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Narrative self-consciousness in Virgil's *Aeneid* 3¹

Helen Gasti

- 1 In this essay I intend to identify and interpret the poetological discourse in the area of structure² within *Aeneid* 3, with the aim of providing a detailed analysis of the means by which Virgil produces a sense of 'beginning' and 'closure' of the book by maintaining the forces for continuation.³
- 2 I will first discuss the devices used to mark the beginning of the narrative in book 3:⁴
- 3 The sailing imagery introduces the major theme of book 3, that of the journeyings of the Trojans and it also serves as a narrative device signaling beginning.⁵ I suggest, therefore, that expressions such as *dare vela* (l. 9), *litora ... patriae portusque relinquo* (l. 10), *feror in altum* (l. 11), *inceperat* (l. 8), *ingressus* (l. 17), *coeptorum operum* (l. 20)⁶ are used to emphasize the narratological dynamics of the passage by foregrounding the narrative activity of Aeneas.⁷ Aeneas as internal narrator draws attention to the fact that the beginning of his narrative of the departure from Troy coincides with the beginning of book 3. It is thus tempting to see in Aeneas' departure and voyage into the open sea (*in altum*), in contrast to the harbor (*litora ... portusque*), Virgil's self-awareness of the poet's task: Aeneas' embarkation is literal, while Virgil's is figurative.⁸
- 4 An instance of temporal punctuation in line 8 (*vix prima inceperat aestas*)⁹ and the self-reflexive annotation *prima inceperat* draw attention to the narrative organization of Aeneas' wanderings. The allusion to a well-defined unit of time (*prima aestas*) and the programmatic use of *prima*¹⁰ *inceperat* by which the poet signals the beginning of Aeneas' wanderings focus the reader's attention on the act of narration itself and on the elaborate structure of the narrative.¹¹ Besides "the initial word *postquam* itself moves the narrative forward" (3.1 *Postquam res Asiae...*).¹²
- 5 In this context much concerned with beginnings repetition is used to generate a sense of continuation. Thus, it can hardly be accidental that *desertus* appears at the beginning of both books 2 and 3 (*Aen.* 2.24 *huc se provecti deserto in litore condunt*, i.e. the Greeks; *Aen.* 2.27-28 *iuvat ire et Dorica castra / desertosque videre locos litusque relictum*; *Aen.* 3.4-5 *et desertas quaerere terras / agimur*). In *Aen.* 3.4-5 *desertus* is chosen to accentuate

reversals of situation and fortune. By the repetition of *desertus* the narrator draws attention to related themes in a recognizable and coherent sequence and connects the ending of history with its beginning.¹³ Intratextually, this repetition both unifies and gradually advances the poem by recapitulating the past.¹⁴

- 6 As Aeneas comes to the end of his account we read at 3.714-718:

*hic labor extremus, longarum haec meta viarum,
hinc me digressum vestris deus appulit oris.
Sic pater Aeneas intentis omnibus unus
fata renarrabat divum cursusque docebat.
conticuit tandem factoque hic fine quievit.*

[And this was my last trial; this was the term / of my long journeying. I left that harbor. / And then the god drove me upon your shore." / And thus, with all of them intent on him, / father Aeneas told of destinies / decreed by gods and taught his wanderings. / At last he ended here, was silent, rested (transl. by A. Mandelbaum)].

¹⁵

- 7 The clear articulation of the end of *Aen.* 3 adds to the sense of completion and closure.
- 8 The pausal effect is multiplied through the modified repetition of the theme of silence that frames line 718 (*conticuit*¹⁶ is placed at the beginning of the verse and *quievit* at the end of the same verse) and the well-known closural term *finis* (3.718 *factoque fine*)¹⁷ that marks narrative ending.¹⁸
- 9 Temporal punctuation (3.718 *tandem*)¹⁹ and spatial awareness (3.718 *hic*: we are reminded of where book 3 stands in relation to other books) are to be identified as terminal elements.
- 10 The phrase *hic labor extremus* (3.714) may be read metapoetically since its summarizing function and the poetological value of *labor* mark the close of book 3.²⁰ By *hic* Virgil is pointing to his text in a vivid way so as to mark with *labor extremus* an editorial pause between book 3 and 4.
- 11 One can also add the term *meta* (3.714) which, with its finality, implies a reference to the end. After Aeneas' narrative has taken shape (*facto*) it is now possible to reflect on the outcome by recasting the entire narrative process of books 2 and 3 as a teleological one aimed at *finis*. On the basis of a teleological assumption implied by *finis*²¹ the reference to *fata* should be associated with the compositional design of the *Aeneid* within which the end is fully contained at the beginning.²²
- 12 By using sailing imagery (3.714 *longarum haec meta viarum*, 3.715 *digressum*, 3.717 *cursusque*), Virgil connects the subject-matter of Aeneas' narrative to the issues of narrative control in the *Aeneid*. I would therefore suggest that we might think of *digressum* (3.715) as an explicit sign of internal segmentation since it reinforces the sense of Aeneas' embedded narrative of books 2 & 3 as a digression.²³
- 13 *Digressum* by recalling *ingressus* at 3.17, provides an appropriate frame, surrounding the geographical digression with a reference to narrative digression (Ahl's translation "Then a god drove me clear off the course" captures the meaning of *digressum*);²⁴ in other words *ingressus* as a signal of beginning and *digressum* as a closural feature occurring at the end of book 3 have a complementary narrative function since they give a sense of narrative segmentation.²⁵
- 14 It should also be noted that *ingressus* and *digressum* encourage us to read book 3 as a digression from the Odyssean account. Despite the fact that Odyssean apologos remains the fundamental intertext for book 3 Virgil's treatment of Polyphemus' story affirms its

originality.²⁶ The story of Achaemenides as a short epyllion, narrated in part for its own sake (the story within-the-story technique) is digressive and it confirms the metanarrative comment made by *digressum*.²⁷ In addition my own sense is that *digressum* serves as a metageneric signal which enables the reader to detect the deviation from the dominant generic framework. By setting apart Aeneas' narrative as a digression Virgil also focuses on issues of generic deviation that become prominent in book 4. The amatory theme of book 4 that falls outside the boundaries of 'proper' heroic epic is introduced into epic narrative as 'unepic' digression. Besides, from its opening word at ('but', 4.1) book 4 sets itself apart from the rest of the epic in terms of genre (generic fusion of tragedy, love-elegy, lyric-Catullan poetry) and theme.²⁸

- 15 Then, at lines 690-691 the summarizing comment on the Achaemenides' episode could be taken as a metapoetic statement: *talia monstrabat relegens errata retrorsus / litora Achaemenides, comes infelicis Ulixi*. ["These were the coasts that Achaemenides, / the comrade of unfortunate Ulysses, / showed us, as he retraced his former wanderings" (transl. by N. Mandelbaum)].²⁹ Papangelis offers an excellent documentation of intertextual self-reflexivity in *Aen.* 3. Commenting on *Aen.* 3.690-91 he notes: "So Achaemenides is now sailing back along the same Homeric coast rewarding his rescuers with a guided tour – re-reading at the same time the Homeric text in reverse order. After all, this is what he has been to the Trojans all along: a re-reader of and a guide through, the Homeric text" (Papangelis 1999, 284). Thus Virgil is concerned with the poetics of intertextuality since the use of *relegens* and *retrorsus* self-reflectively signal his conscious deviation from the Homeric model, the prefix *re-* conveying the idea of rereading and rewriting the 'source' texts.
- 16 Further, it is worth noticing that we can conceive of *renarrare* in line 717 (*fata renarrabat*) as a comment on intertextuality as the most important poetic mechanism of Aeneas' narrative; in this case *renarrare* means that book 3 is a narrative based on a reworking of Ulysses' adventures. After all, the prefix *re-* is not comprehensible here except as intertextual and polyphonic signpost. Its iterative meaning adds to the verb *renarrare* the sense of "going through the literary tradition again".³⁰ At the same time *renarrare*, as an authorial intervention, that offers the narrative stopping-point of Aeneas' embedded narrative,³¹ suggests the poem's dynamic process of polyphony with regard to both intertextuality (Aeneas' account is a retelling and a re-contextualisation of the Homeric material) and voice (point of view). Thus the phrase *intentis omnibus* (3.716) is rather an appeal to the actual readers of the *Aeneid* on the part of the poet inviting them to be *intenti*, i.e. alert to literary reminiscences, distinguishing different levels of narrative and recognizing all kinds of deviation. *Renarrare* functions as a metanarrative marker of the complex act of narration in *Aeneid* 2 and 3, which 'reframe' Aeneas' legend.
- 17 A closer look at the phrase *cursusque docebat* (3.717) and in particular at *docere* yields further insights into Virgil's 'metageneric reflection'.³² In this particular context, *docere*, appropriate to didactic poetics,³³ is a marked term: it suggests generic mixture raising an intriguing question about the performative dimension of Aeneas' narrative and its impact on the audience. *Docere* in the sense of 'reveal', 'unfold' presumes that Aeneas' narrative, used as an authoritative discourse,³⁴ did have a powerful impact on its audience. *Docere* implies that Aeneas tells his tale through multiple generic lenses: while ostensibly retaining the familiar Homeric story, Virgil introduces the competing Hesiodic voice into his version.³⁵ *Docere* is primarily aimed at the implied reader of the

Aeneid, who is thus alerted to the contamination of Homeric subtext with the Hesiodic tradition of didactic. For instance the account of the Sicilian cities at *Aen.* 3.692-708 should be linked directly with Callimachus' parallel account at *Aet.* 2 fr. 43 Pf.³⁶

- 18 With the phrase *cursusque docebat*, Virgil comments on the 'embedded learning'³⁷ of Aeneas' apologos that distinguishes it from Homeric narrative since it exemplifies a Callimachean interest in scholarship through its predilection for didactic material (for example the Sicilian geography). Thus Virgil by demonstrating that his mode of composition adheres to the Hesiodic – Callimachean tradition, sends his audience an important signal about his compositional techniques and his multiple generic affiliations.³⁸ The term *docere* functions as a sort of 'built – in commentary'³⁹ that reveals the literary self-consciousness of the poet; in essence by encapsulating the process of digression from the dominant epic norm in terms of the requirements of Hesiodic / Callimachean aesthetics, *docere* requires us to see the *Aeneid* as the resolution of Virgil's epic ambitions and Hesiodic / Callimachean poetics. Thus Aeneas' narration elicited by Dido and the didactic song of Iopas (*Aen.* 1. 740-747) do not represent contrasting or even rival poetic performances⁴⁰ since they show that Virgil's commitment to Hesiodic / Callimachean poetics, on the level of style and approach, persists even in the *Aeneid*. Infelix Dido, preferring Aeneas' account of his *labores* (*Aen.* 2.11 *supremum laborem*, *Aen.* 3.714 *labor extremus*) and *errores* (*Aen.* 1.755) to Iopas' didactic song on 'the wandering moon and the labors of the sun' (*Aen.* 1.742 *errantem lunam solisque labores*) tragically misreads Aeneas' heroic narrative, in which 'she sees only the appeal of Aeneas' heroic sufferings, not the unrelenting dedication to mission of the future imperial Romans'.⁴¹ Despite the fact that the poet has given Aeneas' narrative a didactic valence, Dido prefers the emotional (*delectare*) to the intellectual (*docere*).⁴² From the opening words of book 4 (*at regina*) we understand that Dido's empathetic response to book 3 is to be contrasted with the intended reader-response invited by *docere*.⁴³
- 19 In sum *fata renarrare* as a marker of allusion refers to some degree to the intertextual awareness of book 3 since *fata* 'tends to coincide with the constraints imposed by the epic tradition'.⁴⁴ In opposition to the fixity of *fata* Virgil's renarration represents a digression from the Homeric apologos that contaminates (*docere*) even the generic canons of Homeric epic. The motif of poetry as toil (*labor extremus*) and the notion of poetry as didaxis (*docebat*) exemplify neoteric poetics. In this final *docebat*, referring to the disciplined craft of the *poeta doctus*, can be detected an echo of Alexandrian poetics that insists on the *labor* and *doctrina* of poetic art. By carrying with it particular preselected generic, ideological and aesthetic overtones, *docere* evokes a kind of audience response analogous to that of a morally binding kind of writing regulated by the norms of didactic poetry.

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NOTES

1. I would like to thank the Editors of *Dictynna* and my two anonymous readers for their useful criticisms and suggestions.
2. Glei 1998 considers structure (i.e number and division of books, narrative technique, architecture etc.) as the area in which the poetological discourse is implicit within an epic poem.
3. For a discussion, with bibliography, of closure in ancient literature see Fowler 1989 and 1997. For a very useful and influential contribution to the larger discussion of poetic closure see Smith 1968. Nagle 1983 investigates the open-ended closure in Aeneid 2 in the light of the model proposed by Smith 1968.
4. On this book in general, see Lloyd 1957a, 1957b; Hershkowitz 1991; Putnam 1995, 50-72.
5. Cf. also Harrison 2007a, 9-11 who examines the analogy between the progress of the Trojans' voyage and of the epic plot in Virgil's Aeneid.
6. Mynors' Oxford edition 1969 is used throughout.
7. On the metanarrative status of Aen. 3. 1-5 see Deremetz 2001, 159.
8. On the parallelism between Aeneas' voyage and Virgil's poetic task see Deremetz 2001, 162-63. The arrival and departure elements somewhat formulaic in their expression are reiterated in every one of the nine major episodes en route of book 3. On this see Lloyd 1957a, 138-140.
9. As Smith 1968, 129-130 puts it, "By the device of 'temporal punctuation' the poet introduces allusions to the progress of a day, a season, a year, or some other well-defined and familiar unit of time".

10. On the self-reflexive use of *primus* cf. Pincus 2004, 165-166 (esp. 166: "... the inaugural words of the poem consist of the proper name Cynthia and the self-reflexive annotation *prima*, which draws attention to the 'firstness' of the *incipit*", commenting on Propertius 1.1.1.).
11. The verb *incipere* focuses the reader's attention on the act of narration itself and the self-reflexive combination *prima inceperat* gives to the passage without doubt a programmatic overtone. On terminology designating the beginning or the closure of a narrative see Goldhill 1991, 286-300.
12. Kyriakidis 1998, 30.
13. (i) *deserto in litore* (Aen. 2.24) refers to the *dolus* of the Greeks; (ii) *desertos ... locos* (Aen. 2.28) confirms the naivety of the Trojans and foreshadows the fall of Troy; (iii) *desertas ... terras* (Aen. 3.4) foreshadows the future destiny of the Trojans. Repetition as a narrative tool serves to signal the ordering of Aeneas account. Thus it functions as a structural feature of the text by giving it the order and significance of plot. Cf. Brooks' observations on textual repetition as quoted by Mitchell-Boyask 1996, 290-292.
14. For a fuller discussion of the recapitulating force of *desertus* see Gasti 2006, 128-129.
15. Mandelbaum 1971, 80. Cf. also Horsfall's translation: "This was my last toil, this the turn in my long travels. From here I sailed and the god brought me to your shores. So father Aeneas, alone, told all his rapt audience of the gods' oracles and explained his travels. Finally he fell silent, and having made an end here, took his rest" (Horsfall 2006, 37).
16. On the pausal effect of the verb *conticuere* (Aen. 2.1) in the division of the first two books see Kyriakidis 1998, 24-25. Cf. also Putnam 1995, 66: "calculated chiasmus, as *conticuere omnes intenti ... pater Aeneas* becomes *pater Aeneas intentis omnibus ... conticuit*, helps the reader work forward and backward into Aeneas' unfolding story".
17. Cf. Harrison 1980, 364 on how Virgil dismisses Aeneas by emphasizing three times (*conticuit / quievit / factoque fine*) that hero's speech is finished.
18. Cf. Mitchell-Boyask 1996, 295-296 on how *finis* at Aen. 2.554 highlights the end of the narrative about Priam's death and on how Virgil closes Aeneas' story about his wanderings at Aen. 3.716-18 in a similar language that adds to the sense of narrative completion.
19. On *tandem* as a key word both in prologues and in endings see Heyworth 1993, 125.
20. It has been correctly observed by Geymonat 1993, 323 that at this pivotal stage of the poem (3.714) *labor* should be read as a metaphor for the toil involved in poetic activity.
21. Virgil's *Aeneid* is strongly teleological since it has a strong narrative line which drives the story forward and it also has a "purpose" towards which the epic is directed.
22. *Fata* points yet further beyond narrative limits to *fatum* as the template pattern for the whole epic since as a generator? of the epic plot it has an important motivational function on the narrative and metanarrative levels of the *Aeneid*. The repetition of *fata* (3.7 *incerti quo fata ferant* / 3.9 *et pater Anchises dare fatis vela iubebat* / 3.717 *fata renarrabat divum*) links beginning and end of book 3 by providing a unified frame from a narratological point of view. Thus book 3 is structured as a self-contained unit within the poem as a whole. Lloyd 1957a, 136 observes that Virgil bound together all the nine major episodes of book 3 around a plot of progressive revelations to Aeneas of his destiny.
23. *meta* may also be used here in the sense of "change of direction". On this see Horsfall 2006, 473-474 ad 714.
24. Cf. Ahl 2007, 76.
25. Cf. also Aen. 8.583 *digressu ... supremo* where, as Laird 1999, 190 n. 72 observes, the expression might have an additional metaliterary significance. Catullus, poem 64.116-117 apologizes for a similar digression. On Catullus' self-reflexive quality of the participle *digressus* see Deremetz 1995, 99.
26. Harrison 2007, 231 notes that the Cyclops Polyphemus bears the traces of his previous Vergilian (the pastoral Polyphemus of the *Eclogues*) and Theocritean existence.

27. On the form of Achaemenides' episode and on the technique of epyllion used by Virgil here see Lloyd 1957b, 397-98.

28. On this see Spence 1999, 80-86.

29. Mandelbaum 1971, 79.

30. Cf. Servius' commentary: *renarrabat aut "re" vacat, ut "confieri possit" aut apparet Aeneam ante suis casibus cum Didone confuse locutum. Et ideo hic addidit "renarrabat", quasi quae dixerat antea, nunc ex ordine referebat, quod notat in primo "immo age et a prima dic hospes origine nobis". Sane in secundi principio duo poetae sunt versus, sicut hic tres, et similis est finis initio: "conticuit" et intentis". Of particular interest is Fernandelli's discussion 1999, 99-100 where he offers an exhaustive analysis of scholarly views on *renarratio*. Fernandelli 1999, 109 concludes that Aeneas' ἀπόλογος as *renarrare* suggests the narrative repetition of a material already known to his audience "attraverso precedenti racconti".*

31. *Renarrare* responds to Aeneas' initial *renovare dolorem* (2.3) in the context of a larger ring-composition marking off the beginning and the end of Aeneas' embedded narrative. The verbs *renovare* and *renarrare* as signals of division within the *Aeneid* contribute to a sense of internal segmentation that suggests that books 2 and 3 are to be read conjointly as parts of a whole. Taking further the remarks made by Deremetz 2001, 150 on *renovare dolorem*, I propose to interpret *renarrare* as a "reprise littéraire" describing the difficulty of the author in this process of "réécriture".

32. The term is borrowed from Harrison 2002, 80 where it is used to describe Ovid's poetic technique.

33. On *docere* as a key didactic verb, see Volk 2002, 123. This verb as a metagenetic signal can be used to mark a text as having elements of the didactic tradition. On this see Harrison 2007, 24.

34. The narrator's moral and philosophical reliability is expressed through the term *docere* which is the verbal sign of the author's didactic intent and of his will to draw attention to his authoritative presence in Aeneas' narrative, i.e. to his role as orchestrator of the text. Aeneas is not only defined as the narrating voice of books 2 and 3 (*renarrabat*) but he is described as Virgil's double (*re-narrabat*) and thus as a product of the author's creation. Nevertheless the narrator-text has been so carefully crafted by the author as to achieve the desired didactic effect on his narratees.

35. This technique is rightly defined by Harrison 2007, 1-2 as "generic enrichment", i.e. as "the way in which generically identifiable texts gain literary depth and texture from detailed confrontation with, and consequent inclusion of elements from, texts which appear to belong to other literary genres". Harrison 2007, 232 ff. elaborates on the generic "intrusions" detected in *Aen.* 10.636-42, 1.430-8, 6.706-9, 12.587-92 by investigating the incorporation of didactic elements in the higher genre of heroic epic.

36. On this see Geymonat 1993.

37. The term is borrowed from Thomas 1999, 218.

38. It is worth pointing to allusion across genre boundaries as a vital part of Callimachus' poetic technique. On this kind of "hybridization" see Depew 1993, 58 and *passim*. On the importance of cross-generic allusion for Roman poetry see Thomas 1999, 219.

39. Hinds 1998, 1.

40. This is the view proposed by Brown 1990, 329 where he suggests that, in autobiographical terms, those contrasting poetic performances reflect Virgil's progression from the didactic (*Georgics*) to the epic mode (*Aeneid*). Nevertheless Virgil's literary and generic affiliations are much more complex than presented by Brown. On the parallelism between Iopas' song and Aeneas' narrative see also Adler 2003, 9-16, 105-108 (p. 108 where Adler notes that "both Iopas' song and Aeneas' song tell Dido that her love for Aeneas can have no fulfillment").

41. See Perkell 1999, 48-49 (for the citation p. 49). On Dido as the intended listener and archetypal misreader of book 3 see Hexter 1999, 65-67.

42. Hexter 1999, 68 rightly observes that in book 3 “Aeneas is contrasted with Odysseus, Vergil vies with Homer, and the reader is free to surpass Dido in careful reading”. The reader who has noticed the Hesiodic content of *docere* has activated a perspective which conflicts with that of Dido [Aen. 4.1-2 *At regina gravi iam dudum saucia cura / vulnus alit venis et caeco carpitur igni* and 4.14 *quae bella exhausta canebat*: Dido’s passionate love (*caeco ... igni*) for her guest is due to Aeneas’ bardic performance (*canebat*)]. Dido as a representative of the internal audience receives Aeneas’ tale with intimate personal concern (Aen. 2.10 *sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros*) which is transformed into passionate love. In contrast to Dido’s empathetic / subjective response the expression *cursusque docebat* calls attention to the pleasure that comes from the distancing perception of Aeneas’ narrative and to the understanding or knowledge or lesson that distant observers may have (Here *docere* is directed towards the intellect of the learned extra-textual readers). On the erotogenic function of Aeneas’ bardic performance and on how Virgil transforms the erotic effect of Aeneas’ narrative into issues of narrative control in the *Aeneid* see Biow 1994, 227-244.

43. Spence 1999, 80-86 (esp. 83) focuses on how the opening word *at* is setting apart book 4 from the rest of the epic in terms of genre and theme.

44. For this definition of *fata* see Barchiesi 2001, 131.

ABSTRACTS

In this paper I intend to examine some instances of narrative and poetic self-consciousness in *Aeneid* 3 as manifested in the rich textures and inter/intratextualities of its beginning and end. First I discuss the devices used to mark the beginning of the narrative in Book 3 (sailing imagery – key motifs of proems – temporal punctuation) and then I propose a systematic analysis of the end which is clearly articulated and adds to the sense of completion and closure. In this interpretive framework I suggest a new reading of *digressum* (3.715), *fata renarrabat* and *cursusque docebat* (3.717).

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Mots-clés: metapoetics, voyaging and poetry, self-reflexive images, beginnings and closures

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