

## ***Haud Ignota Loquor: Palamedes, Sinon, and the Alexandrian Footnote in Aeneid 2***

In this paper I argue that Virgil's inclusion of the story of Palamedes in Sinon's speech to the Trojans in the second book of the *Aeneid* marks the poet's deliberate subversion of material from the Epic Cycle through an ironic use of the phenomenon of the "Alexandrian footnote". The *Aeneid*'s relationship to material from the Cycle is complicated by the loss not only of the epics themselves but also of the secondary poetic products deriving from them and by our consequent reliance on later scholiasts and mythographers (see e.g., Kopff 1981). As a result, even where it is possible to identify an element in the *Aeneid* as belonging to the Cycle, it is often difficult to assess whether Virgil is "using" the Cyclic version or a later treatment.

One place where Virgil's debt to the Cycle is readily acknowledged is Book Two of the *Aeneid*, where he works with material from both the *Iliou Persis* of Arctinus and Lesches' *Little Iliad* (see Kopff 1981: 928–930; Heinze 1993: 5–6). Into this material he inserts the story of Palamedes' death as orchestrated by Ulysses, a story that derives rather from the *Cypria*. The key element in Virgil's treatment of Palamedes' death (*Aen.* 2.81–93), and the one which marks it off from much of the rest of the Cyclic material in the book, is who tells it. Palamedes' name is not uttered by Virgil *qua* narrator; it is not even uttered by Aeneas. It is instead put directly into the mouth of Sinon, and Sinon is a liar, though, of course, with deep irony he claims otherwise: *nec, si miserum Fortuna Sinonem / finxit, uanum etiam mendacemque improba finget* (*Aen.* 2.79–80). More than that, as Aeneas' weighty injunction to his listeners indicates, Sinon is the archetypal Greek liar: *accipe nunc Danaum insidias et crimine ab uno / disce omnis* (*Aen.* 2.65–66).

Sinon's status as liar has important implications for the interpretation of his parenthetical comment *haud ignota loquor* (*Aen.* 2.91). While the phrase may refer specifically to Ulysses'

wiliness (*pellacis Ulixis*, *Aen.* 2.90), I follow Austin and Horsfall who connect it more generally to the story of the *invidia ... Ulixis* (*Aen.* 2.90) and its role in Palamedes' downfall (Austin 1964: *ad* 91; Horsfall 2008: *ad* 91). Although it is far from certain that Sinon's audience (i.e., the Trojans) would have known the story of Ulysses' *invidia* towards Palamedes, the story would certainly be familiar to the ultimate audience, Virgil's reader. In this way, *haud ignota loquor* is surely loaded in the manner of an "Alexandrian footnote", designed to draw attention to the allusive content of the utterance (see Hinds 1998: 1–5). The problem is that the details of Sinon's account do not map onto any extant version of Palamedes' story; they are, in fact, unfamiliar. I suggest that the unfamiliarity of Sinon's story is precisely the point. Virgil's reader has already been alerted to the fact that Sinon's story may not be completely true. The poet then has Sinon not only tell a story whose characters the reader recognizes but the details of which are strange, but also assert the familiarity of those details. In doing so, Virgil ironically exploits the allusive function of the Alexandrian footnote to draw attention to unfamiliarity of the story, i.e., its lack of allusive content, and thereby reinforce the fact that Sinon is a liar.

This particular episode, then, demonstrates the subtlety of Virgil's art and his sophisticated exploitation of allusive techniques and characterization.

### Works Cited

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