Typology, Symbolism and Allegory in the *Aeneid*

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Any long and complex work of art, whether it be an epic poem or a symphony, can be looked at, so to say, both horizontally and vertically. A piece of music, a narrative, moves through time in a linear pattern from beginning to end. But a piece of music, a narrative, also exists, and can be described, at any single moment in its action. Such a moment is, in effect, the sum of the various parts, written vertically, given to the various instruments at that moment, some of which are likely to recall material which will recur, or has occurred already, or both, elsewhere. In a literary narrative, what is being said at any one moment will likewise recall or anticipate (or both) material of which use is made elsewhere. Moreover, the artist will rely on his auditor or reader to be aware of such correspondences and cross-references and to feel their significance in terms of a total structure which, while it will not emerge fully until the last chord or the last sentence, is nevertheless also fully felt at each moment of the composition. It is a commonplace that long and complex works are often held together by cyclic devices: themes and images return, in their first form or in metamorphosis. The literary device known as returning symmetry or ring-composition is not a linear device, it is not essential to narrative, which ought to be moving forward, and indeed might even be said to impede narrative since it asks us to remember and think back when we ought to be anticipating and thinking forward. Yet the device of returning symmetry is frequent in literary epic. Nor is it enough to say it is a mere poetic embellishment, a rhetorical figure, ornamenting the line of the verse narrative. It often functions in a way which must be felt as essential not contingent; as shaping and forming the composition; as, in a word, a structural device. The 24th book of the *Iliad* contains a number of correspondences or returning symmetries which link it with Book I. We have come a long way in terms of narrative since Book I. As far as the *Iliad* goes, indeed, we have quite literally come the whole way. The journey of the poem as narrative is over. Yet in another sense we have come full circle, and the poem emerges, not as the structurally innocent work it once seemed, but as structurally sophisticated. The poem's end is subsumed in its beginning, its beginning recalled in its end. We need look no further for proof of the literary genius of the author of the monumental *Iliad.*

It may be objected that structures are only there because we want them to be, because we see them. This however is true of every category of things, whether in the created universe (nature) or art. Discoveries of this kind do not put new things into existence, but show new relationships, new order, between things already there. Structure is a way of talking about relationship of parts to the whole. When Northrop Frye says that the Bible is a single unified structure from creation to dissolution, genesis to apocalypse, he is only offering a rather grandiose synthesis of an existing tradition. It is the tradition used by Milton in *Paradise Lost:*

so shall the World go on,
To good malignant, to bad men benign,
Under her own weight groaning, till the day
Appear of respiration to the just
And vengeance to the wicked, at return
Of him so lately promised to thy aid,
The Womans seed, obscurely then foretold,
Now amplier known thy saviour and thy Lord,
Last in the clouds from Heav'n to be revealed
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted World, then raise
From the conflagrant Mass, purg'd and refin'd,
New Heavens, new Earth, Ages of endless date,
Founded in Righteousness and Peace and Love,
To bring forth Fruits Joy and eternal Bliss.

When Frank Kermode argues that works of art are teleological, that is, the nature and meaning of the work of art is determined chiefly by its end, the telos, towards which it moves, he is not making a new point about endings, but rather psychologising on the question, why are endings so important? When in the 18th century Shakespeare's tragic endings were turned into happy ones, it was precisely that 'sense of an ending' which was at psychological issue. (The audiences feelings at the end, as they prepared to leave, must be soothed, not outraged.) Shakespeare himself, in giving *King Lear* a tragic ending instead of the happy one he had from Spenser and the chronicle tradition, did not just 'alter the ending' of the Lear story. He created the entire structure of his play in terms of that ending.

It is within this larger structural framework that we must place any consideration of such matters as allegory, symbolism and typology. A convenient starting point may be found in the introductory pages of a recent learned book on *Aeneid* VIII by a German scholar, Dr. Binder: *Aeneas und Augustus*. He deals with these three modes or techniques and considers their applicability to the *Aeneid*. First, then, allegory. Binder rejects any allegorical interpretation of the *Aeneid* as untenable. His argument is that allegory must involve a fixed, invariable and single 'one for one' co-identity. Thus, Sergestus in book V must not only, if the poem is an allegory, contain an allusion to Catiline; he must actually BE Catiline. Achates must actually BE Agrippa.

Nor can allegory, he maintains, support multiple parallels. If Aeneas is 'really' Augustus, then Latinus, whose peaceful reign in Latium clearly offers some affinities with the golden age, cannot also be Augustus. Binder approvingly quotes Ste-Beuve – and when a German critic approvingly quotes a French one you know he really means business – : "Cette idée petite et tout mécanique d'allégorie". He also rejects any possibility that the early allegorical tradition of Virgil criticism, from Servius to Fulgentius, could provide what he regards as the *sine qua non* of allegory, viz. an absolute coincidence or correspondence between myth and historical reality, between poetic images and actual events. Of the total absence of such absolute correspondences in the poem the poem itself, he implies, is the clearest indication. If Virgil had intended an allegory, he would have written an allegory.

I would not go so far as to claim that that argument belongs in the same category as 'If God had intended us to fly he would have given us wings', but I do suggest that for the moment we place Binder's anti-allegorical argument on one side; contenting ourselves for the moment with the observation that authorial intention is a dubious plank in any critical platform, unless the author has made his intention clear, as Orwell did about *Animal Farm.* And even then, we must remember that a writer's proclaimed intention as regards his work does not necessarily include all possible meanings of that work, or exclude interpretations which may occur to his readers after he is dead. Spenser's letter about *The Faerie Queene* is a famous case in point. Not only is the poem unfinished; but as it stands it cannot be completely reconciled with the plan proclaimed in the letter. In the case of the *Aeneid* Virgil said nothing which survives about the poem outside the poem itself.

The second of Binder's critical categories, the symbolic, is scarcely less complicated than allegory though it is certainly less controversial. We are of course not concerned with symbolism in its 19th century sense. We are not concerned with private symbols invented by a writer to operate within certain artefacts and having no meaning or referential significance outside these artefacts. James's golden bowl, the silver of the mine in Conrad's *Nostromo,* the leitmotiv or themes of Wagner's *Ring,* for instance. We are concerned with earlier kinds of symbolism, in which the symbols are used by an author but not invented by him. He works them, as he works myths and other external concepts, into his structure.

In this sense, a symbol is an object or person which may be used to represent some abstraction, a quality or an idea. Binder gives as examples, with perhaps a touch of pedantry, the Tiber, symbolising Rome's existence, and the Capitol, symbolising Rome's everlastingness. Dido, he tells us, symbolises the effeminate oriental way of life, the demonic, and love. Binder thus admits a multiple symbolism while excluding multiple allegory. It might perhaps be argued, though Binder does not argue it, that it is in the renaissance emblem rather than in the more fluid concepts of later symbolist theory, that we should seek a fixed and commonly agreed equation of meaning between objects and abstract ideas. The anchor is the emblem or symbol of hope, for example. However, emblems are no less cryptic, potentially at least, than symbols, and perhaps only become generally accessible when taken into the world of metaphor; or the world of language; for originally an emblem was a picture which carried an accompanying explanatory text or motto. Later the picture and the text became separated; the picture went out of fashion; the emblematic text had to be interpreted by understanding a silent reference to an image or symbol. We might not be surprised to know that the violet is an emblem of chastity or modesty if we recalled the phrase a modest violet; the meaning of a famous image in Donne depends on the familiar emblem of a pair of compasses = constancy. Emblems were commonly supposed to have been derived from Egyptian hieroglyphs, and though this is unlikely the idea does correctly convey the fact that symbols depend upon a code or convention. National emblems, the rose of England, for example, are an example of such a convention.

A whole range of jokes, puns, double meanings and word-plays become relevant under the heading of symbol also. Nor are such jokes and puns confined to the Freudian field though we should not forget how closely Freud related symbols and word-play in his theories of the way our minds work at an unconscious level. Formal structures such as

symbols lift this semantic tendency in us all into the conscious form of a sophisticated system of meanings. Virgil is full of such symbols as puns: *heus etiam mensas consumimus, inquit Iulus, nec plura, adludens.* Or to take a larger example, the Biblical phrase 'in my father's house are many mansions' allows for a whole emblematology, a whole symbolism of houses as standing for the organising of human society on a moral level, in renaissance poets from Sidney and Spenser to Jonson, and in novelists (who here follow an established tradition) from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* to E.M. Forster's *Howards End.* In the *Aeneid* Latinus' temple-curia, Priam's house, Evander's house, Dido's palace may all be symbolically regarded: symbolising respectively the traditional Saturnian order, rooted in the local *pietas,* legislative and spiritual, of primitive Italy; the fallen splendour of the Homeric/oriental past; the pristine simplicity of Rome's origins; the decadent luxury of Rome's enemies.

Again from the Bible comes a whole range of emblems or objects which were used as symbols: the lily, the talent, the ark, the tree (both 'tree of life' and tree of death = cross: in Old English tree = cross and on this pun depends the significance and power of a famous line of George Herbert in his poem "The Sacrifice" in which Christ says "Man stole the fruit but I must climb the tree.")

Natural phenomena interpreted as omens are often used as symbols: comets portending the deaths of princes, the Julian star, which began as a natural phenomenon and became a heraldic device, a family emblem. The Tiber in flood was interpreted symbolically as the extending of Roman power beyond its previous confines: *imperium,* literally, *sine fine.* Roman culture, indeed, specialised in the veneration of symbolic objects and places: the *penates;* the Lupercal, the *ancilia.* The aetiological significance of these venerated objects and places was frequently expressed in terms of word-play, of which the Romans, and the Latin language, seem to have been particularly fond, though of course these aetiological word-plays occur often in Hellenistic poetry. Ritual acts also had symbolic significance; e.g. the opening and closing of the gates of Janus' shrine to symbolise peace and war. Customs, traditions, actions are often symbolic: the 'rape of the Sabine women' could be described as symbolising Rome's early expansionist policies.

Numerological symbols should perhaps be briefly mentioned here. These are as old as the *Iliad,* as witness the omen of the snake and nine sparrows, symbolising the nine years of Achaean warfare at Troy before the tenth and victorious year. The sow with her thirty piglets in *Aeneid* VIII, taken by Virgil from a well established antiquarian tradition, is a symbol of this kind.

It is when we turn from objects to people that symbols become more complex and controversial. Straight personification is simple enough: as when in *Faerie Queene* III an old and jealous cuckolded husband, Malbecco, when he finally loses his unfaithful wife Hellenore to Sir Paridell, turns into jealousy personified, ceasing to be an individual at all. He feeds on toads and frogs

> Which in his cold complexion do breed
> Matter of doubt and dred suspicion
> That doth with cureless care consume the hart.
> Corrupts the stomacke with gall vicious,

Croscuts the liver with internal smart
And doth transfix the soul with deaths eternal dart.
Yet can he never dye but dying lives,
And doth himself with sorrow new sustain,
That death and life at once unto him gives.

Spenser clearly intends the story of Hellenore and Paridell as a parody of the story of Helen and Paris, and on that level it works as a mediaeval comic fabliau. But Malbecco is no Menelaus; his fate is presented on the lines of an Ovidian metamorphosis, except that he does not turn into a tree but into the kind of allegorized personification familiar in pageants of the seven deadly sins or the figure of Despair in *Faerie Queene* I. In the *Aeneid* the Fury Allecto is perhaps the nearest to personification of this kind; a non-human figure symbolizing civil and domestic strife, hatred, venom and destruction. But I am interested now in more complex symbolic figures and their uses. Let us take a mythological character who plays an important role in *Aeneid* VIII: Hercules. We may say he is a symbol of strength, or of deeds of heroic prowess undertaken in order to destroy evil. We may then go further and consider the philosopher Prodicus' story of the choice of Hercules, (see Xenophon, *Memorabilia*), in which the hero's rejection of pleasure and choice of virtue (symbolized by ladies) represents a voluntary act of self-denial. Ought we to say that this choice provides a correct model for all heroes, Aeneas for instance when he rejects the blandishments of Dido, symbol of sexual love. Aeneas' famous words *Italiam non sponte sequor* exactly represent the stoic hero's subordination of his own will to that of destiny or the gods: a conformity to the divine will. If we pursue Hercules beyond Virgil to the renaissance we find him commonly portrayed as the champion of justice throughout the western world: e.g. Spenser F Q. V. I. 1, where he is placed alongside a parallel figure, Bacchus, who traditionally civilised the east:

Next Hercules his like ensample showed,
Who all the west with equall contest wonne,
And monstrous tyrants with his club subdued,
The club of justice dread, with kingly power endewed.

Finally, Hercules became a commonly accepted symbol of Christ, the victorious hero, man who became god and immortal after death, a correspondence alluded to by Milton in the Nativity Ode:

Not all the gods beside
Longer date abide,
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe to shew his Godhead true
Can in his swadling bands controul the damned crew.

Milton in his hymn to Christ clearly recalls and echoes Virgil's hymn to Hercules in *Aeneid* VIII: *non terruit ipse Typhoeus arduus arma tenens* But by this time we have already, perhaps without noticing, crossed the uncertain frontier which separates the world of symbols from that of types. It is in this world that Binder, in his introductory critical analysis of *Aeneid* VIII, locates the poem's structure. It is into this basket that he places

all his critical eggs. Types are not co-identities or one for one equivalents, but parallels, paradigms, prefigurations. Thus we can say that Hercules and Aeneas are both types of Augustus, though neither is, or conceals, Augustus; both exist independently in their own right. Similarly Cacus and Turnus are both types of Antony. Binder's argument is that each group of characters shares common features or traits, and has a common function: thus the task of Augustus, as of Aeneid, is Herculean, consisting of clearing away impediments to the peace and security of Rome.

The basis of all this is a long accepted critical doctrine which few would now dispute. Typology, a system invented for biblical exegesis, in which old testament characters and events are seen as types or prefigurations of New Testament ones, is now happily naturalised into the criticism of Virgil and Milton. Indeed, the word type, in this sense of prefiguration, is used by Milton in *Paradise Lost* in its proper biblical context:

> God from the mount of Sinai whose gray top
> Shall tremble, hee descending, will himself
> In Thunder, Lightning and loud Trumpets sound
> Ordain them Lawes; part such as appartain
> To civil Justice, part religious rites
> Of sacrifice, informing them, by types
> And shadows, of that destined seed to bruise
> The serpent, by what means he shall achieve
> Mankind's deliverance.

A symbol is a person or thing which stands for some abstract idea or quality, something larger than, different in kind from, the symbol itself: let us recall Binder's examples, the Tiber as the symbol of Rome's existence, the Capitol as the symbol of Rome's everlastingness; let us add to that the wolf as the symbol of Rome's origins. We might more loosely describe all three objects, the Tiber, the Capitol and the wolf as symbols of Rome. But the city of Rome, whether we mean by the city and abstract concept, an ideal of order and civilisation, or the actual town, differs from a single building, the Capitol, a river, and an animal. The fact that when we see the wolf we substitute the idea of Rome brings us back to the cryptic or hieroglyphic element in symbols, their emblematic value, which is something known and shared by all members of a culture. (It is highly improbable that the wolf would suggest Rome to an African not educated in the tradition of western *literae humaniores.*)

Typology on the other hand works by the logical process known as analogy, in which each side of the equation resembles the other. Hercules resembles Augustus, Aeneas resembles Augustus, or at least they have in common some conspicuous trait. There is an element of representativeness in typology, for we think of a class: of heroes, or villains, or monsters, or battles, or temples. Let us take another biblical example, Abraham and Isaac. This may be described in several ways. We may say that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son symbolises God's willingness to sacrifice his son. But Abraham is also a type of prefiguration of God: the patriarch stands in analogy to God the father. Or let us turn to the Iliad. The sceptre is a symbol of kingly authority. Agamemnon's sceptre once belonged to Zeus. Agamemnon resembles Zeus since one is the leader of men, the

other the leader of gods. There is an analogy. Yet one cannot say that Agamemnon is a type of Zeus or Zeus of Agamemnon. This is because neither acts as a model or referent for the other. There is analogy in respect of a single common quality, supreme command; but though typology is a system which works by analogy, it is not conversely the case that every system of analogy is a typological one. There may be resemblance, as we have seen, by simile or metaphor, which does not involve typology. The simplest type of epic simile, as when we say that a hero fought like a lion, works by analogy, but it is not typological, even though we understand the common trait, fierce courage or whatever. When, then, we speak of Hercules as a type of Augustus we mean something more than mere analogy through a common trait. We mean first that Hercules is a model, an *exemplum.* But then the lion's courage is exemplary and is a model for the hero. We mean, further, that the role and function of Hercules in his culture reappears in the role and function of Augustus in a later culture. The later figures confer a new significance, retrospectively, on the earlier; but the converse process does not hold. In XIX c. usage 'type' begins to carry the dominant sense of ideal representative, perfect example. But since the XIX c. was an evolutionary age the sense of a type embodying perfectly the essential characteristics of a genre also emphasized the idea with it that the type was a lonely forerunner of what was to be, a model for the future rather than the present. Hercules is important in *Aeneid* VIII precisely because he is placed in analogy with the *later* figures of Aeneas and Augustus. Isolated and left on his own, he becomes merely the best-known example of a wide class of mythical hero-figures; his value lies chiefly, if not solely, in what he retrospectively became when related to later cultures. Typology is thus a means of reviving and revaluing myth, and of conferring additional sanctity upon contemporary phenomena. We may say, perhaps, that nineteenth century evolutionary theory gave a meaning and a developing continuity to what earlier typology saw as isolated though recurrent phenomena. In a famous passage of Wordsworth's *Prelude* types and symbols are used as synonyms to explain the significance of a series of phenomena, the scenery and landscape of the Alps. A series of repeated phenomena, or better, sense – impressions: crags, waterfalls, winds, torrents, rocks, 'tumult and peace the darkness and the light' – are described as being

> all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of eternity,
> Of first and last and midst and without end.

To say of a series of sense-impressions that they are symbols of eternity is to remove any idea of temporality and to present a fixed and timeless image, a Yeatsian Byzantium. To say that the same impressions or phenomena are 'types' of eternity carries a different connotation, and this is helped by the use of the word characters in 'characters of the great Apocalypse.' We feel that these impressions give us, here, now, a foreglimpse of eternity. In Wordsworth's psychology the flashes which emanate from sense-impressions stored in the memory are most commonly invoked to try to recapture the past before it grows too dim and vanishes altogether; but in addition, Wordsworth seeks to give meaning and continuity to these isolated moments of vision: and when he calls the sense-impressions remembered from his visit to the Alps 'types of eternity' we have the sense that such

moments of vision are important because they look forward to the future. This sense of an evolving continuity occurs again in Wordsworth in a famous passage which forms the preface to the *Excursion:* in which the poet expresses his feeling that visions of paradise should not be regarded as belonging to the past or to the unreal world of poetic imagining, but should be seen as foreshadowings of all that the mind of man is capable of actually bringing about in the future when its powers become fully realised and function properly in relation to the external world. The poet's task then becomes not one of recalling the past by fictions or actual memories but of 'dreaming on things to come', expressing 'the image of a better time':

> – I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
> Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
> Of this great consummation.

The 'consummation' is nothing less than the ultimate marriage between the individual mind (and, Wordsworth adds,

> 'the progressive powers, perhaps, no less
> Of the whole species)

and the external world, the world of sense-impressions and phenomena.

This evolutionary typology is developed further by Tennyson. In *The Princess* there is a passage looking forward to the time when there will be sexual equality.

> Yet in the long years liker must they grow-
> The man be more of woman, she of man;
> He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
> Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
> She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
> Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
> Till at the last she set herself to man,
> Like perfect music unto noble words;
> And so these twain, upon the skirts of time,
> Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,
> Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be......
> Then comes the statelier Eden back to men,
> Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm.
> Then springs the crowning race of human kind.
> May such things be.

The princess rejects these dreams of the future as beyond immediate realisation, to which the answer is:

Dear, but let us type them now,
In our own lives, ...
in true marriage lies
Nor equal nor unequal; each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating with one full stroke,
Life.

This idea of the gradual evolution of a crowning race with whose coming the golden age will return, no longer a fiction placed in the past but a reality towards which evolving creation moves, recurs in *In Memoriam*, in which poem Tennyson uses his dead friend Hallam not only as a symbol of all the things the human race will one day be capable of, but as a type, a foreshadowing, a paradigm. Tennyson, using the evolutionary theories of his day, sees the emergence of man upon the planetary stage as the culmination of a sequence of species. But man himself as we know him is merely

The herald of a higher race
And of himself in higher place
If so he type this work of time
From more to more.

Again, the verbal form of 'type' conveys the idea of a foreshadowing of the future, a continuity evolving through time. The marriage with which *In Memoriam* ends is seen, like the marriage in *The Princess*, as forging

a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race.

Moreover, 'all we thought and loved and did and hoped and suffered'

is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;
Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet, was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe.

Types as symbols coexist in a system of timeless parallels within a single unifying structure – the Bible or the *Aeneid*. But, to return now more specifically to Virgil and to our sense of moving forward, when we read of Hercules we must be aware not only of the past as existing in its own right, as *an exemplum*, but of the past as foreshadowing the future, of Hercules as foreshadowing both Aeneas and in the fullness of time Augustus. In *Aeneid* VIII Virgil organises his typology in a temporal structure, by making Aeneas the central or pivotal term in a historical series. When Evander tells him of the aristeia of Hercules in the very place where he stands now, he teaches him about the past but makes it also present; the continuity is established by the ritual at the Ara Maxima being celebrated when Aeneas lands at the Forum Boarium and still celebrated in Virgil's own day. When Aeneas gazes

at the prophetic shield forged for him by Vulcan *haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aeui,* he looks forward across time through a series of exemplary types, saviours of Rome from barbarism along the pattern set up by Hercules, until we reach Augustus. His victory at Actium and his triple triumph are described by Virgil as already past, although they have not yet, in terms of the poem as narrative, taken place. But for Virgil's readers they are historical events, they are ready to be turned into myth, along with the defence of the Capitol against the Gauls, the death of Catiline, and thus to become the same imaginative stuff, to which the stories of Hercules and Aeneas themselves belong. But Hercules and Aeneas are 'fictions of what never was'. The legendary types foreshadow an actual saviour. The *Aeneid* is beyond dispute a cyclical poem. The golden age inaugurated by Saturn in Latium did not continue, it was broken, but it recurs under Latinus: *rex arua Latinus et urbes/iam senior longa placidas in pace regebat.* It is worth remembering here that in the Hesiodic mythsequence of the races of man, there is no development, no continuity, no concept of evolution. Zeus simply destroys or writes off one race, or they destroy themselves, and another starts from scratch. The same idea occurs in the Old Testament when Jehovah says after the flood that he will never again destroy mankind. The fact that such a pledge is made by God makes it clear that in the mythology of man's beginnings 'starting again' was a recognised way of wiping out the failures of the past. And throughout recorded history cycles of creation and destruction have been detected and seen by Christian thinkers as types of a single enormous cycle whose end will be synonymous with the end of the created world and the final destruction of all things, the 'great apocalypse'.

But there is a sense in which the *Aeneid* is a teleological poem as well as a cyclic one. No one who reads the end of *Aeneid* VIII, or Jupiter's prophecy in *Aeneid* I with its vision of Furor bound and chained like a captive in a Roman triumph, can doubt this. The structure of a cyclical poem is a repeated pattern of returning symmetries. The structure of a teleological poem is a sequence or series with a culminating point or climax to which earlier items in the series look forward and which are only finally understood in relation to the last term in the series. We must not, however, confuse teleology with eschatology. Christian views of world-history are eschatological since they all look forward to a final dissolution; not merely to 'an end' but to 'the end'. And there is a vital difference. For Virgil Augustus is 'an end' but not 'the end'. The typological sequence encompassed by the poem, and by the experience of its author, ends with Augustus; but all human experience will not so end.

> ostendent terris hunc tantum fata nec ultra
> esse sinent.

Those words are spoken to Aeneas in VI by Anchises, not about Augustus but about his designated heir Marcellus who died in 23 BC at the age of 19. In the structure of the poem Marcellus's death takes its place alongside the deaths of other young men, a wastage Virgil laments often: the death of Pallas is perhaps the most famous instance. In the poem's temporal structure mortality must always have the last word. Even though the saviour heroes, Aeneas, Romulus and (ultimately, like his adoptive father Julius Caesar) Augustus himself, all achieve immortality, and all as a reward for their deeds, their *facta,* their prowess, their deification does not end the problems of the living. Epic heroes may

for the time being make the world a better place. But they cannot make it a good one. Even Christ's first coming, his redemptive death and resurrection, could not do that. Nor can it be achieved as long as the present order and fabric of things holds.

The earliest readers of the *Aeneid* saw it as a poem which resembled both the Homeric epics and '*in quo Romanae simul urbis et Augusti origo contineretur.*' Why should the poem's modern reader seek further? This is a poem modelled on the Homeric epics, about Rome's origins and about Augustus. In that case, however, it is not easy to see why a modern reader should still regard the poem as a masterpiece, for we care no more today for Augustus than we do for Aeneas; indeed, perhaps not as much, for in our age, which distrusts and dislikes great men and successful leaders almost as much as the Romantics did, there is a revival of interest in the shadowy figures of myth, Arthur and Aeneas. The question I want to try to end by considering – for I cannot answer it – is, then, simply this: was Binder right to reject any allegorical reading of the *Aeneid* and to see the poem's structure as wholly explicable in terms of typology?

Allegory is not only a way of writing; it is also a way of reading. The *Aeneid* cannot be shown, by any argument known to me, to have been written as an allegory, in the sense that the *Faerie Queene* can be shown to have been so written, since Spenser says so: 'knowing how doubtfully all allegories may be construed, and this book of mine which I have entitled the *Faerie Queene,* being a continued allegory or dark conceit, I have thought good....to discover unto you the general intention and meaning....The general and therefore of all the book is to fashion a gentle man or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline.' Now I am not here suggesting that renaissance ideas of epic as allegory are necessarily still valid; only that they at least offer a way of refuting the Ste-Beuve-Binder view that allegory is a tiny and mechanical idea. Spenser, and Sidney when he argued in the *Apology for Poetry* that 'no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil', see the aim of the epic poet as being 'to stir and inflame the mind with desire to be worthy, and to inform with counsel how to be worthy'. They see the epic poem as having some general moral end beyond the immediate appearance of quasi-chronicle, heroic narrative. Spenser justifies his use of allegory along the orthodox lines of the aesthetic theories of his day, that poetry is delightful teaching and that the teaching will not be successful unless it is delightful and pleasing; we judge by show, so that allegorical meanings must be so conveyed like pills inside the jam of an attractive mythological narrative. Moreover, Spenser distinguishes the general aim, the allegory of his poem, from its various particular correspondences. 'In that Faery Queene I mean glory in my general intention, but in particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queene... And yet in some places else I do otherwise shadow her.' Spenser then goes on to explain how, since Elizabeth is both a royal queen and a most beautiful and virtuous lady, her different aspects can be shown in different characters in the poem. The use of the verb shadow clearly alludes to what we have been calling typology, and to a multiple typology at that. But behind the typology is a larger and more general sense of the poem's aim or purpose which goes beyond the drawing of parallels between real and imagined characters.

The idea that a work of literature had a moral function or purpose was a familiar τόπος among the ancients: and especially in respect of works of history. Livy in his preface states it clearly for the Augustan age: 'hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri: inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu, foedum exitu quod uites.' The purpose of history, whether the events narrated belong far back in the doubtful mists of time, or are recent and well attested, is to enable 'you the reader' to learn, in your own place and time, what should be imitated and what should be shunned. On this clearly recognised principal Virgil in the exempla of *Aeneid* VIII arranges his contrasted types: Catiline and Cato, the one in Tartarus the other in Elysium, are a good example of such a diptych. The moral and exemplary function of types is further assisted in all ancient writers by their belief in fixed characters; what a man is at any moment of his life, this he always was and always was and always will be. The bore is always a bore, the tyrant always a tyrant. Men are thought of as being true to themselves throughout, like Brighton rock. Thus a single action – Cloelia breaking her chains and swimming to safety, Tarpeia betraying her country – exemplifies a whole life-stance, a moral totality, and provides material for parable. The man who once breaks a treaty is branded for ever as a treaty-breaker. The man who once saves his country will not subsequently betray it. If he does, there is likely to be Orwellian rewriting of the past: either the dubious act will be taken from the hero and attached to a more suitable subject, or it will be suppressed in the interest of a black and white picture of human conduct. Thus the typical or characteristic action assumes an importance which is more than merely typological; in so far as it is typological, it works simply by analogy and resemblance to other typical acts of other characters – Hercules's victory over Cacus is a 'characteristic' action, in this sense, and so is Augustus' victory at Actium. But beyond the typological parallel there is a larger sense of the moral significance of every such act, and of their sum; recurring phenomena in the life of a nation form a chain of consistent meaning which is more than the sum of each, and which confers a moral value upon history. The lesson of Aeneas's coming to the Palatine reinforces the lesson of Hercules's earlier coming; each new culture-hero strengthens the achievement of his predecessors. On the ruins of Saturn's age, pointed out to Aeneas by Evander, arise in succession the huts of Evander himself, the primitive town of Romulus, the temples and *arx* of republican Rome, and the Augustan metropolis. As the exempla multiply, the meaning intensifies. And it is this 'meaning' which seems to me to permit the label 'allegorical'. Personification, abstraction, the idea or quality for which a man, or an object, stands, – the tendency to produce such abstractions, to look for them, is built deep into classical culture. The Roman state was built upon the abstract ideals of *pietas, uirtus, iustitia, clementia.* The cynical reader of Roman history may feel that another and opposite set of abstractions – *furor, uiolentia, discordia* – is more conspicuous. The Romans felt this too, often enough and expressed it. Such a reader may also recall with approval Orwell's dig at the tarnished idealism of the French republic, where they inscribe 'liberté egalité fraternité' even over the pawnshops.

Let us consider for a moment one such set of opposed qualities in the *Aeneid.* Not the obvious contrast between *pietas* and *furor,* as personified in Aeneas and Turnus, but the contrast between the primitive hardness of the native Italians and the decadent

softness of the invading Trojans, *bis capti Phryges.* That sneer comes of course from the Italian opposition – from Numanus's speech in *Aeneid* IX. Looking at it from the other side, we might reformulate the opposites by saying the Trojans are civilised and religious – *sacra deosque dabo,* says Aeneas *penatiger* – and the adjective became perhaps even more of a cliché than *pius* to represent the religious continuity on which the Roman state set such store; the Italians will then become ignorant and undeveloped. Yet the Italians have their own culture, laws, traditions, powers of survival. They even have their own religion. There are times when, in Virgil, Aeneas *penatiger* seems rather like a man carrying coals to Newcastle. This ambiguity or tension is central to the *Aeneid* and to Virgil's reading of the Roman destiny. Virgil often praises Italian primitivism: there are parallels between Numanus's praise of the Italians in *Aeneid* IX and the picture of the Italian farmer, emphasised by the repetition in the epic passage of a complete line from the didactic one: *at patiens operum paruoque adsueta iuuentus.* Yet if primitivism represented all that was best in a nation there would be no civilising role for culture-heroes and one would be defending the proposition that men have been getting worse and worse instead of better and better. Virgil does in fact trace just such a decline from the golden age of Saturn in Evander's sketch of early Italy in *Aeneid* VIII. The age of peace, law and order under Saturn, Italy's first culture-hero, is succeeded by an age of war and lust for gain. The passage recalls a famous passage in Lucretius III depicting the decline in moral standards under the late republic. This idea of decline was of course another τόπος, a literary commonplace. Yet against this must be set the fact that before Saturn came to Latium the indigenous inhabitants lived in a wild state in caves, without *mos* and *cultus,* two more very Roman abstractions. Thus Virgil sees the golden age not as something man started with, as in the Hesiodic myth, but as something that had to be given to him by a culture-hero, a lawgiver, *pietate grauem ac meritis si forte uirum quem conspexere.* . The Virgilian pattern of evolution and decline is thus a complex one. It does move in a single graph, but must be plotted as a double and conflicting pattern.

It may seem a curious philosophy of history to suggest that a saviour figure, a culture-hero will always emerge just when a fresh decline into disorder or barbarism needs to be arrested, and when a fresh temptation to hybris through too much civilisation needs a corrective course of primitivism. But behind such a philosophy lies a way of redeeming history from a meaningless and amoral cyclicism, a sense of divine protection expressed by Evander in book VIII when he describes the coming of Hercules when the Palatine was menaced by Cacus.

> attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
> auxilium aduentumque dei.

'Auxilium' recurs in VIII when Evander hails Aeneas as Hercules's successor. And the helping role of the gods at Actium becomes even more dominant.

If as I would argue such ideas are the true subject, the larger general meaning of the *Aeneid,* they cannot be subsumed under the exclusively typological structure demanded by Binder. Again, if we ask what the two kinds of fire in *Aeneid* VIII stand for, the destructive fire of Cacus and the constructive fire of the Herculean altar and of Vulcan's forge in which the arms are made, we may seem simply to be going back from typology to

symbolism. Yet in these opposites we have, once again, two versions of evolution. This time, primitive barbarism must give way to culture; crime and fraud, *scelus* and *dolus*, must give way to salvation through divine help. If man evolves, he does not evolve unhelped; if he repudiates or ceases to deserve such help he will relapse into barbarism.

Throughout *Aeneid* VIII, the defenders of Rome against barbarism are depicted in religious postures: Aeneas is seen *ad aram* after the vision of Tiberinus – cf. the *Ara Pacis Augustae* – sacrificing to Juno, still at this time Troy's traditional Homeric foe but eventually one of the guardians of the Capitol; Evander sacrifices at Hercules's own altar; Aeneas and Evander sacrifice together before the former departs for Caere; Romulus stands before Jupiter's altar on the Shield; Manilus stands before the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus: the Roman matrons carry the sacra; Augustus leads the Italians into battle *cum penatibus et magnis dis;* Augustus after Actium, at his triumph, sits in the new temple of Apollo while all over the city the altars and temples are the scene of sacrificial rejoicing.

These religious gestures are formal and conventional, no less than the moralising postures which accompany the chivalric heroisms of the *Faerie Queene*. Yet the poems are both constructed upon sets of such formalities. The more one reads the *Aeneid* the more one is struck by their recurrence. How much more forcibly would they have struck a Roman reader.

Allegory is a way of reading as well as a way of writing. The Romans did not consciously write allegory and we do not know enough about their critical theories to know whether they tended to allegorize their reading. If they did not, I am inclined to believe it was because they did not need to. They would have seen instantly meanings which we can reach only by submitting a text to the allegorizing process. Altars and deities which were part of the texture of their culture are to us only literary images. To recover the meaning behind such images we may find allegory the best if not the only route; provided we understand what we are doing, the allegorizing process may give us an *Aeneid* closer to, not further away from, that of its own age.

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