer has its ears pricked it has sharp hearing and the hunter is not able to escape its notice, but if its ears are flat the hunter dupes it."

Pliny, who completed his *Natural Histories* after the *Aeneid* was already in circulation, also describes deer as startled creatures possessing similarly dazed characteristics to those alluded to in Aristotle:

cum erexere aures, acerrimi sunt auditus, cum remisere, surdi. cetero animal simplex et omnium rerum miraculo stupens in tantum ut equo aut bucula accedente propius hominem iuxta venantem non cernant aut, si cernant, arcum ipsum sagittasque mirentur.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.50.114.

"When their ears are pricked their sense of hearing is very sharp, but they are deaf when their ears are flattened. In terms of other characteristics the deer is a simple creature stunned at every event. They are so simple that they do not recognise a hunter close at hand when a horse or a cow is approaching; or if they do perceive the hunter they only wonder at his bow and arrows."

Although Aristotle and Pliny generally offer similar accounts of the characteristics of deer, it seems that the two natural historians differ in their estimation of deer intelligence. Pliny (*Nat*. 8.50.114) tells us that deer are largely simple creatures, while Aristotle (*H.A*. 8.5.611a15-16) argues that deer do not seem to be unintelligent.

When we examine the writings of didactic authors published slightly before the *Aeneid* and Pliny's *Natural History*, the characteristics of deer are not detailed to the same extent. Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* was completed by 55 BC, and it describes deer in very basic terms when we compare his level of examination to that found in Aristotle and Pliny. Lucretius merely accounts for deer as timid and swift of foot (Lucr. 3.741-743), while Phaedrus (2.8) represents the deer in his moral tales merely as a suppliant, always as a victim and as a nimble creature, continually fleeing from attack.

In *Aeneid* 1 the deer depicted display a complete lack of awareness which hints that Virgil may have shared Pliny's damning assessment of the animal's intelligence.

navem in conspectu nullam, tris litore cervos
prospicit errantis; hos tota armenta sequuntur
a tergo et longum per vallis pascitur agmen.
constitit hic arcumque manu celerisque sagittas
corripuit, fidus quae tela gerebat Achates,
ductoresque ipsos primum capita alta ferentis
cornibus arboreis sternit, tum vulgus et omnem
miscet agens telis nemora inter frondea turbam;
nec prius absistit quam septem ingentia victor
corpora fundat humi…

Verg. *A*. 1. 184-193

"There was no ship in sight at all, but Aeneas saw three stags wandering on the shore; a whole herd followed at their back and foraged on the valley arranged in a thin line. He stopped and took his bow and swift arrows in his hand - faithful Achates had been carrying the weapons – first he shot to the ground the three leaders who bore lofty and branching antlers on their heads, then the main herd as a whole mass ran off in different directions, away from the missiles and into the leafy grove; but he did not leave before he had succeeded and brought seven magnificent corpses to the ground".

Vance (1981: 132) refers briefly to this episode and argues that the passage is designed in order to compliment the hunting skills of Aeneas, "Virgil emphasizes Aeneas' strategies as a hunter, which are those of a good warrior as well, as he assaults a herd of deer: first he kills the leaders, then scatters the herd, killing one stag for each boat in his party…". However, I suggest that we may interpret the passage slightly

differently when we consider the behaviour of the deer. In this simile the leading stags are completely unaware of threat and the deer are slow to react to the threat of Aeneas as huntsmen. There is a certain similarity between the behaviour displayed by stags in Virgil's depiction and the characteristics of deer as defined by Pliny. Pliny (*Nat*. 8.50.114) informs us that deer often do not even realise that they are under threat from attack.

In *Aeneid* 1, Aeneas not only slaughters seven deer overall, but he actually has the opportunity to define and select the leaders of the herd as his first kill. *ductoresque ipsos primum…sternit* (Verg. *A*. 1.89) "first he shot to the ground the three leaders…". Aeneas manages to kill seven deer in succession before they can escape with no help from his companions. To my mind, this is not only a testament to Aeneas' skill as a hunter (as Vance suggests), but also a testament to the Roman belief that deer are easily stunned and not the most intelligent of creatures. Unlike Aristotle, Pliny suggests that deer may be slow witted; it seems that Virgil may well have been of the same opinion as Pliny who pronounced judgement on deer stupidity rather than supporting the assertion of Aristotle that deer were intelligent animals.

Statius also refers to deer in a simile:

qualis cum cerva cruentis
circumventa lupis, nullum cui pectore molli
robur et in volucri tenuis fiducia cursu,
praecipitat suspensa fugam, iamiamque teneri
credit et elusos audit concurrere morsus.

Stat. *Theb*. 5.165-169

"…Just as when a deer has been encircled by blood-thirsty wolves, no courage is left in her gentle heart and faint confidence in her swift escape, she runs headlong in uncertain flight, and now, and now again she believes herself to be captured and she hears the cheated snap of hungry mouths."

For the first time it seems that an epic writer has fully taken into account the thought processes of the deer. The deer is hunted in a realistic format and Statius actually considers the chase on the mental level of the deer. The deer is completely aware of the threat to its safety and the feelings of the deer are not just described as panic and terror, but the animal actually goes through a more substantial thought process. *iamiamque teneri | credit et elusos audit concurrere morsus* (Stat. *Theb*. 5.168-69) "now, and now again she believes herself to be captured and she hears the cheated snap of hungry mouths". Statius emphasises the spontaneity of the deer's thought, *iamiamque* and the reader is afforded a direct insight into the deer's consciousness when we are told that it hears the sound of the dog's jaws snapping in close pursuit. In fact in none of the other epic episodes relating to deer are there significant references to deer as beasts that may possess a succession of thoughts.

In *Aeneid* 7, Horsfall states that the *ille* in line 490 signals a change in Virgil's approach. "V. has begun with human care lavished on the stag; now he passes to the stag's view point: though used to petting and fixed meal times, he retains, fatally, some independence" (Horsfall 2000: 329). But at this point, Virgil only narrates the activities of the stag and does not comment that the animal has a range or sequence of thought processes: *hunc procul errantem rabidae venantis Iuli | commovere canes, fluvio cum forte secundo | deflueret ripaque aestus viridante leveret* (Verg. *A*. 7.493-95) "…This stag the vicious dogs of hunting Iulus startled as it was wandering far, when by chance

it had floated down on the river and was resting from the heat on the green bank". Virgil does not consider the subsequent realisations of the prey.

Even in another stag reference in *Aeneid* 12, the stag is merely described in a general state of fear, *inclusum veluti si quando flumine nactus | cervum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pennae | venator cursu canis et latratibus instat; | ille autem insidiis et ripa territus alta | mille fugit refugitque vias, at vividus Vmber | haeret hians, iam iamque tenet similisque tenenti | increpuit malis morsuque elusus inani est* (Verg. *A*. 12. 749-755) "Just like a stag which has stumbled, encircled by some stream or entrapped by the fear of purple feathers and has been pressed by the running and barking of the hunting dog; but the stag, afraid of the snares and the high bank, flees and runs back again in a thousand directions, but the Umbrian hound, full of life, stays close with gaping jaws and now and then he seems to seize it, but cheated he snaps on emptiness with his mouth". Here Virgil merely tells us of the snarling of the dogs, but in Statius' account, the deer actually hears them, *audit* and therefore is unmistakeably depicted as responding mentally to the threat of the predator.

The deer in Statius considers her own position in the chase, *volucri tenuis fiducia cursu*: the deer has "faint confidence in her swift escape" (*Theb*. 5.167). Statius' deer effectively judges that she is too slow to get away and she does not have confidence in her ability to outrun the hound.[58] The case could be similarly argued in reference to the *Punica*. Silius' deer has to be driven out of the city; it does not choose to wander away from the city's protection of its own accord; Silius' deer reacts to threat; it reacts because it is more aware and more conscious of danger than its epic predecessors. However, in earlier Homeric extracts, the deer merely flees and does not consider whether she can out pace the predators that follow.[59]

[58] Statius' wolves (*Theb*. 10.42-48) in section 6.3 display similar levels of awareness.
[59] See Hom. *Il*. 10.360-362 and 11.113-121.

Perhaps Silius and Statius chose to represent deer as beasts aware of threat because they had been influenced by similar contemporary concepts. Writing more or less contemporaneously to Statius and Silius, Plutarch wrote a long treatise discussing whether wild animals had the ability to reason. In his book, Newmyer investigates Plutarch's theories and beliefs and draws a number of conclusions. Newmyer effectively distances Plutarch from the general ancient Roman consensus and suggests that his positive attitude towards animals defines his theories as separate from other contemporary Roman beliefs: "...his consistently positive attitude toward animals sets him apart from the majority of ancient thinkers who addressed the issue of animal creation and man's relation to animals. He touched upon issues not found elsewhere in extant ancient sources..." (Newmyer 2006: 8) and "I would contend that Plutarch's concomitant regard for animals as suffering creatures is in general uncharacteristic of Graeco-Roman attitudes towards non-humans..." (Newmyer 2006: 6). On the contrary, Statius' epic depiction of the humanised suffering of the deer suggests that some Romans did believe that animals could suffer irrespective of how they rated deer intelligence.

Despite the difficulties in comprehending Plutarch's exact stance on animal consciousness issues[60] Plutarch shows respect for the smallest of creatures. He appreciates the skill of the spider as it weaves a web and describes how it captures its unsuspecting prey (Plu. 966E-967A). It is clear that Plutarch not only appreciates the beauty of the web but also attributes powers of perception to the spider. The spider lures its prey on with intent. αἰσθανομένης καὶ φρονούσης, (Plu. 967 A) "perceiving it the spider works out a stategm".

Although Greek thinkers such as Pythagoras and Theophrastus had addressed animal welfare issues before Plutarch (Newmyer 2006: 21) Plutarch seems to have

[60] It is very challenging to interpret Plutarch's theories: the author had a tendency to contradict himself particularly when it came to animals (Newmyer 2006: 6-7).

developed the concept that animals were rational creatures to a much greater extent.[61] For instance he recognises that animals cannot communicate in the same way as humans and imagines that they would beg for kindness if they were capable of doing so (994E-F).

Even if he did not generate a mass outcry against animal cruelty[62] it seems that Plutarch's writings demonstrate a subtle change in the Roman attitude towards animals; a change that is also evident in later Roman writers of epic. Perhaps Romans in this period attempted to gain a greater insight into the feelings of wild animals such as deer. I do not argue that all Romans believed that animals had thought processes but that epic writers were engaging with animals (such as deer) more sympathetically than ever before.

3.4 Conclusion

It appears that Roman epic writers were aware of the works of their didactic contemporaries and that they were also paying attention to individual pieces of information and modelling their similes with these didactic observations in mind. It appears likely that Silius and Statius exploited the best "science" of their day to enhance their poetic message. By including such nuggets of information from the records of their

[61] A number of scholars have suggested that Plutarch was more sympathetic towards animals than his Greek counterparts. "It was left to the Platonist Plutarch in his *Life of Cato*, not to any Stoic, to say that benevolence is owed to animals, even if justice is not. I have not found this argument anywhere else" (Sorabji 1993: 125). "That Plutarch takes a more sympathetic note of the animal creation than any other Greek writer, except the naturalists, would be a thesis no doubt impossible to prove. Yet, for what it is worth, the impression remains" (Barrow 1967: 112). "Barrow may be correct when he says that Plutarch may have been more sympathetic to animals than any other Greek writer; Lecky would agree, claiming that Plutarch was the first to advocate vegetarianism on grounds of universal benevolence" (Dombrowski 1984: 87). It seems possible that Plutarch's thoughts were indeed symptomatic of the times, "…there were several remarkable humanitarian writers in later Roman times who showed compassion for animals. Pliny recounted anecdotes about the alleged intelligence and religiousness of elephants, the medical skill of the hippopotamus and the love that dolphins showed for music and young children. A tender feeling for animals is a distinctive feature of the poetry of Virgil, and Lucretius and Ovid also touch upon it" (Ryder 2000: 18).

[62] "Plutarch exhibited admiration and sympathy for the myriad forms of living things and was an early defender of animal rights. Unfortunately, neither in his case nor in any other known from ancient times does it seem that such ideas resulted in practical programs to help wildlife" (Newmyer 2006: 19).

more scientifically minded counterparts, utilising specifically Roman insight into species in an entirely Roman format and stylising their works with specifically Roman beliefs in mind Roman epic writers reflect both the inrooted and the developing conceptual understanding of wild animals in the period in which they were writing.

The innovative deer representations found in Statius and Silius seem to have been part of a wider development that heralded a time of increased Roman sympathy towards wild animals. The theories of Plutarch, which in the time of these epic writers were relatively new, may well be symptomatic of a change in thinking about animals in this period.

Chapter 4: The Tigress

4.1 Imagining the Tiger

Owing to the elusive nature of the tiger it seems that Roman epicists were given a free reign to interpret, manipulate and contextualise the animal as they saw fit. Roman epic authors could not even rely on previous epic accounts of the animal. Homer does not make any reference to the tiger in his epics; this is hardly surprising when we examine the Greek experience of the animal. It was only in the fourth century that Athens received a tiger sent by Seleucus I as a gift (Toynbee 1973: 70). Tigers may have inhabited Eastern Armenia, but they cannot have been in much abundance closer to Greece. Jennison (1937: 24) theorises that those tigers nearest to the mainland would have roamed around the region of Mount Ararat.

In the *Historia Animalium* Aristotle refers to the *mantichoras*, a creature with a triple row of teeth and a ferocious reputation. Some modern scholars equate the *mantichoras* (whose name means 'man-eater' in Old Persian) with the tiger.[63] According to Aristotle the *mantichoras* has fantastical characteristics: it is as big as a lion and hairy, but its face is somewhat similar to a man's. It has a tail like that of a scorpion and it can fire arrows from it. It runs incredibly fast and has a voice like a trumpet (Arist. *H.A*. 2.1.501a25-501b). These extravagant claims suggest that Aristotle knew nothing about the *mantichoras* first-hand. Indeed, he states that his description comes from Ctesias, a writer whose works are dated to the beginning of the fourth century. It has also been argued that Aristotle's remarks about the *mantichoras* are in fact interpolations (Bigwood 1993: 538-542).

Later in the *Historia Animalium* (8.28.607a4) Aristotle records that some people believe that Indian dogs are the offspring of dogs and tigresses, but it has been

[63] Peck 1965: 99; Louis 1973: 101.

theorised that Aristotle actually means the jackal in this context (Bigwood 1993: 542). Either way, Aristotle's descriptions, if authentically his, appear to be fantastical and do not seem to confirm any accurate understanding of the tiger. It is virtually certain that he never saw a tiger; meanwhile the *mantichoras* certainly belongs to the world of fable rather than to reality (Bigwood 1993: 538).

Pliny's account of the tiger is more developed than that of Aristotle; he explains that tigers are found in Hyrcania (the region around the south of the Caspian) and in India. Pliny (*Nat.* 8.25.66) details the techniques involved in snaring the creature and considers the behaviour of the animals in some depth.

Although extremely rare, the tiger made more appearances in the Roman capital than in Greek cities. Augustus was given a number of the animals on the Island of Samos by the Indian embassy in 20-19 BC (Toynbee 1973: 70), and Pliny notes that a tame tiger was displayed in a cage at Rome in 11 BC.[64] The next recorded appearance of the tiger is dated to the reign of Claudius, who exhibited four tigers altogether (Plin. *Nat*. 8.25.65). Seneca (*Ep*. 85.41) refers to a tiger in the rule of Nero that was trained to perform tricks with its keeper in the arena; apparently the animal allowed the keeper to kiss it. Meanwhile Martial (1.104.2-3) records that tigers may be disciplined with the aid of a whip, and if we take Martial's *Liber Spectaculorum* (21) literally it seems that tigers were sometimes set against other wild animals.

Later emperors entertained the crowds with innovative shows; Commodus slaughtered a tiger in public,[65] and Antoninus Pius displayed a selection of animals including tigers.[66] There is evidence to suggest that tigers were sometimes harnessed and trained to pull chariots.[67] At the funeral games of Quintus Plautianus 10 tigers were

[64] Plin. *Nat*. 8.25.65 cf. Toynbee 1973: 70.
[65] *Hist. Aug.* 8.5. cf. Toynbee 1973: 22.
[66] *Hist. Aug.* 10.9.
[67] Mart. 8.26 cf. Coleman 2006: 161 and Toynbee 1973: 71.

exhibited and slaughtered.[68] However, it was not until the days of Elagabalus - well after the life span of the Roman epic writers in this study - that a larger number of tigers was shown together. Apparently, that Emperor secured 51 tigers for his games.[69]

In comparison to lions, tigers remained a relative rarity in the Roman world. The *Digest* of Justinian goes into some detail specifying the taxes for felines such as lions, leopards and panthers but does not mention taxes relevant to the tiger.[70] The tiger does not appear worthy of consideration alongside other exotic commodities; they were obviously not imported frequently enough to make it worth listing them. It is unlikely that tigers were shown in the provinces in the west (except for Rome) and if they were it was certainly not a common occurrence (Toynbee 1973: 71). King (2002: 442) asserts that tigers were unlikely to have reached Pompeii.

Challenging hunting conditions may well have been partly responsible for the limited supply of tigers as they prowl over long distances (Kitchener 1991: 157). The fatality rate during transport to the capital must have been considerable and no doubt further limited supply.

4.2 The Prominence of the Female

In the ancient world there was a common fable that there was no such thing as a male tiger. Oppian (writing in the 2nd century AD) theorises that this notion became prevalent because mother tigresses tended to stay with their cubs when hunted whereas males quickly abandoned their offspring.

ὠκυτέρη τελέθει δὲ θοῶν πανυπείροχα θηρῶν·

[68] D.C. 76.7.5 cf. Toynbee 1973: 71.
[69] D.C. 79.9.2 cf. Jennison 1937: 91.
[70] Marcianus, *dig*. 39.4.16.7 cf. Jennison 1937: 153.

αὐτῷ γάρ τε θέειν ἰκέλη Ζεφύρῳ γενετῆρι·

οὔτι γε μὴν γενετῆρι· τίς ἂν τάδε πιστώσαιτο,

θῆρες ὅτι δμηθεῖεν ὑπ' ἠέρι νυμφευτῆρι;

ἔπλετο γὰρ κείνη κενεὴ φάτις, ὡς τόδε φῦλον

θῆλυ πρόπαν τελέθει καὶ ἀδέμνιον ἄρσενός ἐστι·

δηθάκι γάρ κεν ἴδοις πολυανθέα καλὸν ἀκοίτην·

ῥεῖα γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἕλοις· δὴ γάρ τε λιπὼν ἑὰ τέκνα

ἐμμενέως φεύγει, θηρήτορας εὖτ' ἂν ἴδηται·

ἡ δ' ἕπεται σκύμνοισιν ἀνιάζουσά τε θυμόν,

χάρμα μέγ' ἀγρευτῆρσι, πρὸς ἄρκυας ἰθὺς ἱκάνει.

Opp. *C.* 3.353-363.

"The tigress comes forth at great speed, faster than all swift beasts for she runs just like her father, the West Wind. But the wind is not her father. Who would feel confident in this claim, that wild beasts are tamed in a marriage with the air as bridegroom? For that fable is a false one, that this race is counted as wholly female and is unwedded to any male. Indeed, you might see her handsome mate often enough, but you can not capture him easily. For abandoning his young, the tiger always escapes as soon as he perceives the hunters, but the tormented tigress follows with her young and brings them straight into the nets, to the great pleasure of the hunters."

It is intriguing that Pliny also highlights the fact that the tigress cares for her young while the male has no involvement with his cubs.

Tigrim Hyrcani et Indi ferunt, animal velocitatis tremendae et maxime cognitae, dum capitur totus eius fetus, qui semper numerosus est. ab insidiante rapitur equo quam maxime pernici atque in recentes subinde transfertur. at ubi vacuum cubile reperit feta (maribus enim subolis cura non est), fertur praeceps odore vestigans. Raptor adpropinquante fremitu abicit unum ex catulis; tollit illa morsu et pondere etiam ocior acta remeat iterumque consequitur ac subinde, donec in navem regresso inrita feritas saevit in litore.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.25.66.

"The tigress comes from Hyrcania and India; it is an animal of formidable swiftness and is most often recognised as such when the whole of her brood – which is always very large – is hunted down. The litter of cubs is seized by ambush on a horse that has as much stamina as possible; after a time the cubs are transferred to a fresh steed. When the tigress discovers that her den is emptied of her cubs – for male tigers have no interest in their offspring – she makes off at top speed, following the robber by his scent. When the robber hears the growl [of the tigress] draw near he throws one of her young cubs away; she picks it up in her mouth and continues on with the burden, following him to the sea shore. If he makes it back to the ship she is enraged and she paws angrily on the shore."

It seems likely that Pliny's "insight" sparked artistic interest in the topos; Toynbee[71] draws attention to the scene found on the Nasonian tomb in Rome. Two tigers (perhaps one intended to be male and one female) chase three horsemen; another

[71] *tomba dei nasoni* dated to second century A.D. cf. Toynbee 1973: 72.

two men are depicted on foot, and one of them suggestively holds a cub that is no doubt to be dropped as a delaying tactic. Other mosaics from the East also depict similar situations; namely the Worcester Hunt, a third Antiochene mosaic (c.500). This work was completed much later than the time of our Roman epic authors but suggests that conceptions of tiger-cub hunting did not change beyond recognition.[72]

The prominence of the female rather than the male in zoological writings may have coloured the Roman epic treatment of the animal (Zissos 2008: 301). Epic references tend to concentrate on the female of the species, and Toynbee (1973: 70) tells us that *tigris* is always used in the feminine in the poets but is also found in the masculine in prose.[73]

The reasoning behind the females' prominence in epic could be explained in a number of ways. Renehan (2000: 218) asserts that one grammatical gender may be used at the expense of the other on grounds of style. For example, the feminine form of *tigris* may be employed because it sounds better in poetical terms or because it draws on archaic forms of language. The grammatical gender of the animal does not necessarily correlate with the intended sex of the creature; grammatical gender can behave quite seperately from sex as when Horace (*Carm.* 1.23.9) uses the feminine *tigris* to mean the male of the species in one of his poems.

Even so, in the references that I am to research in the rest of the chapter the feminine grammatical usage of the tigress appears to match with an intended feminine subject. Why would the female tigress feature so prominently in the epic material?

One possible explanation for the frequent use of the tigress could be that Roman epic writers cared about representing the tigress realistically. Authors of Roman epic could hardly utilise the information on the *mantichoras* as found in Aristotle, and Greek

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[72] Toynbee 1973: 72.

[73] Early references to the tigress are made by Philemon the Comic (fragment 47.1). Theophrastus (5.4.7) refers to the skin of a tiger in the 4th century BC. Alexis the Comic mentions a tiger belonging to Seleucus (fragment 204.3).

epic sources made no reference to the animal whatsoever. Meanwhile Roman natural history accounts focused on the female of the species: if the tigress was to stand up to contemporary scrutiny it would need to conform to contemporary understanding.

The feminine grammatical form could be used in such a way that it would support the general assumptions made about the animal; the female's prevalence in Roman mentality must have gone some way towards influencing the depiction of the species in epic.

4.3 The Maternal Tigress

References to the tigress in Roman epic frequently emphasise the way in which the animal prioritises her cubs. The interest in the tigress' maternal instinct is prevalent in philosophical writings. In one ancient experiment Plutarch relates that a tigress and a kid were made to share a cage and subsequently grew fond of each other. Plutarch (974C) records that the tigress refused to attack the adopted goat despite the fact that the animal keepers deliberately starved the tigress in an attempt to provoke her to savage the kid. The failure (or success) of the experiment may well have shocked and delighted Roman readers.

Pliny's (*Nat*. 8.25.66) and Plutarch's maternal representations of the tigress appear to correspond with literary references found in a range of Roman epic literature. In the *Punica*, the tigress behaves in a proactive way when she purposefully hunts down those that have abducted her young ...*rabiem prenso consumat in hoste* (Sil. 12.462) "...she unleashes her rage on the seized enemy". The tigress' anger is specifically directed towards those that have stolen her offspring, and she will go to some lengths (from the Caucasian mountains to India in fact) to retrieve them (Sil. 12.460).

In *Thebaid* 2 (130), the tigress is provoked from sleep by the attack of hunters and although *bella cupit* "she desires wars" the tigress *natisque alimenta cruentis | spirantem fert ore virum* (131-132) "...carries a breathing man in her jaws as nourishment for her blood-stained cubs". In the two extracts above the epic tigress is uniformly aware of her responsibility to protect and nurture her young. Her duty to her cubs overrides her natural instinct to battle when provoked. Even when the tigress reacts angrily to attack, she does not lash out at random, but behaves in such a way that she purposefully prioritises the welfare of her offspring. She perceives the hunter merely as a means of nutrition for her young.

The stereotype of the vengeful and maternal tigress reoccurs often in Roman epic. In Valerius' *Argonautica* Jason takes Acastus on board his ship and is compared to a hunter on horseback. Clutching stolen tiger cubs that are meant to be aligned with Acastus, Jason (the hunter) flees from the cubs' mother (Pelias).[74] *haud aliter saltus vastataque pernix | venator cum lustra fugit dominoque timentem | urget equum teneras compressus pectore tigres | quas astu rapuit pavido, dum saeva relictis | mater in adverso catulis venatur Amano* (V.Fl. 1.489-493) "it is no different when the agile hunter flees from woodlands and the destroyed haunts of wild beasts; he spurs the horse on that is anxious for its rider and he hugs young cubs to his chest - the very same animals that he snatched up with terrified cunning. Meanwhile their furious mother hunts down her abandoned cubs on the opposite bank of the Amanus".

The hunter fears for his life owing to the savage nature of the provoked mother; he is described with words that emphasise his trepidation *quas astu rapuit pavido* (V.Fl. 1.492) "he snatched them up with terrified cunning". The atmosphere is so tense that the steed becomes apprehensive *dominoque timentem | urget equum.*[75] "he spurs the horse on that is anxious for its rider." The reference to the abducted cubs and the swift escape

[74] As Kleywegt (2005: 283) comments, this comparison is strained because Acastus was not kidnapped by Jason but boarded Jason's ship voluntarily.
[75] V.Fl. 1.490-491 cf. Zissos 2008: 301.

of the hunter leaves the reader to formulate the sequence of projected events: the tigress will be incensed by the abduction of her offspring and will subsequently pursue the criminal at high speed. The tigress is capable of hunting down those that have wronged her; she will find the huntsman despite the fact that she was absent when the crime actually took place.

The tigress is only mentioned indirectly, and there is no explicit explanation why the hunter is fearful; it may be inferred that the Roman epic author expected the reader to make connections independently between these details. Valerius must have been confident in the general interpretation of the animal's maternal instincts; otherwise the tigress' behaviour would be detailed more explicitly. The implications are three-fold: the tigress was commonly credited with a sense of justice, a good memory and most importantly a loyalty to her cubs that often manifested itself in pursuing those that had wronged her. All in all it seems highly probable that Valerius was drawing on Pliny's (*Nat*. 8.25.66) assessment of tigress behaviour (Zissos 2008: 300). At the core of this reference is a general assumption that tigresses are dangerous; particularly when their cubs are stolen.

On some occasions the tigress does not react to the loss of her cubs with violence but obsesses over her offspring by remembering their material absence. In *Thebaid* 10, the tigress is associated with the mother of Menoeceus. Menoeceus has committed suicide by throwing himself from the walls of Thebes so as to end the war, and so his mother struggles to come to terms with his sudden death.

sic aspera tigris

fetibus abreptis Scythico deserta sub antro

accubat et tepidi lambit vestigia saxi;

nusquam irae, sedit rabidi feritasque famesque

oris, eunt praeter secura armenta gregesque:

aspicit illa iacens; ubi enim, quibus ubera pascat

aut quos ingenti premat expectata rapina?

Stat. *Theb.* 10.820-826.

"Just so a ferocious tigress lies deserted in her Scythian cave when her young have been plundered and she licks their imprints on the warm rock; she feels nothing of anger; the ferocity and hunger of her jaws subside, while the flocks and the cattle wander by. She, lolling about, considers them; for where are those cubs that she nurtured with her teats or for whom, long expected, she piles up her great plunder?"

Menoeceus' mother is in a state of shock when she sees her son commit suicide: Statius describes her initial reaction: she rends her face with her finger nails and repeatedly criticises the dead Menoeceus for ending his own life. Then, Menoeceus' mother is lead away by her maids and goes into a trance, paying no attention to her surroundings.

In this description the tigress initially attempts to reinforce the memory of her cubs by licking their traces. Like Menoeceus' mother, the tigress then tends to ignore her surroundings and pays no attention to the cattle that wander by. Williams (1972: 124) suggests comparison with Ov. *Met*. 13.547-548 and V.Fl. 3.737-740[76] yet concludes that Statius' description and wording in relation to the tigress is innovative.

Interestingly, Martial (*Sp*. 21) describes a tigress that licks her keeper. In effect the author emphasises the power that the human wields over the tigress: *Lambere securi*

[76] In fact both these references pertain to lions rather than tigers.

dextram consueta magistri | *tigris, ab Hyrcano gloria rara iugo,* | *saeva ferum rabido laceravit dente leonem:* | *res nova, non ullis cognita temporibus...* "The tigress is well accustomed to lick the hand of the carefree trainer; she is the exotic beauty from the Hyrcanian mountain. She lacerated the ferocious lion with her razor sharp teeth: a strange sight, known from no other such times...". Coleman comments that an animal licking a human is to be understood as a sign of submission and makes reference to two other occasions where this is the case.[77]

The extracts above[78] are not the only references to tigresses licking in Roman literature. In *Punica* 10, the tigress is compared to Paulus when he makes a last ditch attempt to fight and wound Iertas. In the comparative simile the tigress tries to resist her attackers but is finally defeated. *ceu vulnere tigris* | *letifero cedens tandem proiectaque corpus* | *luctatur morti et languentem pandit hiatum* | *in vanos morsus nec sufficientibus irae* | *rictibus extrema lambit venabula lingua* (Sil. 10.293-297) "Just like a tigress that has been knocked flat; she at last collapses with a fatal wound and wrestles with death; she opens her gaping jaws that are weary and bites with little effect; not capable of expressing her wrath she licks the hunting spears with the tip of her tongue".

It appears that the tigress in Silius' *Punica* 10 and the reference to the tigress in Martial could be symbolically connected. On both these occasions the tigress is defeated and is clearly submissive. The act of licking a spear, a man-made implement of warfare, could be linked to the act of licking the hand of man himself. In complete contrast, the tigress in *Thebaid* 10 is involved in an act that depicts motherly tenderness; licking the few remains of her cubs emphasises the tigress's maternal sentiment.

In *Thebaid* 10 (820-826) the tigress is not only depicted as attempting to recall the presence of her cubs but also seems stricken by their absence. It is generally understood in Roman epic that the tigress would normally be unable to ignore prey. The

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[77] Coleman 2006: 162: Specifically when Io, transformed into a cow, licks the hand of her father (Ov. *Met.* 1.645-6), and when Cadmus licks his wife's face when turned into a serpent (Ov. *Met*. 4.595-596).
[78] Stat. *Theb.* 10.820-826 and Mart. *Sp*. 21.

tigress in *Punica* 4 clearly has a reputation for inflicting mass murder; Hannibal is likened to a tigress that should be avoided at all costs. *sic, ubi Caucaseis tigris se protulit antris,* | *...tutas petit omne latebras* | *turbatum insano vultu pecus; illa pererrat* | *desertas victrix valles, iamque ora reducto* | *paulatim nudat rictu ut praesentia mandens* | *corpora et immani stragem meditatur hiatu* (Sil. 4.331-336) "Just as when the Caucasian tigress ventures from her cave...all the cattle seek safe refuge since they are disturbed by her ferocious appearence; the tigress, the conqueror, roams through desolate valleys, and now she gradually bears her teeth with lips drawn back, as if she were devouring actual bodies, and devises slaughter with wide-open jaws."

In another reference in *Thebaid* 10 (when Thiodamas wishes to come up against his enemies), human traits are projected onto the animal. The tigress regrets that her hunger is sated as she wishes to cause even greater bloodshed; in effect the animal's normally ferocious characteristics are heightened so that they suggest Thiodamas' dissatisfaction. *Caspia non aliter magnorum in strage iuvencum* | *tigris, ubi inmenso rabies placata cruore* | *lassavitque genas et crasso sordida tabo* | *confudit maculas, spectat sua facta doletque* | *defecisse famem* (Stat. *Theb*. 10.288-292) "It is not in any other way that the Caspian tigress, her killing frenzy abated with plentiful bloodshed, has wearied her jaws with slaughter and has covered her stripes with congealed blood in the carnage of massive bullocks. She gazes down at her own deeds and regrets that her appetite has failed her."

The tigress is often depicted as a savage creature in the *Aeneid* and *Civil War*. Turnus is depicted on the war path *immanem veluti pecora inter inertia tigrim* (Verg. *A*. 9.730) "…just like a monstrous tigress among motionless cattle", while Lucan's tigress is compared to Pompey: *altus caesorum pavit cruor armentorum* (Luc. 1.329) "she has feed well on the gore of slaughtered cattle". The depiction in *Thebaid* 12 is just as decisive in emphasising the murderous instincts of the tigress: *non secus adflavit molles*

si quando iuvencas | tigridis Hyrcanae ieiunum murmur, et ipse | auditu turbatus ager, timor omnibus ingens, | quae placeat, quos illa fames escendat in armos (12.169-172) "It is no different when the hungry growl of the Hyrcanian tigress has wafted towards the gentle heifers; the very pasture is struck by the noise, huge fear is felt by all, which may well satisfy the tigress; her very hunger unleashes itself upon the shoulders of her prey." In this instance the terror of the mild heifers emphasises the sheer brutality of the tigress.

The exaggeration of the tigresses' instinct to slaughter their prey and the violence of human traits projected onto the creature places the tigress' devotion to her young at Stat. *Theb.* 10.820-826 in stark contrast. Simultaneously, it is implied that the abandonment of this ingrained desire for slaughter would only come about under exceptionally distressing circumstances. In *Thebaid* 10 (820-826) the disappearance of the tigress' cubs have disturbed her to such an extent that she is unable to function normally. The tigress' loss of interest in hunting speaks volumes and the extract shows that the animal is far removed from her usual carefree existance.

The bewilderment of the tigress when she is bereft of cubs is also emphasised in *Argonautica* 6: *maestaque suspectae mater stupet aggere ripae* (V.Fl. 6.149) "the mother tigress is struck senseless with sadness on the mound of the traitorous bank". In the first instance the tigress is so emotionally disturbed that she becomes instinctually impervious to the prey that are around her (Stat. *Theb.* 10.820-826); she does not even register them. In the second case the tigress is portrayed in a state of shock; unable to believe what has happened; she struggles to come to terms with her loss.

Occasionally the typical maternal behaviours associated with the tigress are inverted in order to convey other, less palatable ideas. Whereas Statius and Valerius exaggerate the tigress' protective stance towards her young Ovid employs the tigress to portray the perversity of women. In the *Metamorphoses* Procne wavers in her resolve to

kill her son. *mota quidem est genetrix infractaque constitit ira,* | *invitique oculi lacrimis maduere coactis* [79] "her mothering instinct became agitated and her unbroken ferocity diminished; her reluctant eyes became wet with the tears that gathered there". It is highly ironic that Ovid then compares Procne's relationship with her son to that between a tigress and her quarry (Ov. 6.636-645)[80]. Instead of protecting and valuing her offspring as a tigress is often shown to do, Procne rapidly steels herself to murder her son by evaluating him as legitimate prey.

Ovid probably used Sophocles' *Tereus*[81] and Euripides' *Medea* as inspiration for this scene (Otis 1970: 211). Euripides and Ovid imagine the action from slightly different perspectives: Euripides has Jason term Medea a "she-lion" (*Med*. 1342), while Ovid describes Procne as a tigress that attacks a young deer. This characterisation proved to be an influential one: in his version of *Medea*, Seneca subsequently defined Medea *ut tigris orba natis* | *cursu furente lustrat* | *Gangeticum nemus* (*Med*. 863-865) "just like a tigress bereft of her cubs rushes through the meadows of the Ganges in a mad onrush".

Ovid's tigress simile must also be considered in the wider context of the Tereus myth. Procne is driven to the impious act of murdering her son because her husband has violated her sister, Philomela. Tereus' original crime causes misery that is then mirrored in Procne's killing of Itys. In effect, the tigress simile comes to encompass and then dominate all those that originally suffered as a result of Tereus' crime. Ovid explicitly suggests that Procne is to be associated with the tigress but implies that the characterisation is just as relevant to Philomela. It is Philomela who cuts Ity's throat in a horrific re-enactment of Tereus' violence towards herself.

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[79] Procne killed her son Itys in an act of revenge when she discovered that her husband had raped her sister (Ov. *Met*. 6.627-628).
[80] This passage (Ov. *Met*. 6.636-645) is translated with discussion at 1.1.
[81] Now fragmentary (Fitzpatrick 2001: 90).

The gruesome nature of this scene may be designed to call to mind the very primal instincts of the tigress in the process of the hunt. Like Philomela, big cats tend to kill their victims by targeting the neck.[82] Although Philomela's characterisation is not explicitly linked to the tigress within the simile itself it appears that Procne's tigress-like brutality may have influenced her sister: both women become bestial due to Tereus' original barbarity.

Ovid neatly calls to mind Itys' supplication when Philomela violently slits his throat; the boy attempts to reach for his mother's neck in a final entreaty before his slaughter. This gesture should remind Procne of her responsibility to her son, but the symbolism of the child's very embrace is perverted into an act of sheer brutality when his own neck becomes the focus of Philomela's attack.

Hill (1992: 190) recognises that the tigress is often employed as a symbol of cruelty, but it seems that the imagery of the animal is also well adapted to this situation for more subtle reasons. The rapid change in Procne's mentality from caring mother to savage killer is equally applicable to the characteristics of the tigress who may display these two types of behaviour almost simultaneously.

Ovid subtly emphasises that Procne behaves unnaturally as a mother through his clever manipulation of the common conception of the tigress. The roles of the tigress, as an efficient predator and a faithful mother, have become fatally confused. The image of the tigress has been built up by a number of epic references and is supported by the conception of the animal in Roman natural history references: Ovid has simultaeneously blurred the boundaries between human and wild animal and cleverly exploits the image of the tigress as an ambivalent creature that can display maternal tendencies as well as ferocity.

[82] Kitchener 1991: 78 and Macdonald 2001: 18.

4.4 The Representative of the Exotic East

Epic authors employ a great variety of regional prefixes when introducing the tigress. In the *Argonautica* Valerius (1.492-3) refers to a tigress that hunts around the Amanus, a mountain in Cilicia. It appears odd that Valerius places the tigress in this region, for tigresses are most often referred to as inhabiting the Hyrcanian region in Latin poetry.[83] Zissos (2008: 301) theorises that Valerius may have made this reference for the sake of novelty, but it is curious that Valerius (6.147) later refers to hunters that run from a pursuing tiger by crossing the Hypanis (a river flowing north-west from the Caucasus). It appears that Valerius uses a range of exotic labels to introduce the tigress.

It is noticeable that tigresses are often afforded striking regional prefixes in a range of other Latin epics. In the *Punica*, the tigress leaves her den in the Caucasus (Sil. 4.331) and is later depicted roaming from the Caucasus to the Ganges (Sil. 12.460). Bacchus' chariot is drawn by tigresses that are defined as Caucasian in the *Punica* (Sil. 15.81), but in the *Aeneid* Dido aligns Aeneas with the offspring of Hyrcanian tigresses (Verg. 4.367), and Lucan (1.328) envisages a tiger who goes from den to den in the Hyrcanian jungle. Ovid (*Met*. 15.86) refers to Armenian tigers, while the tigress is Caspian in *Thebaid* 10 (Stat. 10.288). Statius continues to build on the exotic characterisation of the tigress six hundred lines later. At 10.821 the tigress is deserted in a Scythian lair, while in *Thebaid* 12 (Stat. 170) the animal is described as a Hyrcanian beast.

The exotic nature of the tigress is often highlighted in Roman epic as a point of considerable interest. As soon as the tigresses in *Thebaid* 7 (581) show violent temperaments Statius comments that they are out of their normal sphere: *erumpunt non agnoscentibus agris* "they break forth, but the fields do not recognise

[83] Zissos 2008: 301 and Pollmann 2004: 130. Kleywegt (2005:286) states that Mt. Amanus is mentioned several times by Cicero (*Att*.5.20) and also in Lucan (3.244) but comments that other areas are associated with wild animals such as Scythia (Stat. Theb. 10.820), the Ganges (Sen., Sil) and the Caucasus (Sil.).

them". This line cleverly serves three purposes; it explicitly suggests that the two tigresses' behaviour has become much more vicious than ever before; it highlights the foreign nature of the animals, and finally it reminds the reader that the land of Greece is far from the eastern home of the tigress. According to Statius the aggressive behaviour that the animals show is completely unprecedented in Greece. Perhaps Statius is partly flattering his Roman audience with knowledge of the tigress, while highlighting the comparative Greek ignorance of the animal.

It is clear that Roman epic authors were using a range of regional prefixes to describe the tigress, but why did they continue to highlight the geographical details of the tigress' origin to such a great extent? It seems that the tigress added a sense of the exotic and the remote to Roman epic. Steele points out that the Romans had a conception of the Nile but that they were largely ignorant of the Ganges.[84] He theorises that the concept of distance in epic simile lends a kind of appeal to the comparison: "distance lends enchantment to the view" (Steele 1918: 84). Meanwhile, Braund (1986: 36) terms the Roman conception of unknown lands as "fantasy space" and emphasises the ancient curiosity in cultures that were associated with savagery.

When we consider the theories of Parker it seems that our assessment of the Roman epic tigress may be brought into better focus. Parker (2002: 90) explains a link between the commodities of India and the mental mapping of India in the Roman mind. It seems possible that the tigress' inclusion in epic may well have been indicative of Roman curiosity in regions beyond their understanding. In effect, the Roman need for comprehensive symbols underlines the significance of the epic tigress as a geographical marker for exotic lands outside of the Roman Empire.

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84 Steele (1918: 84) comments on a passage in the *Aeneid* (Verg. 9.2831) in which the Ganges is mentioned.

Sometimes the curiosity and excitement concerning the tigress translated itself into descriptions that seem rather outlandish. In *Thebaid* 7, Statius experiments with the limits of tigress behaviour.

errabant geminae Dircaea ad flumina tigres,
mite iugum, belli quondam vastator Eoi
currus, Erythraeis sed nuper victor ab oris
Liber in Aonios meritas emiserat agros.
illas turba dei seniorque ex more sacerdos
sanguinis oblitas atque Indum gramen olentes
palmite maturo variisque ornare corymbis
curat et alterno maculas interligat ostro.
iamque ipsi colles, ipsa has - quis credat? - amabant
armenta, atque ausae circum mugire iuvencae;
quippe nihil grassata fames: manus obvia pascit,
exceptantque cibos fusoque horrenda supinant
ora mero, vaga rure quies;
...erumpunt non agnoscentibus agris.
ceu duo diverso pariter si fulmina caelo
rupta cadant longumque trahant per nubila crinem:[85]
non aliter cursu rapidae atque inmane frementis
transiliunt campos aurigamque inpete vasto,
Amphiarae, tuum...
...illae autem longo cum limite fusi
sanguinis ad portas utrimque extantia ducunt

[85] The Argives kill two tigresses sacred to Bacchus and so stir the Thebans into battle. The tigresses are here compared to two lightening brands.

spicula semianimes, gemituque imitante querellas

saucia dilectis adclinant pectora muris.

Stat. *Theb*. 7.564-598.

"Twin tigresses were wandering by Dirce's streams. Their chariot was once a devastating force of Eastern war, but Liber (only recently the victor from Erythraean borders) had sent the deserving animals forth into Aonian pastures. When the war had been forgotten the crowd of god's priests, and a man advanced in years (as is the custom) took pains to bedeck the tigresses. They adorned them with a ripened vine branch with the smell of the grass of the Indus and with varigated ivy; thus they interlinked the tigresses' markings with alternating purple stripes. Now - who would believe? The very hills themselves, and the cattle love the tigresses. The daring heifers bellow all around them. Indeed, hunger does not torture the tigresses: a willing hand supplies them with food and they take the titbits and throw open their bristling mouths to the wine poured for them; they are peaceful in their countryside wanderings (576);...[a Fury attacks the tigresses and so awakens them to their natural state of ferocity] (581) ...They break forth but the fields do not recognise them. Just as when two thunderbolts breaking at the same time from different parts of the sky descend and drag a long trail through the clouds. It was no different, for the tigresses flew through the fields at a fast pace and seized your charioteer Amphiaraus with tremendous force. (586)...[But Aconteus pursued them and drove them away with javelins]...(595) The tigresses, tottering about with dizziness, carry back the missiles protruding from their flanks and leave a long trail of blood in their wake to their very doors. Their moans sound just like human wails and they rest their injured flanks on the walls they loved."

The passage is clearly indebted to similar episodes in the *Aeneid* (Verg. 7.483-502), *Metamorphoses* (Ov. 10.109-119) and *Punica* (Sil. 13.115-137),[86] but whereas Virgil, Ovid and Silius all refer to the adornment and or slaughtering of a tame deer, Statius chooses to describe the superficial taming and subsequent killing of two tigresses instead. The mention of tigresses definitely adds a sense of outlandish flair to the passage that the deer descriptions do not possess.[87] Apparently the tigresses were so friendly that *iamque ipsi colles, ipsa has amabant | armenta* "...the very hills themselves, and the cattle loved them"; the heifers even begin to approach the tigresses of their own free will. This is surely an unnerving development that runs counter to the normal characteristics displayed by domesticated and agricultural animals towards tigresses.[88]

Whereas the epic pet deer described in Virgil, Ovid and Silius are likely to be based on real phenomenon, the superficially tame tigress in Statius is probably a complete fiction. The tigresses show little interest in attacking the herds of cattle; preferring instead to quaff wine. Apparently tigresses and leopards were sometimes associated with Bacchus so there may be some symbolic association that explains the rather uncharacteristic portrayal (Smolenaars 1994: 259).

In Stat. *Theb*. 7.564-598 the tigresses' behaviour is somewhat suprising. The animals are attacked by Aconteus but they do not react aggressively. Instead they are described with the verb *querellas*. *querellas* is most often interpreted as a human sound and appears somewhat out of place here. It has been suggested that we interpret the tigresses as victims of the gods, and that *querellas* defines them as creatures that should

[86] See 3.2.
[87] Smolenaars (1994: 255) writes that the pair of tigresses are meant to call to mind the war between the two brothers central to the theme of the *Thebaid*; apparently, the death of the tigers portends the demise of the brothers.
[88] Consider Stat. *Theb*. 12.169-172.

be pitied (Smolenaars 1994: 269). It could also be that Statius is attempting to imitate the emotional wail that emanates from Virgil's stag when it is attacked.[89]

Statius' tigress passage could even be read as an acknowledgement that dangerous wild animals had the potential to run amok - particularly when they were kept in a domestic environment. Martial points out that captive animals would sometimes disobey their trainers; in *Liber Spectaculorum* 12 a lion actually turns on its keeper, *Laeserat ingrato leo perfidus ore magistrum...* (Mart. *Sp*. 12) "the perfidious lion had injured its trainer in its grim jaws...". In effect, Statius' passage could be perceived as being part of a larger scale epic investigation into wild animal behaviour: his representations of deer[90] and tigresses allow him to consider animal behaviour in comparison with human interactions.

Over time epic authors' curiosity in the tigress resulted in a range of rather unlikely literary scenarios. Ovid (*Met*. 1.305) takes delight in picturing the tigress as she is swept along by the waves of a flood in the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, while Silius describes a tigress that can travel at terrific speeds in search of her cubs.

haud secus amisso tigris si concita fetu emicet, attonitae paucis lustratur in horis Caucasus et saltu tramittitur alite Ganges, donec fulmineo partus vestigia cursu colligat et rabiem prenso consumat in hoste.

Sil. 12.458-462.

"There is no difference at all if a provoked tigress has been separated from her young; she springs forth, and she roams through the stunned Caucasus in a few hours; the

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[89] *saucius at quadrupes nota intra tecta refugit | successitque gemens stabulis questuque cruentus | atque imploranti similis tectum omne replebat.* (Verg. *A*. 7.500-502) "But the wounded stag fled inside the well-known dwelling and entered its stable moaning; blood-stained it was filling the whole household with lamentation as though it were invoking protection."

[90] Cf. Statius' manipulation of the deer in 3.3.

tigress is carried across the Ganges in a leap, until she deduces in her lightning path the tracks of her young and she unleashes her fury on the captured enemy."

Tigresses were renowned for their speed [91] but it seems that this tigress is as fast as lightning. The tigress crosses the Ganges in one leap; the animal is able to negotiate the rocks of the Caucasus mountains (the highest point measuring some 18,506 feet), track down her young, and reach India, all in a few hours.

4.5 Conclusion

In epic contexts designed to elicit a range of competing and contradictory emotional responses the tigress could be employed to explore ferocious impulses while also illustrating complex ties of responsibility. The maternal characteristics associated with the tigress in epic appear to arise from conceptions of the animal in Roman thought; these prevailing ideas seem to be original to the Romans and do not take Greek precedents such as Aristotle's fantastical *mantichoras* as their inspiration.

The nature of Roman epic tigress descriptions suggests that the Romans initiated their own investigations into tigress behaviour. The Romans employed a great variety of regional prefixes when referring to the tigress; the range of geographical associations exaggerated the exoticism of the animal and developed a way of thinking about the East. Some more outlandish tigress descriptions show how experimental Roman epic authors had become.

[91] cf. Jennison 1937: 147. Tigers were considered as being particularly swift.

Chapter 5: The Owl

5.1 The Greeks and the Fortunate Owl

The Romans and the Greeks interpreted the owl in very different ways and fostered opposing views on the meaning and symbolism of the bird. In the Greek consciousness the owl was most often linked with Athena and came to adopt her special qualities of wisdom and intelligence by association (Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 61). No doubt as a result of mythical connotations, the owl had come to the fore in the tale of Ascalaphus and Demeter. Apparently, Demeter threw magical water at Ascalaphus in a fit of rage and the latter subsequently took on the form of an owl (Apollod. 2.5.12). Despite the fact that Demeter wanted to punish Ascalaphus for betraying her daughter, Ascalaphus got away from the affair relatively unscathed and, as the story goes, was adopted by Athena as a special ally. Ascalapus went on to enjoy Athena's favour and served as her watchful guardian.

The owl was immortalised as representative of the Athenian world in Athen's very currency. The Athenian owl coinage depicted the goddess on one side and the owl on the other. Darel Tai Engen (2005: 367) discusses the possibility that the coinage was originally designed in order to publicise the democratic system at the heart of the Athenian civilisation and theorises that the coinage may have been maintained owing to its good repute as a silver standard both at home and abroad (2005: 364). The design proved to have considerable longevity; the owl currency was used in Athens with only minor variations for three and a half centuries (Darel Tai Engen 2005: 363-364).

As a result of its positive connotations the Athenians favoured the owl and encouraged the bird to fly around the city night and day. Owing to its prominent night activities the owl was often associated with the moon, which was reputed as the seat of knowledge and good sense (Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 61). The Greeks believed

that the owl had special powers of discernment because it was able to see clearly in the dark; the Greek name for the owl, *glaux* or "gleaming one", emphasises the size and power of the bird's eyes (Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 61-62). Pollard (1977: 39) has it that it was the significant number of *Glaux* or little owls in the capital city that led to a pun denoting abundance (Antiphon, 3.96). "Taking owls to Athens" is the ancient equivalent of "carrying coals to Newcastle".

The good fortune associated with the owl is clearly denoted in Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*. He writes that the Athenians believed that the owl was a symbol of coming success when it appeared before the battle of Salamis (Plu. *Them.* 12). Benevolent characteristics were also attributed to the owl when Agathocles, the Tyrant of Syracuse, released a flock of owls over his battle line in order to enthuse his troops. On this occasion the owl was seen as a definite symbol of Athena's support (D.S. 20.11.3-5). Seemingly the owl had become a powerful conveyer of positive meaning in the context of war. The bird was even attributed with powers to predict the climate; Aratus records that the hoot of the owl was sometimes interpreted as a promise of good weather.[92]

Attitudes towards the owl in the natural world were similarly positive. Aristotle suggests that the owl may be put to good use in the hunting of other birds: Τῆς δ' ἡμέρας τὰ ἄλλα ὀρνίθια τὴν γλαῦκα περιπέταται, ὃ καλεῖται θαυμάζειν, καὶ προσπετόμενα τίλλουσιν· διὸ οἱ ὀρνιθοθῆραι θηρεύουσιν αὐτῇ παντοδαπὰ ὀρνίθια (*H.A.* 9.609a) "During the day some small birds fly around the owl; this is referred to as 'venerating', and when flying towards her they pull out her feathers. For that reason, bird hunters take an owl with them when lying in wait for many types of small birds". Aristotle also comments that the scops owl was a relatively common sight since it was to be seen throughout the whole year (*H.A.* 8.617b-618a) and

[92] Arat. 999 cf. Pollard 1977: 113.

observes that owls feed on mice, beetles and lizards (*H.A*. 8.619b). Meanwhile Alexander of Myndus, whose writings only survive in fragments, notes the appearance of the scops owl with significant insight. The scops owl is minutely defined: μικρότερός ἐστι γλαυκὸς καὶ ἐπὶ μολυβδοφανεῖ τῳ χρώματι ὑπόλευκα στίγματα ἔχει δύο τε ἀπο τῶν ὀφρύων παρ' ἑκάτερον κρόταφον ἀναφέρει πτερά.[93] "it is smaller than the average owl and has white feathers over lead coloured ones; it has two pointy feathers above its eyebrows on each side of the forehead."

5.2 The Roman Omen-Owl

Whereas the Greeks favoured owl symbolism and encouraged the owl to inhabit their temples, the Roman relationship with the bird was more ambivalent.[94] Phaedrus (3.16) depicts an owl that is slow to anger but vicious when forced into a situation that warrants its resentment, and Pliny suggests that the night owl is constantly at odds with other birds. *maiore circumdatae multitudine resupinae pedibus repugnant collectaeque in artum rostro et unguibus totae teguntur* (*Nat*. 10.19.39) "ringed by a myriad of birds, owls defend themselves by lying down and kicking out with their feet; rolled into a ball, they are covered by their beak and talons". It is true that owls have been observed behaving in this way in modern times; the birds may lean back and lash out with their feet when approached (Cramp 1985: 441). Owls pose a considerable threat to smaller birds at night but themselves become susceptible to attack during the daytime – particularly if a large group of birds gang together. Crowds of jays, crows and chickadees have been known to pester owls in daylight hours,[95] and Elphick describes

[93] Alexander of Myndus in Athen. *Deip*. 9.391b-c.
[94] Holmgren 1988: 31-2 and Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 10-11.
[95] Elphick et al. 2001: 341 cf. Parry-Jones 2004: 29.

how owls attempt to camouflage themselves during the day by compressing their feathers.

It appears that authors writing in Roman times saw owls as deceitful and vicious birds. Aelian writes that owls have a habit of stealing crow eggs (*N.A*. 3.9). Owls do not, in fact, steal crow's eggs but they have been known to occupy abandoned nests after crows have deserted them some time before (Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 75). It seems that Aelian deliberately exaggerates the evil potential of the owl when he suggests it is capable of sidelining its hunters, hypnotising them and holding them spellbound (*N.A*. 1.29).

Like Aristotle, Aelian suggests that the owl may be useful in attracting other birds, but his account has much more negative overtones; the owl here is synomonous with evil rather than acting as the helpful assistant to the hunter:

ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ θήρατρα ἕτερα τοῖς ὄρνισι προσείει
μωκωμένη καὶ ἄλλοτε ἄλλην ἰδέαν προσώπου στρέ-
φουσα, ὑφ' ὧν κηλοῦνται καὶ παραμένουσιν ἐνεοὶ
πάντες ὄρνιθες...

Ael. *N.A*. 1.29.

"During the day the owl offers another trap to birds, at intervals it alters the expression of its face to a different one; all the birds are bewitched by the owl and they stand fast, both deaf and dumb they are seized with dread...".

Aelian's owl appears to have a malignant bearing and an ability to wield power over other less cunning birds. This type of behaviour may be based on realistic insight:

by tensing up the owl may drastically change its appearance. The bird will often raise its ear tufts and close its eyes to slits in the day time. At night owls generally relax their feathers, open their eyes and lower their ear tufts (Elphick et al. 2001: 341). The implication is that the owl is a dangerous entity, inherently deceptive and able to transform its expressions to terrifying effect. The Romans sometimes referred to the owl as *strix*. The word *strix* in Latin is used to signify the witch as well as the owl, and Aelian asserts that the bird actually looks like a witch (*N.A*. 1.29). The terminology as well as the comparison may indicate a deep rooted distrust of the bird.

Pliny no doubt expresses the common sentiment of his day when he dubs the eagle-owl as a funerary bird, *bubo, funebris et maxime abominatus publicis praecipue auspiciis, deserta incolit nec tantum desolata, sed dira etiam et inaccessa, noctis monstrum...* (*Nat*. 10.16.34) "The owl is a bird associated with funerals and it is considered as an altogether terrible omen, particularly in public auspices; it dwells in wastelands and not only inhabits forsaken places but even those that are ominous and unapproachable; it is the demon of the night". Pliny has it that the hoot of the owl is not a pleasant noise but sounds like a scream, *nec cantu aliquo vocalis, sed gemitu* (*Nat*. 10.16.34) "its voice is totally without song, it merely screeches". In the Greek play *Lysistrata* the owl's hoot is an annoyance but does not come across as such a foreboding sound; the nuisance is caused by the fact that the owl can disturb sleep rather than the fact that is terrifies in its very symbolism, ἐγὼ δ′ ὑπὸ τῶν γλαυκῶν γε τάλαιν′ ἀπόλλυμαι | ταῖς ἀγρυπνίαισι κικκαβιζουσῶν ἀεί. (Ar. *Lys*. 760-761) "Wretched me, I am completely exhausted by the sleeplessness which is caused by the constant screeching notes of owls".

Aelian asserts that the very presence of the owl is to be interpreted as an ill omen and relates as proof the story of Pyrrhus of Epirus. The man in question travelled on horseback to Argos by night and was met by an owl that refused to leave him. As

soon as Pyrrhus arrived at his destination he was killed outright by a tile thrown from a roof (*N.A*. 10.37). The owl was also associated with death in more familiar Roman historical contexts: Caesar, Augustus and Aurelius Commodus were all visited by an owl before their deaths. Meanwhile, Herod Agrippa was correctly warned that he would come to his demise when he saw an owl for the second time (Cenzato and Santopietro 1990: 72-75).

The Romans appeared to go to some lengths to rid themselves of the owl; Pliny (*Nat*. 10.16.35) records that an owl flew into the shrine on the Capitol Hill and that a purification of the city was held on the 7th of March as a result. Whereas the Athenian owl came to represent the very heart of Athenian society the Roman owl had only negative connotations of death and witchcraft. It is clear that the owl was disliked and feared by the Romans.

5.3 The Romans and the Epic Owl

In Homeric epic the owl is seldom used as an entity in its own right; it is mainly employed in epithets. Pollard (1977: 144) records that Athena is referred to as owl-eyed 92 times in Homer.[96] I have counted 30 references to owl-eyed Athena in the *Iliad* and 53 references to γλαυκῶπις Athena in the *Odyssey*. In addition, there are three more references to a "flashing-eyed one" or "you of the flashing-eyes" in the *Odyssey* and two more references to an "owl-eyed darling" and a "flashing-eyed maiden" in the *Iliad*. Irrespective of all these references Athena never transforms herself into an owl, and there is only one occasion when the owl is referred to as an entity in itself.

In book 5 of the *Odyssey* owls nest near Calypso's haunt;

[96] cf. Friedrich 1997: 316. [Friedrich misquotes the page number in Pollard as 140]. The difference in figures might be owing to the fact that Pollard has counted other 'Homeric' works. He does not give a break down of his count by each epic.

ὕλη δὲ σπέος ἀμφὶ πεφύκει τηλεθόωσα,

κλήθρη τ' αἴγειρός τε καὶ εὐώδης κυπάρισσος.

ἔνθα δέ τ' ὄρνιθες τανυσίπτεροι εὐνάζοντο,

σκῶπές τ' ἴρηκές τε τανύγλωσσοί τε κορῶναι

εἰνάλιαι...

Hom. *Od*. 5.63-67.

"A flourishing forest had grown up around the cave, alder and black poplar and sweet-scented cypress were all there. There, the birds, their wings outstretched, roosted, owls and hawks and the long-tongued ravens that roam the sea...".

The Homeric manipulation of the owl is limited. The bird helps to contextualise the scene along with a range of other birds: there is no suggestion that the owl is a demonic or troublesome force. In fact the tone is rather picturesque; the owl is content enough to nest and so obviously feels secure, it does not fight with the other birds, the sea crow chatters away. The general atmosphere is pleasant: trees are sweet-smelling and the wood is luxuriant. Anderson (1958: 6) even goes as far as to compare Calypso's island with Elysium and notes that the messenger Hermes, arriving in order to deliver a message to Calypso, stands back in admiration of the scene (Hom. *Od*. 5.73-4).

Considered thus, the Homeric representation of the owl accords well with the fundamental characterisation of the owl found in Greek society as a whole. The mythical association between Athena and the owl is repeatedly emphasised through epithets. In *Odyssey* 5 the owl is not envisaged as a negative omen. The bird is aligned

with other birds that carry positive connotations; there is nothing sinister about this extract.

Left to develop the role and characterisation of the owl as they saw fit, Roman epic writers tended to offer a very different interpretation of the bird. In *Aeneid* 4, Virgil makes reference to an owl that lingers and hoots while Dido is pictured in a state of desolation after Aeneas' desertion. Dido suspects that all is not well; first, she believes that she can hear the sound of her lost husband's voice, an owl announces death on the roof top and then Dido listens to the words of prophets with trepidation. Dido appears to know that she will soon die.

hinc exaudiri voces et verba vocantis
visa viri, nox cum terras obscura teneret,
solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo
saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces;
multaque praeterea vatum praedicta piorum
terribili monitu horrificant. agit ipse furentem
in somnis ferus Aeneas; semperque relinqui
sola sibi, semper longam incomitata videtur
ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra:..

Verg. *A*. 4.460-468.

"Whenever dusky night covered the earth, voices were clearly heard from this place as well as the apparent mutterings of her calling husband, and alone on the roof tops the owl often lamented with funereal song and drew out its long notes into weeping; moreover the many predictions of devout priests worried her with dreadful admonition. Wild Aeneas himself drives her on as she is raving in her sleep; she is always alone and

deserted. She always dreams that she is travelling a long journey to search for her Tyrians in a desolate land...".

Considering the Roman associations with the bird it seems unsurprising that Virgil's depiction of the owl contextualises it in an atmosphere of doom. The focus on the mournful nature of the bird's character is highlighted in the sound it makes. Gould and Whiteley (1981: 101) suggest that we interpret *longas in fletum ducere voces* to mean that the owl's hoots have become so prolonged that they mimic the sound of weeping. It is in this very context that Pliny's observation, *nec cantu aliquo vocalis, sed gemitu* (*Nat*. 10.16.34) "its voice is totally without song, it merely screeches" seems particularly relevant.

The isolation that Dido feels is repeatedly emphasised in *Aeneid* 4. Dido is *sola* or "alone"[97] and other words such as *incomitata* and *deserta* emphasise her isolation from others. It seems that Virgil has cleverly incorporated the owl into this foreboding atmosphere while also taking account of the owl's traditional characteristics. The Romans appear to have perceived the owl as a nomadic bird; Pliny emphasises the fact that the bird has a solitary existence, *...deserta incolit nec tantum desolata, sed dira etiam et inaccessa, noctis monstrum...* (*Nat*. 10.16.34) "...it dwells in wastelands and not only inhabits forsaken places but even those that are ominous and unapproachable, it is the demon of the night". In fact the structure of line 462 mirrors the meaning, for *sola* in line 462 is separated from its subject *bubo* at the very end of the line. Dido's seclusion is thus highlighted by an animal that was particularly symbolic of isolation; the bird stereotype highlights the clever linguistic structure of the line.

Whereas Homeric epic makes very limited use of the owl, Virgil imbeds the bird into the narrative in a very sophisticated way. Dido's lamentation is clearly set in

[97] Verg. *A*. 4.462 and 467. Virgil further emphasises the fact that Dido is all alone by placing *sola* in line 462 and 467 at the very beginning of the sentence.

darkness so the owl is the most appropriate accompaniment to the scene. The owl, midway through the trio of bad omens, symbolically links the voice of Dido's dead husband and the premonitions of the seers. The owl hoots in a way that reminds us of Dido's husband's voice and the bird is associated with death and the night: the world that her dead husband inhabits. However, the owl also carries connotations to do with wisdom and discernment; the owl, like the seer, often deals in omens and is reputed for its insight into areas that others cannot see. In short, the owl here embodies and encompasses the sentiment of the passage as a whole. The bird's very presence unifies the horrific trio of terrible omens.

Virgil's reference to the owl in this context appears to have sparked more references to the bird. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the epic writer narrates the demise of Orpheus, who is attacked by a throng of Maenads.

ac primum attonitas etiamnum voce canentis
innumeras volucres anguesque agmenque ferarum
Maenades Orphei titulum rapuere theatri.
inde cruentatis vertuntur in Orphea dextris
et coeunt, ut aves, si quando luce vagantem
noctis avem cernunt, structoque utrimque theatro
ceu matutina cervus periturus harena
praeda canum est...

Ov. *Met.* 11.20-27.

"First the Italian Bacchantes seized the countless birds still stunned by the voice of the singer, as well as the snakes and the flock of wild beasts, the glory of Orpheus' theatre.

Then the Bacchantes turned on Orpheus with bloodstained hands and ganged up just as birds do when they catch sight of the bird of the night wandering in the daylight, just as when a doomed deer is the victim of dogs on both sides in the erected theatre in the morning... ".

Miller (1990: 143-144) surmises that Ovid's owl simile mocks the behaviour of the animals that once peacefully listened to Orpheus' music. He suggests that the representation of the birds attacking the owl recreates a scene that the Maeneds are simultaneously destroying. It could be that Ovid modelled his version of Orpheus' demise on Virgil's description of Orpheus' death in the *Georgics*.[98] In the *Georgics*, Orpheus' song is compared to that of a nightingale grieving for her lost young. Yet whereas Ovid develops comparative imagery associated with Orpheus' demise, Virgil concisely describes the brutal attack of the Ciconian women on the poet in three simple lines. *spretae Ciconum quo munere matres | inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia Bacchi | discerptum latos iuvenem sparsere per agros* (*G*. 4.520-522) "The women of the Thracians, spurned by that devotion, were acting as sacred worshippers in the noctural orgies of Bacchus, and mangled the young man scattering him over the wide fields" . It is clear that Virgil makes no comparison between Orpheus and the owl or between Orpheus and the stag. Ovid has clearly departed from Virgil's epic model and developed innovative associations with Orpheus' death.

Investigating the meaning of the owl passage in Ovid, Miller (1990: 144) refers to the writings of both Aristotle and Pliny. He emphasises the fact that Aristotle terms little birds as venerating the owl (*H.A.* 9.609a) and concludes that this type of behaviour is relevant to the descriptions of Lucian[99] and Timon of Philus.[100] Lucian describes fans flocking around a skilled musician ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τὴν γλαῦκα τὰ ὄρνεα "like birds

[98] Verg. *G*. 4.520-7 cf. Hill 1999: 185.
[99] Lucian was born 120 AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 886).
[100] Timon of Philus lived 320 BC-230BC (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1529).

around an owl"[101] and Timon pictures a similar scene employing a like concept οἱ δέ μιν ἠϋτε γλαῦκα πέρι σπίζαι τερατοῦντο "just as when chaffinches crowd around the owl".[102]

Owing to the phrasing of Aristotle, Timon and Lucian concerning the owl, Miller (1990: 144-145) proposes that the smaller birds' respect for the owl became almost proverbial. He argues that Ovid inverts the common literary sentiment reversing the application of the owl and the smaller birds. Instead of admiring the owl (or Orpheus) the small birds (as representative of the Maenads) go on the attack and viciously tear apart the owl.

However it seems to me that there may be another plausible explanation. Ovid may not be inverting the proverbial venerating of small birds as much as building on the strength of the assumption that little birds would attack an owl. It appears that the owl-small bird relationship was not that clearly defined as a positive one in Roman times.[103] Pliny has it that the owl is forced to defend itself when surrounded by other birds and he tells us that owls are not in league with other birds at all but actually attempt to harm them. Apparently there was often considerable enmity, there is a *Noctuarum contra aves sollers dimicatio* (*Nat*. 10.19.39) "clever war that owls wage against other birds".

Perhaps Ovid was well aware of the possible interpretations of this owl passage. He may have been intentionally using the owl here in order to implicitly convey the explosive nature of the situation and emphasise the inevitability of the gruesome outcome. It is also interesting that Aristotle writes that birds, when they are drawn to the owl, not only 'venerate' the owl but will actually try to pluck it, Τῆς δ' ἡμέρας τὰ

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[101] Lucianus, *Harm*. 1 cf. Miller 1990: 144.
[102] Diels. H. (1901) *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta*, Berlin fr. 34 (Diog. *Laert*. 4.42) cf. Miller 1990: 144.
[103] Chronologically, Pliny's description of the owl would have come just after the time that Ovid wrote his *Metamorphoses*. Ovid lived from 43BC-17 AD and the *Metamorphoses* was written preceding 8 AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1084-1085). Pliny lived 23-79 AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1197).

ἄλλα ὀρνίθια τὴν γλαῦκα περιπέταται, ὃ καλεῖται θαυμάζειν, καὶ προσπετόμενα τίλλουσιν· (*H.A.* 9.609a) "During the day some small birds fly around the owl, this is referred to as 'venerating', and when flying towards her, they pull out her feathers". Miller has not taken account of this statement which may conceptually undermine his argument that Ovid has deliberately inverted the common behaviour of the small birds.

Instead of inverting a common proverb, it could simply be that Ovid is assuming knowledge of the owl along similar lines to that stated in Pliny. This would not undermine the meaning of the simile, but rather would fit in with the context of the passage. Probably Pliny's idea of owl enmity and the concept in Aristotle that the owl could suffer plucking contributed to Ovid's literary manipulation of the bird.

Unlike the Homeric scene in *Odyssey* 5, this reference in Ovid and the owl representation in *Aeneid* 4 both characterise the owl in ominous contexts. On both occasions the owl's presence forebodes inevitable death and a gruesome end. Dido is tragically cursed by her own unrequited love and cannot perceive an alternative to suicide. Orpheus is doomed to being torn apart despite his powerful performance.

However, Ovid does not stop there but frequently describes the owl in negative terms. The poet refers to the fact that Nyctimene was turned into an owl and characterises her as a pitiful creature: *avis illa quidem, sed conscia culpae* | *conspectum lucemque fugit tenebrisque pudorem* | *celat et a cunctis expellitur aethere toto* (*Met.* 2.593-595) "she is indeed a bird, yet realising her wrongdoing she flees the light and the dishonourable gaze; she conceals her humiliation in the gloom and is thrust out by all from the entire sky". Nyctimene is shunned and forced to avoid humankind owing to her overwhelming sense of guilt. Unable to inhabit the world of others she consigns herself to the night and leads a lonely existence as she attempts to conceal her shame.

The owl is also negatively portrayed in Ovid's version of the Ascalaphus myth. When Demeter throws water into Ascalaphus' face he is transformed into a hideous owl. The owl is afforded a very unattractive persona:

ingemuit regina Erebi testemque profanam
fecit avem sparsumque caput Phlegethontide lympha
in rostrum et plumas et grandia lumina vertit.
ille sibi ablatus fulvis amicitur in alis
inque caput crescit longosque reflectitur ungues
vixque movet natas per inertia bracchia pennas
foedaque fit volucris, venturi nuntia luctus,
ignavus bubo, dirum mortalibus omen.

Ov. *Met*. 5.543-550.

"The queen of Erebus wailed and turned the eye-witness into the unholy bird [the owl] and changed his head, dripping with Phlegethon water, into a beak and feathers and big round eyes. He, snatched away from his own form, is now clothed in deep yellow wings and grows in his head and is bent around into long claws. He barely ruffles the feathers all over his incompetent arms, for he has become a repulsive bird, who makes known the grief of something to come; he is a listless owl - a warning dreaded by mankind."

The owl has lethal claws and spells doom for humans; it is also depicted as slow and cumbersome in its movements. Although Pliny does not represent the owl as a slow bird he does write that owls do not direct themselves efficiently, *volat numquam quo*

libuit, sed traversus aufertur (*Nat*. 10.16.35) “It never wings its way where it wants to go but is carried diagonally off its course instead”.

The bird is also used to introduce tragic episodes depicting the most horrific violations of human moral conduct. Thus Ovid contextualises the marriage of Tereus and Procne with the screeching of an owl (as well as the appearance of the Furies). *Eumenides stravere torum, tectoque profanus | incubuit bubo thalamique in culmine sedit* (Ov. *Met*. 6.431-432) “The Furies flattened out the couch covers, and the unholy owl perched on the roof and squatted on the gable of the dwelling”. Even the remains of the bird may have morbid and wicked connotations. Medea drops the wings of a screech owl into her evil potion in order to murder Pelias. *addit et exceptas luna pernocte pruinas | et strigis infames ipsis cum carnibus alas |...* (Ov. *Met*. 7.268-269) “she adds hoar frost extracted when a full moon shone all night and she adds the wings of the owl of ill repute along with the flesh...”.

In *Metamorphoses* 15, the owl is associated with a range of fearsome images when Caesar’s assassination is predicted:

tristia mille locis Stygius dedit omina bubo,
mille locis lacrimavit ebur, cantusque feruntur
auditi sanctis et verba minantia lucis.

Ov. *Met*. 15.791-793.

“In a thousand places the Stygian owl delivered melancholy foreboding,
in a thousand places the ivory effigy shed tears, it was said that singing and threatening words were heard in sacred groves.”

The owl hoot also bodes ill for Myrrha when she proceeds to commit incest with her father. *ter pedis offensi signo est revocata, ter omen* | *funereus bubo letali carmine fecit:* | *it tamen...* (Ov. *Met*. 10.452-454) "Three times she was called back by the omen of stumbling, three times the funereal owl gave her a warning with its deadly song, but still she carried on...". The Romans interpreted a stumble as a sure sign of disaster (Anderson 1972: 513). Once again, the owl's song carries incredibly negative connotations.

The negative ideas of contemporary Roman society concerning the owl are subtly integrated into yet more epic references. In *Thebaid* 3, Melampus portends war when he and Amphiaraus go to Aphesas to take auspices; *monstra volant, dirae strident in nube volucres,* | *nocturnaeque gemunt striges et feralia bubo* | *damna canens.* (Stat. *Theb*. 3.510-512) "Monsters fly about, ominous birds hiss in the clouds, nocturnal screech owls lament, and the horned owl is singing its harmful funeral chant." The owl is also just such a malignant omen in the *Civil War*. *...tonat augure surdo,*
|*et laetae iurantur aves bubone sinistro* (Luc. 5.395-6) "it thunders when the soothsayer is deaf, and birds that bring happiness are falsely sworn despite the horned owl that flies to the left". The augurs are misleading, for the owl and the left hand side combined suggest doubly bad luck. The implication is that the Romans interpreted the owl as a sure sign of doom, both in their epics and in their everyday lives.

5.4 Conclusion

References to the owl in Homeric epic accord with general ideas about the owl's association with Athena and are employed mainly in positive contexts, but the owl in Roman epic is envisaged as a dreadful creature that is linked to negative events which lead to funerals. In Roman epic the owl's reputation as a bird of ill omen is employed to

heighten the unease created in highly distressing and disturbing situations. The differing epic representations encapsulate the contradictory attitudes found in the respective societies towards the owl.

Chapter 6: The Wolf

6.1 Greek and Roman Understanding

It is clear that the ancients encountered the wolf more often than exotic species such as the tiger. To the Greeks, the wolf was a savage and ruthless killer: wolves could grow large enough to wound humans and could cause significant damage to livestock. Capable of hunting in packs, wolves could even target larger animals and so were recognised as treacherous and rapacious creatures (Calder 2011: 67-69). Anti-wolf measures were suggested by Plato (*Lg*. 3. 681) who writes that walls of rubble and brick would dissuade wolf attacks. Meanwhile, it is clear that the Greeks employed guard dogs to protect their flocks from wolves; Aristophanes' Bdelycleon states that his dog is "capable of guarding a large flock of sheep" (Ar. *V*. 953-955).

It is very difficult to estimate the exact frequency of wolf predation on Roman livestock and thus to guess the amount of interaction between wolves and humans in rural areas, but it is likely that wolves permanently presented challenges to Roman shepherds. Toynbee (1973: 101) writes that wolves were "particularly common in the north and western provinces", and Roman literature implies that wolves sometimes attacked Roman flocks. Columella (7.12.3-4) asserts that white dogs should be used to drive wolves off, and Silius (6.329-331) composes a simile in which a shepherd sets a pit trap for a wolf using a lamb as bait. Oppian writes that sheep are terrified of the predator: καὶ φθίμενοι γὰρ ὄϊς φθίμενον λύκον ἐρρίγασι (*C*. 3.287) "even when they are dead, sheep tremble at the dead wolf."

Coupled with the extensive territorial range of the wolf (they may travel from 100 to 1000 km^2) and its ability to adopt to a variety of environments (Macdonald and Barrett 1993: 92-3), it is quite plausible that a Roman shepherd would have encountered or at least sighted the animal first hand.

Indeed, Plutarch quickly dismisses the idea of describing the wolf in great depth, on the grounds that it was well known to his readers: Πανουργίας δὲ πολλῶν παραδειγμάτων ὄντων, ἀφεὶς ἀλώπεκας καὶ λύκους καὶ τὰ γεράνων σοφίσματα καὶ κολοιῶν, ἔστι γὰρ δῆλα,... (Plu. 971A-971B) "Of roguery there are many patterns, but I shall ignore those of foxes and wolves and the ruses of cranes and of jackdaws, indeed, they are evident in themselves...". Plutarch obviously expects his Roman reader to have previously accumulated knowledge on the wolf; it seems that wolves were known first-hand at this time.

Meanwhile Pliny (*Nat*. 8.34.80-84) ridicules the Greek beliefs about the werewolf but leaves us with painfully little solid information about the wolf itself. The relative disinterest in the wolf in natural history may be indicative of the Romans' particular familiarity with the animal. Calder (2011: 57) writes that the Greeks tended to "exalt prestigious" animals while ignoring species that they encountered on a regular basis, and it could be that the very familiarity of wolves affected the Roman view of them.

It is likely that wolves were not only present in rural areas but were also kept in captivity. Roman law stipulated the wolf could not be kept in a public street in case it caused injury to a passer-by,[104] and young wolves were sometimes sacrificed in the context of religious festivals.[105] Wolves did not take part in *Venationes* (hunts of wild animals in Roman amphitheatres), and King (2002: 414) theorises that this may have been because they were challenging to capture alive. Another possible explanation may be that wolves were not considered exotic enough to excite crowds. Indeed, in their respective accounts of *Venationes*, Livy (39.22), Cicero (*ad Fam*. 7.1.3, 8.8.10), Dio Cassius (43.23) and Suetonius (*Tit*. 7 and *Jul*. 39) tend to refer to animals that are

[104] *dig*. 21.1.40-2 cf. Jennison 1937: 153.
[105] Paus. 7.18.12 cf. Jennison 1937: 25.

striking in their size, ferocity and novelty. It appears that more familiar wild animals may have been overlooked or considered unworthy of the amphitheatre.

Conceptually, the Romans had an ambivalent attitude towards the wolf. The wolf was an animal of the wilds but the Romans not only recognised it as a predator but also thought of it as the nuturing creature that played an important role in their earliest civilisation. The Romans associated the wolf with the Romulus and Remus myth and the earliest foundation of their race. They celebrated the Lupercalia, a festival with a name surely founded on the Latin name for the wolf (*lupus*), and even employed the symbolism of the wolf in stock expressions. Terence, Cicero and Plautus used variations on the phrase *lupus in fabula* in order to express the concept "speak of the devil", ie. if you speak of the wolf, he will come (Abbott 1956: 117-122). No doubt the Romans saw the wolf as a frequent visitor to farmsteads; the animal's predation on livestock probably made them superstitious about its presence.

6.2 Homer's Savage Wolf

The Homeric representation of the wolf tends to concentrate on the animal's savagery and rarely deviates from this theme. In the *Iliad* the fighting of the Trojans and Achaeans is compared to wolves that leap towards each other (Hom. 4.471-472) or rage in combat (Hom. 11.72-73). Wolves are portrayed as formidable beasts that are quite capable of seizing large prey. In book 16 wolves slay a stag, rip it to pieces and gorge themselves (Hom. *Il*. 16.155-163). Their aggression represents the spirit of the Myrmidons as they prepare for battle. Meanwhile, in book 13 the Trojans are compared to hinds which provide sustenance for wolves.

Τρῶας ἐφ' ἡμετέρας ἰέναι νέας, οἳ τὸ πάρος περ

φυζακινῆς ἐλάφοισιν ἐοίκεσαν, αἵ τε καθ' ὕλην

θώων παρδαλίων τε λύκων τ' ἠϊα πέλονται

αὔτως ἠλάσκουσαι ἀνάλκιδες, οὐδ' ἔπι χάρμη·

Hom. *Il*. 13.101-104.

"The Trojans attack our ships; formerly they resembled the very timid hinds which become the victims of jackals, leopards and wolves in the forest; the cowardly beasts prowl about in the same way and they do not have any fighting spirit."

The Homeric wolf not only hunts down deer but also targets sheep. Homer chooses to emphasise the bitterness between the two animals and thus highlights the great enmity between Hector and Achilles.

Τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς·

Ἕκτορ μή μοι ἄλαστε συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε·

ὡς οὐκ ἔστι λέουσι καὶ ἀνδράσιν ὅρκια πιστά,

οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες ὁμόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν,

ἀλλὰ κακὰ φρονέουσι διαμπερὲς ἀλλήλοισιν,

ὣς οὐκ ἔστ' ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ φιλήμεναι, οὐδέ τι νῶϊν

ὅρκια ἔσσονται, πρίν γ' ἢ ἕτερόν γε πεσόντα...

Hom. *Il*. 22.260-266.

"Staring sternly, Achilles, swift of foot, addressed him: "Hector, you scoundrel, do not harangue me with peace treaties, for just as there are no faithful oaths between men and lions, nor do wolves and lambs possess a harmonious existence but endlessly think up malicious schemes against each other; as such it is not for me and you to hold each other dear, nor will there be peace treaties until one of us has fallen..."".

The tradition of enmity between these two animals must have been well accepted to be considered worthy of describing the conflict between Achilles and Hector. It is obvious that lambs do not scheme against wolves, so, in effect, Achilles' alignment of himself and Hector with wolves and lambs does not make logical sense. The inaccuracy is relatively unimportant however, for the association of the two heroes with such wholly opposite animals is designed to throw the differences in the mens' natures into stark contrast. Homer has chosen these animals carefully because they have entirely different characteristics: one animal is reputed for its wild and savage nature, the other for its tame and defenceless tendencies.

In another reference the Trojans are compared to lambs attacked by hungry wolves.

Οὗτοι ἄρ' ἡγεμόνες Δαναῶν ἕλον ἄνδρα ἕκαστος.
ὡς δὲ λύκοι ἄρνεσσιν ἐπέχραον ἠ ἐρίφοισι
σίνται ὑπ' ἐκ μήλων αἱρεύμενοι, αἵ τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
ποιμένος ἀφραδίῃσι διέτμαγεν· οἳ δὲ ἰδόντες
αἶψα διαρπάζουσιν ἀνάλκιδα θυμὸν ἐχούσας·
ὣς Δαναοὶ Τρώεσσιν ἐπέχραον·

Hom. *Il*. 16.351-356.

"Each of these leaders of the Danaans killed a man, just as starving wolves prey on lambs or on kids and select them out of the herds. The sheep are separated in the mountains owing to the foolishness of the shepherd, and the wolves, at once realising this, seize and tear to pieces those who have but cowardly strength. Just so the Danaans were attacking the Trojans."

The savage representation of the wolf goes largely unaltered in Homer; it is only when wolves surround Odysseus' men (when they come to the house of Circe) that the animals are considered in contexts that do not involve conflict. Circe's enchanted wolves fawn around the visitors instead of savaging them. Comically, Odysseus' men are seized with fear by the appearance of the animals (Hom. *Od*. 10.219); they obviously expect the wolves to attack rather than sit and beg. In effect the wolves' behaviour emphasises the potency of Circe's magical powers; her hold over the wild animals runs counter to the stereotypical Homeric representation of the creature. Eurylochus later voices his concern that Circe will turn them all into wolves and lions (Hom. *Od*. 10.433).

Finally, the wolf is sometimes used in the context of epithet. Homer twice refers to Apollo as the "wolf-born god".[106] This usage is hardly surprising considering the Greek association between Apollo and the wolf. While the Romans often associated the wolf with Mars the animal was conceptually identified with Apollo in the Greek world (Richardson 1977: 93). Aelian[107] writes that the wolf was honoured in Delphi, and Plutarch (*Per*. 21) records that a bronze wolf statue was inscribed with decrees in the sanctuary there.

[106] *Il*. 4.101 and 119.
[107] *N.A*. 12.40 cf. Calder 2011: 69.

6.3 Innovations in Multiple Epics

Major themes such as the relationship between the wolf and the lamb are common to Greek and Roman epic, but Roman epic writers develop various details of the wolf as a predator and colour the literary representation of the animal in very particular ways. Whereas there are only two Homeric references to the wolf attacking lambs, Roman epic (as well as other genres of Latin literature)[108] re-examines the behaviour of the wolf when it faces its prey. It is perhaps a mark of the wolf's continuous presence in the agricultural world that it continued to play such a prominent epic role. Alternatively, it is possible that epic authors frequently included the wolf because it fascinated urban readers who would have had relatively little experience of the creature.

Some authors of Roman epic elaborate on the characteristics of the wolf. Virgil's aligns Turnus with a predatory wolf when he attempts to scale the walls that prevent him from attacking the Trojans. Virgil's wolf is a cunning beast; it selects a fold brimming with sheep (*pleno*) and lies in wait for the right moment to attack (*lupus insidiatus*).

ac veluti pleno lupus insidiatus ovili
quom fremit ad caulas, ventos perpessus et imbris,
nocte super media (tuti sub matribus agni
balatum exercent, ille asper et improbus ira
saevit in absentis, collecta fatigat edendi

[108] That the topic gained momentum in the genre of Roman fable as well as the full range of Roman epic references is evident. Phaedrus presents a wolf that is ferocious and savage; he accuses the lamb of muddying his drinking water, and when his charge is proved to be false the wolf quickly slaughters the lamb with no justification. Here the lamb is merely an innocent victim. As Phaedrus summarises, *Haec propter illos scripta est homines fabula, qui fictis causis innocentes opprimunt* (1.1.14) "This fable was written on behalf of men who crush the innocent with falsehoods as proof". Phaedrus subsequently determines the wolf's characteristics; *Rapere atque abire semper adsuevit lupus...* (1.16.4) "the wolf has a habit of snatching its prey and leaving".

ex longo rabies et siccae sanguine fauces)...

Verg. *A*. 9.59-64.

"Just like a wolf that has lain in wait snarls at the entrances of the over-flowing sheep pen at midnight and endures the winds and the showers steadfastly. The lambs, safe under their mothers, keep up a constant bleating, but the wolf, cruel and bold in his anger, rages against the sheep that are safe. Its bloodless jaws and frenzy torment it with long-accumulated pangs of hunger".

Unlike the Homeric wolf in *Il*. 16.351-356, Virgil's wolf is placed at a severe disadvantage; it cannot reach its prey and has to undergo the torment of being unable to attack the lambs. Virgil's simile emphasises the contrast between Turnus in his wild state and the civilised society that he is attempting to attack. The wolf's determination to endure adverse weather conditions highlights the lengths to which Turnus will go to to breach the Trojan walls; the Virgilian predator cannot reach the sheep and the beast is subsequently tortured by its proximity to the prey.

Of course these innovations accord well with the epic context of Turnus' attempt to scale the wall to reach the Trojans, but the added nuances of the simile also develop the wolf's characterisation as a desperate predator. It is of particular interest that the Homeric wolf is employed as an animal that operates exclusively in a pack.[109] The Greeks perceived the wolf as an animal that hunted as part of a team and conceived the idea that they worked together. In the Greek mentality it seems likely that the wolf

[109] See Hom. *Il*. 16.160-161, 16.352-353, 11.72-73. In the *Aeneid*, Turnus is linked to the isolated wolf in two similes and Arruns is envisaged as a wolf slinking away from a crime after he has killed Queen Camilla (Verg. 11.811). The solitary wolf comes to the fore in later Roman epics too. Hannibal is compared to a singular wolf (Sil. 7.718), Tydeus is presented as an unaccompanied wolf attempting to wound Thoas (Stat. *Theb*. 8.691-694) and Pheres is compared to a lone wolf in the thick of battle (Stat. *Theb*. 9.119). It is clear that the Roman use of the individual wolf in epic was not imitated from Homeric examples.

simultaneously represented cooperation along with the remoteness of the uncivilised and outside world (Buxton 1987: 62-63). Some Greeks thought that wolves were to be interpreted as a collective and began to consider that all wolves were alike (Buxton 1987: 62-63). Xenophon (*Hipparch*. 4.19-20) records stories of wolves that deliberately worked together and suggests that packs of wolves behave as a cohesive unit. Such observations may be borne out by modern day research: Mech (1970: 7) observes that wolves have adapted so as to cooperate as much as possible. Fox (1971: 123) suggests that outside of breeding season wolves tend towards behaviours that prioritise the defence of the pack, the guarding of the territory of the pack, and the exclusion of unknown wolves, and Busch (2007: 47) asserts that there is a very close bond between wolves that may be compared to the relationships among primates.

It appears that Virgil was drawing on alternative insights when he aligns Turnus with a lone wolf. Peterson (in Mech and Boitani 2003: 121) explains that wolves may hunt in isolation, in pairs or in a pack. Furthermore, the solitary wolf is certainly at a greater disadvantage than animals cooperating as part of a pack: Busch (2007: 55) comments that lone wolves have a much higher mortality rate owing to the lack of pack protection and the greatly increased difficulty in hunting for food. Thus Virgil cleverly emphasises the difficulties that the isolated wolf (Turnus) faces. It is only Aristotle (*H.A*. 7.5.594a30) among the Greeks who records that lone wolves may attack humans owing to their increased desperation for food. In sum, it seems that Virgil is going to every length to represent Turnus' dire situation. He is shut out from the community that he is attacking and is not just compared to a marauding wolf, but specifically to a lone wolf. In effect Virgil characterises Turnus as the most desperate, disadvantaged and dangerous entity imaginable.

In *Punica* 7 Hannibal defeats Minucius but is subsequently driven from the battlefield by Fabius and his son. Minucius is compared to a lamb, while Hannibal is likened to a wolf.

ceu stimulante fame rapuit cum Martius agnum
averso pastore lupus fetumque trementem
ore tenet presso, tum, si vestigia cursu
auditis celeret balatibus obvia pastor,
iam sibimet metuens spirantem dentibus imis
reiectat praedam et vacuo fugit aeger hiatu.

Sil. 7.717-722.

"Just so the wolf that is driven on by hunger drags off a lamb when the shepherd is distracted. He, the creature of Mars, grasps the quivering young creature in his clamped together jaws, but then the shepherd makes haste (if he has heard the bleating) so as to meet with the track of the wolf. Fearing for its own sake the wolf now hurls the breathing victim from its long fangs and runs off, sick, with empty jaws."

The first three lines of this simile are very similar to Homer's description of the wolves in *Iliad* 16 (351-356). In both instances the wolf targets the weakest animals; the fate of each of the lambs is apparently sealed by the absence of the shepherd. However, from line 719 onwards, Silius extends the simile and allows the herdsman the opportunity to recover his lamb. Fabius and his son rout Hannibal and his forces; the wolf tosses his prey away and beats a hasty retreat. Once again, the image of the lone

wolf emphasises Hannibal's isolation from civilised society; Hannibal's attack has left him hungry and dejected.

The outcome of the simile is not the only innovation; Silius refers to the wolf as *lupus Martius* "the creature of Mars".[110] As previously discussed, the Romans associated the wolf with the Roman war god, but it seems curious that Silius has chosen to use such terminology to describe Hannibal. Perhaps Silius highlights the relationship between the wolf and the god of war because Hannibal was thought of as a formidable warrior. In effect the association between Hannibal, the wolf and the Roman god of war highlights the Romans' ambivalent attitude towards the wolf. Although their foundation myth rested on a perception of the wolf as a nurturing creature, epic authors did not shy away from associating enemies of Rome with wolves.

Statius' Roman epic portrayal of the wolf as a predator is equally innovative. Unlike Virgil's reference to Turnus as solitary wolf (*A*.9.59-64) Statius' description refers to a number of frustrated wolves' attacking in a group. Statius' innovation is not that he describes a number of wolves but that he imagines the wolves' anticipation of the kill in extensive detail.

rabidi sic agmine multo
sub noctem coiere lupi, quos omnibus agris
nil non ausa fames longo tenuavit hiatu:
iam stabula ipsa premunt, torquet spes inrita fauces,
balatusque tremens pinguesque ab ovilibus aurae;
quod superest, duris adfrangunt postibus ungues,
pectoraque et siccos minuunt in limine dentes.

[110] Virgil (*A*. 9.561-566) employs similar terminology when he compares Turnus to the wolf.

Stat. *Theb*. 10.42-48.

"Thus enraged wolves assemble in a great swarm under the cover of night, when all-daring starvation has long held them in her grasp throughout all the region. Now they surround the very sheep folds; as well as the trembling bleating and fatty aromas from the pens, unfulfilled hope tortures their jaws; what remains - they strike their claws against the solid stakes, bruise their bodies and blunt their dry fangs on the gate."

Whereas Homer considers the wolf attack from the human perspective Statius considers the wolves' senses and reactions to their prey.[111] The lures of the sheep fold are too much to withstand: the bleating of lambs and their juicy scents prove irresistible. The phrase *torquet spes inrita fauces* highlights the desperation of the wolves and suggests that they are merely acting in order to survive. From this complex perspective, we are forced to recognise the pressures on the predators; they have to kill because they are starving.

In effect Statius has charged this description with a sense of emotional contrast, the men outside the rampart are full of zeal for attack while those inside are beaten and defeated in submission. The beginning of book 10 is established with the comment that Jupiter does not pity either side of the forces involved in combat, but the nuanced wolf simile portrays that both sides are effectively the sacrificial victims of inevitable civil war.

Statius' description emphasises the extreme differences between the emotions of attacking warriors and those that are surrounded but also remains true to realistic wolf behaviours. Statius writes that the wolves attack under the cover of darkness. Whereas Homer makes no connection between the wolf and night predation, Roman epic authors

[111] Statius' deer (*Theb*. 5.167) in section 3.3 displays similar levels of awareness.

such as Statius routinely refer to the wolf's nocturnal activities. In fact, the animals in *Aeneid* 2.360, *Aeneid* 9.61, *Punica* 6.331, *Punica* 7.126, *Thebaid* 3.46, *Thebaid* 8.691 and *Thebaid* 10.43 all roam in darkness. Macdonald and Barrett (1993: 92) confirm that the wolf in Europe is mostly nocturnal and reason that this is owing to the wolf's fear of man. It seems that Roman epic authors were right to emphasise the fact that wolves were likely to be active under the cover of darkness.

In fact, in a number of their epic similes, Roman authors display impressive contemporary awareness of the realities of wolf predation. Varro suggests that shepherds should take care to protect sheep rather than larger beasts. He writes that cattle are easily able to defend themselves against wolves whereas weaker and smaller livestock are vulnerable to attack.

quid dicam de pecore maiore? cum sciam mulorum gregem, cum pasceretur <et> eo uenisset lupus, ultro mulos circumfluxisse[t] et ungulis caedendo eum occidisse[t], et tauros solere diuersos adsistere clunibus continuatos et cornibus facile propulsare lupos.

Var. *R*. 2.9.2.

"What should I say about the larger cattle? For I know that when a herd of mules was grazing and a wolf turned up, of their own accord the mules surrounded it and killed it by kicking with their hooves. And pairs of bulls have a habit of standing with their hindquarters together and so easily ward off wolves with their horns."

Statius displays a similar level of awareness when he refers to Polynices watching over the corpse of Tydeus:

inbellem non sic amplexa iuvencum
infestante lupo tunc primum feta tuetur
mater et ancipiti circumfert cornua gyro;
ipsa nihil metuens sexusque oblita minoris
spumat et ingentes imitatur femina tauros.

Stat. *Theb*. 9.115-119.

"He was more watchful than a mother cow guarding her helpless first-born calf against a hostile wolf, when she moves in a circle to point her horns in all directions and (not at all fearful) forgets her weaker sex. Although she is merely a female she foams at the mouth and copies the intimidating bulls."

Statius presents the cow accurately in terms of comparison to Varro; the capabilities of the domestic animals in facing the savagery of the wolf correspond and it is demonstrated that such animals as the cow, being on a larger scale, could indeed look after themselves.

Statius marks the fact that the cow wheels about in an attempt to face the predator. In both instances the cattle are not portrayed as weak victims: Virgil depicts lambs that cower beneath their parents (*A*. 9.59-64), but Statius' maternal cow feels no fear on her own account *ipsa nihil metuens*. Statius and Varro present cattle as intimidating beasts; it is implied that the wolf is placing itself in danger by choosing to attack large prey.

Roman knowledge of wolf behaviour was surprisingly accurate: according to modern day research the wolf may place itself at risk by attacking some prey species and must approach with caution. Wolves possess the ability to judge the relative

vulnerability of different prey[112] but become unsure of themselves when they come across victims that do not flee. If prey of comparable size withstands the curiosity of the wolf the predator will eventually leave without launching an attack (Mech and Boitani 2003: 120).

Seemingly, Virgil, Silius and Statius afford us with relatively authentic representations of the wolf; they understand the dynamic between predator and prey and dramatise this interaction in innovative ways. Whereas the Homeric wolf is merely a savage predator, Roman epic authors tend to highlight the difficulties that the wolf faces - even to the extent that it is driven on by its starvation and is so desperate to reach its prey that it will injure itself to get to them.

6.4 Innovations by Author

While most of the authors in this study investigate the characterisation of the wolf in its capacity as a predator there are other facets of the Roman epic wolf that are explored most thoroughly by individual epicists. Roman epic authors create starkly different narratives that consider completely diverse aspects of the wolf's characterisation. The discussions below investigate these alternative representations and show how small details of the wolf's characterisation are innovations specific to individual writers.

6.4.1. The Wolf and the Shepherd in Virgil

In their traditional roles as sworn enemies, [113] the images of the wolf and the shepherd form a framework of contrast in the *Aeneid*.[114] At 2.302-8, Aeneas relates to Dido how

[112] Peterson and Ciucci in Mech and Boitani 2003: 119.

[113] The conflict between the wolf and the shepherd had a volatile tradition in Roman consciousness.The discordant nature of the interaction is well documented by Virgil in the *Georgics*: *Nec tibi cura canum fuerit postrema, set una | velocis Spartae catulos acremque Molossum | pasce sero pingui.| numquam*

he woke from sleep to see the destruction of Troy and compares himself to a dazed shepherd.

excutior somno et summi fastigia tecti
ascensu supero atque arrectis auribus asto:
in segetem veluti cum flamma furentibus austris
incidit, aut rapidus montano flumine torrens
sternit agros, sternit sata laeta bovomque labores
praecipitesque trahit silvas; stupet inscius alto
accipiens sonitum saxi de vertice pastor.

Verg. *A*. 2.302-308.

"I shake myself from sleep and scaling the gables of the house to the higher part I stand with listening ears: just as when a flame falls on a cornfield when the south winds are raging, or when the fierce torrent from the mountain flood flattens the pastures and crushes the prospering crops and the toils of the oxen. It pulls the forests down headlong while the ignorant shepherd stands aghast, hearing the din of rock from on high."

The most obvious point of comparison with the shepherd in this simile is to be found in Homer (Anderson 1968: 3-6).

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custodibus illis | *nocturnum stabulis furem incursusque luporum* | *aut inpacatos a tergo horrebis Hiberos.* (Verg. *G*. 3.404-409) "The care of dogs should not be your last one, but feed the sharp Molossian and the pups of the swift Spartan with rich whey. You will never worry about a nocturnal thief when those dogs are on guard, nor are there wolf attacks or violent Spaniards at your back."

[114] Anderson and Chew have interpreted the role of the shepherd in Virgil. Chew (2002: 618) highlights the intricate combination of "martial" and "pastoral" in relation to the portrayal of the *pastor* as a progression in the *Aeneid*, while Anderson (1968: 17) believes that Aeneas' pastoral innocence and behaviour as a shepherd is challenged in the political context of the epic. While interpreting the shepherd in relation to *milites* and the political sphere of the *Aeneid* is absolutely essential, we may gain greater insight into the manipulation of the shepherd by simultaneously considering the literary deployment of the wolf. To my mind the inherent meaning in the shepherd's characterisation is further developed and balanced by comparison with the manipulation of the wolf and vice versa.

ὡς δ' ὅτε χείμαρροι ποταμοὶ κατ' ὄρεσφι ῥέοντες

ἐς μισγάγκειαν συμβάλλετον ὄβριμον ὕδωρ

κρουνῶν ἐκ μεγάλων κοίλης ἔντοσθε χαράδρης,

τῶν δέ τε τηλόσε δοῦπον ἐν οὔρεσιν ἔκλυε ποιμήν·

ὣς τῶν μισγομένων γένετο ἰαχή τε πόνος τε.

Hom. *Il*. 4.452-456.

"Just as when winter-gushing rivers, tumbling down the mountains from their great springs to a point where they meet each other, bring together their forceful waters within a hollow gorge, and far away in the mountains the shepherd heard the thunder: clamour and toil came from the turmoil in just such a way."

In Virgil's description, Aeneas and the shepherd watch the destruction of the world about them but they cannot fully comprehend the chaos that is to come. The scene is made more poignant by the fact that the shepherd's way of life had traditionally been idealised in pastoral literature (Anderson 1968: 6). Virgil's shepherds in the *Eclogues* are portrayed in the context of beautiful pastures; they amuse themselves by playing the pipe and lament that their peaceful existence is destined to come to an end (*Ecl*. 1). Meanwhile, Horace studies the different pace of life in the country and his speaker desires the simplicity of a rural existence. *Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus, hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons...* (Hor. *S*. 2.6.1) "This was my prayer: a quantity of arable land, but not a huge amount, in which place there is a garden and a spring that continually flows with water near the house...". In one fell swoop Virgil shatters this idyllic existence; the peaceful picture of country life has been irrevocably polluted, and Aeneas' future has become overshadowed by chaos and war.

Anderson explains that we are party to the scene through the eyes of an individual at Verg. *A*. 2.302-308, but that this is not the case in the comparable Homeric simile. In Homer the shepherd is quite marginal; he is merely an adornment to the battle: τῶν δέ τε τηλόσε δοῦπον ἐν οὔρεσιν ἔκλυε ποιμήν· (*Il*. 4.455) "far away in the mountains the shepherd heard the thunder." In contrast, in the *Aeneid* passage our focus is bought to bear on the battle through the eyes of Aeneas, and he reacts emotionally to the remembered image he sees before him (Anderson 1968: 3-6).

Virgil's shepherd plays a much more prominent role in his description. Virgil is not content to refer to the shepherd's confusion once but immediately follows *stupet* with *inscius*. The shepherd is actually stunned by the disaster and can not look away from the on-coming destruction. Both Aeneas and the shepherd are ideally placed to view the drama as it unfolds. Aeneas watches from the roof top, *summi fastigia tecti* | *ascensu supero atque arrectis auribus asto* (Verg. *A*. 2.302-303) "scaling the gables of the house to the higher part I stand with listening ears" while the shepherd is perched up high *de vertice*.

Following this shepherd simile, Aeneas goes on to narrate the turmoil as he and his men gather to defend the city from further attack. At 2.355 Aeneas encourages his friends to fight bravely and inclusively describes their thirst for battle by likening them to wolves.

sic animis iuvenum furor additus. inde lupi ceu
raptores atra in nebula, quos improba ventris
exegit caecos rabies catulique relicti
faucibus expectant siccis, per tela, per hostis
vadimus haud dubiam in mortem mediaeque tenemus
urbis iter...

Verg. *A*. 2.355-360.

"Thus it was that madness polluted the rational souls of the young men. Then, just like plundering wolves in a gloomy fog, since the impious frenzy of hunger drives them on blind and their abandoned pups wait for them with dry fangs, we rush on through arrows and make our way through enemies to the city, towards a likely death...".

It is notable that Virgil has Aeneas associate himself and his band of comrades with wolves directly after he has depicted himself in the preceding simile as a startled shepherd. In *Aeneid* 2.302-308 Aeneas is like the rustic shepherds in the *Eclogues*; he is more accustomed to watch the world go by than to take decisive action. In striking contrast, just forty lines later at 2.355-360, Aeneas takes an active role in proceedings. He stirs on his fellow soldiers and compares them (including himself) to hungry predators who range through the dark night. It is interesting that Aeneas and his men behave like a group of wolves; perhaps Virgil is implying that the wolves tend to spur each other on when they behave as a pack.

Wholly motivated by their lust for food, the wolves' hunger is termed as *improba*. Austin (1971: 155 and 80) translates the word as "nagging" or "malicious", but it is possible *improba* may also infer lawlessness. It seems that Virgil may be aiming to imply that the feeling of war is all encompassing. Virgil has Aeneas paint himself like a wolf to show that he is dominated by hunger for battle and desires bloodshed. Simultaneously, the wolf simile also underlines Aeneas' multi-faceted response to the complicated circumstances around him. Aeneas is not only influenced by his desire to engage in warfare but also by his desire to protect and nurture those who rely on him.

Virgil uses the first person plural to make it clear that Aeneas is personally involving and including himself within the bounds of this comparison, *vadimus*. As a result, the reader may gain insight into the turmoil of the night, the inner workings of Aeneas' thoughts and his subsequent assessment of his behaviour well after the event. The swiftness of the transition between the two descriptions, Aeneas as a shepherd versus Aeneas as a wolf, is vital to the interpretation. The chasm between the identity of the shepherd and the symbolism of the wolf demonstrates that Aeneas may switch between extreme behaviours when under the stress of battle conditions. The antagonistic relationship between the wolf and the shepherd encapsulates the disparate traits that may be found in both Aeneas' character and his behaviour.

In some respects, Virgil's comparison of Aeneas to a shepherd emphasises the development in his character. In Virgil's *Georgics* the shepherd is most concerned for his flock; he feeds them, protects them and herds them.[115] Yet in the *Aeneid*, Virgil associates Aeneas with a shepherd when he unknowingly strikes a deer (4.68-73). Here the care of flocks has resulted in the wounding of an innocent animal; the shepherd appears distracted from the list of concerns properly addressed in the *Gerogics*. Later at *Aeneid* 12.587-592 Aeneas is once more depicted as a shepherd. But in this context the hero is compared to a herdsman smoking out bees. It appears that Virgil is attempting to convey the destructive powers of Aeneas and the distress of the Latins as they are attacked by his men.

Through the progressive analysis of shepherd similes Anderson (1968: 1-17) argues that Aeneas has been politicised and has lost his initial innocence. I argue that Aeneas has not only lost his pastoral innocence but that he also begins to behave more as a predator than as a victim. It could be that the wolf simile, inclusive of Aeneas and his men, not only questions the place of pastoral innocence in successive shepherd

[115] Verg. *G*. 3.295-338 cf. Chew 2002: 618.

similes but also highlights Aeneas' altering characterisation. In his thoughtless wounding of Dido, or the deer, the Virgilian shepherd could be said to have adopted some of the predatory characteristics of the Homeric wolf which hunts down stags (*Il.* 16.155-163). Perhaps Virgil is preparing us for another later episode when Aeneas will be governed by murderous instinct rather than responsibility, the murder of Turnus.

To further complicate matters other characters are also associated with the wolf. As we have already seen Turnus is compared to a wolf when he searches for a way to attack the Trojans in book 9 (*A.* 59-64). Later, Turnus is compared to a wolf once again, this time the wolf snatches a lamb in the same way that Turnus grabs Lycus. For his part Lycus attempts to escape Turnus' grasp by scrambling up the wall to his allies.

simul arripit ipsum
pendentem et magna muri cum parte revellit:
qualis ubi aut leporem aut candenti corpore cycnum
sustulit alta petens pedibus Iovis armiger uncis
quaesitum aut matri multis balatibus agnum
Martius a stabulis rapuit lupus.

Verg. *A*. 9.561-566.

"At the same time he [Turnus] snatches at the very man who hangs and pulls him down along with a big chunk of the wall: just as when the armour bearer of Jupiter lifts up either a hare or a dazzling white swan in its hooked claws as it is hunting at altitude, or as when the wolf of Mars has seized a lamb from the fold that is sought by the mother who bleats constantly."

Unlike Aeneas, Turnus is not compared to the shepherd. This is hardly surprising since Turnus is not the symbolic leader of his people in the same way as Aeneas. Yet in the context of war and in the simile of the wolf, Turnus and Aeneas are the same. Turnus' desire for war is compared to the hunger of the wolf and he is dominated not by any code of civilisation but by his most primal instincts. Hardie (1994: 85) even suggest that the term "*rabies*" conceptually links Turnus' hunger with a kind of madness.

In these similes, Turnus is cast as an outsider. He is isolated from others and shut out from a community that fears him. It is revealing too that Virgil describes Turnus as "*siccae sanguine fauces*" (*A*. 9.64). In *Aeneid* 8, Virgil uses very similar words to describe the monster Cacus, whose throat is also *siccum sanguine*.[116] Ideologically, Virgil appears to be aligning Turnus with a man-slaughtering monster, but the epithet *Martius* suggests that alternative comparisons are also being drawn. The epithet links Turnus to the Roman war god and so may emphasise Turnus credentials as a brave warrior. As Mackie (1997: 50-51) asserts, the fact that Aeneas and his men are compared to wolves and that Turnus is subsequently likened to the wolf must be significant.

In effect Virgil cultivates the image of the shepherd and the wolf in order to emphasise the conflicting pressures that Aeneas experiences. Meanwhile the wolf's characterisation exaggerates the antithesis between Turnus and Aeneas while simultaneously demonstrating the similarities in their behaviours and reactions to events. When we consider Aeneas' characterisation, it becomes clear that the transformation from the shepherd to the wolf is part of a deliberate strategy. Virgil emphasises the similarities between Aeneas and Turnus by comparing them to wolves and shows how pressures can drastically influence the heroes' behaviours.

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[116] Verg. *A*. 8.261 cf. Hardie 1994: 85.

6.4.2. Wolf Cowardice in Statius

Whereas the Homeric wolf is often employed in battle similes and behaves as a savage predator, Statius' version of the wolf is frequently characterised by its cowardice. In *Thebaid* 11, Statius describes how the Theban warriors chase the Achaeans after Jupiter has struck Capaneus with a thunderbolt.

indomitos ut cum Massyla per arva
armenti reges magno leo fregit hiatu
et contentus abit; rauci tunc comminus ursi,
tunc avidi venere lupi, rabieque remissa
lambunt degeneres alienae vulnera praedae.

Stat. *Theb*. 11.27-31.

"...as when the lion has shattered wild kings of the herd with his wide jaw in Massylian fields and goes off on his way fully sated; then hoarse sounding bears approach; then greedy wolves come right up close. When their rage has been quietened the degenerate [wolves] lick the wounds of the spoil that belongs to another."

The Homeric wolf (*Il*. 16.155-163) attacks a stag and slaughters it itself, but Statius' wolf is a scavenger who relies on the strength of another predator to make the initial kill. The wolf avoids confrontation with the lion and waits until the lion has departed to claim the remains of the slaughtered stag. In addition the jaws of the lion are placed in stark contrast to the wolf; the wolf only laps at the blood of the fallen prey whereas the lion shatters the bones of the stag in its jaws. Statius highlights that the

savagery of the wolf is diminished, *rabieque remissa*; the wolf scavenges from remains that are not the product of its own kill, *alienae praedae*.

In book 12, Statius emphasises the degenerate behaviour of the wolf even more explicitly.

taedet fugientibus uti
Thesea, nec facilem dignatur dextra cruorem.
cetera plebeio desaevit sanguine virtus.
sic iuvat exanimis proiectaque praeda canesque
degeneresque lupos...

Stat. *Theb*. 12.736-740.

"Theseus tires of battle with those that are fleeing, his right hand does not consider easy bloodshed worthy. The others sate themselves in common slaughter. It is just as when lifeless carrion feeds dogs and degenerate wolves when it is thrown down before them...".

Here, the reference works on the assumption that wolves prefer to scavenge rather than struggle with their prey. The wolves are termed as *degeneres*; they are not driven to seek out victims that challenge their hunting prowess – they are satisfied with scavenging. Due to their degeneration the boundaries between wolves and dogs disappear; the soldiers' morality does not benefit from fighting as part of a group. Theseus' bravery and skill is placed in stark contrast with lowly soldiers who prefer easy battles; the wolves represent warriors who lack finesse.

Finally, in the *Achilleid*, Statius describes how Diomedes and Ulysses go to seek Achilles and compares the warriors to wolves that are ill at ease.

procedunt, gemini ceu foedere iuncto
hiberna sub nocte lupi: licet et sua pulset
natorumque fames, penitus rabiemque minasque
dissimulant humilesque meant, ne nuntiet hostes
cura canum et trepidos moneat vigilare magistros.

Stat. *Ach*. 1.704-708.

"They go forth - just like a pair of wolves in alliance on a wintry night: their own hunger and that of their offspring taunts them. Inwardly they disguise their frenzy and go on their way keeping low to the ground, lest the attention of the dog make their presence known as enemies and lest it remind the restless shepherds to keep watch."

Statius emphasises the contrast between the wild wolves and the domesticated dogs; like Virgil,[117] Statius manipulates the opposition between the two states. It is clear that each wolf is aware of the inherent dangers involved in alerting a trained guard dog of its presence; the wolves appear to realise that the bark of a hound will result in violent human intervention and they keep low to the ground in an attempt to get at their prey. In this instance Statius' wolves display prudence; they are not reckless like the Homeric wolves (*Il*. 4.471-472 and 11.72-73) but appear to realise that they will suffer if they are caught.

[117] See section 3.2.

In all three accounts, *Thebaid* 11.27-31, *Thebaid* 12.736-740 and *Achilleid* 1.704-708 Statius subtly develops the wolf's degenerate characteristics. He portrays how the wolf waits for the lion to leave before snatching its leftovers and symbolically associates the wolf with weakness in *Thebaid* 12. Instead of savaging their prey and relentlessly attacking farmsteads like Homeric wolves, Statius' wolves conceal themselves in order to increase their chances of reaching their prey.

As a by-product of displaying degenerate characteristics Statius' wolf is characterised as a more developed creature than its Homeric counterpart. Wolves in Statius possess the inherent ability to weigh up possibilities and have the foresight to imagine a disastrous outcome if they are caught in the act. Statius' wolf will not scavenge when the lion is present but only approaches when a carcass is left unguarded. The wolf realises that the shepherd represents a threat to its safety. Homeric wolves are reckless and attack flocks without trepidation, but Statius' wolves are clever enough to sense danger and react to the threat of discovery. Statius collapses the boundary between wild wolves and tame dogs to make a moral statement: some heroes do not live up to Homeric models of bravery.

6.5 Conclusion

The Roman epic wolf shows greater awareness than its Homeric predecessor. It realises that it is advantageous to attack in darkness, will use its cunning so as not to have to kill its own prey and displays prudence when it attempts to get into the farmstead. The Roman epic wolf is sometimes equated to Roman deities such as Mars and will not only hunt in packs, as in Homeric references, but will also attempt lone ventures.

Some Roman authors made incredibly specific literary demands of the wolf: Virgil explored how the behaviours of the wolf and the shepherd could be manipulated

to explore personality traits in particular epic settings, while Statius exaggerated the cowardly elements of the animal's behaviour and depicted wolves that display prudence. The wolf was well established in Greek and Roman thought and so its predatory characteristics were constantly re-examined, but lesser details of the animal's characteristics could also be adapted to fit with the specific demands of very different Roman epics.

Chapter 7: The Snake

7.1 Contact with the Snake

The Greeks associated snakes with the god Asklepios and saw them as incarnations of the deity. It is likely that snakes actually inhabited the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus (Tomlinson 1983: 20) and were believed to have healing powers: there are several references to snakes curing patients: one inscription records that a man had a malignant ulcer on his toe, and that a snake cured it with its tongue; meanwhile Aristophanes (*Pl*. 730-740) narrates that serpents cured Plutus' blindness (cf. Benson 1983: 185). It is likely that snakes were trained to lick the afflictions of patients (Caton 1955: 1573) and that they enjoyed the respect of Asklepios' worshippers. Pausanias (2.11.8) records that the cult serpents at the temple were offered food.

We know that a serpent inhabited the temple of Athene on the Acropolis at Athens; Herodotus (8.4) suggests that the snake behaved as the "guardian" of the place and that it was fed regularly with honey cakes; Jennison (1937: 20) points out that snakes are unlikely to have actually fed on these offerings and that mice probably feasted on the cakes.

The Greeks may have encountered cult snakes that inhabited the temples of Asklepios and Athene but they did not necessarily experience or think of snakes in exactly the same way as the Romans. Pliny records that snake numbers could grow rapidly and could get completely out of control.

anguis Aesculapius Epidauro Romam advectus est vulgoque pascitur et in domibus, ac nisi incendiis semina exurerentur, non esset fecunditati eorum resistere in orbe terrarum.

Plin. *Nat*. 29.22.72.

"The Aesculpian snake was conveyed from Epidaurus to Rome and is usually reared even in our homes, and owing to their fertility it would not be possible to resist their spread over the earth if it were not for the fact that their young are often burned in fires."

The snake could easily become an unwanted nuisance. Pliny asserts that an excess of serpents could cause a problem quite as severe as mice: *in Italia Amynclas a serpentibus deletas* (Plin. *Nat*. 8.43.104) "Amynclae in Italy was completely obliterated by snakes…". Such infestations are not unknown in the modern world and suggest that we should take Pliny's comments seriously. One family in Idaho was recently forced to desert their home when they found that it was infested with snakes. The house had been built on a garter snake den where serpents would normally hibernate in the autumn and winter months. The scale of the infestation was so great that it was not unknown for 42 serpents to be killed in a single day.[118]

Some non-poisonous serpents may have taken up residence in Roman homes uninvited while others may have been deliberately welcomed in order to keep the mouse population at bay. Some scholars claim that the animal may have been perceived as a symbolic protector of the larder and may even have adopted a similar role to that of Zeus Ktesios - the traditional guardian of the Greek household and the food supply within the home.[119] Snakes may have enjoyed the type of relationship with the Romans that was to be observed in Japan in the 1940's. Opler (1945: 258) records that the presence of a white coloured snake was associated with fortune in Japan. In fact, white serpents were so strongly linked with wisdom that they were meant to bring luck if they

[118] Karlinsky, K. (2011) "Idaho Family Abandons Snake Infested House", June 15th 2011.
[119] Lazenby 1949: 248.

approached the family home; they were only considered to be a sign of ill omen if they subsequently left.

While some Romans probably thought of snakes as benign guardians of the household the animals could also carry negative associations. Tiberius was warned that his fortune had changed after his pet snake was eaten by ants (Suet. *Tib*. 72.2.) and fell ill quickly afterwards. In Terence's *Phormio* Geta places snakes in the context of negative omens. *Quod res postilla monstra euenerunt mihi! | Intro iit in aedis ater alienus canis; | anguis in inpluuium decidit de tegulis; | gallina cecinit; interdixit hariolus;|* ... (Ter. *Ph*. 705-708.) "After this, what divine portents have taken place in my presence! A strange black dog came into the house; a snake fell from the roof tiles into the courtyard; a hen sang out; a holy man said bad things...". Such incidents in Latin literature suggest that the Romans made a connection between the presence of the serpent and changes in fortune, whether they turned out to be good or bad.

Like most societies, there were some Romans who detested and feared serpents. Cicero was absolutely repulsed by poisonous snakes. *etiamne in sinu atque in deliciis quidam optimi viri viperam illam venenatam ac pestiferam habere potuerunt?* (*Har*. 24.50.16) "How is it that even the best men are able to have that poisonous and noxious viper in their lap and in their hearts?" Petronius (77.1) appears to share similar sentiments in the *Satyricon*, and Lucan's Cato perceives poisonous snakes as fearful animals that must be endured by the brave (Luc. 9.402-4).

Attitudes towards non-poisonous snakes were often at odds with those towards poisonous types. Many appear to have embraced non-poisonous species wholeheartedly: as we shall see there are plenty of references to serpents that lived alongside human beings.

7.2 Epic Snakes as Benevolent Messengers

The application and meaning of the snake in Roman epic has been variously interpreted, not least in reference to the *Aeneid*. Knox (1950: 379-400) has considered serpents in association with the imagery of the flame. He suggests that the snake was first to be associated with concealment and destruction whereas in the later stages of *Aeneid* 2 the serpent more positively invokes renewal and rebirth. Lewis (1974: 105) examines snakes and the imagery of the flood. He considers the snake as comparative to the penis, while associating Priam's attacked castle with the womb. In the context of *Aeneid* 5 Rose (1983: 115-121) argues that snakes were emblematic of Trojan fortune and the subsequent improvement in that fortune. Meanwhile Putnam (1962: 233) asserts that the flame imagery in the *Aeneid* transforms from "baleful to productive", but that there is no change in the ideas or overall tensions associated with snakes.

Instead of imposing a Freudian frame on snake references like Lewis (1974: 103-113) or considering the monstrous snake solely in the context of the Roman epic tradition (Bassett 1955: 1-20), I would like to emphasise the fact that the representation of snake behaviour in Roman epic often develops beyond Homeric associations.

Homeric snakes are repeatedly associated with omens and artifacts that are strongly related to war. Homer describes a terrible portent when a viper steals and devours eight baby sparrows along with their mother; the death of the nine birds is meant to portend the length of the bloody war against Troy (*Il*. 2.308-329). Homer makes another reference to the snake when he recalls the myth of Philoctetes (*Il*. 2.721-723), and Alexander's fear of Menelaus is compared to the reaction of a man who steps back from an intimidating serpent (*Il*. 3.33-37). Writhing snakes are depicted on the breastplate of Agamemnon when he is about to go into battle (Hom. *Il*. 11.26-28), an eagle in a portent is forced to drop a snake when it continues to attack and injure the bird (Hom. *Il*. 12.200-209) and Achilles awaits Hector just like a snake that plans to

attack a man (Hom. *Il.* 22.93-95). These Homeric serpents are terrifying creatures that often signify the bruality of conflict to come.

The role of the snake in Roman epic develops beyond these Homeric representations. While there are plenty of Roman epic references that refer to the frightening behaviour and intimidating appearence of the snake, Roman epic authors also offer more nuanced interpretations of the serpent that characterise it as a benevolent creature that carries positive connotations. The Greeks and the Romans associated snakes with the underworld and sometimes interpreted snakes as representatives of the deceased (Lazenby 1949: 248); whereas Homer does not elaborate on this theme Virgil appears to engage with the idea and offers a positive depiction of the snake as a symbol of renewal.

In book 5 Aeneas addresses his men, and a snake coils itself placidly around Anchises' tomb.

dixerat haec, adytis cum lubricus anguis ab imis
septem ingens gyros, septena volumina traxit,
amplexus placide tumulum lapsusque per aras,
caeruleae cui terga notae maculosus et auro
squamam incendebat fulgor, ceu nubibus arcus
mille iacit varios adverso sole colores.
opsitpuit visu Aeneas. ille agmine longo
tandem inter pateras et levia pocula serpens
libavitque dapes rususque innoxius imo
successit tumulo et depasta altaria liquit.
hoc magis inceptos genitori instaurat honores.

Verg. *A*. 5.84-94.

"He had said this when a slippery snake slithered from the depths of the shrine and hauled his seven great coils around it in seven folds. Quietly embracing the mound and slipping through the altars, with his back mottled with blue markings, the snake gleamed with gold from his scales; just like a rainbow in the clouds throws a thousand different colours against the sun. Aeneas was flabbergasted at the scene. At last, the snake, making its way among the libation-saucers and the fragile drinking cups, took a sample of the solemn offerings and went harmlessly back under the deepest depths of the mound, leaving the altars on which it had browsed. So Aeneas re-started more eagerly the honors of his father that had been begun."

Significantly, Virgil describes the impressive skin of the snake in some detail; "Quietly embracing the mound and slipping through the altars, with his back mottled with blue markings, the snake gleamed with gold from his scales; just like a rainbow in the clouds throws a thousand different colours against the sun." Williams (1981: 61) claims that the imagery in this passage may be linked to that in *Iliad* 2.308: ἔνθ' ἐφάνη μέγα σῆμα· δράκων ἐπὶ νῶτα δαφοινὸς | σμερδαλέος, ...| βωμοῦ ὑπαΐξας πρός ῥα πλατάνιστον ὄρουσεν. (308-310) "Suddenly a significant omen came to light there. A terrible snake with blood-red back ... slithered from the altar to the plane-tree." Immediately after these lines the Homeric snake attacks and devours baby sparrows ignoring the protests of their mother.

Virgil's snake is a thing of beauty and glimmers with the sun, but Homer's snake is described as "σμερδαλέος" and has a skin the colour of blood. The relative contexts highlight the varying treatments of the snake. The Homeric snake should be considered in the immediate context of inevitable warfare; it highlights the fact that the

conflict with the Trojans will last ten years, but the Virgilian snake behaves very differently.

Virgil describes the snake as unharmful: the description is intriguing because such harmless behaviour is completely out of the ordinary in the context of earlier epic (Putnam 1962: 207). The peaceful and stately behaviour of the snake has lead the meaning of this passage to be questioned.

Rose (1983: 119) has suggested that the snake's appearence pinpoints a more favourable future for Aeneas, but Putnam (1962: 207) concentrates on the impending doom of the book and sees the snake as a threat of negative things to come; to him the snake's appearence is a prelude to the firing of Aeneas' ships and the evil deeds of Iris. Putnam (1962: 211) compares the snake in *Aeneid* 5.84-94 with the serpents that attack Laocoon in *Aeneid* 2 and asserts that there is a certain ambiguity owing to the intent of the differing snakes; both are pictured in the process of embrace, but Laocoon and his sons are the victims of attack whereas the Anchises' serpent is not violent.

Despite Putnam's protests I think that the portrayal of the snake in *Aeneid* 5.84-94 is a positive one. The Virgilian snake embraces Anchises' tomb in an act of reverence rather than in a murderous embrace. Toynbee (1973: 224-233) explains the strong association that the Greeks and the Romans made between the snake and those that have died. She suggests that the snake was perceived as a representative of spirits of the deceased from Greek archaic times to the early Imperial period. To my mind Virgil's characterisation of the snake hints only at peaceful associations: the snake slithers quietly through the libation saucers and tastes the offerings. Snakes that partake of offerings are often considered as symbolic embodiments of the dead (Mozley 1963: 158-159) and they can also be identified as attendants to the deceased: it is probable that the snake personifies Anchises himself (Galinsky 1968: 171).

In fact, it is not particularly unusual for snakes to behave in this way in Roman epic. In Valerius' *Argonautica* snakes sip at libations, and Valerius describes these snakes as *placidi* (V.Fl. 3.457). After making offerings to the gods the Argonauts are in particularly good spirits (V.Fl. 3.464, 468). Similarly positive associations with the snake are drawn to mind in *Punica* 15.139-145 when the portent of a glittering snake shoots through the skies. After the snake omen, Scipio's supporters urge him to engage in battle believing the appearence of the serpent to be a form of encouragement from the heavens.[120]

Furthermore the behaviour of the snake in *Aeneid* 5.84-94 is not necessarily aligned with "negative" developments in the rest of the book as Putnam suggests. In material terms the burning of Aeneas' ships is not disastrous. Only four ships are actually damaged and the Trojans are all able to continue their voyage (Galinsky 1968: 168). Aristotle's popular account[121] of Aeneas' mission focuses on the fact that the burning of the ships guarantees his renewed efforts to found the city. It could be argued that the burning of the ships allows Aeneas to rid himself of less useful comrades: the snake portent could easily be seen in the context of a positive interpretation of events in the sense of progress (Galinsky 1968: 170).

In fact, Putnam's alignment of the snake with the firing of Aeneas' ships appears to be a rather random association altogether; particularly when we consider Aeneas' immediate and positive reaction to the serpent. The snake's appearence invigorates Aeneas (Rose 1983: 119), and the hero re-establishes the honours after the serpent has coiled itself around the mound. Even the Trojans react positively to the snake's presence. They happily bring gifts before the altars and sacrifice oxen.[122]

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[120] Scipio was associated with the serpent in contemporary legend; there was a story that he was the offspring of Jupiter – it was said that his mother had been visited by the god in the form of the snake one night (Duff 1950: 336).
[121] Quoted by Dionysius Halicarnassensis 1.72.3 cf. Galinsky 1968: 170.
[122] Verg. *A*. 5.100 cf. Galinsky 1968: 170.

While the snake is placed in the funerary context of Anchises' burial mound, it is possible that the snake's cultural association with fertility may also be relevant to the interpretation of the Anchises snake passage. As Toynbee points out (1973: 234) snakes were regularly associated with renewal, healing and fertility in the Ancient world; the symbolism of the staff of Asklepios is (of course) a case in point. Rose does not consider the possible connotations with rebirth when she refers to the serpent, but the idea of renewal along with the positive outcomes of healing would fit particularly well with her argument. Perhaps the serpent's presence, evocative of rebirth, suggests that Anchises' death is a necessary component in a sequence of events that will eventually result in regeneration and a new start for Aeneas and his people.

Williams (1981: 60) examines the significance of the snake coiling seven times and judges that the number would have had a "mystical" meaning to the Romans. The number is not referred to in complete isolation so it appears that there may be some correlation between the number and the attitude of the snake itself. In Japanese culture the arrangement of the serpent is all-important in the interpretation of its meaning; Opler (1945: 258) explains that dreams about coiling snakes are understood to have particularly positive meanings and asserts that they are taken as indications of future prosperity.

Toynbee (1973: 234) makes reference to a figurine in the temple of Syrian mystery deities on the Janiculum entwined by seven coils of a snake: "The seven coils of the snake and the seven eggs between the convolutions may allude to the seven planetary births and rebirths through which the soul must pass before attaining to its final immorality". Perhaps the particular significance of this statuette as a symbol of rebirth may also be applied to the description of the Anchises' funerary serpent in the *Aeneid.*

All in all, Virgil's tomb snake deviates from Homeric depictions of the serpent. The snake in *Aeneid* 5 behaves as a benign messenger of support and encourages Aeneas and his men by its presence, but Homer's snakes warn of wars and behave as savage predators.

7.3 The Snake as a Pet

It is possible that Ancient Greeks kept snakes in their homes in order to control vermin (Jennison 1937:20), but it is unlikely that serpents played as prominent a role in Greek homelife as they did in Roman times. Pet snakes were the height of fashion in the Roman Imperial court and a number of textual sources suggest that the Romans considered snakes as pets rather than as cult healers or as rat catchers. Augustus was given a ten cubit snake as a present (Str. 15.1.73) and thought it worthwhile to display particularly large examples of the species. Suetonius writes,

solebat etiam citra spectaculorum dies, si quando quid inuisitatum dignumque cognitu aduectum esset, id extra ordinem quolibet loco publicare, ut rhinocerotem apud Saepta, tigrim in scaena, anguem quinquaginta cubitorum pro comitio.

Suet. *Aug*. 43.4.

"He was accustomed, even on days when no spectacles were scheduled, if anything worth seeing and exotic had been conveyed to display it in public in any place that suited, such as a rhinoceros in the Saepta, a tigress on the stage and a snake fifty cubits long in front of the Comitium."

Augustus was not the only Emperor to display serpents; Tiberius was the proud owner of a pet snake that fed from his own hand (Suet. *Tib*. 72.2), and Elagabalus kept poisonous and harmless varieties (Hist. Aug. *Elagabalus*, 28.3). Martial even refers to an acquaintance who made a practice of placing snakes about her person: *…gelidum collo nectit †Gladilla† draconem* (Mart. 7.87) "…[Gladilla] fastens a cold snake around her neck…". Vioque (2002: 469) tells us that the adjective *gelidum* "cold" refers to the poisonous and deathly nature of the serpent.

The upper echelons of Roman society may have encountered snakes fairly regularly. Seneca (*Dial*. 2.31.6) refers to snakes that went gliding over people's laps at dinner parties, and Tacitus remarks that Nero had the protection of serpents from a young age.

favor plebis acrior i<n> Domitium loco praesagii acceptus est. vulgabaturque adfuisse infantiae eius dracones in modum custodum, fabulosa et externis miraculis adsimilata; nam ipse, haudquaquam sui detractor, unam omnino anguem in cubiculo visam narrare solitus est.

Tac. *Ann*. 11.11.2-3.

"The more enthusiastic praise given to Nero by the common people was taken in the place of an omen. It was widely said that snakes had been at hand as guards during his childhood - a myth invented to match foreign tales; for he himself, who was hardly prone to excessive modesty, was accustomed to tell people that only one snake had ever been seen in his bedroom."

Pet snakes are also recorded by Pliny; he relates how Thoas kept a serpent and was forced to give it up. According to Pliny the serpent remembered the boy and defended him from attack:

Haec fidem et Democrito adferunt, qui Thoantem in Arcadia servatum a dracone narrat. nutrierat eum puer dilectum admodum, parensque serpentis naturam et magnitudinem metuens in solitudines tulerat, in quibus circumvento latronum insidiis agnitoque voce subvenit.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.22.61.

"These tales afford Democritus the benefit of the doubt; he is the one who recounts that Thoas was saved by a snake in Arcadia. When he was a boy he looked after a snake like a beloved pet, and his parents, growing concerned about the nature and size [of the snake], carried it into the wilderness. There it recognised Thoas' voice and assisted him when he was entrapped by the tricks of mercenary soldiers."

Accounts like Pliny's often depart from highly scientific descriptions and tend to include sentimental episodes detailing affectionate serpent behaviour, but other records also focus on the intimacy of the relationship between human and snake. Lucian[123] writes that Alexander saw huge snakes that took milk from women's breasts like babies (*Alex.* 7), and Aelian delights in the way that snakes were treated by the Egyptians. He describes how dinner guests snapped their fingers to summon and dismiss the animals. The asps enjoyed treats of honey cakes and quickly disappeared when diners wanted to rise from their couches so that they were not stepped on (Ael. *N.A*. 17.5). It seems that it

[123] Lucian wrote after Pliny: He was born in approx. 120 AD (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 886). Pliny lived AD 23 -79 (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1197).

was particularly fashionable to make a literary connection between human and serpent; even if, like Aelian, you were merely referring to the snake's intimacy with people in foreign cultures. No doubt such tales and public displays of the serpent provided fertile material for Roman epic elaboration.

7.4 Epic Renderings of the Snake as a Pet

Romans kept snakes that were understood as pets in their own right. It is therefore not wholly surprising that Roman epic authors developed the pet-like qualities of their epic serpents whereas Homeric references to snakes do not consider them as pets. The Roman epic accounts of the snake offer more nuanced interpretations of the creature that develop its pet-like qualities and emphasise its benevolent characteristics.

When we compare Valerius' Roman version of the *Argonautica* with Apollonius' Greek version of the tale it becomes apparent that the serpent that guards the golden fleece is given a much more pet-like representation in Valerius' description. In Apollonius' *Argonautica* Medea drugs the snake on Jason's behalf, and the snake is presented as a formidable monster.

τὼ δὲ δι' ἀτραπιτοῖο μεθ' ἱερὸν ἄλσος ἵκοντο,
φηγὸν ἀπειρεσίην διζημένω ἦ ἔπι κῶας
βέβλητο, νεφέλῃ ἐναλίγκιον ἥ τ' ἀνιόντος
ἠελίου φλογερῇσιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσσιν·
αὐτὰρ ὁ ἀντικρὺ περιμήκεα τείνετο δειρήν
ὀξὺς ἀύπνοισι προϊδὼν ὄφις ὀφθαλμοῖσιν
νισσομένους, ῥοίζει δὲ πελώριον, ἀμφὶ δὲ μακραί

ἠιόνες ποταμοῖο καὶ ἄσπετον ἴαχεν ἄλσος·
ἔκλυον οἳ καὶ πολλὸν ἑκὰς Τιτηνίδος Αἴης
Κολχίδα γῆν ἐνέμοντο παρὰ προχοῇσι Λύκοιο,
ὅς τ' ἀποκιδνάμενος ποταμοῦ κελάδοντος Ἀράξεω
Φάσιδι συμφέρεται ἱερὸν ῥόον, οἱ δὲ συνάμφω
Καυκασίην ἅλαδ' εἰς ἓν ἐλαυνόμενοι προρέουσιν·
δείματι δ' ἐξέγροντο λεχωίδες, ἀμφὶ δὲ παισίν
νηπιάχοις, οἵ τέ σφιν ὑπ' ἀγκαλίδεσσιν ἴαυον,
ῥοίζῳ παλλομένοις χεῖρας βάλον ἀσχαλόωσαι.
ὡς δ' ὅτε τυφομένης ὕλης ὕπερ αἰθαλόεσσαι
καπνοῖο στροφάλιγγες ἀπείριτοι εἱλίσσονται,
ἄλλη δ' αἶψ' ἑτέρῃ ἐπιτέλλεται αἰὲν ἐπιπρό
νειόθεν ἰλίγγοισιν ἐπήορος ἀίσσουσα—
ὣς τότε κεῖνο πέλωρον ἀπειρεσίας ἐλέλιζε
ῥυμβόνας, ἀζαλέῃσιν ἐπηρεφέας φολίδεσσιν.
τοῖο δ' ἑλισσομένοιο κατ' †ὄμματος εἴσατο† κούρη,
Ὕπνον ἀοσσητῆρα, θεῶν ὕπατον, καλέουσα
ἡδείῃ ἐνοπῇ, θέλξαι τέρας, αὖε δ' ἄνασσαν
νυκτιπόλον, χθονίην, εὐαντέα δοῦναι ἐφορμήν.
εἵπετο δ' Αἰσονίδης, πεφοβημένος· αὐτὰρ ὅγ' ἤδη
οἴμῃ θελγόμενος δολιχὴν ἀνελύετ' ἄκανθαν
γηγενέος σπείρης, μήκυνε δὲ μυρία κύκλα,

οἷον ὅτε βληχροῖσι κυλινδόμενον πελάγεσσιν
κῦμα μέλαν κωφόν τε καὶ ἄβρομον· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔμπης
ὑψοῦ σμερδαλέην κεφαλὴν μενέαινεν ἀείρας
ἀμφοτέρους ὀλοῇσι περιπτύξαι γενύεσσιν.
ἡ δέ μιν ἀρκεύθοιο νέον τετμηότι θαλλῷ,
βάπτουσ' ἐκ κυκεῶνος, ἀκήρατα φάρμακ' ἀοιδαῖς
ῥαῖνε κατ' ὀφθαλμῶν, περί τ' ἀμφί τε νήριτος ὀδμή
φαρμάκου ὕπνον ἔβαλλε· γένυν δ' αὐτῇ ἐνὶ χώρῃ
θῆκεν ἐρεισάμενος, τὰ δ' ἀπείρονα πολλὸν ὀπίσσω
κύκλα πολυπρέμνοιο διὲξ ὕλης τετάνυστο.
ἔνθα δ' ὁ μὲν χρύσειον ἀπὸ δρυὸς αἴνυτο κῶας,
κούρης κεκλομένης, ἡ δ' ἔμπεδον ἑστηυῖα
φαρμάκῳ ἔψηχεν θηρὸς κάρη, εἰσόκε δή μιν
αὐτὸς ἑὴν ἐπὶ νῆα παλιντροπάασθαι Ἰήσων
ἤνωγεν· λεῖπον δὲ πολύσκιον ἄλσος Ἄρηος.
ὡς δὲ σεληναίης διχομήνιδα παρθένος αἴγλην
ὑψόθεν ϯἀνέχουσαν ὑπωρόφιον θαλάμοιο
λεπταλέῳ ἑανῷ ὑποϊσχεται, ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ
χαίρει δερκομένης καλὸν σέλας—ὣς τότ' Ἰήσων
γηθόσυνος μέγα κῶας ἑαῖς ἀναείρετο χερσίν,
καί οἱ ἐπὶ ξανθῇσι παρηίσιν ἠδὲ μετώπῳ
μαρμαρυγῇ ληνέων φλογὶ εἴκελον ἷζεν ἔρευθος.

A. R. 4.123-171.

“The pair reached the sacred grove by path, seeking the great oak where the fleece was hung; the fleece reddens up like a cloud hit with flaming rays of the rising sun. Stretching out his very long neck the sharp snake caught sight of them coming right away with his sleepless eyes; the monster hisses loudly, and the very hisses echoed around the long shores of the river and the unspeakable grove. Those heard it who were inhabiting the Colchian land at a great distance from Titanian Aea, next to the mouth of Lycus, the river which flows and is diffused from the loud Arxes and is borne of the sacred flow with Phasis; together they flow driving into the Caucasian sea. The mothers awoke owing to their fear and threw their arms up in anxiety; the very arms that were surrounding their helpless infants. Those babies were sleeping in their mother’s bent arms and started at the hiss. Just as when boundless whirls of smoke curl over wood giving off vapour in a sooty cloud, one waft always rises over another. The uplifted vapours waft about from below. Just so at that time did that gigantic snake coil up his unlimited length overhung with parched and horny scales. As he was squirming, the girl <came> before <his eyes>. She was calling on her protector, sleep, the loftiest of the gods with a sweet voice. Then she called on the queen that roams by night on the earth, to grant a successful attack. The son of Aeson followed in a state of fear. Being quickly enchanted by her song the snake was relaxing the long spine of its earth-born back. It stretched out its countless coils as when a black wave both blunted and loud-roaring rolls over a torpid sea. Nevertheless he lifted up his terrible head on high, desiring to enfold them both in his destructive jaws, but the witch cupped up her mixed potion with a recently cut twig of juniper and sprinkled pure drugs into the snake’s eyes with a chant. All around a boundless waft of the potion induced sleep. In that very place, the leaning snake dropped its jaw and stretched out his numberless coils far behind through

the forest with its many trees. Then Jason took the golden fleece from the oak while the girl was urging him on. Medea stood there and rubbed the head of the wild beast with a potion. When Jason himself commanded her to turn back to the ship again the witch left the very shady grove of Ares. Just as a maiden holds the reflection of the full moon from on high on a delicate robe under the roof of her chamber as it rises. Her heart is joyous as she looks at the beautiful radiance, so glad Jason lifted up the great fleece in his hands."

It is clear that the serpent in Apollonius' version of the myth is to be imagined as a gruesome atrocity. The snake is a horror: it is huge in size (the "countless coils" are repeatedly referred to) and it has malicious intent: ...μενέαινεν| ἀμφοτέρους ὀλοῇσι περιπτύξαι γενύεσσιν. " [the snake was] desiring to enfold them both in his destructive jaws". In actual fact, this is a masterly description of monstrosity. Apollonius appeals to four of our five senses: the context of the simile suggests that we should imagine the sour smell of smoke; the terrible hissing of the snake jars in our ears; the sight is horrific since the snake is depicted on a huge scale, and we can imagine the feel of the serpent when we are informed that its body is covered with rough scales. Apollonius' snake is even more horrifying because it recognises the approach of its enemies προϊδὼν ὄφις ὀφθαλμοῖσιν νισσομένους "the sharp snake immediately caught sight of them coming with its eyes".[124] It seems that Apollonius had a clear idea of the reaction that he expected from his Greek audience.

Meanwhile the representation of Medea's behaviour is also revealing. The fact that the heroine chooses to deceive the beast is emphasised with an ironic twist. Medea does not charm the serpent with a ἡδείῃ ἐνοπῇ "sweet voice" because she cares for it but because she is invoking the protection of the gods. The implication is that Medea is

[124] Apollonius' description emphasises the monstrous and terrifying aspects of the snake's senses. Serpents are not generally reputed for their eyesight (Cogger 2002: 618).

acting out of her own interest; her words are strategically applied in order to overcome an obstacle rather than to reassure the serpent.

The tension in Apollonius' passage remains until Medea puts a spell on the serpent with her pungent potions. After the snake has been drugged and the fleece snatched Medea simply annoints the snake's head with a potion and follows Jason's instructions to leave. The Apollonian heroine betrays no feelings of inner turmoil after she has drugged the serpent; her conscience is clear, and the welfare of the snake is not subsequently focused upon. All in all, Apollonius' Medea is a calculating character: she believes that the fleece is of paramount importance and treats the snake with relative disdain.

Not all ancient accounts consider the snake's monstrosity or Medea's relationship with the snake from the same perspective as Apollonius' version of the myth. In some accounts Jason is recorded as taking a more dominant role in the action than the one that he plays out in Apollonius' description. Some centuries before Apollonius, Pindar described the contact between Jason, Medea and the snake.[125] In Pindar's version of events it is not Medea who drugs the snake, but Jason who dispatches it: κτεῖνε μὲν γλαυκῶπα τέχναις ποικιλόνωτον ὄφιν, ὦ 'ρκεσίλα, κλέψεν τε Μήδειαν σὺν αὐτᾷ, τὰν Πελίαο φονόν· (Pi. *P*. 4.249-250) "With his skills he [Jason] killed the snake with spotted back and with gleaming eyes; Arcesilas and he [Jason] stole Medea, and bought about the murder of Pelias with her help".

In Pherecydes' version[126] of the myth Jason slays the snake, and a Vatican vase depicts Jason being swallowed whole by the serpent (Green 1997: 298). Herodotus' comments also appear to feature Jason's role at the expense of Medea's; Medea is often the lesser figure of the two (Hershkowitz 1998: 60). All in all it seems that the earliest

[125] Pindar was born circa 518 BC (Hornblower and Spawforth 2003: 1183).
[126] Pherecydes of Leros lived circa 450 BC (Huxley 1973: 137-43).

Greek representations of the myth do not focus on Medea or comment on her relationship with the serpent at any length.

It appears that the details of the golden fleece episode were transformed over time. In his version of the myth Euripides characterises Medea as the dominant figure. The witch highlights the fact that she protected Jason from peril.

ἐκ τῶν δὲ πρώτων πρῶτον ἄρξομαι λέγειν· | ἔσωσά σ', ὡς ἴσασιν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι | ταὐτὸν συνεισέβησαν Ἀργῶιον σκάφος, | πεμφθέντα ταύρων πυρπνόων ἐπιστάτην | ζεύγλαισι καὶ σπεροῦντα θανάσιμον γύην· | δράκοντά θ', ὃς πάγχρυσον ἀμπέχων δέρος | σπείραις ἔσωιζε πολυπλόκοις ἄυπνος ὤν, | κτείνασ' ἀνέσχον σοι φάος σωτήριον.

E. *Med*. 475-482.

"I shall first start to narrate from the beginning. I saved you, as all the Greeks who embarked from the same hull of the ship, the Argo, know, when you were sent forth to tame the fire-breathing bulls with a yoke and to sow the deadly piece of land. And when I killed the snake, which being sleepless surrounded the golden fleece with its coils and guarded it, I held up the light of deliverance for you."

When we consider the various versions of the myth it seems that the accounts of Apollonius and Euripides share the most similar features. Indeed Apollonius' account of Medea may be perceived as a response to Euripides' manipulation of the witch as a strong heroine figure (Mori 2008: 91). Both writers comment on the sleepless nature of the snake and imply that Medea saved Jason from his doom; both authors highlight Medea's motivations at the expense of Jason's. As many scholars have noted,

Apollonius' Medea is a force to be reckoned with while Jason behaves in an utterly unheroic manner; he fails to kill the snake and does not live up to the traditional standards of heroic bravery that we would expect.[127]

Valerius' account is quite different from those of Apollonius and Euripides. When we compare Valerius' description of the snake to the one in Apollonius we can see that the authors represent the serpent, as well as the relationship between Medea and the snake, in completely contrasting ways.

haec ait atque furens rapido per devia passu
tollitur. ille haeret comes et mi[se]ratur euntem
cum subito ingentem media inter nubila flammam
conspicit et saeva vibrantes luce tenebras.
'quis rubor iste poli? quod tam lugubre refulsit
sidus?' ait, reddit trepido cui talia virgo:
'ipsius en oculos et lumina torva draconis
aspicis. ille suis haec vibrat fulgura cristis
meque pavens contra solam videt ac vocat ultro,
ceu solet, et blanda poscit me pabula lingua.
dic age nunc utrum vigilanti hostemque videnti
exuvias auferre velis an lumina somno
mergimus et domitum potius tibi tradimus anguem.'
ille silet, tantus subiit tum virginis horror...
ille haud Aeolio discedere fessus ab auro
nec dare permissae, quamvis iuvet, ora quieti

[127] Byre 2002: 114, Hutchinson 1988: 123, Beye 1982: 33.

sustinet ac primi percussus nube soporis

horruit et dulces excussit ab arbore somnos.

contra Tartareis Colchis spumare <venenis>

cunctaque Lethaei quassare silentia rami

perstat et adverso luctantia lumina cantu

obruit atque omnem linguaque manuque fatigat

vim Stygiam ardentes donec sopor occupet iras.

iamque altae cecidere iubae nutatque coactum

iam caput atque ingens extra sua vellera cervix

ceu refluens Padus aut septem proiectus in amnes

Nilus et Hesperium veniens Alpheos in orbem.

ipsa caput cari postquam Medea draconis

vidit humi fusis circum proiecta lacertis

seque suumque simul flevit crudelis alumnum.

'non ego te sera talem sub nocte videbam

sacra ferens epulasque tibi nec talis hianti

mella dabam ac nostris nutribam fida venenis.

quam gravida nunc mole iaces, quam segnis inertem

flatus habet! nec te saltem, miserande, peremi.

heu saevum passure diem, iam nulla videbis

vellera, nulla tua fulgentia dona sub umbra.

cede adeo inque aliis senium nunc digere lucis

immemor, oro, mei nec me tua sibila toto

exagitent infesta mari. sed tu quoque cunctas,

Aesonide, dimitte moras atque effuge raptis

velleribus. patrios exstinxi noxia tauros,

terrigenas in fata dedi: fusum ecce draconis

corpus habes! iamque omne nefas, iam, spero, peregi.'

quaerenti tunc deinde viam, qua se arduus heros

ferret ad aurigerae caput arboris, 'heia per ipsum

scande age et adverso gressus' ait 'imprime dorso.'

nec mora fit.

V.Fl. 8.54-112.

"Saying this and raging Medea walks up through hidden paths with a quick step. He, Jason (her accomplice) remains close and laments for her as she walks. When he suddenly notices a great flame in the middle of the clouds, and that the gloom is disturbed by a cruel glow, he asks "What is that red in the sky? What mournful star gleams so?" The girl replies to his anxiety: "behold, you are looking at the eyes and savage stares of the snake himself. He shakes these lightning flashes from his crest; he, fearing me only, sees me and calls on me as he is accustomed to and he begs me for food with a fawning tongue. Come now and tell me whether you would steal the fleece when he is awake and aware of his enemy, or shall we rather immerse his eyes in sleep and hand the snake to you when it has been tamed?" Jason does not speak, for considerable fear of the girl then overcomes him... [Medea invokes sleep to help her conquer the snake]. The sleepy snake does not want to abandon the Aeolian gold or to give in to permitted sleep, though sleep would please it; he holds up his head, and when he is first struck by the fog of sleep, he shivers and shakes the sweet drowsiness from the tree. Yet the Colchian girl stands firmly against the snake; she continues to sprinkle him with deadly drugs and to shake on him all the sleep of Lethe's branch. She overwhelms his struggling eyes with an opposing chant and exhausts all her Stygian

power with her hand and song until sleep dominates the snake's burning passions. Now his tall crests fall, and now he nods his conquered head; the great neck has fallen away from the fleece just like the flowing Po, or the Nile - that runs into seven rivers - and the Alpheus when it joins the Hesperian land. Afterwards, Medea herself looked at the head of her beloved snake on the ground. Thrown forward with her embracing arms about it the cruel woman bewailed both her nursling and herself. "I used not to see you thus late at night when I was bringing sacred offerings and feasts to you; nor was I thus when I used to place honey cakes in your gaping mouth and feed you faithfully with my drugs. How swollen up you are now as you lie in a shapeless mass! How your lingering breathing keeps you still! At least, wretched snake, I did not destroy you! Alas, you will suffer a cruel day: now you will see no fleece; no flashing gifts will lie in your shade. Yield then and spend your old age in other sacred groves – forgetting me, I beg you! May your hostile hisses not plague me across the whole sea! But you, son of Aeson, stop all your delaying and escape with the stolen fleece. I have destroyed the bulls of my father with my deadly skill and I have offered up the earth-born [snake] to the fates: look at the body of the snake stretched before you! Now I hope that I have achieved the whole crime". When the hero was seeking a way to get up to the top of the tree bearing the golden fleece, Medea said, "Alas! Look, climb up on the snake itself and get going: imprint your steps on your adversary's back."

Unlike Apollonius' Medea, Valerius' Medea holds the snake in some reverence. She cares for the serpent as if it were a domesticated pet: she feeds the snake titbits and places lovingly made cakes into his mouth. Medea does not stop at providing sustenance but also disciplines the snake. She claims that *meque pavens contra solam videt...* "fearing me only, he sees me...". It seems that Medea has established the hierarchy in the relationship, and that the snake is well aware of his duties to his

mistress. In effect, Valerius' snake is being depicted as a Roman pet snake rather than a dangerous wild animal.

In addition, Jason's inadequacies in terms of recognising the snake emphasise Medea's ease with the serpent. She is familiar with the snake and can recognise his eyes for what they really are, but Jason only sees them as an indiscriminate glow. It is implied that Valerius' Medea is comfortable with the proximity of the serpent: when Jason cannot reach the fleece it is Medea who encourages him to climb the snake itself.

The level of concern that Valerius' Medea openly displays for the snake is so acute that she drops to the ground to embrace the creature after he has been drugged; interestingly the serpent is termed as her *alumnum* "nursling", and so we begin to consider the serpent as a creature that requires love and attention. It is clear that the heroine feels that she has betrayed the snake's trust by drugging him. Medea bewails the serpent and imagines the snake's consternation when it realises that the fleece has been stolen. It appears that the witch wants to limit the snake's suffering and she even attempts to eradicate her traitorous doping of the snake from its mind.

It could be that Valerius developed Medea's reaction to the snake to make the hero and heroine appear alternately powerful. Stover (2003: 145) argues that Jason's masculinity is tested by Medea in Valerius' version of the *Argonautica*, but that his supremacy is eventually reinstated. It is true that Medea takes the initiative in directing her lover, but on other occasions she is characterised as an emotional wreck.[128] An alternative reasoning may be that Valerius simply wished to depict Medea as a sweet woman; his version of the tale definitely demonstrates her kindness towards the serpent.

These reasonings, although valuable in their own right, should not distract our attention from the fact that Valerius' snake is at odds with its Apollonian equivalent. Valerius' snake is portrayed as an intriguing creature which suffers from an ambivaent

[128] Hershkowitz (1998: 96-7) studies how Valerius' Medea has many intertextual models including Helen (as she appears in *Iliad* 3) and Nausicaa (Hom. *Od*. 6150-152). Valerius' Medea is simultaeneously dangerous and innocent: she has a dual personality.

personality. On occasion the serpent displays the characteristics that we would expect from an intimidating guard. Valerius mentions that the snake possesses an angry glare: *ipsius en oculos et lumina torva draconis | aspicis. ille suis haec vibrat fulgura cristis*| ... "behold, you are looking at the eyes and savage stares of the snake himself. He shakes these lightning flashes from his crest;...". Yet on other occasions the animal seems more subjugated than the most obedient of domesticated creatures. The serpent does not gulp down gruesome entrails but begs Medea for food. This is not the type of behaviour that we would expect from a snake; especially when it is meant to be protecting a precious treasure. The snake's contradictory characteristics show how far Valerius has come from simply imitating Apollonius; Valerius' snake cannot seem to decide whether it owes greater loyalty to its mistress or to guarding the fleece.

The Apollonian golden fleece tradition has warned the reader to expect a terrible serpent, and Valerius does not wholly abandon this monstrous stereotype; the *Argonautica* snakes share the ability to frighten those that encounter them with their terrifying appearance. However, Valerius' reading of the snake does differ significantly from the creature found in Apollonius: Valerius' snake loves Medea whereas Apollonius' snake is (at best) disinterested in the witch. In effect, Valerius has kept the outer form of the horrific Greek serpent but has transformed its inner nature.

The dichotomy in the snake's behaviour may be typical of pets that the Romans would have been more familiar with (such as dogs). Snakes do not actually fawn on their owners, but dogs routinely display the type of behaviour that Valerius attributes to the serpent. It could be that Valerius based his serpent's characteristics on those of a faithful hound. Dogs instinctually tend to protect their owners and guard against intruders: Valerius' snake appears faithful to Medea alone but does not extend its loyalty to intruders such as Jason.

Roman epic snakes do not behave as stock monsters but tend to endear themselves to those that encounter them. The pet-like qualities these serpents display are no doubt symptomatic of a culture that accepted snakes as legitimate household pets.

7.5 Snakes as Creatures with Thoughts and Feelings

Homer makes little reference to the thought processes of the snake when it comes into contact with humankind, but it seems that Roman epic authors began to consider snakes as animals that had their own thoughts and feelings.

In the *Iliad*, Homer relates how Paris starts back from Menelaus and compares him to a man who comes across a snake.

Τὸν δ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησεν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδὴς
ἐν προμάχοισι φανέντα, κατεπλήγη φίλον ἦτορ,
ἂψ δ' ἑτάρων εἰς ἔθνος ἐχάζετο κῆρ' ἀλεείνων.
ὡς δ' ὅτε τίς τε δράκοντα ἰδὼν παλίνορσος ἀπέστη
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃς, ὑπό τε τρόμος ἔλλαβε γυῖα,
ἂψ δ' ἀνεχώρησεν, ὦχρός τέ μιν εἷλε παρειάς,
ὣς αὖτις καθ' ὅμιλον ἔδυ Τρώων ἀγερώχων
δείσας Ἀτρέος υἱὸν Ἀλέξανδρος θεοειδής.

Hom. *Il.* 3.30-37.

"But when godlike Alexander recognised the one who had shown up among the warriors his own heart was struck with dismay. He fell back into the band of his fellow

soldiers, shunning fate. Just as when a man backs away, recoiling, when he catches sight of a snake in the glens of a mountain and a shudder takes hold of his knees, he steps back and his cheeks go pale. Just so godlike Paris sank back into the crowd of noble Trojans, fearing the son of Atreus."

The mental state of the snake is not at issue in Homer's version of the confrontation; the description focuses on the unfortunate man who approaches and hurriedly backs away from the serpent. The threat of the serpent is implied but the snake is not described as taking any action against its perceived enemy. It is simply assumed that the snake represents danger.

As we shall see Virgil also describes an altercation between snake and man. His reference is more shocking and immediate than Homer's rendering of the same subject. In *Aeneid* 2 Androgeos (a Greek) confronts Aeneas and his companions. He suddenly realises that he faces Aeneas and his men disguised in Greek amour.

opstipuit retroque pedem cum voce repressit.
inprovisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem
pressit humi nitens trepidusque repente refugit
attollentem iras et caerula colla tumentem:
haut secus Androgeos visu treme factus abibat.

Verg. *A.* 2.378-382.

"He was stupified and curbed his voice and his foot as he stepped back. Just like the man who presses down on an unseen viper in among sharp thorns when he steps heavily on the ground and suddenly jumps back in fear at the snake, who rises up in anger and

swells out its dark throat: it was in no other way that Androgeos, made anxious by the sight, departed."

Here the Roman epic account extends the initial Homeric reference (*Il.* 3.30-37). Whereas Homer's Alexander is likened to a man that almost steps on a snake Virgil's soldier is compared to a man who actually treads on the serpent and encounters the animal's resulting wrath. Virgil employs words that emphasise the difficult position the snake finds itself in: *pressit* and *nitens*.

It is immediately clear that Virgil's simile is much more descriptive of serpent behaviour than Homer's account. The Virgilian snake is depicted as being very reactive to threat: *attollentem iras et caerula colla tumentem* "it rises up in anger and swells out its dark throat", but the *Iliad* reference does not consider the snake's reaction to the man; only the human subjects' horror at perceiving the snake.

In *Aeneid* 5, Virgil describes a snake crushed by a carriage wheel or the violent beating of a passer by.

qualis saepe viae deprensus in aggere serpens,
aerea quem oblicum rota transit aut gravis ictu
seminecem liquit saxo lacerumque viator;
nequiquam longos fugiens dat corpore tortus,
parte ferox ardensque oculis et sibila colla
arduus attollens, pars volnere clauda retentat
nixantem nodis seque in sua membra plicantem...

Verg. *A.* 5.273-279.

"Just as when a snake has been caught on the height of the road, when a bronze wheel drove across it or when a traveller has mangled it with the strike of a heavy object and left it half dead. The snake pulls along its coils as it flees in vain: partly fierce and blazing from its eyes, lifting high its hissing head – but another part, damaged by the wound, holds back the struggling creature as it twists its body into knots".

Once again, Virgil emphasises the snake's volatile reaction to attack. The serpent is termed as *ferox*, and its eyes blaze with anger (*ardensque oculis*). It seems that the author has attempted to demonstrate the snake's distress by focusing on its vulnerability to pain. The serpent attempts to escape the agony it feels by writhing and turning back on itself.

It is not unusual for later Roman epic authors to focus on the snake's thoughts and feelings. In the *Punica*, Marus tells Regulus' son the story of his father's battle with a snake. Regulus fights an immense and terrifying serpent (Sil. 6.151-293) that has a horrific appearence; it is monstrously long (as big as the hydra that Hercules had to fight) and has poisonous breath. This snake feeds on the the corpses of humans, and Regulus' soldiers have to regroup in order to brace themselves for the attack.

Despite the terrible appearence of Silius' snake, and its fiercesome appetite for human flesh, it displays thought processes that qualify it as a complex animal. When the snake suffers a blow from Regulus' thrown spear it goes mad with rage and Silius terms the snake as *impatiens dare terga...* (Sil. 6.254) "unable to endure the shame of turning its back in surrender...". The snake appears to be spurred on by the attack of its enemies and shows determination in the face of adversity, but more importantly, it is unwilling to lose face by retreating. It seems that Roman epic writers were attributing snakes with thoughts and feelings that were in line with Roman concerns about bravery and duty.

The depiction of the snake under threat is also manipulated by Statius in the *Thebaid*. Like Silius, Statius tends to humanise the snake's reactions.

at illi tacito sub pectore dudum
ignea corda fremunt, iacto velut aspera saxo
comminus erigitur serpens, cui subter inanes
longa sitis latebras totumque agitata per artus
convocat in fauces et squamea colla venenum:...

Stat. *Theb.* 2.410-414.

"But for a long time [Eteocles'] burning heart roars in his silent chest, just as when a cruel snake lying concealed in a hollow is enraged by a hurled stone and puffs itself up close at hand. Racked by long thirst throughout its body, the snake summons up all its poison into its jaws and scaly neck".

It appears that Statius has afforded the stung snake a real depth of understanding. Statius describes the boiling rage building up within Eteocles, *...tacito sub pectore dudum | ignea corda fremunt...* "his burning heart roars under his silent chest...". This description demonstrates the lengths to which Statius has gone in order to imagine the strength of the anger inherent in both the man and the comparative serpent. The fact that the epicist equates the serpent's strength of feeling with a specifically human reaction implies that Statius saw the snake's emotional range as broad and intense in scale as that of a human.

Statius (5.505-587) also describes the gruesome serpent that kills Opheltes and then is itself killed. Recent research has re-examined the significance of Statius'

Opheltes-snake episode: although the Nemean serpent is hideous (it has green eyes, poison in its fangs and a threefold quivering tongue) it does not attack Opeltes deliberately (as in every other version of the myth) but only kills him by accident. Statius describes the snake with the words, *ignaro serpente* (*Theb*. 5.539). While Soerink[129] has suggested that the Opheltes passage is a microcosm of the *Thebaid* as a whole (Opheltes represents the victims of the Theban War; Hypsipyle the lamentation of the bereaved women, and the Nemean serpent the destructive forces of Thebes) it seems that the treatment of the Nemean serpent in the Opheltes episode also fits with a developing examination of the snake's motivations – or lack of them. To describe a snake as "unknowing" when it attacks is to establish its actions within human terms of innocence and guilt. Epic writers appear to be thinking about snake behaviour in the context of human morality.

7.6 Conclusion

Roman writers examined humans' relationship with the snake in much more depth than their Greek counterparts. Apollonius appears to describe the snake as a stock monster, and Homer most often associates it with omens or contexts suggesting war. Over time the image of the snake became open to more diverse interpretations. Virgil characterises the snake as a benevolent creature in his reference to Anchises' tomb, and Valerius considers the snake in the conceptual role of a pet. The popularity of the household snake may well have contributed to its epic characterisation as a thinking and emotional creature.

Roman epic writers define snakes as developed creatures that have thoughts and feelings of their own. The snakes' external features may define them as monstrous

[129] Suggested by Soerink, 22 Jan 2010: Statius Nottingham Conference.

beasts, but the internal responses of epic snakes show that they are not merely terrifying monsters, but have the potential to respond and feel complex emotions.

Chapter 8: The Eagle

8.1 The Greek Eagle

In ancient scientific accounts the descriptions of the eagle range from those that are fairly accurate to those that are completely absurd. Pollard (1977: 76) records eight species of eagle that may be found in Greece and points out that Aristotle managed to define six different types of eagle. However, the fact that vultures, eagles and hawks were often confused emphasises the difficulty in interpreting the Greek understanding of the bird (Halliday 1913: 260). Pollard (1977: 78) suggests that whoever wrote the *Historia Animalium* book 9[130] had a satisfactory insight into the bird's habits, but the fact that the eagle often inhabited remote areas would no doubt have made it challenging for the Greeks to observe the bird in the wild. The most common of eagles is the golden eagle; and that species is most frequently found in uninviting mountainous areas (Bruun 1982: 72). Arnott (1964: 249) underlines the difficulty in identifying the birds found in ancient Greek literature and suggests that Aristotle's accuracy in describing animals depended on the availability of particular species.

The Greeks examined a range of the eagle's characteristics. Dionysius[131] comments that eagles are extremely skilled in hunting and praises their ability to find and kill the most cunning of prey, but the writer also makes some bogus claims suggesting that the eagle does not drink water but only blood (D.P. 1.3). Even more fantastical notions find their way into his account; apparently the eagle places a magical stone in its nest and the same stone may be employed as a safeguard against abortion in women (D.P. 1.3).

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[130] The authenticity of Aristotle's book 9 *On Birds* has been placed in some doubt (Pollard 1977: 18).
[131] The poem on birds is attributed to Dionysius of Philadelphia or Dionysius the Periegete. The former lived in the era of Hadrian and the latter two centuries later. It is not known whether this account of the eagle belongs to the earlier or the later scholar (Pollard 1977: 23).

In Greek culture the eagle was often seen as a link with the world of the divine. The eagle was symbolic of Zeus and the bird was most commonly considered as his personal messenger.[132] Pseudo-Euripides[133] (*Rh.* 531) refers to the eagle as flying in heaven, and Aratus (313ff) depicts the eagle soaring among the constellations.

As the most predatory of the bird species, the eagle became a particularly potent symbol in Homeric epic; it is a frequent participant in omens and portents and often delivers messages that relate the intentions of the gods. As Boraston (1911: 220) points out, Homer most often chooses to align the gods with particularly swift and keen birds reputed for their intelligence and superior reputation. As such, Homer's version of the eagle is defined by its aggression and predatory nature. The eagle and the snake are pitted against each other in Homeric simile (*Il.* 12.200-209); other prey are hares and lambs. In actual fact the eagle appears to have had a reputation for initiating conflict with a range of other species. Aesop's fables highlight hostility between the fox and the eagle,[134] while Aristotle (*H.A.* 9.609b.9.615b) emphasises the particular enmity between the swan and the eagle.

The eagle sometimes carried negative connotations. Aeschylus employs an eagle omen in the *Persians* when the Queen has a dream about her son. She recalls:

ὁρῶ δὲ φεύγοντ' αἰετὸν πρὸς ἐσχάραν | Φοίβου, φόβωι δ' ἄφθογγος ἐστάθην, φίλοι· | μεθύστερον δὲ κίρκον εἰσορῶ δρόμωι | πτεροῖν ἐφορμαίνοντα καὶ χηλαῖς κάρα | τίλλονθ'·

A. *Pers.* 205-209.

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132 Pollard 1977: 16 and 117 cf. Wittkower 1939: 307.
133 Kovacs (2002: 352) discusses the much-disputed question of its attribution.
134 Aesop. 41 in Grahame 1984: 82.

"I caught sight of an eagle fleeing towards Phoebus' hearth and stood absolutely speechless with awe, my friends. Later I beheld a hawk in pursuit; it was attacking the eagle's wings and plucking at its head with its claws."

The eagle took on ominous characteristics in other contexts too: Xenophon (*An*. 6.1.23) records how the appearance of the bird portended ill for him when he was setting out to reach Ephesus and join Cyrus.

8.2 The Roman Superior Eagle

In Roman times the eagle had great significance as the most impressive of birds. As the messenger of the father of the gods the eagle was often depicted as wielding the thunderbolt and was commonly associated with Jupiter. Pliny strategically places the eagle as one of the first species of birds in his avian chapter. The eagle is given a striking introduction *Ex his quas novimus aquilae maximus honos, maxima et vis* (Plin. *Nat*. 10.3.6) "Out of those [birds] which we know, eagles have the greatest honour and the greatest strength". Writing in Roman times, Aelian also values the bird as among the most elite of the avian species;

Τὸν ἀετὸν τὸν τῶν ὀρνίθων βασιλέα οὐ μόνον
περιόντα καὶ ζῶντα δέδοικε τὰ ὄρνεα καὶ καταπτήσσει
φανέντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ πτερὰ ἐκείνου ἐάν τις τοῖς
τῶν ἄλλων συναναμίξῃ, τὰ μὲν τοῦ ἀετοῦ μένει ὁλό-
κληρα καὶ ἀνεπιβούλευτα, τὰ δὲ ἕτερα κατασήπεται

Ael. *N.A*. 9.2.

"Birds fear the eagle, the king of birds, and are in awe of his presence; not only when he flies around and is full of life, but also if one mingles his feathers with those of other birds; those of the eagle stay intact and in pristine condition while those of others decay".

Like Aelian, Pliny suggests that the eagle's feathers have a negative effect on other birds. It seems that the eagle was a powerful force to be reckoned with; Aelian (*N.A*.9.2) refers to the bird as βασιλέα, and, like Pliny, Aelian suggests that its remains are so potent that they can dissolve the feathers of inferior species.

The strength of the eagle was rated so highly that some believed that it would take on much bigger enemies. Pliny (*Nat*. 10.5.17) states that the eagle gathers dust and sprinkles it over the stag's head in order to temporarily blind it and subsequently beats its victim's head with its wings. Meanwhile Aelian (*N.A*. 9.10) asserts that the eagle is highly predatory and lists its most common victims as geese, hares and fawns. He claims that eagles have been known to attack the octopus (Ael. *N.A.* 7.11) and explains how eagles prey on tortoises and drop them from great heights in order to shatter their protective shells. It is interesting that Aelian attributes the eagle with this premeditated strategy; he records that eagles behave in this perculiar way in order to attack the tortoises' unprotected bellies (*N.A*. 7.16).

Some authors attributed the eagle with extremely loyal characteristics. Aelian (*N.A*. 2.40) relates how Pyrrhus' captive bird chose to starve itself after its master's demise, while Pliny (*Nat.* 10.6.18) records that an eagle committed suicide by throwing itself on a pyre as a tribute to the death of its mistress.

8.3 Military and Political Symbolism

The power of the eagle's associations with Jupiter, honour and strength meant that its use as a symbol quickly extended to the battle field. Pliny (*Nat*. 10.5.16) explains that the eagle became a Roman military mascot in the second consulship of Gaius Marius in 104 BC. An eagle was sculpted on the top of Roman legionary standards and the *aquila* came to represent both the past military achievements of the legion and their imminent prowess on the battle field (Peddie 1994: 31).

It appears that the Romans spent a considerable amount of time and energy in designing new models of the *aquila*; whereas early standards were small and easily portable later versions were moulded from gold and were larger (Peddie 1994: 32). The eagles on top of standards often acquired divine meaning further elicited by their poses. Some eagles were depicted with thunderbolts held in their claws, and others were designed with their necks bending sharply to the left as if awaiting divine favour (Peddie 1994: 31). The eagle standards took on such status that they were never melted down and reconfigured, even if they were badly mutilated in battle (Peddie 1994: 31).

Peddie suggests that the eagle standards had a very practical use and asserts that the symbolic standards were important in the organisation and deployment of troops in the heat of battle.[135] The standards even played a part in the religious life of the Roman army; Webster (1969: 135) explains that the symbols were annointed with oils and adorned with flowers on special occasions. The power of eagle symbolism also becomes clear when we consider monuments to Roman war dead. Keppie dates his study on Roman funerary monuments from 31BC to 68 to 70 AD and analyses a number of sculptures that depict the *aquila*.[136]

The conceptual power of the Roman eagle as an influential symbol becomes even more apparent when it is mentioned by Tacitus. He tells us that Germanicus

[135] Peddie 1994: 36 see also Webster 1969: 135.
[136] Keppie 2003: 43 and 47.

engaged in battle in 16AD at Cherusci. Apparently eight eagles flew towards the forest and Germanicus took courage. Interestingly enough, Tacitus actually labels the eagles as *Romanas aves* "birds of Rome" and attributes the birds with divine characteristics; *exclamat irent, sequerentur Romanas aves, propria legionum nu<m>ina* (*Tac. Ann*. 2.17) "He shouted that they should charge and follow the birds of Rome, the special protectors of the legions". This positive interpretation of the eagle is supported by the behaviour of Caesar's tenth legion in 55 BC. Worried about jumping from the ship when invading Britain for the first time, Caesar's soldiers were only convinced to disembark from the relative safety of the vessel after the eagle bearer had leapt towards the shore ahead of them (Caes. *Gal*. 4.25).

The eagle not only proved to boost morale in the Roman army but also carried significant connotations in the wider political environment of the Roman world. After Crassus famously lost the eagle standards to the Parthians in 53 BC Augustus campaigned tirelessly for their return. When the Parthians finally signed a peace treaty the eagles were returned to the Roman capital to great public acclamation. The standards were housed in a new temple dedicated to Mars the Avenger (Zanker 2007: 186), and Augustus proudly recorded his achievement in the *Res Gestae*.[137] The force of the ideology behind the recaptured eagles appears to have been considerable; the event itself was commemorated on the cuirass of the Prima Porta statue (Zanker 2007: 189), and a significant number of denarii were minted depicting the return of the standards.[138] It is also a tribute to the symbolism of the eagle that the Romans rejoiced so enthusiastically on the occasion of the standards' return.

Augustus was well aware that the eagle carried positive connotations. The *Gemma Augustea* is thought to have been designed in order to commemorate Tiberius' triumph in 12 AD (Stewart 2008: 121-2). The stone measures 23cm wide and depicts

[137] *Monumentum Ancyranum*, tab.v. cf. Webster 1969: 135.
[138] Webster 1969: 135.

Augustus, who is seated on a throne surrounded by close members of his family. Augustus is contextualised with an eagle that is perched beneath his figure and holds a sceptre in his left hand. The scene not only emphasises his divine associations with Jupiter (Stewart 2008: 121-2), but also highlights the successful and long lasting cultivation of Augustus' image in relation to the bird.

Considering the use of eagle symbolism in funerary contexts, the religious connotations of the bird and the Roman's reluctance to abandon damaged standards it appears that the eagle embodied a large number of far-reaching sentiments. The repeated redesign of the *aquila* suggests that the eagle proved to be an enduring icon possessing powerful connotations. It does not seem to be an exaggeration to say that the Romans associated their very national security and identity with the eagle.

8.4 Turning the Eagle to the Sun

Both Aristotle and Pliny describe how the parent eagle would test the origins of his offspring with reference to the glare of the sun. Aristotle explains that the keen-sighted eagle forces its young to look at the sun and kills those that cannot gaze directly at the beams of light (Arist. *H.A*. 9.620a). Pliny describes how the sun provides unequivocal confirmation of legitimacy; if the eagle is a genuine descendent it will be able to withstand the glare of the bright rays.

haliaetus tantum inplumes etiamnum pullos suos percutiens subinde cogit adversos intueri solis radios et, si coniventem umectantemque animadvertit, praecipitat e nido velut adulterinum atque degenerem. illum, cuius acies firma contra stetit, educat.

Plin. *Nat*. 10.3.10.

"Still, the sea eagle forces his own unfledged chicks to stare into the glare of the sun, beating them. If the fledgling turns away blinking and weeping the parent hurls it from the nest as if it were an imposter and degenerate; he rears only the one whose line of sight stays unwavering."

The initial association between the eagle and the sun may be found in texts that predate Pliny and Aristotle. The Egyptians thought of the eagle as representative of the sun (Wittkower 1939: 293-325), and early Greeks followed their lead. In Aeschylus' *Suppliant Maidens* the sun is described "Ζηνὸς ὄρνιν" (212) "the bird of Zeus". Pollard (1977: 114) speculates that the link between the eagle and the sun may have been detailed in this instance in order to emphasise the exotic beliefs of the Egyptians. The other reference to the eagle carrying particular connotations with the sun is to be found in the writings of Pausanias. He states that the eagle is sacred and links it with Helios.[139]

A tentative connection between the bird and the sun may have passed from Egyptian society or Greek literature to that of the Romans, but it seems that the concept of testing eagle chicks occurs frequently in Roman epic. In Silius' *Punica*, the eagle and the sun come to the fore in the context of warfare. At the battle of Cannae, the father of six sons, Crista, urges his offspring to fight Hannibal alongside him.

armiger haud aliter magni Iovis, anxia nido
cum dignos nutrit gestanda ad fulmina fetus,
obversam spectans ora ad Phaethontia prolem
explorat dubios Phoebea lampade natos.

139 Paus. 5.25.5 cf. Pollard 1977: 114.

Sil. 10.108-111.

"…the armour bearer of great Jupiter behaves in no other way; she anxiously rears the young in the nest so that they are worthy of carrying thunderbolts. The bird examines the staring chicks which look towards Phaethon's face and investigates their lineage with the blaze of Phoebus."

It is obvious that the premise of this simile rests on the same basis as the explanations in Aristotle and Pliny. Crista's sons' legitimacy becomes conceptually related to their bravery and they are to be examined in the face of adversity.

It is interesting that the young sons are aligned with the eagle in a military capacity, for the bird not only carried associations with the gods but also with the sovereignty of Rome herself. As previously discussed, the eagle, as the symbolic representation of Jupiter, came to invoke the very heart of what it meant to be Roman. Considered in this light it appears that both the state and the nobility of ancestors are elemental in this simile. Because Hannibal will slaughter the brothers they are associated with the most noble of birds and subtly linked to the identity of the Roman military as a whole.

Although Silius aligns the boys with the historic glory of Rome he does not neglect the more realistic meaning of their involvement in war. By comparing the sons of Crista to eaglets Silius suggests the relative inexperience of the adolescent warriors; they are children in a hostile environment, and their lives are ultimately at stake. Their father's righteous determination that they prove themselves as heroic fighters has a tragic aspect - his demands will ultimately end in all their deaths.

In effect, the simile explores the nature of personal loss in the face of military responsibility. Both the eaglets that fail examination and the sons that suffer defeat are doomed; but whereas the eaglets are sacrificed by their own father it is Hannibal that guarantees the murder of the young men.

As well as operating as the executor of death Hannibal also initiates the test that tries the young soldiers' endurance and so he is aligned with the sun. Spaltenstein (1990: 62) highlights the fact when he comments, *Les armes d'Annibal luisent d'un éclat terrifiant* "Hannibal's armour beams with terrifying brilliance". Given the foreign associations with sun worship it seems possible that Hannibal's alignment with the sun subtly emphasises the barbaric and hostile culture that he represents.

It appears that the interest in turning the eaglet towards the sun is matched in non-epic sources. Aelian gives another account of the eagle's attitude towards its young; once again, adolescents are forced to prove their worth by gazing unblinkingly at rays of light.

βάσανος δέ οἱ τῶν νεοττῶν
τῶν γνησίων ἐκείνη ἐστίν. ἀντίους τῇ αὐγῇ τοῦ
ἡλίου ἵστησιν αὐτοὺς ὑγροὺς ἔτι καὶ ἀπτῆνας· καὶ
ἐὰν μὲν σκαρδαμύξῃ τις τὴν ἀκμὴν τῆς ἀκτῖνος
δυσωπούμενος, ἐξεώσθη τῆς καλιᾶς, καὶ ἀπεκρίθη
τῆσδε τῆς ἑστίας· ἐὰν δὲ ἀντιβλέψῃ καὶ μάλα
ἀτρέπτως, ἀμείνων ἐστὶν ὑπονοίας καὶ τοῖς γνησίοις
ἐγγέγραπται, ἐπεὶ αὐτῷ πῦρ τὸ οὐράνιον ἡ τοῦ γέ-
νους ἀδέκαστός τε καὶ ἄπρατος ἀληθῶς ἐστιν ἐγ-
γραφή.

Ael. *N.A*. 2.26.9-17

"The test of legitimate nestlings is as follows. They place them as fragile and featherless infants to face the gleam of the sun, and if [the eaglet] blinks at the intensity of the beam of light, shrinking away, it is thrust out of the dwelling and separated from its hearth. However, if the bird stares right at the beam wholly unmoved it does better than to deserve suspicion and is marked down as legitimate. This is all owing to the fact that the heavenly blaze is genuinely an uncorruptable and unbiased assurance of descent."

The relationship between the sun and the eagle is not only implied, but the process of scrutiny is dramatically played out before our eyes. The harsh treatment of the eaglet which fails the examination is striking; false imposters are evicted from the nest and left to perish. Like Silius' young warriors, the eaglets are doomed if they do not quickly prove themselves. It appears that the concept of the eagle turning its young towards the beams of the sun could be employed in a range of epic and non epic contexts.

In his *Civil War*, Lucan also refers to the relationship between eaglets and the sun. On this occasion the Psylli test their infant's magical power against snakes.

utque Jovis volucer, calido cum protulit ovo
implumis natos, solis convertit ad ortus:
qui potuere pati radios et lumine recto
sustinuere diem, caeli servantur in usus,
qui Phoebo cessere, iacent: sic pignora gentis
Psyllus habet, si quis tactos non horruit angues,

si quis donatis lusit serpentibus infans.

Luc. 9.902-8.

"Just like the bird of Jupiter, which turns its fledgling young towards the rising sun when they emerge from the warm egg: those who are able to endure the rays and sustain their gaze direct at the glare are kept unharmed in the employment of heaven, but those who yield to Phoebus are cast aside. If the child does not recoil from handling snakes and plays with the snakes they have been given the Psylli have guarentees of their genuine descent."

In this instance the eaglet and sun simile has been put to a slightly different use. Lucan emphasises the expectations that parents have of their young but also identifies the inherent powers of the Psylli as a people who are able to protect themselves against snakes. It seems that Lucan is combining two literary traditions: firstly the rite of passage that young eagles must go through, and secondly the traditional conflict between the eagle and the snake.

Wittkower (1939: 308) explains how the eagle and the snake were traditionally interpreted as enemies from the earliest times. Minoan stones depict the struggle between the two animals, and Homer pictures the battle between the eagle and the snake in *Iliad* 12 (200-209) when the bird clutches a serpent in its talons but is forced to drop it. Meanwhile Aristotle (*H.A*. 9.609a) explains that the eagle may feed on the snake and writes that the two animals are sworn enemies.

The concept features just as prominently in the epics of Virgil and Silius. Virgil (*A*. 11.751-758) describes how Tarchon carries Venulus off like an eagle grabbing a

serpent in its claws, while Silius (12.55-59) employs the traditional emnity between the snake and eagle to describe the hostilities between Hannibal and the Romans.

By skilfully invoking such a traditional concept of conflict between two arch animal rivals Lucan's simile (9.902-8) symbolically links old epic traditions with new epic innovations. Lucan has aligned the adolescents of the Psylli with the eagle in order to identify them as more strongly opposed to the snake. It makes logical sense that the Psylli should be associated with the arch enemy of the serpent for the very reason that they are able to tame the snake.

In effect the concept of turning eaglets to the sun adds a new twist to the epic eagle usage. The alignment of the Psylli as a unified snake-charming people with the eagle alludes to basic and accepted epic conventions. As such, Lucan bridges the gap between two very different types of material and fuses them in a completely innovative hybrid simile.

It seems that epic references to the eagle may have coloured subsequent representations of the bird. Writing in the second century AD, Lucian includes a comic reference to the strange ritual and indirectly proves the potency of this particular belief.

παρὰ πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων ζῴων ἀετός ἐστιν ὀξυωπέστατος, ὥστε
μόνος ἀντίον δέδορκε τῷ ἡλίῳ, καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ
γνήσιος καὶ βασιλεὺς ἀετός, ἢν ἀσκαρδαμυκτὶ
πρὸς τὰς ἀκτῖνας βλέπῃ." "Φασὶ ταῦτα," ἦν δ'
ἐγώ, "καί μοι ἤδη μεταμέλει ὅτι δεῦρο ἀνιὼν
οὐχὶ τὼ ὀφθαλμὼ τοῦ ἀετοῦ ἐνεθέμην τοὺς ἐμοὺς
ἐξελών· ὡς νῦν γε ἡμιτελὴς ἀφῖγμαι καὶ οὐ πάντα
βασιλικῶς ἐνεσκευασμένος, ἀλλ' ἔοικα τοῖς νόθοις

ἐκείνοις καὶ ἀποκηρύκτοις.

Lucianus, *Icar.*14.9-18.

"The eagle is by far the most keen-sighted of all living things. Consequently it is the only one who may look straight at the sun; it is only the legitimate and king-like eagle which looks towards the beams of light not blinking." "They say such things", I said, "And I am already sorry that I did not put the eye of the eagle in while taking out my own eye. Now I have come incomplete and am not wholly prepared in a royal way, just like those illegitimate and disinherited birds."

The examination of the references found in this section suggests that the concept of turning the eaglet to the sun could be combined with other epic traditions to form hybrid similes. Similes such as those in Lucan 9.902-8 and Silius 10.108-111 portray the ingenuity of epic authors. It has been demonstrated that the anecdote concerning the eagle, repeated so systematically in epic texts and other written sources, indicates that animal imagery possessed the power to transcend completely different types of literature.

8.5 The Eagle and Epic Identity

Over time the eagle is associated with a range of individuals. In the *Odyssey*, it is Odysseus who is most prominently aligned with the bird:

χῆνες μὲν μνηστῆρες, ἐγὼ δέ τοι αἰετὸς ὄρνις

ἦα πάρος, νῦν αὖτε τεὸς πόσις εἰλήλουθα,

ὃς πᾶσι μνηστῆρσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐφήσω.′

Hom. *Od*. 19.548-550.

"Before I was the eagle and the geese were the suitors, now your husband is back again, who shall unleash an outrageous destiny on every one of the suitors."

and so establishes his symbolic connection with the bird. The hero is also associated with the bird when his enemies see a sight that predicts they will suffer stern retribution at the hero's hands, αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀριστερὸς ἤλυθεν ὄρνις, | αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης, ἔχε δὲ τρήρωνα πέλειαν (Hom. *Od.* 20.242-3) "A bird came upon them from the left, the high-soaring eagle held the timid wild dove". These bird omens show their continuous support for Odysseus and guarantee that he will enact his revenge when he manages to return home (Podlecki 1967: 13-15 and 23). In fact, Odysseus' identification of himself as the eagle is reiterated when Homer aligns his movements with the bird at the very end of the *Odyssey* οἴμησεν δὲ ἀλεὶς ὥς τ′ αἰετὸς ὑψιπετήεις (Hom. *Od*. 24.538) "Soaring high, he swooped just like an eagle on the assembled throng".

Homeric tradition shows the strength of the alignment between the eagle and Odysseus, but the link between epic heroes and the eagle is not always as we might expect in Roman epics. For example, in *Aeneid* 1, Aeneas is not associated with the eagle but with a swan.

aspice bis senos laetantis agmine cycnos,
aetheria quos lapsa plaga Iovis ales aperto
turbabat caelo; nunc terras ordine longo

aut capere aut captas iam respectare videntur:

ut reduces illi ludunt stridentibus alis

et coetu cinxere polum cantusque dedere,

haut aliter pubesque tuae pubesque tuorum

aut portum tenet aut pleno subit ostia velo.

Verg. *A*. 1.393-400.

"Look at the twelve swans rejoicing in their procession: the swift bird of Jupiter has been struck down and causes tumult in the upper air. Now they seem either to reach land or to have reached it already in their long line; already they seem to look back on land. Just as you will succeed, the swans duck and dive with beating wings and swoop around circling in a crowd, loud with song. Your youths and your warriors will reach the port or the harbour in full sail just like the swans."

It is somewhat surprising that Aeneas is not associated more directly with the eagle. As the parallel hero to the Homeric Odysseus, Aeneas has more reason to be aligned with the bird than his Homeric predecessor. Aeneas is the human guarantee of Rome's future success and is supported by Jupiter in his mission to found Rome. Given Rome's military association with the eagle and her ancestral link with Jupiter[140] it seems somewhat odd that the earthly representative of Jupiter's divine intervention is not more frequently aligned with the Trojan hero.

In *Aeneid* 1 the eagle is aligned with malign forces that threaten Aeneas' safety as well as the prosperity of his men. It seems that the flock of swans in refuge represent the fact that Aeneas' twelve missing ships from his fleet are safe (Austin 1971: 140).

[140] Jupiter was grandfather to Romulus and Remus.

The very phrasing emphasises the celebratory nature of the flight, the swans are termed as *laetantis agmine*[141] "rejoicing in their procession". It is likely that Aeneas' ships are aligned with the swan because the swan was perceived as Venus' bird; the conflict between the birds may symbolise the emnity that Jupiter and Venus display towards each other. Austin (1971: 141) asserts that the swans' safe return signals Venus' victory.

In another episode in *Aeneid* 9, it is not the obvious hero of the epic, Aeneas, who takes on the characteristic associations of the eagle, but the impediment to peace, Turnus. Turnus is dramatically associated with the eagle when he attempts to catch the escaping Lycus,

simul arripit ipsum
pendentem et magna muri cum parte revellit:
qualis ubi aut leporem aut candenti corpore cycnum
sustulit alta petens pedibus Iovis armiger uncis
quaesitum aut matri multis balatibus agnum
Martius a stabulis rapuit lupus.

Verg. *A*. 9.561-566.

"At the same time he snatches at the very man who hangs
and pulls him down along with a big chunk of the wall:
Just as when the armour bearer of Jupiter
lifts up either a hare or a dazzling white swan in its hooked claws
as it is hunting at altitude, or as when the wolf of Mars
has seized a lamb from the fold that is sought

[141] Verg. *A.* 1.393 cf. Austin 1971: 140.

by the mother who bleats constantly."

It seems that the correlation between Turnus and the eagle is quite definite. Turnus is associated with the eagle's predatory characteristics; he preys on a weaker victim and brings disruption to the scene. The swan is the victim of the eagle's hunt once more; as such the previous association between Aeneas and the swan (Verg. *A.* 1.393-400) is brought to mind once again.

Such a simile has obvious parallels in Homer; Menelaus is compared to the eagle when it is out hunting the hare (*Il.* 17.673-678); Hector is like an eagle swooping on a lamb or hare in *Iliad* 22 (308-311) and Hector is once again aligned with an eagle attacking swans in book 15 (690-695). The choice to represent Turnus as the eagle and the wolf emphasises his strong connections with the gods and aigns him with these Homeric heroes; there is no doubt that the warrior will cause great disruption owing to the fact that he believes that the gods support his aggressive stance (Hardie 1994: 180).

The choice of phrasing has a number of striking implications. On the most basic level, the Romans thought of the eagle as a bird of prey; in this context Turnus is clearly a predator and a skilled one at that. Symbolically, the eagle was believed to possess superior qualities of strength and honour; as a result the Romans made the bird their very own military mascot. Finally, as the bird of Jupiter, we expect the eagle to behave as the executor of the god's will. In this episode, verbally highlighted as "the armour bearer of Jupiter", Turnus has a direct link to Jupiter. Seemingly, at this point, his actions are the most direct expression of the god's wishes that we may expect. All these considerations may well have entered the mind of the Roman reader, but why would Virgil choose to align Turnus more prominently with the eagle than Aeneas?

Perhaps the eagle is associated with Turnus because Virgil was trying to demonstrate the extent of the hero's misplaced confidence in his military prowess. Or

perhaps Virgil was attempting to offer an alternative perspective on Turnus' identity in the epic.

To my mind it is the latter of these two concerns that determined Turnus' suprisingly prominent association with the eagle. Because Turnus is aligned with the eagle more predominantly than Aeneas it could be that Virgil was attempting to emphasise the fact that the Italians had as much a critical role to play in the foundation of Rome as the Trojans.[142] The symbolic usage of the eagle, as well as the comparative alignment of both Aeneas and Turnus with the wolf,[143] may suggest that they both had the potential to play a critical part in Roman history. Jupiter's association with the bird, and by extention, with Turnus, highlights the fact that the two men could have been allies. It is mainly owing to the interference of the gods that Turnus is killed; the eagle alignment highlights the fact that Aeneas and Turnus could have been linked in a positive way if things had turned out differently. Instead Aeneas' eventual slaughter of Turnus is the ultimate tragedy: Turns suffers an ignoble death and Aeneas is dehumanised by the way he treats the Italian.

Over time, the symbol of the eagle is crystalised as a representation of Roman power and military strength in its own right. In the *Punica*, the Romans are depicted as banding together as a nation struggling to defend themselves against a common enemy: the Carthaginians. Silius' snake makes an attack on the eagle's nest and so represents Hannibal launching his forces against the citadel of Naples.

haud secus, occuluit saxi quos vertice fetus
ales fulva Iovis, tacito si ad culmina nisu
evasit serpens terretque propinquus hiatu,

[142] Toll (1997: 51) goes as far as to suggest that the *Aeneid* offered the perfect opportunity to draw the Romans and the rest of the Italian population together after the Civil War of the 90's BC and the new citizenship laws. According to Toll (1997: 38) it is probable that the Romans considered themselves as ancestrally superior to the wave of newly enfranchised citizens.
[143] See 6.4.1.

illa hostem rostro atque adsuetis fulmina ferre

unguibus incessens nidi circumvolat orbem.

Sil. 12.55-59.

"It is not at all different when the tawny bird of Jupiter hides its young at the top of a rocky outcrop. If a snake climbs silently up to the nest at the summit and terrifies the young with its gaping mouth, the eagle, accustomed to carrying thunderbolts, picks up the enemy snake in her beak, and divebombing, swoops around the nest in a circle."

Silius distinguishes the eagle as *ales fulva Iovis* or the "tawny bird of Jupiter" (Sil. 12.56). The wording choice emphasises the specific associations between the wild animal and the Roman identity. In this particular instance, the eagle's nest is comparative to Naples, and so the eagle itself becomes descriptive of Roman sovereignty in the face of attack. The eagle is repeatedly referred to as the bird of Jupiter in Roman epic and is even termed as the eagle of Pompey and the "Roman" eagle.[144] The eagle comes to denote the military potential of a nation under threat from foreign forces.

Considering the power of the symbol of the eagle in the Roman mentality it seems possible that Virgil manipulated the eagle's associations in order to provide the Italians and the Romans with a more unified identity. In the struggle to promote a united Roman front the symbolism of the eagle may well promote the similarity between Italian and Trojan heroes and their respective origins. Meanwhile the later depiction of Silius takes the symbolic use of the eagle to its logical extension. The eagle comes to

[144] Sil. 10.108, 12.56; Luc. 6.138-139, 6.129.

represent a much more established version of Roman sovereignity in the face of foreign attack.

8.6 The Eagle Omen and the False Omen

The Homeric eagle is often featured as the carrier of accurate omens: in the *Iliad*, an eagle omen warns that the Trojans will not be successful if they continue to fight against the Greeks (Hom. *Il.* 12.200-229). In the *Odyssey* (19.538-9) the eagle predicts Odysseus' eventual return home when an eagle attacks geese in Penelope's dream. The eagle is often suggestive of Odysseus' slaughter of the sinful suitors; in book 2 (146-156) eagles attack each other to prophecy the ominous return of the hero. The reoccurrence of the eagle is highlighted by both Podlecki (1967: 12-15) and Anderson (1971: 49-65). Considering the frequent manipulation of eagles and other birds in the *Odyssey*, Podlecki (1967: 23) suggests that we consider the bird usage as affording the epic with a sense of unity.

In the Homeric context the eagle omen correctly predicts the eventual outcome of events and warns participants what will come to pass if they continue to behave in the same way (Anderson 1971: 51). When eagle omens are present in Homer, they are "expected to be true" (Anderson 1971: 52). Birds are conceptually identified as messengers that announce the intentions and desires of the Homeric deities.[145]

In Homer's *Odyssey* 2.147-156 and *Iliad* 12.200-229 the eagle omen constitutes a definite warning. The eagle omen in the *Odyssey* threatens the suitors who are attacking Odysseus' household, while the eagle portent in the *Iliad* threatens the Trojans who keep attacking the Greeks (Anderson 1971: 51). In both Homeric cases the eagle

[145] Pollard 1977: 116 cf. Hom. *Il.* 10.274-276.

omen represents the genuine sentiments of divine forces at work; it is clearly evident that the suitors and the Trojans would ignore the omen at their peril.

In Virgil's *Aeneid* 12, however, the usage of the eagle omen evolves. Here the eagle is involved in a completely misleading episode when the Rutulians are duped by Juturna's deceptive portent. Aeneas and Turnus have previously agreed to fight each other in single combat, but a deceptive eagle omen means that the Rutulians are mislead into thinking they must break the truce and attack to save Turnus. In the omen, an eagle swoops down on a swan but is forced to surrender the prey when it struggles:

namque volans rubra fulvos Iovis ales in aethra
litoreas agitabat avis turbam que sonantem
agminis aligeri, subito cum lapsus ad undas
cycnum excellentem pedibus rapit improbus uncis.
arrexere animos Itali, cunctaeque volucres
convertunt clamore fugam (mirabile visu)
aetheraque obscurant pinnis hostemque per auras
facta nube premunt, donec vi victus et ipso
pondere defecit praedamque ex unguibus ales
proiecit fluvio penitusque in nubila fugit.

Verg. *A*. 12.247-256.

"For flying in the rosy sky the tawny bird of Jupiter was driving shore birds and the resounding birds of a winged formation on, when suddenly, fallen to the very waves, the eagle cruelly seized up a pure white swan in its hooked claws. The Italians' minds were agitated, and (an astonishing sight) all the birds turned about in riotous flight and cast a

shadow in the sky with their wings. Overpowered by their force and its own weight the eagle failed; he dropped the prize swan from his talons into the stream and fled deep into the clouds."

The eagle omen in the *Aeneid* is different from the Homeric counterparts. For one thing, the eagle omens in Homer are questioned and disbelieved by the onlookers, whereas in the *Aeneid* 12 Tolminus' definition of the omen is accepted wholly without criticism (Anderson 1971: 51). Tolminus interprets that the eagle represents Aeneas, the swan symbolises Turnus, and the onlookers of the fight are the frightened birds. Of course it may be that Virgil was encouraging his readers to consider an alternative interpretation: namely, that Turnus may be aligned with the thwarted eagle and Aeneas with the rescued swan. Whereas Virgil's readers are given the opportunity to consider the various meanings behind the omen, the Italians merely receive Tolminus' interpretation at face value.

In effect the eagle omen in *Aeneid* 12 may be read as a conscious attempt on the part of the gods to spur the Italians on to warfare. It not only contradicts the omen in book 1 that suggests that Aeneas will be successful and reach his mythical home safely but also shows how the Rutulians are easily swayed by their own naivety when it comes to considering their own and Turnus' situation (Anderson 1971: 58 and 53). The Italians are duped by the omen because they prefer to perceive Turnus as the victim of the hostilities rather than as the cause of them.

There are no Homeric eagle omens that parallel Virgil's use of the bird. Homer only uses a false omen once, in book 2 of the *Iliad*. In this instance, Zeus sends a false dream to Agamemnon as an omen and deceives him into believing that he will be able to defeat the Trojans if he assaults their walls with his own forces. When Agamemnon acts on this omen, he gathers his forces for war and decides to test their bravery before

the attack. He deceives his men and tells them that he has decided to abandon the war and return home to Greece. Despite Agamemnon's expectations, and in contradiction to Zeus' dream prophecy, Agamemnon's forces rejoice and eagerly return to their ships.

It is likely that Virgil was drawing on Homer's false dream omen in *Iliad* 2 when he was writing the deceptive eagle omen in *Aeneid* 12, but it is noticeable that the types of omens are quite different. Most obviously there are no eagles in Homer's false omen; Virgil is innovative in his use of the eagle as a carrier for a false omen. It is also worth mentioning that although Tolminus and Agamemnon find themselves in similar positions (they are both deceived by omens that spur them into initiating conflict (Anderson 1971: 52)) the motivating forces behind the two deceiving gods, Juturna and Zeus, are at odds. In effect, Juturna does not operate within a moral set of codes: whereas Zeus uses omens that "point unfailingly to the future" (Anderson 1971: 52), Juturna consciously creates a false omen that sparks unnecessary conflict and acts only out of pity for her brother (Anderson 1971: 52 and 57).

The eagle omen in *Aeneid* 1 (393-400) encourages the view that augury is a reliable and authoritative form of communication between the divine world and the mortal sphere (Green 2009: 155). Yet the reference in *Aeneid* 12 is completely different in nature. Here, Virgil emphasises the fact that the eagle omen is not to be trusted. Tolminus interprets the omen, but it is not a misinterpretation on his part that sparks the Italians to violence, but the consciously deceptive omen itself which is to blame (Green 2009: 157). As such the very reliability of augury is called into question.

All in all it seems that the eagle omen in book 12 of the *Aeneid* makes an interesting comment on the nature of the contemporary political climate (Anderson 1971: 53) and the Roman perception of the relationship between gods and men. It seems that this false omen explores and questions bird augury as a mediating force between

immortals and mortals. Green perceives this deceptive eagle omen as part of a larger development in Latin literature.[146]

If the eagle omen does play a part in questioning the reliability of augury as a method of communication Virgil's eagle omen may be seen as contributing to an Augustan reassessment of religion (Green 2009: 166). The influence of the gods as deceptive and selfish entities are emphasised in this reference; Juturna acts only to please her own instincts to protect her brother. She does not consider the welfare of the Italians, nor the larger repercussions of her behaviour. The deception inherent in Virgil's *Aeneid* 12 signals considerable innovation in the role of the Roman epic eagle; this omen imagery questions the nature of bird augury in a way that is never examined in the Homeric counterpart.

8.7 Conclusion

Roman epic authors combined traditional facets of the eagle's identity with more contemporary ideas of the bird: the eagle is employed by Virgil in order to promote the role of Turnus in Rome's foundation, the myth of turning the eaglet to the sun becomes a literary topos in its own right and the eagle comes to the fore as a regal bird capable of representing Roman might. Where the eagle is still employed in the context of prophecies it takes on new significance and can no longer be relied upon as a trustworthy indicator of events to come.

[146] Green considers other references to augury in the works of Livy and Ovid (Green 2009: 147-167).

Chapter 9. The Elephant

9.1 The Lack of Homeric Elephants

There are no references to the elephant in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In order to understand the Greek knowledge of the elephant we are forced to refer to Aristotle. Aristotle, as usual, takes a natural historian's approach to the elephant rather than a poetic one; he studies the elephant's trunk and describes how it uses it to convey food to its mouth (*H.A*. 1.492b17-21). He writes that elephants suffer from flatulence (*H.A*. 7.605a23-24), that they have guts four times the size of an ox's (*H.A*. 2.508a1-3) and that they can consume up to nine Macedonian medimni of barley or groats (*H.A*. 7.596a3-4). It appears that Aristotle's accounts of the animal owe much to those of Ctesias; Ctesias refers to elephants that fight in battles and have the power to demolish walls, and Aristotle's comments betray Ctesias' influence (Bigwood 1993: 544).

Ctesias claims to have encountered an elephant first hand and to have witnessed it uprooting a tree (Bigwood 1993: 543), but it is questionable whether Aristotle had ever seen elephants himself and unlikely that he had dissected them. Although it is impossible to prove whether Aristotle encountered the elephant first hand, he may have referred to the writings of the physician Mnesitheus and those of Eudoxus of Cnidus (ca. 391- ca. 342) for further insight into the creature's anatomy. These scholars had researched the elephant's physique and the geography of India respectively (Bigwood 1993: 546-7).

Because Homer makes no mention of the elephant, Roman epic authors could not base their representations of the animal on Homeric traditions.[147] Instead, Roman authors largely used historical narratives as their basis for elephant imagery.

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[147] There are no references to elephants in Apollonius Rhodius. Theocritus mentions ivory from elephants in his *Idylls* (24.101, 28.8) but does not refer to elephants themselves. Roman epic authors might have found the accounts of Diodoros Siculus (19.82.3-4, 84.4) helpful; he refers to the creatures in the context

9.2 The Carthaginian Experience

To investigate the Romans' understanding of the elephant we must first refer to the Carthaginian experience of the animal. The Carthaginians' first contact with the war elephant came in the early third century. Pyrrhus king of Epirus travelled to Italy to help the Tarentines who were battling against the Romans and brought elephants with him. His fleet was subsequently attacked by Carthaginian fleets and many of the animals perished (Toynbee 1973: 33-34). Perhaps the Carthaginians were impressed by the magnificent stance of the animals, or perhaps they imagined their future potential in battle situations; at any rate they soon attempted to create their own elephant force. In the main the Carthaginians sourced elephants from Mauretania and Numidia and probably recruited Indian Mahouts to assist them in training the animals. Scullard (1974: 146) estimates that it would have taken the Carthaginians a significant amount of time to capture and train elephants to perform to a standard conducive to victory; it is likely that two or three decades would have been necessary. Although the Carthaginians were not the first to train the elephant for military purposes they were definitely committed to increasing their stock of the animal (Scullard 1974: 148).

From the outset of the First Punic War elephants were included in the battle line; in 262 Carthage sent fifty elephants to fight against the Romans in Sicily. In doing so, the Carthaginians showed impressive flair and commitment to transporting their military weapon; they not only managed to keep the elephants alive but also succeeded in navigating the difficult seas between Africa and Sicily with them on board (Scullard 1974: 149). Despite their commitment to employing the war elephant, the Carthaginians lost the subsequent battle at Agrigentum, and the Romans confiscated their elephants. It is surely a mark both of Carthaginian determination and of their confidence in the elephant that they continued to capture and train elephants despite this initial and later

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of battle. Aelian (*N.A.*11.25) comments that Indian was the language used to train elephants. Later authors such as Galen (*de usu partium*) dissected elephants and studied their anatomy.

following defeats. By the time of the next clash with the Romans in Africa in 256 the Carthaginians fought victoriously with a force of a hundred elephants.

After the Carthaginian defeat in the First Punic War elephants were used once again in the Mercenaries war. Carthage was unable to pay the mercenaries who had assisted in the initial conflicts against Rome but she fought and then managed to crush the mercenary rebels. Elephants were used during the struggles, but the most illuminating use of the animal came at the conclusion of the war. Hamilcar was ruthless in punishing the defeated mercenaries; "…men captured in battle were executed on the spot, while prisoners who were later brought in were thrown to the elephants to be trampled to death" (Scullard 1974: 153). It is revealing that Carthage chose such a form of punishment for those who had dared to challenge her. Conceptually it could be said that the elephant represented the Carthaginian state by enacting the punishment on her behalf. The magnitude of the violence reveals that Carthage wanted to daunt those who had crossed her and also portrays the value she bestowed on the elephant as an instrument of intimidation and annihilation.

The Carthaginians continued to employ the war elephant in conflict in the Second Punic War and by Hannibal's day the Carthaginians had realised how to use elephants to their best advantage. The elephant could intimidate inexperienced armies and terrify horses because of their smell (Scullard 1974: 155). The Carthaginians had understood that the elephant could have a profound effect on those novice armies who had not previously encountered it.

9.3 Roman Understanding

It seems that the Romans saw the elephant as a representation of the Carthaginian force rather than as a suitable military tool for themselves. The Romans did use some of the

elephants captured after the Punic wars to support their own troops in subsequent conflicts,[148] but it is clear that they chose not to use elephants to the same extent as their Carthaginian rivals. Most of the animals captured after the success of Metellus during the First Punic War were probably put in the arena (Scullard 1974: 152).[149] All in all the relationship between the elephant and the Roman army after the Second Punic War was spasmodic to say the least. "From time to time the Romans captured elephants, but Livy tells us that it was not until 200 BC that they actually used them in battle. A few campaigns showed that the experiment was not a success, and after the transportation difficulties of Aemilius Paullus in the Pydna campaign the elephant was seen no more in Roman armies except, as it were, by accident" (Glover 1948: 3). By the time of Silius it seems that the Romans had given up on the idea of employing the elephant as a weapon altogether.

The Carthaginian association with the elephant must have had a strong influence on the Roman conception of the nation's identity. Images of elephant head-dress including depictions of the tusks and ears are to be found on coins and sculptures; these symbols as well as depictions of the elephant itself personify Africa (Toynbee 1973: 50-51). The Romans had obviously accepted the association of the elephant with Africa, and Roman authors consequently commented on this bond. In his explanation on the progression of humankind Lucretius comments,

inde boves Lucas[150] *turrito corpore, tetras,*
anguimanus, belli docuerunt volnera Poeni
sufferre et magnas Martis turbare catervas.

[148] War elephants fought for the Roman forces at Pydna, 168 BC, Numantia, 153 BC and Thapsus, 46 BC (Hammond and Scullard 1970: 380).
[149] It is recorded that Caesar used an elephant in his invasion of Britain (Polyaenus *Strategemata*).
[150] Toynbee (1973: 34) explains: "Since Lucania had been the scene of the elephant's first appearance in Italy they were nicknamed by the Romans 'Lucanian cows'".

Lucr. 5.1302-1304.

"Next the Carthaginians taught the Lucanian oxen with towering backs to suffer the wounds of conflict and to disorder the great battle lines of Mars; they were foul monsters and snake-handed."

In addition Pliny describes the lengths to which Hannibal was prepared to go in order to save the reputation of the elephant in the arena.

Clara est unius e Romanis dimicatio adversus elephantum, cum Hannibal captivos nostros dimicare inter sese coegisset. namque unum qui supererat obiecit elephanto, et ille dimitti pactus, si interemisset, solus in harena congressus magno Poenorum dolore confecit. Hannibal, cum famam eius dimicationis contemptum adlaturam beluis intellegeret, equites misit qui abeuntem interficerent.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.7.18.

"It is well known that there was a fight of one of the Romans against the elephant, when Hannibal had driven our men that were taken prisoner to fight among themselves. For he cast the one man who remained in front of the elephant, and that man, when the bargain was made [that he would be set free if he destroyed the elephant], faced it alone in the arena and executed it - to the great sorrow of the Carthaginians. When Hannibal understood that the rumour of this struggle would result in scorn of the elephants he dispatched horsemen to kill the departing man."

It is interesting that the Roman author attributed Hannibal's actions to concern for the animal's image. Pliny appears to suggest that Hannibal realised that he could not afford for the elephant to suffer a drop in Roman esteem.

It seems that the Romans had a contradictory attitude towards the elephant depending on its context. Silius portrays the Romans as openly hostile to the elephant in times of war, which is hardly surprising in the setting of blood-thirsty conflict,[151] but at some points in his *Natural History* Pliny emphasises the Roman adoration of the animals in the arena.

sed Pompeiani amissa fugae spe misericordiam vulgi inenarrabili habitu quaerentes supplicavere quadam sese lamentatione conplorantes, tanto populi dolore, ut oblitus imperatoris ac munificentiae honori suo exquisitae flens universus consurgeret dirasque Pompeio, quas ille mox luit, inprecaretur.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.7.21-22.

"But Pompey's elephants, when they had despaired of escape, were seeking mercy from the people with indescribable expression. Bewailing, the elephants prayed humbly for themselves with a certain type of lamentation; the anguish of the people was so great that they forgot the commander-in-chief and the munificence sought out for his honour and stood up weeping as one. They called the Furies down on Pompey - for which that man soon paid the penalty."[152]

Pliny's delight in performing elephants is also difficult for him to mask.

[151] The Romans had attempted to develop a range of anti-elephant measures. At Ausculum two ancient sources record that the Romans tried to crush the enemy elephants with specially designed cranes and chariots (Scullard 1974: 107-108).

[152] Apparently elephants were not only held in affection by the Romans but sometimes fell in love with humans (Plin. *Nat*. 8.5.14).

Germanici Caesaris munere gladiatorio quosdam etiam inconditos meatus edidere saltantium modo...postea et per funes incessere, lecticis etiam ferentes quaterni singulos puerperas imitantes, plenisque homine tricliniis accubitum iere per lectos ita libratis vestigiis, ne quis potantium attingeretur.

Plin. *Nat*. 8.2.4-6.

"At the gladiator show of Germanicus Caesar certain elephants even made disordered movements in the manner of dances,... Afterwards they balanced along ropes - even carrying between four of them a single elephant in a sedan pretending to be a woman; they moved among couches in dining rooms full of reclining people with poised footsteps so as not to knock any of those who were drinking."

Despite their love of the comic elephant the Romans were undeniably aware of the destructive potential of the Carthaginian war elephant. In the history of conflict the catastrophic Roman defeat at Tunis during the First Punic War may have influenced the subsequent Roman impression of the animal. The Roman formation was weakened by the attack of the elephants and the soldiers were so tightly packed together that they could not flee (Glover 1944: 260). The Carthaginian elephants annihilated the Roman forces and it seems that the Romans were not quick to get over the defeat. "Such Romans as came through the terrible line of elephants alive survived only to be spitted upon the pikes of the Carthaginian phalanx which the shrewd Spartan [Xanthippus – who was fighting on the side of the Carthaginians] had placed a little to the rear. On the other wing the Roman left was doing well until they were swallowed up in the disaster to their right, and from the battle only two thousand Romans escaped; the effect of the

defeat on their morale was almost equally crushing" (Glover 1944: 260). Unsurprisingly, it seems that the destructive capabilities of the war elephant left a lasting impression on the Romans after this episode. The horrific events of the battle meant that the Romans were unwilling to challenge elephants again for a number of years (Nossov 2008: 27).

9.4 The Elephant as a Symbol

Lucan is the first Roman epic author to refer to the elephant. He uses it in a simile to describe Scaeva – a heroic centurion who fights in Caesar's army. In this context, Scaeva ignores the wounds that are inflicted on him and steadfastly attacks the enemy soldiers that outnumber him. He is badly mutilated by the arrows that strike him but refuses to give up:

sic Libycus densis elephans oppressus ab armis
omne repercussum squalenti missile tergo
frangit et haerentis mota cute discutit hastas:
viscera tuta latent penitus, citraque cruorem
confixae stant tela ferae: tot facta sagittis,
tot iaculis unam non explent vulnera mortem.

Luc. 6.207-212.

"Thus the Libyan elephant, attacked unrelentingly by spears, breaks all the arrows repelled from its rigid back; he breaks and dashes to pieces the spear heads clutching to his moving skin, his entrails are safe, concealed far within, and the spears do not reach

the blood of the struck beast; the wounds inflicted by so many arrows and so many javelins do not result in the death of the one elephant".

Whereas Lucan only employs the elephant once to illustrate Scaeva's strength and determination in facing the enemy army, Silius employs the elephant in a sequence of references that emphasise the importance of the elephant to Carthaginian prowess and the threatening power of the animal to the Roman psyche. Revealingly, Silius describes the Carthaginian Mago making a specific request for more of the animals to be dispatched to the front line after the battle at Cannae: *defit iam belua, tristis Ausoniis terror, necnon alimenta fatigant* (Sil. 11.540-541) "Our elephants, the nightmare of the wretched Romans, are now lacking in number, and our lack of food supplies wears us down."

This extract simultaneously summarises the nature of the relationship of the animal with both the Carthginian side and the Roman troops. The Carthaginian forces prioritise the elephant along with food supplies as a necessary facet to wage effective war. The Roman side is characterised as being fearful of the war elephant. The arrangement of the Latin here emphasises the force of Roman horror in reaction to the animal: *defit iam belua, tristis Ausoniis terror, necnon alimenta fatigant.* By careful word placement Silius has linguistically encircled the Romans by their own foreboding of the elephant: *Ausoniis* is surrounded by *tristis* on the one side and *terror* on the other.

Silius again indicates the significance of the Carthaginian elephant to the Roman consciousness when he refers to the transfer of the animals from the defeated Carthaginians to the victorious Romans after the battle of Nola.

ille dies primus docuit, quod credere nemo
auderet superis, Martis certamine sisti

posse ducem Libyae. raptant currusque virosque
Massylamque feram et vivis avulsa reportant
tegmina bellantum atque abeunt, sub cuspide terga
contenti vidisse ducis.

Sil. 12.273- 278.

"The first day taught them the thing which no one would have dared to believe even if it had been promised by the gods: that the Libyan chief could be resisted in the conflict of Mars. The Romans usurped chariots, men and the elephants; they snatched the armour from living soldiers, took these things away and then went off; satisfied that they had seen the back of the Carthaginian leader at the point of their spears."

In combination with the confiscation of Carthaginian weaponry the Roman possession of the elephant signals the material dimension of Carthaginian defeat. The abduction of the elephant from Carthaginian command is simultaneous with the Roman realisation that Hannibal could indeed be conquered. With these details in mind it is revealing that Silius repeatedly brings the elephant to the fore at key turning points in the progress of the conflict between Carthage and Rome. Silius emphasises the animal's importance again when the Carthaginian forces are defeated at Zama. The confiscation of the elephants is deliberately highlighted to emphasise the magnitude of the Carthaginian surrender.

hic finis bello. reserantur protinus arces
Ausonio iam sponte duci. iura improba adempta

armaque, et incisae leges, opibusque superbis

vis fracta, et posuit gestatas belua turres.

Sil. 17.618-621.

"The war ended in this way. Immediately and voluntarily the citizens unbarred their defences to the leader, Scipio. He removed their presumptuous laws and weapons and inscribed new laws; the influence of their arrogant wealth was broken and the elephants put down the towers they had once carried."

Clearly Silius appreciated the power of the elephant as a symbol of Carthaginian might. The elephant was relatively new to the epic genre and this presented Silius with the perfect opportunity for embellishment of the historical record. I shall argue that Silius was not satisfied with merely innovating and creating new elephant similes but that he also chose to undermine the Carthaginian forces in his *Punica* by subtly recreating and stylising the traditional portrayal and role of the war elephant seen in the historical writers. The epicist placed his own artistic and political beliefs over and above recording the exact reality of elephant involvement in the war. To him, the war elephant provided a symbol for the power of Carthage; the fall of the elephant could be artistically manipulated as a metaphor for the decisive Carthaginian defeat at the conclusion of the epic.

9.5 Undermining the Carthaginian Elephant

Silius repeatedly undermines the Carthaginian forces in his epic: he emphasises that the Carthaginians do not necessarily succeed in battle owing to their own merit and suggests that Carthaginian victories are largely owing to the support of Juno. At

Saguntum Juno drives the native citizens mad so they destroy themselves and cannot fight against the Carthaginians (Sil. 2.527-530). At Trebia, Juno makes the river swell up so the Romans become stuck in the swirling waters.[153] Hannibal wins at Trasimene partly because the lake sends up a deceiving mist (Sil. 5.34-36). At Cannae the goddess stirs up winds that topple the Romans.[154] At one point Juno even attempts to talk Paulus out of fighting because she fears for Hannibal's safety (Sil. 10.45-58). Juno regularly contributes to the battle and offers a constant source of reassurance to Hannibal.

Meanwhile the deceptive nature of the Carthaginians is constantly reasserted. Hannibal often chooses ambush over direct attack and is described as a deceitful man (Sil. 9.434-437). Hannibal attempts to turn Fabius' men against him with a trick (Sil. 7.260-267) and deviously sets fire to cattle and sends them to spread the flames in the Roman camp in order to escape from encirclement (Sil. 7.310-321). According to Silius, Hannibal even trained his men to pretend to retreat in order to confuse the enemy (Sil. 10.185-192). It could be that we are meant to interpret Hannibal's behaviour in a positive way, but I suspect that Silius is indirectly criticising the Carthaginians by emphasising their preference for trickery. At the same time, several Roman generals are given very scathing treatments by Silius and they are described as unprepared and foolish.[155] Arguably Silius' Hannibal does not make the most of his enemies' weaknesses.[156]

This then is the backdrop to the place of the elephant in Silius' *Punica*. The epicist 1) undermines Carthaginian tactics and bravery by emphasising the importance of Juno's help in their successes; 2) criticises the behaviour of Roman generals in making Hannibal's eventual demise seem even more pathetic; 3) emphasises that

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[153] Juno is clearly rooting for the Carthaginians at Trebia; Sil. 4.573-574.
[154] Juno's interference is perhaps most obvious at the battle of Cannae; Sil. 9.501-510.
[155] Varro (Sil. 9.20-23) and Flaminus (Sil. 4.708 -710) are afforded particularly damaging descriptions.
[156] The Romans admired Hannibal but simultaeneously hated him. Livy (22.51) narrates how Maharbal (Hanibal's cavalry commander) chided Hannibal "*Vincere scis, Hannibal; victoria uti nescis.*", "You know how to win a victory, Hannibal, but you do not know how to use a victory".

the Carthaginians were deceptive and suggests that they could not win the war despite the advantages that their trickery afforded them.

Silius does not stop at emphasising the weak traits of the Carthaginians, but characterises the involvement of the Carthaginian elephants so as to further undermine the symbolic representation of the Carthaginian forces. One example of this may be found when Silius describes the crossing of Hannibal's elephants over the Rhone. Livy's elaborate description of the same event suggests two ways that this was achieved, while Polybius gives a lengthy account of one way.

"I believe that there were various plans for transporting the elephants; at all events the tradition varies as to how it was accomplished. Some say that the elephants were first assembled on the bank, and then the keeper of the fiercest of them provoked the beast and fled into the water; as he swam off, the elephant pursued him and drew the herd in his train; and though they were afraid of the deep water, yet as soon as each of them got out of his depth, the current itself swept them to the other bank. It is, however, more generally believed that they were carried across on rafts; this method, as it would be safer, if the thing were to be done, so, in view of its accomplishment, is more probably the one employed. A raft, two hundred feet long and fifty feet wide, was thrust out from the shore into the stream, and, after being moored to the bank above by a number of stout hawsers, so as not to be carried down the current, was covered with earth, like a bridge, in order that the beasts may boldly venture upon it, as solid ground. A second raft, of equal width and a hundred feet long, and fit for crossing the river, was coupled to the first. Then the elephants, with the females leading, were driven out over the stationary raft, as over a road: and after they had passed onto the smaller raft adjoining it the ropes by which this had been loosely attached were cast off and it was towed across by some boats on the eastern bank. After landing the first contingent in this

fashion, they returned and fetched the others over. The elephants exhibited no signs of fear so long as they were being driven along as though on a connected bridge; they first became frightened when the raft was cast loose from the other and was carried out into mid channel. The crowding together which resulted, as those on the outside shrank back from the water, gave rise to a slight panic, till terror itself, as they looked at the water all about them, made them quiet. Some in their frenzy, even fell overboard; but, steadied by their very weight, threw off their riders, and feeling their way to the shallow places, got out upon the land".

Liv. 21.28.5.[157]

"Hannibal, on the day after the assembly, advanced his cavalry in the direction of the sea to act as a covering force and then moved his infantry out of the camp and sent them off on their march, while he himself waited for the elephants and the men who had been left with them. The way they got the elephants across was as follows. (46) They built a number of very solid rafts and lashing two of these together fixed them very firmly into the bank of the river, their united width being about fifty feet. To these they attached others on the further side, prolonging the bridge out into the stream. They secured the side of it which faced the current by cables attached to the trees that grew on the bank, so that the whole structure might remain in place and not be shifted by the current. When they had made the whole bridge or pier of rafts about two hundred feet long they attached to the end of it two particularly compact ones, very firmly fastened to each other, but so connected with the rest that the lashings could easily be cut. They attached to these several towing lines by which boats were to tow them, not allowing them to be carried down stream, but holding them up against the current, and thus were to convey

[157] This passage and all translations of it in later references are taken from Foster 1929: 83.

the elephants which would be in them across. After this they piled up a quantity of earth on all the line of rafts, until the whole was on the same level and of the same appearance as the path on the shore leading to the crossing. The animals were always accustomed to obey their mahouts up to the water, but would never enter it on any account, and they now drove them along over the earth with two females in front, whom they obediently followed. As soon as they set foot on the last rafts the ropes which held these fast to the others were cut, and the boats pulling taut, the towing-lines rapidly tugged away from the pile of earth the elephants and the rafts on which they stood. Hereupon the animals becoming very alarmed at first turned round and ran about in all directions, but as they were shut in on all sides by the stream they finally grew afraid and were compelled to keep quiet. In this manner, by continuing to attach two rafts to the end of the structure, they managed to get most of them over on these, but some were so frightened that they threw themselves into the river when half-way across. The mahouts of these were all drowned, but the elephants were saved, for owing to the power and length of their trunks they kept them above the water and breathed through them, at the same time spouting out any water that got into their mouths and so held out, most of them passing through the water on their feet."

Plb. 3.45.5-3.46.12. [158]

Silius characterises the elephant crossing in a very different way from his literary predecessors: he offers a remarkably short account of the episode and fails to supply the intricate level of detail found in Polybius and Livy.

fluminea sonipes religatus ducitur alno,

belua nec retinet tardante Libyssa timore;

[158] This passage and all translations of it in later references are taken from Paton 1979: 109-111.

nam trabibus vada et iniecta tellure repertum
conexas operire trabes ac ducere in altum
paulatim ripae resolutis aggere vinclis.
at gregis illapsu fremebundo territus atras
expavit moles Rhodanus stagnisque refusis
torsit harenoso minitantia murmura fundo.

Sil. 3.458-465.

"The noisy footed [herd of horses] is bound fast and led across by a wooden raft. The Libyan beast (elephant) does not hold the crossing back with delaying fear; for they cleverly cover the shallows with timbers, and they bind together beams with thrown earth, and then bring (these elephant-laden rafts) out into the deep little by little, loosening the chains attaching them to the bank. Terrified by the slipping and trumpeting of the herd, the Rhone dreaded the black bulky elephants and turned away its retreating waters; the river sent up threatening sounds from its sandy bed.

Spaltenstein (1986: 237) states, "*Liv. parle de radeaux faits de poutres ('trabes') assemblées puis recouvertes de terre pour que les éléphants croient s'avancer sur la terre ferme. Sil. note bien 'iniecta tellure' mais oublie d'en donner la raison. Si l'on n'avait que son texte, on ne comprendrait pas l'utilité de cette couche de terre."* "Liv. speaks of assembled rafts contrived to be covered by earth so that the elephants thought that they were walking on dry land. Silius justifiably records '*iniecta tellure*' but forgets to give the reason. If one did not have Livy's text one would not understand the use of the layer of earth". It is probable that Silius assumed that his audience knew the practicalities behind the passage and thought it would be superfluous to repeat the

details. Even so the extremely concise nature of the reference in comparison to the more "historic" models is perhaps surprising. It seems to me that Silius not only understood that the elephant was to be remodelled for symbolic purposes but also recognised the constraints of his genre which determined the suitable level of emphasis to be put on each elephant episode.[159]

When we consider the different intentions of the authors it becomes interesting to consider which particular details of elephant behaviour Silius chooses to include. It was important that he mould his elephant image carefully. Instead of clarifying the intricacies of the raft arrangement Silius emphasises very different details. He tells us to imagine elephants so great that they affect the flow of the Rhone. Apparently the river was terrified by the appearance of the elephants: "Terrified by the slipping noise of the herd the Rhone dreaded the black bulky elephants and turned away its retreating waters". It seems that Silius had a very specific image of the elephant that he wanted to impart to his reader. The elephant is an intimidating creature that has the power to terrify nature;[160] it is noisy, monstrous and foreboding in appearance.

It could be argued that Silius' rendering of the elephant owes more to Virgilian influence than historical reality. The Rhone's reaction to the elephants could be compared to the response of the Tiber to Hercules' strength at hurling a boulder in *Aeneid* 8. *inde repente* | *impulit, impulsu quo maximus intonat aether,* | *dissultant ripae refluit que exterritus amnis*. (Verg. *A*. 8. 238-240) "…then he suddenly threw it; mighty heaven thundered with the blow: the banks flew asunder, and the terrified river retreated." Considered in this light, Silius' elephants are representative of considerable might.

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[159] Wallace (1968: 85-86) considers the factors of composition that may well have also influenced Silius' depiction of the elephant. "In his approach to a historical panorama, out of which he was obliged by the requirements of epic poetry to select only those events which furthered and clarified the intent of his poem, Silius was forced to evaluate the importance of each individual happening; he was then obliged to include it or discard it according to his judgement and poetic acumen. The omission of events which did not contribute to the main action of the poem was accomplished in two ways: they were either completely passed over, as if they had not transpired at all, or they were alluded to by the barest mention".

[160] Cf. Sil. 4.601 below.

Irrespective of epic influences both Livy and Polybius went to great lengths to describe the fear of the elephant in facing the river. Livy (21.28.5) asserts that the animals were calm as long as they were on connected bridges but also describes their terror when they were near water. Polybius (3.46.12) too asserts that the animals were panicked and then made silent by their excessive fear of the river. In complete contrast Silius makes no reference to the fear of the elephants. He merely states *belua nec retinet tardante Libyssa timore;* "The Libyan beasts do not hold back in delaying fear".

It is clear that Silius depicts the elephant in a completely different light from his historiographic predecessors. He chooses to describe the elephant as an intimidating beast that has the power to affect the behaviour of the Rhone. In complete contrast, Polybius and Livy describe the animals as scared into silence by their excessive fear of that same river. Whatever Silius' feelings concerning the historic versions of the war, he chooses to modify the reported behaviour of the elephant.

In his first reference to the elephant Silius depicts the animal as an intimidating one. The elephants have the power to terrify the Rhone but remain under the complete control of the Carthaginians. Silius' elephants are not permitted to hinder the crossing over the river; in effect Silius not only emphasises the inherent power and impressive stance of the elephant but also heightens the efficient "elephant-handling" skills displayed by the Carthaginians. I argue that Silius exaggerated the power of Carthaginian control over the elephants at this early point in the epic only to undermine that same control when the elephant next appears at the much more vitally important battle of Trebia. It seems that Silius made a conscious decision to integrate the elephant in his epic as a symbol of progressive Carthaginian failure rather than as a historically accurate reality.

The subsequent repeated subjection and failure of elephants, particularly in battle scenes, is deliberately and artistically highlighted in order to foreshadow the

eventual fall of the Carthaginian force. In his next reference to elephants, in the Battle of Trebia, Silius describes the downfall of the animal despite the context of Trebia as a decisive Carthaginian victory. Before examining Silius' account of these elephants it is worth studying the historical narratives of Polybius and Livy to see their treatment of the animals in this battle:

"At length both of Tiberius' wings, hard pressed in front by the elephants and all round their flanks by the light-armed troops, turned and were driven by their pursuers back on the river behind them. After this, while the rear of the Roman centre was suffering heavy loss from the attack of the ambuscade, those in the van, thus forced to advance, defeated the Celts and part of the Africans, and after killing many of them broke through the Carthaginian line. But seeing that both their flanks had been forced off the field, they despaired of giving help there and of returning to their camp, afraid as they were of the very numerous cavalry and hindered by the river and the force and heaviness of the rain which was pouring down on their heads. They kept, however, in close order and retired to Placentia, being not less than ten thousand in number. Of the remainder the greater part were killed near the river by the elephants and cavalry, but the few infantry who escaped and most of the cavalry retreated to join the body I just mentioned and with them got safely into Placentia…[The Carthaginians were triumphant]…for very few Africans and Spaniards had been killed, the chief loss having fallen on the Celts".

Plb. 3.74.2-11. [161]

[161] This passage and all translations of it in later references are taken from Paton 1979: 183 and 185.

Thus Polybius' elephants play an important part in the defeat of the Romans; the elephants encircle the Romans at the start of the battle and then advance against the retreating army. Livy describes a similar scenario: the elephants at Trebia intimidate the Roman forces.

"…Besides this, the elephants, looming large on the outer extremities of the wings, gave rise to such a panic, particularly among the horses, not only by their strange appearance, but also by their unfamiliar smell, as to bring about a general flight....the elephants had now charged the centre of the line; and Mago and his Numidians, as soon as the Roman army had passed their ambuscade without observing it, started up in their rear, and caused the wildest panic and confusion. Nevertheless, amidst all these evils, the line held for a time unshaken and even - what no one had dared hope to for - against the elephants. Skirmishers, expressly posted to deal with the beasts, would throw darts at them and make them turn away, and then pursuing them would strike them under the tail, where the skin is softest and it is possible to wound them...In their terror they [the elephants] were now on the point of charging their own people, when Hannibal gave orders to drive them from the centre to the extreme left wing, against the Gallic auxiliaries. Here they immediately caused a decided stampede, …[the Romans attempted to escape in all directions]…".

Liv.21.55.7-11 and 56.1-2.[162]

Livy does not expand on the conflict between human and elephant on individual terms. Instead he discusses the tactics that were used against the elephant in general. Although Livy suggests that the animals were somewhat inclined to panic he indicates

[162] This passage and all translations of it in later references are taken from Foster 1929: Vol. V.

that the elephants were successfully deployed: they are depicted as intimidating beasts that rout the Romans and cause confusion among the enemy forces.

According to Livy, Hannibal's aggressive tactics paid off, and (on the whole) it seems that the elephants contributed positively to the Carthaginian success at Trebia. None of these positive details concerning the elephant are to be found in Silius' rendering of the same battle.

accumulat clades subito conspecta per undas
vis elephantorum turrito concita dorso.
namque vadis rapitur praeceps ceu proruta cautes
avulsi montis Trebiamque insueta timentem[163]
prae se pectore agit spumantique incubat alveo.
explorant adversa viros, perque aspera duro
nititur ad laudem virtus interrita clivo.
namque inhonoratam Fibrenus perdere mortem
et famae nudam impatiens 'spectabimur' inquit
'nec, Fortuna, meum condes sub gurgite letum.
experiar, sit ne in terris, domitare quod ensis
non queat Ausonius Tyrrhenave permeet hasta'.
tum iacit adsurgens dextroque in lumine sistit
spicula saeva ferae telumque in vulnere linquit.
stridore horrisono penetrantem cuspidis ictum
belua prosequitur laceramque cruore profuso
attollit frontem ac lapso dat terga magistro.

[163] See river Rhone above (Sil. 3.464).

tum vero invadunt iaculis crebraque sagitta

ausi iam sperare necem, immensosque per armos

et laterum extensus venit atra cuspide vulnus.

stat multa in tergo et nigranti lancea dorso,

ac silvam ingentem concusso corpore vibrat,

donec consumptis longo certamine telis

concidit et clausit magna vada pressa ruina.

Sil. 4.598-621.

"Disaster suddenly struck when there was a sighting of a force of elephants; they had towers on their backs and were driven through the waves. The troop of elephants forged on headlong through the fords just like the tumbling rock of the dashed apart mountain plummets. The elephants stirred up the Trebia; the very Trebia that was unaccustomed to such trepidation in its heart, and they wallowed in the foaming water. Misfortunes test men, and virtue toils undaunted through adversity on the steep ascent towards glory. So Fibrenus scorned to waste himself in a dishonourable death bare of fame, and said: "I shall be known! Fortune, you will not hide my death beneath the waves. I shall experiment to see whether there is anything in the world which the Roman sword cannot conquer and the Roman spear cannot pierce". Then straightening up he stood and threw a cruel shaft into the elephant's right eye, and the spear remained in the wound. The elephant followed the impact of the pointed end with a high pitched sound, he raised his cut head which was dripping blood, dumped his driver and turned tail in escape. Then the Romans dared to hope for the elephant's death and they attacked it with arrows and a shower of spears. A wound from the cruel weapons spread across its back and sides, and many a spear stood in its spine and in its dull coloured back; it set

the thick forest of weapons in motion when it shook its body until it fell down; all the spears had been used up in the drawn out conflict. The elephant blocked the compressed shallows with its monstrous carcass."

Despite the context of the Carthaginian victory Silius' elephant displays underlying weaknesses. The elephants do not rush into battle of their own accord, but Silius' perfect passive *concita* (Sil. 4.599) "driven" emphasises the fact that they had to be urged into battle; perhaps they were unwilling to become involved in the fighting. In the midst of battle too the behaviour of the elephants seems somewhat chaotic. The animals are described as rushing on *praeceps* (Sil. 4.600) and move *ceu proruta cautes avulse montis* (Sil. 4.600-601) "just like the tumbling rock of the dashed apart mountain plummets."

In contrast, the Roman Fibrenus takes on a heroic stance in facing the elephants, and Silius presents him as a brave and noble character. As Spaltenstein (1986: 316) asserts, Silius indulges in a well established motif "*L'opposition entre son courage et l'injustice de la Fortune (vers 607) est également habituelle*…" "The contrast between his [Fibrenus'] courage and the injustice of Fortune is equally traditional". Fibrenus makes short work of the elephant, yet Silius describes the downfall of the beast in considerable detail: its eye is injured and it trumpets in agonised response to its pain, *stridore horrisono* (Sil. 4.612) "with a high pitched sound". The elephant is afflicted with a series of wounds (Sil. 4.618) and is depicted bleeding *cruore profuso | attollit frontem* (Sil. 4.613-614) "he raised his cut head which was dripping blood". Even the Carthaginian perched on top of the animal is unable to control it; he is thrown unceremoniously from the back of the elephant *lapso magistro* (Sil. 4.614). Ominously, the elephant attempts to escape rather than face the aggressive Fibrenus *dat terga* (Sil. 4.614).

In dealing with the elephant the Romans quickly gain confidence and Silius describes the gory end of the wretched creature in vivid detail. The poor animal is showered with spears, *stat multa in tergo et nigranti lancea dorso* (Sil. 4.618) "many a spear stood in its spine and in its dull coloured back". It appears that Silius has once again applied the epic tradition to this scene rather than paying heed to the more historic models. In *Aeneid* 10, Mezentius throws so many spears at Aeneas that they collect in the hero's shield: *ter circum astantem laevos equitavit in orbis | tela manu iaciens, ter secum Troius heros | immanem aerato cicumfert tegmine silvam* (Verg. *A*. 10.885-887) "He rode three times around the motionless man in left winding circles; throwing spears from his hand the Trojan turns around with him three times. A huge forest of arrows is in his bronze shield."

It is possible that Silius was mindful of this reference in the *Aeneid* when he was describing the elephant at Trebia. When we look back to Lucan 6.207-212[164] we can see that Silius deviates significantly from Lucan's treatment of the elephant in the *Civil War*. Lucan's elephant is relatively unaffected by missiles: the javelins cannot penetrate its skin and the elephant has only to twitch to get rid of the irritants that do manage to get through its hide. To Lucan's elephant the attack of missiles is a mere inconvenience: the darts rebound, the spears do not draw blood; the elephant's life is not under threat. In some respects, Silius' description of the elephant under attack could not be more different. Silius' elephant is vanquished by the weapons aimed at it. The animal is easily overpowered and the shafts that pierce it are *saeva* (Sil. 4.611). All that is left is a corpse straddling the river, *clausit magna vada pressa ruina* (Sil. 4.620-621) "The elephant blocked the compressed shallows with its monstrous carcass". The elephant has been transformed from a magnificent animal ferocious enough to intimidate a river

[164] See 9.4.

into a victim blocking the shallows it once terrified. The message is clear; the elephant's days are numbered as surely as the side it fights for.

Seemingly, Silius' desire to stylise the elephant and set it up for defeat demanded that he both innovate on the epic representation of the elephant as found in Lucan and flout Livy's and Polybius' historical record in increasingly dramatic ways. Polybius' parallel account of elephants at Trebia does not concentrate so deeply on the conflict between elephant and human. His version of events is a markedly more simplistic overview of the skirmish and the elephants appear to contribute positively to the Carthaginian victory.

In Silius' account of the elephant's behaviour at Trebia we can sense that the animal shifts in characterisation from the aggressor to the victim. Unlike Lucan's impervious epic elephant Silius' animal struggles to ward off attack; irrespective of Polybius' and Livy's historical accounts Silius' elephant does not contribute to the Carthaginian victory. In effect the author undermines the reliability and intimidating characteristics of the animal. The focus on the collapse of the animal highlights the ingenuity and bravery of the Romans and foreshadows the eventual defeat of the Carthaginians.

Following Silius' complete annihilation of the elephant at Trebia he goes on to emphasise the scale of the animal. In book 8, Silius makes a passing reference to the elephant and envisages the effect of its impressive stature ...*victrix insultat belua campis* (Sil. 8.670) "The conquering elephant tramples the battlefield." In the battle line-up Silius once again emphasises the apparent strength of the animal.

sed qua se fluvius retro labentibus undis
eripit et nullo cuneos munimine vallat,
turritas moles ac propugnacula dorso
belua nigranti gestans ceu mobilis agger

nutat et erectos attollit ad aethera muros.

Sil. 9.237-241.

"But where the river flows back with lapping waves and does not afford the soldiers any safeguard with a rampart, the elephants stand nodding, bearing heavy towers and fortresses on their black backs; like a movable fortification wall; the elephants raise the constructed defences to the heavens."

Silius once again sets the elephant on a magnificent pedestal before unceremoniously tearing it down. In Sil. 9.237-241 the elephant is compared to a rampart, and the epicist exaggerates the scale of the creature to excessive lengths: *erectos attollit ad aethera muros*. However, just three hundred lines later Silius subsequently refers to elephants that suffer terrible attacks at the Battle of Cannae.

The fact that Silius refers to elephants in this context is an anomaly. Neither Polybius nor Livy mention elephants taking part in the battle at all. This seems hardly surprising since both historians claim that the majority of the Carthaginian elephants perished owing to the cold conditions after Trebia.[165] Despite the historical evidence, Silius does not refer to the death of any of Hannibal's elephants after Trebia. In fact he does not make any attempt to acknowledge this historical claim. In terms of historical accuracy, Silius' account leaves a lot to be desired.

appellitur atra

mole fera, et monstris componitur Itala pubes.

[165] Livy 8.11, Polybius 3.74.11; cf. Toynbee 1973: 35 and Spaltenstein 1986: 237.

nam praevectus equo moderantem cuspide Lucas

Maurum in bella boves stimulis maioribus ire

ac raptare iubet Libycarum armenta ferarum.

immane stridens agitur crebroque coacta

vulnere bellatrix properos fert belua gressus.

liventi dorso turris flammaque virisque

et iaculis armata sedet. procul aspera grando

saxorum super arma ruit, passimque volanti

celsus telorum fundit Libys aggere nimbum.

stat niveis longum stipata per agmina vallum

dentibus, atque ebori praefixa comminus hasta

fulget ab incurvo derecta cacumine cuspis.

hic inter trepidos rerum per membra, per arma

exigit Ufentis sceleratum belua dentem

clamantemque ferens calcata per agmina portat.

nec levius Tadio letum: qua tegmine thorax

multiplicis lini claudit latus, improba sensim

corpore non laeso penetrarunt spicula dentis

et sublime virum clipeo resonante tulerunt.

haud excussa novi virtus terrore pericli.

utitur ad laudem casu geminumque citato

vicinus fronti lumen transverberat ense.

exstimulata gravi sese fera tollit ad auras

vulnere et erectis excussam cruribus alte

pone iacit volvens reflexo pondere turrim.

arma virique simul spoliataque belua visu

sternuntur subita, miserandum, mixta ruina.

Sil. 9.570-598.

"The monstrous and dusky beasts were summoned and the Roman soldiers were brought together to face the animals; when Hannibal had ridden up on horseback he ordered the Moors who guided the Lucanian oxen to hasten them on into the conflict with the greatest speed and with a sharp goad. The elephants were driven on with many an injurious blow; they trumpeted wildly and moved nearer. A tower rested on each grey back equipped with soldiers and torches and arrows; and each poured a pounding hailstorm of rocks onto distant ranks; meanwhile the Libyans (who were up on high) threw a cloud of javelins here and there from their moving fortress. A long palisade stood crowded with white tusks and to each and every tusk was tied a spear which glinted from the curved section. Here, among the panic of the ongoing events, one elephant thrust an evil tusk through the armour, through the limbs even, of Ufens. When the elephant had lifted him up it carried him moaning through the trampled army. Nor was Tadius' death less horrific; at the place where the breast plate hid his body with many layers of linen the sharp tusks of the elephant forced their way through little by little; the tusks lifted the man on high while his body was unharmed, but his shield was clunking. The courageous man was not shaken with fear by this new danger but used it as an opportunity for glory; near to the forehead of the elephant he quickly transfixed its two eyes with his dagger. Goaded on by such a painful wound the elephant raised itself up in mid-air; its legs lifted on high, it shook and dislodged the heavy tower behind it as it was shaking. It was a wretched sight when suddenly the elephant was stripped of its

rider; soldiers and weapons were strewn all over the ground in various states of collapse."

Considering the wider context of this episode (the battle of Cannae resulted in a Carthaginian victory) we would expect Silius to offer a positive account of the Carthaginian elephants. Our expectations are not left completely unfulfilled: one elephant skewers the unfortunate Ufens, and he is carried about by the murderous animal. However, the actual destruction wrought by the elephant on the Roman line remains limited and the characters verge on the fantastic. Silius emphasises the bravery of the courageous soldiers who face the animals and stresses their ingenuity: Tadius displays considerable presence of mind in a hugely dangerous situation. "The courageous man was not shaken with fear by this new danger but used it only as an opportunity for glory" (Sil. 9.591-2).

From this point on Silius emphasises the ineffectual behaviour of the elephant; the animal is easily put out of action; it is simply a matter of poking the elephant's eyes out, and then the outcome is inevitable. The tower on top of the elephant crashes to the ground, and the symbolism is clear; the elephant is destined to fail.

By sculpting the elephant into a powerful symbol and then obliterating that same symbol repeatedly - irrespective of the historic tradition - Silius subtly suggests the magnitude of the Carthaginian defeat to come. The collapse of the elephant stands out in pronounced and stark contrast to the Carthaginian success that Silius had every opportunity to describe. Despite the fact that the historical record tells us that a large number of elephants was unavailable at this time the epicist stubbornly refers to the presence of a number of creatures, narrates the colossal downfall of one animal and chooses not to portray a more positive elephant image. The exotic magnitude of the elephant would have been new to the Roman reader of epic on this scale, but Silius

moreover emphasises the heroism of the Roman soldiers who defeat the elephant rather than the capability of the animal as a symbolic military weapon.

Silius' account of the elephant combat at Cannae continues in a similar vein; this time the elephants are ruthlessly set alight:

spargi flagrantes contra bellantia monstra
Dardanius taedas ductor iubet et facis atrae,
quos fera circumfert, compleri sulphure muros.
nec iusso mora. collectis fumantia lucent
terga elephantorum flammis, pastusque sonoro
ignis edax vento per propugnacula fertur.

Sil. 9.599-604.

"The Roman general commanded the Dardanians to throw burning torches against the warring beasts and to cram the defences carried by the elephants with dark and sulphurous firebrands. These orders were acted upon without delay: the elephants' backs lit up with blazing fire and smoke. The greedy fire was fed by the resounding gusts of wind and spread through the ramparts".

Once again the Carthaginians perish with the elephants, but this time it is flames that devour them. The epicist emphasises the complete collapse of the elephants and their handlers by innovating with a simile.

non aliter, Pindo Rhodopeve incendia pastor
cum iacit et silvis spatiatur fervida pestis,

frondosi ignescunt scopuli subitoque per alta
collucet iuga dissultans Vulcanius ardor.
it fera candenti torrente bitumine corpus
amens et laxo diducit limite turmas.

Sil. 9.605- 610.

"The outcome is not different when the herdsman casts a flame on Pindus or Rhodope; the glowing plague travels on through the woods, the leafy cliff faces are on fire and suddenly Vulcan's force, leaping about, collects into one unified and combined fire on high. Their bodies were glittering with baking bitumen and the elephants went mad and trampled a wide inroad into the troops."

This simile emphasises the ingenuity of the Romans in employing the force of fire against the animal. The strength of the fire is unendurable and quickly runs riot through the ranks of animals. Silius emphasises the speed of the flames with words such as *dissultans* (Sil. 9.608) "leaping about" and the unstoppable nature of the fire, *fervida pestis* (Sil. 9.606) "a growing plague". Once again the elephants are completely uncontrollable; they run wild (Sil. 9.610) *amens* and charge through the ranks without hesitation. Silius not only refers to elephants that are not to be found in Livy and Polybius but provides the Romans with the most effective weapon against the elephants. By employing fire to rout the animals, Silius has gained the opportunity to minimise Roman losses and heighten the painful suffering of the Carthaginian elephants.

The agony of the elephants is continually highlighted,

nec cuiquam virtus propiora capessere bella:

longinquis audent iaculis et harundinis ictu.

uritur impatiens et magni corporis aestu

huc atque huc iactas accendit belua flammas,

donec vicini tandem se fluminis undis

praecipitem dedit...

at qua pugna datur necdum Maurusia pestis

igne calet, circumfusi Rhoeteia pubes

nunc iaculis, nunc et saxis, nunc alite plumbo

eminus incessunt, ut qui castella per altos

oppugnat munita locos atque adsidet arces.

ausus digna viro, fortuna digna secunda,

extulerat dextram atque adversum comminus ensem

Mincius infelix ausi, sed stridula anhelum

fervorem effundens monstri manus abstulit acri

implicitum nexu diroque ligamine torsit

et superas alte miserum iaculata per auras

telluri elisis afflixit, flebile, membris.

Sil. 9.611-631.

“No one’s courage was enough to take the elephants on in face to face combat, but they dared to lash out from afar with the blow of darts and javelins. The submissive elephant of great bulk is burned by the raging fire and approaches the hurled torches here and there until it hurls itself head first into the waters of a nearby stream...but where the battle commences (before the Moorish plague of elephants burned with fire) the Roman

soldiers had encircled the elephants and assailed them with javelins, stones and bullets hurled from a distance. Just as when soldiers besiege a fortress or fortification and attack a citadel on the high ground. There was one man who showed noble bravery worthy of favourable fortune; Mincius raised up his drawn sword in his right hand at close quarters but was unfortunate in his venture: the trumpeting trunk of the elephant, pouring out aggression, grabbed him up in a sharp embrace and wound him up in a dreadful wrap. When the elephant had cast the wretched man on high through the upper air it threw the unfortunate soldier down (his limbs mangled) on the ground."

Silius emphasises the madness of the elephant in pain and describes the misery of the animal in vivid detail. The epicist is not particularly quick to put the animal out of its agony. Only after another few sentences does the elephant have the presence of mind to submerge itself in the river. It is clear where Silius' loyalties lie. In narrating the maiming of the Roman soldier Mincius Silius emphasises his bravery and is sympathetic when the murderous elephant finally crushes him to death. According to Silius, Mincius deserved better fortune (*fortuna digna secunda*) (Sil. 9.625). Perhaps Silius is foreshadowing the way that fortune will eventually side with the Romans; Minicius definitely seems to be a worthy warrior: he is termed as being incredibly courageous (*ausus*) (Sil. 9.625) and his deed was a brave but unlucky one (*infelix ausi*) (Sil. 9.627). The soldier is described as a poor wretch when crushed by the elephant (*miserum*) (Sil. 9.630) and the event of his demise is a mournful sight (*flebile*) (Sil. 9.631).

The last reference to the elephant in the context of war comes in book 10. Once again the elephant is mocked and destroyed, this time by soldiers who are also brothers.

unanima inde phalanx crudo ducente magistro

postquam hominum satiata nece est, prostraverat ictu

innumero cum turre feram facibusque secutis

ardentem monstri spectabat laeta ruinam,...

Sil. 10.98-101

"Then that phalanx, in union and led by a blood stained general, when it had been satisfied with the murder of soldiers, attacked with numerous blows an elephant with a turret on its back. Then the burning torches followed and they looked on happily at the burning downfall of the monstrous beast".

Silius describes the shell of the elephant for all to see. The reader looks on as the brothers watch the burning corpse; their reaction is ironically joyful when they themselves are destined to perish at the hands of Hannibal. The prominence of the symbolism is clear: the elephant has fallen despite its initial success, the Carthaginian victory at Cannae will be short-lived and Carthage will burn just as the elephant has burned before it.

9.6 Conclusion

Silius' elephant is a symbol of Carthaginian power, and by undermining the animal in battles where it should have played a more decisive role (or should not have been present in the first place) the epicist forewarns of the eventual destruction of the Carthaginian force and of Carthage herself. Instead of showcasing Carthaginian victory by depicting strong and tactically well placed elephants, Silius describes the animals as victims. The elephant's failings showcase the ingenuity, determination and bravery of the Romans while foreshadowing the inevitability of Carthaginian defeat.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Wild animals were a medium through which Roman authors expressed a vast range of ideas; the society that the authors lived in was not static and the relationship between wild animals and the human world was a constantly mutating one. The dynamism of Roman culture and altering attitudes towards animals as well as a range of other factors guaranteed that no two epic wild animals were ever afforded exactly the same treatment.

The traditional epic representations of Homer often provided a basis for Roman epic authors to generate their own depictions of a wild animal; the deer is a timid creature in Homeric epic and maintains this characterisation in Roman writings (3.3). The predatory nature of the wolf is manipulated both in Homeric epic and in Roman literature (6.4.1). Some concepts were evidently so deeply rooted in the ancient psyche that they could not be ignored and were constantly manipulated and reemphasised.

Although some wild animal characteristics are just as apparent in Homeric as in Roman accounts, it appears that Roman epic authors often extended, reinvented or created new wild animal depictions. Five types of innovation are particularly evident: 1) Roman epic accounts offered greater insight into the mental capacity of animals; they afforded animals with the ability to think, react and even love. 2) Roman authors examined the difference between wild and tame animals and used the application of these concepts as epic themes. 3) Roman epic authors aligned wild animals with beliefs (scientific and cultural) that were particular to their society; epic wild animals often display characteristics that accord with practical animal writings of the time; they are frequently detailed in contexts that make them relevant to the contemporary climate. 4) Roman epic authors used wild animals to think about themselves as a nation and define exotic places that were foreign to them. 5) Roman epic authors represented particular

aspects of animal behaviours with fresh insight, sometimes ignoring traditional representations and historiographic sources.

10.1 Emotional Development

Authors of Roman epic often projected human feelings onto animals and sometimes described epic wild animals as emotionally developed creatures. The lion's facial expressions are brought to the fore, and we are party to its distress when it is under pressure (2.5); the animal's Homeric characteristics of blind anger are set aside (2.4), and the lion is often victimised (2.5). The wolf will use its cunning so as not to have to kill its own prey and displays prudence when it attempts to get into the farmstead (6.4). The snake's reaction to threat leaves it open to examination as an emotionally complex being and the animal is credited as capable of suffering (7.6). The serpent does not always behave as a stock monster but tends to endear itself to those that encounter it; it may inspire human affection and behave as a faithful pet (7.4). The deer is portrayed as conscious of attack and capable of suffering; it has a heightened capacity for fear and displays a sequence of thought processes (3.3).

The fact that Romans displayed wild animals in the arena and kept them as pets informed their attitudes towards wild animals and allowed them to observe creatures in a new light. There was a noticeable shift in the representation of wild animals that may be attributed to realism as well as new philosophical reckonings. Epic references also give us insight into the rules that governed relationships between humans and animals as well as boundaries between nature and culture. The increased interest in wild animal behaviour is symptomatic of a society that was re-evaluating the rights, status and mental capabilities of wild animals.

10.2 Wildness as a Topos

Roman epic authors were interested in the definion of wildness and sometimes described animals that transgressed the boundary between wild and tame. Valerius' snake behaves as a pet despite the fact that it is meant to be guarding the golden fleece. The serpent's pet-like qualities define it as a completely different creature from the one described in Apollonius (7.4). Valerius' version of the animal feels love for Medea whereas Apollonius merely emphasises the monstrous and terrifying characteristics of the creature. In Valerius' *Argonautica* Medea's treatment of the snake identifies her feelings of responsibility to the animal: she feeds it, trains it and does not wish to cause it pain.

Virgil employs the question of the stag's status as a prelude to battle in *Aeneid* 7 (483-502). Iulus' shooting of the stag brings the technical status of the animal into question. Its plight plays an important part in the motivation of the plot (3.2). Meanwhile, Silius' similarly targeted deer is the subject of interaction between wild and tame influences (3.2).

Other epic animals undergo transformation and abandon their tame characteristics only to resort to wild behaviours. Statius' tigresses (*Theb*. 7.564-598) are exotic beasts that behave as pets but then run amok (4.4). Some Romans appear to have had doubts that wild animals could be trusted; when wild animals are depicted in domestic environments they are prone to return to their base instincts and revert to savage behaviours. The examination of wildness as a topos in its own right proved that the Romans continued to question the status of animals; authors of Latin epic manipulated the subject and found innovative ways of integrating such concepts into their writings.

10.3 Scientific and Cultural Alignment

Roman epic writers changed the way that they portrayed wild animals because of changes in the way that Roman society thought about animals. Pliny shows us what the Romans thought about the owl and these thoughts often appear to accord with details found in Ovid and Virgil (5.3): the owl adopted increasingly ominous connotations in Roman epic after Virgil associated the bird with Dido's death, and the deaths of historically prominent individuals (such as Caesar and Augustus) may have further encouraged the negative associations with the bird. Animals were also used as symbols for nations; the owl was associated with Athens (5.1), the eagle with Rome (8.3) and the elephant with Carthage (9.2). The eagle is repeatedly described in similes that emphasise its habit of turning its offspring to the sun (8.4). This test of legitimacy is recorded in natural history accounts and it appears that Roman epic authors adopted the observation of this particular phenomenon into their own representation of the bird and of humans.

Pliny describes deer that live to a great old age and records that it is possible for deer to have snowy white coats, and Silius makes reference to deer with similar characteristics (3.1). Varro's writings may well have contributed to the Roman epic stylisation of the wolf (6.3). The wolf fears the guard dog and strategically picks off the weakest of prey (6.4.2).

The improved access to some species allowed deeper examination of wild creatures in Roman epic. Some references, such as those to lions in the arena (2.7) and those to owls being attacked by smaller birds (5.3), take fundamentally realistic facts as their basis. Some epic animals are treated in ways that ring true; the grooming of the epic deer in Virgil and Ovid may be based on real life phenomenons (3.2).

Contemporary moral principles or ancient patterns of thinking may emerge from epic references to wild animals. The epic recharacterisation of the lion suggests that the Romans were questioning the place of traditional "heroic anger" (2.4 and 2.6) while the manipulation of the tigress suggests a wider interest in foreign cultures (4.4). The emphasis on snakes' thought processes, and the interest in the deer's emotions reveals that Roman authors of epic were thinking about animals in particularly innovative ways that probably coincided with assessments of creatures in everyday thought.

10.4 Perceptions of Self and Otherness

Some wild animal innovations are the result of how the Romans perceived themselves and others. Particular creatures, such as the wolf (6.3), are attributed epithets that denote their associations with Roman deities. The eagle was strongly associated with the Roman forces: the bird's strength and symbolic association with Jupiter defined it as a key representative of Roman might in the face of adversity. The eagle represents Roman sovereignity as well as the role of individuals in the foundation of that sovereignity (8.5). Meanwhile, the tigress may well have been understood as an exotic commodity and could be considered in the context of the Roman's mental mapping of India (4.4). This is an area of significant innovation, for Roman epic authors tended to employ creatures such as the elephant and tigress that are not to be found in Homeric epic at all.

10.5 Hindsight and Literary Response as Innovation

The interpretation of the wild animal in one source could germinate into a range of literary responses, extending, reinforcing and forever altering the epic wild animal representation. Sometimes a treatment of an animal could spark a number of imitations.

The wounded deer episode in the *Aeneid* (Verg. *A*. 7.483-502) triggered an array of similar passages in the *Metamorphoses* (Ov. *Met*. 10.109-132), *Punica* (Sil. 13.115-137) and *Thebaid* (Stat. *Theb*. 7.564-598). Each account stresses some aspects of the traditional characterisation while developing others.

The conceptual identity of the wild animal was also governed by its relevance to the individual epic plot. Wild animals were often characterised with reference to the roles that they would play in the text. Dido is likened to the deer because she is defenceless and doomed to be attacked (3.2), while Aeneas and Turnus are both compared to wolves because they are suseptible to fury as well as the demands of their respective destinies (6.4.1). Ovid inverted the pre-established maternal nature of the tigress in order to highlight Procne's murderous inhumanity (4.3).

Sometimes historiographic sources did not contribute to the portrayal of wild animals as much as we would expect; Polybius' and Livy's descriptions of elephants in the *Punic Wars* had some influence on the representations found in Silius (9.5), but Silius sometimes offers completely alternative representations of the animals that do not follow historiographic accounts. Roman epic authors often explored a traditional aspect of the wild animal's characterisation and treated that particular element with fresh insight; forever redeveloping key characteristics to fit within their larger epic schemes. Silius is not deterred from manipulating the epic depiction of the elephant when it was not historically authentic (9.5).

In effect, each wild animal's representation in epic was influenced by a number of external factors. Every depiction of the Roman epic animal was governed by fundamental cultural and literary influences; it was the relative balance and interaction of these traditional and contemporary influences that determined how the epic wild animal would subsequently evolve.

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