

The *Aeneid* and the *Oresteia*

When I was writing my book on the *Aeneid* I was much taken up with the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius as model for the universalising and unifying tendencies in the *Aeneid*—that is, the epic’s drive to construct an image of the cosmos within which all parts are connected by links of sympathy and analogy, and in particular the worlds of nature and of human history are seen to share the same principles of order or disorder.¹ Since then I have repeatedly found myself thinking about the ways in which these features of the Virgilian epic find parallels in the tragedy of Aeschylus, above all in the one surviving trilogy the *Oresteia*; and I have come to reflect on the fact that some modern criticism has traced in Aeschylus patterns similar to those that had preoccupied me in my study of the Latin hexameter tradition. I subtitled my book *Cosmos and Imperium*: a recent (admittedly not particularly useful) French work on Aeschylus by B. Deforge is called *Eschyle: poète cosmique*,² and the cosmic afflatus that strikes many readers of Virgil also breathes strongly through the works of Aeschylus. Of all the surviving works of Greek tragedy the *Oresteia* is perhaps the most obviously and thoroughly permeated with the ideology of the Athenian imperialist democracy; when thinking about the *Aeneid*, a poem written in the decade after the ending of the civil war that destroyed the Roman Republic it does not seem irrelevant to remember that the *Oresteia* was produced at a time, 458 BC, when faction had recently threatened the stability of the Athenian state.

In what follow I shall pursue a comparison of the *Aeneid* and the *Oresteia* that starts from the premise that they are both highly public works of literature which seek to validate a social and political order. That is of course already a contentious description of either work and the fact that this is so is itself one example of how Virgilian and Aeschylean criticism have, independently, trodden similar paths. Much has been written on the subversiveness of Virgil’s portrayal of Roman

imperialism, and in particular on the disturbing way that the war in Italy is brought to an end with Aeneas' infuriated slaughter of the defenceless Turnus; similarly, a number of recent Aeschyleans have questioned the status of the *telos* of the *Oresteia*, and have found the resolution of the *Eumenides* through the trial scene deeply unsatisfactory as a way of reconciling the counterclaims of Apollo and the Furies, of the male and female principles.³ This coincidence of critical approach may only be an index of the modern disquiet with works that seem to have a firm set towards closure; but it may point to wider similarities between the two works themselves.

The parallels that I shall describe are not for the most part so specific as to prove direct borrowing by Virgil from particular passages of Aeschylus, but they are suggestive of the possibility that in literature, as in the visual arts, Augustan imperialist images were developed with an eye to the productions of fifth-century Athenian artists working, directly or indirectly, in the service of the state. In this respect the present essay is part of a wider inquiry into the parallels between fifth-century BC Athenian and late first-century BC Roman political iconographies: the kind of thing I have in mind is the prominent placing in the Forum of Augustus of close copies of the Caryatids of the Erechtheum. Was Pericles one of the many models that Augustus presented to himself in the elaboration of his own image?⁴

Virgil had of course read the Athenian tragedians with attention; Richard Heinze showed how in general he pursues the emotional goals of tragedy in his epic,⁵ and numerous specific models work to reinforce what many critics have seen as the tragic quality of the *Aeneid* in the more general sense. Scholars have focussed chiefly on Virgil's use of Euripides, and to some extent of Sophocles; the possible influence of Aeschylus has received less attention.⁶ There are a number of verbal parallels with the *Agamemnon*;⁷ the most striking of these is found in Dido's curse at 4.625, *exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*. Unfortunately for the Romans Dido enjoys the prophetic power of one close to death, and her desperate imprecations will score a high hit-rate; the efficacy of these particular words is assured by the fact that they allude to the infallible words of Cassandra at *Ag.* 1279 f., οὐ μὴν ἄτιμοί γ' ἐκ θεῶν τεθνήξομεν· ἢ ἦξει γὰρ ἡμῶν ἄλλος αὖ τιμάορος, 'we shall not die unavenged by the gods; for there will come one after to avenge us'. Dido had earlier been given another role from the history of the house of Agamemnon, in the

simile at 4.471 ff. where, in her frenzy, she is compared to Orestes: *aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes, | armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris | cum fugit ultricesque sedent in limine Dirae*; although there is nothing in the language that forces us to take this as a specific reference to the *Choephoroe* or *Eumenides* rather than to one of the other numerous Greek and Roman plays on the subject.⁸

The similarity between the *Oresteia* and the *Aeneid* may best be approached from those aspects in which the Aeschylean trilogy differs as a form from the more normal tragic practice of writing single plays that constitute complete units in themselves. The *Eumenides* is not the only surviving Attic tragedy to end on a cheerful note, but the greater length of the trilogy allows for patterns of evolution towards that happy ending that could hardly be accommodated within the single play. A central structural principle that informs and unifies all three plays of the *Oresteia* is *inversion*; now inversion is a structural feature of many tragedies (classically *Oedipus Rex*, the story of a godlike king who eventually casts himself out from society little better than a beast, and already Aristotle saw peripety as a defining feature of the genre); but the *Oresteia* is largely built on a play of ‘repetition and reversal’⁹ that extends far beyond the limits of one complete *praxis*. Repetition and reversal link the opening of the first play to the ending of the third: the nocturnal lights of the stars and then of the beacons that announce the capture of Troy, seen through the eyes of the watchman in the prologue of the *Agamemnon*, are answered finally in the torches of the Panathenaic procession that concludes the *Eumenides*;¹⁰ the visual reflection points to a more important inversion, for the trilogy traces a vast arc from the total destruction of a city and its gods, Troy in the legendary past, to the affirmation of the political and divine order of another city, Athens, represented on stage in a thinly veiled allegory of the historical city of 458 BC. At *Agamemnon* 527 f. the messenger tells of the altars and temples of Troy destroyed, the ‘seed of the land’ annihilated; in the finale of the *Eumenides* the Erinyes are escorted to their new shrine as they assent to Athene’s request that they ensure the ‘preservation of human seed’ (909). Inversion is also the central structural principle of the *Aeneid*, a work that like the *Oresteia* charts the distance between the destruction of a city (the same city, Troy, the same act of destruction) and the glorification of another city, Rome.¹¹ Seen in this light the true conclusion of the *Aeneid* is not the death of Turnus at the end of book

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twelve, but the triple triumph of Octavian shown on the Shield of Aeneas at the end of book eight, a religious procession that may be compared broadly with the Panathenaic procession at the end of the *Oresteia*; light out of darkness, the concelebration of triumph by man, god, and nature. In Virgil the mid-day brilliance of the temple of the sun-god Apollo and the *triumphator's* easy mastering of the violent rivers of barbarian lands form the strongest contrast to the dark night of the storm with which the poem opens and which nearly destroys Aeneas as he steps on to the epic stage. In the *Oresteia* the contrast between beginning and end is worked through two night scenes, the night which holds the ominous news of the fall of Troy and the night of the Panathenaic torch procession; but there is a secondary contrast between the darkness at the beginning of the *Agamemnon* and the sunny days ahead promised by the Eumenides (*Eum.* 906, 926); Peradotto shows how the clement weather and agricultural prosperity heralded at the end of the trilogy stand at the opposite pole to the storm-winds that preceded (bad weather at Aulis) and followed (the storm that strikes the returning Greeks) the expedition to Troy as described in the *Agamemnon*.¹²

Storm-imagery recurs insistently in the *Aeneid*, from the first time that we see Aeneas, at the mercy of the elements in book one, to his last appearance at the end of book twelve as, figuratively wielding the thunderbolt of Jupiter, he strikes down Turnus. As in the *Oresteia* imagery works to reinforce structure. This practice, of course, is hardly peculiar to Aeschylus and Virgil; here, if anywhere, my comparison of the two runs the risk of being formulated in terms that might be used to show a parallelism between Virgil and many other authors. But, if I may be allowed to run that risk for a few minutes: one of the most successful results of the application to Virgil of new-critical techniques was the anatomising of the image-systems that run throughout the poem in a lacework of astounding complexity. In my book I examined the possibility that for Virgil this is more than a matter of verbal patterning, and is instead the expression of a philosophical or semi-philosophical view of the interconnections that structure the worlds of nature and of history; and I argued that in this respect (as in many others) a central model was Lucretius, the philosopher-poet who revalorises the analogies of poetic imagery as an accurate description of the connections of things in the Epicurean grand unified theory. In particular I looked at the way in which Lucretius uses the movement from figure to reality or from reality

to figure, and compared this with Virgil's practice: for example, at *Aeneid* 1.50 Juno is described as *talia flammato secum dea corde volutans*. Juno's 'fiery' thoughts have included the memory of the blazing corpse of Oilean Ajax, and will lead to the release against the Trojans of the lightning-fires. One Lucretian and one Aeschylean parallel: at *De Rerum Natura* 1.473–7 the figurative flame of Paris' love for Helen ignites the literal fires of Troy sacked; at *Ag.* 479–82 the sceptical chorus speaks of the fool whose heart may have been 'set on fire' by the message of the beacon-fire.

I would now add that for the casting of such networks of imagery over a large-scale poetic work with mythological or legendary subject-matter the closest parallel to Virgil's practice in the *Aeneid* is to be found in Aeschylus' practice in the dramatic trilogy, of which our only extant example is the *Oresteia*. So far as I can see there is no real precedent in pre-Virgilian epic (neither Homer nor Apollonius of Rhodes seems to me to use imagery in a comparable way); and the Aeschylean trilogy is the only other kind of ancient poetic work that begins to approach the scale of the epic. We are well served with analyses of the imagery of both Virgil and Aeschylus, and little needs to be done other than to juxtapose the results of each. Striking is the coincidence not only of technique, but also of the range of subject-matters chosen by each poet: central images include storm, fire, serpents, hunting, sacrifice. Again I would not pitch my claim here too high: these are common images, and one could point to other tragedies which work with a complex of all or most of them, for example the *Bacchae*. It may be that we are dealing rather with a tragic, rather than specifically Oresteian or Aeschylean, quality of the *Aeneid*.¹³ I take a couple of these images as examples: firstly, the image of the hunt that reaches from beginning to end of the *Aeneid* as of the *Oresteia*: in the *Agamemnon* the omen of the eagles' capture of the hare (114 ff.) foreshadows the Atreids' successful hunt against Troy, caught in a figurative hunting-net (358), a figure that will turn into the reality of the woven robe thrown over Agamemnon by Clytemnestra (1382 f.) and which will be actually displayed on stage in the *Choephoroe* (980 ff.); by the end of the second play Orestes, who has in turn ensnared Clytemnestra, becomes himself the hunted as in his delirium he sees his mother's avenging hounds (924, 1054), figments that materialize as the chorus of hunting Erinyes in the *Eumenides*.¹⁴ Virgil weaves another tapestry of real and figurative hunts, from the time that Aeneas shoots

seven stags when he lands on the shore of Carthage (1.180 ff.); the real hunts of books four and seven form parts of chains of causality that result in more sinister figurative hunts, Love's hunting down of Dido in book four and Aeneas' hunting down of Turnus, reaching its climax in the hunting-dog simile of 12.749 ff.¹⁵ Secondly, the image of sacrifice: sacrifice pure, inverted, and perverted, runs throughout the *Oresteia* from the sacrifice of Iphigeneia which sets in train the whole series of actions to the good sacrifices instituted in honour of the Eumenides in the final scene of the trilogy, with the ghastly sacrificial victimisation of Agamemnon, Cassandra, Aegisthus, Clytemnestra, and Orestes along the way.¹⁶ Sacrifice is equally pervasive in the *Aeneid* where more work remains to be done: in absolute chronology the epic action begins with the perverted sacrifice of Laocoon, with its echoes of the Lucretian version of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia; book two reaches a climax with the 'sacrifice' of Priam at his own altar; Aeneas' journey to and arrival in Italy is punctuated by a series of sacrifices, propitious and not so propitious (as the sacrifice of the cattle of the Harpies); Palinurus' death is also a kind of sacrifice, *unum pro multis*; in the last four books the killing of war is associated with the killing of sacrifice: the priest Haemonides is 'sacrificed' (*immolat*) by Aeneas, and the main action of the last book opens and closes with sacrifices, the solemn ritual of the foedus at 12.161 ff., and Aeneas' final frenzied offering to Pallas (12.948 f.): *Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas | immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit*.¹⁷

The apparently innocent introduction of the hunting motif near the beginning of *Aeneid* 1, to be developed in most unexpected ways later on, is reminiscent of the Aeschylean practice of introducing themes and images at the beginning of the trilogy to be fully unfolded or unpacked later on: Lebeck speaks of *prolepsis*, i.e. 'a brief initial statement of several major themes *en bloc*'. The full development toward which each repetition builds may not occur for several hundred lines;¹⁸ with this compare for example Viktor Pöschl's analysis of the first three hundred lines of the *Aeneid* as 'symbolic anticipation of the whole poem'.¹⁹

The interpenetration of the several levels of man, gods, nature; and of the moral, the political, and the philosophical, is a part of what I mean by the 'cosmic' quality of the *Aeneid*; Aeschylus is another poet who proceeds simultaneously on a number of levels. I have touched on the *political* aspect of the *Oresteia*, its treatment of cities and their management; but the trilogy is often interpreted as dramatising the development

of a certain type of *morality*, away from the blood-feud which is the family's only sure recourse to justice and towards the more civilised forms of justice made possible by socialisation within the *polis*. Here one might think of a commonplace of Virgilian criticism, that in Aeneas we see the transition from the individualistic ethic of the Homeric hero to the socially responsible morality of the Augustan statesman. But the scope of the *Oresteia* is wider than human society alone, whether as organised in house or city; in Aeschylus as in Virgil there is a sense that events in the moral world and in nature are bound to each other by a sympathetic causality; the imagery of the last scene of the *Eumenides* suggests that justice in the city will be accompanied by, even in some way cause, balance and harmony in nature. The *locus classicus* for this kind of outlook is Hesiod's description of the just and unjust cities at *Works and Days* 225 ff. Peradotto sees in the parallel a mark of Aeschylus' archaic (or archaising) habits of thought; and I am reminded of archaising tendencies in Virgil, above all those transmitted from Lucretius' sustained revival of pre-Socratic ways of thinking.²⁰

Aeschylus and Virgil are also 'cosmic poets' in the simple sense that they write about the cosmos, the universe seen in its largest outline. I will bring out this aspect of Aeschylus through a brief annotated doxography. Herington discerns a 'last phase' of Aeschylean tragedy, consisting of the *Suppliants*-trilogy, the *Prometheia* and the *Oresteia*, characterised by 'a preoccupation with the possibility that Zeus may emerge from the chaos as the ultimate authority'.²¹ George Thomson, in his commentary on the *Prometheus Bound*, speaks of the 'cosmic breadth and grandeur' of the trilogy, which charts the evolution of the universe.²² More recently N.S. Rabinowitz argues a similar case in an article called 'From Force to Persuasion: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* as Cosmogonic Myth',²³ a title which again reveals the double focus on human society and the natural universe; Rabinowitz in effect revives the methods of the Cambridge school of myth critics by arguing that the human events of the trilogy are patterned on primitive mythological models of creation and of the struggle between Olympian forces and monstrous dragons, the latter embodied in the Furies and Clytemnestra. Rabinowitz stresses the link between dragon-slaying and city-founding, a link unmistakably present in book eight of the *Aeneid* which tells a story that begins with Hercules' slaying of the monstrous Cacus and ends with the foundation and growth of Rome. M. Tierney, one of those scholars who argue for the

pervasive influence of the Mysteries on the *Oresteia*, concludes his article thus: 'I believe that the ordinary Athenian in 458 BC was capable of seeing all through the *Eumenides* the majestic comparison between the institutions of his city and the eternal economy of the κόσμος which is implied in the echoes of mystic terminology here pointed out'.²⁴ More bluntly, A. Moreau writes: 'Un mythe essentiel sous-tend toute l'oeuvre d'Eschyle, celui du combat entre le Cosmos et le Chaos'.²⁵ The movement from chaos, or the threat of chaos, to an ordered and stable universe is that of the *Aeneid*, from the storm of book one with its Gigantomachic allusions to the final reconciliation of Juno and Jupiter in book twelve; this reconciliation of husband and wife is also to be understood as an ending of the split in the cosmos which had reached a climax with the mobilisation by Juno of the lower against the upper world through the evocation of the Fury Allecto in book seven. Herington sees this concern with the order of the macrocosm as a reflection of Aeschylus' interest in the speculative thought of the fifth century,²⁶ though it might also be viewed as a continuation of the Hesiodic concern with the evolution of the world-order.²⁷ And looking forward in time, the combination of poetry and philosophy will be central to Virgil's conception of the Roman epic.

Herington, in another article, has argued seductively that many of the peculiar features of the *Eumenides*, including the festive ending, could be explained as the result of the influence of Old Comedy on Aeschylus' later trilogies.²⁸ One may also come at the *Oresteia*, and the *Eumenides* especially, from another non-tragic genre, epic, and in particular the *Odyssey*. Comic and Odyssean models may in fact be difficult to disentangle, for if the *Iliad* anticipates many features of tragedy, the *Odyssey* is in important ways the source of a typical comic plot, dislocation within the family finally resolved in renewed family harmony.²⁹ The *Oresteia*'s theme of moral and political reintegration runs closely parallel with a reading of the *Odyssey* as a journey from the destruction of a city, via a series of struggles with disorder in the natural and human worlds, to the reassertion of order in the *oikos*. Particularly germane in this context is Norman Austin's analysis of the *Odyssey*. He writes: 'Odysseus' task is not merely the expulsion of usurpers but the re-creation of an original order that had existed in Ithaka.³⁰ Austin understands the Odyssean concern with order to apply to both the human and the natural worlds, and finds support for this idea in the Stoicising and allegorical *Homeric Problems*, a work perhaps of the early first century AD: 'The cosmic

exegesis of Heraclitus Rhetor is more in tune with Homer's psychology than [is] modern exegesis which circumscribes the poet by eliminating or diminishing the primary physical realities behind the symbols.³¹ Austin's neo-allegorical and structuralist reading of the *Odyssey* comes close to my reading of the *Aeneid* as an epic heavily influenced by precisely that post-Homeric allegorising tradition which is represented in Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*.³²

But I see this convergence not simply as pointing to the *Odyssey* as shared source for the *Oresteia* and the *Aeneid*. There remain ways in which Virgil is closer still to the Aeschylean than to the Homeric version of social and cosmic reintegration; Goldhill, in his discussion of the influence of the *Odyssey* on the *Oresteia*, writes: 'Orestes' act of matricide is not only to re-order the disorder of the *oikos* [as Odysseus does in the *Odyssey*], but also to rediscover the relation of the internal ties of the *oikos* to the wider society of the *polis*';³³ the *city* is at the centre of both the *Oresteia* and the *Aeneid* in a way that it is obviously not in the the *Odyssey*. In both of the first two works the theme of political strife is closely bound up with the theme of the 'threatened destruction of generational continuity';³⁴ the stability of the state is only ensured through the survival and prosperity of, respectively, the House of Atreus and the *gens Iulia*. Furthermore Aeschylus and Virgil stand together, and apart from Homer, in the breadth of their cosmic vision; in the profundity of the chasm that threatens to open up between the parts of the universe; in the pressing sense of history in both the *Oresteia* and the *Aeneid*, virtually absent from the *Odyssey*; and not least in the problematical nature of the progress from disorder to order—too much that seems valuable has to be jettisoned on the way. We hardly come to the end of the *Odyssey* feeling that the Cyclops' eye or the suitors are serious losses.

In both the *Oresteia*, in particular the *Eumenides*, and in the *Aeneid* the split in the universe is expressed through a radical theological dualism. Certainly many of the dichotomies that structure the *Aeneid* may be understood as reflections of the typically Greek polarities that run through Homer, but neither in the *Iliad* nor in the *Odyssey* do we find a suggestion that the world is divided between radically opposed moral or theological forces. The impartiality of Homer between the Achaeans and the Trojans in the *Iliad* is striking, and quite different from the fairy-tale-, or romance-like opposition between the goody, Odysseus, and the baddies, the suitors, at the end of the *Odyssey*, but even there the

viciousness and worthlessness of the suitors is not associated with a notion of absolute evil. The idea of an absolute division between forces of the upper and the lower worlds is presented in the *Eumenides*, at least from the perspective of Apollo and his representatives for whom the Erinyes, daughters of Night, embody all that is opposed to the order and light of the Apollonian dispensation. Note especially lines 71–3: κακῶν δ' ἕκατι κάγροντ', ἐπεὶ κακὸν ἰ σκότον νέμονται Τάρταρόν θ' ὑπὸ χθονός, ἰ μισήματ' ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεῶν Ὀλυμπίων, 'it was for evil that they were born, since they dwell in the evil darkness and Tartarus beneath the earth, hated of men and the Olympian gods'. Similarly Juno turns to Allecto for the embodiment of all that is opposed to the stability of human society and of the upper world, an evil demon who will work strife within both family and state. Allecto is, as the descendant of Ennius' *Discordia*, a close relative of Empedocles' cosmic principle of Strife.³⁵ Radical theological or cosmic dualism is not commonly found in classical antiquity before the Hellenistic period, and the Apollonian view of the world as presented at the beginning of the *Eumenides* is striking in a fifth-century context; it is somewhat different from the opposition between forces of heaven and hell that we see in the wars between the gods and the Giants or Typhoeus, for the Erinyes claim to stand for an alternative divine order, rather than emerging simply as rebels against the established Olympian order.³⁶

The Furies are central to the theology of the *Oresteia*. They motivate the action even from the time before the dramatic action; in the parodos of the *Agamemnon* the Chorus liken the Atreids to an Erinys proceeding to punish Troy. Further references to the agency, literal or otherwise, of the Furies abound in the first two plays of the trilogy, until the Hellhounds are physically called up into the world above, visible to Orestes at the end of the *Choephoroe* and to the audience at the beginning of the *Eumenides*. Virgilian criticism, today as in the Middle Ages, feels a strong urge to allegorise, reducing the plot of the *Aeneid* to a struggle between the psychological personifications of Pietas and Furor (so Brooks Otis, for example); but it should not be overlooked how frequently the mythological Furies appear in the poem, whether in person or figuratively, and not just in the second half of the poem which in a sense is all about the activity of Allecto: in the disputed Helen scene in book two Aeneas, picking up an originally Aeschylean topic, describes Helen as *Troiae et patriae communis Erinys* (2.573); in book three the Harpy Celaeno styles herself *Furiarum . . . maxima* (252); in book four Dido threatens Aeneas

that after her death she will ‘pursue him with black flames’ (384), in other words she will turn into a Fury; Furies turn up, as expected, in the Underworld scenes in book six and on the Shield of Aeneas in book eight.

Here we come up against a problem central to the interpretation of both the *Oresteia* and the *Aeneid*. At the end of the *Eumenides* the Furies, converted into the Kindly Ones, are established at the very heart of Athens, the visible symbol of the human and natural harmony to which the whole trilogy has been striving; but do the incantations of the final chorus really succeed in persuading us that henceforth man and the Furies can enjoy a cosy coexistence? How kindly will the Eumenides really be; after all Athene herself had spoken of the fear that must be enshrined at the centre of the state to ensure justice (691), thus affirming the Erinyes’ earlier claim that τὸ δεινόν is necessary if the individual and the city are to walk in the path of justice (517 ff.). Terror and order, it seems, cannot be separated.³⁷

Turning to Virgil: at the end of *Aeneid* 12 the rift in heaven is patched up by the deal struck between Jupiter and Juno; Juno will henceforth comply with the requirements of Jovian *fata*. We might assume that the upper world will no longer be plagued by eruptions from Hell of the sort that Juno engineered in book one through the unleashing of the Titanic winds, and in book seven through the evocation of the Fury Allecto. It comes as something of a shock when Jupiter’s next action (12.843 ff.) is to send down one of his agents to warn off Iuturna from further support of her brother Turnus; who is the agent? Not for example Mercury, the god of *logos*, who descends as Jupiter’s messenger to Aeneas in book 4, but—a Fury, one of two who, it seems, had always been present in heaven as servants seated by the throne of Jupiter (12.845–54):

*dicuntur geminae pestes cognomine Dirae,
 quas et Tartaream Nox intempesta Megaeram
 uno eodemque tulit partu, paribusque reuinxit
 serpentum spiris uentosasque addidit alas.
 hae Iouis ad solium saeuique in limine regis
 apparent acuuntque metum mortalibus aegris,
 si quando letum horrificum morbosque deum rex
 molitur, meritas aut bello territat urbes.
 harum unam celerem demisit ab aethere summo
 Iuppiter inque omen Iuturnae occurrere iussit.*

W.R. Johnson has already suggested that in this last scene of divine action in the *Aeneid* Virgil is preoccupied with the issues of the *Oresteia*.³⁸ In this passage Virgil spans the whole history of the question of the relation between order and violence: the mythological tableau of agents at the throne of Jupiter looks back to the beginning of Greek literature, to Hesiod's *Theogony* (383 ff.), where four allegorical children of the Styx, *Zelos*, *Nike*, *Kratos*, and *Bie*, are described as attendant on the seat of Zeus.³⁹ But Virgil also looks to the present day: in his use of the word *apparent* (12.850) Virgil presents Jupiter as the Roman magistrate accompanied by his *apparitores*, for example the lictors with their axes; legal terror is as much in place on earth, in Rome, as it is in heaven. From this point of view the poem's final image of Aeneas, ultimate progenitor of the Roman *imperator*, seems quite in keeping with the dispensation of Jupiter: Aeneas poised implacable above Turnus, *furiis accensus et ira terribilis* (12.946 f.).⁴⁰ The ancient text would of course make no distinction between *furiae* and *Furiae*. At the beginning of the *Aeneid* Juno had wished, in vain, that she might use the thunderbolt of Jupiter to destroy her human enemy Aeneas; excluded from the powers of her husband, she then looked to other agents in order to confound the upper and the lower worlds through the force of the storm; here at the end of the poem we find that the two worlds were never separate.

Some, troubled by the association of Jupiter and a Fury, have attempted to maintain a separation of powers between Upper and Lower worlds, most circumstantially W. Hübner in his study of *Dirae* in Roman epic.⁴¹ Hübner tries to distinguish between Virgil's Furies, at home in the Underworld and responsible for the active infuriation of human beings, and Virgil's *Dirae*, bird-like purveyors of omens from the gods above and whose function is to inhibit, rather than incite, action by inducing *torpor* and *formido* in those to whom they appear. The great value of Hübner's book lies in its detailed demonstration of the influence of Roman augural language and tradition on Virgil's presentation of the *Furiae* and *Dirae*, but he seriously distorts the text in his desire to keep the two separate. In *Aeneid* 12.845–7 we are told that Jupiter's *Dirae* are the sisters of the Erinys, or Fury, Megaera, all three spawned by Nox in one and the same birth. And in the Pentheus and Orestes simile in 4.469 ff. it is hard not to identify the *Eumenides* that appear to the deranged Pentheus with the *Dirae* that sit at the threshold as Orestes is pursued by the ghost of his mother. The 'avenging *Dirae*' on whom Dido calls as

she curses Aeneas at 4.610 are surely none other than the Erinyes familiar to the Aeschylean Cassandra, whose prescience Dido here mimics.⁴²

The Jupiter at the end of *Aeneid* 12 is the god who will preside over the future greatness of Rome, and we may compare what we learn here about the divine order with what we find in book eight, *the* book of Rome. In the *Eumenides* the Erinyes are housed in a cave under the Areopagus;⁴³ the first story that we hear about Rome in *Aeneid* 8, a story that tells of the imposition of order on chaos as a preliminary to the history of the foundation of the city, concerns the removal by Hercules of a monster, Cacus, from a cave under the Palatine Hill; at the etymological level the extirpation of evil, *to kakon*, from Good-man Evander's settlement. Cacus is a close relative of the monsters of the Underworld; the simile at 8.243 ff. compares the breaking-open by Hercules of his cave to the opening-up of Hades itself. At 194 he is described as *Caci facies dira*; when Virgil uses the adjective *dirus* there is often a hint of something infernal, something akin to the *Dirae*;⁴⁴ at 8.205 the majority of the manuscripts read *at furiis Caci mens effera*. The removal of the wicked Cacus can be taken as a mythical aetiology of the claim in the *laudes Italiae* in *Georgics* 2 that the land of Italy is free from natural and mythological monsters; the eradication of the forces of darkness from the Palatine here, at the beginning of the story of Rome, will be balanced in the final scene on the Shield of Aeneas at the end of the book, the brilliant temple of the Sun-god Apollo on the Palatine, the setting for the triumph of Octavian. That triumph celebrates the victory at Actium, decided according to Vulcan's artistry by the *terror* (705) struck into the enemy by the effortless bowshot of Apollo: the controlled and unproblematic use of violence and fear against the barbarian enemy.

Hercules, however, is a Jovian rather than an Apollonian hero; his victory is not so easy to categorise as simply the triumph of light over dark, and many critics have felt unease at the similarity between the methods of Hercules and his enemy Cacus. Hercules rages furious in his violence: 228 *ecce furens animis aderat Tirynthius*. He is the child of a fearful and not always sunny god. Rome has two centres, the Palatine and the Capitoline hills; if the Palatine is Apollo's, the Capitol is Jupiter's. At 8.347 ff. Evander shows Aeneas the future site of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; now, Virgil tells us, it gleams with gold, but then it was shaggy and shady with scrub. But the contrast between a shady

past and a bright present is elided in what follows (349 f.): *iam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestis | dira loci, iam tum silvam saxumque tremebant*. The woods may have gone, but *iam tum* assures us that whatever it was that frightened them then is still there now. *Religio dira* and fear are to this day planted in the heart of Rome, just as the worship of the fearful Furies is enshrined in perpetuity at the centre of Athens at the end of the *Oresteia*.⁴⁵ Hübner makes the interesting suggestion that the description at *Aeneid* 12.849 of the Dirae as appearing *Iovis ad solium saevique in limine regis* might be read *both* of the mythological dwelling of Jupiter on Olympus *and* of the real Capitoline temple of Jupiter, with its seated cult-statue, and a place where birds of omen might be expected to appear;⁴⁶ thus a vivid instantiation of the *religio dira loci*.

The Capitol, like the Palatine, appears again at the end of book 8 of the *Aeneid* on the Shield of Aeneas, and a similar point is made visually. The Capitol is here shown *in summo*, successfully defended against the attack of the Gauls, types of the barbarian enemy of the gods; pious celebration of the city's salvation is followed immediately by the scene of the Underworld, whose rewards and punishments are the sanctions for just or unjust lives in the world above; most vivid is the picture of Catiline *pendentem scopulo Furiarumque ora trementem* (669). So, above we have an image of the Capitol, symbol of the gods' favour towards Rome; below in the dark cave of the Underworld the Furies, working with the gods to destroy the enemies of the state. The Furies make one last appearance on the shield, during the battle of Actium where they are described as *tristesque ex aethere Dirae* (8.701); *ex aethere* is difficult to take as simply, 'in the air', nor is it an exact translation of the Homeric ἡεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς (*Iliad* 9.571, 19.87) and it is tempting to take this together with the last appearance of the Furies in the poem when they are seen to be inseparable partners of Jupiter himself.

Furies or Dirae act as a corps of stormtroopers on behalf of Rome, unlike the *dirae facies* that reveal themselves to Aeneas' supernaturally heightened vision as Troy sinks into the ashes in book 2.622.⁴⁷ Among the *dirae facies* of the gods might perhaps also be discerned the Erinyes sent by Zeus with the Atreids against Troy in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (59); an agent of destruction who three plays later has, with her sisters, been socialised as one of the Semnai in the centre of Athens.

NOTES

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1. P.R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986) ch. 5.
2. (Paris 1986).
3. Above all S. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge 1984) esp. pp. 262 ff.; see also *id.*, 'Two Notes on τέλος and Related Words in the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 104 (1984) 169–76.
4. Perhaps surprisingly the question of the debt of Augustan political imagery to that of fifth-century Athens has been relatively little explored: some suggestive comments by E. La Rocca, *Amazzonomachia: le sculture frontonali del tempio di Apollo Sosiano* (Rome 1985) 89 ff.
5. *Virgils epische Technik*³ (Leipzig & Berlin 1915) 323 ff., 466 ff. In general see A. König, *Die Aeneis und die griechische Tragödie: Studien zur imitatio-Technik Vergils* (diss. Berlin 1970).
6. König, *op. cit.* p. 262, goes so far as to say that 'Aischyleisches kann man nirgends in der Aeneis sicher erkennen'; she claims that none of the parallels meet her strict criteria for *proof* of borrowing.
7. For these, and other echoes of, or parallels with, Aeschylus, see V. Ussani, 'Eschilo e il libro II dell'Eneide', *Maia* 3 (1950) 237–54; König, *op. cit.*, pp. 262 ff.; G. Highet, *The Speeches in Virgil's Aeneid* (Princeton 1972) 171, 201, 229 f.; Fraenkel on Aesch. *Ag.* 1280.
8. See Pease on *Aen.* 4.471; König, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–22. M.J. Dewar, *CQ* n.s. 38 (1988) 563–5, argues that the chariot simile at *Geo.* 1.511 ff. is modelled on the charioteering images of Orestes' madness at Aesch. *Choe.* 1021 ff. Note also the family resemblances between the famous passage on the destructive power of love at *Geo.* 3.242 ff. and the first stasimon of the *Choephoroe*, 585 ff.
9. The phrase is Goldhill's, *op. cit.*, p. 224. On inversion in Aeschylus see also F. Zeitlin, *TAPhA* 96 (1965) 463 ff.; P. Vidal-Naquet, *PP* 129 (1969) 401 ff.; Winnington-Ingram, *JHS* 68 (1948) 130 ff.
10. T.N. Gantz, 'The Fires of the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 97 (1977) 28–38.
11. Hardie, *op. cit.*, index s.v. *inversion*.
12. J.J. Peradotto, *AJPh* 85 (1964) 378–93. See also W.C. Scott, 'Wind Imagery in the *Oresteia*', *TAPhA* 97 (1966) 459–71; E. Petrounias, *Funktion und Thematik der Bilder bei Aischylos* (Göttingen 1976) 213 ff.
13. Others have suggested that Virgil's use of imagery is indebted to Attic tragedy: already B.M.W. Knox, *AJPh* 71 (1950) 400, '[Virgil's] use of the sustained metaphor, a power which he shares with Aeschylus and Shakespeare'; cf. R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1987) 193, 'In this practice of linking imagery/motifs Vergil's model was most probably the Greek tragic dramatists'. Simon Goldhill points out to me that one reason for the difficulty in pinpointing specifically Aeschylean allusion in Virgil is the pervasive influence of the *Oresteia* on later fifth-century Attic tragedy.
14. A. Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* (Washington 1971) 63 ff.; Petrounias, *op. cit.*, pp. 140 ff., 185 f.; P. Vidal-Naquet 'Chasse et sacrifice dans l'*Orestie*', in *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1973).

