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Crossing the Borders

Vergil's Intertextual Mercury

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Mercury intervenes thrice in the *Aeneid*, always in connection with Dido's story.[1] In Book 1, after having reassured Venus with his prophecy, Jupiter sends Mercury to Carthage to ensure that the Trojans are hospitably received (1.297–304); in Book 4, Iarbas complains to Jupiter about Dido's and Aeneas' relationship, and the god again sends Mercury to Carthage, this time to Aeneas, to remind him of his mission (4.219–72); later, after Dido has vainly attempted to delay Aeneas' departure, Mercury, apparently on his own initiative, appears to Aeneas in a dream and urges him to leave (4.553–70). In the *Aeneid* Mercury is the Greek Hermes, and acts in his traditional role of messenger and emissary of the gods, and in particular of Jupiter, though he also appears to take at least one initiative of his own.[2] Hermes/Mercury is a god associated with the crossing of boundaries, with the channeling of messages, and with interpretation; if we ever had to imagine a god of intertextuality, he would be the perfect candidate. The whole *Aeneid* of course is a

[1] For essays dedicated to Mercury in the *Aeneid*, see Harrison 1984; Feeney 1998; Fratantuono 2015. Especially important are also Hardie 1986: 276–8; Feeney 1991: 173–5; Schiesaro 2008: 81–90; Hardie 2012: 92–5.

[2] See, briefly, Bailey 1935: 117–18. Although "Hermes as θεῶν κῆρυξ (Hesiod *Op*. 80, *Th*. 939, fr. 170) is not an explicit concept in Homer" (Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth 1988 on *Od.* 5.28), the god acts as a messenger of Zeus in the *Odyssey* (1.37–43, 84–7, 5.28–148), whereas in the *Iliad* the messenger of Zeus is Iris (e.g. *Il.* 2.786–87, 8.397–408). At *Il.* 24.333–8 Zeus sends Hermes to accompany Priam on his voyage to the tent of Achilles, but gives him no message; however, Hermes later delivers a message to Priam on his own initiative (*Il.* 24.460–7) and returns to address Priam during the night (*Il.* 24.679–89) in a scene that is the main model for Mercury's second intervention at 553–70 (see later); Hermes' preparation at *Il.* 24.339–45 = *Od.* 5.43–9 (~ *Aen.* 4.238–46). At *Hom. H. Herm.* 3 the god is called ἄγγελον ἀθανάτων ἐριούνιον ("the gods' swift messenger;" see Vergados 2013 ad loc.). See also Nisbet and Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *C.* 1.10.6. For excellent discussions of the divine messengers in Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil, see Harrison 1984: 9–17 and Feeney 1998: 106–11.

highly intertextual work, but maybe it is not just chance that every passage in which Mercury appears holds a particularly profound dialogue with preceding texts, and especially with Vergil's two main intertextual models, Homer and Apollonius. In what follows we will try to follow this dialogue and to disentangle some of the threads which concur in forming the image and the actions of Vergilian Mercury.

1. MERCURY'S FIRST VISIT TO CARTHAGE (*AEN.* 1.297–304)

Jupiter has just finished his prophecy on Aeneas' and Rome's glorious future, and sends Mercury to Carthage to appease the Carthaginians'—and Dido's—savage hearts; paradoxically, it is the first step toward the biggest obstacle Aeneas' Roman mission will encounter on its journey (*Aen.* 1.297–304):[3]

> Haec ait et Maia genitum demittit ab alto,
> ut terrae utque nouae pateant Karthaginis arces
> hospitio Teucris, ne fati nescia Dido
> finibus arceret. uolat ille per aera magnum
> remigio alarum ac Libyae citus astitit oris.
> et iam iussa facit, ponuntque ferocia Poeni
> corda uolente deo; in primis regina quietum
> accipit in Teucros animum mentemque benignam.

So he says, and sends the son of Maia down from heaven, so that the land and the fortresses of newly-built Carthage may open to welcome the Teucrians, lest Dido, in ignorance of fate, should drive them from her lands. He flies down through the vast air, wielding his wings like oars, and soon he alights on the shores of Libya. And already he carries out the orders, and the Phoenicians lay aside their fierce thoughts in accordance with the will of the god; the queen most of all receives a meek mind and benevolent purpose toward the Teucrians.

Mercury here acts in his role of peace-maker, connected with his mastery over the persuasive powers of language.[4] The pacifying aspect of the god's intervention is based on two precedents in Vergil's most important epic models: (1) Of course, the main Homeric model for Aeneas' arrival at Carthage is Odysseus' arrival on Scheria, and the trip of Aeneas to the temple of Juno in *Aen.* 1 recalls that of Odysseus to the house of Alcinous and Arete in *Od.* 7.

[3] See Harrison 1984: 1–8; Nelis 2001: 73–5.

[4] Cf. Plaut. *Amph.* 32 (Mercury speaking) *propterea pace aduenio et pacem ad uos fero*; Ov. *Met.* 14.291, *pacifer… Cyllenius* (with Hardie 2015 ad loc.); *F.* 5.665–6 *pacis et armorum… arbiter*; and for his associations with Concordia, see Combet-Farnoux 1980: 343–5; also S. Eitrem, *RE* 8.782–3.

Now, the Phaeacians, like the Carthaginians, are not very well-disposed toward newcomers as Athena, disguised as a Phaeacian maiden, instructs Odysseus: he has to follow her toward Alcinous' house, but without looking at anyone and without posing any questions, *οὐ γὰρ ξείνους οἵδε μάλ' ἀνθρώπους ἀνέχονται, / οὐδ' ἀγαπαζόμενοι φιλέουσ' ὅς κ' ἄλλοθεν ἔλθῃ* ("for they neither put up very much with strangers, nor welcome hospitably those who come from a foreign land," *Od.* 7.32–3). Athena, as she has already done at 7.14–17, sheds a divine mist around him so that he can proceed without danger (40–2). When the goddess reveals herself to Odysseus on Ithaca, however, she says something more specific about the help she gave the hero at Scheria: he did not recognize her, his protectress, *ἥ τέ τοι αἰεὶ / ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίσταμαι ἠδὲ φυλάσσω, / καὶ δέ σε Φαιήκεσσι φίλον πάντεσσιν ἔθηκα* ("I who always in all your troubles stand at your side and watch over you and made you welcome to all the Phaeacians" *Od.* 13.300–2).[5] (2) It is possible that Apollonius alludes to this intervention of Athena when he relates in indirect speech what Aeetes says to the assembly of the Colchians (*Arg.* 3.584–8):

> *οὐδὲ γὰρ Αἰολίδην Φρίξον μάλα περ χατέοντα*
> *δέχθαι ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐφέστιον, ὃς περὶ πάντων*
> *ξείνων μειλιχίῃ τε θεουδείῃ τ' ἐκέκαστο,*
> *εἰ μή οἱ Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἄγγελον ἦκεν*
> *Ἑρμείαν, ὥς κεν προσκηδέος ἀντιάσειεν.*

For he would never have welcomed Phrixos, grandson of Aeolus, as a guest in his house, though he was in sore need, Phrixus who exceled among all strangers in gentleness and piety, had not Zeus himself sent Hermes his messenger down from heaven, to ensure that Phrixus might find him welcoming.

Mercury's first intervention in the *Aeneid* recalls the only intervention of Hermes as messenger/emissary of Zeus in the *Argonautica*,[6] which is not part of the main plot but is located in a flashback. "The roles played by Jupiter, Mercury, Aeneas and Dido in Vergil correspond exactly to those of Zeus, Hermes, Phrixus and Aeetes."[7] This is particularly interesting in the case of Dido ~ Aeetes, as Moorton 1989 has well illustrated: Apollonian intertextuality suggests that Mercury intervenes to calm down a character who is potentially as fierce and dangerous as the king of the Colchians.[8] Vergil's language might seem to suggest at least a slight distinction between the *Poeni*, who put down their *ferocia . . . corda*, and the queen (1.302–4), but in fact Dido herself,

[5] See Harrison 1984: 8. Nausicaa, speaking to Odysseus, defines the Phaeacians as *ὑπερφίαλοι* ("over-weening," *Od.* 6.274; see Rose 1969: 390); this may support the view that the *gentis . . . superbas* at *Aen.* 1.523 include the Carthaginians as well as the neighboring African tribes.

[6] See de la Ville de Mirmont 1894: 249; Kuhn 1971: 28 n. 2; Moorton 1989 51 (on the parallels between Jason's first audience with Aeetes and Aeneas' first audience with Dido); Schmit-Neuerburg 1999: 113 n. 309; Nelis 2001: 75.

[7] Nelis 2001: 75.

[8] See esp. Moorton 1989: 53.

just like any of her subjects, has a "fierce heart" ready to be roused again. Moreover, this relationship between Dido and Aeetes connects the first and the last intervention of Mercury. It is precisely when the god appears to Aeneas in a dream to warn him of the danger represented by the abandoned Dido that she is depicted not only as a potential Medea, as we shall see later, but also with traits that specifically recall the figure of Aeetes, and this is in turn a comment on an association between Medea and Aeetes suggested by Apollonius himself. At *Aen.* 4.563–4 Mercury warns Aeneas about Dido's menacing thoughts: *illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore uersat,/certa mori, uariosque irarum concitat aestus* ("She, resolved to die, revolves in her heart deceptions and nefarious crime, and stirs up the changeable tides of her anger"). This recalls a passage from the introduction to the speech of Aeetes that contains the reminiscence of Hermes' pacifying intervention on the occasion of Phrixus' visit: Aeetes summons the assembly of the Colchians outside of his palace, *ἀτλήτους Μινύῃσι δόλους καὶ κήδεα τεύχων* ("devising against the Minyans insufferable deceptions and troubles," *Arg.* 3.578).[9] The moment when Dido fully "becomes" Aeetes is in her speech at *Aen.* 4.590–629; Moorton (1989: 53) points out the connection of *Aen.* 4.590 and 607 with *Arg.* 4.229 (invocation to Jupiter and Sol ~ invocation to Zeus and Helius), and that of *Aen.* 4.600–6 with *Arg.* 4.233–4 (thirst for vengeance of Dido and Aeetes). But more significant for our present purposes is the way the words of Dido at 604–6, in which she regrets not having burned the ships when she had the chance, echo not only those of the "Euripidean" Medea at *Arg.* 4.391–3, as is well known:[10]

> faces in castra tulissem
> implessemque foros flammis natumque patremque
> cum genere extinxem, memet super ipsa dedissem

I should have carried fire into his camp and filled his decks with flames, and killed father and son with all their race, and thrown myself on top of all,

> *ὣς φάτ' ἀναζείουσα βαρὺν χόλον· ἴετο δ' ἤ γε*
> *νῆα καταφλέξαι, διά τ' †ἔμπεδα πάντα κεάσσαι,*
> *ἐν δὲ πεσεῖν αὐτὴ μαλερῷ πυρί*

So she spoke, seething with heavy anger; and she longed to set fire to the ship and shatter everything [. . .] in pieces, and throw herself into the raging fire,

[9] Immediately after having recalled Hermes' intervention, Aeetes refers to the *κρυπταδίους . . . δόλους* the Argonauts would be devising (*Arg.* 3.592), and to them as "stateless brigands living off the land," as paraphrased by Hunter 1989 on 3.592–3, who compares *Aen.* 1.527–8, where Ilioneus rejects that very accusation in his speech to Dido immediately after denouncing his attack by the Carthaginians (*Aen.* 1.525–6).

[10] See e.g. Nelis 2001: 168.

But Dido's words also echo those of Aeetes at the assembly of the Colchians at *Arg*. 3.581–2, reported in indirect speech: as soon as the bulls had torn Jason apart:

> δρυμὸν ἀναρρήξας λασίης καθύπερθε κολώνης
> αὖτανδρον φλέξειν δόρυ νήιον,

he would break up the thicket above the wooded hill, and burn the ship and her crew.

As Hunter observes (1993: 61), "[Medea's] desire to burn the Argo (4.392) in fact echoes an intention of Aietes (3.582, cf. 4.223); in her anger she is her father's daughter, and Jason must resort to the same tactics with her as he used to calm Aietes." In Apollonius Medea "transforms" herself into an Aeetes, and so also in Vergil, where the *dolos dirumque nefas* that Mercury attributes to Dido in his speech to Aeneas during his last visit to Carthage recall the ἀτλήτους δόλους καὶ κήδεα that Aeetes plans when he delivers the speech that contains the passage that is the main model for Mercury's first visit to Carthage. Dido is indeed a potential Aeetes at the time of Mercury's pacifying visit, and she will become an Aeetes after Aeneas' abandonment has somehow canceled the mollifying effects of Mercury's first intervention.

A major irony in the development of Dido's story, of course, is that Aeneas' abandonment, and thus Dido's (re)transformation into a Euripidean Medea/Aeetes, is provoked, or at least set in motion, by Mercury himself with his second and third visits to Carthage in Book 4. This irony appears even more acute if we consider another double influence, again simultaneously Homeric and Apollonian, on Mercury's first intervention in *Aeneid* 1.

Let us return to Hermes' pacifying intervention as recalled by Aeetes in his speech to the Colchian assembly of *Arg*. 3. This first (and only) reference to Hermes as emissary of Zeus in Apollonius, besides evoking the pacifying intervention of Athena among the Phaeacians, alludes to the first mention of an intervention of Hermes as emissary of Zeus in the *Odyssey*. At the very beginning of the poem, Zeus casually recalls the time when he sent Hermes to Aegisthus to admonish him and prevent his crimes, unsuccessfully (*Od*. 1.27–43). Mercury's first descent to Carthage shares with Aeetes' remembrance of Hermes' intervention a reference to the context of Hermes' Odyssean interventions. Mercury's first intervention in the *Aeneid* follows the conversation between Venus and Jupiter, a scene that recalls, among other passages,[11] the exchange between Zeus and Athena at *Od*. 1.26–95.[12] After Zeus agrees that the gods should think about Odysseus' return, Athena advances two suggestions: Hermes should be sent to order Calypso to free Odysseus, and she herself will go to Ithaca to help Telemachus. Only the

[11] Cf. especially Thetis and Zeus in *Il*. 1.493–530; Naevius *Bell. Poen*. fr. 5 Mariotti.
[12] See Knauer 1964: 496, with further references.

second suggestion is immediately put into action; the first one is apparently forgotten until the beginning of Book 5, when Athena again addresses Zeus about the issue of Odysseus' return (without mentioning Hermes), and the god reacts by sending Hermes to Ogygia.[13] Thus Mercury's first mission to Carthage at 1.297–304 already recalls Hermes' mission to Ogygia as suggested in *Od*. 1 and realized in *Od*. 5, which will be the fundamental model for Mercury's mission to Carthage in *Aeneid* 4.219–72.[14]

Apollonius also refers to the Odyssean passage(s) concerning Hermes' mission to Ogygia in another context: Aphrodite's sending of Eros to Aea in *Arg*. 3. In particular, Eros' descent recalls Hermes' descent in *Od*. 5.[15] Vergil alludes to Apollonian Eros when describing the descent of Mercury in *Aen*. 1: "Just as Eros flies ἀν' αἰθέρα πολλόν (*Arg*. 3.166), so Mercury flies *per aëra magnum* (*Aen*. 1.300)."[16] Jupiter's sending of Mercury to Carthage and the god's flight recall both Zeus' sending of Hermes to Ogygia in the *Odyssey* and Aphrodite's sending of Eros to Aea and serves to heighten the narrative suspense: will the gods' interference with Aeneas' affairs in Carthage be limited to this intervention? The reader of the poem might legitimately think at first that with this intervention the gods' interference in Dido's life is over. But on the contrary, Venus is not content at all with Jupiter's sending of Mercury to mollify the hearts of the Carthaginians and of Dido. A series of more and more pressing divine interventions is about to influence the events at Carthage, culminating in the *real* repetition of Aphrodite's sending of Eros at *Aen*. 1.657–722 and of Juno's nuptial project at 4.90–128.

2. MERCURY AND AENEAS (*AEN*. 4.219–78)

Jupiter hears Iarbas' prayer, turns his gaze to Carthage, and sends Mercury to order Aeneas to leave and resume his mission. Vergil's fundamental model here is Zeus' dispatch of Hermes to Calypso to free Odysseus at *Od*. 5.28–42.[17] In the *Odyssey* it is Athena, Odysseus' protectress, who asks her father Zeus to free the hero, who is detained by Calypso against his will (*Od*. 5.44–62); here instead it is Iarbas, an enemy of Aeneas, who asks his father Jupiter to intervene in order to destroy the relationship between Dido and Aeneas.

[13] On the narrative problems created by this structural repetition, see Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth 1988: 251–2.

[14] See also Knauer 1964: 210 n. 1 and 374; Nelis 2001: 74. The duplication of the missions of Mercury to Carthage in *Aen*. 1 and 4 may hint at the "duplication" of Hermes' missions to Ogygia in *Od*. 1 and 5.

[15] Cf. the preparations of the two gods: *Arg*. 3.156–7 ~ *Od*. 5.44–7; see Nelis 2001: 74 and n. 35.

[16] Nelis 2001: 73.

[17] See Knauer 1964: 209–14, 386–7.

The god does intervene, but he is not concerned at all with Iarbas' own aspirations and resentments: "he [sc. Jupiter] only uses him [sc. Iarbas] as an 'alarm bell' that alerts him to the fact that Aeneas' historical mission is currently on hold at Carthage."[18] In fact, notwithstanding his initial focus on "the lovers forgetful of their better repute" (221), Jupiter does not make any reference to Dido or to Aeneas' love for her, in the message to Aeneas that he entrusts to Mercury.[19]

The speech of Jupiter to Mercury presents no verbal echoes of Zeus speaking to Hermes at *Od*. 5.29–42.[20] Of course, in the *Odyssey*, Zeus has no reason to reproach Odysseus, and accordingly sends Hermes to Calypso, not to the hero. However, the two speeches share the same concern about the hero's future and fate: Odysseus is fated to reach Phaeacian Scheria and then Ithaca, "since it is his destiny to see his friends and to arrive in his high-roofed house and the land of his fathers" (*Od*. 5.41–2 = 5.114–15, Mercury's speech to Calypso); Aeneas' fate, as promised to Jupiter by Venus (a striking inversion of the situation of *Aen*. 1), is to dominate Italy and through his descendants the whole world. (By choosing the epithet *Dardanium* at 224, Jupiter may hint at Dardanus' Italic origin and at the idea of Aeneas' voyage as a *νόστος*, like that of Odysseus.)

Obeying his father's command, Mercury prepares himself, and then flies to Carthage (*Aen*. 4.238–58):

> Dixerat. ille patris magni parere parabat
> imperio; et primum pedibus talaria nectit
> aurea, quae sublimem alis siue aequora supra
> seu terram rapido pariter cum flamine portant.
> tum uirgam capit: hac animas ille euocat Orco
> pallentis, alias sub Tartara tristia mittit,
> dat somnos adimitque, et lumina morte resignat.
> illa fretus agit uentos et turbida tranat
> nubila. iamque uolans apicem et latera ardua cernit
> Atlantis duri caelum qui uertice fulcit,
> Atlantis, cinctum adsidue cui nubibus atris
> piniferum caput et uento pulsatur et imbri,
> nix umeros infusa tegit, tum flumina mento
> praecipitant senis, et glacie riget horrida barba.
> hic primum paribus nitens Cyllenius alis

[18] Gildenhard 2012: 192.

[19] Harrison 1984: 20: "[F]or him to proceed as if Dido did not even exist involves an extra dimension of callousness"; see also Hejduk 2009: 229 for Jupiter's elision of any hint at the sentimental reasons that may detain Aeneas at Carthage.

[20] Apart from a possible instance at 237, where the line-ending *nuntius esto* in the *last* line of Jupiter's speech perhaps echoes the line-ending *ἄγγελός ἐσσι* in the *first* line of Zeus' speech (*Od*. 5.29), with variation in the meaning of *ἄγγελος*, "messenger" in Homer, "message" in Vergil (Knauer 1964: 210 and n. 2).

constitit; hinc toto praeceps se corpore ad undas
misit aui similis, quae circum litora, circum
piscosos scopulos humilis uolat aequora iuxta.
haud aliter terras inter caelumque uolabat
litus harenosum ad Libyae, uentosque secabat
materno ueniens ab auo Cyllenia proles.

So he had spoken. Mercury prepared to obey his father's command; and first he binds on his feet the golden sandals which carry him high on wings over seas or land together with the whirling wind. Then he takes his wand, with which he calls forth the pale souls from Orcus and sends others into grim Tartarus, he gives and takes away slumber, and unseals the eyes in death. With it, he drives the winds and swims across the turbulent clouds. And now in flight he sees the top and steep sides of hard Atlas—Atlas, whose head abounding in pines is ever girt with dark clouds and beaten with wind and rain; fallen snow covers his shoulders, while rivers plunge down his chin, and his beard is rough with ice. Here, pressing on with equal wings, the Cyllenian first halted; from there with all his weight he threw himself headlong down to the waves like a bird, which around the shores, around the cliffs full of fishes, flies low near to the waters. Thus Cyllene's offspring flew between earth and heaven to the sandy shores of Libya, cleaving his way through the winds and coming from his own maternal grandfather.

Mercury's preparation and flight to Carthage via Atlas are closely modeled on Hermes' preparation and flight to Ogygia via Pieria at *Od.* 5.43–54:

ὣς ἔφατ', οὐδ' ἀπίθησε διάκτορος ἀργεϊφόντης
αὐτίκ' ἔπειθ' ὑπὸ ποσσὶν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα,
ἀμβρόσια χρύσεια, τά μιν φέρον ἠμὲν ἐφ' ὑγρὴν
ἠδ' ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν ἅμα πνοιῇς ἀνέμοιο.
εἵλετο δὲ ῥάβδον, τῇ τ' ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει,
ὧν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ' αὖτε καὶ ὑπνώοντας ἐγείρει.
τὴν μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχων πέτετο κρατὺς ἀργεϊφόντης.
Πιερίην δ' ἐπιβὰς ἐξ αἰθέρος ἔμπεσε πόντῳ:
σεύατ' ἔπειτ' ἐπὶ κῦμα λάρῳ ὄρνιθι ἐοικώς,
ὅς τε κατὰ δεινοὺς κόλπους ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο
ἰχθῦς ἀγρώσσων πυκινὰ πτερὰ δεύεται ἅλμῃ:
τῷ ἴκελος πολέεσσιν ὀχήσατο κύμασιν Ἑρμῆς

So he spoke, and the messenger Argeiphontes did not disobey. Straightaway he bound under his feet his beautiful sandals, divine, golden, which were wont to carry him both over the sea and over the boundless land along with the blasts of the wind. And he took the wand, with which he lulls to sleep the eyes of whom he wishes, while others again he awakens from slumber. With that in his hand the strong Argeiphontes flew down. From the ether he alited on Pieria and swooped down to the sea; and then he rushed over the waves like a bird, a cormorant, which over the fearful gulfs of the unharvested sea wets its dense plumage in the brine, catching fish; like it did Hermes go over many waves.

However, the designation of the god as *Cyllenius* (252, 258, 276) alludes to *Od.* 24.1, where Hermes *Κυλλήνιος* is introduced as leading the souls of the suitors

to the Underworld (note that *Od.* 24.3–4 = *Il.* 24.343–4 = *Od.* 5.47–8), a context recalled at 242–44, where Mercury is described in his function as guide of the souls of the dead, a dark detail absent from the *Od.* 5 passage, pointing to the lethal consequences for Dido of the god's visit to Aeneas.[21]

According to Nelis (2001: 155–7), Mercury's mission is also reminiscent of two Apollonian contexts which were in their turn modeled on *Od.* 5: Thetis' descent to visit Peleus in order to prepare the Argonauts' departure from the island of Circe, Aeaea (cf. *Arg.* 4.757–69 and *Od.* 5.29–42, Hera speaking to Iris and Zeus speaking to Hermes), and Eros' flight down to Colchian Aeaea (cf. *Arg.* 3.156–7 and *Od.* 5.44–9), the same scene that, as we have seen, was already a model for Mercury's first descent to Carthage in Book 1. As to the first passage, Nelis suggests that the fact that Mercury goes directly to Aeneas, whereas in Homer Hermes addresses Calypso rather than Odysseus, is influenced by the fact that Thetis, obeying Hera's order, goes directly to Peleus and tells him to leave Aeaea the next morning (*Arg.* 4.856–81). Later Aeneas' reaction to Mercury's speech (279 *at uero Aeneas aspectu obmutuit amens*) perhaps recalls Peleus' reaction on seeing his wife (*Arg.* 4.866, 880).[22]

At *Od.* 5.47–8 Homer refers only to the power of Hermes' wand over states of sleep and wakefulness (244 *dat somnos adimitque*).[23] Vergil adds to this multiple and emphatic references to the role of Hermes' wand in controlling the crossings between the living and the dead (242–3 *hac animas ille euocat Orco/pallentis, alias sub Tartara tristia mittit*; 244 *et lumina morte resignat*).[24] The formulation of 244 is especially ominous: *Tartara* is used here in the general sense of "realm of the dead," but it has particularly sinister implications, given that it usually refers to the place of punishment of the worst sinners, whereas the dying invoked Mercurius *ut se placido itinere in meliorem*

[21] The context of *Il.* 24.339–45 (= *Od.* 5.43–9) is also recalled, since Mercury's second visit to Aeneas at 553–70 will correspond to Hermes' returning to Priam during the night to rouse him (*Il.* 24.679–89); see later.

[22] For important remarks on how "[t]he descent of Mercury . . . represents a reversal of the ascent of *Fama*, the reimposition of Olympian order in a space which has been threatened by an evil chthonic power," see Hardie 1986: 276–8 (278). Among the many similarities and contrasts between *Fama* and Mercury, note especially that "*Fama* is a divinity of perverted speech; one of the most consistent allegorical identifications of Mercury is as *Logos*, *Ratio*, the unperverted word. More particularly, the Homeric scene of the equipping of Hermes was allegorized with reference to the descent of the divine *Logos* from heaven to earth" (Hardie 1986: 278 with n. 198; further 2012: 92–5).

[23] For Hermes' power over sleep, besides *Od.* 5.47–8 = *Il.* 24.343–4 ~ *Od.* 24.2–4; cf. e.g. *Il.* 24.445; *Od.* 7.137–8; Ov. *M.* 1.671–2 (*uirgam . . . /somniferam*) and 715–16; Stat. *Theb.* 1.306–7.

[24] Hermes plays the role of *ψυχοπομπός* (but not the word itself, first attested at Diod. 1.96), also in association with his wand, at *Od.* 24.1–15 (Hermes shepherds the ghosts of the suitors down to Hades); cf. esp. 24.5 (after a repetition of *Od.* 5.47–8 = *Il.* 24.343–4). Cf. Petr. 140.12; Stat. *Theb.* 1.306–8 (modeled on Vergil's passage). On Hermes conducting the dead to Hades as part of his chthonic aspect, see also Finglass 2007 on Soph. *El.* 111; Nisbet-Hubbard 1970 on Hor. *C.* 1.10.17.

sedis infernae deduceret partem ("so that he bring them with a peaceful voyage into the better part of the Underworld," Val. Max. 2.6.8; cf. Hor. *C.* 1.10.16–17). Furthermore, elsewhere in the *Aeneid* the "formulaic" *sub Tartara mittere* means "to kill," corresponding to the Homeric *Ἄϊδι προϊάπτειν* (*Il.* 1.3, 11.55, etc.). The implications are clear: Mercury's intervention will metaphorically "awaken" Aeneas from his "slumber,"[25] but it will also bring the slumber of reason and death to Dido.[26]

Mercury summons the souls of the dead from the Underworld (242–3 *hac animas ille euocat*[27] *Orco/pallentis*, where *animas . . . euocat* ~ *Od.* 24.1 *ψυχὰς . . . ἐξεκαλεῖτο*),[28] and also, mysteriously, *lumina morte resignat*. This famously difficult phrase– and an unexpected return to Mercury's involvement with death after *alias sub Tartara tristia mittit*—since *resignare* primarily means "to break the seal of," "to unseal" (*OLD* s.v. 1a).[29] Thus there can be no doubt[30] that here *lumina resignare* = "open the eyes." Most commentators since De La Cerda 1612 have accepted the explanation of Turnebus, comparing Plin. *NH* 11.150.[31] The opening of the eyes on the pyre is not attested elsewhere, "but it would be a natural part of the Roman conception of a *ψυχοπομπός*, the object being that the dead might see their way to the lower world."[32] The resulting meaning, however, is too similar to *alias sub Tartara . . . mittit* to be fully convincing. Among the many other explanations, that of

[25] See Kraggerud 1968: 37–8.

[26] See Pöschl 1962: 145–6 = 1977: 177. See also Feeney 1998: 113, and on Vergil's emphasis on death in this passage, Paschalis 1985: esp. 112–15.

[27] The verb is attested elsewhere in Vergil only at 6.749, where the *deus* who *euocat* the souls after their thousand-year stay in Elysium (6.749) is possibly but not necessarily Mercury (see Horsfall 2013 ad loc., and later).

[28] Already at *Od.* 11.625–6 there is an indirect reference to Hermes' role in bringing up the souls of the dead, when Heracles says to Odysseus that he was able to bring back Cerberus from the nether world, "for Hermes and gleaming-eyed Athena escorted me." Hermes is also sent by Zeus down to Hades to guide Persephone back from the realm of the dead at *Hom. H. Dem.* 334–85 (a scene also represented on an Attic red-figure bell-krater, attributed to the Persephone painter, ca. 440 BCE). At Aesch. *Pers.* 628–30 the chorus of the Persians invokes Hermes together with Earth and Hades, asking that they send up the soul of Darius; at *Choeph.* 123–26 Electra asks Hermes *chthonios* to summon to her the Underworld demons to hear her prayers (cf. Orestes' prayer at *Choeph.* 1–5); in Aeschylus' *Psychagogoi* (*TrFG* fr. 273a) the Evocators advise Odysseus to invoke primeval earth, chthonic Hermes, and chthonic Zeus, to send up the souls of the dead (on the Lykaon painter's *pelike* in Boston representing Odysseus, the shade of Elpenor, and Hermes [*LIMC* s.v. "Odysseus" 149], see Ogden 2001: 49–51). In Euripides' *Protesilaus* it is quite certainly Hermes who brings back the soul of Protesilaus to the world of living; cf. Eur. *TrFG* fr. 646a, Hyg. *Fab.* 103, and see Lyne 1998: 201–4 = 2007: 213–16. According to Servius on 6.603, Mercury had a role in resuscitating Pelops from the dead: *cum eum dii per Mercurium reuocare ad superos uellent* (a resuscitation that might be interesting for the meaning of *lumina morte resignat*: see later).

[29] It means "open the lips" at Ter. *Maur.* 810 (*si non resignet labra uocalis comes*); conversely, at Stat. *Theb.* 3.129 *lumina signant* = "they close the eyes" (of dead soldiers).

[30] *Pace* e.g. Reed 2007: 199.

[31] Turnebus 1564–5, Book 24, Ch. 26 (p. 507 in the 1604 Geneva ed.).

[32] Conington 1884 ad loc.

Wagner (ap. Heyne and Wagner: 1830) implies taking the phrase as = "*resignat a morte*." In a variation of this, "he unseals the eyes from death" might mean "he restores to life the dead"; that would be an unwelcome return to the idea of 242, *animas ille euocat Orco*. Maybe, however, at 242 the point may be that Mercury "calls (momentarily) ghosts from the Underworld" to the realm of the living, while at 244 "he opens the eyes from death," i.e. he "definitively" resurrects the dead and calls them back to life.[33] Mercury does not usually resuscitate the dead—but one example of resuscitation by Mercury is the story about Pelops quoted earlier;[34] and in fact, the recovery of Persephone and that of Protesilaus can also be seen in terms of resuscitation (intermittent, in the case of Persephone; temporary, in the case of Protesilaus) rather than of the evocation of souls. At Hor. *C.* 1.24.17 Mercury, as shepherd of the dead, is said to be *non lenis precibus fata recludere* ("not gentle in opening the Underworld[35] in response to prayers." There *recludere* ~ *resignare*), which might suggest that it was sometimes *possible* for him "to open the Underworld." Alternatively, "he unseals eyes from death" might "refer mysteriously to some aspect of existence in the Underworld,"[36] in particular to some aspect of metempsychosis (cf. 6.748–51, where the *deus* who *euocat* at 749 is Mercury, according to "others" cited by Servius ad loc. on the basis of the present passage).[37]

The descent of Hermes to Ogygia brings him to Pieria (*Πιερίην δ' ἐπιβὰς ἐξ αἰθέρος*), a mountain range which constitutes a northern offshoot of Mt. Olympus; from there he swoops down upon the sea (*Od.* 5.50), like a bird (as Mercury will do at 252–8). Vergil expands this small Homeric detail by bringing his Mercury to Atlas and giving a description of both the mountain and the human figure of the god, *caelum qui uertice fulcit* (247). Vergil's allusion to Homer's Pieria is filtered through the imitation of this same *Odyssey* passage at *Arg.* 3.161–2: Eros' flight from Olympus to Colchian Aea (already a model for Mercury's first visit to Carthage in *Aen.* 1) takes him past a place at the eastern edge of the world, where *δοιὼ δὲ πόλον*[38] *ἀνέχουσι κάρηνα / οὐρέων ἠλιβάτων, κορυφαὶ χθονός* ("two peaks of lofty mountains hold up the sky, the peaks of the earth").[39] This suggestion of a similarity between Mercury and Eros is bitterly ironic: "Mercury's mission is to end a love-affair, whereas Eros initiated one."[40]

[33] See Wagner 1861 ad loc.: "*aperit oculos morte clausos, s. revocat mortuos in vitam.*"
[34] See n. 37. [35] See Housman 1888: 32 = *Class. Pap.* 1.52.
[36] O'Hara 2011 ad loc. [37] See, along these lines, Pearson 1961: 37.
[38] Platt 1914: 26–7: *πόλοι* codd. [39] Hunter 1989 ad loc.; Nelis 2001: 156.
[40] Nelis 2001: 157 On Vergil's reworking of the Homeric Hermes' role of "preventing or limiting erotic liaisons," see Farrell in this volume. On the association Eros ~ Hermes in Apollonius and Vergil, we might recall Kerényi's idea that "Eros is a divinity very closely related by nature to Hermes" (Kerényi 1985: 64); see also Myers in this volume. It might also be relevant

The "curiously elaborated and baroque" description of Atlas[41] has multiple symbolic resonances in the present context: the image of "hard Atlas" (247), describing a Giant punished for his rebellion against Jupiter, who now almost stoically tolerates his labor, can be seen as a prefiguration of Aeneas, momentarily rebellious against Jupiter in his stay in Carthage, but soon to be recalled to his hard duty by Mercury's message.[42]

Mercury finds Aeneas building Carthage, dressed as a Carthaginian. The god is shocked and, briskly departing from the speech Jupiter assigned him, calls Aeneas *uxorius*, almost "slave of a wife" (266):[43]

> continuo inuadit: "tu nunc Karthaginis altae
> fundamenta locas pulchramque uxorius urbem
> exstruis? heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum!
> ipse deum tibi me claro demittit Olympo
> regnator, caelum et terras qui numine torquet,
> ipse haec ferre iubet celeris mandata per auras:
> quid struis? aut qua spe Libycis teris otia terris?
> si te nulla mouet tantarum gloria rerum
> [nec super ipse tua moliris laude laborem,]
> Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli
> respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus
> debetur."

At once he assails him: "Are you now putting in place the foundations of high Carthage, and building up a wonderful city, enslaved to your wife? Alas, forgetful of your kingdom and of the deeds that await you! The king of the gods himself, who governs with his power heaven and earth, sends me to you from bright Olympus. He himself orders that I bring you this command through the swift breezes. What do you have in mind? Or for what are you hoping while idling your time away in Libyan lands? If you are not stirred by the glory of such a great deed, [and for your own glory you do not make any effort,] have regard for growing Ascanius and for the hopes entertained by Iulus, to whom the kingdom of Italy and the land of Rome are owed."

The whole first part of Mercury's speech is not based on Jupiter's speech, but constitutes his own personal introductory "adaptation" of the message he must transmit to Aeneas. This corresponds structurally to Hermes' personal introduction of his speech to Calypso (*Od.* 5.97–104). There the god, after

for Vergil's choice of Atlas as a staging post between Olympus and Carthage that in Homer Calypso is a "daughter of Atlas" (*Od.* 1.52–54); so Knauer 1964: 210 n. 1; Davidson 1992: 369–70.

[41] Hardie 1986: 276.

[42] "The everlasting endurance of the mountain Atlas (246 ff.) may be compared to the Stoic resistance of Aeneas (441 ff.)" (Hardie 1986: 373; see 280–1 for a full comparison of the description of Atlas with the oak simile at 4.441–9). For other suggestions along these lines, see Gíslason 1937: 32–3; Pöschl 1962: 144–5 = 1977: 176; McGushin 1964: 225–9; Kraggerud 1968: 38–44; Scholz 1975: 134–6; Morwood 1985; Feeney 1998: 113–14.

[43] On the word and its implications, see the classic treatment of Lyne 1989: 43–8, and now Sharrock 2013: esp. 166–74.

having replied to the nymph (since in *Od.* 5 it is Calypso who first addresses Hermes, and he dines before delivering Zeus' message), first complains about the difficulty of his voyage, but then concludes that "it is in no way possible that any other god evade or frustrate the will of aegis-bearing Zeus" (103–104). Mercury substitutes Hermes' formal words to Calypso with a harsh reproach, based not on Jupiter's instructions but on his personal experience of having seen the "Tyrian" Aeneas busy with the building of the city of his wife. Mercury makes no complaints about the unpleasantness of his voyage but, like Hermes, he emphatically stresses the power of Jupiter with the same obvious implication that the recipient of the message has no other option than to obey his will (268–70). Of course, Odysseus is not reproached either by Zeus or by Hermes;[44] Mercury's reproach to Aeneas also corresponds to the intervention of Heracles on Lemnos (*Arg.* 1.865–74).[45]

Mercury, having left out the words about Venus' promise (227–31), focuses on the kernel of Jupiter's message (232–5), "repeating" it with skillful variations both in the order of the lines and in the content of the speech. Mercury (partially) repeats only two lines out of the six that constitute Jupiter's more direct address to Aeneas: 271 ~ 235, 272 ~ 232. This is a precise allusion to the Homeric model, where, of the fourteen lines of Zeus' speech (*Od.* 5.29–42), Hermes, in his nineteen-line speech to Calypso (*Od.* 5.97–115), repeats only two at the end of his speech (114–15 ~ 41–2), whereas Mercury places the repetition of his two lines at the beginning of his speech.[46] Otherwise Mercury, even if he clearly inherits the independence of his Homeric counterpart, is a more faithful messenger than Hermes, who "in what seems a spirit of sheer perverseness . . . ignores ten lines in which Zeus refers to Odysseus' future actions and experiences (31–40), and devotes six of his own to the hero's past (106–11),"[47] after having added an eight-line introduction that is entirely his own (97–104), which corresponds structurally to the completely Mercurial introduction of 265–70. Apart from the two semi-repetitions at 271–2, Mercury echoes some other keywords from Jupiter's speech (*Ascanium*, *respice*, *Italiam*, *Romanaque*); he omits the reference to the Carthaginians as "enemy people" (235), which would have puzzled Aeneas; he transforms Jupiter's bland *nec . . . respicit?* (236) and his brief reference to Aeneas' duty toward Ascanius (234, *Ascanione pater Romanas inuidet arces?*) into the much more assertive and emphatic *Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli/respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus/debetur* (274–6). This is appropriate to

[44] Even if Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth 1988 at *Od.* 5.97–113 finds "a contemptuous sneer" in Hermes' allusion to the unmentioned Odysseus.

[45] See Nelis 2001: 157–8. Aeneas has already been associated with Jason on Lemnos through the red cloak he wears building Carthage (262–3); cf. *Arg.* 1.722–8; Nelis 2001: 158; Hunter 1993: 179 and n. 40.

[46] By the way, a supplementary reason to bracket line 273.

[47] Harrison 1984: 17.

Mercury as the god of eloquence,[48] and maybe also to his being "an essentially youthful deity" (cf. 559 *membra decora iuuenta*), ready to champion another young man like Ascanius when he gets the chance.[49]

3. MERCURY'S DREAM APPARITION TO AENEAS (*AEN.* 4.553–70)

At 259–78 Mercury, sent by Jupiter, visited Aeneas in the daytime. Now the god, apparently on his own initiative, returns at night, appears to Aeneas in his sleep, and reproaches him for sleeping in such a dangerous situation: the enraged Dido meditates crimes in her heart; he must leave now (*Aen.* 4.560–70):[50]

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

"Son of a goddess, can you still sleep at a time like this? Do you not see the dangers that encircle you, madman? And do you not hear the Zephyrs that blow propitiously? She, resolved to die, revolves in her heart deceptions and nefarious crime, and stirs up the changeable tides of her anger. Will you not flee now with all your speed, while a speedy flight still is possible? Soon you will see ships churning the sea and cruel torches blazing, and soon the shores flashing with flames, if dawn finds you lingering in these lands. Come then! Break off delays! An unstable and always changing thing is woman." So he spoke, and melted himself into the dark night.

[48] Highet 1972: 124.

[49] Harrison 1984: 19–20. The god disappears *medio . . . sermone* "while he was still speaking" (277); this alludes to the connection of Mercury ~ *medius sermo* attested e.g. at Aug. *CD* 7.14; see Short 2012–13: esp. 206–208. Earlier at 256 *terras inter caelumque uolabat* referred to the etymology of *Mercurius* from *medius currens*; see Pease 1935 ad loc.

[50] On Hermes as "leader of dreams" see *Hom. H. Herm.* 14, with Vergados 2013 ad loc.; Brillante 1990: 43–5. Whereas the preceding intervention of Mercury was focalized through the god, this dream apparition is focalized through Aeneas; hence the cautious and uncertain expressions with which the apparition is described at 555–59; see Harrison 1984: 31.

Whereas the main model of Mercury's first mission was Hermes' mission to Calypso in *Od.* 5, here the model is Hermes' second visit to Priam—in the night, on his initiative, and following his earlier appearance—at *Il.* 24.677–95. The god reproaches Priam for sleeping in a such a dangerous situation: Agamemnon and the other Achaeans might find out about his presence in their camp and take him hostage.[51] Compare especially the beginning of Hermes' speech to Priam (*Il.* 24.683–4):

> "ὦ γέρον οὔ νύ τι σοί γε μέλει κακόν, οἷον ἔθ' εὕδεις
> ἀνδράσιν ἐν δηΐοισιν, ἐπεί σ' εἴασεν Ἀχιλλεύς"

"Old man, so you are not concerned of any danger, that you are sleeping among the enemies, after Achilles spared you."

Surely there is a paradoxical aspect in Mercury's exhortation to beware of Dido's *doli*. After all, he himself is none other than Hermes Δόλιος (invoked as such e.g. by Odysseus at Soph. *Phil.* 133),[52] and readers have often thought that here Mercury is in fact lying when he gives Aeneas the image of a deceitful, vengeful, and changeable Dido. As Austin points out (1955 ad loc.), "in spite of her wild moods she has never ceased deep within her to love Aeneas, and she had no plots against him to do him personal injury." Feeney (1998: 122). also refers in this context to the image of Mercury as "the archetypal liar."

In fact we have already seen how Mercury's words about Dido plotting "deceptions and nefarious crimes" relocate her in the role of an angry Aeetes at the time of Mercury's first visit to Carthage. Recently, Alessandro Schiesaro has given a brilliant treatment of Mercury's speech, emphasizing the importance of the Euripidean intertext at line 568, where Mercury's words, *si te attigerit terris Aurora morantem*, echo those of Creon to Medea at *Medea* 351–4: προυννέπω δέ σοι, / εἴ σ' ἡ 'πιοῦσα λαμπὰς ὄψεται θεοῦ / καὶ παῖδας ἐντὸς τῆσδε τερμόνων χθονός, / θανῇ ("But let me warn you, if tomorrow's sun sees you and your children within the borders of this land, you will be put to death").[53] This allusion, which at first seems "irrationally" to suggest an identification of Medea with Aeneas, serves to signal the transformation of Dido from the lovestruck Medea of Apollonius' Book 3 to the vengeful and dangerous "Euripidean" Medea of Apollonius' Book 4, and of Euripides'Medea. But this transformation has already been hinted at in Dido's speech to Anna at 4.433 (*tempus inane peto, spatium requiemque furori*), a line

[51] Harrison 1984: 15, 30–2.

[52] For Hermes' deceitfulness, see Vergados 2013: Index rerum s.v. "deception," "deceit." On *Hom. H. Herm.* 66, Vergados 2013 refers to *Il.* 24.679–81 (the introduction to Hermes' speech to Priam) for "the image of the plotting, sleepless Hermes."

[53] See Schiesaro 2008: 81–5. References to Euripides' *Medea* in *Aen.* 4 begin most clearly with the exchange of speeches between Dido and Aeneas at 304–92 (~ Eur. *Med.* 446–626); for the influence of the "Euripidean" Medea of *Arg.* 4 on abandoned Dido, see Nelis 2001: 160–9.

apparently "innocuous" and humble, which instead reworks Medea's menacing words in her monologue following her exchange with Creon: "And so I shall wait a little time yet, and if some tower of safety appears, I shall go about this murder in silence and by deception" (Eur. *Med.* 389–91).[54]

Intertextuality suggests that the potentially deceitful Mercury of *Aen.* 4.560–70 is actually telling Aeneas the truth in regard to the danger Dido poses: she has been transformed into a vengeful Aeetes and a homicidal Medea, and Aeneas is actually in danger as he sleeps, just as Priam was actually in danger when he slept in the middle of the enemies' camp.

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[54] See Schiesaro 2008: 64–8.

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