The Primal Voyage and the Ocean of Epos: Two Aspects of Metapoetic Imagery in Catullus, Virgil and Horace[1]

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1 : Introduction

This paper looks at some key examples of the symbolic use of the sea and of sea-voyaging as images for epic poetry, for original poetic enterprise and for the progress of the plot within a poem.[2] Beginning from the emblematic use of one aspect of this symbolism in Hellenistic poetics, it traces the treatment in Catullus 64 of the journey of the Argo as the primal voyage of both human culture and Greco-Roman literature, suggests some further allusions to voyage-symbolism to add to those already known in Virgil's *Georgics*, and examines the analogy between the progress of the Trojans' voyage and of the epic plot in Virgil's *Aeneid*. It concludes by looking at two odes of Horace, one of which shows the limits of the epic-ocean symbol.

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[1] — An initial version of this paper was given in a seminar on 'The Sea' in Oxford in 2002; my thanks to Matthew Leigh for organising the seminar and to its participants for their comments, to Jacqueline Fabre-Serris for encouraging publication, and to the anonymous referee for *Dictynna* for some helpful comments.

[2] — On this field of metapoetic symbolism see in outline Lieberg 1969.

2 : Poetic Waters : A Key Hellenistic text

I begin with one of the most discussed texts of poetic symbolism in classical literature, Callimachus *Hymn* 2.105-113 :[3]

> ὁ Φθόνος Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπ’ οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν·
> ″οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ’ ὅσα πόντος ἀείδει.″
> τὸν Φθόνον ὡπόλλων ποδί τ’ ἤλασεν ὧδέ τ’ ἔειπεν·
> ″Ἀσσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ
> λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ’ ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἕλκει.
> Δηοῖ δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,
> ἀλλ’ ἥτις καθαρή τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει
> πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.″
> χαῖρε, ἄναξ· ὁ δὲ Μῶμος, ἵν’ ὁ Φθόνος, ἔνθα νέοιτο.

[Envy spoke in secret to the ears of Apollo : ‘I do not admire the bard who does not sing as much as the sea’. And Apollo drove at Envy with his foot and spoke as follows : ‘Great is the stream of the Assyrian river, but it drags along on its water many offscourings of the land and a great amount of refuse. But the bees carry to Demeter water that comes not from every source, but [from] the thin stream which is pure and unsullied and wells up from the holy spring, the highest and choice.’ Greetings, Lord : as for Blame, may he go where Envy is’.]

Scholars have debated the identity or general type of the bard who sings as much as the sea : the most plausible identification is Homer,[4] and though this has been questioned[5] it ties in with other evidence which presents Homer as the sea or Ocean, especially in literary-critical texts : Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Longinus and Quintilian all point this way, and it is clearly an established image by the Hellenistic period.[6] In what follows I will assume that metapoetic references to ‘sea’ (as in Callimachus’ πόντος) and ‘Ocean’ can refer to epic in general as well as to Homer in particular, and I will argue that the Latin poets of the first century BC exploit this symbolism in their own metapoetic passages.

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[3] — See the material gathered by Asper 1997, 120-25 and Cameron 1995, 403-7. On water-symbolism in Callimachus more generally see Wimmel 1960, 222-233, Kambylis 1965, 110-25, Asper 1997, 109-25.

[4] — Williams 1978, 85-9, 98-9.

[5] — Cameron 1995, 403-7.

[6] — See Morgan 1999, 32-40, 46-9, citing Dion.Hal.*Comp*. 24, Longinus 9.13, Quintilian 10.1.46, Williams 1978, 88.

2 : Catullus 64 and the Argo - The Primal Epic Voyage

There is no doubt that Catullus 64, commencing as it does in the mythical context of the supposed meeting of Peleus and Thetis on the voyage of the Argonauts, draws much on the narrative of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, though of course its key incident of the lovers' initial encounter is not the version found in Apollonius.[7] But its opening may look much further back in literary history and also refer to the renewal of this ancient tradition in the contemporary form of the epyllion (64.1-11):

Catullus 64.1-12 :

> *Peliaco* ***quondam*** *prognatae uertice pinus*
> ***dicuntur*** *liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas*
> *Phasidos ad fluctus et fines Aeetaeos,*
> *cum lecti iuuenes, Argiuae robora pubis,*
> *auratam optantes Colchis auertere pellem*
> *ausi sunt uada salsa cita decurrere puppi,*
> *caerula uerrentes abiegnis aequora palmis.*
> *diua quibus retinens in summis urbibus arces*
> *ipsa leui fecit uolitantem flamine currum,*
> *pinea coniungens inflexae texta carinae.*
> ***illa rudem cursu prima imbuit Amphitriten.***
> ***quae simul ac rostro ventosum proscidit aequor…***

[Pine-trees born from the peak of Pelion are said once to have swum through the clear waters of Neptune to the waves of the Phasis and the territory of Aeetes, when a choice group of young men, the flower of Greek youth, wishing to take the gilded fleece away from Colchis, dared to speed over the salt waters in a swift ship, sweeping the sea-blue levels with palms of fir-wood. For them the goddess who guards the citadels at the height of cities herself made a vehicle to fly under a light wind, joining together the pine framework of the curved keel. That vessel was the first to dip into a virgin sea in its course. As soon as it sliced through the windy sea-surface with its beak …]

This opening makes it clear that the voyage of the Argonauts is being presented (as often) as the origin of sailing itself, a version found elsewhere[8]. But it could also be argued that a larger point of literary history is being made, namely that the voyage of the Argonauts initiated not only human sailing but also the classical epic tradition. As scholars have often pointed out, the Argonaut saga is one of the few epic myths to which we have a back-reference in Homer at *Odyssey* 12.69-72 :

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[7] — On Catullus' debt to Apollonius see the excellent treatments by Thomas 1982/1999 and Clare 1996.

[8] — Cf. Bramble 1970, 5-6 and Jackson 1997.

> οἴη δὴ κείνή γε παρέπλω ποντοπόρος νηῦς
> ᾿ Αργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα, παρ᾿ Αἰήταο πλέουσα·
> καί νύ κε τὴν ἔνθ᾿ ὦκα βάλεν μεγάλας ποτὶ πέτρας,
> ἀλλ᾿ Ἥρη παρέπεμψεν, ἐπεὶ φίλος ἦεν Ἰήσων.

[The only sea-going ship that sailed past by that route was Argo known to all, sailing away from Aeetes; and even that would have swiftly struck against the mighty rocks, but Hera sent it on its way, since Jason was dear to her].

This passage is generally recognized as clear evidence for a pre-Odyssean poem on the Argo which forms a model for the adventures of Odysseus' ship.[9] My argument is that the clear indication of poetic tradition at the opening of Catullus' poem, where *quondam* and *dicitur* evidently point in the manner of the 'Alexandrian footnote' to previous literary sources,[10] extends back beyond the Hellenistic model Apollonius to this earliest known stage of Greek epic. The opening lines of Catullus 64 can thus claim to return to the pre-Homeric origins of the classical epic genre, via a learned allusion to the *Odyssey* very much in the Callimachean tradition. This makes further sense of 64.11-12 : Argo 'initiated' the sea in the first and morally dubious sea-voyage, but also initiated the poetic genre of epic as the subject of a pre-Homeric epic poem.

I would further suggest that in these lines the sea-voyage of the Argo is presented as co-extensive with its literary representation in epic : the epic is symbolized as the voyage. The metaphor of voyaging for poetry is well established before the Hellenistic period, and as we shall see is commonly employed by Virgil in the next poetic generation.[11] The detailed language of lines 10-11 supports such an interpretation, since several of the terms can be used symbolically of poetic activity as well as of sailing. *Cursu* in line 11, together with *decurrere* in line 6 and *currum* in line 9, recalls *currere* of the progress of poetry (cf. Horace *Sat.*1.10.1 *incomposito dixi pede currere versus / Lucili*, *Culex* 35 *mollia sed tenui pede currere carmina*, Martial 11.90.1 *carmina …molli quae limite currunt*). *Aequor* can allude to any flat surface, and here it might represent not only the metaphorical 'sea' of epic (we shall see *aequor* used frequently in this sense in Virgil, below) but even perhaps a flat surface for writing (cf. Boethius *Cons.*5.v.4.6-9 *ut quondam celeri stilo / mos est* ***aequore paginae****/quae nullas habeat notas/pressas figere litteras.*). Similarly the verb *proscidit* deploys a ploughing metaphor which can also be used of writing (cf. Martial 4.86.11 *[libelle] inversa pueris* ***arande*** *charta*, Phaedrus 3 prol.29 *librum* ***exarabo*** *… Aesopi stilo*), with the ship's *rostrum* or 'beak' serving the function of the *stilus* or pen, which like a ship's beak can leave a furrow (cf. Quintilian 1.1.27 (training the boy to write through tracing outlines) *non inutile erit eos [sc.ductus] tabellae quam optime insculpi,* ***ut per illos velut sulcos ducatur stilus***). Even the adjective *ventosum*, 'windy', may have some metapoetic content, and it is interesting that in its purely literal sense it is in some tension with *aequor*, which suggests a flat, calm sea : metaphorically, *ventosum* could allude to the tradition of storms which are so prominent in Greco-Roman epic since the *Odyssey* itself.[12]

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[9] — See conveniently the material gathered by Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989, 121 and more recently West 2005.

[10] — See Horsfall 1990

[11] — For the voyaging and poetry analogy in general cf. Cody 1976, 82-7, Fedeli 1985, 134-8, Steiner 1986, 71-5.

This intense gathering of metapoetic imagery, and its allusion to the original appearance of epic in the Greco-Roman literary tradition, is perhaps especially appropriate in Catullus 64, which embodies another initiatory moment in ancient literary history. The Catullan poem, I would argue, presents itself as another new beginning in the Latin epic tradition, matching that of the original pre-Homeric Argonaut epos in Greek, that of the epyllion. Though this is a modern term invented in the nineteenth century,[13] it is conveniently given to the short one-book epic hexameter narrative which emerges in Greek in the Hellenistic period and in Latin in the poetic generation of Catullus.[14] Though we cannot tell whether Catullus 64 was the first epyllion in Latin, it clearly exemplifies a new literary kind for Rome in the mid-first century BC. Just as archaic Greek epic can be said to begin with the Argo, so too can its neoteric successor the epyllion in Rome in the 50's BC.

3 : The Georgics :
The Didactic Voyage and an Epic Encounter

Virgil's didactic *Georgics* in the next poetic generation picks up both the metapoetic images seen in Catullus 64 – that of the poetic voyage and that of the ocean of Homeric epic.[15] The metaphor of the poetic voyage is naturally useful for the didactic poem, where the reader needs to be conducted through the body of material; the idea does not seem to be used explicitly in the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, the great didactic poem of the previous generation, or in extant Hellenistic poetry,[16] but was extensively used by Cicero in both speeches and philosophical treatises as well as in Pindar.[17] In the invocation to *Georgics* 1, the future astral god Caesar is called upon to support the poet's enterprise of agricultural instruction (1.40-2) :

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[12] — Cf. Friedrich 1956 and Byron, *Don Juan*, Canto 1 (1819), 200 :

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
  Divided in twelve books; each book containing
With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
  A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning …

[13] — See Most 1982.

[14] — See Perutelli 1979, Bartels 2004.

[15] — For an interesting study of the influence of Catullus 64 on the *Georgics* in other aspects see Crabbe 1977.

> ***da facilem cursum*** *atque* ***audacibus*** *adnue coeptis,*
> ***ignarosque viae*** *mecum miseratus agrestis*
> ***Ingredere*** *et votis iam nunc adsuesce vocari.*

[Grant an easy run and agree to my bold enterprise, and take pity with me on those rustics who do not know the way, rise and even now become accustomed to be called upon in prayers].

Commentators have sometimes been uncertain about the metaphorical field of *facilem cursum*, relating it either to charioteering (another key metaphor in the *Georgics* for the didactic poet's progress) or to sailing. Both readings are possible : I would prefer sailing, given e.g. Martial 10.104.2-3 *Et* ***cursu facili*** *tuisque ventis / Hispanae pete Tarraconis arces* : wayfarers are perhaps more likely to have a rough journey and get lost on the sea, and the astral deity Caesar will be especially important in guiding the way if navigation is in question. This last point is related to the precise sense of *ingredere,* also discussed by commentators, who usually suggest that it refers in general to entering on a new phase of activity; but the verb here has a technical astronomical sense of the 'rising' of a star (*TLL* 7.1.1570.81ff) : the star of Caesar (surely with some allusion to the Julian star)[18] will rise and show the way. A similar suggestion that the imperial patron can provide stellar guidance for the poetic ship is found in the preface to Ovid's *Fasti* (1.3-4): *excipe pacato, Caesar Germanice, vultu / hoc opus et timidae dirige navis iter*, where the fact that the addressee Germanicus himself is in all likelihood the author of an extant Latin version of Aratus' *Phaenomena* is surely relevant (the astral author becomes an astral inspiration).[19] One might even argue that *audacibus coeptis* (40) could pick up the metaphorical *audacia* of Catullus 64 as a new venture in Latin poetry (64.2 *ausi sunt*) : the *Georgics* does appear to be the first

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[16] — Though it has been suggested that the *DRN* charts an implicit voyage towards wisdom: see Gale 1994, 124.

[17] — Cf. Lieberg 1969 on the general history, and Steiner 1986, 73-5 on Pindar.

[18] — On the Julian star in Augustan literature see Ramsey and Licht 1997.

[19] — Note too that *vultus* can be used of heavenly bodies – e.g. Virgil *Georgics* 1.452.

Latin didactic poem on farming, even if its title recalls that of Nicander's largely lost *Georgika*.[20]

This idea of literary primacy seems to be reinforced by lines 50-2 :

> *ac prius* ***ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor,***
> *ventos et varium caeli praediscere morem*
> *cura sit ..*

[And before we cleave the unknown surface with iron, let it be our care to learn first about the winds and the changing habit of the heaven]

This passage is overtly about the literal act of ploughing, the first technical subject of the *Georgics*, but as in Catullus we find the idea of making furrows in a flat surface as a possible symbol for the act of writing (compare 1.50 *scindimus aequor* with 64.11 *proscidit aequor*), and the iron of *ferrum* could be the metal of the writing *stilus* (so *ferrum* at Ovid *Met.*9.422, Martial 14.21.1) as well as that of the ploughshare (cf. *Georgics* 1.147). As *ignotum* stresses, the georgic voyage and poem is like the Argonaut voyage and poem in daring and originality.

At *Georgics* 4.116-7 the lines declining the potential digression on horticulture stimulated by the Old Man of Corycus have a clear nautical colour, commonly observed by scholars :

> *extremo ni iam sub fine laborum*
> *Vela traham et terris festinem advertere proram…*

[Were I not drawing in my sails at the very end of my labours and hastening to turn my prow to the shore].

But scholars have not noted that the counterpart passage where the poet returns to his subject refers equally and in detail to the poetic voyage (4.147-8) :

> *verum haec ipse equidem* ***spatiis exclusus iniquis***
> ***praetereo,*** *atque aliis post me memoranda* ***relinquo.***

[But these topics I pass by, shut out by the unfairnesses of limited space, and leave behind to be related by others after me]

Though once again the language could refer to either charioteering or sailing, the two verbs of 4.148 together suggest a ship passing or leaving behind places as it goes on towards a different destination: cf. e.g. Ovid *Tr.*1.10.37-8 *arces/praetereat*, *Met.* 7.357 *Aeoliam Pitanen a laeva parte*

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[20] — For possible further connections with Nicander see Harrison 2004.

relinquit. Even *spatiis exclusus iniquis* might also refer to the dangers of a narrow space for a ship : we may compare *Aeneid* 5. 203-4, where the rash Segestus' boat is squeezed into waters which are dangerously close to the shore and runs aground :

> *interior* ***spatioque*** *subit Sergestus* ***iniquo,***
> *infelix saxis in procurrentibus haesit.*

[And Sergestus on the inside comes up in a dangerous space, and stuck fast on the projecting rocks].

Finally, as already suggested, the *Georgics* exploits the symbol of the ocean as epic and specifically as Homer. Llewelyn Morgan has convincingly argued that the emergence of the sea-god Proteus in *Georgics* 4 symbolises the turn in *Georgics* 4 to a much more Homeric style of writing which anticipates the texture of the *Aeneid*.[21] As in the potential digression of the Old Man of Corycus in the same book which we have just considered, Proteus' oceanic and therefore Homeric origins (he is of course a figure from the *Odyssey*) are marked at both his appearance in and his disappearance from the narrative.[22] A closer look at the language of these two passages supports this. First, Proteus' introduction at 4.387-9 :

> *est in Carpathio Neptuni gurgite vates*
> *caeruleus Proteus,* ***magnum*** *qui piscibus* ***aequor***
> *Et iuncto bipedum curru metitur equorum.*

[There lives in the Carpathian waters of Neptune Proteus, the sea-blue prophet, who measures the mighty ocean riding on fish and with a yoked chariot of two-footed horses]

Here the sea is specifically described as *magnum aequor*, showing not only the element but also the great size of epic (cf. Propertius 3.9.3 *vastum …aequor*, where epic symbolism is clearly operating).[23] Proteus and his divine chariot (a common epic prop) are being imported from Homer along with the verbal idea of 'measuring' the ocean.[24] Likewise, when Proteus vanishes the depth of the sea is stressed (4.528):

> *haec Proteus, et se iactu dedit* ***aequor in altum.***

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[21] — Closely documented by Knauer 1981 and Farrell 1991, 238-72, and Morgan 1999.
[22] — Well noted by Morgan 1999, 43.
[23] — See Wimmel 1960, 251 and Fedeli 1985, ad loc.
[24] — See Biotti 1994, 306.

[So spoke Proteus, and consigned himself with a leap to the depths of the ocean].

Proteus has returned to the deeper, more elevated Homeric epic environment from which he came to visit Virgil's didactic poem, again in language which echoes a Homeric line.[25] The symbol of the epic ocean is plainly present here : compare *Aeneid* 1.34 where the Trojans move into the poem's epic voyage, *in altum vela dabant laeti*.[26]

4 : The Aeneid : Epic Voyages[27]

The fact that the first 'Odyssean' half of the *Aeneid* (and a little of Book 7) centres on the narrative of the Trojans' voyage to Italy naturally allows some play between the literal voyage of the plot and the symbolic voyage of the progressing epic. This equivalence begins even before the commencement of the Trojans' voyage, when the transfigured Creusa appears in a vision to Aeneas during the sack of Troy to inform him of the journey to come (*Aeneid* 2.780-2) :

> *longa tibi exilia et vastum maris aequor arandum*
> *et terram Hesperiam venies, ubi Lydius arva*
> *inter opima virum leni fluit agmine Thybris.*

[Long exile is in store for you, and a vast surface of the sea to plough, and you will come to the land of Hesperia, where the Lydian Tiber flows with smooth stream amongst fields rich in men]

The 'vast sea' is the voyage of the Trojans but also the voyage of the *Aeneid* : in both cases we are only at the beginning, and *vastum* stresses both the length of the physical journey and the scale of the epic enterprise, as in the symbolic *vastum … aequor* at Propertius 3.9.3 (cited above). We might even suggest that *aequor arandum* alludes to the 'ploughing' of papyrus in writing as at *Georgics* 1.52 (see 3 above) : ten books of physical writing remain. Settlement in Italy will be the conclusion of both travel and literary work. Similarly emblematic is the moment at the beginning of *Aeneid* 3 where Aeneas narrates his final departure from Troy (*Aeneid* 3.10-11) :

> *Litora cum patriae lacrimans portusque relinquo.*
> *Et campos ubi Troia fuit. Feror exul in altum…*

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[25] — See Biotti 1994, 404.

[26] — See Nelis 2004, 101.

[27] — This section is a brief sketch of a vast subject. For some further material see Nelis 2004 and the forthcoming Lille thesis of S.Clément.

[When weeping I leave behind the shores of my homeland and its harbours, and the plains where Troy once was. I am borne as an exile on to the deep…]

Here Aeneas embarks on the part of the *Aeneid* that has relatively sparse models in previous epic,[28] unlike the account of the fall of Troy in Book 2 which drew on the *Iliou Persis* and its later tradition.[29] Thus in both literary and geographical terms, he is setting out from a known harbour into unknown waters : leaving behind the well-narrated plains of Troy familiar from the *Iliad*[30] (*campos ubi Troia fuit*) he moves into the 'deep' of his own epic of exile (cf. *aequor in altum* at *Georgics* 4.528, above).

Just as the analogy between voyage and poem is stressed at the voyage's beginning, so it is brought out at its end when Aeneas and his men finally reach Italy.

At *Aeneid* 7.5-7 Aeneas, having buried his old nurse Caieta on the Campanian coast, sails on to his journey's end at the Tiber :

> *At pius exsequiis Aeneas rite solutis*
> *Aggere composito tumuli, postquam alta quierunt*
> *Aequora, tendit iter velis portumque relinquit.*

[But dutiful Aeneas, when the funeral rites were duly concluded and when the tomb's mound had been piled up, and when the high seas grew quiet, set his way by the sails and left harbour]

Here in a scene which clearly picks up the beginning of Book 3 Aeneas again leaves harbour both literally and metaphorically, on the last stage of his voyage. There is a pointed contrast between waiting for calm weather here and the mighty storm with which Book 1 of the *Aeneid* began, one of a number of parallels between the opening of the *Aeneid*'s first half and the opening of its second,[31] suggesting perhaps that for the moment the divine opposition of Juno is absent;[32] but the reference to the quieting of the 'deep waters' also suggests the conclusion of the poem's first half before this initiation of its second half. The hero has completed one section of his epic mission by reaching Italy, and is now setting off again on its second half.[33]

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[28] — Some limited material is taken from the Cyclic Nostoi, but here the poet shapes his material with great freedom.

[29] — See Kopff 1981.

[30] — 10.11, 21.558, 23.464

[31] — Cf. e.g. Otis 1964, 320-1.

[32] — It will reappear of course with a vengeance at 7.286ff.

[33] — See Kyriakidis 1998, 77. This forms part of the function of this section of the poem as

Just as important as the objective of this metapoetical voyage of the poem are the roads not taken, the plot possibilities suggested but not in fact followed. Very soon after the passage just cited, the Trojans skirt around Circeii and its eponymous mistress Circe (*Aeneid* 7.10-24) :

proxima Circaeae raduntur litora terrae,
diues inaccessos ubi Solis filia lucos
adsiduo resonat cantu, tectisque superbis
urit odoratam nocturna in lumina cedrum
arguto tenuis percurrens pectine telas.
hinc exaudiri gemitus iraeque leonum
uincla recusantum et sera sub nocte rudentum,
saetigerique sues atque in praesepibus ursi
saeuire ac formae magnorum ululare luporum,
quos hominum ex facie dea saeua potentibus herbis
induerat Circe in uultus ac terga ferarum.
quae ne monstra pii paterentur talia Troes
delati in portus neu litora dira subirent,
Neptunus uentis impleuit uela secundis,
atque fugam dedit et praeter uada feruida uexit.

[Shaved very close are the shores of Circe's land, where the rich daughter of the Sun makes her inaccessible groves resound with continuous singing, and in her proud halls burns scented cedar-torches for lights at night, running through the slender warp-threads with her sharp-sounding shuttle. From here could be heard groans and the angry noises of lions refusing bonds, roaring late into the night, and the ragings of bristle-bearing boars and bears in their cages and the yowling forms of great wolves, whom the cruel goddess Circe with her potent herbs had turned from the shape of men, clothing them with the hides and features of wild beasts. To prevent the dutiful Trojans from having to endure such monstrosities, Neptune filled their sails with favourable winds, gave them speedy flight and carried them past the choppy shallows]

As has been recently noted, this is in effect a voyage round a disastrous episode of the *Odyssey* as well as skirting a potential dangerous promontory.[34] The Trojans are preserved from the danger of an encounter with the metamorphic magic powers of Circe, but they are also preserved from repeating a famous episode of the *Odyssey*; such Odyssean episodes could be safely re-run in the Odyssean first half of the poem (e.g. in the

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a 'proem in the middle' – see Conte 1992, 152-3.

[34] — See the full treatment by Kyriakidis 1998, 97-117. He further argues that Circe represents Callimachean poetics which are to be avoided in the more Homeric *Aeneid*, which fits *inaccessos … lucos*, but what about the clearly anti-Callimachean *adsiduo … cantu* ?

Achaemenides episode of 3.588-654 which reprises the encounter with the Cyclops), but in this second part of the poem (*Aeneid* 7-12) the Trojans must leave the voyaging of the *Odyssey* behind and turn to the land-battles of the *Iliad*, heading straight for Latium where the second Trojan War will commence.[35] This contrast with the *Odyssey* is underlined by the fact that it is the god Neptune who rescues the Trojans (just as he had stilled the storm at *Aeneid* 1.142-7), the same god who as Poseidon had so persecuted Odysseus and his men on the sea. On their new departure in the second half of the poem, Aeneas and his men must avoid the distraction of the first. The 'choppy waters' of this unedifying episode in the *Odyssey*'s particular version of epic are thus avoided by Aeneas' dutiful (*pii*) men, who are not the disobedient sailors of the Homeric context : human virtue and divine protection conspire to prevent a repetition of Homeric disaster.

5 : Horace's Odes : how far can you go ?

One of the opening odes in Horace's first book offers an interesting case where the limits of the 'epic as ocean' symbol can be debated. In *Odes* 1.3 Horace addresses his fellow-poet Virgil as he leaves on a trip to Greece (1-20) :

Sic te diua potens Cypri,
sic fratres Helenae, lucida sidera,
uentorumque regat pater
obstrictis aliis praeter Iapyga,
nauis, quae tibi creditum
debes Vergilium; finibus Atticis
reddas incolumem precor
et serues animae dimidium meae.
Illi robur et aes triplex
circa pectus erat, qui fragilem truci
commisit pelago ratem
primus, nec timuit praecipitem Africum
decertantem Aquilonibus
nec tristis Hyadas nec rabiem Noti,
quo non arbiter Hadriae
maior, tollere seu ponere uolt freta.
quem mortis timuit gradum,
qui siccis oculis monstra natantia,
qui vidit mare turbidum et
infamis scopulos Acroceraunia.

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[35] — Gransden 1984.

[So may the goddess who rules over Cyprus steer you, so may the brothers of Helen, those shining stars, and the father of the winds, shutting up all of them except Iapyx – you, ship, who owe the debt of Virgil entrusted to you: give him back safe, I pray, from Attic territory, and preserve the half of my soul. That man had oak and triple bronze about his heart, who first consigned a fragile ship to a fierce sea, and had no fear of the rushing south-wester battling with the north winds, or the grim Hyades or the madness of the south winds, the greatest chief of the Adriatic, whether he wants to raise or allay the waves. What level of death did he fear, who saw the floating monsters with dry eyes, who saw the sea in storm and the infamous rocks of Acroceraunia.]

The possible metapoetical implications of the voyage referred to in these lines have been a focus of dispute amongst scholars. Some declare that 'there is not a hint of Virgil's poetry';[36] others compile elaborate lists of parallels with the *Aeneid* and seek to show that the lines are 'an allusion, couched in Callimachean terms, to Vergil's poetic voyage of the *Aeneid*' and that 'Vergil's poetic ship, hitherto *tenuis*, is now launching into the higher stylistic realms of the *truci … pelago* (10-11) and *mare turbidum* (19) whose dangerous waters were conventionally braved only by grand epic ships'.[37] Both these positions seem too extreme. On the one hand, a reading of other Horatian odes to poets (e.g. 1.6 to Varius or 1.33 to Tibullus) suggests that allusion to the addressee's own literary work is inevitably an important strand in the poem;[38] on the other hand, the voyage of Virgil to Greece does not obviously suggest a voyage into Homeric epic, for which 'Attic territory' (*finibus … Atticis*) would be a curious symbol,[39] and 'fragile' is not the same thing as 'subtle'.[40] Nevertheless, it seems clear that the poem alludes to the epic venture of the *Aeneid*, and that the storm envisaged by Horace as a possible danger for Virgil reflects the poetic storm with which the *Aeneid* famously begins. The role of Aeolus and his winds (3-4 ~ *Aen.*1.52-86), the notion of vulnerable ships and fierce seas (10-12 ~ *Aen.*1.122-3), the storm-winds Africus, Aquilo and Notus (12-14 : *Aen.*1.85,86,102), the fear of death (17; cf. Aeneas, *Aen.*1.92-101), and the expression *mare turbidum* (19:

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[36] — Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, 44.

[37] — Cody 1976, 77 and 89; see similarly Kidd 1977.

[38] — See e.g. Harrison 1993 on 1.33. I leave aside here *Odes* 4.12, also addressed to 'Vergilius', and undoubtedly coloured with Vergilian allusion. For a recent useful discussion of the issue (favouring identity with the poet) see Johnson, 2004 158-66. This would be the only case of an indubitably dead addressee in the *Odes*; perhaps the Vergilian allusions could be appropriate if the addressee is a relative of the poet.

[39] — As pointed out with characteristic good sense by Syndikus 1990, 1.61 n.13.

[40] — The adjective *fragilis* has no literary connotations, but might suggest (cf. *TLL* 6.1.1228.10ff) the traditionally fragile health of Virgil : cf. *Vita Donati* 25-7

cf. *Aen.*1.83-4 *turbine perflant./ incubuere mari*) are all shared with the Virgilian passage. Here, I would suggest, Horace is teasing his poetic friend with allusions to his yet-unpublished *Aeneid*, which was no doubt available to fellow-members of Maecenas' circle in the mid-20s B.C.[41] There is no suggestion that Virgil is not capable of epic, or that Horace is denigrating that genre here : the traditional epic storm is deployed as a metapoetic symbol and literary in-joke which reinforces the mutual affection of the two poets.

By contrast, the last of all Horace's odes plainly presents the ocean as a literary symbol for the *Aeneid*. *Odes* 4.15[42] opens with a version of the intervention of Apollo from Callimachus' *Aetia* which uses for literary symbolism not the animal-imagery of the *Aetia* but the sea-imagery of the *Hymn to Apollo* (see 2 above), thus combining the two most famous Hellenistic poetic manifestos (4.15.1-4) :

> *Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui*
> *victas et urbis increpuit lyra,*
> *ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor*
>   *uela darem.*

[Apollo, as I intended to speak of battles and conquered cities, rebuked me with his lyre, telling me not to direct my small sails over the Etruscan sea]

The 'Etruscan sea', with *aequor* again representing the ocean of epic, surely suggests the *Aeneid* of Horace's friend Vergil, by now publicly available. More literally, the phrase *Tyrrhenum per aequor* cites *Aeneid* 1.67 *Tyrrhenum navigat aequor*,[43] and the poem is certainly authored by a poet whose Etruscan origins are celebrated in the epic's Etruscan catalogue[44]. The poem then goes on to proclaim at length (5-24) the achievements of the *pax Augusta*, describing the victories of peace in terms which recall the lyric encomium of the *Carmen Saeculare*, but which also echo elements in the *Aeneid*, as Michael Putnam has demonstrated :[45] the display of trophies on temple doors (6-8; cf. *Aeneid* 8.721-2), the closing of the temple of Janus (8-9; cf. *Aeneid* 1.293-4) and the naming of a list of tribes subdued (21-4; cf. *Aeneid* 8.722-8). Though Horace is careful himself not to venture on the 'ocean' of Vergilian epic, his poem effectively incorporates epic material into a lyric framework. Indeed, the last lines of this last ode of Horace almost present Horace's praise of Aeneas as parallel with Virgil's in the *Aeneid* :

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[41] — We might compare the references to the *Aeneid* in Propertius 2.34.59-62. Cf. Fedeli 2005, 987-92.

[42] — For recent treatments see references in Griffin 2002 and Johnson 2004, 198-213.

[43] — Noted by Putnam 1986, 269.

[44] — See conveniently Harrison 1991, 124.

[45] — Putnam 1986, 274-6

> *uirtute functos more patrum duces*
> *Lydis remixto carmine tibiis*
> *Troiamque et Anchisen et almae*
> *progeniem Veneris canemus.*

'And we will sing of leaders who have done the job of courage in the manner of our ancestors, with our song mixed with Lydian pipes, Troy, and Anchises, and the progeny of gentle Venus'.

This final stanza talks of future singing of Troy, Anchises, Aeneas and his descendants, the key players in the plot of the *Aeneid*, and it is difficult not to see this as a retrospective programmatic statement of the poem's general procedure as already followed. The 'Etruscan sea' has flowed into Horace's lyric stream despite Apollo's ban.[46]

6 : Conclusion

The image of the ocean for epic and the idea of the voyage of the poet through his work both begin in Hellenistic or earlier times, but are enthusiastically taken up by the Latin poets of the first century BC; though Callimachus is the perceived origin of the epic-ocean analogy, the metapoetic voyage seems to appear first in poetry in the work of Catullus, and is not found in Lucretius. For Virgil and Horace these are familiar symbols which can be variously manipulated, but there is a limit to how far they can be applied in literary interpretation.

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[46] — On epic influences in the *Odes* see e.g. Harrison 1993, Lowrie 1997.

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