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Achilles at Rome

Studies in the *Achilleid* of Statius

Peter Joseph Heslin

Ph. D. Thesis

University of Dublin
School of Classics
1999

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was done in London at the library of the Institute for Classical Studies, in New York at the Columbia University Library and the New York Public Library, and in Freiburg at the Universitätsbibliothek, and the libraries of the Seminar für Klassische Philologie and the Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte. Finally, I must express my greatest debt, which is to my wife, Aideen, for her support and encouragement.

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a literary study of the *Achilleid* of P. Papinius Statius, an unfinished hexameter epic on the life of Achilles. It is, so far as I know, the first full-length monograph on the poem in any language. For the sake of keeping the amount of text manageable, and in order to maintain a focus on the mythical biography of Achilles, I have excluded from detailed discussion the section of the poem that describes the Greek fleet mustering against Troy at Aulis (1.397–559). The first chapter of this thesis serves as an introduction; I describe the shape of the poem and what we know of the circumstances of its composition. My argument is that the portion of the epic that we have should not be considered as a 'fragment', but as a coherent and carefully designed sample of work that was intended to demonstrate the nature of the poet's work-in-progress. On this basis the formal unity of the work may be appreciated. The next chapter attempts to characterize the nature of this epic project by examining a number of key passages, including two programmatic sections. The first of these is a description of a song performed by Achilles himself, which is found to be based on Hellenistic and Neoteric models, especially Apollonius and Catullus 64. The other programmatic section is at the very beginning, where the poet describes the scope of the *Achilleid*. This proem is heavily ironic, and it is misleading even with respect to the part of the epic that we have; it would therefore be extremely hazardous to attempt a reconstruction of the unwritten portion of the epic on its basis. The rest of the second chapter consists of a further attempt to characterize the epic with respect to its poetic forbears by examining a few passages where intertextual relationships are of particular interest. The third chapter is a study of the way Achilles is described by Statius as a marginal figure between the animal world, as represented by his cave-dwelling surrogate father, Chiron, and Olympus, which, as the poet often reminds us, would have been the boy's patrimony if Jupiter had been his father rather than Peleus. The fourth chapter is a discussion of Statius' representation of femininity. Not only does Achilles violate gender norms by dressing as a girl, but Thetis, too, by usurping the role of a father, participates in the gender burlesque which is one of the most dis-

tinctive features of the poem. The origin of Achilles' cross-dressing on Scyros, which is the central episode of the *Achilleid*, has often been explained in terms of adolescent initiation rites; that claim is evaluated in the fifth chapter. We find that, while this is unlikely, it is striking that Statius himself uses the imagery of initiation and mystery cult to represent Achilles' stay on that island as a kind of personal transformation. The sixth and final chapter comprises an attempt to frame an interpretation of the poem by means of examining its two most dramatic moments: the rape of Deidamia by Achilles and the discovery of Achilles by Ulysses. In the end it is hoped that the process of subjecting the *Achilleid* to detailed literary study will have borne out its high level of polish, its coherence as a whole, and perhaps even its value as a meditation on gender, paternity, and the human condition.

ABBREVIATIONS

NB. Abbreviations for the names of ancient authors and their works have been taken from the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (*OCD*[3], pp xxix–liv), except that abbreviations which seemed obscure have occasionally been expanded; for those few ancient works not listed in that volume, abbreviations have been generated by following similar conventions. Modern works, apart from those listed below, are cited by author and year; a list of references may be found at the end of this volume.

Barth	Statius, *Opera quae extant*, ed. K. von Barth. Cygnea (Zwickau), 1664.
Brinkgreve	Statius, *Achilleis*, ed. M. R. J. Brinkgreve. Rotterdam: Brusse, 1913.
Dar.-Sag.	*Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines d' après les textes et les monuments*, ed. C. Daremberg and E. Salio. Paris: Hachette, 1877–1919.
Dilke	Statius, *Achilleid*, ed. O. A. W. Dilke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
F	Fragment (followed by number and editor).
FrGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, ed. F. Jacoby. Berlin: Weidmann, and Leiden: Brill, 1923– .
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, ed. H. Dessau. Berlin: Weidmann, 1892–1916.
Jannaccone	Statius, *L'Achilleide*, ed. S. Jannaccone. Florence: Editrice Barbera, 1950.
LHS	*Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, M. Leumann, J. B. Hoffman, and A. Szantyr. Vol. 2 of *Lateinische Grammatik*, Munich: Beck, 1965.
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zurich and Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1981– .
L-S	*A Latin Dictionary*, ed. C. T. Lewis and C. Short. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879.

LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*, ninth edition, H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, revised by H. Stuart Jones. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940.
LTUR	*Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, ed. E. M. Steinby. Rome: Quasar, 1993– .
Marastoni	Statius, *Achilleis*, ed. A. Marastoni. Leipzig: Teubner, 1974.
Méheust	Stace, *Achilléide*, ed. and trans. J. Méheust. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971.
Mozley	Statius, *Works*, ed. and trans. J. H. Mozley. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1928.
OCD^3	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*, third edition, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
OCT	*Oxford Classical Text.*
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968–82.
Ox. Pap.	*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri.* London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1898– .
RE	*Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Stuttgart: Metzler, 1893–1980.
Rosati	Stazio, *Achilleide*, ed. and trans. G. Rosati. Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1994.
Roscher	*Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, ed. W. H. Roscher. Leipzig: Teubner, 1884–6.
TLL	*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae.* Leipzig: Teubner, 1900– .

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

> A preliminary point to make is that these anomalies require a strong explanation. Carelessness, clumsiness, oversight, will not suffice with such a fastidious, painstaking artist dedicated to self-examination and self-correction as well as self-repetition.
>
> Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art**

1.1 The Coherence of the Achilleid

The Achilleid of Statius is a difficult poem to classify, and this has impeded our understanding of it. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, for example, calls it a 'charming, almost novelistic fragment', an entirely accurate assessment, except for the word 'fragment', which is a label commonly applied to the work.[1] This term, at least in common practice when speaking of ancient literature, generally describes a piece of writing that has become seriously mutilated in the course of its transmission to us; it might also designate in a less technical sense a piece of writing whose composition was halted so abruptly that it was left in an unrevised and incoherent state. This is not true, as far as we can tell, of the *Achilleid*; in fact it is almost certain, as will be argued below, that Statius had recited the *Achilleid* in something like its present form prior to his death. The distinction is important, because it has led to a certain neglect of the formal symmetries of the work. The usual presumption, which is almost certainly correct, is that whatever further plans Statius had for the solid beginnings he had made were rendered moot by his death. There is no sign in his surviving work of the universal adjustment in rhetoric that occurred subsequent to Domitian's assassination in September of AD 96, and so the poet is assumed to have predeceased the emperor by some short time.[2] We should therefore distinguish between real fragments, or works

* Wollheim (1987: 275), discussing spatial dislocation in the work of J.-A.-D. Ingres.

[1] *OCD*[3] s.v. 'Statius, Publius Papinius' [Feeney].

[2] Coleman (1988: xx).

that have been substantially destroyed in the course of their transmission, which would include the epic on Domitian's German campaigns, of which only four lines survive,[3] and on the other hand work that was apparently left unfinished at the time of the poet's death. Of this latter category we have two examples: the fifth book of the *Silvae* and the *Achilleid*. These two works differ in important respects, and so we should further subdivide his late work to distinguish between material that had not yet left the poet's hands at the time of his death and was only published posthumously and on the other hand partially-completed work that Statius had already polished and presented to the world in his lifetime.

The poems of *Silvae* 5 are generally held to have been published posthumously and there are several reasons why this is very likely true: the preponderance of *epicedia* among the poems in Book 5, the personal nature of several of these, the internal inconsistencies in *Silvae* 5.3, which may indicate that it was cobbled together from disparate elements in the poet's *Nachlaß*, and the very incomplete state of the final poem, an *epicedion* on his adoptive child.[4] This last poem breaks off so abruptly it should be considered a fragment in the less technical sense of the term, i.e. it was not damaged in transmission, but its state of composition is so inchoate and its unity so impaired that it warrants the designation. As we shall see, this contrasts strongly with the *Achilleid*, which, though incomplete, ends at a logical stopping-point and exhibits a great deal of symmetry in its structure. It has sometimes been loosely assumed that, because *Silvae* 5 and the *Achilleid* are both unfinished, they were published together, but this is improbable.[5] First of all, it is strange that the manuscript tradition of *Silvae* 5 and the *Achilleid* are so utterly divorced from each other if they were originally published together as a posthumous compilation. More importantly, there exist numerous references to the *Achilleid* in the *Silvae*. It would be a pointless eccentricity for a professional poet to allude publicly to a work whose nervous beginnings he was husbanding away in his study; we should not project modern writerly narcissism back onto a professional Roman poet. Would Statius, as a performer, have advertised his current project in front of prospective patrons before he had a taste of it ready to declaim, should the invitation be forthcoming? We know from Juvenal (7.82–7) that Statius gave public

[3] On the fragment of the *de bello Germanico*, see Coleman (1988: xv–xvii).

[4] See Coleman (1988: xxxi). There are also many *lacunae* in book five, but this is true of the *Silvae* generally, so they are as likely to have been the result of the vagaries of transmission as due to a lack of polish.

[5] Feeney (*OCD*[3] s.v. 'Statius, Publius Papinius') says, in speaking of the *Silvae*: '... Book 5 (together with his unfinished second epic, the *Achilleid*) was published after his death...', which might be taken to imply that the two events were connected.

recitations from the *Thebaid*; he did not say that he waited until the epic was finished before doing so. There is nothing to prevent us imagining that in order to seek out patronage and popular interest the *Thebaid* might have been recited in partial form prior to its ultimate and definitive publication. It may be that what we have in the text of the *Achilleid* is some such provisional script.

When Statius mentions the *Achilleid* in the *Silvae*, he puts it alongside the *Thebaid* as an existing work with which he expects us to be familiar; at the death of his son, he says:

> ... pudeat Thebasque novuumque
> Aeaciden; nil iam placidum manabit ab ore. (5.5.36f)

'Achilles' was no scrap salvaged by the poet's executor from his notebooks; it was a part of Statius' *œuvre* that was acknowledged as such on several occasions by the poet himself. The phrase *novum ... Aeaciden* has a connotation of 'my young Achilles', but its primary sense is 'my recently composed *Achilleid*', where *novum* has the same force as in the case of Catullus' *lepidum novum libellum* (1.1).[6]

Elsewhere in Book 5 there is a scene that conjures up the image of Statius performing the *Achilleid* in precisely the manner that Juvenal described for the *Thebaid*. The poet congratulates the boy Crispinus on his appointment as military tribune, and laments his coming absence from Rome:

> ei mihi, sed coetus[7] solitos si forte ciebo
> et mea Romulei venient ad carmina patres,
> tu deris, Crispine, mihi cuneosque per omnes
> te meus absentem circumspectabit Achilles. (5.2.160–3)

The poet imagines himself performing his 'Achilles' in a theater and looking around in vain to see the boy in the audience. Is this image supposed to represent the day—perhaps another eleven years hence—when Statius finally has the epic completed?[8] Crispinus would be back in Rome by then, one would hope. On the contrary, Statius is evoking an occasion in the not very distant future when he will, as usual (*coetus solitos*, 160) give another of his performances. It is

[6] *Novus* meaning 'young' is not very common of persons, and hard to parallel in that sense with proper names; cf. *OLD* s.v. 11a.

[7] Thus Courtney prints Gronovius' emendation; the MS reads *quaestus*, the identical corruption having occurred at 1.5.5. Less importantly, the MS also has *et mihi*, which construes feebly with the previous line.

[8] Statius claims that it took him twelve years—a conventional figure—to finish the *Thebaid* (*Theb.* 12.810–12). As often noted, the figure is suspiciously round, but Statius clearly meant to stress that the *Thebaid* took a very *long* time.

not certain, but it seems quite plausible that Crispinus has already attended a performance of the *Achilleid*; the flattery would be more tactful if the poet were implicitly acknowledging a past occasion as the warrant to presume his interest in the poet's current work. The least awkward reading of these lines is as a simple expression of regret that Crispinus, having graciously blessed an early performance of the *Achilleid* with his presence, would be forced to miss the subsequent installments. At the very minimum, this passage forces the recognition that Statius could envision a public performance of part of the *Achilleid* in the very near future.

Our most specific information about the composition of the *Achilleid* comes from a passage in Book 4 of the *Silvae*, in which Statius congratulates Vibius Maximus on the birth of a son, expresses his wishes for a speedy return to Rome from Dalmatia and makes a subtle appeal for patronage:

> torpor est nostris sine te Camenis,
> tardius sueto venit ipse Thymbrae
> rector et primis meus ecce metis
> haeret Achilles.
>
> quippe te fido monitore nostra
> Thebais multa cruciata lima
> temptat audaci fide Mantuanae
> gaudia famae. (4.7.21–8)

In short, Statius wants money and material help, but his request is made very politely, using the conventional and correct rhetoric of patronage.[9] As Coleman (1988: ad 4.7.21) says, '*sine te*, originally a religious formula ... conventionally expresses the poet's need for the stimulus of inspiration or patronage'. We might even say that the language of inspiration and poetic guidance was a socially acceptable way of discussing the stimulus of patronage. In the second stanza quoted here, Statius reminds Vibius of his support for the successful project of the *Thebaid*, mentioning the fame that attends the poet and by extension his patron. The previous stanza describes the difficulties that Statius is currently having in becoming sufficiently inspired to make progress with the *Achilleid*. It would be wrong to read this as a case of writers' block in the light of modern romantic notions about the creative process and the tortured artist. Statius was a professional poet, and could ill afford to indulge in hysterical bouts of self-doubt.

[9] On the forms that the material benefit of patronage could take, see White (1978: 90–2); and on the identity of Vibius Maximus, see idem (1973).

Indeed, of all poets, Statius is one whose fecundity and speed of composition is most clearly attested. In the context of an appeal for patronage it would be naive to think that he was having serious compositional problems and that he was counting on the poetic expertise of Vibius Maximus for help. We may be sure that Statius was as grateful for Vibius' material help in completing the revision of the *Thebaid* as for his aesthetic judgment; tactfully, he mentions the latter alone.

What is interesting is that Statius describes the state of the *Achilleid* in a manner that is very consistent with the way we have it now. As Henderson has noted, the metaphor for a chariot getting stuck while making the first turn on the race-course is suspiciously apt for a poem that has stopped just after its first book.[10] For Vibius to understand the references in this poem at all, he would have to have known that Statius was working on a poem on the life of Achilles. He might have known this before he left for Dalmatia; the other possibility is that he had gotten a letter. Had Statius written to describe the details of his working life and his daily grind? Or had he sent his prospective patron a copy of his current work-in-progress? If Vibius had no specific knowledge about the state of completion of the second book of the *Achilleid*, then he would have been able to understand the metaphor of *primis ... metis* only in part. He could infer that the new Achilles-poem was stalled at its beginning, but he might not have been able to appreciate the witty and precise equivalence made between the books of the epic and laps in a chariot-race. What is the force of the word *ecce* (23)? It could be an attempt to inject vividness into the metaphor by expressing the suddenness of Achilles' chariot wreck. Alternatively, it could be an indication that *Silvae* 4.7 was the covering letter that accompanied a copy of the *Achilleid* to Dalmatia. At minimum, what we have here is evidence that Statius acknowledged, in a book of *Silvae* he himself published, the existence of the text we have in something like the form we have it. This text is not a 'fragment', but a prospectus to patrons that was so well advanced that the poet could envision performing it publicly.

The significance of the other point in the *Silvae* where Statius mentions the *Achilleid* is harder to gauge, as he does so merely as a prelude to asking Marcellus whether he should be so bold as to attempt an epic on the emperor's exploits (*Silv.* 4.4.87–100). It may be that the poet is genuinely sounding out his well-connected addressee on the idea, or perhaps he is merely flattering him with an

[10] Henderson (1993: 164): '[Vibius] is now needed for further poetic midwifery as Statius is "stuck getting past his epic's first bend into Achilleid book 2" (Stuck there – he already knew? – for ever)'. On the details of the metaphor, see Coleman (1988: ad 23–4).

appeal to his literary-political judgment.[11] Even if the true agenda here concerns imperial panegyric, Statius nevertheless takes the opportunity to advertise the successful completion of the *Thebaid* and to inform his prospective patron of his current project (*Troia quidem magnusque mihi temptatur Achilles*, 94).

The *Achilleid* has long been considered even by its admirers to be in an unfortunately mutilated state. It is true that there is a great disparity between the sweeping promises of the proem and the limited extent of the narrative. Might this not have been part of the design? If the *Achilleid* as we have it was a prospectus, designed to whet the taste of the public for the new epic and to offer his patrons a sample of what they would be underwriting, then it was surely designed to provoke one question and one question only: what happens next? Only the poet knows the answer and only the generosity of patrons can provide the necessary 'inspiration' to unlock the answer. On this argument, the *Achilleid* is not a clumsy sketch towards an unrealized final product, but rather it is already a carefully crafted lure of a poem, designed to pull the audience in and to cause them to wonder, 'where could it possibly go from here?' The history of critical response to the poem bears out the brilliant success Statius has had in posing that question to the minds of modern scholars; one can only hope that he was equally successful among his prospective patrons. Very little criticism has been written about the *Achilleid*, and amid what little there is, there has been a proliferation of diverging attempts to figure out what Statius *would have* gone on to have written.[12] It will sometimes be necessary to consider here what the *Achilleid* as a whole might have looked like, particularly in discussing the bold promises of the proem, but in general I will attempt to steer clear of arguments regarding the ultimate shape of the epic, on the grounds that the issue is hopelessly subjective, and that such debates merely play uncritically into the hand of the professional poet who made a living in part by keeping his audience wondering about precisely that question.

The most important result to take from the foregoing discussion is that the *Achilleid* did not escape accidentally from Statius' desktop; it had already taken its first steps in the world and the inchoate portion was ready for public recitation at the very least. Moreover, the *Achilleid* is not a rough sketch; rather, it is Statius' final masterpiece.[13] It was evidently designed to indicate the possibilities

[11] See Coleman (1988) ad *Silv.* 4.4.87–100.

[12] The divergence of critical opinion may be illustrated by comparing Koster (1979), who argued that the epic would consist of a string of erotic encounters in thematic contrast to the *Iliad*, versus Méheust (1971: xx), who argued that once Achilles got to Troy, 'le héros ... ne se serait pas révélé moins brutal que ses collègues de la *Thébaïde*'. See Aricò (1996: 198f), the most recent intervention in this reductive and stubbornly persistent debate.

[13] In the past, positive evaluations of the *Achilleid* have often come at the expense of the

of a longer, complete epic on Achilles, sufficient patronage permitting, and so it is not unreasonable to presume that the text we have, while open-ended, also has a structure that is due to more than random chance. On these grounds I will refer to the *Achilleid* throughout this thesis as simply a poem rather than a fragment and treat it as though its gross features, such as its starting and ending points, while idiosyncratic, were as deliberately chosen as in any other work. In comparison with such texts as the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus and *Silvae* 5.5, where the process of composition has evidently been interrupted quite abruptly, the rational endpoint of the *Achilleid* marks it as clearly a different beast. It will be worth remembering that the decisive closure of the *Thebaid* is more the exception than the rule in Latin epic. As to the judgment that the *Achilleid* is Statius' masterpiece, only the success or failure of this study will bear out whether the poem can repay such close scrutiny. We may begin, however, by looking at some features of the overall design of the poem which illustrate its coherence.

In a provocative and deliberately paradoxical article, W. R. Johnson (1994) considered the Achilles of Homer as a literary creation and the Achilles of Statius as an orally created character. Johnson is precisely correct about Statius: the importance of the oral, performative aspect of the work of this poet in particular has been slighted, given what we know about the popularity of Statius' recitals from Juvenal and indeed from the *Silvae* passage quoted above (p 15).[14] In fact, I shall try to elucidate the text where possible from the position of auditor as well as that of reader; but that is not the aspect of Johnson's article that is relevant here. He notes a symmetry that mere 'fragments' are not meant to exhibit:

> Whatever Statius intended to do with Achilles after finishing book 1 and starting book 2, there can be no doubt how deliberate, initially at least, his design was: the first 396 verses are devoted to Thetis getting her son safely to Scyros; 163 verses are given over to the Greeks at Aulis . . . ; finally, 400 verses contain the discovery of Achilles by those sent to search for him and his departure with them to Troy. A – B – A: the architecture of the narrative is severe and arithmetically exact. (1994: 34)

A similar symmetry also obtains from the point of view of Achilles' biography.

Thebaid (e.g. Schanz-Hosius 1935: vol 2, 539), which is certainly not the intent here.

[14] Johnson (1994: 35): '. . . the Flavian audience and their poets probably thought of their texts just as actors and theatre directors think of their scripts—as something that must be interpreted with the whole body. . . , as something whose rhetorical energies and visual and verbal glories would only realize their potentialities in the actuality of performance'.

If we consider only the portion of his life covered in the extant poem, then the *Achilleid* is a very well-balanced narrative. It begins *in medias res*, at the point when the boy is just about to leave Chiron's care; he is plunged into a new adventure, and only later when he is at leisure does he narrate retrospectively the events of his early childhood as far back as he can recall. Those events that he was too young to remember, he reports at second hand (*dicor...*, 2.96), until, with the final words of his narrative, the hero disclaims even his own authority over the story: *scit cetera mater* (2.167).[15] As the narrative of Achilles, who is on his way to Aulis, disappears into his mother's womb, the poem ends, having given a complete account of all the events of Achilles' life up to his joining the Trojan expedition. There is no sense of formal closure here, it is true, nor should there be if the poem is to continue, but it is an eminently logical place to pause. The two main strands of plot, Thetis' attempt to prevent Achilles from joining the war and Ulysses' mission to bring him to Aulis, have just been resolved and there is no action immediately pending. The poem begins by discussing the hero's paternity: the first words are the Homeric patronymic, *magnanimum Aeaciden*; the last word of the poem is *mater*. The childhood of Achilles unfolds between the bounds determined by his parents. It is therefore misleading to say that the poem simply 'breaks off' as a result of the poet's untimely death.[16]

The fact that the poem ends mid-book is not a sign of abruptness either; whereas in the *Thebaid* it is Statius' practice to use book end-points to effect a change of scene, they do not necessarily bring major episodes to a close. For example, the funeral games for Archemorus conclude at book-end (6.946), but after the next book opens with a shift to the divine sphere, the funeral rites are resumed (7.104) and thus provide a bridge between the two books. It is clear that a writer of epic could conceive of larger compositional units than a single book; the *Achilleid* as we have it is just such a structure. If, as will be argued shortly, this is a self-consciously Ovidianizing epic, then we might expect its book-endings to play an even more subtle counterpoint to the plot than in a 'Vergilian' epic.[17] Achilles' autobiographical account of his early life with Chiron gives a fuller sense of completeness to the narrative of Achilles' young life than

[15] Some translators and Dilke (ad loc) have understood these words to refer to Achilles' stay in Scyros, which does not make good sense. Achilles has already refused to discuss that topic (2.43–8); this is a separate demurral, which, as he has been summing up the story of his childhood with Chiron, must refer to the question, never answered in the *Achilleid*, of how Achilles came to live with the Centaur in the first place. The unhappy background must be supplied from Apollonius (*Argon.* 4.865–79), on which see below (Section 4.2).

[16] *OCD*[3] s.v. 'Statius, Publius Papinius' [Feeney].

[17] On the fluidity of transitions in the *Metamorphoses*, see Quintilian (*Inst.* 4.1.77) and Fowler (1989: 88–97).

Book 1 alone possesses. Indeed, any structure that begins *in medias res* demands just such a retrospective narrative to fill in the story before the opening point of the epic. It is also interesting to note that these 167 lines of Book 2 correspond in length to the 163 lines of the Aulis episode at the center of Book 1. Thus the structure of the *Achilleid* in Johnson's schema extends beyond A – B – A to the even more symmetrical A – B – A – B (verses: 396 – 163 – 400 – 167).

Dilke (1954: 7) attempted to demonstrate examples of the lack of polish that the usual account of the poem's creation would necessarily ascribe to it; he says: 'Statius' death may not only have cut short the *Achilleid*, but prevented any thorough revision of the completed portion'. Yet the instances he gives of supposedly awkward repetitions of language may be easily paralleled in the *Thebaid*, as Dilke himself acknowledged (1954: 7, n 1). This entirely vitiates the force of the argument, since that poem, *multa cruciata lima* (*Silv.* 4.7.26, quoted above, p 16), is the only surviving ancient epic we can be reasonably sure was published at Rome in its final form under the supervision of the poet himself. Furthermore, the judgment that lines 1.663f are 'weak and unpoetic' has not been universally accepted, and even so, they might be interpolated, as Garrod thought.[18] The 'awkwardness inherent' in lines 1.927–9 is in fact the result of a brilliant narrative *coup de théâtre*: for an explanation see below (Section 4.3.1). The doubtful hiatus in 2.93 is easily emended, and Dilke himself prints a corrected text. Finally, the expression *sociis multumque faventibus* at 2.91 may be in a sense 'weak', as Dilke charges, but this is a reflection of Statius' characterization of Ulysses, who speaks those words: the devious Ithacan is trying to assure Achilles that he only has the boy's best interests at heart; the amplification is weak because the rhetoric is designed to ring hollow. In conclusion, Dilke's attempt to demonstrate the lack of coherence of the *Achilleid*, which he took as a given, in fact convincingly demonstrates the opposite. If a reader as careful and critical as Dilke could only produce these few, and easily accounted for, flaws in the poem's language, it is a testament to the polish and revision given to the poem before its public recitation.

1.2 The Achilleid and Literary History

It is unlikely that Statius planned that the *Achilleid* should remain in its present state forever, simply because of the way it invites speculation about its completion. Experiments at deliberate incompleteness do, however, exist in

[18] Cf. Marastoni's *apparatus* for approval of the lines. Line 1.661, just two lines before, has poor MS support and is universally thought spurious.

literature. Walter Raleigh, while imprisoned in the Tower of London, wrote the eleventh book, a small piece of the twelfth book, and apparently no more, of *The Ocean to Cynthia*—Cynthia being the moon, Diana, the virgin goddess, and thus the virgin queen, Elizabeth I.[19] For Raleigh, fragmentation demonstrates the shattering effect of imprisonment on his powers of praise:

> The blossumes fallen, the sapp gon from the tree,
> The broken monuments of my great desires,
> From thes so lost what may th' affections bee,
> What heat in Cynders of extinguisht fiers?[20] (13–16)

The 'broken monuments' of his past are reflected in the fragmentary state of the composition. The reason for beginning with the eleventh book in particular may be found in his frank description of his relationship with the queen as a war of twelve years (120). If Raleigh was making the conventional equation of years and books (cf. *Theb.* 12.811f), then his composition described his current state as a desperate point near the end of the work of his life as a courtier, but with the potential yet for redemption and a happy ending. In a manner strikingly reminiscent of Ovid's *error*, Raleigh alludes vaguely to his indiscretion as a 'myshapp' (10) and an 'error' (338). This may not be a conscious echo, but rather due to the similarity of their embarrassment. Raleigh is thought to have been caught in an intimate relationship with one of the queen's maids of honor, Elizabeth Throckmorton, to whom we find him married upon his release from the Tower.[21] Despite Raleigh's situation, the incompleteness of the epic is an invitation:

> My pipe, which loues own hand, gave my desire
> To singe her prayses, and my wo vppon,
> Dispaire hath often threatened to the fier,
> As vayne to keipe now all the rest ar gonn. (505–8)

Near the end of his work, the poet reminds the queen that the fragmentation and destruction of his poetic voice will silence her praises, too, and implicitly promises the production of further praise poetry should he be released.

[19] While never published until the modern era, the poem was more than a sketch; the MS is a fair copy, not a first draft: Latham (1951: 124). The short fragment of the beginning of the '12th book' is in a different meter to the 11th book.

[20] Latham (1951: 25–43); a version of the poem in modernized spelling may be found in Oakeshott (1960: 176–203)

[21] Oakeshott (1960: 41–51).

This sort of negotiation between power and poetry is not foreign to Latin literature: one might consider the six books of the *Fasti* as a similarly motivated down-payment to Augustus on the complete Roman poem that Ovid would deliver upon his return from exile.[22] At the very least, the *Fasti* are a reminder that a Roman poet could publish a work in partially complete form, and still consider it an important part of his *œuvre*. The claims of unity made by Barchiesi for the *Fasti* are equally true of the *Achilleid*: *questo torso ha i suoi diritti di essere considerato come un testo.*[23] Both texts have suffered from the presumption that they only exist as the result of an accident beyond their author's control. For Statius, who was writing in less desperate circumstances than Ovid or Raleigh, incompleteness is not a plea for forgiveness; it is an advertisement to prospective patrons like Vibius Maximus that, having completed the *Thebaid*, he was not about to rest on his laurels, but, like Homer, he was moving on to a second epic. He would show his range by attempting a poem that begins in a boldly different style, as much as the *Odyssey* with its romantic interludes was recognized to differ in tone from the wartime *Iliad*.[24] The intention to write a second mythological epic was in and of itself to go beyond Vergilian ambition and to confront the model of Homer, so to choose Achilles as subject was to do no more than to acknowledge this fact. It can hardly be pure coincidence that the *Iliad* and the *Thebaid* are both named after the besieged cities that feature in each epic, while the *Odyssey* and *Achilleid* are named after the eponymous heroes whose delays and diversions each poem records. The paradox is that this 'Odyssean', second work of Statius is on a trajectory to collide eventually with the martial subject matter of the *Iliad* itself. This paradox was surely part of the lure for the prospective audience.

The incompleteness of the *Achilleid*, which was written as a token of things to come and as a demonstration of the poet's continuing epic ambitions, took on a more somber cast after Statius' death. The contrast between what is promised by the poem and what is achieved in it could be seen in retrospect as a tragic unfulfillment, as promise cut short, or even as an example of poetic insufficiency, and that is apparently how Claudian read the work, recasting it as a monument to aporia. A primary model for the *De Raptu Proserpinae* (*DRP*) was Statius'

[22] See Barchiesi (1994a: 265–9), who also considers Ovid's claim (*Trist.* 2.549) to have written twelve books. On the appropriateness of the note on which the half-finished poem halts, see ibid. p 276.

[23] Barchiesi (1994a: 268): 'Il mio punto di partenza è che questo è un testo che ha avuto una sua normale circolazione, non disconosciuta da Ovidio; un testo che si appella a un pubblico, la metà di un progetto, ma non un manoscritto rubato...'.

[24] On the secondariness of the *Odyssey* in the career of 'Homer', see [Longinus], *Subl.* 11–15.

poem, which is likewise the story of a mother's concern to protect her child and whose plot also turns on an act of rape. In accordance with his Statian model, Claudian left his own poem incomplete. The possibility has not to my knowledge been seriously considered that this might have been an act of deliberate emulation; the usual explanation for the state of the poem is the death of the poet or 'the distraction of some more pressing commitment or a waning of enthusiasm for the project'.[25] There is in fact strong internal evidence that incompletion was always an essential feature of Claudian's project. Claudian abandoned his composition not once but twice, and even tells the reader so, adding a resumptive preface before the second book. It has been demonstrated that this indicates that the composition took place in two stages, with a prolonged interval in between; various biographical explanations of this lacuna have been proposed.[26] Yet if we look at the end of the first book, an aesthetic, rather than a biographical explanation may be preferable.

The first book of the *De Raptu Proserpinae* ends with a description of a work of art (1.248–68). Ignorant of the scheming that will lead to her abduction, Proserpina sits at home singing to herself and weaving a tapestry with a design on it of cosmographic scope and classicizing symmetry. Gruzelier's comment is worth quoting at length:

> Here Proserpina is innocently ensconced in her palace stronghold creating a picture of a harmonious cosmos in which everything is in its proper order: Jupiter on high, Pluto down below, and the world sorted into its appropriate positions. Meanwhile already, unbeknown to her, the dark powers of evil are assembling to upset this order: hence the sudden switch to the bridling of Pluto's steeds at the end of the book. This seems very much consonant with Claudian's own world-view—of a small pool of light at centre stage that is the civilized, organized world, surrounded by the monstrous, threatening shadows of destruction, whether they be Pluto ready to burst out of his proper sphere beneath the earth, the giants trying to scale heaven or the Goths massing to invade Rome. (1993: ad 1.246ff)

The work Proserpina is engaged upon is, however, *inrita ... munera* (256). Her fate has been decided, and Venus, Diana and Pallas are on their way deliberately to lure the girl out of the house to the scene of her abduction. They arrive, in

[25] Hall (1969: 105), quoted with approval by Gruzelier (1993: xx). Cameron (1970: 465f) argues that the poet's death interrupted the composition.
[26] See Hall (1969: 94–105).

fact, while she is weaving:

> ... sed cardine verso
> cernit adesse deas imperfectumque laborem
> deserit ... (*DRP* 1.270–2)

She leaves her work unfinished, its grand ambitions forever unattained, a monument to her lost innocence. The poet rounds out the end of the book with a menacing description of the horses of Pluto preparing for their journey. What a brilliant stroke it was to end the poem at this moment of looming but unconsummated violence, suddenly incomplete, like the tapestry of Proserpina, and like the *Achilleid*. For it must be that at one time the poem ended there, or approximately there.[27]

The second book is preceded by a second pentameter preface, a most unusual device. The poet explains that just as Orpheus was asleep for a long time before Hercules came to wake him to singing once more, so too the poet has found his Hercules, a certain Florentinus, to set him singing again.[28] This elaborate account of Orpheus awaking explains why Claudian has taken up the poem again after a long interval, and indeed why he is taking it up again at all, after producing a poem with such a striking and effective ending. The answer is: patronage. There is an exquisite irony, perhaps not lost on Claudian, in that Statius did not live to see the patronage his own work was designed to attract, while Claudian did reap the profit via his imitation. It may be that Claudian meant his own work similarly as a prospectus to patrons, and that Florentinus simply took up the bid, but that is hard to reconcile with the pathos that incompletion has taken on in the work. Why did Claudian not simply revise the entire poem to insert his new patron's name into the preface proper, as must have often happened in the commerce of patronage? Perhaps the original had too wide a circulation, or too much time had passed in the interim; but neither of these seem insurmountable problems. The reason Claudian would have been obligated to proceed in the strange manner he did, adding a second preface in the middle of the poem, is that the previous version of *De Raptu Proserpinae* had so dramatically abjured completion that simply to add to it or complete it in a straightforward fashion without explanation and without respecting the fragmentariness of the initial conception would have made a mockery of the original project.

[27] Claudian certainly might have revised Book 1 when he added the rest of the poem.
[28] *DRP* 2. pref. 49–52. On the identity of Florentinus, see Hall (1969: 94–105).

Indeed the pathos of the original conception was not abandoned, merely postponed. The poem breaks off again in the third book, as Ceres searches frantically for her daughter. Claudian did not forget about the abandoned tapestry. We see it again on the occasion that Ceres returns to her empty house and runs through it in a panic:

> ... semirutas confuso stamine telas
> atque interceptas agnoscit pectinis artes.
> divinus perit ille labor, spatiumque relictum
> audax sacrilego supplebat aranea textu. (3.155–8)

The weaving that was described so beautifully when Proserpina was still working on it, while it still had a teleology, now appears to be a mess of confused threads. All workers have not been idle in the meantime, however. A bold vandal has supplemented the original weaving at its margins and in its gaps, a spider who spins her insubstantial web on the abandoned loom.[29] So Claudian continues to trope his own work through the image of the loom, and he makes sure that we do not mistake his resumption of the project for an attempt to complete it or somehow to redeem the pathos of his original conception. Claudian's prefaces tell us that even an artist who is committed to producing an incomplete work, given the proper patronage, will take it up—and drop it—once again.

The attraction of the *Achilleid* as a model for the later poet may be imagined on a number of levels. It may be that Claudian read the incompleteness of the *Achilleid* as a symptom of a belatedness to epic that he felt himself to share. He may have seen it as Statius' serious response to the monumental and already-closed nature of mythological epic discourse; Claudian may have seen himself as emulating Statius' principled 'refusal' to advance his poem to treat of the Trojan War, remaining on the margins of the larger epic narrative like the spider on Proserpina's loom. If so, the later poet was reacting to an important element in the *Achilleid*. Of course, we are not obliged to agree that the inevitability of Homeric and Vergilian narrative was the cause of Statius' failure to proceed, but it will be useful to recognize from the outset that the ineluctable nature of epic fate and the failure of any attempt substantially to rewrite it are central themes in the *Achilleid*.

In a recent study of intertextuality and literary tradition, Hinds (1998) has interpreted the *Achilleid* in a way that converges with Claudian's approach. His *Allusion and Intertext* has done a great deal to advance our understanding of

[29] The source that suggests itself for the contrast between Proserpina's weaving and the spider's is Ovid's story of Minerva and Arachne: see Heslin (1998).

the *Achilleid,* and it will be obvious that I am entirely in agreement with most of what he says, especially regarding the programmatic Ovidian ambitions of the poem. Because this justly influential book ends with a negative judgment of the place of the *Achilleid* in literary history, however, it may be a useful way of clarifying my own position if I distinguish it from Hinds'. He illustrates the extensive allusion Statius deploys in the *Achilleid* to Ovid, particularly in the *Metamorphoses*, and to Catullus, particularly in poem 64, and to other poets such as Horace altogether outside the epic tradition; he argues further and correctly that this constitutes an attempt to generate and constitute retrospectively an alternative epic tradition. Because this bid to realign the entire epic genre was unsuccessful, he judges that the poem as a whole was not a success:

> ... this aspect of Statius' own bid to write the tradition into his poem has been, measured by its modern reception, a failure. Statius' literary historiography in the unfinished *Achilleid* constructs a tradition in which Ovid's *Metamorphoses* features front and centre. This is a tendentious rereading of literary history by Statius – more obviously tendentious than his privileging of Catullus 64 – and evidently it is one which has not become canonical. (1998: 142f)

There are several problems with this formulation: (1) it ignores works like Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae*, which did continue the literary tradition constructed by the *Achilleid*; (2) Statius' epic poetry as a whole, including the more obviously Vergilian *Thebaid*, has not been 'canonical' in the West for several centuries, so it is not clear that one can extract the 'failure' of the *Achilleid* to be understood by modern critics from the general failure of those critics to come seriously to terms with Statius' corpus as a whole; and most importantly, (3) it reifies a kind of Statian 'failure' that the poet has already wittily troped through the figure of Thetis. The plot of the poem as we have it is largely the story of failure, the failure of Thetis to prevent her son from going to war, in fact, to prevent him from entering the *Iliad* and joining the mainstream epic tradition. We know this endeavor is destined to fail, the poet knows it, and most of all, Thetis must know it.[30] That fore-knowledge does not dissuade her or make her attempt meaningless. I shall try to demonstrate below (Sections 4.1 and 4.2) that Thetis is characterized as a failure in many ways; we should not confuse this with the poet's failure to overturn the inevitability of the Homeric and Vergilian epic narratives. To suggest the latent and potential imminence of another epic tradition always already alongside and in competition with the dominant paradigm

[30] Catullus' Parcae told her all about it at her wedding: see below, Section 4.1.2.

is a big job for a small poem; even had he completed it, Statius would hardly have expected to supplant the *Iliad* with the *Achilleid*, but rather to supplement it. To redeem the text of the *Achilleid* from the prejudgment of pathetic insufficiency or outright failure that its reception has determined for it, whether on account of its apparent aporia and belatedness, as for Claudian, or on account of the misunderstanding of critics and the resistance of Homeric-Vergilian epic discourse to being rewritten, as for Hinds, it will be necessary to attempt an interpretation grounded in more generous premises.

1.3 Goals and Methods

This introduction has tried to demonstrate that Statius' *Achilleid* has an *a priori* claim to be considered as a coherent poetic document. The remainder of this thesis is mostly an attempt to bear out that hypothesis by subjecting the poem, or at least certain passages of it, to a close reading. In the interest of keeping the quantity of material manageable and of maintaining a focus on the story of Achilles, I have largely and consciously ignored the episode of the Greek fleet mustering at Aulis (1.397–559). Latin quotations are from the *Achilleid* unless otherwise specified, and the text will be quoted according to Dilke's edition, except where noted. Close attention will be paid to rhetorical analysis of speeches, where Statius' skill in characterization is most evident. Particular stress will be laid on interpreting the poem with respect to its literary traditions and the Roman environment in which it would have been recited. By this I mean the intertextual relationship of the *Achilleid* to other poems on the level of language, especially but not exclusively in the epic tradition; and I also mean its relation on the level of narrative to other versions of the story of Achilles' childhood and the events on Scyros. The details of these sometimes obscure myths as they might have been told before Statius are often better preserved in the visual arts than in surviving literature, and so, as we might expect from a poet with Statius' visual imagination and interest in the plastic arts, the necessary 'texts' to which we will compare Statius' narrative will not always be of a literary nature. The origins of some of these Achilles-myths have been traced by scholars to roots in Greek ritual, and a certain amount of comparative anthropology will be required to evaluate these claims. Moreover, Statius himself will be seen to use the language of ritual to account for certain elements in the myth, and this will necessitate some discussion of Roman religion. Finally, much of the *Achilleid* is preoccupied with matters of sex and gender, and accordingly, much of the present work, especially in its latter half, will constitute an investigation of Statius' view of

femininity and masculinity.

I will begin by examining in Chapter 2 how Statius presents the poetic project of the *Achilleid*. First there will be a discussion of two important programmatic passages: the description of the song Achilles sings for his mother (1.188–94), and the proem (1.1–19). The remainder of the chapter will be taken up with several readings of passages in which Statius' intertextual relationship with various earlier texts is especially interesting, and from which some idea may be developed of the place the poem claims for itself in the epic tradition. Chapter 3 is an analysis of the character of the young Achilles and the nature of his upbringing in relation to his depiction elsewhere. The main focus of that inquiry will be the way Statius constructs Achilles as a liminal figure, suspended between masculinity and femininity, youth and adulthood, mortality and divinity. Chapter 4 is a discussion of womanliness as it is enacted not only by Achilles, but also by the 'real' female characters in the poem, especially Thetis. Chapter 5 discusses the transvestism of Achilles in greater depth, paying especial attention to the question of the origins of the myth and the way Statius relates it to Roman ritual. Chapter 6 is a consideration of masculinity and paternity as they are articulated by the phallic humor and the sexual violence that accompany Achilles' eventual assertion of his manhood and the beginning of his career as a hero. The story of Achilles' emerging masculinity as told by Statius will be compared to the only other completely surviving narrative of the hero's stay on Scyros in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. This comparison will lead to some final conclusions about Statius' view of the nature of masculinity. By the end, I hope to have shown that not only is the *Achilleid* a very witty and amusing poem, it also constitutes a serious reflection on the nature of gender and of human subjectivity, in which Achilles serves as an extreme case who explores the boundaries between existential categories: male, female, child, adult, animal, god.

Statius' reputation as a poet has long suffered from the advice he gave to his *Thebaid* at its end, that it should follow a few steps behind the *Aeneid* (*Theb.* 12.816f). This expression of *aemulatio* and filiation is a blasphemy against romantic notions of creative originality and equally against agonistic accounts of poetic succession.[31] Because, as we shall see, the *Achilleid* holds itself at a certain ironic distance from Vergil, it may provide a more accessible approach to Statius' epic *œuvre*, at least until our critical tools are sophisticated enough to do justice to the rather different intertextual model of the *Thebaid*. At the beginning

[31] For the 'pride' and 'self-confidence' that Statius in fact displays at the end of the *Thebaid*, see Hill (1989: 99). On the beginning of the *Achilleid* as a reflection on the end of the *Thebaid*, see Hinds (1998: 91–6) and Barchiesi (1996: 50).

of the *Achilleid*, Statius the epic narrator looks back upon the achievement of his previous work in terms that are very far removed from modesty. He reminds us that this is not his first epic venture, and says that Thebes knows this:

> scit Dircaeus ager meque inter prisca parentum
> nomina cumque suo numerant Amphione Thebae. (1.12f)

That is, 'The territory around Dirce knows it, and Thebes counts me among the names of its founding fathers, and in particular along with its own Amphion'.[32] That latter Theban was famous for building the walls of the city with his brother Zethus, moving huge boulders by the sound of his lyre alone.[33] Statius is like Amphion because he 'constructed Thebes' with his lyre, building the city in the imagination of his audience of his previous epic, stone by stone, word by word. Statius is not merely claiming to be 'regarded as equal to the bards of old' (Dilke ad loc), but equal to the heroic poets of myth, Amphion and Orpheus, who could animate lifeless objects with their lyre. The claim to have literally conjured up a city is a striking image; more than any ancient author, one thinks of Joyce's assertion that one could construct the city of Dublin from the pages of *Ulysses*. Such is the confidence in his own powers that Statius expresses at the outset of the *Achilleid*; it will be up to the reader to judge whether that level of self-assurance was justified.

[32] Dilke's suggestion (ad loc) that the *-que* of *meque* may be an example of its sense of *quoque* is impossible. Fordyce (1961) ad Catull. 102.3 points out that the evidence for such a construction is exceedingly dubious and that even in those doubtful cases the pronoun is always in an emphatic position, which would not be the case here. Rather, *scit* is used absolutely, referring back to the poet's claims in the previous lines; the first *-que,* in *meque,* coordinates the two clauses whose respective verbs are *scit* and *numerant*, and the second, in *cumque,* coordinates the two prepositions, *inter* and *cum*, both of which depend on *numerant*, which alone takes *me* as its object.

[33] Cf. *quo carmine muris / iusserit Amphion Tyrios accedere montes* (*Theb.* 1.9f).

Chapter Two

THE POETICS OF THE ACHILLEID

> If anybody should find fault with this story, i.e. How could Pyrrhus son of Achilles be at the battle of Troy if the Greeks were only ten years and six months and twelve days at the siege, and you think it was because of the abduction of Helen, daughter of Leda, by Alexander that that war of the Greeks was begun. Give him this answer, i.e. that Thetis daughter of Nereus brought Achilles to Scyros in order to hide him immediately after the abduction of Helen, daughter of Leda. And shortly afterwards Achilles was on the island when Pyrrhus was begotten by him upon Deidamia daughter of Lycomedes. It was long after that the Greeks finished assembling and sent messengers to seek Achilles as is told here.
>
> From a twelfth-century Irish version of the *Achilleid**

2.1 Programmatic Passages

Seneca, who allowed himself the license of scoffing at mythological poetry while composing it too, at the beginning of the *De Beneficiis* launches an attack on poetry as compared to philosophy. He complains that serious philosophers like Chrysippus wasted time mythologizing rather than doing philosophy, unearthing obscure names for the Graces and interpreting them allegorically (1.3.8–10). He alleges that poets substitute brazen invention for memory and compose according to the needs of their verse rather than with any regard for truth (1.3.10). He concludes thus:

> Istae vero ineptiae poetis relinquantur, quibus aures oblectare propositum est et dulcem fabulam nectere. (1.4.5)

These are serious charges against anyone who has dedicated himself to the daughters of memory, and whether or not Statius is responding specifically to this

* The English translation is that of Ó hAodha (1979: 107).

passage of Seneca, he justifies the practice of mythography in a scene that depicts Achilles himself singing mythological poetry. This is an elaboration of the moment in the *Iliad* (9.189) where the embassy to Achilles discovers the hero in his tent, playing the lyre to console himself. In the *Achilleid*, the consolatory power of music and poetry is also apparent, but the context is different. The young hero is providing after-dinner entertainment for his preoccupied mother, who is a guest at Chiron's cave. The Centaur takes out the lyre, tests it and hands it to his ward:

> [Chiron] ... attonitae varia oblectamina nectens
> elicit extremo chelyn et solantia curas
> fila movet leviterque expertas pollice chordas
> dat puero. (1.185–8)

The education given to Achilles by Chiron was a mythical paradigm for pedagogical excellence from Pindar onwards (*Nem.* 3.43–52), and Statius reminds us that music was an important part of that education. Chiron teaching Achilles to play the lyre was a very popular motif in Roman art, and Statius' audience would have recognized this intimate scene from such visual representations. In the famous painting from the basilica of Herculaneum, Chiron plucks the strings of the lyre for his pupil just as he does here.[1] The collocation of *nectere* and *oblectamen/oblectare* used in both texts in the sense of composing poetry suggests that Seneca and Statius may have been contributing to the same debate about the utility and accuracy of mythological poetry. Statius redeems its usefulness by reminding us of the part it played in Achilles' pedagogy, as well as by re-emphasizing its consolatory power. The accuracy of the myths sung by the poets is endorsed, moreover, by the implication that Chiron and Achilles stand at the beginning of a continuous tradition of heroic poetry that goes back to the time of the heroes themselves. Statius makes this metaphor of poetic 'tradition' concrete in the act of teacher handing the lyre to his pupil; he used similar language when describing the patrimony of poetry he inherited from his own teacher, his father:

> sed decus hoc quodcumque lyrae primusque dedisti ... (*Silv.* 5.3.213)

Chiron's instruction of Achilles represents one of the first stages in a tradition that bound teacher to pupil and continued all the way down to Statius' own day.

[1] The popularity of the episode in Roman art has been attributed to a sculpture group of the scene that Pliny (*NH* 36.29) says was to be found in the Saepta Julia, and that has been claimed as the model for the painting in the basilica: *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos. 50 and 51.

If contemporary mythological poetry is to be rejected as sheer invention, Homer must be thrown out as well, for all poetry at one time was new; even Achilles once was young.

Rather than making things up to suit the verse, as in Seneca's accusation, we shall see that Achilles' song is very concerned with preserving in detail the minutiae of the myths he relates. Achilles' subject-matter is the *immania laudum / semina*,[2] which translates the κλέα ἀνδρῶν in Homer's description of Achilles' song:

τῇ ὅ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν. (9.189)

It would be interesting to know more about the content of the song in the *Iliad*; there is a potential conflict of interest in the circumstance that Achilles was at the same time the subject of heroic poetry *par excellence* and a poet himself.

[2] This phrase occurs again in the form *immania semina laudum* in a corrupted line of the MSS of Ovid's *Heroides* (9.83), in the midst of a passage rife with interpolations (see Dorrie, 1971 in app. crit.). Merkel speculated that this hexameter was introduced to supply a perceived lacuna between a pentameter and a hexameter that had been corrupted into another pentameter. In that case, the putative interpolator was evidently put in mind of the *Achilleid* by the cross-dressing in Ovid's poem, since Deianeira is here remonstrating with Hercules over his servitude to Omphale. Perhaps, however, the words *immania semina laudum* did originally belong to Ovid's text, and Statius is the imitator. One could eliminate some clear interpolations and marry together two divorced half-lines (*ante pedes dominae* and *immania semina laudum*), emending the whole passage in a way that makes very good sense:

A! quotiens, digitis dum torques stamina duris,
  praevalidae fusos comminuere manus! 80
ante pedes dominae † immania semina laudum [81–3]
  factaque narrabas dissimulanda tibi: 84
scilicet ...
[there follows an enumeration of Hercules' deeds] (*Her.* 9.79–85)

The problem, and the likely reason this simple solution has not been conjectured before, is the resulting metrical irregularity. Such an hiatus at the caesura after *dominae* is almost unparalleled in Ovid: cf. in general Platnauer (1971: 57–9) and on hiatus in the *Heroides*, Palmer (1898: 509f). One could try to patch this up by further conjecturing that an elided monosyllable like *tu* or *tam* fell out of the text at the caesura, but there is in fact some chance that the hiatus may be original. The only other parallel for such an hiatus in all of the Ovidian corpus comes, coincidentally, from this same epistle, about fifty lines further down: *forsitan et pulsa † Aetolide Deianira* (131). One could argue with Courtney (1965: 65f) that this metrical anomaly points to the non-Ovidian authorship of this epistle or, as I would suggest, that Deianira is deliberately evoking a mock-heroic tone by employing an Homeric-Vergilian metrical effect in an incongruously elegiac context. For a similar example of a metrical anomaly in this epistle used to defend rather than impeach its authenticity, see Barchiesi (1993: 340f). The unsuitability of elegiac form to heroic content is precisely Deianira's complaint: Hercules' deeds, recounted in the proper context, are indeed worthy of praise; but not when narrated by an emasculated hero, who sits at the feet of his mistress. If Statius knew the *Heroides* passage in some such form as suggested here, either because it was Ovidian or because it was already interpolated, then Achilles' decision to begin his relation of the *laudum / semina* with the labors of Hercules may also be indebted to Deianeira's ironic taunt at her husband. Elsewhere in the *Achilleid* Statius does allude to this passage: *attrito pollice* (*Ach.* 1.581) and *robusto ... pollice* (*Her.* 9.78) both refer to the cross-dressed heroes' attempts at spinning.

At an absurd extreme the possibility exists of the poet/hero praising his own exploits. In fact, Statius stops not far short of that point. He explores the subject matter of Achilles' verse in much greater detail than Homer:

> ... canit ille libens inmania laudum
> semina: quot tumidae superarit iussa novercae
> Amphitryoniades, crudum quo Bebryca caestu
> obruerit Pollux, quanto circumdata nexu
> ruperit Aegides Minoia bracchia tauri,
> maternos in fine toros superisque gravatum
> Pelion: hic victo risit Thetis anxia vultu. (1.188–94)

Achilles could hardly come any closer than this to becoming the subject of his own poetry without explicitly mentioning himself: he runs through the material of heroic myth right up to the wedding of his own parents. It could yet be that Achilles does touch upon his own life in his song, seeing that the most detailed account of his parents' wedding in Latin, Catullus 64, saw fit to include the song of the Parcae.[3] Did Achilles' own narrative of the event likewise reproduce the predictions of the Parcae about his life? Thetis' response to Achilles' performance is equivocal; she might be expected to smile at the memory of their marriage; yet Statius qualifies Thetis' reaction by noting that her smile was forced.[4] This might be attributed to the general anxiety the goddess has felt about her son's destiny since the beginning of the poem; but the word *hic* (194) implies that it is the final part of Achilles' recitation that provokes her reaction. It seems that the mention of her wedding is the cause not only of Thetis' polite smile, but also of the anxiety it conceals. Thetis apparently remembers the event in the way that the audience of Latin poetry remembers it, including its premonitions of Achilles' glory and death at Troy.[5] This implicit congruity between Catullus 64 and Achilles' song is not in fact implausible, since both 'poems' share a strong connection with the traditions of the epic ecphrasis.

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[3] As Elaine Fantham points out in a forthcoming article in *Hermathena*, Horace, *Epode* 13 is relevant here. In that poem Chiron sings to his young charge about his destiny, telling him that the Parcae (line 15) have fated him to die at Troy. The consolatory power of music is also important in that context.

[4] (1.194) Not as Mozley, 'Then Thetis relaxed her anxious countenance and smiled', but as Dilke (ad loc), 'Then Thetis, though worried, mastered her face and smiled'.

[5] On the reverberation of the song of the Parcae through the *Achilleid*, see Hinds (1998: 125–8) and below, Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3.1.

2.1.1 Anachronism and Ecphrasis

When Apollonius turned his hand to the tradition of ecphrasis that embraced the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* and the pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*, he produced a description of the cloak of Jason, to which this passage of the *Achilleid* owes an important debt. The Homeric shield of Achilles is full of generic representations of life, and, although various gods appear on it, it does not tell any particular, named story from myth. The shield of Heracles as described in the *Aspis* is similar, but there we do find specific myths as well: the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs (178–90), and Perseus and the Gorgons (216–37). One of these supplements is not without its problems, however, since among the Lapiths we find numbered Theseus and Pirithous. Theseus was usually considered to have been a younger contemporary of Heracles, so his appearance on the latter's shield is potentially anachronistic.[6] Apollonius, in his own contribution to the ecphrasis tradition, likewise included scenes of specific mythological figures on Jason's cloak, and in contrast to the timeless 'genre' scenes on Achilles' shield, the main actors in each panel are named.[7] He made sure, however, that all of the events represented there were prior or potentially prior to the voyage of the Argo: not an easy task, given that it was such a foundational event. Apollonius seems to emphasize in quite a deliberate way the avoidance of anachronism, because the final scene on the cloak is of Phrixus, Helle, and the Golden Fleece, the tale which immediately preceded and precipitated the action of the *Argonautica*. Statius matches this precision, likewise enumerating myths carefully chosen to antedate Achilles' own life (Hercules, Pollux, Theseus), and likewise leading right to the threshold of the action of the epic itself, and including even its prolegomena (the wedding of Peleus and Thetis).

Catullus returned to the question of the temporal relationship between ecphrasis and framing narrative by exploiting the chronologically problematic claim of the Argonauts to priority over all other sea voyages.[8] The wedding of Peleus and Thetis is described as a consequence of the expedition of the Argo, the first ship, yet the wedding-tapestry depicts Theseus' voyage across the sea

[6] The *Aspis* reportedly was criticized for inconsistent and implausible mythography, in that Hephaestus was unlikely to make weapons for Heracles, his mother's nemesis: Lamberton (1988: 139).

[7] Cf. Shapiro (1980: 282): 'The central scene, the battle of the Taphian pirates with the sons of Elektryon, is perhaps most Homeric.... Its model is an excerpt from the city at war on the shield of Achilles.... The only major change, in keeping with an essential difference between Achilles' shield and Jason's cloak, is that Apollonios has turned Homer's generic scene of battle into a specific mythological engagement by naming the participants'.

[8] See Malamud and McGuire (1993: 195–7) on the issue of the priority of the Argo in Valerius Flaccus.

to Crete as a past event. Weber (1983) demonstrated that the source for the tension between these two events is to be found in Apollonius. When Jason seduces Medea in Book 3 of the *Argonautica*, he tells her the story of Theseus and Ariadne (conveniently omitting to mention her abandonment, 3.997–1004), as if it belonged to the distant past. This anachronism must have been all the more blatant in the light of Callimachus' *Hecale,* which evidently described Medea's attempt in her later years to poison the ephebic Theseus when he first arrived at Athens to find his father.[9] Catullus violates the distinction between ecphrasis and frame that Apollonius was at such pains to respect on Jason's cloak, and he does so by replicating an anachronism found elsewhere in Apollonius' text. By the time Vergil approached his epic ecphrasis, therefore, the question of anachronism was unavoidable. The shield of Aeneas completely violates the temporal frame of the narrative, but the narrator explicitly justifies the disjunction by explaining that Aeneas understood none of the Roman history represented on the shield (8.730–1).

Statius returns the tradition of epic ecphrasis to Achilles. From Achilles' shield to Achilles' song, the topos comes full circle: from a work of art that was interpreted as a poetic program to a programmatic poem that reflects a tradition of described works of art. Here, as in the case of Jason's cloak, Statius puts together a set of mythological vignettes that carefully precede the action of the narrative, and which respects their relative chronology; he puts Theseus' voyage to Crete *after* the Argonaut Pollux' encounter with Amycus, thus restoring the precedence of the Argo voyage. The major change Statius accomplishes is to apply the tradition of ecphrasis not to a work of plastic art, but to a narrative. Of course the epic ecphrasis had always been in some sense a way of talking about poetry, perhaps even for Homer.[10] Certainly the cloak of Jason and Catullus 64 both contain meta-poetic commentary, particularly on the question of the connection between 'verbal and visual means of communication'.[11] Furthermore, as we shall see below (p 44), one episode in Achilles' song calls to mind another Statian ecphrasis: the shield of Theseus in *Thebaid* 12. Theseus carries into battle a shield that has a representation of himself on it, so that his enemies

[9] Apollonius' solution to the incompatibilities between the story of Theseus and that of the Argo was to note that Theseus *would* have joined the Argonauts, if he had been able; unfortunately he was being detained with Pirithous in Hades at that time (1.101–3). The implication that Theseus spent a lengthy period in the underworld ingeniously solves at a stroke the problem of Theseus' biography seeming simultaneously to predate and postdate that of the Argonauts.

[10] Achilles' shield in the *Iliad* depicts an ἀοιδός, who has been seen as a figure for Homer, but the authenticity of the line has been doubted; see Edwards ad *Il.* 18.604–6.

[11] See Laird (1993); quotation: p 28.

see the hero approaching twice (*bis ... bisque*, 12.673), once in life and once in art. This mirror image of Theseus in his own shield seems to be a comment on the mimetic power of art, corresponding perhaps to the scene on Jason's cloak in which Aphrodite sees a mirror image of herself in Ares' shield.[12] The issue of mimesis is raised by Achilles' song too, in that the narrator applies the techniques of ecphrasis to a different category of object.

In epic, the various songs of Demodocus in the *Odyssey* conveniently illustrate the range of ways to represent poetry 'ecphrastically' within epic: to repeat it verbatim, as in the tale of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.266–366); to list key points of the plot, as in the story of the wooden horse (8.499–520); or simply to name the theme, as in the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (8.72–82).[13] Statius enumerates Achilles' themes in a particularly elliptical way; each story is represented by an indirect question that focusses on a different significant detail in each part of the narrative. This learned and allusive style of reference was also used, for example, to list the different events from early Theban history that Statius suggests and rejects as topics in the proem of the *Thebaid*.[14] We shall now see that these details serve to give strong indications as to the style and aesthetic of Achilles' narrative. The Homeric hero, as it turns out, is in sympathy with certain very learned and distinctively Hellenistic notions of poetic composition.

2.1.2 Achilles, Poeta Doctus

The programmatic nature of Achilles' song is evident in its very subject matter. We have already noted its similarity to Catullus 64: both poems bring together the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the voyage of the Argo, and Theseus and the Minotaur. The story of Pollux and Amycus was told by Apollonius (*Argon.* 2.1–97) and by Theocritus in his hymn to the Dioscuri (22.27–134). Achilles, the Homeric hero, takes up his lyre to perform a poem whose content, on its surface, seems indebted particularly to Alexandrian and neoteric models: Apollonius, Theocritus, Catullus. The details of Achilles' song also owe something to the precision, or even pedantry, of the Hellenistic age. Each of the first three

[12] *Argon.* 1.742–6. The appropriation by Aphrodite of an instrument of war for erotic purposes is also of course a comment on Apollonius' appropriation of the Homeric shield as the model for the cloak in which Jason seduces Hypsipyle. As Professor Barchiesi has pointed out (lecture, delivered at Princeton, May 1, 1999), Statius also alludes to this collision of the erotic and the military in the scene where Achilles catches sight of a reflection in a shield of himself dressed as a girl (Ach. 1.864–7).

[13] On the paradigmatic value of the songs of Demodocus for internal narratives in the epic tradition, see Nelis (1992), esp. p 164 on their thematic connection with the ecphrastic 'narrative' of Ares and Aphrodite on Jason's cloak in the *Argonautica*.

[14] *Theb.* 1.9–13: *quo carmine, unde, quod ... opus, cui,* and *cur.*

episodes in Achilles' narrative is designated by means of an indirect question that focuses our attention on one small peculiarity of each myth. We shall see that these details are not arbitrary; they were all matters of specific concern to the Hellenistic poets. The four details that stand by synecdoche for the topics of Achilles' song are: the quantity of labors performed by Hercules, the type of boxing glove used by Pollux and Amycus, the wrestling holds used by Theseus and the Minotaur, and the bridal couch at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Hinds (1998: 125–8) has pointed out the programmatic value of the last one; *maternos ... toros* (193) alludes to the famous tapestry on the bridal couch described at such length in Catullus 64. The relevance of the other details is less immediately obvious, but, as we will now see, each can be connected in one way or another with Hellenistic poetry.

The labors of Hercules are Achilles' first subject. The indirect question puts the emphasis on the precise number of labors performed by Hercules for Eurystheus (*quot ... iussa,* 1.189). The answer is of course twelve; but that number does not appear until surprisingly late in the mythological record. Brommer (1986: 5, 64, and 77f, n 82) attributed the origin of that particular quantity to the prestige of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, which had a set of twelve metopes; but the number twelve appears nowhere with any certainty before the Hellenistic period and the labors did not take their canonical form until the Roman era. A fragment of Pindar has been suggested to contain a reference to a 'twelfth' labor, but the papyrus only has a few letters of that word (δωδ]έκατο̣[ν, 43), and so the evidence is equivocal.[15] Euripides gives us a list of approximately a dozen accomplishments in the *Heracles*, but to coerce precisely twelve labors from that passage requires a certain degree of special pleading and the great benefit of hindsight.[16] The first certain attribution, therefore, of a specific number of labors is by Hellenistic poets, and they come in a flood: Callimachus (F 23.19f Pfeiffer), Apollonius (1.1318), Theocritus (24.82), and Euphorion (F 57.13 van Gronigen) all mention the number twelve. It is thus with good reason that the establishment of this number as canonical is usually credited to the work of some unidentified author of the Hellenistic period.[17] Stipulating the precise number of Hercules'

[15] See Pavese (1968: 81–4); his argument for δωδ]έκατο̣[ν, rather than δ]έκατο̣[ν ('as a conclusive reference the tenth labor is surely less apt than the twelfth and last', 81) seems to take for granted what he then sets out to prove: that the concept of twelve Herculean labors existed *in nuce* as early as Pindar.

[16] Boardman (*LIMC* s.v. 'Herakles', p. 6), for instance, arrives at twelve labors by counting what is really one episode as three 'labors': the Hesperides, the 'Sea-clearing' and holding up heaven in substitution for Atlas (Eur. *Herc.* 394–407); on this see Brommer (1986: 61).

[17] Thus P.T. Eden (1975: ad Verg. Aen. 8.291), for example: '... the selection of the canonical twelve from the great mass of adventures connected with him was probably the work of the cataloging Alexandrians....' Similarly, Pavese (1968: 83f), and Boardman (*LIMC* s.v. 'Hera-

labors for Eurystheus was a feature of Hellenistic mythography, and Statius' Achilles shares that interest.

The next episode in Achilles' song is Pollux' boxing match with Amycus; the key detail is the *caestus* or boxing glove worn in the bout. This is a technical subject about which there has been much confusion in the scholarship, so some discussion of Greek and Roman boxing will be required in order to demonstrate that Statius is alluding here to Apollonius, or rather to a Vergilian-Apollonian intertextual nexus. Again the topic is introduced by means of an indirect question; Mozley translates it thus: '... how Pollux with his glove smote down the cruel Bebryx....' This is possible, but it is far better to understand *quo* not as 'how', but rather to take it with *caestu*. Since the first indirect question is introduced by *quot ... iussa* and the third one by *quanto ... nexu*, it seems perverse to divorce *quo ... caestu* in the second one. We then should read, 'with what boxing-glove Pollux struck down the blood-thirsty Amycus'. The particular kind of glove worn is relevant because there were various types employed for different purposes and at different times in the Greek world.[18] In Latin the word *caestus*, which properly denoted a brutal glove weighted and spiked to do damage, had to do service for the different Greek varieties of hand-covering. The earliest were evidently supple thongs (ἱμάντες, cf. Hom. *Il.* 23.684), worn to protect the knuckles, which gradually gave way after the classical period to thongs of harder leather with a cutting edge that served also as an offensive weapon. Apollonius and Theocritus both specify quite clearly that the ἱμάντες used by Pollux and Amycus were the hardened leather type familiar in the Hellenistic world.[19] Apollonius further notes that it was Amycus who provided the ἱμάντες for the bout; the pride in his craftsmanship that he displays here (2.57–9) is likely an allusion to the aetiological tradition that he was the inventor of boxing thongs.[20]

It is appropriate that the transition from soft, protective leather to hard, cutting leather should be attributed by Apollonius to this bloody-minded, uncivilized son of Poseidon. Amycus' second sets out two pairs of thongs for Polyduces

cles', p 15). The actual makeup of the canon of labors is first recounted in approximately its familiar form by Diodorus (4.8–27).

[18] See Poliakoff (1987: 68–79) for a clear overview of the subject.

[19] Theocritus calls them stiff (στερεοῖς ... ἱμᾶσιν, 22.108); Polyduces cuts Amycus (95–7) and even manages to skin his forehead to the bone with a overhead chop (103–5), which implies that the thongs were sharp as well: cf. Gow ad 22.8of. In Apollonius, when Amycus boasts of his ability to make his opponents bleed, he is speaking of the thongs he has made, which are of dry leather (ῥινους ... ἀζαλέας, 2.58f).

[20] Thus Gow (1952: ad Theocr. 22.8of). According to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, Book 1, Ch. 16, §76) and a scholiast on Plato (ad *Laws* 796a), there was a tradition that Amycus was the inventor of the ἱμάντες.

to choose between:

> θῆκε πάροιθε ποδῶν δοιοὺς ἑκάτερθεν ἱμάντας
> ὠμούς, ἀζαλέους, περὶ δ' οἵγ' ἔσαν ἐσκληῶντες. (2.52f)

There is a slight pun on the two somewhat different senses of ὠμός. Not only are these thongs made of 'raw' hide, they themselves are also 'cruel' for that very reason. Raw hide is distinguished from tanned leather by being more unstable: i.e. more prone to putrifaction and to shrinking and hardening from exposure to heat; conversely, when soaked in water it can become very soft once again. Apollonius stipulates that the raw leather was dried to a crusty hardness, which in ordinary leather-work is not a desirable outcome, and for this reason rawhide that was not destined for tanning was normally cured by drying it in the shade.[21] This process gave the thongs encrusted ridges on their outside edges; this seems to be the force of περί. Untanned cowhide thongs are not always necessarily hard, however, as is shown by Pausanias' discussion of the difference between the sharp thongs (ἱμας ὀξύς) in general use in his own day, and the softer gloves used in the past: ἐκ βοέας ὠμῆς ἱμάντες λεπτοί (8.40.3). In this latter case, the rawness of the cowhide is an indication of softness, not hardness. This apparent contradiction arises out of the instability of raw, untanned hide, which can be dried to complete rigidity, but which when moist is very soft. Pausanias seems to mean that the cowhide used in the softer thongs was so raw that it had not even been shade-cured, much less tanned; he is in any case describing an historical artifact long since obsolete in his day, so his information on its manufacture is probably speculative.

Apollonius, then, attributes the development of the horny leather thongs, with their ability to cut, to the handiwork of Amycus. He describes them as ὠμούς, or both 'raw' and 'cruel' or 'bloody'. The relevance of all this to Statius will be clear if we look back at the words with which he describes the episode: *crudum quo Bebryca caestu / obruerit Pollux* (1.190f). Statius characterizes Achilles' narrative as having a particular interest in the type of *caestus* used by Pollux; he calls Amycus *crudus*, which has the same range of meanings as ὠμός. As if to emphasize the interest shared by Achilles and Apollonius in the rawhide thongs used in this bout, Statius precisely reproduces the Greek pun in Latin. As Dilke notes (ad 190f), in addition to meaning 'cruel', *crudus* has the

[21] See Reed (1972: 48f) on the process of shade-curing untanned rawhide; the skins are heated slowly, away from direct sunlight, precisely to avoid the combination of surface hardening and inner moistness that Amycus has cultivated. The internal moistness retained under the hard crust and the great heat generated when rawhide is dried in the sun allows destructive bacteria to flourish.

appropriately bloody connotations of *cruor*; in the light of Apollonius, it is also surely a nod to the 'raw' nature of the thongs Amycus used and was responsible for inventing.

This allusion to Apollonius is not as obscure as it might seem at first, since Statius is following a path beaten by Vergil. In *Aeneid* 5, Aeneas' announcement of the funeral games for Anchises includes a reference to boxing with the words *crudo ... caestu* (5.69). When the boxing match develops, a controversy about the nature of the equipment takes center stage. Entellus is convinced to participate, but only on the condition that they put aside the *Troianos ... caestus* (5.420) to which Aeneas had referred earlier, and instead use equipment along the lines of the massive *caestus* reinforced with lead and iron (405) that he had inherited from Eryx. The use of the *caestus* proper, a heavy glove fitted with metal, was the major difference between Greek and Roman boxing, and Vergil gives an aetiology for the introduction of the Roman variety, just as Apollonius had done for the sharp, dry ἱμάντες of his own day. The moment when Entellus throws his gauntlets into the ring is modeled on the equivalent gesture by Amycus' man in Apollonius' text quoted above. Apollonius had marked the moment when the soft thongs of former days were superseded by the hard, cutting thongs used in his own age, and here Vergil simply takes the historical transition one step further, from the rawhide thongs (*crudo ... caestu*)[22] the Trojans formerly used to the Roman variety, weighted and spiked with metal, that were introduced by Entellus.

We know that Statius was aware of the existence of various kinds of boxing glove, since a metaphor in the *Silvae* uses the Greek term *sphaeromachia* to refer to a sparring match using σφαῖραι, or padded boxing gloves, for practice.[23] The allusion here to Vergil's *crudo ... caestu* and to Apollonius' ἱμάντας ὠμούς functions as a display on the part of the poet of his mastery of the details of epic, but it also functions, as we shall often see with Statius, on the level of characterization. Statius attributes to Achilles a precise knowledge of the bout between Pollux and Amycus, and an appreciation of the importance in reconstructing its mythical detail; the things that were of concern to Apollonius are also important to Achilles. As a hero, he combines a 'professional' interest in the boxing equipment used by Pollux and an aetiologizing poetic mode that is indebted to Apollonius and Theocritus. Achilles validates the accuracy of the epic tradition and at the same time he gives us an idea of his own literary tastes.

[22] Servius recognizes the double meaning of *crudus*: *aut crudeli, aut duro* (ad *Aen.* 5.69).

[23] *Silv.* 4, praef; see Frère (1940), and for a different interpretation see Coleman (1988: ad loc).

Achilles' next subject is Theseus' encounter with the Minotaur, and once again the wording shows a concern with the practical and minute details of the struggle; just as before, the kind of instruments used by the combatants in their bout must be investigated at some length in order for the significance of Achilles' interest in these details to be appreciated. The indirect question this time is: *quanto circumdata nexu / ruperit Aegides Minoia bracchia tauri* (191f).[24] The stipulation that Theseus wrestled the Minotaur is again a late development. The earliest visual representations of the scene, which was very popular in classical Athenian vase-painting, show Theseus grappling with a man who has the head of a bull, and dispatching him with his sword. In Roman art, by contrast, the contest develops into a more equally matched bout, with Theseus using a blunt club to finish off the monster. This shift in the iconography from sword to club was not, I would argue, entirely due to 'the assimilation of his career to that of Heracles', as P. E. Knox has it (1995: ad Ov. *Her.* 10.77). The visual representations of Theseus' club in Roman art show a much thinner object than Heracles' customary implement; Woodford identifies it as a *pedum*, or a shepherd's crook.[25] This is not merely because Theseus is unequal to wielding as large a weapon as the greater hero; the article he carries is a distinctively different object.[26] In some cases the appearance of Theseus' club has clearly been affected by Heracles' iconography (cf. Daszewski 1977: pl 68 and perhaps pl 16), but these are the exception; in most instances the club is more of a thin walking stick, in some pictures looking a bit like a golf club (cf. *LIMC* s.v. 'Minotauros', nos. 58, 68, Daszewski 1977: pls. 32, 27).

The likely reason for this change in the iconography may be found in the existence of two slightly differing versions of the myth. The usual tale has Theseus arriving in Athens after the yearly tribute to Minos has already been paid once or twice; he resolves to stop it and volunteers himself to go to Crete. Yet there was another version according to which Theseus sailed back to Crete together with Minos from Athens; this was therefore both the first *and* the last time the tribute was sent; perhaps according to this version it was never intended to be an

[24] Lauletta (1993: 89, n 26) notes that the line ending here may be a reminiscence of the phrase *bracchia Tauro*, which ends line 105 of Catullus 64, where the struggling Minotaur is compared to a tree high on Mount Taurus shaking its branches (*bracchia*).

[25] *LIMC* s.v. 'Theseus', p. 581; the labyrinth being a favorite motif in mosaics, there are many illustrations of this weapon and its meagerness: Daszewski (1977: pls 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, and others).

[26] The club carried by Theseus in *Heroides* 10 is called a *clava* (77) and *nodoso stipite* (101), which does not give us a clear idea of its stoutness; on this use of *stipes*, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 7.523f, *certamine agresti / stipitibus duris agitur*, and on the *pedum*, *Ecl.* 5.88–90, *sume pedum . . . formonsum paribus nodis atque aere.*

annual event.[27] Plutarch (*Thes.* 17 = *FrGrH* 4 F 164) tells us that, according to Hellanicus, the agreement was that the Athenian youths would be hand-picked by Minos and would sail to Crete with him; they were to bear no weapons of war (μηδὲν ὅπλον Ἀρήϊον), and if the Minotaur should nevertheless be killed by one of them, that Athens would be freed from paying the penalty. Under these rules of engagement, Theseus could only safely free Athens from its obligations to Minos if he managed to kill the monster without using normal heavy weapons. The increasing appearance of the light club or shepherd's crook in representations of this particular scene seems to be due to an awareness of the constraints within which, according to Hellanicus, the hero operated. This theory is lent support by the fact that along with an increasing number of scenes in Roman art of Theseus clubbing the Minotaur to death with something like a thin walking-stick, there is also an increase in the desperateness of the physical struggle between them. In a few mosaics Theseus uses no weapon at all, and in several of these the hero digs his fingers in to gouge out the eyes of his opponent. When Achilles describes the contest between Theseus and the Minotaur as a wrestling bout, enumerating the various holds employed by the hero, he is aligning himself with those Roman versions of the encounter that made it a close match: like well-paired gladiators, the Minotaur had his horns, while Theseus had a light stick, but no sword or heavy club. Achilles mentions no weapon at all and thus agrees with Apollodorus, who says that Theseus used his bare hands; but Apollodorus seems to describe more of a boxing match than wrestling (Μινώταυρον ... παίων πυγμαῖς ἀπέκτεινεν, *Epit.* 1.9). There are several mosaics that illustrate a pure wrestling match such as Statius' Achilles describes.[28] In this case too, therefore, Achilles is contributing to an ongoing discussion regarding the proper representation of myth. Some intervention must have caused the shift from the sword-carrying Theseus in Greek art of the classical period to the club-wielding or unarmed Theseus of Roman art; we may, as an hypothesis, attribute the source of this change to Hellenistic literature and scholarship, which was strongly influenced by the atthidography of Hellanicus.

In his song Achilles not only stipulates that Theseus wrestled the Minotaur, he also enumerates the number of holds that he employed and notes specifically that he broke the arms of his opponent. There is not enough detail here to visualize the scene completely, but there is enough to remind us of a more extensive

[27] See Bacchylides 17, in which Minos and Theseus sail back together; Jacoby (ad *FrGrH* 4F 164) rightly saw that Diodorus' version, in which Minos sailed back to Athens to pick up his tribute each year, is an unwieldy attempt to reconcile the two versions.

[28] *LIMC* s.v. 'Minotauros', no 56, and Daszewski (1977: pls 33a, 33b, 34a, 34b).

treatment of the matter in *Thebaid* 12. In that passage Statius exercised his imagination in some detail over the problem of how to grapple with an opponent who has the body of a man and the head and horns of a bull.[29] Once again, we find ourselves discussing an epic ecphrasis, in this case the shield of Theseus, and once again we are confronted with the potential for anachronism. In the pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis*, the appearance of Theseus on Heracles' shield strains chronological plausibility; in the *Thebaid*, Theseus appears on his own shield:

> at procul ingenti Neptunius agmina Theseus
> angustat clipeo, propriaeque exordia laudis
> centum urbes umbone gerit centenaque Cretae
> moenia, seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri
> hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuuenci
> alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem
> bracchia et abducto uitantem cornua uultu.
> terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva
> ingreditur pugnas; bis Thesea bisque cruentas
> caede videre manus? veteris reminiscitur actus
> ipse tuens sociumque gregem metuendaque quondam
> limina et absumpto pallentem Gnosida filo. (*Theb.* 12.665–76)

In this case, ecphrasis and framing narrative come very close indeed, with the mature Theseus displaying a representation of his younger self. The collapse of *laudandus* and *laudator* that threatened to happen when Achilles was singing about his parents' wedding has actually happened here. Not merely *immania laudum / semina*, Theseus' shield represents the beginnings of his own praise: *propriae ... exordia laudis* (666). There is some stress on the remarkable fact that it is he himself (*ipse*, 675) who commemorates his former deeds.[30]

The ecphrasis of Theseus' shield gives enough detail for us to begin to imagine the wrestling holds employed by the hero. The contorted word-order deliberately reflects the intertwining and confusion of limbs on the shield, especially the tmesis of *circumligantem* (670); but we can nevertheless make some sense of Theseus' tactics. The pair are head-by-head, since Theseus must protect his face from the Minotaur's horns (671). It could be that they are grappling face-to-face,

[29] Statius seems to have had a connoisseur's knowledge of wrestling. The *Thebaid* has another vivid and detailed account of a match in which Tydeus defeats the much larger Agyllus. Statius' description of that bout and the tactics of the combatants is detailed and sure: thus Poliakoff (1987: 24 and 46).

[30] Cf. Silius' description of Hannibal's shield (2.451f), on which he himself is depicted; but that is a gift from the Spanish.

arms entwined, with Theseus' hands behind his opponent' neck, pushing it down (*hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuuenci*, 669);[31] but the fact that Theseus is also controlling the Minotaur's hands (*alternasque manus,* 670) makes it unlikely. Theseus is probably positioned behind the monster, controlling his opponent and forcing him down, as he does in a number of the wrestling mosaics (above, n 28). Theseus is twisting his opponent's neck, so he may have his opponent in a head-lock, or he may be applying a Nelson lever, with one or both arms under the Minotaur's armpits, and his hand behind the monster's neck to force down the head. Theseus is simultaneously controlling the arms and hands of the Minotaur,[32] which he seems to have twisted behind his back, ready to break them, as he does in the *Achilleid* (1.192).[33]

It appears, therefore, that Statius gave some thought to the problems Theseus would have faced in this unorthodox match, and that he may have been influenced by representations of the scene in the visual arts, where it was particularly popular in labyrinth-themed mosaics. This link with the plastic arts is evident in the appearance of the scene on the shield of Theseus, where the doubling of the hero and his representation flirts with anachronism in precisely the way the song of Achilles does. Theseus' ecphrastic *Doppelgänger* also focusses our attention on the accuracy of poetic mimesis, in that the people are terrified equally by the Theseus represented in Statius' poem and the Theseus who is explicitly a representation on the shield of the 'real' Theseus. In Statius' description of Achilles' song, which is an ecphrastic representation not of a visual object but of another poem, Achilles displays a kindred interest in the practical requirements of wrestling an opponent with horns on his head, enumerating the holds Theseus used (*quanto ... nexu*). The importance of wrestling in traditional Greek education returns us to the issue of the usefulness of mythological poetry. Poetry is not merely an incidental part of Achilles' *paideia*; it complements his more active pursuits, teaching him valuable and even practical lessons, such how to wrestle an opponent with an unusual advantage.

To sum up, Achilles' song manifests the hero's interest in the *realia* of life in the heroic age and accords well with the rest of his education by Chiron; it also appears to endorse certain poetic models. The general content of Achilles' song

[31] A cista-lid handle represents the pair grappling in this way: *LIMC* s.v. Minotauros, no 47.

[32] *alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem / bracchia* (670f). Both Mozley and Lesueur wrongly translate the accusative phrases as though they were instrumental, and therefore part of Theseus' and not the Minotaur's anatomy: '... binding him fast with sinewy arms and grip of either hand ...' (Mozley).

[33] Examples of arm-locks of the kind that Theseus might be employing are illustrated by Poliakoff (1987: 47, figs. 43 and 44); the intertwining of the arms in these holds would correspond well to the word *circumligantem*.

has much in common with Catullus 64: the Argo, Peleus and Thetis, Theseus in Crete. The encounter of Pollux and Amycus on the other hand is particularly associated with Theocritus and Apollonius. Furthermore, the overall conception of the song as 'episodic', i.e. a string of individual mythical vignettes, may also be derived from a particular style of poetic composition. Callimachus' *Aitia* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* shared the quality of linking together seemingly unrelated stories by means of ingenious transitions. The presence of Amycus in Achilles' song gives a hint of a subtle bond linking all of the stories he tells; each of the heroes was an Argonaut: Hercules, Pollux, Theseus, and Peleus.[34] This provides a unifying principle that these stories otherwise seem to lack; so it may be that this is the implicit theme of Achilles' song. It is an *Argonautica*, of a sort, which would explain why Apollonius is such an important model for Statius here. Accordingly, Achilles is devoted to Alexandrian literary models; this is most obvious in the key details (*quot ... iussa, quo ... caestu, quanto ... nexu, maternos ... toros*) that exhibit his commentary on issues that were demonstrably of interest to Hellenistic and Alexandrianizing poets: (1) defining the precise number of Heracles' labors, (2) determining what type of boxing glove Pollux used, (3) specifying the constraints Theseus faced and the tactics he employed in his encounter with the Minotaur, and (4) describing the bridal couch of Peleus and Thetis. An Homeric hero who sings the κλέα ἀνδρῶν might be expected to do so in purely Homeric fashion; but Statius upsets our expectations and attributes to Achilles an Alexandrianizing taste. Statius has provided an aetiology for Hellenistic poetics that he has boldly imported into the world of the *Iliad*. The poet Statius invokes the poet Achilles as the authority for writing an epic about Achilles in a distinctly non-Iliadic vein. Achilles' performance therefore serves as a good introduction to the poetic strategy of the *Achilleid* as a whole. We shall next move on to consider the opening lines of the epic, where the question of generic affiliation within the epic tradition is to the forefront and offers us similar paradoxes.

2.1.3 Proem and Poem

Turning now from Achilles' poem to Statius', we will look at the proem of the *Achilleid*, which is its most thoroughly studied passage by far.[35] I will have frequent occasion to revert to these lines later on when discussing the particular

[34] Statius, at least, considered Theseus to have been aboard the Argo: cf. *Ach.* 1.156f and *Theb.* 5.431f.

[35] The present discussion does not offer much beyond what has already been said about the proem by Barchiesi (1996).

themes of the epic that are adumbrated here, and so I will be brief, focusing for the moment only on what these lines may say about the scope and program of Statius' projected epic. The seven lines at the beginning of the *Achilleid* pose a conundrum of poetic affiliation that is not easy to solve; and perhaps it was not meant to be solved definitively at this stage in the evolution of the composition. It is not surprising, given the example of *arma virumque,* that the relation of an epic poem to its genre, and to the Homeric poems in particular, should be under negotiation at its opening; but in this case the overt mention of Homer (*cantu / Maeonio*, 3f) brings the issue to the surface in a particularly stark manner.[36] There are several competing models of epic composition in contention here, of which Homer is only one:

> Magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti
> progeniem et patrio vetitam succedere caelo,
> diva, refer. quamquam acta viri multum inclita cantu
> Maeonio (sed plura vacant), nos ire per omnem
> (sic amor est) heroa velis Scyroque latentem
> Dulichia proferre tuba nec in Hectore tracto
> sistere, sed tota iuvenem deducere Troia. (1.1–7)

The subject of the poem is announced in the space of seven lines, which is, as Barchiesi (1996: 47) points out, a canonical number, shared by the opening periods of the *Iliad*, *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Bellum Civile.* In this case, however, there are several strong pauses in the sense; most notably, the narrator interrupts the exposition of his theme with parenthetical comments not once, but twice. As it happens, none of the standard texts of the *Achilleid* punctuate these lines correctly. Two phrases, *sed plura vacant* and *sic amor est*, are both detached syntactically in equal measure from the rest of the sentence: they are pure parentheses. Yet editors have played down their impact; Dilke, for example, set off the first phrase with round brackets and the second with dashes, as if varying the punctuation might temper the halting effect of one interjection coming on the heels of the other.[37] The only place one can find these lines printed correctly is in Barchiesi's article on the interpretation of the proem (1996: 50); he silently corrects the usual typographical evasion and punctuates the passage as above.

[36] Thus Barchiesi (1996: 50).

[37] The punctuation adopted by Méheust and Marastoni, on the other hand, is quite misleading if not simply ungrammatical; they only mark the second parenthesis as such, while putting a comma before *sed plura vacant* and a colon after it. This implies that *sed* coordinates with *quamquam*, but *sed* was not used in place of *tamen* in this period (see LHS 487); it would also leave the sentence divided paratactically into two uncoordinated halves at the colon.

Yet this is not a matter we should pass over without comment, for the discomfort of editors with Statius' syntax is a symptom of its very real strangeness. In the rest of the *Achilleid* we shall see that Statius regularly uses aposiopesis, anacoluthon and parenthesis as verbal markers of direct speech for his characters; to do so in his persona as narrator has a striking, almost colloquial, effect.

These pauses strike a Callimachean note; as Tarrant says, 'One of Callimachus' distinctive techniques is the parenthesis in the opening line of a poem, which appears in several poems of various genres....'[38] Tarrant also documents Callimachus' use of multiple parenthesis, which Statius likewise employs here. In epic, Statius' introductory parentheses may recall the opening of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which is interrupted by a parenthetical comment in its second line: (*nam vos mutastis et illa*) (1.2). That is an apostrophe addressed to the Muses, and belongs, as von Albrecht (1964: 172f) demonstrates, to a tradition of parenthetical invocations of the Muses going back to the Homeric catalog of ships (*Il.* 2.485f). Like Ovid's parenthesis,[39] Statius' comments here concern the form of the work at hand, and although she is not named, I believe they are likewise addressed to the poet's Muse. The hymnic roots of such parenthetical comments on the scope and nature of the work may be seen in the beginning of Callimachus' hymn to Artemis: Ἄρτεμιν (οὐ γὰρ ἐλαφρὸν ἀειδόντεσσι λαθέσθαι) / ὑμνέομεν. Callimachus, however, is not addressing the goddess, but is simply making an aside to his audience; could Statius be doing the same in his two parentheses? It is evidently assumed by most commentators that Statius is addressing no one in particular in these parentheses, but his comments are much less insipid if understood as a continuation of the poet's discourse with the Muse rather than directed towards the audience. The confession *sic amor est* is meaningless if addressed to us; we in the audience *assume*, unless told otherwise, that the poet is doing what he wants to do. The first sentence is addressed to *diva*, and the third (*tu modo ... necte comas*, 8–10) to Apollo; it is only natural that the whole of the sentence in the middle, which is addressed to the muse, and is governed by the second-person verb *velis*, should also be directed towards the Muse, parentheses and all. The poet asks the goddess to be favorable to his request that she inspire (yet again) an epic about Achilles, which he acknowledges to have been done already (*sed plura vacant!*), but which the poet has a heartfelt desire to attempt nonetheless, and despite the reservations the Muse seems to have (*sic amor est!*). It discursively constructs the Muse as reluctant, unwilling, in need of reasons to permit the poet to pursue the goal he has set, justifications that

[38] Tarrant (1998: 143); cf. Callim. *Hymn* 3.1, *Epigr.* 4.1, 56.1f and 61.1f.
[39] Assuming that *illa* (1.2) is the correct reading: Anderson (1993: 108f).

the parenthetical comments provide. The conversational tone these interjections lend to the proem is thus comprehensible as part of an extended negotiation with the Muse that continues through the first seven lines of the poem.

Statius also conducted a discussion with his Muse at the beginning of the *Thebaid* over the content of the epic. In that case, however, he posed as the humble servant of the goddesses: *unde iubetis / ire, deae*? (1.3f); only after mooting a series of hypothetical possibilities does he decide what the boundaries of his poem will be (*limes ... carminis esto*, 1.16).[40] After finally making his decision and excusing himself from the task of praising Domitian, the poet approaches his decided theme, and continues to position himself as the Muse's empty vessel: *quem prius heroum, Clio, dabis*? (1.41). The *Achilleid* begins with a complete reversal of the positions taken by poet and Muse at the beginning of the *Thebaid*. Statius' conversation shows its bantering and informally conversational tone in its parentheses, and this time it is the poet, not the Muse, who dictates the scope of the epic. Statius knows precisely what he wants to do from the outset, and he addresses his Muse as though she were the unwilling party, unconvinced that the project Statius has in mind is really worthwhile.[41] Statius acknowledges that Homer had already sung about Achilles, and stubbornly asks permission to pursue that theme nevertheless (*nos ire ... velis*, 4f). This epic will clearly be a quite different performance from the *Thebaid*. It may be that the real success of the earlier poem has genuinely bolstered Statius' confidence, but this rhetorical pose should not be reduced to biography. The proem tells us that this song will not be such a one as delivered by a mantic poet harrowed by Pierian *calor* and possessed by an irresistible divine will.

The sort of negotiation in which Statius engages the Muse in the *Achilleid* over the type of project that the poet should undertake is reminiscent in a general way of lyric and elegy. Counterintuitive though it may sound, explicitly to mention Homeric poetry is an extremely un-epic thing to do. We expect the *recusationes* of poets in 'lesser' genres to discuss epic models forthrightly in order to distinguish themselves from the crowd of *Pieridum vates* (Ov. *Am.* 1.10). Epics, by contrast, do not usually talk overtly about Homer and writing epic: they get on with it and do it. It is therefore appropriate, in the light of *cantu / Maeonio* (3f), to mention Ovid's digression in the *Remedia Amoris* into Aristotelian genre theory: *fortia Maeonio gaudent pede bella referri*; / *deliciis illic quis locus esse potest*? (373f). The Scyros episode of the *Achilleid* might be interpreted as a

[40] On Statius' relation to his subject in the proem of the *Thebaid*, cf. Heinrich (1999: 168–71).

[41] Barchiesi (1996: 57–60) presents an argument that in the *Achilleid* Statius means a particular Muse by *diva*, namely Erato.

concrete response to Ovid's question. The disjunction between elegy and epic is framed by Ovid in terms of Callimachean and Iliadic verse: *Callimachi numeris non est dicendus Achilles, / Cydippe non est oris, Homere, tui* (381 f). As we shall see, the proem of the *Achilleid* shows every intent of trying to bridge the gap between Homer and Callimachus, if not metrically, then in terms of style and content.[42]

Another trope employed by Statius that is quite common in programmatic and metapoetic passages outside of epic is to describe the poet as a part of the poem and manipulating its action, claiming to do that which is described: Statius says that he himself will 'bring out' Achilles and 'lead him through' Troy (*proferre, deducere*, 6f). Compare Propertius' *recusatio* (2.1.17–19): *quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, fata dedissent, / ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus* ...; and Juvenal's denunciation of the kind of mythological poetry that Statius is writing: *securus licet Aenean Rutulumque ferocem / committas, nulli grauis est percussus Achilles* (1.163f). Statius in the *Silvae* uses the trope in a more complimentary vein with reference to the exemplary achievements of Vergil and Homer.[43] The attribution to the epic poet of an active part in his creation can be a genuinely intended heroization of the artist, as in the *Silvae*, or it can be turned on it head to stigmatize the bombast of the genre, as for Juvenal and, in a more subtle way, for Propertius. Either way, it belongs, like Statius' colloquial bantering with his Muse, to a set of discourses that respond to epic models, but normally belong firmly outside the genre. We shall see that this co-opting of un-epic traditions is one of the strategies Statius employs throughout the Achilles-poem that he writes in the margins of Homer's.

The proem of the *Achilleid* displays several other prominent 'Alexandrian' attributes.[44] First of all, the effort to distinguish between Homeric and extra-

[42] Aricò (1986, and see the more nuanced restatement of his argument in 1996) disagrees, claiming that the elegiac and Hellenistic side of the *Achilleid* has been overemphasized by scholars such as Tandoi (1985) and Rosati (1994). The problem is that this thesis requires trivializing the part of the epic that we have as 'una parentesi da dimenticare' (1996: 198), in favor of the unachieved Trojan remainder of the work, which Aricò is confident would require a drastic change in tone. The example of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* should be enough, however, to warn against the assumption that any epic treatment of the Trojan War must be necessarily bound to a simple and predictable 'heroic' ethos.

[43] *Silv.* 4.2.1–4. Coleman (1988: ad v 2) suggests, since the phrasing there takes the periphrastic form of [*is*] *qui* plus verb, that its origin derives in part by transference from similar relative clauses at the beginning of epics, such as Ἄνδρα ... ὅς (*Od.* 1.1), φωτῶν ... οἳ (*Argon.* 1.1f), *virum ... qui* (*Aen.* 1.1), etc. If this is so, then Statius is returning the trope to its native home: the epic preface. The difference in the *Achilleid* is that Statius is referring to himself, and doing so within an epic.

[44] This is not to say that what Romans came to construe as 'Alexandrian' or 'Callimachean' must have been entirely accurate. These terms took on a life of their own in Roman polemic; cf. Cameron (1995: 454f).

Homeric variants implied by the words *plura vacant* was a fundamental initiative in the scholarship of Hellenistic Alexandria. This was pointed out by Tandoi (1985: 167), who also noted that the metrical form of the first line has an appropriately Alexandrian flavor. It is a four-word hexameter, which is a relatively rare phenomenon;[45] this is the unique example in the *Achilleid*. Such lines are a natural and intrinsic feature of hexameter poetry, but placed in such a prominent position as this they seem a display of virtuosity and take on a programmatic character.[46] The first hymn of Callimachus and the first book of Apollonius' *Argonautica* both have hexameters that consist of only four words as their third line, and perhaps we should also count the four-word line 15 of Catullus 64 as sufficiently close to its beginning to qualify as proemial.

Another major banner of 'Callimachean' aesthetics flown by this poem was noted first by Koster, and by others thereafter; this is the use of the programmatic word *deducere*.[47] The phrase *iuvenem deducere* (7) is the *vox propria* for what a *paedagogus* does for his ward; Statius thus puts himself *qua* poet in a position akin to one of the surrogate fathers, like Chiron and Lycomedes, that the *Achilleid* supplies for the hero in place of Peleus. It is a novel twist on the use of the word *deducere* in metapoetic contexts, replacing the spinning metaphor from Vergil's translation of Callimachus (*Ecl.* 6.3–5). As Barchiesi notes (1996: 58f), the tension implicit in Ovid's proem—that the *Metamorphoses* will be simultaneously an epic of grand scale and refined execution, a *carmen perpetuum* and *deductum*—is equally present in the *Achilleid*. The reference to Ovid's successful management of the collision between Homeric and Hellenistic epic paradigms is appropriate for the course Statius is steering here, all the more so given that the extant part of the *Achilleid* is a metamorphic tale of Achilles' transformation from wild boy to girl to young warrior.[48]

[45] For extensive statistics on the Greek hexameter, see Bassett (1919).

[46] See Barchiesi (1996: 50f); he radically understates the frequency of such lines, however, unless I have misunderstood his assertion that there only seem to be four parallels in Vergil. In fact there are 25 in the *Aeneid* alone, and 33 in total: *Ecl.* 5.73, 8.34; *Georg.* 1.27, 1.470, 1.502, 3.550, 4.111, 4.336; *Aen.* 1.53, 1.80, 2.263, 2.549, 3.248, 3.328, 3.466, 3.517, 3.549, 4.542, 5.826, 6.483, 6.639, 7.576, 8.103, 8.158, 8.214, 8.263, 8.490, 9.767, 10.123, 10.749, 11.700, 11.870, 12.363. There are 35 instances in the *Thebaid*. Nevertheless, it is right to say that such hexameters are relatively rare in absolute terms, and the appearance of one in the first line of the poem must be taken as significant. In Latin verse, such hexameters commonly include long Greek proper names, particularly patronymics (such as *Aeacides* here), and they often have a distinctively Greek character: Thomas ad *Georg.* 1.470.

[47] Koster (1979: 191–6); see also Hardie (1993: 63, n 8), Barchiesi (1996: 58f) and Hinds (1998: 142, n 26).

[48] The importance of the *Metamorphoses* as a global model for the *Achilleid* in deliberate distinction from the more Vergilian *Thebaid* was pointed out by Fantham (1979: 457).

The Ovidian epic model is implicit even in the first line of the *Achilleid*: it begins with a patronymic designation of the hero that sounds grandiloquently Homeric (*magnanimum Aeaciden*); but the source of the precise epithet *magnanumus* turns out to be not so much Homer, but Ovid.[49] In the judgment of Achilles' arms, Ulysses defends his delay in coming to Troy by implicating Achilles' tarrying at Scyros as a similar *crimen*:

> Quid, quod me duri fugientem munera belli
> arguit incepto serum accessisse labori
> nec se magnanimo maladicere sentit Achilli?
> si simulasse vocas crimen, simulavimus ambo ... (*Met.* 13.296–9)

Ovid's Ulysses manipulates competing mythic traditions to construct a rhetorically useful paradox: the Homeric Achilles, *magnanimus* though he incontestably was, was also the subject of another myth, unknown in Homer, according to which the 'great-souled' hero hid from the war dressed as a girl.[50] The *Achilleid* thus invokes the greatness of Achilles in terms that have a Homeric flavor, but which have already been rhetoricized ironically by Ovid; this poem will be no naive attempt by Statius to replicate Homeric epos. The compositional strategy implied by the phrase *sed plura vacant* might also be considered in the light of the *Metamorphoses*. Statius professes his plans to cover some of the same material as the *Cypria* and *Aethiopis*, before and after the *Iliad*, so a cyclic strategy might be a real possibility here; but Statius proposes a different model, which envisions a more direct encounter with the gaps in the Homeric text. The poet asserts that he intends not to stay at the chronological margins of Achilles' life, as the cyclic poems did, but to run through its whole course (*ire per omnem ... heroa*, 4f) *including* the Trojan War and the events of the *Iliad* itself (*Hectore tracto*, 7). This way of approaching a canonical epic is not cyclic, but Ovidian. The *Metamorphoses* subsumed the events of the *Iliad* and of the *Aeneid* into a larger design, such as in the so-called 'little *Aeneid*', describing events of the Trojan war and of Aeneas' biography that had not been told by Homer or Vergil.

Statius' proem therefore opens up the possibility that the *Achilleid* will revise our picture of the Homeric Achilles, as Ovid did for the Vergilian Aeneas, by exploiting the tension between the canonical epic narrative and competing

[49] The combination of patronymic and epithet Αἰακίδης μεγάθυμος is not found in Homer, but that epithet and similar others are applied to Achilles, as in μεγάθυμος Ἀχιλλεὺς (*Il.* 23.168) and Πηλεΐδη μεγάθυμε (*Il.* 21.153). Perhaps the closest Homer comes is the three-word phrase μεγάλας φρένας Αἰακίδαο (*Il.* 9.184) noted by Barchiesi (1996: 49).

[50] Thus Barchiesi (1996: 59).

traditions about the life of the hero. Once again, the first line of the poem is instructive. In it Statius juxtaposes the quasi-Homeric patronymic with the story that Jupiter had pursued Thetis until he was warned that she was destined to bear a son greater than his father. This latter story lurks in the background of the Homeric poems, but is never explicitly mentioned there.[51] The Homeric model is transformed in another way too. The direct object of ἄειδε θεά in Homer is quite specific: the μῆνις of Achilles, whereas the object of Statius' *diva, refer* is Achilles himself, in accordance with the poet's stated intention to cover his entire biography. The hero is named by reference to his grandfather, Aeacus, and is also designated in a hypothetical way as the potential son of Jupiter. The identification of Achilles by means of his grandfather and potential father in the first line of the *Achilleid* highlights the absence of Achilles' real father Peleus, and of the patronymic that identifies him in Homer's first line, Πηληϊάδεω.[52] We shall see that Peleus' absence is an extremely important and conspicuous feature of the plot; this is one of the most important signals the proem gives us about the specific changes to the Homeric tale that the *Achilleid* has in store.

After the first seven lines addressed to the Muse, the poet turns to Apollo, asking the god to grant new well-springs of inspiration and a new garland for his head:

> tu modo, si veterem digno deplevimus haustu,
> da fontes mihi, Phoebe, novos ac fronde secunda
> necte comas: neque enim Aonium nemus advena pulso
> nec mea nunc primis augescunt tempora vittis. (1.8–11)

Hinds (1998: 96f) has pointed out that *fronde secunda* refers not only to the position of the *Achilleid* as a second work within Statius' *œuvre*, but also as a secondary treatment of the Achilles theme, following behind Homer's. *Secunda* could also be taken in the sense of 'propitious' (Dilke ad loc), and we will see this word return with the same range of potential meanings when used subsequently by Thetis (below, p 154). The poet takes the same confident tone with Apollo that he used with the Muse, citing his past success as proof of his rights to the sources of epic inspiration. He plays on the two possible ways we might understand the reference to Bœotia (*Aonium,* 10).[53] The obvious denotation

[51] See Slatkin (1991).

[52] See below, p 291. Barchiesi (1996: 48f) claims that *Pelides* would not sound right (*stonerebbe*), given that there is an implicit parallel between Aeacus as a son of Jupiter and Achilles as nearly a son of Jupiter. It seems to me, however, that the absence of Peleus is not an accidental by-product, but rather a central aspect of the complex way Achilles' patrimony is designated in the first line of the poem.

[53] See Dewar (1991) ad *Theb.* 9.1.

of *Aonium nemus* is the home of the Muses on Mount Helicon; but Statius immediately goes on to speak of his presence in the region around Thebes in the sense of having composed the *Thebaid* (*scit Dircaeus ager*, 12). So Statius is an old habitué of Bœotia in two senses: he knows both Mount Helicon and Thebes.

Barchiesi points out an intriguing possibility for the source of the connection between Apollo and the phrase *Aonium nemus*.[54] In his third book, Propertius (3.3) revisits the scene of Ennius' dream on Helicon and is about to drink from the fount of the Hippocrene, when Apollo accosts him with a warning not to drink the waters of epic, to stay away from martial themes (*carminis heroi ... opus*, 16), and to stick with lesser genres. He leads the poet to the cave of the Muses, where Calliope repeats the warning:

> nil tibi sit rauco praeconia classica cornu
> flare nec Aonium tinguere Marte nemus. (Prop. 3.3.41f)

The notion of bloodying Mount Helicon with the gore of epic is not far removed from Statius' conflation in the *Achilleid* of his two approaches to the area: as an epic poet, and as the poet of a *Thebaid*. The nearness of the home of the Muses to the action of the *Thebaid* is something that Statius notes on several occasions in that poem.[55] So once again the project of epic is described in terms that are borrowed from a *recusatio*, i.e. from a tradition hostile to martial epic, including his own previous work. Statius thereby implicitly associates his own *Thebaid* with the bombastic, *reges et proelia*, kind of epic that Propertius and Roman 'Callimacheanism' affected to disdain. This should bring home the rhetorical quality of such judgments; if Vergil could go from quoting Callimachus to writing the *Aeneid*, then why should Statius not be free to go in the other direction?

Statius' previous drink from the fount of poetic inspiration, *digno ... haustu*, calls to mind such expressions as Horace's description of the Theban poet Pindar's elevated and inimitable style: *Pindarici fontis qui non expalluit haustus...?* (*Ep.* 1.3.10).[56] Yet the verb Statius uses is nothing short of bizarre. *Depleo*, which means 'to pour off excess liquid', is utterly foreign to Latin verse, and indeed to literary prose.[57] It is used by Cato and Columella in agricultural contexts, of olive oil production and phlebotomizing livestock; the term reeks of the barnyard. Statius deflates his own pretensions to epic fame by ironizing the apparatus

[54] Barchiesi (1996: 54), following up Dilke's reference (ad 9f).
[55] Theb. 7.282–9 and 628–31: on which see Barchiesi (1996: 52f).
[56] Cf. Barchiesi (1996: 53f).
[57] Scaliger conjectured *deplete* for *deflete* at Manil. 4.13, and this has been accepted by editors, including Housman. Doubt should remain, however; quite apart from its agricultural connotations, this would be the earliest recorded metaphorical use of the word, the next example being a verse inscription from the end of the second century (*TLL* 5.3.574.24f = *CIL* 12.533).

of poetic inspiration: the Pierian spring, the crown and the *vittae* of the mantic *vates*. An important effect is to distance the *Achilleid* still further from the *Thebaid*, whose author played the vatic role of the mad poet in earnest.[58] Just such a figure is represented within the *Achilleid* by Calchas, who is the quintessential prophet of Apollo, raving, *vitta*-wearing, and possessed (1.514–37). It is no coincidence that Calchas belongs to the military-epic world that Achilles is set to enter when the poem ends. Once again the question arises of how the poet will reconcile the divergent poetic traditions when Achilles gets to Troy, and it is left unanswered. One could extend the question even to the role of the narrator: will the ironic, urbane voice of the proem remain, bantering with Apollo and his Muse as old and familiar colleagues; or will the potentially darker subject necessitate a change back to the fury and divine possession that characterizes the poetics of the *Thebaid*?

The apostrophe to Phoebus is in itself a reminder of the darker potential in the material of the epic; namely, that *tota ... Troia* ends with Achilles' death at the instigation of Apollo. Apollonius began his epic appropriately enough with an invocation of Phoebus, since that god was the special protector of the Argonauts; but the Homeric Apollo was the inveterate enemy of the Greeks at Troy, and was directly responsible, together with Paris, for killing Achilles.[59] The hero's mortality is also implicit in the first line of the poem: Jupiter's fear of marriage to Thetis led directly to Achilles' birth as a mortal. The presence of such themes in the preface excludes, I think, the possibility of declaring with confidence that a complete *Achilleid* would have eschewed serious matters, presenting only romantic situations and embarrassments of the kind we find on Scyros. Even after hearing the proem and the projected contents of the epic, we really do not know how Statius will handle the tragic events of Achilles' short life.

Before the narrative proper begins, there are a few lines that ask Domitian's indulgence for the current work. The brevity and restraint of this address to Domitian in comparison with the beginning of the *Thebaid* has been analyzed as a significant indicator of Statius' relationship with the emperor. It is unnecessary to attribute the change to biographical hypotheses, however; the *Achilleid* is such a stylistic departure from the *Thebaid* that there is no reason to expect that it would address the emperor in the same way. If, as we have argued, the *Achilleid* is strongly distinguished from the previous epic by its playful and ironic tone, then the mode of address employed in the *Thebaid* would be heavy-handed and

[58] Cf. Hershkowitz (1995: 62–4).
[59] See Apollod. *Epit.* 5. 4, with Frazer (1921) ad loc.

very much out of place. As it happens, we find an entirely different and more subtle compliment paid to Domitian. Statius says:

> At tu, quem longe primum stupet Itala virtus
> Graiaque, cui geminae florent vatumque ducumque
> certatim laurus—olim dolet altera vinci—,
> da veniam ac trepidum patere hoc sudare parumper
> pulvere: te longo necdum fidente paratu
> molimur magnusque tibi praeludit Achilles. (1.14–20)

Suetonius tells us that Domitian had been a literary youth, but that he had firmly put such occupations aside when he became emperor; presumably he did not wish to invite comparisons with Nero.[60] Statius makes reference to Domitian's poetic activity, but he carefully relegates it to the past: the laurel of the poet has been conquered long since (*olim ... vinci*, 16) by the success of the warrior. Nevertheless, the invocation of the emperor as a *quondam* poet gives an indication of what kind of ideal reader the *Achilleid* projects for itself. Because of his former interest in poetry, Domitian will be sophisticated enough to appreciate the kind of densely intertextual and ironic poem that Statius is now writing.

It is quite a compliment to Domitian to say that an epic about Achilles is nothing but a warm-up for the emperor, and that, although Statius does not yet have enough confidence to write an epic that would adequately celebrate Domitian's exploits, in the meantime he will write a little poem about Achilles that does nothing more ambitious than to challenge Homer's *Iliad*! In the prose prefaces to the *Silvae*, Statius used similar metaphors from athletic training and even the word *praeludo* to justify his publication of those occasional poems.[61] So Statius' epics stand in the same relation of inferiority to the great hypothetical epic about Domitian as his *Silvae* do to his epics. The description of the *Achilleid* as a *praelusio* in these lines is therefore heavily rhetorical and perhaps not to be taken literally.[62] Yet is it a coincidence that the *Achilleid* is described here as a prelude, which is, in its incomplete state, all we have? It is possible, but unprovable, that the *Achilleid,* which was at the very least going to be recited in

[60] *simulavit et ipse mire modestiam in primisque poeticae studium, tam insuetum antea sibi quam postea spretum et abiectum, recitavitque etiam publice* (Suet. *Dom.* 2.2). On Domitian's literary career, see Coleman (1986).

[61] Compare *praeludit* (20) with *stilo remissiore praeluserit* (*Silv.* 1, pref) and *sudare ... pulvere* (17f) with *exercere, sphaeromachia,* and *palaris lusio* (*Silv.* 4, pref).

[62] For an interpretation that completely discounts the element of *lusus* in *praeludit*, cf. Aricò (1996: 187, 206).

incomplete form, was fitted with a specially-written 'temporary' preface for the sake of such preliminary exposure. We simply do not know enough about the process of composition and revision of ancient poetry to say whether it would be possible, or even normal, to revise the preface extensively in the light of the ultimate shape of the work.

This proem certainly gives away remarkably little of the plot beyond what we have. Statius says that he will go through the entire life of the hero, bring him out from hiding on Scyros with the help of Ulysses' trumpet and that he will not stop at the dragging of Hector's body, but will take the *iuvenis* through the whole of Troy. Of these four points only one is specifically informative: the unveiling at Scyros. The other three merely restate the claim that Statius will treat the entire life of Achilles, without specifying what episodes exactly he will include. Even the dragging of Hector, the climax of the *Iliad*, is mentioned not as a potential incident in Statius' poem, but to say that he will *not* stop there (as Homer did, more or less); indeed it would be strange if Statius were to attempt an extended description of that surpassingly famous scene after saying *plura vacant*. Compare the table of contents, so to speak, at the beginning of the *Thebaid*: in addition to a general statement about the *limes* of the work and the house of Oedipus (1.15–6, 34), allusion is made to the alternating kingship, the double flame on the brothers' pyre, the refusal of burial to the Argives, the rivers running red, the anger of Tydeus, the catabasis of Amphiaraus, the battle of Hippomedon with Ismenus, and the deaths of Parthenopaeus and Capaneus (1.34–45).

Little can be gleaned from the rest of Statius' *corpus* that might hint at the future direction of the epic. When Statius uses Achilles as a mythological *exemplum* in the *Silvae*, it is striking how often he refers to Achilles with respect to his relationships with parental figures: Peleus, Thetis, Chiron and Phoenix.[63] Even granted that this was the sort of detail that was useful in the context of many of the *Silvae*, we see that the material of Achilles' childhood and family life was on the poet's mind to a large degree. If, as argued in the previous chapter, the *Achilleid* was circulated as a prospectus designed to generate interest in the project, then it is perfectly understandable that its preface should tantalize its audience more than it satisfies us. To give away the details of the forthcoming solution to the paradoxes of genre outlined in the proem was not in the poet's interest. There is one thing here that might unwittingly betray the provisional character of the proem, and that is the word *parumper*. It is certainly true that

[63] *Silv.* 2.1.88–91, 2.6.30f, 2.7.96, 3.2.96–8, 5.2.150f and 5.3.191–4.

Statius' account of the *Achilleid* to Domitian is designed to minimize its scale, difficulty and importance in comparison to the task of eulogizing the emperor.[64] It is nevertheless strange that the poet describes his current employment as being brief. Even in comparison to a Domitianic epic, would the time required to write, or even to hear, any epic, no matter how trivial, invite the term *parumper*? The exaggeration is possible, but extreme; if, on the other hand, this preface were written to stand in front of a work-in-progress, then *parumper* makes perfect sense.

The proem of the *Achilleid* introduces a poem that professes to withstand comparison to the *Iliad*, and yet it talks about epic in a way that is quite un-epic, and indeed a number of elements in the proem seem to be derived from the anti-epic discourse of the *recusatio*. Barchiesi (1996: 60–2) conveniently enumerates some of the ways one might account for the paradoxes of the proem, including the possibilities of accidental inconsistency, deliberate parody, and sheer poetic incompetence. He rightly opts instead for the view that the importation of erotic and elegiac elements into epic amount to a revitalization of the genre. It certainly seems true that the strategy of confronting Homer embodied by the words *plura vacant* refers not only to specific incidents in Achilles' biography, but also to a different potential emphasis and style.[65] Barchiesi concludes by offering very tentatively the suggestion that the epic has as its theme the very impossibility of executing the plan of the poem, of following in Homer's footsteps. This may not be entirely far-fetched, if we consider it in the light of Statius' need for patronage, rather than as a symptom of aporia. The poem and its preface seem to have been designed to leave its audience wondering at how a poem, begun in such a non-Iliadic manner, would continue after Achilles got to Troy. The combination of martial epic and other genres in the poem seems designed to make us acutely aware of the contradictions inherent in Statius' project; this may serve the very practical purpose of making us wonder at the end of the *Achilleid*, as Achilles arrives at Aulis, 'what next?' The *Achilleid* engages us actively in an *Ergänzungspiel* whose nature is reflected in the blatantly contradictory signals given by the proem.

The paradoxical nature of the proem is well illustrated by the way it professes to flout some orthodoxies of ancient literary criticism. First of all, Statius insists that the story of the *Achilleid* will be determined by the hero's entire life, and that he will follow it from beginning to end (*ire per omnem ... heroa*, 4f). This goes quite against Aristotle's observation in the *Poetics* that Homer rightly

[64] Thus Aricò (1986: 2931).
[65] Thus Rosati (1994: 7), and *contra*, Aricò (1996: 204)

limited the scope of his plots to a manageable extent, unlike the cyclic poems, which bristle with unrelated incident:

> οἱ δ' ἄλλοι περὶ ἕνα ποιοῦσι καὶ περὶ ἕνα χρόνον καὶ μίαν πρᾶξιν πολυμερῆ, οἷον ὁ τὰ Κύπρια ποιήσας καὶ τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα. (*Poet.* 1459a)

Statius insists that he is going to do just what Aristotle condemns the cyclic epics for doing: he means to write a poem that will be a simple biography of one man, and that will take its unity from that fact. A little earlier, Aristotle had given a more specific warning against precisely this sort of project:

> ... οὕτως δὲ καὶ πράξεις ἑνὸς πολλαί εἰσιν, ἐξ ὧν μία οὐδεμία γίνεται πρᾶξις. διὸ πάντες ἐοίκασιν ἁμαρτάνειν ὅσοι τῶν ποιητῶν Ἡρακληίδα Θησηίδα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιήματα πεποιήκασιν: οἴονται γάρ, ἐπεὶ εἷς ἦν ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, ἕνα καὶ τὸν μῦθον εἶναι προσήκειν. (*Poet.* 1451a)

In defiance of these strictures, Statius writes an *Achilleid* and states bluntly that it will cover the whole of its hero's life (*ire per omnem*, 4). Dilke claims that 'Statius was not alone among Roman poets in rejecting Aristotle's advice'.[66] The *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* by contrast make no claim to describe anything near the whole lives of their eponymous heroes. Moreover, the proem implies a more or less linear progression through Achilles' biography, from Scyros to the death of Hector and all the way through Troy (5–7). This claim flies in the face of another literary judgment about the superiority of Homer:

> ... nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ovo:
> semper ad eventum festinat et in medias res
> non secus ac notas auditorem rapit ... (*Ars P.* 147–9)

On the surface, Statius does not seem to heed this advice, as he ostensibly plans to tell the story of Achilles' life simply from start to finish. The verb Statius uses to characterize his compositional activity is *molimur* (19), which might even correspond to Horace's description of the *scriptor cyclicus..., qui ... molitur inepte ...* (*Ars P.*136–40).[67] Aristotle and Horace attempted to codify in their judgments the reasons why the cyclic epics were inferior to Homer. As Brink put it:

[66] Dilke (1954: 8) lists Roman poets who are known to have composed epics on the life of a single hero.

[67] When *molior* is used in the sense of literary composition, it does not always have a negative sense, but it does seem to connote a certain aspiration to grandness; cf. *Calliope ... sublata molire lyra: neque enim altior ulli / mens hausto de fonte venit* (*Theb.* 4.35–8).

> cyclic poets promise (the whole story of) a memorable happening – *fortunam Priami ... et nobile bellum* – after which the (unselective) story will fall flat. Inability to select and dullness resulting, that was Aristotle's indictment of the cyclic epic....[68]

This sort of diffuse plot and inability to select a theme from a mass of biographical incident is just what the words *tota ... Troia* (1.7) and *ire per omnem ... heroa* (1.4f) in Statius' proem seem to threaten. It is as if the *Achilleid* promises to emulate the most heavily criticized aspects of the beginnings of the cyclic poems. Statius wrote an epic that took as its subject-matter material from the *Cypria* and *Aethiopis*, and that confronted Homer under a banner reading '*plura vacant*', and so as a necessary consequence he risked comparison with the cyclic poems; what is striking is that the proem seems deliberately to have courted this stigma.

Statius does not let us imagine for long that the *Achilleid* will really ignore the lessons of ancient literary criticism. Statius does not, as it happens, run through the *whole* life of the hero, even in that portion of his biography covered by the extant poem. Achilles recounts the details of his boyhood on Pelion in very summary fashion, and he omits what he does not remember, leaving us to wonder, for example, how he came to Pelion in the first place. When the preface ends, we do not begin at the beginning of the story, but rather, we are dropped *in medias res* in classic epic style, into circumstances strongly reminiscent of the beginning of the *Aeneid*. A goddess stares in anger at the fleet of a Trojan prince; she resolves to sink it and goes to visit a god in order to bring about a fatal storm. This Vergilian opening also has an Horatian element to it: the Nereid Thetis reproduces the position of Nereus in the Horatian ode *pastor cum traheret* (1.15), in which the old man reacts to Paris' crossing by foreseeing the whole of the Trojan War. Thetis' prophecy (1.31–8) is a recapitulation of the Horatian ode;[69] the genre-crossing from epic to lyric at this point serves to connect Statius' jump *in medias res* with Horace and perhaps by extension with the strictures of the *Ars Poetica*. Far from being a straight-forward narrative of Achilles' life, the shape of the *Achilleid* turns out to be fairly complex. It begins on the eve of a great change in the life of the hero, the last day of his stay with Chiron; the boy goes to Scyros, and a certain length of time passes as the scene shifts in the meantime to Aulis. We return to Scyros for the unveiling of the hero, and, as he leaves the island, Achilles relates in retrospect the story of his

[68] Brink (1970) ad Hor. *Ars P.* 136–9.
[69] Thus Nisbet-Hubbard (1970: 189); see also Aricò (1986: 2933, n 44).

childhood with Chiron and all of the events of his life prior to the opening of the poem. One would not necessarily suspect from the preface that the poem would have such a non-linear course.

The claim that the *Achilleid* will be purely about Achilles is likewise unfulfilled by the poem as we have it. The observation has been made that the poem could just as well be called a *Thetideid* as *Achilleid*.[70] Thetis is the most active and fully described character in the poem; she is the actor about whose motivations the audience is best informed. Compared to her, Achilles is a cipher; the action revolves around him, but only at two moments is he allowed to take the initiative: his rape of Deidamia and his seizing of the weapons. The completed portion of the *Achilleid* does tell part of the story of Achilles' young life, but it is very far from being a versified biography. It is organized thematically around Thetis' concern for her son's mortality and the dual springs of its plot are her attempt to keep him away from the Trojan war and Ulysses' competing efforts to find him. So Statius does follow Aristotle's advice after all; he does not rely upon Achilles to provide him with a coherent theme, but imposes one upon the material. The combination in the proem of 'cyclic' elements and elements from traditions that ridiculed cyclic epic is one of its central paradoxes.

Given the simultaneous invocation of Homeric, cyclic, Hellenistic and Ovidian epic models in the proem of the *Achilleid*, and its incorporation of elements from the anti-epic *recusatio*, and given the poet's easy banter with the Muse and Apollo, his assertiveness in stating his theme, and the confidence of his claims to poetic inspiration, we can surely say that the proem of the *Achilleid* distances itself forcefully from the *Thebaid*, and advertises something entirely new. It does not give the game away, however, and it is impossible to make sweeping deductions from it about the overall character of the projected epic. We cannot say that the eventual design of the poem would have been essentially serious, primarily erotic, consistently parodic, or what have you. In fact, the proem says remarkably little about the parts of the epic that were not yet written; and this fact—if it is admissible to postulate that the preface was subject to future revision—may not be coincidental, but designed to generate suspenseful interest in the project, or simply to leave the poet room to maneuver in case his own conception should change as the work evolved. It is likely that Statius performed the poem with the contradiction between the totalizing claims of the proem and the incompleteness of the work intact. Moreover, the proem seems deliberately to tease us with the prospect that the *Achilleid* will recklessly

[70] Koster (1979: 199), and *contra*, Aricò (1986: 2960).

ignore Aristotelian/Horatian norms of epic composition; the poem as we have it, however, does not do so. Given all this, it would be reckless to take the preface as a simple, unironic blueprint from which to extrapolate about the unwritten parts of the epic.

The perceived need to make a decisive judgment about the eventual course of the epic has often bedeviled Statian scholarship, but the evidence is simply insufficient to decide the question. At one extreme, there is Koster (1979), who envisioned a series of amorous encounters between Achilles and various women; at the other extreme is Aricò (1986 and 1996), who has insisted that the epic would eventually lead to the 'esaltazione dell'eroe Achille' (1996: 206). The problem is illustrated by Aricò, who, at the beginning of a recent article, says that the function of the proem in an unfinished poem like the *Achilleid* assumes 'particolare rilevanza, legittimando la presunzione di trarre da questa sezione dell'opera una qualche luce sulle intenzione del poeta relative all'intero progetto epico'. The first part of the statement is correct: in the case of an incomplete work, the proem takes on particular interest. The deduction, alas, does not necessarily follow that we are authorized to take it as a useful and reliable guide to the ultimate shape of the finished work. Convenient though that would be, the divergence of scholarly opinion on this matter shows the danger of such an inherently subjective procedure. Interpretations, therefore, that rely upon a settled and decided view regarding the unwritten part of the poem as if it were a knowable quantity are of doubtful value, since neither the proem nor extrapolation from the completed section offer grounds for certainty, or even to be sure that Statius himself knew in advance what his course would be.

It is not likely that the maddening vagueness of the proem is the result of Statius' inability to draw a clear picture, for the prefatory material of the *Thebaid* gives a much more satisfactory idea of the overall plot of that epic. If the *Achilleid*-proem raises more questions than it answers, it may be that the poet was content, at this stage, to leave us wondering about what will happen at Troy. This prospectus for a complete *Achilleid*, which is what we possess, constantly invites speculation, through its sheer contrast with the *Iliad*, as to its future trajectory, and the proem refuses to preempt such speculation with simple answers. The best one can say about the prefatory material is that it holds out the prospect of a poem that will be both cyclic and Callimachean, Homeric and Ovidian, not only military, but also erotic, and not strictly epic, but inclusive of other genres. The nearest parallel for such a catholic approach to epic is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which the proem suggests strongly as a paradigm. If the

Thebaid was Statius' Vergilian epic, the *Achilleid* is his post-Vergilian project. To see how this kind of composition works in practice, we need to read the poem in the light of its sources. The next section will do just that, examining several passages which are representative of the ways Statius handles the diverse poetic and mythical traditions that he includes in this tantalizing foretaste of his most unusual epic project.

2.2 Statius and his Sources

The plot of the *Achilleid* comprises three principal mythological stories: Achilles' childhood and education with Chiron on Mount Pelion, the first mustering of the Greek fleet at Aulis, and Achilles' stay on Scyros with the daughters of Lycomedes. The question of what Statius' sources were for these major episodes can be more suitably dealt with in the course of discussing in detail the relevant passages of the poem; the sources for Achilles' childhood on Pelion and his stay on Scyros will be treated in Section 3.1 and 5.1 respectively, while the Aulis episode is only indirectly concerned with Achilles' biography and so lies beyond the scope of this study. The present chapter does not concern the major sources for the plot of the *Achilleid*; rather it collects together a few small but revealing cases of Statian intertextuality. Most of these involve anomalies of chronology, geography or meter that make the issues at stake particularly evident; we will look first at a few programmatic allusions to Vergil.

Among the various models of epic composition to which the proem of the *Achilleid* makes reference there is little sign of Vergil, whose presence had loomed so large in the *Thebaid*. This is another indication of the novelty and the independence from Statius' prior work that the *Achilleid* proclaims for itself. The reading habits of a lifetime die hard, however, and it is unlikely that the poet could have purged the *Aeneid* from his consciousness, even if he had wanted to. Statius' rhetorical and programmatic invocation of Latin exemplars such as Ovid and Catullus does not mean that he is genuinely obliged to banish Vergil from his work; but it does suggest that here we might profitably examine the intertextual relationship between Statius and Vergil in a way that might be less dominated by the famous anxiety Statius is often held to express at the end of the *Thebaid*.[71]

There is a brief instance that is exemplary, because it concerns a very famous intertextual nexus. Aeneas attempts to explain his actions to Dido when he meets her in the underworld, saying:

[71] On Statius' 'anxiety' vis-à-vis Vergil, see Williams (1986).

invitus, regina, tuo de litore cessi. (*Aen.* 6.460)

The well-known problem is that this is a quotation from Catullus' translation of Callimachus' *Coma Berenices*, where the appropriation has seemed to many readers to show a bizarre and inappropriate disregard for context. The lock of hair in Catullus' poem says to Berenice:

invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi. (Cat. 66.39)

Fortunately, it is not necessary for us to decide upon an explanation of the apparent disjunction between the frivolity of Catullus' line and the seriousness of the circumstances between Dido and Aeneas; we are more concerned with how Statius reinterprets the line in the *Achilleid*. Achilles, having just raped Deidamia, explains to her why he yielded to his mother's plan to dress him as a girl:

... nec ego hos cultus aut foeda subissem
tegmina, ni primo te visa in litore: cessi
te propter ... (*Ach.* 1.652–4)

Statius' allusion to the Vergilian line-ending *litore cessi* was pointed out by Barchiesi (1997: 212–7), and his account goes a long way to explain its presence here. According to his theory, the ambiguous gender of the cross-dressed Achilles corresponds to the changing sex of the speaker throughout the permutations of these lines in various poets. The original line does not survive, but Callimachus' lock is presumed to have been masculine (πλόκαμος or βόστρυχος); Catullus makes the lock feminine (*invita*), and Vergil turns the adjective masculine in applying it to Aeneas (*invitus*). Barchiesi argues that Statius alludes not only to Vergil, but to the whole history of changing genders in the various manifestations of the line. On this argument, Statius reads Vergil as feminizing Aeneas via his identification with the lock much as Statius feminizes Achilles. This accounts for why Statius would have thought to imitate Vergil's adaptation from Catullus in the context of Achilles' ambiguous masculinity. My view differs only slightly, in regard to the way Statius implements the allusion. The Statian line is entirely different in form from the Catullan and Vergilian lines, and of this Barchiesi (1997: 216) says, 'Dopo Catullo e Virgilio, la riconoscibilità della clausola *litore cessi* è tanto nitida che Stazio si può permettere di incuneare una forte pausa di senso fra le due parole'. In one sense this is right, in that the allusion is undeniable once someone has pointed it out, but in absolute terms there is no way that one can call Statius' allusion obvious. It is very well hidden, at least

in comparison with its models: Statius' version of the Catullan/Vergilian line distributes a syntactically simple hexameter among three separate cola. The enjambed first word completes the phrase of the previous line, and the last word of the line begins a new grammatical unit, while the central part of the line is a subordinate clause. The strong pause between the two words *litore* and *cessi* also contributes in great measure to obscuring the origins of the phrase. Even though the *Achilleid* has accumulated a number of commentaries, and Dilke in particular was an assiduous collector of parallel passages, Barchiesi is the first scholar to have noticed this allusion, and so the empirical evidence also suggests that it is not immediately recognizable.

Surprisingly, one crucial part of the original template appears at first to be missing in Statius' imitation: the word *invitus* (*-a*). This is an odd omission, given that the thrust of Achilles' speech is that he put on the clothing of a girl *unwillingly*. If we approach Statius' line with the assumption that it is a virtuoso transformation of its models, then another possible connection exists. Dilke's text, as printed above, is not objectionable and attested in the MSS, but let us consider the possibility of a conjecture. Garrod printed *tu visa* (653) in his *OCT*, on the apparently erroneous information that it was the reading of the Eton MS.[72] Dilke and most editors have preferred *te visa* (653); but because of the elision we cannot know the quantity of the final syllable of *visa*. As Dilke shows, there is a good parallel for *nisi* with an ablative absolute in the *Achilleid* (2.127f), and so one cannot object to the syntax of the text he prints, even if *nisi* + subject and finite verb would be the more common construction. The Etonensis is reported now to read *tui visa*, while the Puteaneus has *te vias*; the others have *te visa*. Just because Garrod was mistaken in reading *tu visa* in the Etonensis, this does not mean his text was necessarily wrong, but its status changes to conjecture. If we allow that it is possible that *tu visa* was the original reading, this opens up the possibility of another allusion to the Vergilian line:

tegmina, ni primo tu visa in litore: cessi (653)

As pronounced, the phrase *tu vis' in* is a syllabic rearrangement of the otherwise missing word: *invitus*. It may also be more than a coincidence that every letter but the first of the Vergilian word *regina* may be found in proper order in *tegmina*. Statius' line is indebted to Vergil's not in its *clausula* alone; it is a subtle transformation of the entire line. Once again, the allusion is not transparent; it is cunningly concealed. By dividing the words of the line among three

[72] As pointed out in Marastoni's *apparatus*.

cola and rearranging the syllables of a key word, Statius effectively obscured the origin of his line. The question becomes: what is the point of this elaborate transformation?

Statius' display of intertextual virtuosity and wilful obscurity comes late to a tradition that is otherwise noteworthy for its transparency. Catullus' line, being part of a translation, presumably corresponded to something quite close in Callimachus.[73] Vergil in turn reproduces Catullus' line almost verbatim. By contrast, Statius' intervention in that tradition is notably subtle and oblique. For example, despite the obvious differences in Achilles' and Aeneas' situations, there are yet some parallels between the embarrassments they face. Both are addressing women with whom they became romantically involved on a foreign shore, diverted temporarily from their heroic destinies; and both are offering excuses for their unheroic behavior. The difference is that Aeneas is explaining why he left, and Achilles why he stayed. One way to interpret Statius' reference, therefore, is as a testament to the growing subtlety required of a poet who wished to participate in the same tradition as Catullus and Vergil. The irony is that it is the successors of Vergil at Rome, and not those earlier Romans, including Vergil, who had styled themselves after the Alexandrian poets, that were able to situate themselves in such a relationship to a canonical text as the Hellenistic poets had stood with respect to Homer. In the case discussed in the following section, Statius' Vergilian allusion is also very subtle, and the entire situation is far more complex, as it involves many passages simultaneously, and it is part of an intertextual tradition that encompasses Homer and Apollonius as well as Vergil and Statius. Fortunately, something of a guide to this tradition has been preserved independently of the allusions themselves in the form of an anti-Vergilian polemic; this will permit us to situate Statius' relationship to Vergil in the context of the scholarship of his day. The result will allow us to see Statius as doing something more complex with Vergil than would be expected of an anxious epigone.

2.2.1 Four Similes and a Difference

In a chapter called 'Two Similes and a Wedding', Clausen (1987: 15–25) demonstrates that the twin models for a pair of similes in the *Aeneid* are to be found in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. When Jason leaves his mother and sets out from home, he is compared to Apollo:

[73] A cautionary note has been sounded, however, by Bing (1997) regarding the presumption that Calullus 66 was always a line-for-line translation of the *Coma Berenices*.

οἷος δ' ἐκ νηοῖο θυώδεος εἶσιν Ἀπόλλων
Δῆλον ἀν' ἠγαθέην ἠὲ Κλάρον, ἢ ὅγε Πυθώ
ἢ Λυκίην εὐρεῖαν ἐπὶ Ξάνθοιο ῥοῇσι—
τοῖος ἀνὰ πληθὺν δήμου κίεν ... (*Argon.* 1.307–10)

Vergil imitated this passage in a simile that compares Aeneas to Apollo as he sets out hunting with Dido and the others:

qualis ubi hibernam Lyciam Xanthique fluenta
deserit ac Delum maternam invisit Apollo
instauratque choros ...
... tela sonant umeris ... (*Aen.* 4.143–5, 8)

Vergil's simile gives more specific information about Apollo's movements, but the repetition from Apollonius' simile of Delos, Lycia and the Xanthus makes the borrowing clear. It was recognized in antiquity that this simile in *Aeneid* 4 looks back also to an earlier simile in *Aeneid* 1 that compares Dido, whom we have just seen for the first time, to Diana:

qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi
exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae
hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades; illa pharetram
fert umero gradiensque deas supereminet omnis
(Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus),
talis erat Dido, talem se laeta ferebat
per medios instans operi regnisque futuris. (*Aen.* 1.498–504)

Some of the similarities between Vergil's two similes are the mention of Delos, the quiver, and the leading of dancers. Servius points out that the conjunction of these similes is prophetic of the ill-fated nature of the union between Aeneas and Dido, in that Apollo and Diana are brother and sister rather than lovers, and both deities are inhospitable to the institution of marriage.[74]

Since antiquity it has been recognized that Vergil's Diana-simile is a reworking of the simile in the *Odyssey* which introduces Nausicaa, but Clausen points out that this was not its only source. The connection between Vergil and Homer is mediated via Apollonius' imitation of the Homeric passage. Medea, a young girl like Nausicaa wandering outside the confines of the city, is described in a simile (*Argon.* 3.876–86) that is obviously indebted to Homer's description of

[74] Servius ad *Aen.* 4.144.

Nausicaa. Clausen (1987: 20f) demonstrates the points of contact between Vergil and Apollonius and makes it certain that Vergil was imitating both Apollonius and Homer. What is interesting for our purposes is the pairing of similes. The 'intricately related' Aeneas-Apollo and Dido-Diana similes of Vergil are modeled on the Jason-Apollo and Medea-Artemis similes of Apollonius. As we shall see, this pattern of paired similes influenced Statius in the *Achilleid.*

When Achilles finally makes his appearance in Statius' poem he too is compared to Apollo returning from Lycia, in a simile that alludes to Vergil:

> ... qualis Lycia venator Apollo
> cum redit et saevis permutat plectra pharetris. (*Ach.* 1.165f)

The young Achilles has just returned from hunting, and has come home to Chiron's cave to get washed and have his dinner. After dinner, he will play the lyre for his mother; he embodies both aspects of the god mentioned in the simile: the hunter and the musician. Given the pair of balanced Apollo- and Diana-similes in the *Argonautica* and *Aeneid* that introduce the romantic leads, and given that Statius likewise introduces Achilles with an Apollo-simile, we might ask ourselves what the chances are that the poet has a matching Diana-simile for Deidamia. It would be worth examining the point where Deidamia enters the *Achilleid* to see if there is a simile there to complete the hypothetically symmetrical set of double similes: Deidamia–Dido–Diana to match Achilles–Aeneas–Apollo. As we shall discover, Statius breaks this symmetry slightly, and, to explain why, it will be necessary to look in greater detail at Vergil's famous reworking of Homer's Nausicaa-simile.

Over the years, a great deal of controversy has attended the simile in which Vergil compares Dido to Diana. It is a translation and reworking of Homer's Nausicaa-simile:

> οἵη δ' Ἄρτεμις εἶσι κατ' οὔρεα ἰοχέαιρα,
> ἢ κατὰ Τηΰγετον περιμήκετον ἢ Ἐρύμανθον,
> τερπομένη κάπροισι καὶ ὠκείῃς ἐλάφοισι·
> τῇ δέ θ' ἅμα νύμφαι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
> ἀγρονόμοι παίζουσι, γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ·
> πασάων δ' ὑπὲρ ἥ γε κάρη ἔχει ἠδὲ μέτωπα,
> ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι·
> ὣς ἥ γ' ἀμφιπόλοισι μετέπρεπε παρθένος ἁδμής. (*Od.* 6.102–9)

The controversy regarding Vergil's adaptation of this passage goes back a long way, which is unsurprising given the ancient interest in Vergil's relationship to

Homer; in this case we have an early and extensive discussion of the problem. It comes from Aulus Gellius, who attributes his information to no less a figure than Valerius Probus. Probus is a shadowy figure in the history of ancient scholarship, whose philological activity has been the subject of much speculation; whatever his true impact, the fame of this scholar was so great that it later caused many spurious treatises and pronouncements to pass under his name.

The fundamental difficulty in evaluating the work of Probus is that he had an immense reputation in antiquity, yet the remaining evidence of his activity is very meager. Aulus Gellius cites him as a great authority, *grammaticum inlustrem*, (1.15.18) and says, *grammaticus inter suam aetatem praestanti scientia fuit* (4.7.1); he never invokes his name in order to disagree.[75] Servius and Donatus cite him more often than any other ancient critic; for Macrobius, he was *uir perfectissimus* (5.22.9). Unfortunately, we have received none of his genuine work directly; but perhaps this is not surprising, since Suetonius' *vita* implies that Probus' audience was limited, and that in his lifetime he only published *nimis pauca et exigua de quibusdam minutis quaestiunculis*, and that he left behind *non mediocrem siluam obseruationum sermonis antiqui.*[76]

The most controversial aspect of Probus' career has been his designation as the 'Roman Aristarchus'. This claim derives from comments in the so-called *Anecdoton Parisinum* which describe Probus as having been the homologue of Aristarchus in his application to Latin authors of critical symbols such as the obelus and asterisk.[77] This has encouraged some to attribute to Probus the same kind of authority over the text of Vergil and other Latin authors that Aristarchus had over Homer, and thus to speak of Proban editions of Vergil and other poets.[78] More sober judgments have revised downwards our estimates of his influence,[79] and the debate has focused most recently on the absolute value of Probus' readings as reported by the scholia vis à vis the manuscript tradition of Vergil.[80] Since we are interested here more in Probus' literary judgments than in his contributions to textual criticism, let us move on quickly past these issues to the evidence provided to us by Aulus Gellius.

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[75] Thus Holford-Strevens (1988: 120).

[76] See Kaster (1995: 267–9).

[77] Keil (1981: vol 7, pp 533–6). There is extensive bibliography and discussion of this document by Jocelyn (1984, 1985a and 1985b), to which add the important reservation of Kaster (1995: 247).

[78] E.g. Leo (1912: 43).

[79] See Reynolds and Wilson (1991: 27–9).

[80] A polarizing issue; see Courtney (1981: 24–6). As Delvigo (1987: 16) points out, editors are still divided: Geymonat tends to accept the indirect tradition much more than Mynors.

Gellius represents himself proudly as having connections, albeit indirectly, with the great Probus; on five occasions he claims to cite people who knew him personally.[81] The value of Gellius' anecdotal information has sometimes been discounted because of the claim that his relish for a good story makes him an unreliable informant.[82] It is true that vanity might make Gellius exaggerate many things, including his closeness to a great scholar of the previous generation, but this does not necessarily falsify the substance of his anecdotes. In fact, one passage portrays Favorinus as debunking an attempt by one of his *sectatores* to ascribe a vacuous opinion to Probus: *'numquam', inquit Favorinus, 'quod equidem scio, tam importuna tamque audaci argutia fuit noster Probus ...'* (3.1.6). This episode indicates that the critic had already acquired such a reputation that his authority was invoked willy-nilly; and this is precisely the misdemeanor of which Gellius himself has been sometimes accused. Yet in a parallel episode Gellius says he looked through the writings of Probus that he had collected in order to refute someone's claims to his authority (15.30). Gellius sheds light on the oral and written traditions of Proban scholarship, of which he sees himself a curator; thus he should be at least a good-faith informant.[83]

Even if Gellius was reporting honestly the information he was given, there is, of course, the possibility that he was misinformed. There is one test which suggests that he was on track. In the apt phrase of Holford-Strevens, Gellius' Probus possesses a 'coherent quasi-personality'.[84] In the few anecdotes we have, the critic emerges as a Housmanesque curmudgeon who does not suffer fools gladly, and who has a clever way with a put-down, whether his target be one of his acquaintances (13.21.7–9) or Vergil himself (9.9.15). These two anecdotes are also our only real glimpse of the critic's aesthetic sensibility. The first passage (13.21.1–9) is a discussion of the correctness of the alternative i-stem and consonant-stem endings of the third declension accusative. Probus shows himself to be 'not ... entirely without taste'.[85] His judgment is in fact remarkably acute and free from pedantry: he declares that whichever form is more pleasing to the ear is to be preferred, and supports his view with examples from Vergil where he deems that the poet chose particular variants to produce musical effects

[81] *familiaris quidam* 13.21.1, *discipuli* 9.9.12; cf. 1.15.18, 3.1.5, 6.7.1–3.

[82] 'Gellius wrote in a tradition affected by the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. The rules of the tradition did not demand even the degree of veracity expected in the minutes of a modern academic committee meeting', Jocelyn (1984: 465). On Gellius' credibility, see Holford-Strevens (1982).

[83] Cf. Kaster (1995: 245f).

[84] Holford-Strevens (1988: 120, n 31).

[85] Holford-Strevens (1988: 53).

appropriate to the context.[86]

It is well to bear in mind that Probus was able to appreciate the subtleties of Vergil's diction, since the other long anecdote Gellius relates shows him in a more disapproving mood (9.9.12–17). He ridicules Vergil's adaptation of Homer's Nausicaa-simile:

> Et quoniam de transferendis sententiis loquor, memini audisse me ex Valerii Probi discipulis, docti hominis et in legendis pensitandisque veteribus scriptis bene callidi, solitum eum dicere, nihil quicquam tam inprospere Vergilium ex Homero vertisse quam versus hos amoenissimos, quos de Nausicaa Homerus fecit....
>
> Primum omnium id visum esse dicebant Probo, quod aput Homerum quidem virgo Nausicaa, ludibunda inter familiares puellas in locis solis, recte atque commode confertur cum Diana venante in iugis montium inter agrestes deas, nequaquam autem conveniens Vergilium fecisse, quoniam Dido in urbe media ingrediens ... nihil eius similitudinis capere possit, quae lusibus atque venatibus Dianae congruat; tum postea, quod Homerus studia atque oblectamina in venando Dianae honeste aperteque dicit, Vergilius autem, cum de venatu deae nihil dixisset, pharetram tantum facit eam ferre in humero, tamquam si onus et sarcinam ...; ipse autem, imitari hoc γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα Λητώ volens gaudia fecerit pigra et levia et cunctantia et quasi in summo pectore supernantia; nescire enim sese, quid significaret aliud 'pertemptant'; praeter ista omnia florem ipsius totius loci Vergilium videri omisisse, quod hunc Homeri versum exigue secutus sit: ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται, καλαὶ δέ τε πᾶσαι, quando nulla maior cumulatiorque pulchritudinis laus dici potuerit, quam quod una inter omnis pulchras excelleret, una facile et ex omnibus nosceretur. (Gell. *NA* 9.9.12–17)

Homer compared Nausicaa at play to Artemis hunting (*Od.* 6.102–9); Vergil adapted the simile to describe the appearance of Dido as Aeneas first saw her (*Aen.* 1.498–504). According to Gellius, Probus' basic point is this: Artemis happily hunting in the woods with her nymphs is a perfectly apt comparison for Nausicaa happily playing ball on the beach with her female friends, but not for Dido dispensing law and justice in the city amidst her male counsellors. Probus has four main objections:

[86] The dubious claim that Probus had confirmed these readings in a manuscript corrected by Vergil's own hand may be Gellius' invention, but the essence of the anecdote remains plausible.

1. Dido is too urban a figure to compare with the rustic Diana of the simile;

2. Homer's Artemis is a huntress rejoicing in the chase, whereas Diana's quiver becomes so pointless in Vergil's simile that it is mere iconography;

3. Vergil misuses the word *pertemptant*; unfortunately, the reasoning here has become nearly unintelligible;

4. he underplays the point of the simile, i.e. that even among goddesses Diana stands out in her beauty.

These criticisms have been debated back and forth in Vergilian scholarship ever since. They have seemed to many the carping of a small mind, and Probus has had his sarcasm repaid to him a thousand times in the scholarly literature.[87] The justice of these comments is not the issue I want to address, however; what is interesting for our purposes is that Statius shows every sign of having taken these criticisms on board in the *Achilleid*. When we look to see whether Statius imitates Vergil's Diana-simile as he did his Apollo-simile, we do find something, but not quite a simile; it is a refusal of a simile and a statement of contrast. Deidamia is on the beach amid a crowd of female companions, just like Nausicaa and unlike Dido; they are described as they perform a ritual at a shrine of Pallas:

> omnibus eximium formae decus ... (*Ach.* 1.290)
>
> quantum virides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas
> obruit, aut umeris quantum Diana relinquit
> Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori
> Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat. (293–6)
>
> ... atque ipsi par forma deae est, si pectoris angues
> ponat et exempta pacetur casside vultus. (299–300)

The first thing to notice is that this is not properly a simile at all. The passage quoted begins with a comparison, but strictly speaking it pertains to quantity rather than quality. All of the Vergilian similes we have discussed and Statius' Apollo-simile begin with the word *qualis*; by contrast the coordinating conjunctions here are *quantum*, *quantum* and *tantum*. The lines quoted above conclude with what we might call the opposite of a simile—Statius explicitly remarks upon the incongruity of the comparanda, and where we might expect a simile we have instead a passage denying the propriety of a simile. How does this anti-simile

[87] For bibliography pro- and contra-Probus: Pöschl (1966: 62–69); Austin (1971) ad *Aen.* 1.498ff and Holford-Strevens (1988: 148, n 30).

demonstrate an acquaintance with the specific criticisms ascribed to Probus? The first problem was Dido's urban setting; here we are told that the girls have left the city to go down to the beach (unlike Dido, and just like Nausicaa). The second criticism was that unlike Homer's Artemis, Diana does not hunt in Vergil's simile, and her iconological attribute, the quiver, is so contextually inappropriate and superfluous that it might as well be a rucksack (*sarcinam*). Statius does not mention hunting, and the girls are worshiping in the shrine of Pallas, not Diana, but in the anti-simile it is precisely Pallas' iconological attributes of *aegis* and helmet that are glossed as the problem with this type of comparison; the goddess would have to remove them in order to bear a qualitative, rather than quantitative, likeness to Deidamia.

The third criticism was Vergil's misuse of the word *pertemptant*. It is hard to determine exactly what Probus was objecting to, as his point has become somewhat garbled in transmission. The gloss offered for the word is *gaudia ... pigra et levia et cunctantia et quasi in summo pectore supernantia*'. This seems an unreasonably narrow definition of the word, but we may perhaps dimly see what Probus was trying to get at by comparing the usage of Lucretius and Vergil in the *Georgics*, who use it to describe the action of a *tremor*.[88] Cicero always uses the verb metaphorically, to mean 'examining from all angles'; this suggests the possibility that the original force of the prefix *per-* was not 'through', but 'all over, from every direction'.[89] In the *Aeneid*, however, the verb is used to mean 'to attack strongly', and Statius uses it in this sense three times in the *Thebaid*, but never in the *Achilleid*.[90] Statius imitates the Vergilian line *Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus* (1.502) elsewhere in the *Achilleid*, applying it to Thetis: *angunt sua gaudia matrem* (1.183). It may not be a significant fact, but Statius in this case uses not *pertempto* but *ango*, a stronger and more vivid verb.

The final Proban objection to Vergil's Dido-simile is that the central figure should be surrounded not by wrinkly old Carthaginian statesmen, but by beautiful young girls, whom she nevertheless out-shines in beauty and whom she exceeds in height. One could not ask for closer adherence to this stricture than the lines Statius gives us. Deidamia literally eclipses her beautiful sisters in the same measure (*quantum*) that Venus exceeds the Nymphs in beauty and by the same amount (*quantum*) that Diana is taller than the Naiads. Statius effects the same comparison as Homer and Vergil, but by casting it strictly in terms

[88] Lucr. 6.287 and Verg. *Georg.* 3.250.
[89] Cic. *De inv.* 2.38, 2.68, 2.117, *De Orat.* 2.318, *Epist. ad Quint.* 1.4.5.
[90] *Theb.* 2.369, 3.381, 5.446.

of quantity, he avoids setting up a true simile and its Proban pitfalls. The last lines of this passage, by explicitly refusing to compare Deidamia to Pallas on account of the iconographical difficulty, call particular attention to the absence of a simile here, to the importance of attending to the proper attributes of divine *comparanda,* and thus to Statius' deft reconciliation of the Vergilian model and Probus' criticism.

There is then the matter of how Statius would have known of Probus' work. There is no question that they were contemporaries. Probus' reputation was already well enough established near the year 88 for Martial (3.2.12) to name him as an example of an unforgiving critic. Moreover, a connection between the two has already been postulated independently. Gellius cites a letter published by Probus dedicated *ad Marcellum.*[91] Coleman (1988: 135) has suggested the possibility that this is the same Vitorius Marcellus to whom Quintilian dedicated the *Institutio Oratoria,* and to whom Statius addressed Book 4 of the *Silvae.* The name Marcellus is very common, but this Vitorius Marcellus can be argued to have had a reason to be interested in the abstruse material on Punic nomenclature that Probus was addressing to him, namely his friendship with a certain Septimius Severus, whom Statius calls his *condiscipulus* (*Silv.* 4, pref), and who was at least in part ethnically Punic.[92] It thus seems reasonably likely that Statius and Probus shared a patron in Vitorius Marcellus.

Statius had the opportunity to be acquainted with Valerius Probus, and it seems that he was interested in his work on Vergil. Vergil had relied on Alexandrian scholarship when reading and interpreting Homer,[93] so it only seems fair that Vergil's successors should follow his example and avail in turn of whatever Vergilian exegesis was available to them. The exiguous remains of the early Latin *grammatici* have hampered investigation of this possibility, but in principle there is no reason why Statius should not have done to Vergil what Vergil had done to Homer. The other opinions that are ascribed to Probus with some degree of plausibility are generally much more fragmentary, and so provide difficult ground for assessing his possible influence on Statius. For example, Servius preserves what is probably a correct reading in *Aeneid* 10: [*Haemonides*] ... *totus conlucens veste atque insignibus albis* (*armis* codd., *Aen.* 10.539). Whether or not this was a conjecture of Probus, the information is useful to editors of Vergil.[94] There is more to Servius' note: *Probus vero insignibus albis dicit legendum, ut vestes*

[91] On Probus' chronology see Kaster (1995: 242–5); on the 'publication' of the letter, see ibid, p 269.

[92] See Coleman (1988: 158f) on Septimius' background.

[93] Cf. Schlunk (1974).

[94] On this crux, see Delvigo (1987: 62–8).

albas accipiamus, quae sunt sacerdotibus congruae sicut Statius de Amphiarao dicit. Servius frequently uses Statius for the purposes of illustration, so it is entirely possible that this is mere coincidence. If the connection between Probus and Statius does go back to one of Servius' sources, then it may be that here too Probus influenced our poet, who did indeed describe Amphiaraus as dressed entirely in white (*ipse habitu niveus, Theb.* 6.330).

The extreme subtlety in Statius' reworking of Vergilian elements that we saw demonstrated in his treatment of the line beginning *invitus, regina* is also evident in his Apollo-simile. That passage seems at first a mere quotation of Vergil's simile, but the important thing is not simply that Statius compared his hero to Apollo because Vergil had done so; rather it is the way he fits the simile into context in his own poem so that it does not appear to be a foreign object; if anything it is even more at home and integrated with the plot than Vergil's is. Vergil compares Aeneas, who is setting out for the hunt, with Apollo as he heads from Lycia to Delos. The implied points of comparison are the arrows that Aeneas carries on his back (*Aen.* 4.148) and the movement from one place to another. Lycia and Delos in particular were chosen as an echo of Apollonius' Apollo-simile, which had named those same places (see above, p 66). What Statius does is to take those rather arbitrary cult-places of Apollo and assign them particular meanings in the economy of his own simile. The key is that Aeneas is setting out for the hunt, whereas Statius' Achilles is returning from it. So when Statius, like Vergil, describes Apollo returning from Lycia, the god is not just moving from place to place, he is coming back specifically from a hunting trip to the wilds of Lycia, and returning to civilization at Delos. Statius does not mention Delos, but he makes the counterpoint between culture and nature explicit (*saevis permutat plectra pharetris*, 1.166). Delos in Statius' day was one of the most heavily urbanized spots in the Mediterranean; and in mythological terms it was the home of music and dance: Callimachus calls it φιλόμολπε (*Hymn* 4.197). On the other side of the simile, Achilles' actions also make the correspondence between god and hero very precise. He is returning from hunting in the mountains just as Apollo is returning from Lycia, and just as Apollo returns to civilization to make music (*plectra*), so too Achilles will shortly settle down to play the lyre for his mother (1.186–9). The audience takes pleasure not merely in recognizing the borrowing from Vergil, but also in appreciating the careful and intricate way it has been recontextualized. The simile also does further work in articulating explicitly the theme of civilization versus nature, which is crucial to understanding the role of Chiron and his cave

in the poem (see below, Section 3.3).

The example of the similes shows Statius' familiarity with the literary scholarship of his time, and it constitutes a useful demonstration of the continuing relevance in the Flavian period of literary polemic to poetic composition. It is particularly interesting that Statius has been held in the past to have been a slavish imitator of Vergil; we see here that even a poet whose respect for his predecessor is undoubted could thoughtfully assimilate the strictures of a strong critic. It may also be that the nature of the *Achilleid* as an Ovidianizing epic encouraged a greater measure of freedom in handling Vergil than would have been appropriate in the *Thebaid*, which placed itself explicitly under the protection of the *Aeneid*. A poet may have recourse to multiple modes of intertextuality; and the nature of the project may determine the way he decides to situate himself with respect to his tradition.

2.2.2 A Movable Feast

We have already seen that Catullus 64 is an important model for the song of Achilles, and for the *Achilleid* as a whole. In this section, we follow another Statian response to a perceived anomaly in one of his most important sources, not because it was censured by a prominent ancient critic, but because its meter and content are clearly of dubious correctness.[95] In reviewing Ellis' *OCT* of Catullus, Housman scorned the 'diction and metre' of this line:[96]

> Pharsaliam coeunt, Pharsalia tecta frequentant. (Cat. 64.37)

Yet several subsequent editors have agreed with Ellis and have also refrained from emending *Pharsaliam*. I will make the case that a passage in Statius' *Achilleid* may indicate that the later poet was familiar with the line as the MSS have it.

First I will treat the putative error in diction which has been half of the argument which led Mynors and Goold to adopt Pontanus' conjecture of *Pharsalum coeunt*; the prosody I shall deal with below. If *Pharsaliam* is retained, we are implying that this is the name of a town, not a region.[97] Fordyce also chose to emend, and in his commentary (1961: ad loc) he says, '*Pharsalia* is nowhere else found for *Pharsalus* as the name of the town'. Both L-S and the *OLD* make

[95] This section has been published elsewhere (Heslin 1997), but it has been revised slightly for inclusion here, because I have changed my mind regarding some of its ultimate conclusions (see below, n 111).

[96] Housman (1972: 627).

[97] '... as shown partly by the omission of any preposition (Kraft), partly by being combined with Crannon and Larissa, partly by the word *coeunt* which could scarcely apply to any place larger than a town': thus Ellis (1889) ad loc.

the distinction that *Pharsalus* was the proper name of the town and that the noun *Pharsalia* denoted only the general region around Pharsalus.[98] On the other hand, Ellis (1889: ad loc) claimed in his commentary that '*Pharsalia* is the name both of a town and a district'. Kroll (1960: ad loc) concurs: '*Pharsalia* für die Stadt brauchen Plin. Tac. Flor'. Who then is right—Ellis and Kroll, or Fordyce and the dictionaries? The answer is that they all have oversimplified a vexed question which has more to do with the disputed location of the eponymous battle than it does with what Catullus wrote. Fortunately we need not be detained by the question of where precisely the battle occurred, for the simple reason that Catullus was not alive when it took place.[99] The important thing is that Catullus is the first Latin author to mention the place, and the only one to do so before the date of the battle. Thus Catullus' use of the name is idiosyncratic to us in any case and if Catullus is alone in using *Pharsalia* without any possible reference to the battle there, there is no reason to suppose that he should not be alone in meaning by the word the town itself.

We can further support this notion by taking a brief look at how the town came to be designated in later sources. There is no definite example of anyone calling the town itself *Pharsalia*, and it is often unclear whether authors are referring to the town or to the battle.[100] Livy mentions the town frequently in his narrative of the second Macedonian war, and always calls it *Pharsalus*. But, as Bruère (1951) has argued, the *Periochae* and the *auctores Liviani* always call the site of the battle between Caesar and Pompey *Pharsalia*. So it might be presumed that Livy distinguished between the town of *Pharsalus* and the battle-site, on the basis that the battle happened outside the town and ought therefore to be loosely located in the general area of *Pharsalia*. Other writers may have followed this policy, more or less, but there are not enough citations which mention the town independently of the battle for us to be sure. It is uncertain whether this distinction really existed after the battle, and if it did, what importance was placed on it. But the important thing is that the distinction between the town itself and its hinterland which the dictionaries make so much of had no reason to exist when Catullus was writing, since the battle had yet to take place. Indeed, his reference to this tiny town would have been much more obscure in his time than it seems to us today.

[98] The *OLD*'s metrical note on this passage appears mistakenly s.v. 'Pharsalius'.

[99] Catullus probably died in the late fifties BC: Wiseman (1985: 206). Here Pharsalia is a learned variant for the Homeric Phthia; this is sufficient to warrant its appearance here. There is no need to infer that Catullus must have written after 48 BC when the hamlet became famous.

[100] E.g. Plin. *NH* 6.216.7, Ov. *Met.* 15.823, Tac. *Hist.* 2.38.12 and Flor. 2.13.245.

Since no Latin author besides Catullus mentions Pharsalus until the battle, it would be wise to view all the usage posterior to 48 BC with suspicion, since it is irredeemably influenced by the development of *Pharsalia* as the name of the battle. Nor does Greek provide much evidence of the supposed distinction whereby Φαρσαλία must indicate a district rather than the town. For example, in Euripides' *Andromache* the adjective (but not the noun) is used indifferently to denote either the town (πόλεως Φαρσαλίας, 16) or the territory (γῆς ... Φαρσαλίας, 22). One example where Φαρσαλία does designate the town is suggestive. A scholion to the *Odyssey* reads (ad *Od.* 4.9, ed. Dindorf), Μυρμιδόνων προτὶ ἄστυ] ἣν Ὅμερος μὲν Φθίαν λέγει, οἱ δὲ νεῶτεροι Φαρσαλίαν. It is possible that the scholiast is referring to a model or models that Catullus might have followed.

Now I will move on to Housman's second objection. The metrical difficulty with *Pharsaliam* is that its second syllable should be long, just as it is in the case of the adjective *Pharsalia* later in the same line. Either the letter *i* is consonantal by synaeresis, or, more likely, the second *a* in *Pharsaliam* must be irregularly short. Ellis, Kroll and Quinn in their commentaries all accept the MS reading, suppose that the second syllable is short, and defend this by reference to the Alexandrian mannerism of repeating a word in the same line with two different metrical values. Precedents may be found in Callimachus, Theocritus and elsewhere.[101] Lucilius (F 355 Marx) and Martial (9.11) noted and criticized this metrical laxity of the Greeks, using Homer's inconsistency in the treatment of the name of Ares as their example.

Theocritus was the champion of this conceit, and Catullus can be seen to have followed his example in this matter. The end of Theocritus 18 has a different word repeated in each line (49–53).[102] Then, the last hexameter (58) begins with the words Ὑμὴν ὦ Ὑμέναιε, with the first upsilon long and the second short. The wedding cry exists in many variants in many authors, but Catullus took advantage of the metrical freedom of Theocritus in making a hexameter out of *Hymen o Hymenaee, Hymen ades o Hymenaee*! in poem 62. The similarity of form and similar metrical flexibility point to a Theocritean origin for Catullus' refrain. Thus it is arguable that Catullus might elsewhere choose to employ this device again, and this is the ground on which the MS reading of *Pharsaliam* in 64.37 is usually defended. It is even more likely if we consider that Theocritus 18, which contains two examples of the conceit, is Helen's epithalamium, and

[101] E.g. Callim. *Hymn* 1.55 and 4.204, Herodas 7.155. An extensive collection of examples is put together by Hopkinson (1982).

[102] In a different but related device Theocritus avails himself of two different scansions of κύπρις in line 51: '... Κύπρις δέ, θεὰ Κύπρις....' Munro (1908: ad Lucr. 4.1254) calls it a 'crime'.

that Catullus is working in the same genre in poem 64.

There are two other possible parallels for a Latin scansion of *Pharsalia* and its adjective with second *a* short: one is in Calpurnius Siculus (4.101) and the other is in the *Achilleid* (1.152). Postgate heartily wished to consign all three to the dustbin together and on examining the instance in Calpurnius Siculus it is easy to see why.[103] On the strength of supposed parallel scansions in Catullus and Statius, some editors have printed the reading of the MSS *Pharsaliae solverunt sibila cannae.* In her Budé edition of Calpurnius Amat defends this by referring to the image of the peace-bearing prince who ends civil war (1.58f). While it is true that there is another mention of this young prince, whoever he may be, in this poem (4.84–6), any notion of civil war is utterly alien to the immediate context.[104] Corydon and Amyntas have joined in praise of a certain *Caesar*, comparing him to Jupiter (4.82–96), particularly in terms of the god's control over the elements (4.92–96). Amyntas points out that the forest had just grown quiet at the mention of the name of Caesar. He then recalls that once before he had noticed the wood become still in the midst of a storm, and at that time he said out loud that this must have been a sign of the presence of a god. This logic requires the following text:

> et dixi: 'deus hinc, certe, deus expulit Euros'.
> nec mora, Parrhasiae sonuerunt sibila cannae.[105] (Calp. Sic. 4.100f)

On this reading, it is clear that the sound of the reeds of Pan confirmed the presence of a god in the forest who caused it to become calm. Since the mere mention of Caesar's name causes the same effect, this implies that he too is a god. Amyntas is simply supplying an example of a natural phenomenon from his past; at that time he did not mention Caesar at all; so it would be rather strange if we should find an allusion to the end of civil war here, rather than when he was praising Caesar explicitly.[106] Thus, the only possible conclusion is that we

[103] Postgate (1905: 260): 'this trio of cripples'.

[104] More generally, such a precise reference to a specific and traumatic event in real history is out of character in the world of Calpurnius' bucolic poetry. One of the challenges of following in Vergil's footsteps is precisely to make events in that timeless world resonate in a political sense for contemporary readers without violating generic decorum. While Pollio, Gallus and others may exist in the *Eclogues* under their own names, Vergil's treatment of the political upheaval of his time is allusive and allegorical. Similarly, when Calpurnius does venture into the real world, such as in describing a wooden amphitheater (7.23–34), the contemporary references are vague and elusive, and in the case of the amphitheater he assimilates it to the traditional bucolic antithesis of the big city and the countryside. Indeed, the seemingly endless controversy over Calpurnius' date, or even century, is a testament to his obliquity.

[105] This is the text printed by Baehrens (1886); *sonuerunt* and Amat's *soluerunt* are both found in the MSS.

[106] Amat explains how this putative allusion to civil war works: '... les *sibila* des roseaux sont l'image des sifflements des spectres tués dans la plaine de Pharsale qui trouvent enfin

must accept Heinsius' emendation of *Pharsaliae* to *Parrhasiae*. Indeed, if, as I am arguing, there is a specific connection between the metrical anomalies of Catullus and Statius, no tenable parallel for the passage in Calpurnius remains, and *Pharsaliae* is simply unmetrical.

In the *Achilleid*, Chiron is complaining to Thetis about the young Achilles' rambunctious behavior:

> nunc illum non Ossa capit, non Pelion ingens
> Pharsaliaeve nives. (1.151f)

This is the reading of P, by far the best manuscript; the others have *Thessaliaeve*. Most editors (e.g. Klotz, Dilke, Méheust, Rosati) have rightly preferred to let the metrical irregularity stand here. *Thessaliaeve* is vague and colorless after the mention of two specific places within Thessaly itself. It also renders repetitious the phrase *Thessala ... pinus* (1.156, i.e. the Argo) only four lines later. As Dilke notes (1949: 50), '*Thessaliae* here will have arisen as a gloss on *Pharsaliae* and then been substituted to help the metre'. We do not, however, seem to have a firm argument from poetic tradition to account for the metrical anomaly here as we did with Catullus. Nevertheless, a look at the context of both reveals a connection more than metrical between them. There is another striking thing about Catullus' line beside the quantity of *Pharsaliam*: it situates the wedding of Peleus and Thetis explicitly in Pharsalus. This is extremely idiosyncratic; the canonical account places the wedding generally on Mount Pelion, or more specifically in Chiron's cave there.[107] The move is all the more striking in that

l'apaisement' (p 111, n 91). She does not adduce any parallels for this striking metaphor.

[107] In fact, all other literary evidence gives Pelion as the site of the wedding. For the numerous sources, see Bloch in Roscher, s.v. 'Peleus', col. 1837.11–56, supplemented by R. Vollkommer in *LIMC*, s.v. 'Peleus', p 251. Vollkommer, however, is mistaken in his claim that Pherekydes (*FrGrH* 3 F 1), Phylarchos (*FrGrH* 81 F 81) and Euripides (*Andr.* 16–23) actually place the wedding itself in the Thetideion near Pharsalus. Pherekydes and Euripides are rather following a tradition in which the Thetideion received its name from the fact that Thetis and Peleus lived there, or in nearby Phthia or Pharsalus, *after* they were married: see Jouan (1966: 68–71). When Euripides is explicit about the site of the wedding, he places it in Chiron's cave, on Pelion (*Iph. Aul.* 704–7 and 1040). The only other sources for a wedding taking place at a venue other than on Pelion are vase-paintings. Several of these, including the François Vase (*LIMC* s.v. 'Peleus', 212) and the Erskine Dinos (*LIMC* s.v. 'Peleus', 211) have very similar representations of the scene, and Stesichoros has been proposed as their common literary source: Stewart (1983). These vases show a procession of gods coming to the festivities; Peleus and sometimes also Thetis await them at home. Despite the fact that the subject of these paintings is often loosely termed the 'wedding' of Peleus and Thetis, this is unlikely; in the François Vase the couple are already in the same house, and Thetis is holding her veil away from her face perhaps to signify her married state. We are actually seeing the ἐπαυλία of the day after the marriage banquet: Simon and Hirmer (1981: 70). The Greek wedding ceremony took place in the house of the bride's father, and included a sacrifice, a meal, and the unveiling of the bride as a married woman in the presence of the men. There was then a night-time procession to the groom's house where the couple went to bed. In the ἐπαυλία the following morning the

it changes the setting from rustic to urban. Whatever the motivation for this in Catullus' text, Statius differs. The *Achilleid* places the wedding on Mount Pelion and in Chiron's cave.[108]

Just as the metrical anomaly in Catullus accompanies an odd transposition of Pharsalus and Mount Pelion, the same thing occurs in the Statian passage. Pharsalus is a hill town in the Thessalian plain; the immediate area around it is hardly mountainous. Nevertheless it is to Pharsalus that Statius attributes snow, and not to Mount Ossa or Mount Pelion, which would seem far more likely candidates. We can form a good guess at Statius' main source for the poetic topography of Thessaly. Lucan's extensive description (6.333–412) was surely influential: Lucan (6.388 et passim) and Statius (*Ach.* 1.238 et passim) are our only two sources which err together in ascribing a Mount Pholoe to Thessaly.[109] Lucan quite rightly speaks of hills and plains around Pharsalus, not mountains (*colles* and *campis*, 7.215f). It is true that elsewhere Statius speaks in general of snowy Thessaly (*niuibus ... Thessalicis,* 1.651f), and tells of the infant Achilles playing in the snows of the valleys of Mount Haemus: *quis enim Haemoniis sub uallibus alter / creverit effossa reptans niue?* (1.476f). It is also true that 'Thessalian snow is conventional',[110] but this snow is generally associated with the mountains of Thessaly, even in conventional formulas like *campis niualis / Haemoniae* (Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.19f), in which snowy Mount Haemus overhangs the phrase. It is my claim that the collocation of *Pharsaliaeve nives* is strange, because when the snow of Thessaly is associated with a specific place, it is with mountains and mountain valleys and not towns of the plain.

The thing that makes the phrase *nunc illum non Ossa capit, non Pelion ingens / Pharsaliaeve nives* really striking is that the conventionally snowy mountains of Ossa and Pelion are mentioned without reference to snow. We are invited to pause not only by this odd transfer of epithet, but also by the

bride's parents and family came bearing gifts to the couple's new dwelling (M. Collignon in Dar.-Sag. s.v. 'Matrimonium', vol 3, pp 1647–54). It is thus natural to assume that Peleus and Thetis would have returned to spend their wedding night at Peleus' palace in Phthia after their wedding on Pelion. Of course the proper venue for the wedding banquet, namely palace of Thetis' father Nereus in the depths of the sea, would have been inconvenient for the bridegroom. So Pelion, or Chiron's cave there, became a handy substitute; confusion about this would explain the obscure tradition that made Thetis the daughter of Chiron rather than of Nereus. To conclude, either Catullus was on his own in situating the wedding in Pharsalus, or he might possibly have been alluding to some source such as Stesichoros, which has left absolutely no trace in surviving literature; cf. Stewart (1983: 71, n 25). Either way, given the weight of tradition that supported Pelion as the venue for the wedding, readers like Statius who were familiar with it would surely have been struck by his departure from that tradition.

[108] *conubialia pandunt / antra* (1.101f), *domus ... Pelion arcu* (1.106f) and lines 109f; on the location of Thetis' wedding, see below (Section 6.2).

[109] See below, p 83.

[110] Nisbet-Hubbard (1970) ad Hor. *Carm.* 1.37.19f.

anomalous meter. These are flags to the reader of an otherwise subtle nexus. Catullus 64 confused town with mountain by putting the wedding in Pharsalus instead of on Pelion; so the *Achilleid* deliberately confuses town with mountain by putting snow in Pharsalus instead of on Pelion and Ossa. The probability that we are dealing with a gentle Statian wink at Catullus' mythography is supported by the fact that these are the only two plausibly attested examples of the anomalous scansion of Pharsalia and that Statius happens to use the word in connection with the story of Achilles and not with, say, the nearby battle. If Statius had learned nothing else from reading Lucan, he would have learned the word's proper quantity; and in fact he has no trouble with it elsewhere (*Theb.* 9.312, and cf. the adjective *Pharsalica* at *Silv.* 2.7.66 and 113). Unless we accept that Statius intends an allusion to Catullus 64.37, we are left to thank a remarkable coincidence and to attribute Statius' topography and scansion to carelessness or perversity. As to the matter of Catullus' metrical habits, it is not essential to our purposes to decide whether Catullus' line was corrupted very early, or whether he actually wrote *Pharsaliam coeunt, Pharsalia tecta frequentant.* The metrical anomaly does not seem to serve any purpose in the context the way it does in the *Achilleid*, so it may be wrong to attribute it to Catullus.[111] It is always possible that a reader like Statius, when confronted with a corrupt MS, might have justified the error in the light of Catullus' metrical practice elsewhere, just as some modern editors have done. The Catullan tradition was very probably unreliable even in Statius' day. Aulus Gellius already complains about the circulation of corrupt manuscripts of Catullus: *libros scilicet de corruptis exemplaribus factos* (6.20.6).

Barchiesi (1996: 48) has suggested that Chiron's warning, *nunc illum non Ossa capit, non Pelion ingens*, might bring to mind Pelion piled upon Ossa, the Gigantomachy, and thus the first line of the poem with its reminder that Achilles was nearly a threat to Jupiter's hegemony. We saw that Statius based his presentation of Thessalian geography on Lucan, who described the area as the incubator of monstrosities. Lucan's reputation for accuracy in matters of astronomy and geography has been notoriously poor since Scaliger, because it appears to be inconsistent in some of its details.[112] Masters (1992) has shown that some of these 'errors' are in fact closely related to the poet's themes. For example, when Lucan 'confuses' the positions of Pelion and Ossa, on Masters'

[111] In an earlier version of this argument (1997), I stressed the evidence supporting the possibility that Catullus had written *Pharsaliam*, wrongly tending to assume that Statius would necessarily have had access to a better copy of Catullus than we have.

[112] See the Astronomical Appendix in Housman's edition of Lucan (1950: 325–37).

view this is not a simple mistake, but rather evokes the result of the failed attempt of the Giants to pile Pelion upon Ossa. The world is turned upside down at battle of Pharsalia, and the instability of Pelion and Ossa is just one 'symptom of gigantomachic disorder' (1992: 154) out of many in the epic. Statius' perverse attribution of snow to Pharsalia rather than Pelion and Ossa might therefore be considered a related manifestation of capricious Thessalian geography.

It is worth noting in this connection that in this same poem, Statius also reproduces another of Lucan's 'mistakes' with respect to the mountains of Thessaly. On two occasions (1.168 and 238) Statius mentions a Mount Pholoe in the neighborhood of Chiron's cave; this is an error (*pace* Dilke ad 1.168), for there was no such mountain in northern Greece. Yet it is an error with a noble history, and there are good reasons to think that its presence here is not a result of Statius' ignorance. Firstly, Statius in the *Thebaid* had indicated that Pholoe was in Arcadia, not Thessaly; secondly Statius is alluding here to Lucan, who had already made precisely the same claim.[113] Statius is clearly following Lucan because, in addition to Centaurs, he puts the lair of a lioness there (*Pholoes sub rupe leaenam*, 1.168), just as Lucan had done: lions are attracted to the battlefield of Pharsalus by the smell of blood (*Pholoen liquere leones*, 7.827).

The confusion here reaches far back in time. When the quintessentially Doric hero, Heracles, was brought into conjunction with Pholus the Centaur and a set of essentially Thessalian creatures in the Centauromachy, the geographical inconcinnity had to be resolved either by bringing Heracles to Thessaly, or by putting the Centaurs in the Peloponnese. Both solutions are suggested in Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, where Heracles' Centauromachy is set in Thessaly (364–74), but there are also Centaurs said to be living on Mount Pholoe in Arcadia (182). So Euripides hints, but no more, that the Centaurs retreated to Arcadia after their rout, where the name of Mount Pholoe would correspond with the residence of Pholus.[114] Conversely, Lucan and Statius would rather move the mountain to Thessaly than move the Centaurs to Arcadia. Masters (1992: 177) explains the move thus: 'A small distortion, bringing Pholoe out of Arcadia, will bring with it the story of Hercules, Pholus and the raging of Centaurs who were already Thessalian in origin'. Lucan's apparent motivation for so doing was to add yet another count to the reckoning of Thessaly's wickedness; Statius' rea-

[113] Cf. Lucan 3.198, 6.386–98, 7.449, 827. Statius in the *Thebaid* never says in so many words where Mount Pholoe is, but Adrastus selecting warriors in the *Thebaid* (10.228) is compared to a horse-breeder on Mount Pholoe deciding which horse is suited to which purpose, including the Olympic games. The mention here of Elis (*Eleas ... palmas*, 10.234) would seem to point to the Peloponnese rather than Thessaly.

[114] See Bond (1988) ad Eur. *HF* 364–74.

sons for putting Pholoe in Thessaly in the *Achilleid* are less clear. It may be simply a nod to Lucan, or it may be meant to remind us of Heracles, and that most encounters between humans and Centaurs, even civilized and hospitable ones like Pholus and Chiron, end badly. The next section continues this line of enquiry into anomalies of geographical fact in the *Achilleid* and what they can tell us about Statius' use of his models. In this case, as with Pholoe, Statius seems to have known perfectly well where certain places were located when he wrote the *Thebaid*, and then strangely to have forgotten them when writing the *Achilleid*.

2.2.3 Epic Geography

Beside Pelion and Ossa, another classic example of unstable geography in ancient poetry is the wandering island of Delos. We will look now at the nature of several islands described by Statius which appear to share with it a propensity to wander about the Aegean. These islands have been cited in the past as examples of Statius' carelessness or lack of interest in geography except as a source of pretty-sounding names to ornament his verse.[115] The main problem is that Statius appears to have thought mistakenly that Scyros was one of the Cycladic islands.[116] Calchas visualizes Thetis seeking out Scyros among the Cyclades:

> ... video per Cycladas altas
> attonitam et turpi quaerentem litora furto.
> occidimus: placuit Lycomedis conscia tellus. (1.530–2)

When the poet describes the itinerary of Ulysses and Diomedes from Aulis to Scyros in search of Achilles, they seem to pass by islands of the Aegean in no rational order:

> Iamque per Aegaeos ibat Laertia flexus
> puppis et innumerae mutabant Cyclades auras:[a]
> iam Paros Olearosque latent; iam raditur alta
> Lemnos et a tergo decrescit Bacchica Naxos,
> ante oculos crescente Samo; iam Delos opacat
> aequor: ibi e celsa libant carchesia puppi
> responsique fidem et uerum Calchanta precantur. (1.675-81)

[a] oras *Dilke*

[115] E.g. Köstlin (1875–6: 533), Klotz (1902a: 300), and Jannaccone (ad 1.677).
[116] Pliny explicitly excludes Scyros from both the Cyclades and the Sporades (*NH* 4.69), but see also *NH* 4.72.

Kürschner (1907: 62f) discerned that there is a more or less rational structure to the list, which is more literary than geographical. It is an inversion of the order of islands in Aeneas' journey through the Cyclades from Delos to Crete:

> Linquimus Ortygiae portus pelagoque uolamus
> bacchatamque iugis Naxon uiridemque Donusam,
> Olearon niueamque Paron sparsasque per aequor
> Cycladas, et crebris legimus freta concita terris. (*Aen.* 3.124-27)

Vergil begins with Delos, proceeds to Naxos and Donusa, and concludes with Olearos (Antiparos) and Paros, whereas Statius begins with Paros and Olearos, proceeds to Lemnos, Naxos and Samos, and concludes with Delos. Leaving to one side for the moment the question of what Lemnos and Samos are doing here, Statius' itinerary seems a completely arbitrary inversion of Vergil's without regard to the needs of his own poem.[117] Vergil's list by contrast makes a certain amount of geographical sense, in that all of the islands he names are in the Cyclades and are south of Delos, and thus potentially on the way to Crete; but there is a slight 'error' in Vergil's text, too. The wind that blows Aeneas and his companions southward is said to be the *Auster* (3.70), which properly speaking blows from the South, not towards it. This was recognized as an hermeneutic problem in antiquity; Servius' note reads: *auster autem quiuis uentus.*[118] It is possible that Statius carefully reversed the order of the islands in accordance with Vergil's text, as if to note that the prevailing wind blew in the opposite direction from Aeneas' voyage. As for making geographical sense of the voyage in Statius' text, the poet explicitly warns against it. The text printed above rejects the conjecture of Dilke, who argued that the sense of *muto* is strained; but the metaphor he introduces with *mutabant ... oras* strains the sense of *muto* even more ('the countless Cyclades were changing one prospect of their shores for another'); other proposals involve radical surgery. The MS reading of *innumerae mutabant Cyclades auras* (1.676) gives good sense, however, and should be retained: 'the countless Cyclades were shifting the breezes'.[119] That is, this passage explicitly points out how fickle the winds in the central Aegean

[117] Klotz (1902a: 300): '... qua re factum est ut quae apud priorem [poetam] recte atque ordine procedunt, in Statio mera nomina sint: nulla enim situs regionisque ratio habita est'.
[118] Servius *auctus* then gets muddled by the same difficulty, repeating Vergil's mistake with respect to the North wind: *nam ad Thraciam aquilone nauigatur.* Somewhat later, Servius *auctus* gets it right: *Africa venientibus auster secundus est, aquilo adversus* (ad *Aen.* 5.2).
[119] As Terzaghi (1956: 16) puts it, 'col navigare attraverso alle Cicladi il vento si cambiava spessissimo, secondo la posizione di ognuna delle tante isole, vicino a cui la nave passava'. Rightly, the MS reading is also printed by Marastoni and Rosati.

are and thus, as it were, excuses in advance 'gli assurdi zig-zag, che Stazio fa fare a questi naviganti'.[120]

The larger issue depends upon two related questions: what are Ulysses and Diomedes doing in this neighborhood, and why are Lemnos and Samos mentioned together with the Cyclades? The reason the Greek heroes have come to the Cyclades is that Statius insists, as we have seen, that Scyros was there. Even more improbably, Statius now adds two more islands to the list: Lemnos and Samos. No wonder, then, that Statius calls the Cyclades *innumerae*, adding so freely as he does to their number. Is this due to ignorance? We cannot rule out the possibility; there is a Cycladic island called Σύρος, which might have been confused with Σκύρος. Servius seems to have had this problem, as in one instance he speaks correctly of *Syrum, unam de Cycladibus* (ad *Aen.* 3.76), and in another he says incorrectly, *Scyro insula, una de Cycladibus* (ad *Aen.* 2.477). This last example actually shows the influence of Statius on Servius, and so does not represent an independent tradition; Servius calls Scyros one of the Cyclades merely because the *Achilleid* had done so.[121] This possibility, however, leaves the question unanswered of why Statius put the other islands in the Cyclades too. It may be that the poet was completely oblivious to geographical correctness, but there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that this was not so. The first factor is that Statius was perfectly aware of the correct location of Lemnos in the *Thebaid.* Secondly, in the *Achilleid* Scyros is assimilated to the model of Delos, the wandering island, and this is an important factor in Thetis' choice of hiding-place for her son.

Examining these two extenuating factors in turn, the first task is to compare Statius' discussion of Lemnos in the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid.* That island has a large place in Book 5 of the *Thebaid,* and Hypsipyle thus describes her homeland to the Argives, comparing it favorably to Samos and Delos:

> ... Aegaeo premitur circumflua Nereo
> Lemnos, ubi ignifera fessus respirat ab Aetna
> Mulciber; ingenti tellurem proximus umbra
> uestit Athos nemorumque obscurat imagine pontum;
> Thraces arant contra, Thracum fatalia nobis
> litora, et inde nefas. florebat diues alumnis

[120] Jannaccone (ad 1.677).

[121] The full context (ad 2.477) is: 'SCYRIA PUBES a Scyro insula, una de Cycladibus, in qua Lycomedes fuit, pater Deidamiae: *quam Achilles commendatus ibi a matre Thetide vitiat, unde Pyrrhus natus est. quamvis alii volente Lycomede Deidamiam Achilli datam in matrimonium dicunt*'. The *Achilleid* is certainly the source of the version mentioned by Servius *auctus* in which Achilles is sent to Scyros by Thetis, as opposed to the story told by *alii.*

terra, nec illa Samo fama Deloue sonanti
peior et innumeris quas spumifer adsilit Aegon. (*Theb.* 5.49-56)

Statius alludes to the volcanic nature of the island and its consequent association with Vulcan. He emphasizes its proximity to Thrace: *Thraces arant contra*; this certainly proves that he knew it to be in the northern Aegean.[122] The statement that Mount Athos casts its shadow on Lemnos derives from Apollonius, and it accurately reflects the fact that Athos is the closest point (*proximus*, 51) of the Greek mainland to Lemnos, which lies roughly midway between it and Asia Minor. Apollonius writes:

ἦρι δὲ νισσομένοισιν Ἄθω ἀνέτειλε κολώνη
Θρηικίη, ἣ τόσσον ἀπόπροθι Λῆμνον ἐοῦσαν
ὅσσον ἐς ἔνδιόν κεν ἐύστολος ὁλκὰς ἀνύσσαι,
ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ σκιάει καὶ ἐσάχρι Μυρίνης. (*Argon.* 1.601–4)

Myrine is a town on the west coast of Lemnos, and the notion that the shadow of Athos reached that far apparently derives from a fragmentary text of Sophocles.[123] There is also the passage in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* where Clytemnestra describes in some detail the route of her chain of signal-beacons; Lemnos is the mid-Aegean link between Asia Minor and Mount Athos.[124] The chorus does not quite believe her first explanation, and asks for confirmation.[125] It seems, therefore, that there was a debate of considerable antiquity over the nearness of Mount Athos and Lemnos; that Statius alludes to this complex tradition makes it unlikely that he would simply forget some years later in the *Achilleid* that Lemnos is in the northern Aegean, off the coast of Thrace and Chalcidice. Lemnos has migrated from its erstwhile position, it seems, into the central Aegean, where it becomes relevant to the voyage of Ulysses and Diomedes through the Cyclades. Samos is out of place too. It is much closer to the central Aegean than Lemnos, but it is still unlikely that the sailors should see it before their eyes (*ante oculos crescente*, 679) in the Cyclades.[126] So there are three islands out of

[122] Compare Vergil's description of Thrace, Aeneas' first stop after Troy: *terra procul uastis colitur Mauortia campis* / (*Thraces arant*) ... (*Aen.* 3.13–4).
[123] Sophocles F 776 Pearson; on the matter of the shadow, see Pearson's exhaustive note. Cf. also Plin. *NH* 4.73.
[124] See the footnote to Fraenkel's note on *Agam.* 285.
[125] For this reading of *Agam.* 317–19, see Goldhill (1986: 9–10).
[126] In a passage from Ovid, when Icarus' misjudged course from Crete to Attica takes him into the vicinity of Samos and away from the Cyclades, he is well and truly lost: 'Iam Samos a laeua (fuerant Naxosque relictae / et Paros et Clario Delos amata deo) ...' (*Ars Am.* 2.79f). For differing interpretations of Icarus' trajectory, see Rudd (1988: 24) and Sharrock (1994: 158f and 188).

place in the Cyclades: Lemnos, Samos and Scyros, and, at least in the case of Lemnos, it can be demonstrated that Statius once knew well its correct position.

If it is allowed, for the sake of argument, that these are not errors, but rather an indication that, in the world of the mythical past that Statius is describing, the geography of the Aegean was still somewhat unstable, with islands wandering about, then it becomes possible to construct a coherent account of the position of Scyros in the *Achilleid* that is geographically 'wrong', but which makes good mythological sense. Such a world, in which the Aegean islands wandered willy-nilly may in fact be found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*. When Leto pleads with different places to offer her sanctuary, they all run away, including all of the islands (φεῦγε ... φεῦγε, κτλ.: 70–105, *passim*); but Delos, then called Asteria, moves down from Eubœa to the region of the Cyclades to meet and welcome her:[127]

> αἱ μὲν τόσσα λέγοντος ἀπέτρεχον εἰν ἁλὶ νῆσοι·
> Ἀστερίη φιλόμολπε, σὺ δ' Εὐβοίηθε κατῆεις,
> Κυκλάδας ὀψομένη περιηγέας ... (Callim. *Hymn* 4.196–8)

Later, after Delos has hosted the birth of Apollo, the other islands arrange themselves in a circle around the island, thus providing an aetiology for the name of the Cyclades:[128]

> Ἀστερίη θυόεσσα, σὲ μὲν περί τ' ἀμφί τε νῆσοι
> κύκλον ἐποιήσαντο καὶ ὡς χορὸν ἀμφεβάλοντο ...
> (Callim. *Hymn* 4.300f)

These passages almost contradict Callimachus' earlier description of Poseidon's construction of the islands, where he is said to have rooted them to the seabed, with the exception of Delos, which was free to float (34–6); but Callimachus does not say that Delos was the *only* exception, so the implication remains that other islands were free to move about. As Bing says, 'all places (islands, rivers, mountains, etc.), which by nature ought to be fixed, are on the run; only Asteria, the one who, by nature, is free to roam, comes to a halt' (1988: 120). To postulate a connection between Scyros in the *Achilleid* and the *Hymn* of Callimachus is not as arbitrary as it might seem, for both texts owe a large debt to the Homeric Hymn to Apollo.

The Homeric Hymn has sometimes been divided by scholars into two halves, a first part concerned with Delos, which has a mostly Ionic world-view, and

[127] On the mobility of Delos, see Bing (1988: 91–143) and Barchiesi (1994b).
[128] Cf. Plin. *NH* 4.65.

a Pythian part. The division must have been apparent in some form to Callimachus, as he based his Hymn to Delos on the story of Leto's search for a place to give birth to Apollo, utilizing only the first half of the Homeric Hymn.[129] In Callimachus, Leto's desperate search is fully dramatized, and the goddess entreats place after place to give her rest; in the Homeric Hymn by contrast, the narrator simply lists those places that were too afraid to receive her:

> ὅσσους Κρήτη τ' ἐντὸς ἔχει καὶ δῆμος Ἀθηνῶν
> νῆσός τ' Αἰγίνη ναυσικλειτή τ' Εὔβοια
> Αἰγαί τ' Εἰρεσίαι τε καὶ ἀγχιάλη Πεπάρηθος
> Θρῃΐκιός τ' Ἄθόως καὶ Πηλίου ἄκρα κάρηνα
> Θρῃϊκίη τε Σάμος Ἴδης τ' ὄρεα σκιόεντα
> Σκῦρος καὶ Φώκαια καὶ Αὐτοκάνης ὄρος αἰπὺ
> Ἴμβρος τ' εὐκτιμένη καὶ Λῆμνος ἀμιχθαλόεσσα
> Λέσβος τ' ἠγαθέη Μάκαρος ἕδος Αἰολίωνος
> καὶ Χίος, ἣ νήσων λιπαρωτάτη εἰν ἁλὶ κεῖται,
> παιπαλόεις τε Μίμας καὶ Κωρύκου ἄκρα κάρηνα
> καὶ Κλάρος αἰγλήεσσα καὶ Αἰσαγέης ὄρος αἰπὺ
> καὶ Σάμος ὑδρηλὴ Μυκάλης τ' αἰπεινὰ κάρηνα
> Μίλητός τε Κόως τε, πόλις Μερόπων ἀνθρώπων,
> καὶ Κνίδος αἰπεινὴ καὶ Κάρπαθος ἠνεμόεσσα
> Νάξος τ' ἠδὲ Πάρος Ῥήναιά τε πετρήεσσα,
> τόσσον ἔπ' ὠδίνουσα Ἑκηβόλον ἵκετο Λητώ,
> εἴ τίς οἱ γαιέων υἱεῖ θέλοι οἰκία θέσθαι. (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 30–46)

The list slights the Peloponnese and other parts of Greece, enumerating only places on the coast of the Aegean and its islands, where Delian Apollo would generally have had greater cult significance, a deficiency that Callimachus' hymn makes good.[130] As West (1975: 161) says, 'The catalog of places in 30–44, which ends as a record of Leto's wanderings, but begins as a survey of Apollo's worshipers, covers the Aegean and its shores, with particular emphasis on the eastern side; it does not look further west than Athens'. The list of places named is as follows: Crete, Athens, Aegina, Euboea, Aegae (uncertain location), Eiresiae (possibly an island in the Thermaic gulf, or Peiresiae), Peparethos (an island off Thessaly), Mount Athos, Mount Pelion, Samothrace, Mount Ida, Scyros, Phocaea and Autocane (both in Asia Minor opposite Lesbos), Imbros, Lemnos,

[129] Thus Depew (1998: 155, n 2); cf. Bing (1988: 91).
[130] On the differences between the catalog of the Homeric Hymn and Callimachus, see Bing (1988: 115f).

Lesbos, Chios, Mimas and Corycos (both opposite Chios), Claros and Aesagaea (both near Colophon), Samos, Mycale, Miletus, Cos, Cnidos, Carpathos, Naxos, Paros and finally Rhenaea (an island off Delos). Here is one characterization of the progression: 'The movement that gradually unfolds through the lines is a slow clockwise spiral from Crete up the western coast of the Aegean, across the Thracian seaboard, down Ionia and the eastern islands to Carpathos—that is, nearly full circle to Crete again—with a final swing inward through the Cyclades to Rhenaea, Delos' closest neighbor'.[131] Scyros appears in the Homeric Hymn, where it disturbs the geographical scheme more than any other element in the list, coming in the midst of locations in Asia Minor.

In the *Achilleid*, when Thetis walks alone on the Thessalian shore, wondering where to hide her son, her musings take a similar trajectory:

> At Thetis undisonis per noctem in rupibus astans,
> quae nato secreta velit, quibus abdere terris
> destinet, huc illuc divisa mente volutat.
> proxima, sed studiis multum Mavortia, Thrace;
> nec Macetum gens dura placet laudumque daturi
> Cecropidae stimulos; nimium opportuna carinis
> Sestos Abydenique sinus. placet ire per artas
> Cycladas; hic spretae Myconosque humilisque Seriphos
> et Lemnos non aequa viris atque hospita Delos
> gentibus. (1.198–207)

The list Thetis makes of places that might receive her son follows roughly the pattern of the Homeric Hymn: Thrace, Macedon, Athens, the Hellespont, the Cyclades, Lemnos, Delos. Both lists have a strong Ionic bias, and are restricted to the coasts and islands of the Aegean, excluding all of Greece west of Athens. Like the Homeric Hymn, Thetis' list traces a rough clockwise spiral around the coast of the Aegean, ending with the Cyclades and Delos.[132] The 'error' that put Scyros among the Cyclades appears here for the first time in the *Achilleid*, where it is connected with Thetis' assimilation to the figure of Leto, who gave birth on the wandering island of Delos.

The phrase *huc illuc diuisa mente uolutat* (200) recalls the Vergilian line *atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc diuidit illuc*, which appears twice in the *Aeneid* (4.285 and 8.20). It is an appropriate formula to invoke here, since in

[131] Miller (1986: 33f). On the organization of the catalog, cf. Baltes (1981: 25–8).
[132] Here too Lemnos appears to be among the Cyclades, although this is merely implied by its position in Thetis' list between Seriphos and Delos.

both instances Aeneas faced a kind of geographical quandary. In Book 4, Aeneas has just been visited by Mercury, who warns him not to tarry in Carthage, but to think of the future of his son. Aeneas then ponders how he may deceive Dido, or at least break the news of his departure gently. Thetis' situation is similar in that she too must devise a way of leaving Chiron under false pretenses. In Book 8, Aeneas, troubled by the stirrings of the Latin war, has difficulty sleeping until Tiberinus appears to him in a dream. The god reassures him that he has at last arrived in his promised home. These important junctures in the *Aeneid*, which are marked by the appearance of divinities to the hero, relate to Aeneas' uncertainty over his geographical destination; this is precisely Thetis' problem here. After rejecting the various options listed above, Thetis decides to hide Achilles on Scyros: *haec placet, haec timidae tellus tutissima matri* (1.211). This line may echo the similarly alliterative words of Aeneas when he reaches Delos: *huc feror: haec fessos tuto placidissima portu / accepit* (*Aen.* 3.78f); and we shall see that Thetis does in fact equate Scyros with Delos. In the subsequent lines, Statius constructs a simile comparing the goddess to a bird looking for the right place to build her nest.

> qualis vicino volucris iam sedula partu
> iamque timens, qua fronde domum suspendat inanem;
> providet hic ventos, hic anxia cogitat angues,
> hic homines: tandem dubiae placet umbra, novisque
> vix stetit in ramis et protinus arbor amatur. (1.212–16)

Thetis, as mother (*matri*), is compared to a bird close to laying her eggs (*vicino ... partu*).[133] The bird considers different trees and branches, looking for a suitable birthplace for her offspring that will be safe from her enemies, just like Leto.[134] It is striking that Thetis, whose son is already a young man, is associated with Leto and the bird as they prepare for the birth of their offspring. By implication, Thetis' attempt to hide Achilles on Scyros is an effort to give birth to Achilles all over again, to undo the damage of her unequal marriage (*thalamos ... minores*, 90) and her son's unequal birth (*impar ... genus*, 256). The imperiled Achilles, who has himself just been compared to Apollo in a simile (165f), will be trundled off to Scyros, where Thetis will attempt to have her son reborn as a daughter. The birth of Achilles happened once as tragedy and will repeat itself as farce.

[133] 'Prossima al parto': Aricò (1986: 2937); see also Mendelsohn (1990: 301f).
[134] Leto gave birth on Delos while holding on to a palm tree (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 3.117, Callim. *Hymn* 4.209f).

The connection between Thetis and the Homeric Hymn does not end here. Thetis eventually leaves Achilles behind on Scyros, and bidding farewell to the land to which she has entrusted her child, she makes a wildly erroneous prophesy of the fame and glory that will accrue to the island as a result of its service to her:

> ... te longus honos aeternaque cingent
> templa nec instabili fama superabere Delo,
> et ventis et sacra fretis interque vadosas
> Cycladas, Aegaeae frangunt ubi saxa procellae,
> Nereidum tranquilla domus iurandaque nautis
> insula ne solum Danaas admitte carinas,
> ne, precor! (1.386–93)

Thetis not only erroneously names Scyros (once again) as one of the Cyclades, she even compares its future fame to Apollo's island, and essentially promises that Scyros will be in all respects another Delos. The model for this passage is also from the Homeric Hymn to Apollo. Leto negotiates an agreement with Delos to the effect that, in return for being the birthplace of Apollo, Delos shall be famous for its temple, rich and honored among men:

> Δῆλ' εἰ γάρ κ' ἐθέλοις ἕδος ἔμμεναι υἱος ἐμοῖο
> Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος, θέσθαι τ' ἔνι πίονα νηόν·
> ἄλλος δ' οὔ τις σεῖό ποθ' ἅψεται, οὐδέ σε λήσει,
> οὐδ' εὔβων σέ γ' ἔσεσθαι ὀΐομαι οὔτ' εὔμηλον,
> οὐδὲ τρύγην οἴσεις, οὔτ' ἄρ φυτὰ μυρία φύσεις.
> αἰ δέ κ' Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκαέργου νηὸν ἔχησθα,
> ἄνθρωποί τοι πάντες ἀγινήσουσ' ἑκατόμβας
> ἐνθάδ' ἀγειρόμενοι, κνίση δέ τοι ἄσπετος αἰεὶ
> δημοῦ ἀναΐξει, βοσκήσεις θ' οἵ κέ σ' ἔχωσι
> χειρὸς ἀπ' ἀλλοτρίης, ἐπεὶ οὔ τοι πῖαρ ὑπ' οὖδας.
>
> (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 51–60).

Leto goes on from here to make a solemn promise to Delos that temples will be built and that the island will have great honor among men (79–88). Thetis makes identical promises to Scyros, but the irony here is that Scyros shall *not* keep Achilles safe, and so it shall *not* be blessed with temples and shall *never* become as famous as Delos. Statius hereby provides a comical sort of anti-aetiology for the obscurity of the island. A further aspect to Thetis' prophecy, that Scyros will

remain among the Cyclades, is equally untrue, and at this point we return to the question of Statius' idiosyncratic geography. The position of Scyros, which Thetis here guarantees will be fixed forever among the Cyclades, is explicitly contrasted with *instabili ... Delo* (1.388). Delos, which had previously floated about the seas, was rewarded for its services to Leto by becoming fixed permanently to the ocean floor. As we have seen, Statius envisions Scyros throughout the *Achilleid* as one of the Cyclades. The clear implication of this broken promise is that Scyros was eventually forced to drift from the Cyclades, where it had been located in the heroic era, and arrived in its present location only later, having been compelled to wander north as a result of its failure to carry out its part in Thetis' bargain. The ironic contrast with Delos, which ended its wanderings in the Cyclades, is complete: Scyros will be compelled to drift from the Cyclades to a place of greater obscurity as a consequence of failing to provide a safe haven for the re-birth of Achilles. The implication that Scyros was compelled to wander from the region of Delos to the coast of Eubœa, where it is today, is the symmetrical opposite to Callimachus' assertion that Asteria/Delos was summoned from Eubœa by Apollo to its present position of honor in center of the Cyclades (4.196–8, quoted above, p 88).

On the level of characterization, we shall see later (Section 4.2) that Thetis' mishandling of the mythological paradigm from the Homeric Hymn to Apollo is quite typical of her rhetorical gestures in the epic. In retrospect, the strange insistence by Statius that Scyros was one of the Cycladic islands proves to be more than a simple error on the part of the poet. Bing (1988: 94–6) argues that the birth of Apollo on Delos and his eventual supremacy over Ares marks in a programmatic way the triumph of Callimachean poetics, and specifically the rejection of martial epic.[135] Be that as it may, Thetis' attempt to associate Scyros with Delos is an effort literally to avert the course of Homeric epic. Its failure and the consequent failure of Scyros to establish a firm and lasting place among the Cyclades represent the ultimate triumph of the Homeric paradigm in Achilles' life, and the futility of Thetis' intervention: it is the destiny of Scyros itself and not Achilles' destiny that is diverted in the end.

On this argument, the subsequent occasions in the *Achilleid* which imply that Scyros and even Lemnos and Samos are among the Cyclades look back to Thetis' prophecy and suggest that in the mythical period of which Statius is writing geographical position and relative prestige were still under negotiation: a process in which Scyros came out a loser. There are a number of reasons Statius

[135] Against this view, see Depew (1998: 173f).

might possibly have wished to suggest that the location of Scyros was ambiguous. There was the confusion mentioned earlier between Scyros and Syros: Homer (*Od.* 15.403) speaks of an island near Ortygia (i.e. Delos), called Συπίη, which some identified as Scyros, others as the Cycladic Syros.[136] Another possible source of confusion could have been the text of Catullus 64. It was suggested above that Statius may have seen an already corrupt version of the following passage:

> deseritur Cieros; linquunt Pthiotica Tempe
> Crannonisque domos ac moenia Larisaea;
> Pharsalum coeunt, Pharsalia tecta frequentant. (Cat. 64.35–7)

Pharsalum is not the only conjectural correction among the toponyms here: neither *Crannonisque* nor *Cieros* appear in the MS tradition. In the case of *Cieros*, it was Meineke that suggested this obscure Thessalian place-name instead of what the MSS give as Siros or Scyros. Of the corrupt alternatives, Scyros at least has a plausible connection with the story of Achilles, even if the context really does require Thessalian homes for the wedding-guests.[137] If Statius knew this passage in something like the form it has come down to us, then he may have thought that Catullus associated Scyros with Thessaly well to the north, and took this as license to move it about himself as he saw fit. In changing the location of Scyros, it may be that Statius was simply following the needs of his poem, or that he was playing on a genuinely existing confusion in the minds of his contemporaries. In any case, the conclusion has sometimes been drawn too quickly that Statius is a careless writer who is more interested in pretty-sounding names than in using them to communicate meaningfully. Inconsistencies such as the wandering islands we have just examined can be valuable opportunities for interpretation to test itself against a clear hermeneutic difficulty in the text. That Statius was simply careless is one possible conclusion to an investigation of apparent anomalies in his work; but if it is taken as a working hypothesis, we are unlikely to discover anything new about it.

2.2.4 Achilles' Heel

The following discussion will necessarily have a different character from the foregoing, since it describes Statius' debt to a source that has disappeared and is no longer identifiable. One of the things that the *Achilleid* is known for, if it

[136] Schol. (ad loc) with Heubeck-Hoekstra.
[137] Ellis (1889: ad loc) reservedly defends the reading *Scyros*.

is known at all, is that the story of Achilles' vulnerable heel appears in it for the first time in ancient literature and art. Even though Statius' references to the myth are casual and brief, it would be strange to omit entirely to discuss such a famous detail, and so I shall do so here. Three times Statius alludes to Thetis' attempt to make her son immortal by dipping him in the Styx. In the first instance, Thetis is falsely reporting a dream to Chiron in which she says that she has been reliving the experience of taking Achilles to the Styx and submerging him in it:

> ... saepe ipsa—nefas!—sub inania natum
> Tartara et ad Stygios iterum fero mergere fontes. (1.122f)

The next reference comes as Thetis is addressing Achilles, and she supplies some further details; we learn that the purpose of the trip was somehow to protect her son and that she failed to complete the task:

> ... si progenitum Stygos amne severo
> armavi—totumque utinam! ... (1.269f)

The incident is mentioned once more, with the more precise stipulation that Thetis brought Achilles to the Styx to make his limbs impervious to weapons. Statius reports it as part of the scuttlebutt among the Greek fleet at Aulis, as though it were general knowledge among them:

> ... quemve alium Stygios tulerit secreta per amnes
> Nereis et pulchros ferro praestruxerit artus? (1.480f)

The first thing to be said is that these must be allusions to a more complete telling of the myth elsewhere; Statius' remarks are not fully comprehensible on their own; he does not even mention Achilles' leg or ankle as the vulnerable point.[138] Even if Statius had planned to tell the story in greater detail later in the poem, these three elliptical references presuppose the ability of his audience to appreciate the story at some level. All modern accounts are unanimous in asserting that Statius was not the source for this myth, but that he merely popularized an incident he had found elsewhere; and this is certainly true. It is worth noting, however, that three separate allusions in the space of some

[138] I use the terms heel, ankle, and lower leg interchangeably here, because in the version Statius adheres to the important thing is that Achilles is vulnerable in the place covered by Thetis' hand, and there is no necessary connection of invulnerability with a special part of his body. Representations of Achilles' death tend to place an arrow in the ankle (*talus*) or even the lower leg. Gantz (1993: 628) has suggested that we speak of Achilles' 'heel' because that is what the Romance reflexes of *talus* mean; see also Burgess (1995: 225f).

four hundred lines constitute a very insistent series of references, which gives cumulatively more and more specific hints as to the nature of Thetis' trip to the Styx. We might therefore guess that the source to which Statius is alluding was obscure enough that not all of his audience might have been expected to appreciate and understand it at first encounter.

If Statius' source was so obscure that he needed to coax his audience towards an appreciation of it, it is perhaps not surprising that no earlier reference to Achilles' ankle or to his partial invulnerability has survived. Kossatz-Diessman (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus' no. 12) reported that there was a Hellenistic gold ring in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art which showed Thetis dipping Achilles in the Styx, but the ring has since been appraised by the museum as inauthentic.[139] This leaves Statius as our earliest witness to the tradition, and even then we must fill in the rest of the story, including the detail of Achilles' ankle, from late sources like Servius and Lactantius.[140] Given these humble beginnings, it is remarkable how familiar the notion of Achilles' vulnerable heel has become. The reason for the wide diffusion of the story, apart from the popularity of the *Achilleid* itself in late antiquity and the middle ages, was well analyzed by Young (1979).[141] He pointed out that the ultimately ineffectual dipping of Achilles into the river of death to preserve his life in this world was the perfect foil in Christian polemic for baptism, which is the successful dipping of a Christian into the river of life to preserve him in the next world. The implication that Achilles' dipping in the Styx was a sort of flawed pagan baptism was surely an extremely influential factor in the propagation of the tale among Christians; Young quotes a passage from Tertullian's *de anima* that engages in this sort of polemic against the heretical baptisms of a Samaritan gnostic named Menander Magus:

> legimus quidem pleraque aquarum genera miranda.... plane Stygias paludes poeta tradidit mortem diluentes, sed et Thetis filium planxit. quamquam si et Menander in Stygem mergit, moriendum erit nihilominus, ut ad Stygem venias, apud inferos enim dicitur.
>
> (*de anima* 50.3)

[139] Personal communication; also reported by Burgess (1995: 222, n 19).

[140] Serv. ad *Aen.* 6.57, Lactantius ad *Ach.* 1.480.

[141] I am obliged to Jonathan Burgess for sending me a copy of this hard-to-find article, and for discussing Achilles' heel with me. I have naturally stressed those points relevant to my argument where I disagree with Burgess, so I should note here that I agree with almost all of the conclusions reached in his comprehensive article on the topic (1995); in particular, his work has made it unnecessary to discuss here at any length the archaic Greek evidence for the manner of Achilles' death.

Unfortunately, Young also took this passage as evidence that the myth of Achilles' dip in the Styx originated in Christian, and specifically gnostic, ideas about baptism. He claimed that the *poeta* to whom Tertullian refers was a putative 'near-Statius', who invented our version of the story along Christian lines, and who was the source for both Statius and Tertullian. Burgess (1995: 222f) has refuted this theory convincingly; we should add the objection that Statius would hardly have hinted so heavily to his audience that they should be familiar with a idea taken recently from some gnostic text. It is worth pointing out an even more fundamental error Young made, an error which led him to confuse the cause and the result of the connection of Statius' Achilles with Christian baptism. The identity of Tertullian's *poeta*, which Young (1979: 16) held to be 'obscure' is in fact quite clear: it is Statius. Young considers this possibility, only to reject it, reiterating without evidence that Tertullian 'shows no certain knowledge of Statius'; this is false. It will be demonstrated below (see Section 6.2) that Tertullian in the *de pallio* was intimately familiar with Statius' *Achilleid*, and his knowledge of its plot is so complete that he could hardly have gained it indirectly or from a *florilegium*, as Young suggests.[142] The similarity in diction between Tertullian's *in Stygem mergit* and Statius' *ad Stygios iterum fero mergere fontes*, admits the possibility of borrowing, but they may both simply be using the natural Latin expression. The fact that Tertullian refers to Achilles' death in terms of Thetis' mourning for him (*sed et Thetis filium planxit*) is probably indebted to Statius' Thetis-centered view of Achilles' mortality; Statius' Thetis describes to Neptune proleptically her mourning at Achilles' tomb.[143] Burgess notes that Young mentions, but dismisses, a more promising approach: to relate Achilles' dip in the Styx to the lustrations of mystery religions. We will see later (see Section 5.2) that Statius is interested in expanding the religious ambit of epic to include mystery cult and even 'Eastern' divinities like Mithras and Osiris. Thetis' trip to the Styx is described as a harrowing ordeal she shudders to remember, and this could potentially accord much better with some of the practices of mystery cult than with a Christian baptism.

Returning to the question of Statius' source, we are left with the plausible guess of Carl Robert (1923: 67f and 1187) that some Hellenistic writer put the story of Achilles' vulnerable heel together from the various parts of the tradition

[142] Young (1979: 16 and 25, n 49). His interpretation (1979: 25, n 48) of the references to magical practices earlier in Thetis' speech is also mistaken; her *magicum sacrum* (1.135) is derived from the parallel deception of Vergil's Dido (see below, Section 4.2), and the *ignoti divi* (1.139) are the powers of the underworld so called apotropaically, not the 'unknown gods' of gnosticism.

[143] *Ach.* 1.75f; and cf. *Silv.* 2.7.97: *Peliden Thetis horruit cadentem.*

that were available in Achilles' biography, but which previously had been unrelated.[144] The notion that Thetis had tried to remedy the mortal state of the infant Achilles by special techniques is present in Apollonius, who says that she placed him in the hearth at night to burn away his mortal parts and anointed him with ambrosia:

> ἡ μὲν γὰρ βροτέας αἰεὶ περὶ σάρκας ἔδαιεν
> νύκτα διὰ μέσσην φλογμῷ πυρός, ἤματα δ' αὖτε
> ἀμβροσίῃ χρίεσκε τέρεν δέμας, ὄφρα πέλοιτο
> ἀθάνατος καί οἱ στυγερὸν χροὶ γῆρας ἀλάλκοι ... (*Argon.* 4.869–72)

This regimen was clearly invented by Apollonius, for its details were borrowed from Demeter's equally unsuccessful treatment of the infant Demophoon in the Homeric Hymn:

> ... Δημήτηρ
> χρίεσκ' ἀμβροσίῃ ὡς εἰ θεοῦ ἐκγεγαῶτα,
> ἡδὺ καταπνείουσα καὶ ἐν κόλποισιν ἔχουσα·
> νύκτας δὲ κρύπτεσκε πυρὸς μένει ἠΰτε δαλὸν
> λάθρα φίλων γονέων... (*Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 2.237–40)

Just like Demeter, Thetis is interrupted in her ministrations by the objections of a foolish mortal; the goddess reacts angrily and the baby loses its chance at immortality.[145] While Thetis is not exactly a model wife and mother in the *Argonautica* nor by extension in the *Achilleid* (see below, pp 160–162), this intervention by Apollonius was presumably an attempt to redeem the utter barbarity attributed to Thetis in other versions, where she killed many of her own infant children in the process of testing their mortality by throwing them in the fire or in a pot of water. Peleus finally catches her performing the same test on Achilles, and prevents her from killing him; she then flees her husband's home, never to return, just as she does in the *Argonautica.* Apollonius took several elements, Thetis' placing her child in the fire, her anger at Peleus, and her abrupt

[144] The argument that the Styx-episode went back to the archaic period, surviving underground in Greek 'folk memory', only to emerge once again in writers like Statius, Hyginus and Fulgentius, has largely been abandoned; given the number of surviving Greek treatments of Achilles' life, the silence of our sources on the matter of the Styx is overwhelming: thus Young (1979: 14).

[145] The desire to attribute a great antiquity to this interesting myth as a part of Achilles' biography has generated a strange reluctance among scholars to acknowledge the obvious fact of Apollonius' near-verbatim borrowing from the Homeric Hymn: Burgess (1995: 221), and more recently Mackie (1998). There is no reason to suspect that Apollonius had found already present in the story of Achilles' infancy any of the elements which he took from the Hymn; the desire to give a more plausible reason for Thetis putting her children in the fireplace would have been enough to suggest Demeter as a parallel.

departure, and by reading them under the auspices of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, he transformed them from the evidence of monstrously indifferent maternal conduct to the evidence of a relatively benign solicitude for her child's mortal state. If we allow the assumption that Statius' allusion to the story of Thetis' trip to the Styx most likely came from some lost Hellenistic poem, then it seems likely that such a text was produced in response to Apollonius. For the *Argonautica* corresponds to a recuperation of the tale, alluded to by Lycophron, that Thetis consumed her mortal children in the fire one by one, while the hypothetical Styx-text will have corresponded to the other variant, attributed to the poet of the *Aegimius*, which claimed that Thetis tested the mortality of her children by throwing them in a pot of water.[146] Apollonius transforms death by fire into thwarted salvation by fire, while the Styx-poet transformed death by water into imperfect salvation by water.[147] This hypothetical competing version will have introduced one radically new element to the myth, namely the bath in the Styx as a fortifying measure, but it will also have introduced a new level of explanatory power to the myth.[148] The story of Achilles' bath in the Styx was not very ancient, but the idea that he was killed at least in part by an arrow to the ankle was much older. The Styx-version of Thetis' intervention on behalf of her baby son, unlike Apollonius' version, was able to explain not only the bare fact of Achilles' mortality, but also its specific modality.

[146] Death by fire: Lycophron 178f with Tzetzes ad loc; by water: Hesiod (*Aegimius*) F 300 Merkelbach-West (*OCT*); the source for this latter *Aegimius*-testimonium (Schol. ad Ap. Rhod. 4.816) mentions the existence of both fire- and water-versions; there are other scholia of lesser relevance that mention Thetis' destruction of her children: see Burgess (1995: 220, n 11).

[147] Burgess (1995: 220, n 10) says that it can be 'assumed' that boiling water is meant, but one can do so only on the basis of an equally arbitrary assumption that all of the pre-Statian accounts of Achilles' infancy are essentially similar and that differences among them should be effaced as far as possible. Robert (1923: 67f) by contrast suggested that Thetis, as a sea-goddess, was checking to see if her offspring could swim and survive in her native element. Regardless of the temperature of the water, the same contrast and symmetry obtains between harmful/beneficent fire on the one hand and harmful/beneficent water on the other. The fact that Thetis dips Achilles in the waters of the Styx, which were ordinarily harmful (cf. Hes. *Theog.* 775–806), merely extends the notion of an ordinarily harmful element being put to ameliorative use: Burgess (1995: 224, n 27).

[148] I acknowledge that the symmetry between these two literary versions is not perfect: one speaks of making the infant immortal, the other of making him invulnerable. There is a difference between incomplete invulnerability and unachieved immortality, and Young was wrong largely to have ignored it; but the decision to use that distinction as his primary interpretive matrix greatly hampered Burgess' investigation of this particular set of data (1995: 219–22). The taxonomy that results from this approach is not very useful, as it merely separates the Styx-version on the one hand from everything else on the other. The contrast between a malevolent and a benevolent Thetis or between fire and water is surely more fundamental than the distinction between imperfect invulnerability and unachieved immortality, which is essentially academic, as the upshot of both versions is the same: Achilles remains mortal.

Homer does not mention Achilles' heel or ankle, and it is uncertain how the *Aethiopis* handled the episode of his death.[149] Much of the evidence connecting Achilles' death with an arrow to that part of his body comes from vase painting, and it is unnecessary to explore the complexities of the evidence here, for it has been analyzed thoroughly and convincingly by Burgess (1995: 224–37). It is sufficient to note that the existence of versions of Achilles' death which attribute it to an arrow below the knee is more than amply accounted for without the Styx-episode. One explanation that has been offered is the invulnerability not of Achilles, but of his divinely-made armor, which required that he be killed by finding a chink in it, just as Achilles does when he kills Hector, who is wearing his old panoply (*Il.* 22.320–25).[150] Here are some of Burgess' conclusions:

> Paris with the help of Apollo, who probably merely guided his arrows, killed Achilles by first immobilizing him with a lower leg wound. The lower wound would have taken away from Achilles his greatest advantage, his swiftness. Such a wound may have been one of the only wounds possible if Achilles was wearing invulnerable armor. ... if Achilles wore invulnerable armor in the early tradition, then the motif of invulnerability ... [was] transferred from the armor to Achilles himself. So the concept of Achilles' imperfect invulnerability may not have existed in early Greek myth, but the seeds of the story did.[151]

The important thing to note is that the image of a mortal arrow-wound in Achilles' lower leg could have persisted in art, particularly in the visual arts, long past the point where the original reasons for it, such as those reconstructed by Burgess, had been forgotten. It was apparently a detail that remained current enough that the inventor of the Styx-episode could create a new aetiology for it.

Thetis' dipping of Achilles in the Styx has a remarkable structural similarity to Apollonius' treatment of her intervention, since both attribute Thetis' once-destructive immersion of her child in a harmful element (fire/water) to altruistic motives. Just as Apollonius modified the brutal picture of Thetis' indifference to her children by adding elements taken from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the inventor of the Styx-episode achieved the same result by adding the notion that, as a result of his mother's intervention, Achilles was invulnerable save for his

[149] Apollodorus (*Epit.* 5.4) records that Achilles died as a result of a wound to the ankle, and this information may go back to a cyclic source.

[150] When Hector kills Patroclus in Achilles' armor, it is first removed by Apollo (*Il.* 16.788–96). The theory of Achilles' magical armor goes back to Paton (1912); see Burgess (1995: 231, n 54) for subsequent bibliography.

[151] Burgess (1995: 237). To the list of vases depicting Achilles' death that Burgess discusses, add the cup which has been argued by Brijder (1991: 430f) to show it also.

heel. How appropriate, then, that the inventor of the Styx-version seems to have borrowed from Apollonius the precedent for this partial invulnerability motif too. The bronze robot Talos was unbreakable except for a vulnerable vein on his ankle, which in the *Argonautica* Medea caused him to cut.[152] The question of which version came first cannot be decided, but it is arguable that the Styx-episode was a response to, and even an 'improvement' on the *Argonautica*, in that it adds a specific explanation for the arrow in Achilles' death-scene. So there is some circumstantial evidence to support Robert's guess that the Styx-episode had its origin in the Hellenistic period or at least at some time later than Apollonius.[153] It is not necessary to go so far as Weitzmann (1959: 54–9), who postulated the existence of an Hellenistic *Achilleid*.[154] The dipping of Achilles in the Styx brings together Achilles' birth and death in a way that is satisfying for any student of Homer, and, as in the *Argonautica*, such an innovation could have been introduced in all sorts of possible poems, not solely in an *Achilleid*.

There is one final piece of circumstantial evidence that may reflect another response to our hypothetical model, which would therefore constitute a parallel to Statius. Ptolemaios Chennos lived in Egypt in the Roman period, perhaps as late as the second century, and his extremely idiosyncratic versions of classical myths survive only as they are reported by Photius. Photius says that, according to Chennos, Thetis burned six of her sons in the fire, and Peleus caught her trying the same on Achilles. So far, so good; this is exactly what we had in Lycophron.[155] Then the strangeness begins; Peleus snatches the infant Achilles away from her, but not before the baby's heel is burnt. So he takes his son to Chiron, who unearths the corpse of an otherwise unknown giant named Damysus, the fastest of all his kind, removes his heel and with his medical expertise performs a transplant on the infant. Unfortunately, the transplanted heel falls off as

[152] *Argon.* 4.1645–82; see Young (1975: 13), who points out that according to one version recorded by Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.9.26), Talos was killed with an arrow to his heel.

[153] Accepted also by Burgess (1995: 222), who has his own theory, however, connecting the origins of the Styx-episode with another Hellenistic innovation: the version of Achilles' death where he was killed, unarmed, in an ambush at the temple of Thymbraean Apollo.

[154] '... chiefly on the evidence of the pictorial tradition in Greek monuments, we would surmise that there must have existed also a Greek *Achilleid* after which Statius modeled his' (54). Apart from the presumption of Statius' utter lack of originality, another problem with this argument is that the 'Greek monuments' Weitzmann adduces are mostly located in Rome and post-date Statius by several centuries (e.g. the Tensa Capitolina and the Capitoline well-head); these were surely influenced by Statius' *Achilleid* itself. Weitzmann is so sure that these cycles had their origin in 'ancient book illumination' that he imagines that Statius' poem could not have inspired these works of art unless every single event depicted on them was narrated explicitly by Statius; for a fuller, but insufficiently sceptical, consideration of his thesis, see Manacorda (1971: 46–50). The post-fifth-century examples cited by Weitzmann do usefully demonstrate how the Styx-episode became assimilated to baptismal iconography, thus contributing to the continuing popularity of the story.

[155] Lyc. *Alex.* 178f; even the number, six children burnt before Achilles is saved, is the same.

Apollo chases Achilles around Troy, which causes him to trip, fall and be killed. Discussion of Chennos has been polarized between those who have treated him as a useful source who was in possession of reliable if obscure scholarly information on myth,[156] and those who have emphasized that he was evidently a prankster of considerable wit.[157] These two opinions are not mutually exclusive, however, and in our case Chennos combines genuine but obscure information with his own outrageous invention.[158] Another example may help to clarify Chennos' method. We know that the name Achilles took as a girl was a matter that had been discussed somewhere, for Suetonius (*Tib.* 70.3) tells us that the emperor Tiberius used to quiz scholars on this question in order to test their erudition, but we do not know where.[159] Apart from the name Pyrrha (Hyg. *Fab.* 96), our only other evidence for the debate comes from Chennos, who gives a list of several names. The names themselves include reasonable candidates, like Pyrrha, along with patently absurd male names like Prometheus, which is perhaps a pun on the 'fiery' name Pyrrha. So Chennos had access to the debate over Achilles' name among the women, but rather than supplying us what we would like, viz. a list of the names that were proposed in earnest in whatever sources Tiberius and Chennos had access to, he gives us via Photius a list that combines elements of the real debate with the amusing products of his own fantasy. The case is much the same with the question of Achilles' partial invulnerability. Let us hypothesize that Chennos was aware of the same source as Statius for the story of Achilles' dip in the Styx. Chennos went back to Apollonius' point of departure, which was Thetis' serial murder of her children in the fire, and proposed a whimsical way of transforming the story as an alternative to Apollonius' solution and the Styx-episode. Chennos did not redeem Thetis' bloody-minded intentions, nor did he foist the notion of invulnerability on Achilles, but he did connect Thetis' treatment of Achilles as an infant with his heel and his eventual death, much as the Styx-episode presumably did.

There is not much we can say in conclusion here about Statius' use of his model, because that model has not survived. Indeed, the foregoing reconstruction is obviously very speculative, but it serves to demonstrate how Statius might have engaged with yet another Hellenistic source in the *Achilleid.* This chapter began with an epigraph from the medieval Irish translator of the *Achilleid.*[160]

[156] E.g. Tomberg (1968).
[157] E.g. Winkler (1990a: 144).
[158] On Chennos' reliability, see O'Hara (1996: 198–200).
[159] See below, Section 3.1.1.
[160] Watkins (1995: 375, n 1 and 513, n 6) has a few interesting comments on this version and its elaboration of the theme of the boyhood deeds of Achilles.

He was very concerned about the chronological plausibility of Statius' epic, particularly with regard to generational succession. He was anticipating objections to such chronological anomalies from his readers, who would have been familiar with the conventions of Irish vernacular epic as well as versions of Latin epic and the Trojan tales. The potential problem that the translator identifies and anticipates is that Neoptolemus would have been too young to go to Troy as a soldier, given that the war only lasted ten years and that he was begotten just before Achilles set out. The Irish version points out, however, that by shifting the scene to the gathering of the Greek forces at Aulis (1.397–559) and then to the voyage of Ulysses and Diomedes (1.675–88), Statius leaves open the possibility that by the time the heroes arrive and meet Achilles, Neoptolemus may have grown up considerably. The medieval translator was more astute in this regard than Mozley, the Loeb translator, who calls Neoptolemus a 'babe' (1.952) at the time of Achilles' discovery and departure, even though the Latin is entirely noncommittal about his age at this point.[161]

The insertion of stretchable time-spans into the plot of the *Achilleid* was not necessarily Statius' ultimate answer to the chronological problem, however. We have access to a piece of information that the medieval translator did not: Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* claims that the Greeks mustered at Aulis *twice*. The first expedition goes awry when it lands in Mysia and attacks Telephus' people in the mistaken belief that they are the Trojans. After this fiasco, the troops must all reassemble at Aulis once again, where Achilles eventually heals Telephus' wound.[162] So there may in fact be plenty of time in the future for Neoptolemus to grow up and for Statius to put off Achilles' arrival at Troy, if that is how the poet wished to shape his plot. Judging from the length of time it takes the Seven to get to Thebes in the *Thebaid*, until even Jupiter grows impatient with the delays (*Theb.* 7.14–20), such a strategy of narrative deferral might have been congenial to Statius in the *Achilleid* too, which embodies such a strong tension between the carefree present and the looming tragedy of the *Iliad*. There is much that could yet happen between the end of Statius' epic at we have it and the beginning of Homer's. The medieval Irish audience of the *Achilleid* was expected to be alert to apparent inconcinnities in epic narrative. By paying attention to a few such inconsistencies, this chapter has tried to shed light on

[161] *natum*, 1.908; *hunc*, 1.952; *commissum*, 2.24. When Achilles asks for forgiveness by laying his son at Lycomedes' feet, the most natural assumption would be that he is still a baby; but this is never specified.

[162] Breslove (1943–4) has suggested that the problem of the relative ages of Achilles and Neoptolemus was the reason the Telephus episode and the double mustering at Aulis was inserted into the cycle.

the general nature of Statius' project, and in particular on his manipulation of his sources. The results of our investigation have confirmed the particular importance of Hellenistic models in the *Achilleid*. The next chapter starts our synthetic examination of the plot of the *Achilleid*, and we will begin with a fundamental matter, a mythological conundrum that we glanced at in passing just above: Achilles' name among men and among women.

Chapter Three

SEMIVIR, SEMIFER, SEMIDEUS

> What Song the *Syrens* sang, or what name *Achilles* assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzling Questions are not beyond all conjecture.
>
> Thomas Browne, *Hydriotaphia, or Urne-Buriall**

3.1 Naming Achilles

In a well-known passage in his biography of Tiberius, Suetonius relates that the emperor had a taste for mythological minutiae, and that he used to quiz scholars on points of difficulty:

> Maxime tamen curavit notitiam historiae fabularis usque ad ineptias atque derisum; nam et grammaticos, quod genus hominum praecipue, ut diximus, appetebat, euis modi fere quaestionibus experiebatur: quae mater Hecubae, quod Achilli nomen inter virgines fuisset, quod Sirenes cantare sint solitae. (*Tib.* 70.3)

From this we know that the name Achilles took among the women had already become, if not yet a by-word for obscurity, at least a matter of investigation before Statius, and so any poet depicting and naming Achilles on Scyros would have to engage in some way with the controversy. It is interesting to observe how Statius proceeds. When Thetis introduces her 'daughter' to Lycomedes, she circumvents the problem entirely and simply calls her Achilles' twin sister:

> 'Hanc tibi' ait 'nostri germanam, rector, Achillis—
> nonne vides ut torva genas aequandaque fratri?—
> tradimus.' (1.350–2)

* Browne (1658: 71).

The parenthetical question of line 351, 'doesn't she look like her brother?' depends for its humorous effect on knowledge shared exclusively between the audience and Thetis, and it probably owes something to similar identity-switching situations in comedy. The point, however, of this gratuitous question is to cover up an awkward gap in Thetis' fumbled introduction. The interruption very abruptly separates *tradimus* from the rest of its sentence, and so calls attention to itself syntactically as an change in Thetis' train of thought. The awkwardness of expression and sudden change of direction reflect the speaker's need quickly to find a substitute for something she has belatedly realized she cannot say: the name of her new addition to Lycomedes' household. Prior to this scene, Thetis successfully changed Achilles' clothes, hairstyle, jewelry, posture, and comportment (1.325–42), but only as she introduces him does she realize that she has quite forgotten to change his name. So she abruptly changes the subject instead. It is easy to imagine that someone reciting this passage out loud might pause for dramatic and humorous effect at the end of lines 350 and 351, in order to illustrate Thetis' momentary embarrassment and to heighten our expectation that we will discover here what name Statius means to give the 'girl'. The poet, however, has evaded the onus of choosing a name for Achilles among the women, and has denied us a simple answer, deftly shifting responsibility for the choice onto Thetis. So when she fails to choose a name, the fault is hers rather than the poet's, and the obscurity of the answer to Tiberius' conundrum is here given a founding charter in myth. Statius explains the uncertainty surrounding Achilles' name in terms of his story; the boy's mother simply failed to think through the details of her deception adequately, and so confusion reigned from the very beginning. The traditional ambiguity surrounding the name that Achilles was known by among the women of Scyros is given an aetiology.

Statius never betrays his silence and nowhere in the *Achilleid* does he reveal Achilles' name among the women. Thetis shortly afterwards refers to 'her' as *haec* (1.355), and the narrator has no reason to calls him anything but Achilles. On another occasion, however, when the name is focalized by the people of Scyros, the narrator employs a circumlocution (*Pelea ... virgo*, 1.884), which once again seems deliberately to avoid the issue. We do have external evidence that bears on the question. Hyginus tells us that Achilles was called Pyrrha, on account of his reddish-yellow hair.[1] The only other recorded names come to us ultimately from

[1] '[Thetis] commendavit eum [Achillem] in insulam Scyron ad Lycomedem regem, quem ille inter virgines filias habitu feminino servabat nomine mutato, nam virgines Pyrrham nominarunt, quoniam capillis flavis fuit et Graece rufum πυρρὸν dicitur'. (Hyg. *Fab.* 96). There is also a Spanish mosaic depicting the Scyros episode in which one figure is labelled as 'Pyrrha filius Tetidis' [*sic*] (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus' no. 100).

the pen of Ptolemaios Chennos, and must be at least in part the product of that strange writer's ingenuity; there is no reason to believe that he reports a genuine tradition that was potentially known to Statius.[2] The name Pyrrha seems to have established itself as the leading candidate, if not the definitive answer to Tiberius' query. It is not hard to see why. The name has a fairly credible putative origin in the color of Achilles' hair, his ξανθὴν ... χαίτην (*Il.* 23.141),[3] and it offers an aetiology for why it was that the son born to Achilles on Scyros was given the name Pyrrhus before he was renamed Neoptolemus.

It is not easy to determine whether Statius, despite his overt reticence on the subject, has made allowances for the possibility that his audience might have approached his poem with the prior opinion that Achilles' name on Scyros was indeed Pyrrha. He does tell us as an afterthought that Achilles' son was named Pyrrhus (2.24), but not why. He also mentions Achilles' hair several times (1.162, 1.328, 1.611, 1.629), but the point of this is more likely to have been that its heroic abundance helped to make Achilles such a plausible girl. There is one point where Statius refers to the color of Achilles' hair in a way that may point to a discourse about it outside the *Achilleid.* Along with a passing reference to Achilles' *flaventia tempora* (1.611), Statius describes his hair color with the phrase *fulvo ... nitet coma gratior auro* (1.162). Kürschner (1907: 39, n 5) saw that this is remarkably like Philostratus' description of Achilles' hair in the *Heroicus* (19.5): τὴν μὲν δὴ κόμην ἀμφιλαφῆ αὐτῷ φησιν εἶναι καὶ χρυσοῦ ἡδίω. The similarity of phrasing seems beyond coincidence. It is unlikely, however, that Philostratus knew and alluded directly to Statius. There are no other points of

[2] Photius records in the *Bibliotheca* (190) what he remembers of Chennos' *Kaine Historia*; this includes a number of names for Achilles among the women: Cercysera, Issa, Pyrrha, Aspetus, and Prometheus. For a parallel example of Chennos combining genuine information with his own whimsical inventions, see above, p 101. As Winkler (1990a: 144) put it, 'he was obviously familiar with a vast range of scholarship and has no compunctions about sending it up'. Several of the names are attributed by Chennos via Photius to the authority of the otherwise unknown and possibly fictitious Aristonicus of Tarentum (*FrGrH* 57.1; cf. *RE* 2.964.48–55 s.v. 'Aristonikos 16' [Cohn]). The first thing that needs to be noted about this improbable list is that the last two names are undoubtedly male. We may be afforded some dim light on what Chennos was trying to do here by the information provided by Plutarch that Achilles was worshiped at Epirus under the name Aspetus (*Pyrrh.* 1, and cf. Hesychius s.v. 'Ἄσπετος'). Chennos was probably inventing his own answers to Tiberius' question by appropriating obscure cult names for Achilles, and whatever other means he could devise. Thus Prometheus may have been a fanciful pun on the 'fiery' name Pyrrha. The motivations behind the other names on this list are probably not recoverable, but Tomberg (1968: 118–20) makes an attempt to reconstruct the possibilities of wordplay. For a review of the differing opinions of Chennos' reliability, see O'Hara (1996: 198–200). Our case is typical of Chennos in that he is one of very few ancient sources to give us the 'genuine' name Pyrrha, and yet it comes to us mixed in with other names that are nonsensical. At any rate, Chennos should probably be dated to the second sophistic (O'Hara, 1996: 198, n 36), and so does not predate Statius.

[3] As Rose points out in his footnote to Hyg. *Fab.* 96, the success of this explanation depends upon a certain flexibility regarding the distinction between the colors ξανθηόν and πυρρόν.

contact between the two authors, and the *Heroicus* has an account of Achilles' stay on Scyros that manifests no awareness of Statius' version, and is entirely at odds with the *Achilleid*.[4] If Philostratus was writing in response to Statius, he chose in Achilles' hair a decidedly strange means to signal the connection. A more likely hypothesis would suggest that both authors were imitating a common Greek exemplar. Nothing, however, is known about this putative common source for both descriptions of Achilles' hair, nor whether it might have been linked to his name as a maiden, and so the point of Statius' allusion has been lost. We cannot penetrate Statius' careful silence, and the poet leaves us to our own conjectures regarding the name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women.

3.1.1 Two Etymologies for Achilles

Having successfully recruited Achilles and having then departed from Scyros in his ship, Ulysses begins a grand peroration concerning the events that transpired there (2.32–42). Achilles is not a bit interested in this rehearsal of his own embarrassment, and cuts him off angrily (2.42); we shall see in a moment how Ulysses bends this sense of shame to his own purposes. Achilles suggests that a more congenial topic would be for Ulysses to recount the origins of the current conflict with Troy, claiming that in this way he will be able to work up a suitable sense of indignation: *ede: libet iustas hinc sumere protinus iras* (2.48).[5] Ulysses responds with a précis of events from the judgment of Paris onwards, putting the worst possible spin on the abduction of Helen. What lends his account real brilliance is that he draws his portrait of Paris in such a way that he comes dangerously close to painting Achilles with the same brush. As *exempla* of men who have pursued their purloined womenfolk, he adduces Agenor following Europa, and then Aeetes going after Medea and the Argo:

> . . . Aeetes ferroque et classe secutus
> semideos reges et ituram in sidera puppim:
> nos Phryga semivirum portus et litora circum
> Argolica incesta volitantem puppe feremus? (2.76–9)

[4] For example, according to Philostratus, Achilles was never sent to Scyros to avoid the Trojan War, but rather Peleus sent him there to attack the place in revenge for Lycomedes' murder of Theseus (*Heroicus* 46.2).

[5] This line is surely one of the funniest in the *Achilleid*. It is ironic, at the very least, that Achilles chooses to discover the reasons behind the Trojan war only after he has embarked to join it, and then he proleptically decides that the *ira* he shall derive therefrom will be *iusta*. For an entirely different view of this line, see King (1987: 129).

A womanly *semivir* who nevertheless manages to rape a woman of the household in which he is a guest: does this description better suit Paris at Sparta or Achilles at Scyros? Achilles is implicated even more strongly in the pointed rhetorical question at the end of Ulysses' speech:

> quid si nunc aliquis patriis rapturus ab oris
> Deidamian eat viduaque e sede revellat
> attonitam et magni clamantem nomen Achillis? (2.81–3)

This hypothetical rapist certainly sounds just as much like another Achilles, who raped Deidamia, and caused her to cry out in this fashion, than another Paris, especially as Ulysses implies that Helen, like Deidamia, went along of her free will (*facili ... raptu*, 2.69). Achilles responds naively, and does not see in this crude provocation the ironic reflection of his own actions; he angrily grasps his sword, ready to defend his bride's honor (2.84–5). Ulysses is pleased to see how well his manipulation of the hero has worked: *tacuit contentus Ulixes* (2.85). The key to Ulysses' speech is his picture of Paris the *semivir* who insinuates himself among the women of another man's household to rape one of his all-too-willing daughters. Statius' Ulysses knows the rhetorical uses of self-loathing; that is, he knows that unseemly behavior is all the more repugnant when it is tinged with the shame of seeing it or remembering it in oneself. He takes the shame and anger that Achilles openly manifested when they began to discuss his effeminacy at Scyros, and effectively redirects it at the figure of Paris.

Ulysses riles Achilles with the image of another man raping Deidamia as she calls out his name. This is not the first occasion in the poem on which the name of Achilles is shouted; the assembled Greek host at Aulis had clamored for the presence of the absent hero on account of his high birth, his invulnerability, and his harsh upbringing (1.476–82), and they dwelt lovingly on his name: *nomen Achillis amant* (1.474). The shouting of that crowd set in motion the events that would bring Achilles to Troy. Deidamia's hypothetical shout for help likewise calls into being Achilles' famous epic anger. As Ulysses knows, voicing the name has the power to conjure a hero. Achilles exists as a category, defined by his potential and by his name, long before he arrives at Troy. As we shall see, Statius makes explicit this relationship between Achilles' name, his upbringing, and his destiny.

There were many ancient etymologies mooted for the name of Achilles, but they fall broadly into two groups, the first of which traces its inspiration to Callimachus, the second to Euphorion; it will be argued here that Statius alludes to both. Callimachus proposed a derivation from ἄχος, 'pain, distress' that came

to be popular in several different forms in antiquity. It is not known where Callimachus propounded his theory, but its canonical formulation seems to have been that 'Achilles' came from ἄχος Ιλιεῦσιν, or 'distress to the Trojans' (F 624 Pfeiffer). Variants of this included ἄχος ἰάλλειν, or 'bringing distress', and even ἄχος λύειν, or 'relieving pain', in reference to Achilles' medical skills.[6] Against this family of etymologies, Euphorion evidently proposed a derivation whose tone may have been intended as whimsical. Fullest information is given in the *Etymologicum Magnum Auctum*:

> Ἀχιλλεύς] παρὰ τὸ ἄχος ... ἢ διὰ τὸ μὴ θιγεῖν χείλεσι χιλῆς, ὅ ἐστι τροφῆς· ὅλως γὰρ οὐ μετέσξε γάλακτος, ἀλλὰ μυελοῖς ἐλάφων ἐτράφη ὑπὸ Χείρωνος. ὅτι ὑπὸ Μυρμιδόνων ἐκλήθη, καθά φησιν Εὐφορίων·
>
> > Ἐς Φθίην χιλοῖο κατήιε πάμπαν ἄπαστος·
> > τοὔνεκα Μυρμιδόνες μιν Ἀχιλέα φημίξαντο.[7]

The latter two lines may be translated as 'Achilles returned to Phthia having abstained entirely from eating fodder, and so the Myrmidons called him Achilles'. This cryptic statement is explained by our sources as referring to Achilles' return to his father at Phthia from his fosterage with Chiron. The etymology would have no point if the similarity between the notional word ἀ-χιλός and Ἀχιλεύς did not correspond to some detail in the story of Achilles' stay with Chiron. There was in fact a tradition regarding the unusual food Achilles was given by Chiron to which Euphorion was making reference. Achilles was not raised on common sustenance, but on a strange diet, described here as the marrow of deer (μυελοῖς ἐλάφων). For the moment it is sufficient to note that the infant Achilles was nourished by Chiron with something other than milk, which, as Euphorion joked, meant that he went without the usual 'fodder' (χιλός or χιλή) for young children. The description of human nutriment as fodder points to Achilles' incongruous wet-nurse, the half-horse Chiron.

The conceit of these two lines is further elaborated in the phrase τὸ μὴ θιγεῖν χείλεσι χιλῆς. Not only was Achilles fed unusual food, he did not touch it with his

[6] The most comprehensive listing of ancient etymologies is given by Fleischer in Roscher s.v. 'Achilles,' 1.64.25–65. I was not successful in confirming in the sources listed by Fleischer nor anywhere else the ancient etymology he reports from ἄχος λαοῦ. I did, however, find Palmer (1963: 79) suggesting much the same thing (*Ἀχί-λαϝος) on the basis of Mycenaean evidence. Modern scholarship has found various derivations from ἄχος attractive; cf. LSJ and Chantraine s.v. 'Ἀχιλλεύς' (1968: vol 1, p 150). Anciently, ἄχος ἰάλλειν is found e.g. in Eustathius ad *Il.* 1.1 (14.12–13), and ἄχος λύειν in Etym. Magn. s.v. 'Ἀχιλλεύς'. For each derivation only one source has been cited here, but the scholia, lexica, and *etymologica* usually give several alternatives each.

[7] *Etymologicum Magnum* (Lasserre and Livadaras, eds.); Euphorion (F 62 v. Groningen). Similar information and phrasing is found in the other sources; cf. v. Groningen (1977) ad loc.

lips (and was thus ἀ-χεῖλος). The suggestion of v. Groningen (1977: ad loc) that this formulation also goes back to Euphorion is likely, if we consider the alliteration and the double etymology. The sense of the derivation has been obscured in the *Etymologicum*, however, by a desire to juxtapose the two words χείλεσι and χιλῆς. The problem is that ἀ-χείλη, if it means anything at all, means 'lipless', and eventually in fact the explanation reached this absurd extreme. Tzetzes or his source combined this idea with the story of Thetis testing her children's mortality by pitching them in the fireplace to come up with the notion that in the course of this treatment Achilles had had his lips burnt off.[8] The real point of Euphorion's derivation is shown more clearly by Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.13.6), who says that Chiron named the boy Achilles because his lips had not touched the breast: ὅτι τὰ χείλη μαστοῖς οὐ προσήνεγκε. There might therefore be an allusion to this etymological tradition in Apollonius; his Hera mentions to Thetis that Achilles is being raised by Chiron and that he is going without her mother's milk: τεοῦ λίπτοντα γάλακτος (4.813). Euphorion's etymological *jeu* may be reconstructed thus: Achilles was raised from his birth by Chiron, and therefore his lips (χείλη) never touched his mother's breast; instead Chiron nourished him on a regime of offal which was a far cry from the usual diet of children, or even the fodder of foals (χιλός). To use the word 'fodder' for the innards of wild animals will have been ironic; Centaurs, as emblems of brutish nature, were conceived of in myth as carnivores, and even eaters of raw meat, and this is consistent with the way Chiron raised the young Achilles; but horses are herbivores, so the raw meat diet of Centaurs is slightly paradoxical.[9]

Returning now to the *Achilleid*, after Ulysses has inflamed Achilles' *iustas ... iras* (2.48) with an account of the elopement of Paris and Helen, and Diomedes has invited Achilles to tell them about his upbringing (2.86–93), we are obliged with an account in the hero's own words that occupies the remainder of the poem (2.96–167). Achilles begins his narration thus:

> Dicor et in teneris et adhuc reptantibus annis,
> Thessalus ut rigido senior me monte recepit,
> non ullos ex more cibos hausisse nec almis
> uberibus satiasse famem, sed spissa leonum
> viscera semianimisque lupae traxisse medullas. (2.96–100)

[8] Tzetzes ad Lycoph. *Alex.* 178. Cf. the story according to Ptolemaios Chennos that Achilles' heel was burnt off (above, Section 2.2.4).

[9] On the diet of Centaurs as an illogical reflection of their embodiment of 'raw nature', see Kirk (1970: 161).

The specific details of Achilles' diet we will return to shortly (p. 118), but it should be clear that the hero uses language which unmistakably recalls the etymological tradition that goes back to Euphorion.[10] The phrase *non ullos ex more cibos* strikingly anticipates Tzetzes' formulation δίχα κοινῆς χιλῆς (ad Lycoph. *Alex.* 178), and *cibus* recalls Euphorion's χιλός in its semantic range, describing both food for men and fodder for beasts. Achilles denies having suckled at any breast (*nec almis / uberibus satiasse famem*); we saw that the etymology from χείλη depended upon the idea of Achilles not suckling. Finally, there is a description of Achilles' diet of the type that usually accompanied the ancient explanations of Euphorion's etymology.[11]

Since Statius' Achilles is at pains to describe his childhood in terms that support and encourage an etymology of his name from ἀ-χιλός or ἀ-χείλη, we might ask whether Statius plays with any of the other ancient etymologies, or whether this, put in the mouth of Achilles himself, is as it were the official answer to the question. There is one other point in the *Achilleid* where this issue may be at play, but the connection is less clear and must remain somewhat speculative. If we turn our attention back to Ulysses' abortive peroration on the events recently transpiring in Scyros that was cut off by the displeased Achilles, we find that he began by addressing Achilles as *vastator ... Troiae* (2.32), a phrase that might just recall Callimachus' ἄχος Ἰλιεῦσιν. The similarity is too vague to stand on its own, but the context is suggestive. As Scyros recedes into the distance, Ulysses begins his speech by calling the hero *magnae vastator debite Troiae.* He is interrupted by Achilles, who suggests another topic, and so he shifts to the subject of the judgment of Paris, concluding his speech by invoking Achilles' name in the words quoted above (p 109): ... *magni clamantem nomen Achillis* (2.83). Achilles then turns around and immediately begins his own speech with a reference to an alternative etymology for his own name. Given the prominent position of these phrases, the possibility might be allowed that Ulysses is alluding to Callimachus' etymology, and that Achilles' reference to Euphorion constitutes a rejoinder to it.

A controversy over the derivation of Achilles' name, if it is admitted that one is present here, would be highly appropriate to the context of Statius' poem.[12]

[10] The connection is noted in passing by Barchiesi (1996: 55).

[11] Robertson (1940) argues that there may be an allusion to this unusual diet in Pindar's *Third Nemean*, while Robbins (1993: 12) has argued that in the same place the poet plays with the etymology of the name of Chiron; so that poem may have been in part an inspiration for Euphorion.

[12] See below, Section 6.2.1, where it is argued that Tertullian read Statius in this way. Another indication that the meaning of names are in some way under general examination at the beginning of Book 2 of the *Achilleid* is Dilke's observation that the phrase *imperiosus Agenor*

We cannot know on what terms ancient scholarship might have weighed the validity of Euphorion's theory next to the Callimachean one, since our sources present them as simple alternatives, often without attribution. One important distinction between them had already been articulated by Callimachus, as attested by the following scholion:

> Ἀχιλεὺς γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶναι ἄχος τοῖς Ἰλεῦσιν ἤγουν τοῖς Τρωσὶ κατὰ φερωνυμίαν· ὑπὸ γὰρ θείας προνοίας, ὡς ἔφη Καλλίμαχος, ἐκλήθη οὕτως.[13]

Callimachus evidently foregrounded in his etymology the fact that Achilles was given a name of wondrous foresight (θείας προνοίας). On the other hand, Euphorion's derivation arises as a consequence of the infant Achilles' situation, and does not depend upon prognostication. Thus in Apollodorus' account Achilles was at first named Ligyron, but then was renamed Achilles by Chiron because his lips had not touched his mother's breast (*Bibl.* 3.13.6).

In the *Achilleid,* Ulysses has called Achilles away from Scyros to his destiny, and so he calls him *magnae vastator debite Troiae*, introjecting the word *debite* into the middle of the Callimachean etymology in order to put emphasis on the fact that, on Callimachus' reading, Achilles' name is a destiny he has yet to fulfill. Understood in this context, Achilles' own account of his childhood is a perfect riposte to Ulysses. He reminds him that, on another reading, the name of Achilles is not the script for a role he has yet to play out, but is the record of significant events that have already taken place. Achilles himself insists upon the importance of his unconventional upbringing to his identity and even to his name. By extension, he also vindicates the importance of the non-Homeric subject matter Statius brings into play in his epic, and reserves a place for the material of the *Achilleid* next to the *Iliad* as a supplementary account of his character. It is time to consider some of these non-Homeric stories about the early childhood of Achilles, especially the unusual diet he was fed by Chiron.

3.1.2 Achilles and Chiron

There are two subtly distinct versions of the presentation of Achilles to Chiron in Greek vase painting, a fact first identified and explained by Friis Johansen; scholars who have subsequently revisited the evidence have not materially challenged

at 2.72 is a *figura etymologica,* where *imperiosus* glosses ἀγήνωρ. (Although his note is correct, Dilke printed *insidiosus* for *imperiosus* in his text, a misprint subsequently corrected in the errata.)

[13] *Anecdota Graeca* (*Oxoniensia*) 4.403.27–29, ed. Cramer (1837). Eustathius (ad *Il.* 1.1, 14.17–19) has similar wording, but without the attribution to Callimachus.

his thesis.[14] The numerous representations of this scene may be divided into two groups. In the first, Peleus alone is responsible for handing his infant son over to the Centaur. In the second group Achilles is not an infant but a child, older and able to walk on his own, and Thetis is also involved in the transfer of her child, sometimes showing her grief at their parting. Friis Johansen pointed out that the first group illustrates perfectly the state of affairs that must have obtained according to the story of the birth of Achilles that is reported most fully by Apollonius. In this version, which has parallels in many folk tales, the mermaid Thetis, after spending a very short while with her mortal husband, is offended by something he does and leaves for her home in the sea, never to be seen by him again.[15] So Peleus is left with a son to raise by himself, and as a consequence decides to foster him with the Centaur.[16] This story was rejected by Homer, who says that Achilles was raised in his father's palace (*Il.* 18.57–60 = 18.438–41), where his mother continued to spend time (*Il.* 1.396, 1.414, 16.574); Thetis even packed warm clothes for him to take to Troy (*Il.* 16.220–4). It is Phoenix, not Chiron, whom Homer depicts as the boy's guardian from infancy (*Il.* 9.485–95). Yet Homer did know something of the other tradition; he allows that Chiron had taught medicine to Achilles (*Il.* 11.831f). Friis Johansen argues that the second group of vases, in which Thetis actively participates in the family group and in which Achilles is an older child when he goes to Chiron, have been heavily influenced by Homer. It is a convincing thesis, and what is important for our purposes is to take from it the possibility that these two competing traditions were available for consideration by Statius.

With the extraordinary popularity in the visual arts at Rome of scenes of Achilles educated by Chiron, the disjunction of these scenes with what is found in Homer might well have struck the reader as curious.[17] The disjunction was also already present within the epic tradition, since Apollonius' account of Thetis' utter abandonment of Peleus pointedly contradicts Homer. Valerius Flaccus (1.255–9) imitated the scene in Apollonius (1.553–8) in which Chiron

[14] Friis Johansen (1939), and subsequently Zindel (1974: 15), Kemp-Lindemann (1975: 8–17), and Kossatz-Deissman (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', p 53).

[15] On Thetis' behavior see above, Section 2.2.4.

[16] So Apollodorus states (*Bibl.* 3.13.6), and Euripides implies (*IA* 710). Mackie (1998: 329) notes that Thetis' abandonment of Peleus as recounted in *Argonautica* 4 leads directly to Chiron raising Achilles as depicted in *Argonautica* 1: 'Despite coming at opposite ends of the epic, these episodes are closely connected because the separation of the parents leads to the rearing of Achilles by Chiron. Thus, as far as the story of Achilles is concerned, the second episode precedes the first and leads directly to it'.

[17] *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos. 50–91. Most frequently these scenes show Chiron instructing Achilles in the lyre; they were evidently inspired by a much-admired sculpture group on display in the Saepta Julia (*LIMC* no. 50, and see above, Section 2.1).

takes the young Achilles down to the shore to wave goodbye to his father as he sails off in the Argo. So the upbringing of Achilles was a disputed issue that, given his subject, Statius would of necessity have to confront. Once again his solution was novel. Given the Apollonian tradition in which Peleus was left with sole responsibility for making decisions about his infant son's upbringing, and the Homeric tradition of a big, happy family at Phthia, Statius chose to invent an entirely different scenario, in which Thetis is the one responsible for organizing her baby son's upbringing by Chiron. Yet the poet chooses his language carefully so that he avoids directly contradicting the other versions of the tale.

In relating to Ulysses and Diomedes the exploits of his early childhood, Achilles makes it clear that his stay with Chiron extended back as far as he can remember, even before he could walk.[18] He disclaims knowledge of anything more and refers them to his mother for further details of his early life.[19] When Thetis reproaches herself for having entrusted her son's upbringing to the Centaur, she says to herself:

> quid enim cunabula parvo
> Pelion et torvi commisimus antra magistri?[20] (1.38–9)

The use of the first person plural (*commisimus*) has no special force in itself; it is entirely possible that Thetis means to do nothing more than to refer to herself

[18] *in teneris et adhuc reptantibus annis* (2.96).

[19] *scit cetera mater* (2.167), on which see above, p 20, n 15.

[20] There is a difficulty with the syntax here. When *committo* means 'to entrust', as the context seems to require, it naturally takes the dative of the person or thing to whom the trust is given; the syntax here is reversed. Statius provides no parallel for this construction; in fact, the verb is used in a very regular sense at 1.384–5: *tellus, ... cui pignora ... commisimus* and again at 2.36: *commisitque illis tam grandia furta latebris.* There are two ways that the sense here has been justified:

1. Jannaccone offers the possibility that the inversion is rhetorical; in her words 'quivis infans incunabilis mandaretur, at Achilli mandantur incunabula'. Statius does employ this figure, for an example cf. *Silv.* 4.3.16–7: *qui* [Domitianus] *reddit Capitolio Tonantem / et Pacem propria domo reponit*, with Coleman (1988) ad loc. Generally, though, a rhetorical purpose can be divined for the inversion; above it is a compliment to the emperor. In the present passage Thetis' distraught monologue would be an odd place for such a mannered flourish.

2. Dilke tentatively suggests that the word might mean simply 'to connect' and thus the dative and accusative are interchangeable. That gives a very feeble sense to the phrase, and the examples of this usage cited by the *TLL* s.v. 'committo' (3.1902.60–1903.32) mean 'to join' in a very physical sense, especially in describing hybrid creatures like Centaurs and such (3.1902.66–70).

Neither of these explanations are entirely satisfactory. There is, however, a parallel from Ovid's *Fasti* that comes nearer to our inverted usage: [Janus speaks] *tempora commisi nascentia rebus agendis* (1.167), which Frazer translates, 'I assigned the birthday of the year to business'. If *committo* can thus mean 'to assign, designate', we may translate here: 'Why did I designate Pelion and the cave of its stern taskmaster as the cradle for my little boy?'

alone. Yet in the earlier representations of Achilles' transfer, Peleus is the primary agent, sometimes accompanied by Thetis.[21] So we may choose to read the plural as a gesture of accommodation towards the pre-Statian story in which Peleus was centrally important. The 'we' in *commisimus*, which has at least the potential to include Peleus, marks the point where the poet carefully and discreetly flouts the tradition, for the plot of the *Achilleid* implies strongly that Thetis alone was responsible for Achilles' apprenticeship with Chiron. While speaking to Deidamia, Achilles himself, although he apparently does not know the circumstances of his fosterage, attributes it naturally to his mother: *ego ... quem caerula mater ... nivibusque inmisit alendum / Thessalicis* (1.650–2).

This centrality of Thetis in Achilles' infancy is strongly reflected in subsequent Roman art, where we can trace Statian influence in a way that recapitulates Friis Johansen's investigation of the Homeric influence on Greek vase painting. In contradistinction to classical Greek representations of the handover of Achilles, where Peleus is the dominant figure, in the few surviving monuments of Roman art he never appears.[22] The cause of Thetis supplanting Peleus as the dominant parent is surely the *Achilleid* itself, which intensified the focus on Thetis already begun by Homer to such a degree that Peleus all but vanishes from subsequent Roman art.[23] There are a number of Achilles-cycles in fourth-century Roman art that all marginalize Peleus: the Capitoline well-head, the *tensa capitolina,* and the silver plate from the Kaiseraugst hoard.[24] Whereas the centrality of Thetis in the *Iliad* was surely of great general importance for her frequent appearance in depictions of Achilles' life, nevertheless her dominance over Achilles' younger life in later Roman art should probably be credited to the influence of the *Achilleid.*[25].

What all of this means for our understanding of the *Achilleid* is that, in

[21] The exception is a single vase (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus' no. 39, ca. 520 BC) on which Thetis, Chiron and the pre-adolescent Achilles are pictured without Peleus; Friis Johansen (1939: 181–4) takes this vase as the starting point for his investigation of the group of vases with 'Homeric' versions of the myth.

[22] The Roman depictions of Thetis handing Achilles to Chiron by herself are *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos. 46–9.

[23] The only examples in Roman art of Peleus and the young Achilles depict Chiron holding up the boy to his father as Peleus passes by on the Argo, as described by Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus (see above, p 114), thus emphasizing the distance between the two (*LIMC* s.v. 'Peleus', nos. 43 and 44).

[24] *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos. 2, 13, and 4. For a discussion of these cycles, see Guerrini (1958–9), Manacorda (1971: 20–26) and Delvoye (1984).

[25] Kossatz-Deissmann (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', no. 46) has the improbable idea that the Capitoline well-head, on which Thetis alone carries Achilles to Chiron, should be referred to the corresponding scene in the Orphic *Argonautica*, in which Peleus is similarly lacking. Because the well-head contains a cycle of scenes from the early life of Achilles, including points where it has very likely been influenced by the *Achilleid* (e.g. the dipping of Achilles in the Styx), it is much more economical to suppose that inference from Statius is responsible here too

Statius' formulation, Peleus is effectively elided from Achilles' upbringing, along with other Homeric figures such as Phoenix. In their place Chiron becomes far more to Achilles than the simple teacher of medicine that he was for Homer, and more than he was in any other previous version: not simply a teacher, as Thetis chooses to call him (*magistri*, 1.39), but a surrogate father, as Achilles himself calls him (*ille pater*, 2.102). The effect of this move is to situate Achilles uneasily between two non-human parental figures, the divine Thetis and the semi-bestial Chiron. We now move on to consider a particularly disturbing and brutish aspect of Achilles' upbringing by the Centaur.

3.1.3 The Food of Achilles

One of the vases that Friis Johansen considered in his study of scenes depicting the handover of the infant Achilles to Chiron is a fragmentary proto-Attic neck-amphora that presents a variant on the usual representation of the Centaur.[26] Chiron in Greek art often carries with him a stick or branch on which are tied the fruits of his hunting: birds, hares and other small animals. On this vase, however, three cubs of much fiercer species hang from his branch: a small lion and boar, and a third which cannot be identified with certainty. The original editors of the vase immediately saw this as an allusion to the tradition we glanced at earlier, namely Chiron's nursing of Achilles on the entrails of various wild animals. As for the identification of the third animal carried by Chiron, those that prefer the account of Apollodorus, who gives Achilles a diet of the innards of lions, boars and bears, have seen it as a bear.[27] Statius' description is slightly different, naming lions and a she-wolf. Here is the passage again:

> Dicor et in teneris et adhuc reptantibus annis,
> Thessalus ut rigido senior me monte recepit,
> non ullos ex more cibos hausisse nec almis
> uberibus satiasse famem, sed spissa leonum
> viscera semianimisque lupae traxisse medullas.
> haec mihi prima Ceres, haec laeti munera Bacchi,
> sic dabat ille pater. (2.96–102)

[26] Friis Johansen (1939: 184–6) = *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', no. 21.

[27] [Χείρων] ... αὐτὸν ἔτρεφε σπλάγχνοις λεόντων καὶ συῶν ἀγρίων καὶ ἄρκτων μυελοῖς ... (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6); it is not clear whether συῶν ἀγρίων is better taken with σπλάγχνοις or μυελοῖς. Friis Johansen (1939: 186) follows Apollodorus and the original editors of the vase, Eilmann and Gebauer in *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*, Deutschland, Berlin (Antiquarium), vol. 1, and calls the third animal a bear.

Those guided by this passage have thought the third animal on the vase to resemble a wolf.[28] Either way, the point for us is that this part of the Achilles legend is not an invention of Statius. Nor does it end with him; the fourth-century Achilles-cycle on the silver platter from Kaiseraugst has a very explicit scene in which Chiron holds his right hand out towards the mouth of the tiny Achilles, who has both of his hands outstretched to him. In his left hand, the Centaur holds a lioness upside-down by the hind legs; bodies of a lion and a boar lie on the ground.[29]

D. S. Robertson in 1940 first drew attention to the word *semianimis* in line 100 as an indication of another ancient tradition preserved in the description Statius gives us of Achilles' diet. For whereas the idea of a baby nursed on meat is a bit out of the ordinary, and the notion of a baby nursed on raw meat is a disquieting prospect, a baby nursing on quivering, still breathing flesh is an entirely disgusting image. Robertson (1940: 178) quite rightly compares Statius' description of Tydeus digging into the brains of Melanippus in the *Thebaid* (8.751–66), and points out that there too Statius revived a disturbing detail that had grown obscure, but which he did not invent. Robertson, following Frazer, lists a number of ethnographic parallels for the practice of eating the innards of animals raw in order to acquire their power.[30] He also argues that Pindar was alluding to the same tradition when he describes the animals that the young Achilles brought back to Chiron from the hunt as still panting.[31]

More interesting for our purposes than the origin of this myth is the use to which Statius puts it. It seems fair to say that *semianimis* was meant to shock and disgust a Roman audience, for whom the eating of raw versus cooked meat marked the division between animal and human as much as or more than it does for us today. It serves to put a different complexion on life in Chiron's cave from the one we are given in Book 1. There we met an elderly and patient Centaur, very much a gentleman and concerned for the comfort of his guest.[32] In Book 2,

[28] For the identification as a wolf, Robertson (1940: 177) cites Beazley (1939), an article I have not been able to consult.

[29] None of the scholars mentioned above had the opportunity to see this plate, which was only discovered in 1961. It bears a picture of the unveiling of Achilles at Scyros in its center and ten scenes from the childhood of Achilles around its rim: *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', no. 4; there is a full-length study of the piece by Manacorda (1971). There are a few passing references to Achilles' diet in ancient literature; see Roussel (1991: 95–8) and Pavlovskis (1965: 283).

[30] Robertson (1940: 177–8) and Frazer ad Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.13.6. Twentieth-century cultural anthropologists were not the first to see this symbolic meaning in Achilles' diet; as much had already been suggested by Libanius: ἣν [τροφὴν] ὁ Χείρων ᾔδει πρὸς ἀνδρείαν αὐτῷ συμβαλουμένην (*Laudationes* 3.2).

[31] Robertson (1940: 179–80). The text (σώματα... ἀσθμαίνοντα, *Nem.* 3.48–9) is not entirely secure.

[32] For example, in the phrase *admonet antri* (1.125), on which see Rosati (1992b: 267–70), whether Chiron means to tell Thetis to mind her step or whether he is apologizing for the

Achilles begins his story of his time with Chiron in a way that jars very strongly with that cozy picture.[33] We are forced to confront the fact that Chiron for all his virtues is only half-human, and in the absence of any other parental or nurturing figure, he is Achilles' surrogate father (*sic dabat ille pater*, 2.102). The resulting dehumanization is startling, even repulsive, but does not make Achilles, who is only a child, an unsympathetic figure. Again, Diomedes' father is a useful point of comparison. When Tydeus was just on the point of transcending human heroism and achieving immortality, he descended into the worst kind of subhuman brutality. Thus, according to Statius, the superhuman and the subhuman meet in the extremity of battle. In aiming for more-than-human glory, Tydeus missed the mark by only a small margin and yet he failed utterly. Tydeus' tragedy repeats itself as comedy for Achilles. The upbringing that is designed to train the greatest of heroes comes disturbingly close to producing a brutish animal. Despite being raised by, respectively, a goddess and a half-brute Centaur, the boy nevertheless finds a way to become human, and perhaps even to transcend his humanity as the greatest of Greek heroes.

The foregoing discussion took Achilles' word *semianimis* as the starting point for an investigation of the hero's contested and problematic humanity; but this is not the only *semi-* compound found at the end of the *Achilleid*. Statius' Ulysses is very fond of words describing half-men. In the space of not very many lines he uses three such words in speaking to Achilles: he calls Chiron *semifer* (1.868), the Argonauts *semidei* (2.77), and Paris *semivir* (2.78). We saw that the word *semivir* applies in its context as much to Achilles as to Paris. Achilles, on the basis of his diet and his quasi-filial relationship with Chiron, may have a claim to the epithet *semifer*, too. In the rest of this chapter we shall establish Achilles' claim to the title of *semideus*; we shall also revisit the question of the young Achilles' likeness to a wild animal as he grows up in Chiron's cave. Ulysses knows that Achilles' identity is under negotiation between the male and female, and between the human, feral and divine; and he addresses the cross-dressed hero accordingly: *Quid haeres? ... tu semiferi Chironis alumnus, / tu caeli pelagique nepos ...* (1.867–9). As we shall now see, the humanity of Achilles is a problematic issue for Statius right from the very first line of the *Achilleid*.

humbleness of his home, the point is to give Chiron a solicitousness that is not just human, but even civilized.

[33] Barchiesi (1996: 55) points out that this image also contrasts strongly with the picture painted by Homer (*Il.* 9.485–91) of the baby Achilles spitting up his food as Phoenix holds him on his lap.

3.2 Achilles in the Subjunctive Mood

Returning from the end of the *Achilleid* to its very beginning, we may recall that to account for Achilles' family origins is stated as a theme by Statius from the very outset. As noted in the course of discussing the proem (Section 2.1.3), the question of Achilles' paternity is raised in the first two lines of the poem:

> Magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti
> progeniem et patrio vetitam succedere caelo ... (1.1–2)

The subject of the epic is announced in a pair of accusative nouns, *Aeaciden* and *progeniem.* The words do not divide the matter of the poem, after the fashion of *arma virumque,* into its parts, but rather refer by hendiadys to a unitary topic like the *acies*, *regna*, and *Thebas* at the beginning of the *Thebaid.* And yet there is an important difference between the two modes of reference to Achilles. The weighty phrase *magnanimum Aeaciden* gives the hero's genealogy as familiar from Homer, son of Peleus and grandson of Aeacus. On the other hand, this *formidatam ... progeniem* is no one that ever existed, even in fiction; the phrase describes what Achilles might have become had circumstances been different, if his father had been Jupiter instead of Peleus: Achilles in the subjunctive mood. Statius announces at the outset his willingness to consider Achilles as he was and also as he might have been.

The story of this son whose potential Jupiter feared so greatly is told by Pindar (*Isthm.* 8.28–45): Zeus and Poseidon were rivals for the hand of Thetis until they were warned by Themis that the Nereid was fated to bear a son greater than his father. In order to avert any threat to his position, Jupiter himself refrained from mating with Thetis, and ensured that she would bear no son to any of the other gods by marrying her to a mortal, Peleus. The same basic tale is given with some variations by other writers, including the author of the *Prometheus Bound.*[34] Thematically, this potential threat to Jupiter's hegemony is very reminiscent of Hesiod's tale of Zeus and Metis near the end of the *Theogony* (886–900). In this case it is Gaia and Uranos that warn Zeus of Metis' destiny to bear clever children, including a son destined to be the king

[34] There are some noteworthy divergences from this scheme. In *Prometheus Bound* (907–27), it is Prometheus that knows the secret of Thetis' destiny, a fact he has learned from his mother Gaia. Gantz (1993: 160) relates the conflation of Themis and Gaia in this play to the influence of the Pindaric version in which Themis is the messenger. In Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.790–804) Zeus' fear was not the only obstacle to his union with Thetis; the Nereid spurned his advances in consideration of Hera's feelings. According to Philodemus, this tradition had its origins in Hesiod and the *Cypria* (F 2 Bernabé). Ovid (*Met.* 11.216–28) has Proteus make a general announcement of Thetis' fate.

of gods and of men. Zeus' wife Metis is already pregnant; but instead of waiting for the child to be born and then swallowing it as Kronos had ineffectually done, Zeus swallows Metis herself. The outcome of Metis' pregnancy is of course Athena, born from Zeus' head (924). The significance of the Metis episode in the *Theogony* is that it marks the end-point of the divine succession myth that is the 'backbone' (West 1966: 31) of the poem. Kronos had deposed Uranos, Zeus had deposed Kronos, and Zeus puts an end to this potentially endless sequence of usurpations, thus imposing upon the universe its present stability and form. He succeeds in forestalling the process by swallowing Metis, which prevents her from ever bearing a son and also thereby imparts to him her native shrewdness.[35] This is an important moment in the imaginative history of the world; it is the dividing line between the tumultuous period of the birth of the cosmos and its present stability.

The stability of Zeus' dominance rests upon his ability to foresee and neutralize threats to him such as the children who were to become Athena and Achilles. If he did not do so, the universe would be a constant turmoil of son overthrowing and succeeding father; the mortal birth of Achilles is the price of cosmic stability. Statius emphasizes the far-reaching consequences of Thetis' hypothetical union with Jupiter by describing Achilles as the child 'forbidden from succeeding to the throne of heaven as his patrimony'. Dilke (ad 1.1f.) points out that *patrio ... succedere caelo* here follows the model of *regno succedere*, so it 'implies overlordship of the gods, not ... a mere place among them'. Yet, as he also notes, *succedere caelo* can also mean 'to join the heavenly spirits' (Verg. *Aen.* 4.227). It is an apt phrase in both senses, since Thetis' marriage to Peleus not only denied her son absolute power over the cosmos, it even begrudged him the simple gift of immortality. The word *patrio* is used in a kind of hypothetical prolepsis to refer to Achilles' inheritance of Jupiter's realm, but it may also cause us to think of another way in which Achilles is doomed to forfeit an inheritance. The suspension of *caelo* until the end of the line means that at first *patrio* might seem a reference to Peleus and his realm. Achilles not only failed to inherit anything from Jupiter, he also was prevented by his early death from coming into his actual patrimony in Phthia. One thinks of Achilles' lament to Priam at the end of the *Iliad*; he remembers his father alone and unprotected, with no heir except for a son who is doomed to die prematurely.[36]

[35] *Theog.* 900; see Detienne and Vernant (1978: 57–92). On the near-eastern sources of the myth of divine succession, cf. West (1966: 18–31) and Burkert (1992: 5–7).

[36] οἱ οὔ τι / παίδων ἐν μεγάροισι γονὴ γένετο χρειόντων, / ἀλλ' ἕνα παῖδα τέκεν παναώριον (*Il.* 24.538–40).

West (1966: ad *Theog.* 889) points out that the similarities between Metis and Thetis go beyond the fated greatness of their offspring. Thetis was a Nereid and Metis an Oceanid, so both were associated with the sea; and both had the ability to change their shape. A cosmological commentary on Alcman from a fragmentary papyrus, in which Thetis is conceived of as the demiurge that put order on the formless mass of the cosmos, reveals that she could be considered a primal creative force along the lines of the personifications in Hesiod's *Theogony*. It does not make a great deal of difference to our purposes if the identification of Thetis as a cosmic power was made by Alcman himself, or if it is the product of the anonymous commentator's allegoresis, as Most (1987) has argued.[37] This sort of allegorizing tradition around Thetis was represented at Rome by Annaeus Cornutus (*Theol. Graec.* 17), and it may be that it influenced Statius, for, as we shall now see, he alludes to the very passage in Homer that contains our most intriguing hint of the cosmological role of Thetis.

3.2.1 The Power of Thetis

Thetis comes to us in two guises; she is a goddess so powerful that her potential to overturn Jupiter's hegemony must be neutralized, and on the other hand she is a worried mother, helpless to protect her own son. In order to see how Statius reconciles these two aspects in his portrait of the goddess, we shall begin by examining what Slatkin (1991) has called 'the power of Thetis', as it appears in the *Iliad*. For example, one possible allusion to this tradition comes when Thetis visits Hephaestus to make her request for a replacement set of armor. She begins by complaining that Zeus has sent her more misery than any other goddess, in that she alone was compelled by him to marry a mortal (*Il.* 18.428–41). This passage is the only indication in Homer that Achilles' parents were anything other than happy together, and it seems plausible to seek its origin in the tradition, otherwise absent in Homer, that Zeus needed to marry Thetis to a mortal in order to ensure his continued sway in heaven. When Statius has Neptune tell Thetis to stop complaining about her marriage to a mortal (1.90), he may intend an allusion to this Homeric passage, since there is no place in the *Achilleid* where Thetis explicitly makes such a complaint.[38]

Another point in the *Iliad* where allusion is made to Thetis' power is also

[37] The Alcman commentary is F 5 Page (1962) and Davies (1991), and F 81 in Calame (1983); Detienne and Vernant (1978: 133–62) and Slatkin (1991: 81–3, n 32) consider it as a token of an ongoing tradition of Thetis' cosmic power, while Calame (1983: 445–7) and Most (1987) are more sceptical. The papyrus has been dated to the second century AD and its contents somewhat earlier: Most (1987: 18, n 97).

[38] See below, Section 4.1.2.

the preface to a request. In Book 1, Achilles asks his mother to go to Zeus to ask that the Trojans enjoy success during his absence from battle (*Il.* 1.393–412). He directs Thetis to preface her supplication with a timely reminder of the occasion she came to Zeus' aid when he was in need:

> πολλάκι γάρ σεο πατρὸς ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἄκουσα
> εὐχομένης, ὅτ' ἔφησθα κελαινεφέϊ Κρονίωνι
> οἴῃ ἐν ἀθανάτοισιν ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι,
> ὁππότε μιν ξυνδῆσαι Ὀλύμπιοι ἤθελον ἄλλοι,
> Ἥρη τ' ἠδὲ Ποσειδάων καὶ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη·
> ἀλλὰ σὺ τόν γ' ἐλθοῦσα, θεά, ὑπελύσαο δεσμῶν,
> ὦχ' ἑκατόγχειρον καλέσασ' ἐς μακρὸν Ὄλυμπον,
> ὃν Βριάρεων καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δέ τε πάντες
> Αἰγαίων'—ὁ γὰρ αὖτε βίην οὗ πατρὸς ἀμείνων—
> ὅς ῥα παρὰ Κρονίωνι καθέζετο κύδεϊ γαίων·
> τὸν καὶ ὑπέδεισαν μάκαρες θεοὶ οὐδ' ἔτ' ἔδησαν. (1.396–406)

> I often heard you in my father's house telling with pride how you alone among the immortals rescued the son of Kronos, lord of the dark clouds, from a shaming plight, when other Olympian gods sought to bind him fast – Hera and Poseidon and Pallas Athene. But you came and released him from his bonds, goddess, quickly calling up to wide Olympos the hundred-hander, called Briareos by the gods, but Aigaion by all humans. He is yet stronger than his father, and he took his seat beside the son of Kronos glorying in his splendor. The blessed gods shrank in fear from him, and there was no more binding. (trans. Hammond)

This is noteworthy for being apparently one of the few genuinely cosmological passages in Homer, a poet who was relentlessly allegorized for hidden cosmology. It will come as no surprise that Thetis' role here occasioned comment in antiquity.[39] In some mysterious way, the Nereid had the power to aid Zeus decisively when he was confronted with a rebellion. Statius alludes to this incident when he describes Thetis mulling over the different locations that come to mind as potential hiding places for Achilles. She finally plumps for Scyros, which she had happened to notice recently when she was sent to check on the bonds of the hundred-hander:

[39] See the bT-scholia ad *Il.* 1.399–406, Cornutus, *Theol. Graec.* 17, and for modern bibliography Slatkin (1991: 61–2, n 6).

inbelli nuper Lycomedis ab aula
virgineos coetus et litora persona ludo
audierat, duros laxantem Aegaeona nexus
missa sequi centumque dei numerare catenas. (1.207–10)

With its invocation of the Homeric *hapax*, Αἰγαίωνα (*Il.* 1.404), and its talk of binding, this passage is a clear reference to Thetis' assistance to Zeus in the *Iliad*. Yet the description of Aegaeon/Briareus in chains seems at first glance to contradict the Homeric story that he came to Zeus' assistance when summoned by Thetis. The information given in the *Aeneid* (10.565–70) and *Thebaid* (2.595–601) that Briareus was the chief enemy of the Olympian gods in the Gigantomachy would seem to confound matters entirely. There are three apparently incompatible roles for Briareus: the ally of Zeus and Thetis in the *Iliad*, the active enemy of the Olympian gods in the Gigantomachy as described by Vergil and Statius, and the confined prisoner of Thetis in the *Achilleid*. The nature of Statius' description, however, allows us to reconcile the conflicting data in two very different, and not entirely compatible, ways.

The first method takes its cue from Statius' word *nuper* (1.207), and would distribute the conflicting accounts chronologically. The narrative of Briareus' vicissitudes would begin with Hesiod's description of how he was freed by Zeus from the bonds in which he had been put by Uranus. The hundred-hander then fought with the gods against the Titans, and returned peacefully to his home under the earth when the fighting was done (*Theog.* 734–5). Then, as Homer reports (*Il.* 1.396–406), Thetis summoned Briareus to the aid of Zeus once again when the other Olympians tried to bind him. As Rosati (1992: 270f) rightly saw, this happened long, long ago, before the Gigantomachy, and before the imprisonment described in the *Achilleid*. In the meantime, Briareus turns against Zeus for unknown reasons, and he fights with the Giants against the Olympians, as described in the *Aeneid* (10.565–70) and *Thebaid* (2.595–601). This event must have occurred relatively late in mythical time, approximately a generation before the Trojan War, since the participation of Heracles in the Gigantomachy was a condition of the Olympians' success. Following the defeat of the Giants, Briareus is imprisoned by Zeus. In the *Achilleid*, Thetis is sent to check on his bonds (1.207–10), which reflects the more recent condition (*nuper*, 207) of Briareus, erstwhile ally and current prisoner of Zeus. This is admittedly a lot to deduce from the presence of a single adverb in Statius' account. The advantage of this complex and artificial chronological scheme is that it makes some sense out

of the evident confusion regarding the allegiance of Briareus.[40] It fails, however, to connect Thetis' role as a jailer in the *Achilleid* with her role as Briareus' summoner in the *Iliad*, leaving the relationship between the Statian and Homeric passages vague and coincidental. There is a better way to explain the apparent contradiction between the two passages.

In the *Iliad*, Thetis summons Briareus, who stands by Zeus, apparently as an ally and of his own free will, and they prevent the other gods from binding Zeus. In Statius' text, Briareus is bound as a prisoner, incapable of asserting his will, and Thetis is his warden. This small but significant disjunction can be explained by positing that Statius has tendentiously misread the text of Homer and its description of Thetis' role in the unbinding. Homer actually says that Thetis 'came and released him [i.e. Zeus] from his bonds ... quickly calling up to wide Olympus the hundred-hander'.[41] By subsequently depicting Thetis as checking on Briareus' bonds, Statius encourages us to construe those words differently; he seems to translate the Greek thus: Thetis 'came and released him [i.e. Briareus] from his bonds ... quickly calling up to wide Olympus the hundred-hander'. It is certainly a strain on the syntax of the Greek to refer the pronoun τόν at *Iliad* 1.401 (quoted above, p 123) not to its antecedent, Zeus, but forward to the ἑκατόγχειρον of the following line; but it is not impossible.[42] This tendentious misreading of Thetis' role in the *Iliad* gives Statius the license to depict her as nothing but Jupiter's turnkey. Briareus is Zeus' prisoner even before the attempt of the other gods to bind him, and he goes back to being a prisoner afterwards; Thetis presumably leads him back to his cell.[43] It is in this pseudo-Homeric

[40] It may be possible to identify the source of this element of confusion. The cyclic *Titanomachy*, as we are told by a scholiast (ad Ap. Rhod. 1.1165c = *Titanomachia* F 3 Bernabé, Davies), asserted that Aegaeon was an ally of the Titans. If true, this is a flat contradiction of Hesiod's tale, according to which he was an important ally of Zeus in the Titanomachy (*Theog.* 617–63). When we later find Briareus fighting in the Gigantomachy against Zeus, this seems to be a result of the confusion of Titanomachy and Gigantomachy that is common in post-Archaic literature (cf. Vian 1952: 169–74, Gantz 1993: 445–54, and West ad *Theog.* 617–719). The change in Briareus from an ally to an opponent of Zeus may thus have resulted from the contradiction that already existed in the archaic period between Hesiod and the cyclic *Titanomachy*. For example, as Gantz (1993: 447) and Davies (1989: 14) both note, one scholiast (ad Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.554) who mentions the Gigantomachy clearly meant the cyclic *Titanomachy* instead. By postponing Briareus' opposition to the gods from the Titanomachy until the Gigantomachy, it thus becomes possible to accommodate his role as both an ally and an opponent of Zeus by positing different occasions for each.

[41] On the process of binding, see Slatkin (1991: 66–9).

[42] Stanford (1950: vol 1, p lxii) on the 'attributive sense' of the pronoun in Homer in which it is 'followed by a noun or adjective which defines it' gives the example of ἡ μὲν ... ἀπέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.

[43] This reading is not without its problems, in that it does not explain why the Homeric Briareus would be inclined to help Zeus while he is his captive. Statius' version might, however, be pedantically justified in a different respect. The other Olympians are only said to have wanted to bind Zeus, not to have actually done so (ξυνδῆσαι Ὀλύμπιοι ἤθελον ἄλλοι, 1.399).

capacity as the warden of Briareus that Thetis goes in the *Achilleid* to check on his bonds (*centumque dei numerare catenas*, 1.210).

One indication of the subtlety of Statius' intervention is the way he has beguiled modern scholars of the *Achilleid* into unconsciously misreading Homer in precisely this manner. Dilke and Rosati both report that in the Iliadic passage Thetis released Briareus, rather than Zeus, from his bonds. Thus Dilke (ad 209f) says that Thetis 'saved Zeus ... by releasing "the hundred-handed one".' Rosati (1994: 95, n 71) is doubtful about the allusion, but nevertheless reports that 'Egeone-Briareo ... fu liberato da Tètide'. Homer actually says nothing at all about Briareus being bound; but Statius wants us to think that that is what Homer says. As Slatkin (1991: 66) has it, 'she [Thetis] herself unbound Zeus, summoning the hundred-handed Briareos as a kind of guarantor or reminder of her power'. It was really Zeus that was bound, unless one is reading the Iliadic passage through the distorting frame that Statius provides. If it seems improbable that Statius had read Homer as closely as this, consider the way he handles the question of the location of Briareus' confinement in the same passage. This was a vexed issue; Hesiod says that after the victory in the Titanomachy, the hundred-handers went to dwell in Tartarus (*Theog.* 734–5). Not long afterwards he contradicts himself, saying that they live on the ocean floor (ἐπ' Ὠκεανοῖο θεμέθλοις, 816); Briareus is even married to a daughter of Poseidon (*Theog.* 815–9).[44] The Homeric A-scholion (ad *Il.* 1.404a), in a passage that Erbse assigns to Aristonicus and whose substantive content Kirk (1985: ad *Il.* 1.403–4) attributes to Aristarchus, tells us that Zenodotus subscribed to the view that the hundred-hander lived in Tartarus (ὑπὸ Τάρταρον εὑρώεντα), against which the scholion, and thus presumably Aristarchus, objected that Aegaeon was not a Titan but a sea-creature (ἐνάλιος δαίμων). Callimachus on the other hand had placed Briareus under Mount Aetna (Callim. *Hymn* 4.141–3), while Vergil located him at the entrance to the underworld (*Aen.* 6.287), followed in the *Thebaid* (4.535) by Statius. Yet Statius also gives a hint of the Aristarchan argument that Briareus/Aegaeon was a sea-creature. In another passage of the *Thebaid*, Hypsipyle personifies the Aegean sea as Aegaeon, by implication one of the sea-gods (*dis pelagi*, 5.288). In the *Achilleid*, it is implied that Aegaeon is imprisoned in the sea, since Thetis travels past Scyros in the Aegean when she is on her way to

So how could Thetis unbind Zeus before he was actually bound? The answer of course is that Homer has omitted an obvious intermediary step, but on the reading of Statius, the solution is simpler: the only bonds that Thetis loosened were those of Briareus.

[44] West (1966: ad *Theog.* 720–819) deems the first passage (734–5) an interpolation. According to the scholion cited above (n 40), the cyclic *Titanomachy* also said that Aegaeon made his dwelling in the sea.

visit him. Statius therefore explicitly follows the tradition of Zenodotus, Callimachus, and Vergil that Briareus was imprisoned in the underworld, and yet on two occasions he uses the alternative name Aegaeon and apparently follows the Aristarchan argument that Briareus was imprisoned in the sea. Statius thus replicated in his own texts a similar ambiguity to that which is found in Hesiod. Moreover, his hint at the connection between Aegaeon and the Aegean also suggests why it should have been Thetis who came to Zeus' aid when he was threatened by the other gods. On Statius' argument, this was not because of her cosmic power, but simply because Briareus/Aegaeon, as a sea-creature, was imprisoned in the sea, and thus the circumstances required a marine divinity to go fetch him.

Slatkin has argued that Homer alludes to stories about the power of Thetis in order to add poignancy to the helplessness to which she is reduced by her son's mortality in the *Iliad*. Statius, it seems, appreciated the force of Homer's allusion, but he had a different purpose in mind. He alludes to Homer's text in a way that reduces her from being the goddess who unbound Zeus (with the help of Briareus) to being Zeus' messenger and turnkey. A jailkeeper in the *Achilleid*, a jailkeeper in the *Iliad*, Thetis is not the agent of stability in heaven, but a messenger sent (*missa*, 1.210) on behalf of more powerful gods. By giving Thetis a very prosaic role with respect to Briareus, Statius simultaneously acknowledges and undercuts the tradition of her cosmic role. This allows him to sidestep the tradition of Thetis' power, which would conflict starkly with his own conception of the goddess. As we shall see, Thetis in the *Achilleid* is generally a rather bungling and inept figure, most notably as the inventor of the absurd and unsuccessful plan to save Achilles by dressing him as a girl. In fact, the plot of the *Achilleid* as we have it turns on the ineffectiveness of Thetis in her efforts to divert the course of fate. The story that Thetis was destined to bear a son greater than his father is important for Statius insofar as it relates to Achilles, but he does not allow that Thetis herself was a figure of cosmic importance.

A full consideration of Thetis' character will be found in Chapter 4, but a brief look at her helplessness in the *Achilleid* may be instructive. Homer's Thetis is successful in her two important interviews with other gods, securing from Zeus the temporary Trojan success, and from Hephaestus a new panoply of armor. In the *Achilleid*, by contrast, Thetis approaches Neptune to raise a storm against Paris' fleet, and this small request in her native element is flatly rejected (1.61–94). The condition of having a mortal son itself contributes to Thetis' powerlessness. She recognizes that to be connected by a mother-son

bond to a mortal circumscribes and compromises her own divinity. When the departure of Paris' fleet adumbrates the beginnings of war, Thetis responds in an extraordinarily personal way, saying, *me petit haec, mihi classis ... funesta minatur* (1.31). Thetis sees the Trojan War as an attack on herself. She explains why this should be so in her appeal to Neptune:

> da pellere luctus,
> nec tibi de tantis placeat me fluctibus unum
> litus et Iliaci scopulos habitare sepulcri. (1.74–6)

There is difficulty with the text here,[45] but the lines most likely mean: 'let my grief be held at bay, and do not elect that out of such a vast expanse of sea I should haunt just one shoreline and the rocks of a Trojan tomb'. She ultimately asks Neptune not to have pity upon her son as a mere mortal, but to sympathize with *her* plight as a goddess whose own immortality will be compromised by the death of her only child. In the *Odyssey* (24.35–94), the shade of Agamemnon had described Achilles' funeral mound and Thetis' lamenting there; Statius imagines that state of mourning as a permanent constraint on the blithe indifference to death that characterizes immortality.[46]

3.2.2 Introducing Achilles

Before leaving the topic of Achilles' missed chance at immortality, we should look at a passage where it is not the narrator, but Achilles himself who mentions his bad luck in failing to have been Jupiter's son. After Achilles rapes Deidamia, he reveals his identity to her and tries to reassure her that all will be well (1.650–60). He professes his long-standing love (1.652–655), and boasts of his distinguished family connections (1.655–6). He responds to her objection, or her imagined objection, regarding Lycomedes' reaction to their relationship with the angry guarantee, typical of Achilles' character but hardly calculated to appease her feelings, that he will destroy Scyros root and branch before she ever has to pay the penalty for what they have done (1.657–60). Achilles addresses himself to Deidamia, and for the first time in the poem his words are reported in direct speech, so that this passage introduces a new voice into the *Achilleid*, a voice

[45] The MSS differ between *unum* and *unam* in line 75. Dilke (ad loc) gives a lengthy and convincing defense of the text as printed here; recent editors (Méheust, Marastoni, Rosati) have concurred. Dilke imagines Thetis 'confined to the waters immediately below Achilles' tomb [on Cape Sigeum]'.

[46] Cf. Slatkin (1991: 56): 'In the *Iliad* Thetis has a present and, prospectively, a future defined by the mortal condition of her son; as such she is known in her dependent attitude of sorrowing and suffering'.

which we surely would have heard a great deal more of, had the epic ever been completed:

> ille ego—quid trepidas?—genitum quem caerula mater
> paene Iovi[a] silvis nivibusque inmisit alendum
> Thessalicis.
> ... quid defles magno nurus addita ponto?
> quid gemis ingentes caelo paritura nepotes? (1.650–2, 655f)

[a] paene Iovi *Gustafsson*, paene iovis P

An epic hero is supposed to describe himself with a certain amount of boastfulness. He may refer to his own past prowess, as Statius' Tydeus:

> ille ego inexpletis solus qui caedibus hausi
> quinquaginta animas.... (*Theb.* 8.666f)

The classic locus for this sort of speech-making is the Homeric battlefield, where a regular part of the boasting comprises genealogical information. A hero's father is the most important element of his genealogy; as Edwards says (1991: ad *Il.* 20.200–58), 'it is common for Homeric warriors to recount their pedigrees with pride, because the glory of the fathers is reflected upon their sons'. Some examples of Homeric heroes recounting their own lineage at some length are Glaucus (*Il.* 6.145–211), Idomeneus (*Il.* 13.448–54), and Aeneas (*Il.* 20.200–58). Achilles himself makes such a speech over the dead body of Asteropaeus, saying:

> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γενεὴν μεγάλου Διὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι.
> τίκτε μ' ἀνὴρ πολλοῖσιν ἀνάσσων Μυρμιδόνεσσι,
> Πηλεὺς Αἰακίδης· ὁ δ' ἄρ' Αἰακὸς ἐκ Διὸς ἦεν. (*Il.* 21.187–9)

In the *Achilleid*, the account Achilles gives to Deidamia of his distinguished ancestors is a parody of such boastful Homeric speeches. The first point of the burlesque is that while the Homeric Achilles may vaunt his lineage over the body of a warrior whom he has killed, the Statian Achilles makes his genealogical boast to a girl he has raped. Achilles does not simply identify himself by name to Deidamia; he gives his genealogy, just like an epic hero on the battlefield.[47] Another part of the travesty is that Achilles does not actually name his father, but rather names the individual who would have been his father had circumstances been different. The statement beginning *ille ego* continues with *genitum ... paene Iovi*, which sounds oddly like an admission of failure in the

[47] See Richardson (1993: ad *Il.* 21.152–60) for examples.

midst of what should be a proud boast.[48] Achilles identifies himself not as the Homeric Pelides or Aeacides, *magnanimus* or otherwise, but as the purely hypothetical *formidatam ... progeniem* (1.1–2) of Statius' proem. This inversion of a basic element of the heroic *ethos* exemplifies the continuing absence from the poem of Peleus, who does not even figure in his son's account of his ancestry. This passage also expresses Achilles' awareness of his loss of the immortality and the universal rule over gods and men that the hero came so close to having as his birthright. Homer's Achilles is a cosmic scapegoat: 'the price of Zeus' hegemony is Achilles' death'.[49] Statius' Achilles knows it and resents it. Achilles identifies himself to Deidamia as 'the one almost born to Jupiter, whom his sea-blue mother sent to be reared in the woods and snows of Thessaly'. Instead of Peleus, Achilles mentions two near-father figures, Jupiter and Chiron. One is a god and the other is half animal; in the next section we will see how Statius characterizes Achilles in terms of his near-divinity on the one hand and the brutality of his primitive surroundings on the other.

3.3 Achilles at the Threshold

Leaving Achilles' first direct speech in the *Achilleid* behind us, we turn now to an earlier scene in which the hero makes his first physical appearance in the poem. This episode is interesting for the way Statius describes the adolescent hero as a liminal figure, caught between child and adult, male and female, divine and human, nature and culture. The careful design is reflected quite literally in the setting: Achilles and his mother appear on the threshold of Chiron's cave (*in limine*, 1.171), which is, like its master, of a twofold nature that reflects the meeting of nature and civilization (*pars exhausta manu, partem sua ruperat aetas*, 108).[50] Thetis, foreboding danger in the impending Trojan War, has come to Chiron's cave after a considerable absence to take her son away; Chiron explains to her that Achilles has been growing more unmanageable of late. Even the Centaurs of the locality, those quintessentially uncivilized beings, are finding his rambunctious pranks uncivil (1.152–5).

Statius stages the reactions of Thetis and Chiron to Achilles' arrival quite carefully. As Chiron continues with his report, he begins to compare the boy with the young Hercules and Theseus, until he silences himself abruptly:

[48] The text here is next to certain, despite *paene Iovi* being a conjecture; Dilke's note (ad 1.650) provides parallels for 'this idea of quasi-relationship'.

[49] Slatkin (1991: 101).

[50] On the geography of Chiron's cave, see Section 6.2 below; on Centaurs as the embodiment of a distinction between nature and culture, see Kirk (1970: 152–62).

'... iuvenem Alciden et Thesea vidi—
sed taceo.'
figit gelidus Nereida pallor:
ille aderat multo sudore et pulvere maior,
et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores
dulcis adhuc visu ... (1.157–61)

Chiron's *sed taceo* (1.158) is the cue for Achilles' arrival, but we do not know this at first.[51] Chiron, we may presume in retrospect, has seen him approaching and does not want him to overhear his quasi-parental discussion. Yet we in the audience do not know that Achilles is nearby until the words *ille aderat* at the beginning of the following line. It appears to us at first that Chiron cut off his description of Achilles' bad behavior in order not to alarm Thetis any further. He has acknowledged her fears for Achilles (*metum*, 1.146), and sketched his own uneasy premonitions of what is to come; now he has said enough.

This reading is apparently confirmed by the rest of the line, where we hear that Thetis was transfixed with fear (*figit gelidus Nereida pallor*, 1.158). Again, the cause of her terror appears to have been Chiron's narration. This is hardly surprising; it would be quite normal for a mother to be alarmed at stories of the trouble her son has been causing and of the threats against his safety. Chiron's point is that Thetis has every right to be concerned about Achilles. Motherly concern is not, however, the reason Chiron falls silent and Thetis grows pale; as we find out in the next line, it is because Achilles has arrived: *ille aderat*. Statius misleads and wrong-foots his audience so that we share with Thetis in her surprise at Achilles' arrival. The very sight of her own son frightens the goddess; he is still a boy, and yet he is a startling presence all the same, covered in dust and sweat.

3.3.1 Achilles and Apollo

Statius describes Achilles in terms that are equivocal and ambiguous. He is an impressive figure, yet he has a sweet countenance nonetheless (*tamen ... dulcis*, 1.160f). Achilles is just on the verge of growing a beard (1.164); he is an ephebe, neither yet a man nor still a boy.[52] There is also something in Achilles' coloring

[51] Dilke (p 18) classes this as an aposiopesis, but it is not quite; neither of the sentences *olim ... Thesea vidi* nor *sed taceo* are incomplete syntactically. Aposiopeseis are quite common in the *Achilleid*, as Dilke is right to note, where they often serve as markers of direct speech. In this case, however, the point is not that Chiron has had a sudden change of thought; rather, it is that Achilles has suddenly come into view (although we do not know that yet).

[52] Mozley translates *maior* (1.159) as 'made larger', while Dilke (ad loc) gives 'more impressive'. It is not clear to me how a disheveled appearance could make one seem larger or more

that could be feminine or could be divine:

> niveo natat ignis in ore
> purpureus fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro. (1.161f)

The word *purpureus* indicates a healthy ruddiness, which, combined with snow-white skin (*niveo ... ore*, 1.160), can characterize the unspoiled beauty of maidens and gods.[53] The poet called 'Lygdamus' described in similar terms the appearance of Apollo in a dream:

> candor erat, qualem praefert Latonia Luna,
> et color in niveo corpore purpureus ... ('Tibullus' 3.4.29f)

The poet then goes on to liken the god to a bride in the contrast of apple red to lily white in his features.[54] Achilles is said to look a great deal like his mother (*plurima vultu / mater inest*, 1.164f). The femininity implicit in Achilles' looks will, of course, be important to the subsequent plot of the poem.[55] Here it functions to paint Achilles' adolescence as a mingling of the adult and the child, the male and the female; and, just as for 'Lygdamus', the unspoiled beauty of a maiden also suggests the flawlessness of a god.

Statius compares Achilles, returning from his hunt, to the ephebic god Apollo:

> ... qualis Lycia venator Apollo
> cum redit et saevis permutat plectra pharetris. (1.165f)

The Vergilian pedigree of this simile was discussed at length in an earlier chapter (Section 2.2.1); but it is worth noting what it contributes to the characterization of Achilles here. Achilles, like Apollo, is returning from the hunt and after dinner he too will pick up the lyre (1.186f). The simile marks Achilles as being capable of both violence and art, beautiful in exertion and repose, just like Apollo, hunter and musician. This is the partner of another simile later in the poem, which also compares Achilles to a god who reconciles seemingly antithetical qualities via two different cult-aspects and cult-places. In that case the god to whom he is compared is Bacchus, who could combine effeminacy and aggression in a way

impressive; but Achilles' sweat and exertion could make him look 'apparently older'. The entire clause is concerned with the discrepancy between Achilles' apparent and real age: his exertions are precocious (*festinatos*, 1.160), and yet he has still (*adhuc*, 1.161) got a youthful freshness.

[53] Cf. André (1949: 389). For the oxymoron of media in the phrase *niveo natat ignis*, compare the near-oxymoron of *tranquillae ... faces* (1.164) several lines later.

[54] Cf. Tränkle (1990) ad loc: 'Von der Mischung von Weiß und Rot in der Hautfarbe ist in der antiken Dichtung seit hellenistischer Zeit häufig die Rede, fast immer von jungen Frauen....'

[55] Thus Aricò 1986: 2937.

that reflects Achilles' state at that point in the poem, dressed as a girl and yet purposing violence.[56] In the present circumstance, the tension in Statius' description of Achilles that is reconciled by the two aspects of Apollo is between the ephebic, almost feminine, beauty of Achilles and the marks of his masculine exertion: high color, sweat and dust. After Achilles goes to clean himself off, there is another simile comparing him to a divinity; in this next case the god himself is conceived of as tired and sweating, and Statius presents a fully articulated way of assimilating the filthy and the numinous.

3.3.2 Achilles and Castor

After greeting his mother, Achilles goes to wash up before dinner. The description of the hero bathing is complemented by another simile comparing him to a divine figure:

> protinus ille subit rapido quae proxima saltu
> flumina fumantisque genas crinemque novatur
> fontibus: Eurotae qualis vada Castor anhelo
> intrat equo fessumque sui iubar excitat astri. (1.178–81)

First we must clarify our picture of what is going on in the simile, for it has seemed obscure to many commentators and difficult to visualize. Brinkgreve (ad 181) and Jannaccone (ad 181) have confused the matter by speaking of a compound picture of Castor as both deified horseman and constellation. Dilke (ad 180f) agrees that this refers to the deified Castor, and further explains that he refreshes 'the beam of his constellation in the Eurotas', presumably, from afar in the heavens. These interpretations have promoted a view of the simile that is confused, imprecise, and incorrect: namely, that only the *iubar* of the constellation Castor passes through the water. How could the beam of a star be 'refreshed' in any way merely by shining into a body of water? Castor clearly has physically entered into the river with his horse (*intrat*, 181), just as Achilles did; the comparanda are perfectly matched in that regard. The parallel Dilke himself cites argues against the notion that Castor here is a constellation: [Iris] *obtusum multo iubar excitat imbri* (*Theb.* 10.136). Iris has physically passed through the caves of Sleep, and this is what has affected her *iubar*. Moreover, Castor's breathless horses act very like the weary and panting horses of the sun's chariot, which very often in Roman poetry are pictured as being refreshed by

[56] On the Bacchus-simile, see below (Section 5.3.3).

diving physically into the river of Ocean in the west at day's end.[57] In all of these cases, we are dealing with a physical motion of a god (and his horses) through water. There is no reason to suppose otherwise here, and the only reason to think of Castor as a constellation or anything but a horseman and a demigod is the phrase *sui iubar excitat astri*, which is not really very difficult to explain. The Dioscuri were regularly represented in Roman art as having stars above their heads, often attached to the *pillei* they habitually wore. The beam of Castor's star is refreshed because his star itself enters the river along with the hero and his horse, to be cleaned of the dust that has dimmed its sparkle.

This alternate version of the simile was originally suggested as a tentative possibility by Jannaccone.[58] She appeals to Hyginus (14.12) for evidence that Castor and Pollux, setting out with the Argonauts, were said to have had stars adorning their heads. Hyginus does appear to have had some specific text in mind (*his . . . stellae in capitibus ut viderentur accidisse scribitur*), but we do not know what author he might be referring to. It is unnecessary, however, to appeal to Hyginus and his hypothetical exemplar in order to validate the idea that the Dioscuri were imagined as having stars above their heads; most Romans would have needed to look no further than their purse. Throughout the plastic arts a star appears as the brothers' iconographical attribute, whether they appear singly or as a pair.[59] As patrons of trade at Rome, they appear very frequently on coinage, often adorned by their star. Given the oft-cited tendency of Statius to borrow elements from the visual arts, it is entirely possible that he is doing so here, playfully treating an iconological attribute as a physical reality.

Now that we have a clear picture of how Castor's star ended up in the Eurotas, we can consider why Castor in particular is the object of comparison to Achilles here. Perhaps surprisingly, the answer seems to come from Roman history. It happens that there are a number of episodes concerning the Dioscuri which suggest themselves in this context. At the battle of Lake Regillus, it was said that the pair appeared in battle to help the Roman cavalry, and that later they were seen in Rome washing down their sweaty horses at Juturna's fountain, where they gave the people advance news of the victory that had been achieved. This story was so popular that it was recycled again and again for Roman victories in later ages.[60] In the fullest versions of the story, which revolve around

[57] For parallels see Bömer (1969–86) ad Ov. *Met.* 4.633f (*anheli*).

[58] Jannaccone (ad 181); repeated by Méheust (p 81, n 5).

[59] Cf. *LIMC* s.v. 'Dioskouroi/Castores', *passim*.

[60] As M. Albert (Dar.-Sag. s.v. 'Dioscuroi', vol 2, p 263) says: 'Le souvenir de la bataille du lac Régille persiste toujours très vivant dans les imaginations pieuses des vainqueurs reconnaissants'.

Battle	Source	Description
Regillus (497 BC)	Livy (2.20.12 & 2.42.5)	
	Dion. Hal. (*Ant. Rom.* 6.13)	Sweating
	Frontinus (*Str.* 1.11.8)	
	Plutarch (*Vit. Coriol.* 3.4)	Sweating
	Plutarch (*Vit. Aem.* 25)	Sweating
	Florus (1.5.4)	
	[Aur. Vict.] *De vir. ill.* (16.3)	
Regillus & Pydna	Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2.6 & 3.11)	
	Valerius Maximus (1.8.1)	Sweating
	Lactantius (*Div. inst.* 2.7.9f)	Sweating
Pydna (168 BC)	Florus (1.28.14f)	Breathless, bloody
	Minucius Felix (*Oct.* 7.3)	Breathless, sweating
	Pacatus (*Pan. Lat.* 2.39.4)	Dusty, bloody
Vercellae (101 BC)	Florus (1.38.20)	
Vercellae & Pydna	Pliny (*HN* 7.86)	
No battle named	Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.12)	
	Nazarius (*Pan. Lat.* 4.15.4)	
	Amm. Marc. (28.4.11)	
	Symmachus (*Ep.* 1.95.3)	Breathless, sweating

Table 3.1: Incidents where the Dioscuri intervened in battle on Rome's behalf and/or appeared subsequently at Rome to wash and/or to herald the victory. The descriptions noted here apply usually to the horses, but sometimes to the Dioscuri themselves.

the battle of Pydna, the horses of the Dioscuri are usually described explicitly as breathless and sweaty, and sometimes blood-spattered too. This is why they are being washed down at the sacred spring next to the temple of Castor. Before considering whether or not these stories come close enough to Statius' simile to warrant our attention, it is necessary to demonstrate the common motifs that unite the different versions of the story and to evaluate just how precise a connotation this image of Castor washing down a breathless horse might have at Rome.

Table 3.1 summarizes the stories and our sources. It includes for the sake of completeness a number of very slight and passing references to the story.[61] Nev-

[61] For further related passages, see Pease (1955: ad Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.6); and for Greek parallels and bibliography, see Ogilvie (1965: ad Livy 2.20.12). Sironen (1989: 97–103) has a more detailed discussion of the *topoi* of the Dioscuri as helpers in battle and messengers of victory.

ertheless, the total is impressive. The most convenient summary of the vulgate is given by Florus in his narrative of the battle of Pydna:

> sed multo prius gaudium victoriae populus Romanus quam epistulis victoris praeceperat. quippe eodem die, quo victus est Perses in Macedonia, Romae cognitum est, cum duo iuvenes candidis equis apud Iuturnae lacum pulverem et cruorem abluebant. hi nuntiavere. Castorem et Pollucem fuisse creditum vulgo, quod gemini fuissent; interfuisse bello, quod sanguine maderent; a Macedonia venire, quod adhuc anhelarent. (Flor. 1.28.14f)

Castor was quintessentially a horseman: Κάστορά θ' ἱππόδαμον καὶ πὺξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα (Hom. *Od.* 11.300). As such, he was the particular patron of the Roman cavalry, which paraded annually past his temple in the *transvectio equitum.* The frequency with which the story of Lake Regillus and the breathless horses was recycled and retold indicates its hold on the Roman imagination. Nor is Statius the only one who connected it with the stars above the heads of the Dioscuri.

Apart from Hyginus and Statius, I was able to find only one other textual reference to the literal presence of the brothers' stars. It is curious that it is found in the context of the very same story of the Dioscuri bathing in the Roman forum. The *Panegyric* to Theodosius credited to Latinius Pacatus Drepanius claims that the emperor's soldiers were miraculously carried along by the wind against Maximius. Pacatus assures his audience that they may believe this prodigy, on the strength of the gods' past aid to Rome:

> nec fides anceps: nam si olim severi credidere maiores Castoras geminos albentibus equis et stellatis apicibus insignes pulverem cruoremque Thessalicum aquis Tiberis abluentes et nuntiasse victoriam et imputasse militiam, cur non tuae publicaeque vindictae confessam aliquam immortalis dei curam putemus adnisam? (*Pan. Lat.* 2.39.4)

The mention of Thessaly indicates that Pacatus associates Castor's epiphany with the battle against Perses of Macedon at Pydna. Here, as in the *Achilleid*, the stars that are the iconic mark of the Dioscuri in art are imagined to be physically present when the twins wash themselves.

Another convergence of the bathing story with the stars comes from a series of *denarii* minted by A. Postumius Albinus, a descendant of the victor of Lake Regillus. These coins depict the twins, who are identified by a star, leading their

horses to drink.[62] It is true that the star is an exceedingly common attribute of the Dioscuri on coins, but given the family connections of Postumius Albinus, it is fairly sure that the coins were meant to illustrate the story we have encountered. It is worth noting that the coins were issued only a few years after the battle of Vercellae, when the tale was enjoying a renewed circulation.

Although Pacatus lived almost three centuries after Statius, the coincidence that they both associated the physical presence of the stars with the bathing of the Dioscuri suggests that they may form part of a common tradition. One possible source is in the physical appearance of the *lacus Iuturnae*. As it stands now, next to the temple of Castor whose foundation was originally vowed by the victor of Regillus, the complex that houses the spring contains a large, nearly square basin with a rectangular podium set in its center. Inside the basin were found the fragments of a Hellenistic, archaizing marble group of the Dioscuri, and a small altar. The podium was likely just large enough for the statues, and they probably stood atop it, in the middle of the *lacus*.[63] G. W. Clarke (1968) argues that the position of the statues inside the *lacus* accounts in a very literal way for the words of Minucius Felix:

> testes equestrium fratrum in lacu, sicut ⟨se⟩ ostenderant, statuae consecratae, qui anheli spumantibus equis atque fumantibus de Perse victoriam eadem die qua fecerant nuntiaverunt. (*Oct.* 7.3)

Unfortunately, these statues are too fragmentary for us to know whether they had *pillei* adorned with stars, and thus whether they might constitute the source of Statius' image. Also found inside the pool was a small altar. On one side the Dioscuri appear in relief, with stars atop their *pillei*, but they are leaning on their lances and their horses are not pictured. The altar sits at present on a ledge surrounding the basin; its original location is unknown. The altar has been dated to the era of Trajan, but it is plausible to assume that even in Statius' day the iconography in the area around the *lacus Iuturnae* should have featured images of the Dioscuri, marked out, as was normal, by stars.

One justification for Statius' invocation of this Roman myth might be that he wished to commemorate Domitian's reconstruction of this part of the forum. Between the *lacus Iuturnae* and the Palatine are monumental remains of Domitianic work, including a covered ramp up to the imperial palace, a large hall and

[62] Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum*, nos. 718–23, p 310, vol 2, not pictured; *LIMC* s.v. 'Dioskouroi/Castores' no. 147, not pictured; Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, p 335, illustrated on plate 43, no. 11.

[63] Thus Richardson (1992: 230), *contra* Nash (1968: vol 2, p 11). On the statue group and its dating, see *LIMC* s.v. 'Dioskouroi/Castores' no. 56.

possibly a library.[64] Steinby, who directed a recent archaeological reexamination of the area, alludes to work by Domitian on the *lacus* itself.[65] It is as yet unclear, however, how far Domitian's interest in the *lacus* itself or the adjacent temple of Castor may have extended. One late source mentions Domitian's renovation of a certain *templum Castorum et Minervae*, and that name is also found in the regionary catalogs.[66] It is possible that he may have done some very slight restoration of the *templum Castoris*, and then rededicated it to his favorite goddess as well as the Castores. The most that can be said with certainty is that Domitian had an interest in the area of the forum near the *lacus Iuturnae*, if only as a point of approach to his palace.

It must be acknowledged that an allusion such as Statius makes here, which refers to a tradition attached to a specific place in the city of Rome, rather than to a text we possess, will present unique hermeneutic difficulties. It is hard to recover the cultural norms that encoded the significance of this urban myth as it circulated among the *populus Romanus* and was recorded by the historians. Instead, we can analyze this epiphany in its context in Statius' poem. We saw that Achilles returned to Chiron's cave covered in dirt and sweat, and yet had something superhuman about him. The poet tries to convey a sense of this by means of a simile comparing him to Apollo, but even Apollo the Lycian hunter fails to capture the right combination of exertion and sublimity. So too the traditional vocabulary of divine and human beauty (*purpureus, niveus, aurum*) fails the poet's purpose. So he turns away from the usual building blocks of epic to another, very Roman point of comparison in order to convey an impression of a god covered in blood, dust and sweat.[67] Castor is carefully naturalized to the genre, however; he bathes in the Eurotas rather than the *lacus Iuturnae* or the Tiber.

Coruscating, attended by a star, yet filthy and walking among men, the demigod Castor replicates Achilles' liminal position between the divine and the mortal. After he comes in from the hunt, Achilles washes himself and then proceeds into the cave where, in the lair of a beast, he will partake of the human pleasures provided by Chiron—cooked meat, wine and music. The river not only

[64] Coarelli 1981: 72–75.

[65] Steinby in *LTUR* (s.v. 'Lacus Iuturnae', vol 3, p 170) speaks of the adjacent shrine of Juturna as an 'edificio appartenente alla ultima fase domizianea e forse finito solo sotto Traiano'. In the first and thus far only volume of the Finnish Institute's publication of the *Lacus*, Steinby (1989: 32) makes a tantalizing allusion to Domitian's restoration and reconstruction not only of the 'sacello di Giuturna', but also of 'l'interno del *Lacus*'.

[66] Chronographus anni 354 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, vol 9, p 146). Cf. Coarelli 1981: 72–75.

[67] Cf. *Silv.* 4.2.47f, a simile describing the *lubrica ... membra* of Pollux, tired out after wrestling.

washes the dust from him, but serves as a threshold to the cave, a boundary he crosses before entering human society again, even if that society problematically consists of a half-beast and a goddess. The Castor-simile not only adds a Roman touch, it also lends to Achilles' arrival at Chiron's cave something of the nature of an epiphany. Alluding to the Dioscuri just as they were wont to appear to the Roman people adds an almost 'realistic' note to Achilles' numinousness. Achilles is not the only character, however, whose divinity is sketched by Statius with reference to the realia of Roman religious life. A few lines later, a similar circumstance involves Thetis, and so it seems appropriate to leave Achilles aside for a moment in order to discuss that passage.

3.3.3 Thetis at the Table

After Achilles has embraced his mother and washed up, he joins her in the meal that Chiron has prepared for them:

> tunc libare dapes Baccheaque munera Chiron
> orat ... (1.184f)

The fact of Thetis' divinity makes this more than an ordinary dinnertime. Statius elides any difficulty about the particular dietary requirements of the goddess by not mentioning the substance of the meal, but at the same time his language draws attention to the issue of sacrifice as food for the gods. The words *libare, dapes,* and *orat* each have a religious connotation, the metaphor more or less diluted by usage. In the case of *orare*, the religious significance was not original, but was growing more common, as evidenced by its later Christian meaning. On the other hand *libare* and *daps* were originally very much ritual terms associated with giving sacrifice. *Libare* is the proper term for pouring out a portion of anything as an offering to a god; this is its original significance.[68] It can also take the figurative meaning 'to remove a small portion', 'to taste or sip'. This latter sense is primary here, and it is used as a form of politeness: Chiron asks Thetis to 'taste' the meal and the gifts of Bacchus. Yet the verb is also appropriate for a sacrificial offering to a deity. The original meaning of *daps* was a sacrificial meal in honor of a god.[69] This sense was still very much current in Statius' day, and its extension as a synonym for a *convivium* was a recent innovation, as yet limited to poetry; the religious metaphor was certainly not dead yet. It is a word appropriate to the context in both its senses: Chiron is hosting a *convivium* for

[68] Cf. *TLL* 7.2.1338.16.
[69] Cf. *TLL* 5.1.38.4–53.

his guest; but since his guest is a goddess, it is also technically speaking a divine offering. The confusion of religious and secular contexts precipitated by having Thetis as a participant in the meal is tellingly revealed by the way the *TLL* has classified Statius here. In an error resulting either from inadvertence or from an overly-literal reading of the passage, Chiron's *dapes* has been classified under the rubric *terminus sacralis*.[70]

The usage of the words *libare* and *daps* together in poetry may be demonstrated by comparing two passages from Book 3 of the *Aeneid*. The first instance is clearly sacramental, as Andromache offers sacrifice to the shade of Hector: *sollemnis ... dapes et tristia dona ... libabat ... Andromache* (*Aen.* 3.300–5). Some fifty lines later, after Helenus welcomes the Trojans to his palace he offers them a primarily secular feast: *aulaï medio libabant pocula Bacchi / impositis auro dapibus, paterasque tenebant* (*Aen.* 3.354f). Yet even here it is unclear whether *libant* should be translated 'they were tasting' or 'they were offering in libation'.[71] So the vocabulary Statius uses is decidedly ambiguous, compatible both with very solemn ritual contexts and with social occasions. The crucial difference between Vergil and Statius is expressed by Dumézil (1970: 567): 'To feed the god at the altar is the object of every sacrifice. To serve him a meal is another matter'. Thetis is simultaneously both the guest at a social gathering and a goddess receiving an offering of food. The metaphorical and literal senses of *daps* collapse into one for her, making the occasion both a family dinner and a theoxeny too.

What makes this condensation of religious offering and social gathering natural is that the two were habitually combined in Roman cult. Not only were *dapes* given at which humans dined in honor of a god, and perhaps in memory of a deceased person,[72] but in particular there were also the *lectisternium* and similar rituals.[73] In these rites, which corresponded to the Greek θεοξένια and

[70] *TLL* 5.1.38.26f. A similar ambiguity regards *redde Iovi dapem* at Hor. *Carm.* 2.7.17, where the thank-offering is intended either for Jupiter or possibly for Octavian (considered as Jupiter). Nisbet-Hubbard (1978: ad loc) reject the latter hypothesis, saying, '... the sacral word *dapem* (particularly grandiose in the singular) seems to confirm that *Iovi* is used in the normal sense....'

[71] Williams (1972: ad loc) translates 'they poured in libation the juice of wine'. Vergil himself exploited the ambiguity of these words in another passage. After Aeneas makes solemn sacrifice to the shade of his father and pours libation (*libans*, *Aen.* 5.77), the presence of Anchises is demonstrated by the approach of a snake which 'tastes' the offerings (*libavitque dapes*, *Aen.* 5.92).

[72] Compare how Statius describes his attention to the shade of Claudius Etruscus: *assiduas libabo dapes et pocula sacris / manibus effigiesque colam* (*Silv.* 3.3.199f).

[73] On the *lectisternium* and *epulum Iovis*, see Latte (1960: 242–4) and Dumézil (1970: 567f); on the history of the rite and its introduction to Rome in 399 BC, see Beard, North and Price (1998: vol 1, p 63; vol 2, p 130), and Ogilvie (1965: ad Livy 5.13.5–8).

κλίνη, the gods played a compounded role, as the recipients of cult and as actual participants in the banquet. Before it begins to seem far-fetched to invoke Roman cult to explain what is happening in this passage, it is worth glancing back to an earlier point in the *Achilleid* where Chiron's cave was the site of a ritual equally suggestive of the *lectisternium*.

When Statius sketched for us the neighborhood of Chiron's cave, he noted the place where the wedding of Peleus and Thetis had been celebrated:

> signa tamen divumque tori et quem quisque sacrarit
> accubitu genioque locum monstrantur ... (1.109f)

The passive *monstrantur* leaves it unclear who pointed these sights out, the house-proud Chiron or ἐξηγηταί for the tourists.[74] The interest of the site is expressed in terms of exactly which couch each of the gods reclined upon. To a Roman sensibility, it was highly pertinent that the gods reclined, as it meant that they were present as normal banqueters.[75] Therefore the arrangement of the guests on the couches in order of rank was a matter of some importance, and not an arbitrary detail. This was an inevitable concern for the giver of a *lectisternium*, public or private, as one would not want to offend any of the deities being honored by putting a statue in a position beneath its station.[76] The final hint that Statius envisioned the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis as an animated version of something like a *lectisternium* is in the troublesome word *signa*. These have variously been explained as 'tokens', 'images', 'insignia', and 'traces' of the gods, or as merely identical to the couches themselves. Rosati, following Dilke, circumspectly translates *signa* as 'le tracce degli dèi, i letti e il luogo che ognuno di essi ha reso sacro....' All of these explanations dodge the obvious meaning that the phrase *signa ... divum* would have in almost any other context: 'representations of the gods', in general i.e. 'statues'. Statius may not mean that there is a *lectisternium* with full display of statuary continually in place in front of Chiron's cave, but perhaps he does envision some sort of

[74] For a list of passages mentioning such tour guides, see W. H. S. Jones' edition of Pausanias (Loeb, 1934) vol 1, p xiii, n 1.

[75] At human *convivia* at Rome, male guests usually reclined while females sat on chairs. This structure seems to have gradually taken hold in *lectisternia* as well. As Dumézil puts it (1970: 568), 'In these first accounts of the historian [Livy] (5.13.6), the gods and goddesses all recline in the same way, *stratis lectis*. Later the goddesses are shown seated, *sellis positis*, while the gods remain in a reclining posture, and the *sellisternia* are side by side with the *lectisternia*'.

[76] Thus when Livy (5.13.6) specifies the gods honored in the first *lectisternium*, he does not merely list them, but carefully pairs them as couch-mates. The importance of due precedence in these cases is seems to be illustrated by the trend over time for Jupiter to replace Apollo as the chief honorand. Apollo's initial preference will have been due to his role as healer, since the first *lectisternia* were responses to pestilence.

permanent memorial.[77] What is interesting is that the 'traces' left by the gods of their visit to Mount Pelion are in Latin identical to the 'statues' used to mark their presence in Roman cult.

To return to the meal shared by Thetis, Chiron and Achilles, it should be clear that Statius uses ritual terminology to convey a sense of Thetis' divinity in the midst of a cozy domestic scene. The sitting down together for dinner of mortal and immortal is modeled on a Roman way of accommodating the human and the divine together in a social setting. In this it shares something in common with the simile comparing Achilles to Castor. Both passages allude to non-literary ways of thinking about the gods, adding an extra dimension to epic discourse. Moreover, there is a kind of religious logic connecting the two forms of divine manifestation, since the Dioscuri were the usual guests of honor at theoxenies throughout Greece.[78] So Achilles' arrival at something resembling a theoxeny after being compared to an epiphany of Castor is perfectly appropriate.

These allusions to specifically Roman myth and cult serve to reify for a Roman audience the issues of life and death that confront Achilles and Thetis. The failure of Achilles to achieve immortality is made more poignant by comparison with the heavenly Castor. After meddling temporarily in the affairs of men, the demigod can wash away mortality with the dirt from his heels. Achilles, on the other hand, cannot set mortal cares aside. In fact, he proceeds straight to a dinner with his mother which is figured as a sacrifice, a rite that emphasizes the distance separating them. In some versions of the myth, Castor possesses only partial immortality, sharing it in alternation with his twin; Achilles likewise has one foot in this world and one in eternity. Achilles comes near to divinity via his mother, but on the other hand Chiron, his less-than-human surrogate father, is raising him in his cave in a manner of exemplary harshness; and we shall see in the next section that Achilles' homecoming is presented not only as a divine epiphany but also as the return of a dangerous beast to his lair.

3·3·4 Thetis and the Lioness

Achilles is returning home to Chiron's cave from the hunt when he meets his mother, and he is carrying with him some lion cubs, whose mother he has attacked and killed. When he sees Thetis, he throws them aside and runs to embrace her:

[77] Cf. the way at *Theb.* 4.161 Hercules' arms are depicted on the doors of the house of Molorchus in Nemea as a memorial of his stay.

[78] Thus Latte (1960: 243): '... sie [die Dioskuren] die spezifischen Götter der Theoxenien sind'. They do not seem to have had such an association with *lectisternia* at Rome.

forte et laetus adest—o quantum gaudia formae
adiciunt!—: fetam Pholoes sub rupe leaenam
perculerat ferro vacuisque reliquerat antris
ipsam, sed catulos adportat et incitat ungues.
quos tamen, ut fido genetrix in limine visa est,
abicit exceptamque avidis circumligat ulnis,
iam gravis amplexu iamque aequus vertice matri. (1.167–73)

Just as previously (see above, p 131) there was a moment of ambiguity when Statius held in suspension the real reason for Chiron's sudden silence, here too there is a point where the poet deliberately destabilizes the meaning of his language and the audience must suddenly revise its understanding of what has gone before. This point was appreciated by Mendelsohn, whose reading of these lines is worth quoting at length:

> The immediacy and vividness of lines 168–70, with their focus on the slaughtered lioness, do not prepare us for the sudden shift of attention to Thetis in line 171. I suggest that it is the poet's intention to create uncertainty here as to which *genetrix* is actually meant, the lioness or Thetis. This momentary blurring of identity serves to establish a powerful parallel between Thetis and the lioness that has compelling ramifications.... Here the lioness is pointedly described as having just given birth (*fetam*), that is, specifically in its maternal function. Achilles' violence to the newly delivered mother, *fetam ... leaenam / perculerat ferro* (168f), which Aricò rightly calls 'un certo selvaggio sadismo' [1986: 2937], thus recalls the wounds described by Thetis in her 'dream', *infensos utero mihi contuor ensis* (131). (1990: 300f)

The word *genetrix* does indeed seem at first to point to the lioness, rather than to Thetis.[79] Furthermore, the entire line, *quos* [*catulos*] *tamen, ut fido genetrix in limine visa est*, couched as it is in the passive voice seems at first to refer not to Achilles as the agent of *visa est*, but rather to the lion cubs seeing their mother (*genetrix*) and witnessing the attack on her at the threshold of their own den. Only at the beginning of the next verse and the verb *abicit* are we wrenched into the present tense. The audience then realizes that the *genetrix* is Thetis and the *limen* is Chiron's. This momentary equivalence between Thetis and Achilles on the one hand and the lioness and her cubs on the other is made possible by

[79] For *genetrix* used of animals, especially lionesses, see *TLL* 6.2.1822.77–1823.1, s.v. 'genitor (genetrix)'; e.g. Claudian, *in Eutropium* 1.389: *crescere miratur genetrix Massyla leonem.*

the poet's careful stage management. He carefully places both mothers in caves, so that both are standing *fido ... in limine.*

This lioness has recently given birth, and so she is presumably nursing her cubs when Achilles kills her.[80] Given the identification of Thetis and the lioness, we might also recall the 'dream' Thetis invented to tell to Chiron. In this fictitious nightmare she claims to have given suck to wild animals: *in ubera saevas / ire feras* (132f). Thetis clearly expects Chiron to interpret this as a sign of the violence threatening her as a result of Achilles' fierce nature. The only other dream that is mentioned in the *Achilleid* is likewise a mother's nightmare that forebodes ill of her son. The poem opens with a description of Paris' trip back to Troy with Helen; he is said to be bringing back with him the complete fulfillment of his mother's dream (*plenaque materni referens praesagia somni*, 1.22). This refers to the story that the pregnant Hecuba dreamed that she gave birth to a firebrand that set Troy ablaze. This dream is reflected graphically in the torches that Paris' ship carries (*facibus de puppe levatis*, 1.33); he is not just fulfilling, but literally 'carrying back' (*referens*), his mother's presentiments of destruction.[81] So just as Hecuba's dream comes true in a very explicit way in the *Achilleid*, so too, in a way, does Thetis' invented dream; as Statius says: *heu numquam vana parentum / auguria!* Not only is Thetis momentarily confused with a wild animal, her son takes on some of the qualities of a lion cub, just like one of the wild animals she dreams are at her breast. In a footnote to the passage quoted above, Mendelsohn adds (301, n 23): 'It is possible that the assonance of *unguis* and *ulnis* further suggests a subtle identification between Achilles and the cubs....' The homology is quite clear. These playful cubs that have yet to realize their deadly powers are an ideal metaphor for the young Achilles as he is presented in the *Achilleid.* The irony is that Thetis' enemy is neither, as she thinks, Paris nor the Greeks; the real threat to her is the precocious violence (*vis festina*, 1.148) latent in her own son. Thetis, like the lioness, will be powerless to protect her offspring, who will be carried off by others.

[80] On the fierceness of nursing lionesses, cf. Ov. *Met.* 13.547: *utque furit catulo lactente orbata leaena.* That simile describes Hecuba, who has just called Achilles *nostri orbator* (13.500).

[81] Dilke (ad loc) points out that these must be wedding torches for the couple; yet he allows that 'there may be a double significance, i.e. *faces* = Bellona's instrument of war'. If we read these war/wedding torches that Paris brings back with him in the context of Hecuba's dream, then they will ignite the flames that lead to the destruction of Troy. This transmission of flame from Europe to Asia as a foreshadowing of war thus anticipates the flame of the signal beacons that carry ill-omened fire in the opposite direction at the beginning of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon.*

3.3.5 Achilles in the Lions' Den

The identification of Thetis with a lioness may be shown to run deeper than an invented nightmare and a momentary slippage in the referent of the word *genetrix*. My argument here will be that Statius' words, *sub rupe leanam* (168), together with *genetrix*, a derivative of *gigno*, are designed as an allusion to the rhetorical question *quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena?* in Ariadne's excoriation of Theseus in Catullus 64:

> quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,
> quod mare conceptum spumantibus expuit undis,
> quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis,
> talia qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita? (Cat. 64.154–7)

This is the *locus classicus* in Latin of a topos that has a long history before and after Catullus, in which a person's hard-heartedness is attributed to his having been whelped by a lioness, or the offspring of the sea or a monster like Scylla.[82] The absolute *locus classicus* for the topos is Patroclus' reproach to Achilles for his stubbornness in refusing to help the Greeks in book 16 of the *Iliad:*

> νηλεές, οὐκ ἄρα σοί γε πατὴρ ἦν ἱππότα Πηλεύς,
> οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ· γλαυκὴ δέ σε τίκτε θάλασσα
> πέτραι τ' ἠλίβατοι, ὅτι τοι νόος ἐστὶν ἀπηνής. (*Il.* 16.33–5)

Statius has brought the trope full circle, as it were, by returning it to the question of Achilles' parentage. After Homer the topos appears frequently, and a poem by Alcaeus already presupposes these lines as common knowledge.[83] Euripides has Jason compare Medea to a lioness and to Scylla, elements which will be vital in the Latin tradition (*Med.* 1342f, with 1358f). The lioness is finally integrated into the Homeric topos by the chorus in Euripides' *Bacchae*:

> ...τίς ἄρα νιν ἔτεκεν;
> οὐ γὰρ ἐξ αἵματος
> γυναικῶν ἔφυ, λεαίνας δέ τινος
> ὅδ' ἢ Γοργόνων Λιβυσσᾶν γένος. (*Bacch.* 988–90)

[82] There are exceedingly many passages in Latin literature which employ this trope and its like; for examples see Bömer ad Ov. *Met.* 7.32f and for similar *topoi* see Pease ad Verg. *Aen.* 4.366.

[83] See below, p 146.

Adapting elements from these Euripidean and Homeric models, Catullus made his short, reproachful poem 60, quoted here in its entirety:[84]

> Num te leaena montibus Libystinis
> aut Scylla latrans infima inguinum parte
> tam mente dura procreavit ac taetra
> ut supplicis vocem in novissimo casu
> contemptam haberes, a, nimis fero corde? (Cat. 60)

As Lee remarks in the note to his translation of the poem (1990: 164), 'The reader naturally takes "you" as Lesbia and the "suppliant" as Catullus, though ... [this] is not in the Latin....' True enough, but what happens if we imagine the reverse, that is, that the poem is spoken by Lesbia to Catullus? Admittedly, this would be unparalleled in Catullus, but the Latin name of the actual offspring of lions and dogs, such as those at Scylla's waist, is *catulus*. Read in this way, the short poem becomes an extended pun by Lesbia on the name of her lover, Catullus, one letter and the stress accent notwithstanding. A 'literal' answer to the rhetorical question, 'did a lioness give you birth (you cub/*catulus*/Catullus)?' is not in itself improbable to deduce, since such answers were in fact a part of the tradition from its very beginnings. The poem of Alcaeus mentioned above is apparently a riddle that turns on just such a desperately literal answer to a purely rhetorical question:

> πέτρας καὶ πολίας θαλάσσας τεκνον ...
> ...ἐκ δὲ παίδων χαύνωις φρένας, ἀ θαλασσία [λέπας] ⟨χέλυς⟩.
> (F 359 Lobel-Page)

The essence of the conundrum is that Alcaeus gives a literal answer to the Homeric question, 'what is the child of rock and the grey sea?' viz. 'a limpet or a tortoise'.[85] Even the answer to the chorus' question in Euripides' Bacchae (see above), 'what creature engendered him? ... a lioness...,' has in its way a literal fulfillment in the course of the play. As Dodds observed (1960: ad 987–90), '... the Chorus see farther than they know: what they put into Agaue's mouth as a metaphorical *façon de parler* will in the true action be experienced by her as paranoiac delusion (1141)', i.e. when she mistakes her son for a mountain lion. What was comedy in Alcaeus is tragedy in Euripides.

[84] Catullus was also influenced by Hellenistic formulations of this already common topos (e.g. Theocritus 3.15). Weinreich (1959) discusses the relationship between the two poems of Catullus.

[85] The existence of a Hellenistic polemic over the correct reading, λέπας or χέλυς, is the reason that Athenaeus preserves for us these lines, the first and last of Alcaeus' poem.

Something of the comedy is also discernible in Ariadne's letter to Theseus in Ovid's *Heroides*, which is obviously very much indebted to Ariadne's speech in Catullus 64. Ovid's Ariadne does not accuse Theseus of having been whelped by a lioness, but reverts to the purely Homeric formula of sea and rocks:

> nec pater est Aegeus, nec tu Pittheidos Aethrae
> filius; auctores saxa fretumque tui. (Ov. *Her.* 10.130f)

The Homeric elements take on a special meaning in the case of Theseus: in some versions of the myth, it is literally true that Aegeus was not the father of Theseus; Poseidon was.[86] Thus Theseus was in a sense a child of the sea, and Ovid makes more explicit what was hinted at in Catullus' account; in retrospect, a literal answer to the rhetorical question was always latent in Ariadne's accusation that Theseus was spawned by the sea. This way of thinking is no surprise; even in the first instance, the force of Patroclus' charge that the sea, not Thetis, gave birth to Achilles obviously turns in part on the Nereid's identity as a sea-goddess. Therefore, even if one rejects the admittedly speculative argument that Catullus was having Lesbia pun on his name in poem 60, Catullus may nevertheless belong to the long list of poets who had played with literal answers to this sort of rhetorical question. Statius makes his own contribution to this tradition by alluding to Ariadne's question *quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena?* (64.154) while at the same time making *genetrix* refer ambivalently to the lioness and Thetis.

Statius is not the only poet to use the phrase *sub rupe leaenam/leonem* in order to allude to Catullus. The hymn to Hercules in book eight of the *Aeneid* begins thus:

> 'tu nubigenas, invicte, bimembris
> Hylaeumque Pholumque manu, tu cresia mactas
> prodigia et vastum Nemeae sub rupe leonem'. (*Aen.* 8.293–5)

The *leonem* named here is of course the Nemean lion, in whose impenetrable skin Hercules routinely draped himself. Representations often show him wearing it in such a way that its head was like a helmet, the lion's face nearly covering his own. So Vergil's allusion to Catullus' phrase *sub rupe leaenam* has an important point to it.[87] The distance between Hercules and the offspring of a lioness collapses visually when he wraps himself completely in the skin of a lion, as if Ariadne's

[86] As noted by Barchiesi (1993: 347, n 23).

[87] Vergil comes as close as he can: *leonem* instead of *leaenam*, because the Nemean lion was male.

accusation *te genuit sola sub rupe leaena* were literally true. It is not surprising this Catullan-Vergilian intertext appealed to Statius; Hercules in his mixture of the divine, the human, and the near-bestial is a model for the portrait of Achilles that Statius is in the process of sketching. In his hymn to Hercules, Vergil juxtaposed the Centaurs in the persons of Hylaeus and Pholus, next to Hercules in his lion skin, all of them being medial figures between man and beast.

Some insight about the way these intertexts were interpreted in antiquity may be gained from examining a comment of the sophist Favorinus as reported by Aulus Gellius.[88] Delivering a disquisition in favor of mothers breast-feeding their own children, Favorinus deplores the custom that leads to the blood of aristocratic infants being polluted by the milk of barbaric wet-nurses. His central point is a medical one: that the quality of the milk a child is given has a critical effect on its development.[89] In learned fashion, he adduces Vergil's support of this thesis. Gellius cites the Homeric lines quoted above (p 145) in which Patroclus casts aspersions on Achilles' parentage, and then compares an adaptation by Vergil, where Dido reproaches Aeneas:

> nec tibi diva parens, generis nec Dardanus auctor,
> perfide, sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens
> Caucasus Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres. (*Aen.* 4.365–7)

Gellius quotes this last line, which is the reason Favorinus approves of Vergil: unlike Homer, who only mentions the sea giving birth to Achilles, Vergil adds the charge that Aeneas was given suck by tigresses. Thus Vergil's support is demonstrated for the thesis that the development of a child is affected not only by the nature of its parents, but also by the kind of milk it is given. Favorinus' discussion of Vergil here is merely *en passant*; it is interesting nevertheless that he interrogates in a hyper-literal way the details of the fantastic rhetorical constructions of Patroclus and Dido in just the way that we have been doing. For the sake of his argument, Favorinus dips into the stock of a popular critical practice in antiquity, the comparison of Vergil and Homer. The approval he expresses of Vergil's amplification of Homer suggests that the added detail of the *ubera* and its significance had already been explored in that tradition.[90] Why, apart from the peculiar needs of Favorinus' argument, might this Vergilian passage have been deemed a commendable variation on Homer? Macrobius says that Vergil

[88] Gell. *NA* 12.1, on which see Gleason (1995: 140–3).

[89] On the ancient belief that corruption could be introduced into infants by their wet-nurses, see Bradley (1986: 214f).

[90] For a very similar discussion of these two passages, see Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.11.14–19.

added something that Homer had missed: *ad criminandos igitur mores defuit Homero quod Vergilius adiecit* (*Sat.* 5.11.19). It is perhaps not a coincidence that the infant Achilles had been given by Chiron to suck on the innards of wild animals; as Statius says: *nec almis / uberibus satiasse famem, sed spissa leonum / viscera* ... (2.98–100). Paris, according to one story, was suckled by a bear after he was exposed as an infant as a consequence of Hecuba's disturbing dream (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.12.5). Aeneas was not, as Dido charges, nursed by tigresses, but by mountain nymphs: νύμφαι μιν θρέψουσιν ὀρεσκῷοι βαθύκολποι (*Hymn. Hom. Aphr.* 257). It may be that Dido' speech originally reaped this sort of critical approval in antiquity not merely because, as our sources report, she added at random one more charge to the Homeric *topos*. The rhetorical effectiveness of her amplification should probably be evaluated in the light of the unconventional wet-nurses employed—of necessity, perhaps—by the non-human mothers of mortal heroes such as Achilles and Aeneas.

We have returned to the topic of Achilles' savage diet, which we discussed near the beginning of this chapter; in between we saw that Statius' depiction of Achilles expresses a paradoxical combination of the near-divine and the barely-human. His first appearance in the poem is like the return of a dangerous predator to his cave, but it is also something like a divine epiphany as well. It is clear that Achilles, as he stands on the threshold of Chiron's cave, is also on the threshold of great changes in his life. Statius describes his hero at the turning-point of manhood: *necdum prima nova lanugine vertitur aetas* (163). His epicene appearance is not surprising, in that he will presently go on to impersonate a girl.[91] Achilles, however, is at a crossroads not only of age and gender but also of existential categories. With Peleus and Phoenix out of the picture, the two parental figures that Statius has supplied for Achilles are an absentee goddess and a Centaur foster-father; each of these pull him in opposite directions, towards heaven and towards the raw existence of an animal. Achilles' dilemma is a vivid illustration of the situation of any mortal man, in that he must find a *modus vivendi* between these two poles of being. The *Achilleid* is not unique in ancient literature for exploring these concerns. It might be said that heroism as considered in Latin epic is an exploration of man *in extremis*, and so it tends to map the points where the human realm borders on the divine on the one side and on the bestial on the other. Compare Feeney's discussion of Hercules and Cacus in the *Aeneid*:

> According to Evander, the monster Cacus is *semihominis* ('half-

[91] Thus Aricò (1986: 2937).

> man', 'semi-human', 194), and he means that the other half is a beast, as he shows seventy lines later, when he calls him *semiferi* ('half-beast', 267); yet the god Vulcan is the creature's father (198), so that he is half-god as well. Hercules' semi-divine parentage likewise places him beyond the normal categories of humanity. Bestial and divine both surround the human, and extreme behaviour on either fringe may meet, so as to be indistinguishable. When Servius explains Hercules' difficult epithet of *communis* as meaning 'between gods and men' (8.275), he may be mistaking the gist of that particular passage, but he is putting his finger on something determinative about the significance of Hercules.[92]

The story of how Achilles redeems himself on Scyros and successfully invents himself with Ulysses' help as a man and as a hero is yet to come. That problem will present itself in terms of gender, so from here onwards we will be more concerned with Achilles as *semivir* than as *semifer* or *semideus*.[93] Before approaching the issue of Achilles' contested masculinity, though, it may be useful first to broach the subject of gender by addressing Statius' treatment of femininity, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

[92] Feeney (1991: 159). The expression of such paradoxes was not confined to literature; Gleason (1995: 144f) cites the report that Herodes Atticus owned a giant 'wild man', whom he named Heracles and set to wrestling fierce animals: Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 552f.

[93] Taking *semivir* in its usual sense of 'unmanly' (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.215), rather than its Ovidian sense of 'half-human' (*Her.* 9.141, *Ars Am.* 2.24, *Fast.* 5.380; but its usual meaning at *Met.* 4.386).

Chapter Four

WOMEN, RHETORIC, AND PERFORMANCE

> A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. Performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is nonetheless something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized.
>
> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life**

4.1 The Wrath of Thetis

The plot of the *Achilleid* as we have it describes an arc bounded by Thetis' two failures: her attempt to destroy Paris' fleet, and her attempt to keep her son hidden on Scyros. In order to make these failures plausible, Statius depicts Thetis as over-reaching her powers; the goddess becomes by turns a figure of pathos and of comic ineptitude. Her haplessness manifests itself in frequent misuse of language and rhetorical tropes; one way of reading this incompetence, I shall argue, is as the result of her attempt to usurp modes of behavior inappropriate to her gender. Foregrounding gender norms of all sorts in his poem, Statius does not limit his interest to the construction of masculinity; he also explores the behavior of his female characters as such. Thetis is the mirror-image of Achilles; both have equal difficulty wearing with ease the constricting garb of womanhood. We shall see that Thetis tries to adopt discursive modes at odds with normative behavior for epic goddesses; moreover, as a woman she lacks the requisite education to carry off her improvisations successfully. Thetis thus has difficulty adapting herself to literary models, such as the traditional epic roles of protective mother on the one hand, and of avenging nemesis on the other. We begin with Thetis' attempt to recreate the *ira* of the Vergilian Juno.

* Goffman (1959: 75).

4.1.1 Stormy Weather

The *Achilleid* begins *in medias res*, and we discover Thetis in mid-Ocean as she observes Paris' fleet sailing back from Sparta with Helen aboard. The goddess is spurred to action by her foreknowledge of the destined *sequelae* to this adventure, and she tries to intervene in the progress of fate by lobbying Neptune to sink Paris' fleet in a storm. This beginning cannot help but recall the opening of the *Aeneid*: a goddess intercedes with a god in order to stir up a storm to divert fate from its course and to wreck the fleet of a Trojan prince. The fact that the goddess in this case is Thetis, not Juno, may also remind us that the *Iliad* too began its course with Thetis interceding with a god, Zeus, on behalf of Achilles.[1] There is a major hurdle that blocks the narrator's initial attempts to align this story with the lineaments of the *Aeneid* (and the *Iliad*): there is, alas for Thetis, no storm in this particular mythological narrative of Paris' journey nor can she foil him completely without derailing the course of those very epic tales the poem seeks to invoke as precedents.[2] Thetis is refused by Neptune, and is forced to have recourse to other expedients in order to protect her son. This refusal is the first of many frustrations in which Thetis will prove to be a failure: she makes requests that are not granted and makes prophesies that do not come true. As Neptune says, *fata uetant* (81); and yet by aligning Thetis' desired outcome as so closely congruent to the norms of epic tradition, in particular to Juno's successful interview with Aeolus in the *Aeneid*, Statius seems to imply that it is just as much literary history as the Fates that stand in the way. Thetis presents herself as another Juno and the narrator begins by claiming the mantle of Vergil; both are rejected, snubbed by Neptune and denied their pretentious claim to that particular Homeric-Vergilian epic paradigm.

Does the *Achilleid* begin in deliberate failure, a confessedly rash and ill-conceived imitation on the parts of both Statius and Thetis of the *Aeneid*? If we look at the specifics of the relationship between this scene and its Vergilian

[1] Thus Hinds (1998: 96).

[2] There did exist, in fact, a version of this myth in which Paris and Helen were somewhat hindered on their way by a storm, and so Statius could have represented Thetis' embassy to Neptune as successful, if he had wished. According to Proclus' summary of the *Cypria*, in that poem Hera stirred up a storm against Paris and Helen, forcing them to put in at Sidon while on their way to Troy; this corresponds with Homer's account, although he does not mention a storm (*Il.* 6.289–92). On the other hand, Herodotus claims that, according to the *Cypria*, Paris and Helen reached Ilium in three days, *contrary* to Homer's information that they stopped at Sidon. For a summary of the numerous and diverse attempts to resolve this contradiction, see Bernabé (1987: 52f) ad *Cypria* F 14. At the very least, it seems that Statius could have derived implicit precedent from Homer and possibly explicit authorization from the *Cypria* that Paris was delayed on his way by a storm. On this argument, Thetis has not only Vergil's Juno but also the Hera of archaic epic as a model. Her failure even to delay Paris slightly, where Hera had succeeded in doing so, will thus have seemed all the more abject and startling.

exemplars, we may see that Statius is manipulating the contrast between his poem and Vergil's rather from a position of strength. It is only the character Thetis who gets her literary models wrong, not her creator. The global model for the plotting and inaugural position of Thetis' request to Neptune for a storm is clearly Juno's intervention with Aeolus, but on the other hand much of the detail of their encounter is drawn from Venus' petition at the end of *Aeneid* 5, in which she asks Neptune for calm seas for her son's crossing.[3] The tension between these two competing models of goddess behavior, Juno and Venus, is particularly visible in a transitional passage that links Thetis' first musings on what to do and her approach to Neptune. Thetis deliberates:

> nunc quoque—sed tardum, iam plena iniuria raptae.
> ibo tamen pelagique deos dextramque secundi,
> quod superest, complexa Iovis per Tethyos annos
> grandaevumque patrem supplex miseranda rogabo
> unam hiemem. (1.47–51)

This passage begins with a pointed allusion to, or rather, according to strict mythical chronology, an anticipation of Juno's opening speech in the *Aeneid*. The judgment of Paris found a place in her litany of Trojan wrongs: *iudicium Paridis spretaeque iniuria formae* (*Aen.* 1.27). These words anticipate Thetis' phrase *plena inuria raptae* (1.47) in vocabulary and syntax.[4] It is not coincidental that both of these *iniuriae* have been perpetrated by Paris. At this stage the audience is still imagining a Thetis who is positioning herself as a second Juno—or rather a prior Juno—affronted by Paris. She intends, like Juno, to avenge the *iniuria* of Paris with a storm; but by the end of the passage she has declared different intentions: to approach Neptune, not Aeolus; to go as a suppliant, not as an equal bargaining from a position of strength. These lines are immediately followed by a description of Neptune and his *thiasos* which shifts the point of reference away from the beginning of *Aeneid* 1 and towards the end of *Aeneid* 5, to which the phrase *quod superest* (1.49) also belongs. In these lines we witness Thetis repositioning herself strategically within the epic tradition, dropping the mask of power and adopting the role to which her situation compels her: the suppliant female.

The subsequent epic model for Thetis is Venus' approach to Neptune at the end of Book Five of the *Aeneid* (5.779–826). Some of the echoes in language

[3] For a detailed comparison of Vergil's Juno and Statius' Thetis, see Mulder (1955: 122–4).

[4] In both instances, *spretae ... formae* and *raptae* are participles of the *ab urbe condita* type and both are genitives that define the substance of an *iniuria*.

have been set out in Table 4.1. No one of these similarities is especially important in itself, but together they have a cumulative weight. These verbal echoes supplement the presence of a major visual landmark in both texts that signposts the connection between the two passages. As Vergil's Neptune departs the scene of his discussion with Venus, his chariot is escorted by a grand *thiasos* of sea-gods and sea-beasts. A similarly sculptural *thiasos* accompanies the chariot of Statius' Neptune, but in this case the entourage is described before the conversation between Thetis and Neptune has started, as if to help us orient ourselves with respect to the conversation's model in the *Aeneid* before it even begins.

Aeneid 5.796–826	*Achilleid* 1.48–94
quod superest (796)	quod superest (49, same *sedes*)
fas omne est (800)	fas sit (73)
permulsit pectora dictis (816)	dictisque ita mulcet amicis (79)
caeruleo ... curru (819)	caeruleis ... equis (78)
cete (822)	cete (55)
Tritonesque (824)	Tritones (55)

Table 4.1: Correspondences between Venus' embassy to Neptune and Thetis'.

There are significant parallels between the situations of Vergil's Venus and Statius' Thetis. Both are the divine mothers of the mortal, eponymous heroes of their respective epics; both approach Neptune for help. There are differences, too: Venus is asking for a calm sea, Thetis for a storm; Venus is successful in her request, Thetis is denied. The upshot of this double inversion is an identical result: no storm. It may be the fact of her motherhood that suggests this new epic role to Thetis, i.e. Venus in *Aeneid* 5 rather than Juno in *Aeneid* 1, but Thetis, as we shall see, is making a big mistake. We as readers of Vergil know that the result of Venus' interview was not a storm but rather a promise of safe crossing for a Trojan prince. Thetis seems unconcerned about that, however, and her lack of awareness of the Vergilian tradition is betrayed by the force of her own language, which moves, as it were, from knowing allusion to unconscious punning that undercuts her own designs.

What is more, we can identify the term that mediates between these two role-models, Juno and Venus. The odd phrase *secundi ... Iovis* (1.48f) demands explanation. As a description of Neptune it is unparalleled, but it would seem to be based on similarly periphrastic designations of Pluto, like Vergil's *Iovi Stygio* (*Aen.* 4.638) and Homer's Ζεὺς ... καταχθόνιος (*Il.* 9.457),[5] but the apotropaic purpose that motivates those turns of phrase is absent here. One explanation for

[5] On this class of epithets, see West (1978) ad Hesiod, *Op.* 465.

this curious coinage has been suggested by Hinds (1998: 96–8). He convincingly connects the epithet *secundus* with a series of moments in the *Achilleid* that programmatically lay claim to a kind of belatedness or secondariness in the epic tradition. More specifically he points out that to call Neptune *Iuppiter secundus* is to refer us back by implication to the 'original' Jove of the *Iliad*, and thus Thetis' first divine intervention on her son's behalf at the start of Homer's epic. This is true, and there is even more to it than that. For this epithet also looks forward, by means of a pun, to Thetis' prospective encounter with Neptune. The phrase *Iuppiter secundus* in a poetic context can be construed to mean simply 'favorable weather'. In fact, in Catullus' poem about his yacht (4.20f), that is precisely what this phrase does mean: good winds for sailing. With exquisite irony the hapless Thetis designates the figure she wants to lobby for a ship-destroying storm by the name 'good weather'.

The irony here is constructive, too. It adumbrates the very problem Thetis will have in accommodating herself to the particular requirements of her shifting epic paradigms. As she evolves from identifying with the avenging Juno to the motherly, concerned Venus, she moves from the example of a goddess who like her wants to stir up a storm to one who wants to ensure calm seas. The fit is less than perfect, and Neptune's epithet points out the slippage between Thetis' desires (i.e. a storm, *unam hiemem*) and the outcome of the Vergilian role she tries foolishly to co-opt (i.e. a safe crossing, propitious winds, *Iuppiter secundus*). We have seen Thetis try on epic roles like the items in a wardrobe: the indignation of Juno and the supplication of Venus. The lines we have been discussing are put in Thetis' own mouth, and should be read as belonging to Statius' characterization of the goddess. The epic narrator starts off in complicity with Thetis, beginning the poem in imitation of the *Aeneid*, with an angry goddess and the voyage of a Trojan prince. This narrator seems at first supportive of Thetis' attempts to position herself as a Vergilian Juno, and one distinguishes with difficulty between the narrator's invocation of the Vergilian model and Thetis'. Gradually, as Thetis changes her mind and takes on the very different role of Venus, Statius distances himself from her with irony, putting in her mouth 'unconsciously' self-defeating language and allusions which serve to characterize Thetis by excluding her from the circle of competence and erudition that Statius constructs between his audience and himself. Thetis may have supernatural insight into the future, but we and the poet know our Vergil, which is even more useful in this situation. We, being educated readers of epic, know that if you want to create a storm, you act like Juno; if you want to prevent one, you act like Venus. Thetis, lacking

a Roman education, does not know this. This handicap will further betray her in her interview with Neptune.

4.1.2 Thetis Addresses Neptune

When Thetis encounters Neptune he is in mid-ocean, attended by his *thiasos*; she addresses him thus:

> 'O magni genitor rectorque profundi,
> aspicis in qualis miserum patefeceris usus
> aequor? eunt tutis terrarum crimina velis,
> ex quo iura freti maiestatemque repostam
> rupit Iasonia puppis Pagasaea rapina.' (1.61–65)

Thetis begins her appeal with the very common topos of condemning the first man to sail the seas, and at line 65 we realize that she is making the traditional identification of that ship as the Argo. An unconscious irony undercutting Thetis' discourse manifests itself at this point: her own husband was on board during the very voyage that she is so conventionally denouncing. In fact, according to the account in Catullus 64, that was the occasion of his falling in love with her: *tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore* (64.19).[6] When Roman schoolboys practiced their declamations and employed chestnuts like this one as mythological *exempla*, the one thing they might reasonably be sure of is that they were safely removed from contemporary life; mythical events such as the Argo voyage did not directly involve themselves or anyone in the audience. Not so for Thetis. She has committed a classic rhetorical blunder in deploying an example that undermines rather than supports her own position.[7]

The question, then, is whether a Roman, with ears finely tuned to this kind of speechmaking, would have recognized Thetis' poor choice of starting-point. The answer is likely to have been yes, and in case anyone may have missed it, Neptune refers us to her blunder in his reply. He says to her:

> Pelea iam desiste queri thalamosque minores.... (1.90)

This line requires some interpretation; it is hard to know, on the face of it, to what Neptune is referring, since this line is the very first time Peleus' name is

[6] In other versions of the story, Achilles was already born when Peleus embarks; according to Apollonius (1.553–8) and Valerius Flaccus (1.255–9) the boy was brought to see his father off.

[7] Quintilian warns that great care must be taken when employing an *exemplum* to ensure that its appropriateness to the argument is more than superficial: *Solent tamen fallere similitudinum species, ideoque adhibendum est eis iudicium* (*Inst.* 5.11.26).

mentioned in the *Achilleid*. Thetis has certainly complained about Paris and about Jason and the Argonauts, but not yet about Peleus. She had done so 'already' in Homer, expressing to Hephaestus her resentment at her mortal wedding (*Iliad* 18.429–35). Yet in mythical time this encounter still lies in the future, so strictly speaking Neptune should not be referring to that particular episode. Mendelsohn (1990: 302) offers this explanation: 'Yet Thetis had not in fact mentioned her marriage at all; Neptune responds to what he expects to hear—such is the frequency with which we may presume she complains about Peleus'. Such a presumption is in fact a lot to read into the text, particularly since Thetis' concern for her son seems just now to have been suddenly reawakened from a period of dormancy by Paris' voyage from Sparta with Helen. Moreover, the vivid word *desiste* makes better sense if we imagine that Thetis is complaining right now. Neptune responds not to what he 'expects to hear', but to what he has in fact heard. He is pointing out that when the Nereid complains about mortals wandering to and fro on the sea, she is by implication complaining about the behavior of her own husband, too. Neptune thus suggests that Thetis may have personal reasons surpassing the conventional, rhetorical ones to regret the voyage of the Argo, since that was the beginning of her own troubles.

Thetis makes a formal error, blithely employing the clichés of mortal rhetoric without proper circumspection. More important, and beyond her own embarrassment, her *exemplum* risks gravely offending her *supplicandus*. For Thetis is not the only one implicated in the Argonaut story by her own personal history; so too is Neptune. Apollonius lists three sons of Poseidon among the Argonauts: Euphemus, Erginus and Ancaeus (1.179–89).[8] Would this complication have been perceptible to Statius' audience? Again, we find the answer in the reactions of the characters themselves. Thetis in her speech to Neptune finishes her introductory, Argonautic *exemplum* and goes on to complain at length about Paris (1.66–70), who is the real object of her anger. She then interrupts herself right at the critical point of making her request, reverting abruptly back to the story of the Argonauts:

> has saltem—num semideos nostrumque reportant
> Thesea?—si quis adhuc undis honor, obrue puppes
> aut permitte fretum! (1.71f)

The precipitancy of her change in thought is signalled by the violence of the syntax, with *has* separated from its noun, *puppes*, by two full lines and a parenthetical question. Rhetorically, this interruption could not have come at a

[8] Apollodorus includes only the first two names in his catalog of Argonauts (*Bibl.* 1.9.16).

worse time, as it diverts the flow of her argument just at the delicate moment when she is formulating her request. Why does Thetis revert to the subject of the Argo? Barth (ad loc) was right to note a change in Thetis' tone: 'blandius jam et clementius loquitur de Argonautis, semideos eos vocans'. Indeed, Thetis speaks much more kindly now of the Argonauts, even using them as a standard of nobility that Paris fails to meet. What Thetis is doing is to backpedal furiously from her earlier condemnation of the Argo, and the reason is that she has belatedly realized that she has insulted and offended Neptune. For, quite apart from the minor figures of Euphemus, Erginus and Ancaeus, Statius has added to poor Thetis' troubles by identifying Theseus as both an Argonaut and a son of Neptune. Statius already in Book 5 of the *Thebaid* had put Theseus aboard the Argo; the epithet *noster* for *Theseus* here must mean that Statius and Thetis follow the tradition that Theseus was the son not of Aegeus but Poseidon.[9] Thetis' *faux pas* is thoroughly damning; her belated use of the flattering term *semideos* demonstrates that she realizes too late the relevance of the immortal parentage of some of the Argonauts. She puts her finger precisely on her own blunder, too late, however, to repair the damage.

There are other ways in which Thetis miscalculates rhetorically. She veers away from her abuse of Paris and lets her anger settle upon Venus, which serves no point in her argument:

> eheu quos gemitus terris caeloque daturus,
> quos mihi! sic Phrygiae pensamus gaudia palmae,
> hi Veneris mores, hoc gratae munus alumnae. (1.68–70)

This abuse of Venus advances her cause not at all. One might read it as a representation of 'female' jealousy over Venus' victory in the beauty contest on Ida. Certainly such a lapse is the mark of a speaker who lets her emotions get the better of her judgement. Moreover, Thetis' decision to single Venus out for abuse is, intertextually speaking, another bad idea, given that Thetis is trying to reproduce Venus' successful petition to Neptune on Aeneas' behalf in *Aeneid* 5. Thetis' continued incompetence in handling the Vergilian paradigm of gods and storms is once more demonstrated in this passage. She breaks off her description of the suffering that Paris will bring (1.68) by adding at the beginning of the next line a very elliptical pendant: *quos mihi!* (i.e. *quos gemitus et mihi daturus!*). This is not technically an aposiopesis, but an ellipsis that depends for its meaning

[9] For Theseus as an Argonaut, cf. *Theb.* 5.431f, *Ach.* 1.156f; the tradition that Poseidon, not Aegeus, was Theseus' father goes back at least as far as Bacchylides (17), on which see Gantz (1993: 248f).

on the previous line. Nevertheless, the two figures are very closely related.[10] As such, Thetis' quasi-aposiopesis *quos mihi!* is strongly reminiscent of the most famous such construction in Latin, also at the beginning of a line, Neptune's *quos ego* in the *Aeneid* (1.135). By now we should not be surprised at any amount of self-defeating foolishness on Thetis' part, and this allusion is of a piece with her other attempts at acting out a Vergilian role. Neptune's outburst in the *Aeneid* belongs of course to the most famous scene in all literature of a god calming the waves. Then, Neptune was calming the seas; now, Thetis wants him to do the reverse. Thetis once again undermines her plea with a completely inapposite allusion; or rather, Statius undermines Thetis' discourse by putting in her mouth an 'unconscious' allusion to Vergil's representation of events that are yet to happen.

Thetis' ignorance of the literary canon is put in relief by the unlabored sophistication of Neptune's reply. It has long been noted that this passage is dense with reference to Catullus 64, particularly to the song of the Parcae.[11] In fact, the testimony of Statius has even been used by editors to emend the corresponding text of Catullus.[12] In mythical time the Parcae had 'already' told Thetis of her son's destiny, and by echoing their language Neptune implies that Thetis should know herself that her request is impossible. When he says *fata vetant*, Neptune is not merely making a general observation about destiny, but is introducing a near-verbatim quotation from the *fata* themselves, viz. Catullus' Parcae.[13] Once again, 'fate' in the world of the *Achilleid* is identical with literary tradition. Catullus 64 is a particularly appropriate buttress for Neptune's argument, as it takes its start from the voyage of the Argo and leads to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis; Neptune, as we have seen, rebuts Thetis by making a polemical connection between the Argo, Thetis' marriage and her son's destined greatness and death. Statius provides Neptune with a Latin allusion that elegantly illustrates and supports his case. The contrast with Thetis' bungling of Vergil is very pointed.

[10] 'Von der affektischen Ellipse ist nicht immer scharf zu scheiden die Aposiopese' (LHS 823).

[11] Compare *cum Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine ⟨campi⟩* (Catullus 64.344), and *saepe fatebuntur gnatorum in funere matres* (64.349), with *quanta / aspicies victrix Phrygiarum funera matrum, / cum tuus Aeacides tepido modo sanguine Teucros / undabit campos* (*Ach.* 1.84–7).

[12] In his 1566 edition of Catullus, Achilles Statius (Aquiles Estaço) supplied *campi* in 64.344 on the basis of Statius' imitation at *Ach.* 1.84–8: see Heslin (1997: 593). Not all modern editors have been entirely happy with this emendation, but the MSS are corrupt and no other suggestion has found general favor.

[13] For the equation of *fata* with the Parcae, cf. Thetis' pleonastic phrase: *humiles Parcas terrenaque fata* (1.255); see also *OCD*^{3} s.v. 'fate', which cites Gellius' designation of the Parcae as *tria fata* (*NA* 3.16.9f).

Statius accomplishes his characterization of Thetis and Neptune in part by a particularly sophisticated deployment of intertextuality. The idea that Greek gods and heroes should be represented in the literature of Rome as speaking Latin is a convention completely naturalized and transparent for Statius and his audience. It may be, however, that a certain slight amount of pressure is put on that concept when Greek gods and mortal characters quote Vergil and Catullus as 'classics'. This is not necessarily the case, of course; there are endless examples of later Roman poets unproblematically endowing the speeches of their Greek characters with Vergilian phrases in order to lend them depth and epic dignity. Thetis is different in that her lack of rhetorical and literary sophistication makes an issue of assumptions that are usually taken for granted. Neptune's dexterity in his handling of allusion is the norm; Thetis' poor showing is the comic exception which may expose the seams, if we wish to see them, that betray the constructedness of Latin mythological epic. In such characteristic moments we can see the comic spirit of the *Achilleid* very clearly. The example of Thetis also brings to light the extent to which the intertextual mode of ancient poetry implicitly constructs a community of poet, audience and even character as knowledgeable and competent interpreters of classic authors. Such a community of competence was a matter of some concern to the historical Statius, since his father made his living as a teacher by selling access to it. Thetis is a poorly equipped poseur, whose literary incompetence contrasts with the mastery shown by the male characters. On the level of characterization, her discourse represents her as someone whose rhetoric does the opposite of what it should: it betrays her weakness rather than enhances the strength of her argument. We shall consider whether, in the patriarchal economy of Latin epic, there might not be something that can usefully be called 'feminine' about such a character.

4.2 Rhetoric and Maternity

When Thetis arrives at Chiron's cave, Achilles is out hunting alone; she accosts Chiron in alarm, worried about the level of supervision he has been giving her son.

> 'Ubinam mea pignora, Chiron,
> dic', ait, 'aut cur ulla puer iam tempora ducit
> te sine?' (1.127–9)

There is irony latent in this sudden concern for Achilles' whereabouts. The reader might well ask what right Thetis has to scold Chiron when she herself has not

taken part in the rearing of her son. The *Achilleid* is not helpful in explaining why Thetis did not raise her son and how Achilles came to be fostered with the Centaur. Achilles himself does not even seem to know; as he says about the balance of his story, *scit cetera mater* (2.167). In the absence of other information, we are forced to sketch in his background from sources outside the poem. As we have seen (above, Section 3.1.2), there are two competing versions, which come from Homer and Apollonius respectively. In the *Iliad*, Achilles grows up at Phthia with Peleus and Thetis, receiving at some unspecified time a certain amount of medical instruction from Chiron. According to Apollonius (*Argon.* 4.865–79) on the other hand, Peleus interrupted Thetis as she tried to make her child immortal by roasting his mortal flesh in the hearth, whereupon she dropped the baby Achilles and fled into the sea, never to return. In this scenario, Peleus' decision to leave his son with Chiron while traveling with the Argo is motivated by Thetis' departure. By implication Statius follows Apollonius' version, since neither the narrator nor Achilles himself in his autobiographical sketch (2.96–167) ever mentions that he spent any time at all at Phthia. Even if Thetis, not Peleus, was responsible in the *Achilleid* for lodging Achilles with Chiron, her sudden concern at Chiron's lack of supervision has a hypocritical cast to it, since she herself has clearly not been around for some time.

We cannot be certain that the history of Achilles' abandonment by his mother is relevant to this passage, since there is no reference to it here. Thetis does, however, go on to mention a story that is curiously parallel to Apollonius'. She describes a nightmare in which she repeats the now-famous story of her trip to the underworld in order to dip Achilles by the heel into the Styx (1.133f; see above, Section 2.2.4). Statius is our earliest source for this tradition of Thetis' attempt to make him impervious to injury in this way. The elliptical mode of reference to this myth here and elsewhere in the poem implies that Statius assumed a certain level of familiarity with it among his audience.[14] Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the more prestigious epic version of Achilles' infancy in Statius' era will have been the one authorized by Apollonius, and not the story of Achilles' heel so familiar to us now. Both accounts describe Thetis' attempts to make her son immortal, one in the hearth, the other in the Styx; but Apollonius' account takes a much harsher view of Thetis. So when Thetis speaks in her own voice, it is no surprise that what she has to say about her care of Achilles as an infant reflects much better on her than Apollonius' account does. Nevertheless, uncertainty about Achilles' infancy remains. Even if Thetis

[14] See the discussion of Achilles' heel above, Section 2.2.4.

provides here an alternate version of her attempt to make the infant Achilles immortal, she does not explain how she came to have abandoned her child. So the question she asks Chiron, 'Why does the boy spend even a moment without your supervision?' may still rebound on her and prompt the audience to ponder Thetis' own inconsistency of involvement in supervising her son's upbringing.

Thetis' story about her nightmare is rhetorically useful to her in that it reminds Chiron of her past concern for her son, the services she has rendered to him, and the unspeakable unpleasantness to her that she claims it involved (*nefas!*, 1.133). Thetis continues to describe to Chiron the nightmares and terrors she has experienced out of fear for her son, including a vision of wild animals trying to suckle at her breast (1.129–34).[15] This is another rhetorically self-defeating moment, for it may remind us once again of Thetis' distance from her offspring more than her motherliness. Thetis, despite her nightmares, and whatever the reasons for her long absence, did not suckle her own son. Achilles himself says, *dicor ... nec almis / uberibus satiasse famem ...* (2.96–9).

4.2.1 Thetis Lies to Chiron

Thetis now embarks upon the lie she has cobbled together in order to explain her sudden need to remove Achilles from the Centaur's care. She claims that Proteus has advised her to perform certain magical rites in order to purge her fevered mind. Thetis, having evoked Juno and Venus in the *Aeneid*, now cannot resist the greatest Vergilian female role of all. Statius, as Dilke pointed out, 'seems clearly to have in mind the scene in Virg. *Aen.* 4.480 ff. where Dido, who is deceiving Anna about her real intentions, tells her that she has found an Ethiopian sorceress who will cure her of her love, and asks her to put relics of Aeneas on a funeral pyre'. The similarities in language are collected in Table 4.2.

Here Thetis would seem to be on safer ground than she was in her earlier attempts to invoke Vergilian models of behavior, inasmuch as her purposes are similar to Dido's. Each woman is trying to perpetrate a deception in order to induce someone close to her to abet a scheme that would otherwise be unacceptable. To that end, each invents a tale that a faraway magician has ordered her to perform certain rites. Each attempts to lend a sort of magical plausibility to her lie; Dido claims that she will ritually burn Aeneas' possessions to exorcize his memory, while Thetis implies by the sequence of her argument that her lustrations at the end of Ocean will be something of a recapitulation of her trip

[15] Mendelsohn (1990: 301, quoted above, Section 3.3.4) comments on the potency of this image in the light of the poem's comparison of Achilles to a lion and Thetis to a lioness.

Achilleid 1.135–40	*Aeneid* 4.480–502
abolere ... iubet ... vates (135f)	abolere ... iuvat[a] sacerdos (497f)
magici (135)	magicas (493)
sacri (135)	sacris (500)
litora summa Oceani (137f)	Oceani finem ... ultimus locus (480f)
sub axe peracto ... ubi ... tepet	ubi maximus Atlas axem umero tor-
inlabentibus astris Pontus (136–9)	quet stellis ardentibus aptum (481f)

[a] Dilke reads *iubet* here on the evidence of Statius' imitation; the better MSS have *iuvat*.

Table 4.2: Correspondences between Thetis' lie and Dido's (after Dilke ad 135ff).

to the Styx to protect the infant Achilles. This time Statius has given Thetis a Vergilian model appropriate to her goals, and her results improve accordingly; Thetis' deception of Chiron is successful, just as Dido's was. There must be, however, something disproportionate and inauspicious about invoking Dido's suicide as a precedent. Anna went on to prepare a pyre for Dido, who used it to end her own life. Chiron will likewise unwittingly acquiesce in a process whose consummation he may regret; but Thetis wants to save a life, not to end one. In the final analysis, therefore, this Vergilian paradigm also portends an unhappy outcome for Thetis.

The goddess soon grows impatient with spinning out the details of her lie and abruptly interrupts herself, concluding her speech to Chiron in this way:

> 'ibi ignotis horrenda piacula divis
> donaque—sed longum cuncta enumerare vetorque.
> trade magis!' (1.139–41)

Thetis' impatience, her abrupt curtailment of the argument and the peremptory way she poses her request are perhaps further signs of her lack of rhetorical fluency. She has not fully thought out the details of her lie, just as on the earlier occasion when she realized that she had forgotten to think up a girl's name for Achilles, and so abruptly changed the subject (see above, Section 3.1). Her syntax betrays a similar lack of preparedness in her deception here.

Thetis' blunt command, *trade magis!*, gives the impression of impatience not only with the details of her lie, but also with the fact that, despite being Achilles' mother, she has to explain herself to someone else. With these final words, Statius once again undercuts the force of her rhetoric, foisting upon her another unconscious and self-defeating pun.[16] The word *magis* here admits two

[16] For a similar example, see above (p 155) on the phrase *Iuppiter secundus*.

meanings, only one of which suits Thetis' purposes. All editors since Barth have explained *magis* as an adversative adverb, meaning, like *potius*, 'rather'.[17] Yet the word stands before a consonant in the next sentence, and so the meter does not allow us to determine whether the second syllable should be long or short. Thus we, as readers without the benefit of an authoritative recitation, cannot be sure whether Thetis said, 'hand him over, rather', or, 'hand him over to the magicians'.[18] Thetis has, after all, just explained that she is under orders to perform some sort of *sacrum magicum* (1.135). In fact, two humanist commentators on Statius, Maturantius and Brittanicus, had explained *magis* in just this way, as the dative plural of *magus*.[19] The result of this ambiguity is that Thetis raises the possibility that, when Chiron hands his ward over to Thetis, she will simply pass him on to a surrogate. In the event, this is of course what happens, in the more respectable person of Lycomedes. Thetis is successful in her appeal to Chiron, but even here her unique style of self-destructing argument is apparent.

4.2.2 Thetis Addresses Achilles

As we saw, Statius never quite explains how Achilles came to be raised by Chiron, nor does he advert directly to Apollonius' tale of Thetis' sudden abandonment of her son and husband. Rather, he sketches a certain distance and lack of intimacy between the two that hints at Thetis' absenteeism. After dinner Achilles falls asleep; he naturally goes to Chiron's side out of habit, despite his mother's presence:

> ... saxo collabitur ingens
> Centaurus blandusque umeris se innectit Achilles,
> quamquam ibi fida parens, adsuetaque pectora mavult. (1.195–7)

Thetis is now free to take a walk upon the shore and to ponder where to hide her son. Having decided on Scyros, she carries the boy there while he sleeps. When he awakens, Achilles is surprised at being in a different place, and his amazement is cast in terms that refer to the change of locale (*quae loca, qui fluctus, ubi Pelion?* 1.249), but also to the change in his usual care-giver, as Achilles hesitates

[17] For *magis* in the sense of *potius*, see LHS 497f.

[18] On indifference to vowel length in Latin wordplay, see Ahl (1985: 56f).

[19] The commentary of Maturantius (Francesco Maturanzio, d. 1518) was first published in 1475, and reprinted with the *Achilleid* a number of times; I consulted it in Calderini's 1498 edition of Statius. I have not seen the edition of Britannicus (Iohannes Britannicus Brixianus, ed. Brescia 1485), but his comment here has been kindly confirmed for me by Harald Anderson *per litteras*.

to acknowledge that he is now with his mother (*dubitatque agnoscere matrem*, 1.250). So when Thetis essays her next hortatory performance, common sense would dictate that she should attempt to bridge the gap that heretofore has separated mother and child. She makes a certain effort in this direction, yet her intentions are subverted by a measure of contempt for Achilles' mortality that seeps into her mode of address. Her task is a most nettlesome one and it is a point on which the plot of the *Achilleid* turns: how does she convince the hero to don a girl's clothes? In the event, her achievement in this matter will be credited more to the fortuitous appearance of Deidamia than to her own powers of persuasion. Notwithstanding this serendipitous success, Thetis' rhetorical incompetence is put on full display in this speech. She begins her petition in terms that could only further alienate her already bewildered son.

Thetis' speech starts and ends on the note of *care puer* (1.252, 273), and the narrator claims that Thetis is trying to soothe Achilles, who is still disoriented by his new surroundings (*blandeque adfata paventem*, 251); but her words are full of reproach to her son's lineage and, though he is never named, to his father. She reminds him that if luck had been on her side and she had made a different kind of marriage, Achilles would have been immortal, and all of Thetis' problems would have been solved:

> 'Si mihi, care puer, thalamos sors aequa tulisset,
> quos dabat, aetheriis ego te conplexa tenerem
> sidus grande plagis, magnique puerpera caeli
> nil humiles Parcas terrenaque fata vererer.' (1.252–5)

Thetis would have been *magni ... puerpera caeli* (1.254), where *caeli* reminds us that Achilles would have gained from Jupiter as a father not just immortality, but succession to his father's dominion over gods and men (cf. *patrio ... caelo*, 1.2). Just how far that ambition exceeds Achilles' grasp finds expression in the bitterness that Thetis vents on her son, who is the least at fault. This is how she characterizes his lineage:

> nunc inpar tibi, nate, genus, praeclusaque leti
> tantum a matre via est.... (1.256f)

Méheust provocatively translates *nunc inpar tibi, nate, genus* as 'Mais tu es un bâtard, mon fils....' One suspects he derived this phrasing from Dilke's note (ad 256f), which wavers between interpreting the phrase *inpar ... genus* as referring to 'illegitimate sons and the like' or rather as indicating someone whose

family was simply less distinguished on one side than the other. When we look at the usage of the word *impar* the reason behind Dilke's hesitation will become clear: according to Roman custom and law a union between unequals need not necessarily be illicit, but was often so. Thus Dilke's example from Tacitus, *maternum genus impar* (*Hist.* 2.50), does not refer to an illegitimate union, as it is between a man of consular rank and a woman of equestrian family—a match to raise eyebrows, but hardly forbidden. A more strongly worded example is Sallust calling Jugurtha illegitimate on account of his mother's low birth (*ignobilitatem Iugurthae, quia materno genere impar erat...*, *Iug.* 11.3). Difference of status could be in the eye of the beholder, as when Augustus' daughter Julia scorned Tiberius for a husband *ut imparem* (Tac. *Ann.* 1.53). There was a real bar prohibiting very unequal marriages, particularly after Augustus' marriage legislation. The *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC attempted to maintain the dignity of the senatorial class by forbidding the intermarriage of senators and their descendants with freedmen, freedwomen and actors. Treggiari has pointed out that the accidental preponderance of heredity along the maternal line in the Julio-Claudian imperial house tended to generate in the general populace an increasing importance placed upon maternal descent.[20] In this context Thetis' comment marks her as something of a snob. The sound of the phrase *impar genus* in the mouth of a woman referring to her husband would characterize her as proud and high-born, fiercely jealous of her station and blood. Thetis reminds her son that she is of high status and Peleus is of (relatively) low status in terms that had current resonance at Rome; it is at the very least unkind and could even put Achilles' legitimacy in doubt; for the quasi-legal phrase *impar genus* could also denote a spouse too ignoble to be marriageable.

There is a very similar example in Latin literature of the metaphorical use of the relation between social superior and inferior to figure the relation between immortal and mortal. In the Amor and Psyche episode of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Venus is furious at the thought of her son marrying a mortal and asserts in a parody of legal jargon that Psyche's son will be rendered illegitimate (*spurius*) by the match since the marriage will be between unequals (*impares ... nuptiae,* 6.9), and besides that there will be no witnesses to the ceremony nor paternal consent. Then Jupiter turns to Venus and reassures her:

> 'nec tu', inquit, 'filia, quiquam contristere, nec prosapiae tantae tuae statuque de matrimonio mortali metuas. iam faxo nuptias non im-

[20] See Treggiari (1991) for references to the importance of maternal lineage (91f, esp. n 35), and on the provisions of the *lex Julia* (60–4).

pares, sed legitimas et iure civili congruas'. (6.23)

Even in its humorous application to the divine realm the quasi-legal sense of *impar* is made clear by its opposition here to *nuptias ... legitimas et iure civili congruas.*[21] The incongruous use of technical terminology like *impar genus* in a divine or mythological setting has an Ovidian ring to it.[22] In fact, Alessandro Barchiesi has suggested another way in which the phrase *impar genus* may be read.[23] Ovid argues in one of the *Amores* that his *servitium amoris* at the hands of the beautiful Corinna is an example of the rule that great things may be joined to lesser. He cites a number of examples of goddesses who married lesser beings, including Thetis: *creditur aequoream Phthio Nereida regi ... concubuisse* (*Am.* 2.17.17f). He also mentions Venus' marriage to the unlovely and limping Vulcan; the mention of limping brings to mind the rhythm of the elegiac meter:

carminis hoc ipsum genus impar; sed tamen apte
iungitur herous cum breviore modo. (*Am.* 2.17.21f)

For Ovid, *genus impar* is a pun on the nature of elegy. It is an 'unbalanced genre' because of the inequality of the number of feet in its alternate lines, but it is also a sort of 'bastard child'. Like the previous examples, the mating of Calypso and Ulysses, Thetis and Peleus, Egeria and Numa, and Venus and Vulcan, it is a result of the joining of the more noble, heroic hexameter to the plebeian pentameter. There is no pun in Statius' use of the phrase, since the metrical connotation of *impar* would not apply to the hexameters of the *Achilleid*, but the suggestion is attractive that Statius borrowed this legal term from Ovid for his description of the inequality between Peleus and Thetis. If that is so, then the generic connotations of the phrase cannot be ignored; Achilles, on account of his lower birth, must now proceed to take part in the kind of humiliation for the sake of love that is more associated with the *servitium amoris* of elegy than epic. The *Achilleid*, like Achilles, is the offspring of mismatched parents: the epic on the one hand and other poetic traditions, including elegy, on the other.

It might seem harsh for a mother to cast aspersions on the lineage of her own son; at the very least it is a poor way to introduce a difficult request. As Thetis carries on, her discourse continues to betray her in familiar ways. She embarks on a series of rhetorical *paradeigmata* which attempt to show Achilles that transvestism can be a noble option. Just as her earlier attempt to sway

[21] Kenney (1990) ad 6.9.6 notes that Jupiter is repeating back to Venus the legalistic language of her earlier complaint.

[22] Cf. Coleman (1990).

[23] Lecture, delivered at Princeton, May 1, 1999.

Neptune featured an appeal to the *exemplum* of the Argo which actually served to undercut her argument, so too here her *exempla* lead in the opposite direction to that which she intends:

> si Lydia dura
> pensa manu mollesque tulit Tirynthius hastas,
> si decet aurata Bacchum vestigia palla
> verrere, virgineos si Iuppiter induit artus,
> nec magnum ambigui fregerunt Caenea sexus:
> hac sine, quaeso, minas nubemque exire malignam. (1.260–5)

First she adduces the example of Hercules' servitude to Omphale and their exchange of dress. It is unsurprising and appropriate that she uses this example, as it was perhaps the most famous incident of transvestism in ancient art and literature. Hercules is a fittingly heroic and virile role-model for Achilles, even if their circumstances were different, as Hercules was under a constraint to serve Omphale in order to atone for his slaying of Iphitus.[24] Thetis' next two examples are also reasonable: the god Bacchus' gender-indeterminate dress in his *aurata ... palla*, and the story as told by Ovid of Jupiter's pursuit of Callisto while disguised as Diana (*Met.* 2.401–65). This latter example does in fact prefigure very well Achilles' eventual situation in Scyros, but not perhaps in the way Thetis foresees. Both Jupiter and Achilles take on female disguise in order to enter into a maiden's company; both adventures end in rape and discovery. Jupiter's amours are not the most heroic precedent for Achilles, and it is not clear that seduction and rape is a desirable outcome for Thetis. Still, her first three *exempla* cannot be seriously faulted, especially given the shortage of heroic cross-dressers in the stock of classical myth.

Thetis cannot stop while she is ahead. Her fourth heroic exemplar is Caeneus, who contrary to the others was never a transvestite, but like Tiresias a transsexual. Caenis was a maiden who was raped by Poseidon; and when offered a wish in recompense, she chose to be changed into an invulnerable man, thereafter named Caeneus.[25] Thetis is apparently trying to argue that having once been the maiden Caenis did not interfere with the male Caeneus' later strength as a hero; but this mythical figure actually exemplifies the instability

[24] Gantz (1993: 439f) points out that in Seneca (*Herc. Oet.* 371–7) Hercules' transvestism is attributed directly to his infatuation with Omphale. If Thetis means to follow this account, the parallel with Achilles' situation is even stronger.

[25] Ov. *Met.* 12.177–209; in Vergil's underworld she has reverted once more to the female (*Aen.* 6.448f), so Caeneus may represent the transformation of male to female as well as female to male.

of gender, which is the opposite of what Thetis wants to demonstrate. In order to bring out the full force of Thetis' blundering confusion of transvestite and transsexual it may be useful to compare her rhetorical strategy with a real speech from antiquity that deployed much the same *exempla*, albeit to a very different purpose. Aelius Aristides addressed the people of Smyrna in January, AD 170 in a speech that attacked the effeminacy of certain crowd-pleasing sophists whose extravagant self-presentation he considered more fitting to pantomime-dancers than orators.[26] In this speech he mocks their extravagance of dress, grooming, voice and gesture, calling such performances a kind of rhetorical transvestism. Towards the climax of the speech, Aristides brings forth a parade of mythical cross-dressers as *paradeigmata*. He notes that while Heracles may have danced for Omphale in the manner of these sophists, at least for him there were extenuating circumstances, and thus he did not shame himself in so doing. Aristides then moves to his other two *exempla*, the first of which is Caeneus:

> τίσιν δὲ καὶ προσήκων ὁ χαρακτήρ; πότερον τοῖς περὶ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς καὶ αγωνιστικοὺς τῶν λόγων; τἀναντία μεντἂν πάθοιεν τῷ Καινεῖ τῷ Θετταλῷ γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀνδρῶν γενόμενοι. (*Or.* 34.61)

That is, the effeminate comportment of these sophists risks even changing their sex definitively, like Caeneus. Aristides then decries the spectacle of a philosophically minded orator preaching self-control while he cannot practice it himself in his style of oratory, comparing him to Sardanapallus vainly singing battle-hymns while weaving and doing women's work. This is how a virtuoso orator deploys his cross-dressing *paradeigmata*. Aristides begins with a kind of preemptive strike, acknowledging the damaging potential of Heracles to operate against him as a counter-example of a virtuous transvestite; he therefore minimizes this threat to his argument by giving extenuating facts about Heracles' stay in Lydia. Then he proceeds to two figures that are much more useful to his purposes, and who show forcefully the dangers of cross-dressing. Caeneus/Caenis is an extreme example of the way a desire to emulate the opposite gender could corrupt even the subject's sex. Finally, and climactically, Sardanapallus is an example of a man whose effeminacy could cost an entire people its independence.[27]

How does this scheme compare with Thetis' arguments to Achilles, bearing in mind that she is trying to demonstrate the opposite conclusion, namely, that

[26] *Or.* 34, 'Against Those Who Burlesque the Mysteries (Of Oratory)', as translated by Behr (1981: 2.173–184); its circumstances of delivery are apparently described by the author in his *Sacred Discourses* (*Or.* 51.38–41): see Gleason (1995: 122–6).

[27] On Sardanapallus, the last Assyrian king, as the stereotyped epitome of the lazy, effeminate, cross-dressing 'Oriental', see Diodorus 2.23.

a little transvestism is a harmless thing? She starts excellently with Heracles, whose potential to buttress the sort of case Thetis is making was openly acknowledged by Aristides. She continues well enough with Bacchus and Jupiter, but her climactic example is Caeneus, who can only exemplify, as Aristides knew, the danger of one sex changing to the other. Thetis employs as her clinching *exemplum* an anecdote whose force in this context is to demonstrate the opposite conclusion. What is more, Thetis' language betrays her once again; it bears out this difficulty and calls our attention to her mistake. As Dilke says (ad 264), 'In l. 337 *ambiguus ... sexus* is said of Achilles; here the pl. [*ambigui ... sexus*] is more appropriate owing to Caeneus' change of sex'. A key difference this plural makes, too. It is one thing to change clothing, quite another to change sex. Thetis needs to project a conception of the relation between sex and gender that is fixed and constant in order to win her point that Achilles' prospective violation of gender norms poses no threat to his sex. Caeneus, on the other hand, is an *exemplum* of the opposite thesis, i.e. the instability of biological sex. Thetis' own inability to keep these two categories straight is yet another manifestation of her rhetorical incompetence, and a sign of how tricky the subject of transvestism can be. Thetis even directly articulates the fear that cross-dressing can generate: that the change in clothing will affect Achilles' nature as determined by his sex: *cape tuta parumper / tegmina non nocitura animo* (1.270f).[28] This phrase and Thetis' mistaken invocation of Caeneus evince the same anxiety regarding the immutability of biological sex and normative gender roles.[29]

Statius poses the problem of why a hero like Achilles would have done what he did on Scyros in a set of rhetorical questions:

> Quis deus attonitae fraudes astumque parenti
> contulit? indocilem quae mens detraxit Achillem? (1.283f)

The usual justification for Achilles' strangely unheroic sojourn in Scyros was that he was being a good son considerate of his mother's wishes. As Ovid says: *turpe,*

[28] For ancient expressions of the dangers presented by transvestism, see Gleason (1995: 100).

[29] Gellius was at pains to point out that the tale of Caenis/Caeneus, mythical though it was, was the reflection of a real and present danger to the separation of the sexes. He reviewed the evidence given by the elder Pliny (*NH* 7.34–6) for reported cases of spontaneous sex change and came to the conclusion that: *neque respuenda neque ridenda sit notissimua illa veterum poetarum de Caenide et Caeneo cantilena* (*NA* 9.4.14). Likewise Phlegon of Tralles' *Book of Marvels* (*Mir.* 4–9) has a section on sex-changers and hermaphrodites that begins with Tiresias and Caenis and proceeds to supposedly contemporary examples and claimed autopsy. Hanson (1996: 123–6) speculates that these reports probably had a factual basis in the misunderstanding of a certain medical disorder, male pseudo-hermaphrodism. The discovery in the Roman empire of a sex-change of the Caenis type was no trivial event, but a prodigy that demanded expiation at the highest levels (Phlegon, *Mir.* 6.4).

nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset, Achilles / veste virum longa dissimulatus erat (*Ars Am.* 1.689f). The questions posed by Statius are reminiscent of classroom exercises in rhetoric. The problem of explaining Achilles' transvestism comes up in the *progymnasmata* of Libanius, but was probably also current in Statius' day. For example, Libanius records an exemplary Ψόγος Ἀχιλλέως which indicts Achilles for his ignoble behavior on Scyros in these terms: τοῦτο δὲ εἴτε ἄκων εἴτε ἑκὼν αὐτῇ τῇ μητρὶ χαριζόμενος ἔπλαττεν, ἀμφοτέρωθεν οὐ καλόν.[30] A corresponding Ἐγκώμιον Ἀχιλλέως likewise defends the hero in terms of his filial piety.[31] In a general way, the *Achilleid* conforms to this idea, putting responsibility for the Scyros episode squarely on Thetis' shoulders. Yet the timing of Statius' rhetorical questions is ironic, and they takes the credit for Thetis' success away from her. Immediately subsequent to these lines, and as if in answer to the narrator's rhetorical questions, Deidamia and her sisters appear on the Scyrian shore (285) and Achilles falls in love. Statius clearly attributes Achilles' sudden acquiescence to his mother's plan and his new-found willingness to dress as a girl neither to his consideration for his mother's fears, as was traditional, nor to the Nereid's dubious rhetorical gifts, but to the fortuitous arrival of Deidamia. The answer implied hereby to the questions, 'What god bestowed guile and cunning upon the bewildered mother? What plan subdued Achilles' pride?' is 'No god at all and no plan but luck'. The contradictory notion that Thetis is at once 'bewildered' (*attonitae*) and yet endowed with 'guile and cunning' (*fraudes astumque*, 282) is a sign of the irony in Statius' presentation of the goddess. For all of Thetis' lies and cajoling, she owes her success not to her 'plan' (*mens*, 1.283), which was undermined by her poor powers of persuasion, but to the mere chance appearance of a girl who catches Achilles' fancy.

4.2.3 Thetis Instructs Achilles

When Achilles sees Deidamia on the shore and Thetis observes his infatuation with her, she knows she has won her point (1.318, 325). Thetis then begins to work her transformation:

> ... tum colla rigentia mollit
> submittitque graves umeros et fortia laxat
> bracchia et inpexos certo domat ordine crines
> ac sua dilecta cervice monilia transfert;
> et picturato cohibens vestigia limbo

[30] Libanius, ed. Förster (1915), vol 8, p 284.
[31] Libanius, ed. Förster (1915), vol 8, p 237.

incessum motumque docet fandique pudorem. (1.326–331)

There is much obvious comedy in this scene, as Achilles takes his first steps as a girl. It is worth noting that Thetis puts just as much stress on the way Achilles comports himself as she does on the way he looks and dresses; these elements of her instruction may in part be derived from identifiable sources. There were no ancient guidebooks on how to achieve a demure femininity; but it was a commonly accepted notion in antiquity that, although virtue was largely innate, nevertheless proper comportment as a man was to some extent an achieved and achievable skill.[32] A young man had plenty of sources of guidance in antiquity on how he could achieve the *gravitas* appropriate to adult manhood. As Gleason has shown, these guidelines often found expression *per contra* as descriptions of effeminate behavior which was studiously to be avoided. She quotes the physiognomical tract of the second-century sophist Polemo as offering the following cautionary portrait of the *androgynos*:

> You may recognize him by his provocatively melting glance and by the rapid movement of his intensely staring eyes. His brow is furrowed while his eyebrows and cheeks are in constant motion. His head is tilted to the side, his loins do not hold still, and his slack limbs never stay in one position. He minces along with little jumping steps; his knees knock together. He carries his hands with palms turned upward. He has a shifting gaze, and his voice is thin, weepy, shrill and drawling.[33]

Compare Thetis' instructions: relax the neck, so that the head is not held stiffly (*colla*, 326), keep the shoulders slack (*umeros*, 327), relax the arms (*bracchia*, 328), and take tiny steps (*incessum*, 330f). Achilles is getting the imaginary inverse of a Roman education, where his natural virtues are to be hidden rather than enhanced. To stand for the notion of a 'female' education, which did not exist in such terms, Statius has substituted a topsy-turvy version of male education where what was bad is good and what was good is bad, and the *androgynos*

[32] Quintilian, for example, maintains that excellence in oratory requires both aptitude and training (*Inst.* 11.3.11–13).

[33] Gleason (1995: 63). This quotation in offered in English, as it is Gleason's reconstruction of Polemo's argument, which does not survive in its original form. There is an Arabic translation of the treatise, which supplies part of this passage; it is supplemented here by information from a Greek epitomator, and from a Latin treatise that relies heavily on Polemo. All three of these texts, with a facing translation into Latin of the Arabic, are printed by Förster (1893: Arabic, vol 1, pp 276f; Greek, vol 1, pp 415f; Latin, vol 2, pp 123f); see Gleason (1995: 30–2) on the tradition of Polemo's text and its derivatives.

is the ideal rather than a figure of contempt.[34]

A Roman education would have included instruction in posture, gait, voice, and grooming. Attire was taught, too; the proper way to wear a toga and to move about in it with dignity were evidently not entirely intuitive. Thetis' warning to Achilles that he keep his steps within the bounds of his skirt might be compared to Quintilian's warning that the toga-clad orator avoid movements with the arms that might leave a part of the torso exposed.[35] In oratory, posture and other non-verbal aspects of male self-presentation were under scrutiny as much as the content of the speech. Cicero describes the comportment of the ideal orator:

> Idemque motu sic utetur, nihil ut supersit in gestu; status erectus et celsus; rarus incessus nec ita longus ... nulla mollitia cervicum ... trunco magis toto se ipse moderans et virili laterum flexione, brachii proiectione in contentionibus, contractione in remissis.[36]

In a more explicitly pedagogical context, Quintilian gives similar instructions: hold the head upright (*rectum et secundum naturam*) but not stiff (*praeduro ac rigente*, *Inst.* 11.3.69), keep the shoulders straight (82), avoid rapid movements with the feet (128).[37] In the physiognomical writers we find that an ample gait was considered a sign of virtue.[38]

Thetis' advice, to relax the body and constrain the gait, is the opposite of the kind of instruction that Roman boys would have gotten from their parents, teachers and *pedagogi*.[39] These lines, apart from their humor, also say something important about Achilles' unusual childhood. By putting Thetis into the role of father or *pedagogus*, Statius implicitly points to a potential shortcoming in Achilles' proverbially excellent education. Despite Chiron's best efforts to teach

[34] One of the goals of Polemo's physiognomical treatise is to enable the reader to penetrate the masks of those around him and to determine their true natures. One deception to which he alerts the reader is the case of these *androgynoi* who attempt to pass as more virile than they are; Achilles' gender deception inverts for comic purpose the usual forms of a suppression of the 'effeminate' that must have been routinely internalized by Roman men: cf. Gleason (1995: 76–81).

[35] *Inst.* 11.3.118: ... *ut bracchio exerto introspiciatur latus*...; on the wearing of the toga, cf. also 11.3.137–49.

[36] *Orator* 59, Westman's punctuation; others have: ... *nihil ut supersit. in gestu status erectus*....

[37] Cf. Gleason (1995: 63).

[38] The anonymous Latin writer who followed Polemo says that a gait of short steps indicated a feeble and ungenerous nature, while a long stride betokens the man who is *magnanimus* (75f, Förster 1893: 2.97–9); see Gleason (1995: 60–2). By way of contrast, when Achilles is discovered by Ulysses' stratagem and tears the woman's robes from his body, he is described as *immanis ... gradu* (1.883) where, in addition to its usual meaning, *gradus* is perhaps also a 'technical term for the stance taken by a combatant' (Dilke ad loc).

[39] It may be significant in the context of such educational parody that Statius was the son of a teacher.

Achilles the skills of the hunter and warrior and the more social arts of medicine and justice, the Centaur is a solitary figure even among his own kind; and Achilles has not before now, it seems, ever mixed in human society. The occasion on which a Roman boy officially entered public society was the day he was helped on with the *toga virilis* for the first time.[40] It was a memorable family occasion; as Seneca says: *tenes utique memoria, quantum senseris gaudium, cum praetexta posita sumpsisti virilem togam et in forum deductus es.*[41] On this important day, a Roman boy would doubtless have gotten some words of advice from his father on how to comport himself as a man; and then father, son and family would proceed to the forum, crowded with other families performing the same ritual. Then the boy was escorted by his father to the Capitol to make his first sacrifice as a citizen.[42] By contrast, on Achilles' entry into public life, he gets advice from his mother; he is helped on with a kind of *toga muliebris*; and he is introduced by his mother into human society for the first time at Lycomedes' palace. The quintessential Roman ritual at which father introduced his son into public life as a man is parodied in a very similar way by Petronius in his description of Giton's childhood. On the day he should have put on his *toga virilis*, the boy puts on a woman's *stola* instead:

> die togae virilis stolam sumpsit, qui ne vir esset a matre persuasus est, qui opus muliebre in ergastulo fecit.... (*Sat.* 81)

Like Giton, Achilles has received an upbringing that is excessively dominated by his mother. Peleus is conspicuous in his absence here, as he is so often in the *Achilleid*; Thetis has usurped the role of the Roman father, presenting her son to the world in *her* own image. The extent of Thetis' intrusion into the duties proper to fatherhood is vividly sketched by a simile that compares Thetis, as she transforms her son, to an artist shaping a waxen image (1.332–4). Dilke (ad 332f) suggested that Statius means to evoke the wax *imagines* of the ancestors that adorned the houses of aristocratic Romans. If so, then this is an explicit demonstration of Thetis' intrusion into the patriarchal realm and her perversion of the expectations regarding public conduct and achievement that connected a Roman son via his father to his male ancestors.[43]

[40] This traditionally took place on March 16 in a boy's fifteenth year, at the feast of the *Liberalia*: Ov. *Fast.* 3.771f.

[41] *Ep.* 4.2. The technical term for this act was *in forum deducere*; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 26, *Tib.* 15, and *Nero* 7. For a similar use of *deducere* in a pedagogical context, cf. Statius' claim that he will lead Achilles through Troy (*iuvenem deducere*, 1.7).

[42] Thus Hunziker in Dar.-Sag. s.v. 'Toga', vol 5, pp 352f.

[43] There were no wax masks of female ancestors in Roman houses, although a distinguished female lineage could be advertised through other types of portraits: Flower (1996: 78f and 212).

4.2.4 Thetis Addresses Lycomedes

Thetis' rhetorical efforts are spectacular failures even when she gains her purpose, notable for their misuse of conventional *topoi* of rhetoric and allusion. In contrast, Venus' speech to Neptune in Book 5 of the *Aeneid* and indeed her other speeches in that epic are calculated to appear unaffected, affectionate, ingenuous, submissive and 'natural'. They appear to have recourse to nothing more sophisticated than indignant rhetorical questions and emotional appeals to natural justice.[44] In short, they are the kind of discourse a patriarchal society, keeping the benefits of formal education to its males, is likely to categorize as 'feminine'. Part of the humor of Thetis' speeches is the inept way they transgress these culturally gendered norms of argument. Against this background of 'female' speech, Thetis' attempt to deploy the rhetorical flourishes of the classroom transgresses the norms of discourse on several levels. Firstly, she confounds divine and human spheres. She invokes the terminology and concepts of Roman law to derogate the nobility of Achilles' birth; she invokes the voyage of the Argo as a negative *exemplum* while speaking to Neptune, having forgotten that both herself and her addressee were closely related to members of the crew. An immortal in the mythic past must use with circumspection the *topoi* of a Roman orator.

Furthermore, the very employment of these rhetorical tropes by a woman, even an immortal one, contributes to the humor on the level of gender burlesque. Much of Thetis' discourse to her son on the beach of Scyros is mothering and intimate, exemplifying the cultural imaginary of the 'female'. She touches him as she speaks (1.343); she wishes for a wedding and a grandchild (1.321f); she pays close attention to his facial expressions (1.271f); she makes her suggestions by way of rhetorical questions (1.319–21). In this context Thetis' use of pedantic mythological *paradeigmata* is humorous because she is transgressing not only the existential divide between human and divine, but also the educational divide between men and women. In the course of her 'feminine' discourse, the learned *exempla* stand out as inappropriate, since women did not usually have access to the education which encouraged the maintenance of such discursive norms, and Thetis' inept misuse of them highlights her usurpation of an alien rhetorical patrimony.

It is easy enough to pick out the major errors in Thetis' mythology and rhetoric, but it is not so clear how to quantify the extent to which the register of her language itself might transgress the norms that a Roman would have

[44] This is not to say that Vergil's Venus is lacking in intelligence and shrewdness; on the keen subtlety of her address to Neptune, see Highet (1972: 273f).

found acceptable for female speech. The problem is compounded if we suppose that the frame of epic would have brought with it a further set of rules and expectations. The diction of female characters in epic has not to my knowledge been studied in enough statistical detail even to say whether it displays any gross characteristics to distinguish it from similar male speech. Such a study has been made by Adams (1984) with respect to women's speech in Latin comedy, and his results indicate that in that genre at least poets did stereotype women for the audience with certain nuances of their language.[45] As a first approximation, we may make some tentative conclusions based on Adams' data. Apart from the famous case of exclamations and oaths (*edepol, mecastor*, etc.), and the use of *mi* as a vocative, all of which are alien to epic and therefore irrelevant to us, the other important class of data for Adams is the imperatives, with and without polite modifiers:

> One of the clearest manifestations of female Latinity in comedy is found in the use of what I term 'polite modifiers'. Certain verbs were used absolutely in Latin to tone down or modify an imperative or question. Not only are such modifiers considerably more common in female speech than in male in comedy, but the modifier chosen varied with the sex of the speaker. (1984: 55)

So it may be that politeness is a sign of 'female language' at Rome, as it is in many societies; again, one could derive this from a lack of access to power.[46] Consider the prayer to Scyros quoted below (p 178): *precor*, repeated twice, is not one of the words that Adams studied, and indeed it cannot count strictly as one of his 'polite modifiers', because Thetis does not employ it absolutely with an imperative; rather, the verb introduces two subjunctives (*sis, taceas*, 386) and a *ne*-clause (392). Nevertheless, one can say that *precor* is used out of politeness, or even desperation. Contrast the string of imperatives in which Thetis issues her commands to Lycomedes: *frange ... tene ... concede ... ale ... secludе ... memento* (1.350–62). Her manner with Lycomedes is quite abrupt and 'unladylike'. The question is whether this difference in tone can entirely be attributed to the difference in relative status between the interlocutors, or whether gender norms are also relevant here.

The fact of Lycomedes' mortality is surely important in accounting for the tone Thetis takes with him. The goddess has every expectation that the king

[45] Fronto praises Atta, a first-century BC playwright of *fabulae togatae*, for being 'graceful with women's language', (*elegan[s] ... in verbis ... muliebribus, Ad M. Caesar* 4.3.2): cf. Adams (1984: 47) and Gleason (1995: 99).

[46] Thus Lakoff (1976: 73–83).

of Scyros will be pleased and honored to comply with her orders, so she has no great need to flatter him. Nevertheless, given the importance of this matter to her, Thetis would have done well to accord him a minimum of dignity; according to Adams the evidence from comedy suggests that Thetis may not even be doing this:

> In Terence when the addressee is a freeman, women use modified imperatives almost as often as unmodified (10 : 13).... When a woman addresses a slave, the imperative is almost always on its own (17 : 1). Women too usually receive a plain imperative (27 : 3). There seems to be a difference between the way women issue orders to freemen, and the way they issue them to women and slaves. (1984: 66f)

The string of six unmodified imperatives in the space of twelve lines that Thetis issues thus seems to mark the gap in status between the two, figured in terms of a woman of status speaking to a slave. This is a fairly contemptuous mode of address; and it is another manifestation of the less-than-expert interpersonal skills with which Statius has gifted Thetis. It could also be that Thetis is laying claim to a traditionally masculine mode of command. Even a divine goddess addressing a mortal encounters to some degree the ideological construct of male rhetorical mastery and female deference and insufficiency.

Given the subject matter of the *Achilleid*, the presence of Thetis' discursive 'transvestism' is unlikely to be coincidental, nor is it surprising that she trips herself when donning the toga of a male orator. The comedy in the *Achilleid* is not limited to female drag. As Gleason comments, 'If speech itself is gendered, then the possibility of confusion of gender boundaries is inherent in any spoken enterprise' (1995: 98). Thetis' 'transvestism' is an intervention by the author on the level of characterization; her incapacity to perform adequately the roles she sets for herself is what accounts for her repeated failures in the poem. She fails as a terrifying epic goddess on the lines of Vergil's Juno, and then she fails as a protective epic mother like Vergil's Venus, or even Leto of the Homeric Hymn. She fails as an orator, and in the final analysis Thetis fails to understand and perform 'properly' the role of the female. Achilles' failure as a girl is anticipated by his mother's failure as a goddess. Thetis demonstrates that it is burden enough to wear convincingly the mask of gender appropriate to one's sex; yet she has set for Achilles the even harder task of impersonating the other sex. The outcome of that experiment looks hopeless from the start.

4.2.5 Thetis' Prophecy

As Thetis leaves Scyros, she makes a valedictory gesture; but it is impossible to know whether Statius envisioned that Thetis would appear again in the plot of his epic. In case she should not, this moment would have provided a sufficient sense of closure to mark the departure of the character who has been the dominant figure in the opening episodes of the epic. Thetis turns around in mid-sea, and addresses the island with a prayer that it keep her son safely hidden:

> sis felix taceasque, precor, quo more tacebat
> Creta Rheae; te longus honos aeternaque cingent
> templa nec instabili fama superabere Delo,
> et ventis et sacra fretis interque vadosas
> Cycladas, Aegaeae frangunt ubi saxa procellae,
> Nereidum tranquilla domus iurandaque nautis
> insula ne solum Danaas admitte carinas,
> ne, precor! 'Hic thiasi tantum et nihil utile bellis:'
> hoc famam narrare doce, dumque arma parantur
> Dorica et alternum Mavors interfurit orbem,—
> cedo equidem—sit virgo pii Lycomedis Achilles. (1.386–96)

Unusual among epic goddesses, Thetis makes predictions that do not come true, promising Scyros fame to match that of Delos.[47] Thetis compares herself to Rhea and Leto, who had given birth in obscure places under difficult circumstances; the choice of mythological paradigms made by Thetis, who is not pregnant, is once again misguided. More so than any of her previous blunders, this particular faux pas is unmistakable: *taceas ... quo more tacebat / Creta Rheae.* Thetis' prayer that Scyros be as *silent* for her as Crete was for Rhea is splendidly absurd, for Crete protected the infant Zeus from the attentions of his father Cronus not, of course, by its silence, but by making a tremendously loud noise. The Curetes, and sometimes Corybantes, attendants of Rhea, concealed the presence of the baby by clashing their weapons and armor in order to drown out his cries.[48]

One final oddity characterizes Thetis' speech here; and with her very last words the goddess seals her title as the Mrs. Malaprop of Latin epic. It cannot be that she means literally what she says in her prayer: *sit virgo pii Lycomedis*

[47] On Thetis' identification with Leto, her false prophecy, and the consequent fate of Scyros, see above, Section 2.2.3.

[48] Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.206f: *ardua iamdudum resonat tinnitibus Ide, / tutus ut infanti vagiat ore puer*; also Callim. *Hymn* 1.51–53. On the conflation of Curetes and Corybantes, see Fantham (1998) ad *Fasti* 4.210.

Achilles (1.396). Thetis does not, we presume, really want Achilles to *be* a daughter of Lycomedes; she means to say 'in the eyes of the world let him be a maiden', using *sit* as a shorthand for *videatur* or *habeatur*. This might be thought a flourish of rhetoric or a careless slip of little consequence, except that the distinction between *seeming* a woman and *becoming* a woman was precisely what Thetis failed to grasp when she put Caeneus alongside Hercules. Thetis' final blunder confuses being and seeming in a way that adumbrates suggestively the controversy between essentialist and performative conceptions of gender that will be a point of contention during Achilles' stay on Scyros.

4.3 Womanliness as Masquerade

The possibility that gender is merely a matter of performance at which one may excel or not, that it is a form of self-presentation akin to rhetoric, and the opposing idea that sex and gender are identical, innate and essential are both notions that Statius addresses in the *Achilleid*. One side of this argument is eloquently expressed by Deidamia, who has an interesting perspective on the case of Achilles.

4.3.1 Deidamia Theorizes Gender

Near the end of Book 1, Achilles has been discovered by Ulysses; he has confessed his relationship with Deidamia to Lycomedes; he has acknowledged the existence of the baby Neoptolemus; and he has been duly married to Deidamia. The couple is allowed to spend only a single night together as lawful man and wife before Achilles sails away. At this point the narrator changes subject with disorienting abruptness; it is not clear from the lines that precede it who the referent of *illius* in line 927 should be:

> tunc epulis consumpta dies, tandemque retectum
> foedus et intrepidos nox conscia iungit amantes.
> Illius ante oculos nova bella et Xanthus et Ide
> Argolicaeque rates, atque ipsas cogitat undas
> auroramque timet. (1.925–9)

At first, as Dilke says (ad 927), it seems certain that *illius* must refer to Achilles. The hero seems, naturally enough, to be thinking about and imagining the great adventures that are finally to come for him. Then we hear the words *auroramque timet*. What is this? The greatest of heroes was not only a cross-dresser, but also

a secret coward? Statius keeps his audience in shock only for a moment; before he loses their confidence he continues:

> auroramque timet. cara cervice mariti
> fusa novi lacrimas iam solvit et occupat artus. (1.929f)

As soon as we reach the end of the line and hear the word *mariti*, 'husband', our confusion begins to be allayed and soon we realize that *illius ... oculos* had referred in fact to Deidamia, who has been only a very shadowy presence in the poem ever since her pregnancy.[49] Deidamia has not been given any direct speech thus far in the poem, except perhaps for a two-word exclamation just after her rape,[50] so this sudden shift of focus to her inner thoughts is quite unexpected. The narrator's momentary substitution of Deidamia for Achilles sets the stage well for Deidamia's speech, in which she will claim a degree of equivalence between the two of them.

Alone with Achilles, Deidamia delivers an address in the manner of a *propempticon* in which she tearfully laments her situation and asks her husband to be careful and thoughtful of her while he is gone. She then makes the whimsical proposal that she accompany him to Troy:

> quin age, duc comitem; cur non ego Martia tecum
> signa feram? tu thyrsa manu Baccheaque mecum
> sacra, quod infelix non credet Troia, tulisti. (1.949–51)

This is a remarkable statement of the arbitrariness of gender roles. Deidamia says in effect, 'If you can perform actions that are constitutive of femininity and therefore be considered a girl, then why should I be prevented from attempting to perform the actions of a man on the grounds of my sex? What constitutes gender if not the performance of certain gender-specific roles? If performative competence is what makes a man go to war and a woman stay home, then what *a priori* reason is there to prevent a woman from trying a male role?' Deidamia brings to the surface a potentially disquieting implication of Achilles'

[49] Even in English with its gendered possessive, Mozley felt the reference confusing enough to require glossing the word 'her' with a footnote: '*i.e.*, Deidamia's'.

[50] The exclamation '*sed pater!*' (1.657) that interrupts Achilles' attempt to console Deidamia after his rape is probably spoken by her (thus Rosati, p 131, n 152), and not an 'aposiopesis spoken by Achilles as if it were an objection by Deidamia' (Dilke ad loc, following Jannaccone and ultimately Barth). Ker (1953: 181) saw this as the sign of a lacuna in the text that would have contained the rest of Deidamia's words, but *aposiopeseis* of all kinds are very frequent in the *Achilleid* (cf. Dilke, p 18) and there is no real problem with the text, so it is unnecessary to hypothesize a lost speech by Deidamia here. On this exclamation, see below, p 292. Her only vocal intervention in the poem since then has been unspecific wailing (*lamenta*, 1.887, upon the discovery of Achilles), like a violated maiden of New Comedy.

performance in Scyros: if a man like Achilles can perform adequately the duties of the female, then the potential exists for the gender bar to be crossed in the other direction, too. The wording of Deidamia's hypothesis is clever; the military standard-bearer and the maenad are alike in that both carry what is in some sense an ornamented weapon. The *signa* of a Roman military unit consisted of a large pole or spear adorned with a variety of symbols, metal disks, wreaths and such, while the thyrsus had long been considered in poetry as a kind of decorated spear.[51] The notion that *thyrsoi* are a sort of feminine equivalent to the weaponry wielded by men is a theme that surfaces frequently in the *Achilleid*.[52] Here we should note one feature in particular of the correspondence between *signa* and *thyrsa*. In some images of Roman legionary standards there are stylized representations of strands of ivy wrapped around the pole.[53] Given the possibility that Roman military *signa* themselves sometimes quoted Dionysiac imagery, including the thyrsus, Deidamia's argument for the equivalence between the two gains in vividness and force.

At the very moment that Deidamia makes a claim that sounds an egalitarian, one might say even proto-feminist note, she is betrayed by her ineluctable femininity; her discourse is signed by the poet as 'female' even at the moment it contests the essentiality of such labels. The equation that she makes between military standards and maenadic *thyrsoi*, clever though it is, depends ultimately upon a misunderstanding of military matters, an error which in this context would likely appear as 'typically female'. Deidamia envisions herself as a standard-bearer as though it were a decorative role, the very slightest, the most unobtrusive capacity in which she might possibly accompany Achilles. By seizing upon the decorative aspect of the standards, she betrays her ignorance of their extreme importance to an army, whose import culminated at Rome in the religious cult of the *signa militaria*.[54] In the Roman army as in most armies, the *signifer* was anything but a supernumerary; he held a coveted post of great prestige. Even the subsidiary *signiferi* of small units were substantial figures, whose *cursus honorum* culminated in the position of *aquilifer*, who carried the standard of the whole legion. In peace the *signifer* was the treasurer for the men in his unit, and in war he could function as a petty officer, detached to lead small missions. Moreover, the *signa* themselves were very heavy. Herodian tells the story of the emperor Caracalla deliberately sharing the hardships of his

[51] E.g. θύρσον ... κίσσινον βέλος, Eur. *Bacch.* 25, and *redimitum missile*, *Ach.* 1.612.

[52] See below, Section 6.1.

[53] A.-J. Reinach in Dar.-Sag. s.v. 'Signa Militaria', vol 4, p 1315.

[54] On religious veneration of the *signa*, see Kubitschek in *RE* s.v. 'Signa (Signale)', 2.4.2342.7–2344.53.

soldiers even to the point of digging ditches and carrying the standards while on the march; he notes that even the best soldiers found the standards, which were ornamented with gold, very heavy to carry.[55] Nonetheless Deidamia has offered to join Achilles as *signifer*, as though it were an entry level position into the military and indeed into masculinity. Despite his 'decorative' appearance, the standard-bearer is not in fact a particularly suitable position for a woman, nor indeed for any neophyte soldier. While Statius gives voice through Deidamia to a provocative conceptualization of gender as performative, he simultaneously invites us to wonder at the reliability of Deidamia's ideas about military life, and thus to consider the opposite position: that there are some duties to which one sex is more apt than the other, that gender is not a freely negotiable attribute.

It is interesting to note in this connection Statius' employment of the heteroclite neuter plural form *thyrsa* (950). This is apparently the only example of the form in Latin, and it is exceedingly rare in Greek; it is the reading preserved by the Puteaneus, while the other MSS substitute *pensa*.[56] The use of the neuter is exceptional: Statius has already used the regular, masculine forms of the word *thyrsus* eight times prior to this in the *Achilleid*.[57] Is it a coincidence that *thyrsa ... Baccheaque ... sacra* is cast entirely in the neuter to match its counterpart, *Martia ... signa*, given that these terms map out a common middle ground where the male and the female spheres meet and overlap?

Deidamia's discussion of gender and performance is embedded in a speech rich in literary resonance. She is about to be left behind by her husband, and proleptically, as if in anticipation of their separation, she delivers to Achilles a message that draws heavily on the letters of Ovid's abandoned heroines. Rosati, who has edited both the Statian and the Ovidian texts, even calls her speech 'una sorta di *herois*' (1994: 42). Deidamia shows particular foresight and a metaliterary self-awareness worthy of an Ovidian heroine in her concern for the way in which her story will subsequently be narrated. She fears that her significance will be minimized by Achilles and that she will be dismissed in the telling as 'the

[55] Herodian 4.7.7: τὰ τῶν στρατοπέδων σύμβολα ... μόλις ὑπὸ τῶν γενναιοτάτων στρατιωτῶν φερόμενα.... Indirect evidence for the weight of the *signa* is provided by Suetonius' tale that Praetorian guard were once in such a haste to join Caligula that they adopted the exceptional expedient of packing their standards with the baggage (*Calig.* 43). Cf. *RE* s.v. 'Signa (Signale)', 2.4.2337.20–36 [Kubitschek].

[56] *Thyrsa* has been accepted by all editors since Klotz, who demonstrated (1902b: 130) the Greek parallels, one of which is from the Greek Anthology and predates Statius; the other is from Nonnus. It should be noted that *pensa* was probably supplied from *pensa manu ... tulit* (Hercules with Omphale) at 1.261, a line in which the thyrsus is also mentioned. Another word of unorthodox form that was erroneously 'corrected' in all of the MSS but P is *Pharsaliaeve* at 1.152.

[57] *Ach.* 1.572, 617, 634, 648, 714, 830, 839 and 849.

story of a boy's early mistake' (*primae puerilis fabula culpae / narrabor famulis aut dissimulata latebo*, 1.947f). Deidamia begins by wondering when she will see Achilles again (1.931f), and whether he will be too proud ever to return (933f); she then laments her present misery in a string of rhetorical questions: six or seven in the space of eight lines.[58] None of these questions expect any response from Achilles, any more than do her exclamations (*heu!*, 935; *o timor!*, 939). Deidamia's rhetoric has been so conditioned, it seems, by an Ovidian, epistolary mode of abandonment that she carries on as if Achilles were not even there. This mode is fully realized in the turn of phrase that closes this exclamatory, operatic part of Deidamia's speech: *abripitur miserae permissus Achilles* (939). She uses the third person to name Achilles, despite the fact that he is right next to her and she has hitherto been addressing him in the second person; she speaks to him as if he were already absent, thus objectifying her lover and the narrative of her own plight in a very Ovidian way.[59] Among Ovid's abandoned women, there is a specific debt to Briseis. She wrote to Achilles and imagined him in his anger sailing away from Troy, and marrying a noble maiden more worthy of his ancestry than she, a slave girl. The princess Deidamia, as if in anticipation of that letter, asks that Achilles not demean his noble lineage in having children by a slave girl.[60]

In addition to the *Heroides*, Deidamia also invokes another, related literary model. Ovid's heroines themselves are epigones of Catullus' Ariadne, the prototypical abandoned woman of Latin literature; and it is to Catullus 64 that Deidamia turns:

> i—neque enim tantos ausim revocare paratus—,
> i cautus, nec vana Thetin timuisse memento,
> i felix nosterque redi! nimis improba posco.... (1.940–2)

[58] 1.931–8; six question marks: Dilke, Méheust; seven: Mozley, Marastoni, Rosati.

[59] To mention in the third person the name of the individual whom one is otherwise addressing in the second is a particular feature of the salutation and closing of Latin letters: *Cicero Attico salutem*, etc. This feature is also found in the *Heroides*, especially in the opening couplet of most letters. The authenticity of some of these couplets has been much debated, but even if most are inauthentic, they may be supplementary to lost Ovidian originals; thus argues Kenney (1996) ad *Her.* 18.1–2.

[60] Ov. *Her.* 3.71–74 and *Ach.* 1.953–5; thus Jorge (1990: 225f and 251, n 17). Making explicit the latent connection between these two texts, an anonymous medieval poet composed a pseudo-Ovidian epistle from Deidamia to Achilles in Leonine elegiac verse; the text is given by Riese (1879: 476–80). The general model for the poem is Ovid' *Heroides*, and specifically the letter from Briseis to Achilles (3), but the poet quotes the *Achilleid* too, which he obviously knows well. For example, his Deidamia throws in Achilles' teeth (lines 19–24) the words of the promises that Statius' Achilles made as he departed in the *Achilleid* (1.956–9).

The pathetic triple repetition of a word at the beginning of three subsequent lines is a very distinctive feature of Catullus' epyllion; it is found there in four separate passages.[61] With the repetition of *i* three and even four times (*i . . . i . . . i . . . redi*) Deidamia invokes the pathetic tones of Catullus 64, but she does not emulate Ariadne's behavior. She never curses Achilles and her attitude towards him personally is entirely understanding and supportive, never bitter. Deidamia positions herself in her speech beside Ovid's heroines in a long line of abandoned women, but at the same time she evokes a voice from Catullus 64: not Ariadne's, but the narrator's. It is 'Catullus' the neoteric, Alexandrianizing *urbanus* to whom the idiosyncratic repetitions of poem 64 belong. In Deidamia's concern with the way her story will be told (*narrabor*, 948) she stands outside her own narrative and judges it. Her appropriation of the voice of 'Catullus' similarly provides Deidamia with a frame for distancing herself from her own rhetoric of abandonment while still generating the pity due to an abandoned woman.

Deidamia's speech is, in comparison to the *Heroides,* a paragon of restraint. Ovid's heroines are frequently betrayed by their ignorance of future events; they ask for things that the audience knows to be impossible and tragically ironic in hindsight.[62] By contrast, all of the things Deidamia asks for will in fact come to pass; it is Achilles who makes unbidden and extravagant promises. Compare Thetis' farewell from the *Achilleid*; she asks for the impossible, that Achilles might stay indefinitely at Scyros, and in return she makes wild promises about the future fame of the island that we know will never come true. The extravagance of her wishes almost seems to justify their complete frustration. Deidamia, on the other hand, makes only very limited requests. She even tells Achilles three times to go, recognizing that she is powerless to stop him. Despite her stated worry that she may never see Achilles again (931–4), her request that he return is only made tentatively (*redi*) and is immediately retracted as excessive (*nimis*

[61] Cat. 64.19–21, 39–41, 63–65, 256–9; cf. also a triple line-initial anaphora of *saepe* (387, 390 and 394). The appearance of Thetis' name here (941) might remind one especially of the first of these passages, which features a triple anaphora of *tum* combined with polyptoton of Thetis' name in the genitive, nominative and dative cases (Cat. 64.19–21). This tendency to repetition may be traced to Hellenistic precedents, especially Callimachus (eg. *Hymn* 2.44–44, and 55–58); see Ellis (1889) ad Catullus 64.19–21 for further examples. Ovid also availed of this sort of pathetic repetition in the *Heroides* (eg. 13.25f).

[62] For example, Laodamia imagines the safe return of Protesilaus from the Trojan war in precisely the way Statius' Deidamia refuses to do. Laodamia even warns him not to be the first off the ships, to beware of someone named Hector, and so forth. On the irony and the complicity between author and reader that is created by the allusions in the *Heroides* that look forward in mythical time, see Barchiesi (1993: 333f).

improba posco, 942).[63] Deidamia concludes with two hesitant requests (*hunc saltem ... hoc solum*, 953f): that Achilles remember Neoptolemus (952f), and that he not dishonor her by fathering any children by a slave woman (954f). We happen to know that both of these small requests will be fulfilled.[64] Deidamia omits to ask for many of the obvious things that a woman in her situation might ask her husband in a *propempticon*: that he should stay with her on Scyros, that he should remain faithful to her, that he should be careful not to let his anger and stubbornness get the better of him at Troy, and so forth. It is Achilles who in response makes sadly over-reaching promises. He promises to return after Troy is captured—a thing Deidamia is prudently wary of asking, no matter how much she may want it. It is Achilles whose naivete is exposed in the manner of Ovid's heroines by the light of subsequent literary history.

The final verse of the first book of the *Achilleid* confirms the importance of Catullus' Ariadne as a point of contrast for Deidamia. Statius concludes with a single line of comment on Achilles' vain promises of return:

> inrita ventosae rapiebant verba procellae. (1.960)

This is an elegant *variatio* on Catullus' description of Theseus as he made his surreptitious exit from Naxos: *irrita ventosae linquens promissa procellae* (64.59). Statius has changed two words, but has managed to generate one golden line from another; he thereby lost the alliteration of 'p', but substituted an alliteration of 'v'. The situation of Achilles and Deidamia is parallel to that of Theseus and Ariadne; but there are also important differences. Theseus slipped away like a coward, and he quite deliberately broke the promises he had made. Achilles, on the other hand, will leave Deidamia with his promises unfulfilled (*inrita ... verba*) not out of any wish to deceive her, but because of his own fate to die before he may fulfill them. It is a sad line, and Achilles' boyish optimism highlights by contrast the realism of Deidamia's assessment of her situation. Words that for Catullus were a token of the faithlessness of men become here an acknowledgement of the futility of mortal plans and hopes. While the literal meaning of the two hexameters is almost identical, Statius' *variatio* also comprises a change, even a deepening, in the implications of the line.[65]

[63] Dilke prefers to take *improba* as neuter plural, rather than nominative singular; it makes little difference to our argument. See Hollis (1977) ad Ov. *Ars Am.* 1.701 for a different interpretation of this speech by Deidamia.

[64] In the *Iliad* (19.326f) Achilles thinks of Neoptolemus on Scyros; children other than Neoptolemus were rarely attributed to Achilles, and only by eccentric sources: see Roussel (1991: 404).

[65] Damsté (1907: 141) argued unconvincingly that this final line (1.960) was spurious; see the responses of Dilke (ad loc) and Méheust (p 98f, n 3).

Deidamia bids farewell to her new husband in a speech that is remarkable for its awareness of the roles she and Achilles are playing out. Whereas she argues that she should be free in principle to throw off the typical assignments of gender in order to accompany Achilles to war, in fact she ultimately finds herself in the quintessentially female role of Ariadne, the woman left behind to wave at a departing ship. To some extent this fact must undercut the force of her radical and humorous critique of normative gender assignments. Yet Deidamia's mourning becomes her; it is contained, moderate, and not irrational. Moreover, her invocation of the urbanity of Catullus and the epistolary mode of Ovid's heroines lends a certain knowingness to her adoption of this literary role. In the end Deidamia accepts the usual constraints of gender and genre and takes the traditional position of the woman left behind. She gracefully plays the title role of *L'Arianna*, complete with an Ovidian aria of lament and self-pity, but she does not do so merely by default. She first raises the possibility that she might, if she wished to, play out a farce of male drag corresponding symmetrically to Achilles' performance. In the light of this statement, Deidamia appears to fill the role of abandoned woman well because she explicitly repudiates inappropriate gender-crossing and makes womanliness a deliberate choice, the wilful and ironically knowing adoption of the gender modality to which she is inclined by sex. For Statius, then, womanliness is a masquerade of sorts, either to be carried off well, as Deidamia manages to do, or to be botched, as Achilles and Thetis each does in his or her own way.[66]

4.3.2 The Girlhood of Achilles

Apart from Thetis and Deidamia, there is another 'female' character in the *Achilleid* whom we should consider. An examination of Achilles' stay on Scyros and his cross-dressed adventures there will be the subject of the next two chapters, but a preliminary overview of Achilles' masquerade as a girl may be useful in the present context, in order to shed further light on Statius' treatment of femininity. The next chapter will examine in detail the lacunose evidence for earlier treatments of the myth of Achilles on Scyros; we shall see that these focussed largely on his private romance with Deidamia and its conflict with Achilles' public obligations as a warrior. Statius does present secluded, tender episodes between the two, but he also displays Achilles as a girl among girls, engaged in collective tasks; he not only depicts Achilles cross-dressed in the private

[66] The classic article on this topic in the field of psychoanalysis is Riviere's 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' (1929), reprinted by Burgin, James and Kaplan (1986: 35–44).

boudoir of Lycomedes' palace but also exposes him to the world in quasi-public settings and religious ceremonies.[67] Achilles presents himself falsely at Scyros, and so it will be no surprise that Statius casts his behavior in terms of a performance. The most innovative aspect of Achilles' exhibition consists in its varied and public settings; he appears as a girl in the women's private quarters (1.560–91), but also in a Bacchic ritual amid the woman of Scyros (1.593–660), at a mixed-sex banquet (1.750–805); and, finally, he is exhibited as part of a chorus of dancers (1.821–40). This overview of Achilles' behavior on Scyros will focus on the contrast between his public and private displays of femininity.

When we first encounter Achilles as a girl, he is in the women's quarters and engaged in private, domestic activities. He is showering Deidamia with persistent attention (1.560–91); a possible source of this scene is an incomplete Hellenistic poem ascribed falsely to Bion, in which the secretly cross-dressed Achilles importunes Deidamia with equal relentlessness:

> [Ἀχιλλεύς] ...
> ἐξ ἀοῦς δ' ἐπὶ νύκτα παρίζετο Δηϊδαμείᾳ
> καὶ ποτὲ μὲν τήνας ἐφίλει χέρα, πολλάκι δ' αὐτᾶς
> στάμονα καλὸν ἄειρε, τὰ δαίδαλα δ' ἄτρι' ἐπῄνει.[68]

When that fragment breaks off, the disguised Achilles is in the midst of a disingenuous attempt to convince Deidamia to share a bed with him. Statius' Achilles exploits his proximity to Deidamia in a similar way. He takes it upon himself to teach his foster-sister the art of playing the lyre; this affords him the opportunity of touching her, guiding her hands and, as with the pseudo-Bion, kissing her in sisterly praise when she does well (572–6). When Achilles' pursuit eventually ends in rape, he is taking a page from Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, where Achilles on

[67] In Euripides' *Skyrioi*, for example, Deidamia is an only child; she has lost her mother and the chorus is male, so it seems that she and her nurse, and possibly Thetis, were the only female characters. Euripides evidently did not portray Achilles as one amid a crowd of girls: see below, Section 5.1.3. By contrast, any version of the Scyros story in which Achilles is found out by Ulysses' stratagem will have imagined Achilles in the midst of many girls. That scene of discovery was extremely popular in the visual arts; Achilles is usually distinguishable as a figure in female clothing grasping weapons, but sometimes he is shown with the women's garb already half fallen off, as if to show concretely the process of his emergence into heroic nudity (*LIMC*, s.v. 'Achilleus', 105–175, with Achilles in part nude: 110, 143, 148, 169 and 172). Far fewer are representations of Achilles' life at Scyros before his discovery (*LIMC*, s.v. 'Achilleus', 94–104). Most show him playing a stringed instrument; all show him in private in the girls' quarters (with one exception from the mid-fourth century, no. 94, showing Thetis presenting Achilles to Lycomedes, which likely was inspired by the corresponding scene in the *Achilleid*). Of these boudoir scenes, several (nos. 98, 99, 102) portray Achilles as bare-chested and obviously careless of his disguise. In the *Achilleid* the pretense of Achilles' girlhood is strictly maintained, even in private, and even after Deidamia has silently guessed the truth (1.560–3: see Heslin 1998).

[68] Pseudo-Bion 2, *Bucolici Graeci* (ed. Gow, *OCT*), lines 22–4.

Scyros serves as an *exemplum* to justify in general the use of force against an apparently unwilling woman.[69] In Ovid's telling, however, Achilles' opportunity was a direct result of the physical proximity of boy and girl sharing the same quarters: *forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem* (*Ars Am.* 1.697). By contrast, Statius situates the rape outdoors, in a nearly public setting.

One private activity in which cross-dressed heroes regularly participate is the carding, spinning and weaving of wool, which offers the incongruous spectacle of men like Achilles and Hercules sitting in women's quarters, engaged in a quintessentially female chore. Ovid (*Ars Am.* 1.691–6) directly entreats Achilles to drop the wool, the basket and the spindle in favor of the spear and shield, thereby identifying the paradigmatic implements of either gender. Propertius' Heracles amusedly looks back on his days of spinning and even boasts that, despite his coarseness, he was not a bad hand at women's work (... *manibus duris apta puella fui*, 4.9.50).[70] Statius describes Achilles as suffering from a similar handicap (*dura ... manu*, 1.582f), and his spinning suffers; Deidamia has to repair the work that his clumsiness has damaged (1.581–3).[71] One could call spinning the standard female activity by which the unsuitability of heroic males to women's work is measured.[72] In addition to this typical kind of private display, Statius goes further and puts Achilles' transvestite clumsiness on show before a much broader public.

We saw that Thetis, when she transformed Achilles into a girl, paid close attention to his carriage and movement. Deidamia is equally concerned to teach her new friend, the huntress from the wilds of Pelion, how to move more like a lady: *ipsa ... validos proferre modestius artus ... demonstrat* (1.580–2). When Achilles participates in wild maenadic rites his vigor is in keeping with the occasion; his boisterous and undisciplined style of movement attracts admiration (1.603–8). Usually, however, Achilles' expansiveness is not such an asset in counterfeiting the movements of a girl. This is demonstrated on the next occasion that Lycomedes' daughters perform a dance, an exhibition for the benefit of the visiting Ulysses and Diomedes. At this point Achilles' interest in remaining a girl

[69] *vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis*, *Ars Am.* 1.673.

[70] Understanding *apta puella* to refer here not only to Hercules' looks, but also to his dexterity.

[71] Statius also notes the wear on the thumb that spinning caused: *attrito pollice* (581). Cf. *digitis ... duris* and *robusto ... pollice* in Heracles' attempt at spinning as described by Ovid's Deianira (Ov. *Her.* 9.79 and 77). The juxtaposition of Achilles' newly abraded thumb with his *dura ... manu* implies that women's work leaves its own mark on the body, too. Achilles problem is not simply that he has calloused and indelicate hands, but that his callouses are in the wrong place for his current chores.

[72] There is an accusation of wool-spinning, probably spoken by Odysseus to Achilles in Euripides' *Skyrians*: see below, Table 5.1, p 215.

has already been dimmed by Ulysses' tales of brewing war, and he attends to his movements even less than usual. Achilles proves to have just as little delicacy of touch when dancing as when working wool:

> tunc vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles
> nec servare vices nec bracchia iungere curat;
> tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus
> plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat. (1.835–8)

The point of putting Achilles on public display in this manner is partly for the sake of its humorous incongruity; dancing in a chorus was as quintessential an activity for young maidens as spinning wool, but more public, more humiliating, and funnier. This scene also contrasts the fierce independence of the traditional and Homeric Achilles with the cooperation necessary for choral performance. The iconoclasm of the warrior who carries himself aloof from human standards and judgments (*iura neget sibi nata*, Hor. *Ars P.* 122) is reduced to a simple inability and disinclination to keep time and stay in step with the dance: from 'best of the Achaeans' to worst of the dancing-girls: *tunc vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles* (835).

There is another aspect of Achilles' dancing to consider; this particular choral exhibition is ostensibly religious in motivation, forming part of a larger pattern in the *Achilleid* of putting women on display in the practice of cult. When Achilles first arrived at Scyros he fell in love at the sight of Deidamia leading her sisters in sacred procession to the shrine of Pallas on the shore (1.285–9). The narrator then commented that this was a privilege rarely granted to them (*patriis, quae rara licentia, muris / exierant*, 287f). Yet after the poem shifts the scene to Aulis and then back again to Scyros, we find the women of Scyros once again out of the city, off on their biennial maenadic expedition. In fact, Deidamia and her sisters seem to do little else but celebrate religious rites, both in their father's house and abroad. Statius is exploiting the tension between the ideology that claimed strict isolation of respectable maidens and the reality which must often have been messier and less absolute. Cult was one place where the public appearance of well-born girls was not only acceptable, but essential. For this reason, in other genres, especially comedy, religious displays and festivals were frequently the occasion for respectable girls to get into trouble.[73]

[73] In Menander's *Epitrepontes* and its derivative, Terence's *Hecyra*, a rape in the course of a nighttime Dionysiac festival provides a strong parallel for the plot of the *Achilleid*. The danger inherent in the gathering of large groups of women for cult purposes was of course commonplace for Aristophanes, while the classic expression in elegy of the dangers that cult practice posed to the individual maiden is the tale of Acontius and Cydippe.

The situation facing Lycomedes must have been typical: as the father of many daughters he has to protect their reputations; yet he also needs to marry them off, and so he wants to display them in some way, but discreetly and properly. Lycomedes plainly sees the visiting Ulysses and Diomedes as god-sent marriage prospects. He invites his daughters to a banquet in honor of the visiting heroes, and eventually brings the topic of conversation around to his children (1.780–3). He turns to Ulysses and makes the classic lament of the man burdened with unmarried daughters: *quando novos dabit haec mihi turba nepotes?* (783). Ulysses does not take up this conversational gambit but rather turns in his response to the Greeks' preparations for the Trojan war (785–802). Ulysses' true purpose is to flush Achilles out, and as his intense gaze moves from girl to girl (*tum vero intentus vultus ac pectora Ulixes / perlibrat visu*, 761), Lycomedes must surely think that he has a good chance here of unloading one of his daughters. He will soon do so, of course; shortly he will have two fewer unmarried maidens in his household, but not quite in the way he anticipates. Lycomedes correctly interprets Ulysses' gaze as a sign of his desire, but he mistakes its object. Deidamia, who understands the situation far better, becomes fearful that Achilles will betray himself at Ulysses' bellicose goading and gives a signal for the girls to retire from the banqueting hall (803f). Only after they are gone does Ulysses pick up the theme that Lycomedes had offered; he praises the beauty of the girls, and tells him not to worry about the war, but to concentrate his energies on marrying off his daughters (*caris ... para conubia natis*, 808). Ulysses apparently intends this as an ambiguous token of his potential interest in Lycomedes' daughters. The king certainly seems to take his remarks as encouraging, for he obligingly conjures up another possible excuse for putting them on display:

> occurrit genitor: 'Quid si aut Bacchea ferentes
> orgia, Palladias aut circum videris aras?
> et dabimus, si forte novus cunctabitur auster'. (1.812–14)

As promised, the following day the girls perform for the visitors a variety of sacred choral dances (*choros promissaque sacra*, 822); this is the occasion, quoted above (p 189), of Achilles' listless and stumbling performance. There is something odd, however, about the wording of Lycomedes' offer. We very recently witnessed another account of *orgia Bacchi* (1.593), which were the maenadic rites at which the presence of men was expressly forbidden by the king himself (1.599). Kürschner also found this odd, and he suggested a simple solution: Lycomedes must be referring here to a very different sort of Dionysiac rite.[74] Yet

[74] Kürschner (1907: 50): '... hoc loco non orgia spectat trieterica, sed ludos vel spectacula

the close juxtaposition of the 'secret', women-only maenadic rites with this public spectacle and the similarity of language used to describe them (*orgia Bacchi, Bacchea orgia*) makes Lycomedes' offer at least slightly confusing. As to this particular combination of rites, Seneca had given quite similar language to the chorus of his *Hercules Oetaeus*, as they sympathize with Deianira for the way Hercules has dishonored her; they remind her of their past companionship and promise her their future devotion:

> nos Palladias ire per aras
> et virgineos celebrare choros,
> nos Cadmeis orgia ferre
> tecum solitae condita cistis
> cum iam pulso sidere brumae
> tertia soles evocat aestas
> et spiciferae concessa deae
> Attica mystas cludit Eleusin. (*Herc. Oet.* 592–9)

The women evoke a spirit of female independence by reminding their friend of the way they had celebrated rites at Pallas' altar, and the Dionysiac and Elusinian mysteries. Lycomedes has taken these normally private moments of female solidarity and offered them as a kind of beauty pageant for his guests. The reconciliation of his need on the one hand to put his marriageable daughters on display and on the other to enforce their public modesty has led to something approaching a profanation of women's private religious rites. Lycomedes wants to stage-manage the kind of encounter that happened serendipitously between Achilles and Deidamia on the beach when she went to worship at the shrine of Pallas. The tension between public and private displays of womanhood is even more strongly palpable when the girls begin their dance. To begin with, Deidamia and Achilles are compared to Diana and Pallas and Proserpina among the nymphs of Enna (823–6). That simile introduces a hint of the Elusinian story, and cult music is played on the flute and drums of Dionysus and the cymbals of Cybele (827–9). The mystic and private atmosphere is intensified in the narrator's description of the dances themselves:

> tunc thyrsos pariterque levant pariterque reponunt
> multiplicantque gradum, modo quo Curetes in actu
> quoque pii Samothraces eunt, nunc obvia versae
> pectine Amazonio, modo quo citat orbe Lacaenas

Bacchica'.

Delia plaudentesque suis intorquet Amyclis. (830–4)

The *thyrsoi* remind us again of maenads and the orgiastic cult of Dionysus. The mythical Curetes were the dancers who had protected the infant Zeus from Cronus with their noisy dancing, clashing their weapons; the human Curetes were Cretan youths, nude except for their armor, who performed dances which were supposed to commemorate the birth of Zeus, and which were in the nature of initiations for the young men.[75] The Samothracians were well known for initiatory rites in honor of their *theoi megaloi*, who were often equated with the Cabiri.[76] The 'Amazonian comb' is otherwise unknown, but must have been, Dilke says (ad loc), 'a dance ... in which the two rows interlaced ... like the teeth of two combs'. Finally, the circular dance at Amyclae or Sparta in honor of Artemis itself is not specifically identifiable in ancient cult, but the goddess had several cults there, the most famous of which was that of Artemis Orthia, which was closely associated with the *agôgê*, the famous training of Spartan youth, certainly for boys and also perhaps for girls, too.

Several patterns emerge from this odd collection of religious lore and ritual dance from around the Greek world. Firstly, the dances of the Curetes were performed in armor; Callimachus had also imagined Amazons as dancing with their weapons, and perhaps we should infer the same for Statius.[77] If so, there may be a hidden aetiology here for Achilles' female name. We saw earlier (Section 3.1) that while Statius never explicitly calls Achilles by name on Scyros, he does perhaps implicitly acknowledge the possibility that he might have been called 'Pyrrha'. That becomes relevant here because armed dancing was in general called 'pyrrhic' dance.[78] Many ancient etymologies made the obvious linguistic connection between Achilles and his son Pyrrhus and the pyrrhic dance, crediting its invention to one or the other of them; according to other stories Athena or the Curetes were the inventors.[79] Statius leaves the possibility open, therefore, that 'Pyrrha' while on Scyros may have participated in pyrrhic dancing, permitting us to make a connection between the two terms if we wish to.[80]

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[75] Cf. *OCD*[3] s.v. 'Curetes'.

[76] Cf. Herodotus 2.51.

[77] *Hymn* 3. 241f: ἐν σακέεσσιν ἐνόπλιον ... χορὸν. Callimachus' Amazons performed a ritual dance in armor for Artemis at Ephesus; their next dance was circular; Dilke (ad 1.832f) pointed out that Statius describes the same sequence of dances. Callimachus uses the term πρύλις, a Cretan or Cypriot word for the pyrrhic dance, in the cases of both the Curetes (*Hymn* 1.51) and the Amazons (*Hymn* 4.240). For the terminology, see McLennan (1977) ad *Hymn* 1.51; for the nature of the dance, see Calame (1997: 86, 91f).

[78] Plato, for example, used it as a generic term for dancing with weapons: *Laws*, 815b; cf. Lonsdale (1993: 137).

[79] See Lonsdale (1993: 148–61) for a survey of ancient aetiologies.

[80] The girls carry *thyrsoi*, which are also a sort of weapon, as Deidamia herself says (above,

Another pattern that emerges from the diverse cults that are invoked by Statius is that they involve initiations of various types. To begin with, Statius sets the scene for the dance by evoking the Elusinian and Bacchic mysteries; then we hear of the Curetes, a boys' initiation group, and the Samothracians, who were best known for their initiatory mystery cult. The meaning of the reference to the Amazons is obscure, but the Spartan worship of Artemis may allude to the initiation of adolescents into adult Spartan life in association with one of the cults of Artemis. The connection of choral dancing at Sparta with the initiation of young girls has been well established by Calame.[81] Choral dancing was, particularly in Classical Greece, one of the ways a girl demonstrated her coming to maturity, negotiated her position in society and advertised her availability for marriage; it was a transition rite.[82] Achilles' difficulty is that he has not yet found the correct variety of transition ritual for his proper gender. In a sense, it is entirely appropriate that Achilles should be presented as stumbling his way through a rite of passage or initiation of sorts, as his stay on Scyros marks the transition for Achilles from his boyhood in Thessaly to his adult life as a warrior.[83] The problem, and the humor, is that Achilles has found himself getting the wrong sort of initiation for his true sex.

The Greek practice of having choruses of young women perform publicly in this way brought with it an anxiety about displaying their sexuality, which is borne out by the many mythical tales of girls being abducted from the dancing area and raped. Calame counts three separate cults of Artemis at Sparta whose mythical history involved the abduction of girls from the dancing floor. Two of these were reasonably well-known: Helen was said to have been abducted as a girl by Theseus while she danced for Artemis Orthia, and Pausanias tells a story of the Karyatids, famous from sculptural representations of their dance, who were abducted by Messenians while they danced for Artemis in her cult at Karyai.[84] The classic instance of this sort of vulnerability was the story of

p 180). If this equation seems far-fetched, consider that Athenaeus described contemporary pyrrhic dance as Dionysiac, in which the dancers were clothed and carried *thyrsoi* instead of spears: ἡ δὲ καθ' ἡμᾶς πυρρίχη Διονυσιακή τις εἶναι δοκεῖ, ἐπιεικεστέρα οὖσα τῆς ἀρχαίας. ἔχουσι γὰρ οἱ ορχούμενοι θύρσους ἀντὶ δοράτων. . . , Athen. 631a–b; on this passage, see 'II. The Bacchic *Pyrriche*' in Slater (1993: 200–5), and cf. Lonsdale (1993: 168).

[81] Calame (1997: 142–74).

[82] Cf. Lonsdale (1993: 169–205).

[83] The inclusion here of the dance of the Curetes, which was a genuine part of the initiation into adulthood of adolescent male Cretan ephebes, serves to make obvious the lack of a proper peer group for Achilles on Scyros. For a discussion of the frequent claim that Achilles' transvestism itself is the relic of an archaic Greek initiation rite, see below, Section 5.2.

[84] Calame (1997; Orthia: 159–62, Karyai: 150–2); Helen's abduction: Plut. *Thes.* 10; the abduction at Karyai: Paus. 4.16.9. Another story that featured the Messenian rape of Spartan girls surrounded the cult of Artemis Limnatis; Calame (1997: 143f) suggests plausibly that

Proserpina, taken as she danced and plucked flowers in the valley of Enna.[85] Statius began his description of Lycomedes' dancing girls with a simile comparing them to Proserpina and her companions. Should we go so far as to imagine that Lycomedes was staging the dance as an implicit opportunity for one of the Greeks to carry off one of his daughters? Perhaps that is too harsh a judgment, but it would be worth remembering Thetis' commands to the king when she left Achilles with him. She says to him:

> haec [= Achilles] calathos et sacra ferat, tu frange regendo
> indocilem sexuque tene, dum nubilis aetas
> solvendusque pudor; neve exercere protervas
> gymnadas aut lustris nemorum concede vagari.
> intus ale et similes inter seclude puellas;
> litore praecipue portuque arcere memento.
> vidisti modo vela Phrygum: iam mutua iura
> fallere transmissae pelago didicere carinae. (1.355–62)

We may leave to one side the amusing spectacle of Thetis inveighing against the bad faith of others (*iura fallere*, 361f) even as she is duping Lycomedes about the identity of her 'daughter'. Thetis wants to keep Achilles' identity hidden, so she has her own reasons for keeping him inside and away from visiting ships; the threat she sketches for Lycomedes' benefit is adapted to the purposes of her deception. Jannaccone noted Thetis' meaning, and Slavitt's translation of the last two lines quoted above brings it out very well:

> 'The sea isn't safe anymore,
> and having heard the stories of Paris and what his crew
> of Trojans did in Mycenae, I know you'll agree with me: caution
> is what we parents must learn'.[86]

Thetis mentions Paris and Helen specifically to illustrate the danger facing her 'daughter' and all girls in the area: that they might be abducted by visiting sailors, who may seem friendly but who may also betray the rules of hospitality at any moment. Lycomedes, by welcoming the Greeks into his palace, inviting his daughters to recline with them at a banquet, and displaying the girls at a

this too probably took place during a choral dance, although the sources do not specifically mention what kind of rite the girls were performing when they were abducted. For other tales in myth of girls abducted while dancing, see Calame (1997: 92).

[85] See Lonsdale (1993: 222) on Proserpina's 'dancing' or 'playing' (παίζουσαν, παίζομαι, *Hymn. Hom. Cer.* 5 and 425).

[86] Slavitt (1998: 13).

dance that takes place outside the protection of his house, ignores her warning and violates the spirit of her orders.[87]

Thetis thinks that by lodging her daughter with a family of girls that she will insulate 'her' in a completely immured environment of impeccable modesty; but she has reckoned without the need that besets even the best of Greek fathers eventually to marry off his cloistered children. At the very least, Lycomedes has put his wish to display his marriageable daughters ahead of Thetis' command to keep her 'daughter' strictly away from visiting sailors. Thetis warns Lycomedes not to allow her 'daughter' to exercise shamelessly in the nude (357f); this must be an allusion to the distinctive education of Spartan girls. Lycomedes does nothing so extreme as that, but Achilles' public dancing is compared to the practice of Spartan maidens. Thetis warns Lycomedes to beware of the precedent set by Paris' abduction of Helen; instead he allows Achilles to perform a dance that may remind us of the setting of the earlier abduction of Helen by Theseus as she danced for Artemis Orthia.

The reaction at Scyros to the news of the arrival of Ulysses and his companion gives a hint that the girls themselves may be worried about the visitors' intentions:

> Rumor in arcana iamdudum perstrepit aula,
> virginibus qua fida domus, venisse Pelasgum
> ductores Graiamque ratem sociosque receptos.
> iure pavent aliae, sed ... [Pelides] .... (1.750–3)

The narrator emphasizes the seclusion in which the girls normally lived (*arcana ... aula, virginibus qua fida domus*). They are frightened to hear about the arrivals, in contrast to Achilles, whose excitement at the news is described subsequently. It is worth pausing to consider why the girls are afraid. Deidamia certainly has good reasons, since she has a great deal to lose if Achilles is discovered, but it may not be that her sisters and her companions know about her situation. When Achilles first arrived, before Deidamia's rape, she fearfully thought that her companions might have already guessed the truth (1.563); but all we know for certain is that the only person in whom she confides her pregnancy is her nurse (*unam ... sociam*, 1.669f). In Euripides' *Skyrioi* Deidamia

[87] The girls leave the privacy of their boudoir to dance (*egressae thalamo*, 821), and after it is done they go back to the palace where Ulysses has laid out his gifts for them (*repetuntque paterna / limina*, 841f). Perhaps they had ventured no further than the porch of the palace to perform, but even that can be a dangerous place for an incautious maiden. Another point on which Lycomedes violated the letter of Thetis' instructions was to allow Achilles to wander through the woods when he was a maenad; but the king may be forgiven in assuming that an all-female environment would pose no threat.

was sisterless (see below, Section 5.1.3), so she had only her nurse to confide in; Statius' Deidamia is unlikely to have been able to keep her secret from the girls with whom the poet surrounds her, but we never hear of any other confidante but the nurse. So it is not clear that the girls are afraid for Achilles' sake; it is plausible that they might be afraid for their own safety. Everyone acknowledges that Scyros is not militarily well-equipped. Thetis chose it as an unwarlike spot (*imbelli ... Lycomedis ... aula*, 1.207). Lycomedes confesses to the visitors that he is too old to go to Troy and that he has no sons to send in his place (1.775–83), although he does manage in the end to equip two ships to accompany Achilles, begging pardon for being able to do so little (1.923f). Ulysses, concerned that his arrival will alarm Lycomedes, goes to the palace alone with Diomedes, and explicitly orders his crew not even to disembark, but to stay on board the ship (*puppe iubet remanere suos*, 1.700). In the light of these circumstances, the appearance at Scyros of an armed ship, even a single one, would be enough to inspire a certain reasonable trepidation among the girls for their own safety (*iure pavent*, 753), even if the visitors appear friendly enough at first.

Thetis explicitly stipulates that the 'girl' she is entrusting to Lycomedes is not yet ready for marriage: *dum nubilis aetas / solvendusque pudor* (337), '[keep her] until she is old enough to marry and must relax her modesty'. Many elements combine to give an impression that Lycomedes has prematurely relaxed, just a bit, the *pudicitia* of Thetis' 'daughter'. When Statius describes the dance of Deidamia and her companions, he hints at the rape of Proserpina and the abduction of Spartan girls; taken together with the language of initiation and secret ritual, it is hard to avoid the impression that Lycomedes is making an improper display. It may be too much to accuse the king of trying to stage-manage a rape/abduction, but he appears at the very least to be overly trusting and incautious. The cult activity that Statius uses to give an impression of the dance is not the sort of thing one can easily imagine girls performing for strangers: the Bacchic, the Elusinian, and the Samothracian mysteries. Lycomedes makes an offer to Ulysses of a ritual display that comes uneasily close to blasphemy, and the event is described by the narrator in terms that continue to problematize the king's decision to display these dances to strangers.

Finally, we must remark an exceptional omission: for all of the detailed cult language in the description of the dance, we never find out exactly what ritual the girls are performing and for the benefit of what god or goddess. The god whose cult this dance serves is not named because it is designed to serve no god but rather is intended as a secular pageant for the benefit of visitors. Women

who danced simply for the pleasure of men were not at all respectable; hence the almost desperate profusion of religious language that Lycomedes uses to conceal his motives. Yet that same language also betrays a sense that something private is being put on public display. What is happening here is a failed initiation, as we see from the simile that compares Achilles to Pentheus (839f). It is not surprising that Achilles stumbles badly through a rite which after all comprises part of a girl's rehearsal for womanhood; but there is also emphasis on the way that Achilles' failure has been made public. When the dance is over and the girls go back into the palace, they stop on their way to examine the gifts that the Greeks have laid out for them; this is, of course, the trap that Ulysses has laid for Achilles. Statius has worked out the circumstances leading to this moment so fully that the discovery of Achilles seems as much due to the indiscretion of Lycomedes as to the cleverness of Ulysses. Instead of merely celebrating the wit of Ulysses' trick, Statius explains how he came to be in a position to play it in someone else's household.

4.3.3 Modesty and Surveillance

While the *Achilleid* does sometimes represent Thetis sympathetically as the victim of a cruel fate,[88] it is nevertheless her repeated failures that drive the plot of the beginning of the epic. Thetis consistently overreaches her abilities, and her ineptness is often couched in terms of a woman acting without regard to the limits proper to her sex. Females are as capable as cross-dressed men of misjudging the codes of womanhood. Not all of the women in the *Achilleid* have such difficulties. We saw that Deidamia merely toyed with the idea that she might similarly travesty her gender; and she quickly resumed the role to which her sex and her situation disposed her. Together these women explore the limits of acceptable femininity. When Statius set out to write these scenes he gave a great deal of thought to the way women were required to act in literature and in society. This attention to the details of normative female behavior is clearly demonstrated when Achilles attends the banquet given for the visiting Greeks, and nearly betrays his sex because he keeps forgetting to act like a girl.

Ulysses and Diomedes are welcomed into Lycomedes' palace and are given couches spread with gold embroidery to recline upon (*discumbitur*, 756). Then the girls' presence at dinner is requested explicitly; presumably, like most Greek girls, they did not usually dine in company with men:

[88] For example, Thetis complains to Neptune at being singled out among immortals to be so deeply involved in the fate of a human (1.75f).

> ... pater ire iubet natas comitesque pudicas
> natarum. subeunt, quales Maeotide ripa,
> cum Scythicas rapuere domos et capta Getarum
> moenia, sepositis epulantur Amazones armis. (1.757–60)

The aptness of this simile has puzzled scholars; it has not always been clear what demure maidens going to dinner have to do with Amazons dining after battle.[89] In the light of the girls' fear at the arrival of the Greek heroes, it is a fine irony that they are compared, as they swarm to the dinner table, to Amazons after a conquest. The important point of the simile, however, is that the girls *recline* on couches (*iacentum*, 763, *stratis*, 802). Amazons with their weapons put aside (*sepositis*[90] ... *armis*, 760) would presumably have adopted male habits of dining, just as Lycomedes' daughters have unexpectedly done. It was usual at Rome for women to sit rather than to recline at table; the presence of respectable women at meals in company was recognized as a particularly Roman idiosyncrasy.[91] In Greece the emphasis was more on drinking than eating, and it is hard to imagine a citizen woman attending any such meal, much less reclining with the men; in the world of Homer no one reclined at all. If we consider that the women at this banquet are not *matronae* associating with friends and family, but unmarried girls reclining in the company of strangers, then we may begin to understand how odd and outrageous their behavior here is.

Statius points out that Ulysses' examination of the girls in the dim light of evening is hampered when they recline: *extemplo latuit mensura iacentum* (1.763). This is the key to the Amazon-simile. Evidently someone, presumably Deidamia, has organized this unconventional arrangement in order to hide Achilles' body from the Greek guests. As Denis Feeney has demonstrated, it is not only Achilles' size (*mensura*) that would betray him if the girls were to sit up.[92] Ulysses scrutinizes the faces and *breasts* of the assembled company (*vultus ac pectora*, 761); and Deidamia must make sure that Achilles does not uncover

[89] Sturt (1972: 837–9) complains of the 'fundamental disparity between image and context' (839) especially of the warlike imagery, and suggests that the point of the comparison is the 'epicene' appearance of Achilles and Deidamia. He correctly appreciates the irony in the epithet *pudicas* as applied to Deidamia and Achilles.

[90] This is Dilke's text, but subsequent editors have preferred to retain the MSS reading, *suppositis*. Dilke followed Garrod in adopting Schrader's conjecture, *sepositis*, rightly rejecting the idea that the Amazons were leaning on their weapons, which is what Jannaccone claimed that *suppositis* meant. Méheust and Rosati print the MSS *suppositis*, but they translate it to mean instead that the weapons are at the Amazons' feet as they recline. So it seems that there is broad agreement on what the phrase generally means, and the only disagreement would be over whether *supponere* can take that meaning. For our purposes it matters little whether the weapons were either vaguely 'put aside' or specifically 'put below their feet'.

[91] Cf. *OCD*[3] s.v. '*convivium*'; the Etruscans went even further.

[92] Lecture, delivered at Princeton, May 1, 1999.

his chest in his carelessness (*nudataque pectora*, 768). The dim light conceals the girls' faces, and the fact that they recline helps to conceal Achilles' lack of breasts. Just like the breastless Amazons of the simile, the girls of Scyros come to dinner and recline like men, concealing, as much as possible, their relative height and their figures. Unfortunately, as Deidamia discovers, this unwonted posture leads to an unexpected problem: it becomes harder to keep the chest of Achilles modestly covered with his tunic.

At the banquet, the daughters of Lycomedes and their female companions are put on display. Despite the low lighting and the precaution of reclining, Achilles very nearly gives himself away. Ulysses picks out one girl who seems less modest than the rest, while Deidamia does her best under difficult circumstances to help Achilles act like a proper young lady:

> [Ulixes] at tamen erectumque genas oculisque vagantem
> nullaque virginei servantem signa pudoris
> defigit comitique obliquo lumine monstrat.
> quid nisi praecipitem blando complexa moneret
> Deidamia sinu nudataque pectora semper
> exsertasque manus umerosque in veste teneret
> et prodire toris et poscere vina vetaret
> saepius et fronte criniale reponeret aurum? (1.764–771)

Achilles has forgotten his mother's instructions on how to behave like a girl: he holds his head erect, he stares around the room, he is careless of his clothing, he makes gestures, he exposes his body, he wants to move about, he tries to drink wine, and he is careless of his hair and jewelry. This is a veritable catalog of the things a girl must not do if she wants to preserve her *pudor*. Deidamia lies next to Achilles, embracing him, and the two of them taken together provide an interesting picture of femininity as self-control. Deidamia is a well-behaved woman who recognizes and controls Achilles' impulses as they arise and threaten to become manifest. The scrutiny Deidamia pays to Achilles is a visible demonstration of the internalized self-surveillance that produces womanly modesty. Once again, womanliness is represented as a performance, not only for transvestites, but for women, too.

The primary story of the *Achilleid* is about an emergent masculinity, and we shall turn to that story in the next chapter. Nonetheless, it is clear that the *Achilleid* is also very interested in illustrating patterns of appropriate conduct for women. Thetis does not grasp the nuances of behavior that are required of epic goddesses and pays the price, while by contrast Deidamia understands very

well what is required of a wife left behind by a soldier. In addition to these quite literary roles, the general topic of how women should comport themselves in daily life is explored via Achilles' disruption of those norms. A final issue regarding femininity is also addressed here: if gender is largely a matter of imitative performance, then who should be in the audience? Modern debates over gender-roles and the extent to which they may be essential or performative have usually been closely linked to deeper questions: whether the binary division of gender is 'natural', whether most human behavior is innate or imitative, and so forth. For Statius on the other hand, womanliness, to the extent that it may be a matter of performance, does not raise questions of ontology, but rather of propriety. In a strong reinterpretation of the mythic material, Achilles' poor public showing as a girl and his ultimate discovery are attributed by Statius in large part to Lycomedes' improper eagerness to display his marriageable daughters before strangers. The women of Scyros spend much of their time in cult activity, most of which involves dancing. When the king puts these rituals of female solidarity before a male public without a religious context, Statius implies that there is something sacrilegious about it. The paradox of femininity is that even modesty is a performance, but it must seem an unwilling one. Ritual is where an unimpeachable obligation to perform typically intervenes and allows respectable girls the opportunity to display their demureness. Lycomedes manufactures such an event and the results are disquieting, not because Achilles' masquerade betrays the performative nature of gender, which to some extent is taken for granted in the *Achilleid*, but because maidenhood is not meant to be a matter of deliberately *public* performance and display.

Chapter Five

MYTH, RITUAL, AND ACHILLES' TRANSVESTISM

> A columnist in the *Christian Century* reports that a retired American bishop, John Baumgaertner, sent four vestments to the cleaner – namely an alb, cincture, stole and amice. They were beautifully done and the slip indicated that the Rev. Baumgaertner was charged for one dress, long; one scarf; one rope; and one apron.
>
> Janet Mayo, *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress**

5.1 Scyros before Statius

Statius may have been drawn to the story of Achilles' transvestism at least in part because it had not, to our knowledge, been told at great length by any poet since Euripides, nor ever in the epic genre; as he says, *sed plura vacant* ... (1.4). The scene of Achilles' unveiling at the hands of Ulysses was popular in the visual arts, but the rest of the episode is much less commonly depicted. Philostratus (*Imag.* 1) does describe a hypothetical 'painting' of Achilles on Scyros. In practice, however, the subject was a challenge for the artist: how does one represent Achilles without using his typical attributes? Paradoxically, even on Scyros Achilles is often depicted heroically, and at least partially nude. This in turn tends to dictate the kind of scene that he is found in: by far the most frequent is the unveiling, where the seizing of the weapons and the falling away of the women's robes permitted both the heroic and the cross-dressed Achilles to be represented simultaneously.[1] Another solution to the problem of representation was to show Achilles in the girls' private quarters, careless for the moment of his disguise and for this reason identifiable to the viewer.[2] We would like to

* Mayo (1984: 9), cited by Garber (1992: 210); Mayo is quoting the *Church Times* (15 February 1980), which in turn cites the *Christian Century*.

[1] *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', 105–75.

[2] *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', 98, 99, 102.

know how Statius differed in his treatment from earlier versions of the episode in literature and art, but, unfortunately, very few of the materials necessary for such an investigation have survived. For example, to judge from what remains of Euripides' Σκύριοι it is almost certainly the case, as demonstrated below, that Statius was familiar with that play; but that is nearly all that the fragments permit us to determine. Our investigation of the pedigree of the Scyros episode begins with Homer.

5.1.1 Homer and the Epic Cycle

According to two brief notices in the *Iliad*, Achilles at some time before his arrival at Troy captured a place called Scyros and left behind a child, Neoptolemus, to be reared there.[3] The familiar story of Achilles' evasion of military service has left no surviving trace in archaic epic. It has long been claimed that such a story, even if it had been available for inclusion at the time of composition, would have grossly violated the particular decorum of the Homeric poems.[4] Thus it can be argued that Homer's pretermission of the transvestite version of the Scyros-story is deliberate, and that the story is nevertheless very old and native to epic. The casual inquirer will find many modern authorities who state with a fair degree of confidence that the cyclic epics in general, and the *Cypria* in particular, told the story of Achilles among the women of Scyros.[5] Such was the case made by Severyns in his influential monograph, *Le cycle épique dans l'école d'Aristarque*, and despite occasional challenge this has remained a commonly held view.[6] This is, however, a very unlikely hypothesis. The first appearance of Achilles' transvestism in the record is not until the fifth century BC, and it is a serious mistake to project it back into the archaic period. Since this misconception is widespread, it may be worthwhile to take the space here to refute it in detail. In Proclus' summary of the Cypria, the Greek fleet leaves Aulis and makes its first mistaken landing in Telephus' territory in Mysia, and then:

> ἀποπλέουσι δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῆς Μυσίας χειμὼν ἐπιπίπτει καὶ διασκεδάννυνται. Ἀχιλλεὺς δὲ Σκύρῳ προσσχὼν γαμεῖ τὴν Λυκομήδους θυγατ-

[3] Capture of Scyros: *Il.* 9.666–8; Neoptolemus raised there: *Il.* 19.326–7; Odysseus, in his consoling report of Neoptolemus' prowess to the shade Achilles at *Od.* 11.504–38 claims to have brought the boy to Troy from Scyros, but he does not say how he came to have been raised there.

[4] Pausanias (1.22.6) commends Homer's restraint; more recently, Griffin (1977: 46) does the same.

[5] E.g. Roussel (1991: 121–125) and Davies (1989: 45).

[6] Severyns (1928: 285–291); a notable exception is Kullmann (1960: 189–92). Jouan (1966: 213–4, n 8) concisely reviews the scholarship.

ἑρα Δηϊδάμειαν.[7]

This passage cannot reflect the presence of a story involving Achilles among the women in any form known to us; he does not evade the draft here, since he is already a part of the expedition to Troy. It would be dangerous to make an argument purely from silence, since the epitomator of Proclus was selective, yet it might be noted that Proclus does not mention Achilles' transvestism at all, while he does tell us that the Cypria did contain an account of Odysseus' own similarly draft-dodging ploy of madness. How then can it be argued that the Cypria told the story of Achilles' cross-dressing? Severyns is obliged to construct a hypothesis of the plot of the Cypria in which Achilles is sent to Scyros *twice*:

> CHANTS CYPRIENS—Achille adolescent parmi les filles de Lycomède. Intrigue secrète avec Déidamie. Arrivée des Grecs. Départ d'Achille. Naissance d'un fils, 'Pyrrhos'. Après l'affaire de Mysie, Achille est rejeté par la tempête à Scyros. Mariage. 'Néoptolème'.[8]

This odd yet influential formulation has no direct support from anything we know about the plot of the *Cypria* and no subsequent authority—not even Apollodorus, whom we know to have relied fairly heavily on the cyclic epics—gives even a hint of this inexplicable sequence of events. There must surely be, then, a compelling reason for Severyns to insist that the story of Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes must be inserted willy-nilly into the plot of the *Cypria,* even at the expense of supposing that later, by purest coincidence, he is blown back to the same place to marry the girl he had violated on his earlier visit. The evidence for this is, however, far from certain. The only putative support for attributing our story to the *Cypria* is an Iliadic scholion of doubtful authority. To begin with, the scholion belongs to the so-called *scholia minora* or D-scholia. Its content perfectly exemplifies the second half of Kirk's summary description: 'These D-scholia are ... either brief notes on single words ... or long and often rambling ἱστορίαι from much later sources....'[9] In the *Iliad* (19.326), when

[7] Procl. *Chrest.* 80 (Bernabé 1988: p 41, ll. 38–40). Breslove (1943–4: 159–61) adduces this passage in support of his plausible theory explaining the origin of this strange navigational error: apart from the need to integrate the Telephus story into the main Troy tale, there was also a need to account for how Achilles came to have a son old enough to fight in the same war as himself, if he fathered that son on his way there. If it took, as Apollodorus says (*Epit.* 3.17–18), eight years for the Greeks to reassemble after this storm, then there was plenty of time for Neoptolemus to be born and begin his life before the start of the Trojan war proper.

[8] Severyns (1928: 291), on which see Kullman (1960: 191).

[9] Kirk (1985–93: vol 1, p 40), paraphrasing Erbse (1969: vol 1, p xi): 'Scholia D praeter interpolationes leviores e narrationibus (ἱστορίας) constant et verborum singulorum explicationibus. Haec illis vetustiores sunt'.

Achilles refers to Neoptolemus on Scyros, the valuable bT-scholia cite two lines from the *Little Iliad* which tell of Achilles brought to Scyros by a storm.[10] Thus far there is nothing to contradict the Homeric story of an attack on Scyros or to suggest the transvestite episode. Since Erbse is only concerned to edit the *scholia vetera,* his edition prints nothing further; but Dindorf has the text of the D-scholion that Severyns relies upon for his argument.[11] It gives a rambling account of the Scyros episode as we know it; a brief paraphrase should suffice to illustrate its flavor. It tells us, as if a reader of Homer needed telling, that Paris raped Helen and so Agamemnon and Menelaus made war against Troy. Peleus knew that Achilles would die in the war, and so he hid his son on Scyros, to be brought up among the daughters of Lycomedes. The Greek delegation searching for Achilles visited Peleus and then Scyros, where they found him out by the familiar stratagem of mixing weapons among the girls' gifts. The scholiast continues by noting that Achilles had previously attacked Deidamia and that she had borne a son originally called Pyrrhus. He was later called Neoptolemus, because he went to war very young. In some MSS the scholion concludes with the fateful words: ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ τοῖς κυκλικοῖς. This phrase, doubtfully attested, is the sole piece of evidence for ascribing this entire tale to the *Cypria.*

The scholiast's account contains what could be called only with great charity two 'variations' on the standard story which appear nowhere else in the mythological record:

1. Peleus rather than Thetis is uncharacteristically the parent who is concerned with Achilles' destiny to die at Troy; it is he rather than the goddess Thetis who can predict the future, and, implausibly, it is Peleus who wants his son to avoid a future as a warrior.

2. Neoptolemus gets his name from his own youthful war service, rather than that of his father, as we know the *Cypria* had it.[12]

Thus this scholion represents not an independent tradition to be cherished, but a bungling and implausible version of the post-Homeric vulgate. Further difficulties stand in the way of considering this scholion 'comme un résumé des

[10] Erbse (1969: vol 4, pp 635f); *Ilias Parva* F 4A Davies; see below (p 206), where these lines are quoted.

[11] Dindorf (1875–88: vol 4, pp 222f) has a minimal apparatus, but he notes that in the MS he was using this D-scholion was added by a second hand; there are partial French translations given by Severyns (1928: 286f) and Jouan (1966: 214). Gantz, who in general cites the Homeric scholia from Dindorf, has apparently been misled into believing that this information comes from the b-scholia, and thus the *scholia vetera* (1993: 581f, 873, n 23). Even so, he is rightly skeptical of Severyns' argument.

[12] *Cypria* F 16 Davies.

Chants Cypriens'.[13] Why did the scholiast feel the need pointlessly to remind us that the Trojan War began with the rape of Helen, and yet not to go back one step further to the point where the *Cypria* itself began: the plan of Zeus and the judgment of Paris? Then there is the argument Kullmann put forward against Severyns: the whole idea that Achilles would need to return to Scyros to regularize in marriage a union that had begun in rape is to import modern social transactions into archaic Greece.[14] Finally, let us accept for the moment that it is necessary to reconcile the summary of Proclus with this scholion. If that is so, then Severyns was absolutely correct in seeing that we are obliged to postulate that the *Cypria* described *two* visits by Achilles to Scyros. If this is the case, then why does the D-scholion introduce its version with the words ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα ἱστορία ἔξει οὕτως? If both visits to Scyros, the draft-dodging one and the storm-driven one, were part of the same organic whole, in what sense can one visit belong to an ἑτέρα ἱστορία? The point is even more strongly put a few lines previously in the words ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα ἱστορία διαψεύδεται.[15] Why is one story true and the other false if they are two incidents drawn from the same poem? The simplest solution is to disregard the words ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ τοῖς κυκλικοῖς as a late and bad guess. As it happens, the bT-scholion on the same verse genuinely cites the *Little Iliad* (the lines quoted below), and so the later D-scholion's mistaken attribution shall have been inspired by the nearby presence of an authentic cyclic fragment.[16] The story given by the D-scholion is characteristic of the *scholia minora* in giving a much later version of the myth; we should not radically rewrite the plot of either the *Cypria* or the *Little Iliad* on the basis of this vague and uninformed assertion. This is not the tale according to the cyclic epics, but according to the later tradition, to which we will turn shortly.[17]

[13] Severyns (1928: 289); his sentiment is echoed with approval by Roussel (1991: 125).

[14] Kullmann (1960: 191–2).

[15] Even Severyns accepts, rightly or wrongly, that these words form part of the same scholion, as his translation begins, 'La seconde histoire est mensongère...' (1928: 286). Davies (F incert. loc. 4) does not include these words, nor does Allen's *OCT*.

[16] Even Davies, who accepted this scholion in his edition of the epic cycle (F incert. loc. 4), calls it a 'late source' in his monograph (1989: 45). He is skeptical about its attribution of this story to the *Cypria*, however, and hints that it might fit better in the *Little Iliad*; yet the same inconsistency would obtain in that poem as well, since it claims that Achilles was brought to Scyros by a storm, not by his father's deliberate command. So we would be obliged in any case to postulate two trips for Achilles to Scyros in the course of the same epic.

[17] As Robert (1923: 1108, n 6) says in regard to this scholion, 'die κυκλοί ... sind nicht die Kyprien ... sondern irgendwelche Mythographen'. It may be that Ovid was aware of the disjunction between these two incompatible traditions. His Ulysses mentions Achilles' transvestism while boasting that he was the one who found out Achilles by means of the trick of including weapons among the girlish gifts (*Met.* 13.162–70); he does not name Scyros. Then a few lines later, while listing a number of places that Achilles had sacked, including *en passant* the land of Telephus, he does mention Scyros (*Met.* 13.175). It seems plausible to see in this an attempt to reconcile the two stories in a way that curiously anticipates Severyns' tactic; Ulysses implies

We now know that the story of Achilles among the women did not form part of the preparations for war in the *Cypria*, but before leaving the cyclic epics, we must move onwards in the chronology of the Trojan story to look briefly at the *Little Iliad.* One incident in this poem was Odysseus' expedition from Troy after Achilles' death to retrieve Neoptolemus from Scyros. The poem presumably gave a background account of how Achilles came to have a son there, and it might easily have mentioned the original circumstances of the father's arrival there. This is almost certainly the context in which the following fragment fits. As in Proclus' summary of the *Cypria*, the Greek fleet has just left the land of Telephus when a storm comes up:

> Πηλεΐδην δ' Ἀχιλῆα φέρεν Σκῦρόνδε θύελλα
> ἔνθα γ' ἐς ἀργαλέον λιμέν' ἵκετο νυκτὸς ἐκείνης.[18]

This story corresponds so exactly with what we saw above, that it seems reasonable to posit a coherent and archaic form of the Achilles-in-Scyros myth which did not coexist alongside the transvestite version of the story but rather pre-existed it and was common to the *Iliad, Cypria* and *Little Iliad.* Such at least was the understanding of the *scholia vetera.* It may be that this is not, as has been thought, yet another example of Homer censoring undignified behavior that found its way into the less-scrupulous cyclic poems.[19] Rather it seems that Homer and the cyclic texts are in full accord regarding Scyros: after the first mustering of the Greek fleet at Aulis and its misguided attack on Telephus in Mysia, on the way back from Asia Minor a storm separated the ships and drove Achilles to harbor in Scyros. He sacked the town and took prisoners, including Iphis, whom he gave to Patroclus.[20] Achilles then married Lycomedes' daughter Deidamia and sailed off, leaving her pregnant with Neoptolemus. This version of events is also supported by the argument that the tale of Achilles as a draft-dodger entered the mythological tradition at a specific point in time, motivated by particular historical circumstances (see below, Section 5.1.2). Thus our first notices of another, different tradition concerning Scyros come not from the ar-

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that there must have been two different trips by Achilles to Scyros under radically different circumstances, or two different islands. At the very least Ovid here demonstrates his mastery of his material by alluding to two available versions of a myth in a way that keeps the potential incompatibilities between them in suspension.

[18] *Ilias Parva* F 4 Davies; as it happens, one of the several sources for these lines is the bT-scholion on *Iliad* 19.326. As argued above, this seeming coincidence may well account for how the D-scholion ad loc came to mention the κυκλικοί.

[19] Griffin (1977: 46), for example, assumes that Achilles' transvestism, like Odysseus' feigned madness, was cyclic.

[20] Homer never mentions Lycomedes, but names an otherwise unknown Enueus (*Il.* 9.667–8).

chaic period, but from the painting and drama of fifth-century Athens, to which we will turn shortly.

Does any of this matter very much? Surely the cyclic epics had a very limited readership at Rome in Statius' day. It is not clear that, even if the *Cypria* had treated Achilles' cross-dressing, Statius would have felt its example weighing heavily on his shoulders. I believe nevertheless that it is useful to know whether or not the *Achilleid* was the first ever epic treatment of this material. The recycling of plot elements from cyclic epic was an important and programmatic part of Latin epic beginning from the *Aeneid*'s conspicuous incorporation of the fall of Troy from the *Iliupersis*. This should probably be seen as a deliberate recuperation of quintessentially epic material from the clutches of cyclic narratives which had become since Callimachus the archetype of unsound poetry.[21] It is against this background that Statius' own *Thebaid* can be seen as a revision of a classically epic tale that had been 'badly' told not only by the poets of the epic cycle, but also by that other Callimachean object of ridicule, Antimachus of Colophon. In the novelty of its subject matter the *Achilleid* marks a departure for Statius. The notion of writing an epic manifest in the words *plura vacant* (1.4), that is, to write another poem in the margins of a classic plot, is essentially cyclic.[22] Furthermore Statius' advertised subject, the life and death of Achilles, was also cyclic, having been told in the *Cypria* and the *Aethiopis*. A substantial part of the *Achilleid* describes the mobilization of the Greek fleet at Aulis, and this too was part of the *Cypria*. Against this background Statius' total departure from the cyclic model for his Scyros tale is notable. Achilles is not at Scyros in his Homeric and cyclic role as a conqueror, but in his Euripidean aspect as a lover. This admixture of non-epic matter into an epic framework is also typical of the *Achilleid*, and the workings of this process are obscured if we do not see clearly the fact that Statius is the first writer we know to have told the story of Achilles' transvestism in epic verse.

5.1.2 Polygnotus and Cimon

There being no archaic evidence for the story as we know it of Achilles on Scyros, it first appears in the record in the fifth century BC as the subject of a painting by Polygnotus. When Pausanias describes the already ancient and faded paintings executed by Polygnotus that hung in the Propylaea to the Athenian Acropolis,

[21] For ancient criticism of the *scriptor cyclicus*, see Horace, *Ars P.* 136–45 and Callimachus, *Epigr.* 28 Pfeiffer (=*Anth. Pal.* 12.43) with Cameron (1995: 394–7).

[22] It was Ovid of course who showed how this technique could be updated and deployed in a particularly sophisticated way.

he lists among the subjects represented there the sacrifice of Polyxena at the tomb of Achilles. He then makes the following comment:

> Ὁμήρῳ δὲ εὖ μὲν παρείθη τόδε τὸ ὠμὸν οὕτως ἔργον· εὖ δέ μοι φαίνεται ποιῆσαι Σκῦρον ὑπὸ Ἀχιλλέως ἁλοῦσαν, οὐδὲν ὁμοίως καὶ ὅσοι λέγουσιν ὁμοῦ ταῖς παρθένοις Ἀχιλλέα ἔχειν ἐν Σκύρῳ δίαιταν, ἃ δὴ καὶ Πολύγνωτος ἔγραψεν. (1.22.6)

Polygnotus' painting of the sacrifice of Polyxena reminds Pausanias of another incident in the Trojan Cycle that in his view Homer had been right to suppress, viz. Achilles at Scyros. Does this mean that Polygnotus' painting of Achilles among the women was specifically at the Propylaea? Many standard works say yes, ignoring the more cautious reading of Carl Robert: 'In irgend einem Gebäude Athens—in welchem wissen wir nicht, jedoch sicher nicht in den Propyläen—hatte Polygnot den Mythos ... dargestellt....'[23] It is true that Pausanias does not actually say where he saw Polygnotus' picture, and he presents the connection between the undignified stories about Polyxena and Achilles at Scyros as the product of his own fancy. Pausanias goes on to describe another painting by Polygnotus depicting Odysseus and Nausicaa, and then resumes his description of the picture gallery with the words γραφαὶ δέ εἰσι καὶ ἄλλαι. It would be unusual, given the author's geographically indexed design, to find no indication that he had just illustrated, in the midst of a description of the Athenian Propylaea, two paintings that the frustrated Roman tourist would not be able to find there. So, Robert's caution having been noted, I shall nevertheless follow the general opinion and assume that the painting was indeed to be found in the Propylaea in Pausanias' day. It is unlikely that the paintings could have been meant originally for the Periclean Propylaea, as Polygnotus can be dated nearly a generation earlier by his association with Cimon. The time of the painter's activity is generally reckoned to have been the 470's through the 440's, while the Propylaea was built between 436 and 432 BC. It may be that the paintings were executed for Polygnotus' patron, Cimon, and then moved to their later position by Pericles' architect, Mnesikles.[24] It was Carl Robert again who was the first to see that a connection might be made between this sudden appearance in Cimon's Athens ca. 480–440 BC of a previously unheard-of myth concerning Achilles in Scyros and the conquest of that island by Cimon himself ca. 476–63 BC as recounted by Thucydides. Others have further developed this line of

[23] Robert (1881: 34); Kossatz-Deissmann (*LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus' 95), for example, situates the painting unproblematically in the 'Pinakothek der Propyläen'.

[24] As argued by Jeffery (1965: 45–6); see also Robertson (1975: vol 1, p 245, n 153).

argument by stressing the propaganda value of such mythological painting to Cimon.[25]

It is surely no coincidence that the story of Achilles among the women of Scyros appears for the first time in the history of Greek myth at the precise time and place that the island was first colonized by Athens. The likelihood of coincidence is reduced still further if we consider that we know of an equivalent case in which Cimon capitalized upon the mythological potential of Scyros for his own propaganda. The only other event of significance in Greek myth that was located on Scyros, apart from Achilles' concealment, was the murder there of Theseus by Lycomedes. Once again this is a tale whose appearance in the mythical record is first attested in Cimon's Athens.[26] Cimon made much of returning Theseus' bones from Scyros to Attica, and he raised a proper funeral mound in Athens to which hero cult was thereafter given. For the sake of rounding out the biography that the Athenians gradually developed for him, Theseus was provided with a death tale, and there may be reasons to explain why it had to happen in exile from Athens, but why set it in such an obscure place as Scyros?[27] The answer seems to be that it fitted in nicely with Cimon's war plans: the story that Theseus retired to his property there was an invented mythological precedent for an Athenian proprietary interest in the island, and the treachery of Lycomedes provided a *casus belli* for the Athenian invasion. The only thing that remains to be explained is the notion that Lycomedes pushed Theseus off a cliff. It would have provided a particularly ignominious crime for Cimon to avenge; it explains how a nonentity like Lycomedes could have been responsible for the death of a hero such as Theseus; finally, the specific modality of Theseus' death—to be pushed from a cliff—might well have been adapted from an element of some local story on Scyros.[28]

The story of the death of Theseus and the story of Achilles among the women both seem to have been imported from Scyros to Athens at around the same

[25] Jeffery (1965) and Robertson (1975: vol 1, 242–5); they naturally focus on Polygnotan paintings whose content lends itself more readily to a political reading than this one; see also Simon (1963).

[26] Apart from Thucydides' story of Cimon finding Theseus' bones in Scyros (1.98.2), the complete story of Theseus' death there is first found in Diodorus (4.64.4), and thereafter in Plutarch (*Thes.* 35), Pausanias (1.17.6) and Apollodorus (*Epit.* 1.24).

[27] Gantz (1993: 297–8) makes an interesting guess about the circumstance that might have obliged the Athenians to invent a death-in-exile tale for Theseus. He imagines that the absence of Theseus' sons from the Catalog of Athenians in the *Iliad* (2.545–56) was an awkwardness that demanded such an explanation as this.

[28] For what it is worth, the site of the ancient acropolis on Scyros is perched atop a very precipitous rocky eminence, presumably the source of its Homeric epithet, Σκῦρον ... αἰπεῖαν (*Il.* 9.668). The bay there anciently called Ἀχιλλεῖον (Plut. *Cimon* 8, T-schol. ad *Il.* 19.326) is still called *Akhili.*

time and promoted there by Cimon. Yet the tales differ in one important way. The Scyros story of Theseus is neatly explicable in political terms, and it serves Athenian interests down to its minutest particular. By contrast, the propaganda value of Achilles' Scyros story is unclear. Cimon's objective would seem to have been even better served by the already existing story from the archaic epics that Achilles had attacked and sacked the place. Cimon would thus be following in the Homeric Achilles' footsteps in sacking Scyros. So why did the story of Achilles' involvement in the island change from one that would better suit the conquerors to one less apt to their purposes? Why did Polygnotus promulgate the transvestite episode at all, if its political value was nil?

Robert gave some thought to the problem, and his solution is at first glance appealing. According to him, the notion that Neoptolemus was a native Scyrian and a descendant of their royal house was flattering to local vanity, and conversely the story that his birth was the result of Achilles' successful sack of the island was an insult to their pride. The locals therefore said that Achilles had not come there as an aggressor, but as a draft evader from the Trojan war, hiding among their women.[29] This model accounts for the motivation behind the change of story, but it is unworkable. It assumes that these locals would have had the power, despite their defeat, to promulgate their own version of Achilles' stay on the island, and that their mouthpiece in doing so was Polygnotus from Thasos, a fellow Ionian dweller 'auf den Inseln des thrakischen Meers'.[30] While Polygnotus, being from Thasos, was an 'ionische Künstler', it is hard to see why he should have been so keen to uphold the honor of another island, particularly one that had never to our knowledge been Ionian at all, but rather was inhabited at that time, as Thucydides (1.98.2) says, by Dolopes from Thessaly.[31] Scyros is not really very near Thasos, and Polygnotus, though born in Thasos, was a naturalized Athenian citizen. Given this, should we really look in Polygnotus' work for the voice of the feelings of these dispossessed and enslaved Thessalian pirates rather than of his own friend and patron, Cimon? It is clear from Thucydides' account of the piratical Dolopes who dwelt on Scyros that the inhabitants

[29] Robert (1923: 1106–7).

[30] Robert (1923: 1108); cf. also Robert (1881: 34)

[31] According to Dowden (1989: 54), '... they [the Dolopes] can scarcely belong to any other dialect group than the Aeolic'. Vidal-Naquet, on the other hand, says in a preface contributed to a recent book, 'Et Thésée mourra à Scyros, chez les Dolopes qui ne sont pas vrais Grecs, mais des *mixéllēnes* ou encore *mixobárbaroi*'. In a footnote, he adds, À ces personnages Denise Fourgous a consacré depuis plusieurs années toute une série d'études': Calame (1996: 11 and 13, n 4). These studies have apparently not yet been published. It may be that the Dolopes, like the Macedonians, were slanderously accused of being half-barbarian by their fellow-Greeks; their membership in the Delphic Amphictony would seem nevertheless to demonstrate their true Hellenic credentials.

were not treated with much consideration by the Athenians. If by Scyrians we mean not the Dolopes, but the Athenian cleruchs Cimon installed there, then it is equally improbable to invoke Robert's motive of local patriotism, as new colonists should theoretically be quite happy with the old epic story, identifying with the invading hero Achilles, rather than the victimized local princess.[32] How then may we reconcile the evident politicization of Scyrian myth in Cimon's Athens with the apparent non-existence of a party to whom the newer version of Achilles' stay might have been advantageous?

The full answer is probably beyond recovery, but since the Achilles-in-Scyros story would seem to cut athwart any possible political interest at Athens, the diffusion of this myth cannot be reduced to purely political manipulation. The development of Theseus into a pan-Attic hero may provide a parallel example of a hero whose biography combined ideologically useful material with less edifying stories. He became a symbol of Attic synoecism, but this did not obscure the more unsavory aspects of his legend, such as his endless pursuit of women. Indeed, the disjunction between the civic and personal Theseus was exploited to ironic effect by Euripides in his *Hippolytus*. As the influence of power is brought to bear on mythic material, there may be a supplement left over that does not mold itself so easily to whatever political end is in view. The colonizers, in order to discover the whereabouts of the remains of a hero that they could identify with their 'Theseus', may have been obliged paradoxically to validate the heroic narratives of the conquered Scyrian natives. The most famous mythical association of the island was with the birth of Neoptolemus; so in their search for local stories of 'Theseus' in order that they could bring his bones triumphantly home, the Athenians might also have discovered a version of the birth of Achilles' son as told from a Scyrian perspective. It is probable in any case that the wide promulgation of the myth of Achilles' cross-dressed sojourn on Scyros had its origin in some oblique way in the Athenian drive to assert their claims to revenge for Theseus' murder.

The circumstantial evidence is strong that the introduction of the story of Achilles among the women into the body of Greek myth was directly connected

[32] There is one remaining possibility to consider among candidates for whom the Achilles story might have had propaganda value: the political opponents of Cimon at Athens. If we knew, say, that he had been accused of effeminacy, then we might argue that both pro- and anti-Cimon myth-making was happening on Scyros. Plutarch rebukes him for uxoriousness, but nothing more. He was slandered with the charge of incest with his sister (Plut. *Cimon* 4.5–9, to which may be added the unpublished ostracon cited by *OCD*[3] s.v. 'Cimon'), and Achilles and Deidamia did commit a sort of incest (cf. *Ach.* 1.588–91); but the connection is tenuous. The intimate association between Polygnotus and Cimon inclines one to imagine that if the Scyros-story had any political edge, it would have been favorable to Cimon, rather than the opposite.

with Cimon's sack of the island. What conclusions can be inferred from this, and what relevance does it have for the *Achilleid*? As far as Statius is concerned, Polygnotus merely stands as a prelude to Euripides, who was the key figure for the later diffusion of the myth. At the very least, our account of precisely how the story of Achilles' cross-dressing entered circulation can help to copper-fasten the argument that the tale was utterly foreign to cyclic epic and indeed to all epic before Statius. Even if it does not bear directly on the plot of the *Achilleid*, there is an obligation for us to dwell upon the origins of the myth. This is because a different theory has been widely accepted, and as we shall see below (Section 5.2), it will be important to clarify what contribution Statius makes to the debate.

5.1.3 Euripides

For Statius the most influential treatment of Achilles among the women of Scyros was certainly Euripides' play on the subject, the Σκύριοι, a work that has usually been classed among the poet's early plays.[33] Even so, given that he first competed in the City Dionysia in 455 BC, a decade after Cimon's expedition to Scyros, it is likely that the play was composed well after Polygnotus' painting, and yet not so long afterwards that the context of the Athenian expedition will have been forgotten.[34] Nothing is known directly about its circumstances of first performance, but given the non-tragic subject matter, the guess (Körte 1934: 12) that it stood like the *Alcestis* as a melodrama in lieu of a satyr-play at the end of a tetralogy is attractive. As for what remains to us of the play, there are a handful of quoted fragments, the longest of which is of five lines, and a fragment

[33] There seems to be no firm evidence for dating the play early, but more a general intuition; thus Robert (1923: 1108). That Sophocles' play of the same name treated an entirely different circumstance, the fetching of Neoptolemus to Troy, was demonstrated long ago by Tyrwhitt (thus Robert 1881: 34), yet the error of assuming that the two plays had similar plots still occasionally persists. Körte (1934: 12) admits that the metrical evidence from the fragments is not decisive in establishing a chronology. His argument is that Euripides' Σκύριοι probably predates Sophocles' play of the same name, since the latter dealt with the retrieval of Neoptolemus from Scyros, which Körte deems a less promising poetical scenario. Even if we grant the dubious claim that the Achilles-leaving-Scyros story was much more compelling dramatically than the Neoptolemus-leaving-Scyros story, what was there to prevent Sophocles from treating the same story again? Jouan (1966: 216–8) is rightly skeptical of Körte's argument, but his own view that the play is a late one is equally unproven, and remains the minority view.

[34] On the basis of his argument connecting Cimon and Polygnotus to Scyros, Robert asserts, 'Hier ist es also auch für den skeptischsten Forscher klar, daß die Tragödie des Euripides Σκύριοι nicht nur später, sondern in direkter Abhängigkeit von Polygnot gedichtet ist' (1881: 34). But this precedence of visual art over poetry in articulating local myth is one of the central themes of *Bild und Lied*, and so Robert perhaps overstates his case slightly here. We may still conclude that Polygnotus' painting was at least 'vortragisch' (Kullmann 1960: 191), if not necessarily the direct inspiration for Euripides. Thus T. B. L. Webster's inclusion of Polygnotus' painting among his 'Selected illustrations of lost plays by Euripides' (1967: 301) is mistaken.

of a hypothesis on papyrus, which gives us the first line and some background to the *mise en scène*, and then breaks off just as it is beginning to describe the action of the play itself.[35] A certain amount can be reconstructed on this basis, and the assumption that Statius knew the play can also help; Körte (1934) has attempted such a reconstruction in a very careful manner.

The influence of Euripides on Statius is assured, despite the exiguous state of his play, because Statius may be seen to have signalled the debt overtly. In the *Achilleid*, after the narrative of Deidamia's rape there intervene several lines in which the princess debates whether she should confess to her father what happened; a few words elide her period of pregnancy (1.665–74). At this point she makes reference to a figure whose presence is never alluded to anywhere else in the poem:

> ... unam placet addere furtis
> altricem sociam, precibus quae victa duorum
> adnuit. illa astu tacito raptumque pudorem
> surgentemque uterum atque aegros in pondere menses
> occuluit, plenis donec stata tempora metis
> attulit et partus index Lucina resolvit. (1.669–74)

So this nurse, the couple's sole confidante, helps them conceal the pregnancy and birth. The nurse then disappears from the epic as quickly as she entered it. Her cameo appearance raises a few questions. Why do we need to know about her at all? What purpose does it serve to introduce a new character for the space of only six lines? Statius could have described the concealment of Deidamia's pregnancy just as economically without introducing us to its agent, or he could have referred to the help of her sisters, for Deidamia is not an only child in the *Achilleid*. The answer to the difficulty is that these lines are surely a nod to Euripides. While nurses may be sometimes found in epic, the sudden and superfluous presence here of a nurse, tragic and Euripidean figure *par excellence*, should alert us to the possibility of *contaminatio* with that genre.[36] The few fragments of Euripides'

[35] The fragments are 682–686 Nauck including F adesp. 9 (=F 683a Nauck²); Gallavotti discovered and first published the hypothesis (1933), and subsequently re-edited it for *PSI* (1951). It has also been published by, among others, Austin (1968) and Luppe (1982), who provides a photographic facsimile of the papyrus. Its state is imperfect and there have been some minor differences regarding the supplements added, but none materially affect the interpretation of the hypothesis. The accuracy of the account given of the play is relatively secure, not only because of its general congruence with the brief accounts of the Scyros episode found in Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.13.8) and Hyginus (*Fab.* 96), but also because the hypothesis that precedes it on the alphabetically ordered papyrus scrap is of the *Rhesus*, and it agrees well with our manuscripts of that play.

[36] Körte's caution seems misplaced to me: 'Aber ich möchte auf die Vertrautenrolle der

Scyrians that we have permit us to know that Deidamia's nurse was indeed a character in that play:

⟨Τρ.⟩ ἡ παῖς νοσεῖ σου κἀπικινδύνως ἔχει.
⟨Λυκ.⟩ πρὸς τοῦ; τίς αὐτὴν πημονὴ δαμάζεται;
μῶν κρυμὸς αὐτῆς πλευρὰ χειμάζει χολῆς; (F 682 Nauck)

The hypothesis tells us that Deidamia was motherless and so scholars have been unanimous in attributing the first line to Deidamia's nurse; we are told that the following two are spoken by Lycomedes.[37] Perhaps the nurse manages to deflect Lycomedes' curiosity at this stage, perhaps not. The question of whether the nurse succeeds at this point in the play to continue to hide the nature of Deidamia's illness is critical for a reconstruction of Euripides' play, but it is not so important for our purposes. What is clear is that the nurse is presented here as the agent concealing Deidamia's pregnancy. By a fortunate chance we know that the nurse served the same purpose for Euripides as she does for Statius. It is no wonder, then, that Statius does not elaborate on how Deidamia kept her confinement a secret from her father; the invocation here of the Euripidean nurse tells the well-read reader the answer: she feigned an illness. Statius deploys his nurse almost as a footnote: for further details on Deidamia' pregnancy and the method of its concealment, cf. Euripides' *Scyrians*.

To return then to the plot of the *Scyrians*, one possible reconstruction of the order of the fragments is given in Table 5.1. There is not much that can be gleaned from these scraps, but in a few places we may see where Statius has followed or diverged from the Euripidean model. To begin with, the first line commences an invocation of Helen that probably formed part of a diatribe spoken by Thetis, evidently placing blame for the whole situation on her shoulders.[38]

Amme kein zu großes Gewicht legen, denn die »Euripideische« Amme hatte ja längst aus der Tragödie ihren Weg in das Epos gefunden,—es genügt an die Ciris zu erinnern—, und so kann Statius diese nachher nicht wieder genannte Figur auch ohne Benutzung der Skyrier eingelegt haben' (1934: 8). Whereas the very brevity of the nurse's appearance in the *Achilleid* indicates to Körte that the connection between Statius and Euripides is also very slight here, I draw the opposite conclusion; the nurse appears briefly, because her only function in the epic is to provide a pointer to Euripides' play. The fact that nurses may be found in Latin hexameter does not diminish their more natural association with tragedy.

[37] Thus Körte (1934: 5), Jouan (1966: 209), Webster (1967: 96).

[38] Such was Gallivotti's original suggestion, but some disagreement was voiced by Körte (1934: 3–4), who would rather give the prologue to the nurse. His objection to Thetis is that because her plans are frustrated in the course of the drama, she is not an appropriate figure to speak the prologue. I do not see why this should matter; the nurse's plans to conceal Deidamia's pregnancy are equally frustrated. Jouan (1966: 208) follows Körte, but Webster (1967: 96) sees that Thetis is the only character with sufficiently ample knowledge of the situation to trace it back to its causes. As he notes, even Achilles himself has imperfect knowledge; he is likely not even to know who Helen is at this point, so why should the nurse know any more?

Prologue:	Thetis or the nurse apostrophizes Helen	papyrus hypothesis (=F 681a Nauck²)
Epeisodia:	Nurse tells Lycomedes that Deidamia is ill	F 682 Nauck
	Someone, perhaps the nurse, urges the wisdom of dissimulating domestic problems	F 683 N
	Lycomedes bemoans the capriciousness of fate towards mortals [Birth of Neoptolemus?]	F684 N
	Arrival of Odysseus and Diomedes [Discovery of Achilles?]	F 686 N
	Odysseus upbraids Achilles for avoiding the war ...	F incert. 880 N
	... and for spinning wool, despite his high birth. [Achilles leaves Scyros?]	F adesp. 9 N (=F 683a N²)

Table 5.1: Hypothetical reconstruction of Euripides' Σκύριοι, after Webster (1967: 97).

The *Achilleid* also begins with Thetis, likewise furious at the elopement of Helen with Paris. Statius directs Thetis' anger more at Paris than Helen, in keeping with her recapitulation of the role of Juno at the start of the *Aeneid.* But even as she rails in Vergilian vein against the fleet of a Phrygian prince, she may owe something to this Euripidean prologue, if in fact it was spoken by Thetis.

The most striking thing that we can learn from the hypothesis is that Euripides' Deidamia is, in addition to being motherless, apparently an only child.[39] The consequence, as Körte pointed out, is that in Euripides' version of the story, Ulysses must not have required any devious stratagem in order to find Achilles out. If the only two maidens in the household were Lycomedes' single daughter and a stranger, it would not have taken much guile to solve the puzzle. So there was no elaborate trap involving gifts and a trumpeter such as we find in the *Achilleid* and so many visual representations.[40] Instead, we may speculate that

[39] The circumstantial evidence for this conclusion, adduced by Körte (1934: 4f), is strong: the hypothesis introduces Deidamia as if Lycomedes had no other children: τρέφων δ' ἐκεῖνο[ς θυγατέρα] μητρὸς ὀρφανὴν ὄνομ[α Δηιδάμει]αν.... Then the nurse refers to her simply as ἡ παῖς in the fragment quoted above (p 214); it seems that was enough to identify her to her father. Finally, the chorus of the play is made up of Σκύριοι, and not Σκύριαι as would surely have been the case if the play had featured a crowd of girls, as the *Achilleid* does.

[40] At the very most, it is possible that the trumpeter who fools Achilles into thinking an attack

Euripides concentrated on articulating the competing claims on Achilles of his love for Deidamia and his desire for glory. Some of the rhetoric Odysseus must have deployed to sway him is reflected in the *Achilleid* (1.795–802, 1.867–74) and in two of the fragments above (F incert. 880 N and F 683a N²). We might imagine that the *Scyrians* had some affinity with Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, with love rather than hate as the obstacle to the hero's progress to Troy. There was surely some opportunity for physical comedy with a male actor playing a man playing a 'girl' on stage next to male actors playing female characters.[41] But this may not have been the focus of the script, as it might if Euripides had written the chorus as female (Σκύριαι) rather than male.

It follows therefore that some of the most theatrical moments in the *Achilleid* do not derive from any play we know of. The scene of Achilles' unveiling (1.841–885), with its complex movement and staging, thus evokes, as has long been recognized, the popular visual representations of the scene in Roman art, but it does so in a way that is nearly unprecedented in any other literary representation of whose existence we have notice.[42] Since Duncan (1914) it has become conventional, perhaps even a cliché, to speak of Statius' pictorial imagination.[43] This allegiance to the visual arts is demonstrated not only in the striking images, but also in those aspects of Achilles' biography that are elaborated for the first time in literature by Statius. Scenes like these bring dramatically new material into epic. The choice to describe Achilles' unveiling was innovative and did not have a Euripidean pedigree—Ovid's brief mention was the only precedent.[44] It is not enough to attribute it to a mere change of taste in the reading public; we should also examine the dramatic possibilities it opened up. As a result of departing from Euripides, Statius gave himself the chance to introduce a host of nameless females '*in deren buntem Schwarm der jugendliche Held verschwand.*'[45] It is an

is imminent may belong to Euripides' version, since Apollonius mentions him (*Bibl.* 3.13.8). The weapons mixed among the gifts on the other hand would have no point at all unless there were a plurality of maidens.

[41] As in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae,* on which see Zeitlin (1981). See also studies on the transvestite plots of Renaissance English theater, in which female roles were likewise ordinarily filled by males: Greenblatt (1988: 66–93), Garber (1992: 72–77) and Howard 1993.

[42] For the mass of Roman wall paintings, mosaics, and sarcophagi showing the discovery of Achilles, see *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos 107–166. The most important model for these, especially for the Pompeian wall paintings, was apparently Athenion's painting of the scene as described by Pliny (35.134); for bibliography, see *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', no 105. Almost all of these show a plurality of girls, proving that they belong to a different tradition from Euripides.

[43] Farrell (1993) rightly complains that this is not a sufficient account of the intensity of Statius' descriptive style.

[44] The literary notices of this scene come from the mythological handbooks of Apollonius and Hyginus. Ovid is the only surviving poet before Statius, Greek or Roman, to mention Ulysses' stratagem: see above, n. 17.

[45] Körte (1934: 4).

opportunity that Statius seized with enthusiasm. There may be no chorus of girls in Euripides' *Scyrians,* but there are several in the *Achilleid,* and significantly so. Achilles exists as a girl among girls, sometimes blending smoothly in, sometimes standing awkwardly out, but he is always seen in a thoroughly female milieu. As we saw above in Chapter 4.3, this opens up remarkable possibilities for burlesque and for comment on the nature of gender.

5.1.4 Hellenistic and Roman Sources

We find few other indications of the Scyros-story in literature before Statius.[46] We have already discussed (Section 4.3.2) the scrap of an Hellenistic poem erroneously ascribed to Bion.[47] It influenced Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and so it is possible that Statius knew the poem as well, but there is no passage where its influence on the *Achilleid* could not be equally attributed to Ovid.[48] This poem does introduce several motifs into the story that we also find in Statius: Achilles is androgynous in appearance, he works with wool, he presses his attentions on Deidamia, and he maintains the fiction of his femininity even in private. There are divergences, too: Thetis is not mentioned, and a rival or chaperone seems to stand between the couple. The manuscript breaks off after 32 lines, so there is not a great deal we can know. Apart from the odd casual reference (eg. Prop. 2.9.16, Hor. *Carm* 1.8.13–16) there is no extended treatment of the Scyros myth in Latin verse until Ovid (*Ars Am.* 1.681–704). Statius' narrative of Achilles' rape of Deidamia and its aftermath may be considered a detailed response to the *Ars Amatoria* and so it will reserved for a detailed discussion in Chapter 6.

5.2 Transvestism and Initiation

We saw in the foregoing section the force of Carl Robert's theory that the myth of Achilles on Scyros first gained wide diffusion beyond that island at the point when its inhabitants were conquered by the Athenians. The tale may possibly have had its origin in the local patriotism of the people of Scyros; this picture of Achilles' stay was more flattering to them than the Homeric and cyclic story that they were conquered by Achilles. Whatever the local circumstances may have been that gave rise to a tale of Achilles' transvestism, it was disseminated through the Greek world thanks to its place in the work of artists like Polygnotus,

[46] Bickel's argument (1937) that the *Achilles* of Livius Andronicus, of which only one line survives, was based on Euripides' *Scyrians* is pure speculation.

[47] Pseudo-Bion 2, *Bucolici Graeci* (ed. Gow, *OCT*).

[48] Cf. Hollis ad Ov. *Ars Am* 1.681–704.

Euripides and Athenion of Maroneia.[49] On this theory, therefore, the dissemination of the story of Achilles on Scyros was primarily a post-archaic literary and artistic phenomenon. This view of the matter is difficult to reconcile with the account of the myth currently prevailing.

Since the publication of an article by Crawley in 1893 it has been usual to explain the myth of Achilles' cross-dressing as an echo of a supposed adolescent initiation rite that once was practiced in the pre-historic Greek world, or at least an echo borrowed from another culture that did practice such a rite.[50] It can no longer be doubted that the initiation of young men was a significant influence on many kinds of myth and ritual in Classical Greece, and not only in Doric areas. The typology of initiation has been extraordinarily productive as a matrix for understanding certain aspects of ancient myth and culture. Nonetheless, there are many potential occasions for ritual transvestism aside from initiation, and so to evaluate Crawley's theory, it will be necessary to examine the evidence for transvestism in rites of passage as it may relate to cross-dressing in the Greco-Roman world.

I shall try to treat these admittedly complex matters adequately in the first two parts of this section, which will comprise a substantial but necessary detour away from the *Achilleid*. First we must establish what is known from comparative ethnology about initiatory transvestism, and to determine whether this evidence really does bear upon the case of Achilles. Secondly we need to examine some of the other examples of cross-dressing in Greco-Roman myth and cult to see whether they can substantiate the theory that cross-dressing once may have constituted a part of the initiation of young men in ancient Mediterranean society. The relevance of these investigations to a study of the *Achilleid* will become clear afterwards. Statius insistently uses the imagery of initiation in his presentation of Achilles at Scyros; we have already discussed this with respect to Achilles' dancing (above, Section 4.3.2). The problem is how to interpret these initiatory elements in the *Achilleid*; we shall consider that question in the final part of this section. Subsequently (Section 5.3) we will extend this investigation into a detailed look at the episode of Achilles' maenadism in the light of Roman ritual practice.

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[49] Pliny (*NH* 35.134) described a painting by Athenion of the discovery of Achilles by Ulysses that has been claimed by scholars as the probable prototype for Pompeian wall-paintings of the scene; for bibliography, see *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilles', no. 105.

[50] For an account of the ways myth might derive from initiatory ritual, see Graf (1993: 116f), and more generally, Calame (1996: 15–60).

5.2.1 The Anthropology of Cross-dressing in Rites of Passage

In an influential formulation, van Gennep (1960: 10f) categorized the ceremonial *rites de passage* that mark transitions from one social state to another as divided into three types, which are often found together as different phases of the same ritual: rites of separation, transition rites and rites of incorporation. The period of transition or suspension between the old status and the new is characterized by 'liminal rites'. This time is often passed in the wilderness or simply away from the main part of society, where the participants may wear non-standard clothing, eat an unusual diet, and generally act in ways not usually sanctioned in that society. After this period of 'social death', the initiate rejoins the mass reborn into a new role.[51] In the ancient Greek world this pattern has been divined, for example, in the background of the *krypteia* at Sparta and in aspects of the *ephebeia* at Athens; in both cases young men spend time on the margin of the city's territory before joining the army as hoplites, while engaging in a style of fighting that was not customary for citizens.[52] Initiation ritual proper only survived into the historical period in the Doric ambit, but studies have demonstrated that echoes of adolescent initiation rituals may be found in aspects of social practice throughout the Greek world.[53] In complementary fashion, various stories of myth have been inspected for reflections of initiation rituals; the legend of Theseus and the tale of the Argonauts, for example, have both been interpreted in the light of such rituals.[54] It has been claimed that there is comparative evidence from other cultures to indicate that cross-dressing of initiates may sometimes play a part in the coming-of-age ceremonies of both boys and girls; this style of dress has been seen as a marker of the 'liminal' state of the initiates. It will be useful to review the relevant ethnographic data, because it constitutes the basis for the argument that Achilles' cross-dressing is an echo of an adolescent initiation rite. This theory has gained wide currency, but it has not been explored in detail since Crawley's original article, and it is not easy to find the supporting data assembled in one place.[55]

The first step in evaluating the claim that the myth of Achilles on Scyros is the echo of an initiatory practice is to work out just how cross-dressing generally

[51] See Turner (1967: 93–111, 152).

[52] Vidal-Naquet (1986: 106–28).

[53] E.g. Winkler (1990b), Calame (1996, esp. 432–5). On historical initiation rituals in Crete and Sparta, see Burkert (1985: 261–3).

[54] Theseus: Jeanmaire (1939: 227–383) and Dacosta (1991: 11–29); Argonauts: Hunter (1993: 15–17) and Dacosta (1991: 90–106); for a survey, see Dowden (1992: 102–18).

[55] For the currency of this explanation of Achilles at Scyros, see OCD^3 s.v. 'initiation' [Bremmer].

figures in the typology of initiation rites in traditional societies throughout the world. Crawley himself gives an admirably clear exposition of the theory:

> As this seclusion of Achilles was, in a way, a preliminary to his bearing arms at Troy, so the 'initiation' of the savage boy marks the end of boyhood, and admits him to the full rights of man. The candidates are secluded in special places, often in the depths of the forest, where they pass their time of probation, often extending to weeks or months, and undergo the various tests or operations prescribed by custom, the most conspicuous of the latter among many peoples being circumcision or a similar mutilation. (1893: 243)

The following survey will lay out the particulars of the ethnographic evidence. Only cases of boys' initiation will be considered and only those reports of cross-dressing by the boys themselves, not their adult supervisors. It is often the case that the men in charge of the ritual dress as women, in order to act out a drama, to impersonate a female ghost or spirit, to mime sexual intercourse, and so forth. These are not, in my opinion, interesting parallels for the practice whereby novices themselves are supposed to wear elements of female dress as a sign of their liminality. Vladimir Propp, in the course of a discussion of initiation, has claimed on the contrary that: '... der Organisator des Ritus *verkleidet sich* als Frau. Er ist Frau-Mann. Von hier führt eine gerade Linie zu als Frau verkleideten Göttern und Helden (Herakles, Achilles) und zum Hermaphroditismus vieler Götter und Helden'.[56] Rather, for the purposes of argument I accept Leitao's definition of 'initiatory transvestism' as 'those occasions on which adolescent boys or young men adopted feminine attire in public ritual'.[57] Not being an anthropologist, I cannot guarantee that the following survey is anything like exhaustive. Nevertheless, despite the ubiquity of the claim that 'transvestism is familiar in passage rites' (Dowden 1989: 65), I was unable to find another similar gathering of the evidence for this commonly accepted claim. I did not make a systematic search through the vast ethnographic literature on initiation, which would be beyond my competence and beyond the scope of this work, but I did follow up each and every ethnographic citation given in support of all assertions I could find of the existence of initiatory transvestism.[58]

[56] Propp (1987: 133); emphasis present in the translation from the Russian. The examples from ritual and folktale adduced by Propp (131–4) do not involve transvestism on the part of the youths concerned.

[57] Leitao (1995: 137); it will eventually become clear, however, that I do not think that the category in practice serves a useful descriptive purpose.

[58] Even the intrepid Versnel (1990b: 78, n 88 = 1993: 50, n 91) acknowledges that 'the amount of literature on initiation is overwhelming'.

We may firstly dismiss a few of the commonly-cited examples of initiatory transvestism where no cross-dressing has actually been documented as part of the initiation ceremonies. It is natural in every culture that people should adorn themselves on important occasions; we are only interested in cases where the boys' ornaments are such that they are read by the members of that culture as feminine. One spurious example concerns the long-extinct *Arioi* society of Tahiti, whose exact nature is uncertain, but which is known to have had a complex initiatory hierarchy of seven grades.[59] The would-be initiate into this group exhibited his worthiness and his interest by displaying a frenzy of divine possession. He 'repaired to some public exhibition in a state of apparent derangement. He was dressed and adorned in the most fantastic manner'.[60] This garb might include gender-inappropriate items, but that was not the defining feature of his outfit, and this is apparently not the moment for which initiatory transvestism is claimed. That assertion derives from Mühlmann (1955: 43–6), who tendentiously misread the reports of the early missionaries who are our only source for the *Arioi*; none of them, however, said that they witnessed ritual cross-dressing.[61] A commonly cited witness is Ellis (1831: 241), who merely says that an initiand 'was then commanded to seize the cloth worn by the chief woman present, and by this act he completed his initiation....' Ellis does not even say what the boy did with the 'cloth'; in fact, the presumption of cross-dressing may be due to a simple linguistic misunderstanding. The German and French scholars who cite this passage (Mühlmann, Baumann, Eliade) apparently understand 'cloth' as simply equivalent to 'clothing'. Ellis, however, is probably referring to a specific cloth, the *ahu haio*, that was 'the badge of the society, only worn by its members'.[62] Both women and men were members of the society, so this cloth was a marker not of gender but of status and initiation. In any case, with the *Arioi* one is dealing with a case of induction into a selective society rather than an age-class ritual, so this would not be a particularly compelling parallel even if it were a true instance of ritual cross-dressing.

In the course of surveying the evidence for transvestism in boys' initiations

[59] For the claim of 'initiatory transvestism' among the *Arioi*, see Bullough and Bullough (1993: 17), Eliade (1958: 26) and Baumann (1955: 58). Depending on whose report one believes, they were either 'professional entertainers' (Williamson 1939: 116), 'a political, warrior and plundering association' (van Gennep 1960: 83) or some combination of the two.

[60] Williamson (1939: 118).

[61] Apart from Ellis, cited below, Mühlmann (1955: 37f) also quotes the diaries of two Spanish missionaries, who do not mention women's clothing or anything remotely like it; the diaries may be consulted in Corney (1915: vol 2, 329f). Furthermore, the Polynesian parallels Mühlmann adduces (1955: 77) are of male actors performing female roles on the stage, and of men who spent their whole lives as women, both of which are entirely distinct phenomena.

[62] Williamson (1939: 119).

Eliade (1958: 26) says, 'according to Wilhelm Schmidt and Paul Wirz, ritual transformation into women is practiced in New Guinea. And Haddon has found it in Torres Strait'. None of these Melanesian examples, however, are convincing illustrations of cross-dressing, if that is what Eliade intended them to be.[63] A reference may have gone astray, for the ritual described by Wirz in the pages to which Eliade's accompanying footnote refers is an initiation that entails ritual pederasty, serial rape, human sacrifice and cannibalism, but not transvestism.[64] Among the other initiations conducted by the Marind people of Papua New Guinea and described in Wirz's book there is one that does involve some incidental cross-dressing, but not on the part of the initiates themselves.[65] Schmidt, on the other hand, describes a ritual in which it is not clear that the boys' garb in question should be considered feminine. Schmidt, who was not a witness to the rite himself, merely says that, after the circumcision is performed, the boys wear a 'Leibgürtel'.[66] Neither Schmidt nor his native informant, however, calls this a woman's garment, and so it is unclear on what grounds it might be considered female dress.[67] It is equally unclear how transvestism enters into Haddon's report from the Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea. It is true that he repeatedly employs the quaint term 'petticoats' to denote the grass skirts that were sometimes worn in ceremonial dances by the men of the Torres Strait islands. He also, however, expressly notes that, 'this kind of petticoat was used by the men alone and only when dancing' (1893: 136); so this particular kind of skirt was not in fact women's garb. Even if we allow that skirts were

[63] That is certainly what Bullough and Bullough (1993: 17, n 51), accepting Eliade's authority, took him to mean.

[64] Wirz (1922: vol 1, pt 1, pp 43–8). It could be that Eliade mistook for one of the otherwise exclusively male initiates the 'in vollem Schmuck prangende und von Öl und Farbe triefende *Iwåg*', who is actually a maiden of marriageable age (Wirz 1922: vol 1, pt 1, p 40) and a sacrificial victim (1922: vol 2, pt 3, p 43). It is also possible that Eliade meant to move on from his preceding examples to another topic entirely, viz. ritual pederasty. On this reading, 'ritual transformation into women' does not mean cross-dressing, but is code for boys adopting the passive homosexual role. This is not borne out by his other examples, so I will carry on assuming that these latter citations of his were meant like the ones that precede it to illustrate ritual transvestism.

[65] It is the already-initiated men (*Metoar*) who dress as women; cf. Wirz (1922: vol 2, pt 3, p 12) and Propp (1987: 132). For a similar case of older men acting out the part of women for the benefit of the novices from more recent ethnography of Papua New Guinea, see Herdt (1982: 343). This same collection of essays gives many accounts of women cross-dressing and pantomiming the roles of men in female initiations: Herdt (1982: 116, 215f, 224, 229, and esp. 231).

[66] 'Dann wird jedem ein Leibgürtel angelegt, während die Knaben bis dahin überhaupt nackt umhergelaufen sind. Wenn die amputatio praeputii vorgenommen worden ist, wird dieser Gurt auch später nicht mehr abgelegt. Die Kleineren aber, die bloß gestochen worden sind, legen ihn später doch oft wieder ab, wenn die Wunden vernarbt sind' (1907: 1038).

[67] There is a an element of transvestism in the ritual, as a girl appears dressed as a man (1907: 1052), but there is no cross-dressing on the part of the boys that is recognized by Schmidt as such; cf. Baumann (1955: 228).

generally worn by women in this culture, that is not relevant here, because it is the elders who wear the skirts, not the boys being initiated, who wear instead a string-like belt (1893: 141). We are not interested in evidence of elder members of a tribe cross-dressing in the context of pantomime dances, but for evidence of transvestism as a marker of the 'liminality' of the boys themselves. Given the strict separation of the sexes in most adolescent initiations, the roles of female characters, both human and supernatural, must be interpreted by male actors in female costume.[68]

Brelich (1969: 72, n 60) adduces Elmberg's description of the Mejbrat of Irian Jaya (Western New Guinea) as an example of initiatory cross-dressing. On this occasion Elmberg does, it is true, say that 'In connection with male initiates transvestitism is observed, as well as a hair-do imitating that of the full-grown women, [and] the manufacture of bark cloth (otherwise a typically female occupation) ...' (1959: 76f). Yet when we compare this quotation, which comes from a brief paragraph on the subject of initiation, with the same author's subsequently published and much more detailed fifty-page account of Mejbrat initiation rites, the facts to support his earlier characterization are not forthcoming.[69] In his subsequent description of this and other Mejbrat initiation rites, Elmberg does speak of transvestism on the part of the adult men (1965: 121, 125), but not on the part of the initiates themselves. In addition to observing ritual nudity (1965: 113, 118), Elmberg says that the novices wear ceremonial necklaces, armlets, cloth and so forth; yet it is clear from his earlier discussion of Mejbrat attire that these were not uncommon for men to wear on festive occasions (1955: 10f). We are told, on the other hand, of 'transvestite pranks' that are a feature of Mejbrat death ritual and courtship (1955: 69f, 1965: 96). It seems that Elmberg gradually refined his understanding of Mejbrat initiatory ritual over the course of time; his later presentation (1965: 111–127), while mentioning some women's tasks performed by the novices, concentrates on the way their initiation ceremony enacted a symbolic death and rebirth, a pattern whose world-wide diffusion is indubitable.

There are a number of better-documented cases of initiatory transvestism in the ethnographic record.[70] Boys and girls both cross-dressed as part of their re-

[68] See Baumann (1955: 228); for the corresponding phenomenon in female initiations, see above, n 65.

[69] Elmberg (1965: 92–142); there is also no mention of transvestism in Elmberg's prior account of the same initiation (1955: 43–5).

[70] The most useful sources for bibliography are Baumann (1955: 57f) and Jensen (1933: passim). Among classical scholars, Brelich (1969: 72, n 60) treats the anthropological data in some detail.

spective circumcision ceremonies among the Nandi of Kenya.[71] Hollis (1909: 52–7) reports that boys were dressed as girls during the preparatory stages of the rite, and for four days after their circumcision. At this point they exchanged the girls' clothing for an elaborate headdress and the clothing of a fully-grown woman, donated by their mothers. During the ensuing months of convalescence the boys continued in this mode of dress while living apart from the rest of the community, observing various restrictions on diet and behavior, and receiving instruction from the elders who dwell with them. At the conclusion of this period, a feast is held and the boys trade their female garb for the weapons of a warrior. Again it is Hollis (1905: 298) who reports on another ritual, that of the Maasai. He says that, following their circumcision, boys wear women's clothes until they have recovered, at which time they put on the accoutrements of a warrior; in this case there is apparently no long communal period of seclusion, recovery, and initiation. Raum (1967: 308f) records that among the Chagga of Kilimanjaro the novice wore his mother's sheepskin dress while recuperating; this is another case in which the circumcised boy recovered at home, rather than with his age-group.

Most circumcision rituals that involve cross-dressing are infrequent events, like that of the Nandi, and are a collective act on the part of the whole community, unlike the Chagga, who circumcised boys in small groups. One group of the Sotho of South Africa, for example, are said by Endemann (1874: 37f) to have practiced an elaborate circumcision rite in which the boys lived away on the veld for three months. During this period they recovered from the surgery and were taught the secret lore of their tribe. Endemann also reports that during this period each boy exchanged his normal loincloth for one that resembled the sort usually worn by girls.[72] Here too the girls cross-dressed symmetrically during their coming-of-age ritual, wearing boys' clothes and carrying weapons; each sex was equally prohibited from encountering the other while in seclusion. Another report from South Africa concerns a different Sotho people; Eiselen (1932), or rather his informant, describes a two-stage initiation rite. Firstly a circumcision ritual was held; the boys lived away from the community on a mountainside for three months while recovering from the operation. Women and the uninitiated were prohibited from witnessing this first, very secret phase, in which the boys were taught the arcana of the initiation lodge. Later, after the initiates returned

[71] Hollis (1909: 52–7); Bryk (1964: 113–27).

[72] Endemann (1874: 37f): 'Nach vollzogener Beschneidung wird die gewöhnliche Bedeckung der Lenden, das *kχeśŏa*, nicht wieder angethan, sondern ein dem der Mädchen ähnlicher Schurz.... Nach Verlauf von drei Monaten ziehen die Beschnittenen, mit einem neuen *kχeśŏa* angethan, nach Hause'. For a description of both of these garments, see ibid. p 18.

home, a secondary part of the initiation was held, called the *boxwera*, which was more public. Yet there was one aspect of even this ceremony that was to be kept from the women and the uninitiated, and this was the gathering from afar of the leaves from which the skirts for the initiates were plaited. Eiselen's informant said that these garments resembled a girl's skirt, but it is not clear whether this turn of phrase was used to give to a European some idea of the garment, or whether this was a judgment within the context of his own people's sartorial usage. In this secondary phase of the initiation it was allowed for the boys to encounter women, and they apparently wore the *boxwera* skirts for the ensuing months they spent on the veld except while sleeping, when loincloths were worn.[73]

There are very few reports of transvestism in boys' initiation rites that do not involve circumcision. Nadel (1947: 242) claims that the Moro of the Nuba mountains in Sudan held a dance that marked an entry into adulthood, and at this dance the young men adorned themselves as girls. There are also two relevant reports from turn-of-the-century German colonial Cameroon. Morgen reported that Ewondo boys (Morgen's 'Yaunde') had to wear a sort of grass skirt in the period following the end of their long instruction in the bush and until the feast that was held to celebrate its end.[74] On this latter occasion their 'imitirten weiblichen Tracht' was torn from the boys by the assembled women (Morgen 1893: 52). Another German soldier in Cameroon, Hans Dominik, described a very similar scene among the nearby Bane.[75] Again, after a period of isolation and instruction, the boys assemble: 'Sie sind ganz nackt, mit weisser Thonerde bemalt und tragen nach Weiberart trockne Bananenbüschel um die Hüften'.[76] Another scene is described in which the costume is likewise torn from the boys by the assembled women. An interesting thing is that in both cases the 'transvestism', if that is what it really was, was not a part of the 'liminal' time spent by the novices apart from the community, but was rather a part of the celebration that attended their rejoining it. This is emphasized in Dominik's account, where the grown men also wear a 'weiberartige Kostüm' while dancing at the festival and other eccentric garb, the point of which, we are told, was to make people

[73] Eiselen (1932: 17–9).

[74] Morgen (1893: 50–2). On the name 'Yaunde' for the Ewondo, see Biebuyck, Kelliher and McRae (1996: 83).

[75] Both the Bane and the Ewondo are part of the Betsi or northern Fang division of the Bantu-speaking Fang-Pahouin cluster in Cameroon: Biebuyck, Kelliher and McRae (1996: 49, s.v. 'Betsi').

[76] Quoted by Schurtz (1902: 100) evidently from Dominik (1901: 164); I have not been able to locate a copy of the latter to check the quotation. The combination of grass 'skirts' and white clay markings will recur among the Ndembu; see below, p 230.

laugh.[77] This sounds much more like carnivalistic cross-dressing than a marker of the boys' status. It is not always clear where to draw the line between ceremonial, or merely festive, garb and 'female' attire in various cultures. The problem is particularly acute when evaluating the reports of Victorian travelers, who do not always document the basis for their evaluations of male versus female attire. One suspects that Morgen and Dominik might have judged any sort of grass skirt to be self-evidently feminine attire, regardless of how the participants might have felt about it. Also from Cameroon comes another piece of evidence cited by Brelich (1969: 72, n 60), which is not really relevant to the question: the report by Nicol (1929: 105) that Bakoko novices wore their hair like women while in seclusion. From the perspective of initiatory clothing, the more significant datum is that these novices also spent their confinement completely nude. This is in fact by far the most common and widespread proscription with regard to the dress of boys during the period of their initiation and seclusion, as Brelich himself acknowledged.

The initiation rites exhibit a pattern, and some of the aspects in which they generally agree are such that they tend to exclude the possibility that the story of Achilles on Scyros could have arisen from a connection with such rituals. The first thing to emerge from the evidence is the strong connection of cross-dressing with circumcision. All of the well-reported cases in which the boys undergo a period of seclusion like Achilles on Scyros and are dressed as girls are not only initiation rites in general, but are also more specifically circumcision rites.[78] Quite apart from the absence of circumcision in pagan antiquity, one must confront the problem of Neoptolemus. The reason for the seclusion of the novices in the initiation rites described above is that the wound from circumcision takes much longer to heal in adolescents than in infants, anywhere from six weeks to three months. During this time it is of course impossible for the boys to have sexual intercourse without enormous pain. In the Ndembu ritual described below, even the parents of the novices, as if in sympathy, are prohibited from intercourse for the duration of their sons' confinement, believing that to break this taboo would be to delay their sons' healing.[79] Even if we postulate that the myth of Achilles on Scyros evolved separately, even in a non-Greek milieu,

[77] Schurtz (1902: 101), quoting Dominik (1901).

[78] The standard Freudian explanation for circumcision in initiation ceremonies is that it represents the threat of castration with which the father enforces the incest taboo; the representation of boys as girls as they recover from the operation would agree with this account: Freud (1946: 197, n 87). For a very different psychoanalytic account, see Bettleheim (1962, esp 19–23; on transvestism: 35f, 111–3), against which see Turner (1967: 35).

[79] Turner (1967: 5, 256).

from that of the Homeric Achilles, the father of Neoptolemus on Scyros, it is hard to imagine that the two stories merged under these circumstances. Surely if anything was remembered of the 'initiation' on Scyros, it would have rendered the notion of a novice fathering a child while in seclusion absurd. This may seem a trivial and rather pedantic point, but it leads immediately to a more general and much more substantial objection.

In all of the relevant cases in the ethnographic literature, boy novices who undergo a period of seclusion apart from the community are strictly enjoined from seeing or meeting with any woman during this period.[80] The separation of the sexes is an essential feature of adolescent initiation rites in traditional cultures. In some cases any woman, or indeed any uninitiated man, who happens upon the secluded boys is subject, at least in theory, to summary execution.[81] This period of 'seclusion' is therefore primarily a seclusion from women and secondarily a seclusion from men outside the tribe, whereas initiated adult males are usually free to come and go when visiting the camp. The motive behind adolescent initiation ceremonies is to separate the boys from home and mother and to integrate them, while in seclusion, into the community of men.[82] To the extent that initiation is a symbolic death and rebirth, it is a rebirth into a purely male society that is accomplished without the aid or intervention of women.[83]

This will pose a serious problem for anyone who wishes to connect the myth of Achilles with initiatory practices, for the hero is always in a very feminine environment on Scyros, and indeed is secluded at his mother's behest entirely among women. There are other, related problems; a summary of some of the similarities and differences between the narrative of Achilles' cross-dressing and a narrative of initiation may be found in Table 5.2. Some of these objections might be accounted for by the disparities that separate the mythical mode of discourse from the ritual mode, but not, I think, all of them.[84] It may even

[80] According to Hollis, the case of the Nandi is a partial exception, since this prohibition was eased after the boys recovered from their circumcision and a washing ceremony was held (1909: 56); they continued to wear women's clothes for some months afterward.

[81] Cf. Eiselen (1932: 11). For worldwide statistics on the same-sex exclusivity of adolescent initiation rites, see Schlegel and Barry (1980: 707).

[82] Thus Gluckman (1949). Leitao, while the thesis of his article is misguided (see below, p 236), provides good information on the nature of initiation ceremonies in the ancient world as a transition from the private, female sphere to the public, male world (1995: 142, 152–5).

[83] This fact had already been noted briefly by Casadio (1982: 228), who was arguing, against Brelich (1969: 32f), that ancient mystery cults could not have derived from tribal initiation. He contrasted the universal participation of women in mystery cults with the strict separation of the sexes in initiation ritual among traditional peoples.

[84] The scholarly literature on the relation of myth to ritual is vast; two recent discussions of the problem as it relates to initiation rites in the ancient Mediterranean are by Versnel (1990b = 1993: 15–88) and Calame (1996: 15–60).

Similarities between the Scyros episode and an initiation:	
At the end of a period of seclusion, Achilles, like the novices at the end of an initiation, puts aside women's clothes and takes up the arms of a warrior.	
Differences:	
Novices are secluded in a community of peers and older men.	Achilles is secluded in a community of girls.
All women are absolutely prohibited from the rite.	Deidamia is present in all versions, and in some (Polygnotus, Statius) there is a crowd of maidens around Achilles.
The purpose is to bond men to men.	The purpose is to avoid Achilles joining the male community.
The boys' bond with their mother is weakened.	Achilles only stays on Scyros in obedience to his mother.
The novice sometimes takes on a new name, which stays with him ever afterwards.	Achilles takes on a new name, which is only temporary.
The wearing of one or two items of women's clothing is not meant to deceive, and is often accompanied by other extravagant, but not feminine, forms of attire.	Achilles takes on the clothing and full social role of a maiden.
The initiation usually entails grueling physical ordeals, among which circumcision and scarification figure prominently.	Achilles suffers nothing but embarrassment on Scyros.

Table 5.2: Comparison of some common practices in boys' initiation ceremonies with the details of the myth of Achilles on Scyros.

seem like logic-chopping to raise this type of objection in a field where a measure of speculation is inevitable; but cross-dressing is simply too widespread and multivalent a cultural practice for us to read it as an initiatory feature without some further contextual support. One could argue that the story of Thetis hid-

ing her son from his peers and from the men of Greece among the maidens of Scyros is somehow an *inversion* of the ritual. On this argument, the figure of Achilles serves not as a model for the novice, but as a cautionary mythical figure who demonstrates to the novice the consequences of failing to break free of his mother's authority. Such a claim would be difficult to prove or to refute, but one thing is clear: any attempt to salvage a connection between the myth and the ritual must put a heavy burden on the meaning of cross-dressing, as it, apart from Achilles' age, is the only point of agreement between the two. Yet, as we shall see, it is far from clear that what some ethnographers have called 'ritual cross-dressing' is generally understood as such by the participants.

The unfortunate fact is that most of the evidence for cross-dressing in boys' initiation ceremonies is to be found in older works of ethnography which do not always provide the information one would wish for: the nature of the clothing in question, the criterion for adjudging it female, the precise circumstance of its wearing. Fortunately we do have a very thorough and careful description of a similar ritual from the pen of Victor Turner. Building on the earlier work of Gluckman (1949) and White (1953), he gives in *The Forest of Symbols* an extended account of *Mukanda*, a boys' circumcision and initiation ritual practiced by the Ndembu of northwestern Zambia. Turner's evidence is not usually considered in association with claims of initiatory cross-dressing for the simple reason that neither Gluckman, White nor Turner himself ever gave the name 'transvestism' or anything like it to the practices they recorded. Yet the Ndembu evidence is much less ambiguous and more fully documented than the cases discussed above, and also conforms very closely to the same typology. The grass kilt worn by Ndembu boys at the end of their ritual is precisely the kind of thing that in the older literature has been casually assumed to be an example of 'initiatory transvestism'.[85] The irony is that Turner is a scholar who, more than any other, is associated with expanding the use of van Gennep's term 'liminal' as a behavioral category; yet, as we shall see, he did not make such judgments willy-nilly.[86]

Mukanda is apparently an ideal illustration of a *rite de passage*, because it divides naturally into three phases, corresponding to van Gennep's tripartite scheme: *kwing'ija* or 'causing to enter', *kung'ula* or 'at the circumcision lodge', and *kwidisha* or 'to take outside or make public'.[87] A very rough outline of the

[85] Cf. the grass skirts of the Ewondo, Bane and Sotho, above.

[86] Cf. Versnel (1990b: 50–52, with bibliography, 81f, n 110 = 1993: 60–62, with n 113), who is skeptical of Turner: 'Nearly all (groups of) people, then, are marginal in some respect or another, or are potentially so, and so also are most situations' (1990b: 54).

[87] Turner (1967: 185–7).

ceremony and the changes in attire it entails is as follows: the novices gather with their families outside their villages at a campsite in the bush. The mothers will remain here for the several months that the rite lasts, cooking for their sons, but never seeing them; they only communicate with them via group chants, to which the novices respond in unison. The boys' circumcision lodge is therefore built within earshot, but no woman or uninitiated man is allowed to approach. The boys are led to the lodge by a new path over which a lintel has been erected; they throw their old clothes over the beam and will wear them no more as men. They are circumcised, and the subsequent period of recuperation may last anything from two to four months; during this period the novices wear no clothes.[88] After they have recovered, but before they rejoin their mothers, the appearance of masked dancers marks the beginning of the end of the period of seclusion; now the boys weave themselves a garment, called *fwefweta*, from the roots of a certain tree. Turner describes it variously as a 'skirt' (241) and a 'girdle'; from the photograph it appears to be scant bundles of fiber hanging in bunches from the waist.[89] Turner does not suggest that this rude construction had any particular gender associations. Then, after a few weeks of instruction in esoterica, the *kwidisha*, which is roughly the rite of incorporation in van Gennep's terms, begins.

As part of the boys' preparations for reappearing to their mothers and rejoining the rest of the community they construct a knee-length skirt of stiff grass, the *nkambi*. Again, however, Turner refrains from making any judgments about the gender connotations of this garment. In fact he generally calls it a kilt in preference to a skirt, as if to downplay its potential to be interpreted as female garb.[90] The boys dress up in their kilts, but that is not the most distinctive feature of their appearance; they are also spotted and striped all over with white clay. In this state each boy is carried on the shoulder of another boy's guardian, and they go out to meet their mothers again. While the novices are not so fully disguised as to render them unrecognizable, some part of the effect of the clay and the kilts and the fact that each novice returns on the shoulders of a different boy's guardian is to mark their change in status through defamiliarization.[91] After a joyous reunion, dancing and celebration, the boys go at dawn of the next

[88] Turner (1967: 238).

[89] Turner (1967: plate 10, between pp 274 and 275); a detail of the photograph is reproduced on the cover of the paperback edition.

[90] For a photograph, see Turner (1967: plate 11, between pp 274 and 275).

[91] Turner (1967: 255). Coloring the boys' bodies with clay or ocher is a frequent part of initiation rites; cf. above, n 76. For another example, told in the first person, see Nelson Mandela's account of the Xhosa circumcision ceremony in his autobiography (1994: 22–7).

day to a river where they strip naked and wash the clay off; their supervisor takes the rolled-up ritual clothing, the *nkambi* and *fwefweta*, and flings it all into the river. After further rituals the boys dress in the new clothing that has been bought or made for them; thus attired they complete the final ceremonies.

It will be clear from this outline that forms of attire are an important marker of the different stages in the Ndembu ritual; it is also clear that to reduce the significance of the *fwefweta* and *nkambi* to cross-dressing would be a distortion. Turner returned to this topic in a later work, and he did on this occasion say something about the way that clothing could be a marker of the 'liminal' phase of the ritual, never alluding to the possibility that the kilts might be considered feminine.[92] Rather, he asserted that liminality is marked, in terms of attire, by nakedness or uniformity of clothing (1969: 95f, 106, 108). His point was that during the time of isolation old distinctions of rank are suspended and new ones are negotiated, and that uniformity of dress or undress aids this process. This way of looking at the matter is supported by an anecdote related by Turner. During the celebration of *Mukanda* that he attended, a fierce controversy broke out between the conservative leader of the rite and some of the adults who had been educated at a mission school. These latter wanted to put Bermuda shorts on their boys underneath the grass kilts, claiming that it would not be 'decent' to display them to their mothers as they were. It is interesting that in the course of this dispute as Turner recounts it the accusation that the kilts might be feminine never surfaces; the concern on the part of the Christianized is over the boys' partial nudity, and on the part of the traditionalists it is over the conservation of tradition and the enforcement of uniformity in dress.[93]

Baumann (1955: 58) argues that initiates are assimilated to the status of women during their liminal period, and he notes that in many Bantu languages the word for initiates, *mwali*, also means 'girl'. Against this one may put Turner's discussion of the term *mwadi* (1967: 95f, 222f), which is presumably a dialect variant of the same word, employed among the Bantu-speaking Ndembu. Ac-

[92] Leitao (1995: 137f) says, 'For Turner ... the boy's adoption of feminine dress expresses this lack of differentiation: he is neither masculine nor feminine, but androgynous ... Turner and Calame see transvestism as expressive of androgyny, an absence of sexual differentiation'. This seriously misrepresents the views of both scholars, especially Turner, who to my knowledge never discusses transvestism in his works on liminality, and certainly does not do so in the pages cited by Leitao.

[93] Turner (1967: 253); his wife, Edith Turner (1987: 44f), also recounts the same story, necessarily at second hand, but working from her late husband's field notes (preface, p. x). She quotes the head circumciser as saying, 'Pants at the dance of the spotted boys? Impossible!' (p 45), which is a telling detail, for it implies that the decoration of white clay, not the kilts, was the most distinctive aspect of the boys' appearance for the Ndembu, giving the dance its name.

cording to Turner, the Ndembu likewise use the word *mwadi* to mean either 'novice' or 'first wife'. Yet the same word can also refer to a chief being installed in his office. On this basis, Turner argues that the most general semantic force of the word is to denote 'a person undergoing an experience for the first time' (223). Thus the application of the term *mwadi* or *mwali* to novices may not be primarily a token of gender. Turner's native informants explained the fact that this same word denoted 'novices' and 'first wives' by pointing out that 'the novices were regarded as 'married by the lodge Instructor, whose Ndembu name ... means "husband of the novices".'[94] This gives an important hint of the way that womanliness may be seen to function in the context of boys' initiations. To the extent that the novices are treated as women, it is only in pointed contrast to the already initiated adult men who are also present. Womanliness is a relative judgment made about the novices by men in a completely male ritual, from which all women have been banished. The initiates are at a point between boyhood and manhood, and the imperfect state of their masculinity is emphasized by describing them as women. As for real women, in the milieu of the Ndembu circumcision lodge anything feminine was regarded as 'inauspicious and polluting' and even the use of the normal word for 'woman' was taboo.[95] The point of *Mukanda* was extremely typical of boys' initiation rites: to remove each boy from the domestic sphere, to integrate him into the world of men, and to create a sense of solidarity among his peer group.[96] We have come a long way indeed from Achilles, obedient to his mother, hiding alone amid a crowd of girls.

In conclusion, the Ndembu evidence suggests the possibility that the 'transvestite' element in boys' initiation rites has sometimes been overstated. The Ndembu wear kilts, but they also paint their bodies with white clay; the Nandi boys who wear women's ornaments also wear an elaborate headdress to which they attach the small birds that they have shot.[97] The 'female' element of dress therefore may not be the most distinctive and emphatic part of the display of otherness on the part of the novices. In some cases, it is not clear whether the grass 'skirts' worn by the novices were really thought of as feminine at all by the actors in the rite. This interpretation may be simply due to the Western presumption that a skirt is of its essence a primarily feminine garment.[98] The

[94] Turner (1967: 223); the instructor says to his wards, 'I am your husband; I have married novices. I am your husband, I will guard you and look after you'.

[95] Turner (1969: 41 and 1967: 254).

[96] Turner (1967: 153) quotes Gluckman (1949: 145): 'the boys are ritually separated from their mothers to be identified with their fathers'.

[97] Hollis (1909: 56).

[98] The accounts of Morgen (1893), Dominik (1901) and Eiselen (1932) are particularly suspect in this regard.

judgment of transvestism can very easily be an artifact resulting from the casual imposition of one interpretive frame regarding gender and dress upon a foreign set of cultural norms. When a bishop brings his ritual vestments to a dry cleaner and finds them encoded in minute detail as items of women's apparel, it is a trivial parallel for what seems to have happened a number of times in colonial anthropology. More recent comparative anthropological work has focussed by contrast on practices that are demonstrably wide-spread and well-documented, such as the mandatory nudity that is a part of the seclusion of novices in so many initiation ceremonies.[99]

Finally, the evidence that has been adduced from the South Pacific does not withstand scrutiny, so the few plausible examples of boys' initiatory transvestism in the scholarship are from sub-Saharan Africa.[100] Adolescent initiation itself is a very widespread practice, but its modalities are patterned by culture, and to the extent that this particular pattern exists, it appears to be African. It may be that in some few African societies gender-inappropriate clothing has been one of the markers of a novice's suspension outside the usual categories of existence, but to make a leap to the Greco-Roman world without substantial internal evidence of initiatory transvestism from ancient Greece itself would be a misuse of the comparative method. Furthermore, to single out discrete practices such as transvestism as indications of the initiatory paradigm was not the way van Gennep worked. The explanatory power of his model has derived from the fact that he described a functional typology and not a menu of transcultural symbols. Using his method, we may examine a ritual to see if it can be profitably analyzed as exhibiting a dynamic of marginalization and reabsorbtion in its own terms. No signifier, however, transcends culturally embedded systems of meaning to provide us with an immediately distinctive and self-evident transcultural sign of initiatory status. The purported evidence for 'transvestism' in the initiation of adolescent boys has too often been abstracted from various cultures without reference to the particularities of ritual context. It would be most useful if someone trained in anthropology would investigate the comparative material more thoroughly than has been possible here.[101]

[99] In a forthcoming book, Gloria Pinney discusses the nudity of adolescent Greek boys in this context.

[100] Within Africa the examples are geographically and linguistically diverse, however. The Bantu-speaking Betsi (Ewondo and Bane), Ndembu, Sotho and Chagga live in Cameroon, Zambia, South Africa and Tanzania respectively; the Nuba of southern Sudan belong to the related Kordofanian language group. The Nandi and Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania on the other hand speak languages belonging to the Nilo-Saharan family. This information comes from the table entitled 'Ethnic and Identity Groups', which is Appendix C of Middleton (1997: vol 4, 477–563).

[101] Calame (1996: 32–4), for example, whose interest in the initiatory background of archaic

It is unlikely that there was ever a 'transvestite' element to adolescent initiation in archaic Greece or its neighbors, and so to trace a connection from the myth of Achilles on Scyros to such a ritual requires a great deal of special pleading. How is it then that this theory took root so stubbornly?[102] Initiation was first mentioned by Crawley, but his article (1893) was written before van Gennep's book (1960; orig. Fr. pub, 1908), and so he did not account for the myth as a matter of liminality. Rather, taking a cue from James Frazer, Crawley saw Thetis' disguising of Achilles as belonging to a range of rituals designed to hide a child from evil spirits.[103] To his credit, Crawley acknowledged the connection between cross-dressing and circumcision, and tried to account for the specific details of the myth, such as Thetis' involvement, in terms of the ritual. As Frazer's theory of disguises was gradually displaced by van Gennep's account of initiation, Crawley's hypothesis was adapted to the new climate by W. R. Halliday and Jane Harrison, who postulated somewhat arbitrarily that cross-dressing could be a sign of liminality.[104] This new idea was not, however, rigorously tested; and, furthermore, it was not recognized that the shift to this initiatory paradigm made it suddenly difficult to explain certain details of the myth, such as Thetis' role, and the very feminine environment on Scyros. There are several aspects to the mythology of Achilles' early life that might repay study in the light of Greek social practice, especially the story of his fosterage and instruction with Chiron in the wilds of Pelion, and the dedication of a lock of his hair to the god Sperchios.[105] The Scyros episode, however, is unlikely to have had anything to do with an initiation rite.

Greek lyric was originally philological, has himself more recently undertaken anthropological fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, in order to develop a better understanding of the claims of comparative anthropology.

[102] Versnel (1990b: 80, n 102 = 1993: 56, n 105) notes that '[Crawley's] views are generally accepted'.

[103] Cf. Frazer (1966: 263f).

[104] This subtle transformation of Crawley's thesis was first effected in an article by Halliday (1909–10), and quickly seconded by Harrison (1912: 505–7). Subsequently, Eliade (1958: 109) promoted the theory to great effect. On the history of the initiatory paradigm in general in classical scholarship this century, see Versnel (1990b: 44–6 = 1993: 48–51)

[105] At the Spartan Apatouria festival, boys dedicated a lock of their hair: Burkert (1985: 263). In the light of the old Irish practice of fosterage and its importance in Irish heroic myth, it is interesting that the translator of the *Achilleid* into Middle Irish insistently and with a repetitiousness that is almost obsessive refers to the relationship between Chiron and Achilles using the terminology of fosterage: Ó hAodha (1979). Chiron is the foster-father (*aite*), and Achilles is his fosterling (*daltae*); the same terms were also used in Irish to describe the relation between teacher and disciple. The translator sometimes makes heavy weather of understanding certain elements of the Latin poem, such as pagan cult practices; it is as if here he came at last upon an aspect of Statius' story that made excellent sense to him within his own cultural context.

5.2.2 Cross-dressing in Ancient Myth and Ritual

Whereas a comprehensive discussion of the evidence that was presented in the foregoing section was not available elsewhere, there would be little point to recounting here in similar detail all of the episodes of transvestism in Greco-Roman myth, history and cult, since a thorough survey may be found in Marie Delcourt's *Hermaphrodite.*[106] The interest of this material for our purposes is to see whether the putative ritual origins of the myth of Achilles on Scyros might have left any other traces in ancient myth or cult. Indeed Delcourt herself is convinced, on the basis of her examination of the ancient evidence for cross-dressing, of 'the conclusion that first and essentially we must see here a passage-rite, applied alike to boys and girls on entering the nubile group' (1961: 5). This conclusion is based on the familiar supposition that the dressing of boys as girls 'is characteristic of initiations'. We saw in the foregoing section how equivocal the evidence for that is; a closer look at the ancient material reveals nothing there to compel the conclusion either.

Delcourt (1961: 4) begins her search for traces of initiatory transvestism with the *Ekdysia* at Phaistos, following the idea of Jeanmaire (1939: 442). Antoninus Liberalis, following Nicander, records the story of a Cretan woman whose husband would only agree to rear their child if it was a boy; when a girl was born, her mother raised her as a boy named Leucippos. At the point of being discovered, the mother prayed to Leto to change her daughter's sex, and the prayer was granted. Liberalis says that the people of Phaistos called their feast *Ekdysia*, 'in memory of the moment when the girl laid aside the peplos. It is the custom, before the nuptials, to lie down beside an image of Leucippos'.[107] Delcourt guesses that the festival was originally 'a collective ceremony ... in which boys wearing feminine clothes took them off and donned those of their own sex' (1961: 5). The only evidence for this influential theory is that Leucippos, who was being raised and dressed as a boy, apparently took off a peplos, which admittedly does not make sense. The account given by Liberalis of the peplos is a bit confused, but this is not entirely surprising, given that he is condensing the information he got from Nicander, who presumably took it in turn from a work on Cretan antiquities. What is certain amid this confusion is that

[106] Delcourt 1961: Chap. 1, entitled 'Transvestism in Private and Public Rites', pp 1–16; to this catalog may be added the accusation made against both Gaius and Elagabalus that they indulged in wearing women's clothes; in both cases political slander has presumably made capital out of some aspect of ritual practice: Suet. *Calig.* 16 and 52, SHA *Comm.* 5 (see below, n 136).

[107] ... τὴν ἑορτὴν Ἐκδύσια καλοῦσιν, ἐπεὶ τὸν πέπλον ἡ παῖς ἐξέδυ. νόμιμον δ' ἐστὶν ἐν τοῖς γάμοις πρότερον παρακλίνασθαι παρὰ τὸ ἄγαλμα τοῦ Λευκίππου. Ant. Lib. *Met.* 17.6.

Liberalis was speaking of a girl (ἡ παῖς), not a boy, taking off a peplos, and so our source actually says nothing about cross-dressing. The *mythical* account of the sex-changer Leucippos may say that he wore a peplos, but it does not follow that the Cretan *ritual* must have been for cross-dressed boys.

Even if we insist that a feast called *Ekdysia* must have involved undressing, and transfer the detail of the peplos from myth to ritual, it still does not follow that the ritual was for boys. We are told that it was a custom to lie beside a statue of Leucippos before a wedding; perhaps it was a ritual for girls, who took off their peplos, and then lay in the temple of Leto before their marriage. This is a completely arbitrary hypothesis, but no more so than the cross-dressing theory.[108] In fact, it has an advantage; the only thing that Liberalis tells us that pertains directly to the ritual *dromena*, rather than the myth, has to do with a pre-nuptial rite. This datum is hard to reconcile with the theory that the *Ekdysia* was an age-class initiation ritual. What is more, this connection with the institution of marriage is helpfully confirmed for us by an outside source. Ovid's story of Iphis (*Met.* 9.666–797) is also set in Phaistos and its plot is nearly identical, except for the names of the characters; like Antoninus Liberalis it is presumably based on Nicander's *Heteroeumena*. The wedding of Iphis and Telethusa is absolutely central to Ovid's version, tending to confirm that marriage was not an extraneous part of the Leucippos myth and its attendant ritual.

Even without transvestism, one may interpret the Leucippos myth as a token of the transformative power of ritual, as Graf (1993: 118) does. Forbes Irving provides an account of the myth as 'a metaphor for the growth of boys into men'; he rejects the theory of a transvestite ritual at the *Ekdysia*.[109] That baseless proposition has nevertheless been reiterated at some length in a recent article that provides a useful demonstration of the sacred cow that 'initiatory transvestism' has become. Leitao (1995) supports his thesis by adducing some circumstantial evidence regarding Cretan ritual; he notes the existence of other adolescent ceremonies that were named after putting on and taking off clothing.[110] This hardly seems surprising, given the importance of nude display for young Greek men, particularly in initiatory contexts. None of these other rites are connected with transvestism by our sources. Leitao begins his article by quoting promi-

[108] The somewhat similarly named *anakalypteria* or 'unveiling of the bride' was a regular part of the Greek wedding ceremony. See Oakley (1982) and for further bibliography on the *anakalypteria*, see Carson (1990: 163, n 55).

[109] Forbes Irving (1990: 152–5) discusses the lack of evidence for cross-dressing; Willetts (1962: 175) argues that the festival was part of Cretan male initiation ritual, and he simply assumes that it was the occasion for putting aside the garb of boyhood.

[110] Thus also Burkert (1979: 29).

nently most of Antoninus Liberalis' account, but he silently omits the crucial, final sentence of the passage, which describes the actual ritual connected with the myth. The inconvenient fact that the myth of Leucippos and the feast of the *Ekdysia* are explicitly connected in our text with a ritual act—prospective spouses sleeping by a statue, not adolescent boys dressing as girls—is not even mentioned until the epilogue of the article, where the Greek of this inconvenient sentence may be found relegated to a footnote.[111] The genuinely attested ritual attached to the myth is subordinated to the presumption of cross-dressing and it is even said to be 'possibly unrelated' (161, n 137) to the Leucippos story. The phantom phenomenon of initiatory transvestism carries more weight than the ancient testimony that contradicts it.

Delcourt's next example of initiatory transvestism is a story told by Plutarch (*Mul. Virt.* 26) about the tyrant Aristodemus of Cumae; he is reported to have forced the boys there to wear gold jewelry and long hair while the girls were obliged to wear boys' clothes and to cut their hair short. Delcourt imagines that this tale is a survival of a custom that was no longer understood, namely, of course, a transvestite initiation rite. Yet Plutarch speaks only of the boys' long hair and gold ornaments, not of their clothing. Moreover, at the start of his tale, Plutarch tells a complicated story about how Aristodemus got the nickname Μαλακός; in the course of it he describes the fashion he shared with the young men of Cumae in wearing their hair long when they fought against the barbarians. If it is true, as Delcourt argues, that some misunderstood and garbled cultural detail has found its way into Plutarch's account of Cumae, then it has to do with some local custom of hair-dressing that might have been thought effeminate, not with clothing.

Delcourt's final example from ritual is more plausible. Of all the instances of transvestism in the ancient world there is only one that can be associated with a putative coming-of-age ceremony for adolescent boys: the Athenian Oschophoria, held at the time of the grape harvest. This feast involved the participation of *epheboi* in several ways. There was a procession from a certain shrine of Dionysus to the temple of Athena Skiras at Phalerum; this was led by two noble and wealthy boys of the Salaminioi *genos*.[112] They carried grape-vines (ὄσχοι) and were dressed as women. Another event was a foot-race between the adolescent boys of different tribes.[113] There has been controversy over whether the feast was

[111] Leitao (1995: 130f; the omitted sentence may be found at 161, n 133). The omission is not indicated by the presence of an ellipsis in the Greek text, although another perfectly routine omission is so marked.

[112] Parke (1977: 77), Simon (1983: 89f) and Calame (1996: 128f, 143–8).

[113] On the race, see Rutherford and Irvine (1988).

primarily in honor of Athena Skiras, at whose shrine the festivities took place and with whose cult the Salaminioi are known to have been associated, or primarily in honor of Dionysus, invariably the god of the grape, and from whose shrine the procession began. Deubner and Simon have argued for Dionysus, while Parke has insisted on Athena.[114] If we admit that Dionysus was among the recipients of cult, then the transvestism of the two boys might be explained within that context. The cult of the god who himself was often attired in garb of ambiguous gender did sometimes feature a disruption of normal gender assignments.[115] This argument may derive some support from another attested aspect of the Oschophoria: the participation of women as *deipnophoroi*.[116] It was irregular for respectable women to take part in public religious dinners, and so there was more bending of gender roles at this festival than just the boys' unusual dress.

The case for initiatory transvestism has some plausibility, because this ritual is connected by Plutarch with the myth of Theseus' Cretan voyage, which Jeanmaire had explained as an initiatory narrative.[117] Theseus was said to have founded the rite on his return to Athens from Crete. The explanation of the boys' transvestism was that they were dressed in memory of two of Theseus' companions. Plutarch says that, to better his odds, he brought five maidens and nine boys instead of the required seven of each, disguising two young men and teaching them to act like girls.[118] Given Jeanmaire's argument that Theseus' Cretan adventure reflected a narrative of initiation, we finally seem to have here a nexus of myth, ritual, initiation and transvestism that might reflect their connection in the deep structure of Greek society.[119] Calame, however, has recently revisited the evidence for both the myth and the cult and concludes that neither are likely candidates for initiatory narratives. He allows that Theseus' voyage from Troezen to Athens has initiatory features, but insists that the Cretan adventure does not.[120] As for the ritual, Calame says:

> Ce qu'il est possible d'affirmer pour l'instant, c'est qu'aussi bien les connotations civilisées impliquées par les nourritures cuites consommées aux Oschophories que la constellation des classes d'âge in-

[114] Deubner (1932: 142–7), Simon (1983: 90–2, esp n 7), and Parke (1977: 79).
[115] Thus Simon (1983: 91); cf. Henrichs (1982: 158f).
[116] Parke (1977: 77f).
[117] We first must admit the possibility that participation in what was originally an age-class ritual had become restricted to two aristocratic boys. This sort of argument has been made before, e.g. regarding the girls' Brauronia; Calame rightly distinguishes these as 'rites initiatiques compris au sens large' (1996: 432).
[118] Plut. *Thes.* 23.2–3.
[119] Jeanmaire (1939: 227–383); for a bibliography of those who have adhered to this interpretation, see Calame (1996: 461f, n 77).
[120] Calame (1996: 432–5).

> vitées à assumer leur célébration exclut toute interpretation du rituel des Oschophories dans un sens initiatique.[121]

He goes on to note that the rite itself does not show any sign of van Gennep's scheme, that Theseus is too old, and that his companions on the voyage to Crete show no signs of changing their status as a result of their experiences. In short, 'puisque moins encore que la légende, ces rites n'adoptent ni le schéma ni la fonction de l'initiation tribale....'[122] It is not vital for us to arrive here at a final answer to the question of whether the Oschophoria admits reflections of an initiation rite. Let us note rather that the Oschophoria has been an attractive candidate for an initiation rite in the past not because of the simple presence of cross-dressing, but because the myth and the ritual have been claimed to make sense together; by contrast there is no such evidence for Achilles on Scyros.

Delcourt then moves her investigation of initiatory transvestism from ritual to myth, to Hercules with Omphale, and inevitably, to Achilles on Scyros. Initiation rites could not, however, have affected the story of Hercules' cross-dressing. In all versions of that tale, it belongs to the latter stage of the hero's life, certainly not to his youth. Heracles is sold to Omphale as a slave to atone for the slaying of Iphitus, brother of Iole, who provoked Deianeira's murderous jealousy; thus the hero was no ephebe, but married and a father when he goes to Lydia.[123] A comment that Delcourt makes at the conclusion of her survey is relevant in this context:

> The constant link between *transvestism* and *sexual union* prevents our considering the exchange of garments as merely a passage-rite signifying no more than the final incorporation of young men into complete manhood.[124]

Delcourt finds that there is a common link in the ancient world between the various manifestations of cross-dressing in myth and ritual on the one hand and sexual union, by which she means heterosexual union, on the other; and this is a particularly prominent aspect of the myths of Hercules and Omphale and of Achilles and Deidamia. It was documented in the previous section how initiation rites in traditional cultures are almost always strictly separated by

[121] Calame (1996: 339). This is an implicit retraction of his prior position on the Oschophoria, as stated in passing in an earlier work (1997: 146, orig. pub. 1977).
[122] Calame (1996: 448); see also pp 433f, 191.
[123] On the difficulty of applying initiatory paradigms to non-ephebic heroes, see Versnel (1990b: 56f = 1993: 69–71).
[124] Delcourt (1961: 16); italics in the original.

gender.[125] While there is often a homosexual, and especially a pederastic element to these rituals, there is no room in them for heterosexual relations, which would undermine the whole structure of gender solidarity that initiation rites aim to establish.[126] The end of initiation often marks the beginning of a boy's sexual life and of his freedom to marry, so rites of reincorporation often take on a heterosexual aspect; but this is quite distinct from the strict separation of the sexes that characterizes the 'marginal' period. The fact that the 'seclusion' and transvestism of both Achilles and Hercules is intertwined with romance indicates that they do indeed belong to a similar narrative typology, and that it is unlikely to have derived from initiation. We may also add this objection to Calame's observation (1996: 433) that neither Theseus not Ariadne are the right age for initiation.

There is in fact no pattern that emerges from the ritual use of cross-dressing in the ancient world. As far as its cult associations are concerned, there is as much connection between transvestism and the great milestones of marriage and mourning as there is with coming to maturity. For example, there are several notices of brides dressing as men on their wedding night[127] and of men dressing as women while in mourning.[128] Even more common are stories of cross-dressing as a stratagem, either military[129] or erotic.[130] According to Artemidorus, it is not a bad thing to dream of oneself wearing women's clothes, provided that it is in the context of festivity, and indeed there are a number of carnivalistic occasions attested on which men might put on female dress.[131] Finally, we should mention the well-known case of the gender-indeterminate dress of the eunuch priests of certain divinities, such as of Cybele.[132] The exchange of garb between men and women was evidently a practice that occurred in a wide range of contexts in antiquity, just as it does in most societies. Neither comparative ethnography nor

[125] For a statistical survey of worldwide adolescent initiation rites, see Schlegel and Barry (1980).

[126] The extreme exception that proves the rule of initiatory practice is the gang rape of a female victim; this sort of heterosexual activity does serve to bond men together and to distance the other sex by objectifying it; see above (p 222, n 64), and Herdt (1982: 9).

[127] At Sparta: Plut. *Lyc.* 15; at Kos: Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 58.

[128] Lycian men dress as women while in mourning: [Plut.] *Cons. ad Apoll.* 22 and Val. Max. 2.6.13.

[129] Soldiers dress as women to set an ambush: Plut. *Sol.* 8; to escape captivity: Hdt. 4.156.

[130] Jupiter woos Callisto dressed as Diana: Ovid, *Met.* 2.401–530; Leucippus woos Daphne: Paus. 8.20.2.

[131] For the cross-dressing of komasts after a symposium, see Philostratus, *Imagines* 1.2, and see Frontisi-Ducroux and Lissarrague (1990) and Price (1990) on the 'Anacreontic' vases. For a later example, see the story of the philosopher Demetrius, the only man in Alexandria that refused to put on female attire at the Dionysia: Lucian, *Cal.* 16.

[132] The confusion of female and sacred garb is likely to be the origin of the story of the cross-dressed priest of Athena Ilias at Siris: Schol. ad Lyc. *Alex.* 984–92, with Bremmer (1992: 195), who considers it as an example of initiatory transvestism.

what we know of the ancient world demonstrates any necessary or remarkable connection between transvestism and adolescent initiation.

5.2.3 Cross-dressing on Scyros

One conclusion resulting from the foregoing analysis of the ancient evidence is that cross-dressing was a multivalent activity in Greek culture, with no necessary connection to age-group initiation, if indeed it ever formed a part of that practice. In the previous section Carl Robert's theory was adduced to explain the spread of the Achilles-myth as a by-product of the Athenian colonization of Scyros and its appropriation of the mythical past of that island. The combination of these results means that the myth according to which Achilles came to Scyros not as a conqueror but as a draft-dodger probably originated on that island, and probably did not have anything to do with initiation, even within the local Scyrian context. We have also seen that one of the contexts in which transvestism occurred in the ancient world was in ritual expressions of carnivalistic license. Given this combination of findings, it is interesting to note that, at the beginning of this century, ritual transvestism was observed on Scyros itself, not in the context of an initiation, but at Carnival. I do not mean to suggest that the myth of Achilles necessarily arose out of this particular ritual setting, but it may be useful to point out an alternative to the usually accepted explanation of Achilles on Scyros, if only to give a further demonstration that a conclusion based on the initiatory paradigm is not inevitable.

J. C. Lawson, a fellow of the British School at Athens around the turn of the century, happened to be on Scyros for Carnival and wrote an account of a display that he observed there, which he called a 'beast-dance' (Lawson 1899–1900). This 'dance' consisted of a man, called a γέρος, dressing up in goat skins, with a multitude of sheep-bells around his waist, leaping about, frightening passers-by, and making as much noise as possible. Several years later this account was confirmed and elaborated by another fellow of the British School, R. M. Dawkins (1904–5), who added that this γερός was often accompanied by a boy dressed as a girl (the maid, or κορέλλα).[133] All this was apparently part of the social inversion that is a regular part of carnivals. Dawkins says that Monday, the first day of Lent (in the Orthodox calendar), was in fact called the day of the μετημφιεσμένοι, or disguised men, and on that day the shepherds came into town in their best clothes while the boys of the town dressed up as girls or as shepherds

[133] There was another costumed figure, who was identified, curiously enough, as a Frank (Φράγκος). This might indicate that the practice was of some antiquity, as the Frankish crusader kingdoms in the Aegean had all fallen by the fifteenth century.

(1904–5: 74). If the Athenian colonists had happened upon an amusing scene of social inversion such as this at Scyros, the legendary cradle of Neoptolemus, might they not have done precisely what the emissaries of the British school did, and reported the curiosity back to the metropolis?

This inquiry has taken us far afield from the *Achilleid*; it was necessary because the erroneous notion that the story of Achilles on Scyros as Statius tells it derives from initiation ritual has attained the status of received wisdom and is the basis for most discussions of the myth. It would have been impossible to analyze the story without addressing the issue; but it may be that this is to ask the wrong question; as Versnel has said, '*origin* is not to be identified with *meaning*'.[134] Whether or not ritual transvestism was practiced on prehistoric Scyros, and whether its origin was initiatory or carnivalistic in nature is ultimately a question that has little repercussion beyond the ethnography of the island of Scyros. The irony, as we shall see shortly, is that it has always been possible, long before the current vogue of 'liminality' as a concept, to interpret the meaning of the story of Achilles' transvestism in the light of initiatory transformation, and this is precisely what Statius himself does.

5.2.4 Initiatory Motifs in the Achilleid

It has been a matter of particular urgency to lay to rest the commonly accepted account of the origins of Achilles' cross-dressing in adolescent initiation rites, because the word 'initiation' will figure prominently in the account of the *Achilleid* that follows, but in a somewhat different sense. Statius lived in a world in which tribal age-class initiations were nearly as vestigial as they are in ours. Yet, even more than ours, the Roman world was replete with opportunities for personal initiation into religious cults whose practices and teachings were available only to the adept. Several of these cults marked the internal transformation of the initiate and his place apart from the everyday world by means of an external show of clothing. Just as the modern-day bishop's ecclesiastical garb marks its difference from every-day clothing in part by blurring normal distinctions of gender, in the ancient world it was also possible for the clothing that marked the separation of the sacred from the quotidian to be construed as feminine. In the case of the *galli* of Cybele and of the *Dea Syria* this was evidently quite intentional; but the male worshipers of Isis wore a linen garment that apparently was not designed to evoke femininity *per se*, but rather purity or even transcen-

[134] Versnel (1993: 242, italics in original), quoted by Feeney (1998: 115).

dence.[135] Nevertheless, this sort of attire could be slandered as feminine by the cult's enemies. Josephus, for example, tells the story that Caligula used to mock a certain captain of the guard, his eventual assassin, Chaerea, by insinuating against him the charge of effeminacy: 'He did this even though he was not free from it himself, putting on women's clothing in the rites of certain mysteries that he himself organized, and devising wigs to wear and many other ways of counterfeiting a feminine appearance'.[136] It is either the case that the emperor's sartorial flamboyance is being used to support charges of private blasphemy, or that a genuine ritual activity of the emperor's has been distorted into a private perversion.[137] Either way, the link that could easily be made between effeminate dress and mystery religion is well illustrated by Josephus' accusation.[138] In the light of the potential connection between cross-dressing, or at least gender-ambiguous clothing, and mystery cults at Rome, it is perhaps not surprising that Statius decided to present Achilles, while dressed as a girl on Scyros, engaged in cult activity which is described in the language of initiation.

To return at last to the text of the *Achilleid*, we find the atmosphere dense with references to mystery cult on the occasion of the dance that Deidamia, Achilles, and their companions perform for the visiting Ulysses and Diomedes. This episode was discussed earlier (Section 4.3.2) from the point of view of Achilles' public performance as a woman. We saw then that the language gave a sense that something private was being revealed through allusions to various secret rituals. Here is the scene again:

> ... nitet ante alias regina comesque
> Pelides: qualis Siculae sub rupibus Aetnae
> Naidas Henneas inter Diana feroxque
> Pallas et Elysii lucebat sponsa tyranni.
> iamque movent gressus thiasisque Ismenia buxus
> signa dedit, quater aera Rheae, quater enthea pulsant

[135] According to Griffiths (1975) ad Apul. *Met.* 11.10 (271.15), the Isaic white linen garment had its origin in the normal garb of Egyptian priests. In addition to the normal white robes worn by initiates, Apuleius (*Met.* 11.24) also speaks of twelve highly ornate robes that were put on Lucius after his initiation, on the occasion when he was put on display before the congregation; see Griffiths (1975) ad loc (285.17). On the other hand, there is one genuinely cross-dressed figure in the Isaic procession described by Apuleius (*Met.* 11.8), whose attire is motivated by theatrical masquerade, not by ritual: Griffiths (1975) ad loc (272.7).

[136] ... καὶ ταῦτα ἔπρασσεν αὐτὸς οὐκ ἀπηλλαγμένος ἔν τινων τελεταῖς μυστηρίων, ἃς αὐτὸς συνίστατο, στολάς τε ἐνδυόμενος γυναικείους καί τινων περιθέσεις πλοκαμίδων ἐπινοῶν ἄλλα τε ὁπόσα ἐπικαταψεύσασθαι θηλύτητα τῆς ὄψεως ἔμελλεν ... (*Ant. Jud.* 19.30).

[137] Turcan (1996: 89) and Griffiths (1975) ad Apul. *Met.* 11.9 (272.18) claim that Caligula was possibly devoted to Isis.

[138] This claim has also sometimes been made by modern scholars: e.g. Cumont in Vogliano and Cumont (1933: 257), and Turcan (1959: 200f).

terga manu variosque quater legere recursus.
tunc thyrsos pariterque levant pariterque reponunt
multiplicantque gradum, modo quo Curetes in actu
quoque pii Samothraces eunt, nunc obvia versae
pectine Amazonio, modo quo citat orbe Lacaenas
Delia plaudentesque suis intorquet Amyclis.
tunc vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles
nec servare vices nec bracchia iungere curat;
tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus
plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat.
sic indignantem thyrsos acceptaque matris
tympana iam tristes spectabant Penthea Thebae. (1.823–40)

The narrator alludes to the Elusinian story (1.824–6), to the Bacchic mysteries (827–30) and the cult of Cybele (*aera Rheae*, 828),[139] to the Curetes (831), to the Samothracian mysteries (832), to an otherwise unknown Amazon dance (832f), and finally to a chorus of Spartan girls dancing for Artemis (833f). The scene goes on to end with a simile comparing Achilles' ineptness at dancing to Pentheus' rejection of Dionysiac religion (1.839f).

The dances here seem at first quite an arbitrary collection of rituals deriving in part from poetic convention and in part from more obscure sources of antiquarian and religious lore. What impression was this passage designed to give? A first attempt to answer the question could begin from the situation being described in the poem. Achilles is a boy dressed as a girl, and so perhaps Statius has put together the kind of dances in which cross-dressed or effeminate men might be seen or imagined to have taken part. This would explain the presence of Cybele, and perhaps even the Bacchic imagery, since Dionysus himself was sometimes an effeminate figure.[140] If we stretch the definition of the term, the Amazons were cross-dressers of a sort, too.[141] Yet the references here, while they are rather

[139] The *locus classicus* for the assimilation of elements (particularly musical instruments) from the Corybantes, the Cretan Curetes and the cult of Cybele into Dionysiac rites is the *parodos* of Euripides' *Bacchae*, on which see Dodds (1960) ad 120–34 with Versnel (1990a: 180).

[140] As Jameson (1993) argues, 'asexuality' may be a better characterization of Dionysus than 'effeminacy'. As for the connection between the Bacchic imagery and the possibility of ritual cross-dressing, see Henrichs (1982: 159): 'In any case, ritual transvestism was never prominent in Dionysiac cult, and apart from the concept of the effeminate Dionysus, it has left no trace in the Dionysiac iconography of the Hellenistic or imperial period'. See Strabo (*Geogr.* 10.3.8) for a suggestion of transvestism by certain 'Curetes'.

[141] One could pursue this line of argument further, as it has been argued, for example, that in the dances for Artemis Korythalia at Sparta, the girls wore phalloi, and so they would constitute parallels for Achilles as a male interloper: Gallini (1963: 219). It has also been argued that the grotesque masks of old women found in the precinct of Artemis Orthia at Sparta were worn in transvestite dances there performed by men: Ephraim (1989: 9).

specific, are not particularly organized around the theme of cross-dressing, so they cannot be explained purely on the basis that the poet wished to evoke a scene of ritually sanctioned transvestism. Literary convention may have played a role; certainly maenads and Amazons are a staple of poetic imagery. Yet there are other rites mentioned that are far from any literary convention; in particular, the Samothracian mysteries stand out as a piece of 'real' ritual introduced into the conventional world of mythological epic; this is apparently the first mention of the Samothracian mysteries in Latin verse.[142] Such an interpolation should come as no surprise from a poet who had described Adrastus, in the hymn that concludes Book 1 of the *Thebaid*, as invoking Apollo in the name of Osiris, and even of Mithras, whose name is the last word of the book (*Theb.* 1.717–20). As Ahl (1986: 2856) says, 'Statius is clearly trying to startle us with this reference to Mithra'. Indeed, the poet effects a startling connection between the world of the *Thebaid* and the religious milieu of its audience, integrating two indisputably ancient but non-Greek and initiatory gods into the epic framework. There is nothing quite so startling here, but still the Μεγάλοι Θεοί of Samothrace belong more to the world of Roman traders and travelers in the Aegean than to classical epic.[143] One possible attraction of this particular piece of 'realism' is that it, like the Bacchic mysteries, like the rites of the *Magna Mater*, like the rites of the Curetes, and like the choruses of Spartan girls, was an initiation ceremony that may have involved dancing.[144]

The one thing, then, that unites these dances is initiation; all of them, with the single exception of the obscure *pectine Amazonio* (833), are unambiguous indications of dramatized status transformations in the course of either mystery cult or puberty rites.[145] The scene is set with a simile that alludes to the

[142] It is also one of the very few occasions that the cult is mentioned at all; cf. Juvenal (3.144f), *Samothracum ... aras.*

[143] The true names of these gods seem to have been a part of the mystery, and they do not have a mythology that has come down to us. They were often assimilated to the Cabiri, from Herodotus (2.51) onwards: see Cole (1984: 1–4). On Roman interest in the Samothracian mysteries, see Latte (1960: 274) and Cole (1984: 87–103).

[144] Lobeck (1829: 1291–3) claims, on the basis of rather weak and equivocal evidence, that the Romans derived the dances of the Salii from Samothrace; cf. Servius (ad *Aen.* 2.325 and 8.285). Plutarch (*Numa* 13.4) considers this theory only to reject it. Better evidence for dancing as part of the rites comes from a relief found on Samothrace that shows a female chorus: Conze (1860: 62f); cf. Nock (1941: 579), Cole (1984: 29, 107 n 61) and Burkert (1993b: 185). A passage from Lucian that connects the rites with the *galli* of the *Magna Mater* is quoted below, p 273.

[145] It is not provable, but it is highly likely that the Amazon dance was also meant as an allusion to mystery rites for Artemis, and that the reference has simply become opaque to us. Callimachus (*Hymn* 3.237–47) described the establishment of a statue and the cult of Artemis at Ephesus by the Amazons. They danced in their armor and then danced in a circle, while their leader, a woman named Hippo, performed some sort of rite (τέλεσεν ... ἱερὸν, 239). It is not stated explicitly here whether or not Hippo herself participated in the dancing; then in the final lines of the Hymn the poet adds Hippo to a list of more famous characters from

Elusinian tale, and when the dancing starts, the steps are described by means of analogy with both kinds of ritual: mystery and puberty initiations. It is of great interest that Statius mixes together two categories that we might otherwise have thought distinct until brought together by modern scholarship: on the one hand, rituals like those of the Curetes and the choruses of Spartan girls, which are artifacts of age-group initiations, and on the other, rituals like the Samothracian, Bacchic and Elusinian mysteries, which feature initiations into cult groups.[146] It is clear that the ancients understood mystery religions as a category, and had words to describe the process of initiation (*initiare*, τελεῖν). It is not so certain that what anthropologists call secular initiation was understood as such in the ancient world.[147] We tend to think of the results obtained by modern ethnography as being unavailable to ancient writers, but certain of its conclusions were evidently accessible by other means, since we meet here with a broadly conceived sense of 'initiation'. For Statius, at least, the ritual change in status accompanied by dancing and unusual clothing that characterized both private mystery cult and public age-group initiations made them good illustrations of Achilles' change of status on Scyros, and so he grouped both types of

myth who offended Artemis and were punished, Calydon, Agamemnon, and Orion (260–5). He admonishes everyone to attend the goddess' yearly dance, saying that Hippo's refusal to dance in the circle around her altar did not go unpunished (οὐδὲ ... ἀχλαυτεῖ, 267). Callimachus clearly expected his audience to be familiar with the identity of this Amazon and his allusion to her crime against Artemis, but the story has been lost to us. Hyginus (*Poet. astr.* 2.18.2) offers an unconvincing identification of this Hippo with a certain Hippe, daughter of Chiron, who was turned into a horse as a consequence of an unexpected pregnancy. Bornmann (ad Callim. *Hymn* 3.266) accepts this account, but he allows that it does not explain her refusal to join in the dance. It is this refusal that makes it likely that Statius was alluding to the Callimachean myth, since is a perfect parallel for Achilles, likewise a gender-crossing reluctant dancer. Statius goes on to compare Achilles to Pentheus (1.839–40), a third cross-dresser who was reluctant to participate in the rites of a god. The match of the comparanda in that simile is praised by Sturt (1972: 836f); but Hippo, though not famous, is an even better fit for the situation, since Pentheus' rejection of Dionysus was not related specifically to dancing alone. If we understood the story of cult dancing for Artemis that Callimachus was referring to, then Statius' *pectine Amazonio* might become clearer.

[146] It could be argued that the Curetes here are only meant to refer to their mythical avatars who kept the infant Zeus safe with their dancing. It could even be said that Statius did not mean to distinguish them particularly from the Samothracian gods, if he understood these to be the Cabiri. That is what Nock (1941: 580) intends when in the course of discussing this Statian passage, he says, 'there was no little resemblance between the emotional ceremonies of the Corybantes, Curetes and Cabiri ... they were in the main minor deities, and they could easily be put in one category'. While it is true that the Samothracian gods were often identified with the Cabiri, and that the Curetes of Crete were often confounded with the Corybantes of Asia Minor on account of their noisy dancing and devotion to Rhea (see above, n 139), it is not normal to find the Samothracian gods and the Cabiri on the one hand confounded with the Curetes and Corybantes on the other. Nevertheless, mistakes of this kind were sometimes made: see Nock (1941: 580, n 20), to which add Strabo (*Geogr.* 10.3.7).

[147] See Burkert (1987: 7–11) on the ancient terminology of initiation. *TLL* 7.11.1651.3–17, s.v. 'initio' lists some wider uses of *initiare* beyond the field of mystery cult, none of which are quite able to carry the very broad sense of *rite de passage*.

transition rite together.[148]

In the light of Statius' deliberate and careful construction of an association between Achilles' situation on Scyros and initiation rites broadly conceived, the very likeness of his formulation to the scholarly consensus that sees the origins of this mythical episode in those very same rites begins to appear suspiciously coincidental. The mixture of transvestism, initiation and ritual is already present in the *Achilleid*, not because Statius was privy to a true account of the *origins* of the myth, but because of his need—the same need that has motivated later scholars—to make sense of the *meaning* of this strange episode of cross-dressing. It is not really very surprising that Scyros came to be interpreted as a threshold in Achilles' life: the putting aside of the childish and unmanly aspects of life in favor of the life of a warrior and its accoutrements. This is attested by the fact that eighty percent of all surviving visual representations of Achilles' life on Scyros depict the moment of that transition, the scene of Achilles' unveiling by Ulysses.[149] It is interesting that at the very beginning of the tradition Polygnotus, according to Pausanias (1.22.6), had painted a genre scene of Achilles' mode of life (δίαιταν), and that few subsequent artists chose (or were able) to follow his example. Such it seems was the attraction of understanding and explaining Scyros from the perspective of Achilles' renunciation of unmanliness. These artists were not structuralists, but they understood instinctively that the moment when Achilles seized the weapons divided his biography into a time of life as a child and a 'female', that is, not a man, on the one hand, and his life as a man and a warrior on the other; they accordingly represented him at the critical moment of that transition. The myth of Achilles' transvestism was thus envisioned from the perspective of his rejection of that part of his life and the spontaneous reassertion of his normative gender. This is not in the end very different from the account given by the ritualists of the way transvestism has been supposed to work in initiation rites. What advertises itself, therefore, as the result of modern scholarship and the application of the results of comparative anthropology to the ancient world turns out to embody an overly naive acceptance of the ancient literary and artistic representation of the myth as a faithful reflection of the earlier tradition. Statius, however, and the countless storytellers

[148] This connection is not inevitable: '... ancient mysteries still seem to form a special category: they are not puberty rites on a tribal level' (Burkert 1987: 8).

[149] Unveiling: *LIMC* s.v. 'Achilleus', nos. 105–175; other scenes: nos. 94–104, 176–181. Omitting Kossatz-Deissmann's 'unsichere Darstellungen' (nos. 182–185), this yields a ratio of 71 representations of the unveiling to 17 of everything else on Scyros. Admittedly, this may also have been because it was an attractively dynamic scene and because the alternatives were more difficult, viz. to represent Achilles as a maiden and yet identifiably his heroic self.

and artists who had handled the material before him had already thought about how to make sense of this strange Scyros-episode, and they decided that it was a narrative of transition and transformation into manhood, which is essentially what we mean by the tribal initiation of an adolescent boy.

What Statius adds is the element of ritual. He did not have privileged information regarding the supposed origins of the mythical Scyros episode in Greek initiation rituals for adolescents. That is not the reason he mentions such rituals in the *Achilleid*. Rather, Statius applies his own intelligence to the meaning of the myth. He illustrates Achilles' social transformation and transition from childhood to manhood with reference to rituals whose transformative force his audience could appreciate. The adolescent initiation rites that Statius mentions include the armed dance of the Curetes for boys, and also the choral dances for Artemis at Sparta for girls. At the dramatic moment within the poem, the dance Achilles is performing with Deidamia and the others is of the kind associated with girls' initiation, and his clumsiness at it is a sign of his true sex, which anticipates his successful entry into manhood that is to come. Achilles' transformation into a warrior is comically adumbrated by a description of his bungled transformation into a woman. The other rituals of transformation or status-dramatization that Statius adduces here are from the mystery religions. These rites are not particular to adolescents, but on the other hand they are securely associated with ritual cross-dressing, or at least with ambiguously gendered clothing. Taken together, the adolescent *rites de passage* and the mystery religions provide a comprehensive ritual model for the myth of the adolescent Achilles' social transformation via transvestism. The common element that unites both types of ritual is the concept of 'initiation' in its broad sense, and the dance. As Lucian said, 'There is scarcely an ancient mystery cult to be found without dancing in it'.[150]

It is of course extremely common to find ancient authors explaining ritual with reference to certain mythical stories: this is normal aetiology. What Statius does here is more striking in that he is employing a mode of analysis associated with modern scholarship, but not by any means impossible for an ancient author: he explains the symbolic force of a myth with reference to a collection of ritual practices. This fact illustrates a danger in applying methods from anthropology that were developed for the analysis of pre-literate cultures to a culture that has a long and continuous tradition of self-conscious and sophisticated literary discourse about its own religious practices. Statius gives two examples of adolescent initiation rituals taken from Crete and Sparta respectively; this is, if it is not

[150] τελετὴν ἀρχαίαν οὐδεμίαν ἔστιν εὑρεῖν ἄνευ ὀρχήσεως (Lucian *Salt.* 15). Cf. also Eur. *Bacch.* 1109: χοροὺς κρυφαίους.

a coincidence, a sign of a clear consciousness that those were the places where such practices were most prominent and lasted longest. When explaining Classical myth with reference to initiation rites, it must be remembered that the data may reflect prior analysis along these lines by ancient writers themselves. The simile at the end of the passage under discussion compares Achilles to Pentheus (839f); and this is a reminder that the association of Achilles' transvestism with initiatory ritual is not confined to this episode, but rather it was already demonstrated in the previous description of Achilles' participation in the maenadic festival on Scyros. In the following section we shall take a close look at this rite to see how Statius further develops his own distinctive ideas about 'initiatory transvestism'.

5.3 Achilles the Maenad

The maenadic rites celebrated by the women of Scyros, during the course of which Achilles rapes Deidamia, comprise the most extensively described and dramatic episode in Achilles' life as a young girl as it is imagined by Statius (1.592–660). Why is Achilles a maenad? Several influences might help to account for why Statius chose to imagine the cross-dressed Achilles on Scyros in a ritual context, and, more specifically, why he depicted his rape of Deidamia as taking place in the midst of a Bacchic festival. It is not the case, first of all, that Statius merely associated the worship of Bacchus with licentiousness and sexual promiscuity. As we shall see, the women worshipers of Scyros are very chaste, as cultic maenads were supposed to be.[151] There are a number of potential connections between transvestism and maenadism to consider:

Pantomime: According to Juvenal (7.82–7), Statius wrote a libretto called *Agave* for Paris, Domitian's favorite actor. The dancer in pantomime impersonated female as well as male characters, and so the connection between cross-dressing and maenadism may have been inspired for Statius by Paris playing the female role of Agave. It is unlikely that Achilles dressing as a maenad was meant as an allusion to Paris' performance, since Paris had been executed in AD 83, and Juvenal implies that having written for the pantomime is not something one would wish to advertise in any case.

Comedy: It is a commonplace in New Comedy for girls to get into trouble at religious festivals, particularly those that take place at night, like the maenadic

[151] Maenads were not always represented chastely in art, however; see below (nn 191 and 197).

festival on Scyros. In Menander's *Epitrepontes*, for example, the heroine becomes pregnant at the Tauropolia, a *pannychis* for Artemis celebrated near Brauron.[152] This plot device seems possible as a general influence on Statius, but it is not a very useful explanation of the specifics of his narrative. The problem in comedy was to get the maiden out of the house to someplace where she is vulnerable to seduction or rape, but Achilles by contrast is living in the same quarters as Deidamia, and so he hardly needs to await this opportunity.[153] Aristophanes on several occasions has cross-dressed male characters in attendance at exclusively female rituals; but once again, those episodes are motivated by dramatic objectives that are not present here.

Roman History: Perhaps the most famous transvestite in Roman history was Clodius, who like Achilles scandalously violated rites reserved for women. This was not a very topical issue in Statius' day, and so a specific reference to that event is not likely; moreover the connection made by Juvenal (6.314) between maenads and the celebrants of Bona Dea is merely polemical.

Roman Cult: One conspicuous group of effeminate dressers at Rome, if not outright transvestites, comprised the *galli* of Cybele and the *Dea Syria*. The rites of these ecstatic cults had long been associated in myth and literature with Dionysus and maenadism.[154]

None of these general considerations give a completely satisfying explanation of the motive behind depicting the cross-dressed Achilles as a maenad. A more complete answer may be found by examining the details of the episode as they relate both to literary representations of maenads and to Roman ritual.

Statius describes the scene of a maenadic ritual that had been a staple of literature since Euripides, but which was no longer very commonly practiced. It will be argued here that Statius, while working within the Euripidean literary tradition, also directs his presentation of this episode towards the so-called ritual 'maenads' of his own day, i.e. the participants in the Bacchic mysteries, a very different sort of cult. In effect, he offers a revision of Pentheus' transvestism in the *Bacchae* that serves as an alternative aetiology for Roman cult. The background

[152] Cf. Gomme and Sandbach ad *Epit.* 451.

[153] Cf. Pseudo-Bion 2, *Bucolici Graeci* (ed. Gow, *OCT*), which breaks off as Achilles is disingenuously inviting Deidamia to be his bed-partner.

[154] Cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 78f, τά τε ματρὸς μεγάλας ὄργια Κυβέλας θεμιτεύων..., and conversely the words of Attis, Catull. 63.69: *ego maenas ... ero?*

that will need to be described before embarking on this interpretation is therefore twofold: mythical maenads as represented in the art and literature of classical Greece, and their counterparts in the ritual of the period; and secondly the Bacchic mysteries of the Hellenistic and Roman world, which affected to share some common features with maenadism proper, but which were largely a distinct phenomenon.

5.3.1 Maenadism in Greek Myth and Cult

Statius designates with great specificity the precise type of Dionysiac ritual the women of Scyros are performing, and so we can compare his depiction of the rite with what we know of its *dromena* in myth and in cult:

> Lucus Agenorei sublimis ad orgia Bacchi
> stabat et admissum caelo nemus; huius in umbra
> alternam renovare piae trieterida matres
> consuerant scissumque pecus terraque revulsas
> ferre trabes gratosque deo praestare furores. (1.593–7)

The word *trieteris* (595) is the *vox propria* for the central rite of maenadism.[155] Statius helpfully glosses it with the adjective *alternam*; it was celebrated every other year (every third year or *trieteris* by inclusive counting). The influence of Euripides' *Bacchae* on Statius' description is made clear by the mention of rending cattle (cf. *Bacch.* 734–6) and digging up trees (cf. *Bacch.* 1103f). This rite, which belonged to Greek history as well as to myth, involved women traveling to the mountains every other winter to engage in ecstatic worship of Dionysus. Even in the Greek world maenadism was never universal.[156] The *trieteris* was exclusive to women, at least originally, and the participants wore distinctive garb. It was held in the mountains, with the worshipers organized into troops under the leadership of a chief maenad. The dancing and the physical effort required led to exhaustion and perhaps to an elevated mental state. Mythical maenads performed an act called ὠμοφαγία in the course of their rite; much remains obscure about the possible counterpart of this act in historical ritual.[157] It is doubtful whether mountain-going maenadism of this type ever really existed in Italy; if it did, it did not survive the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* of 186 BC.

[155] Cf. Eur. *Bacch.* 132f, χορεύματα ... τριετηρίδων, and Verg. *Aen.* 4.302, *trieterica ... orgia.*
[156] Cf. Henrichs (1978: 153) on the scantiness of the evidence.
[157] For a more extensive summary of maenadic ritual, see Henrichs (1982: 143–7); on the vexed question of the nature of the ὠμοφαγία, see Henrichs (1978: 147–2) and Obbink (1993: 68–72). On the ecstatic aspects of the ritual, see Bremmer (1984) and Henrichs (1994: 51–6).

Henrichs (1978) has sharply distinguished these real maenads of ritual from the maenads of myth, who loomed large in later Dionysiac iconography, due in part to the prestige lent by Euripides' portrayal in the *Bacchae*. If Euripides may have represented certain aspects of ritual maenadism faithfully, the play is very far from being a documentary account of Greek ritual.[158] The influence of the play was also surely felt in the elaboration of later rituals that aspired to the level of communion with the god for which Euripides had made maenads famous.

Another difficulty in interpreting the *Bacchae* with respect to ritual is that Euripides sometimes appears to employ the language of initiation and mystery cult, and this has been taken to mean that the *Bacchae* is not only a reflection of maenadic cult practice, but also of initiatory Dionysiac religion in Athens.[159] Seaford is candid about the lack of evidence: 'it must be immediately and frankly admitted that we do not know much about the mysteries of Dionysus and that most of what we do know is from the Hellenistic and Roman period ... [we must] suppose a degree of continuity between the Dionysiac mysteries of the classical and later period'.[160] Fortunately, it is not necessary for our purposes to decide the extent to which the *Bacchae* was influenced by initiatory religion; it is only necessary to point out that it could have been interpreted in this way by a Roman audience. In Statius' day the only 'maenads' to be found in Italy were the participants in the Bacchic mysteries who styled themselves as such. Contemporary linguistic and ritual practice would have authorized them to read the ὄργι[α] ... ἄρρητ[α] (471f), and τελετάς (74) in Euripides' text in terms of mystery cult, whether or not that is what they had primarily meant in fifth-century Athens.[161] For Roman and Hellenistic 'maenads' the language of initiation that is occasionally used by Euripides would have entitled them to feel that they themselves were the inheritors of mythical maenadism, whether or not this was in fact true. There is little doubt that subsequent worship of Dionysus invoked

[158] 'In the *Bacchae* both the "black" maenadism of the Theban women and the "white" maenadism of the maenadic chorus from Asia contain elements that are derived from real cult' (Henrichs 1978: 144). On the intercontamination of ritual and fictional maenadism, see ibid, 121f.

[159] Certain interpretations of the play put great stress on its initiatory features; thus Seaford (1996: 39–44). This interpretive strategy is not new; cf. Boyancé (1966: 55f) and Coche de la Ferté (1980: 232–50). On the centrality of Dionysiac ritual to the play, see the exchange between Seaford and Segal in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (*BMCR* 95.10.20, 98.3.10, 98.5.26, 98.7.01), and the afterword to the second edition of Segal's book on the *Bacchae* (1997: 349–93). Cf. also Henrichs (1982: 147): 'In Euripides' *Bacchae* the non-maenadic, esoteric and private cult of Dionysus coexists with maenadism'.

[160] Seaford (1981: 252). This position has gained some strength in recent years on the back of discussion of the 'Orphic' gold lamellae; cf. Graf (1993: 239–75) and Burkert (1993a: 259f): 'We find evidence for Bacchic mysteries from the sixth to the fourth century'.

[161] Henrichs (1982: 223 n 91): '... maenadic rites are never called *mystêria* in classical or Hellenistic texts, although they are occasionally said to involve "initiation" (*teletê*)'.

the example of maenadism: 'Certainly, the Dionysian mysteries preserved some features of the ancient orgy. Their liturgy incorporated the gestural, vestmental, emblematic, symposiac, even omophagic appearances of classical Maenadism: dances, rhythmic swaying of the body and prophecies ... drunkenness and music, garments of animal skins, the brandishing of staffs wreathed in ivy'.[162] The influence of Euripides can be felt throughout the recorded history of Greek maenadism.[163] It is likely then that the example afforded by the *Bacchae* also affected the social construction of 'maenads' at Rome.

5.3.2 The Bacchic Mysteries at Rome

The literary background to Achilles' maenadism as portrayed by Statius derives from Euripides, and thus, however obliquely, from the maenadism of the classical period; but the nature of Dionysiac ritual was very different at Rome, and so in order to investigate the hypothesis that the depiction of maenads in the *Achilleid* might have been influenced by actual Roman cult, we must look to the Bacchic mysteries. Despite the fact that the mysteries appropriated much of the imagery of maenadism, there were also important discontinuities between the two. Maenadism itself was strictly limited to women, whereas the mysteries were open to the participation of both sexes.[164] Bianchi (1976: 13) points out that the shift from the outdoors to indoor *telesteria* was a major typological change. In fact, the entire nature of the ritual changed from that of an ecstatic and explosive riot to that of an escapist drinking club: 'maenadism degenerated into Dionysiac carnival and merrymaking'.[165] Thus a second-century AD inscription from Physkos in Lokris records a group of 'maenads' who are merely members of a well-organized social club; the inscription uses maenadic language to describe the members of the club and their activities.[166] The same hierarchy is evident in another second-century inscription, this one from Italy. It was set up at Torre Nova near Tusculum to honor a woman from a well-known family, a consul's wife, Pompeia Agrippinilla, and it records the names of four hundred initiates into the Dionysiac mysteries together with their ranks: 'the old names for the maenads had become mere titles....'[167]

[162] Turcan (1996: 296). In fact, drunkenness was almost certainly not an aspect of mountain-going maenadism: Henrichs (1982: 145; 1984: 69).
[163] Cf. Henrichs (1978: 122).
[164] '... the available evidence suggests very strongly that the sexual barriers separating male and female followers of Dionysus began to break down in the late classical period': Henrichs (1984: 70).
[165] Henrichs (1978: 155).
[166] See Henrichs (1978: 155f).
[167] Henrichs (1978: 156); on the inscription, see Vogliano and Cumont (1933).

The first literary notices we have of Dionysiac mysteries at Rome are from the events of 186 BC, but there is archaeological evidence that Bacchic cults already existed in Italy before that date.[168] We have Livy's account of the conspiracy (39.8–19) and an inscription has preserved the *senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus* which suppressed it (*ILS* 18). There are also some allusions to the crisis in Plautus. These accounts seem at first to give the impression that there was a vigorous cult of ecstatic worshipers of Bacchus throughout Italy. The anxiety generated at Rome by the idea of maenadism is striking, given what we know about the cult of Dionysus as it existed elsewhere. In the Hellenistic world the tendency had long been towards more sedate communities of mystery worship that were hierarchically organized and met regularly; while their rituals may have included music and dancing and such, they were not the ecstatic rites that the maenadism of the classical period had been. When the cult appears next at Rome, it is in the initiatory form common in the Hellenistic world, which may be because the Roman magistrates succeeded in suppressing the ecstatic form of worship, or, more likely, because that is what it had been all along. The Roman authorities were doubtless suspicious of organized religious structures beyond the control of the state, and their anti-Dionysiac propaganda was highly effective; we see it reflected in Livy's tale, and even in the hinted scandal and the 'popular fears' of the cult that find expression in Plautus.[169] In fact, Gruen has suggested that the cult was never very dangerous and that the crisis was a mere pretext for the Roman senate to extend the reach of its powers in Italy, while Walsh has emphasized the dramatic and fictive nature of Livy's narrative.[170] Livy's drama, involving 'the son of a good family, his wicked step-father and his freed-woman mistress with a heart of gold', is clearly derived from New Comedy or the Roman stage.[171] One could take this a bit further and argue that not only is Livy's account of the affair colored by literature, so too was the senate's campaign itself. The substance of the charges made about the cult also derives from a dramatic source: Euripides' *Bacchae*. The senate's inherent suspicion of night-time worship and the mixing of the sexes, and its accusations of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity are very similar to the concerns voiced by Pentheus when he returns to Thebes:

ἔκδημος ὢν μὲν τῆσδ' ἐτύγχανον χθονός,

[168] Beard, North and Price (1998: 93f).
[169] Gruen (1990: 150–2).
[170] See Gruen (1990: 34–78) with extensive bibliography on the episode, and Walsh (1996) on Livy's version.
[171] Walsh (1996: 195–9); quotation: Beard, North and Price (1998: 92).

κλύω δὲ νεοχμὰ τήνδ' ἀνὰ πτόλιν κακά,
γυναῖκας ἡμῖν δώματ' ἐκλελοιπέναι
πλασταῖσι βακχείαισιν, ἐν δὲ δασκίοις
ὄρεσι θοάζειν, τὸν νεωστὶ δαίμονα
Διόνυσον, ὅστις ἔστι, τιμώσας χοροῖς:
πλήρεις δὲ θιάσοις ἐν μέσοισιν ἑστάναι
κρατῆρας, ἄλλην δ' ἄλλοσ' εἰς ἐρημίαν
πτώσσουσαν εὐναῖς ἀρσένων ὑπηρετεῖν,
πρόφασιν μὲν ὡς δὴ μαινάδας θυοσκόους,
τὴν δ' Ἀφροδίτην πρόσθ' ἄγειν τοῦ Βακχίου.
... γυναιξὶ γὰρ
ὅπου βότρυος ἐν δαιτὶ γίγνεται γάνος,
οὐχ ὑγιὲς οὐδὲν ἔτι λέγω τῶν ὀργίων. (*Bacch.* 215–25, 260–2)

Compare an extract from Livy's account of the activity of the Bacchants:

> initia erant, quae primo paucis tradita sunt, dein volgari coepta per viros mulieresque. additae voluptates religioni vini et epularum, quo plurium animi illicerentur. cum vinum animos ⟨movisset⟩, et nox et mixti feminis mares, aetatis tenerae maioribus, discrimen omne pudoris exstinxissent, corruptelae primum omnis generis fieri coeptae, cum ad id quisque quo natura pronioris libidinis esset paratam voluptatem haberet. nec unum genus noxae stupra promiscua ingenuorum feminarumque erant, sed falsi testes, falsa signa testamentaque et indicia ex eadem officina exibant: venena indidem intestinaeque caedes, ita ut ne corpora quidem interdum ad sepulturam exstarent. multa dolo, pleraque per vim audebantur. occulebat vim quod prae ululatibus tympanorumque et cymbalorum strepitu nulla vox quiritantium inter stupra et caedes exaudiri poterat. (Livy 39.8)

The Roman version is more exaggerated, with insinuations of magical practices and the addition of some quintessentially Roman fears about legitimacy and inheritance, but the picture is essentially similar.[172] This kind of accusation, though inspired by literature, did take hold in the Roman popular imagination.[173] The reason the charges were credible may not in fact be because truly ecstatic worship comparable to Greek maenadism was taking place in Italy, but rather because the Bacchic mysteries at this stage were open to both sexes and did involve the drinking of wine.

[172] Orgies of this kind were likewise ascribed to early Christians: Henrichs (1982: 225, n 104).
[173] Cf. Gruen (1990: 50f), Beard, North and Price (1998: 93, n 77).

The Bacchanalian affair and the introduction some years earlier of the cult of Magna Mater have been interpreted as a watershed in the development of the definition of the Roman religious sensibility against Greekness.[174] If the Roman senate was asserting its ability to regulate and control Greek cult and Greek culture, it was doing so in part by demonstrating its freedom to rewrite Greek literature as it saw fit. The *Bacchae* was revised from the perspective of Pentheus, considered not as an impious and feckless tyrant, but as a dutiful Roman magistrate. The Bacchanalian affair itself, and not just Livy's narrative of it, was carefully scripted:

> Roman leaders built a carefully constructed scenario in 186. Sympathetic witnesses appeared, their characters scrutinized and their stories verified, their testimony then presented to the *patres*, who sanctioned firm consular action, without apparent dissent. Denunciation of the Bacchants came in virulent terms, stressing the alien features of the cult, alleging a combination of crimes, and stigmatizing the movement as a *coniuratio*.[175]

This is how the senate announced to the world the way it would handle the unauthorized arrival of cults from the East, which is, after all, the subject of the *Bacchae*. In Greece, the claims of religion might sometimes prevail over the objections of the secular authorities, but not at Rome. The dénouement of the play was accordingly rewritten by the Roman senate in line with proper Roman sensibilities. The influence of Euripides on the Roman view of Dionysiac cult might be regarded as having been subliminal, except that the blatant theatricality of Livy's narrative, which in turn is likely to reflect senatorial propaganda, suggests that, despite the sober language of the *senatus consultum* itself, the self-conscious manipulation of literary models was not beyond the capabilities of the senate.[176] The relevance of this to our inquiry is to show how important the *Bacchae* was as a document for the practice of Dionysiac religion at Rome. In fact, we shall see that Statius repeats this process of rewriting the role of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, although for Statius he is not an allegory of the watchful and duteous Roman magistrate, but rather he represents the problematic

[174] Gruen (1990: 5–78).
[175] Gruen (1990: 77).
[176] Walsh (1996: 200f), drawing on the model proposed by Wiseman (1994: 1–22), suggests that the events of the Bacchanalian affair, or rather the senate's approved version of those events, might have been dramatized on stage for the edification of the *populus*. Against this view, see Flower (1995) for the argument that the *fabulae praetextae* were a feature of aristocratic competition and patronage closely linked with specific military successes, and thus an unlikely venue for the expression of the senate's corporate will.

status of the male companion of the 'maenads' in the Bacchic mysteries.

From the first century BC and for several centuries thereafter there is widespread evidence of the Bacchic mysteries throughout the empire, but the nature of its practices remains obscure.[177] It is not necessary to attempt here a comprehensive description of the cult; there is, however, an aspect of the mysteries that forms part of the cultural background against which the *Achilleid* might be read. The iconography associated with the Bacchic mysteries is varied. Some symbols overlap with the general Dionysiac idiom: Silenoi and maenads, thiasoi of revelers, the thyrsus, the torch, the vine, dancing and music. Some, on the other hand, have been interpreted as pertaining more specifically to the mysteries: representations of the infant Dionysus, the basket or *cista mystica*, the egg. One distinctive symbol of the cult was the *liknon*, a winnowing basket in which either the infant god or a phallus was placed, together with fruit.[178] The *liknon* was also associated with Dionysus in non-mystical contexts.[179] So too the phallus always had a part in the traditional Dionysus cult, particularly as carried in procession.[180] The combination of the two, however, is distinctive, and the *liknon* containing a phallus, either veiled or not, was apparently a unique symbol of the Dionysiac mysteries, and Matz (1963) used it as a litmus test in categorizing certain of the monuments as belonging to mystery cult.[181] This position was criticized by Boyancé (1966: 42–4), who accused him of slighting the other aspects of the iconography and of ignoring literary accounts of the mysteries in which the *liknon* is not prominent. Nevertheless, Matz does usefully bring together a number of images of the unveiling of the *liknon* with phallus from Italy and North Africa, the earliest of which is the famous fresco in the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii (first century BC).[182] Nilsson (1953: 178) concluded

[177] Turcan (1959: 195) had warned of the difficulty in bringing together the evidence, scattered in time and place, into a coherent and universal picture; in a later work he nevertheless attempts just such a speculative account: Turcan (1996: 306–12).

[178] See Nilsson (1957: 66–98), who calls the *liknon* 'the sign of the Bacchic mysteries' (95).

[179] Nilsson (1953: 177) at one time wrote that, 'earlier the liknon had no special religious significance'; but he presumably changed his mind, as he later sketched at some length the ritual use of the *liknon* in Classical Athens, particularly as associated with Dionysus and Sabazios (1957: 21–30), concluding that 'in the classical age the liknon was not sacred in itself but like other profane implements sometimes occurred in sacral use'. The syncretism of the Dionysiac and Elusinan mysteries, and Dionysus' assimilation to the Elusinian figure of Iacchus, yielded Vergil's famous designation of the *liknon* as the *mystica vannus Iacchi* (*Geor.* 1.166): see Harrison (1903).

[180] Cf. Athenaeus 622b–c.

[181] 'Zusammengehalten wird die Reihe der 18 Bilder ... durch das Motiv der Enthüllung des Phallos': Matz (1963: 16). Strictly speaking, some of the depictions in his collection simply show a liknon, veiled or unveiled, and the process of veiling or unveiling must be inferred from those other pictures that do show someone doing it.

[182] A complete list of the monuments Matz refers to (not all of which in the end he convincingly relates to the mysteries) is found on pp 8–9 of his monograph; excellent plates illustrate nearly

that 'The culminating point of the Bacchic rites was the revealing of the liknon with its contents'. This may or may not be true, but it does seem that this act was a significant part of the rite and something that set certain of the mysteries apart from other forms of Dionysiac worship.

There have been many attempts to understand the meaning of this gesture. Cumont (1949: 251), connected it with the use of phalloi as grave markers, taking the *liknon* and phallus as symbols of generation and thus of the immortality that awaited the initiate. Nilsson, who put the most influential stamp on the interpretation of this material, essentially agreed (1957: 143).[183] Turcan (1996: 309) similarly says that the unveiling 'revealed to the candidate the triumph of life over death'. The ritual has been compared to a wedding by Merkelbach (1988: 113), who interprets the moment of unveiling as a symbol of the initiate's introduction to the mysteries of sexual union. Zuntz (1963: 182f) expressed the view, which has not found much acceptance, that the fresco in the Villa of the Mysteries in particular depicts someone not revealing the phallus, but veiling it in order to protect it; he also questioned the assumption that these scenes necessarily represent an initiation.[184] There does nevertheless appear to be a strong relationship in these representations between the phallophoric *liknon* and one figure in particular, who is usually taken to be the initiand. Sometimes the liknon is held over the head of this figure; sometimes his or her head is turned away or the figure is bent at the waist, or the head or entire body is veiled.[185] There seems to be some truth to Matz' judgment (1963: 18): 'Wesentlich ist, daß die einzuweihende Person den Akt der Enthüllung nicht sehen darf'. Yet it is curious that so many of the representations of the scene are keen to show us, the spectators, precisely that moment which the initiand is not allowed to see. The person in the picture is afraid or ashamed or terrified of what is about to be unveiled, and so turns away; or the head of the initiand has been veiled. Generally those with their heads veiled are boys and those who are fully veiled are

all of them (the poor picture of the Villa of the Mysteries fresco is excused by its frequent illustration elsewhere; see Henderson, 1996: 237–40 for the modern history of the reproduction of the fresco). Most of the important monuments were already brought together by Rostovtzeff (1927), and nearly all of them are also illustrated by Nilsson (1957).

[183] On the Bacchic mysteries in general, see Nilsson (1957; and on the Roman material alone, 1953); on the generative symbolism of the phallus, see idem (1957: 142), citing an allegory of Iamblichus (*Myst.* 1.11).

[184] On the history of interpreting the Villa of the Mysteries, see Henderson (1996), esp. 329, n 29 on ritualist explanations of the fresco.

[185] For the typology of the scenes, see Matz (1963: 19–20); *liknon* over the head: Matz nos. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14; head turned away: nos. 1 (the fresco from the Villa of the Mysteries) and 3; bowed at the waist: nos. 4, 7, and 14 head veiled: nos. 10, 11, 12, and 13. These details come from the commentary; the details are not always discernible in the reproductions.

women, while men simply turn their gaze away or are covered with a cloak.[186] The people in the representations run away or protect themselves, while we are permitted to gaze on the whole process. One way of looking at these pictures, then, is as instructional: they teach us how we ourselves should respond to the unveiling. They show the viewer something and at the same time show us that it is not to be looked at. Burkert (1987: 95f) may be closest to the truth when he points out that the important thing is not so much the identity of the banal objects themselves that the hierophant revealed, but the meaning with which the unveiling invested them.

The phallus may be a symbol of fertility or power or protection or emerging sexuality, but it is first and foremost a male symbol. This is one of the major discontinuities between the Bacchic mysteries at Rome and the maenadism of classical Greece, which was entirely 'chose féminine'.[187] The question then arises of how the mysteries managed to reconcile the contradiction between this focus on male potency and the fact it traced part of its heritage and much of its imagery to a ritual that excluded men and in some sense even 'empowered' women, inasmuch as it released them temporarily from the confines of their οἶκος and πόλις. The problem of phallic imagery in the Bacchic mysteries is a distillation of the more general contradiction that existed between the congregation of men and women in the mysteries and the total exclusion of men from maenadism proper. I will argue that this is the problem with which Statius is engaged here. When the Roman poet took the figure of the transvestite Achilles and made him surreptitiously attend a trieteric maenadic rite, he clearly invited comparison with Pentheus, also cross-dressed as a maenad and secretly spying on precisely the same festival. By revising the outcome of the mythical story of the male intruder among the maenads, Statius attempts to negotiate the disjunction between the mythical paradigm of maenadism and Roman ritual.

[186] According to Matz (1963: 18), nos. 2 and 9 are 'Knaben' with only their heads veiled; nos. 10 through 13 are entirely veiled women; 4, 7 and 14 are men bending away, and in the first two of these the figure is covered with a cloak. The most notable exception to this pattern of concealment is 'the terrified woman' in the Villa of the Mysteries fresco, who appears to be looking across the corner of the room at the phallus as it is unveiled. If we suppose that the cloth billowing above her head was a veil which had covered her head, then we may be meant to imagine that she too had been covered just a moment before.

[187] Gernet (1953: 383), echoed by Detienne (1977: 216, n 138), and reiterated by Henrichs (1982: 147, 1984: 69, and 1994: 51), who adds that 'Male maenads in the ritual sense did not exist' (1982: 147).

5·3·3 The Achilleid as Aetiology

When the participants in a Roman cult that had little historical connection with Greek maenadism went about wearing fawn-skins and carrying thyrsoi, they exhibited the impact of the tradition of Dionysiac imagery, a major strand of which was embodied by the *Bacchae*.[188] As an account of the arrival of Dionysus and his worship in Greece, one aspect of the play was aetiological, or at the very least it could have been read in this way by a Roman audience. Pentheus too served this purpose, as an illustration of the rule that maenadism was for women only and of the price to be paid for infringing that rule.[189] Pentheus' fundamental crime was impiety, but the modality of his punishment illustrated the danger to men of violating the rites of maenadism. A Roman male worshiper of Bacchus was at a disadvantage vis à vis his female companion in that the quintessential Dionysiac text endorsed her attainment of the most elevated state of mind while the only man to join that number was torn limb from limb. Statius' text addresses this imbalance on the level of myth. His Achilles recapitulates the role of Pentheus as interloper, but rather than suffering violence at the hands of women, he inflicts it.

The exclusion of men from maenadism is an issue that Statius raises explicitly:

> lex procul ire mares; iterat praecepta verendus
> ductor, inaccessumque viris edicitur antrum. (1.598f)

This stipulation shows a good understanding of the cult practices of maenadism, which is borne out by the text in other ways, too.[190] As we saw above, Statius uses the proper name for the rites, *trieteris*, and he understands that they only took place once every two years. These details are important, because they set the activity that follows in a specific ritual context, exactly parallel to the *Bacchae*. Otherwise, we might dismiss the rape that follows as simply inspired by the lechery of the satyrs who chase maenads in traditional Dionysiac iconography; in the *trieteris*, however, promiscuity did not feature.[191] Statius' most important

[188] Tacitus (*Ann.* 11.31), for example, describes an elaborate reenactment of maenadism, heavily influenced by the *Bacchae*, that was put on by Messalina and Silius; cf. Henrichs (1978: 156–9).

[189] Cadmus and Tiresias participate in the general worship of the god, but only Pentheus joins the maenads on Cithaeron: Henrichs (1984: 69f, esp. n 3). The messengers spy on the maenads, but do not attempt to join in.

[190] Modern scholarship has not always been clear on this point: see Henrichs (1984), who corrects the erroneous view, shared by Dodds and others, that there was a male priest presiding over the rites of maenadism.

[191] The sexual activity commonly attributed to maenads in art and myth was not a reality of cult; Henrichs (1994: 55) explains it as a 'Konstrukt der antiken Männergesellschaft'.

source for the activity of these maenads of myth was of course Euripides:

> consuerant scissumque pecus terraque revulsas
> ferre trabes gratosque deo prestare furores. (1.596f)

These introductory words whet our expectations for maenadic violence on the model of the *Bacchae*, from which Statius draws this picture of the women of Scyros tearing up trees and rending cattle limb from limb; yet when we meet these maenads, they turn out to be a much meeker group than Euripides'. They do share some superficial features in common with the maenads of myth: they wear fawn-skins (*nebrida*, 1.609), adorn themselves with ivy (*hedera*, 610) and carry a thyrsus (612, 648), but on this particular occasion there is none of the violence—female violence—that the Euripidean atmosphere portends. The Scyrian maenads shake their thyrsoi, clash cymbals and dance until they fall asleep, but they do nothing more. It might be argued that Statius' depiction of Dionysiac cult is unconsciously reflecting the disjunction of his sources: the violence of mythical maenads versus the calmer forms of ritual that he and his audience knew. Yet there are several details of the *mise en scène* that contradict each other so conspicuously that it seems more likely that the juxtaposition of mythical and Roman maenads was not merely accidental.[192]

In the lines quoted above, the words *inaccessumque viris edicitur antrum* (599) refer to the prohibition on men attending the rite that is enforced by Lycomedes and is violated by the smirking Achilles (*tacitus sibi risit*, 602). The word *antrum* is an appropriate description of the *telesteria* in which Roman mystery rites were held, including Bacchic rites. Caves are a common feature in Roman cults of Bacchus, and it has even been argued that the proper setting for the mysteries of Dionysus was in a simulated cave, a practice, however, that is better documented for other mystery religions.[193] In any case, *antrum* is not an appropriate description for the setting of maenadism, which took place on a mountain, in the open air and often ranged for miles around. This is precisely the kind of setting described a few lines earlier: *lucus ... sublimis ... et admissum caelo nemus*. There is a clear tension in Statius' account between the shady grove, explicitly said to be 'reaching the sky' and therefore open to it, and an enclosed cave.[194] Bianchi (1976: 13) observed that the difference between mysteries and

[192] Euripides himself had also superimposed the maenads of myth and the maenads of cult in this way.

[193] The evidence produced by Boyancé (1961) for caves in the Bacchic mysteries is diffuse and his conclusions should be balanced against the reservations expressed by Lavagne (1988: 47f).

[194] Dilke (ad 599) points to a resolution of the difficulty by citing several points at which Propertius uses the word *antrum* to mean a 'rocky hollow', and notes an allusion in the *Silvae*

maenadism was reflected in the contrast between 'the secrecy of *telesteria*' on the one hand and the 'exhausting courses across the mountains, by the light of many torches' on the other. A related contradiction expresses itself in Statius' account of the maenads' distance away from the town. Traditional maenads left the city and went to the mountain; Pausanias reports that the *thyads* of Attica traveled as far as Mt. Parnassus to celebrate the *trieteris* with their fellow maenads from Delphi.[195] When Achilles rapes Deidamia, she is said to fill the grove and the mountain (*montem*, 645) with her cries, and so it would seem that Statius is adhering to the mountain expedition (ὀρειβασία) of traditional maenadism. Yet we were given no information about a lengthy trip to the site of the ritual, so this detail comes as something of a surprise. Then, when Achilles speaks to Deidamia and tries to console her, he threatens to destroy her father's realm if he should try to punish her for what has happened; and Achilles refers to 'these walls' of Scyros (*haec ... moenia*, 658f) as though they were near to hand. So, from this perspective, the maenads appear not to have traveled very far at all. This would correspond to the more urban setting of the Bacchic mysteries as compared with maenadism.[196] To sum up, Statius appears to be combining features of Dionysiac religion old and new; the setting of the ritual is in the open, yet in a cave; near the city, yet on the mountain; part belongs to the mythical world of the *Bacchae*, and part to contemporary practice.

Given that Achilles is here recapitulating the role of Pentheus, it is hard not to interpret the divergence in the fates of the two men as a significant matter. Pentheus comes to grief at the hands of women who act with a violence usually reserved to men; Achilles by contrast announces in a soliloquy his determination to act like a man (1.624–39), and he apparently succeeds, raping his foster-sister, Deidamia, while the other maenads are exhausted and asleep (640–4).[197] The balance of power and of violence in maenadism has been restored by Achilles to the male sex. In a parody of the empowerment of women that maenadism could, rightly or wrongly, be seen to represent, the other women misinterpret

(1.2.253) to Propertius' *antrum*. Even if that usage is an influence here, it does not affect the primary meaning of *antrum*, and its contrast with the rest of Statius' description still stands. For an entirely differing account of Statius' reference to Propertius' use of *antrum*, see Lavagne (1988: 497–501).

[195] Paus. 10.4.3; cf. Henrichs (1978: 152–5).

[196] If we assume that the decoration of a room can be an indication of cult activity, we can name as examples the Villa of the Mysteries, which is just beyond the Herculaneum gate of Pompeii, and the Villa Farnesina, which is just across the Tiber from Rome proper.

[197] The fact that the other maenads are asleep during the rape suggest that Deidamia was sleeping, too. This would put her at the end of a long tradition in Greek vase painting (echoed in Pompeian wall painting) of sleeping maenads who are approached or assaulted by satyrs while sleeping; on which see Osborne (1996: 72–6).

Deidamia's cries as a signal for the maenadic celebrations to begin anew (646–8).[198] Whereas, in the *Bacchae*, Pentheus among the maenads was deluded and unable to make sense of the world before his eyes, it is the maenads of Scyros themselves who misunderstand their situation, marvelling at the figure of Achilles (603–6), but not divining the truth about him; hearing the cries of Deidamia, they awaken and think that she is calling them back to worship, ignorant of the violence she has suffered. Statius' Achilles therefore rewrites the ending of the *Bacchae* to suit Roman circumstance, just as the Roman senate had done centuries before. Women were prominent in Dionysiac cult at Rome, but not to the exclusion of men; both sexes mixed freely.[199] There was no exclusively female Bacchic rite at Rome, and accordingly Statius projects back into the mythical past a revised version of the *Bacchae*, providing a precedent for the male worshiper of Dionysus who wished to join his 'maenadic' companions in their revels.

Statius' engagement with Euripides' play is explicitly signalled in a simile somewhat later, when Achilles, unwillingly dancing before Ulysses and Diomedes, is compared to Pentheus (1.839f). On the present occasion, however, there is another simile that also recalls the *Bacchae*, but in a different fashion. Achilles is an imposing sight in his fawn-skin and thyrsus, a mixture of the warlike and the effeminate; and he is compared not to Pentheus, but to the god himself:

> talis, ubi ad Thebas vultumque animumque remisit
> Euhius et patrio satiavit pectora luxu,
> serta comis mitramque levat thyrsumque virentem
> armat et hostiles invisit fortior Indos. (1.615–8)

This passage should be considered together with its doublet, an earlier simile that likewise compares Achilles to a god in the process of moving from one place to another and thus revealing a different aspect of himself:

> ... qualis Lycia venator Apollo
> cum redit et saevis permutat plectra pharetris. (1.165f)

Part of the point of the Apollo-simile was to illustrate Achilles' epicene appearance (*plurima vultu / mater inest*, 164f); and likewise the Bacchus-simile exploits

[198] Statius leaves it for us to decide whether Deidamia cries out of pleasure or terror. The backward glance of the pursued maenad on Greek pottery may likewise be read as expressing either invitation or anxiety: Osborne (1996: 73).

[199] For example, the inscription set up to honor Agrippinilla indicates that she was an important figure in the *thiasos*, but the highest ranking member listed among the subscribers to the statue is in fact a man, called by the cult title of ἥρως, while the second rank was held by a woman, called the δᾳδοῦχος, or 'torch-bearer': Vogliano and Cumont (1933: 237–40)

the god's ambiguity to account for the successful blending of aggression and femininity in Achilles' looks. Statius illustrates the combination of male and female, toughness and beauty, adulthood and immaturity, by comparing the boy first with Apollo, who could be both hunter and poet, and secondly Bacchus, both a sybarite and a conquering hero; and the very combination of these two figures is telling. The two gods who were so often set in pointed contrast to each other are the joint comparanda for Achilles, and this itself is a token of the ephebic hero's radical ambiguity.[200] In context of the Apollo-simile, the comparison with the god is apt because Achilles is at that moment returning from the hunt to Chiron's cave, where later on he will sing and play the lyre, thus demonstrating both features of Apollo's nature, moving from hunter to artist, as described in the simile. The Bacchus-simile is no less apt, as Sturt (1972: 836) recognized. Achilles has hitherto been living a girl's life on Scyros, but now his 'vigorous wielding of the thyrsus' adumbrates his intentions toward Deidamia and the violence that he will shortly visit upon her. In short, the point of the simile is that even someone in effeminate dress like Bacchus is capable of effective violence.[201] Statius' Apollo-simile has a very close literary forbear in the *Aeneid* (4.143–49), a simile that compares Aeneas, setting out to hunt, with Apollo, returning from Lycia to Delos. The Bacchus-simile also has a literary source—not a in a simile, but in a general situation. Thebes, the thyrsus, the mitra and the garlands all are reminiscent of the *Bacchae*, and the dramatic situation described by the simile is precisely that of Euripides' play, but in reverse. In the *Bacchae*, Dionysus is returning triumphantly from a campaign in Asia to his home in Thebes, whereas in Statius' simile Achilles is compared to Bacchus, about to leave the comforts of his Theban home for a military campaign in the East. The simile is an inversion of the dramatic situation of the *Bacchae*, which reflects the inversion Achilles himself is about to accomplish, turning the role of Pentheus from victim to conqueror. Statius compares Achilles here not to Pentheus, but to Bacchus himself, who, as the mysterious stranger, is the other disguised and effeminate character in the *Bacchae*, a much more auspicious role-model for the male worshiper of Dionysus than Pentheus.

As we have seen, the maenads of Scyros do not do much on this occasion to deserve their comparison to the maenads of myth: they tear up no trees, rend apart no animals, and practice no violence of any kind. If we accept that Achilles

[200] For one example of the opposition of Dionysus and Apollo at Rome, see Zanker (1988: 44–65) on the propaganda of Antony and Octavian. On the ambiguous appearance of Statius' Achilles, see Rosati (1992: 236–41).

[201] The effeminacy of Bacchus' dress was noted earlier by Thetis (*Ach.* 1.262f).

is revising the role of Pentheus in the light of Roman cult, then we may take this reading of the episode still further. It is clear that the rape of Deidamia by Achilles stands in opposition to the dismemberment of Pentheus as an assertion of male mastery within the context of maenadism. We saw that one distinctive moment in a certain type of Bacchic rite at Rome was the unveiling of the phallus in the *liknon*, and it may be that the culminating moment of Statius' ritual was designed to evoke this particular act. Achilles, veiled in women's clothing, finally attempts to assert his masculinity; the unveiling of a phallus is in a sense the symbolic equivalent of a transvestite man carrying out a rape. In fact, we do find that the covering and unveiling of the phallus is closely related in the surviving representations of the act to the veiling of the initiates themselves. This is admittedly a speculative connection, since we have not yet seen the phallus to be an element that interests Statius in his characterization of Achilles. The next chapter will attempt to give an account of some of the sexual imagery in the *Achilleid*, and we shall see that Statius uses the spear and the thyrsus as important markers of different modes of sexuality. Once it has been established that phallic images and humor play an important role in the *Achilleid*, it may seem less implausible that here too we should read Achilles' phallic intervention in the maenadic *trieteris* as an aetiology, either comic or serious, for the unveiling of the phallus in the Bacchic mysteries at Rome.

An argument along similar lines was once made by Robert Turcan (1959) regarding an episode in Ovid's *Fasti* (2.303–58). He claimed to see the Bacchic mysteries as the background to Faunus' humiliating encounter with Hercules and Omphale. The Lydian queen and her slave enter a cave on Mt. Tmolos in a district sacred to Bacchus (313). Faunus spies Omphale from afar and sets his mind on having her. Inside the cave, the couple exchange clothing and go to sleep on separate beds, because they wish to remain pure for the Bacchic rites that they intend to perform in the morning (329f). In general it seems plausible that some sort of Bacchic ritual is important for the understanding of this scene, even if the connection Turcan describes between caves and initiation into the Bacchic mysteries is not entirely beyond doubt.[202] The real problem with Turcan's otherwise attractive theory was recognized by Fantham (1983: 196): the evidence that he tries to adduce for ritual transvestism in the worship of Dionysus is not convincing.[203] Does this then mean that there was no influence of Bacchic ritual on the depiction of the cross-dressed couple in the cave as they prepared to worship Dionysus? We may be able to put Turcan's argument on a better footing

[202] See above (n 193).
[203] See also Henrichs (1982: 159).

by rejecting the delusory notion that there was literal transvestism practiced in Bacchic cult at Rome, and by reading the cross-dressing in Ovid's text as a more subtle rendering of the symbolism of the rite. The reason Ovid introduces this story is to explain the ritual nudity practiced at the Lupercalia; he attributes to Faunus a hatred of all kinds of *velamina* (2.303) as a result of this episode. For when the god entered the cave at midnight, he recoiled from the couch where he felt the lion skin and sought instead the soft clothing of Omphale, which of course Hercules was now wearing. The god approached the other couch and its *velamina ... mollia* (343f) in a state of excitement:

> Ascendit spondaque sibi propiore recumbit
> et tumidum cornu durius inguen erat.
> Interea tunicas ora subducit ab ima:
> horrebant densis aspera crura pilis. (*Fast.* 2.345–8)

Faunus pulls back the *velamen* and the woman's tunic to reveal a surprise underneath. The notably phallic figure here is Faunus himself and not the sleeping Hercules, but otherwise this scene is explicable as a symbolic narrative of the unveiling—or attempted unveiling—of the phallus. Perhaps Turcan's mistake was to assume that Hercules and Omphale were the figures who represented the Bacchic initiate. If we see Faunus instead as the prospective initiand, for whom the phallus is to be unveiled, then the episode becomes a parodic inversion of a successful initiation: the phallus is in the wrong place. The whole episode is a disaster for him, ending in his humiliation before the laughing crowd of hero, queen and slaves. If we see that Ovid had already figured the ritual unveiling of the phallus in the Bacchic rites as the exposure of a transvestite male, then Statius' variation of the trope follows easily. Whereas Faunus is a failed initiate, Achilles himself successfully enacts the founding moment of the ritual.[204]

We began this section by wondering why Statius represents Achilles as a maenad. It is possible that Euripides might have done so in his Σκύριοι, or, more plausibly, that he might have simply mentioned that Neoptolemus had been conceived, like many another child in the plot of an ancient drama, during a nighttime Dionysiac festival. In Euripides' *Ion*, for example, Xuthus claims

[204] See Fantham (1983: 196–8) for the similarities between Ovid's tale and the end of Plautus' *Casina*, first suggested by F. Skutsch. It should be noted that in Plautus the humiliated *senex* who discovers a phallic male dressed as a bride in his bed (907–13) later attempts to blame the Bacchants for his discomfiture and the loss of his cloak (978–81). It cannot be safely asserted, however, that Plautus was also punning on the nature of the same ritual, as the earliest surviving representation of the unveiling of the phallus is much later, in the Villa of the Mysteries (mid-first century BC). See MacCary (1975) for an account of the Plautine allusion that refers it to a different purported aspect of Bacchic cult.

to have fathered Ion during the course of maenadic rites.[205] At present, unfortunately, we have no way of knowing to what extent Statius may be following Euripides here. When examined in terms of Statius' poem, however, the episode makes good sense. The focal point of the plot of the *Achilleid* as we have it is Achilles' cross-dressed stay on Scyros, and the central event of that sojourn is the *trieteris*. The idea that gender identity is subject to lability is an important part of the conceptual world of Dionysiac religion, and so, since this part of the poem describes one young man's inversion of sex roles, maenadism is well-suited to being the ironic backdrop for Achilles' symmetrically opposite gender inversion. Moreover, the aspects of this scene that correspond to Roman mystery cult should be compared with the other evocations of the Elusinian, Bacchic and Samothracian mysteries during Achilles' stay on Scyros. In the next chapter we shall see that the cult of the Magna Mater is also evoked by Achilles' transvestism. The various vestmental displays of otherness that such cults sometimes occasioned, which could be caricatured as effeminate, are likely to have been one reason that Achilles' transvestism was visualized by Statius in a cult setting. This is not to say, however, that cross-dressing was necessarily practiced as such in Bacchic mystery cult at Rome. Rather, in a general sense, the kind of personal transformation advertised by initiatory religions is accomplished by Achilles on Scyros: he enters a boy and leaves a man, while in between he spends most of his time dressed in unfamiliar clothing, performing ritual dances. The conceptual grid that the *Achilleid* offers us for understanding Achilles' stay on Scyros configures it as a personal transformation, and even as an initiation; not the distant echo of a purported age-group rite from long ago, but a concrete process comprehsible to a contemporary Roman audience.

[205] Eur. *Ion* 550–4; I owe this point to Professor Henrichs.

Chapter Six

RAPE, REPETITION, AND ROMANCE

> '*This* is my favorite', he said. He held the object toward me. I took it in my hand. It was a little bronze statue, helmeted, clothed to the foot in carved robe with the upper incised chiton or peplum. One hand was extended as if holding a staff or rod. 'She is perfect', he said, '*only she has lost her spear*'. I did not say anything.
>
> H. D., *Tribute to Freud**

6.1 Athena's Spear

A statue of Pallas Athena guards the shore of Scyros in the *Achilleid* (*Tritonia custos / litoris*, 1.696f), and Ulysses and Diomedes venerate the image upon landing on the island (1.697f). It is a lucky omen: the presence of Ulysses' patroness adumbrates success for his mission. This is not the first time, however, that we have seen the statue. It is to a shrine of Pallas on the beach, presumably this same one, that the procession of Deidamia and her sisters makes its way on the occasion of Achilles' own arrival at the island (1.285f). This virgin goddess presides, not without irony, over the arousal of Achilles' interest at his first sight of Deidamia: Pallas, the virgin goddess who guards the kingdom's boundary, will prove an ineffectual guardian of her ministrant's chastity.

On that occasion, the cult activity of Deidamia and her sisters is described by the poet:

> Palladi litoreae celebrabat Scyros honorum
> forte diem, placidoque satae Lycomede sorores
> luce sacra patriis, quae rara licentia, muris
> exierant dare veris opes divaeque severas
> fronde ligare comas et spargere floribus hastam. (1.285–9)

* H. D. (1974: 68f), italics in original; for bibliography on this passage, see Garber (1997: 59f). The statuette is today in the collection of the Freud museum in London.

On this festive spring day, the girls relieve the severity of Pallas' stern statue by tying a crown of leaves to its head; they also strew the statue, and more specifically its spear, with flowers.[1] That detail is not an arbitrary piece of religious color, for the image of a spear whose appearance and deadly purpose has been softened by vegetative decoration has a particular resonance within the *Achilleid*. Throughout Statius' poem, the distinction between male and female is expressed by means of an opposition between the spear and the thyrsus. We have already examined in detail (above, p 181) one striking example in Deidamia's farewell speech to Achilles. There, arguing for a certain equality between the sexes, she made a comparison between the thyrsus Achilles carried on Scyros and the decorative *signa* that are carried by soldiers in wartime. The likeness between them, and her argument, depends upon seeing both implements as varieties of decorated weapons. The thyrsus and the spear are the proper tools of either gender; they are much alike, and yet importantly different. The idea that the quintessential implement of maenadism corresponds to a decorated spear is a commonplace that goes back at least as far as Euripides.[2] The *thyrsoi* are a sort of feminine equivalent to the spears carried by men within the world of gender inversion and female violence in the *Bacchae*.[3] The thyrsus, which was made from a stalk of giant fennel, would have been a less than optimal weapon; the connection is metaphorical. The thyrsus is often represented in poetry as a sort of spear manqué; it is used as a weapon by maenads and by the mythical legions of Bacchus in his Eastern campaigns (cf. *thyrso bellante subactus / Ganges*, *Theb.* 12.787f), but is just as often contrasted to and juxtaposed with real weaponry as a harmless toy (cf. *molles thyrsos*, *Theb.* 9.435).

Originally, the fennel stalk was topped with a bunch of ivy, while in Hellenistic and Roman representations it was usually capped with a pine cone and wrapped with streamers of ivy and vine leaves.[4] Sometimes its weaponlike aspect was made explicit by showing it with an iron tip.[5] Catullus alludes to this aspect of the spear metaphor when he says: *tecta quatiebant cuspide thyrsos*

[1] As Dilke points out, Mozley mistranslates the phrase *divaeque severas / fronde ligare comas* by taking *comas* to refer to the girls' own hair. In such a case, the phrase *divae ... fronde* would have to refer to the olive ('the leaf of the goddess'); yet this is not a victory nor a funeral wreath, nor is the olive a plant associated with the spring. It is also more likely for the goddess than the girls to have 'grave tresses'. Thus, Dilke's translation is surely correct: they 'bind the austere locks of the goddess (i.e. of her statue) with foliage'.

[2] Eg. θύρσον ... κίσσινον βέλος, Eur. *Bacch.* 25.

[3] The maenads inflict wounds on men with their *thyrsoi*: *Bacch.* 761–4. For maenads throwing the thyrsus just like a spear in Latin epic, cf. *coniciunt thyrsos non haec in munera factos*: Ovid, *Met.* 11.27f and cf. 3.712.

[4] Dodds (1960) ad Eur. *Bacch.* 113 and 1054–5.

[5] Dodds (1960) ad Eur. *Bacch.* 761–4.

(Catull. 64.256). The words *tecta ... cuspide* imply that the thyrsus is like a spear that has been rendered harmless by putting a knob on its tip.[6] This is a reference to the ivy bunch or pine cone on the thyrsus, and also perhaps to the practice of rehearsing with blunted weaponry.[7]

Statius frequently exploits the paradoxical nature of the thyrsus as an ersatz weapon in the *Thebaid*. During the *aristeia* of Tydeus in Book 2, the hero insults the Thebans, taunting them for their unmanly association with Bacchus: *nebridas et fragiles thyrsos portare putastis...?* (2.664). Bacchus pleads with Jupiter to spare his Thebans, claiming they are ignorant of war: *timent thyrsos nuptarum et proelia matrum. / unde tubas Martemque pati...?* (7.171f). Another insult to Theban manliness comes from Parthenopaius, who contrasts the masculine occupations of his mother with the effeminacy of Theban men who worship Bacchus. Speaking for the Arcadians, he says, *haud ... turpemque*[8] *manu iactavimus hastam ...* (9.795f). This last example shows how the thyrsus could be designated by a periphrasis such as *turpis hasta*.

Given that the thyrsus appears often in the *Thebaid* in taunts of unmanliness, it will be no surprise that it serves a similar purpose in the *Achilleid*, where Dionysiac themes are equally prominent and effeminacy a much more important issue. The thyrsus is often deployed as the representative of what is proper to women, in direct opposition to the weapons of masculinity. Achilles, for example, imagines Patroclus back in Thessaly exercising with the weapons he used to use, while he is on Scyros instead, shaking the thyrsus and spinning wool. When Ulysses sets out to Lycomedes' palace with the girlish gifts that he will use to set his trap, we find that they are mostly implements of Bacchic cult, including *imbelles thyrsos* (1.714). In joking incomprehension, the slightly dim Diomedes then asks him, *hisne gravem Priamo Phrygibusque armabis Achillem?* (1.717). When the trap is sprung, the girls go to play with the gifts laid out for them, including the *teretes thyrsos* (1.849); they ignore the real *arma*, thinking that they are for their father. Achilles, of course, picks up the spear and shield instead of the thyrsus and tympanum. The juxtaposition of these particular male and female implements highlights their similarity of form and difference of function.

The two-fold nature of the thyrsus as potential weapon and harmless toy for women is apparent in the simile that compares Achilles to the effeminate Bacchus transforming himself into a warrior as he sets out for India: *thyrsumque*

[6] Lee (1990) translates, '*thyrsi* with covered spike'; but Goold (1983) has 'wands with ivy-covered tips', which would downplay the weaponlike implications of *tecta ... cuspide*.

[7] See Coleman (1988) ad *Silv.* 4, pref. (29–30).

[8] Klotz' emendation for the MSS *turpique*.

virentem / armat (1.617f). Dilke (ad loc) explains that 'Bacchus is regarded as converting his thyrsus into a spear by fitting it with an iron tip'. Perhaps so, or it may be that Statius is thinking, like Catullus, that the thyrsus is already like a spear with its tip covered; if so, *armat* would mean to remove the pine cone or ivy bunch that blunts it. In either case, by changing an emblem of femininity into a paradigmatically male weapon, the transformation of Bacchus' thyrsus into a spear reflects the god's move from leisure to violence, and adumbrates the forthcoming transformation of Achilles into a warrior. The fearful instrument of Troy's destruction will be discovered underneath the feminine decoration that covers it and conceals its deadly purpose.

In addition to the leaves or pine cone at its tip, another feature that distinguishes the thyrsus from a simple staff consists of the ivy or vine leaves hanging from it and entwining the stem (*redimitum missile*, 1.612; *pampineis ... thyrsis*, 1.634). This decorative aspect is relevant, I would argue, to the description of the ritual activity of Deidamia and her sisters at the shrine of Pallas. They 'offer the riches of spring', 'bind the austere locks of the goddess (i.e. of her statue) with foliage' (Dilke ad 288f), and bestrew her spear with flowers. This transformation and feminization of the warlike image of the goddess by decking it with foliage and flowers is suggestive of the thyrsus as a decorative and womanly spear. Compare Vergil's description of the invention of the thyrsus by Daphnis: *foliis lentas intexere mollibus hastas* (*Ecl.* 5.31).[9] If all that Statius meant to do by mentioning Athena's spear was to name the statue by metonymy, he chose a slightly unusual attribute. The iconography associated much more distinctively with the goddess is her aegis and her helmet.[10] The motivation behind this apparent association between the thyrsus and the transformation of Athena's spear may be made clearer by examining another passage in the *Achilleid*.

When Thetis is trying to coax her son into a girl's garment, she offers a series of mythological *paradeigmata* to support her case. The rhetoric of this speech was analyzed earlier (above, Section 4.2.2), and we saw that her strongest example was Hercules' sojourn with Omphale:

> cedamus, paulumque animos submitte viriles
> atque habitus dignare meos. si Lydia dura
> pensa manu mollesque tulit Tirynthius hastas.... (1.259–61)

[9] Coleman (1977: ad loc) translates the latter phrase as 'languid spears'; he notes that 'fennel is not supple' and offers a number of possible explanations for the epithet, such as its motion and the optical effect of the ivy streamers. Giant fennel may not be supple, but it is surely less rigid than wood.

[10] Pallas identified with her aegis: *Silv.* 1.1.38, 3.1.131, *Theb.* 2.597, 12.606f, *Ach.* 1.486; identified with her helmet: *Silv.* 2.2.117, *Theb.* 2.243; aegis and helmet: *Ach.* 1.299f.

Like the *turpis hasta* of the *Thebaid* (9.796), and Vergil's *lentas ... hastas* (*Ecl.* 5.31), the thyrsus is identified as a variety of spear. The quality that distinguishes it from a true weapon is its 'softness', presumably referring both to its material substance and its womanly associations. Thetis says, *animos submitte viriles*, and then refers to the *mollis hasta* carried by Heracles while dressed as a woman. It is hard to imagine that the phallic humor here is unintentional.[11] One might object that it would hardly be in Thetis' interest to imply that, as a woman, Achilles' *hasta* might become *mollis*; yet earlier we saw Thetis tangle herself inextricably in precisely this kind of self-defeating language. Seen in this light, the thyrsus is a symbol of Achilles' transvestism and compromised masculinity in the *Achilleid* not merely because it is a hidden and veiled weapon, but also because it can stand as a symbol of the feminine or, better, the non-masculine. Ornamented and ornamental, it serves no real purpose, whereas the spear is a purely functional and phallic object. The thyrsus is a spear in drag. When Achilles chooses the spear instead of the thyrsus, both of which are laid out before him by Ulysses, he chooses masculinity in a very graphic way.

To return to Athena's spear, it may be clearer now why she is the ideal goddess to preside over the transformation of Achilles. Athena herself is a cross-dresser, of course, wearing her armor and helmet; in the *Iliad*, she even puts on Zeus' own chiton.[12] While the girls of Scyros are adorning and feminizing the statue of Pallas, it is no coincidence that Thetis is within sight, just down the beach, simultaneously adorning and feminizing Achilles. The flowers with which the girls bestrew the spear of Pallas' statue transforms it temporarily into something like a thyrsus. One could press further an interpretation of Athena's spear as the symbol of Athena's 'masculinity'.[13] Standing in the midst of Lycomedes' daughters, the statue of Athena, if we consider it as a representation of a phallic woman, is a reflection of Achilles on Scyros, ostensibly female, surrounded by girls, yet armed and masculine. In the next section, we shall go beyond the thyrsus and the spear to see how this kind of phallic imagery finds a reflection in Achilles' account of himself on Scyros.

[11] Cf. Adams (1982: 19–21), esp. p 19: 'the frequency of *ad hoc* metaphors both in Greek and Latin shows that the sexual symbolism of weapons was instantly recognizable in ancient society'.

[12] χιτῶν' ἐνδῦσα Διός, *Il.* 5.736.

[13] See Pomeroy (1975: 4) on Athena as the 'archetype of the masculine woman'.

6.1.1 Achilles' Castration Anxiety

While discussing Achilles' maenadism, we noted the connection between extravagant dress and initiatory religion at Rome, and speculated that this may have influenced the variety of cult settings in which Statius places Achilles while he is dressed as a girl. More specifically, we articulated the possibility that Achilles' maenadism might have been influenced by the example of the *galli* of the *Magna Mater* and *Dea Syria*. Compare the syncretic account given by Lucian of Attis and the spread of the cult of Cybele:

> Ἄττης δὲ γένος μὲν Λυδὸς ἦν, πρῶτος δὲ τὰ ὄργια τὰ ἐς Ῥέην ἐδιδάξατο. καὶ τὰ Φρύγες καὶ Λυδοὶ καὶ Σαμόθρᾳκες ἐπιτελέουσιν, Ἄττεω πάντα ἔμαθον. ὡς γάρ μιν ἡ Ῥέη ἔτεμεν, βίου μὲν ἀνδρηίου ἀπεπαύσατο, μορφὴν δὲ θηλέην ἡμείψατο καὶ ἐσθῆτα γυναικηίην ἐνεδύσατο.... (*de Syria Dea 15*)

Not enough is known about the Samothracian mysteries for us to understand quite why Lucian associates them in this way with the worship of the *Magna Mater* and *Dea Syria*, but it is interesting to note that Statius makes a similar association. At the dance performed for Ulysses and Diomedes, the girls of Scyros play the cymbals of Rhea (ie. Cybele, 1.828) and are compared to Samothracian dancers (832). The archaeological evidence indicates that the mysteries at Samothrace may have involved a chorus of dancing girls,[14] while the literary evidence associates the rites with phallicism. Herodotus (2.51) and Callimachus (F 199 Pfeiffer) both allude to the presence of ithyphallic herms in the cult, and it seems that two ithyphallic statues played a prominent role.[15] By describing the cross-dressed Achilles as a Samothracian dancer, Statius is perhaps making a humorous allusion to the secret phallicism of the cult. Similar, and even more appropriate, is the connection the poet implies with the *galli* of Cybele, since Achilles has in a sense temporarily emasculated himself on Scyros. The most prominent group of transvestite males at Rome were eunuch priests, who had long been assimilated, on account of their drums, tambourines and ecstatic worship, to the maenads of myth.[16] Paradoxically, the real maenads at Rome were male. Could this fact have influenced Statius in his decision to portray his cross-dressed hero as a maenad? Proceeding from the hypothesis that a man dressed as a woman while taking part in ecstatic rites as a 'maenad' might have reminded a Roman above all of the *galli*, the argument here is that Statius has

[14] For the frieze of dancing girls found there, see above, p 245, n 144.
[15] This information derives ultimately from a Gnostic source, quoted by Burkert (1993b: 182).
[16] See above, p 250, n 154.

adapted a literary model appropriate to the circumstance. Lauletta (1993) has argued that not only are there are echoes of Catullus 64 in the *Achilleid*, which no one would deny, but also of Catullus 63. He freely acknowledges that this is not a case of demonstrable allusion, but of evanescent hints. This may be true, but the case can be presented more forcefully than was done by Lauletta.

In Catullus' poem, Attis comes to his senses momentarily, and before Cybele drives him mad once more he looks out across the sea and regrets all that he left behind at home. The cross-dressed Achilles likewise takes a moment to pause and reflect upon his situation in the middle of his ecstatic worship of Bacchus. He too thinks regretfully of his homeland and rebukes himself for the dishonorable and unmanly course he has taken. In this case we are dealing not so much with parallels on the level of language and vocabulary as with a similarity in the dramatic situation and in rhetoric. While the other maenads sleep off their exhaustion, Achilles delivers this soliloquy:

> haec secum: 'Quonam timidae commenta parentis
> usque feres? primumque imbelli carcere perdes
> florem animi? non tela licet Mavortia dextra,
> non trepidas agitare feras? ubi campus et amnes
> Haemonii? quaerisne meos, Sperchie, natatus
> promissasque comas? an desertoris alumni
> nullus honos, Stygiasque procul iam raptus ad umbras
> dicor, et orbatus plangit mea funera Chiron?
> tu nunc tela manu, nostros tu dirigis arcus
> nutritosque mihi scandis, Patrocle, iugales:
> ast ego pampineis diffundere bracchia thyrsis
> et tenuare colus—pudet haec taedetque fateri—
> iam scio. (1.624–36)

The monologue of Catullus' Attis likewise takes place during a brief pause in his wild ravings: *rabie fera carens dum breve tempus animus est* (57). He addresses his fatherland, *patria o mea creatrix* ... (50), and wonders in what direction it might lie: *ubinam aut quibus locis te positam, patria, reor?* (55). Achilles addresses his Thessalian homeland, calling upon the river Sperchius (628), and he wonders where the fields and streams of Thessaly are: *ubi campus et amnes Haemonii?* Attis compares himself to a runaway slave: *ut erifugae famuli* (51f); Achilles calls himself a runaway foster-son: *desertoris alumni.* One major difference in the situations of the young men is that Attis was a city-dweller who

deplores the savage wilderness of the mountains and forests where he finds himself, whereas for Achilles that sort of place *is* home. So Attis hates the snow and the wild animals whose lairs he approaches in his madness (*ferarum ... operta adirem*, 53f), while that is precisely what Achilles longs for: *trepidas agitare feras.*

Attis mentions the specifically urban pleasures that he misses, such as the forum and gymnasium (60), which would not apply to Achilles; but first he notes some more personal losses: his fatherland, possessions, friends and parents (*patria, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero?* 59). Achilles also laments his absence from his fatherland, and the other items in his soliloquy correspond to Attis' complaint, too. Achilles, like Attis, regrets the loss of his possessions: his weapons, his bows and his chariot (*tela..., nostros ... arcus..., iugales*). He imagines his friend Patroclus enjoying their use in his absence, just as Attis thinks of his friends (*amicis*) back home. Finally, corresponding to the parents (*genitoribus*) Attis remembers, Achilles thinks of his foster-father, imagining him as a bereaved parent: *orbatus ... Chiron.*

There are a few similarities in language between the two speeches; they are not significant enough to be compelling on their own, but taken together with the other parallels they have some interest. Achilles complains that he is wasting his *primum ... florem animi* on Scyros, which might be compared with Attis' *ego gymnasi fui flos*, a similar kind of metaphor. The shame that they both express is couched in similar language, but this may simply be coincidence. Attis says, *iam iam dolet quod egi, iam iamque paenitet* (73); Achilles says, *pudet haec taedetque fateri— / iam scio* (635f). These verbal similarities might be put down to chance, however, and this is why the argument as made by Lauletta is not very convincing. He attempts to demonstrate the allusion in terms of this slight likeness of language, but that is not where the true correspondence lies. Not all allusion necessarily manifests itself in terms of vocabulary, and considering the difference in meter between the galliambics of Catullus 63 and the hexameters of the *Achilleid*, we have little right to expect that Statius should borrow phrases from Catullus. Rather, it is in the situations of the two characters and the rhetoric of their response to it where lies the connection whose presence was intuited by Lauletta.

Attis is perhaps the only other male maenad in Latin literature apart from Statius' Achilles; he even makes the identification himself: *ego maenas ... ero?* (69). When Achilles pauses in the middle of his 'frenzy' to reflect upon his state and turns his thoughts to his home, he cannot but call to mind the pathetic solil-

oquy of Attis. We might also refer to Attis the 'wound' of love for Deidamia that Achilles complains of (*quonam usque premes urentia pectus / vulnera?* 638f). At a further extreme, we might even associate with Attis' self-mutilation the reference here to Achilles' promised lock of hair that he was growing in order to cut it off as an offering to the river Sperchius on his return (*promissasque comas*, 629; cf. Hom. *Il.* 23.141–53). If that seems unlikely, compare the conclusion of Lucian's essay on the Syrian goddess. The pseudo-Herodotean narrator describes the custom, in which he claims to have participated himself, of children growing a lock of hair long, which is then cut off and dedicated to the goddess in her temple at Hierapolis (*de Syria Dea* 60). As Stephens and Winkler comment (1995: 360f, n 6), 'This rite of passage might be regarded as the ordinary level of dedicating one's manhood to the goddess, whereas the *galli*'s act is an extraordinary version of the same'.

Be that as it may, this connection between Statius and Catullus can be interpreted in the context of the phallic humor in the *Achilleid*. Thetis ineptly offers to her son the chance of carrying like Hercules the *mollis hasta* (621), and of emulating the transsexual Caenis (1.624); and then we find Achilles echoing the rhetoric of the recently castrated Attis. The difference is that Achilles' unmanned state, unlike that of Attis, is reversible. That is what makes the *Achilleid* essentially comedic, in contrast to Catullus 63. The hinted assimilation of Achilles to a eunuch may in fact have its roots not only in Catullus, but also in New Comedy. The stratagem whereby a young man disguises himself as an unthreatening figure in order to gain access to his beloved comes in two closely related forms. He may disguise himself as a girl, as in Menander's *Androgynos*, or he may disguise himself as a castrato, as in Terence's *Eunuchus*. In Terence's play, much amusement is had from the improbable fact that a 'eunuch' has committed a rape (cf. *Eun.* 653–8). If we recall that this play was originally performed in 161 BC for the Megalesian games, the feast of the *Magna Mater*, then the juxtaposition of sacred eunuchs and romantic pseudo-eunuchs may have a long pedigree on the Roman stage. In fact, the romantic eunuch from comedy and the religious *gallus* seem to have been combined in this way by a Greek novel whose papyrus fragments go by the name of *Iolaos*. Dodds made the suggestion, which has been generally accepted, that the part of the novel we have is a scene where a young man is 'initiated' in order to carry off the part of a *gallus* well enough to gain access to a woman.[17] So the examples from New Comedy and the

[17] Dodds' suggestion was reported by Parsons in *Ox. Pap.* vol. 42, p 35, n 1. On the *Iolaos*, and on transvestite plots in antiquity, see Stephens and Winkler (1995: 358–74). What they call 'this old plot', meaning the erotic stratagem of a young man dressing as a woman, is a

Iolaos show that Statius was not alone in connecting transvestism as an erotic stratagem with playing the part of a eunuch or even a *gallus*. What is different here is that this comedic role is juxtaposed intertextually with the tragic lament of Catullus' Attis.

Whereas Attis' period of lucidity ends when Cybele sends a lion to provoke him to madness once more, Achilles, at the culmination of his speech, forms a resolution to prove himself a man: *teque marem—pudet heu!—nec amore probabis?* (639). The hero acts immediately on this decision, and his *amor* finds expression in the violent rape of Deidamia which follows (640–4). Thus the problem of Achilles' ambivalent gender and his compromised phallic potency is apparently resolved instantly by the expression of his innate capacity, as a male, for sexual violence. Or is it? That moment at which Achilles asserts his masculinity in the act of rape has a very significant Ovidian pedigree, and before we examine that scene, we must turn first to an earlier point in the *Achilleid* where another Ovidian rape forms the background to Statius' narrative.

6.2 Rereading Ovid's Rapes

When Thetis arrives in Thessaly at the beginning of the *Achilleid* to retrieve her son from Chiron's care, it is not her first visit to the place. She has been away for some time, but according to Statius, she was originally responsible for delivering Achilles to Chiron.[18] Not only that, Chiron's cave was the site of her wedding to Peleus, as Statius makes clear.[19] There were two incompatible versions of the union of Peleus and Thetis in Latin hexameter verse, one as told by Catullus and the other by Ovid. Catullus in his poem 64 was the first poet, so far as we know, to make the match a love affair; Peleus falls in love with Thetis and their joyful union is sanctified by a great gathering of men and gods. Yet even Catullus alludes to Jupiter's interest in the matter:

> tum Thetidis Peleus incensus fertur amore,
> tum Thetis humanos non despexit hymenaeos,
> tum Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit. (Cat. 64.19–21)

In this account, Thetis marries Peleus willingly, or at least without disgust (*non despexit*), but the mention of Jupiter (*pater ipse*) reminds us of the tale that

version of what Garber, in her more general survey, would call a 'transvestite progress narrative' (1992: 67–77).

[18] See above, p 116.

[19] Just outside of Chiron's cave, the place where each god sat on that famous occasion is still pointed out (109f). This was the usual location; cf. 1.101f and 109f; the only source which would place the wedding elsewhere is Catullus 64, on which see above, p 80, n 107.

Thetis had to marry a mortal in order to eliminate the potential that she might bear a son who could be a rival to Zeus. As early as Homer (see above, p 122), Thetis complains that she was compelled to marry a mortal, and this unwillingness on the part of Thetis is an important aspect of the myth before Catullus. In fact, there was a long tradition in which Peleus attacked and raped Thetis, while she fought back and metamorphosed into various animals. This version of events is told by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (11.221–65), where there is no mention of the formal wedding. Thus Catullus and Ovid present what would seem to be diametrically opposed and contradictory accounts of the union between goddess and mortal.

This disagreement in the Latin tradition arose from a tension that was always, as far as we know, present in the myth. Images of the elaborate wedding of Peleus and Thetis and of Peleus wrestling with Thetis are both popular in Greek art from a very early period.[20] Lesky (1956) claimed that the two motifs were distinct and of separate origin, but more recent work has emphasized that the two stories are not necessarily incompatible; as Gantz puts it, 'there is no reason why such a hero [as Peleus] should not be asked to prove himself worthy of the gift [of Thetis]' (1993: 229). Likewise March (1987: 11) says that 'in literature this wrestling-match is taken to be an integral part of the Peleus/Thetis story and an established preliminary to their wedding from Pindar onwards. . . .' Indeed both Pindar (*Nem.* 4.62–8) and Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.13.5) explicitly make the rape a preliminary to the wedding. As to the evidence from art, Boardman (1976: 4) says, 'the same painters show equal familiarity with both episodes and we do not look for contradictory stories in the repertory of such a close-knit group as that of the black figure vase painters'. Nonetheless it is interesting that apparently no single vase depicts both events together. So it may be that even in Greek art a certain tension was felt between the story of rape and that of the wedding; but this did not make them incompatible. Thetis in the *Iliad* complains that she was forced to marry Peleus, and she seems to live in the sea at that point, even though we also hear of Achilles' life with his parents in Phthia, so perhaps this tension is very old indeed: see Gantz (1993: 229–31).

Catullus transforms this tradition by eliminating Thetis' reluctance towards the match, thus making the rape superfluous; for him the wedding of Peleus and Thetis an example of the intimate commerce between gods and men in the golden age. This intervention made the rape and wedding stories incompatible, rather than complementary, versions of the myth. Accordingly, Ovid's response was

[20] Eg. the chest of Cypselus as described by Pausanias (5.18.5) for the struggle and the François Krater and Erskine Dinos for the wedding: Gantz (1993: 229).

to reassert the story of the rape and Thetis' multiple metamorphoses, without making any attempt to reconcile it with the wedding. This is how the matter stood for Statius, for whom both Catullus 64 and the *Metamorphoses* were important sources. On the surface, it would seem that he followed Catullus in the *Achilleid*. Statius mentions the wedding and the attendance of the gods on Pelion, while there is no word of the rape. Nevertheless, we shall see that the Thessalian landscape as described by Statius is framed in terms of Ovid's description of the area as the setting for the rape of Thetis. Here is Ovid's description of the location of that event:

> Est sinus Haemoniae curvos falcatus in arcus,
> bracchia procurrunt: ubi, si foret altior unda,
> portus erat; summis inductum est aequor harenis;
> litus habet solidum, quod nec vestigia servet
> nec remoretur iter nec opertum pendeat alga;
> myrtea silva subest bicoloribus obsita bacis.
> est specus in medio, natura factus an arte,
> ambiguum, magis arte tamen: quo saepe venire
> frenato delphine sedens, Theti, nuda solebas. (*Met.* 11.229–37)

In the line just before these, Peleus is ordered by Jupiter to seek the 'embraces' of the Nereid (*amplexus in virginis ire marinae*, 228). As it turns out, this hint from Jupiter hides the key to the challenge the hero faces. Peleus at first tries to seize Thetis, but he is foiled when she transforms herself into new shapes. He prays for guidance and eventually Proteus comes to tell him what he must do: he must take hold of the Nereid and refuse to let go regardless of what metamorphoses she attempts. Armed with this knowledge, Peleus holds on resolutely and finally succeeds in pinning Thetis down. In this light, it is interesting how Ovid describes the bay here; its arms run out into the sea, as if the land is attempting to embrace the water, just as Peleus attempts to hold the slippery and shifting water-goddess in his grasp.

Thetis swims towards Thessaly, and she arrives in three strokes of her legs and arms, much as Poseidon in the *Iliad* arrives at his destination after three mighty steps.[21] When she arrives, the landscape of Thessaly near Chiron's cave

[21] *Il.* 13.20; thus Dilke (ad 1.99f), who is surely correct that *gressus* must refer to Thetis' leg strokes, even though this seems to be a unique usage: *TLL* 6.2.2325.81, s.v. 'gressus'. On women swimmers in antiquity, see Mehl in *RE*, suppl. 5.848.7–11 and 862.37–60. Martial describes an aquatic display put on in the amphitheater by a large group of 'Nereids', who moved in concert so as to describe various patterns in the water. Of their skill he says: *aut docuit lusus hos Thetis aut didicit* (*Spect.* 26.8 = 30.8 Shackleton Bailey).

is reminiscent of the site of her rape as described by Ovid. Ovid claimed that it was difficult to discern whether the cave (*specus*, 235) in which Peleus raped Thetis was either man-made or natural, as if it were a grotto in the garden of a tasteful Roman aristocrat. Statius explains one possible reason for this ambiguity, describing the cave in which Chiron lives:

> domus ardua montem
> perforat et longo suspendit Pelion arcu;
> pars exhausta manu, partem sua ruperat aetas. (1.106–8)

The half-and-half nature of this cave, part artificial and part man-made, reflects the combination of raw nature and human culture in the Centaur's own body, but, as Dilke (ad 108) noted, it also owes something to the cave described by Ovid: *natura factus an arte / ambiguum* (235f). Furthermore, the sea-floor is said by Statius to strike Thetis' feet when she arrives in Thessaly (100); the inversion of the usual action, feet striking the ground, gives the impression that she reached the shore quickly, or even unexpectedly.[22] This might be a reference to the extreme shallowness of the bay described by Ovid, whose water is spread thinly over the surface of the sand (*summis inductum est aequor harenis*, 231).

Another peculiarity of the place Ovid describes is that the sand is so firm that it retains no impression of footprints: *litus habet solidum, quod nec vestigia servet* (232). In a practical sense, this helps Peleus, since it it is implied that the hero may have gone ahead to lie in wait for Thetis in the cave where she comes to sleep. On a metaphorical level, it may be significant that Ovid is describing here an event in the history of the world that had become obscure, replaced by descriptions, such as Catullus 64, of the glorious wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The beach is the setting for an act whose *vestigia* had become effaced from history. This metaphorical reading is taken up again by Statius, whose beach does retain footprints:

> laetantur montes et conubialia pandunt
> antra sinus lateque deae Sperchios abundat
> obvius et dulci vestigia circuit unda.
> illa nihil gavisa locis.... (1.101–3)

The river Sperchius washes the feet of the goddess, which are designated by the metonymy of *vestigia*. On this beach, Thetis does leave her footprints, if only temporarily. Statius modifies Ovid's description: this sand is not so firm

[22] Dilke (ad 99f) gives parallels for *ferio* used of stationary objects.

that no impression is made on it by passers-by, but they will vanish quickly, washed away by the river. For Statius, the *vestigia* of Thetis' rape are real, but evanescent. Thetis is preoccupied with Achilles, and this is the main reason that she takes no pleasure in the welcome she receives from the Thessalian landscape; but we might read a little more into the phrase *illa nihil gavisa locis* (103). If this landscape was, as argued here, the site of her rape by Peleus as described by Ovid, then it is not surprising that she does not rejoice in her memories of the place.

Ovid's description of the cave in which Thetis was raped is echoed by Statius in his description of Chiron's cave. This cave is called *conubialia ... antra* (1.101f), which refers on one level to the formal wedding ceremony of Peleus and Thetis but, on another, the Ovidian epithet *conubialia* may refer to the rape.[23] We can see further relevance in this connection by looking in greater detail at Statius' description of that cave:

> domus ardua montem
> perforat et longo suspendit Pelion arcu;
> pars exhausta manu, partem sua ruperat aetas.
> signa tamen divumque tori et quem quisque sacrarit
> accubitu genioque locum monstrantur; at intra
> Centauri stabula alta patent, non aequa nefandis
> fratribus: hic hominum nullos experta cruores
> spicula nec truncae bellis genialibus orni
> aut consanguineos fracti crateres in hostes,
> sed pharetrae insontes et inania terga ferarum. (1.106–15)

The language of this description is strikingly violent, and it is appropriate to the act that, according to Ovid, happened in just such a cave. This cave penetrates the mountain (*perforat*, 107), which age has split apart (*ruperat*, 108). The peaceful decor of Chiron's abode is described by means of a contrast with the sort of things the other Centaurs might hang on their walls. Obviously, the point of this is that Chiron is completely unlike his fellows; Homer calls him δικαιότατος Κενταύρων (*Il.* 11.832). Yet it is interesting that Statius describes at such length what Chiron is *not*. The bloody and broken weapons and the shattered bowls lend a strangely violent tone to the description of Chiron's cave, and they might even be read as symbols of spent sexual violence. The episode alluded to is the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodameia (*genialibus*, 113),

[23] Before this, the word *conubialis* is only found in Ovid (*Her.* 6.41) and in the *Thebaid* (5.112).

and so this is another reference to an event where marriage and violence intersected. Chiron's cave, overtly the location of the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, implicitly the location of the rape of Thetis by Peleus, is aptly connected with an event that combined a wedding and (attempted) sexual violence.

Ovid reintroduced into Latin verse an episode whose *vestigia* had been effaced from the tradition. Statius brings the two versions back together, but he does not juxtapose them chronologically, making the rape a preliminary to the wedding, as Pindar, for example, had done (above, p 278). Rather, the reconciliation is effected by openly adhering to one version and implicitly alluding to the other. In this way the famous story of the romance of Peleus and Thetis is found under examination to carry at its center an Ovidian tale of violent rape. So too for the upcoming tale of Achilles on Scyros. That amusing romantic interlude has at its center the act of rape with which Achilles begets Neoptolemus. The connection between the father's act of rape and the son's is far from coincidental, as the language shows. In Ovid's account, after Thetis has exhausted her transformations, Peleus finally overcomes her:

> confessam amplectitur heros
> et potitur votis ingentique inplet Achille. (*Met.* 11.264f)

In the *Achilleid*, Achilles gains his bride and begets his own son in turn, taking advantage of the exhaustion of his maenadic companions:

> vi potitur votis et toto pectore veros
> admovet amplexus.... (*Ach.* 1.642f)

Like father, like son; they both get what they want and take it by force from an exhausted female: *potitur votis*. In fact, the rape of Deidamia is also described by Ovid; in the *Ars Amatoria* it is a paradigmatic moment at which the rhetoric of romance yields to the law of force. We now move on to examine Achilles' act of rape as described by Ovid and as described by Statius.

6.2.1 Statius against Ovid

If the completed portion of the *Achilleid* has a climax, it is the moment at which Achilles rapes Deidamia. As we have seen, this event comes in the middle of the maenadic rites celebrated by the women of Scyros. Achilles delivers a monologue in which he thinks of Thessaly and expresses his regret for the shameful position he has taken. He concludes by resolving to prove himself a man by means of his love for Deidamia. He approaches his foster-sister, who is presumably asleep like

the rest of the maenads, and he rapes her. With the loss of Euripides' Σκύριοι and most of the Pseudo-Bion, Ovid's is the only literary treatment of any length of the story of Achilles on Scyros that survives before Statius. Thus far, the outline of the *Achilleid* is entirely compatible with Ovid's narrative in Book 1 of the *Ars Amatoria* except that Statius locates the rape outdoors, and not in a shared bedroom (*Ars Am.* 1.697). Like Statius, Ovid makes the rape of Deidamia the centerpiece of the episode. Indeed, the story is present in the *Ars* as an *exemplum* of the power and usefulness, when all else fails, of physical force. The moral is that the man should always take the initiative with a woman.[24] After all, even as a woman protests against you, says Ovid, she does not want you to desist: *pugnando vinci se tamen illa volet* (666).[25] Even physical force is not really unwelcome to women: *vim licet appelles: grata est vis ista puellis* (673). This argument might seem to run counter to the more subtle and rhetorical modes of seduction that the *Ars* advocates elsewhere, but the main point here is not so much that rape is a good thing, as that there are natural gender roles, and the man's role is always to be the aggressor, to press forward regardless of resistance: *vir prior accedat, vir verba precantia dicat / excipiat blandas comiter illa preces ... corrupit magnum nulla puella Iovem* (709f, 714). The *exemplum* of Achilles on Scyros thus serves two related purposes in Ovid's argument: it demonstrates that women like Deidamia *want* to be raped; and it proves that, however it may be concealed, masculinity will reveal itself through the aggression that is the natural expression of maleness. Here is Ovid's description of the rape:

> quid facis, Aeacide? non sunt tua munera lanae;
> tu titulos alia Palladis arte petes.
> quid tibi cum calathis? clipeo manus apta ferendo est:
> pensa quid in dextra, qua cadet Hector, habes?
> Reice succinctos operoso stamine fusos:
> quassanda est ista Pelias hasta manu.
> forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem;
> haec illum stupro comperit esse virum.
> viribus illa quidem victa est (ita credere oportet),
> sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen. (*Ars Am.* 1.691–700)

The narrator addresses the hero and urges him to reject the implements of womanhood. The contrast of *calathus* with *clipeus* and *fusus* with *hasta* may have

[24] Thus Hollis (1977) ad 1.705–14.

[25] This idea of unwilling willingness is found in the *Achilleid*, when Thetis is trying to convince Achilles, who has just seen Deidamia, to impersonate a girl. Achilles is 'willing to be compelled' (*cogique volentem*, 1.325); cf. Jorge (1990: 192).

been the inspiration for Statius, who contrasts Bacchic implements, rather than wool-working tools, with male weaponry. The disadvantage of Statius' approach is that the apparatus of Bacchic cult does not represent the quintessence of womanhood the same way that spinning does, but its advantage is that there is a much closer homology of form between the *thyrsus* and *hasta* and the *tympanum* and shield (*orbem*, 852; see 1.849–54, where the four terms are juxtaposed). In Ovid's account, despite the feminine camouflage, Achilles' masculinity reveals itself irresistibly in the act of rape: *haec illum stupro comperit esse virum*; and that is that. In the *Achilleid*, a similar plot unfolds, albeit in greater detail. As Deidamia cries out, the other maenads take it for a signal to begin their dance again, and Achilles identifies himself to her (1.645–660). The narrator describes very briefly Deidamia's reaction and her decision to keep her rape a secret from everyone except her nurse (662–71). The nurse helps to conceal the pregnancy, which is accounted for in the matter of a few lines, and Neoptolemus is born. The narrator turns his gaze away from Scyros to the approaching ship of Ulysses and Diomedes (1.675), and that is that. It seems that Thetis' foolish attempt to keep Achilles in girlish clothing has been shattered, just as in the *Ars Amatoria*, by the instincts that are natural to his true sex. The story of Achilles on Scyros according to Statius does not end there, however.

When Ulysses arrives on Scyros, at least nine months have passed since the rape, because Neoptolemus has been born.[26] Yet when we next see Achilles he is still cross-dressed, and apparently no one else has discovered his true sex. We might pass this off as a trivial detail, except that Statius goes out of his way to put Achilles on display, dressed as a girl, long after the rape. He could have merely depicted the hero succumbing to Ulysses' trap, but instead he shows him attending a banquet as a girl and even performing a choral dance for the benefit of the visitors. These gratuitous and humiliating scenes are vividly described, and the poet had to go to some trouble to contrive them. Even under normal circumstances it would not have been usual to put the daughters of a respectable house on display in this manner, and so Statius arranges it that Lycomedes is desperate to marry off his daughters. Ovid demonstrates *en passant* the way Achilles was normally portrayed on Scyros: he spins and weaves, just like Hercules with Omphale. These are private occupations that typically take place in the women's quarters of a house. Visual representations likewise show Achilles in the female quarters, often spinning, often negligent of his female disguise.[27] We know of no identifiable precedent for this kind of extended, public display

[26] And perhaps far more time than that: see above, p 103.
[27] See above, p 187, n 67.

of Achilles as a cross-dresser, and, since the most humiliating scenes come after his rape of Deidamia, the insult to the manhood of the hero is even stronger. One way of understanding this development, therefore, is as a rejection of the Ovidian notion that rape alone is a simple and effective statement of masculinity. Before attempting an interpretation, however, it would be useful to know whether a Roman audience would have found it surprising that Achilles' rape was such an ineffectual measure of male self-fashioning.

We have from the pen of Tertullian one example of an ancient reaction to the plot of the *Achilleid*. He does not mention Statius, but it will be clear nevertheless that he knew our poem, from which he took the Achilles on Scyros episode as an *exemplum*. Tertullian is a famous polemicist, and so one must be careful not to pretend his reaction is that of a naive reader, but it will be possible to isolate those elements of the *exemplum* that he undoubtedly took from Statius' text. In a dense and allusive work, the *de Pallio*, Tertullian makes the argument at great length that there is nothing wrong with wearing the *pallium* of the Greek philosopher rather than the Roman toga. In the fourth chapter, he anticipates the objection that might be put against him that the clothes might, as it were, unmake the man. He runs through *exempla* from myth that could be proposed in support of the assertion that unmanly dress leads to unmanly behavior: Achilles on Scyros, Hercules with Omphale, Sardanapallus, and so forth. He acknowledges that not all kinds of change in appearance are good, and that affectation in dress can be the result of vanity, pride, or, worse, effeminacy. His argument at this point is that only those changes which go against nature are ignoble. Here is the relevant passage, and, since the Latinity is idiosyncratic, a translation taken from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*:

> Habitum transferre ita demum culpae prope est, si non consuetudo, sed natura mutetur. sat refert inter honorem temporis et religionem. det consuetudo fidem tempori, natura deo. naturam itaque concussit Larissaeus heros in virginem mutando, ille ferarum medullis educatus (unde et nominis concilium, quandoquidem labiis vacuerat ab uberum gustu), ille apud rupicem et silvicolam et monstrum eruditorem scrupea schola eruditus. feras, si in puero, matris sollicitudinem patiens; certe iam histriculus, certe iam virum alicui clanculo functus adhuc sustinet stolam fundere, comam struere, cutem fingere, speculum consulere, collum demulcere, aurem quoque foratu effeminatus, quod illi apud Sigeum strongyla servat.
>
> Plane postea miles est; necessitas enim reddidit sexum. de proe-

lio sonuerat, nec arma longe. ipsum, inquit, ferrum virum attrahit. ceterum, si post incentivum quoque puellam perseverasset, potuit et nubere. ecce itaque mutatio. monstrum equidem geminum, de viro femina, mox de femina vir, quando neque veritas negari debuisset neque fallacia confiteri. uterque habitus mutandi malus, alter adversus naturam, alter contra salutem. (*de Pallio* 4.2)

> The transfer of dress approximates to culpability just in so far as it is not custom, but nature, which suffers the change. There is a wide enough difference between the honour due to time, and religion. Let Custom show fidelity to Time, Nature to God. To Nature, accordingly, the Larissaean hero gave a shock by turning into a virgin; he who had been reared on the marrows of wild beasts (whence, too, was derived the composition of his name, because he had been a stranger with his lips to the maternal breast); he who had been reared by a rocky and wood-haunting and monstrous trainer in a stony school. You would bear patiently, if it were in a boy's case, his mother's solicitude; but he at all events was already be-haired, he at all events had already secretly given proof of his manhood to some one, when he consents to wear the flowing stole, to dress his hair, to cultivate his skin, to consult the mirror, to bedizen his neck; effeminated even as to his ear by boring, whereof his bust at Sigeum still retains the trace.
>
> Plainly afterwards he turned soldier: for necessity restored him his sex. The clarion had sounded of battle: nor were arms far to seek. 'The steel's self', says (Homer), 'attracteth the hero'. Else if, after that incentive as well as before, he had persevered in his maidenhood, he might withal have been married! Behold, accordingly, mutation! A monster, I call him,—a double monster: from man to woman; by and by from woman to man: whereas neither ought the truth to have been belied, nor the deception confessed. Each fashion of changing was evil: the one opposed to nature, the other contrary to safety.

This is, it should be clear, close to being a résumé of the plot of the *Achilleid.* Strangely, Geffcken (1909: 105–7) considered the question of Tertullian's sources here and ruled out Statius, preferring to credit works of satire, particularly by

Varro, that are conveniently lost.[28] Fortunately, this argument has been refuted in detail by Gerlo in his commentary on the *de Pallio*, which thoroughly documents Tertullian's dependence on the *Achilleid*.[29] We may therefore proceed to examine in detail the relationship between the two texts.

Tertullian begins by contrasting Achilles' harsh upbringing with his womanly seclusion on Scyros, a contrast that is fundamental to the *Achilleid*. The detail that he was nursed on *medullis ferarum* comes from Statius (2.100), and it is encouraging to note that he explicitly connects this fact with the etymology of Achilles' name from ἀ-χεῖλος, for that was precisely the argument made above (Section 3.1.1). He implicitly credits Achilles' arrival on Scyros to his mother's worry (*matris sollicitudinem*), and excuses him to a certain extent for that. What Tertullian claims is shocking, however, is that Achilles continued to tolerate acting like a girl (*sustinet stolam fundere*, etc), long after he had definitely ceased to be a *puer*. He even continued after he had started to grow pubic hair[30] and after he had raped Deidamia (*virum alicui clanculo functus*). We shall return to the rape of Deidamia in a moment, but the hair of Achilles is an interesting point. In the *Achilleid*, when Thetis collects Achilles from Chiron's cave, the down on his cheeks is just about to grow: *necdum prima nova lanugine vertitur aetas* (1.163). Since then, however, at least nine months have passed and probably more than that. The bare-cheeked boy is sexually mature by the time Ulysses arrives, and that is why it is unforgivable that he is still playing the girl. Tertullian then lists several clichés of female behavior in which Achilles is implicated. Among these, care of the hair and relaxing the neck are strongly reminiscent of Thetis' transformation of Achilles in the *Achilleid*: *inpexos certo domat ordine crines* (1.328) and *colla rigentia mollit* (326). Evidently the details of that scene stayed in Tertullian's imagination. Finally, Tertullian refers to an object of some

[28] I do not understand the logic of Geffcken's argument (1909: 106), which appears to employ references to Statius to prove that Statius was *not* Tertullian's source: 'Daß bei Tertullian Statius vorliegen sollte, ist mir unwahrscheinlich; die Ausmalungen z. B. der Einzelheiten seines Wechsels sind, wie neben Statius (325ff) auch Bion II 18 zeigt, alexandrinischer Kunst geläufig. Die ganze Episode kann also schon in der satirischen Vorlage des Kirchenvaters enthalten gewesen sein'. A footnote to these lines adds, 'Daß Statius 326 *colla rigentia mollit* eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit mit Tertullians *collum demulcere* hat, kann nicht für Tertullians Abhängigkeit von Statius entscheidend sein'. Gerlo (1940: 106, n 1) comments on Geffcken's tendency to look always to Varro as Tertullian's source.

[29] Gerlo (1940) ad 4.2, *passim*, esp. p 106: 'Wat volgt over Achilleus zijn reminiscenties uit de na-homerische sagen en hunne bewerkingen, zooals Tert. die met zijn veelzijdige belezenheid heeft leeren kennen. Ik meen dat hij hier vooral steunt op Statius' *Achilleis*, cfr. *infra* bij de afzonderlijke plaatsen'.

[30] If *histriculus* is the correct reading here, it would mean 'hairy-bottomed', this is the (Greek) definition given by the glossary entry cited by Gerlo (1940: 109) and by L-S s.v. 'hystriculus'; it would evidently be a punning combination of a diminutive of *hystrix* (ὕσριξ), 'porcupine', and *culus*. Gerlo (1940: 109) points out the difficulty that the parallels cited for this word in Latin do not admit the sexual meaning that is evident here.

kind (*strongyla*) at Cape Sigaeum that represented Achilles wearing an earring. The meaning of the word *strongyla* has been debated inconclusively (see Gerlo ad loc), but given Tertullian's search for deliberately exotic vocabulary in the *de Pallio* (cf. Heracles' epithet of *scytalosagittipelliger* in the next paragraph), perhaps we should not put too much weight on its technical meaning, which is uncertain in any case. A more sober guide is Servius (*auctus*), who reports that: *sane apud Sigeum Achillis statua fuisse dicitur, quae in lanna, id est in extima auris parte elenchum more femineo habuerit* (ad *Aen.* 1.30). So this was a male statue, perhaps 'in the round' (στρογγύλη) and wearing an earring, at Cape Sigaeum near Troy, which in the age of Tertullian and Servius was identified as a representation of Achilles. Is it possible that this might have been an archaic kouros?[31] Some of these statues wear necklaces and what appear, at least superficially, to be earrings. A statue of venerable antiquity at Cape Sigaeum in the Troad might logically have come to be identified in later antiquity as Achilles, particularly if the earring could be explained as a relic of his days on Scyros, an episode lately re-popularized by Statius.

Tertullian then turns to the discovery of Achilles by Ulysses. The sound of battle refers to the trumpet blast of Agyrtes in the *Achilleid* (1.875f). Achilles is 'attracted' to the weapons rather than the girlish gifts, a circumstance that Tertullian glosses with a witty Homeric tag: *ipsum, inquit, ferrum virum attrahit.*[32] Tertullian's final comment on the events on Scyros displays a debt to the *Achilleid*, but in a subtle way. He says: *ceterum, si post incentivum quoque puellam perseverasset, potuit et nubere.* True, but where does this idea come from? We saw that Statius characterizes Lycomedes as desperate to marry his daughters and deluded into thinking that Ulysses and Diomedes might be good candidates as husbands. The king takes encouragement when he sees the force of Ulysses' desire for one of his daughters, but misreads the character of his gaze as erotic. Tertullian appreciates the spectacle of Achilles as marriageable maiden that Lycomedes stages for his guests, and he extrapolates from that to the prospect of Achilles as bride for some poor unsuspecting groom. Tertullian concludes paradoxically by claiming that Achilles' transformation from girl to man was as wrong as his earlier change from boy to girl.

[31] This hypothesis is suggested by Gloria Pinney in a forthcoming book; she notes that while in some cases what appear to be earrings are actually stylized representations of the anatomy, nevertheless they are of the same shape as women's earrings. I am grateful to Professor Pinney for giving me a copy of her chapter in advance of publication.

[32] αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐφέλκεται ἄνδρα σίδηρος, *Od.* 16.294 and 19.13; Tertullian's satiric use of this tag was surely influenced by Juvenal's parody (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐφέλκεται ἄνδρα κίναιδος, 9.37).

Tertullian knows the whole plot of the *Achilleid* at a level of completeness that could not have been gleaned from *florilegia*. He also shows evidence of having reflected on the poem, for he has three keen insights which have not been matched even by modern commentators. He knows that the discussion of Achilles' diet in Book 2 of the *Achilleid* is closely linked to the question of the correct etymology for Achilles' name, which is a matter of implicit debate between the hero and Ulysses (see above, Section 3.1.1). He understands the humor Statius injects into Lycomedes' situation as the father of many daughters and that in effect he offers Achilles, along with the rest of his girls, as a potential bride for Ulysses. Finally, he appreciates that Achilles' violation of the norms of gender is excusable to some extent when he is simply following Thetis' suggestions; and this is the way it was commonly explained.[33] The really shocking thing for Tertullian in Statius' depiction of the episode is that the hero continued the charade long after Thetis' departure, after the boy was left to his own devices, after he had grown to sexual maturity, and even after he has committed rape; Thetis cannot be blamed for this anymore. As Tertullian says, *feras, si in puero, matris sollicitudinem patiens; certe iam histriculus, certe iam virum alicui* [*scil. Deidamiae*] *clanculo functus adhuc sustinet stolam fundere*.... This is a vitally important point, for this is where Statius parts company from Ovid.

In the *Ars Amatoria*, Achilles on Scyros is an *exemplum* of the inevitability of the normative mapping of gender on sex; this Ovid, the *praeceptor amoris*, is an essentialist, even if the narrator of the *Metamorphoses* is not. There is a male role and a female role, and even if you dress Achilles up in skirts, he is still Achilles, he is aggressive, and his masculinity will come out. The rape of Deidamia puts things back as they should be, as they must be. Statius follows Ovid up to this point, but no further. Even after the rape, after the birth of his son, after the arrival of the Greeks, Achilles remains the girl he was. His attempt at asserting his manhood fails to take effect, which comes, as Tertullian testifies, as quite a disconcerting surprise. It might be argued that, if he wanted to combine the Ovidian rape of Deidamia with the discovery of Achilles by Ulysses familiar from art, Statius was merely obliged to keep Achilles in skirts until Ulysses' arrival. There is some truth to this, but it will not do to explain the structure of the *Achilleid* as entirely due to external constraints. Statius could well have written a poem in which Lycomedes becomes a party to the deception, or in which he is the only one who does not realize his foster-daughter is a boy. Instead, Statius keeps Achilles' masculinity a secret from everyone except Deidamia and her nurse

[33] Eg. Ovid, *Ars Am.* 689f: *turpe, nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset, Achilles / veste virum longa dissimulatus erat.* See also above, p 170.

(*unam ... sociam*, 669f). It would have been simpler if the first time Ulysses laid eyes on Achilles were the moment of springing the trap, but the poet goes out of his way to put the cross-dressed Achilles on public display prior to that.[34]

So Statius' decision to represent Achilles as a female, in public settings, *after* his rape of Deidamia was remarkable. It was recognized as a very significant choice by at least one perceptive reader in antiquity. The rape had been described previously by Ovid, for whom the event was a decisive break with Achilles' womanly ways. Given all these data, the most plausible conclusion is that Statius means to contradict one aspect of Ovid's account. For Ovid, the rapist is the quintessentially male erotic role, once the rhetoric has been stripped away. Statius, however, implies that, however essential sexual violence may be to masculinity, it *on its own* is not enough. To become a man again, Achilles requires something more. In the *Ars Amatoria*, the act of rape clears the way for Achilles the Homeric hero; in the *Achilleid* there is still an obstacle or two in his way. Here is Richlin on the voice of Ovid as *praeceptor* in the *Ars Amatoria*:

> His point is that *pati*—'to suffer', 'to be passive', 'to be penetrated sexually'—is pleasing to women, and this is the mark of the woman, as *vis*, 'force', is the mark of the man.... When we want to know the gender of the adolescent hero dressed in women's clothing, the signifier of his maleness is his ability to commit rape. (1992: 169)

For Statius as for Ovid, rape is the natural and proper course of action for Achilles; Deidamia wants to be raped; the outcome of the rape is happy for the couple; and rape is a problem in male self-fashioning, not female victimization. Nevertheless, there is one important difference in the *Achilleid*; there, even after showing himself as a man to Deidamia, Achilles still lacks something. His wilful and deliberate assertion of his manhood (*teque marem—pudet heu!—nec amore probabis?* 1.639) fails, somehow, to take hold. Rape, that Ovidian signifier of maleness, has surprisingly limited repercussions in this world.

Can we identify a reason why Achilles' attempt to shake off his femininity fails so unexpectedly? The missing element might be discovered in the act of violence itself: *vi potitur votis et toto pectore veros / admovet amplexus* (1.642f). These are *veros ... amplexus* with respect to the sisterly play that preceded this (cf. 1.571f), but the other point of comparison is Peleus, whose *amplexus*

[34] It is this helplessness and the continuing humiliation of Achilles, even after the boy has declared to us that he does not want to be a girl anymore, that argues against naive readings of the *Achilleid* as a simple heroic progress narrative, eg. Aricò (1996: 196): *verrà progressivamente maturando la sua crescita, rivendicando a se stesso la gestione del proprio destino....* Achilles does progress from *puer* to hero, but his path there is far from direct.

(Ov. *Met.* 11.228) of Thetis failed at first, but ultimately succeeded: *potitur votis ingentique inplet Achille* (*Met.* 11.265). Masculinity proves as slippery for Achilles as Thetis had for his father. Statius describes the act of rape by means of an allusion to a line in the *Metamorphoses* just as he is in the process of turning Ovid's version of that event in the *Ars Amatoria* on its head. This is the pointer to what is missing in Achilles' attempt to prove himself a man. His attempt to change his circumstances becomes an emulation of his father's rape of his mother; and this is the first moment in the poem that Achilles has done anything to emulate his *real* father, Peleus. It is very nearly in fact the first time the presence of Peleus is felt, even obliquely, in the *Achilleid*. The question of Peleus' absence is an important one, and in the next section we will try to draw some conclusions about the poem as a whole by means of a consideration of this strange omission.

6.2.2 In Search of Peleus

The very first lines of the *Achilleid* pose a conundrum of paternity:

> Magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti
> progeniem et patrio vetitam succedere caelo,
> diva, refer. (1.1–3)

While examining the proem, we noted in passing that Peleus is curiously absent here (see above, p 51). The Homeric-style patronymic and epithet is present in *magnanimum Aeaciden*, and by contrast there is a sophisticated allusion to a récherché myth about the unfulfilled possibility that Jupiter might have fathered the hero. These two ways of designating Achilles, as the grandson of Aeacus and as the potential son of Jupiter, put into relief the absence of Peleus, who is of course present in the first line of the *Iliad* in the patronymic Πηληϊάδεω. This might seem a casual omission if it did not prefigure the almost total absence of Peleus from the poem. As we saw (above, Section 3.1.2), earlier accounts in literature and the visual arts of the early childhood of Achilles either, like Homer, pictured him as part of a more or less nuclear family of Peleus, Thetis and Achilles, or, like Apollonius, saw Peleus as a single father, abandoned by his mermaid wife; left to raise the child himself, he fosters him with Chiron. In Roman art after Statius, on the other hand, Thetis dominates the young life of Achilles (see above, p 116). The most economical explanation for this shift is the influence of the *Achilleid* itself. The Nereid is extraordinarily active in our version of events; Statius even makes Thetis responsible, contrary to logic,

for Achilles' presence with Chiron (cf. 1.650–2). Effectively, Statius extends to Achilles' childhood the interest that the Homeric Thetis takes in her son in the *Iliad*. Compare Apollonius' Thetis, who wants nothing to do with her family and only assists Peleus at Hera's insistence. The absence of Peleus from Achilles' childhood is unprecedented in Homer, Apollonius and the visual arts before Statius.

The most vivid illustration of the missing part in Achilles' life comes from the mouth of the hero himself. When he introduces himself to Deidamia, he gives an account of his illustrious genealogy:

> Ille ego—quid trepidas?—genitum quem caerula mater
> paene Iovi silvis nivibusque inmisit alendum
> Thessalicis. nec ego hos cultus aut foeda subissem
> tegmina, ni primo te visa in litore: cessi
> te propter, tibi pensa manu, tibi mollia gesto
> tympana. quid defles magno nurus addita ponto?
> quid gemis ingentes caelo paritura nepotes?
> 'Sed pater— ...' (1.650–7)

Achilles mentions his mother Thetis, Jupiter as his almost-father, his foster-father Chiron, his maternal great-grandfather Oceanus, and finally Jupiter as his paternal great-grandfather.[35] We discussed this passage earlier in relation to Homeric self-introductions, and saw how odd it was by the standards of heroic epic that Achilles omits to mention Peleus (above, Section 3.2.2). He alludes to Jupiter as his father's grandfather, but that is as close as he comes. So when Deidamia interrupts with the objection in aposiopesis, *sed pater!*, there are two things she might mean.[36] What Achilles takes her to mean, and what all commentators have taken her as meaning is that her own father Lycomedes will

[35] This is Rosati's interpretation of the lines, which is surely correct. *Magno nurus addita ponto* has often been taken to refer to Thetis once again, but that would be pointlessly repetitive; Achilles has moved on to enumerate his more distant and even more awesome and elemental ancestors. L-S give parallels from Justinian's *Digest* of *nurus* used to mean the wife of a grandson or great-grandson, in which case Achilles means Nereus, or more likely Oceanus, by *magno ... ponto*. Dilke claims that Mozley is wrong to take *caelo paritura nepotes* as a reference to Peleus' descent from Jupiter, but his note (ad 656) does not make sense. The reference could not be 'still to Thetis', since she was not related to Jupiter, and, since Jupiter did not in fact mate with Thetis, it could not refer to that possibility, either. For Senecan influence on these lines, see Fantham (1979: 458).

[36] Dilke, following Jannaccone's suggestion, says that this is an 'aposiopesis spoken by Achilles as if it were an objection by Deidamia'. This is a needlessly complex solution to a non-existent problem. There is no reason why this should not be a momentary objection spoken by Deidamia herself, and that is how Rosati takes it. It is hard to see how one could possibly know that this was *not* an objection spoken by Deidamia, especially in an oral performance of the poem. See above, p 180, n 50.

be furious with her. What if, however, Achilles has misunderstood her in formulating his reply? The speech she interrupts is an account by Achilles of his own family tree, and so the interjection *sed pater?* might well be a query with regard to that. Perhaps Deidamia finds Achilles' bizzare and periphrastic self-designation confusing and she simply wants to know who he is. She asks for the most important identifying fact, which Achilles has omitted: who is your father? Achilles, of course, understands her differently and goes on to reassure the girl about *her* father. The audience, however, who must be wondering by now what has happened to Peleus, still awaits reassurance.

All we know about Peleus from the *Achilleid* is the following. Neptune rebukes Thetis for complaining about her marriage to a mortal (*Pelea ... thalamosque minores*, 90). The people of Thessaly express their regret at not contributing to the war effort, because Peleus is too old and Achilles is not yet old enough (1.438–40). Old enough or not, the Greeks at Aulis want Achilles, and *fama* tells them that he is not in Chiron's cave, nor in the house of his father, Peleus (*patria ... Peleos aula*, 1.507). Both the narrator of the *Achilleid* and Achilles himself omit to mention Peleus when giving an account of the hero's descent. Is Peleus even mentioned as Achilles' father before his transformation into a warrior? In passing, yes. When Thetis tries to get Achilles to put on a girl's clothing, the boy resists, thinking of his father (*genitor*, 1.275) and Chiron. It is Chiron who is the main concern, however, and Thetis assures her son that the Centaur will never know (*nesciet hoc Chiron*, 274). When Thetis pictures Achilles growing up in Chiron's cave, she thinks of him measuring himself against his father's spear (*patria ... hasta*, 1.41). The great spear did belong to Peleus, but it was given to him by Chiron, and so in a sense the adjective *patria* is doubly appropriate, for it had belonged both to his father and his foster-father. Chiron likewise refers to the *patria omina* (1.147) that he feels, as a father, with respect to Achilles.[37]

When Achilles considers the shame he has brought upon himself on Scyros, he does not think of Peleus, but of Chiron, imagining him as a bereaved parent: *orbatus plangit mea funera Chiron?* (1.631). In even more direct language, Achilles describes his upbringing on Pelion by *ille pater*, Chiron (2.102). Achilles was with Chiron from before he could walk (*reptantibus annis*, 2.96), and he mentions no interruption of his stay there until Thetis comes to collect him, so in Statius' version Achilles has never lived with Peleus. This contradicts the

[37] Thus Rosati, correcting Dilke's improbable notion that prophecy was a gift bestowed on Chiron by *his* father, Saturn. Dilke's discomfort with the natural sense of the word *patria* is a sign of how surprising it is that Chiron calls himself Achilles' father.

Iliad, where Achilles' early years at Phthia are mentioned a number of times (see above, Section 3.1.2). Even Lycomedes is called by Achilles *care pater* (1.892). There is an important difference, however, when Achilles introduces himself—this time as a man—after discarding his disguise:

> Me tibi, care pater—dubium dimitte pavorem—,
> me dedit alma Thetis: te pridem tanta manebat
> gloria; quaesitum Danais tu mittis Achillem,
> gratior et magno, si fas dixisse, parente
> et dulci Chirone mihi. sed corda parumper
> huc adverte libens atque has bonus accipe voces:
> Peleus te nato socerum et Thetis hospita iungunt
> adlegantque suos utroque a sanguine divos. (1.892–9)

This speech serves much the same purpose as his introduction to Deidamia, but this time Peleus takes his rightful place in Achilles' self-introduction. What has changed since then? When Achilles explained himself to Deidamia he was in the course of a failed attempt to assert his masculinity on his own, emulating his father's act of rape, without, however, acknowledging Peleus as his father, whereas at this point he claims his true patrimony and successfully reveals himself as a man.

It seems plausible to connect this new-found recognition of Peleus with the arrival of Ulysses and the discovery of Achilles. When Ulysses delivers his recruitment speech to Lycomedes' household, designed to provoke Achilles into revealing himself, he says: *tradunt arma patres, rapit inrevocata iuventus* (1.791). The upcoming war is an opportunity for sons to take over from their fathers and to succeed them in valor. Then, when Ulysses is just about to spring his trap, he whispers a few words in Achilles' ear:

> 'Quid haeres?
> scimus' ait, 'tu semiferi Chironis alumnus,
> tu caeli pelagique nepos, te Dorica classis,
> te tua suspensis exspectat Graecia signis,
> ipsaque iam dubiis nutant tibi Pergama muris.
> heia, abrumpe moras! sine perfida palleat Ide,
> et iuvet haec audire patrem, pudeatque dolosam
> sic pro te timuisse Thetin'. (1.867–74)

The trumpeter blows on his instrument and Achilles discards his disguise. This speech was surely not part of the standard version; the whole point of the trum-

pet blast is to fool the disguised Achilles into thinking that an attack is imminent, so that he will take hold of the weapons and betray himself.[38] Statius makes Achilles' transformation as much a product of Ulysses' rhetoric as his clever trick.[39] Indeed, his recruiting speech the previous night very nearly did the job on its own, except that Deidamia intervened and took Achilles away. Ulysses addresses the hero in a manner we have heard before: Chiron's fosterling, descendant of sky and sea. The difference is Peleus: *iuvet haec audire patrem.* For the first time in the poem, Achilles is addressed as the son of Peleus, and just after these words, he begins his transformation into a man; this time the transformation will be successful.

When Achilles goes on to say to Lycomedes that he is as dear to him, *si fas dixisse* (1.895), as his great father or sweet Chiron, the language is telling. The epithet *dulcis* reminds us of Achilles falling asleep on the Centaur's breast (1.195f), and however much respect Achilles now expresses for Peleus, it is with Chiron that he was raised. Now Achilles says that Lycomedes is even more dear to him (*gratior*) than they, which is flattery in part, but this sentiment also resonates with something Statius said in the *Silvae*:

> natos genuisse necesse est,
> elegisse iuvat. tenero sic blandus Achilli
> semifer Haemonium vincebat Pelea Chiron.
> nec senior Peleus natum comitatus in arma
> Troica, sed claro Phoenix haerebat alumno. (*Silv.* 2.1.87–91)

Peleus is an *exemplum* of a father who was displaced in his son's heart by other parental figures, and this passage affords us insight into his absence from the *Achilleid.* The position of 'father' in Achilles' life is under continual negotiation; the role is filled by Chiron, usurped by Thetis, and then filled by the unheroic Lycomedes. Despite Achilles' fondness for them, none of these ersatz fathers is an adequate substitute for Peleus. This was a very personal topic for Statius, who was himself childless, but who had adopted an infant slave as his own son.[40] When he died, the poet expressed his grief for his adopted son in emphatically proprietary terms:

> meus ille, meus. tellure cadentem

[38] Thus Ov. *Met.* 13.162–70; cf. Gantz (1993: 581).

[39] This may be a reflection of Euripides' handling of the scene in his *Scyrians*: see Körte (1934: 9) and cf. F incert. 880 Nauck and F adesp. 9 Nauck (=F 683a Nauck²).

[40] In a forthcoming article in *Hermathena*, Elaine Fantham discusses the relationship between Chiron in the *Achilleid* and the various foster parents in the *Silvae*, including Statius himself.

aspexi atque unctum genitali carmine fovi,
poscentemque novas tremulis ululatibus auras
inserui vitae. quid plus tribuere parentes? (*Silv.* 5.5.69–72)

Compare Calchas, possessed by Apollo and equally possessive of Achilles: *meus iste, meus* (1.528). Calchas disputes Thetis' right, as a mother, to have Achilles: *quid aufers? ... ei mihi raptus abit!* (528–35). The hero has a father who is absent, a mother who wants to turn him into a girl, a foster-father whom he loves, but who is somewhat less than human, fellow Greeks who claim his destiny as part of theirs, and a secret family at Scyros. This confusion and the consequent absence of a proper father figure is a precipitating circumstance of Achilles' cross-dressing.

When Thetis convinces Achilles to go along with her plan, she usurps, as we have seen (above, Section 4.2.3), the role of the Roman father and presents her son to the world in her own image. Perhaps the problem Achilles has when he tries to prove himself a man with his rape of Deidamia is that the transformation wrought by his mother cannot be undone by the boy himself, but can only happen with the aid of his father, or a substitute like Ulysses. It is certainly not a coincidence, it seems to me, that Peleus begins to play a role in the poem only after Achilles has become a man:

Mittitur Haemoniam, magnis qui Pelea factis
impleat et classem comitesque in proelia poscat. (1.921f)

Presumably among these *comites* would figure Phoenix, another surrogate father. Is it plausible to ascribe Achilles' waywardness and transvestism to lack of proper supervision by a normal, human father? Certainly this is what allows Thetis free rein with the boy. To claim that Achilles lacks a proper father-figure, who would provide him with a role model, might sound like a modern concept applied anachronistically to Statius' poem, but there is in fact a precedent in ancient epic for a similar situation.

Near the beginning of this thesis, we noted that the title of the *Achilleid*, as a second epic, made it seem that Statius was challenging Homer with his own version of something like the *Odyssey* (see above, p 23). In a general sense this holds true, for the portion of the epic that we have is a story of delays and diversions. Yet we have not had much cause to look at the *Odyssey* as a model in the course of studying the details of the *Achilleid*. There is one aspect of the plot of Homer's second epic that might bear consideration, however. The Achilles described by Statius is a young man who has not yet gone to war. He is far older

than Opheltes, but younger than Parthenopaeus, for example. He is an ephebe, but unlike a figure such as Hylas, he is destined to be a warrior. It is hard to think of parallels in ancient epic, Greek or Latin, for a boy at such an awkward and transitional age, with one major exception: Telemachus. Fatherless, with only his mother to guide him, struggling to find a sense of himself as a man, Telemachus has much in common with Achilles, and it is worth considering whether Statius might have been influenced by Homer's portrayal.

Carolyn Higbie, in a recent study of Homeric patronymics, has claimed that, 'In the *Odyssey*, Telemakhos learns who he is, that is, in a Homeric sense, whose son he is, and he learns it in a number of ways' (1995: 148). She documents Telemachus' reluctance to identify himself as his father's son. At one point he expresses doubt about his paternity:

> τοιγὰρ ἐγώ τοι, ξεῖνε, μάλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορεύσω.
> μήτηρ μέν τ' ἐμέ φησι τοῦ ἔμμεναι, αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε
> οὐκ οἶδ'· οὐ γάρ πώ τις ἐὸν γόνον αὐτὸς ἀνέγνω. (*Od.* 1.214–6)

This sort of evasion is unusual in the Homeric poems, because heroes identify themselves by means of their lineage: 'when a warrior goes into battle or meets a stranger, whether in his own home or elsewhere, it is important that he identify himself with his name and that of his father or, very rarely, that of his grandfather'.[41] Statius' Achilles shows a similar reluctance to do just that. Telemachus, like the young Achilles, lacks a sense of his own destiny and is easily directed by others. He finally comes into his own, of course, when Ulysses arrives on Ithaca. There is a recognition scene, and father and son go into battle together. In the *Achilleid* it is Achilles who is in disguise, not Ulysses, and the Ithacan is not his father, but at least he belongs to the same masculine and heroic world as Peleus. And it is he who utters in Achilles' ear the words which, as much as the trumpet blast, cause him to reveal his Homeric self: *iuvet haec audire patrem* (1.873). Only then does Achilles identify himself to Lycomedes, for the first time in the poem, as the son of Peleus and only then does he successfully prove himself a man.

6.3 Conclusion

When he set out to represent Achilles among the women of Scyros, Statius gave some thought to the circumstances and the deeper reasons that might have

[41] Higbie (1995: 148).

permitted such a situation to arise. A young man dominated by his mother, with no proper supervision by his father, such a young man, like Telemachus, might be imposed upon. So Statius proceeded to revise both the Homeric and the Apollonian models of Achilles' childhood, making Thetis the active party and Peleus an absentee father, like Ulysses in the *Odyssey*, a total reversal of the situation described by Apollonius. It was already part of the traditional story that Achilles had only submitted to the indignity of girlish clothing in order to please his mother. What Statius added was to depict Thetis as taking the place of a father, providing her 'daughter' a parodic inversion of male education. Statius took a bare idea, that Achilles stayed on Scyros to please his mother, and gave it dramatic life. Statius stresses the harshness of the preparation Chiron gave Achilles, which was also traditional, but by making Pelion the only world that Achilles ever knew the poet effects another subtle but no less important change in the myth. No longer is Achilles' home in the royal hall of Phthia, whence he spends a temporary sojourn with Chiron; Pelion is the only home he has ever known. This change permits Statius to depict the hero as completely prepared for a life of war, and yet utterly unprepared to deal with human society. So when Thetis suggests that her son dress as a girl in order to gain access to Deidamia, the boy does not really know any better. Never having mixed in human society as a boy, it makes little difference to him that he joins it as a girl. In this way, Statius lends Achilles' acquiescence to the plan dramatic plausibility. Like the giant barbarian slave who spoke perfect Attic Greek and whom Herodes Atticus kept as an amusement (see above, p 150, n 92), Statius' Achilles is a pure child of raw nature who also possesses, in some ways, perfect culture. Yet he does lack one important thing, and that is a sense of himself as a Homeric hero, which is something that can only be had via one's father. A lesson that Statius took from Homer is the same one that Joyce took in his *Ulysses*: the development of a boy into a man can only happen with the help of the right kind of a father-figure, who need not necessarily be the boy's biological father.

At two points in the *Achilleid* does Achilles assert his own will. He declares his intention to prove himself a man when he rapes Deidamia, and he responds to Ulysses' tales of war and glory, eventually seizing the weapons that make him a warrior. Both of these are attempts to put his girlishness behind him and to open up his Homeric destiny, but only one of them succeeds. We analyzed the circumstances of Achilles' failure to prove himself a man through rape and we concluded that Statius meant this as a response to Ovid. For Ovid, the rape of Achilles by Deidamia is a demonstration of the naturalness of normative gen-

der assignments. For Statius, sexual violence may be a necessary condition of masculinity, but it is not sufficient on its own. Achilles, placed in a completely feminine milieu with *imbellis* Lycomedes and his daughters, is incapable of figuring out on his own how to become a man. It is only when the arrival of a Greek warship changes the atmosphere on Scyros and injects a male element into Achilles' world that his fierce nature has something to respond to. For Statius as for any writer in antiquity, biology is destiny, but that destiny may be postponed, for it needs a suitable environment to develop. In words that would have been alien to Statius but may be descriptive nonetheless of one aspect of his project, gender is not only natural and inevitable (as the Ovidian *praeceptor* teaches), but it is also, to an extent, socially constructed.

The masculine destiny to which Achilles is called at the end of the completed portion of the *Achilleid* is figured as literary tradition. It is not just any glorious mythical future, but specifically the plot of the *Iliad* that beckons. Chiron recognizes this when he makes a prediction to Thetis:

> non addo metum, sed vera fatebor:
> nescio quid magnum—nec me patria omina fallunt—
> vis festina parat tenuesque supervenit annos. (1.146–8)

What Chiron reads from omens and prophecy is what we know from Homer. The phrase *nescio quid magnum* is a reference to Propertius' famous characterization of the *Aeneid*: *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade* (2.34.66). Statius says *magnum*, not *maius*, because it is not something greater, it *is* the *Iliad* that is in preparation. As Barchiesi (1993: 344f) and Hinds (1993: 41–3) have shown, another mythological 'prequel' that alludes to this Propertian line is *Heroides* 12, the letter from Medea to Jason. In the dramatic frame of her letter, Medea is just about to embark upon the actions that constitute the plot of Euripides', and presumably Ovid's, tragedy. So when she says *nescio quid certe mens mea maius agit*, she refers to the higher genre of the 'upcoming' Euripidean tragedy; and perhaps Ovid's too. The same ambiguity holds for Statius; does Chiron mean only the events of the *Iliad*? Propertius was referring to the production of a new epic, so maybe the Centaur is too. If we read Chiron's prophetic remarks as referring not only to Homer, but also the future unfinished plot of the *Achilleid*, then it amounts to a statement of poetic intent. Statius is engaged in writing something new and, especially at this stage of its composition, *nescio quid* is an apt characterization of the *Achilleid*. It is not going to be *maius ... Iliade* perhaps, but *nescio quid magnum* nonetheless. If this is true, it fits well with the sort of bold yet modest claim Statius makes at the end of the *Thebaid*: an

epic that was not perhaps better than Vergil's, but every bit in the same class: not *maius Iliade* but *magnum* nonetheless.

The kind of epic that Statius was embarked upon has been variously characterized in recent years, especially as Ovidian (eg. Hinds, 1998), and as Hellenistic (eg. Barchiesi, 1996), and these are important points to make, for we should realize that Statius must have seen himself as an 'epic successor' not only to Vergil, but also to Ovid, Apollonius and Homer. It would be wrong, however, to try to reduce such a deliberately open-ended work to a simple poetic formula. In confronting Homer's portrait of Achilles, Statius employs, as we have seen, a broad range of poetic models, both Greek and Latin. Such bricolage was not, however, the only point of the work. The *Achilleid* was not just an exercise in writing erudite mythological poetry; despite being only one part of a work-in-progress, it does yield a coherent meaning. It is about sons, mothers, foster-fathers and biological fathers, men and animals, men and gods, sex as power, gender as a cultural construction, and gender as innate and essential. It is about a wild boy brought up in the disappointment of lost immortality; it is about his first experience of human culture and his encounter with the odd puzzles of sex and gender; and it is about the emergence, despite his confused family circumstances and lack of clear paternal guidance, of his innate virtue and destiny as an epic hero.

The question is inevitable: as Achilles leaves Scyros, what happens next? It was suggested above (p 102) that there was enough incident in the myth that Statius could easily have tarried for twelve books before even bringing his hero to Troy. Alternatively, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* provides a model for how the tragedy of the Trojan War could be dissolved in comedy. Ovid accomplished this, however, by setting the story in a wider frame, and it is not clear that Statius would have been able to do the same in an epic that restricted itself to the span of Achilles' life. Perhaps then his epic would have taken a somber turn; but this is not a question we can answer on the basis of the evidence we have, for the simple reason that the proem is too elliptical and ironic. Statius apparently did not want to foreclose potential solutions to his *Ergänzungspiel* at this stage, and in the first chapter it was suggested that this kind of uncertainty could actually have been an asset for a work-in-progress by a professional poet. So it would be more productive to consider the *Achilleid* as we have it against the background of the *Iliad* than to speculate naively about its unfinished portion. A better question is: how do the events of the *Achilleid* make us look differently at the Homeric Achilles? More specifically, does his time spent as a girl and the drastic

humiliations to which Statius subjects him leave a trace in our minds when we turn to Homer?

A debate over a parallel question has taken place in recent years in discussions of the transvestite plots of Shakespearean comedy, which might clarify the issues at stake here. For example, at the end of *As You Like It*, Orlando's mock courtship of Ganymede is redeemed as legitimate when the boy is revealed to have been Rosalind in disguise. Rosalind marries Orlando, life returns to normal, and normative gender roles are reestablished and reaffirmed. Greenblatt (1988: 90f) claims that the qualities of the male identity conjured up by Rosalind, 'will not ... endure: they are bound up with exile, disguise, and freedom from ordinary constraint, and they will vanish ... when the play is done. What begins as a physiological necessity is reimagined as an improvisational self-fashioning that longs for self-effacement and reabsorbtion in the community'. One could apply a similar judgment to the *Achilleid*; for, in our case, we do not have to imagine what happens after leaving the forest of Arden, because we know from Homer that Achilles leaves behind girlish things when he leaves Scyros and joins the community of warriors. Yet even in Homer Achilles is a unique figure who interprets the heroic code according to his own lights. Garber (1992: 75–7) contests Greenblatt's interpretation of Rosalind's reabsorbtion, pointing to the epilogue of the play. This speech is delivered in the character of Rosalind, but in its course the boy actor acknowledges his true sex ('If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me ...'), and teases the audience with the kind of transvestite humor and homosexual innuendo that was a part of Rosalind's masquerade in the play as Ganymede. Garber suggests that, while Rosalind takes up her proper wifely role as the play ends, nevertheless a 'supplement' remains that does not vanish when the curtain comes down, namely the erotic charge that Ganymede has brought to the play. If we read the *Achilleid* in the light of its own epilogue, which is the *Iliad*, do our perceptions of the hero in either text change? Achilles' stay on Scyros may be read as confirming the inevitability of gender assignment and the triumph of innate male virtue, and therefore as an amusing but unproblematic prelude to Homer. It might just as easily be read, by a small shift in emphasis, as a problematization of gender, which locates a large part of its formation in convention and circumstance rather than in nature. On this reading, it is an invitation to deconstruct the Iliadic hero by locating certain Homeric traits, such as his pride, his brutality, his excellence as a warrior, his sensitivity to humiliation, and his disdain for certain conventional limits on human behavior, in the details of his biography as well as in his inborn essence.

Debate about the *Achilleid* has usually been cast in terms of the hypothetical future progress of the poem: would it have been a continuing romantic comedy or a recapitulation of the tragedy of the *Iliad*? What such debates may really be about, however, is the proper function of literature. Does it confirm what we already know about myth and life or does it provoke questions about them?

This thesis began by asserting the claims of the *Achilleid* to consideration as a coherent poetic document. The guiding idea has been to subject the completed portion of the epic to a close reading in order to see if it can be treated as something more than a fragment that was lying on the poet's desk at his death, an accidentally surviving rough draft. I hope to have demonstrated that certain individual episodes repay very close scrutiny and, what is more, that the shape of the plot in the 1127 lines that we have was determined not by accident but by design. Pelion and Scyros function as opposite poles, too little culture and too much, and our poem is a study in how the pre-Iliadic Achilles negotiates a path between them, ending just at the point when the narrative of Achilles' pre-warrior existence is complete. This part of the epic, at least, is a comedy, not only on account of its obvious humor, which I hope this thesis has not completely obscured, but because Achilles does succeed in becoming the man and hero that he must. As a prospectus of his current project, as a testament of the poet's extraordinary range, and as a demonstration of his continuing powers, the *Achilleid*, unfinished though it is, can only be judged a success.

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