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CHAPTER I

Introduction: gender and genre

From Homer to Claudian, classical Greek and Latin epic poetry was composed by men, consumed largely by men, and centrally concerned with men. The ancients knew of no female epic poets. The Greek 'singer of tales' was a man, whether a fictional character in the Homeric poems themselves (such as Phemius or Demodocus), an exponent of Homeric poetry (such as one of the Homeridae, a Chian guild of bards who recited Homeric poetry in the classical period, or the fictional Ion of the eponymous Platonic dialogue), or one of the mythological or historical singers of non-Homeric epic (such as Orpheus, Hesiod, Panyassis, and Apollonius Rhodius). Ancient and modern critics alike have therefore assumed that behind the name of Homer there lies either a single master poet or a succession of male singers.

A signal exception to this consensus is Samuel Butler, who argued in *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1922) that the poem must have been written by a woman, so numerous, so sensitive, and so varied are the depictions of female characters in the *Odyssey*. Lillian Doherty has shown that 'what he mistook for evidence of female authorship is actually evidence for the inclusion of females in the implied audience of the poem',[1] but his work gave renewed attention to the integral importance of female characters in the world of Homeric epic, a subject which has been the focus in recent decades of much provocative scholarship.[2] Homer's ancient commentators long ago saw in the web Helen weaves in

[1] Doherty (1995), 104 n. 43.

[2] See, e.g., Foley (1978); Bergren (1980) and (1981); Arthur (1981) and Arthur Katz (1992); Felson-Rubin (1994); Doherty (1995); and Holmberg (1995).

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the third book of the *Iliad*, depicting the Trojan war as a struggle undertaken for her sake, 'a worthy model of his own poem'.[3] By projecting herself into her tapestry, the Homeric Helen implies that women and their activities are central themes of epic song.[4] Elsewhere in the *Iliad* Helen explicitly refers to her relationship with Paris as a fertile subject of song for later ages (6.356–8), while in the *Odyssey* Agamemnon envisions two competing traditions of epic respectively devoted to the celebration of Penelope's virtue and Clytemnestra's vice (24.196–202).

The Homeric poet in his own voice, however, defines the subject of epic song as the 'famous exploits of men' (κλέα ἀνδρῶν, *Il.* 9.189, 524, *Od.* 8.73), a gender-specific interpretation of the genre echoed by poets and critics for millennia.[5] Throughout antiquity, epic poetry in general (most commonly exemplified by Homeric epic) was viewed as a genre primarily concerned with masculine social identity and political activity, particularly in the context of warfare. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, for example, Aeschylus attributes Homer's fame to his focus on 'battle order, valour, and the arming of men' (τάξεις ἀρετὰς ὁπλίσεις ἀνδρῶν, *Ran.* 1036).[6] But Homer enjoyed an authority that extended far beyond the conduct of war into all reaches of ancient Greek life. From the archaic period until well into the Byzantine era, Homeric epic served as the cultural template for Hellenism.[7] In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates sketches the poet's central place in Greek culture: 'you hear people singing the praises of Homer, that this poet has educated Greece, that we should take him and study him for the administration and cultivation of human affairs, that we should regulate all our own lives by this poet' (*R.* 10.606e).[8] Plato acutely analyses the close connection

[3] Schol. ad *Il.* 3.126–7. On Helen's web, see Bergren (1980).

[4] On the focalization of the tapestry through the character of Helen, see de Jong (1987), 120.

[5] On classical and hellenistic Greek theory about epic, see Koster (1970). Within the *Iliad* itself, the androcentrism of the genre is well brought out in Thersites' abusive attack on the Greek chiefs: 'My poor weak friends, you sorry disgraces, you women of Achaia, not men' (2.235).

[6] Cf. Pl. *Ion* 540d5–541b5; Xen. *Smp.* 4.6, *Mem.* 4.2.10

[7] Marrou (1956), 9–13. Nagy (1979), 5–9, (1990), 36–82, and (1990a), 52–115, argues that the composition of the Homeric and Hesiodic epics in the eighth century BCE was already Panhellenic. Havelock (1963), 61–86, emphasises the central place of Homeric poetry in Greek education and culture.

[8] Cf. *R.* 10.598d-e; *Prt.* 325, 312b3–4; *Hp. Mn.* 365b; *Ion* 531c-d, and 536e1–3.

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between the widespread instructional use of poetry and its commemorative function: 'poetry, by embellishing the myriad feats of the men of old, educates those who come after' (*Phdr.* 245a). Antisthenes, an Athenian character in Xenophon's *Symposium*, lays bare the gender-bias implicit in this view when he reports his father's belief that familiarity with Homeric poetry forms the basis of the good *man*'s character (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός, *Smp.* 3.5).

As early as the fifth century before our era, Greek sophists began to charge a fee to train boys in the art of public speaking through the study of epic and lyric poetry, but instruction is already a feature of the earliest Greek examples of the epic genre. Hesiodic epic, which the Greeks thought their most ancient literature, has an explicitly didactic purpose, and markedly didactic passages also appear in Homeric poetry. In the ninth book of the *Iliad*, for example, Phoenix relates to Achilles the exploits of Meleager, one of the heroes of old, as a guide to his conduct (οὕτω καὶ τῶν πρόσθεν ἐπευθόμεθα κλέα ἀνδρῶν | ἡρώων, *Il.* 9.524–5). Homeric heroes characteristically dispense to their juniors or receive from their elders instruction in points of personal and public etiquette. 'Always be the best and be distinguished above others', Peleus instructs his son Achilles and Hippolochus his son Glaucus (αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, *Il.* 11.784 = *Il.* 6.208). Throughout the *Odyssey*, Telemachus is tutored in the cultural conventions of Homeric manhood by a series of father-surrogates who hold up to him the examples of his father Odysseus and his cousin Orestes for emulation.[9] Since Homeric epic occupies a central position in ancient Greek culture, the exemplary exploits of the well-instructed epic hero come to be emulated not only by his fellow epic heroes, but also by 'those who come after'. Thus the actions of the epic hero are interpreted, until well into the Byzantine period, as models of good (or bad) behaviour, for imitation (or avoidance) by the student, who is invited by poet and teacher alike to identify himself as a latter-day Achilles or Odysseus.[10] Alexander the Great, for example, is reported to have taken his copy of the *Iliad* on campaign with him (Str. 13.1.27, Plu. *Alex.* 8) in order, as a modern historian notes, 'to follow in the footsteps of his favourite heroes

[9] See Murnaghan (1987), 34–7; cf. Habinek (1988), 196.

[10] Cf., e.g., Plu. *De lib. educ.*; see Bonner (1977), 241–3, and Marrou (1956), 397 n. 14. On 'interpellation', the process of hailing individuals as subjects within an ideological matrix, see Althusser (1971).

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and emulate their deeds'.[11] The rhetorician Libanius, writing in the fourth century of our era, attempts to reconcile the grammarian Nicocles with his former pupil Clearchus by appealing to Clearchus' respect for his teacher: 'Granted that Nicocles is otherwise worthless, he at least deserves respect because he "made you such as you are, godlike Achilles"' (Lib. *Ep.* 1492.2, quoting *Il.* 9.485).[12]

The commemorative function and interpretive conventions of Greek epic poetry were appropriated along with the formal features of the genre by Latin-speaking poets working in an aristocratic philhellenic milieu in mid-Republican Rome.[13] As in Greece so at Rome epic poetry was an exclusively male-authored genre. Quintilian's exhaustive survey of Roman practitioners of the genre preserves no record of a female epicist (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.85–92), nor does the shorter catalogue of Roman writers of epic offered by Quintilian's contemporary Statius, himself an epic poet. In a poem written to commemorate the birthday of the Neronian epicist Lucan, Statius rehearses the names and subjects of Rome's most celebrated epic poets in a brief list that probably reflects the reading practices current in Flavian Rome more accurately than Quintilian's ideal reading list:

> cedet Musa rudis ferocis Enni,
> et docti furor arduus Lucreti,
> et qui per freta duxit Argonautas,
> et qui corpora prima transfigurat:
> quid? maius loquar: ipsa te Latinis
> Aeneis uenerabitur canentem. (*Silv.* 2.7.75–80)

> The rough Muse of bellicose Ennius will yield, as will the sublime passion of learned Lucretius, and he who led the Argonauts across the straits, and he who transforms the first bodies. What? I shall hazard a greater claim. The *Aeneid* itself will worship you, Lucan, singing to the Latins.

Statius opens his roster of canonical Roman epicists with Ennius, the founder of Latin hexameter epic, and includes in the canon Lucretius, who set out an Epicurean cosmogony in his *De Rerum Natura*; the author of an *Argonautae* (a poem about the heroes who sailed with the Argo),

[11] Pearson (1983), 46. [12] Cited by Kaster (1988), 215, whose translation I quote.
[13] Goldberg (1995), 111–34, esp. 123–4, 131–4; and Skutsch (1985), 1–8.

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most likely Varro of Atax, whose translation of Apollonius Rhodius, no longer extant, was well regarded by Roman poets and critics;[14] the author of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid; as well as Virgil, the most celebrated Roman epicist, whose *Aeneid* itself, Statius suggests, will bow before Lucan's masterpiece, the unfinished *Bellum Ciuile.*

Statius' catalogue of Roman epic poets and their poems furnishes the core of texts addressed in this study, for reasons both strategic and methodological. First and foremost, the poems to which Statius refers are still extant, with the exception of Ennius' *Annales* (which survives in several hundred fragments) and the lost *Argonautae* of Varro. Furthermore, we know that the hexameter poems of Ennius, Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid and Lucan were widely read in antiquity both in school and afterwards. Most importantly, these poets echo and re-echo their predecessors' hexameter poems, thereby establishing a self-consciously Roman tradition of epic poetry. In addition to the Roman writers of epic celebrated by Statius in *Silvae* 2.7, this study will address the three complete (or nearly complete) epic poems of the Flavian period: Statius' own *Thebaid*, which was known before publication and quickly entered the canon;[15] Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, praised by Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.90); and Silius Italicus' *Punica.*

Classical Roman definitions of epic from Ennius to Statius adapt ancient Greek genre theory to characterise the subject of the genre as the 'greatest accomplishments of the fathers' (*maxima facta patrum*, Enn. *Epigr*. 45.2 Courtney), primarily, though not exclusively, in warfare, as the opening words of Virgil's *Aeneid* imply (*arma uirumque*, 1.1). In the *Annales*, the earliest Latin hexameter epic (?184–169 BCE), Ennius attributes the pre-eminence of the Roman state to her ancient traditions and men (*moribus antiquis res stat Romana uirisque*, 156 Sk), and we are reliably informed that the *Annales* bore repeated witness to the military achievements of generations of Romans. Indeed Ennius seems to have exploited a Hellenistic Greek innovation in the thematic focus of epic – the shift from an individual hero (Achilles or Odysseus) to a heroic collective (the Argonauts) – to pay tribute to the heroic nationalism that built the Roman state.[16] Just as Greek epic examines the panhellenic

[14] Prop. 2.34.85, Ov. *Am.* 1.15.21–2, Quint. *Inst. Or.* 10.1.87. Fragments of the poem are collected in Büchner (1982), with commentary in Courtney (1993), 238–43.

[15] Stat. *Theb.* 12.812–15, Juv. 7.82–6. See Dewar (1991), xxxvii–ix, and Curtius (1953), 48–54.

[16] Goldberg (1995), 111–34.

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ideals of manliness (ἀνδρεία) and military prowess (ἀριστεία),[17] so Latin epicists from Ennius to Statius scrutinise the conventions of Roman *uirtus* ('manliness') in 'poetry that trains men' by inculcating the 'values, examples of behavior, [and] cultural models' by which Rome won and governed her Mediterranean empire.[18]

If this project necessarily entails an imperial narrative of foreign conquest and external expansion, it also requires a domestic narrative of internal hierarchy and social cohesion, documenting the establishment and maintenance of orderly relations between generations, classes, and sexes. Thus we find, embedded in Ennius' record of foreign conquest, passages which delimit the social contributions of the statesman's confidant (*Ann.* 268–86 Sk) and the good woman (147 Sk), and which underscore the importance of military discipline even when it conflicts with intra-familial loyalties such as those between father and son (156 Sk) or brother and sister (132 Sk). Roman social relations, both foreign and domestic, are also explored by Virgil, Lucan and Silius, who focus in their epics on crucial moments in Roman history, while even those epicists like Lucretius, Ovid, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius, who write philosophical or ostensibly non-Roman mythological epic, constantly engage in a complex negotiation between their subject-matter and Roman themes.[19] Indeed Roman epic, as a genre, can be said to construct a comprehensive model of 'Roman Order'[20] at home and abroad, including relations between the sexes. The prominent social focus of Roman epic invites us to take up the challenge of feminist criticism to 'account for gender'[21] and so to investigate the role of women in Latin epic.

By fusing ancient and modern definitions of the genre – Latin epic is about men; Latin epic is about Rome – we can see that Roman epic (and its critics) neatly enact what Teresa De Lauretis, appropriating Foucault's theory of a 'technology of sex', has called a 'technology of gender'.[22]

17 Nagy (1979) and Hunter (1993), 8–45.
18 Conte (1994), 83, on the epic projects of Ennius and Livius Andronicus; cf. Bakhtin (1981) on epic.
19 On Roman national themes in Lucretius, see Nugent (1994); in Ovid, see Feeney (1991), 198–200, 210–20, and Hardie (1990) and (1993); in Flavian epic, see Ahl (1984) and (1986); Dominik (1990); Hill (1990); McGuire (1990); John Henderson (1991), and (1993), 165–7; Hardie (1993); Malamud and McGuire (1993), 210–12; and Malamud (1995), 189–95.
20 Henderson (1989), 53; cf. Hardie (1993), 3; and Feeney (1991), 276.
21 De Lauretis (1987), 48.
22 De Lauretis (1987).

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Feminist criticism has shown that within every known culture, a symbolic system 'correlates sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies',[23] effectively transforming biological sex into cultural gender. Although the meanings vary from one culture to another, all sex-gender systems are embedded in the political and economic structures of the social order and contribute to the systematic organisation of hierarchies within it.[24] For De Lauretis, gender 'is the product [and process] of various social technologies . . . and of institutional discourses, epistemologies and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life'.[25] Although working principally on twentieth-century cinematic narrative, De Lauretis draws on the literature of psychoanalysis and semiotics – primarily Freud's psychoanalytic reading of Oedipus and Propp's semiotic analysis of folktale (along with Lotman's refinement of Propp) – to develop a theory of the gendered subject in Western narrative and of the process by which subjectivity is engendered in that tradition. Despite the primarily modern focus of her model of 'the work of gender'[26] in criticism and culture, therefore, De Lauretis' work offers a potentially productive means of exploring the 'differential solicitation'[27] of male and female identities in classical epic. In the chapters that follow, I shall examine the questions raised by De Lauretis in the classical Roman context through a series of thematic readings of Latin epic. The role of Latin epic in the context of ancient education (itself a form of elite male social organisation), the particular versions of masculine and feminine identity that Latin epic proposes, and the critical responses that the Latin epic tradition evokes are the subjects of the next chapter.

[23] De Lauretis (1987), 5. On the sex/gender system, see Rubin (1975), Ortner and Whitehead (1981), and Caplan (1987). More recent feminist theory has explored the paradox that 'biological' sex is always already culturally constructed, with the result that sex always already turns out on closer inspection to be gender: see Wittig (1986), De Lauretis (1986), and Butler (1990).

[24] See Collier and Rosaldo (1981).

[25] De Lauretis (1987), 2.

[26] The title of Montrose (1991).

[27] De Lauretis (1987), 3.

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CHAPTER 2

Epic and education: the construction of Roman masculinity

> disce, puer, uirtutem ex me uerumque laborem,
> fortunam ex aliis. nunc te mea dextera bello
> defensum dabit et magna inter praemia ducet.
> tu facito, mox cum matura adoleuerit aetas,
> sis memor et te animo repetentem exempla tuorum
> et pater Aeneas et auunculus excitet Hector.
>
> (*Aen.* 12.435–40)[1]

> Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove any thing.
>
> (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*)

When Statius published the *Thebaid* in 92 CE, late in the reign of the emperor Domitian, he hoped to secure the lasting success of his epic by attracting imperial favour and by achieving a place in the Roman educational system. In an unusual envoi bidding farewell to his epic, Statius records indications of the present popularity of the poem as an index of its future acclaim: *iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum | strauit iter coepitque nouam monstrare futuris. | iam te magnanimus dignatur noscere*

[1] 'Learn manliness, boy, and true toil from me, luck from others. Now my right hand will keep you safe in war and lead you into the midst of great rewards. See to it that you remember my deeds, when adulthood comes upon you, and that your father Aeneas and your father's brother Hector inspire you to live up to the examples of your ancestors.'

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Caesar, | Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuuentus ('Certainly attendant Fame has already laid a benevolent path for you, and begun to show you, new as you are, to future generations. Already generous Caesar deigns to know you; already the youth of Italy learns you with zeal and recites you', *Theb.* 12.812–15). Statius was neither the first nor the last in the long line of ancient epicists to aspire to a place in the classical curriculum on the model of Homer, whose poetry enjoyed pride of place in education throughout antiquity.[2] Suetonius records that grammatical study at Rome originated with Livius Andronicus and Ennius, both of whom taught Greek as well as Latin in the houses of aristocratic Roman patrons (Suet. *Gram.* 1.2). Livius Andronicus composed a Latin version in Saturnians of Homer's *Odyssey* which was still in use as a teaching text in Horace's youth (Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.69–71), but it was Ennius' *Annales*, the first hexameter epic composed in Latin, which conferred on its author the title of *Homerus alter* and acceded to a position of unchallenged primacy in Roman education during the Republic.[3]

Suetonius reports that both Livius and Ennius made use of their own compositions to teach Latin (*Gram.* 1.2), and passages in Ennius' poetry lend credence to the Suetonian notice. An epigram written to accompany a statue of Ennius, in all likelihood written by the poet himself, celebrates his achievement in the *Annales* in diction that strikingly resembles Aeneas' injunction to Ascanius, quoted in the epigraph of this chapter: *aspicite, o ciues, senis Enni imaginis formam: | hic uestrum panxit maxima facta patrum* ('Look, citizens, at the shape of the portrait of old Ennius: he depicted the greatest deeds of your ancestors', *Epigr*. 45 Courtney). This epitaph implies, as Conte has suggested, that the *Annales* 'celebrates the history of Rome as the sum total of heroic exploits proceeding from the *uirtus* . . . of the outstanding individuals, the great nobles and magistrates who had led disciplined armies to victory'.[4] The interdependence of the commemorative and didactic functions of the *Annales* is implicit in the tradition

[2] On Statius' didactic program here, see Malamud (1995), 194–5. On ancient education, see Marrou (1956); Bonner (1977); and Harris (1989), 96–114, 129–39, 157–62, 233–49, 306–12. On Homer's centrality in Greco-Roman education, see Marrou (1956), 9–10; Bonner (1977), 213; Harris (1989), 39; and Conte (1994), 83.

[3] Republican writers regularly associate Ennius with Homer (Var. *R.* 1.1.4, Cic. *Orat.* 109, *Rep.* 6.10; cf. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.50, Sen. *Ep.* 108.34); imperial authors associate Homer with Virgil (Sen. *Dial.* 8.2, Quint. *Inst. Or.* 1.8.5, 4.1.34, 10.1.85, 12.11.26; Juv. 6.436–7).

[4] Conte (1994), 83.

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recorded by the elder Pliny that Ennius supplemented his original design of fifteen books with a continuation memorialising recent wars.[5]

Whatever the nature of Ennius' teaching career and however he employed the *Annales* in his teaching, the poem was certainly used as a teaching text after his death. It was expounded to large audiences by Q. Vargunteius in emulation of the rhetorician Crates, who gave public lectures on Greek authors while convalescing from a fall in Rome shortly after the death of Ennius (Suet. *Gram.* 2.2), and as early as the first half of the second century BCE commentaries on the *Annales* began to appear.[6] The *Annales* enjoyed pre-eminence in the Latin curriculum until early in the principate when Virgil's *Aeneid* superseded it as the national epic.[7] Even in the Flavian period, however, the great Roman educator and rhetorician Quintilian, holder of the first chair of Latin at Rome, identifies Ennius as the earliest exponent of epic at Rome and commends the *Annales* as still well worth study (*Inst. Or.* 10.1.88).

This chapter examines the social and institutional contexts in which Latin epic poetry was first encountered and interpreted, in order to investigate the place of epic within the curriculum and the social function of schooling in ancient Rome. In order to analyse the scholastic role of epic in the cultural reproduction of social relations, particularly gender relations, in Roman antiquity, I shall also scrutinise both the explicit statements about the female in Latin epic and the interpretation of these statements in the ancient commentary tradition on Latin epic.[8] Modern sociologists of education agree that 'the systematic regulation of reading and writing belongs to the project of social reproduction',[9] and I shall be particularly concerned to examine the conventions of classical Roman

[5] Skutsch (1985), 563–4. [6] Skutsch (1985), 8–9.

[7] On Ennius' primacy in Republican education, see Skutsch (1985), 9–16, 20–4, 26–9, 34–5. On Virgil's primacy in the imperial period, see Marrou (1956), 252; Bonner (1977), 213–14; and Harris (1989), 29, 227, 261; and on Virgil's continuing centrality in the curricula of late antique and medieval Europe, see Curtius (1953), 48–54, 167–202; and Desmond (1994).

[8] On the sociology of education, see Bourdieu (1977), 187–90; (1984); (1990), 124–5; and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977). Feminist criticism has demonstrated that the importance of canonical texts in the educational systems of a culture derives at least in part from their formulation and perpetuation of culturally prescribed social roles under patriarchy: see Homans (1987), Moi (1990), and Pope (1989).

[9] Guillory (1993), 61; cf. Kaster (1988), 11–14 and Harris (1989), 333–4. My thanks to Georgia Nugent for drawing Guillory (1993) to my attention.

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