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***Redeeming Epic: Furor, Classical Tradition, and Christian
Cosmos in Late Antiquity***

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Redeeming Epic: Furor, Classical Tradition, and Christian Cosmos in Late Antiquity

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the renewal and redefinition of the Vergilian epic tradition, as represented by the *furor*-theme, in the biblical epics of late antiquity. The Christian project of redeeming the most prestigious genre of classical literature in order to suffuse the language, themes, and cosmic vision of Vergil and his successors with new meaning offers a unique perspective on the wider relationship between late antique Christians and the classical culture they inherited. Despite a recent quickening of scholarly interest in late antique biblical epic, few works have devoted sustained attention to Vergilian diction as a vehicle for innovation in biblical epic. This study enhances our understanding of the role played by inherited epic keywords in the thematic development of the new genre. It illustrates how the linguistic and thematic significance of *furor* and its associated verbal cluster in Vergil's *Aeneid* emphasizes an unresolved tension between cosmic order and chaos (Ch. 1). This ambivalence—still mediated through the concept of *furor*—proved programmatic for the cosmic perspectives articulated by later classical epicists from Ovid to Silius Italicus, who rework Vergilian themes to affirm or call into question the possibility of universal order (Ch. 2). Later semantic shifts, under the influence of patristic rhetoric and the *Vetus Latina* tradition (Ch. 3), facilitated the pioneering works of Juvencus and Proba, whose articulations of Christian cosmos depart radically from Vergilian ambivalence even as they appropriate the thematic categories of classical epic (Ch. 4), creating in turn a new model poetics further developed by Avitus of Vienne (Ch. 5). This literary-historical sequence reveals a hitherto-neglected aspect of Christian engagement with classical thought in late antiquity.

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INTRODUCTION

In the second book of Alcimus Ecdicius Avitus' *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*, a fifth-century biblical epic—that is, a retelling in narrative hexameters of select biblical episodes—the increasingly lurid depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah prompts God to issue a terrifying warning to Lot. Avitus sets the scene like this (2.329-337):

Peccandi quasdam fervor succenderat urbes
civica permittens laxatis crimina frenis.
Incestus pro lege fuit totumque libido
ius habuit, regni sedem metata voluptas
indigenas populos domina sub carne tenebat:
et scelerum studio, fida quod plebe localis
dudum parendi promptis res publica iussit,
abstinuisse nefas et non peccasse pudendum
credebant omnes, facinus quos iunxerat omne.

A burning passion for sinning had inflamed certain cities, condoning public crimes and casting off all restraint. Impurity held complete sway, and lust was the law; pleasure, having set itself up on the throne, held the peoples of the land in thrall to the tyranny of the flesh. In their devotion to wickedness, long enforced on eager subjects by the local authorities, they all considered it a sacrilege to shun evil, and a shameful thing not to sin. Every depraved deed had bound them closer together.¹

The unbridled passions of the people (vividly marked by the underlined words), which not only rage unchecked by the law but actually usurp its binding power, have so far ruined them that virtue rather than vice is officially suppressed. Inhibition has itself become a tool of uninhibited wickedness. The shocking immorality of the two cities soon provokes a response from heaven (2.338-346):

talibus offensus iudex atque arbiter orbis
cum fureret flammisque loco finemque pararet,
quendam dissimilem cunctis tectoque latentem,
qui tunc forte fuit propria peregrinus in urbe,
atque inter multos solum sic adloquitur Loth:
“Oppida lascivo iam dudum plena furore
respergunt caelum maculis nostrasque fatigant
quamvis obstructas scelerum clamoribus aures.

¹ Except where otherwise noted, all translations are mine. For Avitus I have used the text of Peiper (1883) throughout.

Inminet exitium...”

Outraged by such deeds, the Judge and Overseer of the world, while He rages and readies flames and ruin for the place, speaks to a man unlike all the rest, who happened then to be hiding in his house, a foreigner in his own city—to Lot alone out of many He speaks thus: “For a long time now these towns, full of lustful frenzy, have spattered heaven with stains and wearied my ears—shut against them though they are—with the clamour of their wicked deeds. Their destruction is near...”

As so often in Avitus’ poem, these verses are heavily freighted with studied antitheses and a palpable love of paradox.² The immorality which has acquired the force of law among the Sodomites arouses the wrath of the *iudex atque arbiter orbis*, the Supreme Lawgiver, who addresses an urgent warning to Lot, a stranger (where he should be at home) and a man in hiding (when he should be at liberty). He is a man alone, set against all the other townspeople who vex unhearing ears with the clamour aroused by their evil deeds. Their punishment will fall from the very heavens they have polluted with their sin.

Amid these overt rhetorical flourishes there is perhaps another, less obvious antithesis. The sinful passion of the Sodomites—here summed up by *lascivo furore* (343)—is opposed by the *furor* of God Himself (*fureret*, 339). The same root, in its nominal and verbal forms, describes both the wicked frenzy of a depraved people and the holy wrath of the Almighty, who is about to rain down His just vengeance from the ominously darkening skies. Its use in what we quite naturally assume to be two different senses based on contextual clues (especially *lascivo*) in such close proximity raises several important questions. Is divine *furor* entirely antithetical to that of the Sodomites, or does Avitus’ use of the same root indicate some kind of relationship between them, however subtle? Is the close proximity of the two words something to which Avitus means to call attention, or is his usage unremarkable by his own standards and those of his age? Is Avitus’ usage in either line 339 or 343 consonant with the way the word was used by earlier

² Although this is especially characteristic of late antique epicists, it is hardly unique to them. Cf. for example Lucan’s delight in the paradox of a Senate meeting on foreign soil (5.9-14, 34).

Latin epics—pagan and Christian—or does it represent a radical innovation? If he was not the first to use it this way, from what literary precedent might he have drawn inspiration? These questions matter not only for their intrinsic interest but also because we know before we read the passages, as every reader of Latin epic instinctively knows, that after Vergil *furor* is a thematically marked word in hexameter poetry. In what sense does Avitus' treatment of the *furor*-theme throughout his poem (and not just here) diverge from or align with the Vergilian tradition?³

My goal is not to destabilize or deconstruct these texts. I want to learn something about what Avitus may have meant by invoking *furor*, and about the complex relationship revealed by this word and its cognates between the thematic concerns of biblical epic and those of classical epic. We can safely assume at the outset that the Bishop of Vienne who made his name by winning the Arian Burgundian kings for orthodoxy does not intend, in the quoted lines, to erode bedrock Christian convictions about God's justice or holiness by attributing madness or immoral excess to the Almighty.⁴ Yet he may condition his readers' understanding of God's attributes and their relation to human behaviour through subtle semantic cues. In order merely to interpret the simple sense of the passages above, as I have done in the translations, we need not go much beyond the immediate context. But to appreciate the full generic and literary-historical significance of Avitus' *furors* as signposts of cultural change, and indeed as symbols of a way of thinking about cosmic order that is both traditional and revolutionary, we must range farther

³ I will consider these questions with reference to Avitus in Chapter 5.

⁴ Mastrangelo (2016) 44 rightly notes that the "close-knit ideological community" of ancient Christian readers and its shared concern for orthodoxy gives the critic "good reasons to make assumptions about an early Christian poet's intentions and reader expectations," to a greater degree than what is possible when interpreting earlier (pagan and classical) Latin literature.

afield: to the protean semantics of *furor* itself, to the different cultural contexts which inform late antique biblical epics, and of course to other passages within Avitus' poem itself.

I. Goals and Scope

This study traces the semantic history of *furor* and related words through the Latin epic tradition from Vergil to Avitus, from the classical period to late antiquity, and addresses its implications for the theme of cosmic conflict in Vergilian poetry. It is primarily concerned with the master-genre of Roman literature as it was perennially renewed by both pagan and Christian poets, but since this story cannot be told in isolation from the broader history of Roman culture, it also includes substantial forays into the prose and poetic literature of the republican and patristic eras, in which the roots of classical and Christian *furor* are respectively located. The significance of *furor* in the biblical epics has received only occasional and passing attention as an ancillary of other topics.⁵ Though it has received rather more attention in the voluminous scholarship on classical epic, even in the case of Vergil and his successors the precise semantics of *furor* have generally attracted far less interest than its role in the conceptual oppositions of the *Aeneid*; in particular, its relevance to the eternal debate about the prevailing mood of Vergil's epic has helped to obscure considerable detail. The patristic literature of the third and fourth centuries, which bridges the chronological and semantic gap between classical and biblical epic, has never (so far as I can discover) been systematically canvassed for *furor* and its related terms. My own survey in Chapter 3 is unique, though far from comprehensive. Considering all three points of triangulation which define the "cultural revolution" in the late antique Roman

⁵ The most pertinent material lies in the thoughtful studies of Flieger (1993), Röttger (1996) and Poinssotte (1979), all on Juvencus, and in Hecquet-Noti's commentary on Avitus (1999).

Empire—the classical, biblical, and patristic traditions—is the key to understanding the development and significance of *furor* in biblical epic.⁶

My goal is to explore what has been called “the affinity between formal epic diction and Christian theology,” and by testing the strength of the bond between these two codes in Juvenecus, Proba, and Avitus—paying special attention to moments when it flexes conspicuously, or even breaks—to contribute to the grand project of better understanding the “wider hybridity” which defines late antiquity.⁷ Late antiquity marks one of the earliest and most momentous phases of an ongoing effort across many different cultures “to translate Christian scriptures, rituals, and practices into other languages and idioms,” and biblical epic is a significant product of that process.⁸ The genre moreover plays an important role in the history of Western literature in Latin (and Greek)⁹ as well as in various vernaculars. Its later reception included not only appreciative medieval and Renaissance readers but also a succession of great poets, among whom Milton deserves pride of place.¹⁰ This study is not concerned solely with the development of Christian culture, however. The semantic compatibility between classical and Christian *furor* is also an avenue into greater understanding of the classical tradition,¹¹ and especially the brilliant poetic

⁶ I am indebted for my terms here to the stimulating essay of Mastrangelo (2016) 36.

⁷ Nodes (1993) 24; McGill (2016) 26.

⁸ McGill (2016) 23.

⁹ On the Greek biblical epics, which regrettably I cannot discuss here, see e.g. Agosti (2001) 67-104.

¹⁰ For the reception of the biblical poets (both Old and New Testament) see Green (2006) 351-72. The Miltonian epigraphs which introduce each chapter are intended to underscore the spiritual and intellectual continuity between late antique biblical epic and the English poet’s great masterpiece.

¹¹ Cf. Witke (1971) 231: “The effectiveness with which the Latin tradition of poetry could liberate a Christian poet to compose upon Christian themes, even in epic, is proof of that tradition’s life...”

art of the Latin epicists, inasmuch as observing the creative reuse of an established canon by admiring outsiders helps us gain access to “its true communicative potential.”¹²

The analysis in each chapter alerts readers to revealing points of contact between the pagan worldview of the classical poets and the Christian metanarrative to which the biblical poets subscribed—that is, moments which prefigure “l’intégration des spiritualités antique et chrétienne,” the medieval synthesis—but ultimately emphasizes the unique trajectory of the Christian poems over their similarity to classical predecessors.¹³ I have tried to build on the work of experts in the fields of both classical and biblical epic to bring into much higher resolution the innovative and audacious character of the new genre, which notoriously prompted Ernst Curtius to claim that “the Christian story of salvation, as the Bible presents it, admits no transformation into pseudo-antique form.”¹⁴ In the more than sixty years since Curtius made that claim, a great deal of scholarly effort has gone toward falsifying it; this study is firmly situated in that tradition of re-evaluation, but aims to deepen and substantiate the argument in new directions. I have done my best to escape the powerful gravity of *Quellenforschung*, which has dominated much of the work on biblical epic since the 1960’s, and to focus on broader horizons.¹⁵

Inevitably there is a great deal that this study must omit. On the classical side, analysis of the evidence supplied by Ovid’s *Fasti*, Statius’ *Achilleid*, most of Seneca’s plays, and much imperial prose was beyond my resources; as for the Christians, Prudentius, Paulinus of Nola, and

¹² Stella (2007) 34-5, channeling Bakhtin. This statement also accords almost exactly with the thesis that inspired Philip Hardie’s brilliantly stimulating book on Vergil’s epic successors (1993).

¹³ Roberts (2004) 55; Deproost (1997) 36.

¹⁴ Curtius (2013 [1953]) 462. Cf. in the same year Auerbach (1953) 51-2: “The birth of Christ in a manger in Bethlehem, his life among fishermen, publicans, and other common men, the Passion with its realistic and ‘scandalous’ episodes—none of this could have been treated appropriately in the lofty oratorical, tragic, or epic style. According to the Augustan aesthetic, such matters were worthy, at best, of the lower literary genres.”

¹⁵ For testimony to the need to move beyond the quarrying of classical tags in biblical epic, see e.g. Stella (2007) 34.

Augustine are the most egregious absences, though many of the biblical epic poets themselves (e.g., Sedulius, Cyprianus Gallus, Marius Victorius, Arator) also suffered necessary exclusion.¹⁶ In the case of the bypassed classical material, I am confident that the representativeness of my results was not much diminished; that is probably somewhat less true of the Christian texts, though my selection of Juvencus, Proba, and Avitus was based on an informed perception that their works had the most interesting things to say about Christian *furor*.

II. Method and Approach

My approach draws inspiration from a number of sources from both within and outside the discipline of Classics. The seminal keyword studies of C.S. Lewis, William Empson, and Raymond Williams have been a decisive influence. All three theorists were interested in semantic history—the way thematically important words in both poetry (Lewis and Empson) and prose (Williams) acquire new meanings during periods of epoch-making cultural change, and relate those new meanings to an older set of significations. This is a quintessentially philological pursuit, and Lewis well expressed how readers of antique literature can develop a keen sense of the semantic fluidity of long-lived words. It begins with a recognition of polysemy. Lewis describes

a practice which was at first my necessity and later my hobby...In my young days when I had to take my pupils through Anglo-Saxon and Middle English texts neither they nor I could long be content to translate a word in the sense which its particular context demanded while leaving the different senses it bore in other places to be memorized, without explanation, as if they were wholly different words. Natural curiosity and mnemonic thrift drove us, as it drives others, to link them up and to see, where possible, how they could have radiated out from a central meaning.¹⁷

¹⁶ I hope to remedy this state of affairs soon.

¹⁷ Lewis (1967) 1.

This curiosity prompted Lewis and his pupils to interrogate the meaning of words which survived into Renaissance and Modern English but which, as they discovered to their surprise, they were often misinterpreting; ignorance of a word's history, its "semantic biography," was causing a kind of unnoticed interpretative blindness. Once one's eyes are opened in this way, according to Lewis, attending more carefully to the subtle changes in a word's semantic field across the centuries quickly becomes a habit. And finally "the habit becomes second nature; the slightest semantic discomfort in one's reading rouses one, like a terrier, to the game."¹⁸ Only through this vigorous semantic chase can we become aware of "the ancient, fragile, and immensely potent instruments that words are."

The current study ultimately arises from the 'semantic discomfort' that I experienced when first reading deeply in the biblical epics of late antiquity. It became obvious to me—not, significantly, on a first reading of a text, but generally by the second or third reading—that some keywords of great thematic importance in Christian epic do not mean, indeed *cannot* mean, precisely or merely what they mean in the *Aeneid* or the *Bellum Civile*.¹⁹ They do not necessarily mean *less* than they had meant in those poems, but it seems, especially in the case of texts like Avitus' Sodom and Gomorrah vignette (quoted above), as if they must sometimes mean more. Such words—among which *furor* fascinated me most in part because of its historical importance in the longstanding debates of Vergilian criticism—had evidently undergone some sort of ideological or theological expansion. But I was also often struck by how well classical diction seemed to accommodate the transformation. This is partly explained by the fact that semantic change, as Lewis observed, is not like an insect undergoing a metamorphosis, a process of total

¹⁸ Lewis (1967) 1-2.

¹⁹ My eye was repeatedly caught by uses of *virtus*, *spes*, and *salus* in biblical epics, as well as by *furor*.

replacement in which an old identity is obliterated; rather it is like “a tree throwing out new branches,” or “ramification.”²⁰ As a result “we shall again and again find the earliest senses of a word flourishing for centuries despite a vast overgrowth of later senses which might have been expected to kill them.”²¹

Nevertheless, Lewis’ lively metaphor does not quite seem to do justice to the elementary truth that more than one meaning of a word can coexist in the same context and at the same moment in a text; by contrast, the branches of a tree ramify in different directions and necessarily individuate the sense. But here the insights of William Empson, writing just a few years before Lewis, are particularly fruitful.²² In his book *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951), which was not as well known in its time as his more famous *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, Empson impressively demonstrates how individual words, even seemingly undemanding ones like “all,” “honest,” “wit,” or “dog,” can encode compact polysemic assertions. There is an “internal structure” of words that makes possible an intricate interplay of multiple meanings at the same moment. If one possible meaning of a word is more “contextually immediate” than another, for instance, it does not follow that less immediate meanings disappear altogether. On Empson’s view meaning is not a zero-sum game: several possibilities can be immanent simultaneously, to varying degrees.

According to *Complex Words*, this relationship between meanings within a single word can sometimes be expressed by analogy to a simple sentence. A word in which meanings A and B plausibly coexist may really be asserting “A is B”, where B relates to A as a sort of predicate.

²⁰ Lewis (1967) 8.

²¹ Lewis (1967) 9.

²² Lewis’ *Studies in Words* was first published in 1960; Empson’s work had appeared in 1951. I am very grateful to Gregory Mellen for pointing me to Empson during a conversation about polysemy.

Thus a use of “wit” to mean “irreverently creative intellectual” (A) may also, in a particular context, suggest an older meaning, “knowledge seasoned by experience” (B), in such a way as to suggest an implicit relationship. Empson calls the result an “intra-verbal equation”: a true wit, perhaps *because of* his irreverence (A), is wise in a traditional sense (B).²³ Empson is at his most useful when explaining how the “equations” commonly implicit in certain words (their “inner grammar”) change over time under various social pressures. These changes, when they come thick and fast in ages of momentous intellectual transition, can create moments of extraordinary tension and richness in a given text. Individual keywords themselves become the site of intellectual renegotiations, consciously or unconsciously, against the backdrop of longstanding tradition. I refer to this concept where appropriate in what follows, using it to try to appreciate more fully the complex web of meaning woven by the biblical epic poets as they allude to and innovate upon the work of classical writers.

Raymond Williams, a British social critic and Marxist writing thirty years after Empson, pursued a similar agenda, but with greater interest in contemporary political realities than in literary-historical questions. Williams’ goal was a fruitful combination of studies in semantic change and cultural history. From his *Keywords* (1985) I will draw some important methodological principles. Like Empson, Williams recognizes that though one cannot but start from lexical resources (like the Oxford English Dictionary, in his case), these are inevitably “much better on range and variation than on connection and interaction” between different

²³ I have here pared down and paraphrased part of Empson’s discussion on Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1985) 84-100. Empson is keenly aware of some of the potential problems presented by such an approach to individual words, and he does not presume to say how far such analysis ought to go; his own applications are provisional and experimental. See his note on pp. 57-58, which acknowledges and attempts to disarm the very real danger of over-determining meaning in a literary work with such equations. I agree with Empson that the risk is almost certainly worth it, particularly in the case of pivotal texts which have already been subjected to a fair amount of superficial attention (like the biblical epics).

senses.²⁴ Again like Empson he acknowledges the intrinsic internal structure of individual words. Unlike Empson, however, Williams aims at a deeper understanding of not just single examples but of “clusters” of complex words, which constitute “vocabularies” both singly and collectively. His principle of selection is simple: the words discussed in his book had “forced themselves on [his] attention.”²⁵ My selection of *furor* and its related vocabulary in the context of Latin epic, which I generally call a “cluster” or “verbal group” (as defined in Chapter 1), has arisen organically in the same way.

Williams goes on to note that the great value of historical semantics lies in its ability to unmask the deceptive “nominal continuity” of language, particularly in times of momentous change, in which

words which seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings, have come in fact to express radically different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings.²⁶

I share Williams’ fascination with these “hardly noticed” seismic shifts. When key words—those which “impose themselves” on our attention in a given text—are examined in light of Empson’s insights into complex internal structures, a sensitive reader can begin to understand how a variety of senses (old and new) can consort comfortably, or even “become actual alternatives in which problems of contemporary belief and affiliation are contested.”²⁷ The Nijmegen school of research on Christian Latin incorporates a similar respect for polysemy and also anticipates my

²⁴ Williams (1985) 19.

²⁵ Williams (1985) 15.

²⁶ Williams (1985) 17.

²⁷ Williams (1985) 22.

approach.²⁸ Though today the idiosyncratic view of Josef Schrijnen and his student Christine Mohrmann of Christian Latin as a *Sondersprache* or *Gruppensprache*, a “special language” unto itself, holds little currency among scholars of late antique and Medieval Latin,²⁹ Schrijnen and Mohrmann pioneered the close study of Christian Latin vocabulary and semantic change, and their influence—theoretical disagreements notwithstanding—has stimulated several generations of productive scholarship. Clearly, the basic idea of “Christian Latin”, apart from the specialized sociological sense favoured by the Nijmegen school, is a sound and helpful one.

It is worth noting with particular reference to Empson and Williams that their methods make relatively modest claims as an “indirect” approach to interpreting certain kinds of cultural change. Empson makes it clear that his polysemantic readings should not be interpreted in an exclusive way, so as to imply that a particular text can only be read with profit in the manner he demonstrates.³⁰ Williams for his part casts his work as a complement to (rather than a replacement for) the more direct study of social value systems.³¹ I intend to imitate both theorists by seeking to substantiate not definitive readings but revelatory ones, designed in my case to suggest the complexities of meaning that I believe are clearly at play around a particular cluster of words in classical and Christian epic.

²⁸ Cf. Loi (1978) 39: “in molti casi un medesimo vocabolo poté conservare il significato profano primitivo e insieme sviluppare un nuovo significato cristiano, sicché frequente è nella latinità cristiana il fenomeno della polisemia, che impone la massima cautela nell’interpretazione semantica di termini del vocabolario cristiano.”

²⁹ See especially Schrijnen (1977) and Mohrmann’s collected papers (1958). For criticism see Sheerin (1996) 149-56 and Houghton (2016) 8-9.

³⁰ Empson (1985) 98.

³¹ Williams (1985) 23.

This study is far from the first, of course, to recognize *furor* as a keyword of Latin epic,³² and variations on the kind of investigation I undertake here, though focusing on other words and concepts, have long been a customary part of Vergilian and Latin epic criticism.³³ Some of these studies, however, have prompted methodological misgivings. Nicholas Horsfall for instance warns that keywords

have come to exercise a certain tyranny over even the best modern writing on the *Aeneid*. When the individual word (very carefully selected) becomes more important than the whole verse, than the context, than the narrative, then perhaps it may be time to express anxiety, without wishing to question the need to study most minutely words such as those just listed [*pius/pietas, labores, ira, urbs/moenia, condere, laeti, furor*]. A sense of the whole tends to be lacking in rigorously word-based studies...we can understand the text best by reading it, even, sometimes, as a whole, in the order in which it stands, rather than by microscopic analysis of selected details. Or rather, the one system should be used to reinforce the other!³⁴

Undoubtedly the trap Horsfall describes is a hard one to avoid; the exigencies of argument make the temptation to decontextualize difficult to resist even for a conscientious interpreter, and all narrower studies will seem to some to give disproportionate attention to some themes over others. That is why the periodic appearance of broader syntheses like Horsfall's is salutary. Nevertheless, I have tried to contextualize my readings as fully as possible, and striven to locate each within the wider story of each poet's aims in a way that is mutually beneficial both to the detailed semantic study of *furor* and to the broader understanding of each poem. My goal has been to preserve a sense of the tight integration of the *furor*-theme into each epic as it is found "in the wild" and to take advantage of the best of modern commentary, though in some cases (e.g.

³² Horsfall (1995) 104 simply assumes its importance as a given. In her study of Claudian's poetry, Ware (2012) frequently refers to *furor* and its central importance to the epic tradition (117-28). Cf. Hecquet-Noti (2002) 315: "...la tradition du *furor*...sous ces multiples facettes, est un des moteurs important de l'épopée classique."

³³ See for instance Pollmann (2008), Charlet (2004), Sklenar (2003), Fantham (1993), and Eisenhut (1973) on *virtus* in various parts of the tradition. *Spes* and *salus* have also received extensive coverage from cultural and literary historians of Rome, but not generally with primary reference to epic (though see Hackl [1963] on *spes*).

³⁴ Horsfall (1995) 104.

Chapters 1-2) limitations of space make it impossible to do more than sample some of the highlights of recent scholarship.

Like Williams I will also point to the light indirectly thrown on a “conceptual system” by my readings. In fact, in the case of my chosen material, I aim to illuminate not one but two conceptual systems: the idea of cosmic order as successively envisioned by the poets of classical epic on the one hand, and the Christian universe imagined by the writers of biblical epic on the other. As Lewis acknowledged, when one embarks on this kind of keyword study, one soon discovers that one is “learning not only about words.”³⁵ In the ideologically charged vocabulary of classical Latin epic, a medium which makes possible “an entire technique of thematic connection” based in “recurring semantic fields and their internal echoes,”³⁶ *furor* and its associated verbal cluster allow for the concentrated expression of the threat posed to Roman social and political order by a range of destabilizing forces. Some of these forces were understood by Roman poets to be external to *Romanitas*, and in fact to be indirectly responsible for some of its greatest achievements; others seemed endemic to it, and even to wax to cosmic dimensions in proportion to the increasingly universal pretensions of Roman *imperium*. This Vergilian universality is best expressed by the work of Philip Hardie, especially his richly detailed books *Cosmos and Imperium* (1986) and *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (1993).³⁷ In a key passage of the former book, Hardie explains that the *Aeneid* plots two kinds of expansion, along horizontal and vertical axes, throughout the total space of the universe, itself understood at different times and for different reasons as either expanding or of fixed dimensions:

³⁵ Lewis (1967) 1.

³⁶ Stella (2011) 326. Stella is describing biblical epic here, but I think his formulation applies equally well to classical epic.

³⁷ See also among others the older studies of Pöschl (1962) 23 and Otis (1963) on Vergil’s collapsing of distinctions between the empire and the cosmos.

On the human level this expansion is the historical growth of Rome, and is presented fairly realistically in terms of the horizontal axis; but it may also, more fantastically, be understood as expansion along the vertical axis. This model of an expanding universe is appropriate for the presentation of the historical growth of empire. The alternative model of the steady-state universe is more appropriate for the presentation of theological powers; the possible limits of the universe are already occupied by gods and demons, and change can occur only as a shift in the relative size of the provinces occupied by the individual divine powers. The most important type of power struggle here is that which opposes the forces ranged along the vertical axis, the powers of good and evil, of light and darkness, Heaven and Hell. The themes of Roman imperialism in fact bind human and divine power struggles in an inextricable unity; the growth of Roman power is also the history of the victory of the gods of the upper heaven over the forces of the Underworld.³⁸

Hardie explores the “strategy by which the localized events of the legend of Aeneas are connected with narrative and conceptual structures referring to the most general features of the universe”—*inter alia* the recurring story of the Gigantomachy—in order to elucidate what he later calls “Roman ideological consciousness.”³⁹ Vergil’s epic advances a viewpoint better called “ideological” than “political” because Vergil’s perspective on history is “pervaded by religious and, to some extent, philosophical elements, which are incorporated into a unified set of beliefs.”⁴⁰ In what follows I use the term “worldview” as a convenient shorthand for this unified set of beliefs. According to Hardie, the worldview of the *Aeneid* has precedents, including Cicero’s notion of “an inner congruence between the workings of the cosmos and the proper functioning of the Roman state,” Lucretius’ creation of a “literary microcosm,” and the “universal show” on display in Homer and in Hesiod.⁴¹ But Vergil’s work establishes something new in Roman poetry, inasmuch as

the *Aeneid* is a universal poem: its essential theme is the history of a city which realizes universal empire. The apparently localized theme of foundation, *ktisis*, becomes universal by virtue of the fact that all things and peoples must eventually be seen in relationship to one city and people of Rome.⁴²

³⁸ Hardie (1986) 268.

³⁹ Hardie (1986) 293, (1993) 57.

⁴⁰ Hardie (1986) 331.

⁴¹ Hardie (1986) 380, 377, 25, 329.

⁴² Hardie (1986) 25.

As we shall see in Chapter 1, *furor* as a theme of truly global scale was the singular creation of Vergil, an integral component of the universalizing ideology of the *Aeneid* itself. If this seems inevitable in retrospect, that is partly because the success of his audacious experiment was so zealously endorsed and repeated by later ages.⁴³ Vergil was, so far as we know, the first poet to wed the expansive potential of Roman madness—already enlarged by Lucretius and the elegists—to the heroic and historical moods of earlier Greek and Roman epic respectively. By means of this ambitious synthesis, the cosmos of the *Aeneid* is well equipped not only vividly to portray a varied range of threats to *imperium* on earth and among celestial powers, but also to express the deep internal schism of the human heart, torn asunder by the competing summons of both order and chaos, of Heaven and Hell. In other words, Vergil’s poem “has described once and for all the very quality of most human life as it is experienced by anyone who has not yet risen to holiness or sunk to animality.”⁴⁴ The cosmic and individual dimensions of *furor* are intimately related.

It is no surprise then that the *Aeneid*’s cosmic scope, predicated on the opposition (or collusion!) between *furor* and the destiny of an entire people, should furnish supremely well-adapted verbal and thematic material to Vergil’s admirers among the Christians—themselves Romans, and poets gripped, like Vergil, by an intense interest in human destiny. They found such poetry congenial to their aims, and to the contours of the Christian metanarrative as outlined by the Bible. In fact the epics of Vergil and his successors seemed practically “designed as models for the Christian epic poet.”⁴⁵ Hardie has succinctly explained how

⁴³ Cf. Lewis (1961) 33-34.

⁴⁴ Lewis (1961) 39.

⁴⁵ Hardie (1993) xii.

through the transposition of the theme of universal power from the terrestrial to the celestial plane the Virgilian epic easily became the Christian epic. The Biblical story, as told for example in the epics of Vida and Milton, has as its plot-line ‘the world destroyed and world restored’, in which the Incarnation makes of the universal god a man who is also all men, another scapegoat who takes the sins of the world upon his head. The Christian epic tells of a universal struggle of a particular sort, that between the forces of Heaven and Hell. But in this respect too the necessary adjustment had already been made by Virgil.⁴⁶

In other words, the *Aeneid* can be seen anachronistically but with ample justification on thematic grounds as “a work peculiarly alive to the impending revolution in history brought about by the advent of Christianity,” even if we do not imagine with some “adventist” commentators that Vergil’s was an *anima naturaliter Christiana*.⁴⁷

This summary is provocative, but its insights are limited by the restricted scope of Hardie’s study, which afforded space to mention only a few highlights of the later Western epic tradition, and by the need to represent the ancient Christian worldview quickly and schematically. In truth there is much more to be said, not only about the ‘missing link’ between the classical Latin tradition and early modern epics like Vida’s or Milton’s—that is, late antique biblical epic, written during what is now “Europe’s most unread epoch”⁴⁸—but also about the complexity of universal history as seen through orthodox Christian eyes.⁴⁹ The basic Christian sequence of Creation–Fall–Redemption–Restoration admits of no circularity, as does the Greek idea (taken up by the Romans) of the Golden Age,⁵⁰ and though human destiny continues to be cast in a symmetrical mold between Heaven and Hell, the impression of balance is short-lived and the

⁴⁶ Hardie (1993) 57.

⁴⁷ Hardie (2014) 143. The Latin phrase is Theodor Haecker’s, quoted in Hardie (2014) 144.

⁴⁸ Herzog’s assessment, cited by Formisano (2007) 277.

⁴⁹ By ‘missing link’ I simply mean “the missing piece of the story of biblical epic”, and do not intend to imply that Vida and Milton were directly dependent on Juvenecus and his immediate successors. On possible connections between the late antique biblical epics on the one hand and Vida, Milton, and later poets on the other, see the discussion in Green (2006) 351-72. Green concludes that the influence of the earlier epics on the later was probably slight.

⁵⁰ Hardie (1993) 58.

divine combat itself decidedly asymmetrical. Satan, a creature, cannot extract concessions from the Creator at the bargaining table, as Juno does from her sibling and husband; no heavenly *Dirae* coopt the Devil's methods. Hardie describes as normative for Roman epic "a radical dualism"—that is, of rather unstable oppositions between unreason and reason, *pietas* and *furor*, the upper and lower worlds, light and darkness—which is original to the *Aeneid*, and which "enters the Roman tradition to flow in an uninterrupted stream into the Christian successors,"⁵¹ but this is not quite the full picture, at least as far as late antique biblical epic is concerned. As I intend to show, Juvencus diverts the stream along a new course. Hardie goes on to say that

The whale-bone stiffening of [Virgil's] epic plot with a rigidly dualistic scheme of the order of things might seem to lead only to an unwelcome simplification and abstraction of the genre. But Virgil's remarkable powers are one step ahead of themselves: Virgil's dualistic scheme already contains its own contradictions and tensions of such a kind that final stability is never attained. It is this built-in instability that makes the *Aeneid* a perpetually mobile text...

The poets of late antique biblical epic neutralize these tensions and contradictions, but without paralyzing Vergil's "perpetually mobile text"; that is, without jettisoning entirely the subtle thematic interplay between *furor* and its opposites that makes Virgil so interesting. Hardie's phrase "unwelcome simplification and abstraction" undoubtedly stands for the aesthetic bugbears of many a 21st-century critic. Ambiguity and *enargeia* are in vogue.⁵² But in late antiquity, what may now almost seem like an "unwelcome simplification" of the epic plot to us—say, the *Aeneid* stripped of its disquieting ambivalence—might have been, in the form of the biblical epics, the

⁵¹ Hardie (1993) 58.

⁵² Compare the aesthetic judgment of Miller (2000) 15 on the reformulation of traditional epic heroism during the time of the Reformation: "One powerful effect... was to reintroduce harsh, individualized, and even absolute differentiae into matters spiritual... The reform and its consequent sharpening of spiritual or confessional identification and definition, and of a newly identified 'heretical' opposition, might be said to have brought to an end that more tolerant aspect of the matured medieval thoughtworld that had produced the 'ambiguous epic,' with its reversals and doublings of traditional epic personae gathered up into a crop of failed kings and successful villains, and its casual dilution of older heroic themes and values. Hard and sharp and intolerant edges are seen anew, and clearly or even luridly outlined protagonists and antagonists grimly face one another, under battle flags again marked with the cross, and newly sacralized." One thinks of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, which would doubtless hold little appeal for Miller.

inspiring assertion of a more hopeful vision of the future of the cosmos and of individual human destiny, one no less realistic about the “crooked timber” of which human beings are made, but not finally linking their spiritual consummation to the problematic achievements of temporal empire.⁵³ Moreover, one age’s “abstraction” may be another’s attempt to uncover and illuminate unseen spiritual realities which grow too muddled in daily experience easily to impress themselves on human sight; “abstraction” may be another name for transcendent poetic diction inflected by an emerging theological vocabulary.⁵⁴

This is not to imply, of course, that those who exercised and defined spiritual power in ancient Christian communities abandoned problems of terrestrial *auctoritas* altogether in preference for the purely celestial. For them Christ’s *imperium* was hardly confined to other worlds. This at least is what we gather from Christian teaching in the Church’s early centuries (with some notable exceptions).⁵⁵ But what happens when Roman-Christian poets appropriate the language and thematic structures of classical epic? What sorts of cross-pressures are at work when the first attempts are made to synthesize the orthodox Christian *Weltanschauung* with the model epic of Vergil? This study attempts to answer these questions, which have animated a now

⁵³ “Crooked timber” is Kant’s phrase, powerfully applied to Vergil’s anthropology by Tarrant (2012) 29. Cf. Tolkien (1997 [1936]) 22, writing on a similar dynamic at work in the pagan-cum-Christian aesthetics of *Beowulf*, in which the formerly hopeless resistance to chaos (symbolized by Ragnarok) acquires new meaning under the influence of the Christian metanarrative: “The tragedy of the great temporal defeat remains for a while poignant, but ceases to be finally important. It is no defeat, for the end of the world is part of the design of the Arbiter who is above the mortal world. Beyond there appears a possibility of eternal victory (or eternal defeat), and the real battle is between the soul and its adversaries.” One might compare the recurring emergence of *furor* envisioned by Vergil with the cosmic optimism of the biblical epics, which like *Beowulf* “glimpse the cosmic and move with the thought of all men concerning the fate of human life and efforts, [standing] amid but above the petty wars of princes...we look down as if from a visionary height upon the house of man in the valley of the world.”

⁵⁴ Auerbach (2013 [1953]) 48-9 speaks of “the antagonism between sensory appearance and meaning, an antagonism which permeates the early, and indeed the whole, Christian view of reality,” which he contrasts with the concern of classical writers for the “sensory substance” of events. But he also notes that “rigid, narrow, and unproblematic schematization is originally completely alien to the Christian concept of reality” (119).

⁵⁵ One thinks immediately of the Manicheans, and others might be invoked. Since the poets of surviving late antique biblical epics all seem to have been more or less orthodox by the standards of their own time and of later ages, however, we can securely omit alternatives to early Christian orthodoxy from consideration.

decades-long resurgence of interest in biblical epic, with specific reference to the *furor*-theme inherited by Christian poets from the Vergilian tradition. It aims at a discovery of an as-yet unexplored sector of the biblical epics' "vocabulary of poetic theology."⁵⁶

Christian poets "invested old language with new meaning" as they strove "to articulate spiritual doctrine and negotiate the new and shifting relationship between Christianity and empire."⁵⁷ In demonstrating the truth of this claim, scholars of biblical epic have not been able to avoid speaking in dualities in order to try to capture the paradoxical hybridity of the genre, which "Christianizes Virgil and Virgilianizes Christianity," represents a "double allegiance," enacts a "reciprocal colonization," produces something "at once familiar and unfamiliar," and "transforms the language of Roman epic into the language of Christian anticipation."⁵⁸ By far the cynosure of such statements, as measured by acclamation, belongs to Klaus Thraede: the biblical epics encode an "*interpretatio Christiana*" of Vergilian epic but also an "*interpretatio epica*" of the Bible.⁵⁹ The present study will be no exception to this general style. Speaking this way is unavoidable, I believe, not only because of the obvious duality of cultural traditions (classical and Christian) which informs the biblical epic poets, but also because their works embody a fundamental truth about Christian cultural production in every age. Participation in the world and the use of its symbols is inevitable, even desirable, and certainly mandated by biblical ethics; but it is also worryingly fraught with compromise, and continually points to the need for the recovery of a marred design which was once "very good" (God's own verdict in Genesis 1:31).

⁵⁶ Stella (2011) 326.

⁵⁷ Ware (2012) 56.

⁵⁸ Cullhed (2015) 3; McGill (2016) 9; Deproost (1997) 21; Witke (2004) 129 (on Prudentius); Nodes (1993) 7.

⁵⁹ Thraede (1962) 1035, repeated by Nazzaro (1984) 2680, Roberts (2004) 50, Consolino (2005) 448, Sandnes (2011) 59, and McGill (2016) 14. Shanzer (2004) 203 wryly calls this "the great chiasmus."

For this reason I prefer the term *redemption*⁶⁰ as a more evocative and “emic” (as opposed to “etic”)⁶¹ description of the activity of the poets of biblical epic, not in the sense that they wish to rescue Vergil or his *Aeneid* from pagan error—indeed it seems they wish rather in some ways to supplant the *Aeneid* in the esteem of their readers⁶²—but in the sense that they approach Vergilian language and themes, if not quite Vergil himself, with a salvific objective.⁶³ They want to perpetuate the august tradition of hexameter storytelling even as they radically change its character, since

epic, which had served to vocalize other versions of Roman identity, imperial destiny, and cosmic order, was the sole poetic form suitable for expressing the grand historical, ideological, and theological claims at the core of Christian thought.⁶⁴

Conservation and conversion—both are implied by “redemption”—transform a familiar word (or larger semantic unit) and make it productive in the service of a new master.⁶⁵ The commanding position of epic at the top of the generic hierarchy of Latin literature is sufficient explanation for the desire of Christian poets to appropriate heroic verse for themselves.⁶⁶ But its frequently exploited power as a vehicle for imperial ideology, philosophical meditation, and cultural self-

⁶⁰ With apologies to Roger Green (1995) 555, who dislikes “colourful words about ‘redeeming epic.’”

⁶¹ These terms are borrowed from the social sciences, in which they typically denote the origin of a particular research perspective, whether “looking out” from within the context of a particular culture (emic) or “looking in” from an external, non-participatory viewpoint (etic).

⁶² Nides (1993) 19. See also McGill (2016) 9 (on Juvenius): “he legitimates his text and assigns it superior value and authority by separating it in its truthfulness from the earlier epics.”

⁶³ Ware (2012) 56: “Christian poets could not replace epic but they could *convert* it” (emphasis mine). Cf. also Moreschini (2007) 177.

⁶⁴ Trout (2009) 552. Cf. the conclusion of Green (2006) 384: “Christian Latin epic is not to be seen as a compromise reluctantly made by a Christian society which would ideally part company completely with Rome’s literary past but feels obliged to match classical literature with an ecclesiastical literature; it is rather an attempt by many writers over many years to seize the opportunity to instruct, delight, and move a highly educated audience in a bold programme of discriminating appropriation and sensitive adaptation.”

⁶⁵ Cf. Herzog (1975) 185-211.

⁶⁶ Roberts (1985) 73 among others also makes this point.

examination must have been even more compelling.⁶⁷ From the viewpoint of Christian poets, epic offered something to sophisticated Latin readers, pagan and Christian alike, which could appeal far more widely (and subversively) than homilies, apologetical tracts, or the mortifyingly homely prose of the Latin Bible itself.⁶⁸ It could offer a kind of approachably incarnate worldview, a narrative expression of theology at liberty to entertain and arouse the affections, without sacrificing the sobering claims of biblical revelation.⁶⁹ It could catalyze the “immanent epic potential” of the Bible itself by exploiting Vergil’s profound literary influence.⁷⁰

The poets of biblical epic are in one sense “inside” the Vergilian tradition, in that their thematic priorities and pregnant diction show awareness of and sensitivity to Augustan and Silver hexameter poetics, even as in another sense they may also be “outside” of it, conscious of a fundamentally new direction in their own work, and of a new relationship to the poetry of the past that is not exactly like Lucan’s or Statius’.⁷¹ For the Christian epicists the tendency toward a sort of combined “homage, correction and criticism” of Vergil, inherited from Ovid, Lucan, and Statius, fulfills more than a merely poetic purpose: it entails real theological consequences for

⁶⁷ Ware (2012, 3) notes that “poets of late antiquity, as their predecessors had done, turned naturally to the medium of epic to redefine Rome for their own time and did so as earlier Roman epic poets had done, by intertextual *imitatio* and *aemulatio*.”

⁶⁸ Cf. Augustine *Conf.* 3.5.9 for a famous account of the Bible’s disappointing style, as seen through the eyes of a sophisticated Roman reader.

⁶⁹ Roberts (1985) 74 suggests that “the Stoic theory of poetic sublimity and of the special appropriateness of poetry to express higher truths” may have stimulated the creation of biblical epics. Auerbach’s description ([1953] 158) of the paradoxical grandeur of the Christian metanarrative is appropriate here: “In it all the heights and depths of human conduct and all the heights and depths of stylistic expression find their morally or aesthetically established right to exist; and hence there is no basis for a separation of the sublime from the low and everyday, for they are indissolubly connected in Christ’s very life and suffering. Nor is there any basis for concern with the unities of time, place, or action, for there is but one place—the world; and but one action—man’s fall and redemption”.

⁷⁰ Šubrt (1993) 10; Green (2006) 134.

⁷¹ Cf. Pelttari (2014) 150.

themselves and their readers, in which aesthetic considerations play no small part.⁷² For them the biblical worldview functions hierarchically as a kind of “arch-text,” and the hermeneutical balance between Christian and classical ideas, though characterized by mutuality, is not egalitarian⁷³; in biblical epic “it is the former that selects and activates the latter,” creating a blended whole characterized by “structural dipphony.”⁷⁴ Using Dracontius as a model, Francesco Stella has demonstrated how classical *topoi* are used to express themes elaborated by earlier Christian poets and thinkers,⁷⁵ including the early Church Fathers. Nevertheless, as Stella recognizes, the relationship is not merely one of form vs. content, or of *res* and *verba*.⁷⁶ It is a wholesale “rebuilding of the poetic code.”⁷⁷ To be sure, the form/content categories represent in general terms an important truth about the nature of biblical epic, but the tidy dichotomy breaks down in close encounters with Christian rhetoric that appropriates both classical forms *and* content and applies them to new contexts.⁷⁸ Careful readings of the relevant texts will often reveal an original convergence of classical and Christian content to such an extent that a rigid

⁷² Quotation from Hardie (2014) 130.

⁷³ Stella (2005) 143.

⁷⁴ Stella (2005) 143-144. Stella acknowledges that the gap between these two individual “codes,” which cannot always be satisfactorily bridged, can lead to a “betrayal” of the biblical worldview; this is particularly true in the special case of Proba’s *Cento*, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

⁷⁵ Stella (2005).

⁷⁶ *Res* and *verba* are used by Sandnes (2011) to describe these categories.

⁷⁷ Stella (2007) 47.

⁷⁸ Cf. McGill (2016) 26: “Christian subject matter remade classical poetry, by extending the range of what its forms and language could describe, and...classical poetry gave new shape and expression to Christian subject matter.”

opposition between the two domains sometimes seems actively misleading.⁷⁹ Biblical epic cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts.⁸⁰

Scrutinizing the relationship between one text (or set of texts) and another, whether classical or Christian, is foundational to my project. I have been guided in part by the helpful observation that some intertexts do not, strictly speaking, function as references; that is, they are “non-referential” in the sense that they do not seem to evoke their source contexts even in a superficial way, except insofar as the mere fact of re-use is apparent.⁸¹ Oftentimes particular *iuncturae* may simply represent “constituents of a poetic *koine*” which was passed down from the first century AD to late antiquity by “a continuing tradition of grammatical instruction and verse composition.”⁸² How then actually to distinguish such moments from more meaningful connections between texts?⁸³ Paying close attention to congruence of situation and context is one

⁷⁹ Šubr (1993): “The process of the transformation into epic does not occur only in the surface structure of the text as *Erweiterungen und Kompressionen* (Thraede) but affects its structure far more deeply, changing the presented world...more fundamentally than it could seem at first sight. In order to take in this fact it is highly commendable to break away from the ballast of misleading simplification represented by the metaphor about filling the pagan form with Christian content (Curtius). From the literary point of view the problem does not lie in a dichotomy of content and form but more in the convergence of two diametrically different approaches to composition.” Deproost (1997) 91 also makes the point well: “Une analyse correcte de l'épopée biblique doit donc tenir compte de cette double obédience du poète à la culture antique et au christianisme, en prenant en compte qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un contenu nouveau dans des formes anciennes, mais bien d'une conjugaison de valeurs esthétiques et spirituelles qui implique une conversion mutuelle entre les deux mondes.” McGill (2016) 12 asserts that language and style are “fundamental to a text’s identity, essential to its definition, and even constitutive of its content.” Gnilka’s *chrēsis* (“use”) model (2001) similarly allows for the transformation of both form and content.

⁸⁰ Stella (2007) 47. Cf. Hanks (2010) xvii writing on the semantic blending of Maya and Spanish discourses: biblical epic represents a “dynamic fusing of elements in a new literary world...not a composite of traits defined by their supposed origins.”

⁸¹ The term is that of Pelttari (2014) 131, who argues for a greater proliferation of “non-referential allusions” in late antiquity as compared to earlier periods, which in turn stimulates the independence of the reader. Conte (1986) calls this a “code model”. See also Roberts (1983) 64-5 and (2004) 50-1, and Thor (2013) 31-3. For a different view of how this works in biblical epic see Simonetti Abbolito (1982) 71.

⁸² Roberts (1983) 64.

⁸³ On Avitus for example Shanzer (2001) 65 points out that the poet “both plunders *tesserae* for his *opus sectile* without care for original context and uses choice finds with intent.” Cf. Sandnes (2011) 140: “intertextual links...vary from simple references to verbal coincidence taken from the ‘mind concordance’ to hermeneutically significant and penetrating allegories or typologies.” In an unpublished forthcoming essay, according to Mastrangelo

method,⁸⁴ though of course this criterion will not settle all disputes between interpreters about what is or is not plausible. Sustained interaction between a pair of texts, showing allusive patterning on the level of whole scenes, is perhaps another.⁸⁵ Yet this is a problem with which much critical discourse on biblical epic has been preoccupied, mirroring debates in the field of classical epic and competing for similar stakes—the right to decide how Vergil’s successors relate both to one another and to the *Aeneid*. The question seems the more acute in studies of biblical epic because our understanding of the genre as a whole depends to a significant extent on how we interpret the uses to which the biblical epic poets put the work of their pagan predecessors.⁸⁶ But rather than recapitulate the dozens of extremely subtle and sometimes abstruse attempts to find an ultimate solution to this quandary, or pretend to offer anything myself beyond an invitation to collaborative interpretation (as opposed to final and definitive readings),⁸⁷ I would prefer simply to register my agreement with the assertion that when it comes to interpreting intertextuality, “it is never true that ‘anything goes,’ but we should not be too quick to decide in advance what will go.”⁸⁸ In my view this perspective represents the sensible

(2016) 35, Helen Kaufmann argues for “a sliding scale or ‘continuum’ of allusions made up of two poles with a middle point: on one side are allusions essential to the content meaning; on the opposite end are allusions that are ‘formal features’ of the poetry that express the (classical) tradition and are irrelevant to the content meaning of the new poem; and between these two poles are allusions that are an optional part of the content meaning, perhaps adding an ‘extra layer of meaning if taken into account.’” I find Kaufmann’s formulation appealing.

⁸⁴ Roberts (2004) 52.

⁸⁵ Herzog (1975) 21-26 calls this ‘leading reminiscence’ (*Leitreminiszenz*).

⁸⁶ As observed *inter alios* by Hexter (1988) 5. Scholars of late antiquity have made significant contributions to these questions in recent years; see the studies of Peltari (2014), Mastrangelo (2016), and Kaufmann (forthcoming).

⁸⁷ Cf. Hinds (1998) 51: “We may continue to use the deadpan ‘cf.’ when needed, provided that we treat it as an invitation to interpret rather than as the end of interpretation. The critic, like the poet, can bring only finite resources to the infinity of discourse.”

⁸⁸ Martindale (1993) 97.

center between “positivistic philological fundamentalism” and “reader-oriented subjectivity.”⁸⁹

The criteria which sway my judgment will speak for themselves in the body of each chapter and in the notes more demonstratively than a preemptive declaration of what should or should not constitute a meaningful allusion.

Finally, the reader should also note a significant deficiency in what follows. Since there is no single English word which can possibly do justice to the multifarious semantics of *furor* as unfolded in Chapter 1 and expanded thereafter, I have been forced to make do with various stand-ins (“madness,” “frenzy,” “rage,” “disordered passion,” etc.) whenever I have needed to refer to the whole constellation of meaning without making *furor* itself still more odious by tedious repetition.⁹⁰ This is an unavoidable problem, and so wherever I may seem to be over-determining the sense of the general term, I must simply ask for the reader’s indulgence and understanding.

II. Prospectus

Chapter 1 investigates the multiple identities of *furor* in pre-Augustan Latin before examining its hugely influential profile in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, a topic which has attracted no small controversy over the past century of classical scholarship. In Chapter 2, the works of Vergil’s imperial successors—Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Silius Italicus, and Valerius Flaccus—testify to the immensely productive potential of the *furor*-theme, as each epic emphasizes a different combination of semantic fields in accordance with its own poetic goals. This is always done in

⁸⁹ Mastrangelo (2016) 35, channeling Hinds (1998).

⁹⁰ Poinssotte (1979) 152n543 also laments this problem, which is no easier to overcome in French.

close connection with a poetic re-fashioning of the cosmos, in imitation of (or in pointed opposition to) the *Aeneid*. Chapter 3 explores the Church Fathers' adaptation of *furor* and its cosmic significance from Roman rhetoric embedded in classical prose and verse. The Old Latin (pre-Vulgate) translations of the Bible are also presented as a key *comparandum* for the Fathers' use of *furor*, and as an illustration of a striking (if not exactly common) semantic field which reappears later in some of the biblical epics: *furor* as the holy wrath of God. Chapter 4 illustrates the importance of epic madness in the first biblical epic, the *Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor* of Juvencus, and its close relationship to the *furor* formulated by the Church Fathers. Proba's mid-fourth-century *Cento Virgilianus* is also discussed according to its own unique methodology, and as a reservoir of comparative insights into Juvencus' interpretative strategies and those of his later successors. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a full analysis of the *furor*-theme in what is generally considered to be the most accomplished of the biblical epics, the *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis* of Avitus, Bishop of Vienne and "epitome of the classically and patristically educated Christian of Late Antiquity."⁹¹

⁹¹ Nides (1993) 123.

CHAPTER 1

The Meaning of Madness and Vergil's *Aeneid*

High winds worse within
Began to rise, high passions, anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord; and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent:
For Understanding ruled not, and the Will
Heard not her lore; both in subjection now
To sensual Appetite, who from beneath
Usurping over sovereign Reason claimed
Superior sway.

Paradise Lost, 9.1122-31

I. Semantics

Standard lexical tools supply us with a starting point from which to survey the semantics of *furor*, though we cannot trust them to answer all our interpretative questions. It is best to meet keywords “alive, in their native habitat,” so that as far as possible our understanding should be corroborated, and not simply decreed, by dictionaries.⁹² For *furor* and its companions, this process can supply a richer alternative to the fragmentary story told synchronically by the *OLD* or the *TLL*; the goal is a tighter grasp of the sequence of “conscious changes, or consciously different uses; innovation, obsolescence, specialization, extension, overlap, transfer.”⁹³ Resources like the *OLD* and *TLL* are of course an indispensable aid in marking out rough boundaries of semantic range and variation, despite their inability to inform us in much detail

⁹² Lewis (1967) 2.

⁹³ Williams (1985) 17.

about the “connections and interactions” between words.⁹⁴ This section will build on these lexical resources to achieve a more cohesive picture of the historical slipperiness of *furor*, before we move on to examine how Vergil’s influential designs at the head of the imperial epic tradition shaped the *furors* of biblical epic.

From very early times, *furor*, along with *insania*, was a convenient general label among the Romans for mental illness or madness, a synonym for *alienatio mentis*.⁹⁵ This usage was codified (if not much clarified) around 450 BC by the Twelve Tables, which regulated legal responsibility for the wild and potentially dangerous behaviour of the *furiosus*.⁹⁶ Horace’s famous proverb, *ira furor brevis est* (*Ep.* 1.2.62), must express the same general sense, as does Ovid when he explains the origins of a caste of self-mutilating priests called *galli* with reference to a dangerous river (*insana aqua*) in Phrygia called the Gallus: *qui bibit inde*, he warns, *furit; procul hinc discedite, quis est | cura bonae mentis* (*Fast.* 4.364-6). Similarly the younger Seneca, in one of his letters to Lucilius (*Ep.* 18.15), links *insania* and *furor* very closely. Engaging in lively dialogue with an Epicurean maxim about madness (*inmodica ira gignit insaniam*), he points out that unsoundness of mind can arise from excessive love no less than from excessive hate (*tam ex amore nascitur quam ex odio*) and that the result of immoderate anger (*ingentis irae exitus*) is

⁹⁴ Williams (1985) 19. In their studies of semantic change, Empson (1985), Lewis (1967), and Williams (1985) all begin with semantic ranges defined by the *OED*, before adding (or controverting) detail from individual authors of interest. In what follows I more or less adapt their method, using as points of departure what seem to me the most illustrative citations in the *TLL*, *OLD*, and Lewis and Short.

⁹⁵ Possible etymologies of *furo* (whence the derivatives *furor*, *furia*, *furiosus*, etc.) do not survive from antiquity, and there is no modern consensus; for a summary and bibliography see de Vaan (2008) s.v. For madness as *alienatio* in a different sense, see Padel (1995) 107-119.

⁹⁶ Cf. *New Pauly* s.v. *furor*. On the legal semantics of *furiosus*, see Lanza (1990), esp. 71-84. Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.5.11) is an important witness to this provision of the Tables. Hershkowitz (1998a) 12 remarks, “In the Roman world, lawyers got round these problems [of definition] largely by not concerning themselves with the definition of madness, but only with various legal problems arising out of it; the actual question of whether someone was mad was left for the judges of the cases to decide.” According to Alessi (1974) 88, *furor* and its cognates (*furere*, *furia*, etc.) appear very rarely in surviving Latin literature before the first century BC; it is unclear whether this is merely a function of our sample size or a true reflection of the concept’s semantic history.

furor; a word which must here correspond to Epicurus' *insania* (presumably *μανία* in the lost original). Excessive anger must therefore be avoided more for the sake of one's own sanity than for the sake of moderation (*ideo ira vitanda est non moderationis causa, sed sanitatis*).⁹⁷

Though *insania* and *furor* were often coupled this way, Cicero draws a philosophical distinction between them in his *Tusculan Disputations* (3.5.10-11). For Cicero both words correspond to Greek *μανία*, but *insanus* (closely related to *amentia* and *dementia*, 3.5.10) also connotes folly, *stultitia*, and therefore has a wider application.⁹⁸ So far this is in keeping with the famous Stoic belief that "all those who are not wise are insane" (*omnes insipientes esse non sanos*),⁹⁹ a notion that Cicero applied with enthusiasm to his political opponents.¹⁰⁰ In Cicero's view however *furor* corresponds better to *μελαγχολία* than to *μανία*, but the Latin word is superior since it lacks the limiting physiological association with black bile and makes room for more complex emotional motives (*iracundia, timor, dolor*).¹⁰¹ Cicero supposes that the Twelve Tables employ *furiosus* rather than *insanus* because the latter word (including the accessory notion of *stultitia*) did not mean a person who was so far out of his mind as to be incapable of managing his own daily affairs, as did *furiosus*. *Furor*, by contrast, is a "total blindness of the

⁹⁷ In *De ira* (also cited in Hershkowitz [1998a] 7), Seneca equates anger directly with madness; *ira* is described as *furens* (1.1.1), and those controlled by it (*furentes*, 1.1.3), are insane (*non esse sanos quos ira possedit*). On madness in Seneca see Motto (1970). The idea of madness as a consequence of extreme passions goes back at least as far as Aristotle, *Nich. Eth.* 1147A15.

⁹⁸ Cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 11-12. In the *Timaeus* (86b), Plato had classified both madness (*μανία*) and ignorance (*ἄμαθία*) as types of foolishness (*ἀνοία*). On madness in Plato see Dodds (1951) 64-101; Simon (1978) 166-79; and Padel (1995) 82-9.

⁹⁹ This is one of the notorious "Stoic paradoxes," and an idea which (if Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.9.6 is to be credited) goes back to Socrates himself, as Cicero notes. For more on the paradoxes and relevant bibliography see Graver (2002) 82 and Wallach (1990).

¹⁰⁰ Gill (1997) 233.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Graver (2002) 81: "Cicero objects to the term *melancholia*, literally 'black-bilioussness,' on grounds that it implies mental derangement is caused only by an imbalance of humors (of brain chemicals, we would say) and not by a person's whole emotional history." See also Taldone (1993). Putnam (1990) 31 connects Cicero's discussion here to the interpretation of the *Aeneid*.

mind” (*mentis ad omnia caecitas*, *Tusc.* 3.5.11). He goes on to say that whereas the wise man is immune to *insania*, since as a *sapiens* he cannot fall prey to *insipientia/stultitia*, he can nevertheless fall under the influence of *furor*—“though it seems worse than *insania*.”¹⁰²

Elsewhere however Cicero uses the two words together rather more casually. Describing Verres’ distress at being deprived of the chance to steal some silver plate from a provincial, he says that the governor “seemed to everyone to lose his mind and rave” (*insanire omnibus ac furere videretur*, *Ver.* 2.4.18); that is, he was so distraught he behaved like a madman.

As Cicero’s fastidious discussion of *furor* and *insania* suggests, the relationship between behaving like a madman and actually *being* one in antiquity was often as ambiguous as it is now.¹⁰³ The variety and general inadequacy of repeated attempts to define madness in ancient as well as modern times is baffling.¹⁰⁴ Madness is apparently a paradox:

It is outside the boundaries of comprehension, yet it is also a necessary component of comprehensibility. It is outside discourse, yet can only be understood and described by being placed in some sort of discursive content in the form of models and metaphors. Any model or metaphor is inadequate to express madness, yet it is only by means of models and metaphors that it can be thought about or written about. These models and metaphors are as varied as the forms of madness itself.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² On Cicero’s understanding of *melancholia* in this passage, see Kazantzidis (2013), 245-264. Augustine disagrees with Cicero’s assessment in an interesting passage on madness (*Civ.* 22.4).

¹⁰³ This is not to say that the ancient Romans had no concept of merely *feigning* madness. Plautus’ character Menaechmus Sosicles, after being accused of insanity, decides to turn the charge to his advantage and play the part: *Quid mihi meliust, quam quando illi me insanire praedicant, | ego me adsimulem insanire, ut illos a me absterream?* (*Men.* 831-2); see Zanini (1984). Shakespeare’s Polonius elucidates the problem with his customary sagacity: “Mad call I it; for, to define true madness, | What is’t but to be nothing else but mad? | But let that go.” (*Ham.* II.ii.89-91). Polonius’ description of Hamlet’s feigned (?) descent into madness seamlessly blends the emotional and physiological; after his rejection by Ophelia, says Polonius, Hamlet “Fell into a sadness, then into a fast, | Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness, | Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension, | Into the madness wherein now he raves” (II.ii.147-50).

¹⁰⁴ See Hershkowitz (1998a) 1-16 for a concise summary of this problem. She gives three main methodological categories according to which madness is most often defined: (1) “neurobiological models, which seek the roots of disorder of the mind in dysfunctional mechanics of the body”; (2) “societal models...[which] see madness as a product of dysfunctional interpersonal relationships” (between humans or between humans and gods); and (3) “psychological models...[which] see madness as a product of dysfunctional mental processes within the individual.” Attempts at definition in antiquity largely followed one or a combination of the same three models.

¹⁰⁵ Hershkowitz (1998a) 13. Padel (1995) 137 makes a similar point.

Furor, as one of the primary Latin signifiers for this protean concept, necessarily partakes of its vagaries. Our standard lexical resources all distinguish between the very general sense of *furor* as “madness” and another sense: “violent, excessive, irrational passion” (where “irrational” includes behaviour which is seemingly rash, obsessive, or self-defeating).¹⁰⁶ This is a frenzy most often and predominantly animated by rage (which “does most outside damage”),¹⁰⁷ but also sometimes by love, hatred, sorrow, greed, terror, envy, or a combination of emotions. In one place Cicero recalls being moved by the vivid performance of an actor who seemed to embody both Telamon’s helpless grief and at the same time his bitter wrath: *iratus furere luctu filii videretur* (*de Orat.* 2.46.193). No reader of Latin love elegy can fail to notice the related use of *furor* to illustrate love, lust, anger, or jealousy (or a fusion of the above) in Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid,¹⁰⁸ and this sense of the word is well represented in Horace when Damasippus lampoons the hapless poet’s lusty *puellarum, puerorum mille furores* (*S.* 2.3.325).¹⁰⁹ In many such examples, *furor* freely functions as a kind of synecdoche for the extreme emotions which provoke it. The effect—the loss of rationality that *results* from an excessive indulgence in

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *TLL s.v. furo* or *furor* (“*i.q. cupiditas, amor, libido...avaritia, aviditas*”), *OLD* (“to rage with anger, hatred or similar passions”; “passionate desire, furious longing”); *L&S* (“to be madly in love with”; “the fierce passion of love”). I am also indebted to Esther Eidinow’s article *s.v.* “Madness” in the *OCD(4)* for some elements of this composite definition. As she points out, understanding what the Romans inconsistently called *insania* is a slippery business. It is instructive to compare the use of words like *morbis* and *sanus* in philosophical discussions of madness (e.g. the example from Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*) with the physiological approach of Celsus, for whom *insania* is both an affliction of the mind and a *corporis adfectus* (3.18).

¹⁰⁷ Padel (1995) 238.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. Catullus 15.14, 68.129; Propertius 1.1.7, 1.4.11, 1.5.3, 1.13.20; Tibullus 1.6.74; Ovid *Am.* 2.2.13, *Ars* 1.281, 342, *Ep.* 9.145; cf. Horace *Carm.* 1.13.11, 1.25.14, and 3.27.36. Cairns (1974) 102 calls this “one of the commoner notions of erotic poetry.” See Cucchiarelli (2012) on *Ecl.* 10.22 for more on elegiac madness, and Hardie (2016) 10-14.

¹⁰⁹ On *eros* as a type of madness in Greek tragedy see Padel (1995) 163-66. See also more generally Mazzini (1990).

unbridled passion—is often substituted for the cause (*ira* or *dolor* or *amor*, the specific passions themselves).¹¹⁰

Thus *furor* caused by lust that is careening out of control can be used as a virtual synonym for *libido*, and by the same intuitive process *furor* can mean nearly the same thing as *avaritia*, or *cupido*, or *luctus*, or (in epic perhaps most commonly, as we shall see) *ira* and *indignatio*, depending of course on the context. With frequent use along these lines *furor* seems to have steadily expanded its semantic range across a variety of genres and situations, until it could comfortably stand in for nearly any of the frenetic expressions of extreme feelings which are wont to overthrow a person’s rational faculty, and take up its “grand comprehensive role as dramatized metaphor of human passion.”¹¹¹ But the process of broad semantic transference cuts both ways.¹¹² Not only do intense *ira* and *amor* often acquire a veneer of madness from their habitual association with *furor*, but the original connection of *furor* with *insania* is occasionally weakened almost out of existence by its persistent association with *ira*. When *ira* and *furor* serve as near-synonyms, the context may empower either one or the other as the dominant influence on its range of meaning in a given passage, though in general *furor* seems to resist subordination more often than *ira*.

The dictionaries assume that in its secondary sense (“irrational passion”), *furor* is madness only metaphorically or by resemblance; it is not literally what we might today call clinical insanity (“sickness” in Lewis and Short) but something that *looks* very much like it. This is an intuitively appealing approach, since it seems sensible to allow the ancients at least as much

¹¹⁰ *TLL* s.v., B.A.3: *transfertur ad ipsos affectus*. Cf. Alcaraz and Perez (2005) 645.

¹¹¹ Putnam (1995) 273.

¹¹² Cf. Padel (1995) 164: “There are several conditions or experiences to which madness is assimilated...Madness is seen in terms of them. But they are also seen in terms of it.”

metaphorical flexibility in their speech as we allow to ourselves when we say that someone is “madly in love” or “crazed with grief,” and indeed it is analogous to other sorts of ancient hyperbole.¹¹³ We must also be alert to the danger, however, of imposing an artificial and characteristically modern distinction onto ancient evidence that is sometimes ambiguous on precisely these points.¹¹⁴ Madness was defined inconsistently, usually with reference neither to duration—mad people could move unpredictably into and out of lucidity, and their condition was not assumed to be permanent¹¹⁵—nor to exclusively physical, as opposed to emotional phenomena.¹¹⁶

Not all of the examples cited by the *OLD*, *TLL*, or Lewis and Short for this sense can definitively be declared free from the implication that the *libido* or *amor* or *odium* in question is so excessive as to indicate actual (rather than merely metaphorical) madness.¹¹⁷ Temporary or

¹¹³ One thinks for example of the humorous use of *perii* (“I’m finished!”) in Plautus. Propertius seems to speak hyperbolically this way using both *furor* and *perire* at 1.4.11-12: *haec sed forma mei pars est extrema furoris; | sunt maiora, quibus, Basse, perire iuvat*. For other common examples in contemporary English see Padel (1995) 194.

¹¹⁴ Padel (1995) 194 sensibly warns: “with any interpretation across cultures, it is risky to think we know when ‘mad’ is hyperbolic, and when not.”

¹¹⁵ See Padel (1995) 34-46. Cicero (*Ac.* 2.88) writes about how a person whose madness has “subsided” would think that the visions he saw must be false (*cuius furor consederit putare non fuisse ea vera quae essent sibi visa in furore*). In the same vein, Jerome famously (and erroneously) describes Lucretius as writing his magnificent poem in the lucid periods between fits of madness caused by a love potion, before his supposed tragic suicide (*Chron. Ol.* 171): *postea amatorio poculo in furorem versus, cum aliquot libros per intervalla insaniae conscripsisset...propria se manu interfecit*. Celsus divides *insania* into three types, partly according to duration: that which accompanies fever and is usually of short duration (*breve esse consuevit*, 3.18.2) but sometimes becomes *continua dementia*, persisting beyond the initial febrile stage (3.18.3); melancholy *insania*, which *spatium longius recipit* (3.18.17); and a third type which he calls *longissimum*, arising either from phantoms (*imagines*) or *desipientia animi* (3.18.19); but in no case does he assume that *insania* is a permanent condition. On the other hand, the much later medieval grammatical tradition in the so-called *Differentiae Ciceronis* (sometimes informally called the *inter metum* after its incipit) explains the difference between *furor* and *insania* thus: *inter furorem et insaniam hoc interest, quod furor temporale vitium est, insania perpetua* (Keil [1870] 279).

¹¹⁶ This is well illustrated by the physician Caelius Aurelianus (5th cen.; cited in Hershkowitz [1998a] 3), who offers a vague definition: [*alienatio mentis*] *quibusdam vehemens, quibusdam levis, et aliis alia specie atque visu differens, virtute tamen atque genere uno confecta. nam furor nunc iracundia, nunc hilaritate, nunc maestitudine sive vanitate occupat mentem, nunc timore comminante inanium rerum* (*De morb.* 1.150).

¹¹⁷ Padel (1995) 194: in tragedy hyperbolic expressions “all suggest common ground with real madness: showing where the perceived boundaries of normal behavior lie.”

permanent, physical or emotional, or some combination of these—often we cannot exclude madness altogether from uses of *furor* involving “irrational passions” simply because they may be more hyperbolic than our own customary usage, which tends to lay greater weight on more limited physiological (or “scientific”) definitions of madness.¹¹⁸ When someone claims to be “insanely jealous” or “mad with desire” in our own age, it is nearly always colorful hyperbole, but the corresponding idioms in Latin seem more often to have retained something closer to their literal force.¹¹⁹ In his *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero remarks *est aliquis amor...qui nihil absit aut non multum ab insania* (4.72), and a little later his prescription for the person possessed by love (or lust) makes the same point: *maxime autem admonendus est, quantus sit furor amoris* (4.75). Even when Cicero says in a very different context that Verres “seemed” to rant and rave in the eyes of his proconsular staff (*insanire...ac furere...videretur*) with unbridled *cupiditas*, the orator hardly means to exculpate him from the charge of genuine criminal insanity. Instead Cicero “transfers the word suggestive of mental deviation and abnormality to the sphere of politics”¹²⁰ in order to impugn Verres’ basic humanity—that is, his capacity for rationality—along with his moral character.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Lowe (2008) 428: “sharp distinctions between the ‘psychological’ and the ‘physiological’ are a modern phenomenon; the ancient perspective was more holistic.” See also Padel (1995) 157-62.

¹¹⁹ This is not to deny that the Romans spoke hyperbolically about madness, too; it is rather to emphasize that according to their rather different idiom of insanity, obvious exaggeration is harder to identify than in ours. Cf. Alessi (1974) 2-3: “The Romans often labeled various personal and cultural characteristics as forms of madness which we in the modern world would not so designate. For example, occurrences of religious ecstasy, mantic possession, violent love, or political extremism are commonly portrayed as mental derangements or deviation...”

¹²⁰ Alessi (1974) 211; cf. also 154-58. Cicero explicitly accuses Verres of *insania* (*Ver.* 2.2.35), *amentia* (2.1.2) and *furor* (e.g. 2.1.3)—all arising from his frenzied *cupiditas*—throughout the speech. The exaggerated portrait which emerges is of a man who is not just unusually avaricious, but dangerously unbalanced. His derangement will spread if not contained: Cicero suggests that if the jury fails to convict Verres, they will be contaminated by the same madness for crime (2.5.153). Cicero also frequently accuses Catiline, Clodius, Antony, and other political opponents of *furor* throughout his speeches, but the word usually describes what Cicero views as genuine irrationality and is rarely a simple slur; it is “blindness to constitutionality and social order” (Alessi [1974] 213). This is well illustrated by *Pis.* 47.12: *Quid est aliud furere? non cognoscere homines, non cognoscere leges, non senatum, non civitatem.* For a useful summary see Alessi (1974) 149-214.

In an interesting inversion of this sense, *furor* could also express madness induced by extraordinary external pressures.¹²¹ Prophets, poets, and Bacchantes are often represented as experiencing a loss of self-control and the suspension of their rational faculties, but not because of their own grief or anger or unbalanced humors;¹²² they endure temporary frenzy while subject to supernatural possession. Catullus vividly describes the power of the goddess Cybele to drive mortals mad with unearthly *furor*, exercised upon the unfortunate man Attis, who bewails “her” transformation by castration into a “Maenad” in a brief moment of lucidity (63.69).¹²³ She has unwillingly become the leader of the *Galli furibundi*, Cybele’s priests, and the poem ends with the renewed onset of madness in the form of one of the goddess’ lions (63.74-93). Catullus also presents to us true Bacchic possession (64.254-55) and Cupid sowing *furores* in unsuspecting Ariadne’s *imae medullae* (64.93).¹²⁴ Propertius’ Tarpeia, plagued with frenzy (*furiae*) from Venus, rages (*furit*) like a Bacchant on the banks of the Thermodon (4.4.68-71).

Soothsayers suffer this kind of imposition, too. In Cicero’s treatise on divination, he notes that a well-developed power of *praesagitio* (“foreknowing”) is really a kind of *furor*, when the soul is inflamed from without by a divine impulse (*Div.* 1.66). The classic case is Cassandra, whose characteristic epithet was *furens* (1.85; so also in Propertius, 3.14.65). As Cicero notes, even Aristotle admits that those who rave with mental illness (*valetudinis vitio furerent*, *Div.* 1.81) possess an uncanny ability to foretell the future. Poets likewise become natural conduits for

¹²¹ Not that internal and external pressures are mutually exclusive; as Putnam (1995) 250 notes, *furor* often manifests a certain duality which is both “externally instigated and internally triggered.”

¹²² This is not to deny, however, that internal and external factors frequently coincide and resemble one another. Cf. Padel (1995) 164: “Passion, like divinity, changes things, inside and outside.”

¹²³ On the madness of Attis see Noé (1990) and Foster (2008).

¹²⁴ Interestingly, for all his embellishment of these *furores* Catullus never uses the word of his own turbulent affair with Lesbia (Alessi [1974] 148).

madness: nobody can be a great one *sine furore* (*Div.* 1.80).¹²⁵ Pacuvius, who wrote the scene with Telamon that had so captured Cicero’s imagination, could not possibly have been in a “calm and relaxed” state of mind (*leni animo ac remisso*) when he composed it (*de Orat.* 2.193). Catullus combines amatory and poetic *furor* when he recounts a night of fevered composition in which, fired by the wit of his friend Licinius and by erotic infatuation (*tuo lepore | incensus...facetiisque*, 50.7-8), he tossed and turned, tormented by *furor* (11) and unable either to eat or sleep until he had produced something worthy of his fellow poet—the object of his intense passion. Horace’s reference to the poetic *amabilis insania* induced in him by Calliope or the *Camenae* (*Carm.* 3.4.5-6) belongs here as well,¹²⁶ as does Damasippus’ sarcastic denunciation of Horace’s *rabies*-inspired poetry, which plays on the same trope: *quae [poemata] si quis sanus fecit, sanus facis et tu* (*S.* 2.3.321-2). Poets were already *male sani* when Liber enlisted them in his merry ranks (*Ep.* 1.19.3), and Ovid draws a vivid comparison between his poetic *furor*, which rages unbidden even in exile, and the wild possession of a Bacchant (*Tr.* 4.1.43-8). Like the Bacchant’s frenzy, Ovid’s mysterious poetic passion brings consolation and forgetfulness of human woes (*quiddam furor hic utilitatis habet*, *Tr.* 4.1.38).¹²⁷ Long before the time of Isidore, the *vesania* and *furor* of the *poeta-vates* were a commonplace of critical discussion (*Etym.* 8.7.3).

Furor was also used metonymically in an objective sense, to describe a person or thing that inspires madness or frenzy in others. Thus Propertius claims that his anger (*ira*) against Cynthia

¹²⁵ For this notion Cicero relies on the authority of Plato and Democritus. He repeats the sentiment at *De Orat.* 2.194, and again in somewhat weaker form at *Arch.* 18. In Plato he presumably thinks of *Phaedrus* 245a, and perhaps *Ion* 533a-534a.

¹²⁶ On this see Altimiras (1953).

¹²⁷ Of course, a long night of riotous drinking will do the same thing for you: so Horace *Carm.* 2.7.26-8, where *furor* and *bacchabor* describe wine-soaked celebrations. Ammianus Marcellinus reports a “saying of Cato” (*Catoniana sententia*) to the effect that drunkenness was a voluntary form of *furor* ([sc. *ebrietatem*] *quam furoris voluntariam speciem esse...definivit*, 15.12.4).

for her coldness toward him will not be so great that he will become a source of rage (lit. “a *furor*”) to her in turn: *non ita saeva tamen venerit ira mea, | ut tibi sim merito semper furor* (1.18.14-15).¹²⁸ This usage may also help explain *Furiae* and *Furores* as names for what the Greeks euphemistically called the Eumenides, the Erinyes or Furies.¹²⁹ Though the Latin goddesses do not correspond precisely to their Greek counterparts,¹³⁰ Cicero nevertheless equates the *Furiae* with the Eumenides (*speculatrices credo et vindices facinorum et sceleris, N.D.* 3.18.46). After Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* these dread goddesses became permanently associated with madness in both tragedy and epic, and the Roman *numina* to which Cicero links them embody something of an enigma; they inspire—and experience¹³¹—*furor* so intensely that they are sometimes hard to distinguish from mere personifications or the abstraction itself.¹³² As Lowe has shown, the “ontological ambiguity” of the *Furiae* already developing in Cicero’s day becomes particularly conspicuous in the Augustan poets.¹³³ Modern editors of classical texts often intervene to clarify this puzzle, capitalizing *furiae* when it seems to refer specifically to the anthropomorphized goddesses.¹³⁴ This is an interpretive decision, sensibly grounded in

¹²⁸ In a related sense Vergil’s Gallus uses *furor* metonymically for “lover,” i.e. “someone who drives me mad [with desire]” at *Ecl.* 10.38; on that passage see Coleman (1977) *ad loc.*.

¹²⁹ It is unknown to us precisely when *furor* was first used for “Fury”; outside epic see e.g. Horace *Ep.* 5.92 for this usage.

¹³⁰ Lowe (2008) 423. Lowe summarizes: “Roman literature brings about an overall shift in the symbolic value of the Furies: though specifically avengers of familial crime in Greek myth, they became avengers of all crimes in the underworld and on earth, instigators of (‘fratricidal’) war, and eventually all-purpose symbols of foreboding or funereal horror” (423n45). Alessi (1974) 7 makes a similar point. See also Thuile (1980) 9-16.

¹³¹ Lowe (2008) 423 calls them “medio-passive”; that is, experiencing themselves “the effects they enact upon their victims.” See also Hardie (1999) 96 and Padel (1995) 142. Feeney (1991) 163 contrasts Euripides’ Lyssa, “an interesting case of a divine agent of madness who remains rational, emancipated from her characteristic effect.”

¹³² Cf. Pausanias (8.34.1), who thought the Greek Μανίαι (“Madnesses”) worshipped near Megalopolis were more or less the Eumenides by another name.

¹³³ Lowe (2008) 415. See also Lyne (1989) 28-9.

¹³⁴ Feeney (1991) 381 calls this a “post-medieval” problem.

contextual clues, and if named or described *Furiae* are already active in the immediate environment and the word seems to denote personal agency, the choice will seem persuasive enough to most readers.¹³⁵ Thus, if editors are justified in intuiting a distinction, the *Furiae* can sometimes be distinguished from *furiae* in a vaguer sense, as the “semi-metaphorical”¹³⁶ representations of internal passions.

These latter (lower-case) *furiae* are brilliantly captured by Rubenbauer, author of the *TLL* entry for *furia*, with the phrase *de affectibus quos Furiae excitant*. They are nearly identical to *furor* itself, but appear more rarely, and—in a sense that is hard to define—convey something more concretized than *furor* but less personal than the supernatural *Furiae*. These *furiae* behave more like objects or beasts than like people; like goads or gadflies, they plague and scourge their unfortunate victims, who are invariably described by words like *actus*, *agitatus*, *accensus*, or *impulsus*. They are feral, embodied emotions: witless, malignant, and sub-human. A generation before the *Aeneid*, Cicero gives us a fascinating glimpse into the semantic transference then in progress between “*Furiae*” and “*furiae*”. In a speech against his bitter political enemies Piso and Gabinius, Cicero gloats over the fact that, thanks to a resolute senate, they have now been tarred with the public opprobrium they deserve. Their subsequent behaviour has even exceeded his prayers in its shamelessness, “for it had never occurred to me to pray for the frenzied lunacy (*furor et insania*) into which you have fallen.”¹³⁷ He continues (*Pis.* 47):

Atqui fuit optandum; me tamen fugerat deorum immortalium has esse in impios et consceleratos poenas certissimas. Nolite enim ita putare, patres conscripti, ut in scena videtis, homines consceleratos impulsu deorum terri furialibus taedis ardentibus: sua quemque fraus, suum facinus, suum scelus, sua audacia de sanitate ac mente deturbat; hae sunt impiorum furiae, hae flammae, hae faces. Ego te non vaecordem, non furiosum, non mente captum, non tragico illo Orete aut Athamante dementiorem putem...?

¹³⁵ Lowe (2008) 419 dryly and rather unfairly quips that editors thus “defend us from a powerful ambiguity.”

¹³⁶ Lowe (2008) 423.

¹³⁷ *Pis.* 46. The translation here and following is that of Watts’ Loeb (1931), lightly modified.

And yet I might well have prayed for it; but I had forgotten that such [*furor* and *insania*] is the most inevitable of all the penalties ordained by the immortal gods against the wicked and the impious. For you must not imagine, Conscript Fathers, that, as you see happen upon the stage, impious men are hounded by the blazing brands of the Furies sent against them by the gods. It is a man's own crime, his own sin, his own guilt, his own effrontery which unseats his mind from its sanity. These are the furies, these the flames, these the brands that hound the wicked. Must I not account you senseless, frantic, demented—madder than the Orestes of the Athamas of tragedy...?

I have capitalized one set of *furiae* and not the other in the translation to highlight the distinction Cicero draws between the goddesses, represented on stage as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* with flaming brands¹³⁸ and sent by the gods to terrify and torment evildoers, and the allegorical representation of wicked men's crimes (*fraus, facinus, scelus, audacia*). But one could just as well write "Furies" (with or without quotation marks) in both cases; Cicero's point is to supplant the stock deities of tragedy with rationalized, psychologized counterparts.¹³⁹ He makes the same point in his *De legibus* (1.40), where he says guilty men pay penalties, not so much at the hands of the courts,

sed ut eos agitent insectenturque furiae non ardentibus taedis, sicut in fabulis, sed angore conscientiae fraudisque cruciatu.

but rather the Furies torment and pursue them, not with blazing torches, as in the tragedies, but with the anguish of remorse and the torture of a guilty conscience.

If only the second passage had survived, we might interpret Cicero to be saying merely that the supernatural Furies torment evildoers with psychological terrors rather than with blazing torches. Read in tandem, on the other hand, the passages suggest that Cicero inclined toward making metaphors of the Furies altogether. In this sense he anticipates the blurring of ontological boundaries that we find in Vergil and Ovid some decades later, where both *Furiae* and *furiae* rage impetuously across the epic landscape.

¹³⁸ I take *furialibus* in *furialibus taedis ardentibus* as an unproblematic equivalent for *furiarum*; cf. the near match in *Q. Rosc.* 67 (*furiarum taedis ardentibus*). For further support of this reading see Nisbet (1987) on *Pis.* 47.

¹³⁹ Cf. Lucretius (3.1011). See also Alessi (1974) 150.

The battlefield may in some ways be the consummate setting for human *furor*, because of both the central significance of warfare in Roman civilization and the unparalleled trauma that armed, mass frenzy inflicts on human life. Though *furor* does not seem to have been used very frequently to describe the emotions of combatants on the battlefield before the Augustan age,¹⁴⁰ it is attested as a collective mad lust for war at least once before the *Aeneid*. This is an impulse that is political as well as martial, a drive toward civil strife. An example from Cicero's letters may or may not be representative of contemporary political terminology; certainly it fits his own longstanding pattern of characterizing his personal political enemies as madmen. In the final anxious days before the full onset of civil war, Cicero's rhetoric takes on a harder edge as the real possibility of slaughter in the streets draws ominously nearer. Cicero recounts for Tiro the circumstances of his withdrawal from Rome at the advance of Caesar in 49 BC (*Fam.* 146.2):

equidem, ut veni ad urbem, non destiti omnia et sentire et dicere et facere quae ad concordiam pertinent. sed mirus invaserat furor non solum improbis sed etiam iis qui boni habentur, ut pugnare cuperent, me clamante nihil esse bello civili miserius. itaque, cum Caesar amentia quadam raperetur...urbem reliquimus, quam sapienter aut quam fortiter nihil attinet disputari.

From the day I arrived outside Rome [after returning from Cilicia], all my views, words, and actions were unceasingly directed towards peace. But a strange, frenzied desire for war had taken possession of not only the rascals but even those who pass for honest men, while I cried aloud that civil war is the worst of calamities. Therefore since Caesar was being swept along by some madness...we abandoned the city, how wisely or how courageously it is pointless to argue.¹⁴¹

The connotation of *furor* here is obviously negative: the decision of Pompey and his party to fight rather than continue to work for peace is itself a calamity, to say nothing of the horrors yet to come. This characterization of events is consistent with Cicero's self-image as a champion of *pax* and *concordia*,¹⁴² and in the next sentence the *furor* of those in Rome is seen to correspond,

¹⁴⁰ I have been unable to discover a single pre-Augustan example, though this may of course be due to the vicissitudes of transmission.

¹⁴¹ The translation is Shackleton Bailey's (2001), with significant modifications.

¹⁴² E.g. *Fam.* 146.5.

tragically, to the bellicose *amentia* of Caesar, to whom Cicero is quick to attribute madness elsewhere.¹⁴³ The *furor* of sedition and of civil war, often combined with (but not always the same as) battle frenzy, will play an important role in the *Aeneid*, a work “haunted by a spectre of the disorder of the previous decades.”¹⁴⁴

Before the period during which Vergil was working on his epic, however, other evidence for *furor* in a martial context is scarce. In the last three decades BC, in the literary milieu which shaped and was shaped by Vergil’s poetry, a new application of the word seems to have become more common: martial zeal, a complex blend of intense anger, alert prowess, and competitive ambition sometimes experienced by soldiers and warriors in the classical imagination.¹⁴⁵ This is not what Tibullus describes when he passionately condemns warfare (1.10.33) and dangerous hunting expeditions (3.9.7-8) as *furor*, since in his poetry they are mad only in the sense that they constitute wretched—and irrational—substitutes for a life of *otium* devoted to love and the enjoyment of the beloved (with all limbs intact). Martial *furor* may instead be glimpsed allusively in Propertius’ witty comparison of his lover Cynthia, seized by a jealous rage (*furibunda*), to a hero or army on the warpath, capturing cities, claiming spoils, and haughtily entertaining desperate supplications (4.8). We see it again more explicitly in Horace *Carm.* 1.15, in which Nereus issues a dire prophecy to Paris of the evils to come at Troy. He will be preyed upon by the *rabies* of Pallas (11) and pursued by Teucer and Sthenelus, heroes skilled in the arts

¹⁴³ He is ready to convict Caesar of being a *homo amens* at *Fam.* 145 if he plunders Rome; at 146.4 Caesar will be guilty of *insania* if he presses on toward the city.

¹⁴⁴ Hardie (2016) 4. On *furor civilis* see Franchet d’Espèrey (2003).

¹⁴⁵ “Berserker”—a term often casually connected to this kind of *furor* in Vergilian scholarship—may be a misleading label for those seized by such emotions, since that term itself apparently possessed shifting nuances in its original Norse context. Its semantic field seems to have covered a wide spectrum ranging from “elite fighter” to “feral madman.” See e.g. Blaney (1972) 1-8 and *passim*, and Samson (2011). In the classical context note the judgment of Griffin (1980) 92, “We are not dealing with berserkers in the pages of Homer.” See also Shay (1994) 77-99.

of war (*sciens pugnae*, 24-5), together with Diomedes, who “rages” (*furit*) to find and kill him (27-8). Collectively their wrath and martial prowess will dog him after the theft of Helen, and Horace’s detailed engagement with the *Iliad* (especially obvious in a proliferation of epithets, including Tydides’ famous appellation *melior patre*), makes it clear that he is translating for a Roman audience the characteristic battlefield behaviour of the Homeric hero.

Studies of the language surrounding “battle-rage” in Homer (especially the key verb *μαίνομαι*) have suggested that the terminology used in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to describe the anger of heroes focuses on the destructive effects of their wrath, as observed especially by their enemies, rather than on their state of mind. Such heroes “may display extraordinary courage, stamina and coordination, may pursue objectives with remarkable purpose and fail to be distracted by most threats to their courage or even physical wounds,” in marked contrast to “the frenzied, bellowing, foaming, ill-disciplined berserker that many assume.”¹⁴⁶ Horace’s portrayal of Paris’ encounters with raging Greek heroes, focalized by Nereus through Paris’ own eyes (cf. *respicis* 22, *nosces* 27), seems to correspond to this more careful reading of *μαίνομαι*, and focuses on the threat the heroes pose to Paris (their enemy) rather than on insanity or lack of mental self-possession *per se* (quite the contrary, as shown by *sciens pugnae*). *Furor* here, as often with *μαίνομαι* in Homer, denotes a heightened level of *μένοϛ*—forceful, passionate energy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Chandler (2009) 17. See also Saïd (2013) 369, who comes to a similar conclusion. Hershkowitz (1998a) 137 views things slightly differently, asserting that “the majority of times madness terminology is employed in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* it is for pejorative purposes in character speech”; but she also notes that “rarely does a Trojan call a Trojan mad, or an Achaean similarly address an Achaean” (137) and that “madness is always an external attribute in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and as such has little bearing on one’s understanding of the internal state of the individual. What counts is someone’s behaviour, as seen and judged by others...” (139). Cf. Padel on *μαίνομαι* (1995) 23-29.

¹⁴⁷ On the relationship between *μένοϛ* and *furor*, cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 144. In the first-century *Ilias Latina*, a hexameter epitome of Homer attributed to one Baebius Italicus, *furor* sometimes corresponds to occurrences of *μαίνομαι* in the *Iliad* (e.g. Scaffai [1997] 292, on l. 424) and mostly refers to simple battle-rage; there is never any subtext of madness and the focus is usually on the actions rather than the mental states of the characters. Cf.

Two other contemporary usages are worth considering. In Livy's history a body of troops is twice characterized by *furor*, in the sense of *studium pugnae*. In the first case (7.33), Roman soldiers are fired by anger (*accensi ira*, 14) and by the sight of their courageous commander leading a charge (*hoc spectaculo accensi*, 12) while fighting the Samnites. They rout the enemy, who later attribute their defeat to the terrifying countenance of the Roman troops: *oculos sibi Romanorum ardere visos aiebant vesanosque voltus et furentia ora* (17). As in Propertius' and Horace's poems, this picture of mad rage is seen through the eyes of an enemy (or victim). Though Livy tells us that the soldiers were driven by *ira*, the Samnites' report need not be taken as evidence that the Roman troops were actually out of their minds with wrath, but only that they seemed so to their opponents; Livy in fact emphasizes the well-ordered discipline of both sides until the Samnites flee in terror. The description is focalized from an external viewpoint and emphasizes the devastating *effect* of Roman arms rather than real frenzy or madness on the part of those wielding them.

In another Livian passage a ferocious attack on Roman lines by soldiers from the city of Astapa, an ally of Carthage, described as an *impetus hostium iratorum*, is fuelled by reckless, even "mad" daring: *caeci furore in volnera ac ferrum vecordi audacia ruerent* (28.22.14). Here the emotional state of the attackers, driven to desperation by the grave peril of their wives and children, is clearly relevant to Livy's use of *furor*: the battle is fought with more passion than order (*acrior impetu atque animis quam compositior ullo ordine pugna fuit*, 28.22.13).¹⁴⁸ Yet even in this example, *furor* on the battlefield is seen primarily in terms of its effect on the other side—that is, the stiffening of shaky Roman resolve, as Livy emphasizes their lack of preparation

however lines 854-5, where Achilles is described just after the death of Patroclus as *accensus furiis* (in clear imitation of Vergil's Aeneas) just before he asks Thetis for arms with which to pursue Hector.

¹⁴⁸ On Livy's use of *furor* and *insania* to describe foreigners who challenge Rome see Thompson (1965).

and surprise at the unexpected sally from the city. Though the anger of the Astapians is unusually fierce (they “bore a particular hatred against the Romans over and above the exigencies of war”¹⁴⁹) it remains within the pale of the *ius belli* so long as it is vented only against other armed men, *in armatos repugnantesque* (28.23.1-2). But after losing the battle, the townsmen go on to slaughter their own wives and children in order to preempt outrages at Roman hands (*nihil relinquerent in quod saevire iratus hostis*, 28.22.10), which Livy pointedly calls “a despicable and debased deed” (*facinus...foedum ac ferum*, 28.22.6). In perpetrating on their own initiative the *saevitia* they fear from the Romans, the town’s defenders act like wild beasts (*ferum*).

Thus *furor* in the sense of “fierce battle rage”—understood to be within the acceptable bounds of warfare—can be motivated by the mad *furor* of suicidal savagery, which is emphatically beyond those bounds. Livy’s account is careful however to distinguish between the legitimate *ira-furor* of soldiers caught up in a high-stakes fight and the barbarous *feritas-furor* of men who put their own relations to the sword. Even if the former is motivated by the latter, each calls for a different, contextual moral judgment. The conceptual nuances of Livy’s diction illustrate the possibility in Augustan times of using *furor/furere* in a focalized, martial sense (perhaps best captured by the English word ‘rampage’), even as it shows this sense coexisting and interacting with older ones (e.g. *saevitia, odium, insania, feritas*).

In still another sense, animal savagery and the violence of nature were also described by *furor* and its cognates, presumably on account of the universal human tendency to invest inanimate processes and living creatures of all kinds with human qualities. Madness and extreme emotions caused people to behave like instinct-driven animals, or to reproduce the destruction inflicted by storms; therefore it was an easy step to invert the comparison and describe natural

¹⁴⁹ Translated by Frank Garder Moore (1949). Livy’s phrase is *extra necessitates belli praecipuum in Romanos gerebant odium* (28.22.3).

phenomena in emotive terms. Thus when Latin writers use *furor* of animals and nature, it is usually in symbolic connection with human affairs. In Roman literature the tradition is already a very old one by the time of Phaedrus, who uses the word in one of his fables to describe a fight between bulls over the sovereignty of the herd (*de principatu...gregis*), as observed by frogs who rightly conclude that the bigger animals' fury will have consequences for them, too: *ita caput ad nostrum furor illorum pertinet* (1.30.11). Of course, these are anthropomorphic bulls and talking frogs, and the context is hardly natural history. But the humour of Phaedrus' fable depends on the resemblance between human madness and more literally bestial *furor*, the absence of reason by nature rather than by catastrophe, as in the elder Pliny's retrospective account of an aggravated elephant in games sponsored by Pompey nearly a century before (*Nat.* 8.20). Even here, however, anthropomorphizing is the rule: Pliny reports that the audience watched the elephant toss weapons in the air "as though it did so by skill and not in brute frenzy" (*velut arte non furore beluae*), and he himself recounts a few sentences later how the huge animals aroused the pity of onlookers by their very human distress and supplications (8.21). This is corroborated by a contemporary letter of Cicero on the same games (*Fam.* 7.1.3) in which the orator records that the audience felt a certain compassion (*misericordia quaedam*) for the animals, as well as a vague intuition that there was something human-like about them (*quaedam belvae cum genere humano societas*). The other side of the coin here, however, is the fear that the very non-humanity of beasts, or of nature, or for that matter of divinities and demons, can engender;¹⁵⁰ they may rage like madmen, like disordered human beings, but they are not really human. They may share dangerous violence with us; but they may just as convincingly lack, for example, the

¹⁵⁰ Padel (1995) 141-44.

capacity for compassion and rational restraint that (sometimes) reassuringly characterize the human race.

In the context of natural phenomena, Catullus uses the phrase *caeli furor aequinoctialis* to evoke the raging storms of winter (46.2), and in Horace the constellation Leo rages (*furit*) at the peak of the scorching summer heat (*Carm.* 3.29.19), uniquely combining the weather- and animal-related senses in one image. Lucretius employs *furor* very effectively in this way in the *De Rerum Natura*, where ferocious winds, volcanic eruptions, thunderstorms, and even iron filings (agitated by a magnet) can be imagined as natural expressions of frenzy.¹⁵¹ Although the evidence is slight, it seems Ennius may have pioneered this usage in his archetypal Roman epic.¹⁵² If so, it is ultimately Ennius (together with Lucretius) that we must credit with at least partial inspiration for the sophisticated uses to which *furor* is put in countless animal and weather similes in later classical epics.

II. The Vergilian Turn

Epic—which I have so far omitted in my abridged overview of the semantics of *furor* in Latin literature—presents in fact the richest vein of material, a body of evidence so plentiful and self-reflexive that it seems better to treat it separately and on special terms. This approach is naturally suggested by the relatively clear generic boundaries which contain and shape epic,¹⁵³ as

¹⁵¹ Cf. 1.275 (wind), 2.593, 6.687 (volcanic eruption), 6.111, 6.367 (thunderstorms), and 6.1045 (filings).

¹⁵² See Alessi (1974) 5-16 for an analysis of the two surviving examples. Alessi does not think Ennius used the word frequently, but this is pure speculation. Servius (*A.* 1.51) points out that Vergil's *furentibus Austris* alludes to Ennius' *furentibus ventis* (frg. 601 Skutsch), and Alex Hardie (2000) 109-10 is inclined to see this as evidence for the antiquity of the "elemental *discordia*" theme which is so closely bound up with *furor* in the epic tradition.

¹⁵³ This is not to deny of course the steady progression of generic mixing in Vergil and his successors. Ovid and Claudian, whose hexameter works have resisted easy classification, are high-profile examples. On generic

well as by the passage from Avitus with which we began the chapter. How did the poets of Latin epic, with whom the Bishop of Vienne implicitly claims some continuity, use *furor* and its cognates? What range of meaning was possible for an interpreter of *furor* in a later age, when immersion in the classical epic tradition was the *sine qua non* of poetic ambition? Against what patterns might fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-century innovations be measured? The remainder of this chapter will begin to answer these questions through a consideration of the paradigmatic semantics and thematic significance of *furor* in Vergil's *Aeneid*, setting the stage for an investigation in the next chapter of how Vergil's successors manipulated this complex concept. Before turning to the *Aeneid* itself, however, we will briefly consider important new developments in the generation of Latin poets preceding Vergil's, already hinted at in the synchronic and thematic survey of the semantics of *furor* above. As Hardie points out, "a significant part of a history of rationality and irrationality in Augustan poetry might indeed be written through an account of the reception" of Lucretius and Catullus, to whom we will turn in a moment.¹⁵⁴ In the last decades of the republic leading up to the literary efflorescence of Augustus' reign, *furor* exhibits not only a fascinating complex of meanings but also a new flexibility of expression that exerts a decisive influence on the *Aeneid*.

Of all the thematic keywords which run like golden threads through the epic tradition—*virtus*, *pietas*, *salus*, *spes*, etc.—the group represented by *furor* and its derivatives (*furere*, *furibundus*, *furialis*, *furia*, etc.) appears the most often in imperial Latin epic, roughly five hundred and sixty times.¹⁵⁵ Its clear status as a major theme—perhaps *the* major theme—of the

boundaries and the *Metamorphoses*, see e.g. Farrell (1992, 2004), Keith (2002), Feeney (1991) 188, and Baldo (1986); on Claudian see Ware (2012) 18-31.

¹⁵⁴ Hardie (2016) 31.

¹⁵⁵ *Fides* is the runner up (about 500 times), followed distantly by *spes* (c. 370) and the rest of the pack.

Aeneid and of Latin epic generally is a scholarly commonplace.¹⁵⁶ Due to the paucity of our evidence for pre-Vergilian epic, however, it is impossible to judge its relative importance in the genre on the eve of the Augustan age. As we noted in the last section, Ennius and Lucretius probably set important precedents for the range of *furere* and its cognates.¹⁵⁷ *Furere* and related words in *De Rerum Natura* describe not only turbulent natural phenomena, but also turbulent human emotions, including above all the mad erotic passion which Lucretius characteristically likens to a sickness.¹⁵⁸

This polysemous synthesis of different aspects of *furor* within a single work (the natural and human, the physical and emotional, the violent and erotic) clearly exercised lasting appeal among later Latin poets. The tendency to link the violence of nature and of animals to disordered human passions is characteristic of Latin epic, especially after Vergil, and statements about this tendency in the *Aeneid* could just as well be applied to the *Bellum Civile* or *Thebaid*: “The frenzy of the hunting animal, the passion of love and the emotions of the warrior, the poet seems to say, are the same—immoderate and indiscriminate.”¹⁵⁹ In Lucretius the first signs of the developing “inner grammar”¹⁶⁰ of *furor*—its subtle semantic fusion of a wide range of manifestations of

¹⁵⁶ E.g. Johnson (1976) 142, which speaks of the central focus on “cosmic unreason and of human efforts to combat that unreason”; Tarrant (2012) 86: “The tension between the need to restrain violence and its capacity for overwhelming that restraint is one of Virgil’s pervasive themes”; Fratantuono (2007) 397: “if Virgil’s epic has any one overarching theme, it is the questioning of Jupiter’s announcement that Madness, *Furor*, would be chained up.” See also Lyne (1989) 178-9, Boyle (1986) 88, and Sachs (1972) 86.

¹⁵⁷ See Alessi (1974) 89-128.

¹⁵⁸ Lucretius 3.824-9; Alessi (1974) 95. Mazzini (1990) 41-2 traces the history of this trope in dialogue with ancient medical texts. Hershkowitz (1998a) 17 notes that the language of sickness is most prominently connected to Vergilian madness in the figure of Cacus (8.219-20).

¹⁵⁹ Stephens (1990) 114.

¹⁶⁰ For the concept of “inner grammar” and verbal equations in general see Empson (1985) 84-100.

chaos and emotional excess—emerge. At the same time, the language of *furor* and its retinue of associated words expands to incorporate new elements.

Lucretius' verbal associations of *furor* with *rabies* (4.1115-17), *fremitus/fremere* (1.275; 5.1064-5), *ardor/ardere* (2.592-3; 4.116-7), and *saevire* (1.275-6) may have had a lasting influence.¹⁶¹ His diction, though clearly natural enough, constitutes a noteworthy contribution to the evolving language of epic madness in its own right.¹⁶² Whether Catullus imitated his contemporary or simply drew independently on a common stock of conventional vocabulary,¹⁶³ the *furor* of his poetry looks much like it does in Lucretius and seems to have had a disproportionately large influence on Vergil's language. In poem 63 *furor* and *rabies* twice appear together not as synonyms in apposition (as in the *DRN*) but as twin components of a single phrase that vividly expresses the inspired madness of Attis (*furenti rabie*, 4; *rabidus furor*, 38).¹⁶⁴ The lion which embodies Cybele's punitive *furor* (78) drives Attis in headlong flight with its roaring (*fremitus* 82, *fremit* 86), and both the lion and its victim are *rabidus* (85, 93), with Attis herself rendered *demens* (89) by the pursuit. Less commonly, Catullus uses *vesanus* (absent from the *DRN*) to describe the half-crazed lover or his passion (e.g. 6.10, 100.7), and in one

¹⁶¹ Some of the poetic verbal associations discussed here may have actually begun with Ennius, in one of whose fragments (recorded in Cicero, *Div.* 1.66) we find *rabere* and *dementia* connected in a description of Cassandra (*furor* does not appear). The pairing of *furor* and *rabies* may go back further as well, to judge from the closely linked popularity of *rabies* and *insanus* in Roman comedy (which does not itself feature *furor*). See Alessi (1974) 10, 13; 110. On *saevus* and *saevire* see Alessi (1974) 120-1. In his commentary on Avitus, Hoffmann (2005) 274 notes the Lucretian vintage of the *furor/rabies* collocation.

¹⁶² A quick glance at the *TLL*'s list of appositives and other verbiage frequently associated with *furor* underscores this point: there were many options. The list of choices for describing madness *stricto sensu*, however, is neither long nor particularly appealing. Besides the vocabulary mentioned in this chapter we might adduce *saevitia* (occasionally), *vecors/vecordia*, *excors*, *delirare/delirus*, *desipere*, periphrastic phrases like *mente alienatus* or *mente captus*, and a Grecizing group which includes *bacchari* as well as ungainly technical terms like *phreneticus*, *lunaticus*, *cerritus*, and *cerebrosus*. On *bacchari*, with particular reference to Vergil, see Bocciolini Palagi (2003).

¹⁶³ On the (ultimately uncertain) possibility of mutual poetic influence between Lucretius and Catullus, see among others Frank (1933), Ferrero (1949), and Skinner (1976).

¹⁶⁴ I am indebted to Alessi (1974) 139 for some of these examples.

place uses the cognate participle to characterize his own anger (over some purloined possessions), which he implicitly compares to a raging storm-wind (*vesaniens ventus*, 25.13). In poem 64, Ariadne rages with heart aflame (*ardenti corde furens*) in her abandonment, and a key phrase in her complaint to the Eumenides links *furor*, *ardor*, and *amentia* (197).¹⁶⁵ Elsewhere bacchants are said to “rave with frenzied minds” (*lymphata mente furebant*, 254).¹⁶⁶ Hardie effectively sums up the precedent-setting, polysemantic texture of Catullan *furor*:

The instances of *furor* words in Catullus 64 forge links between spheres that are also conjoined in Augustan poetry: the *furor* of love...of Bacchic ecstasy...and of politico-social chaos, in the poem’s closing description of a state of social breakdown that is often taken to refer to the conditions of the decade preceding full-blown civil war at Rome (405).¹⁶⁷

Later, in Propertius, an elegiac “vocabulary of aberration”¹⁶⁸ similar to Catullus’ clusters around *furor*, including *amentia* (1.1.7, 11) and *dementia* (1.13.20). Gallus is *insanus* for wanting to experience the *furores* of Cynthia (i.e., the pain of rejection by her, 1.5.1). In the third book Cynthia herself is *furibunda* because of her passionate *amor* for the poet (3.8.7, 10). Her voice and hand are *insana* (3.8.2, 8), her tongue is *rabida* (3.8.11), she is like a possessed Maenad (*maenas ut icta*, 3.8.14), and she suffers *dementia* because of lovesick nightmares (3.8.15). In 4.8, once again *furibunda* (52), she rages (*saevit*, 55) and the whole street resounds with her *insana vox* (60). Propertius also occasionally uses *vesanus* (of a stormy sea, 1.8a.5; of violent

¹⁶⁵ *Furor atque amentia*(/*dementia*) is a favourite formula of Catullus’ other contemporary, Cicero, who associates *furor* with a wider (and not surprisingly, more litigious) range of words, including *cupiditas*, *crudelitas*, *audacia*, and above all *scelus*. Cf. for example *Q. Rosc.* 62.12, 67.1; *Ver.* 2.1.7, 2.4.38, 2.5.139; *Clu.* 15.8, 191.8; *Dom.* 144.11; *Har.* 39.2 (*dementia*); *Phil.* 5.37, 13.43 (*dementia*).

¹⁶⁶ The rare word *lymphatus*, derived through *lymphare* (“dilute with water; drive mad”) ultimately from *lympa* (“water-nymph”), seems to have acquired its alternative sense from association with divine possession by aquatic *numina*; the *OLD* compares it with Grk. νυμφόληπτος (“nymph-caught”). For an ancient etymology see Varro *L.* 7.87.

¹⁶⁷ Hardie (2016) 31.

¹⁶⁸ Here I apply a phrase of Alessi’s (1974) in a different context.

grief, 2.9a.10; of limitless love, 2.15.29), a word kept current and connected to *furor* by Horace (*Epode* 3.29.19) along with the recherché *lymphatus* (*Odes* 1.37.14).

In these examples we can detect the formation of a conventional verbal constellation, a typical word-pattern or “semantic cluster”¹⁶⁹ that achieves its definitive shape in the *Aeneid* and maintains a recognizable coherence through the many imitations and innovations of post-Vergilian epic.¹⁷⁰ The special affinity of Vergil’s *furor*-language with that of Roman love elegy becomes obvious once one applies a filter based on the cluster loosely comprised of *rabies/rabidus*, *saevire*, *insanire/insanus*, *amens/demens/-tia*, *vesania/-us*, *fremere/fremitus*, *ardere/ardor* and *lymphatus*.¹⁷¹ Such a cluster can open up for us a picture of madness in Latin epic that is more comprehensive than one obtained by investigating *furor* alone, and my method throughout this and the following chapters, while still privileging explicit occurrences of *furor* itself, will rely on this broader perspective to highlight epic madness where it may be less immediately obvious. Latin poets before Vergil did not apply the special vocabulary surrounding *furor* and its cognates to one type of madness or rage only, but by the time of the *Aeneid*’s composition the cluster already embraced bodily sickness, passion-induced insanity, supernatural possession, and animal *feritas*. Indeed, the *Aeneid* marks a major development in the history of *furor* and madness in Roman literature due not only to its immense influence on the diction, themes, and tensions explored by later writers but also to its unprecedented exploitation of the

¹⁶⁹ I have pilfered this term of art from Paschalis (1997), who defines it more narrowly.

¹⁷⁰ For the sake of space I will not treat here the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, which are adequately discussed by Alessi (1974) 227-241, Boyle (1986), Dion (1993) 391-400, and now Hardie (2016) 6-10. Alessi (1974) 242 judges that “*furor* is not a consistent thematic link” in Vergil’s earlier works, but Boyle (1986) 88 suggests otherwise.

¹⁷¹ On multiple occasions Boyle (1986) 88, 90-3, 106-7 comes close to articulating a verbal group similar to mine (including *amens*, *fremere*, *ardere*, *desaevire*, *accensus*, which he calls “*furor* terms”). Braund and Gilbert (2003) 281 mention *furor*, *rabies*, *saevire*, and *amens*; Alcaraz and Perez (2005) 645 list a similar group.

entire semantic range of the root and its associated verbal constellation.¹⁷² Vergil's poem embraces every shape of *furor*: the raging of natural forces, the savagery of beasts, the unbridled passion of love, the lawless frenzy of revolution, the terror of supernatural possession, the awesome spectacle of mantic vision, and the uncanny delirium caused by *Furiae* and *furiae*.¹⁷³

In addition to these more-or-less established uses, there is a new and pronounced emphasis on the *furor* of battle frenzy.¹⁷⁴ This meaning of the word seems to have matured in Vergil's lifetime. As we saw in the previous section, it also appears in Propertius, Horace, and Livy, where it expresses the focalized effects of rampaging martial zeal in the Homeric mold. In the *Aeneid* this Homeric background—every Roman poet's common cultural inheritance—attains a striking prominence perhaps unrivalled in later Latin literature until Silius Italicus' *Punica*. This is particularly true of the second half of the poem, when prophecies of ultimate Trojan recovery are subjected to the hard trials of heroic combat in the shadow of an opponent twice called “another Achilles” (6.89-90, 9.742). Vergil's epic design called for a re-animation, from a distinctly Roman worldview, of battle scenes and bellicose emotions drawn from the heroic past.¹⁷⁵ This design necessarily brought into close and complex contact the divine *furor* of Juno (a destabilizing threat to Aeneas' Trojans and thus to the future Roman order) and the *furor* of

¹⁷² Alessi (1974) 89: “Vergil...does not limit the denotation of the word [*furere*]. In the *Aeneid*, *furere* assumes a combination of aspects, all suggesting madness or irrationality, not necessarily applied only to politics, love, or violence.” Cf. Boyle (1986) 88: “it can be used to refer to hysteria, rage, insanity, bloodlust, passion, love, anger, and the behaviour to which they give rise—wild, mindless, destructive, violent.”

¹⁷³ E.g. (Nature:) 1.107, 5.694, 10.37, 10.694; (Beasts:) 7.479, 9.60-6, 9.340-1, 12.9; (Love:) 4.69, 78, 101, 433, 532 etc.; (Revolution:) 1.149-50; (Possession:) 3.443, 6.49, 80, 100-2, 262; (*Furiae/furiae*;) 4.376, 7.392, 8.205, 494, 12.101 etc.

¹⁷⁴ This emphasis and its development in later Latin epic seems to go beyond its Homeric inspiration; cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 153, “The battle madness of Diomedes, Hector, and Achilles becomes a far more widespread and more accepted, or at least expected, phenomenon on the battlefields of Vergil, Statius, Valerius, and Silius.” Hershkowitz thinks that battle madness is “arguably the only form of madness truly indigenous to epic poetry,” though she believes it was mediated between Homer and Vergil by Greek tragedy (25 and n98).

¹⁷⁵ See Anderson (1957) and Knauer (1964). On Vergilian *furor* as *mēnis* see Muellner (2012).

love and battle (the feverish intensity of elegiac devotion and Homeric *aristeia*).¹⁷⁶ Here too the boldness of Vergil's innovations is striking: though Homeric μένος anticipates Vergilian *furor* in some ways, the latter exerts a pervasive thematic influence throughout the *Aeneid* which far surpasses the relative importance of its Iliadic precedent.¹⁷⁷ The various kinds of *furor* at work in Vergil's poem and their complex relationships to one another pick up where Lucretius left off in building up a novel and compelling inner grammar of Roman madness.¹⁷⁸

In all, *furor* or one of its cognates occurs 98 times¹⁷⁹ in the *Aeneid*; *furor* itself (the noun) is most often associated with Dido (14x), Turnus and Aeneas (6x each), Amata (3x), and the Cumaean Sibyl (3x).¹⁸⁰ There is a rough overall parity between its application to each sex (30 times of women, 26 of men) and between its use in the two halves of the epic (32:24), but closer inspection reveals some clear (and not entirely unexpected) inequalities: in the first six books, *furor* is used twice as many times of women as of men (22:10), but the reverse is true of the last

¹⁷⁶ Fowler (1997) 34: in Vergil “the binary opposition within the soul between reason and emotional disturbance is consonant with the wider ideology of the *Aeneid*, with its stress on the imposition of order in the state and the world through forceful action, whether by Aeneas, Augustus, or Jupiter...”

¹⁷⁷ Hershkowitz (1998a) 144. Lyne (1989) 111 is instructive here: “Much of Vergil's battle narrative of fighting is demonstrably imaginative and ‘other’: poetical in diction, and content. He needs to establish that his warriors are not mere legionaries...But if Vergil is to induce us to see in the war a reflection of our own civil war, he must also anchor its combat in our reality.” *Furor* accomplishes both goals by evoking Homeric battle rage and the *Furor impius* of civil war. By contrast Cairns (1989) 83 resorts to special pleading in order to dissociate Aeneas' battle *furor* from *furor* of any other kind: “Being *furens* in battle, if it is Aeneas who is in this state, is equivalent to being righteously angry.” This reasoning is akin to Richard Nixon's claim that “it is not illegal if the President does it.”

¹⁷⁸ Hardie (2016) 14 anticipates me here: “Aeneas is impelled by a *furor* born of affect-laden *pietas* and of *amor patriae*; Dido by the *furor* of love and then of hatred and despair; Turnus by a *furor* fuelled by self-regard, *superbia*, and, once more, *amor*. Again we perhaps rarely stop to think how unusual it is for all the major characters in an epic to be afflicted by an intensity of emotion that verges on, or spills over into, madness.”

¹⁷⁹ This count includes all forms of the noun *furor* and the verbs *furere* and *furiare*, including their participles, as well as *furialis*, *furibunda*, and *furia/Furia*. Dion (1993) 406 records 56 occurrences of *furor* alone. I rely on Dion's tables for the figures which follow.

¹⁸⁰ Compare with the figures of Farron (1985) 621, who counts *furiae* and *furor* together.

six books (8:16).¹⁸¹ Four people (Dido, Turnus, Aeneas, and Amata) collectively account for more than half of the total.¹⁸² *Furiae/furiae*¹⁸³ appear more often in the second half of the poem than in the first (6:8) and more often plague men than women (10:4). Most of the occurrences of *furor* in the earlier part of the poem appear within carefully bounded set-pieces (Aeneas fighting at Troy, Dido spurned, Amata attacked), while those in the later books occur at more regular intervals and alternately figure in the fate of both major and minor characters before the climactic death of Turnus. Interestingly, in contrast to the Homeric pattern of madness language (μαίνομαι, λύσσα, μαργαίνω, etc.), *furor*, its cognates, and associated terms appear nearly as frequently in narrator-text as in character speech; in Homer the balance is heavily weighted toward character speech.¹⁸⁴ This in keeping with what has been called Vergil's "more subjective narrative style."¹⁸⁵

In the *Aeneid* more often than in earlier Latin poetry, words drawn from the semantic cluster centered on *furor* tend to flock together, but even when they do not, it is frequently easy to discern their closely connected use in passages which elaborate upon or recapitulate one another. We also frequently find *dolor*, *amor*, or *ira* lurking in the immediate environs, words well within "the range of the passions which are indistinguishable from madness."¹⁸⁶ These emotions can be hard to distinguish from *furor* not so much because they are synonyms for *furor*

¹⁸¹ For more detailed interpretations of these gendered differences than I can provide here, see e.g. Keith (2000).

¹⁸² Dion (1993) 407.

¹⁸³ Vergil seems at times to exploit the ambiguous relationship between *Furiae* and *furiae*; see Tarrant (2012) 21n81. On the *Aeneid*'s Furies in general see Thuile (1980) 17-48 and 286; Putnam (1990) 27-9.

¹⁸⁴ Hershkowitz (1998a) 139n49. Hershkowitz's list of associated terms includes only *amens*, *demens*, *insanus* and their cognates.

¹⁸⁵ Hershkowitz (1998a) 139n49.

¹⁸⁶ Hershkowitz (1998a) 154.

(as *rabies* or *insania* can be) but because they frequently appear as *causes* of *furor*, and hence they too help weave the subtle verbal texture of epic madness.¹⁸⁷ In Book 1 Aeolus, ruler of *loca feta furentibus Austris*, suppresses with his *imperium* the unruly *ira* of resentful, roaring winds (*indignantibus...fremunt*, 1.55-6). About a hundred lines later, in the poem's first simile, the seditious crowd "rages" (*saevit*, 149) before *furor* supplies arms,¹⁸⁸ and later in the book *Furor impius* itself "roars" (*fremet*, 296) behind bars. At Troy, Sinon so thoroughly deceives the Trojans that despite Laocoon's warning that it would be *insania* to accept the horse within the gates (2.42), they are too blinded by *furor* in the end to resist (2.244). In this they ironically imitate the disastrous (and fictitious) *dementia* of Sinon that supposedly caused him to provoke Ulysses and drove him into their arms in the first place (2.94). The air around the city is so thick with the threat of madness that Sinon wears it like camouflage.

While Aeneas frantically (*amens*, 2.314) takes up arms during the city's subsequent fall and surrenders himself to *ardor*, *furor* and *ira* (316), he passes Panthus (also *amens*, 321) before kindling the hearts of his companions with *furor* (355). Like wolves blinded by savage hunger (*ventris rabies*, 357) they set upon unwary Greeks in a frenzy, just as raging warriors in later books will crush their prey like lions driven by *vesana fames* (9.340, 10.724). Following Aeneas through the city we meet Coroebus, the tragic suitor of Cassandra, twice: at first appearance he is *insano...incensus amore* (2.343) and thus an ironic match for his bride, who is afflicted by madness of another sort (*sponsa furens*, 345). At the second meeting he finds death with a *mens furiata*,¹⁸⁹ mimicking the indignant rage of Cassandra as he sees her dragged off with her own

¹⁸⁷ Compare Cairns (1974) 106, which asserts that *ira* and *furor* are "almost synonymous" in Propertius 1.1, as elsewhere in classical literature.

¹⁸⁸ On the thematic importance of this simile for *furor*, see Beck (2014).

¹⁸⁹ The participle of *furiare* is first attested in Latin in the *Aeneid*. Austin (1964) on 2.407 and Farron (1985) believe it is Vergil's coinage; cf. *OLD* and *TLL* s.v.

spirit ablaze (*ardentia lumina*, 405). With supernaturally enlightened eyes Aeneas later beholds *saevissima* Juno leading the divine assault and raging (*furens*) against the city undisguised (2.612-3). At the end of Book 2 Aeneas is again *amens* (2.745) as he searches madly (*quaerens et sine fine furens*, 771) for the lost Creusa, whose shade finally upbraids him for indulging in *insanus dolor* (776), echoing his mother Venus (*quis indomitas tantus dolor excitat iras? | quid furis?*, 2.594-5). In the next book the unexpected appearance of Aeneas at Buthrotum drives Andromache almost out of her wits (*arma amens vidit*, 3.307; *furens*, 313).

Much later, Dido, rendered *demens* (4.78) by Aeneas' storytelling, burns (*ardet*, 4.101) and rages out of her mind (*saevit inops animi*, 4.301) with *furor* (300); in her dreams she retraces the desperate footsteps of *demens Pentheus* and Orestes *furiis agitatus* (469-71) and wonders, too late, what *insania* has overtaken her (595). Across the sea in Italy, a land Jupiter had characterized as "howling with war" (*bello fremens*, 4.229), Amata, already burning (*ardens*) with *ira* at 7.345 and afflicted with *furor* by Allecto (348, 350), cannot be restrained but *sine more furit lymphata per urbem* (377), roaring like a wild beast (*fremens*, 389).¹⁹⁰ Allecto herself is seized with fury when Turnus insolently rebuffs her, and she issues a terrifying reply from her *ravidum os* (451). The Rutulian is overwhelmed in his turn by *furor*, and his bloodlust is thick with the vocabulary of frenzied emotion as he rages within like water boiling in a cauldron (7.460-2):

arma amens fremit, arma toro tectisque requirit;
 saevit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli,
ira super...

¹⁹⁰ See the brilliant insights of Feeney (1991) 168 on Amata: "What happens to Amata is understandable and it is not understandable. She feels, she is, responsible; she does not feel, is not, responsible. She at once seems and does not seem, to herself and to the reader, to be acting 'normally'...this symbiosis of the concrete and the hallucinatory fantastic catches at something central to the experience of madness. By laying bare the impossibilities of adequately narrating such extremes of behaviour, this technique involves the reader in the recognition of our inability to understand madness in others, or acknowledge it in ourselves."

For arms he madly shrieks; arms he seeks in couch and chamber; lust of the sword rages in him, the accursed frenzy of war, and resentment crowning all...¹⁹¹

Soon all Ausonia is set aflame (*ardet*, 7.623) by Juno and the Italian cavalry squadrons storm across the land (*furit*, 625) in anticipation of the battles to come. Later Turnus' fury will cost the Trojans dear as he rejoices in the slaughter (*sed furor ardentem caedisque insana cupido | egit in adversos*, 9.760-1), and near the poem's conclusion his burning desire to meet Aeneas on the battlefield is vividly expressed: *his agitur furiis, totoque ardentis ab ore | scintillae absistunt* (12.101-2). Examples could be further multiplied. It should be easy to conclude from this brief selection, however, that even if every line of the *Aeneid* which contains some form of *furor* or *furere* had been lost in transmission, the dense gloom of rage, madness, and disordered passion which envelops so many pivotal passages would scarcely be dispelled.¹⁹²

III. Cosmos and Delirium

Several specialized studies have dedicated sustained attention to the semantics of *furor* and its fellow travelers in Vergil,¹⁹³ and the word and its connotations have attracted intense debate.¹⁹⁴ This is because the interpretation of *furor* in the *Aeneid*—and above all of Aeneas'

¹⁹¹ All translations of the *Aeneid* are from the revised Loeb of Fairclough (1999).

¹⁹² Boyle (1986) 126-32 also identifies a constellation of images evocative of *furor* (including "serpent, fire, wound, and storm") that signals its presence, and would still do so even if *furor* were removed.

¹⁹³ The place to start is Hardie (2016) 1-34; see also Muellner (2012), Alcaraz and Perez (2005), Boccioni Palagi (2003), Hershkowitz (1998a), Dion (1993), Thomas (1991), Potz (1991), Korpanty (1985), Schenk (1984) 189-287, Scott (1978), Farron (1977), and Alessi (1974). Hejduk (2009) relates Vergilian *furor* to the aims and desires of Jupiter.

¹⁹⁴ Virtually everyone who has written on central interpretative questions in the *Aeneid* in the last 150 years has addressed the interpretation of *furor* (and *pietas*) on some level; Galinsky (2006) 17 aptly calls the endless critical wrestling with interpretative questions left open by Vergil "the real *imperium sine fine*." In what follows I can only refer to a small selection of the relevant literature. Of the many disputants, Michael Putnam has probably written

execution of Turnus while *furiis accensus*—emerged as a focal point of disagreement between the rival interpretations of Vergil’s poetry which have dominated scholarship on Roman epic for decades. Bypassing the litany of disputed and misleading names for these viewpoints,¹⁹⁵ we may simply summarize them with respect to the core issue.¹⁹⁶ On the one hand are **(A)** those who view Aeneas’ *furor* at the end of *Aeneid* 12 as ultimately justified, mitigated, necessary, or in some other way qualitatively different from that of Turnus, Juno, Allecto, et al. (or from Aeneas’ own *furor* in *Aeneid* 2).¹⁹⁷ These critics usually emphasize contextual differences which seem to invite contrasting moral judgments. Vergil’s contemporary philosophical milieu, or at least a careful attempt to reconstruct it, has also figured largely in such arguments.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand are **(B)** those inclined to view Aeneas’ *furor* as of a piece with the rest, in thematic and intertextual terms, and therefore as either **(B1)** ambivalent and expressive of human fallibility or, more radically, **(B2)** actively subversive of Roman identity and imperialism.¹⁹⁹ The **(B)** camp often emphasizes meta-literary and conceptual resonance between the various appearances of *furor* in the poem (the “sonar” method)²⁰⁰ to suggest the plausibility of an implicit negative

more on the *furor* theme than anyone else in a century, and it plays a role in an astonishing number of his voluminous publications.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. optimistic/pessimistic; triumphalism/failure; Augustan/anti-Augustan; Bivocalism/New Augustanism; and of course European/Harvard Schools. Nearly all of these labels have fallen victim to various attempts to sidestep or redefine the debate.

¹⁹⁶ Galinsky (1997) 95, exasperated by what he sees as an over-emphasis on the significance of Aeneas’ final scene, calls it a “red herring.”

¹⁹⁷ E.g. Pöschl (1962), Hardie (1986), Conte (1986), Cairns (1989), Galinsky (1994).

¹⁹⁸ Preeminently Galinsky (1994), but see also Thornton (1976), Erler (1992), Wright (1997); for different views on philosophy in Vergil see Farrell (2014), Kronenberg (2005), Braund and Gilbert (2003), Fowler (1997), Putnam (1990).

¹⁹⁹ For “B” readings see (e.g.) Parry (1963), Putnam (1965), Johnson (1976), Boyle (1986), Lyne (1987), Thomas (2001), Tarrant (2012).

²⁰⁰ So called, with more than a little skepticism, by McKay (1997) 519; it “targets phrases and usages, episodes and characters, a procedure that is attentive to common resonances in different contexts and which synoptically excites

moral judgment in *Aen.* 12. The implicitness of any narratorial judgment on Aeneas' final act, whether positive or negative, is taken for granted by most interpreters, whatever their views²⁰¹— it is generally agreed that the poet leaves the choice of judgments and sympathies to his readers, and indeed that this invitation to interpretation is one of the clearest signs of the work's greatness. The fundamental disagreement which divides many of those readers, however, cannot be easily settled by a simple appeal to the text or to the historical setting.²⁰² To tackle the whole question anew here is beyond my means and beside my purpose. It will have to suffice simply to note with little argument that in general I find the “ambivalent” interpretation of Aeneas' final act (B1) more convincing than the others.²⁰³ It informs my reading of madness in the epic, which may be summarized as follows.

All the poem's manifestations of madness are linked to one another by the *Aeneid's* central preoccupation with order and chaos on a cosmic scale.²⁰⁴ Everyone and everything is implicated in the birth of universal Roman *imperium sine fine*, a theme of such exalted dimensions that it forcefully unites each of the disparate semantic environments in which *furor* had been invoked by earlier authors (love, war, prophecy, nature, etc.). The fundamental significance of *furor* for

awareness of contemporary, sometimes competing, discourses on issues of consequence in antiquity.” McKay regards this method as essentially a New Critical one, but this is an oversimplification.

²⁰¹ Cf. for example Putnam (1990) 24, Horsfall (1995) 197, and Galinsky (1994) 192.

²⁰² So Fowler and Fowler (*OCD4* s.v. Vergil).

²⁰³ I identify with the view of Tarrant (2012) 24: “...one might say that Aeneas does the right thing (or the necessary thing) but does it in a terrifying way. ‘Optimist’ critics stress the justifications for T.’s death and downplay the manner in which it comes about, while pessimists do the opposite. But both aspects, and the tension between them, are grounded in the text, and both therefore need to be part of an adequate response to the text. Such a response, however, calls for an attitude of genuine ambivalence that is difficult, perhaps impossible, to maintain; every reader on every rereading will probably incline in one direction or another.”

²⁰⁴ In this respect my views align with Hershkowitz (1998a), Hardie (1993), and Putnam (1965). Cf. Johnson (1976) 148, who argues that the *Aeneid* countenances “the possible failure of rational order and rational freedom in the universe, in human history, and in individual existence...this intimation of the danger to rational order in the universe and rational freedom in human lives comes near to being the central *praxis* of his poem.” (148)

the *Aeneid* is symbolized in Book 1 by the unforgettable image of a bestial demon imprisoned in the temple of Janus (1.293-6), an image perhaps partly inspired by a famous painting of Apelles, displayed in Augustus' new forum:²⁰⁵

dirae ferro et compagibus artis
claudentur Belli portae; Furor impius intus,
saeva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus aenis
post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore cruento.

The gates of war, grim with iron and close-fitting bars, shall be closed; within, impious Rage, sitting on savage arms, his hands fast bound behind with a hundred brazen knots, shall roar in the ghastliness of blood-stained lips.

For the first time in epic (as far as we know) and for the only time in Vergil, *Furor* is vividly personified as the sum of all fears, the great enemy of humanity and of universal order. It will only be subdued—but not quite annihilated²⁰⁶—by the advent of Caesar and the *aurea aetas* of renewed Roman values, presided over by *Fides*, Vesta, and Romulus (1.292). For all her opposition Juno cannot prevent this final outcome (1.279-83). In its immediate context, the demon behind the gates represents the endless *bella*—particularly *civilia bella*²⁰⁷—of the *aspera saecula* which are passing away as Augustus extends his *imperium* to Ocean (287), and the closing of the temple doors alludes specifically to the *furor* of armed conflict. Nevertheless, it is not easy to distinguish the *Furor impius* of 1.294 from manifestations of Juno's frenzied rage throughout the poem, many of which are connected in one way or another to the rising strife that reaches its climax on the battlefield.

²⁰⁵ Austin (1971) *ad loc.* and Miller (1995) 292n7. Servius Danielis (*A.* 1.294) and the elder Pliny (*Nat.* 35.27, 93-94) indicate that the personifications *Bellum* and *Furor* were depicted.

²⁰⁶ Hershkowitz (1993) 106n124 notes that the final words of Jupiter's prophecy (*fremet horridus ore cruento*) are not entirely reassuring: "The figure of Furor is conquered but not silent, and it is the image of Furor, restrained but not destroyed, that ends the prophecy, not one of peace." Cf. Tarrant (2012) 27: "Even in an idealized future, the lust for violence remains unabated, and the best that can be hoped for is that it may be prevented from bursting its bonds." For a more sanguine view see Horsfall (1995) 947.

²⁰⁷ So Austin (1971) *ad loc.*

It is Juno's bloody vendetta against the Trojans that unleashes the *furor* of Aeolus' storm winds at 1.51 (through a *porta* opened by the wind-god),²⁰⁸ and it is to forestall further treachery (*Iunonia...hospitia*, 670-1) that Venus inspires the tragic love-*furor* of Dido through the insidious touch of Cupid (659-60). Dido's ominous passion will spawn future wars for Aeneas' descendants (4.629) that dwarf the initial Italian skirmishes, while Juno's implacable enmity sets ablaze the mutinous *furor* of the Trojan women and nearly destroys Aeneas' fleet (5.659). Through an *insana vates* (3.443), maddened not by *ira* but by the goad of Phoebus, Aeneas achieves the resolve he desperately needs to overcome the warlike peoples Juno mobilizes against him. The Sibyl's prophetic *furor* (6.100) compels the hero to attempt a journey that the seer herself dismisses as a madman's errand (*insanus labor*, 6.135); this is what it will take to assert his destiny in the face of implacable celestial *ira*.

But the clearest link between the monster bound in Janus' temple and Juno's frenzy occurs in Book 7, in a scene which mirrors the words and context of Jupiter's prophecy in Book 1. Juno "unleashes *furor* in and on the epic," violently contesting and (as it were) prying open again the foregone closure of Jupiter's will. Her terrible vow, *Acheronta movebo* (7.312), provocatively echoes Jupiter's majestic declaration to Venus, *fatorum arcana movebo* (1.262).²⁰⁹ Summoning the Fury Allecto to do her bidding (7.310-40), she even usurps Jupiter's famous nod (592) before

²⁰⁸ Hershkowitz (1993) 103. Cf. Hardie (1986) 93: "Virgil's winds inhabit the same moral world as the personification of *Furor* at lines 294-6, the description of whose imprisonment and irritation is clearly designed to echo the earlier description of the enclosed winds."

²⁰⁹ Hershkowitz (1998a) 97. Juno is perhaps parodying not only Jupiter's prophecy, but other moments of reassurance for Aeneas based on *fata arcana* as well (cf. 6.72, 7.123).

dramatically throwing open with her own hands the Gates of War—the same doors shut on *Furor* at 1.293ff—as Latinus retreats helplessly into the shadows (7.618-22):²¹⁰

abstinuit tactu pater aversusque refugit
foeda ministeria, et caecis se condidit umbris.
tum regina deum caelo delapsa morantis
impulit ipsa manu portas, et cardine verso
Belli ferratos rumpit Saturnia postis.

But the father withheld his hand, shrank back from the hateful office, and hid himself in blind darkness. Then the queen of the gods, gliding from the sky, with her own hand drove in the lingering doors, and on their turning hinges Saturn's daughter burst open the iron-bound gates of war.

Chronologically, Juno's powerfully transgressive act occurs long before the gates of war will be closed at Rome, when the golden reign of Augustus will finally restrain *Furor impius*. In Vergil's narrative sequence, however, she effectively reverses Jupiter's sanguine promise of order and (at least temporarily) suppresses the fulfillment of the triumphant vision of 1.293-6.

Peace and *concordia* may be Rome's ultimate future, but they are in scant supply in the second half of the *Aeneid*, which is overshadowed by the struggle between Juno and Jupiter as champions of *fatum* and *furor* respectively.²¹¹ In the course of this contest, both Juno and Jupiter seem to become agents of *ira*, and *furor* is appropriated rather than destroyed by the dictates of Fate.²¹² Key elements of the poem, like mad Turnus' brief moment of sanity and the ambiguous *Dirae* (celestial servants of Jupiter who are disquietingly similar to the infernal *Furiae*), blur the boundaries between the forces of universal order and those of cosmic chaos.²¹³ The martial *furor* which runs riot across the battlefields of Latium, exhibited by heroes major and minor, Trojan

²¹⁰ There is a great deal more to say about this pivotal scene; cf. especially Hershkowitz (1998a) 103 n105, n106, and n107 on resonances with Ennius' *Annales* (frg. 225 Sk.), Aeolus' opening of the mountain of the winds at *Aen.* 1.81-2, and the characterization of a consul's duties at *Aen.* 7.611-15.

²¹¹ Hershkowitz (1998a) 97.

²¹² Hershkowitz (1998a) 118.

²¹³ On the *Dirae* and Turnus' *furor*, see Hershkowitz (1998a) 113-122 and Hardie (1993) 73.

and Italian, is embedded in a far more highly charged ideological fabric than the traditional Homeric rampage. Mantic frenzy and disordered *eros* mingle with the madness of bloodshed.²¹⁴ Even those warriors who show no sign of the unhomeric *insania* which drives Mezentius (10.871) and Turnus (12.667; cf. 9.760) rage not only on their own account but also at the instigation and pleasure of Juno, malignant mistress of the *postes Belli*, and unwittingly serve her anti-Roman, anti-imperial ends in the cause of discord. Jupiter's decisive intervention merely coopts Juno's methods.

In the very first book, Penthesilea—an image inscribed on Juno's very temple and thus physically inseparable from the goddess' cult—signifies more than the impassioned valour attributed to her in the post-Homeric Cycle (*furens mediisque in milibus ardet*, 1.491). Her ill-omened masculine daring, expressly highlighted in the following lines (*bellatrix, audetque viris concurrere virgo*), fittingly introduces the fateful first appearance of Dido, the paradoxical female *dux* (1.364) who will meet her end *furiis incensa/accensa furore* (4.376, 697). The *furor* of both women, notwithstanding other epic or elegiac connotations, is subordinated to the will of heaven's queen, and their juxtaposition is hardly coincidental.²¹⁵

Finally Aeneas himself, in the very act of removing the final obstacle to the rise of Roman *imperium*, stands alone, *furiis accensus*, at the disconcerting intersection of heroic Achillean rampage and malevolent Junonian insanity: the *saevi monimenta doloris* and *ira terribilis* which prompt his revenge unmistakably mirror the poem's only other *saevus dolor* at 1.25-6 (Juno's hatred of the Trojans) as well as the programmatic picture of the goddess brooding over her own

²¹⁴ Boccioni Palagi (2011) 27: “furori di diverso tipo, furore bacchico femminile e furore bellico maschile, convergono e interagiscono in un'atmosfera incandescente che culmina nello scoppio della ostilità.”

²¹⁵ As has long been noticed; cf. e.g. Austin (1971) *ad loc.* For a contrary view of the meaning of Penthesilea's *furor*, see Thornton (1976) 162.

monimenta at 1.4 (*saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*).²¹⁶ Aeneas' emotions in the final scene marry the unbridled battlefield μένος familiar from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to a deeply Roman preoccupation with madness and the eternal struggle between order and chaos. The result is a new creature altogether. The complex, composite *furores* of Vergil's poem brilliantly articulate his "double-sided vision" of human suffering: internal emotional forces and external coercion (by partisan gods or impersonal *fatum*) conspire to inflict terrible physical and spiritual tragedy on both victors and victims.²¹⁷ Shortly before his violent death in the Rutulian camp in Aeneid 9, Nisus asks:

dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt,
Euryale, an sua cuique deus fit dira cupido?

"Do the gods, Euryalus, put this fire into hearts,
or does his own wild longing become to each man a god?"

We are driven to ask the same question about the epic madness which is so essential to the meaning of the poem. Nisus' question, like ours, is not answered by the poet.²¹⁸

IV. Righteous *Furor*?

At the end of her comprehensive analysis of *furor* in the *Aeneid*, Jeanne Dion wonders whether perhaps Jupiter's plan in bringing the *furor* of Turnus and Aeneas into collision in Book 12 intends a kind of mutually-assured destruction of *furores* that will clear the way for peace, justifying the terrible price paid by both warriors (death for Turnus, and moral degradation for

²¹⁶ Tarrant (2012) 336-7.

²¹⁷ Tarrant (2012) 28-29.

²¹⁸ Cf. Tarrant (2012) 29.

Aeneas).²¹⁹ According to this perspective, *furor* in the *Aeneid* may have at least a kind of instrumental value, insofar as it prepares a way through the wilderness for the *pax Romana*. Alessi's formulation is representative: "sometimes the forces of *furor* must be expediently used to destroy another representation of *furor*."²²⁰ This is "homeopathic violence" (a cure that necessarily mirrors aspects of the disease).²²¹ For better or worse *furor* is indeed essential to the Romans' self-definition in Vergil, insofar as war is "literally at the centre of Roman *imperium*" on the shield of Aeneas, where it is symbolized by a formidable group of infernal deities (including *Discordia* and the *Dirae*) ranged around Mars (who "rages in their midst," *saevit medio in certamine*, 8.700).²²² In and after the *Aeneid*, threats to this *imperium* are also represented as expressions of *furor*. Like Dion, Ware makes sense of this duality (with reference to the poetry of Claudian) by distinguishing between the "righteous *furor*" that brings peace and its opposite, mad rage that brings only chaos and dissolution. Fire must be fought with fire if *concordia* is to prevail.²²³ One basic aspect of *furor* which emerges from these treatments is compelling: its raw, provocative force is both fundamental to and relentlessly opposed by Roman *imperium*. Nevertheless, some attempts to distinguish between "good" and "evil" *furor* in individual contexts are more persuasive than others.

²¹⁹ Dion (1993) 419.

²²⁰ Alessi (1974) 268; 283. For similar views see Schenk (1984) 260, Mackie (1988) 172-4, Galinsky (1988), Cairns (1989) 67-76, 82-4, and Potz (1991). For other scholars, particularly of the (B2) camp, *furor* is far more pervasively troubling; see Putnam (1990, 1995) and Thomas (1991).

²²¹ Tarrant (2012) 20. Cf. p. 16: "It would seem that in Virgil's world madness and disorder can only be treated homoeopathically; that is, they are not overcome by their opposites, but by like forces."

²²² Ware (2012) 122. Cf. Thomas (1983) 29-30. Fowler (2009) 165 captures the paradox: the energy of *furor* is "the energy that created Rome and creates the epic; the act of control itself is not possible without the previous existence of that energy."

²²³ Cf. Zarker (1972) 41: "What sort of force is needed to defeat *furor* personified? (The old adage about fighting fire with fire comes to mind.)"

Some interpreters have challenged the practice of approaching the problem primarily through verbal repetitions and intratexts featuring *furor* (and *ira*). Through a misplaced zeal for connecting disparate contexts, they allege, some critics have mechanically flattened out the polysemantic nature of these words and ignored important distinctions between the emotions they can represent.²²⁴ In their view, this inevitably leads to the misleading conflation of all *furores* and a question-begging refusal to acknowledge even the possibility of “good” or rightly motivated *furor*. As a vocal proponent of this view has put it:²²⁵

Anger was viewed as a highly differentiated phenomenon. It is another instance where the blunderbuss approach of defining Vergil’s poetry mostly by connecting verbal repetitions falls down because it tends to ignore shifting aspects of the same phenomenon. In plain English, each instance of *furor* is not the same...

This sharply polemical assessment is not quite fair, not least because its author himself sometimes unintentionally flattens out the semantics of *furor*, treating it as a simple synonym for *ira* and divorcing it entirely from *insania* with little justification.²²⁶ In any case, Oliver Lyne’s sensible explanation of how intratextuality can work in Vergil—which as it happens makes special reference to *furor*—reveals the oversimplifications of Galinsky’s caricature:

If a poet uses a word on one occasion in some particularly striking way, if he organizes a combination which imparts some signal novelty of sense to it, that use will stick in our memory and affect or potentially affect our response to later occurrences of the word in the same text. It has *acquired* for the duration of this

²²⁴ See for instance Galinsky (1994) 194 and Horsfall (1995) 202. Both (like McKay) regard the “sonar” method with skepticism. Though some have undoubtedly abused it to support unlikely interpretations, it offers the best hope of understanding Vergil’s allusive and self-reflexive technique. Connelly (2012) 150 offers a helpful analogy here: “Just as Mozart’s characters in an opera like *Le Nozze di Figaro* sing in keys or melodies that evoke or even ‘belong to’ other characters, hinting at (sometimes surprising) likenesses or alliances between them, so Vergil’s evocations of character through word and phrase constructs a narrative of emotional evolution for Dido, Turnus, Aeneas—and us.”

²²⁵ Galinsky (1994) 194. So also Thornton (1976) 162.

²²⁶ Galinsky (1994) 198, which says that Aeneas’ *furor* in *Aeneid* 12 cannot “amount to *mania*” because Aeneas’ anger is neither habitual nor described by the word *insania*, which *is* however applied to Turnus and Mezentius elsewhere. Since Galinsky is grappling with the whole poem here, and not just Book 12 (as shown by citations of Turnus’ and Mezentius’ *insania* in *Aen.* 7 and 10), other readers have rightly objected that Aeneas’ *furor* during the fall of Troy in Book 2 is, in fact, explicitly characterized as “mad” (cf. Putnam [1965] 151-2; [1995] 15; [2011] 62). Aeneas twice remembers himself as *amens*, both in search of battle (2.314; he also says *nec sat rationis in armis*) and while he “raves” (*furens*, 2.771) in a frantic search for Creusa (2.745). When he finally meets Creusa’s shade, she upbraids him for indulging in *insanus dolor* (2.776).

poet's text the potential to mean something special. The poet can then cash in this special value when he pleases; and he can do so more or less patently, depending on the combination he organizes at the time of encashment...[a] familiar example might be 'furor'. This word is given a striking political resonance in its first use in the *Aeneid* (1.150), and acquires thereby the potential to bring to mind *political* madness from that point on. So do its cognates. This value is cashed in often enough, and especially at 12.946 [Aeneas *furiis accensus* above Turnus].²²⁷

Galinsky's larger point, however—that it is worth probing carefully into just how we are to tell the difference between “good” and “bad” *furor*—is constructive. Which interpretative “key” is the best?²²⁸ The question cannot be resolved by simply revising the classical Latin lexicon, despite the attempts of some ancient (and a few modern) commentators to make specious philological distinctions where none seem to have existed.²²⁹ Nor can any one reconstructed philosophical model (e.g. for the interpretation of anger) or even a combination of models suggesting an ancient “horizon of expectation” carry much conviction if the pendulum swings away from “the blunderbuss approach” to the opposite extreme of sidelining meaningful intratextual resonance altogether. To fall into that error would be vastly to underestimate a fundamental characteristic of Vergil's epic technique, the densely interwoven neo-Callimachean aesthetic which defines the whole of his poetic project, including not just the *Aeneid* but the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as well.²³⁰

²²⁷ Lyne (1989) 178-9. Cf. Putnam (1990) 23: “...there is no better guide to helping us adjudicate what might have been Virgil's appraisal of someone whom he posits as acting on the remembrance of *saevus dolor* to become, in the next moment, ‘set aflame by furies and terrible in his wrath’ than by examining his own usage of *dolor*, *ira* and *furiae* (or the *furor* such inner ‘furies’ adumbrate).”

²²⁸ For the notion of interpretive “keys” which may be applied to make moral sense of the end of the *Aeneid*, see Horsfall (1995) 198, which explores the conflicting implications of seven such keys.

²²⁹ Servius Danielis distinguishes between *furor/furibundus* as exclusively “good” on one side, and *furiae/furo/furens* as “bad” on the other. For a spirited riposte to this view and its modern partisans, see Thomas (1991) 261.

²³⁰ Hardie (1990) 3: “Repeated reading of the *Aeneid* reinforces the impression of a vast structure of self-allusion and self-comment aiming for a maximal transparency of the text to itself, in so far as the *prima materia* of language will allow, and demanding a ‘simultaneous reading’ that is more spatial than temporal. The fragmentary state of previous large-scale Hellenistic poetry makes it difficult to judge of the originality of Virgil in this extreme extension of the features of repetition and self-allusion that characterize all literary works; but, for example, every increase in our knowledge of Callimachus' *Aitia* makes it seem more likely that it was constructed in a similar way.”

The rare but illuminating testimony of qualifying adjectives offers at least one sure interpretative foothold. In the *Aeneid* the only context in which *furor* is explicitly commended is that of the Etruscans' anger against their cruel oppressor, Mezentius.²³¹ Evander approves of the *furiae iustae* (8.494) which prompt their revolt against the tyrant, and the *longaevus haruspex* who restrains them until Aeneas' prophesied arrival characterizes their motives as *iustus...dolor* and *merita...ira* (8.500-1). The narrator confirms the righteousness of their cause in his own voice (*iustae...irae*, 10.714) and just before his death at Aeneas' hands Mezentius himself claims that in killing him Aeneas will commit no sin (*nullum in caede nefas*, 10.901)—words that may ironically mean more than the tyrant intends.²³² The narrator's language is "curiously emphatic" and unambiguous.²³³ It is hard to disagree with Thomas' contention that these emphatic qualifications reinforce the notion that, absent other clues, "the whole range of such words [i.e. *furor*, *furia*, etc.] is generally condemnatory";²³⁴ in other words, that these are the exceptions that prove the rule.²³⁵

In fairness to Galinsky, he does testify to this aspect of Vergil's technique in other articles (e.g. [1989] 76 and [2009] 70).

²³¹ Putnam (1990) 32n92; on p. 23 he calls the Etruscans' *iustus furor* "Virgil's unique bow to a non-Stoic acceptance of anger...accomplished with careful circumspection." See also Galinsky (1994) 194 and Horsfall (1995) 213.

²³² According to Harrison (1991) *ad loc.*, Mezentius is simply recognizing that all is fair in war: "war for Mezentius is always a situation of 'kill or be killed'; unlike Turnus, he does not ask to be spared, and has no wish to survive his son [Lausus] or undergo captivity."

²³³ Tarrant (2012) 20n79: "Perhaps Vergil felt it necessary to underscore the positive use of language that normally carries negative associations." Cf. also Putnam (1990) 23: the revenge of the Etruscans is "richly motivated, long contemplated and executed by customary heroic procedure."

²³⁴ Thomas (1991) 261.

²³⁵ Cf. Putnam (1990) 32n92: "It is a matter worthy of consideration by those who argue for the justice of Aeneas' final fury that the only occasion in the epic on which Virgil gives a positive attribute to *furiae* and *ira* is in connection with the behavior of Mezentius where the reader least needs help in evaluating their quality. Where we crave some authorial interpretation most, in the cases of Aeneas and Hercules, no guidance is forthcoming."

Thomas' "generally" is itself an important qualification here, however: when such words describe prophetic or poetic inspiration, say, or (more pertinently) the martial zeal and destructive prowess of a Homeric warrior (as in Horace *Carm.* 1.15.27), they need not always imply a negative moral evaluation.²³⁶ It would otherwise be very difficult to account, for example, for the fact that several generations after Vergil, Valerius Flaccus (writing in a self-consciously Vergilian idiom) can ascribe *furor* to the future emperor Titus in his encomiastic proem without any apparent trace of irony or verbal qualification.²³⁷ But Thomas' verdict applies primarily to the *Aeneid*, and the explicit commendations of Etruscan *furor* in that poem do underscore the dire connotations of every other Vergilian *furor*—but as a function of Vergil's overarching themes, above all his interest in the multiple motivations and snowballing consequences of disordered passions, rather than as a mere philological or philosophical inevitability. Minor Vergilian *furores* do not paint a picture which is at stark variance with the chaotic tableaux of Dido, Mezentius, Turnus, and Juno: Pygmalion's *furor* for gold, which leads him to kill Sychaeus (1.348) and precipitates Dido's flight to Carthage, fits the general pattern, as does Coroebus' excessive and ultimately fatal passion for Cassandra. Sergestus' lust for victory (*furens animi*, 5.202) in the boat race leads to near-disaster as his ship is almost shivered on the reef, and Euryalus' reckless excess in the Rutulian camp (Nisus sees him *nimia caede atque cupidine ferri*, 9.354), marked by the exceptionally rare use of the intensive *perfurere* (9.343),

²³⁶ A point also made by Thornton (1976) 162: "...we tend to assume, without question, that *furor* and its cognates, particularly the verb *furere*, are as blameworthy and evil as *pietas* is praiseworthy and good. On detailed examination, this is true, for the most part, of the noun *furor*, although *furor* also denotes the ecstasy of the Sibyl through which divine truth is mediated." She goes on to argue that *furere*, however, is different: "Once it is clear that the frenzy of a fighter expressed by *furere* can be judged appreciatively, it is possible to realize that 'hard hectic fighting' can be called *furere* without any particular moral judgment being involved." (163) As Thomas (1991) says, such philological distinctions are inherently unconvincing; but the idea that the words themselves can sometimes be used in positive contexts (especially outside the *Aeneid*) is undoubtedly correct.

²³⁷ For a more detailed discussion of this passage, see pp. 96-8.

costs him and Nisus dearly and brings their vital mission to naught.²³⁸ These *furors* are “bad” not by lexical necessity but by artistic design, and we are meant to hear their ominous connotations echoed in a litany of deliberate, meaningful resonances. They express a worldview.

Hercules’ confrontation with Cacus has often been cited by arguments against this interpretation, since for some critics it presents a clear-cut example of homeopathic *furor* which is morally justified by the context.²³⁹ The scene is especially important because of several verbal echoes which link Hercules’ behaviour to that of Aeneas later in the poem, as well as for the fact that Aeneas hears the story from Evander at a pivotal moment, just before launching his campaign to pacify Latium.²⁴⁰ But as Putnam and others have shown,²⁴¹ the fact that Cacus’ demise is unambiguously a “good” outcome does not mean that the homeopathic frenzy of Hercules—who is overcome by *furiae* and black bile (recall Cicero’s μελαγχολία)²⁴² and resembles Cacus closely in his *superbia* and beastliness—should be taken as an unproblematic moral exemplar for Aeneas, or as a vindication of *furor* as an instrument of universal peace. The putative alternative is not that Hercules should act like some kind of “Stoic robot” who resolves the dispute dispassionately by quoting ethical paradoxes,²⁴³ but that Vergil (had he wished to do so) might have described the hero’s rampage in terms which did not render the monster and his slayer so nearly indistinguishable. Critics of this point of view quite rightly insist on the

²³⁸ Cf. Putnam (1965) 57-8: “...*furor* and *cupido*, madness and lust, stand out in the narrative as concepts to which the pair were excessively addicted.”

²³⁹ On this view see the discussion in Putnam (1990) 30-2 and notes 84 and 92, which engages with the arguments of Cairns (1989), Galinsky (1988), and Thornton (1976). Cf. the contributions of Horsfall (1995) 213, Hardie (1986) 110-8, and Zarker (1972).

²⁴⁰ Putnam (1990) 30.

²⁴¹ Putnam (1990) 30-32. Cf. Feeney (1991) 161 and Tarrant (2012) 16.

²⁴² Putnam (1990) 31 also notes that Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 11.193) explicitly links black bile with *insania*.

²⁴³ So Galinsky (1994) 193 *contra* Putnam.

importance of contextual interpretation, and warn against the dangers of a mania for intratextuality that makes a deconstructed verbal soup of the poem: “Whenever ‘anger’ is described in the *Aeneid*, its moral quality must be judged according to the reasons for it and according to the whole situation in which it arises.”²⁴⁴ This is eminently sensible. The real disagreement, and the heart of the debate about whether the *Aeneid*’s “homeopathic” *furor* encodes a dry-eyed acceptance of the cost of imperial triumph or a somber lament for the “crooked timber” of human nature,²⁴⁵ revolves around what exactly constitutes the “whole situation” in which *furor* arises and the possibility of multiple overlapping reasons for it. In my view, Vergil’s *furor*es may be defined *both* with reference to individual scenes, with all their concomitant specificities and moral quandaries, their full-bodied recapitulations of Homeric rampage or elegiac passion or tragic psychological collapse, *and* by the comprehensive cosmic situation which the poem articulates when taken as a whole. It encapsulates Vergil’s “double vision” on both a grand and microcosmic scale.

V. Succession and Inheritance

Vergil’s successors were deeply impressed not only by the *Aeneid*’s groundbreaking innovations in broadening the semantic range of *furor* and consolidating a flexible vocabulary of epic madness, but also by the powerful role played by *furor* in the poet’s evocation of profound truths about the nature of Roman *imperium* and of humanity. Although our interpretation of the *furor* theme in the *Aeneid* will of course have significant implications for our interpretation of the

²⁴⁴ Thornton (1976) 162.

²⁴⁵ Tarrant (2012) 29.

same theme in later Latin epics, it need not be a critical straitjacket which denies the possibility of divergence among those later poets.²⁴⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, there is enough daylight between the unique poetic visions of Ovid, Lucan, Valerius, Statius, and Silius—and between their works and Vergil’s, despite their common heritage of Vergilian language, motifs, and ideas—to relieve us of the confining need for a single hermeneutical frame for the whole tradition. Or to put it differently, it may be wiser to apply a hermeneutical frame which by nature can accommodate more than one kind of answer to the questions Vergil poses for his readers, questions which spring from the recurring difficulty of sharply distinguishing good and evil in the muddled complexity of human affairs.²⁴⁷ The *Aeneid* compels its readers to confront moral alternatives, to weigh Heaven and Hell on the scales.²⁴⁸ Vergil’s successors are not exempt from this compulsion, but are constrained to wrestle with it in the unique environments of their own political and (one might say) cosmic contexts. It is to their densely interwoven and yet idiosyncratic responses to Vergilian ambivalence that we now turn.

²⁴⁶ Cf. the healthy skepticism of Galinsky (1997) 92: “I am always leery when I hear the invocation of a ‘pattern.’ It usually means being schematic. A ‘pattern’ tends to become a thing in and of itself, a sort of supra-authorial entity. It seems so immune to challenge—you feel benighted if you don’t see a ‘pattern’—though it clearly is not, especially when we are dealing with two very different authors.” He is writing here about an alleged philosophical “pattern” in Vergil and Seneca, but I think his caution applies equally well to the temptation to impose a single thematic model of *furor* on all post-Vergilian Latin epic.

²⁴⁷ Hardie (1993) 75.

²⁴⁸ Hardie (1993) 76. Following Hardie I use “Heaven” and “Hell” here and throughout as deliberate anachronisms, not only because they are convenient labels for a variety of cosmic dualisms, but also because they foreshadow the later thematic appropriations of Christian poets.

CHAPTER 2

Quis furor iste novus? The Latin Epic Tradition

“Farewell happy fields
Where joy for ever dwells: Hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell
Receive thy new possessor: One who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”

Satan, *Paradise Lost*, 1.249-55

I. Ovid

Ovid’s epic is the first to repeat Ascanius’ anguished cry to the frenzied Trojan women, a troubled and troubling question that will echo throughout the long history of the Vergilian tradition: *quis furor iste novus?*²⁴⁹ In a moment of sudden alarm not unlike Ascanius’, Ovid’s Pentheus cries out in indignation to restrain his fellow citizens as they stream past him, flowing in a mighty throng out of Thebes and from fields which “clamour (*fremunt*) with festal cries” to greet Liber and join his orgiastic rites: *Quis furor, anguigenae, proles Mavortia, vestras | attonuit mentes?* (*Met.* 3.531-32).²⁵⁰ Beside himself with fury, the Theban king wonders how his people could be so quickly debased by wine-soaked madness (*mota insania vino*, 3.536). But in the end

²⁴⁹ On this phrase see Hershkowitz (1998a) vii-viii; “By its very repetition [the phrase] calls attention to the fact that in each case the *furor* in question is different...” See also p. 303: “Just as the *Metamorphoses*, the *Bellum Civile*, and the *Thebaid* are very different from the *Aeneid*, although all are parts of a single epic tradition, so madness in the epics of Ovid, Lucan, or Statius is very different from madness in Vergil’s epic, although its representation and function in these later epics necessarily responds to and builds on the earlier.” Ovid had alluded to the line earlier (*Amores* 3.14.7). On the importance of the line for the “poetic code” of civil war, see Franchet d’Espèrey (2003). Feeney (1991) 275 captures the brilliant paradoxicality of the question: “What answer can [it] expect if it is addressed to those who are responsible for its being asked?”

²⁵⁰ On this speech see McNamara (2010) 178-9 and Anderson (1993) 116.

it is his own *rabies*, growing fiercer the more his ministers counsel restraint (3.566-67), which will drive him to voyeurism and spatter the sacred groves with blood. The Pentheus episode (like so many other Ovidian tales) plays on subtle connections between gender insecurities, sexual transgression, and the disastrous loss of self-control.²⁵¹ Accordingly, not one of the various *furores* which set the stage for Pentheus' dismemberment can properly be understood apart from the dangerous erotic tensions which fester between and within the star actors.

Aside from Pentheus' own precariously unconscious desires, we witness the *furor* of the sailors who abduct Bacchus in Acoetes' tale. They are possessed by a blind desire for booty (*praedae...caeca cupido*, 3.620)—that is, either for the profit to be gained from selling a boy who is “shapely as a girl” (*virginea puerum...forma*, 3.607) or for Bacchus' body itself (or both). The god is *praeda* personified, the object of erotic longing and straightforward greed (3.606).²⁵² Despite Acoetes' gallant vow not to allow the ship (!) to be violated in this way (*non tamen hanc sacro violari pondere pinum | perpetiar*, 3.621-22), he is violently overpowered by the raving Lycabas (*furit audacissimus*, 623). Bleary-eyed Bacchus, as though just now emerging from his habitual stupor, asks *quid facitis? quis clamor?* (632) before the sailors echo Pentheus, too: savagely berating Acoetes the proto-Bacchant for serving his god, they demand *quid facis, o demens? quis te furor...tenet?* (641).²⁵³ Suggestive whispers and nods follow as they proceed with the abduction, until Bacchus belatedly puts forth his power and inspires the sailors with *insania* (670), leading to the grotesque transfiguration of their bodies into the *lasciva...corpora*

²⁵¹ Segal (1998), Salzman-Mitchell (2005), McNamara (2010) 188-9.

²⁵² In the *Amores*, Ovid often uses *praeda* as a metaphor for the hopelessly ensnared lover or the object of a suit; cf. especially 1.2.19-29, 1.3.1, 2.12.6, 2.17.5-6.

²⁵³ McNamara (2010) 178: “Pentheus cannot recognize the implications of hearing his own questions ventriloquized by a *contemptor diuum* who goes on to be severely punished.”

of dolphins (685-6). After Acoetes' tale, Pentheus is compelled to investigate the Bacchic orgies on Cithaeron like a horse chomping at the bit (3.704-7):²⁵⁴

ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus aere canoro
signa dedit tubicen pugnaeque adsumit amorem,
Pentheas sic ictus longis ululatibus aether
movit, et audito clamore recanduit ira.

As a spirited horse snorts when the brazen trumpet with tuneful voice sounds out the battle and his eagerness for the fray waxes hot, so did the air, pulsing with the long-drawn cries, stir Pentheus, and the wild uproar in his ears heated his wrath white-hot.²⁵⁵

Compulsively driven by his superheated passion, he is unable to resist the urge to spy on the forbidden rites. Once he attracts the fatal glance of Agave and her companions, however, he becomes in his turn the *praeda* (an *aper feriendus*, 715) of deluded attackers, the violated object of desire and of violence (*prima suum...violavit Penthea*, 712). Like Actaeon, whose shade he vainly invokes for pity, he reaps the terrible reward of seeing what must not be seen in a landscape suffused with erotic peril.²⁵⁶

Pentheus' story is worth recounting here because it so precisely captures the flavour of *furor* in Ovid's epic, a poem which continually labours to enrich and extend the emotional range of the genre.²⁵⁷ Madness, possession, and fury are ideal vehicles for its dominant themes—"love and art, but also violence and pain"—and though the *Metamorphoses* presents us with a world jarringly different from the tranquil repose of Ovid's elegies, the poem is above all a psychological drama directed by the master of erotic passion.²⁵⁸ Set in an "insidious universe

²⁵⁴ On these lines see McNamara (2010) 183 and n41.

²⁵⁵ The translation is that of Miller's Loeb (1916).

²⁵⁶ One of his murderers is Actaeon's mother, Autonoe (Pentheus' aunt), and as Fratantuono observes ([2011] 81), her name could not be more ironic in this scene since "under the influence of Bacchus she will hardly act according to her own mind."

²⁵⁷ Newlands (2005) 477.

²⁵⁸ Here I am indebted to the compelling analysis of Segal (1998) 36-38. See also Newlands (2005) 480.

governed by change and error,”²⁵⁹ it is preoccupied with crime and punishment, as much concerned with their transformative effects on human identity as on human bodies.²⁶⁰ The poem is also obsessed with “irrational disorder” and “exuberant chaos”; one of its central themes is “the inadequacy of schemes and structures for making sense of the world.”²⁶¹

In contrast to Ovid’s earlier poetry, there is no cool-headed mastery of love’s *furor*, no attempt to tame it so that it may be savoured with judicious detachment; this is an epic obsessed with sex and sexuality and yet surprisingly grudging, for all its convulsions, of physical pleasures.²⁶² Ovid fully exploits the innovative blend of tragic, epic, and elegiac elements familiar from the *Aeneid*, in which Dido and Amata exemplify the same genus of erotic *insania* that defines so many ill-starred characters in the *Metamorphoses*.²⁶³ This is not to say that in Ovid’s poem we do not find *furor* in many guises: animal *rabies-feritas*, in Lycaon’s case foreshadowing the actual physical union of bestial and human flesh; prophetic madness; the raging of natural forces as a picture of human disorder; divine possession, real and simulated; *Furiae* and *furiae*; proto-civil war; and of course battle frenzy.²⁶⁴ But as even passages that highlight martial rage well illustrate—for instance, the line which tellingly qualifies Turnus’ battlefield rampage as *pro coniuge* (14.451)—few forms of *furor* in the *Metamorphoses* wholly

²⁵⁹ Conte (1994) 354.

²⁶⁰ Newlands (2005) 477, 480.

²⁶¹ Solodow (1988) 186, 3, 34.

²⁶² Apart from those brief, selfish ecstasies of the tyrannical gods which are inevitably the germ of horrific tragedy (cf. Segal [1998] 37). I do not mean, of course, to deny that Ovid’s poem is full of pleasure of other kinds for audiences both inside and outside the text.

²⁶³ Ovid’s *Amores* set a precedent for this kind of blending within his own corpus: see Boyd (2002) 109. On erotic and bacchic *furor* see Boccioni Palagi (2003).

²⁶⁴ Animals: 1.234 (Lycaon), 198, 239, 8.343 (Caledonian boar), 11.369-70, 13.547; Prophets: 2.640 (Chariclo), 14.107 (Sibyl); Nature: 5.7; Possession: 11.14, 30; *Furiae/furiae*: 4.471, 6.587-600; civil war: 3.122; battle frenzy: 14.451.

escape from the conceptual hegemony of *amor*, the poet's favourite theme.²⁶⁵ Several of Ovid's most memorable set-pieces, including Narcissus' self-centered affair, Medea's obsession with Jason, the incestuous infatuations of Byblis and Myrrha, and Glaucus' rejection by Scylla, are devoted to love gone mad and treat *amor* and *furor* as a natural, complementary pair.²⁶⁶ Clearly, a new standard in the semantic evolution of epic madness is being set, exploring more deeply the *amor-furor* dyad introduced by Lucretius and elaborated by Vergil.

In the *Amores* (1.2.35) Ovid had imagined a personification of *Furor* to be one of Love's *milites*, along with *Error*, but this light-hearted association takes on a darker significance in the *Metamorphoses*' tales of the devastating consequences of forbidden passion. The invincibility of love's *furor* in contrast to the feebleness of *mens* and *ratio*, the champions of properly ordered affections, is repeatedly stressed.²⁶⁷ Medea stands as an avatar for many of the poem's characters as one who "could not overcome madness with reason" (*ratione furorem vincere non poterat*, 7.10-11).²⁶⁸ We find in Ovid's later poem concrete expressions of a fanciful scene familiar from the *Amores*, in which *Mens Bona* is led captive (*manibus post terga retortis*) in the triumphal procession of Cupid and *Furor*.²⁶⁹ Hardie calls this a parody of the Augustan triumph over disorder, an imperial victory "now turned upside down, celebrating the empire of erotic

²⁶⁵ Hershkowitz (1998a) 85 points out that already in Vergil "an erotic impetus can be read in Turnus' bellicosity."

²⁶⁶ Narcissus: 3.350, 479 (*furor*); Medea: 7.10 (*furor*), 87 (*demens*); Byblis: 9.519 (*insani amores*), 541 (*furor igneus*), 583, 602 (*furores*), 635-8 (*furibunda, demens*); Myrrha: 10.355 (*furor*), 370 (*furiosa vota*), 397 (*furor*), 410 (*furibunda*); Glaucus: 13.967 (*furit*), 14.16 (*furor*); Scylla: 8.107 (*furibunda*).

²⁶⁷ Iphis cannot overcome his *furor* with *ratio* (14.701); Byblis is totally out of her mind (*tota mente defecisse*, 9.635-6). On Medea, Athamas and Ino see below.

²⁶⁸ Hardie (2016) 29.

²⁶⁹ Miller (1995) 285 calls *Mens Bona* here a figure "inimical to elegiac love". See also Propertius 3.24, where that poet uses similar language of his bondage to love (*versas in mea terga manus*, 14) and looks to personified *Mens Bona* (19) for his salvation. On amatory *furor* in Ovid and elegy generally see Morrison (1992).

unreason.”²⁷⁰ Strikingly, *Mens* in the *Amores* seems thus to suffer the same bondage as *Furor impius* at *Aen.* 1.295-6, and it seems that Ovid deliberately inverts the image of *Furor* depicted in the famous painting of Apelles, the likely inspiration of Vergil’s demon.²⁷¹ In keeping with this inversion, *mens* is often an explicit victim of *furor* in the *Metamorphoses*. It is not the bodies of Athamas and Ino which suffer at first when they are set upon by a Fury, for example (Ovid makes this oddly explicit: *nec vulnera membris | ulla ferunt*, 4.498-9), but their *mentes* (499); filled with *rabies* and emphatically *amens*, Athamas causes Ino (herself *male sana*) to leap off a cliff in the grip of *insania* (4.502-28).²⁷² Ovid here and elsewhere uses many elements of the semantic cluster familiar from Vergil, though with slightly different proportions: besides *furor-furibundus-furialis-furia*, there is a predominance of *rabies*, *amens/demens*, and *insanus/-ire*, with less frequent appearances from *saevire*, *vesanus*, *lymphatus*, and *ardor*. Ovid’s usage adds both legitimacy and flexibility to the established terminology, and must have helped confirm for later poets its prestige as a permanent fixture of Roman epic. It is also worth noting that *furor* and its cognates are never used in the *Metamorphoses* in a context of moral approbation,²⁷³ and the overwhelming testimony of the poem concerning the range of emotions described by these words is negative, monitory, or tragic; this too perhaps helped to shape later poets’ treatment of the theme. As a whole, the *Metamorphoses* draws attention to *furor* and its companions less often than do the *Aeneid* and Ovid’s successors, and the full flowering of madness in Latin epic is a

²⁷⁰ Hardie (2016) 13.

²⁷¹ Miller (1995) 293.

²⁷² Fratantuono (2011) 104 notes that the passage “is *hommage* to Virgil and response to the Allecto narrative; in both poets the focus is on the study of *furor* or madness.”

²⁷³ Prophetic *furor*, which is in itself generally neither “good” nor “bad”, is described at 2.640; but even in that case, *furor* leads to grief. The prophetess (Ocyrhoe) quickly regrets her power: *non fuerant artes tanti, quae numinis iram | contraxere mihi: mallet nescisse futura!* (2.659-60).

post-Augustan phenomenon.²⁷⁴ But there is no denying the impressive ease with which Rome's greatest wit confidently claimed the *furor*-theme for his own subtle purposes.

II. Lucan

Decades later, the infamous excesses of the Neronian age left their own mark on the evolution of epic madness. Though the frequency with which *furor* and its cognates appear in the *Bellum Civile* is comparable to their use in the *Aeneid*,²⁷⁵ the theme seems to loom even larger in Lucan's poem, where it occupies a prominent, programmatic space in the opening lines.²⁷⁶ The narrator, who makes no claim to objectivity and adopts a variety of perplexing and contradictory attitudes toward the dismay and horror evoked by his tale, pleads in familiar terms with the Roman people to explain the senseless tragedy of fraternal strife: *Quis furor, o cives, quae tanta licentia ferri?* (1.8).²⁷⁷ To him it is obvious that only collective madness could turn Romans against one another while Crassus' standards languish unavenged and there are still so many foreign enemies; Rome's *amor belli...nefandi* should have at least awaited the subduing of all external enemies (1.21-22), whose alien *furor* Caesar seems to mimic (1.255-6).

²⁷⁴ Zissos (2008) xxxviii, in summarizing the typically 'baroque' features of post-Augustan epic, includes "recurrent depiction of all-consuming, even fanatical passion."

²⁷⁵ *Furor* or one of its cognates actually appears in Lucan fewer times in total, though slightly more frequently, proportionally to their differing lengths (*Aeneid* 92 times, *BC* 82 times; Lucan's poem is about 1,800 lines shorter). Its importance as a "key word" in Lucan and its association with *rabies* is acknowledged by Roche (2009) 113.

²⁷⁶ It is easy to see a parallel between the divine *ira* which begins and drives the *Aeneid* and the propulsive human madness of Lucan's proem; cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 199. On further parallels see Roche (2009) 111-13. For a comparison of *furor* in Seneca and in Lucan see Glaesser (1984).

²⁷⁷ Fantham (1993) 8 points out that these lines echo two *Aeneid* passages (5.670-1; 2.42). According to Hershkowitz (1998a) 199, the link "emphasizes the civil war aspects of the two incidents, by placing them in an explicit civil war context...like Ascanius and Laocoon, Lucan's narrator in a sense intervenes to prevent the citizens from destroying their state and themselves, but history has already rendered this intervention null and void. His voice, though raised, cannot be heard above the din of madness." Cf. also Roche (2009) 111.

A native *furor Hesperius* has now arisen that corresponds, disturbingly, to the infamous *furor Teutonicus* (2.292, 10.62).²⁷⁸ All Rome, led by the example of the people and Senate (2.240; 7.95, 124), has surrendered to *furor* and become a casualty of its own greatness (1.68). The three conspirators against the republic—men bound together by false *concordia* and blinded by their lust for rule—have brought the state to the brink of ruin through their *feralia foedera regni* (86-87). The primordial cause of their internecine slaughter was Rome’s founding act of *furor*, when Romulus stained the new city’s walls with his brother’s blood and established a lasting precedent for his successors (1.96). These successors include Marius and Sulla, whose mad proscriptions (*furoris* | *impetus*, 2.109-10) claimed more victims than the *furor* of the sea (2.199). Romulus’ legacy also overtakes rank-and-file Roman soldiers serving as Egyptian mercenaries in Caesar’s day. Having forgotten their own Roman identity, these mercenaries, corrupted by *externi mores* and bereft of *fides* and *pietas*, nevertheless give irrefutable proof of their true national origin by being unable to resist civil war: the whole band rages (*furit*) in the Roman manner (*more...patrio*, 10.403-13).²⁷⁹

While Crassus lived, an uneasy peace had prevailed among the members of the unofficial cabal that also included Pompey and Caesar, but his death at Parthian hands definitively loosed Roman madness (*Parthica Romanos solverunt damna furores*, 1.106). The death of Julia, whose shade later appears to Pompey in the guise of a Fury (3.11), was likewise the beginning of evil; had she lived she might have restrained her *firens vir* and raging father (1.115-6). *Fides* fails (1.92, 119), but *virtus*—the perverted valour of swords drawn against fellow-citizens—reigns,

²⁷⁸ On this “barbarization” of civil war, see Martin (2010).

²⁷⁹ Cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 207: “Not only does Roman madness taint foreigners, but this madness also taints the very notion of what it is to be Roman. While the madness of civil war may be inherent in the Roman condition, it is also obviously antithetical to it. *Romanus furor* should be an oxymoron, but in the *Bellum Civile...Romanus* arguably comes to signify *furiosus*.”

goads the combatants on to mutual ruin (1.120).²⁸⁰ A crazed Roman *matrona*, herself possessed by *furor* like that of a Bacchant (1.695) and driven by Phoebus' prophetic power (677), repeats the narrator's plaintive question at the end of the first book, rushing through the city crying *quis furor hic...quo tela manusque | Romanae miscent acies?* (1.681-2).²⁸¹ The scale of the horror will be global as Roman *furor*, though a *civilis Erinys* (4.187),²⁸² rouses the whole world to arms (3.249), and Lucan's vision of an unraveling cosmos universalizes the devastation of civil war.

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Lucan's poem, "a welter of wrath and weeping and despair,"²⁸⁴ exploits more or less the same semantic cluster which Vergil and Ovid had used so effectively to add depth and texture to the *furors* of their poetic worlds. Like tame beasts who have been corrupted by their old bloodlust, the soldiers of Lucan's war are driven by *rabies* (4.240, 6.63), a favourite term of the narrator and one that becomes particularly prominent at Philippi. After Pompey's troops are seized by *dira rabies* in their hunger for a decisive battle (7.51), the narrator passionately denounces the headlong rush into the final contest (*O praeceps rabies!* 7.474) before pinning the greatest share of the blame squarely on one man: *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar* (7.551).²⁸⁵ The great general rages like a thunderbolt (*furit*, 1.155) and he is not merely

²⁸⁰ For the relationship between *virtus* and *furor* in Lucan, see below.

²⁸¹ Roche (2009) 111.

²⁸² On this concept see Franchet d'Espèrey (2003) 435-6.

²⁸³ On the "cosmic afflatus" of Lucan's epic, see Hardie (1986) 381. Johnson (1987) 10 describes Lucan's cosmos as "a machine for which making is the same as breaking, a machine that manufactures ruin...It is the Stoic machine gone mad."

²⁸⁴ Johnson (1987) x.

²⁸⁵ Here Bartsch (2010) 27 is surely right to hear the characteristic tone and language of Ciceronian abuse; cf. Cic. *Catil.* 2.25, *Dom.* 25.

characterized by *furor* and *rabies*; he embodies them (7.557).²⁸⁶ He is like his idol Alexander, Philip's "insane offspring" (*proles vaesana Philippi*, 10.20) and another human *fulmen* (10.34),²⁸⁷ or the notoriously *vaesanus* Cambyses (10.279); Lucan in fact uses *vaesanus/vesanus* more often than any other classical epic poet.²⁸⁸

Caesar drives others around him into a similar frenzy, including the urban *turba* of Rome, which becomes *lymphata* at the mere rumour of his approach (1.496). His fury extorts madness even from his opponents: as Domitius learns, the only way to escape Caesar's insidious *clementia*, which is really designed to humiliate and debase the noblest of his enemies, is to throw oneself *in medios belli...furores* (2.523). Pompey at times pities the madness of his rival (*rabies miseranda ducis*, 2.544), a man totally out of his mind (*demens*, 2.575) and plagued after Philippi by *vaesana quies* and *somni furentes* (7.764). Later, penned up by an ambush in Egypt, Caesar gnashes his teeth like a caged animal (*sic fremit in paruis fera nobilis abdita claustris | et frangit rabidos praemorso carcere dentes*, 10.445-6), seemingly embodying Vergil's shackled *Furor impius*,²⁸⁹ and rages like a volcano which is ready to erupt (447-8). No one—not Cato or Pompey—escapes the sweeping tide of madness that rises before and behind Caesar.²⁹⁰ As in the *Aeneid*, even *furor* which might under other circumstances be commendable at some level (e.g.

²⁸⁶ On Lucan's characterization of Caesar, see Martin (2010). For Caesar as the incarnation of *furor* see Newmyer (1983) 249. Leigh (2010) examines the presentation of Caesar as lightning bolt.

²⁸⁷ It is worth remembering that Pompey was also compared to the Macedonian conqueror, both by others and perhaps in his own imagination; cf. Plut. *Pompey* 2.1-2, 46.1; Appian 12.117. On Caesar and Alexander, see Buszard (2008) and Croisille (1990).

²⁸⁸ Fichtner (1994) 153 mentions the fact that both Vergil and Ovid use the word less than Lucan, and to his list we may add Statius, Valerius, and Silius.

²⁸⁹ Fratantuno (2012) 424. But "the shackles are not permanent, and therein lies the horror of the principate: control over the Caesarian fury may be lasting under an Augustus, but the chains are constantly at risk of being smashed."

²⁹⁰ Though Pompey himself is characterized by *furor* much less frequently than Caesar (but see 1.115-6), he is often portrayed as helpless to resist the general Roman paroxysm. For Lucan's characterization of Pompey, see Feeney (2010); on Pompey's *furor* see Glaesser (1984) 100-10. For Cato and *furor* see Hershkowitz (1998a) 239-246.

straightforward martial zeal, on the Homeric pattern) is inseparable from the wider vision of a world unhinged. Civil war has poisoned the wells; as we will see, even *virtus* is perverted by the spiritual conditions under which it must be exercised in such times—the violent self-destruction of Roman identity.

At first glance, the semantic range of *furor* and its companions in Lucan's poem seems somewhat narrower than what we find in the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*, encompassing natural phenomena, animal savagery, various species of sedition, supernatural possession, prophetic frenzy, and battle fury—but with scarcely any trace of amatory *furor* at all.²⁹¹ Although in other respects the word's force and close association with Roman identity are intensified compared with its use in the *Aeneid*, *furor* of the erotic type is almost entirely alien to the *Bellum Civile*, except in a passing reference to the baleful influence of Cleopatra (called “Latium's deadly Fury,” *Latii feralis Erinys*, 10.59) on Antony and Caesar, both victims of a *vesanus amor* (10.72).²⁹² Here, in a reversal of the Ovidian pattern, it is political *furor* that ultimately co-opts love's insanity. A second Helen,²⁹³ the Egyptian queen multiplies the baneful *Hesperios furores* of civil war (10.60-62) and provokes a new eruption of the national madness; even the sternest of republican Roman heroes would surely have been corrupted had they lived to be seduced by her charms (10.154).²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Cf. Thompson (1984), which argues that Pompey's excessive *pietas* to his wives led to the victory of *furor* (as embodied by Caesar) and thus, in a sense, itself represents *furor*. Thompson does not contend that Pompey's *amor* is described in the language of *furor*, however—her argument relies rather on the disastrous implications of Pompey's apparently “good” qualities.

²⁹² Cf. Fratantuono (2012) 405 on this passage: “...this is the third occurrence of the poet's strong declaration of madness in the short compass of this book's opening; Caesar is in the ascendant...and madness is triumphant everywhere.”

²⁹³ In the *Aeneid*'s “Helen episode”, the authenticity of which is disputed, Helen is also called an *Erinys* (2.573).

²⁹⁴ Fratantuono (2012) 408.

In addition to eschewing the possibilities of a more prominent *amor-furor* pairing in the Ovidian mold, Lucan also seems to forgo *Furia/furia*, which occur only once (5.246), in favour of the more personal *Erinyes* (5x) and *Eumenides* (7x), though admittedly auxiliary demons are as a general rule much less conspicuous than in the *Aeneid*.²⁹⁵ Their most memorable moment is an assault *en masse* against the sleeping Caesar in the form of dead soldiers' shades, though as *infera monstra* sent to scourge him they ultimately have little effect (7.777-83). Their failure is unsurprising, since Caesar seems to have long since usurped their power.²⁹⁶ Earlier in the epic, when *Roma* rises like a ghost and appears to him at the Rubicon, benevolent but powerless, it is *he* who reassures *her* that he will not pursue her like a Fury (*non te furialibus armis | persequor*, 1.200-1).²⁹⁷ The man already embodies the "energy of hell" traditionally summoned from infernal haunts to unleash *furor* on the earth;²⁹⁸ who is left to frighten him away from crime? As far as divine machinery is concerned, *furor* possesses Lucan's absentee Olympians only in the flattering simile of the Massiliotes, who, like men watching war in heaven from a pious distance, refuse to take sides in the titanic struggle between Roman leaders (3.315). Phoebus' possession of the *matrona* at 1.673-95 is little more than a brief vignette in which the language of *furor* figures but twice (681, 695), and though Erictho both resembles a Fury and boasts of her own power over the Furies (6.654, 664), her client Sextus Pompey is more explicitly characterized by

²⁹⁵ But see 10.336-37 of Pothinus, Pompey's assassin: *habitant sub pectore manes, | ultricesque deae dant in nova monstra furorem*. For Lucan's Furies, see Gilder (1997) 102-137. Thuille mostly bypasses Lucan in her detailed survey of post-Augustan epic since she is more interested in the place of the *Furiae* in the context of the whole epic divine apparatus, which Lucan largely omits (Thuile [1980] i); but see her long footnote 3 on pp. 324-6. On divine and semi-divine machinery in Lucan in general, see Feeney (1991) 250-301.

²⁹⁶ Hershkowitz (1998a) 220-1 makes the same observation.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Gilder (1997) 104.

²⁹⁸ Hardie (1993) 61.

furor than she (6.434).²⁹⁹ The balance of madness in the poem has been lavished directly on human beings rather than on supernatural intermediaries: it animates the demonic Caesar, the crazed armies of both factions, and the relentlessly suicidal Roman political class, which threatens to precipitate—as it is figuratively represented by—the imminent dissolution of the cosmos.³⁰⁰

The result is a more monotonous repertoire of *furor*, too grim to imitate the sly wit and reckless passion of Ovid's all-conquering *amor*. Nevertheless, at Delphi, the effect of the Pythia's divine possession by *furor* is undeniably arresting, as Lucan's priestess vies impressively with Vergil's Sibyl (5.183) and experiences the appalling convulsions of Apollo's prophetic *rabies vesana* (5.190).³⁰¹ Though the narrator assures us that no human *furor*³⁰² has polluted Delphi's shrine, the Pythia's frenzy is pointedly compared to the boiling torrents primed to blast out of Etna at any moment (5.98-100)—a close parallel to the volcanic simile used later of Caesar's madness—and Appius, who evinces little compassion for the terrified girl, is himself unambiguously *furens* (5.157) in his mad lust for an oracular answer to satisfy his itching ears. It seems that Lucan fashions a monotonous epic madness so evocative of his age in part by deliberately blurring the boundaries between human, natural, and divine *furor*, and not only in his characterization of Caesar.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ But cf. Lapidge (2010 [1979]) 321: “the power of witches is identical to that of ‘furor’: it may drive the elements from their accustomed locations and so threaten ‘chaos’. Thus, it is not coincidental that Erictho’s invocations are addressed to the Eumenides (or Furies), to Stygian *Nefas*, and to *Chaos* itself (6.695-6).”

³⁰⁰ Cf. Lapidge (2010 [1979]), Narducci (2004).

³⁰¹ On the allusive pedigree of Lucan's Pythia see Masters (1992) 128-9.

³⁰² Fratantuono (2012) 185: “a somewhat problematic description, and one which Phemonoe herself seems to think may be untrue...”

³⁰³ Hershkowitz (1998a) 225-9.

Furor has frequently tempted readers of the *Aeneid* to draw schematic oppositions between madness and other central terms, especially *pietas* and *virtus*.³⁰⁴ In his answer to the *Aeneid*, however, Lucan spares no effort to tip the balance between order and chaos decisively in favour of the latter, ruthlessly forcing to a frightening extreme what his predecessor had left undone and perhaps undoing Vergil's poem in the process.³⁰⁵ Some have seen in the *Aeneid* and its later post-Augustan successors a recurring inclination to court disconcerting "slippages"³⁰⁶ between key concepts, whereby conventional distinctions are blurred and significations even reversed.³⁰⁷ This fascination with "semantic decomposition," though not original to epic,³⁰⁸ surely reaches its zenith in Lucan. The gloomy prognostication of Figulus the diviner near the end of Lucan's first book is the *locus classicus* for the indeterminacy which plagues interpreters both within and outside the poem's narrative (1.666-69):

inminet armorum rabies, ferrique potestas
 confundet ius omne manu, scelerique nefando
 nomen erit virtus, multosque exhibit in annos
 hic furor.

The madness of war is upon us, when the power of the sword shall violently upset all legality, and atrocious crime shall be called heroism; this frenzy will last for many years.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ See p. 18 above.

³⁰⁵ Cf. Sklenar (2003) 15 n5: Lucan attacks "the underlying assumptions of the dominant heroic-mythological category, fully aware that Vergil had anticipated him in this enterprise: Lucan is nothing if not one of Vergil's most perceptive readers, and he recurs time and again to the *Aeneid* as a synecdoche for the epic tradition, precisely because he has so well understood the profound ambivalences in that work....Lucan's epic is in large measure an anti-*Aeneid*."

³⁰⁶ This word is a favourite of Hershkowitz (1998a) *passim*.

³⁰⁷ Hardie (1993) 58. Hershkowitz (1998a) 60 sees this as a progressive process, part of the "mounting extremism that marks Silver epic in general."

³⁰⁸ On the influence of the historiographical tradition (especially Thucydides and Sallust) and earlier Latin poetry in this respect, see Sklenar (2003) 11.

³⁰⁹ The translation is that of Duff's Loeb (1928).

In these lines, anticipated in the poem's opening (*ius datum sceleri*, 1.2), *rabies* and *furor* become indistinguishable from *ius* and *virtus*, and this is but the first of many troubling slippages. In the *Bellum Civile* "morally laden terms such as justice, piety, and patriotism are equated with crime, evil, and treachery in a relentless series of paradoxes that begin with the epic's first verses and continue to its bitter end."³¹⁰ This is what has been described as a "the civil war within the text" which enacts the Romans' periodic political *aporia*.³¹¹ Language itself is subjected to considerable abuse, in a vivid corollary to the mangling of lives and limbs by the sword.³¹² These linguistic shifts

rely upon a vocabulary and a conceptual framework that are familiar and meaningful to their audience, but then destroy the integrity of this system by equating the familiar and the meaningful with the terms that were opposed to them in the original system. They thus create a situation in which we have to keep two ways of signifying in place at the same time: the one old and familiar...the other diametrically opposed to it yet dependent on its vocabulary.³¹³

Virtus generally gets the worst of these exchanges, suffering repeated degradations, annulments, and reversals throughout the poem and especially in the characters Vulteius, Curio, and Scaeva.³¹⁴ But the linguistic equations go both ways.³¹⁵ *Furor* is in a sense the chief beneficiary: it devours and absorbs at some level not only *virtus* but also *pietas*, *fortuna*, and even that most essential of cultural tags, *Romanus*.³¹⁶

³¹⁰ Bartsch (1997) 50.

³¹¹ Bartsch (1997) 50. Cf. (*caveat lector*) Henderson (2010 [1988]).

³¹² Bartsch (1997) 49.

³¹³ Bartsch (1997) 48.

³¹⁴ See Sklenar (2003) 26-34, 34-45, and 45-58 respectively. On Scaeva see also Fratantuono (2012) 436-7, Henderson (2010 [1988]) 439-445 and *passim*, and Fantham (1993).

³¹⁵ Bartsch (1997) 51, Hershkowitz (1998a) 216.

³¹⁶ For detailed descriptions of this process see Hershkowitz (1998a) 207-211 and Sklenar (2003) 30-33. Fratantuono (2012) xxi-xxii somewhat hyperbolically calls the *furor* of the *Bellum Civile* the "necessary, inevitable concomitant of the Roman identity" and "the tutelary divinity of the Roman state."

Thus, although the semantic range of *furor* in the *Bellum Civile* appears in some ways to contract in comparison with the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*, in quite another sense it swells far beyond earlier limitations to achieve unprecedented breadth. Now bloated with the contradictory weight of significations snatched from other quintessential concepts of Roman epic, it can even display startling self-awareness in Lucan. At the very height of his suicidal (and completely mad) *virtus*, the Pompeian soldier Vulteius can apparently assess himself plainly and dispassionately: *furor est* (4.517).³¹⁷ This comes as a shock, as Lucan no doubt intends; one expects that those who are mad are generally the last to know it. Civil war has so conflated madness with sanity that one becomes indistinguishable from the other. Cato, whom Brutus calls *virtutis iam sola fides* (2.243), warns his young friend that the two possible courses of action in a civil war (abstention and participation) are both species of *furor* and are therefore problematic—only to immediately declare his intention to participate, in calm submission to the dictates of *virtus* (2.287, 292, 295). The disturbing and ironic effect of this speech on Brutus is to inspire *furor* in him in turn, or at least something very like it (described variously as *acres | irarum stimulos; calorem; nimios belli civilis amores*, 2.323-5).³¹⁸ In this way epic *furor* in the *Bellum Civile* (as sometimes in the *Aeneid*) seems able to co-opt *virtus*, *pietas*, and *fides*—the heart of Roman identity—for itself at will, and can make of madness something eerily and diabolically rational. In so doing, the poem sprouts “sinister flowers” from Vergilian seeds³¹⁹ even as it

³¹⁷ Cf. Sklenar (2003) 31: “Vulteius manipulates the binary opposition between a rational and an irrational conception of *virtus* and, by using rational techniques to defend the irrational, ultimately breaks down the distinction between reason and unreason.”

³¹⁸ Cf. Hershkowitz (1998a) 237: Cato arouses something in Brutus which is “disturbingly close to the genuine *furor* of Turnus, of Petreius or Vulteius, and of the Romans whom Brutus disdains.” Fratantuono (2012) 72: “Part of the game here for the poet is to show the danger of *Furor*; it readily spins out of control, and is prone to surprise its would-be master.”

³¹⁹ The image is Fantham’s (1993).

represents a world turned upside down,³²⁰ a far darker interpretation of Roman destiny than that adumbrated in the *Aeneid*.

III. Statius

Though Lucan can make a strong claim to be “the poet of Roman madness,”³²¹ Statius’ *Thebaid* easily surpasses all of its predecessors in its whole-hearted embrace of the poetics of insanity.³²² This is true even on a verbal level: Statius uses all of the usual members of the characteristic word group and goes further, adding *praefurere* to the repertoire (a possible *hapax*)³²³ and dusting off the very rare *perfurere* (3x; it had appeared only once each in Lucretius and Vergil, and not at all in Ovid or Lucan). Considered loosely as a group, the *Eumenides/Erinyes* and *furiae*, which sometimes instigate and sometimes embody the poem’s *furores* in ways which are hard to articulate, are mentioned about as many times in the *Thebaid* alone as they are in the epics of Vergil, Ovid, Lucan, and Silius combined.³²⁴ *Furor* dominates the tale of the house of Oedipus so completely that from the sins of a single family it grows to envelop the whole universe of myth—gods, heroes, kings, and cities alike. In Statius’ world, it is

³²⁰ Bartsch (1997) 53.

³²¹ Hershkowitz (1998a) 209.

³²² Schetter (1960) 5-20 surveys the various contexts and meanings of *furor* in Statius. Venini (1964) analyses the role of *furor* in the poem as source of psychological motivation.

³²³ *Praefuro*, if it is not Statius’ own coinage, is at least unique to the *Thebaid* among Roman epics; in fact it appears nowhere else in the Latin literature which survives from antiquity. Statian *furor* evidently required a step beyond the pale in diction as well as theme.

³²⁴ By my count the ratio is 67 (Statius):72 (*Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*, *Bellum Civile*, *Punica*). Valerius Flaccus comes in at a distant second to Statius with 35 (about half as many as in the *Thebaid*). On the *Thebaid*’s Furies, see Thuile (1980) 118-228. Thuile notes that in Statius’ epic the Furies achieve “eine bis dahin nie erreichte Bedeutung” (326).

often both cause and creature of Thebes' mythological *fraternae acies* (1.1), and the word or its variants appear with a higher frequency than in any other extant Latin poem, pagan or Christian.³²⁵ The proem of the *Thebaid* promises *furiae* which outlast death (1.35), the poisonous fruit of the *dulces furiae* of Oedipus' fatal marriage (1.68). Now himself the willing, eager prey of *furor* (1.73), Statius' Oedipus begins the epic with a terrible summons to Tisiphone, who wakes the latent *gentilis furor*—the “family madness”—in his two wretched sons (1.126). It will inspire *invidia*, *metus*, *ambitus*, and *discordia* between them (1.127-30); as the narrator observes, this will be the extent of the brothers' *pietas* (1.142). The price of their father's throne will ultimately be sharing in his monstrous madness (*furiisque immanibus emptum | Oedipodae sedisse loco*, 1.163), but it is not only Polynices and Eteocles who will imitate his *furor*.³²⁶ The whole *gens* wears madness like a badge.

When Oedipus' two sons finally approach their climactic duel and the peak of their fratricidal hatred, Jocasta desperately tries to interpose herself between her mad children. Like a frenzied Bacchant, like Agave “climbing to the top of the mad mountain” to present Pentheus' head to Liber (*ad insani scandeabat culmina montis*, 11.318-19), she rushes out of the city in a towering passion to rebuke Eteocles in words which call up deep shadows from the epic past and link the Theban cycle to Rome's very own nightmares: *quis furor?* (11.329).³²⁷ For her part Antigone, passing *amens* out of Thebes on a dangerous mission prompted by her *pietas* (12.384), is like a raging young lioness at liberty for the first time to indulge her *rabies* and *furor* (357-8).

³²⁵ In absolute numbers, however, Silius' much longer poem just manages to edge Statius out of first place.

³²⁶ Ganiban (2007) 24-43 emphasizes *nefas* over madness in the aftereffects of Oedipus' prayer. On Oedipus' *furor* see also Franchet d'Espèrey (1999) 59-64.

³²⁷ Cf. the description of Jocasta in the same context in Seneca *Phoen.* 427-30: *vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit. | sagitta qualis Parthica velox manu | excussa fertur, qualis insano ratis | premente vento rapitur*. On Jocasta's *furor* elsewhere in the poem see Ganiban (2007) 111-12.

At her brothers' funeral, Antigone cries out in dismay when she sees the pyre's flames divide and renew the family curse even in death. Her cry echoes Jocasta's (and Lucan's; and Ovid's; and Vergil's...): *quis ardor? cui furitis?* (12.443-4). But just a few lines later, together with Argia (Polynices' wife), she will be seized by a frenzied death-wish herself (*leti | spes furit*, 457). Like her brothers, she is maddened by ambition—in her case for her own cruel execution (*ambitur saeva de morte*, 456). The two “sisters” compete in a twisted contest of *pietas* and *amor*, furiously vying for the greater punishment; gone is their mutual regard, their *reverentia*, replaced by what looks and sounds very much like the *ira odiumque* of the brothers just committed to the flames (12.462).

As in Lucan, the collapse of distinctions between *furor* and certain traditional buzzwords of Roman morality (especially *virtus*) is conspicuous, though others (like *fides* and *pietas*) suffer much less distortion than in the *Bellum Civile*. Early on in the epic, when Fortuna brings Polynices and Tydeus out of a bitter storm to fight over the same lodgings, the goddess inspires *rabiem...cruentam* in both heroes (1.408), who waste few words before resorting to blows.³²⁸ In this mad and pointless quarrel Tydeus' heroic *virtus*, such as it is, is celebrated (1.417), though the narrator makes it clear that both men are inspired not by *cupido laudis* (a proper stimulus to *virtus*)³²⁹ but rather by base *odium* (425) and *ira* (428). Adrastus, too, sees the quarrel for what it is when he reproaches them for their inexplicable *furor* and *implacabilis ardor* (438-40), prompted either by “impulsive valour or wrath” (*inopina... | aut virtus aut ira*, 468-9)—in the event it matters little, as both motives apparently produce a like result.³³⁰ Adrastus' intervention

³²⁸ For a different reading of Tydeus' *furor* than what follows here, see Lovatt (2001) 108-11.

³²⁹ Later in the poem, during Opheltes' funeral games, the Argives display not the expected athletic *virtus* but *furor in laudes* (6.458); *pax* and *fides* are nowhere to be found and the scene is indistinguishable from the battlefield (456-7). See also 6.762, 778, 6.809-810, and 6.915.

³³⁰ On the poem's association between battle frenzy and the imagery of upheaval in nature, see Taisne (2008).

quickly converts their rage into a fast friendship (*fidem*, 475). Just like their speedily-forgotten enmity, this new alliance will be dominated by *furor*; this time jointly directed outward against Thebes.

In the next book, Eteocles' "fiery heart growls" (*ignea corda fremunt*, 2.411) when he recognizes in Tydeus' stern face the image of his raging brother Polynices (*illum | mente gerens...praefuris*, 420). After Eteocles denies Polynices' claim to take up the throne for his allotted term, Tydeus sarcastically replies *haec pietas, haec magna fides!* (462) passing the same judgment on Eteocles as the narrator had passed on both brothers at 1.142; they have substituted unnatural madness for the *pietas* and *fides* which should bind kin together. This perspective seems at first to reinforce rather than elide the differences between *pietas*, *fides*, and *furor*. Yet immediately after he issues his self-righteous denunciation, Tydeus himself leaves in a bestial fury, gnashing his teeth like the Caledonian boar (*infrendens*, 477). Though the implicit claim of a man characteristically possessed by unbridled *furor* to be a champion of *fides* and *pietas* is dubious, Tydeus' example shows that in the *Thebaid* the concepts do not occupy mutually exclusive poles. *Furor* is sometimes at war with *fides* and *pietas*, and sometimes co-opts them (as in the *Bellum Civile*) for its own purposes.³³¹ It also wages war with itself. The poem is replete with (generally deserved) mutual accusations of *furor*: Capaneus for example, the very picture of reckless madness and *virtus-furor* in Statius (e.g. 3.615-6, 618),³³² contemptuously dismisses Amphiaraus—who has just addressed him as *vesane* (3.627), undeterred by Capaneus' "insane"

³³¹ Hershkowitz (1998a) 296 and n107.

³³² Delarue (2000) 83 calls him "le furieux par excellence." Statius even takes the extraordinary step of calling for a greater poetic *amentia* so that he can do justice to Capaneus' *furor*, a notion of close identification between the poet and the object of his storytelling which will recur near the end of the *Thebaid* (see below); on this see Myers (2015) 34-5. Capaneus fights with *insana arma* (10.32) and urges *virtus* on to new *furores* (10.483, 486); he rages (*furit, furens* 10.753-4) across the battlefield and his final hour is characterized by both *furor* and *virtus* (10.830-4). Ultimately Jove will laugh at his *insanae pugnae* (10.919), motivated by *furiae virtutis iniquae* (11.1). Cf. Lovatt (2001) 111-15.

threats (622)—as the victim of Phoebus’ counterfeit *furor*; a useless prophetic frenzy that scatters the old man’s feeble wits and portends only Amphiaraus’ own fears. “Leave the business of fighting to the real madmen,” Capaneus sneers.³³³

Furor’s divided house, almost a metaphor for the fractured house of Oedipus, is also visible in the mutual antipathy between Bacchic frenzy and martial *furor* in the *Thebaid*. Tydeus first draws attention to the difference when he taunts those Eteocles has sent to ambush him after his embassy on behalf of Polynices. They will find him armed with something more than the *orgia Cadmi* or the fawn skin and thyrsus, he says: *hic aliae caedes, alius furor* (2.667). He explicitly feminizes the madness of Liber, characterized by “mothers greedy to defile Bacchus” and “disgraceful combat unknown to real men” (*maribusque incognita veris | foeda...proelia*, 2.665-6). In a similar vein, the chief Bacchant (*silvestris regina chori*), possessed by Bacchus himself, rushes down Cithaeron in Book 4 to warn of the danger approaching Thebes, the *alius furor* (4.396) of two raging bulls (Polynices and Eteocles) who fight with weapons different than the *gentilia arma* of Bacchus’ people (presumably another reference to the thyrsus). They can boast their own *gentilis furor*. Here again *furor* is gendered along sharply religious and martial lines. The two apparently incompatible *furores* collide directly during battle in Book 7, when Eunaeus—a priest of Bacchus accustomed to the god’s *furor* and dressed in overtly feminizing battle-gear (649-61) that frightens no-one—moves through the ranks under the possession of Liber (*lymphante deo*) and boasts of Thebes’ inviolable divine pedigree. His vaunting is met by the *rabies* of Capaneus, who, like a lion roaring with delight at the sight of his prey, takes aim for

³³³ I have freely paraphrased; the text runs *illic augur ego et mecum quicumque parati | insanire manu* (3.668-9) See also the scene in which Creon (*furens*) accuses Theseus of *amentia* right before his death at the latter’s hands (12.760-5).

an easy kill. The last thing Euneus hears is Capaneus' mocking taunts of his *feminei ululatus*,³³⁴ which are better suited to *Tyriae matres*, and his fervent wish that "the one for whom you rage" (i.e. Bacchus) would condescend to join battle himself (7.670-87). Other passages reinforce the same duality of masculine and feminine *furores*,³³⁵ which is apparently a uniquely Statian addition to the poetics of epic madness.

In stark contrast to the anthropocentrism of Lucan's poem, Statius' gods, it has been observed, are very active in shaping the narrative of the *Thebaid*, intervening frequently (and disastrously) in human affairs.³³⁶ They are no less deeply implicated in the prevailing *furor* than the human characters, and humans and gods seem ultimately to differ mainly in the extent to which they have power to foment madness. *Furor* is imagined variously as both an impersonal tool of the Olympians and as a lesser member of their own order. Though Bacchus will not condescend to grant Capaneus his wished-for confrontation on the battlefield, Mars is assisted in his mad bloodlust by Mercury, who implants *virtutis irae* in the Arcadians (4.229); Juno is again an agent of *furor*, as usual stimulated by ancient hatred (6.671), but in contrast to the *Aeneid* it is Jupiter who inflames Mars' *furor* and *rabies ferrique insana voluptas* at the threshold of the poem's second half (7.20, 22); Apollo joins battle personally, *furens* at 7.768; and Pluto spitefully seeks a willing vessel to wage a proxy war on the gods and assault Jupiter's very throne with *furor* (8.75).

Besides these instrumental uses of madness, we might note that Bacchus' entourage, despite the consistent feminization of his cult throughout the poem, features personifications of

³³⁴ *Feminei* is perhaps superfluous here; according to Zissos (2008) 231, *ululatus* was typically associated with women by the Flavian period.

³³⁵ Cf. 9.479, 12.792.

³³⁶ Dominik (2009) 515; cf. the discussions in Feeney (1991) 337-391 and Delarue (2000) 315-24.

strife and destruction one would expect more normally in the retinue of Mars, including *Ira*, *Furor*, *Metus*, *Ardor*, and—most significantly—*Virtus* (4.661-2).³³⁷ *Furor* is indeed also personified as one of the squires of Mars (3.424). Among others, again including *Virtus*, *Furores* surround his grim northern lair (7.41), and confusingly *Furor* (sg.) can be found there too; together with *Mors*, it obviously alludes to Vergil’s chained *Furor impius*.³³⁸ In Hypsipyle’s story of the murder of the Lemnian men by their wives, *Furor* personified broods menacingly among the women just before the slaughter, in company with *Odia* and *Discordia* (5.74). Elsewhere *furor* can even corrupt other abstractions (like *Fama*, 2.213). During the battle before Thebes’ gates, *Furor* (in formidable array with *Luctus*, *Pavor*, and *Fuga*) tears the city—described as *insanis lymphata horroribus*—apart with internal discord and strangles it with deep darkness (10.556-59). “Fear devours the future”³³⁹ (*consumpsit ventura timor*, 563) and Mars himself would find but little pleasure in the sight (556). Though Statius could find ample precedent for his abstractions in the *Aeneid* and other epics before him, he outdoes them all. *Furor* is not just a major theme of the *Thebaid*, as in other Roman epics; for the first time, it is a major recurring character in its own right.³⁴⁰

The idea that even Mars would be repelled by the chaos and gore that *furor* has wrought at Thebes finds more explicit expression elsewhere, as supernatural exhaustion and disgust grow

³³⁷ Fantham (1993). The similarity between the entourages of Bacchus and Mars is also noticed by Vessey (1973) 168.

³³⁸ Compare Statius’ line (*laetusque Furor vultuque cruento* | *Mors armata sedet*, 7.52-3) with *Aen.* 1.294-6: *Furor impius intus*, | *saeva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus aenis* | *post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore cruento*. For a concise history of epic personification and a brief analysis of Statius’ art here (together with relevant bibliography), see the note of Smolenaars (1994) on 7.47-54.

³³⁹ Shackleton-Bailey’s brilliant translation (2003).

³⁴⁰ On the allegorizing tendency see the brief but memorable treatment of Lewis (1936) 48-56, praised by Feeney (1991) 338 as “even now the most stimulating discussion of Statius’ treatment of the divine.”

apace with the violence. At times, *furor* seems to actually thwart or disable the very gods who elsewhere manipulate it most adroitly. Athena, for example, cannot endure her favourite Tydeus' vile feasting on Melanippus' brains and is forced to flee back to Olympus (8.764) though she had intended to honour him at the moment of his death. Mars, though in the very grip of *furor* himself (9.5), turns away from this abomination in helpless revulsion and directs his terrified chargers to another part of the field. In a celebrated scene on the cusp of the brothers' final duel—the “climax of the Underworld's success, and nadir of celestial power”³⁴¹—Tisiphone, prime mover of the poem's atrocities since the prayer of Oedipus in the first book,³⁴² confesses that she does not have the strength to kindle their hatred to its appointed climax (11.59-60). Summoning her fellow Fury Megaera to her aid, she complains that she cannot sustain so much *furor* alone (*iussos potui tolerare furores | sola*, 77-8), since her *corda* grow weak and her hands slack with the “vast labor” (*grande opus*, 100) of vanquishing *Fides* and *Pietas*, who must be driven from the field.³⁴³ Only the “untapped frenzy” (*totus adhuc furor*, 95) of her sister can accomplish this mammoth task. This is an extraordinary acknowledgment of the appalling prodigality with which *furor* contaminates everything and everyone in the *Thebaid*, and the poem ostentatiously routs its predecessors. There is no precedent for madness on this scale in Roman epic, and that is precisely the point of Tisiphone's unbelievable, almost *human* inadequacy in carrying out her own divine mission. The *furor* around Thebes is so intense that it wearies the unwearying gods as though they were hapless mortals like the rest of us. In response to the gathering climax presided over now by *two* Furies, Jupiter commands the Olympian host—

³⁴¹ Feeney (1991) 352.

³⁴² Dominik (2009) 520.

³⁴³ *Pietas* herself identifies *furor* as the reason for her flight at 11.468.

already accustomed to watch (and egg on) innumerable *armiferi...furores*—to avert their eyes from the unholy horror below (11.122-6). Ultimately, however, the Furies, for all their untrammled domination of the action while the faint-hearted Olympians are sidelined, can add little to the intense hatred of Polynices and Eteocles when they finally come to blows. Humanity puts Hell to shame (11.537-9):

nec iam opus est Furiis; tantum mirantur et astant
laudantes, hominumque dolent plus posse furores.
fratris uterque furens cupit affectatque cruorem...

There is no more need of the Furies; they only marvel and stand by applauding, chagrined that men's madness is mightier than their own. Each furiously desires and seeks his brother's blood...³⁴⁴

Tisiphone and Megaera, the poem's most potent symbols of hostile supernatural malevolence bent on human suffering, have suddenly become redundant. They might as well disappear from the epic apparatus altogether—and in fact this is precisely what happens.³⁴⁵ The brothers' *furor* has reached such a feverish pitch that it is now, as it were, self-propelled. It overshadows the most dire madness that the poem's supernatural cast can contrive, and they can only continue as spectators, both pleased and chagrined by the independent omnipotence of human madness.

Statius, too, is eventually overborne by the relentless *furor* of his poem. Narrating the aftermath of the war for Thebes is such a huge task it would require Apollo's very presence and a new immersion in madness (*vix novus ista furor...implessset*, 12.808). In one sense Statius here simply repeats the conventional divine invocation, a standard element of the craft since Homer, as he had in his proem (where he refers to Pierian *calor*, the *oestrus* or gadfly of Apolline inspiration, and the Muses).³⁴⁶ In another sense, however, he links his activity as a poet directly

³⁴⁴ All translations of Statius are from Shackleton-Bailey's Loeb (2004).

³⁴⁵ Ganiban (2007) 199-206 argues *contra* that the Furies maintain a "terrifying presence" implicitly for the rest of the poem.

³⁴⁶ On Statius' invocations see Myers (2015).

to the central preoccupation of the *Thebaid*. The line echoes Ascanius' cry to the Trojan women in the *Aeneid* (*quis furor iste novus?* 5.670), as well as its subsequent iterations in Statius' predecessors, which had transformed it into an unmistakable marker of the impulse to *aemulatio* at the core of the Vergilian tradition. More proximately, the line also echoes Theseus' noble intervention against Creon's inhumanity from earlier in the same book (*Theb.* 12.593):

“quaenam ista novos induxit Erinys
regnum mores? non haec ego pectora liqui
Graiorum abscedens, Scythiam Pontumque nivalem
cum peterem; novus unde furor?”

“What Fury is this that brings strange manners of kings? Not such were the Greek hearts I left behind when I sought Scythia and snowy Pontus. Whence this new frenzy?”

Though Thebes enjoys a temporary respite after the death of Oedipus' sons, and the eventual victory of *Clementia* over Oedipus' *furiae* is foreshadowed (12.510), Creon's refusal to allow the Argives to be buried represents—and subsequently prompts—yet another new outbreak of the same epic *furor* which recurs endlessly throughout the epic tradition. When Theseus (“not weary of bloodshed,” 12.594, and inflamed by *iustae belli...irae*, 12.714) and Creon (*iam letale furens*, 760) meet amidst the onslaught of the Athenian host (itself compared to *venti...furentes* and *insani...fluctus*, 12.728-9), it looks as though the interminable cycle of violence is beginning again. But the battle proves to be short-lived; Creon's execution without mercy heralds an abrupt peace.³⁴⁷ The ensuing lamentations and funerals, to which Statius confesses he could not do justice without a *novus furor*, seem at first blush like a relief from frenzy, a *dénouement*. Yet even now, the poem's madness has not been totally exhausted. The brides and mothers of the dead are so turbulent in their rejoicing over the hard-won right to lament that they resemble crazed Bacchants careening off to Liber's *thyrsus*-wars (*quales Bacchea ad bella vocatae | Thyiades amentes*, 12.791-2) and one would think they were guilty of (or are ardent for) some

³⁴⁷ Turnus and Aeneas lurk in the background here; cf. Dominik (2009) 521.

great crime, so violent is their passion (*magnum quas poscere credas | aut fecisse nefas*, 792-3). In the grip of *novae lacrimae* they seethe like wind-tossed waves: *rapit huc, rapit impetus illuc* (794). Statius cannot continue. But we can easily imagine from this hint that any extension of his tale would hardly represent a radical departure from his favourite theme thus far.

A poem like this one, driven remorselessly on from *furor* to *furor*, is impossible for anyone but a *furor*-possessed poet to perform.³⁴⁸ *Novus*, a key word in Theseus' rhetorical questions and in the alarming description of the Theban mourners, implies continuity at 12.808 (*vix novus ista furor...implesset*); the poet has been mad all along.³⁴⁹ Statius needs a *renewal* of the poetic *furor* which has already sustained his epic storytelling through twelve books, as was clearly revealed in his request for a greater *amentia* to narrate Capaneus' *aristeia*. Despite the fact (as we have seen) that it was not unusual to describe poetic inspiration as *furor* in earlier Latin literature, no other epic poet of whom we know does so with reference to his own composition before the *Thebaid*. In this sense too, Statius' own *furor* (both past and projected) is *novus*. By means of the unique recognition here at his tale's end that madness is as essential to the storyteller as it is to the story, Statius identifies himself as *the* poet of *furor*, whose inspiration must—as a matter of practicality—be equal to (and thus resemble) the frenzy he represents so vividly before our eyes.

IV. Valerius Flaccus

The perennial renewal of epic *furor* continues in the works of Statius' fellow Flavian poets, Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus, who nevertheless do not appear to have enjoyed the same

³⁴⁸ Hershkowitz (1998a) 61 calls this “meta-madness.” Delarue (2000) 323 describes it as “une bonne fureur.”

³⁴⁹ Leigh (2006) 235.

level of popularity as their contemporary in late antiquity. In contrast to the devoted esteem in which Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan were held by the poets of biblical epic, the presence of clear allusions to Valerius and Silius in these later poems is more difficult to substantiate, in part because the traditional diction of epic is often shared among many texts.³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, a consideration of the use of *furor* in their works will deepen our appreciation of the manifold possibilities inherent in the complex tradition inherited by Juvenecus and his fellow Christian bards. It will also provide further opportunities to observe how the duality of order and chaos at the heart of that tradition could spur on re-workings of the epic cosmos which are both new and familiar with every iteration.

A telling use of *furor* in Valerius Flaccus' poem occurs in the course of the "more or less obligatory imperial homage" at the beginning of the epic, in which the poet praises the reigning emperor Vespasian and his sons.³⁵¹ Domitian composes verses about his brother, fresh from the sack of Jerusalem (1.12-14):

versam proles tua pandet Idumen,
namque potest, Solymo nigrantem pulvere fratrem
spargentemque faces et in omni turre furentem.

Your son shall tell of the overthrow of Idume—for well he can—of his brother foul with the dust of Solyma, as he hurls the brands and spreads havoc in every tower.³⁵²

Titus, realistically imagined, covered in the soot and dust of the battlefield, "scattering firebrands and raging on every tower," embodies martial zeal without a hint of ambiguity. The description is

³⁵⁰ Zissos (2006) 167 observes that Valerius' reception in late antiquity "is not substantial." Arweiler (1999) 237-9 sees multiple allusions to Valerius in Avitus, and there are extensive lists of apparent parallels in Costanza (1968); Dalla Pietà (2007) finds echoes of Silius. But see the cautionary words of Green (2006) 11-12 on finding alleged intertexts in biblical epic (with reference to Juvenecus).

³⁵¹ Zissos (2008) 81.

³⁵² The translation is that of Mozley's Loeb (1934).

“vivid and heroizing,”³⁵³ and there is no reason to believe that Valerius means to attribute anything but politically and morally praiseworthy qualities to the heir-apparent. After all, the praise is apropos of his greatest feat, a decisive victory of central importance to the dynasty’s imperial propaganda.³⁵⁴ The last line exalts Titus’ destructive prowess in much the same way that the warlike zeal of Homeric heroes is praised in the *Iliad*,³⁵⁵ and so it seems to constitute a bona-fide example of “good” *furor*.³⁵⁶ As we have seen, this is legitimate offspring derived from the semantic conventions of the *Aeneid*, which do permit a few exceptions (albeit highly marked ones) to the general subordination of Homeric *furor* under the wider moral vision of threatening cosmic disorder in that poem, represented chiefly by Juno and her machinations. Worth remembering, too, are the surviving hints of morally neutral or positive *furor* in other Augustan poets.³⁵⁷ It may be significant that the most prominent examples of morally untainted *furor* in the classical epic tradition occur in Vergil and Valerius. The *Argonautica* has after all acquired a modern reputation for neoclassicism, a “creative synthesis of Vergilian classicism and post-

³⁵³ So Zissos (2008) 88, who notes that “as commander Titus was renowned for his active—sometimes reckless—participation in military operations.” For Stover (2012) 18 “Titus is presented as a heroic military figure.” Richard Thomas has suggested to me that it is possible Titus is focalized here through Jewish eyes, which would in fact be in keeping with Homeric *mania* and the *furor* we earlier characterized as “rampage” (see p. 45 above). Contrast Statius’ description of “gentle” Domitian in the *Silvae* (1.1.26) as reluctant to “rage” even against foreign *furors*: *tu mitior armis | qui nec in externos facilis saevire furores*.

³⁵⁴ Zissos (2008) 88.

³⁵⁵ Mozley (1936) translates line 14 “as he hurls the brands and *spreads havoc in every tower*” (emphasis mine), which nicely captures the focalized “rampage” nuance of Homeric battle rage.

³⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that Josephus, Valerius’ contemporary, attributes something very much like excessive *furor* (in a “bad” sense) to Titus’ troops—but, conspicuously, not to Titus himself—during the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The temple’s interior is set aflame, strikingly in view of Valerius’ lines, by a single hurled torch (*BJ* 6.265-5), and the soldiers who accelerate the conflagration against orders (ἄκοντος Καίσαρος, 6.266), like men possessed (ἐνθουσιώντων, 6.260) are motivated by “hatred of the Jews and a more frenzied lust for battle” (Ἰουδαίους μῖσος καὶ πολεμικὴ τις ὀρμὴ λαβροτέρα, 6.263). On the other hand, Josephus also puts into Titus’ mouth a battlefield exhortation earlier on which praises in unambiguous terms those who die ἀρειμανής, “full of warlike frenzy” (6.46)—presumably the equivalent of “good” *furor*. On the mental state of these soldiers, see Saddington (2009). Zissos (2008) 89 views a deliberate connection between Valerius’ lines and Josephus’ text with skepticism.

³⁵⁷ See Chapter 1 section I (“Semantics”) above.

Augustan baroque” that in some ways hews closer to the aesthetics and moral vision of the *Aeneid* than to that of the intervening epics,³⁵⁸ and it may be that Valerius’ poem is a more natural setting for commendable *furor* on the Homeric model for that reason. In addition, it may be that Valerius can quite reasonably take for granted that his readers will correctly interpret a *furor* which is so obviously situated in encomium, and which clearly has nothing in common with Dido, Turnus, Juno, or for that matter with the many disturbing portrayals of *furor* in the epics of Ovid or Lucan. Not surprisingly, the fundamental interpretative questions posed by the *Argonautica*—some of which I will touch on briefly below—have attracted debate along lines which are similar to those which vex ‘the Vergilian question,’ that is, concerning whether the poem’s cosmic vision should be read “optimistically” or “pessimistically.” In any case, it is plain that by itself Titus’ *furor* at 1.14 is decisive for neither reading, though it attests to the continuing semantic flexibility of the word in the Latin epic tradition down almost to the second century AD.

When the Argo stands out to sea for the first time—in this poem an event of major global importance, though not in Apollonius’ *Argonautica*—its crew embarks on a journey which will have grave religious and political implications.³⁵⁹ To Boreas, who cannot but view the first attempt on the sea as an impious violation, the bark is an *insana ratis* (1.605), and though its voyage in defiance of the ancient ban will ultimately be successful, the god’s description is accurate in some unintended senses; the Argo will be intimately associated with *furor* more than

³⁵⁸ Zissos (2008) xxxviii.

³⁵⁹ Jupiter hints at the Argo paving the way for the *translatio imperii* that will bring Roman world-dominion at 1.558-60. See also Manuwald (2015) 9-12, Stover (2012) 28-30. Hershkowitz (1998b) 241 sees the connection of the Argo to the “struggle between East and West for world supremacy” as “imparting a cosmic dimension on the enterprise far beyond the apotheosis of a few selected heroes.”

once in the course of the poem.³⁶⁰ Something like *furor* is actually depicted twice on the Argo itself: once in Argus' rendering of Rhoetus, one of Vergil's *furientes centauri* (*Geo.* 2.455-6),³⁶¹ and here "mad with much wine" (*multoque insanus Iaccho*, 1.140), and a second time in Argus' depiction of Jason's father Aeson, *ense furens* (1.144).³⁶² It is tempting to attribute sinister significance to both,³⁶³ especially in light of Jason's anxious reaction to the images.³⁶⁴ On the other hand, the usual semantic cluster of *furor*-words is absent, Jason is later reassured of the Argo's ultimate success in a dream (1.300-9), and *multoque insanus Iaccho*—though not incompatible with the general ferocity of centaurs—is plainly a stilted periphrasis for "drunk," whatever the other associations of *insanus*.³⁶⁵ Aeson's *furor* is easily explicable as straightforward Homeric battle-rage and is not disturbing in itself;³⁶⁶ in fact, if one reads the ecphrasis primarily as a presentation of the archetypal victory of civilization over barbarism (a

³⁶⁰ Cf. Kleywegt (2005) 361, who concludes that Boreas' *insanus* suggests that the people who built the Argo must be mad. So also Zissos (2008) 338.

³⁶¹ Rhoetus is also described as *ferox* in Ovid (*Met.* 12.294) and in Lucan (6.390).

³⁶² In the *Thebaid* Statius uses a similar phrase (*ense furit*, 9.303) in a similar context (battle-fury); cf. Kleywegt (2005) *ad loc.* Zissos (2008) 161 sees the centaur scene's thematic importance primarily in terms of "the idea of conflict over women, which Jupiter will later identify as a vital catalyst in the unfolding of human history." More obviously, it serves to "connect heroic generations, establishing a relative mythological chronology" (161). For bibliography on both ecphrases see Zissos (2008) 152-4.

³⁶³ One can interpret the whole ecphrasis "as suggesting a pessimistic view of erotic attraction" since "each scene involves an unhappy or otherwise unfortunate love relationship." The Argo foreshadows the disaster of Jason and Medea's marriage (Zissos [2008] 153).

³⁶⁴ Hershkowitz (1998b) 129-30, Zissos (2008) 167.

³⁶⁵ Zissos (2008) and Kleywegt (2005) both point out with reference to the *TLL* that this use of *insanus* is apparently a novelty.

³⁶⁶ Zissos (2008) 164 calls the phrase *ense furens* "vivid and heroizing", applying the same phrase he used of Titus' *furor* in the poem.

trope closely connected to the battle of centaurs and Lapiths), Aeson's wrath may be positively commendable.³⁶⁷

Nevertheless, Jason does wonder whether his father—the man himself, and perhaps in a punning sense the painted Aeson raging on the bow—will bear the brunt of the sea's own wild wrath (*in solum...saeviet Aesona pontus?*, 1.152), and his dread of the open ocean leads directly to his covert recruitment of Acastus, in order to win Pelias' prayers by force. When we first meet Jason's mother (Aeson's wife), due to the Argo's impending departure she too is *furens* (1.318), drowning out all the other *feminei ululatus* in the singular intensity of her grief (319).³⁶⁸ Once the vessel gets under way, as Jason recognizes with pain (and not a little guilt), *furor* will immediately follow in the Argo's wake as Pelias realizes his son Acastus has been shanghaied (1.699); Jason's fear of the sea's rage has ironically aroused a far more deadly kind of wrath. When he learns of his son's kidnapping, the cruel king rages (*saevit*, 1.700), and in a description recalling Aeneas' execution of Turnus he becomes *furiis iraque minaci | terribilis* (722).³⁶⁹ His madness is likened by the poet to the Bacchic frenzy of the Thracians and of their impious king Lycurgus (727-9),³⁷⁰ a modest twist on a conventional comparison. But *furor* lies ahead of the Argo as well. Among many other perils awaiting Jason are an island full of bloodthirsty husband-slayers, in whom his very approach renews a *furor improbus* (2.314), a disastrous night battle

³⁶⁷ For a summary of this view with bibliography see Zissos (2008) 161.

³⁶⁸ Kleywegt (2005) 184 thinks that Valerius here innovates on the semantic range of *furere*, arguing that most other *TLL* examples for grief are actually about anger.

³⁶⁹ *Aen.* 12.946-7. Noted by Zissos (2008) 376.

³⁷⁰ Pelias will eventually become prey for the Furies (*Furorum*, 1.792) invoked by Aeson just before his forced suicide. On the simile see Zissos (2008) 377-8 and Kleywegt (2005) 424.

fuelled by *furor* (both Jason and Cyzicus are *furens*, 3.71, 86),³⁷¹ and the terrifying Cyanean rocks, *insana saxa* (4.641) which are described as quasi-animate agents of *furor* (4.562).³⁷² Nearly the full semantic cluster familiar from Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan (leaving out *ardor/ardere* but including even *vesanus* and *lymphatus*) is brought to bear by Valerius on the elaboration of these threats.³⁷³ Nor are the gods untainted by *furor* in connection with the Argo's mission: Juno, Pallas, Venus, and Mars are all associated with (or at least accused of) madness at some point in the poem.³⁷⁴

The poem's most memorable *furores*, however, appear in its second half, in which the love frenzy of Aeetes' infamous daughter takes center stage and its famously tragic results at Corinth are "repeatedly, almost obsessively anticipated."³⁷⁵ The second proem at 5.219-20 explicitly declares Medea's madness to be the undergirding theme: *ventum ad furias infandaque natae | foedera*. As many scholars have noticed, the marriage-themed paintings on the ship recounted in Book 1 (of unhappily-matched Thetis on one side, and the disruption of Hippodamia's wedding

³⁷¹ Manuwald (2015) 89 differentiates between the mental state of Cyzicus and Jason: "Since Cyzicus is also characterized as *demens*, owing to the influence of Bellona (63) and compared to mythical figures out of their minds (65-9), the emphasis is different: with respect to Jason it is the fury of battle."

³⁷² The rocks are described in vivid, almost human, terms; they "wander" over the deep (*errantes*; this must be a learned gloss on Homer's *πλαγκταί*, *Od.* 12.61, and Zissos [2008] 77 notes another such gloss at 3.621), they "see" (*videre*) no ships, and they "fight" interminably against one another on the sea (4.561, 563, 566).

³⁷³ For *vesanus* see 5.527 and 5.673; *lymphatus* 6.166. The episode of the Lemnian women is representative of the broader cluster: like a fury (*furiale*, 2.102) Venus aims to render the women *rabidae* (2.133); in a false tale, a Lemnian husband rages (*furit*, 2.145) with adulterous love; bloodthirstiness (directed against jilted wives) is attributed to the Thracian women (*saevire*, 2.157); Venus spreads *furiae* through the city (2.163); another putatively unfaithful husband is *amens* (2.180); each Lemnian wife is now *furens* (2.191); Venus herself is *furibunda* (2.200); *Discordia demens* attacks (2.204) with *Rabies* (206); the Thracian slaves are the *causa furoris* (2.239). For similar piling-up of *furor* language see the case of Cyzicus (*demens* 3.63, *furens* 3.71, *saevit* and *fremens* 3.229) and Hercules (*amens* 3.576, *ora...accensa furiis* 3.590, *furit* 4.5, *amens* again 4.50).

³⁷⁴ Venus inspires (and seemingly partakes of) the madness of the Lemnian women, and both Venus and Juno are deeply implicated in the arousal of Medea's mad passion for Jason. Mars and Pallas engage in some petty name-calling (Mars says Pallas is *rabida* 5.626; Pallas responds by referring to him as *demens* 5.656), and later Jove calls Mars *vesanus* (5.673) and dismisses his evil *furores* (5.676). At 7.1 Mars is still incensed by *furiae*.

³⁷⁵ Zissos (2008) xxxi.

on the other) foreshadow Jason's own disastrous marriage, as well as the martial strife which will both accompany and follow it.³⁷⁶ Two further invocations of the Muse (at 6.33 and 6.516) emphasize the *furor* of Aeetes' civil war against Perses, which in turn provides Juno with a perfect opportunity to corrupt Medea's reason with *furor* inspired by the rapturous sight of Jason raging in the thick of the action (*saevit* 6.613, *furit* 616). Martial madness is thus transmuted by the goddess into erotic obsession.³⁷⁷ Medea's deadly infatuation represents a highly elaborated expression of the same erotic *furor* that had been described to such compelling effect by Vergil in *Aeneid* 4 and by Ovid throughout the *Metamorphoses*, and the contrast here with the virtual absence of amatory frenzy in Lucan, Statius, and Silius is conspicuous.³⁷⁸ Perhaps most ominously, a personified *Furor* (apparently unbeknownst to both parties) promises to avenge Jason's soon-to-be-perjured oath to Medea at 7.509-10.³⁷⁹ Jason too will be overthrown by erotic madness, and in the eyes of his fellow Argonauts, Medea is an *Erinys* incarnate, a disruptive force which threatens to reduce their epoch-making voyage (an expression of undaunted *virtus*) to nothing more than a selfish and reckless adventure driven by one man's *furiae* and *amor*

³⁷⁶ Harrison (2013) 218 and bibliography in n16. As Harrison points out, Medea is described by lines which parallel Thetis' unhappiness very closely (cf. 1.132 and 8.204-6).

³⁷⁷ Zissos (2008) xxx-xxxi sees the war as mere scaffolding for the main drama: "Despite some notable Homeric touches, the martial activity of the second half unfolds in the context of an inconsequential and degraded civil war that serves as little more than a convenient expedient for inciting Medea's destructive sexual passion."

³⁷⁸ Seduced by Juno with Venus' girdle, Medea *ad extremos agitur...furores* (6.667). Her madness is compared to an initially gentle but later deadly wind (6.664-6). The necklace Juno gives her is *furiale* (6.670). Medea addresses herself as *demens* after watching Jason in the battle, reflecting on her own passion (7.12). She is compared to a lapdog being consumed by *pestis* and *rabies* (7.125). She again addresses herself as *demens* (7.128) and is assailed by *furor* (7.154), *furias* (7.161), and the Furies (7.170). At Juno's bidding Venus imparts *furialia oscula* (7.254). Jason is the reason why she rages (*furit*, 7.315). Medea marvels at herself *furens* (7.337) and the narrator calls her *demens* (7.433). After Jason's trials Medea becomes a victim of Aeetes' rage (*furiae*, 8.2). She is *furens* again at 8.54. When Jason seems to give in to the Argonauts' suggestion that he return Medea to her kin, she rages with *furianta mente* (8.445). For a descriptive account of the Furies' role in Valerius, see Thuile (1980) 49-117.

³⁷⁹ Zissos (2008) 409.

nefandus (8.385-96). The Argo itself shudders to bear her over the waves; seen through the narrator's eyes, it is *trepida* under the burden of the *horrenda virgo* (5.220).

In its moment of greatest peril near the end of the unfinished poem, as the ship is hounded by a Colchian fleet bent on vengeance for the theft of both fleece and princess, the Argo lives up to the dubious promise of its troubled departure; its famous accomplishments are nearly submerged by the destructive forces of martial and erotic *furor*. The latter danger is already ensconced within the Argo itself in the form of the frightened Medea, and it is not without some justification that Aeetes, cruel schemer that he is, rails against Jason and questions the true purpose of the Argo's voyage (*quis furor has mediis tot fluctibus egit in oras...?*, 7.36-8). To Aeetes, madness is the Argo's mission, and it bears on board an army of ills (*malorum*, 7.37) which are the bitter fruit of Phrixus' fateful arrival in Colchis a generation earlier. He suspects that some nameless and threatening power lurks in the ship's very timbers (*latet una | nescio quid plus puppe viris*, 5.59-60), and in this the Colchian king, like Boreas in Book 1, seems in one sense to speak truer than he knows. Though the primary reference is presumably to the tradition of the Argo's supernatural, prophetic endowment in the form of an oak plank taken from Dodona—the ship itself speaks twice in the *Argonautica*³⁸⁰—its entanglement with *fata* runs deeper than mere prophetic knowledge. When Jupiter explains the cosmic significance of the Argo's voyage early in the poem, he does so primarily in terms of the intercontinental strife and terrible bloodshed which it presages. It is a tool of the dread goddess of war: *via facta per undas | perque hiemes, Bellona, tibi* (1.545-6)³⁸¹ destined to bring *dolor*, *gemitus*, and *ira* to many (1.548, 550). The outcome, at least for the Romans, will be *longissima regna* and global

³⁸⁰ On this see Zissos (2008) 74 and Davis (1990).

³⁸¹ On Bellona and her associations with “undifferentiated bloodlust” see Zissos (2008) 318. Contrast Stover (2012) 46, which understands Bellona's new freedom in terms of the rebirth of epic poetry.

dominion (1.559-60). But for Pelias, for Aeson and Alcimedede, for Hercules, for Aeetes, for Medea, and for Jason himself, the Argo heralds woe and frenzy. For the slain at Troy, and the slain of the innumerable wars which will rage across the seas, it is the first token of profound miseries.³⁸²

This is not the whole story, of course. For the forlorn women of Lemnos, for Hesione (saved from a monster who rages, *furens*, 2.480), for Phineus (saved from the Harpes, whose *odor* and *fames saevit* 4.455, 499) and for Prometheus, the Argo also represents in the end a harbinger of hope and rescue; against the monstrous Amycus (*furens* 4.293, *saevit* 296) it bears vengeance for a villainous career.³⁸³ These positive aspects of the Argo's journey, when taken together with other features of the poem, have convinced some that the apparent ambivalence of the *Argonautica*'s cosmic vision ultimately tilts in favour of triumph and refoundation (through conflict and collapse) and the establishment of "a new and better world order."³⁸⁴ Certainly there is more encouragement to be found for this view in Valerius than in Lucan's dark and unbalanced world.³⁸⁵ Regardless of how convincing one finds this interpretation, however, it is clear that in the world of the *Argonautica*, as in the *Aeneid* (its most influential intertext after Apollonius' *Argonautica*), the negative consequences of Roman or heroic success are significant enough to prompt sustained reflection on the volatility of disordered human passion and the tragic ironies

³⁸² Manuwald (2015) 10 concedes that "such an outlook may seem negative, especially when compared with the expectation voiced by Jason, namely that open sea routes will lead to interaction (*commercia*) between peoples (1.245-7)." Statius' *Achilleid* seems to have been sensitive to both views and combined them (*Ach.* 1.81-3, 1.397-404, cited in Manuwald).

³⁸³ Manuwald (2015) 12.

³⁸⁴ Stover (2012) 33, 42. For Stover, "in the world of Valerius' *Argonautica*, the brightest days—especially for the poem's Roman readers—are yet to come... Valerius' epic world is one in which conflict is a productive force in history, as collapse leads to reorganization and political succession" (45). For similar readings see (e.g.) Shelton (1984) 23 and Tschiedel (2003) 31-3.

³⁸⁵ Stover (2012) 45.

of history: “Flavian epic organically integrates universal themes like the hard-won victory of order and civilization, but it also constantly invites the reader to think about the possibility of ‘relapse’ and to fear the danger of a catastrophic step backwards: chaos is an everlasting threat, which also looms over the present.”³⁸⁶

V. Silius Italicus

Though Silius Italicus’ *Punica* is the longest Latin epic which survives from antiquity, it is perhaps the easiest to summarize in terms of its contribution to the *furor*-theme. The poem’s arsenal of human madness—almost exclusively consisting of variations on one type, battle frenzy—is deployed by Juno, embodied by Hannibal, indulged by incompetent Roman commanders, resisted (until it can be employed rightly) by Fabius, and harnessed by Scipio. Due to the massive size of Silius’ poem, my examination of *furor* in the *Punica* will perforce be more selective than the discussions above, but not (I hope) less representative.

Hannibal’s *furor*, the soul of the *irae* and *odium perenni servatum studio* which are Silius’ grand subject (1.17-18), combines inherited hatred with an instinctive lust for battle. Its origin lies in the invidious resentment of Juno, who instigated the first Punic war out of fear for Carthage, her favourite city, as Rome grew ever more powerful and Roman fleets reached ever farther out into the Mediterranean (1.29-33). The *furor bellandi* (1.32) with which she inspires the Carthaginians is the ultimate source of much of the poem’s rage and madness, and its close

³⁸⁶ Fucecchi (2013) 108. Cf. Manuwald (2015) 12: “In VF’s epic, apart from prospects for the future, the first sea voyage has short-term positive effects, which are fated...Some scholars have therefore seen the first voyage across the open sea as civilizing, in that it brings progress and humanity to ‘barbarian’ people. This is surely one effect; however, the move to a new age by the introduction of seafaring will also create new dangers...In combination with the facilitation of wars, the results of the Argonautic journey are ambiguous.”

association with Hannibal is emphasized repeatedly by Silius. The great general “dons the goddess’ rage” like a mantle, so that once more she may set up her own champion to vie in vain with Jupiter’s Fates (*iamque deae cunctas sibi belliger induit iras | Hannibal; hunc audet solum componere fatis*, 1.38-9). Hannibal’s *furor* is attributed not only to Juno (who intervenes directly, *iuvenem facta ad Mavortia flammam*, 1.55), but also to his own innate character (1.56), thirst for human blood (1.60), and youthful ambition (1.61). His father Hamilcar, a man who knows how to feed the fires of hate (*sollers nutrire furores*, 1.79), also plays an important role in grooming him for future frenzy (*hanc rabiem in fines Italum Saturniaque arva | addiderat laudem puero patrius furor orsus*, 1.70-71). When Scipio later encounters Hamilcar in the underworld, he finds him still nursing his implacable hatred (*irarum servat rabiem*, 13.734).

In battle Hamilcar’s son rages like Mars (*furit*, 1.429), accompanied like that god by a retinue of hellish abstractions (*Metus Terrorque Furorque*, 4.325), and *spes* and *virtus* collapse before him (4.328). In the eyes of his enemies he is a man who must have been given birth by *insana freta* or *coetus ferarum* (1.638); he is like the *pelagi rabies* (2.290), driven mad by *furiae paternae* (2.296). A hundred tongues would not suffice the poet to number those slain by Hannibal’s *furor irae* at the battle of the Trebia (4.528). Even when stymied by Fabius his rage only increases, fed by *insani curarum...fluctus* (8.32), and the indescribable carnage of Cannae cheats his frenzy by lasting, disappointingly, only a single day (10.327). His *rabies* is like that of a wild tigress (12.462) and he burns with desire to attack Rome even when recalled to Carthage (*talibus ardentem furiis*, 17.236). Like his father he is a leader who knows well how to inflame his followers with his own tortured fury (17.293).

His opponents are characterized by their own kind of madness. In Book 2, Hanno, one of Hannibal’s political enemies in Carthage, warns in vain against war with the Romans. He paints

an exaggerated portrait of the Romans' inborn military prowess and superhuman ferocity.

Hannibal is a madman (*demens*, 1.309) to launch another campaign against men whom even seemingly mortal wounds cannot stop (1.322-324):

ipse ego Romanas perfosso corpore turmas
tela intorquentes correpta e vulnere vidi;
vidi animos mortesque virum decorisque furorem.

My own eyes have seen Roman soldiers, when run through the body, snatch the weapon from their wound and hurl it at the foe; I have seen their courage and the way they die and their passion for glory.³⁸⁷

Hanno attributes to the Romans “a mad passion for glory” (*decoris furor*, 324), a quality no doubt calculated, on the lips of an enemy, to gratify the national pride of Silius' Roman readers. It is excessive and unnatural—that of course is Hanno's point. From the Roman perspective, this comes near to what we might call “good” or morally sanctioned *furor*, despite the fact that it is attested by a character who is no friend to Rome and focalized through his hostile, even fearful eyes. The rest of Hanno's speech aligns with the Roman perspective on Hannibal and on the broken treaty so closely that Gestar (a partisan of Hannibal's who argues for war) sneeringly calls Hanno an *Ausonius miles* (2.331). In Gestar's subsequent riposte to Hanno, his bellicose words in explicit opposition to *fata* ominously echo Juno's loosing of the *furor* of war in *Aeneid* 7 (*liberque Acheronta videbo*, 2.367),³⁸⁸ suggesting that a collision course has been set between the national Roman *decoris furor* and the *furor bellandi* of Hannibal.

Before this can happen, however, Silius interposes the programmatic episode of the Saguntines, whose *furor* and mass suicide at the prompting of Tisiphone, servant of Juno, elicit from the poet both horrifying description and paradoxical praise. Hercules, the town's founder and divine patron, had appealed to Fides to help Saguntum, but the best she can do is to promise

³⁸⁷ The translation is that of Duff's Loeb (1934).

³⁸⁸ Silius alludes to the Vergilian *Acheronta movebo* again at 2.536, when Juno incites Tisiphone against *Fides* and the Saguntines.

to ensure its everlasting fame and to follow the doomed Saguntines down to the underworld (2.510-12). Seeing Fides in the citadel, Juno reviles the goddess' newfound *virgineus furor* for war and responds by sending Tisiphone into the city to counteract Fides' assistance.³⁸⁹ Tisiphone's charge is to "send all Saguntum down to Erebus" (2.541), and Juno hurls the Fury against the city's walls with her own hand (543-4). Tisiphone impersonates the widow Tiburna in order to lead the townspeople astray, and her advice is seemingly confirmed by a terrifying serpentine portent (580-91). This proves too much for the Saguntines' reason (*excussae mentes*, 592) and weary of hoping for salvation (*sperare saluti pertaesum*, 595) they give in to the Erinys; the blame is laid squarely on the *divum inclementia* (596). After burning all their worldly possessions in the center of the city, while Tisiphone hides the supernal gods with a hellish black cloud (611), they begin to murder their closest relations. The awful deed is introduced in laudatory terms by the narrator, who confirms that the *infelix gloria* of their story will preserve their *opus...nobile* forever (612-13). The Fury forcefully suppresses the Saguntines' awareness of the horrors they are perpetrating (variously characterized as *nefas* 618, *scelus* 619, *rabies* 620, and *furor* 623, 644) as she fills their minds with "black passions" (*atros...tumores*, 626); husbands put an end to wedded joys forever as they slaughter their wives, and children and parents stain their hands with the blood of their loved ones. The narrator wonders who could restrain his tears while retelling the *laudanda monstra* of the scene and the *tristia fata* of the pious Saguntines (650-1); the sword rages (*furit*) against a city unjustly abandoned by the gods (*iniustis neglecta deis*, 657) and which has now become a *scelerum...locus* (658). The scene

³⁸⁹ Juno's point in using *virgineus* here must be to show contempt for the warlike enthusiasm of an unwarlike goddess; she seems to say "leave war to the professionals," meaning of course herself and the Fury, who are capable of fomenting much greater *furor*. *Fides' furor*, in addition to representing the goddess' own *ira* (she is *inflammata* at 2.514) is presumably a transferred characteristic of the Saguntines themselves, whom she had just inspired with bellicose *vigor* at 519.

closes with the Dido-esque self-immolation of the very woman, Tiburna, impersonated by Tisiphone at the beginning of the episode (now ironically compared to Allecto, 665-80). The book itself comes to a close shortly afterward with a passionate encomium of the dead from the narrator—they are the *decus terrarum*, a *venerabile vulgus* destined for Elysium, unlike Hannibal who is destined for judgment (696-707).³⁹⁰

Silius' language heightens rather than minimizes the paradoxical quality of this gruesome story. Deeds prompted by *furor* and instigated by the very personification of madness itself (a Fury) do not typically evoke *laus* from pious observers, though of course in the Vergilian mode they do typically (as here) prompt pity and passionate lament. In this case, however, the stakes are nothing less than cosmic.³⁹¹ Order and righteousness, represented by Hercules and Fides, vie with disorder and madness (represented by Juno and Tisiphone) to delay or hasten the city's fated destruction.³⁹² Though Juno and Tisiphone seem to win a decisive victory as they overwhelm the exhausted minds of the city's defenders and plunge them into a paroxysm of gore and chaos, their triumph is undercut by the fact that the very agony of the city's destruction will ensure the everlasting *gloria* of the Saguntines. In this sense, "Juno and Tisiphone unwittingly complete the work of Hercules and Fides."³⁹³ The greater good of enshrining the suffering Saguntines forever in the collective Roman memory as *exempla* of enduring *fides* justifies, even

³⁹⁰ Cf. Statius, *Silvae* 4.6.84, where that poet has Hannibal, by means of his impious attack, fill the Saguntines with "a noble frenzy": *populis furias immisit honestas*. On this passage and its relationship to Silius' Saguntum episode see Marks (2013) 298-9.

³⁹¹ Hardie (1986) 382.

³⁹² Cf. Vessey (1974) 31: "The last days of Saguntum achieve a universal meaning; while the siege was a historical event, occurring at a defined moment of time, it is elaborated by Silius as a cameo or miniature of a far greater struggle which is not limited in time or space but coexistent with the universe."

³⁹³ Vessey (1974) 34.

if it does not much palliate, the unspeakable crimes to which they are driven.³⁹⁴ “Evil” *furor* is co-opted by the forces of order in the interests of cosmic justice: “the power of hell has been negated; even madness itself has been transmuted and purified.”³⁹⁵ Vengeance will find Hannibal out in the end and commandeer the effects of his wicked frenzy to a better purpose. The episode of the Saguntines is undeniably appalling and it harrows the heart; every aspect of the city’s descent into madness and mayhem is disturbing. It does not seem likely, however, at least to me, that the narrator’s explicit, moralizing commentary is intended to subtly undermine readers’ acceptance of that very moral viewpoint.³⁹⁶

Once Roman and Carthaginian arms come into direct collision, it quickly becomes clear that the Romans are indeed susceptible to *furor* as well, often (though not always) in the same sense as that intended by Hanno. It is something of an understatement to say that in the *Punica* “Rome is not always true to an ideal of rational virtue.”³⁹⁷ Just before the two armies meet for the first time, both Hannibal and the Roman commander P. Cornelius Scipio (father of Africanus) experience a similar surge of desire to join battle: *ambobus velox virtus geminusque cupido | laudis et ad pugnas Martemque insania concors* (4.99-100). Taken together *cupido laudis* and *insania* give more or less the same meaning as Hanno’s *furor decoris*, and are notably equated here with *virtus* in the martial sense. Scipio’s *insania* is commendable simply because it is an appropriately Roman response to the onslaught of Hannibal, and no blame seems to

³⁹⁴ Vessey (1974) 34.

³⁹⁵ Vessey (1974) 34.

³⁹⁶ To me evidence for an ironic or ambiguous reading (whether intertextual or from Silius’ own text) of the fall of Saguntum—disturbing though the events themselves are—seems too slight to credit, *pace* Dominik (2003) 485-90. Certainly the abandonment of the Saguntines confers no glory on Rome, but the suggestion that it is represented by Silius as “the failure of idealised *Romanitas*” seems a stretch. For a more balanced view of the poem as a whole see Marks (2005).

³⁹⁷ Hardie (1993) 80.

disfigure his warlike wrath even when he faces down the *furor* and *rabies* of the river Trebia itself with *accensa...violentius ira* (4.642). By contrast the consul Gaius Flaminius is introduced by the poet as a man hand-picked by Juno to lead Roman armies to ruin (4.708-10); he is a man “driven out of his mind by the whirlwind of Fate” (*excussus...fatorum turbine mentem*, 5.54). Ignoring his officer Corvinus’ warning of adverse omens and of the importance of strategic wisdom over valour in a commanding general (5.101), and *furens* with *acrius...accensa...ira* (105)—a description that matches Scipio’s earlier state almost verbatim—Flaminius gives in to his lust for the full *decor* which a single-handed victory will confer on him (116) and like Staius’ Capaneus places his faith entirely in his own naked valour (126-7). Before the battle he rides through the ranks encouraging *rabies* and *furor* in his troops (5.158, 172, 182). Soon, as often in the poem, the mad bloodlust (*amor caedis*, 5.245)³⁹⁸ spreads and rages indiscriminately across the whole battlefield (*accensis in mutua funera dextris | parte alia campi saevit furor*, 258-9).

Silius attributes *furor* and *rabies* and *ira* to rank-and-file Roman and Carthaginian soldiers so many times in the course of the poem’s battles that it quickly becomes clear he has outdone all his predecessors for sheer volume of martial frenzy, and his repeated use of the favourite adjectives *accensus/incensus* rivals the frequency of other, more established members of the Vergilian semantic cluster of *furor* language.³⁹⁹ At the height of the disaster at Trasimene, when an earthquake separates Hannibal and Flaminius just before they can close the distance for single combat, the poet laments the insanity of war which drove both sides to fight on even in the face of such terrible portents (*heu belli vecordia!*, 5.627). Nevertheless, the narrator has Hannibal,

³⁹⁸ Silius uses this phrase three times in the *Punica*, all in Book 5; cf. 229, 427. Elsewhere we find *rabies caedis* (4.351) and a range of other associations, for instance with *furor* (2.665, 9.528), *ardor* (12.402), *dulcedo* (4.422), *libido* (14.531), *honor* (9.431), and *labor* (10.232).

³⁹⁹ Silius uses *accensus* 20 times and *incensus* 6 times, compared to 23 times for *furens*, 16 occurrences of *insanus*, 2 of *vaesanus*, 14 of *amens*, and 11 each of *demens* and *rabidus*.

gazing on the aftermath of the Romans' terrible defeat after Flaminius' death, exclaim *quae vulnera cernis! quas mortes! ...hos, en, hos obitus nostrae spectate cohortes!* (5.668-9, 672). The whole passage seems to confirm Hanno's earlier eyewitness claims (in Book 1) about the Romans' insuperable war-*furor*. The Carthaginian had seen for himself their terrible *mortes* and wounds, the evidence of their immortal battle frenzy (1.322-324), and now Hannibal orders his own soldiers to look on the extreme valour of the Romans, who are terrifying even in death (*fronte minae durant, et stant in vultibus irae*, 5.673). Hannibal concludes, prophetically (and flatteringly, for Silius' readers) that if this is how the Romans *lose*, they may yet conquer the world through such defeats (5.674-6).⁴⁰⁰

When daylight reveals the awful scene of slaughter (the *insani Mavortis opus*, 6.6) on the battlefield the next day, the narrator, in the course of commenting on brave deaths, describes the sight of a Roman corpse—that of one Laevinus—lying on top of a Carthaginian body, whose skull and face the Roman has gnawed in a final expression of terrible hatred. The gruesome picture is obviously indebted to Statius' Tydeus. Silius' language would be curiously ambiguous in a different context: he ascribes the deed to *virtutis sacra rabies* and says that it is deserving of poetic commemoration (*meritae sibi poscere carmen*, 6.41-2). In this context, however, *sacer* must mean “impious, accursed, detestable,”⁴⁰¹ and it can only be worthy of song on account of its extra-ordinary horror; there is no approbation here. This is in fact confirmed after the description itself by a matching narratorial comment which summarizes the episode and transitions into the next: *talia dum praebet tristis miracula virtus...*, “while savage valour displays such portents...” (6.54). Nevertheless, the general setting of this episode, coming after

⁴⁰⁰ Silius may be inspired by Hannibal's similar speech in Horace *Od.* 4.4.50-72, in which he says that the Roman people draw strength from calamity: *per damna, per caedis, ab ipso | ducit opes animumque ferro.*

⁴⁰¹ See *OLD* s.v., 2 b-c.

Hannibal's admiration of defeated Roman ferocity at the end of Book 5 and the tale of valiant Bruttius the standard bearer at the beginning of Book 6 (introduced by the approving line *nec tamen adversis ruerat tota Itala virtus*, "and yet Roman valour had not entirely failed in defeat," 6.14), leaves a mixed impression. Laevinus' actions, like those of the Saguntines, are clearly horrifying and are described in terms manifestly designed to horrify, but in both cases the final outcome—the eventual victory of (sometimes feral) Roman *virtus* and perseverance over Carthage—looms larger than the disturbing deeds which make it possible. Laevinus' story leads directly into the remembered tale of Regulus, the consummate *exemplum* of dogged Roman fortitude.⁴⁰²

Fabius Maximus, the man who will save the Roman name (7.11), exemplifies best for our purposes Silius' use of *furor* in the course of the *Punica*. His years lack the reckless heat (*fervor*) of youth (7.25); he is contrasted with the hothead Flaminius once by Cilnius and makes the comparison once himself (34, 230), underlining his status as the virtual embodiment of discipline, the singular quality by which the Romans will extend their *imperium* across the globe (93-5). Unlike the *fervor*-less Fabius, Hannibal "boils" (*fervet*) at the sight of opposition, and as he charges overconfidently into battle the sagacious dictator waits calmly, a *spectator* of the Carthaginian's *cassae...irae* (123). Fabius is the polar opposite of Hannibal's father Hamilcar, a man of the same generation whom the poet had described at 1.79 as *sollers nutrire furores*; the dictator is *sollers cunctandi* (126). The implicit comparison may also be hinted at when Cilnius tells Hannibal earlier in the book that Carthage would rule the world in place of Rome if Fate had given Fabius birth (*genuisset*) on African, rather than Italian shores. The effect of the Delayer's tactics on Hannibal, predictably, is to further incense his mad rage. The Carthaginians slaver like

⁴⁰² On Regulus as Silian *exemplum* see Tipping (2010) 7. Regulus himself is possessed by *insanus pugnae amor* at 6.335.

a raging (*saevit*) pack of wolves stymied by a shepherd (128-130), and Hannibal himself is *dolore furens...irae* (146). At a critical moment, the Romans are threatened by a rash impulse to break ranks from within their own lines (*a pugnandi prava libido*, 215), but Fabius manages to “tame the twin frenzies,” that is, the rage of his own army *and* the onslaught of the Carthaginians (*geminos domitare furores*, 218). As a result of a masterful calming speech from the Roman general, *furor* is utterly crushed within his own ranks (*his dictis fractus furor*, 253; note the solemn spondees) and *rabida arma* are stilled. Fabius is just like Neptune, who can calm even the most furiously raging seas (255-9); the simile of course recalls Vergil’s famous image of victorious order in *Aeneid* 1. Thanks to Fabius’ brilliant maneuvering to encircle Hannibal, it looks like the poor Saguntines (explicitly invoked by the poet) will even be avenged, at least to some degree (by famine, 280).

But when hotter heads in Rome foolishly decide to divide Fabius’ dictatorial powers with the less restrained Minucius, the war is nearly lost. Hannibal—like his father the mirror image of Fabius’ cool restraint—knows how to *nutrire furorem* (497) and draws the junior commander into a trap. Fabius, *expers irarum* even when provoked by Rome’s folly (516-7) will have to save the day from the madness (*vecordia*) of Minucius, who like another Flaminius “burns with desire both to destroy and to be destroyed” (*perdendi simul et pereundi ardebat amore*, 523-4). The people of Rome, to whom Fabius’ son (who is rather more volatile than his father) indignantly attributes *insania* and *rabies* (541, 546), share the blame for this state of affairs. Remarkably, however, when Minucius is nearly cut off by Carthaginian counterattacks and everything hangs in the balance, Fabius rises to a passionate defence of his countrymen and sheds his delaying tactics just in time to enact a thrilling and explicitly Homeric *aristeia* (he is just like Nestor, 597). In a telling simile, his onslaught is compared to the *bella furentia* fought by stormy winds,

precisely like the ones Neptune-Fabius had peacefully composed earlier in the book (571). But now his fury blazes forth to save Romans, indeed to save Rome itself in its most dangerous hour, and as *exemplum* it inspires the Roman troops around him with much-needed *furor* of their own (*exemplo laudis furiata iuventus*, 617). Fabius himself is described, strikingly, as *saevo Mavorte ferox* (705). Perhaps the single most significant detail of his heroic intervention, though, is the fact that it literally dispels the darkness of death which had overshadowed the Roman army of Minucius, driving away *Stygiae...tenebrae* (724). The passage around this revelation is sprinkled with light/darkness imagery which confirms that Fabius has wrought nothing less than a victory over Hell itself—through rightly-directed, rightly-timed *furor pro patria* at that. This is surely the very picture of “good” homeopathic *furor*.

Another pair of generals will re-enact the Fabius/Minucius duality when Q. Terrentius Varro and L. Aemilius Paulus lead (reluctantly, in the latter’s case) Roman armies to disaster at Cannae through Books 8-10; Varro is predictably *demens*, *insanus*, *amens*, and *firens*, the object of prophesied *furors*.⁴⁰³ On the other hand Paulus, motivated by *pietas* (8.328) to accompany his fellow-consul if only to mitigate the damage, bravely confronts impossible odds. At the height of his heroic last stand, Paulus is said to find pleasure in raging furiously—and gloriously—through the Carthaginian ranks (*furere ac decorare labores | et saevire iuvat*, 10.27-8). Though a disguised Juno, fearing what Paulus’ righteous *rabies* might do to Hannibal, taunts him and derides his *furors* as vain (10.46, 49), the narrator disagrees; had there been two such men, two Pauli, there would have been no defeat at Cannae (10.29-30), and the courageous consul is a victor in all but name (10.172) by dint of his *pereundi Martius ardor* (217). The phrase echoes Manucius’ folly but the contrast is stark: Paulus is almost another Fabius (307).

⁴⁰³ 8.334, 337, 9.22, 138; 9.47, 59.

Later in the poem, Scipio Africanus—an impetuous young commander who does not at first match Fabius’ emotional restraint, his *pietas* breaking out in rage (*furit*) against the gods for allowing his father and uncle to be killed in Spain (13.391-2)—is advised by the shades of the two elder Scipiones to moderate his *furor* on the battlefield, lest he be led into an ambush like them (13.670). And so he does, to Rome’s great benefit.

Limitations of space preclude a full exploration of *furor* and its related terms in the *Punica*, but suffice it to point out that though there is some evidence for the notion that the “bad” *furores* in Silius’ poem occasionally prefigure republican, Augustan, or contemporary Flavian disquiet,⁴⁰⁴ in general the pattern displayed by P. Cornelius Scipio, Fabius Maximus, L. Aemilius Paulus, and the younger Scipio is one which leaves room for “no real doubt about the victory of light over dark.”⁴⁰⁵ The diffuse epic generally employs the semantic cluster familiar from Vergil and other successors in familiar ways, with a few minor tweaks. Most noteworthy is its relentless focus on Homeric battle frenzy. Even when prophetic possession is in view, *furor* language is scarce.⁴⁰⁶ A partial exception to this battlefield emphasis is the suicidal folly and treachery of the southern Italian Greek cities (Capua above all), repeatedly described by the usual verbal group in keeping with their anachronistic portrayal as seditious allies rather than merely hostile neighbours, but even in this case the *furor* of internal division is closely associated causally with the *furor* of avenging Roman legions.⁴⁰⁷ The presence of *Furia/furia*, *Erinyes*, and *Eumenides* (in

⁴⁰⁴ See for instance 14.687, where Silius commends Domitian for restraining the *furor* of rapacious Roman provincial officials (!): *effrenum populandi cuncta furorem*. Penwill (2013) 52-3 sees the praise as insincere and ironic.

⁴⁰⁵ Hardie (1993) 81.

⁴⁰⁶ E.g. at 1.101, 4.755ff, 5.80.

⁴⁰⁷ The decision of some Greek-Italian cities to join Hannibal is ascribed to *furor* (11.20), and Capua is singled out (*furor* 11.29). Capua’s envoy, Virrius, is second to none in furor: *nullique furore secundus* (11.66). Virrius’ proposals—that a Capuan be made consul, among other things—are called *impia dementis vulgi* (11.68). Virrius

fact of Furies of all kinds) is notably diminished in Silius,⁴⁰⁸ and amatory *furor* is omitted altogether. Of nature-*furor* there is also far less than one would expect based on Vergil's unstinting recourse to lion similes and the like in the Iliadic second half of the *Aeneid*. Perhaps both the absence of Furies and the muted use of nature imagery for warlike frenzy can be attributed to a desire to avoid laying too thick a mythological glaze over historical events, and Silius (though he does not dispense, like Lucan, with the traditional divine machinery) may follow the example of the *Bellum Civile* in this regard, a poem which also mostly avoids that particular legacy of the psychologizing tragic stage.

Silius' gods, like those of his predecessors, do suffer an intrusion into heaven of *discordia demens* (9.288), in this case immediately before the climactic battle of Cannae: on one side are ranged, among others, Phoebus, Mars, Neptune, Hercules (who is *captae stimulatus caede Sagunti*, 9.292), and Venus (*amens*, 291); on the other are Juno, Pallas, and Ammon, and before long heaven is emptied by their descent to earth to join in the battle. As Silius takes care to reassure his readers on many occasions, however, the *fata* of Jupiter will not ultimately fail to ensure the wholesale destruction of Carthage, the surrender of Juno, and the subjugation of the unholy cosmic disorder they represent—at least until the renewal of the eternal cosmic conflict in the *next* epic, whether we conceive of it in dramatic sequence as Lucan's *Bellum Civile* or in compositional order as the innovative Christian epics of late antiquity.

himself is called *demens* by Fabius (11.96). Virrius' proposals are also called *furibunda insomnia* by Marcellus (11.102), who himself is filled with *furor* at this moment. At Capua after Virrius returns, the *iuventus* is *furiata* (11.132). Virrius rashly (*amens*, 13.215) leads a sally which falls victim to the *furor* of the Romans (216), and to Scipio, here described as *insatiabilis* (218). Among the citizens of Capua, now despairing, *non cessat furiare dolorque pavorque* (13.279). The city collectively admits its *furor* in supporting Hannibal at the moment of conquest (13.304). At the behest of Jupiter, Pan calms the *rabies* and *furor* of the Romans as they take Capua (13.344). See the similar case of Syracuse, riven by internal *furor* just before its capture by Metellus (14.93, 108, 280).

⁴⁰⁸ They appear less often in Silius' much longer poem than in the *Aeneid*, both in absolute numbers and frequency. Cf. Thuile (1980) 250. For *Furiae* in Silius in general see Thuile (1980) 229-285.

VI. Worlds Without End

Vergil's successors respond to the ambivalence embedded in the *Aeneid* in the form of *furor* and its related semantic cluster from a variety of perspectives, but all extend or correct, in one sense or another, complexities countenanced by the master architect of the tradition.⁴⁰⁹ How does a human being distinguish between—or more momentously, *choose* between—Heaven and Hell, when “both creative and destructive forces are mingled on both sides of the divine combat”⁴¹⁰ between order and chaos, exercising contrary attractions on the human heart? If we need to embrace a means of relating Vergil's epic to those of his successors—and it seems that his successors persistently invite us to do exactly that—we must think of them as readers, like us, who discern differing visions of the cosmos according to different suggestions latent in the moral matrix of the *Aeneid* and in their own perception of the world they inhabit. These worlds include the ones ostensibly ruled by Augustus, Nero, the Flavians, and eventually, Constantine. The historicization of the great epics written by, for, and about Romans is in this sense made unavoidable by the poets themselves, who cannot help but fashion and re-fashion the cosmos anew in each epic iteration. As we shall see, the Christian epic poets of late antiquity bring their own cosmos, their own order and their own universe, to bear on the Vergilian inheritance. The results exert a moral energy and compulsion which, though they are in one sense cognate with the powerful spiritual dualism of the *Aeneid*, radically diverge from it.

⁴⁰⁹ Hardie (1993) 75, 76; “The unresolved tensions [in the *Aeneid*] hold an energy that is tapped by subsequent epicists, who may adjust the balance in favour of either Heaven or Hell, but who...hand over in turn a tradition that contains the seeds of further powerful reworkings.”

⁴¹⁰ Joseph Fontenrose, quoted in Hardie (1993) 74.

CHAPTER 3

Christian Literature and the Cosmic Revolution

How oft amidst
Thick clouds and dark doth Heaven's all-ruling Sire
Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,
And with the majesty of darkness round
Covers his throne, from whence deep thunders roar,
Mustering their rage, and Heaven resembles Hell!

Paradise Lost, 2.263-8

Between the death of Silius Italicus just after the turn of the second century and the literary career of Juvencus in the first quarter of the fourth stretches a period which has left to us no major Latin epic poetry.⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, this poetically barren epoch does furnish us with another rich body of literature, one produced by the early Christian apologists and exegetes who interpreted and communicated biblical truths on behalf of the new religious communities which were proliferating throughout the empire. Among pagan prose authors during this period, *furor* seems to have occupied much the same semantic space in literary discourse generally as it had in Silius' day; none of the contexts in which it was used by classicizing writers would likely have surprised or puzzled writers of the Augustan age. The co-option of the word by a new and revolutionary group emerging from within Roman society in these latter centuries, however, established novel rhetorical coordinates for an old concept. Like their pagan neighbours, the Roman Christians used the language of *furor* to identify and attack threats to the social, political, and cosmic order; it was part of the "sophisticated array of exegetical and discursive skills" they

⁴¹¹ On the latter part of this period Roberts (2007) 146 observes: "For the student of Latin poetry the third century marks a critical watershed. For most of the century the pickings are slim [including] little that can be securely dated." Similarly Malamud (2011) 56 calls the third century "a cultural wasteland for Latin literature"; see Conte (1994) 608-9. Bardon (1956) 230-1 collects a few clues about epic poetry from the period that has not survived.

imbibed with the standard rhetorical education they received.⁴¹² But for the early apologists, their pagan neighbours themselves were one of those threats, by virtue of both their stubborn refusal to believe in Christ and their active persecution of the new sect. In the vocabulary of *furor* and its verbal cluster, early Christian theologians and poets ironically found a rhetorical tradition which was already well suited to their need to draw sharp distinctions between their own view of the universe and the *Weltanschauung* of the pagan civilization which surrounded them, and of which they were inescapably a part. Such language enhanced their ability to articulate a new and subversive *Romanitas*, one which employed the terms of a familiar universalizing ideology, defined now not by allegiance to the empire but to the Kingdom of God, a true eternal Golden Age which alone could satisfy the longstanding yearnings of élite Roman culture.

This chapter will account for the semantic history of madness among Christian authors between the early empire and Juvenecus' poem, and will also investigate the meaning of *furor* in the Old Latin versions of the Bible, another important comparandum for the thought and expression of the poets of biblical epic. The *Vetus Latina* (VL) represents an alternative application of Latin *furor* vocabulary to Christian truth which was contemporaneous with but did not immediately exert significant linguistic pressure over the large mass of Christian literature which emerged in the third and fourth centuries. The Old Latin versions and the writings of the Fathers collectively illustrate the evolving semantic possibilities of *furor* in late antiquity, among which the biblical epicists might choose when composing their highly synthetic works.⁴¹³

Neither poetry nor exegesis was incidental to this process:

The biblical epic poets were steeped in the literary and rhetorical traditions of pagan antiquity and thus emulated the best models which that culture offered. But they were also participants in an age of intense

⁴¹² Roberts (2007) 141.

⁴¹³ Šubr (1993) 16 draws a further connection between the hybridity of biblical epic and “the ambivalent attitude of the Church Fathers to pagan poetry.”

theological inquiry and doctrinal formation affecting all levels of society, especially as fundamental truths were seen to reside in the very scriptural texts they chose to represent in poetry.⁴¹⁴

The semantic boundaries within which Christian epics could articulate a biblical vision of the cosmos were marked out by the *furor* theme of Vergilian epic on the one hand and early Christian writers' theological appropriation of Roman political and philosophical rhetoric on the other. The story of the patristic colonization of *furor* and its associated language—a story that has hitherto remained untold—thus offers privileged access into the meaning of madness in biblical epic.

I. *Furor* in Early Christian Literature

In his treatise on the spectacles (encompassing both the theatrical shows and the Circus), Tertullian points out that in the case of the Circus races spectators are inevitably drawn by their partisan attachments into *aemulatio* (“rivalry”), which in turn breeds all kinds of destructive emotions, including *furor*, *bilis*, *ira*, and *dolor*.⁴¹⁵ These were passions against which the Apostle Paul had specifically warned believers since they grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30-31). Christians should instead conduct themselves before the Spirit (in Tertullian’s paraphrase) in *tranquillitas*, *quies*, and *pax*.⁴¹⁶ Tertullian concludes that the presence of the Spirit cannot be reconciled to the spectacles, which are among the *saecularia* that belong to the Devil, and that it is not enough merely to avoid them oneself; one must also avoid the company of those who are

⁴¹⁴ Nides (1993) 6.

⁴¹⁵ Tertullian, *De spec.* 15 (PL 1 [1884] 647B). *Furor* is not attested by surviving *Vetus Latina* texts for Eph. 4:30-31 (which generally read *indignatio*); either the translation is Tertullian’s own or he draws on a branch of the Old Latin tradition which is unknown to us. On Tertullian’s life and works generally see Barnes (1971) and Sider (1971); for the structure and purpose of the *De spectaculis* see Van Der Nat (1964) and Sider (1978). For an accessible introduction to the treatise see Sider (2012).

⁴¹⁶ On patristic attitudes to the ancient spectacles see the studies of Ville (1960), Saggiaro (1999), Matter (1990), Courtes (1973), Weismann (1972), and Jürgens (1972).

devoted to them.⁴¹⁷ Similarly in his polemic *Adversus Marcionem* he succinctly condemns the Circus, gladiatorial combat, and theatrical shows in a single sarcastic denunciation: *quid non frequentas tam sollemnes voluptates circi furentis et caveae saevientis et scenae lascivientis?*⁴¹⁸ The crowds are utterly ruled by madness at the Circus, which is as it were presided over by *furor*. Tertullian’s vivid description of the races in *De spectaculis*, which has been called “the most detailed and interesting that we possess from antiquity,” is worth quoting at length:⁴¹⁹

Cum ergo furor interdicitur nobis, ab omni spectaculo auferimur, etiam a circo, ubi proprie furor praesidet. Aspice populum ad id spectaculum iam cum furore venientem, iam tumultuosum, iam caecum, iam de sponsonibus concitatum. Tardus est illi praetor, semper oculi in urna eius cum sortibus volutantur. Dehinc ad signum anxii pendent, unius dementiae una vox est. Cognosce dementiae de vanitate: misit, dicunt et nuntiant invicem quod simul ab omnibus visum est. Teneo testimonium caecitatis: non vident missum quid sit, mappam putant; sed est diaboli ab alto praecipitati figura. Ex eo itaque itur in furias et animos et discordias et quicquid non licet sacerdotibus pacis.

Seeing then that madness is forbidden us, we keep ourselves from every public spectacle—including the circus, where madness of its own right rules. Look at the populace coming to the show—mad already! Disorderly, blind, excited already about its bets! The praetor is too slow for them; all the time their eyes are on his urn, in it, as if rolling with the lots he shakes up in it. The signal is to be given. They are all in suspense, anxious suspense. One frenzy, one voice! Recognize their frenzy from their empty-mindedness: “He has thrown it!” they cry; everyone tells everybody else what every one of them saw, all of them on the instant. I seize on that evidence of their blindness; they do not see what was thrown—a handkerchief, they think; no! a picture of the devil hurled from heaven! So it begins and so it goes on—to madness, anger, discord—to everything forbidden to the priests of peace.⁴²⁰

Tertullian here identifies *furor* as a state wholly forbidden to the faithful Christian by Scripture, and yet also as the very soul of the Circus experience. The apologist’s description is corroborated

⁴¹⁷ *De spec.* 15 (PL 1 [1884] 647B). For a thorough study of Tertullian’s complex relationship with classical culture, see Fredouille (1972).

⁴¹⁸ *Adv. Marc.* 1.27 (PL 2 [1884] 279A), cited and discussed by Wiedemann (1992) 147. Wiedemann notes that Jerome and Augustine take up Tertullian’s language again and speak of the madness of the spectacles in the same terms (*harena saevit, circus insanit, theatra luxuriant*, *Jer. Epist.* 43.3; *turpitudines variae theatrorum, insania circi, crudelitas amphitheatri*, *Aug. Serm.* 199.3). The repetitions are analysed at greater length in Rebenich (1994). Büchner (1935) 127 adds a similar phrase from Prudentius (*Hamartig.* 360): *vesania fervida circi*, and a similar description in Lactantius’ *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* (58.8): *circus vero innocentior existimatur, sed maior hic furor est, siquidem mentes spectantium tanta efferuntur insania...*

⁴¹⁹ This is the verdict of Büchner (1935) 128. I cannot resist reproducing his almost equally vivid comparison of the scene to a depression-era German football match: “Man denke etwa an eines unserer Fußballspiele...wo die Zuschauer Massen, deren Augen unausgesetzt den Ball verfolgten und die doch alle sahen, dass eben ein Tor gefallen sei, im selben Augenblick wie aus einem Munde das Wörtchen ‘Tor’ brüllen.”

⁴²⁰ *De spec.* 16 (PL 1 [1884] 648B-649A). The translation is from T.R. Glover’s Loeb (1953), slightly modified.

by (if it is not in fact indebted to) the account of the Scipionic funeral games in Silius Italicus'

Punica, which also feature chariot races (16.314-23):⁴²¹

fluctuat aequoreo fremitu rabieque faventum,
carceribus nondum reseratis, mobile vulgus
atque fores oculis et limina servat equorum.
Iamque, ubi prolato sonuere repagula signo,
et toto prima emicuit vix ungula cornu,
tollitur in caelum furiali turbine clamor.
pronique ac similes certantibus ore secuntur
quisque suos currus magnaue volantibus idem
voce locuntur equis. quatitur certamine circus
spectantum, ac nulli mentem non abstulit ardor.

Even before the starting-gate was unbarred, the excited crowd surged to and fro with a noise like the sound of the sea, and, with a fury of partisanship, fixed their eyes on the doors behind which the racers were standing. And now the signal was given, and the bolts flew back with a noise. Scarcely had the first hoof flashed into full view, when a wild storm of shouting rose up to heaven. Bending forward like the drivers, each man gazed at the chariot he favoured, and at the same time shouted to the flying horses. The course was shaken by the enthusiasm of the spectators, and excitement robbed every man of his senses.⁴²²

Silius emphasizes the spectators' eyes, which are trained with frantic intensity on the objects of their partisan hopes and fears, and the poet underlines the mad passion which seizes on every man. The scene is reminiscent of still another chariot race, the one at Opheltes' funeral games in Statius (6.456-8) which is dominated by *furor in laudes* and from which *pax fidesque* are wholly absent, so that one would almost believe that *bella horrida* were being waged.

For Tertullian it is clear that the *furor Circensis* includes not just excessive anger and grief (the predictable consequences of dashed hopes—and lost bets!), but also a fundamental blindness (*caecitas*), a concept the apologist uses in a double sense. In their senseless excitement his imagined spectators repeat to one another what each has already seen as though they had not seen it (*nuntiant invicem quod simul ab omnibus visum est*); they think they see a handkerchief

⁴²¹ Büchner (1935) 127 notes the parallel with Silius but does not comment on it. For additional classical comparanda, see Castorina (1961) 281.

⁴²² Text and translation are those of J. D. Duff's Loeb (1934).

(the signal for the race to start), but they do not really *see* with spiritual understanding.⁴²³ If they did, they would recognize the release of the signal for what it really is: a *figura*, a spiritual symbol of Satan’s violent expulsion from Heaven and (implicitly) his malignant presence on earth.⁴²⁴

This blindness—a literal incapacity to benefit from their own *oculi* (which are taken captive by the Praetor’s urn), and a fatal ignorance about the cosmic significance of their sin (which unites them to Satan in his fall)—is equivalent to *dementia*. The spectators’ insanity is evident from the futility and foolishness of their behaviour. Tertullian’s description recalls Cicero’s fastidious definition of *furor* as *mentis ad omnia caecitas* (*Tusc.* 3.5.11) but does not exclude *stultitia*, folly, as Cicero’s does. Tertullian’s formulation also has more ominous implications. Cicero had been concerned to define the *homo furiosus* of the Twelve Tables and to determine whether the wise man could ever fall prey to a total loss of his wits, if not to foolishness; for Tertullian the stakes are much higher. The natural tendency of the Circus is to fill people with passions incompatible with the presence of God’s Spirit, that is, the sign of membership in the household of God as a “priest of peace.” As such those passions characteristically mark those who have no share in salvation: that is, they identify men as pagans. Like madmen, the pagan spectators suffer a total loss of control; they are “not their own” (*sui non sunt*) and their thoughts are irrational (*sine causa*).⁴²⁵

⁴²³ For an analogous relationship between madness and sight in tragedy, consult Padel (1995) 65-89.

⁴²⁴ Büchner (1935) 129 detects an allusion to Luke 10:18, where Jesus tells the disciples, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.” Castorina (1961) 285 is not impressed by the image: “certo l’incredibile identificazione del diavolo con la *mappa*, rivelando in Tertulliano un’assoluta mancanza di argomenti validi, era più adatta a lasciare indifferenti che a persuadere.”

⁴²⁵ *De spec.* 16 (PL 1 [1884] 649A). Forichon (2012) studies the typical emotions experienced by spectators at the games, which she sums up with the label *furor circensis*.

When at the end of the treatise Tertullian vigorously contrasts the “spectacles” of the Christian life against the empty sights and sounds of the Circus,⁴²⁶ it is not the *mappa* (the handkerchief) that fires the spirit of the spectator but a soul-stirring sign from God himself (*signum dei*). The context—including the following phrase, which invokes the *tuba angeli*—suggests that Tertullian has the final trumpet, the sign for the imminent end of the world, in mind,⁴²⁷ which would match the trumpet that signaled the beginning of races in the Circus.⁴²⁸ He exhorts his readers, then, to substitute for the vanity and *furor* of the pagan spectacles the far more authentic “thrill” of the grand cosmic drama. How can the Circus compete with the impending second coming of Christ to purge the universe with fire, and bring the fury of his justice against the wicked, who will burn in flames which rage hotter (*saeviores*) than they raged in their hearts (*saevierunt*) against the Messiah and his people?⁴²⁹ The *furor* of the persecutors will redound onto them, and the believer will share in the joy of the angels (*exultatio angelorum*). The pagan spectators whose souls are being corrupted by the frenzy inspired by the games will ironically become a spectacle themselves, as their *furor* is punished by heavenly *furor*, to the rejoicing of the faithful; and the true Christians, including those who take Tertullian’s advice to fore swear the seductions of the Circus, will find satisfaction for their souls in the universal theatre of divine justice.

⁴²⁶ *De spec.* 29 (PL 1 [1884] 660A): *haec spectacula Christianorum sancta perpetua gratuita; in his tibi circenses ludos interpretare, cursus saeculi intueri, tempora labentia, spatia peracta dinumera, metas consummationis exspecta, societates ecclesiarum defende, ad signum dei suscitare, ad tubam angeli erigere, ad martyrii palmas gloriare.*

⁴²⁷ Tertullian’s translators have differed here: De Genoude’s elegant French (1852) interprets *signum* as a military standard, whereas the Italian translation of Mazzoni (1934) renders it simply as the voice of God.

⁴²⁸ Büchner (1935) 128 gives as indirect evidence a line from the boat race at Vergil *Aen.* 5.139: *inde ubi clara dedit sonitum tuba, funibus omnes, haut mora prosiluerunt suis.*

⁴²⁹ *De spec.* 30 (PL 1 [1884] 661A).

Tertullian elsewhere uses the word *furia* again as a virtual synonym for *furor* in a treatise reacting to perceptions of leniency in the handling of sexual immorality within the church, the *De pudicitia*.⁴³⁰ There he condemns in elliptical terms sexual sins even worse than adultery and fornication, which he does not name explicitly but describes as *reliquae...libidinum furiae impiae et in corpora et in sexus ultra iura naturae*.⁴³¹ For our purposes the most interesting aspect of this euphemistic phrase is not the striking contrast between it and the amatory and frequently adulterous *furor* admitted (and celebrated) by Roman elegiac poets, but the fact that *libidinum furiae impiae* could almost have been written by Cicero two and a half centuries earlier. The difference in sexual *mores* indicated by the rest of the phrase is not the point. It is rather the ease with which some language reminiscent of republican political invective—Cicero in one place condemns the *insania libidinum* of Catiline, and in another links the *libido* and *furor* of Verres⁴³²—could be adapted to Christian moral commentary, even as another term shows evidence of significant semantic change. Cicero never uses *furia* in the sense of “excessive, disordered passion,” a meaning which more properly belongs to *furor* in his works. The orator applied it only to the Furies (and by transference to the torments of a guilty conscience) and to implacably hostile political opponents (like Clodius).⁴³³

By Tertullian’s time, no doubt partly under the influence of the epic poets and the semantic tradition of Vergil’s *furiis accensus*, the word could be given a sense almost wholly detached

⁴³⁰ For this work and Tertullian’s views on penitence and readmission to communion, see Mellerin (2012).

⁴³¹ *De pud.* 4 (PL 2 [1884] 987A). This phrase presumably encompasses heterosexual sex acts outside of normal intercourse (*furias...in corpora*) and homosexual behaviour (*furias...in sexus*), both of which were regarded by ancient Christians as *ultra iura naturae*. On ancient Christian sexual ethics, see Harper (2013).

⁴³² *Sul.* 70 (Catiline); *Ver.* 2.5.85.

⁴³³ Cf. *Dom.* 99 (*ista furia*), 102; *Sest.* 33 (*illa furia ac peste patriae*); *Vat.* 33 (*pestem illius anni, furiam patriae*); etc. For analysis of Cicero’s use of *furia* against Clodius see the study of Berno (2007).

from the *Furiae* of the tragic stage. It was also used this way by the unknown author of a *Liber de aleatoribus* (spuriously attributed to Cyprian), who condemns gambling and playing dice in hyperbolic terms. Dice players are in the grip of *furia*—that is, *furor*—and through their *dementia* necessarily expose themselves to the dangers of idolatry and the power of the Devil. Abject surrender to the delights of the gaming table inevitably produces a *mens insana*.⁴³⁴

Some remnant of the earlier meaning connected to the *Furiae* does resurface in Lactantius, though only in very faded dress. In his epitome of the *Divine Institutes*, composed at the request of one Pentadius, the great apologist summarizes his own earlier discussion of three potentially dangerous emotional states (*ira, avaritia, libido*), rooted in wholesome human desires, with this sentence:

Tres affectus, vel, ut ita dicam, tres furiae sunt, quae in animis hominum tantas perturbationes cient, et interdum cogunt ita delinquere, ut nec famae, nec periculi sui respectum habere permittant.⁴³⁵

There are three passions, or, so to speak, three furies, which excite such great perturbations in the souls of men, and sometimes compel them to offend in such a manner, as to permit them to have regard neither for their reputation nor for their personal safety.

Lactantius' parenthetical *ut ita dicam* makes clear here the weakened force of *furiae*, which he introduces only as a metaphor. It is clear from the personifying verbs which describe each emotional state that he has in mind the traditional poetic picture of the *Furiae* who drive men to madness and experience themselves what they inflict on human beings. Anger “desires” vengeance (*cupit*); Greed “longs for” riches (*desiderat*); Lust “hungers after” pleasures (*appetit*). The result is a lack of normal self-possession evidenced in this case by dangerous neglect. The things which are generally among the most important to a person (security, reputation) are swept

⁴³⁴ *De aleatoribus* 6 (PL 4 [1884] 831B). There are good reasons to think the treatise is not Cyprian's, but was written not long after his lifetime; cf. Sanday (1889). On this work see now Bruno (2007) and the essays collected in Marin and Bellifemine (2008).

⁴³⁵ *Epit.* 61 (PL 6 [1884] 1071A). All translations of Lactantius are Fletcher's (1871).

away by the power of disordered sinful affections. The unabridged version of the *Divine Institutes* confirms that Lactantius has the “Furies” in mind here, at least in an inspirational way.

In the earlier work he had put things slightly differently:

Propterea poetae tres Furias esse dixerunt, quae mentes hominum exagitent: ira ultionem desiderat, cupiditas opes, libido voluptates.⁴³⁶

On this account the poets have said that there are three furies which harass the minds of men: anger longs for revenge, desire for riches, lust for pleasures.

Here the editor’s decision to capitalize *Furiae* makes our point for us, but even without this artificial clue, the formula *poetae...dixerunt* confirms that Lactantius is using an imaginative figure drawn from epic (among other genres) as a device by which to present his own contrasting theory of the passions, and the “three Furies” are undoubtedly the canonical triad of Tisiphone, Allecto, and Megaera familiar from the *Aeneid* and its successors. In his *Epitome* of the same passage Lactantius conspicuously omits mention of the poets and simply takes over the image in his own voice.⁴³⁷ Since it is evidently a commonplace rhetorical conceit, the apologist moves quickly on to his own ideas without much explanation. None was necessary. This underlines the superfluity of invoking the poets; the origins of the figure in traditional storytelling contribute very little to the question with which Lactantius is really concerned, namely the extent to which some emotions are “neutral” in themselves and only become sinful when they transgress their natural, God-ordained bounds. His usage of *furiam* in the *Epitome* bears testimony to the same, more prosaic sense in which Tertullian had used the word: simply to express powerful, destructive passions of one kind or another, the *affectus* themselves, the emotions stirred up in traditional stories by infernal agents. Set beside one another the two passages bring into

⁴³⁶ *Div. inst.* 6.19 (PL 6 [1884] 704A), trans. Fletcher (1871).

⁴³⁷ On Lactantius’ *Epitome* the standard work is that of Heck and Shickler (2001), which discusses its textual history and includes a translation and commentary

stereoscopic focus, as it were, the intuitively logical relationship between *Furiae* and *furiae* which was sometimes deliberately blurred by the Latin epic poets of earlier times—the very poets of whom Lactantius was probably thinking.

Returning to the passages quoted from Tertullian above, we can see that what they have in common is the conviction that *furor* and *furiae* are definitively pagan afflictions. True Christians, the *sacerdotes pacis* by virtue of the Spirit of Peace who dwells within them, can take no part in the mad tumult of the Circus and the other spectacles, and the *libidinum furiae* of the *De Pudicitia* are not to be tolerated anywhere under the Church's sheltering roof, let alone at its very threshold.⁴³⁸ The latter treatise, prompted by the apologist's indignation at a report that adulterers and fornicators were being re-admitted to communion by a certain bishop after insufficient penance, is concerned precisely to draw the boundary between the Christian and pagan lifestyles as sharply as possible. For Tertullian *furor* and its near synonym, *furia*, identify the state and behaviour of those who are outside the church's divine protection.

A somewhat different but related picture of *furor* as the defining characteristic of the pagan is painted in Commodian's (probably contemporaneous) *Carmen Apologeticum*, in which the poet gives a short autobiographical sketch of his life before conversion:⁴³⁹

Errabam ignarus spatians spe captus inani,
Dum furor aetatis primae me portabat in auras.
Plus eram quam palea leuior; quasi centum inessent
In umeris capita, sic praeceps quocumque ferebar.⁴⁴⁰

I was wandering, walking foolishly and held captive by an empty hope
while the mad folly of youth bore me up into the air.
I was lighter than chaff; as though I had a hundred heads on my shoulders,

⁴³⁸ [*has furias*] *non modo limine, verum omni Ecclesiae tecto submovemus* (*De pud.* 4 [PL 2 (1884) 987-A]).

⁴³⁹ Some scholars place Commodian in the 5th century; I follow Green (2006) 2n3 and Pollman (2013) 315, among others, in preferring the traditional date (3rd century). On Commodian and his times see Salvatore (1974) and Loi (1984); for an overview of his poetry see Fontaine (1981) 39-52.

⁴⁴⁰ *Carm. apol.* (also called *de duobus populis*) 3-6. The text is Martin's (1960), translation mine.

I rushed headlong whithersoever I was borne.

That is to say, his life lacked the ballast of truth, and he was “blown by every wind” in the heady recklessness of his immaturity. Such a man is the passive plaything of fickle notions (*captus; me portabat; ferebar*) and has little control over his own destiny.⁴⁴¹ His *furor* was not helped, no doubt, by his tender years;⁴⁴² but his point is not so much that he was foolish because of his inexperience as it is that he has now entered a new stage of life, not only in a chronological sense but also in a far more consequential spiritual sense. His physical and spiritual immaturity coincided for a time, and the former was a fitting symbol—though not the real cause—of the latter. In this mad world, Commodian says, “Who can truly come to know the one God of the heavens? Who but him whom He saves from pernicious error?”⁴⁴³ Pagan folly is to the spirit what youth is to the body: a dangerous state of bondage to ignorant passions which is best left behind as one attains to true wisdom and experience, in Commodian’s case the wisdom of Christian faith and the highly personal experience of Christ’s salvation.

Another apologist, Minucius Felix (Tertullian’s contemporary), similarly links pagan thought and behaviour with *furor* in his imagined dialogue between two educated men, a pagan and a Christian.⁴⁴⁴ In his defense of Christian probity in daily life against the attacks of his pagan

⁴⁴¹ Compare Aeneas’ self-description at *Aen.* 2.589: *furiata mente ferebar*. To some extent, such passivity may be inherent in the experience of madness in a broader sense; cf. Padel (1995) 210, on the passive characteristics of madness language in Greek tragedy.

⁴⁴² *Prima aetas* is a standard expression for youth and the age of the *iuvenis* in Latin literature; see (e.g.) Ovid *Tr.* 4.33, where it denotes the poet’s early adulthood (after he had donned the *toga virilis* and was already holding a minor bureaucratic position).

⁴⁴³ *Carm. apol.* 1-2.

⁴⁴⁴ On Minucius and his work see Fredouille (2005), Price (1999), Becker (1967), and Baylis (1928). For the Christian apologists more generally, see N. Thomas (2011), Wlosok et al. (2005), and Edwards (1999a).

opponent Caecilius, Octavius condemns the spectacles in terms very close to those used of the Circus by the African lawyer:⁴⁴⁵

in ludis curulibus quis non horreat populi in se rixantis insaniam? in gladiatorii homicidii disciplinam? In scenicis etiam non minor furor et turpitudine prolixior: nunc enim mimus vel exponit adulteria vel monstrat, nunc enervis histrio amorem dum fingit, infligit: idem deos vestros induendo stupra, suspiria, odia dedecorat...

At the curule games, who would not shrink from the frenzy of the mob in its brawls? or the organized bloodshed of the gladiatorial shows? In your stage plays there is the same kind of madness and indecency still more prolonged; at one a mime describes or acts adulteries; at another an exhausted actor inflicts the very love affair which he depicts; by aping their intrigues, their sighs, and their hates, he brings disgrace upon your gods...⁴⁴⁶

Minucius is appalled less by the effect of these sordid events on the spectators (Tertullian's primary concern) than by the pastimes themselves,⁴⁴⁷ which not only embroil the participants in madness—including a microcosm of civil strife (*populus in se rixans*),⁴⁴⁸ the paradox of carefully circumscribed violence (*homicidii disciplina*), and the unbridled passion of lust (*furor...adulteria...amor*)—but also dishonour the gods in whose honour such spectacles are offered and in which they themselves are parodied. Minucius' objective is not to upbraid compromising co-religionists but to mount a scathing critique of pagan polytheism and idolatry, which abases its worshippers and strips them of their rationality.⁴⁴⁹ The *furor* of mob violence, of regulated bloodlust, and of sexual voyeurism betokens a more fundamental disability of the mental faculties, to be explained ultimately by an infatuation with a ridiculous cast of deities

⁴⁴⁵ *Oct.* 37.11-12 (PL 3 [1884] 354B-355A). Lactantius seems to have this passage in mind at *Div. inst.* 6.20 (PL 6 [1884] 710A-711A): *histrionum quoque impudentissimi motus quid aliud, nisi libidines et docent, et instigant? quorum enervata corpora, et in muliebrem incessum habitumque mollita, impudicas foeminas inhonestis gestibus mentiuntur. Quid de mimis loquar corruptelarum praeferentibus disciplinam? qui docent adulteria dum fingunt, et simulatis erudiunt ad vera?*

⁴⁴⁶ Translations of Minucius are those of Rendall and Kerr's Loeb (1953), occasionally modified.

⁴⁴⁷ Wiedemann (1992) 147-8.

⁴⁴⁸ Cf. Lactantius *Epit.* 63 (PL 6 [1884] 1075A): *mentes spectantium tanta efferuntur insania, ut non modo in convicia, sed etiam in rixas et proelia et contentiones saepe consurgant.*

⁴⁴⁹ Lieberg (1963) discusses Minucius' portrayal of Roman religion generally.

whose own claim to respectability is vitiated by popular devotion. Earlier in the dialogue, after describing various other rites of pagan worship which also involve public disorder, sexual license, and the meaningless shedding of blood, Octavius indicts the non-Christian's fundamental capacity to reason rightly in religious affairs:

Quis non intellegat male sanos et vanae et perditae mentis in ista desipere et ipsam errantium turbam mutua sibi patrocinia praestare? Hic defensio communis furoris est furentium multitudo.

These, anyone can see, are the aberrations, follies and excesses of a disordered mind, and the mere number of those who go wrong supplies mutual securities. General insanity shields itself behind the multitude of the insane.⁴⁵⁰

Acceptance of the absurdities and contradictions of the pagan pantheon, says Octavius, demonstrates conclusively the irrationality of the pagan world, in which each man's own *furor* receives abundant support from a great mass of fellow madmen around him. The *mens sana* of the Roman worshipper—indeed almost of the whole Roman people, according to Octavius' argument—is the chief casualty of trusting in the traditional gods. The insanity of pagan praxis, so easily exposed by even a relatively cursory examination, finds safety from attack only in numbers. It can avail itself of no other meaningful defense. Here it is unreasoning credulity that results in excessive, disordered passions. The Christian alternative is not *pax* (as in *De Spectaculis*) but *ratio*.⁴⁵¹

Minucius' iconoclastic argument is less revolutionary than it might seem at first, however. The entire dialogue, it has been observed, is deeply indebted to Stoic reasoning and in particular to the philosophical vocabularies and thought-systems of Cicero and Seneca.⁴⁵² It was in fact

⁴⁵⁰ *Oct.* 24 (PL 3 [1884] 315A).

⁴⁵¹ Lactantius seems to repeat this idea as well. Cf. *Div. inst.* 6.20 (PL 6 [1884] 711B-712A): *Circensium quoque ludorum ratio quid aliud habet, nisi levitatem, vanitatem, insaniam? Tanto namque impetu concitantur animi in furorem, quanto illic impetu curritur.* The *ratio* of the games is no *ratio* at all, but rather *insania*.

⁴⁵² See Colish (1985) 29-30 and n68 for bibliography on Minucius' specific debts to Cicero and Seneca, and the debate over who exercised the greater influence on him. See also Heck (1999), Fürst (1999), and Powell (2007) on Cicero in Minucius. On Minucius' classicism consult von Albrecht (1987).

conventional by Minucius' time to equate extreme foolishness, from a philosophical perspective, with *insania*.⁴⁵³ As we saw earlier, this was commonly expressed by the famous Stoic maxim that “all those who are not wise are insane.”⁴⁵⁴ Minucius thus draws on a common way of speaking and on “an accepted body of wisdom about man and the universe” to articulate and defend an uncommon *Weltanschauung*, which will thereby seem subversively familiar (and therefore more acceptable to an educated pagan like Caecilius and the dialogue's intended readers).⁴⁵⁵ Octavius' use of Stoic formulae is marked and deliberate. The key *sententia* which closes the passage quoted above is an obvious allusion to Seneca's *De superstitione*, a work which does not survive but is quoted extensively in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. Fortunately for us, Augustine found Seneca's arguments against the generally absurd and (to the philosophically-minded) embarrassing traditions of pagan cult very apt to his own purposes.⁴⁵⁶ Thanks to him we have a passage in which Seneca inveighs against the *furor*, *insania*, and *dementia* on display daily on the Capitol, where attendants dutifully tell the statue of Jupiter the time while washing and oiling him, and others hold up mirrors and fix the hair of Minerva and Juno.⁴⁵⁷ In the same chapter

⁴⁵³ Cf. Augustine (*Civ.* 20.1 [PL 41 (1884) 659]), who calls the willful intransigence of unbelief *pervicacia simillima insaniae*.

⁴⁵⁴ Graver (2002). See p. 30 above. Cf. also Caelius Aurelianus 1.144: *Stoici duplicem furorem dixerunt, sed alium insipientiae genus, quo omnem imprudentem insanire probant, alium ex alienatione mentis ex corporis causa sive iniquitate*.

⁴⁵⁵ Colish (1985) 31, 33. Colish makes this point deftly: “The rhetorical strategy which [Minucius] adopts leads him to emphasize the parallels between Stoicism and Christianity, parallels that he makes as overt as possible while ignoring the differences between those two bodies of thought... His apology resonates with arguments familiar to readers of the pagan Latin authors of a Stoicizing bent. These literary and substantive reminiscences of classical writers such as Cicero and Seneca are a deliberate attempt on Minucius' part to insert Christianity into the mainstream of the culture possessed by the educated Romans he chose to address.”

⁴⁵⁶ Augustine first quotes this work of Seneca's at *Civ.* 6.10.1 (PL 41 [1884] 690), where he introduces it in the context of his running critique of Varro: *Nam in eo libro, quem contra superstitiones condidit, multo copiosius atque uehementius reprehendit ipse ciuilem istam et urbanam theologian quam Varro theatricam atque fabulosam*.

⁴⁵⁷ *Civ.* 6.10.2 (PL 41 [1884] 191).

Augustine quotes another passage in which Seneca recoils in disgust from the self-castration and laceration that accompanies some rites:

Tantus est perturbatae mentis et sedibus suis pulsae furor, ut sic dii placentur, quem ad modum ne quidem homines saeuiunt taeterrimi et in fabulas traditae crudelitatis... Si cui intueri uacet, quae faciunt quaeque patiuntur, inueniet tam indecora honestis, tam indigna liberis, tam dissimilia sanis, ut nemo fuerit dubitaturus furere eos, si cum paucioribus furerent; nunc sanitatis patrocinium est insanientium turba."

"So extreme is the frenzy of a mind disturbed and toppled from its throne, that the gods are appeased by rites which surpass the savagery of the foulest of mankind, whose cruelty has passed into legend... If anyone had the time to notice what those people do and what they have done to them, he would discover things so unbecoming for men of honour, so unworthy of freemen, so incongruous for men of sane mind, that no one would hesitate to call them mad, if there were not so many sharing the same frenzy. As it is, their title to sanity rests on the multitude of the apparently insane."⁴⁵⁸

The *furor* which so offends Seneca's sensibilities here produces a conclusion which Minucius was glad to appropriate for his dialogue and put in the mouth of Octavius, who echoes Seneca's *patrocinium* and paraphrases the whole sentiment, as is plainly evident from a comparison of the underlined words.

But Minucius does not put this idea in Octavius' mouth only. Caecilius, Octavius' pagan opponent, makes in effect the same accusation of insanity earlier in the dialogue from the opposite point of view, charging the Christians with a *furiosa opinio* (because they "threaten the world and the whole universe with conflagration") and characterizing their belief in the resurrection of the dead as "old wives' tales" (*aniles fabulae*). He also anticipates Octavius' attack on the pagans' mutual confirmation in error, alleging that the Christians "believe each other's lies with inexplicable confidence" (*nescio qua fiducia mendaciis suis invicem credunt*).⁴⁵⁹ Minucius thus presents to his readers a stark choice between mutually contradictory alternatives and stakes rationality itself on the controversy, in the manner of the Stoics: both sides cannot be

⁴⁵⁸ The translation is Bettenson's (2003).

⁴⁵⁹ *Oct.* 11 (PL 3 [1884] 266B-267A). Octavius refutes these charges using in part Stoic precedents; on his argument see Colish (1990) 32.

sane, so unnatural and insane do their arguments appear to one another, and Christianity is implicitly identified with wisdom by Octavius.⁴⁶⁰

But Caecilius is won over in the end, and by Minucius' design the final effect of his earlier accusations seems to be—ironically—the confirmation of Octavius' charge. The implication is that pagans can only maintain the pretence of sanity by accusing their less numerous opponents of insanity in turn, secure in their numerical superiority. In a mad world, the mad think themselves sane, and the minority who really *are* sane must be safely ostracized as lunatics. All this is made possible by a wholesale appropriation of Stoic rhetoric, which turns out in this instance to be perfectly consonant (unlike a great deal else in Stoic thought) with the Christian Scriptures. After all, the biblical alternative to godly wisdom was “the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness” (Eccl. 7:25),⁴⁶¹ and unbridled love of transgression caused false teachers to share in the “derangement” of Balaam (παραφρονία, 2 Pet. 2:16). The Apostle Paul characterized his own pre-Damascus state of opposition to the Christian church as “raging fury” (περισσῶς τε ἐμμαινόμενος, Acts 26:11) and in Paul's language “the word of the cross”—i.e., the Christian gospel—was “folly to those who are perishing,” but for believers it was “Christ the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:18, 24).

In Minucius we also find the first direct connection in surviving Christian literature between the *daemones* (for Christians, fallen angels) and manifestations of *furor* in the pagan world. These demons lurk under statues and images, whence they inspire the utterances of false

⁴⁶⁰ Padel (1995) 194-5 is worth quoting here: “Hyperbolic accusations in sane contexts, like real madness, imply that failing to see your situation as others see it—what is wrong in it, what will damage you—is wrong seeing, and therefore evidence of madness. People ‘prove’ sanity by their reasoning; logic comes from minds that ‘see’ properly....At the core of hyperbolic accusations, as of real madness, is a flash of self-neglect, which shows your *phrenes* not working properly.” See also the decree of the emperor Julian in the later fourth century, quoted in Sandnes (2011) 88, which compares Christian belief to insanity and prescribes the “treatment” of a liberal education.

⁴⁶¹ All biblical quotations in English are from the English Standard Version (2011).

prophets and deliver lying oracles.⁴⁶² By these means they pull men down from heaven and afflict them with maladies and diseases, including a type of madness which comes from the same source as the frenzy of the false prophets but wears a different face:

Hi sunt et furentes, quos in publicum videtis excurrere, vates et ipsi absque templo, sic insaniunt, sic bacchantur, sic rotantur: par et in illis instigatio daemonis, sed argumentum dispar furoris.

From them [sc. the *daemones*] too come the maniacs whom you see running into the street, soothsayers without a temple, raving, possessed, and whirling round. There is the same demoniac possession, though the guise of frenzy is different.⁴⁶³

Minucius here seems to mean people who behave bizarrely, as though in imitation of a duly recognized *vates*, but without the legitimating trappings of official cult (or so I take *absque templo*). This is perhaps simply a description of “lunatics” in the modern clinical sense, by which the apologist means polemically to highlight the indistinguishability of “authorized” religious savants and the mentally ill, the kind of person labeled a *furiosus* in the matter-of-fact legal terminology of the Twelve Tables. Certainly Minucius deliberately contrasts only the *presentation* of *furor* between recognized prophets and itinerant madmen; the source (*instigatio daemonis*), and indeed the result (the deception and affliction of mankind) are the same. Like the Furies of earlier Latin literature and especially of epic, Minucius’ demons both perpetrate ill effects and suffer them, both “deceiving and being deceived” (*et falluntur et fallunt*), both agents and victims of *furor*.⁴⁶⁴ But these malevolent powers and the *furor* they inspire cannot withstand prayer. They are forcibly exorcised in the name of the one true God when compelled to face individual Christian believers at close quarters and to submit to *fides* (of the afflicted) and *gratia*

⁴⁶² *Oct. 27* (PL 3 [1884] 323B-324A). It may be worth noting that Lactantius describes the Sibyl as *vaticinans furensque* in the delivery of her Christian oracles (*Div. inst.* 7.24 [PL 6 (1884) 808A]).

⁴⁶³ *Oct. 27* (PL 3 [1884] 324B-325A).

⁴⁶⁴ *Oct. 27* (PL 3 [1884] 324A) Cf. the terminology of Lowe (2008) 423 cited in Chapter 1 above (p. 38): like the Furies the demons are “medio-passive” because they experience “the effects they enact upon their victims.” Augustine (*Civ.* 11.13 [PL 41 (1884) 329]) calls the Devil *falsus et fallax* in the same sense.

(of the healer), though in the comparative safety of crowds they can work much greater mischief, making unwitting pagans their agents.⁴⁶⁵

In later years Lactantius would elaborate the argument: the mere sign of the cross was a source of terror to the demons, who could not endure it and had no choice but to abandon the poor souls whom they had possessed (*obsederint*) and the minds they had caused to go mad with their evil assaults (*mentes...malis incurribus furiatas*).⁴⁶⁶ This was more than the pagan gods could accomplish, as Lactantius points out sarcastically:

Ecce aliquis instinctu daemonis percitus dementit, effertur, insanit: ducamus hunc in Jovis optimi maximi templum; vel, quia sanare homines Jupiter nescit, in Aesculapii vel Appollinis fanum. Iubeat utriuslibet sacerdos, dei sui nomine, ut nocens ille spiritus excedat ex homine: nullo id pacto fieri potest.⁴⁶⁷

See, someone is out of his mind, set on by the influence of a demon; he is carried away, he raves. Let us take him to the temple of Jove Best and Greatest; or, since Jupiter does not know how to heal people, into the shrine of Asclepius or of Apollo. Let a priest of whichever one you like give the order, in the name of his own god, that the malevolent spirit should depart from the person; by no means can it be done.

The only effective cure for the *furor* inflicted by demons is Christ, who can restore human *ratio* to both the mentally sick and the spiritually perverse, between whom the difference often seems to Christian thinkers to have been more a matter of degree than of kind.

From Tertullian and Minucius Felix it is clear that *furor*, especially as understood in a Stoic sense to encompass every species of folly opposed to right thinking—in the Christians' case, biblical thinking—supplied the early apologists with a potent rhetorical weapon. By means of this concept, they could define and assail pagan polytheism as well as the malevolent cosmic forces which inspired it with precision, all while taking advantage of a generally accepted philosophical discourse which seemed to legitimate such a rhetorical move. Opposition to

⁴⁶⁵ *Oct.* 27 (PL 3 [1884] 326A).

⁴⁶⁶ *Div. inst.* 4.27 (PL 6 [1884] 531B-532A). On Lactantius and his times see the essays collected in Fontaine and Perrin (1978).

⁴⁶⁷ *Div. inst.* 4.27 (PL 6 [1884] 533C-534A).

Christian truth was not just epistemologically mistaken and morally perverse; it was insane, and fundamentally incompatible with *ratio* itself.⁴⁶⁸ From this belief, which enjoyed the apparent support of high-caliber philosophers like Seneca, it was only a short step to diagnosing schismatics within the church according to the same binary opposition. In the case of these heretics, however, *furor* brought to bear additional rhetorical firepower derived from the long association in the Roman mind between rebellion against legitimate authority and madness, whether on the imperial or cosmic scale (or both).⁴⁶⁹

Cyprian, a rough contemporary of Tertullian and bishop of Carthage around the middle of the third century, for his part uses the language of *furor* to condemn the factionalism of Novatian, who (though apparently orthodox in other respects) opposed the election of Cornelius to the papacy in 251 and sent messengers to Carthage to make the case for his own election in Cornelius' place.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Cyprian and his fellow churchmen would have none of it, and publicly refuted the messengers' claims by producing witnesses to Cornelius' lawful election. In a letter to Cornelius informing him of these events, Cyprian accuses Novatian and his party of *haeresis* and describes the subversive activity of the messengers, who were driven by their own *furens audacia* to go house to house among the Carthaginian Christians stirring up trouble and tearing apart the members of Christ; they were guilty of the gross *impietas* of deserting their "Mother" the Church.⁴⁷¹ In another letter to Cornelius on the same subject Cyprian grieves that

⁴⁶⁸ Of course, opponents of the faith made essentially the same charge. Augustine quotes Porphyry's opinion that the Christians were worthy of pity because of their *dementia* (*Civ.* 19.23.2 [PL 41 (1884) 652]).

⁴⁶⁹ On heresy in late antiquity see Berzon (2016) and the collections of essays in Iricinschi and Zellentin (2008). Berzon (2016) 92 notes that the "rhetoric of madness, insanity, and uncontrollability" is frequently applied to heretics by the Theodosian Code; on this judicial use see also Zuccotti (1992).

⁴⁷⁰ Grattarola (1984) and Vogt (1968) analyze the ideas and separatism of Novatian. For an accessible account of the controversy and Cyprian's role in it, see Heine (2004).

⁴⁷¹ *Ep. prima ad Cornelium* 1-2 (PL 3 [1884] 701B-702A).

some African Christians, thanks to Novatian's influence, have been seduced by *pervicax factio* and *haeretica tentatio* to remain outside the orthodox church, whether out of *obstinatio* or pure *furor*.⁴⁷²

Cyprian borrows “madness” (*furor*) and “effrontery” (*audacia*) as convenient labels for his opponents from the vocabulary of Roman political invective, especially Cicero.⁴⁷³ The language of threats to the security of the state is seamlessly repurposed to represent threats to the unity of the church. Cyprian also punningly calls Novatus—another rigorist schismatic, not to be confused with Novatian—*rerum novarum semper cupidus*, exploiting a stock phrase familiar from Caesar, Cicero, Sallust, and Tacitus (among others, no doubt).⁴⁷⁴ Cyprian elsewhere designates the destructive frenzy of factions as *non schismaticus, immo haereticus furor*, suggesting that factionalism, even when concerned with procedural matters and not characterized by any doctrinal deviation, is itself a doctrinal error, insofar as it represents rebellion against legitimately constituted authority.⁴⁷⁵ It is almost equivalent to a kind of internal oppression; Novatus' schism during a time of severe pressure from the Roman authorities was, in Cyprian's remarkable judgment, “like another persecution to our people” (*alia quaedam persecutio nostris fuit*).⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² *Ep. secunda ad Cornelium* 3 (PL 3 [1884] 707A). On the letters exchanged between Rome and Carthage concerning Novatian see Guelzow (1975).

⁴⁷³ *Furor* + *audacia*, sometimes joined with *amentia*, is one of Cicero's favourite pairings; cf. *Q. Rosc.* 62; *Ver.* 2.5.139, 188; *Clu.* 15; *Rab. Post.* 4; *Catil.* 1.1, 31, 2.1; *Har.* 4; *Phil.* 3.31, 6.18, 10.11. See also Livy 25.4.2.

⁴⁷⁴ See e.g. Caesar *Gal.* 1.18.3 (*Dumnorigem...cupidum rerum novarum*) and 5.6.1 (*cupidum rerum novarum*, again of Dumnoriges); Cicero *Att.* 9.12.3 (*rerum novarum cupidi*, of the Caesarians); Sallust *Cat.* 48.1 (*plebs...cupida rerum novarum*, of their initial sympathy with Catiline); Tacitus *Hist.* 2.8 (*rerum novarum cupidine*, of revolutionary sentiments prompted by “false Neroes”), 3.4 (*rerum novarum cupido*, of a potential contender for the purple).

⁴⁷⁵ *Ep. Octava ad Cornelium* 1 (PL 3 [1884] 732A). For Cyprian's deliberate fusion of the slightly different concepts of *haeresis* and *schisma* see Dunn (2004).

⁴⁷⁶ *Ep. Septem ad Cornelium* 2 (PL 3 [1884] 728A).

In Cyprian's day the application of *furor* to disruptions of the internal order and peace of the church, a species of heresy analogous to the political heresy of a Catiline or Clodius in its alarming implications for the health and cohesion of the community, must have seemed intuitive. Heretics were not only wicked, they were *suo furore dementes*.⁴⁷⁷ Their madness was evidence that they had never truly belonged to Christ in the first place, or indeed to the empire of reason:

Qui plantatus non est in praeceptis Dei patris et monitis, solus poterit de Ecclesia illa discedere, solus episcopis derelictis cum schismaticis et haereticis in furore remanere. Caeteros vero nobiscum adunabit Dei Patris misericordia, et Christi Domini nostri indulgentia, et nostra patientia.

He alone who has not been planted in the teaching and admonition of God is able to depart from the Church; he alone, when the bishops have been abandoned, can abide in madness with the schismatics and heretics. But as for the rest, the mercy of God our Father, and the pardon of Christ our Lord, and our own patience will unite them to us.⁴⁷⁸

Like Catiline, Novatus, who has proved himself an exponent of lawless *furor*, is not worthy of further patience, though some among his followers may yet be saved. And indeed, according to Cyprian, some were saved.⁴⁷⁹ But madness (in the "clinical" sense) could also be a consequence of faithlessness, as well as its cause or original explanation. In a short book on the lapsed—those who had consented to participate in pagan sacrifices or otherwise compromised their faith during the persecutions—Cyprian recounts how many have been driven to madness by a guilty conscience. Failing to confess their crimes and repent, they are filled with unclean spirits as a result and wracked quite out of their minds with remorse (*usque ad insaniam mentis excordes dementiae furore quatiuntur*).⁴⁸⁰ In the same treatise, Cyprian also rebukes the (physiologically) sane *lapsus* who rages against the local priest for ruling him unfit to receive the Eucharist. This

⁴⁷⁷ *Ep. Septem ad Cornelium* 2 (PL 3 [1884] 728B).

⁴⁷⁸ *Ep. Septem ad Cornelium* 4 (PL 3 [1884] 731A). The translation is from the edition of Coxe (1886), where it is unattributed.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ep. Octava ad Cornelium* (PL 3 [1884] 731B-734A).

⁴⁸⁰ *De lapsis* 26 (PL 4 [1884] 487A).

anger is truly insane from a spiritual perspective—that is, completely irrational—because only the priest can avert from him God’s just and imminent wrath: *O tuam nimiam, furiose, dementiam! Irasceris ei qui abs te avertere iram Dei nititur.*⁴⁸¹ The heresiarchs Novatus and Novatian were beyond the reach of Christian reasoning, though in the physiological sense they were presumably *compos mentis* (indeed, Cyprian’s letters testify indirectly to Novatian’s skill as a savvy propagandist). As an anonymous diatribe perhaps from the same period makes clear, Novatian, a man best described in the specialized theological sense as *discordiae furore vesanus*, had breached both divine and human boundaries (*qui ad tantam furoris dementiam proruperunt, ut nec Deo nec homini reverentiam habuerint*).⁴⁸² The orthodox bishops would of course continue to be troubled by a variety of heresies, many of which introduced not only schism but also novel teachings into the body of Christ. In the judgment of Tertullian such was the teaching of Menander the Samaritan, whose view that he and his disciples would not be subject to death gave ample evidence of *furor*.⁴⁸³ In letters attributed to the emperor Constantine himself,⁴⁸⁴ Arius and the Arians are denounced for their *furor* and *insania*,⁴⁸⁵ as are the Donatists, who belong to the same class as Novatian’s followers,⁴⁸⁶ the same rhetoric was deployed in late antiquity

⁴⁸¹ *De lapsis* 22 (PL 4 [1884] 484A).

⁴⁸² *Tractatus ad Novatianum Haereticum* 13 (PL 3 [1884] 1214B). One is reminded of Cicero’s claim in rather different circumstances: *Quid est aliud furere? non cognoscere homines, non cognoscere leges, non senatum, non civitatem?* (*Pis.* 47).

⁴⁸³ *De anima* 50 (PL 2 [1884] 734B).

⁴⁸⁴ For a consideration of such documents in Eusebius see Daniele (1938).

⁴⁸⁵ *Ep. Constantini Ario et Arianis* (PL 8 [1884] 513C, 516C-517A) and *Ad Alexandrum Episcopum et Arium Presbyterum* (PL 8 [1884] 496A). On the latter letter see Hall (1998); for Constantine’s interactions with Arian theology see Elliott (1992).

⁴⁸⁶ On the Donatist schism see (e.g.) Birley (1987), and Brown (1961).

against the Manicheans as well.⁴⁸⁷ The Donatists are accused of *vesanus furor*,⁴⁸⁸ and in another place the emperor (or his literary surrogate) upbraids their *vesania* and *rabida furoris audacia* in daring to make another appeal directly to him, in the manner of pagans trying to escape the just judgment of a lower court by recourse to a higher.⁴⁸⁹ It is obvious that long before the days of Augustine, *furor* had been thoroughly established as a meaningful rhetorical label to be papered across heretics and their ilk with prejudice. Yet it was no mere term of abuse, but was capable of conveying in compact form and potentially all at the same time, in an Empsonian “intra-verbal equation,” 1) the similarity of heretics and schismatics to the pagans, who were dominated by the *furor* of their disgraceful passions and un-manned (at least with respect to *ratio*) by their rejection of logic and truth; 2) their status as rebels *sine causa* against Christ’s legitimately appointed bishops; and 3) their hidden, even inadvertent attachment to the Devil’s party and the cosmic *furor* of the demons.

Those who troubled the church from without, the pagan persecutors, were similarly animated by raging frenzy, at least in the eyes of their victims. In the second century Dionysius the Great of Alexandria refers to *furor persecutionis* in a letter to Pope Stephen I,⁴⁹⁰ and the strange eschatological vision of Commodian predicted the return of Nero (the antichrist), who would expel all the Christians from Rome itself and pursue them with “terrible rage” (*dirus furor*).⁴⁹¹ In Constantine’s time Lactantius described reports that the mere presence of Christians

⁴⁸⁷ Coyle (2004).

⁴⁸⁸ *Ep. Constantini ad Aelafium* (PL 8 [1884] 483B).

⁴⁸⁹ *Ep. Constantini ad episcopos post concilium Arelatense* (PL 8 [1884] 488B-488C). On the authenticity of this letter see Odahi (1992).

⁴⁹⁰ *Ep. Dionysii Alexandrini Episcopi ad Stephanum Papam Fragmentum* (PL 3 [1884] 1103A).

⁴⁹¹ *Carm. apol.* 869-72. On Nero as antichrist in Commodian, see Baldwin (1989) 334 and n27; Poinsette (1999). For the relationship between personal devotion and cosmic catastrophe in Commodian’s works see Cerati (2011).

marked by the sign of the cross at pagan sacrifices had spoiled the omens and caused pagan priests (themselves subject to *instigantes daemones*) to incite Roman rulers (he does not say which) to *furor* against the Christians, whom they pursued without mercy.⁴⁹² Persecuting the true religion as false, on account of the power of Christ’s followers to scatter the pagan “gods” in fear, made no sense at all. If the Christian God was so superior to the demons worshipped at such sacrifices, did this not prove the deceitfulness (or at least the weakness) of the demons he put to flight? The failure of the Roman authorities to understand this simple logic revealed them to be *caeci*—blind to reason.⁴⁹³ Elsewhere in the *Divine Institutes* Lactantius even enlists Vergil to indict the persecutors as more bestial than beasts in their irrational hatred. “For what Caucasus, what India, what Hyrcania,” he says, “has ever produced beasts so monstrous, so bloodthirsty?”

Quoniam ferarum omnium rabies usque ad ventris satietatem furit, fameque sedata, protinus conquiescit.
Illa est vera bestia, cuius una iussione

Funditur ater ubique cruor . . .
 Crudelis ubique
Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago.

Nemo huius tantae belluae immanitatem potest pro merito describere, quae uno loco recubans, tamen per totum orbem dentibus ferreis saevit; et non tantum artus hominum dissipat; sed et ossa ipsa comminuit, et in cineres furit. . . Quoniam illa feritas, quae rabies, quae insania est, lucem vivis, terram mortuis denegasse?⁴⁹⁴

For the fury of all wild beasts rages until their appetite is satisfied, and when their hunger is appeased, immediately is pacified. That is truly a beast by whose command alone

Everywhere the black gore flows...
Everywhere there is cruel grief, everywhere panic,
and many a shape of death.

No one can befittingly describe the cruelty of this beast, which reclines in one place, and yet rages with iron teeth throughout the world, and not only tears in pieces the limbs of men, but also breaks their very bones, and rages over their ashes... What brutality is it, what fury, what madness, to deny light to the living, earth to the dead?

⁴⁹² *Div. inst.* 4.27 (PL 6 [1884] 532B).

⁴⁹³ *Div. inst.* 4.27 (PL 6 [1884] 533A).

⁴⁹⁴ *Div. inst.* 5.11 (PL [1884] 584B-585A).

We do not need the invocation of Caucasus and Hyrcania (*Aen.* 4.366-7) or the miniature pastiche of Vergilian lines (plucked from *Aen.* 11.646 and 2.369, both scenes of heavy battlefield slaughter) to recognize that Lactantius is drawing on the lofty register and deep pathos of epic suffering to drive his point home. The typical verbal cluster we have thus far been tracing through all sorts of different contexts (*rabies, furit, saevit*, etc.) achieves its expected and desired effects here.

The horrifying bloodshed of the recent persecutions, which was still very fresh in the memory of Lactantius' Christian contemporaries, was not satisfied merely with the dismemberment of the saints, but raged on to the rifling of their very tombs. The insanity and inhuman savagery of the persecutors—here imagined in unitary terms as a singular monster “reclining in one place” (the city of Rome) yet ravaging the whole world with its iron teeth—invalidates the conventional comparison to the irrational frenzy of vicious animals. The natural simile so familiar from Latin epic, likening the savagery of some hero to a ravening lion or a cornered boar, is painfully inadequate to the true cruelty of pagan persecution, which seems by implication to equal the most extreme horrors of excessive epic *furor*. The forces of chaos and *insania* rage across a global stage, and the Lord's enemies think of nothing but how to gain the greatest *gloria* possible by applying the most exquisite tortures to their victims; “for they know that this is a contest and a battle [*sc.* with the martyrs].” There is also a biblical allusion here to Daniel 7:7-8, a prophecy about a monstrous beast with iron teeth, an image sometimes interpreted in late antiquity to refer to the Roman empire.⁴⁹⁵ It is not for nothing that some have located the origins of biblical epic in the Christian apologists' synthesis of Vergilian quotation

⁴⁹⁵ The identification with Rome goes back at least as far as Jerome (*Comm. in Dan. 7:7* [PL 25 (1884) 530B]). The text in Daniel runs in part: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet...”

and biblical interpretation.⁴⁹⁶ As we can see in Lactantius, whose composite classical and biblical imagery cannot help but call to mind the horrible specter of *Furor impius*, its mouth bloody with slaughter (*Aen.* 1.296), the cosmic implications of Christian resistance to pagan brutality were virtually crying out for epic treatment.⁴⁹⁷

In the same era, Eusebius of Caesarea celebrated the first Christian emperor's aggressive action to defeat Maxentius, whose many wicked crimes included attempting to defile Christian matrons, many of whom preferred death to dishonour.⁴⁹⁸ In the Latin version of Eusebius' *Life* Constantine moves decisively to "extinguish the fire of the tyrant's frenzy" (*tyrannici furoris incendium restinguere*), and this *furor* no doubt embraced not only his political opposition to Constantine, but also his supposed attacks on the dignity of the Roman people, Christian and pagan alike.⁴⁹⁹ The translation of Eusebius' biography also describes Licinius, the Christian emperor's final rival, who, having dissembled his hatred of the faith for a long time through fear of Constantine, was beginning to breath out *furor* and *hostiles...minae* against God and his bishops before the final breach.⁵⁰⁰

According to Eusebius' intensely hostile account, this *furor* eventually prompted a war on the churches (*ecclesiis bellum inferret*) as Licinius abandoned reason (*a recta ratione desciscens*)

⁴⁹⁶ Lactantius himself is usually mentioned in this capacity by scholars of biblical epic; see Roberts (1985) 61 and Vessey (2007) 32, both following Herzog (1975) lxx-lxxii, 60-68, 155-211.

⁴⁹⁷ In the grip of this impulse Augustine praises the heroic courage of the martyrs in terms which recall the desperate valour of Vergil's Aeneas (*una salus victis, nullam sperare salutem*, 2.354): *non erat eis pro salute pugnare nisi salutem pro Salvatore contemnere* (*Civ.* 22.6.1 [PL 41 (1884) 758]). Beyond our scope here but also well worth considering is the re-use of *furor impius* in Prudentius (*Peristeph.* 11.5) to denote the wicked madness of pagan Roman persecutors. See the analysis of Witke (2004) 131.

⁴⁹⁸ *Vit. Const.* 1.32 (PL 8 [1884] 24A).

⁴⁹⁹ *Vit. Const.* 1.32 (PL 8 [1884] 24A). On the *Vita Constantini* see Cameron (1997), Drake (1988), and Elliott (1990); on Constantine and Eusebius see Barnes (1981).

⁵⁰⁰ *Vit. Const.* 2.1 (PL 8 [1884] 35A). On Eusebius' account of the war with Licinius see Vogt (1954).

in his disregard for the divinely-inflicted, punitive miseries which had felled those who had persecuted Christians before him. Only a madman would ignore the ominous *exemplum* of those who had been his predecessors in oppressing the church, and Licinius' treachery against Constantine was of a piece with his enmity toward Constantine's adopted people. Thus, as Eusebius (or rather his translator) tells us, Constantine, tempering his natural forbearance with an appropriate admixture of severity, was compelled by Licinius' *rabies* against the Christians to destroy him.⁵⁰¹ The bishop stakes on the confrontation the whole spiritual contest between the new faith and traditional Roman paganism, and puts in Licinius' mouth a speech which declares unequivocally that the coming battle will decide the empire's spiritual character.⁵⁰² For Eusebius' Constantine, the *furor* of hostility against legitimate rule and against cosmic truth were one and the same; both testified to a depraved and unhinged mind. And not for the first time, a claimant to sole power over the Mediterranean world was portrayed as inaugurating a new golden age through the destruction of a lawless agent of *furor*.⁵⁰³ The crucial defeat of Maxentius more than twenty years earlier had already begun the process, in the words of a well-worn formula, of "restoring to the Romans their ancient freedom."⁵⁰⁴

Constantine's habit as an established ruler was apparently to suffer fools patiently. The Latin *Vita Imperatoris* of Eusebius tells us that when it came to his devotion to the *concordia* of

⁵⁰¹ *Vit. Const.* 2.3 (PL 8 [1884] 37A).

⁵⁰² *Vit. Const.* 2.5 (PL 8 [1884] 38A-38B).

⁵⁰³ *Vit. Const.* 2.19 (PL 8 [1884] 42D). The Latin version of Eusebius is worth quoting here for its vivid description of the brave new era. Gloom turned to rejoicing, and everywhere men smiled; every former evil was forgotten: *Omnis iam metus malorum quibus cuncti homines oppressi fuerant, penitus exciderat. Et qui prius maesti fuissent, tunc hilari vultu laetisque oculis sese mutuo intuebantur...Nulla iam praeteritarum calamitatum, nulla impietatis memoria suppetebat: sed praesentium bonorum fructus cum futurorum spe atque expectatione percipiebatur.*

⁵⁰⁴ Eusebius' translator writes that Constantine decided on the final confrontation with Maxentius *ut Romanis libertatem quam a majoribus suis acceperant interventu suo restitueret* (*Vit. Const.* 1.37 [PL 8 (1884) 25B]).

the church, the emperor approved of those who could recognize and assent to a *sanior sententia*.⁵⁰⁵ But he viewed the unyielding stubbornness of schismatics with a kind of tolerant disdain, though their heinous deeds not infrequently aroused his anger: they were *amentes*, perhaps “driven along by the goads of a demon” who was jealous of the prosperity of his reign, and therefore their self-evident *furor* was more fit to be pitied than harshly suppressed.⁵⁰⁶ For Eusebius Constantine was no persecutor, even of schismatics, whose madness might have justified forceful measures. The pious emperor could not even be provoked by the malicious *invidia* of an evil spirit, whose celestial soul was afflicted by the sight of the new empire’s earthly happiness. Thanks to the elevation of Christ’s name and sign on Constantine’s standards, which would now march before Roman legions in the four corners of the globe, earthly blessing was secured even against cosmic attack by the far greater power of the emperor’s new divine patron.

Furor and the verbal cluster we are accustomed to see in classical epic also occur in a strange passage from a work glorifying martyrdom (*De laude martyrii*), of doubtful date and authorship.⁵⁰⁷ Near its climax, the author brings the actual day of martyrdom vividly before the eyes of his reader with what can only be described as zealous longing. In certain respects the resulting picture exemplifies the complexity of *furor* in the late antique Latin west. The passage is worth quoting in full for its strangeness:

Veniat ante oculos vestros qui dies ille sit cum spectante populo, atque intuentibus cunctis, contra terrenas cruces et minas saeculi inconcussa devotio reluctetur, quam suspensi animi mentesque sollicitae de ancipiti trepidatione, gratulantium formidinis pavidae quatiantur horrore, quae illic anxietas quae exoptatio precum, quae vota memorentur, cum adhuc nutante victoria, atque in incertos exitus casu victrix capiti corona

⁵⁰⁵ *Vit. Const.* 1.44 (PL 8 [1884] 28B-28C).

⁵⁰⁶ *Vit. Const.* 1.45 (PL 8 [1884] 29A).

⁵⁰⁷ On classical elements of the work see Ferreres (1999). On the corpus of Pseudo-Cypriana more broadly see Ciccolini (2007).

dependeat, cumque illa pestilens ac *furibunda* confessio accendatur *ira*, inflammetur *insania*, omni denique pectoris *rabie* ac minis *frendentibus* torreatur. Etenim quantum hoc sit quis ignorat, ut non doloribus vulnerum, non ictibus quaestionum, velut despecta nostra fragilitas et humanae virtutis inopinata cedat *audacia*, stare hominem nec moveri, torqueri nec tamen vinci, sed poena ipsa potius qua cruciatur armari.⁵⁰⁸

Let it present itself to your eyes, what a day that is, when, with the people looking on, and all men watching, an undismayed devotion is struggling against earthly crosses and the threats of the world; how the minds in suspense, and hearts anxious about the tremblings of doubt, are agitated by the dread of the timid fearfulness of those who are congratulating them! What an anxiety is there, what a prayerful entreaty, what desires are recorded, when, with the victory still wavering, and the crown of conquest hanging in doubt over the head while the results are still uncertain, and when that pestilent and raving confession is inflamed by passion, is kindled by madness, and finally, is heated by the fury of the heart, and by gnashing threats! For who is ignorant how great a matter this is, that our, as it were, despised frailty, and the unexpected boldness of human strength, should not yield to the pangs of wounds, nor to the blows of tortures,—that a man should stand fast and not be moved, should be tortured and still not be overcome, but should rather be armed by the very suffering whereby he is tormented?⁵⁰⁹

It is difficult to tell who is being described by some of these elliptical expressions (are the *gratulantes* pagan or Christian bystanders? and whom are they congratulating?), but in the central section it is clear that by means of a rather strained transference, the author describes the climactic *confessio* in terms which actually apply to the raging crowd malevolently egging it on. The phrase *illa pestilens ac furibunda confessio* is extraordinary. It captures with extreme compression the paradoxical idea that the faithful martyr's confession before a hostile audience achieves its full power and success precisely through the *furor*, *ira*, *insania*, and *rabies* of the Christian's enemies, who are whipped up into a frenzy like that of wild beasts (*frendentes*) in proportion to the martyr's heroic resistance to punishment.⁵¹⁰ The emotions on both sides are mutually reinforcing. The greater the pagans' fury, the greater the victim's determination to win the crown of martyrdom, and vice versa.⁵¹¹ The *confessio* may also be externally focalized: that

⁵⁰⁸ *De laude martyrii* 25 (PL 4 [1884] 800C).

⁵⁰⁹ All translations of the works of Cyprian, together with the Pseudo-Cypriana and the *De laude martyrii* are taken and modified from the edition of Coxe (1886), which does not give the name of the translator.

⁵¹⁰ The image of gnashing teeth, a familiar enough cliché in classical literature, may also have been suggested to patristic authors by the occurrence of the same image (specifically as associated with oppressors of God's people) in the *Vetus Latina*; see Poinssotte (1979) 169n625 and Flieger (1993) 154-5.

⁵¹¹ Cf. a similar sentiment in Augustine, *Civ.* 20.13 (PL 41 [1884] 678): *quo tempore, quanto erit acrior impetus belli, tanto maior gloria non cedendi, tanto densior corona martyrii*. Poinssotte (1979) 153 captures exactly the right

is, the author is presenting the persecutors' view of the martyr's perverse constancy, which ironically seems like *furor* to the onlookers, who are the real *furantes*. The final line of the quotation points up the paradox, in case the reader had missed it. Where the pagans contemptuously expect *fragilitas*, they find *audacia*; where they expect their enemy to be conquered (*vinci*) they find him armed for battle (*armari*) by their own malicious threats. The *poena* bestows a *corona*.

The conceit is not exactly a success, as *pestilens...confessio* (and indeed the whole paragraph) seems to push the overwrought language past the breaking point. It is difficult, at the first reading, to be sure that one has not misconstrued the passage altogether. The language of *furor* applied to the martyr's confession cannot be entirely ironic, since in one way the author plainly does regard the righteous passion of the suffering Christian as "a consummation devoutly to be wished"; he portrays a kind of holy inspiration or zeal bordering on frenzy.⁵¹² Yet the language must at the same time bear a decidedly ironic meaning if the pagan perspective is the organizing principle here. The passage cannot carry off both. But hints earlier on in the work provide some clue to guide interpretation: the anonymous author had after all pointed out that plague (*lues*) was carrying off greater and greater numbers of Christians to martyrdom, in the indirect sense that they were being blamed (and killed) on that account by the pagans, who believed Christian "atheism" to be the cause of the epidemics.⁵¹³ On this reading the stubborn Christian *confessio* really was *pestilens* and might be abominated as such from the pagan point of

spirit when he says (in a different context) that the *furor* of pagan persecutors was "funeste mais aussi vivifiant" for the ancient Christian community.

⁵¹² There is an illuminating parallel in Avitus' *De virginitate* (108), in which the poet recounts how his mother had set aflame his sister's spiritual zeal: *inflammataque pios ad fortia facta furores*. In Avitus, though, the addition of *pious* tempers the inversion; there is no corresponding softening of the expression in the anonymous treatise.

⁵¹³ So Coxe (1886) in his note on this passage.

view, not in the passive sense of that word ('infected') but in the active ('infecting'). We are also told earlier in the treatise that

circumstreptentis populi terror impavidos animos dat dolori, et minis frendentis invidiae addit ad titulum quod tantum sibi mens crescat in pugna quantum se ille putaverit vincere per quem Christus hominem voluerit coronare.

the terror of the populace that howls around confers fearless courage on suffering, and by the threats of snarling hatred adds to the title whereby Christ has desired to crown the man, that in proportion as he has thought that he conquered, in that proportion his resolution has grown in the struggle.⁵¹⁴

These lines signal the author's commitment to drawing out the paradoxes of martyrdom, which receive their chief expression in the portrait of the day of "coronation." In the end the striving, incendiary passions of spectators and sufferer are so closely related that they may even be described by the same words.

Plainly this should not be pressed very far—perhaps not even as far as the author presses it—but the attempt is noteworthy in itself. *Furor* is the province of pagans and heretics, who aim to destroy God's church either by oppression or sedition. An effort to subordinate this truth to the controlling Christian paradigm of life from death, gain from loss, reward from sacrifice (in short the up-ending of worldly wisdom), leads to the nearly unintelligible equation of impious madness with pious inspiration, at least as a device to steel Christian devotion against the terrors of the pyre and the arena. In our writer's favour we should acknowledge, of course, that it would be difficult to do justice to the extremity of the circumstances he describes without some matching extremities of expression, outside the normal pale of discourse. But one might also compare the "homeopathic violence" of Latin epic, in which order and chaos seem to draw uncomfortably near one another in the heat and confusion of cosmic strife. For the author of the *De laude martyrii*, there is no suggestion of true confusion between the two states, that of persecutor and martyr; but observing from a distance it is easy to see why some bishops of the

⁵¹⁴ *De laude martyrii* 4 (PL 4 [1884] 790B).

early church, unsettled by the extreme zeal of some among their flock for the martyr's crown, found it necessary to regulate such desires—and why the author of the present work found it necessary to anticipate and counter the objection that he “placed all salvation in no other condition than in martyrdom.”⁵¹⁵ My point is not that the author's own zeal is excessive—such judgments are the province of theologians—but that martyrdom itself was no less fraught with subtle temptations than any other form of Christian obedience, a truth intimated, no doubt inadvertently, by the novel and almost nonsensical language to which our writer felt compelled to resort.

The fourth enemy of the peace and mission of the church which naturally attracted the attributes of *furor* in Christian writing, after the pagans, heretics, and persecutors,⁵¹⁶ was of course the Jews. In one of his letters, Cyprian sums up the roster of the church's enemies, who are driven by *furor* to try to intimidate and destroy believers:

Nam et Gentiles et Judaei minantur, et haeretici atque omnes, quorum pectora et mentes diabolus obsedit, venenatam rabiem suam quotidie furiosa voce testantur.

For both pagans and Jews threaten us, and heretics and all those whose hearts and minds the Devil has possessed testify daily to their poisonous frenzy with mad speech.⁵¹⁷

Cyprian's tripartite formulation—pagans, Jews, and heretics—does not distinguish between pagans and persecutors, as we have for the sake of accommodating the usage of the early apologists, but it will become the standard description of opposition to spiritual truth in Christian literature. The Jews, however, seemed at times even to combine in themselves the identities of the church's other foes. They were cut off from the covenant of grace (pseudo-pagans), perverters of the plain meaning of their own scriptures (heretics), and archetypal oppressors of

⁵¹⁵ *De laude martyrii* 27 (PL 4 [1884] 801B).

⁵¹⁶ Poinssotte (1979) 153 mentions the Jews, pagan persecutors, and heretics as constituents of the typical configuration in late antique poetry.

⁵¹⁷ *Ep.* 12.2 (PL 3 [1884] 798A).

the inassimilable Christian community (persecutors).⁵¹⁸ The *furor haereticus*⁵¹⁹ was in some ways prefigured by the Jewish rejection of their own Messiah, a falling away whose dire results were exacerbated in proportion to the squandered privilege of natural membership in a church built on the chosen people's ancient traditions. The *furor Iudaicus* drew together under one head every Christian objection to and prejudice against ancient Jewish life and practice in the light of the New Testament.⁵²⁰ Jean-Michel Poinssotte, writing on Juvencus, well summarizes its key characteristics:

Cette "folie" se manifeste de deux manières: elle est dénégation, obstruction, crispation; elle est aussi action, ardeur, agressivité. Elle est le refus obstiné de la Vérité, devant laquelle le peuple "à la nuque raide" ne veut pas s'incliner et mure ses sens, son coeur, son intelligence. Elle est aussi et en même temps un emportement qui mobilise tous les mauvais penchants et tous les vices, qui invente tous les artifices à seule fin de perdre celui qui est venu incarner et enseigner cette Vérité, puis ceux qui l'ont proclamée et qui la détiennent, les apôtres et tout le peuple chrétien.⁵²¹

Though Poinssotte's sharp distinction between the two 'modes' of the *furor Iudaicus* (which he elsewhere calls "passive" and "active") does not quite do justice to the complex and fluid relationship between (passive) spiritual blindness and the (active) rage or madness that can be either its cause or result, his description rings true not only for the depiction of Jewish *furor* in biblical epic (as we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5), but also for earlier patristic writings.

For another writer ("Pseudo-Cyprian"), the Jews and the heretics were linked in allowing *impatientia* to drive them, in the one case to idolatry (when Moses did not come down from Sinai

⁵¹⁸ In the letter of one Faustinus to Theodosius' *Augusta Aelia Flaccilla* near the end of the fourth century, the shared nature of these categories is clear: the author undertakes to enter the lists of a theological controversy, relying on Christ, *adversus quem more gentilium et furore Judaeorum, bellum exagitat impietas haereticorum* (PL 13 [1884] 38B).

⁵¹⁹ So called in *Ep. ad Pompeium contra epistolam Stephani de haereticis baptizandis* (PL 3 [1884] 1130A).

⁵²⁰ The term *furor Iudaicus* appears most memorably in Prudentius (*Apoth.* 552), and is used extensively by Poinssotte (1979). Cf. Hecquet-Noti (2002) 316 on the tradition in patristic literature and later biblical epic of *furor* as "le vice suprême du peuple juif, celui qui contient tous les autres et qui les a finalement poussés au déicide."

⁵²¹ Poinssotte (1979) 152-3.

soon enough), and in the other to the deposition of legitimate authority; in both cases a stubborn unwillingness to submit to the authority of God compelled them to become *rebelles contra Christi pacem et charitatem* and led them into *hostilia et furiosa odia*.⁵²² For Tertullian the Jews' great failure to embrace Christ was a *perseverantia furoris* of which the logical and scriptural consequence was the desolation of Israel itself.⁵²³ The people of Judea "had not learned repentance in the time between Tiberius and Vespasian"—that is, between their crucifixion of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus.⁵²⁴ Commodian imagines them "full of the hopeless rage of wickedness" (*nequitiae pleni...desperato furore*) addressing the Christians with the haughty challenge that "the law was given to us; where have *you* come from?"⁵²⁵ Later in Lactantius' words they were "swept away by a deranged frenzy" (*insanabili furore correpti*) which prevented them from understanding the very scriptures they read every day (*quotidie*), with the result that they were proved to be totally blind (*excaecati*).⁵²⁶ The figure of blindness recalls both Cicero and Tertullian and supplies here a vivid image of disabled reason. It is also a biblical figure: the NT alone uses blindness in a metaphorical sense at least twelve times, particularly with reference to the Pharisees.⁵²⁷ The *topos* is exploited by a poem *De passione Domini* from an unknown author (though frequently attributed to Lactantius), in which Christ relates in his own voice the story of his life and crucifixion. In Christ's narrative Jerusalem stands as a symbol for the whole Jewish people and their opposition to his ministry:

⁵²² *De bono patientiae* 19 (PL 4 [1884] 633A).

⁵²³ *Adv. Marc.* 3.23 (PL 2 [1884] 354A). See Poinssotte (1979) 153n550.

⁵²⁴ *Adv. Marc.* 3.23 (PL 2 [1884] 354A).

⁵²⁵ *Carm. apol.* 539-40.

⁵²⁶ *Div. inst.* 4.19 (PL 6 [1884] 510A).

⁵²⁷ Flieger (1993) 183-4.

Impia Hierusalem rabidis exercita curis
Invidiae, saevisque odiis et caeca furore,
Insonti est poenis lethalibus ausa cruentam
In cruce terribili mortem mihi quaerere.⁵²⁸

Wicked Jerusalem, worked up in the raging throes
of spite, blinded by savage hatred and mad frenzy,
dared to plot a bloody death for me with murderous torments
on a fearful cross, though I was blameless.⁵²⁹

Jewish impiety, madness, and savagery are here described in hexameters which rely on the typical verbal cluster familiar from the depiction of *furor* in classical epic. Addressing the reader directly, Christ then exhorts believers to follow in the *vestigia* of his suffering, to hold fast and meditate upon such *monimenta*, which will constitute

Hostis in insidias clypei, quibus acer in omni
Tutus eris, victorque feres certamine palmam.⁵³⁰

shields against the plots of the enemy, by which
you will be protected, ready for every emergency;
you will win the prize, triumphant in the fight.

In the spiritual combat envisioned by these words, the machinations of Satan (*hostis...insidiae*, 62) against the believer are straightforwardly parallel to the plots of the Jews (*insidiae*, 31) against Christ, and presumably motivated by parallel *invidia*, *odium*, and *furor*. In martial terms, imitation of the Saviour's patient endurance in overcoming their assault will galvanize the valour of the Christian in his resistance to the Devil (*erunt verae stimuli virtutis*, 61).

Perhaps the strongest statement of the dangerous spiritual derangement thought by some Christians to spur on the Jews' rejection of the Messiah can be found in the Latin translation of a letter preserved in Eusebius, sent from Constantine to a group of bishops after the council of Nicaea. The letter alleges that after putting Christ to death (an act strikingly glossed by

⁵²⁸ *De passione Domini* 25-28 (PL 7 [1884] 285A).

⁵²⁹ Translations of this work are mine.

⁵³⁰ *De passione Domini* 62-63 (PL 7 [1884] 286A).

parricidium), the Jews, “overcome in their minds not by reason [*ratio*] but by reckless frenzy [*praeceps impetus*],” are driven wherever their *innatus furor* (Grk. ἔμφυτος μανία) bids.⁵³¹ In the Greek the first part of the sentence is more vivid than the Latin *mente capti*: the Jews are literally “out of their wits,” ἐκστάντες τῶν φρενῶν. But it is the charge of *innatus furor* that stands out most starkly from the passage, since it characterizes the whole Jewish people genetically, as it were, as particularly susceptible to spiritual insanity; not from their ancient origins, the letter qualifies, but rather in the era since the crucifixion of the Messiah. It is the collective guilt of Christ’s death which accounts for their strange irrationality and “blindness of mind”: *cum manus suas nefario scelere contaminarint, merito impuri homines caecitate mentis laborant*.⁵³² They cannot see the truth, because their crimes have forfeited the privilege of accurate sight (*hinc est quod ne...veritatem ipsam perspiciunt*).

This is almost the language of tragedy: the Jews’ hands are stained with the *contaminatio* of a *parricidium*, a πατροκτονία, and as a result they are driven mad. They bring on themselves their own destruction, by the unleashing of a punitive *furor*. It is difficult not to think of Orestes, and to recall Cicero’s conception of the true nature of the *furiae*, discussed earlier in our first chapter:

Nolite enim ita putare, patres conscripti, ut in scena videtis, homines consceleratos impulsu deorum terreri furialibus taedis ardentibus: sua quemque fraus, suum facinus, suum scelus, sua audacia de sanitate ac mente deturbat; hae sunt impiorum furiae, hae flammae, hae faces.⁵³³

For you must not imagine, Conscript Fathers, that, as you see happen upon the stage, impious men are hounded by the blazing brands of the Furies sent against them by the gods. It is a man’s own crime, his own sin, his own guilt, his own effrontery which unseats his mind from its sanity. These are the furies, these the flames, these the brands that hound the wicked.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ *Ep. Constantini ad ecclesiam post concilium Nicaenum 2* (=Eus. *Vita Const.* 1.3, 17-20; PL 8 [1884] 504A).

⁵³² *Ep. Constantini ad ecclesiam post concilium Nicaenum 2* (PL 8 [1884] 501C).

⁵³³ Cicero *Pis.* 47. See p. 39 above.

⁵³⁴ The translation is from Watts’ Loeb (1931).

It is easy to imagine that Constantine (or his *ab epistulis*)—if he really did authorize the words ascribed to him by Eusebius and translated into Latin by an unknown hand—would have readily agreed with Cicero’s understanding, and gone further to apply it in particular to the Jews. Later in the fourth century, Pacian (bishop of Barcelona; his son was the dedicand of Jerome’s *De viris illustribus*) assigned the role of *Furia* to Satan, who “corrupted the Scribes and Pharisees and the whole herd of impious men with his usual tricks” before Christ’s crucifixion and “drove them along with mad frenzies” (*furoribus agitat*) until they contrived a torturous death for the Messiah, by which they hoped to break his spirit and induce him to sin or repudiate his own teaching.⁵³⁵ On this reading of events, *pace* Constantine, *furor* was the cause rather than the result of the crucifixion—though of course these are not mutually exclusive alternatives, and I suspect the consensus would have affirmed Jewish *furor* anterior to, as well as judicially hardened by, the betrayal of the Messiah. It seems Christian writers explained Jewish *furor* rather differently at different times, in accordance with the rhetorical needs of the moment. But the nature of the Jews’ spiritual error, which blinded the mind and aligned them with the Devil himself, was far more than an intellectual mistake. Its consequences were as profound as Orestes’ violence or Sodom’s wickedness: the result was extreme moral and political debasement, the unmistakable signs of God’s wrath.

Given the associations between *furor* and the blindness of the pagans, heretics, persecutors, and Jews already elucidated from Christian writers, it is particularly striking that Latin churchmen also sometimes chose the word to denote the righteous anger and just judgment

⁵³⁵ *Sermo de baptismo* 4 (PL 13 [1884] 1092A). On Pacian see Marique (1963) and the essays collected in Bertrand, Busquets, and Olivé (2004).

of the Almighty.⁵³⁶ There are only a few hints of this in the evidence which survives. If the usage was widespread, it is certainly not well attested, at least before the time of Jerome.⁵³⁷ In the third century, the poet Commodian's acrostic *De saeculi istius fine* (so named in the initial letters of the first lines) warns of the coming judgment of God against the wicked:

Tantus erit ardor, ut lapides ipsi liquescant,
In fulmine cogunt venti, furet ira caelestis
Ut, quacumque fugit, impius occupetur ab igne.⁵³⁸

So great will be the heat that the stones themselves will melt;
the winds will condense in lightning, wrath from heaven will rage
such that wherever he flees the wicked will be overtaken by fire.⁵³⁹

In this case the use of the verb *furere* to describe divine wrath (*ira*) against the impious is not quite as striking as if the poet had attributed *furor* to God in nominal form, simply because the passage is mainly concerned with the violent response of nature to apocalyptic judgment. *Furet* is appropriate to the conventionally raging weather of a storm (in this case the storm to end all storms, the world-conflagration) and we may take it here to describe the confusion of the elements—the *effects* of God's anger—as much as it describes the divine anger itself.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Commodian means to arouse real dread of God's wrath in his reader through this vivid picture, and that *furere* is more than a hackneyed figure of speech such as one might find in an epic simile. It bears emotional content as well, blurring the distinction between God's thoughts and the tumults of nature that respond with alacrity to his divine

⁵³⁶ This surely is surely a landmark case of what Loi (1978) 40-1 describes when he speaks of "il vocabolo latino scelto, divenendo portatore della nozione biblica, è profondamente rinnovato nel suo valore semantico."

⁵³⁷ If the Pseudo-Cyprianic *De duplici martyrio ad Fortunatum* (PL 4 [1884]) is not, as has been alleged, a forgery perpetrated by Erasmus to support his own theological arguments, its twentieth chapter may furnish an additional *testimonium* for this usage in the discussion of Achan's sin, which provokes the *furor Domini*. For the controversy see e.g. Menchi (1978).

⁵³⁸ *Inst.* 1.43.12-14.

⁵³⁹ Translation mine.

command (*dat tuba coelo signum*, 1). A similar case occurs in the biblical poem *De Iona*, of unknown authorship and date,⁵⁴⁰ which describes the storm that wrecks Jonah's ship in terms which suggest synoptically both natural violence and its ultimate cause, the wrath of God against the disobedient prophet (*diversus furor in profugum frendebat Jonam*).⁵⁴¹ For his part, when his shipmates bemoan their unexpected misfortune, Jonah indicts himself as the reason for the storm in memorable terms (*ea ego tempestas, ego tota insania mundi*).⁵⁴² Since Jonah is the cause of God's wrath, which in turn caused the storm, he speaks metonymically as though he embodies it. From the sailors' perspective, according to Jonah, he *is* the storm, the *furor*, and they will be rid of it only once they are rid of him.

In the early years of the fourth century Lactantius goes out of his way to make it clear that divine *furor* of another sort—that is, the capricious, wounded celestial *furor* of a Juno—is inconceivable in the Christian God. It is because of God's goodness that he is angered by the wickedness of sin, and his anger promotes the common welfare of men and restrains the worst excesses of their evil behaviour.⁵⁴³ It is not the sort of anger defined by Aristotle or the Stoics as the desire to avenge an injury, since God cannot be injured (*illaesibilis est*).⁵⁴⁴ Such anger is unjust, but it is found nevertheless *in homine, quia fragilis est*. Anger in men must be restrained, “lest it leap to some truly execrable crime through rage” (*ne ad aliquod maximum malum*

⁵⁴⁰ Hexter (1988) 3 gives the enormous range of somewhere between the 4th to 7th centuries for a possible date. The thesis of Dando (1965) that both the *De Iona* and the *De Sodoma* were actually written by Alcimus Avitus has not met with wide acceptance.

⁵⁴¹ *De Iona* 36 (PL 2 [1884] 1110A). On this poem together with its companion, the *De Sodoma*, see Hexter (1988), who also discusses their relationship to the biblical epics, as well as Pavlovskis-Petit (1996), and Duval (1973) 506-8.

⁵⁴² *De Iona* 72 (PL 2 [1884] 1112A).

⁵⁴³ *naturale est bono ad alterius peccatum moveri et incitari* (Lact. *De ira Dei* 17 [PL 7 (1884) 131A]).

⁵⁴⁴ *De ira Dei* 17 (PL 7 [1884] 130A).

prosiliat per furorem), through the effects of becoming temporarily *mentis impos*.⁵⁴⁵ But *furor* like this cannot exist in God (*haec in Deo esse non potest*). His wrath is the very expression of reason (*ratio*), since it curbs misdeeds and restrains sinful license, in perfect harmony with justice and wisdom.⁵⁴⁶ It is impossible for him to lose control, since his anger is always in his own power.⁵⁴⁷ Lactantius concludes his discussion on the difference between legitimate anger and sinful wrath with straightforward simplicity.

Ira autem, quam possumus vel furorem, vel iracundiam nominare, haec ne in homine quidem debet esse, quia tota vitiosa est. Ira vero, quae ad correctionem vitiorum pertinet, nec homini adimi debet, nec Deo potest, quia et utilis est rebus humanis, et necessaria.⁵⁴⁸

But that anger which we may call either fury or rage ought not to exist even in man, because it is altogether vicious; but the anger which relates to the correction of vices ought not to be taken away from man; nor can it be taken away from God, because it is both serviceable for the affairs of men, and necessary.

Mad rage (*furor*) represents a moral failure in human beings; how then could it ever be ascribed to God? According to Lactantius' biblical worldview, however, 'good' *ira* is rightly and necessarily ascribed to him, and men should be thankful for it as an expression of his justice; *nunquam nisi merito irascitur*.⁵⁴⁹ Clearly Lactantius uses *furor* in a different sense than the anonymous interpreter of Jonah, who obviously intends it to be a synonym for *ira iusta* (the very concept to which Lactantius opposes it), and it is significant that the latter's formulation explicitly rules out the proper application of the word to God's emotions. His usage conforms to the Latin tradition of associating an impaired state of mind (*caecitas mentis*) with excessive anger, and since God can never be anything other than *compos mentis*—for late antique

⁵⁴⁵ *De ira Dei* 21 (PL 7 [1884] 139B).

⁵⁴⁶ *De ira Dei* 17 (PL 7 (1884) 129A).

⁵⁴⁷ *in potestate habere iram suam* (*De ira Dei* 21 [PL 7 (1884) 140B]).

⁵⁴⁸ *De ira Dei* 17 (PL 7 [1884] 131A-131B).

⁵⁴⁹ *De ira Dei* 21 (PL 7 [1884] 139B).

Christians, whose admiration for key aspects of Platonic theology was nearly universal, this was an ontological truism—it follows that God can never experience *furor*. The *logos*, the ordering principle of the universe and the universal *mens*, could hardly be afflicted by *amentia*.

If we could ask Lactantius about the discrepancy between the two usages, no doubt he would impatiently acknowledge that *furor* was of course also applied in his day to God’s wrath in a looser, more careless sense. We should like to ask him how this came about, though it may have been as strange to him as it is to us. Was it under the pressure of some peculiar popular usage, as fossilized in particular liturgical forms, or even in the diction of contemporary Latin Bibles? We can support an educated guess about this from another document that may be roughly contemporary, a fragmentary exhortation to penitence traditionally attributed to Cyprian of Carthage and composed almost entirely of scriptural quotations. Its author translates Isaiah 54:8 (“In anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you”) this way: *in furore pusillo averti faciem meam abs te: in misericordia aeterna miserebor tui*.⁵⁵⁰ The translator’s *furore pusillo* (perhaps “in an instant’s wrath”) has no parallel in the Vulgate.⁵⁵¹ This is not because *furor* does not appear in the sense “wrath of God” in the Latin Bible versions we possess from late antiquity—as we will see, it does in many places. Indeed, the passage is an additional *testimonium* to a curious translation tradition which we shall examine in more depth in the next section.

But in another sense it is also a *testimonium* to the fact that when we are evaluating the semantic range of a given word-concept, context never ceases to be of critical importance. Lactantius’ massive treatise was written primarily as an evangelistic exhortation for a pagan

⁵⁵⁰ *Exhortatio de poenitentia* (PL 4 [1884] 1153D-1154B).

⁵⁵¹ The Vulgate reads *momento indignationis*; no *testimonia* to the Old Latin for this passage survive.

audience, and probably only incidentally to supply his fellow Christians with a model of apologetic discourse.⁵⁵² This is clear from a variety of features including its first chapter (addressed to men accounted as learned, *qui sapientes vulgo putantur*, who nevertheless do not know the *vera religio*),⁵⁵³ its heavy engagement with classical poets and philosophers, and its conspicuous omission of scriptural quotations. The pseudo-Cyprianic *Exhortatio de poenitentia* quoted above is not like that; it is clearly intended to be a convenient compendium, for the use of Christians, of scriptural passages relevant to a particular topic. There could be no question of divine *furor* meaning anything other than *ira iusta* to a Christian audience already conversant with the Bible and its conception of divinity. In any case alternative translations would have been readily available against which the author's rendering might be checked if there were any doubt. In Lactantius' case, however, the attribution of *furor* to the divine Mind would have been impossibly loaded. It would have either offended learned pagan opinion on the one hand, insofar as the major philosophical schools disapproved of the loss of self-control it generally implied, whether in gods or in men; or, on the other hand, it would have clashed with Lactantius' own theological commitments, insofar as he was obliged to distinguish the perfect holiness of the Christian God from the all-too-human passions of the pagan pantheon. Hence the labor of careful semantic parsing was unavoidable for Lactantius, who could not afford to assume his "exoteric" audience's familiarity with an idiosyncratic Christian usage of *furor*.⁵⁵⁴ Such distinctions would have been completely superfluous in the "esoteric" *Exhortatio*, which drew on what must have already been an established tradition in biblical translation.

⁵⁵² Edwards (1999b).

⁵⁵³ *Div. inst.* 1.1 (PL 6 [1884] 118A).

⁵⁵⁴ Price (1999) 105.

II. The *Vetus Latina*

At first blush it is difficult to explain precisely why some translators of Old Latin biblical texts chose to express God’s wrath with the word *furor* and its derivatives. As we have seen, it was a potentially loaded term in nearly every period and genre, and often meant more than “anger” (and sometimes less). Its frequent associations with ungovernable rage, insatiable desire, the *enthusiasmos* of the pagan seer, and (especially) a pitiable alienation from reason might have been expected to render it “damaged goods” in the eyes of learned believers anxious to make their Creator more readily intelligible to the contemporary cultural élite. And it seems the word was indeed perceived this way by some within the church. In his commentary on Psalm 88:7 (“Your wrath lies heavy upon me”), Augustine puts his finger on precisely the problem when explaining the difference between *θυμός* and *ὀργή* as they are used in the LXX:

*In me confirmata est indignatio tua; vel, sicut alii codices habent, ira tua; vel sicut alii, furor tuus. Quod enim graece positum est θυμός, diverse interpretati sunt nostri. Nam ubi graeci codices habent ὀργή, ibi iram latine dicere nullus fere dubitavit interpres; ubi autem θυμός positum est, plerique non putaverunt iram esse dicendam, cum magni auctores latinae eloquentiae de philosophorum graecorum libris etiam hoc irae nomine verterint in latinum: neque de hac re diutius disputandum est; cui tamen si et nos aliud nomen adhibere debemus, tolerabilius indignationem dixerim quam furorem. Furor quippe, sicut se latinum habet eloquium, non solet esse sanorum.*⁵⁵⁵

“Your indignation lies heavy upon me”; or, as other copies have it, “Your anger;” or, as others, “Your fury,” since that which is rendered by the Greek word *θυμός* has been variously translated by our Latin interpreters. For where the Greek copies have *ὀργή*, no translator hesitated to express it by the Latin *ira*; but where the word is *θυμός*, most did not think it should be rendered by *ira*, although many of the authors of the best Latin style, in their translations from Greek philosophy, have thus rendered the word in Latin. But there is no point in arguing further about this; though if, for my part, I were to suggest another term, I should say that “indignation” is more tolerable than “fury,” since in fact *furor* is not generally applied to persons in their right mind in normal Latin usage.

Augustine was probably not alone in regarding *furor* as a scarcely tolerable translation, and we may guess that his concern was not only philological but also pastoral, and perhaps apologetical

⁵⁵⁵ *Enarr. in Ps. 88.7 (87.7) (PL 37 [1884] 1113)*. The translation is a modified version of Tweed’s (1888).

as well. At worst, *furor* was theologically misleading, for the reason Augustine gives explicitly: in common use it frequently connoted *alienatio mentis*. And as Augustine makes clear elsewhere, readers of the Bible must not suppose that even divine anger (let alone madness), when attributed to God in Scripture, indicates that the Almighty suffers the infirmity of human passions. It is just a figure of speech, a similitude that expresses the *effects* of His wrath rather than His emotions *per se*.⁵⁵⁶ On the other hand, at best—and here we must read between the lines a little, since Augustine does not say so directly—the use of *furor* could expose the implicated scriptures to derision from those (like Augustine himself) who had sufficient theological understanding to dismiss the absurdity of divine madness, but also the literary sensitivity to recognize the interchangeability of θυμός and ὀργή with Latin *ira* even in sophisticated philosophical texts. If even *magni auctores* saw fit to translate θυμός with *ira*, Augustine seems to say, why should the various translators of different Latin versions of the scriptures have scrupled to do the same? The implicit suggestion is that some of these anonymous translators were wanting in good philological judgment—or at least that they possessed more zeal than literary experience.⁵⁵⁷ On this view, the presence of *furor* in at least some passages of the Old Latin texts is best explained as a misguided attempt to introduce meaningful verbal variation where none existed in the original.

Jerome did not seem to feel quite the same embarrassment about using *furor* for the wrath of God in translations of Scripture, though it seems he too was aware of the potential interpretative pitfalls. In his commentary on Ephesians 4:31 (“Let all bitterness and wrath and

⁵⁵⁶ *Civ.* 9.5 (PL 41 [1884] 261).

⁵⁵⁷ In his defense, Augustine is also sometimes willing to credit the OL translators with considerable sensitivity to linguistic nuance; cf. for instance the multiple comparisons of the Greek text of Scripture with Latin Bible translation choices in *Civ.* 13.24 and 14.7.

anger and clamor and slander be put away from you”), he categorizes *furor* as a species of *ira* and does not object to the traditional Latin rendering of the verse. Yet all the same, he is careful to point out, like Augustine, that God’s feelings are not like ours. In this sense the anger which Scripture attributes to Him is really the punishment of the wicked, the effect of His own well-moderated emotions.⁵⁵⁸ The comment reveals a consciousness of the potential for impious misunderstandings of passages which treat of God’s wrath using *furor* and related language, and constitute further evidence of the judicious semantic adjustments required from learned readers of the Latin scriptures.

Translation choices like those criticized by Augustine above would have done nothing to lessen Christian embarrassment in some quarters over the uncouth impression sometimes created by the unique style of the Old and New Testaments, a source of well-documented mortification.⁵⁵⁹ Nevertheless, those who preceded Augustine and Jerome in their attempts to render the sacred scriptures into Latin from the Septuagint or early codices of the NT evidently judged that *furor* was sometimes the best equivalent for the words for God’s wrath that they encountered most frequently in the Greek texts available to them (overwhelmingly θυμός and ὀργή and their verbal and participial counterparts).⁵⁶⁰ Recent studies of the *Vetus Latina* (OL) have suggested that contrary to an older critical view of these translators or editors⁵⁶¹ as slavishly

⁵⁵⁸ *Comm. in ep. ad Eph.* 4:31 (PL 26 [1884] 516B-516C): [*irae*] *quae quidem licet in Deo saepe dicantur...non sunt perturbationes animi computandae sicut in nobis: quia in illo moderata et ordinata sunt omnia, et poena qua peccatores corriguntur, nostris vocibus appellatur.*

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Lact. *Div. inst.* 5.15-18. See White (2000) 8 and Cameron (2011) 350.

⁵⁶⁰ Interestingly, the wide semantic field of these two words (which often appear together outside biblical literature as well, e.g. in magical texts) could include sexual or amatory passion as well as anger—like *furor*. See Faraone (2003) 160-1.

⁵⁶¹ Recent research has suggested that “a single Latin translation underlies all the surviving evidence for the Old Latin tradition,” which was subsequently revised by a variety of different hands at different times (Houghton [2016] 12). Cf. Burton (2000) 78: “...the extant manuscripts of the Gospels derive from one or two original sources, though subject to more or less extensive piecemeal revision; the same has been shown to be the case for other books too.”

literal and lacking in sophisticated judgment—an evaluation which seems to have something in common with Augustine’s view in the passage quoted above—there is substantial evidence for the skill and sensitivity of the Old Latin translators as a group. Many of them were “prepared to show flexibility in their renderings” and were furthermore “able to distinguish various nuances implied by the same Greek word.” They were likely native Latin speakers, as indicated by the ease and frequency with which they employ Latin idioms, and they “show a certain knowledge of archaic or obsolescent Latin words and constructions.”⁵⁶² One of the cumulative effects of newer work on individual books of the OL, when they are taken together as a coherent body of evidence, has been convincingly to rehabilitate the linguistic competence and conscientious industry of the scriptures’ Latin custodians.

The multiplicity of hands involved in revising translation work from the church’s early centuries, which resulted in what Augustine hyperbolically called an *infinita varietas* of renderings and styles,⁵⁶³ can of course make it difficult to generalize about the *Vetus Latina*.⁵⁶⁴ Our picture of the differences between pre-Vulgate Latin translations is complicated by the fact that our oldest manuscripts of Old Latin versions date from a time when there was already significant textual cross-contamination between Jerome’s new translations and older readings.⁵⁶⁵ Jerome’s generally conservative word choices, which tended to preserve the Old Latin tradition whenever possible, only increase the modern scholar’s need to draw cautious distinctions.⁵⁶⁶ Despite these methodological caveats, however, some general conclusions may be drawn about

⁵⁶² Burton (2000) 94, 85, 79. Cf. Houghton (2016) 10-11.

⁵⁶³ *Doct. Chr.* 11.16 (PL 34 [1884] 42).

⁵⁶⁴ Burton (2000) 3-4.

⁵⁶⁵ Burton (2000) 6-7.

⁵⁶⁶ Burton (2000) 6-7.

appearances of *furor* in texts which appear to represent at least some of the streams flowing out of the Old Latin tradition.

Unfortunately our best resource for evaluating the Old Latin texts for most books of the Bible—a vast collection of citation slips comprising MSS readings from dedicated biblical translations as well as patristic quotations, painstakingly catalogued and scanned by the Benedictine monks of the *Vetus Latina Institut* in the archabbey at Beuron—does not support a searchable database. Short of checking every single verse of the Bible that may conceivably occasion a use of *furor*, the best way to get at Old Latin biblical *furor* is to comb modern editions of the Vulgate (which *are* searchable) and check them against the Beuron slips for each resulting hit. This method admittedly suffers from numerous disadvantages. Since they rely on modern revisions of the Clementine Vulgate (itself a thorough recension of earlier versions) the searchable texts are at many removes from the readings of Jerome, which, even if they could be recovered with certainty, themselves differed with unknown frequency from various representatives of the Old Latin tradition.⁵⁶⁷ Old Latin texts may also have used *furor* more often than the version of the Vulgate I have searched, in which case the results presented below will be artificially limited. Nevertheless, in the absence of any other reasonably efficient strategy, this method wagers on the fundamental conservatism of the Latin biblical tradition, from antiquity to the twentieth century, and partly also on the likelihood that frequently repeated formulae like *furor Domini* and similar phrases tenaciously retained their popularity from an early date.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Houghton (2016) viii: “The long period during which different Latin texts circulated and influenced each other often makes it difficult to distinguish between different strands. The Vulgate tradition itself, too, is not monolithic. Nevertheless, the relative stability of the fifth-century revision and the existence of a widely-accepted critical text in the form of the Stuttgart Vulgate makes it simple in practical terms to use this as a measure against which to define different Latin New Testament traditions.”

A thorough comparison of places where *furor* commonly occurs in OL texts against their source texts in the LXX⁵⁶⁸ reveals in fact that *pace* Augustine, Old Latin versions did regularly translate both θυμός and ὀργή with *furor*, among other options.⁵⁶⁹ While we can only speculate about the translators’ reasoning in individual cases, I have not been able to discover any fixed semantic correspondence between *furor* and one or the other Greek term along the lines suggested by Augustine’s critical comment. Jerome’s translation shows a more consistent preference to equate θυμός and *furor*, but he too sometimes renders ὀργή with *furor* and θυμός with a different synonym. Augustine and Jerome both had reason to exaggerate the flaws of the Old Latin tradition, and we ought to treat Augustine’s inferences about the thoughts of Old Latin translators (*plerique non putaverunt iram esse dicendam*, etc.) with caution.⁵⁷⁰ His critical observation about Latin interpreters and their use of *ira* or *furor* cannot be supported from the evidence available to us moderns. That does not prove that he is wrong, of course, but it does give us grounds, together with our own observations of the translation techniques at work in the OL texts (at least to the extent that they can be guessed), to be skeptical of his reconstruction of the translation process. Augustine seems to have thought that in the case of *furor*, the translators “showed linguistic sensitivity” (perhaps Augustine would say ‘hyper-sensitivity’) “to the

⁵⁶⁸ I have used the Stuttgart Septuagint (2006).

⁵⁶⁹ Here and throughout this section, I do not distinguish between different OL MSS or between OL readings gleaned from complete versions and those which appear in patristic citations. Instead I summarize the typical or ‘majority’ reading with respect to the presence or absence of *furor* in the *testimonia* of both types collected in the Beuron *Vetus Latina* catalogue. This admittedly introduces some imprecision into my results, particularly as far as chronology and the possibility of contamination with the Vulgate are concerned. Nevertheless, a closer accounting according to individual MSS would not, in my view, alter my general conclusions, but would impose an unnecessary burden on the text and my readers. It is sufficient for our purposes here to note the *likely* usages of *furor* in OL versions, without aiming at certainty.

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Houghton (2016) 4, 11: “Jerome and Augustine’s comments on the origins and previous history of the Latin translation have often been accepted without question, even though they are writing some two centuries later in justification of their own endeavours.”

detriment of the literary and theological texture of the original.”⁵⁷¹ Even if we agree with him, on the supposition that our evidence is somehow misleading on this score and that he is better informed, we must acknowledge that for the wider OL as we know it, such defects seem to be the exception rather than the rule.⁵⁷²

Furor, then, was used flexibly to translate more than one Greek term. It was used to render more than one sense as well. The only meaning of *furor* in the OL that we have mentioned so far—that which expresses the wrath of God—is the best place to begin, for the simple reason that it is by a very wide margin the most common sense in which the word and its cognates are used in the Old Latin tradition as we know it. Out of some 217 occurrences preserved in the Vulgate, it describes God’s wrath about 178 times (82%); of the remaining 18%, two-thirds of the passages describe human anger. Six passages use *furor* for madness *stricto sensu* (i.e. a loss of mental self-possession), and one uses the word for lustful passion. As with other texts examined in this study, not every use corresponds to just a single sense, of course. On occasion an overlapping of meanings may be detected, as for instance in the Song of Moses when the wrath of God’s judgment against Israel (*furor* or *ira* in the OL) takes the form of the natural, bestial savagery (*furor*) of creeping animals (Deut. 32:22-24),⁵⁷³ or when Saul’s fury (*furor*) is roused against one of Israel’s enemies by the Spirit (*insilivit spiritus Domini in Saul*) and the people respond to his call to arms out of “fear of the Lord,” the God by whose authority Saul was anointed King and whose vengeance Saul faithfully executes (1 Sa. 11:6-7). In this latter case there is a mingling of internal and external motivations, such as we have often seen in other

⁵⁷¹ Burton (2000) 93 gives this evaluation of a different example; he can find only one that may be so characterized.

⁵⁷² Cf. Burton (2000) 86-94.

⁵⁷³ A misunderstanding seems to lie behind the Vulgate and earlier Latin versions here; the major modern English translations unanimously render the key word “venom/poison.”

texts, and the “fear of the Lord”, or perhaps of his divine fury if Saul’s summons is not answered, plays a role here too. In general, however, *furor* as the exclusive prerogative of the Almighty and the expression of his singular wrath predominates.

The real picture may differ somewhat from this outline; some biblical passages are not attested by any surviving OL witnesses at all, and as pointed out already *furor* may have appeared more often in the OL than in the Vulgate version used for the search. But it is hard to believe, in the absence of any compelling evidence for a fundamental semantic shift, and in the light of Jerome’s general conservatism, that the general proportions would look radically different even if we possessed every Latin translation ever produced. Unsurprisingly, fully a third of the *furores* which describe God’s wrath are distributed between the major prophets (Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, in about equal measure), heralds of God’s judgment against the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as well as their foreign enemies and allies. Deuteronomy, Job, Lamentations, and the Psalms account for sizable minorities.

By contrast, only a few passages in the New Testament evidently occasion a use of *furor*. These include Mark 3:21, in which Jesus’ relatives say that he has gone mad (Vulg. *dicebant enim quoniam in furorem versus est*; Grk. ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη), and Rev. 19:15, of the winepress of God’s wrath (Vulg. *torcular vini furoris irae Dei*; Grk. τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ); the Vulgate NT, which is not the work of Jerome, features only these examples. In the OL too, so far as I can discover, *furor* seems to have been a much less popular choice for the Latin NT versions than *ira* or *indignatio*, even where both ὀργή and θυμός appear together. Notably *furor* is never applied to Christ’s anger, even where the Greek text would justify such a translation (as e.g. at Mark 3:5 [ὀργή]) or to references to the wrath of God in the gospels and epistles (e.g. Matt. 3:7 and John 3:36 [ὀργή]; Rom. 2:8, Eph. 4:31, Col. 3:8, Rev.

16:19 [ὀργή and θυμός]; Rev. 15:1 [θυμός]). Nevertheless, in at least one case the wrath of Christ’s enemies is called *furor* (Luke 4:28, where a whole synagogue is incensed with θυμός; some OL readings opt for *ira* instead) and in another it is applied to enemies of his followers (Acts 19:28, also θυμός; *furor* appears only in one MS). Even when θυμός is attributed to Satan, who “knows his time is short” (Rev. 12:12)—surely a natural candidate for *furor* if ever there was one—the word does not appear in what survives of the OL. This state of affairs may have something to do with the fact that θυμός is markedly rarer in the Greek New Testament than in the Septuagint, but again there is no consistent pattern: where it does occur, it is not much more likely than ὀργή to be translated by *furor*.

The pleonastic constructions *ira furoris* and *furor irae*, which generally render combinations of θυμός/θύω (2) and ὀργή/ὀργίζω in the Septuagint (and NT, as in Rev. 19:15 above) are a good example of the typical literalism of the Old Latin tradition, if we define literalism with Burton as “the pursuit of exact correspondence between source- and target-language, with resulting distortions of natural usage and idiom.”⁵⁷⁴ The dual usage for the meaning “wrath” is decidedly unidiomatic in Latin. *Ira* and *furor* do of course appear frequently together in close association throughout Latin literature because of the natural connection between wrath and madness, and as simple synonyms for “anger,” but I can find only one or two examples in surviving prose and verse, even including the works of late antique Christian poets, in which *ira* and *furor* are used together as synonyms for “anger” (without *furor* bearing any connotation of madness, which would upset the parallelism) in this kind of tight syntactic relationship, where one directly modifies the other.⁵⁷⁵ The combination appears to originate in

⁵⁷⁴ Burton (2000) 199.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Silius Italicus, *Pun.* 4.528 (*Tyriae furor edidit irae*, of Hannibal); I suspect more than simple anger is in view even here, however, in keeping with Hannibal’s portrayal throughout the rest of the poem. Another exception is

the OL and the Vulgate, and is a striking example of a deliberate deformation of normal syntactical and semantic patterns for the sake of a more literal rendering of a source text.

In many cases, *furor* (as the wrath of God) yielded to other, alternative translations; the surviving evidence for OL readings is unanimously behind *furor* only about 15% of the time. The most common synonyms in OL texts are *ira*, *iracundia*, and *indignatio* (with *ira* the clear favourite). The same is true of passages where it refers to merely human anger, generally sinfully-motivated emotion (e.g. the anger of the proud, or the raging of Israel's pagan enemies) rather than righteous feeling. Where *furor* means something closer to *amentia* or *caecitas mentis*, the alternative expressions are of course different. In one instance *furere* describes the drunkenness of Judah's disgraceful nobles (Hos. 7:5; *furere a vino*, LXX θυμοῦσθαι ἐξ οἴνου), and in another the judgment of the Lord drives false diviners out of their minds (Isa. 44:25; *[h]ariolos in furorem vertens*, LXX διασκεδάσει...μαντείας ἀπὸ καρδίας). This last example is worth noting because of the contrast it highlights between a kind of *furor* common in classical Roman literature—the divine frenzy of inspired seers—and the biblical idea of prophecy, which is in full harmony with *ratio* and never induces a loss of mental possession, though it too is supernaturally inspired. In the Latin Isaiah, *furor* is not the mark of prophetic authenticity, as in the classical tradition; it is definitive proof that prophecy has failed, and incurred the just fury of God.

The closest approach to erotic *furor* in the Old Latin tradition (*incredibili libidinis furore*) occurs in the context of a brutal rape in the story of the Levite, his concubine, and the men of Gibeah (Jdg. 20:5), which leads to a brief civil war within the Israelite community. Though it

found in the *Lamentum paenitentiae* (line 67) of Sisbert, bishop of Toledo at the end of the seventh century AD; it also refers to the wrath of God, presumably under the influence of the Vulgate (*ab ira furoris tui quis non conturbabitur?*).

indirectly provokes internecine bloodshed when the Benjamites will not suffer the leaders of Gibeah to be punished for their heinous crime, *furor* is not deployed either there or elsewhere to characterize political division *per se*. Nor does battle-*furor*, the martial zeal of the warrior on the battlefield, appear in what survives, although one could argue perhaps that Saul's incipient wrath on Israel's behalf hints at this sense as well as others. The *furor* of natural forces, apart from the bestial *furor* mentioned above, is also almost wholly absent.

Taken as a whole, then, the semantic range of *furor* is considerably more limited in the OL than in Latin literature more broadly, and even than in the Christian literature of the first four centuries AD. *Furor* in the *Vetus Latina* is certainly far removed from its "grand comprehensive role as dramatized metaphor of human passion" in classical literature.⁵⁷⁶ But it is also clear that the primary inspiration for Christian writers' use of *furor* as a heavily-freighted shorthand for pagan irrationality, heretical factionalism, and the Jewish rejection of Christ is unlikely to have come from the language of their Latin scriptures. It is true, as can be seen from a few memorable examples, that some of God's enemies (or those of his faithful people), like Sennacherib⁵⁷⁷ and Nebuchadnezzar,⁵⁷⁸ are occasionally linked to *furor* in the OL. But none of these examples in its context suggests irrationality or spiritual derangement in themselves. Sennacherib is incensed against Jerusalem (and therefore against the Lord) because its defenders have refused to surrender to his army, and on account of his own *superbia*; Nebuchadnezzar's anger threatens to consume Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego because they defy his orders—but *furor* never occurs in the Old Latin description of his own temporary madness (and indeed there is no

⁵⁷⁶ Putnam (1995, [interpretation and influence]) 273.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. the Vulgate and OL renderings of Isa. 37:29.

⁵⁷⁸ Cf. the Vulgate and OL renderings of Dan. 2:12, 3:13, 3:19.

warrant for it in the source text). If Nebuchadnezzar's bestial humiliation and the loss of human characteristics which follows immediately upon his royal boasting suggest the same equation between spiritual rebellion against God and a disordered mind made by the Latin Fathers, *furor* itself is not the means of articulating this idea in the scriptures. In each case the word seems only to mean "wrath" in its immediate context. Certainly these are figures of opposition, even of paradigmatic human wickedness in the Bible, and we saw earlier how some biblical texts suggest in the original a connection between rebellion against God and madness.⁵⁷⁹ But the moral lessons inherent in the stories of figures like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar could be discussed primarily in terms of madness-*furor* only after a more complex conceptual adjustment had been made than is explicitly warranted by the language of the *Vetus Latina*.

It is undoubtedly the case that "the early biblical translations, including features from an initial period of experimentation, exert a strong and lasting influence on most Christian writing in Latin throughout its history."⁵⁸⁰ Yet it would be a mistake to assume that this influence attained its mature authority overnight. The process was naturally gradual and uneven; some indigenously classical words and ideas resisted the pressure of the new biblical idioms more tenaciously than others. As we have seen, Latin Christian writers sometimes drew on strong semantic traditions embedded in the classical literary and philosophical culture they inherited, in order to make their faith more intelligible both to one another and to educated pagans in the church's formative centuries. In the particular case of *furor*, this classical heritage seems to have exerted greater influence on the early Fathers' rhetoric, and on their pointed expressions of the

⁵⁷⁹ See p. 140 above.

⁵⁸⁰ Houghton (2016) 18.

antithesis between the church and the World, than did the language of the Bible (at least in Latin translation).

At the same time, it seems that the consistent and pervasive adoption of *furor*-language for the wrath of God throughout the Old Latin versions began to tell, with the passage of years, in the theological parlance of learned churchmen, especially as the fourth century drew to a close. As we shall see in the next chapter, the development of biblical epic after Juvencus supports this conclusion. The criticisms of Augustine, though his dissatisfaction with the Old Latin translators' use of *furor* was probably shared by some of his contemporaries, must have represented a minority opinion already in his own day—at least, few if any traces of similar attitudes toward that particular translation question have survived. If it is true that the ultimate origins of the Old Latin versions lay in the adaptation of the Greek scriptures for the liturgical needs of western Roman audiences—that is, in oral paraphrase—or even in bilingual biblical texts arranged in an interlinear format,⁵⁸¹ it seems likely that the patina of regular use in the daily life of local congregations would have endowed familiar texts with considerable authority. The longer these versions were in use, the greater their influence on the thought and expression of Christian writers in every genre was likely to be, even in the case of those with the linguistic training and philological judgment to mount objections against individual renderings which seemed unsatisfactory. To some extent, one's very perception of what was or was not satisfactory must have been powerfully shaped by the semantic habits of the local Christian community in which one worshiped, though of course for some the broader epistolary community established between prominent churchmen through correspondence would have gone some way towards

⁵⁸¹ Houghton (2016) 7-8.

counteracting local influence when it came to theological language which was deemed unjustifiably idiosyncratic.⁵⁸²

The usage of *furor* in the Old Latin tradition is also narrower than that found in other Christian writing or in classical literature in a purely lexical sense: the verb *furere* and its participial forms appear only very rarely compared to the noun, and *furiosus* is extremely uncommon.⁵⁸³ *Furibundus* occurs once in the Vulgate (of Ahab, 1 Kings 20:43), but nothing of the OL for the relevant passage survives and it is impossible to know whether this was an innovation or a traditional reading. The semantic cluster surrounding *furor* in and outside of Latin epic, which would only have been available to translators willing to handle the biblical source text very freely indeed, does not of course appear in its familiar shape in the OL, though in fact many of its constituents may be found in the vocabulary of Old Latin translations independently.⁵⁸⁴ *Frendere* for instance occurs occasionally, typically in association with the spirit of impious persecution.⁵⁸⁵ *Furia* never occurs in either the Vulgate or the Old Latin tradition preceding it, perhaps due less to any conscious aversion on the part of the translators than because the biblical cosmos, though it featured malevolent spiritual powers as well as benevolent ones, simply did not encourage the attribution of human emotion to celestial interference with anything like the frequency or casual allegorizing which characterized classical

⁵⁸² Cf. the famous correspondence between Jerome and Augustine (Aug. *Ep.* 71 and 75) about the authority of the Septuagint, and in particular Jerome's truculent reply about the proper translation of *ciceion* in the book of Jonah; Jerome's new translation had outraged some African congregations used to a different word.

⁵⁸³ It appears only in readings of 1 Samuel 21:15 and Proverbs 22:24.

⁵⁸⁴ *Fremere/fremitus*, *frendere*, *insania/-ire*, *ardor/-ere*, *amentia*, *dementare*, *vesanus*, and *saevire* all seem to have been used; only *rabies* and *lymphare* are wholly lacking.

⁵⁸⁵ Poinssotte (1979) 169n625: "Le 'grincement des dents' comme signe de la fureur, et particulièrement de celle qui anime les persécuteurs, n'est pas inconnu de la Bible (par exemple *Ps.* 35:16; 37:12; 112:10)..." See also Flieger (1993) 154-5.

literature (especially epic). Where such interference does occur it is typically attributed explicitly to God or Satan or angelic beings; it is difficult to imagine where the source text would leave room for a translator to insert the ill-defined *furiae* of externalized passions. But other explanations are just as plausible: perhaps the word simply seemed irredeemably pagan to Christian translators aware of its close association with the Greek *Eumenides* and the tragic stage, philosophizing allegories notwithstanding.

By the time of Constantine, the semantic range of *furor* had undergone a series of developments which subtly but significantly altered the quintessential Roman signifier of disorder according to the partly alien, partly classical thought of the late antique Christian worldview. Extending the meaning of the concept along a trajectory which was familiar to them from classical philosophy, Roman invective, and the imaginative world of the epic tradition, Christian authors enlisted the language of *furor* in the defense of the church against its enemies, both internal and external, and in zealous efforts to present the faith as forcefully and attractively as possible to contemporary cultural élites. *Furor* and related concepts were also tools ideally suited to admonish and encourage Christians grappling with the high personal and cosmic stakes of the sharp antithesis between their commitment to Christ and the hostility of the pagan world they inhabited.

Furor was a way of articulating the existential danger posed to the faithful not only by the seductions of pagan amusements, but also by the machinations of heretics and schismatics, which were analogous, in their antipathy to communal cohesion and alignment with the forces of chaos, to the political menace of unbridled personal ambition so abominated by Cicero in republican times. Yet pagan, Jewish, and heretical *furor* would also be punished by commensurate fury from heaven; though patristic authors generally stop short of using *furor* or

furere to describe the Almighty, there are already hints of a kind of implicit parallelism between the sinful frenzy of the wicked and the justice with which it will be answered by God. By means of a bold appropriation, Christian thinkers could also deploy such language to fortify believers' resistance in the face of fierce persecution, even going so far in one case as to liken the zeal of a martyr in the final trial to a holy, heroic *furor* which answered pagan fury in its intensity of commitment—a kind of "good" frenzy capable of overpowering Hell's attacks with homeopathic force.

At the same time, Latin translations of the Bible were pioneering the use of *furor* explicitly to express the overwhelming and irresistible wrath of God, despite the risk of semantic contamination from the word's colorful network of associations in mainstream classical culture. This alternative sense, almost a "semantic Christianity,"⁵⁸⁶ though it obviously retained some of the old field of meaning, demanded to be understood on its own terms; God's wrath clearly belonged to a unique category of emotion which had to be kept strictly separate from much of the semantic baggage that attended on *furor*. That this semantic adjustment was not necessarily an automatic one for all readers is evident from the uneasiness of Augustine and Jerome about the word's natural connotations in normal Latin usage. Eventually Christian writers would experiment with having it both ways: that is, continuing to develop the semantic field of *furor* along lines anticipated in classical literature and readily intelligible to any educated reader on the one hand, while introducing a radically new (and distinctly Christian) idiom on the other, a hybridization which becomes especially pronounced in the mature phase of biblical epic as represented by Avitus at the beginning of the sixth century. Before considering his work,

⁵⁸⁶ The term is borrowed from Loi (1978) 38-9. In Loi's analysis, which is indebted to Schrijnen and the Nijmegen school of "Christian Latin" theorists, the term is *Christianismo semasiologico*. Examples include *virtus*, *fides*, *salus*, *spiritus*, *sacramentum*, *praedicare*, etc.

however, we will turn first to the first poetry to combine patristic and classical notions of *furor*, the synthetic *Evangeliorum Libri* of Juvencus and the *Cento Vergilianus* of Proba.

CHAPTER 4

Furor and the New Model Epic: Juvencus and Proba

So Man, as is most just,
Shall satisfy for Man, be judged and die,
And dying rise, and rising with him raise
His brethren, ransomed with his own dear life.
So heavenly love shall outdo hellish hate,
Giving to death, and dying to redeem,
So dearly to redeem what hellish hate
So easily destroyed, and still destroys
In those who, when they may, accept not grace.

Paradise Lost, 3.294-302

This chapter contextualizes and analyzes the first Christian adaptation of epic *furor*, which occurs in Juvencus' *Evangeliorum Libri* (ca. 330), and briefly summarizes the nature of *furor* in another fourth-century Christian poem, Proba's *Cento Vergilianus*.⁵⁸⁷ Taken together the two works represent the earliest manifestation of the third element in a triangular relationship between the biblical source material, the tradition of classical epic, and a new tradition of Christian poetry that defines the creative possibilities available to members of a later generation of Christian cultural innovators, including Avitus (whose poem will be discussed in the next chapter).⁵⁸⁸

Juvencus' roughly 3,200 hexameters, written during the reign of Constantine, retell the gospel story in the language of Latin epic and represent the birth of a new poetic sub-genre and a

⁵⁸⁷ For an introduction to the revived literary culture of this period see Cameron (1984) 42-58.

⁵⁸⁸ For the notion of the "triangle of Christian communication" I am indebted to Stella (2007) 49.

new aesthetic.⁵⁸⁹ Nothing quite like the poem had appeared before.⁵⁹⁰ It shares similarities not only with the classical epic tradition on which it draws directly,⁵⁹¹ but also with the thought and expression of the early Church Fathers whose interpretations of *furor* were discussed in the last chapter. As we shall see, Juvenecus' epic universe represents a radical revision of the world(s) of the *Aeneid* and its successors, even as it vies with them in its quest to unite the empire, the human heart, and the cosmos in moral harmony. Proba's *Cento*, a patchwork composition of not quite 700 lines pieced together almost entirely of unadapted hexameters drawn from Vergil's three great works, carefully crafts its own message about the meaning of epic madness.⁵⁹²

Though some scholars prefer to treat her work in isolation from the poems which can make a more straightforward claim to be "biblical epics,"⁵⁹³ her unique methods and occasionally bizarre interpretations of the biblical source text are relevant to our investigation.⁵⁹⁴ Her work illustrates

⁵⁸⁹ On Juvenecus generally the indispensable works are Thrade (1962, 2001); Herzog (1975) 52-154, (1989); Kartschoke (1975); Fontaine (1981) 67-80; Roberts (1985, 2004); Green (2006); and now McGill (2016). Juvenecus has also inspired a number of meticulous commentaries, all piecemeal: Kievits (1940) on Book 1; De Wit (1947) on Book 2; Flieger (1993) on 4.478-565; Fichtner (1994) on 1.346-408; Bauer (1999) on Book 3; Heinsdorff (2003) on 2.177-327.

⁵⁹⁰ McGill (2016) 23.

⁵⁹¹ On the Vergilian character of Juvenecus' language consult for example the tables of Borrell Vidal (1991) 95-143, which give sources for *iuncturae* in every line of Juvenecus' first book, though the limitations of her method are criticized in Flieger (1993) 17-18 and Thor (2013) 19. Thor (2013) emphasizes non-Vergilian elements of Juvenecus' language and style.

⁵⁹² For general introductions to Proba and the nature of her project see Clark and Hatch (1981) 97-108; Green (1995); Smolak (2004); Cullhed (2015) 1-55. On the *cento* form itself see Ermini (1909) 56-96; Consolino (1984); McGill (2005); Bažil (2009); Sandnes (2011) 107-40.

⁵⁹³ E.g. Green (2006) xiv: "Proba does not belong in a history of Christian epic, even if her work can illuminate it from time to time."

⁵⁹⁴ Cullhed (2015) 3: "Proba stands at the beginning of a classicizing Christian Latin poetic tradition in which the texts of Virgil stand as the fundamental stylistic paradigm and, as such, are constantly legitimized through allegorizing and decontextualizing readings." Proba's poem "presents us with a conspicuous example of late antique amalgamation of the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman exegetical and literary domains." Sandnes (2011) 140 makes much the same point: "the practice of composing centos was, of course, part and parcel of wider attempts at formulating the Christian faith in the forms and vocabulary of the celebrated past of the pagan society."

another approach to the redemption of the spiritual potential of Vergil's poetry (and that of his successors).

I. The *Evangeliorum Libri* of Juvencus

From the very first line of Juvencus' preface, it is obvious that a Christian cosmology anchored in the trinitarian God of the Bible is of great importance to the poet's project. The universe, the Earth, land, sea, and stars, the kingdoms of men—even Rome itself—all are impermanent, destined to be swept away in the final conflagration by God the Father, the *genitor rerum* (1-4).⁵⁹⁵ This declaration frames a compact reflection on the nature of poetic fame, as contrasted in the glorious and long-renowned (but ultimately ephemeral) works of Homer and Vergil and Juvencus' own *carmen*, which will narrate the *vitalia gesta* of Christ and result in eternal praise and perhaps even salvation for the poet himself.⁵⁹⁶ The subject matter of Juvencus' poem can be related *falsi sine crimine*, unlike the tales of pagan bards, which are mixed with falsehoods (20, 16). Through holy inspiration the Spirit will be the true *auctor* of the poem, playing the role traditionally filled in classical epic by the Muses (25-7), and will purify the *mens* of the poet with the clear waters of the Jordan; there is no poetic *furor* or loss of self-possession here, but rather a kind of higher cognition.⁵⁹⁷ Green helpfully sums up the innovative quality of the passage:

⁵⁹⁵ For Juvencus I use Huemer's text (1891).

⁵⁹⁶ On Juvencus' construction of poetic authority and its relation to his own salvation see Pollmann (2013) 317-19.

⁵⁹⁷ This conceit, again including the waters of the Jordan, is given definitive and explicit expression a century later by Paulinus of Périgeux, *De Vita Martini* 4.245-53, cited and discussed in Deproost (1998) 113: *perge age continuo uirtutum stemmata tractu | historiam pangendo refer, mea Musa, sacerdos, | ingeniumque meum. tu cordis plectra uel oris | auxilio continge tuo. uesana loquentes | dementes rapiant furiosa ad pectora Musas: | nos Martinus agat.*

The theme of fame is a classical one, certainly, but the tone is strikingly different...it is humble in a theological perspective when, with its remarkable importation of a point of reference that is non-aesthetic and otherworldly, it speaks of the end of the world and the Last Judgement. As often in Juvenecus and other Christian epic, literary and theological perspectives are combined.⁵⁹⁸

The entire preface is composed of “great claims and groundbreaking contrasts,” and unsurprisingly it has provoked detailed analysis.⁵⁹⁹ Though we need not recapitulate everything that has been said about this complex passage, a few observations will be relevant to our investigation of *furor* in the *Evangeliorum Libri*.

It is of course true that the proemia of the classical epics also “combine literary and theological perspectives” in the looser sense of providing cosmic context to the events about to be narrated. Ovid starts from creation itself; Lucan contextualizes his civil war in terms of Nero’s divinely appointed accession to global empire, and compares the price paid for this glory to the tumults of the Gigantomachy; Statius implies that the tragic saga of Thebes lacks the grander scale of the triumphs of Domitian, ruler over all mankind and demigod destined for bodily ascension; Valerius prays for Phoebus to lift him above the clouds of the Earth so that he can tell of the opening of the seas that made possible the *translatio imperii*; Silius begins with the sacrilege of wantonly violated oaths to Jupiter, and the struggle to decide which city would be the world’s capital. But Green and others⁶⁰⁰ are right to detect something different in Juvenecus’ preface: its eschatological viewpoint is truly universal and utterly decentralized, or rather re-centered on God himself, disavowing even Rome as the central point of reference and moving beyond all that is comprehended by this present dispensation. It thus in one sense breaks the

talīs mutatio sensus | grata mihi est, talem sitiunt mea viscera fontem. | Castalias poscant lymphatica pectora lymphas: | altera poela decent homines Iordane renatos.

⁵⁹⁸ Green (2006) 17-18.

⁵⁹⁹ Green (2006) 21. On the preface see Van Der Nat (1973), Kartschoke (1975), Murru (1980) 133-151, Fontaine (1981), Kirsch (1989) 84-92, Carrubba (1993) 303-312, Gärtner (2004) 424-446, and McGill (2016) 5-11.

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. also Herzog (1989) 335-6, Thraede (2001) 883, and McGill (2016) 113-4.

Vergilian mould, which had insisted that “all things and peoples must eventually be seen in relationship to one city and people of Rome.”⁶⁰¹ Juvencus’ perspective by contrast is literally “other-worldly” in that everything that exists will be *replaced*, and not simply renewed according to the cyclical pattern of the Stoics. It is also dogmatic in its assertion of a formal doctrine that demands—and receives—the poet’s own devotional commitment; the free-wheeling philosophical eclecticism of Juvencus’ epic predecessors is of a different order altogether. In fact his evangelical zeal, to say nothing of his cosmic language, is reminiscent of Lucretius.⁶⁰² This is the background for his poetic achievement, one that depends wholly on the triune Christian God and receives glory from its subject rather than the reverse.⁶⁰³

Juvencus’ approach therefore follows that of earlier Latin epic poets—toward whom he adopts a remarkably eirenic posture⁶⁰⁴—in foregrounding the cosmic significance of his work, but departs from their example in substituting a different kind of cosmos, one from whose eventual destruction the soul can only be rescued by the grace of Christ. Thus he is naturally disposed to perpetuate the old poets’ interest in Heaven and Hell, even repurposing in his preface Vergilian lines about the *vates* who earn a place in Elysium by singing things “worthy of Phoebus,” as he proceeds to use the classical epics’ own idiom to adorn the new worldview with language befitting its unique spiritual grandeur.⁶⁰⁵ *Furor*,⁶⁰⁶ as we shall see, is a key element in

⁶⁰¹ Hardie (1986) 25.

⁶⁰² Green (2006) 17. See also Mastrangelo (2016) 45: “...Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* has commitments that determine his allusive strategies. Like the Christian poets, Lucretius subordinates his poetic self and its attendant notions of originality to the poetic expression of Epicurean doctrine...”

⁶⁰³ Green (2006) 18.

⁶⁰⁴ Juvencus’ conciliatory attitude has frequently been noted at least since Curtius (2013 [1953]) 459; see more recently e.g. Green (2006) 20 and McGill (2016) 114.

⁶⁰⁵ On Juvencus’ use of Vergilian Tartarus/Elysium, see Green (2006) 23, 94-5.

this process, encoding as it does the fundamental preoccupation of the classical poets with the terrestrial and infernal disorder that periodically threatened the Roman world, the expanding boundaries of which they had come to identify with the limits of the universe itself. Though to some extent of course the antagonism of good and evil, of chaos and *logos* characterizes Juvencus' biblical source material itself, it "gains far more explicit forms" in his poem.⁶⁰⁷ In the *Evangeliorum Libri*, *furor* possesses a repetitious thematic unity which is all the more remarkable in a poem so obsessed with paraphrastic *variatio*.⁶⁰⁸ Yet madness appears not as an entertaining embellishment of legendary *veterum gesta hominum* (as in the classical epics), but as part of the historical record, as it were: for Juvencus the gospels faithfully record the true state of real men's hearts and minds, and it is this trustworthy account of events that the poet seeks to adorn and transmit—but never to alter or revise—in his verse.

In Juvencus' paraphrase of the nativity account, the villainy of Herod occasions the poet's first use of *furor*, directly after the massacre of the children of Bethlehem. By this point the reader has already been presented with a vivid portrait of the king through appropriately foreboding epithets earlier in Book 1.⁶⁰⁹ The poem's very first line introduces him in lurid

⁶⁰⁶ Poinssotte (1979) 152-236 devotes considerable attention to *furor* and its semantics in Juvencus, by far more than any other commentator. Many of his insights and observations align with my own, despite his reductive focus on *furor* as primarily an antisemitic theme.

⁶⁰⁷ Šubr (1993) 13.

⁶⁰⁸ Poinssotte (1979) 172.

⁶⁰⁹ On Juvencus' superabundant adjectives see Donnini (1973) and more recently Green (2006) 42-3: "They not only emphasize elements of the narrative or teaching but also serve as a major source of the intense unity of moral and emotional focus in the four books, importing what Herzog has called *Erbaulichkeit* or edification, and Kirsch *Psychologisierung*. Seen in rhetorical terms, they guide and intensify the emotions and reactions of the reader; while by presenting strongly delineated events, objects, and characters they act as an incentive to meditation." For our purposes the important thing to note is that Juvencus' language is thematic, and not *merely* paraphrastic. Cf. Thraede (2001) 893-904 and McGill (2016) 130.

colours which editorialize on Luke’s matter-of-fact introduction:⁶¹⁰ *rex fuit Herodes Iudaea in gente cruentus*. The characterization may be inspired by Statius, in whose *Thebaid* the ferocious Creon—a prominent exponent of *furor* on more than one occasion—is twice called *rex cruentus*.⁶¹¹ When we next meet the “bloodthirsty king” of Juvencus’ poem he alone is seized with terror at the advent of the Messiah (*territus*, 1.233), whom he regards as a threat to his own hegemony.⁶¹² Herod’s thought process is only implicit in the gospel account, but Juvencus leaves no room for doubt: “he believed that the one whom the subtle skill of the Magi had sought by the stars would succeed to his throne” (1.257-8).

This special focus on a deeply insecure tyrant, ready to bathe his hands in blood to secure his own plans for succession against a backdrop of supernatural intrigue, must have seemed contemporary enough in Juvencus’ day, given the political and religious turmoil which would have reverberated through the poet’s life and times before the triumph of Constantine.⁶¹³ In purely literary terms the archetype fits Creon, too, who had hoped to take advantage of the spiritual gloom which persistently gathered about the house of Oedipus to win the crown of Thebes for his own posterity. When in the *Thebaid* Creon’s hopes are dashed by the death of his son Menoeceus, he butchers living prisoners of war on the pyre in furious defiance, grimly

⁶¹⁰ Luke 1:5: “In the days of Herod, king of Judaea...”

⁶¹¹ *Theb.* 12.184 and 680. Poinssotte (1979) 207 notes the parallels, and also connects Herod to Vergil’s Mezentius. Cf. Green (2006) 267. Pluto is also so named in the *Thebaid* (8.28), and it seems that the phrase was a favourite of Seneca the Younger’s as well (cf. *Oed.* 639, *Herc. Oet.* 1820, *Herc. Fur.* 498, *Dial.* 5.14.4). On Juvencus’ characterization of Herod see also Consolino (2009) 164 and Donnini (1973) 55ff.

⁶¹² Green (2006) 33 notes that “the spotlight falls strongly on Herod; hence the omission of the words ‘and all Jerusalem with him’” when the king’s consternation at the potential arrival of the Messiah is reported.

⁶¹³ Poinssotte (1979) 206-7 discusses the rich rhetorical heritage attached to the term *tyrannus*. Green (2006) 113: “Juvencus presents him as a third-century emperor, fearful of astrology and constantly apprehensive of a rival.” It seems to me that this characterization would apply just as well to the early fourth as to the third century. Green elsewhere points out that the Herod-Christ duality of ‘wild’ king and ‘gentle’ king finds an inevitable analogue in hints of a contrast between Diocletian and Constantine (6; 67). For other possible reminiscences of Diocletian’s reign see Green (2006) 113, 121.

content to “let them call me cruel and savage” (*saevum...immitemque vocent*, 12.94) so long as his enemies, and even their unburied dead, feel the full weight of his wrath.⁶¹⁴ In their indifference to innocent suffering and ruthless devotion to self, Creon and Herod betray the presence of a common genome; they share the pedigree of the purebred epic villain.⁶¹⁵

Of course, no intertextual echo is strictly necessary to motivate Juvencus’ expansion of his biblical model here. His version is hardly out of step with the spirit of the scriptural narrative. But the similarity of tone between the biblical poet and his pagan antecedent is more important than whether or not Juvencus was directly influenced by Statius’ diction, and the massacre of the innocents, one of Juvencus’ most elaborate set pieces, is dyed in a “notable epic colour” that seems a natural match with the palette of the Spanish poet’s classical predecessors.⁶¹⁶ Together with the execution of John the Baptist, the episode anticipates Juvencus’ Passion narrative partly through the conspicuous role of *furor* and related language.⁶¹⁷

Shortly before the slaughter at Bethlehem, the Magi are kept from returning the way they came by *horrida somnia* (1.251), a re-imagining of the gospel’s divine warnings designed to adumbrate some of the horror of the deed that will follow. The dreams reveal the true nature of the *saevus tyrannus* (252), a savage oppressor (*ferus*, 257) panicked (*sollicitatus*, 259) by the unexpected departure of the Magi as he fearfully anticipates a challenge to his power. After the

⁶¹⁴ Cf. the words of L. Accius’ tragic tyrant, Atreus: *oderint, dum metuant*.

⁶¹⁵ Consolino (2009) 163 notes that Juvencus aligns Herod with other *reges superbi* from Rome’s “cultural and poetic tradition.”

⁶¹⁶ Green (2006) 33. Cf. McGill (2016) 130: “Juvencus’ treatment underscores the horror of Herod’s actions and invests the scene with high pathos.”

⁶¹⁷ Poinssotte (1979) 208: “dans deux épisodes tragiques dont Juvencus a manifestement voulu faire, grâce à la réalisation d’une unité thématique et lexicale, de petites Passions avant la grande: le massacre des Innocents et la décollation de Jean-Baptiste. Même sanglante horreur, même tonalité, mêmes mots.” Poinssotte’s table of verbal correspondences (210-11) substantiates the claim.

king's despicable orders are carried out, the poet pivots adroitly back to the Holy Family, here represented by Joseph (as in Matthew, whom Juvencus is following). The news of Herod's death, which prompts Joseph's return in Matthew, is omitted and the chronology collapsed (1.267-273):⁶¹⁸

Ast ubi sopitus furor est, et saeva tyranni
infantum horribili feritas satiata cruore
extinxisse putat cunctos, quos primus, et alter
annus lethiferi miseros oppresserat aevi,
mirandis rursus devinctus membra sopore
urgetur monitis Mariam, puerumque Ioseph
Aegypto ad patriam vectare...

But when his mad rage slept, and the cruel savagery
of the tyrant, sated with the monstrous slaughter of the infants,
supposed that all had been killed—those wretched ones whom the first and second
years of fatal age had crushed—Joseph was spurred on once more
with astonishing warnings as he lay, his body bound fast by sleep,
to bring Mary and the child out of Egypt and back to his home...

As Herod's vicious fury is lulled to sleep by satiety, Joseph's obedience and piety awake; the implicit contrast between them is made palpable by *sopitus* and *sopore*. In Juvencus' poem Herod is not just a foil for Joseph, however. In subtle ways his bloody reign is measured against the ideal of the gentle kingship of Christ, and also against the exemplary humility and purity of other pious Jews closely associated with the nativity (including Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Mary).⁶¹⁹ He is named, after all, as "King of the Jewish nation" (tantalizingly close to "King of the Jews") in the first line of Book 1, and if some readers interpreted this first line to mean that Herod was himself a Jew—he was a gentile convert, but not every Roman Christian (or pagan) will have known this⁶²⁰—the contrast with Simeon and his compatriots

⁶¹⁸ Noted by Green (2006) 24-25, who thinks Juvencus may have deliberately conflated the two Herods of his gospel model for the sake of dramatic unity. So also Poinssotte (1979) 206.

⁶¹⁹ Green (2006) 32, 67; McGill (2016) 114.

⁶²⁰ Green (2006) 110n467. According to Josephus, during the reign of Nero the Jewish inhabitants of Caesarea claimed Herod retroactively as one of their number, a designation the city's inhabitants did not dispute (*Bell. Jud.* 2.13.7). As Green points out, it is impossible to say what Juvencus knew or intended to communicate about Herod's

becomes even more stark, and Herod's resemblance to the Jewish authorities who rage against Christ later in the poem becomes considerably more organic.

Like Christ, Constantine too, that *indulgens...regnator* characterized by *iusta...acta* (4.807, 810), is a model ruler in Juvencus' eyes;⁶²¹ he represents everything Herod—and Domitian, another bloodthirsty persecutor who haunted Christian memory and was denounced as a *rex*—was not.⁶²² In Juvencus, *indulgens* almost always refers to the generosity of God or Christ in forgiving sins and dispensing gifts to the people,⁶²³ and it is with these divine rulers that Constantine is obviously aligned by both actions and epithet.⁶²⁴ If Juvencus' sphragis at the end of the poem really does refer obliquely to Constantine's putative refusal of the odious title 'king,' the poem seems to portray Herod/Christ and Diocletian/Constantine as analogous pairs representing *furor* and its opponents, the forces of *iustitia*, of political and cosmic harmony.⁶²⁵ When Herod reappears later in the poem—there is only one character so named in Juvencus, either because Juvencus confused Herod the Great with Herod Antipas or because for his

ethnicity. Poinssotte (1979) 205 on the other hand, though conceding that Herod is “the least Jewish” of the three great human representatives of Judaism in the poem (Nicodemus and Judas are the others), believes that Herod's purpose in the poem is to link the “Jewish criminals” to the pagan criminals of classical literature.

⁶²¹ McGill (2016) 272: “With ‘just acts’ (*iustis...actis*), Juvencus activates for a final time the prevalent theme of justice: Constantine shows himself to be a just ruler, which, in Juvencus' moral framework, is part of what identifies him as a Christian ruler.”

⁶²² Poinssotte (1979) 206.

⁶²³ Cf. 1.121, 320, 597, 674 (God the Father) and 2.8 (Christ). Only in one case (aside from the lines about Constantine) does the word describe someone else, the wicked servant of the parable at 4.192 (*indulgens ebrietati*).

⁶²⁴ On parallels between Constantine and Christ drawn in the emperor's own time, see Bardill (2012) 338-84 (cited in McGill [2016] 272).

⁶²⁵ See Green (2006) 6. For a useful summary of views on what Juvencus may have meant by the enigmatic phrase *sacri...nominis* at the poem's end (whether *pontifex maximus* or *deus* or something else), see Green (2006) 4-6. *Rex* is Green's own plausible suggestion. McGill (2016) 272 reviews the question without reaching a definitive conclusion. As McGill points out, reference to Constantine's salvation connects the poem's end to its beginning, and the emperor to the poet in a clear example of ring-composition (273). This means that Juvencus too is aligned with the partisans of *iustitia*.

purposes father and son constituted a sort of composite inter-generational villain—he plays a key role in representing the malevolent powers opposed to the Kingdom of God.

The bloody king's *furor* is explained straightforwardly in both the biblical text and in Juvenecus' poem as anger brought on by the defection of the Magi.⁶²⁶ The Greek NT simply runs "then Herod, realizing that he had been deceived by the Magi, grew exceedingly angry," (τότε Ἡρώδης ἰδὼν ὅτι ἐνεπαίχθη ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων ἐθυμώθη λίαν), and the Old Latin translations generally render it *iratus* (or *indignatus*) *est valde*. As we have seen, θυμός and its verbal relatives could be, and very often were, translated by *furor* or *furere* in the scriptures circulating among late antique Roman Christians, and Juvenecus' usage here is in keeping with that tradition, even as it also echoes typical portrayals of wrathful tyrants in classical epic.⁶²⁷ Several generations later in the first half of the fifth century, the Christian poet Sedulius, one of Juvenecus' most attentive and appreciative readers and another pioneer of biblical epic, alludes to Juvenecus' Herod in his own retelling of the horror at Bethlehem. Sedulius elaborates on the *furor* of the wicked king and explains it in broader terms as a wholesale derangement of his *ratio*, so that Juvenecus' account of Herod's emotions and behaviour seems quite cursory by comparison.⁶²⁸

But the characterization of the king elsewhere in the *Evangeliorum Libri* supports a reading of the Juvencan Herod as something more than a merely wicked—or merely angry—human ruler.

Due in part to a dangerous spiritual vulnerability induced by his own impiety, he is revealed to

⁶²⁶ Though Poinssotte (1979) 208 notes that the *furor Iudaicus* (in which he includes Herod) is more complex in Juvenecus than the traditional *furor* of "fanatics, persecutors, and tyrants," he acknowledges that in the king's acts of violence there is little to distinguish him from Antiochus Epiphanes or other famous villains.

⁶²⁷ One thinks for instance of Valerius Flaccus' portrait of the savage rage of Pelias when he discovers that Jason has secretly absconded with his son, which abounds in the language of *furor* (see p. 105 above). Valerius' Aetes is a similar example of the deceived tyrant. Though they are not victims of deception like Herod, we might also recall Statius' Eteocles and Creon, Lucan's Caesar, Ovid's Pentheus, and of course Vergil's Mezentius as general models for the *rex furiosus*.

⁶²⁸ Sedulius, *Carm. Pasch.* 2.119-20: *furor est in rege cruento | non ratio*. See the long note on Sedulius' Herod and the tradition of his portrayal in later Christian poetry in Poinssotte (1979) 209n817.

be closely aligned with the forces of cosmic evil and accordingly suffers their coercive intervention, in precisely the tradition of “externally instigated and internally triggered” possession that we have hitherto observed at work in the classical epics.⁶²⁹ When viewed in this context, Herod’s *furor* in Book 1 takes on a new dimension which raises his significance beyond the merely ethical or political. Just as Turnus’ *enthusiasmos* under the influence of the *furor* of Allecto and ultimately of Juno elevates his role in the *Aeneid* to cosmic proportions, as he becomes the pawn of powerful celestial forces, so Herod (among others) fulfills for Juvencus’ poem the function of an avatar for spiritual disorder on a universal scale. This is the result not of an exegetical development of the biblical text but of the composition process itself; epic convention enhances theological reality.⁶³⁰

Following Matthew’s narrative closely, Juvencus describes in an explanatory flashback the execution of John the Baptist and Herod’s reasons for putting him abruptly to death. The tetrarch (here the historical Herod Antipas) has begun to hear tidings of the miracles of Christ, who is now fully embarked on his ministry, and his reaction and the ensuing reminiscence from the poet’s source give Juvencus an opening to enrich the tale with multiple epic resonances. The passage allows Juvencus to heighten the “archetypal conflict of two opposing powers, the good and the bad, chaos and logos” (3.33-51).⁶³¹

Interea ad regem uoluitabat fama superbum,
 Quod mala cuncta illi uirtus diuina domaret.
 Sed putat Herodes, leti quod lege remissus
 Tanta ut Iohannes uirtutis dona teneret.
 Nam quondam cernens liuenti pectore daemon,
 Erroris labem puris quod solueret undis

⁶²⁹ See p. 36n121 above. McGill (2016) 200 observes that “because Juvencus often uses abstract nouns for the devil, including at 3.40 (*pestis saevissima*), it is plausible that he used *feritas* to align Herod with him.” McGill gives a helpful list of diabolical abstractions on p. 158.

⁶³⁰ Šubrt (1993) 14.

⁶³¹ Šubrt (1993) 13.

Iustus Iohannes, damnis accensa malorum
Tunc petit Herodem pestis saeuissima regem
Et facile iniusti penetrans habitacula cordis
Adcumulare feris subigit scelera impia gestis.
Arserat inlicito Herodes accensus amore
In thalamos fratris, casto quod iure uetabat
Doctus Iohannes. Feritas sed nescia recti
Subiecit leges pedibus fruiturque nefandis
Conubiis ipsumque super, qui praua uetabat,
Carceris inmersum tenebris uinclisque grauauit.
Sanguine nam iusti primo compressa timore
Abstinet sitiens feritas, quia magna profetam
Plebis Iohannem ueneratio suscipiebat.

Meanwhile the rumor flew to the haughty king
that the divine power of that man was subduing every evil.
But Herod thought John had been released from the law of death
in order to possess these great gifts of power.
For once before, the Devil—observing with envious heart
how the righteous John was cleansing the stain of iniquity in the pure waters, and
enraged by the faltering supply of sin—that cruelest of curses then
attacked the king, and easily worming his way into the inmost parts
of the king’s heart he drove him to heap up abominable crimes with savage deeds.
Herod had burned, inflamed by illicit lust for his brother’s wife, whom
the learned John declared forbidden to him by the law of purity.
But the king’s ferocity, a stranger to all righteousness, trampled
the laws under his feet and took its fill of the unspeakable liaison.
The very man who had forbidden the vile act he buried besides
in the deep shadows of a cell and weighed down with chains,
since his ferocity, thirsty for the righteous man’s blood, was constrained
to hold off from it at first by fear, since the great reverence
of the people was accepting John as a prophet.

As commentators have noticed, *livi pectore* (“with envious heart”) picks up a key detail from the previous scene, in which the *livor gravis* of the crowd at Nazareth had compelled them to sneer at “the carpenter’s son” in his hometown;⁶³² the implicit suggestion is that human opposition to Christ is akin to and perhaps inspired by the envy of the evil spirits.⁶³³ Herod’s paranoid fears for the security of his throne and reputation, so memorably made to fester again by the meddlesome prophet he had finally dispatched, are awoken once more by Jesus’ miracles. His own envy in the face of the *veneratio* enjoyed by John (and now by Jesus) is mirrored in the

⁶³² Green (2006) 69: “The importance of this double reference to Envy is enhanced by its position, at the beginning of the poem’s second half, which is where Vergil’s *maius opus* began; the forces arrayed against John, and implicitly Jesus, increase in severity.” Consolino (2009) 165 collects parallel phrases in classical epic.

⁶³³ Poinssotte (1979) 232 connects *livor* in both cases to Satan: “tel père, tels fils.”

infernal sphere by the spiteful wrath of a demon—or perhaps the Devil himself—infuriated (*accensa...pestis*, 39) at the repentance of so many sinners, as it were an intolerable assault on his property.⁶³⁴ Juvencus frequently uses *daemon* indifferently for both the Devil (e.g. 1.408, 2.614, 3.8, 3.300) and the lesser evil spirits which serve him (1.712, 2.419, 2.713).⁶³⁵ The Devil or Satan is never named as such in the poem, and the interchangeability of subordinate minions for the chief evil spirit creates a powerful impression of the essential unity and indistinguishability of the forces opposed to God’s kingdom; the world of the epic is menaced by “a single universal omnipresent dark power.”⁶³⁶

In perfect harmony with the pattern we have observed again and again of the Furies in both poetry and prose, in both pagan and Christian texts, the *daemon* here is “medio-passive”; he experiences himself the diabolical intensity of emotion he inspires in his victim, Herod.⁶³⁷ Mirroring the malevolent spirit, the king quickly becomes *accensus* (3.43) in turn with *amor* that is prompted—not coincidentally—by another species of *livor*, his covetous desire for his brother’s wife, contrary to both the Seventh and Tenth Commandments (which must lie behind *casto...iure* and *leges*). Green asserts that *livor*, which in its broadest sense approaches “malevolence” and held a place of some conceptual importance in the classical tradition, is something like an impersonal cosmic force in the work of Juvencus’ near contemporary

⁶³⁴ As suggested by the decidedly financial connotation of *damnis*. Green (2006) 69 translates “deficit of evil.”

⁶³⁵ Green (2006) 69n306 rightly points out that Juvencus calls Satan simply *daemon* at 1.366-7 during Christ’s temptation. We might add that the poet also does so again a few lines before the passage under discussion here (3.8).

⁶³⁶ Quotation from Šubr (1993) 14, who calls this power “a kind of counter-balance of *spiritus sanctus*. Christ becomes then an exponent of the conflict of two abstract adversary powers.” Cf. Green (2006) 96: “There is no *diabolus* or *zabulus*, no Beelzebul or Satanas; Juvencus adheres to the word *daemon*, perhaps to encourage a single-minded focus on the enemy.” Poinsothe (1979) 229 and n886 had earlier explored the same idea.

⁶³⁷ In a rare slip Green ([2006] 69), doubtless thinking of Herodias’ daughter (Salome) in the next scene, mistakenly has the Devil enter the mind of “Herod’s daughter” at 3.39 instead of Herod himself (at 40-1); *accensa* describes the *pestis saevissima*.

Eusebius.⁶³⁸ In fact Eusebius seems most often to have used it to gloss the very personal malice of the Devil, the arch-*daemon*, whose jealousy fomented disorder and roused both external and internal *furor* against the safety and health of the church.⁶³⁹ The New Testament itself suggests the identification, since at James 3:14-15 bitter jealousy (*zelus* in the Vulgate and OL) and selfish ambition constitute a false wisdom that is “earthly, unspiritual, demonic” (Grk. δαιμονιώδης, OL *diabolica*); where it is tolerated one can expect to find “disorder (ἀκαταστασία) and every vile practice.” Much like *furor*, *livor* was often personified in pagan Latin literature, and furnished as it were a ready-made semantic vehicle for the representatives of disorder and chaos in the Christian worldview, continuing to play the role it had played in Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, and Silius.⁶⁴⁰ In epic it is one of the potent infernal powers which wreak havoc in human affairs,⁶⁴¹ so it is not surprising that for Juvenius (as for Eusebius) it should become closely associated not only with Herod but also with the ruler of Hell and his servants, though its life as an archetypical

⁶³⁸ Green (2006) 68-9.

⁶³⁹ Cf. Eus. *Vit. Const.* 2.73 (PL 8 [1884] 48A): *Haec livor invidiae, et malignus daemon Ecclesiae felicitatem semper aegre ferens, in nostram perniciem machinatus est.* See also 3.4 (PL 8 [1884] 50C) *livor invidiae qui ecclesias Dei...conturbabat*, where *livor* arouses the *furor* and *amentia* of schism and even political affronts to the emperor himself. At 3.59 (PL 8 [1884] 67A-B) it is clearly the personal opposition of Satan that is meant: *rursus daemonis livor qui bonis semper insidias struit, adversus tantam rerum nostrarum felicitatem coepit insurgere, ratus imperatorem tumultibus nostris et insolentia exasperatum, alienato tandem erga nos animo fortassis futurum.* *Livor* and *furor/furias* are also closely associated in Cyprian of Carthage’s treatise *De Zelo et Livore* (PL 4 [1884]); see especially the discussion of Cain and Abel (V, PL 641B) and of Saul (642A): *Saul simultatis atque insectationis furias de livore concepit.*

⁶⁴⁰ Though *Livor* never appears in Vergil, it is personified in Roman elegy (Propertius 1.89.29; Ovid *Am.* 1.15.1, 39, 3.5.43) and at Ovid *Rem. Am.* 389 and *Met.* 10.515, Lucan *Bell. Civ.* 1.288, and Silius *Pun.* 13.584; cf. also the popular phrase *edax Livor* (“gnawing envy”), used by Ovid (*Am.* 1.15.1, *Rem. Am.* 389), Seneca (*Phaedr.* 493), Lucan (*Bell. Civ.* 1.288), and Martial (*Epigr.* 11.33.3). The expression was later picked up with obvious relish by the Christian poets Cyprianus Gallus (*Jud.* 462), Paulinus of Nola (*Carm.* 28.287), Prosper of Aquitaine (*In obtr.* 2.2), Rusticius Helpidius (*Tristicha* 9), Paulinus Petricordiae (*de Vita Martini* 2.44), Dracontius (*Laudes Dei* 1.463, *Romul.* 6.83), Avitus (*de Spiritualis Historiae Gestis* 3.185), and Eugenius of Toledo (*Hexaem.* 345). See also Poinssotte (1979) 176n661.

⁶⁴¹ *Livor* first appears in a list of infernal abstractions in Silius (13.584), and after Juvenius’ time the trope is imitated by Claudian (*in Rufin.* 1.32), Prudentius (*Ham.* 397), Paulinus of Nola (*Carm.* 28.287), Dracontius (*Romul.* 10.571, where it appears in company with both *Furor* and *Furiae*), and Avitus (*de Spiritualis Historiae Gestibus* 6.435, with *Furor* among others).

abstraction of purely human wickedness continued alongside its new connection to the Prince of Darkness.⁶⁴²

Also bound up together with the instigation of the *daemon* and Herod's gnawing *livor* is the familiar language of love *furor* (*arserat inclito...accensus amore*). It appears nowhere else in Juvencus' poem, not surprisingly perhaps given the poet's close adherence to the biblical text and the general absence of torrid affairs in the gospels. Its inclusion here, though brief, is significant: it allows Juvencus to draw on still more of the varied range and richness of epic madness, in a much-abbreviated evocation of the erotic frenzy of any number of doomed lovers in Latin poetry, from Vergil's Dido to Valerius' Medea. Herod wins none of the tragic sympathy of those figures from his poet, however, and there is nothing appealingly Alexandrian about the king's passion: it is simply a further testimony against his vice-addicted character. Here as elsewhere Vergilian language "intensifies the moral force of the narrative."⁶⁴³ Herod's lust is also intimately connected, as the proximate cause, to the *furor* of the bloody crime Juvencus is about the relate, the execution of John the Baptist at the suggestion of Salome the daughter of Herodias.

Explicit mention of *furor* is notably lacking in the possession scene quoted above, but so many other ingredients are in evidence that we may justifiably call it *furor*-madness *sans la lettre*: there is pointed opposition to *virtus* (3.34, 36) and *pietas* (*impia*, 42, *casto...iure*, 44, *nefandis...conubiis*, 46-6, repeated in the later *scelera impia* of Herodias during the dance scene at 61 and the *nefas* of the actual execution at 67); supernatural coercion of the emotions to compel excessive desires (*subigit*, 42), aided and abetted by the disordered internal passions of a

⁶⁴² *Livor* appears in Juvencus again at 4.112 (cited by Green [2006] 69n305) as an expression of the growing human wickedness, particularly division and betrayal, that will bedevil the earth immediately before the *eschaton*: *livor erit terris, erroribus omnia plena | et falsi surgent populorum labe profetae*. The OL for Matt. 24:10 (on which Juvencus' passage is based) is well represented by the Vulgate, which reads *et tunc scandalizabuntur multi et invicem tradent et odio habebunt invicem*.

⁶⁴³ Roberts (2004) 59.

fatally flawed character (*facile...penetrans, iniusti...cordis*, 41); bestial savagery, underlined by the repetition of *feritas* and recalling Herod (the Great's) *feritas satiata cruore* from the slaughter of the innocents; wanton disregard for communal standards of behaviour (*subiecit leges pedibus*, 46); even the fire metaphor (*arserat, accensus*, 43, 39) which is so congenial to *amor-furor*. The *rex cruentus* of 1.1 ("stained with *cruor*, gore") here literally thirsts (*sitiens*, 50) for blood like a rabid animal, and the wickedness of Herod grows in stature, together with the poem itself, along lines laid down in the first book. His frenzy illustrates what Poinssotte calls the "active" (as opposed to "passive") valence of *furor* in the poem: "la force agissante, maléfique, qui aboutit au déicide."⁶⁴⁴

At the end of it all we look on with John's disciples at the piteous sight of a *truncum* "without a name" (*sine nomine*, 3.68-9), the ultimate assimilation of the Baptist to two of the most famous and ennobled victims of *furor* in Latin epic, Priam and Pompey.⁶⁴⁵ John anticipates Christ as a righteous casualty of bloody-minded madness, and joins a distinguished cast of characters in whose light Herod's darkness is given full definition.⁶⁴⁶ Jesus' emotional reaction to John's death goes beyond the gospel account,⁶⁴⁷ and for a moment it seems as though he imitates Astraea's flight in his grief at the human wickedness exemplified by Herod's terrible deed:

⁶⁴⁴ Poinssotte (1979) 212. On "passive" *furor* in the poem, according to Poinssotte's classification, see below (p. 214).

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. *Aen.* 2.557-8; *Bellum Civile* 8.698-9, 722; 9.53. At 1.685-6 Lucan's *matrona* links Pompey's forlorn *truncus* directly to the *furor* of civil war. See also *Theb.* 5.333, where the unmanned Lemnian population is compared to a forlorn herd of heifers, bereaved of its *regem peremptum: it truncum sine honore pecus* (also a direct result of *furor*). For a more detailed discussion of the Juvenecan allusion see Consolino (2009), who notes (173) that the implied comparison of the three great figures favours John the Baptist. See also McGill (2016) 201.

⁶⁴⁶ Consolino (2009) 164 rightly calls this contrast the "Leitmotiv dell'intero episodio." McGill (2016) 199 points out that the epithet *iustus* at 3.38 "ascribes to John a cardinal Juvenecan virtue." See also the excursus of Flieger (1993) 118-19 devoted to *iustus*.

⁶⁴⁷ Green (2006) 67.

deserit insonti pollutam sanguine terram (3.71).⁶⁴⁸ *Terra* here must of course mean not “the earth” but rather “the land” (as opposed to the water), since in the gospel text Jesus immediately withdraws in a boat “to a desolate place by himself” (Matt. 14:13), but Juvencus mentions neither the boat nor the Sea of Galilee, and Matthew’s desolate place is transformed in the next line to something very like a *locus amoenus*: *frondosaque latet secretae uallis in umbra* (3.72).⁶⁴⁹ Both lines underline the holiness and peace that attend on Christ, to whom the martyred John bore witness, and by implicit contrast the blood-soaked moral morass of Herod’s court.

The whole episode, from Herod’s possession to the death of the Baptist, is steeped in Vergilian colours and testifies to the ebullient spirit of *aemulatio*, its various intertexts assiduously linked by commentators back to the *Aeneid*’s infernal powers and their many epic successors in later poems who suffer and perpetrate the ravages of *furor*.⁶⁵⁰ To take just one example: the seductive dancing of Herodias’ daughter before the lecherous king, with its suggestive *alternos laterum celerans sinuamine motus* (“quickly thrusting her curving hips”),⁶⁵¹ coming as it does directly between the demonic attack on Herod and its result, the execution of John the Baptist, is reminiscent of the effects of Allecto’s infamous attack on Amata (*Aen.* 7.346-8), a passage itself imbued with erotic overtones.⁶⁵² *Sinuamen* (“curvature”) in Juvencus’ line is a

⁶⁴⁸ Compare Ovid *Met.* 1.149-50: *victa iacet pietas, et Virgo caede madentes, | ultima caelestum, terras Astraera reliquit*. Consolino (2009) 172n57 also adduces a biblical parallel for the language of terrestrial miasma (from the Vulgate; the parallel is less clear in the OL) as well as a few other candidates for intertextual resonance from classical poets (172n58).

⁶⁴⁹ McGill (2016) 202.

⁶⁵⁰ The dense sequence of echoes begins with the very first line; McGill (2016) 199 punningly observes that *fama* in line 33 “brings the rumor of classical poetry into his scene.” See also McGill (2016) 200-1; Green (2006) 69; Consolino (2009) 168.

⁶⁵¹ The translation is McGill’s (2016) 75.

⁶⁵² McGill (2016) 200 perceptively observes that the location of Salome’s dance (“in the middle of the dining room” in the gospel) is changed by Juvencus to “among the young men,” which “heightens the sense of her shamelessness; Juvencus makes plain that she danced before a male audience, unlike Matthew.”

verbal amplification, part of a periphrastic expansion on “danced seductively,” but when placed in a context replete with echoes of *Aeneid* 7, the shape and sound of the word (and the movement associated with it) mimic Allecto’s serpentine “in-situation.”⁶⁵³ Whereas in that passage the Fury slips the serpent into Amata’s bosom and her “innermost heart” (*inque sinum praecordia ad intima subdit*),⁶⁵⁴ in Juvencus, as we have seen, just a few lines earlier Herod’s *habitacula cordis* have already been infected by daemonic *amor* (for the girl’s mother) at the instigation of an infernal *pestis*, a word also used of Allecto at *Aen.* 7.505. But as he watches Herodias’ daughter dance the effect is immediate, and he is overthrown all over again: *in primis mirata virginis arte | attonitus stupuit* (3.58-9).⁶⁵⁵ The first element of the formula *attonitus stupuit* (familiar from classical epic) only occurs in Juvencus in contexts where people respond with amazement to Jesus’ miracles and words or other manifestations of the divine,⁶⁵⁶ so we might say that Herod reacts to Salome’s dance as though he has been thunderstruck by some kind of supernatural prodigy—in this case an infernal one which accords exactly, in its effects, with his seizure by the *daemon*. He is rendered powerless to resist her fatal request, though when he hears its terms he gives the order only reluctantly.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵³ *Sinuamen* in fact appears here for the first time in surviving Latin literature; it is used only on a few other occasions by later Christian poets (Thor [2013] 51 and n43).

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. also Ovid’s reworking of the Allecto scene at *Met.* 4.496-8: *at illi [angues] | Inoosque sinus Athamanteosque pererrant | inspirantque graves animas*; and a few lines later, *vergit furiale venenum | pectus in amborum praecordiaque intima movit* (506-7).

⁶⁵⁵ Though the phrase is a variation on an epic commonplace, Juvencus’ usage closely matches the line position in *Punica* 12.252, where it is likewise great beauty that stops Pedianus (a Roman soldier) in his tracks when he gazes on the face of his slain enemy Cinyps, described by Silius as one *quo gratior ora | non fuit ac nulla nituit plus fronte decoris*.

⁶⁵⁶ McGill (2016) 201.

⁶⁵⁷ *aegre*, 65.

Thus Herod and his court again provide a vivid contrast to the ministry of Jesus: at the end of the previous episode in Nazareth only 30 lines earlier—in which the *livor* of the people had also played a role—Christ had been in-sinuating something very different into the hearts of his hearers:

Illic expediens populis (mirabile dictu)
Iustitiae leges uitaeque salubria iussa,
Virtutes patrias simul insinuando docebat.

Disclosing to the crowds there (wonderful to tell)
the laws of righteousness and the commands which quicken life,
he taught his Father's *virtutes* at the same time by imparting them.⁶⁵⁸

It is these very *iustitiae leges* which Herod has recklessly trampled underfoot (3.46), and his possession by the cosmic powers of darkness is a horrifying and hellish inversion of the righteousness which flows out of Christ's teaching and divine healing to take up residence in the hearts of his disciples.

The same word, *insinuare*—rare in classical epic, appearing before Juvencus only once in Vergil and twice in the *Thebaid*⁶⁵⁹—describes the activity of the sower of gospel teaching in the parable of the mustard seed (*insinuans...cultor*, 2.814), and appears again in the Great Commission at the end of the poem, in which Christ commands the disciples to disseminate his precepts into every corner of the globe (*nostra insinuate docentes | praecepta*, 4.798). Salome's undulating *sinuamen*, then, though clearly on one level simply a naturalistic description of a beautiful woman's beguiling movements, may also remind us that the sensual power of her dancing is a kind of terrestrial, carnal counterpart to the spiritual possession of Herod's heart and wits that leads directly to the Baptist's murder, a possession which is in turn an infernal mirror

⁶⁵⁸ On the meaning of *virtutes* here see Flatt (2016) 551.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. *Aen.* 2.229, where it is appropriately used of the *pavor* that slithers into the hearts of the Trojans after the snaky death of Laocoon; see also *Theb.* 5.448, 7.110. By contrast *insinuare* was apparently a favourite of Lucretius, who uses it 29 times and in every book of his poem.

image of the grace wrought by Christ's *vitalia verba* in the breast of the believer. Even the life-giving *munera* of God's son, the "gifts of salvation" held back from the wretched inhabitants of Nazareth by their scornful unbelief (*pressit sua munera Christus*, 3.32), find a gruesome verbal counterpart in the bloody *munera* (3.63) demanded by Herodias' daughter—the head of John the Baptist.⁶⁶⁰ The contrast is absolute, and admits none of the destabilizing moral slippage so characteristic of the classical epics, in which it is frequently difficult to distinguish "good" from "bad" *furor*.

The *munera salutis* are also directly opposed to the *furor* of Satan and his servants elsewhere in the poem, as for example in the episode of the healing of a demon-possessed man living in the region of the Gerasenes.⁶⁶¹ In Juvenius the unfortunate man, who has broken every chain used to bind him, is afflicted in his *mens* by an insidious and terrible power. Enter the humble fishing boat bearing Christ, which arrives on the scene like one of the stately ships of Aeneas' fleet (2.43-50):

Iam Gerasenorum steterat sub litore puppis;
 Ecce sed egresso iuuenis (mirabile dictu)
 Occurrit, miseram cui mentem spiritus ater
 Immunda implebat lacerans uirtute furoris.
 Illi grata domus taetris habitare sepulchris;
 Nec poterat rapidum⁶⁶² quisquam retinere furorem,
 Fortia quin etiam rumpebat uinacula ferri
 Scindebatque graues ut lanea fila catenas.

Now the ship had arrived at the Gerasene coast,
 when suddenly, after Jesus had disembarked, a young man

⁶⁶⁰ On the *munera Christi* in Juvenius see Green (2006) 65 and Flatt (2016) 544 and *passim*.

⁶⁶¹ Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39.

⁶⁶² All the MSS except *C* give *ravidum* (the *lectio facillior*), as noted in Huemer's edition. To my mind *rapidum* yields a less satisfactory sense (perhaps the reason Huemer printed it), and I am not convinced by the arguments of De Wit (1947) 24 from the general quality of *C* and from the notion that *ravidus furor* would have seemed excessively pleonastic to Juvenius. *Rapidus* and *furor* are found together only in one other place in Latin poetry (*Anth. Lat.* 487a.7) but the text is insecure there as well (most MSS give *ravidus*). *Ravidus furor* on the other hand is attested by no less an authority than Catullus (63.38), though admittedly in the same poem he also wrote *rapida...rabies* (44). After Juvenius, *ravidus furor* also appears in Marius Victorius (3.293) and Avitus (3.402).

(amazing to tell) ran up to meet him, whose poor
mind had been filled with the vile power of frenzy
by a black and tormenting spirit.
He made his home in the foul tombs,
and no one could restrain his swift frenzy;
he split even strong iron shackles
and snapped heavy chains as though they were woollen threads.

The remarkable phrase *virtute furoris*—which in any earlier era of Latin poetry would have been a striking oxymoron, a provocative moral inversion worthy of Lucan—here by contrast can only mean “with the (supernatural) power of madness,” in keeping with the semantic growth of *virtus* under the influence of biblical texts to include the special sense of Greek δύναμις found in the LXX (“miraculous power”).⁶⁶³ Things have changed; this kind of *virtus* has little or nothing in common with the Stoic rectitude of Lucan’s Cato (such as it is) or with the martial prowess and moral leadership of Aeneas (such as *it* is), but does coincide almost exactly with the *virtus* ascribed earlier by Herod to John the Baptist and exercised by Christ for the benefit of the blind, the sick, and the lame, for maladies physical and metaphysical. It is spiritual *potentia*, the capacity to liberate (or, as in this passage, oppress) human souls, in accordance with the malevolence of *furor* or the bounty of *fides*. It is the primary weapon used by both sides in the celestial battle between Heaven and Hell played out in the Gospels on which Juvenecus was drawing, though as we will see it is not deployed with equal success by all combatants. The conflict is asymmetrical.

The demoniac, who is well known to the locals to be both *ferus* and *insanus* (2.52, 72), begs Jesus to allow his besetting possessor—“Legion,” actually multiple beings united by *vis sola nocendi*, “a single harmful power” (59)—to depart into a herd of nearby pigs, significantly described as *immundi* (60, “unclean” in multiple senses from a Jewish perspective) and therefore

⁶⁶³ Cf. Flatt (2016) 538.

a fitting habitation for the aforementioned *immunda virtus* of the unclean spirits.⁶⁶⁴ They long to satisfy their *rabies* (61) on some living thing.⁶⁶⁵ With highly marked condescension and total authority, Christ “permits them to make an end of their *furores* among the herds of pigs.”⁶⁶⁶ In any case the result for the demoniac is full enjoyment of the *dona salutis* (66) and the restoration of his *mens* (63, *resipisse* 72). This is one of the ways in which Christ’s mission to heal raging sicknesses (*morbi saevique furores*, 1.445) and lunacy (*lunae cursum comitata insania mentis*, 1.446) is fulfilled. As in Minucius Felix and other Christian writers of an earlier time, Juvencus’ Christ restores *ratio* both to those who suffer from physiological ailments and those preyed upon by the forces of cosmic evil; not uncommonly, they are one and the same. These maladies may be caused by and personified in demonic powers, themselves substantively called *furores* (as at 2.721-2). As far as we know, Juvencus’ poem is the first time that the metonymic use of *furor* for a being who inspires madness, a usage already known among the classical poets, is turned to a Christian purpose.

None of these occurrences of *furor* and *rabies* in Juvencus’ poem are matched by corresponding words in the biblical account. The only direct reference, in fact, to the altered mental state of the demoniac in the gospel story is the shocked onlookers’ observation at Luke 8:35 that the man was now “in his right mind” after Christ’s intervention. In the Vulgate and the OL versions, the Greek NT’s σωφρονοῦντα is rendered by *sana mente* or *sobrium* or *constantem*

⁶⁶⁴ De Wit (1947) 27 notes only the repetition from line 46; McGill (2016) 159 observes the correspondence between 2.60 and *spiritus immundi* in the OL gospel text, but not the repetition in Juvencus or the pun on the dietary laws. On various circumlocutions involving *vis* as periphrases for the Devil, see Thor (2013) 259-60.

⁶⁶⁵ Campagnuolo (1993) 68 merely remarks: “Questo riferimento al furore dei demoni, che in Marco non compare, conferisce maggiore drammaticità al racconto giovenchiano.” See also De Wit (1947) 27.

⁶⁶⁶ Juvencus’ language is somewhat ambiguous here: *imperat his hominis mentem dimittere Christus | porcorumque sinit gregibus finire furores*. De Wit (1947) 28 takes *furores* to be the demons themselves. McGill (2016) 55 translates “Christ...let them spend their fury on the swine.”

mente, but aside from this description (compactly glossed by Juvencus with *resipisse*) the language of *furor* in this passage is entirely the creative exposition of our poet.

The demon-*furores* of the *Evangeliorum Libri* take after their master, whose *furibunda...fallacia* had tested Christ's righteousness in the Temptation in the wilderness (1.398), and they practice the same *furibunda...ars* (2.5). Christ himself dismisses the Prince of Darkness with a rather awkward abstraction as "the frenzied insanity of deadly poison" (*pestiferi rabies vaesana veneni*, 1.404),⁶⁶⁷ as it were an embodiment of serpentine *furor* to rival Tisiphone and the most extreme horrors of the infernal pagan pantheon. Ordinary human beings can become agents of *furor* in Juvencus as well, and not only infamous rulers like Herod or celestial powers. Predicting fierce opposition to the gospel message after his ascension, Christ prophesies that "one brother's accursed madness will betray another" (*prodet enim fratrem scelerata insania fratris*, 2.467) in the midst of persecution,⁶⁶⁸ the *insectatio frendens* predicted in the Beatitudes (1.466). As he sends out his disciples on their first independent missionary journey, he tells them not to fear the *rabies* of all those who will persecute them (2.487) and who can only kill the body, since

non est his ulla potestas
vivacem leto pariter dimittere mentem.
illum sed potius cordis secreta pavescant,
corporis est animique simul cui cuncta potestas.

They have no power
to dispatch the lively mind to death as well.
But let your inmost heart rather fear Him
who has complete power over both body and soul. (2.488-91)

⁶⁶⁷ McGill (2016) 44 nicely preserves Juvencus' alliteration: "Leave, madness, with your virulent venom..." Fichtner (1994) 152 points out that the line is a chiasm and notes several other pagan and Christian uses of *rabies vaesana*. Fichtner's chapter on Juvencus' love of abstraction (158-188)—a device in which the poet delighted far more, seemingly, than most biblical or classical epic poets—helpfully reveals that whereas Juvencus is in general strikingly original in the frequency and breadth of his abstractions, this is less the case with *furor* (among other traditional epic key words: *virtus*, *spes*, *salus*, etc.). These words are among a select group which appears with equal persistence in almost all of the classical comparanda Fichtner adduces.

⁶⁶⁸ McGill (2016) 467: "The language is significantly more vivid and forceful than that in Matt. 10:21."

Juvencus' characterization matches the association of mad frenzy and persecution that had already been made in the third century by Christian authors seeking to explain the intensity of sporadic and violent confrontations between pagan authorities and faithful believers. As in earlier Christian writing, here too the supremacy of earthly antagonists is only apparent; true power is on the side of the seemingly helpless and defenseless Christians. Earlier in the same book, in the episode of the Gerasene demoniac, Juvencus had used the same phrase which appears here (*mentem dimittere*, 2.63) of the moment when Christ compels "Legion" to release the possessed man's mind. A comparison of the lines points up the contrast between the earthly *potestas* of men driven by *rabies*—and even of their more powerful counterparts in the spiritual realm, the demons or *Furores*—and the absolute power (*cuncta potestas*) of the omnipotent Son of God.

It is striking that Juvencus interpolates madness or frenzy into many gospel episodes in which the original Greek and the OL versions give no warrant for such language. In the "brother will betray brother" passage, for example, where the source text mentions no motivating emotions at all, Juvencus inserts a Vergilian phrase (*scelerata insania*) matching the famous scene in *Aeneid* 7 in which Allecto hurls a maddening torch into the breast of Turnus and fires him with a terrifying, frenzied lust for war (461) as all Latium is possessed by sudden *furor*.⁶⁶⁹ The words appear a second time in Juvencus just after Christ's resurrection in the speech of the angel who tells the anxious women the good news: the holy body they are seeking, which was fastened to the cross by *scelerata insania*, has risen again (4.755). It is unusual for Juvencus to

⁶⁶⁹ McGill (2016) 180 registers the intertext (as had De Wit [1947] 105), although his translation ("black rage") narrows the meaning.

use a distinctly Vergilian phrase more than once in his poem; *scelerata insania* is one of only a handful of examples.⁶⁷⁰

Whether or not Juvencus consciously alludes in either case to the *furor* of the *Aeneid* or simply obeys a learned poetic reflex, the words themselves seem irresistibly to link Christ's prophecy of persecution for his followers with the fierce persecution that apparently triumphed in his own crucifixion. They naturally form a bridge between both scenes and the pivotal triumph of madness in Vergil's poem: the descent of Turnus into the tragic frenzy which would set ablaze all Latium and result not only in his own death, but also in Aeneas' *furor* in the *Aeneid*'s final scene. In both Juvencan passages, *insania* is a foreign intrusion into the gospel narrative that nevertheless manages to represent faithfully not only the spirit of the New Testament story, but also the pathology of Roman epic discord. In miniature, as it were, it shows us both the traditional bent of biblical epic and its radical revisionism. *Insania* brings the greatest of stories to its great climax, which proclaims not the disquieting *aporia* of evanescent human empire but the eternal victory of Heaven over Hell, of life over death. *Furor* dominates the powerful finales of both tales, but in the latter this serves only to underline its utter failure in the face of the cosmic victory drawn out of immense suffering by divine love. Juvencus redeems the tradition.

Scelerata insania is of course only a single phrase, and need not bear the whole weight of these implications. The theological texture of the poem furnishes support elsewhere as well. In addition to the *furor* and *feritas* of Juvencus' Herod(s) and of the hostile infernal powers, the poem describes as a kind of madness the most extreme manifestation of the sin that is innate, according to a biblical view, in the fallen nature of all human beings. Of this sin and its effects, however, the Jews are the example *par excellence* in Juvencus' poem. This has prompted some

⁶⁷⁰ Green (2006) 54n253. McGill (2016) 270 also notes the repetition. Interestingly, none of Vergil's epic successors use the *iunctura* at all.

scholars to level detailed charges of extreme anti-Semitism.⁶⁷¹ On thorough examination the evidence does not seem to support such charges; there is no systematic exclusion or vilification of all things Jewish, Juvenecus applies similar language to other nations (though admittedly he seems to favour the Romans—see below), and most importantly, there are nearly always other possibilities which explain more compellingly his thematic choices. This is not to say of course that the Jewish leaders do not come off very badly in the narrative, as they do in the gospels themselves, and it seems unlikely that Juvenecus viewed the Jews of his own time with admiration (to put it mildly). But the evidence is lacking for animus beyond what was common among Christians of his time, and for anti-Semitism as a more central motive in the composition of his poem than the impulse to epicize or fidelity to the biblical source material. There were additional reasons to emphasize the Jewish leaders’ wickedness besides faithfulness to scripture.⁶⁷² Stronger villains make for a better story, and what could be better in a villain (or group of villains) than the potent and influential *furor* familiar to everyone from the most famous of all Roman narratives, Vergil’s *Aeneid*?

In Juvenecus’ rendering of Christ’s discourse about the unforgiveable sin, we find *furor* tightly integrated into the poem’s definition of the ultimate blasphemy, the stubborn unbelief that brings souls under final condemnation (2.624-36):

tantum ne Spiritus umquam
 vocibus *insana* laceretur mente profusis.
 sive *furens* hominis nato convicia quisquam
 ingeret, haec etiam poterunt peccata remitti.

⁶⁷¹ Poinsette (1979) argues this case most forcefully; see also Orbán (1992) and Hilhorst (1993). The detailed counter-arguments in Green (2006) 103-12, to which I am indebted in this paragraph, are convincing. Green’s conclusion (112) is that “as adversaries of Christ [the Jews] receive a severe judgement, heightened as often happens in Juvenecus with a typically vehement array of adjectives in a typically dramatized presentation, but Juvenecus does not abandon or modify his policy of substantial fidelity to the gospel accounts.”

⁶⁷² McGill (2016) 21. But McGill also points out that “these [literary] concerns and an anti-Jewish attitude are not mutually exclusive, and Juvenecus likely reflected broader thinking about Jewish ugliness and Jewish guilt surrounding the death of Jesus.” Poinsette (1979) 29n83 in fact acknowledges this as well.

Spiritus at sanctus tantum cuicumque profana
 verborum *rabie* violabitur, irrevocatis
 suppliciiis nunc et semper torrebitur ignis.
 quando veneniferi serpentis saeva propago
 sermonum dulci poterit mitescere fructu?
 nam bona thesauris promuntur dulcia iustis
 et mala letifero procedunt ore venena.
 verborum meritis veniet sub iudice poena,
 verborum meritis dabitur sub iudice vita.

Only let the Spirit never be slandered by a crazed mind
 in extreme language; if some madman should hurl
 insults at the Son of Man, even these sins can be forgiven.
 But the one by whom the Holy Spirit is profaned
 in an impious frenzy of words, he will be consumed
 now and forever by the irrevocable torments of fire.
 When will the cruel offspring of the venomous serpent
 be tamed by the sweet fruit of speech?
 For things good and sweet are produced from righteous hoards;
 things evil and poisonous flow from deadly lips.
 Those whose words deserve it will meet with punishment from the judge;
 Those whose words deserve it will receive life from the judge.

Christ here rebukes and warns the Jewish leaders (in this case Pharisees), whose response to his healing of another possessed man was to claim that he overcame the demon's *horrida virtus* (2.602) only by the power of the prince of demons. Condemning Jesus himself is one thing; profaning the Holy Spirit of God by refusing to believe that He is at work in Christ, and by attributing His work to Satan is another. This act can only be explained as *rabies*, *insania*, and *furor*, “madness” and not merely hatred or rage;⁶⁷³ later at 3.172 Juvencus adds the description *rabidae caelum pulsans vaesania vocis*.⁶⁷⁴ Here Juvencus has Christ turn the tables and reverse the accusation: the slanderous Pharisees (in the NT a “brood of vipers,” γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν; VLG. and OL. *progenies viperarum*) are the offspring not merely of serpents but of *the* serpent

⁶⁷³ McGill (2016) 187 says the scene “pits Jesus and the Holy Spirit in a struggle against the forces of wild irrationality.”

⁶⁷⁴ On Juvencus’ avoidance of the word *blasphemo* in these passages, see Green (2006) 102-3.

(sg.), the Devil himself, the prince of demons with whom they had just linked him.⁶⁷⁵ The Jews “are not—or are not merely—*like* Satan; they carry him around within themselves.”⁶⁷⁶

In their persistent unbelief, so much the more grievous because they had been “roaring for a sign” (*poscens signum...fremebat*, 1.163), the Jewish leaders provoke more *furor*-language in Juvencus’ poem than any other individual or group, including the powers of Hell with whom the poet implicitly aligns them.⁶⁷⁷ Much of it occurs in the fourth book, in which Christ’s ministry culminates in his crucifixion, but traces appear throughout.⁶⁷⁸ The Jews of the *Evangeliorum Libri* seem to have something in common with their characterization in the letter of Constantine quoted in the last chapter, in which they are accused of *innatus furor* (at least since the crucifixion). In Juvencus they are heirs to a more ancient heritage of *rabies*, the madness of their ancestors which prompted them to slaughter God’s prophets, as recapitulated in the parable of the tenants (3.720).⁶⁷⁹ The idea of intergenerational Jewish rebellion comes from the gospels themselves, but the language of madness and frenzy is supplied by the conceptual worlds of classical epic and early Christian polemic.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁵ McGill (2016) 188 also notices the switch to the singular. Juvencus is probably thinking of John 8:44, where Christ tells a group of Pharisees that their collective father is not Abraham but the Devil (Poinsotte [1979] 231).

⁶⁷⁶ Poinsotte (1979) 231.

⁶⁷⁷ See the table in Poinsotte (1979) 233-4 which collects verbal parallels between Juvencus’ portrayal of Satan and of the Jews (particularly the Pharisees and Sadducees).

⁶⁷⁸ McGill (2016) 260.

⁶⁷⁹ The reflection of Jewish *furor* in this parable and in that of the foolish virgins (see below) is also discussed by Poinsotte (1979) 234-5.

⁶⁸⁰ McGill (2016) 232 notes that Juvencus here “increases the force and amount of the tenants’ violence, which he describes with *rabies* (rage). His language gives the scene an epic cast.” Bauer (1999) records the debt to Christian polemic in his commentary on 3.291-2.

Throughout the poem, the Jewish leaders are repeatedly described disparagingly as a *factio* or “sect,”⁶⁸¹ one which hypocritically condemns the righteous (2.580), doubts true miracles (2.606), confuses the faithful (3.344), criticizes the people for rejoicing over healings (3.645), fails to answer theological challenges (3.689) but tries anyway to trick Christ into a foolish reply (4.1), devises cruel torments (4.510), and taunts the Messiah on the cross with *loquellae...insanae* (4.675-7); it is *caeca, fallax, frendens, maculata, and demens*.⁶⁸² Obliquely, they are also implicated with the *damnata factio* which will be convicted of *feritas* and condemned at the judgment for withholding their compassion from “the least of these” (4.294, 301), and contrasted with the *prudens factio*, the alert company of faithful servants, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (4.219). In Juvencus *factio* does not distinguish Sadducees from Pharisees, or scribes from priests; it often lumps all the various Jewish authorities together, their disagreements notwithstanding, as *proceres* (3.691).⁶⁸³ One of Juvencus’ more blistering verbal denunciations is provoked by the infamous lie, spread by soldiers bribed for the purpose by the high priest’s court, that Christ’s disciples had stolen their master’s body from the grave under cover of darkness and concocted the false story of his resurrection. The Jewish leaders are described as a “demented gang / now utterly dedicated, once for all, to mad frenzy” (*manus amens | iam semel insano penitus devota furori*, 4.778-9).⁶⁸⁴

When Jesus predicts his own death and resurrection, he explains that he will suffer in Jerusalem at the hands of *rabies cum prona furore* (3.291), “frenzy together with eager (?)

⁶⁸¹ On this *factio* and its connection to the *furor Iudaicus* see also Poinssotte (1979) 179-83.

⁶⁸² 2.606; 3.689; 4.1; 4.510; 4.675. See the note of McGill (2016) on 2.579-80.

⁶⁸³ McGill (2016) 263. See also the table in Poinssotte (1979) 190 illustrating the different groups covered by *proceres, factio*, and other such terms in Juvencus.

⁶⁸⁴ McGill (2016) 270: “The emphasis on the madness of the ‘band’ (*manus*) is Juvencan, not Matthean.”

fury,”⁶⁸⁵ equated later in the book with the *rabies...caeca furoris* that spilled the blood of John the Baptist (3.350-1).⁶⁸⁶ The pairing is from Mark, where “the Son of Man will be treated with contempt,” just as in John’s case “they did to him whatever they pleased” (9:12-13), but the ascription of motivation and emotion is once again entirely Juvencus’.⁶⁸⁷ *Caeca* reinforces the impression that we are dealing here with the *caecitas mentis* of theological error or “soul-blindness,” as described by the early Fathers and informed by a *topos* familiar from both classical and biblical sources.⁶⁸⁸ Poinsothe calls this the “passive” valence of *furor*: “la force de résistance, la cécité spirituelle,”⁶⁸⁹ though it is hard to see how there is not both an active and a passive aspect to Jewish *furor* in many places. The Jews do not recognize Christ because they do not have eyes to see—Juvencus’ Nicodemus seems to be the prime example of their inability to grasp spiritual realities⁶⁹⁰—just as Herod failed to understand John’s significance (*ignotum*, 3.350), and their resulting savagery provokes the heedless “active” *furor* of the people, who ultimately share in the spiritual blindness of their leaders.

In Book 4, the Jewish leaders themselves are ironically deflected from their preferred course of action (abducting Jesus during the Passover feast and doing away with him quietly) by fear of the people’s *furor*: they refrain lest *plebe frequenti / discordes populi raperent in bella furorem* (4.407-8); the Vulgate and OL versions simply say *ne tumultus fieret in populo*.⁶⁹¹ The

⁶⁸⁵ The text is difficult here; one 8th cen. MS glosses *prona* with “*vesana*” in the margin.

⁶⁸⁶ McGill (2016) 212: “The pleonastic combination of *rabies* and *furor*...is poetic and intensifying.”

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. McGill (2016) 215.

⁶⁸⁸ On blindness/darkness as a key characteristics of the opposition to Jesus, see Röttger (1996) 105-6.

⁶⁸⁹ Poinsothe (1979) 212.

⁶⁹⁰ So Poinsothe (1979) 212-19.

⁶⁹¹ On the role and meaning of the *populus* in Juvencus see Poinsothe (1979) 197-204.

people's unstable temper threatens to break out, if goaded, into a towering wrath spilling over into armed insurrection—presumably against the Romans, who would quickly be drawn into any civil disturbance, even one provoked by the treachery of the people's own religious leaders. The popular *furor* dreaded by the high priest and his entourage is the same kind of seething *sedition* vividly portrayed by the famous first simile of the *Aeneid*, and represents a competing source of disorder which threatens to derail the insidious plan of the Jewish aristocrats. It is the only place in the poem where the word stands for something like political rebellion in the traditional epic fashion.

As it happens, however, the potential menace of the people's *furor* will be redirected, not against their leaders in seditious wrath, but against Christ on the cross, as a symptom of the tragic spiritual blindness that unites them with the very religious authorities who had earlier feared their displeasure. When Juvencus' Christ is arrested, the hostility of the leaders and of the people unites in the treachery of their chosen instrument, Judas Iscariot, who *advenit procerum iussu populique ferocis* (4.512).⁶⁹² The case eventually comes before Pilate, but the people are inflamed (*incendit*, 4.611) by the influence of the *proceres*, and the Jewish leaders use the crowd (now *incensa malo*, 614) to foment the very *saevi tumultus* which had earlier threatened to thwart their purpose. Pilate, failing to calm the crowd, simply crumbles before the resulting pressure; like a parody of the nameless statesman in the *Aeneid*'s first simile, he caves to the mob to avoid open violence. The diabolical unity of the authorities and the people continues at 4.668-9, when the *caeca vesania* of the *furens plebs* taunts Christ with his apparent powerlessness on the cross; immediately afterward the *proceres* are said to “follow up these words of the crazed mob” with

⁶⁹² McGill (2016) 259: “By eliminating the reference to the elders [in the gospel account], Juvencus indicates that the order to arrest Jesus came directly from the people, who are stirred up to pursue mob justice. With ‘savage,’ Juvencus characterizes Jesus’ Jewish tormenters by their cruelty and rage, as he soon does Judas (4.515).”

their own insults (*haec vulgi proceres vaecordis dicta sequuntur*, 674),⁶⁹³ and a little later at 4.697 a *turba* (also called *plebes*, 693) gives proof that it is *firens* by mocking Christ in his final hour, wondering idly if Elijah will save him after all.

Nevertheless, even after the crucifixion, the Jewish authorities fear that the “wild recklessness” (*fera...audacia*, 4.737) of the disciples will steal away the body and that this will encourage “a fresh outbreak of madness” (*recens insania*) among the *plebs* (738).⁶⁹⁴ From the perspective of the Pharisees and scribes, then, the prospect of *furor* among their highly unreliable allies—the fickle mob—is not merely excessive anger over a popular teacher, but actually the subversion of *ratio*. How could a dead man rise? Even when addressing the cynical Pilate with a calculated appeal to his concern for political stability, they pass a theological judgment on the spiritual insanity of Christ’s actual and potential disciples. Two rival discourses about the *furor* of the Jewish people are thus advanced in the poem, though only one is affirmed by the poet: to the Sanhedrin, those sympathetic to Christ must obviously be crazy; to Juvencus, those who reject him have willfully blinded their reason. The turbulent vacillation of the *plebs* supplies both sides with confirmation of their views, but the gospel text and the narrator’s unabashedly partisan retelling ensure the supremacy of the latter perspective. Still, the subjective nature of *insania* emerges clearly, and in this respect Juvencus’ portrayal of *furor* rings true: in the eyes of the deranged, no one but the mad are sane.

Before the crucifixion scene, when Christ is first arrested and brought before the high priest, Juvencus tells us that no false witness, even from among those fraudulently produced by

⁶⁹³ McGill (2016) 266 notes this is yet another example of “vivid amplification” and that “once more, Juvencus highlights the insanity of Jesus’ abusers.”

⁶⁹⁴ McGill (2016) 269 takes *recens* in its preterite sense (“rage / that recently arose”), but to me the reference seems rather to look forward to a feared renewal of Christ’s popularity.

Christ's accusers, can fully satisfy the extreme *furor* of Caiaphas' court (*nullus tanto visus satis esse furori*, 4.545).⁶⁹⁵ The ruler of the Sanhedrin himself occasions the only two appearances of *furia* in the entire poem, reserved, as it were, for the very climax of injustice:⁶⁹⁶ when he hears from the final witness the confused testimony that Christ had threatened to destroy the temple and raise it up again in three days, Caiaphas is infuriated by Jesus' refusal to respond to the charges and gnashes his teeth in rage like a beast (*frendens furiis*, 4.550).⁶⁹⁷ Christ finally does answer, prophesying that they will all see him seated at the right hand of God, and at this apparent blasphemy the high priest rends his sacred garments in an ecstasy of indignation, *exsultans furiis*, and replies with a *caecum cor* (4.562-4):⁶⁹⁸

“Audistis pugnantis foeda profani
verba Deo; polluta magis consurgat in iras
religio et vestram cuncti iam pandite mentem.”

“You have heard the obscene words
of the impious enemy of God;
let our defiled religion now arise in wrath
and declare your verdict, all of you!”

The lines are exquisitely ironic, for the high priest speaks much more truly than he knows. Christ says as much in Matthew, when Caiaphas asks whether or not he is the Messiah; the answer in the gospel is “you have said so” (Grk. *σὺ εἶπας*; VLG. and OL. *tu dixisti*), but in Juvenecus Christ rounds on him sharply: “Those are the only true words to emerge from your mind,” (*istaec sola*

⁶⁹⁵ Flieger (1993) 144 points out that this line can be understood in two senses; it may mean that the false witnesses are insufficient to satisfy the Sanhedrin's desire for evidence against Christ, or it may gesture proleptically toward their need to crucify rather than merely try him. Flieger inclines to the latter (rightly, I think).

⁶⁹⁶ Flieger (1993) 183. Cf. Poinssotte (1979) 169n626, who says that Caiaphas “incarne et exprime toute la violence et tout l'aveuglement du *furor Iudaicus*.”

⁶⁹⁷ Jerome will also represent Caiaphas as acting *furore superatus* (Flieger [1993] 154). On teeth-gnashing and *frendens* as a topos drawn partly from classical epic and partly from the *Vetus Latina*, see again Poinssotte (1979) 169n625 and Flieger (1993) 154-5.

⁶⁹⁸ Flieger (1993) 181 here remarks on Juvenecus' innovative exploration of the inner psychological state of Caiaphas, in contrast to the external perspective of the Gospels.

tibi procedunt pectore verba | vera tuo, 4.556-7). The rebuke seems to apply to the rest of the high priest's speeches in this scene as well, as enhanced by the poet. Caiaphas' *religio* really is *polluta*, not by Christ's blasphemy but by his own; it is he and his partisans who spoke with *profana...rabies* (2.628-9 above) against the Spirit of God working in Christ—the unforgivable sin.⁶⁹⁹ And as Juvencus pointedly observes after the crucifixion (the gospels do not), even the most famous of the Mosaic laws, the obligation strictly to observe the Sabbath that the Pharisees themselves enforced so harshly, is cynically violated by the Jewish leaders when their spiteful *furor* impels them to seek out Pilate on the seventh day (4.728-9). In the passage above the words *vestram cuncti iam pandite mentem*, a curious periphrasis for “give your opinion,”⁷⁰⁰ seemingly appeal for a verdict not only to the Sanhedrin, but also to Juvencus' readers: who is the real “impious enemy of God,” whose own words convict him? Christ, or his hypocritical judge?

Caiaphas clearly sees his own reaction to Jesus as righteous *ira*, which he invites his court to share (*consurgat in iras*, 563), but it is Juvencus who both introduces and condemns his speech as emanating from a *caecum cor*. His *furor* is not simply rage or overblown hostility; it is the disordered frenzy of a heart plunged into darkness by spiritual obstinacy.⁷⁰¹ The man is overwhelmed by *furiae*: not the Stygian Furies, or even the demons of Hell, but the mad passions of his own soul. The phrase *exsultans furiis* (“reveling in his mad fury”)⁷⁰² suggests a kind of

⁶⁹⁹ Flieger (1993) 185, 189 also juxtaposes these two texts and notes the blurring between the rage of blasphemy and Caiaphas' emotions.

⁷⁰⁰ McGill (2016) 106 translates, “reveal your thoughts!”

⁷⁰¹ See Flieger (1993) 186 on *furor* as a combination of *Wut und/oder Wahnsinn*. Röttger (1996) 104-5 notes that *caecare/caecus* often indicates both blindness and darkness.

⁷⁰² McGill (2016) 106 translates “awash in rage and blind emotion.” It is possible that Juvencus means us to imagine the High Priest “leaping up (*exsultans*) in his mad fury,” i.e. springing from his throne in outrage (corresponding to *exsurgens* in the VL for Mark 14:60), but this is not mutually exclusive of a glimpse into Caiaphas' mental state (i.e.

voluntary passivity. It is as though he takes dark delight in surrendering to the ruinous mastery of his disordered passions.

Judas, for his part, is a more ambiguous character. On the one hand, his decision to betray Christ reveals him to be *amens* (4.422), on account at least partly of his greed,⁷⁰³ and the unwitting disciples wonder at the Last Supper who Jesus can be talking about when he predicts that he will be betrayed by one of their own number acting out of a *scelerato corde* (4.435); who could have swallowed such “poison” (*tantum venenum*), they ask, at the instigation of an *insano corde* (437)?⁷⁰⁴ For Christ and his disciples, sin and madness are inseparable here; no one in his right mind could betray the Son of God, with whom he had laboured in ministry for years, and the act is evidence of profound depravity. When at length the temple guards come to arrest Christ at Judas’ direction, Juvencus gives him the forboding epithet *furens* (4.514)—not in order that the reader might imagine him “fuming with rage,” but as a commentary on his spiritual character.⁷⁰⁵ In Poinssotte’s terms he embodies the passive *furor Iudaicus*⁷⁰⁶ at the same time as he foreshadows its imminently active violence. This is perhaps subtly emphasized by the parallel order of *furor*-words which characterizes both Judas and the Jewish leaders who later suborn the troops guarding Jesus’ tomb: Judas is *amens* (422), has a *cor insanum* (437), and is described as

“exulting”). The word admits both senses; cf. *OLD* s.v. Poinssotte (1979) 169n626 makes the same observation: “s’agit-il d’un bond, ou d’un simple tressaillement de l’âme? Il y a, en elle, à la fois de la fureur et la sombre joie du triomphe.” Poinssotte goes on to catalogue classical examples of *exultatio* as a symptom of *furor* and a manifestation of intense joy.

⁷⁰³ McGill (2016) 254.

⁷⁰⁴ On the language of “poisoning” see Thraede (2001) 903-4.

⁷⁰⁵ Flieger (1993) 108: “Iuvencus beschreibt damit [*furens*] den Charakter des Judas, man wird ihn sich hier kaum wutschnaubend vorzustellen haben.”

⁷⁰⁶ Poinssotte (1979) 220 points out that Judas may in many ways stand synecdochically for the whole Jewish people: “Chez nul autre, la puissance du *furor Iudaicus* n’apparaît avec plus d’éclat, et c’est avec son intervention que le déicide proprement dit se déclenche.” *Paranomasia* on *Iudas* and *Iudaeus* was common in late antiquity (220n844).

furens (4.514), just as the priestly court forms a *manus amens* (778) devoted to *insanus...furor* (779).⁷⁰⁷

A hundred lines later and immediately before he takes his own life, however, as he “condemns his own deeds with genuine lamentation” (*veris damnans sua gesta querellis*) he is called *infelix* (4.628), the traditional expression reserved in epic for objects not only of the poet’s dismay but also of his special pity.⁷⁰⁸ Alone of all the frenzied characters in the *Evangeliorum Libri*, he recognizes his own madness in a moment of clarity (*postquam se talia cernit | accepto sceleris pretio signasse furem*, 4.626-7)—but unlike Lucan’s Vulteius, in the extremity of his despair he does not attempt to make a *virtus* of necessity. In the gospels only Matthew tells the story of Judas’ death, which relates that after Gethsamene he was “seized with regret” (or perhaps “changed his mind”; Grk μεταμεληθεῖς, VLG. and OL. *paenitentia ductus*) and confessed that he had sinned (OL. *peccavi*). Juvencus’ version goes further in portraying him in tragic colours as a victim of *furor* as well as its agent, regaining his spiritual “sight”—but in no sense obtaining redemption—only when it is too late.⁷⁰⁹ In general, however, willing agents of *furor* in Juvencus, though they suffer for their madness either within or beyond the limits of the narrative, receive little of the magnificently melancholic sympathy for which Vergil’s poetry is celebrated. Or perhaps this is taking things the wrong way around: perhaps it should seem all the more remarkable that in the intensely didactic tale Juvencus tells, from which stark moral lessons

⁷⁰⁷ Poinssotte (1979) 224. Admittedly the distance between each of the three lines describing Judas makes it seem unlikely that most readers would notice such patterning when they encounter it again in the lines about the troops. On the other hand, Poinssotte also points out that *amens* occurs only in these two places in Juvencus, and that in no other passages of Book 4 do these three words (*amens, insanus, furens/furor*) appear in association.

⁷⁰⁸ Green (2006) 68 and n302. Cf. Flieger (1993) 125: “Judas ist also wahnsinnig und rasend, infolge seiner Tat unglücklich und bemitleidenswert.”

⁷⁰⁹ Poinssotte (1979) 223n859 rightly observes that for Juvencus, Judas, like Nicodemus, cannot spiritually evolve and remains a Jew “*in aeternum*.”

are explicitly meant to be drawn, a brief moment of tragic grandeur is allowed to temper the sharp edge of moral commentary.

The Roman soldiers who crucify Christ are also comprehended by Juvencus' *furor* theme, though far less prominently than the Jewish authorities. The generalized *miles* (actually a group of legionaries) who mocks and beats Christ is called *demens* (4.650), though not much is said about the soldiers' emotions or motives. He and his compatriots are never explicitly called Romans, however, and it has been noticed⁷¹⁰ that in Juvencus' narrative it is not immediately clear (as it is in Matthew) that the soldiers are the governor's. When a few lines later at Golgotha "they" (no subject is expressed) offer Jesus wine mixed with gall, it is interpreted in universal terms by Juvencus, independently of his biblical source, as the *insultans hominum furor*, the "scoffing frenzy of men" (4.661). This treatment fits the generally favourable profile of the Romans in the poem as a whole: Pilate, for instance, surely benefits from Juvencan partiality as he "loathes the bloody duty [of ordering Christ's crucifixion]" (4.618) and passively, guilelessly suffers himself to be manipulated by "the laws" (599) and the hostile crowd.⁷¹¹ It is a remarkable irony that a poem which incurs such significant debts to the crowning imaginative achievements of Roman culture—the Latin epics—and which encodes so thoroughly the *habitus* of elite Romans, makes so little explicit reference to Rome and its empire, even when this would be amply justified by the source text.

Despite the "verbal battle" waged between Christ and his Jewish opponents (particularly the Pharisees and scribes) in Juvencus and moments of martial colouring in the climactic

⁷¹⁰ By Poinssotte (1979) 134-5, cited and discussed by Green (2006) 111.

⁷¹¹ Green (2006) 111.

narrative of Jesus' death and resurrection,⁷¹² the *furor* of battle-frenzy is entirely absent from the poem. The obvious reason is that the biblical account has little to say of war and the warrior's rage, and it is difficult to imagine how Juvencus could have imitated (say) the animal similes so prevalent in scenes featuring martial *furor* from classical epic without straying too far from his scriptural model.⁷¹³ Our poet does however find opportunities to include other senses of the word which do not at first seem to be required by the gospel text. The traditional epic *furor* of nature, for instance, makes a few appearances in the *Evangeliorum Libri*. In Juvencus' retelling of the storm scene on the sea of Galilee, the disciples' humble fishing vessel is nearly overwhelmed by *rabidi...montes* (2.29), in close imitation of the *furor* of the storm at sea in *Aeneid* 1.⁷¹⁴ Later, when the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign and he rebukes them for their blindness, since they know well enough how to interpret the "signs" of terrestrial weather but not the equally obvious signs of God's dealings with Israel, he gives as an example the *ventorum rabiem tempestatumque furores* (3.230), words which echo Neptune's description of sea-storms at *Aen.* 5.801-2.⁷¹⁵ Christ refuses to grant any sign to a "wicked and adulterous generation," and the subtext of the sharp exchange is impending judgment on the treacherous religious leaders (*fallaces*, 231) for their unbelief. It is not *serenum* (226) or "fair weather" that they can expect in the times to come, but the hurricane of God's wrath, here symbolically anticipated by the *rabies* and *furor* of the storm.

⁷¹² Green (2006) 68.

⁷¹³ McGill (2016) 12 observes that the epic simile "is almost entirely missing" from Juvencus' work in any case. This is not the only omission: "there are no battle narratives, no ecphrases, no catalogues, no katabasis, no inset retrospective narrative, and, naturally enough, no Olympian divine machinery" (13).

⁷¹⁴ On the storm scene and its epic texture see Green (2006) 61-2; McGill (2016) 156-7.

⁷¹⁵ *saepe furores | compressi et rabiem tantam caelique marisque*, cited in Green (2006) 54. McGill (2016) 209 notes that Statius, *Theb.* 7.810 (*ventorum rabiem et clausum eiecere furorem*) may be the more proximate model, though the context there (the earth opening to swallow Amphiaraus) is not so analogous.

A similar dynamic also seems to be at work when Christ is instructing his disciples about his future return at the Judgment. In the gospel account the day of his coming will be just like the days of Noah, when the flood caught heedless sinners unaware (Matt. 24:36-44). In Juvencus' version, however, Noah is not mentioned, and it is the flood itself and the cosmic upheaval accompanying the end of days which take center stage. The day and time are known only to the Father, *qui sidera torquet* (4.164); after opening on this appropriately celestial note, Juvencus tells us that just as the *violentia* of the *undae furentes* swept everything away, so shall it be again—with flame instead of water—when Christ returns to judge the quick and the dead (4.165-9).⁷¹⁶ Thus the *furor* of nature is again closely related to divine judgment, and though no trace of *furor* as a synonym for the wrath of God appears in the *Evangeliorum Libri*, the indirect association of meteorological or even cosmic tumult with righteous vengeance follows the pattern established in Christian poetry much earlier by Commodian and the anonymous *De Iona*.⁷¹⁷

The absence in Juvencus' poem of *furor Dei*, expressed in those terms, calls for comment. Though we cannot plot anything like a precise chronology of the development of the OL biblical texts, the latter half of the fourth century (and in particular the lifetime of Augustine) provides a *terminus ante quem* for the use of *furor* for the wrath of God in Latin biblical translations. Given the general conservatism and likely antiquity of the tradition, however, it seems a safe bet that even many decades earlier, Juvencus would have encountered the peculiar semantics of OL *furor* in copies that were circulating in his day (we cannot say exactly which family of OL texts he

⁷¹⁶ McGill (2016) 244 notes the omission of Noah and how Juvencus “emphasizes the violence of the flood in ways not found in Matthew.”

⁷¹⁷ See pp. 162-3 above. McGill (2016) 157 in fact records one place in which Juvencus' language is very similar to a line of Commodian (in the storm on the sea of Galilee). It is difficult to say, though, whether or how well Juvencus might have known Commodian's work.

consulted).⁷¹⁸ Why didn't he imitate their diction? One likely reason is his choice of the gospels as the object of his epic *ornamenta*: as we have seen, *furor* seems to have been very rare in the pre-Vulgate New Testament as a whole, and of those NT passages that do occasion a use of *furor* in the OL, none appear in Juvencus' poem. So his source text will have exerted little or no pressure toward such a usage. It also seems unlikely that a desire to avoid semantic Christianisms *per se* is at play. Though there are a number of familiar and metrically-compatible Christian words that Juvencus seems to avoid, no consistent pattern is apparent in the *Evangeliorum Libri*.⁷¹⁹ It is not as though the wrath of the Lord is extraneous to many of the episodes and teachings related by the poet. Had he wished to expatiate on God's judgment in terms of *furor*, his poem provided multiple opportunities.

The simplest explanation is that Juvencus, adapting the *furor* theme of classical epic for his own purposes, avoids language that might have seemed to both pagan and Christian Romans to align the God of the gospels with the tradition of disquieting celestial *ira* represented by Vergil's Juno and her later iterations.⁷²⁰ If Juvencus' primary reason for writing was "to address the problem raised some twenty years earlier by Lactantius, that scripture lacked credibility among the cultured and the powerful because of its plain style,"⁷²¹ that purpose may have been of decisive importance for his avoidance of the *furor Dei* as well. As Augustine illustrated for us in

⁷¹⁸ For summaries of the problems see Roberts (2007) 66-7 and Green (2006) 389-90. On this question see also Orbán (1995), Heinsdorff (2003) 339-480, and Thor (2013) 269-70.

⁷¹⁹ Green (2006) 98-103.

⁷²⁰ I follow McGill (2016) 23-24 in believing that Juvencus intended his poem to be "a text that could hold cultured pagan attention," as well as edify and entertain Christian readers. Cf. Roberts (2007) 66: "[Juvencus] wrote to awake interest rather than achieve conversion...and for the benefit of those who might have been deterred by the language of the Latin gospels."

⁷²¹ McGill (2016) 23. This seems to be the consensus view; see e.g. Kartschoke (1975) 26-7, Roberts (2004) 47, Gärtner (2004) 436, Green (2006) 128-9, Vessey (2007), Sandness (2011) 63, Thor (2013) 17.

the last chapter, when the word was used this way it could grate on educated ears, even among sympathetic interpreters.⁷²² How then would it sound to curious pagans who knew little about the Christian gospel, or for that matter to more skeptical readers? In order perhaps to sustain the strongest possible contrast between the partisans of Heaven and of Hell, Juvencus avoids any manifestation of the “good” or homeopathic *furor* which appears occasionally in earlier Latin epic; *furor* is the exclusive attribute of the powers ranged against the Kingdom of God.⁷²³ The characteristic ambiguity of classical *furor* as a potent weapon in the arsenal of both supernal and infernal kingdoms thus gives way to a purer and more straightforwardly satisfying cosmic conflict, in which the opposing sides are sharply differentiated and the ultimate issue beyond all doubt. In this respect Juvencus differs radically from Vergil and his successors and fashions a genuinely new kind of epic *furor*, one which is perhaps less to the taste of (post-)modern literary critics but preeminently suited to the spirit of his age. His poem is unlike all the other epics examined in this study so far, simply because “there will never be ‘pessimistic’ readers of the *Evangeliorum Libri* as there are of the *Aeneid*, no interpreters who find in the poem a private voice questioning Christian ideology and registering the costs of the religion or its historical mission. Juvencus wrote as a true believer.”⁷²⁴

No doubt the exigencies of paraphrase and amplification could be adduced to explain many (though certainly not all) appearances of *furor* and its verbal cluster in the poem,⁷²⁵ but the priorities of *variatio*, theological edification, and aesthetic *aemulatio* with the poets of the

⁷²² Poinsothe (1979) 170 suggests that the *leitmotif* of *furor* implies “une sorte d’équivalence entre *Iudaei* et *furor Iudaicus*.”

⁷²³ Cf. Flieger (1993) 186.

⁷²⁴ McGill (2016) 19.

⁷²⁵ But cf. Poinsothe (1979) 170, who suggests that many uses of *furor* in the poem cannot be considered merely to be “périphrases banales.”

classical epic tradition are not mutually exclusive.⁷²⁶ Juvencus adventurously deploys the language of cosmic disorder familiar from classical epic to give novel expression to a Christian theology of evil that, though it superficially resembles the conceptual world of pagan epic, imagines a very differently-balanced universe; though one may claim a dualistic *aspect* for Juvencus' poem, "it does not of course partake of a foundational dualism."⁷²⁷ The poet goes beyond both traditions and synthesizes a new, composite epic cosmos in which a distinctly Roman Christianity—or, viewed from the other end, a distinctly Christian *Romanitas*—frames the complexities of human life and divine justice. As in classical epic and the writings of the early Church Fathers, *furor* and its associated cluster (which Juvencus exploits to the full)⁷²⁸ collects a coordinated set of meanings that combine to suggest verbal doctrines, the word's inner grammar according to Juvencus. Spiritual stubbornness is the root of true madness, and the superficial rationality of those who reject Christ is merely the fig-leaf for a profound insanity; persecution springs from perverse rage against God; the madness of sin is a product of moral sclerosis and disordered passions (even *furiae*), heightened by the connivance of demonic powers; envy bears a family resemblance to lunacy, and sometimes inspires it; frenzy is an inverted spiritual gift, a cruel and pestilential mockery of the *dona salutis* imparted freely by the Messiah to receptive human hearts; the rage of the Jewish people alternately rivals and emboldens that of their princes; God's wrath is like a devastating storm; hypocrisy so blinds the

⁷²⁶ Cf. McGill (2016) 22: in Juvencus "different aims were combined: casting the Gospels as an epic, praise, edification, exegesis, and aesthetic ornamentation."

⁷²⁷ A paraphrase of Röttger (1996) 144 (emphasis mine): "Man kann das als dualistisches Moment verbuchen, um einen prinzipiellen Dualismus handelt es sich freilich nicht." Röttger's thoroughgoing analysis of the light motif in Juvencus does much to illustrate this "dualistic aspect".

⁷²⁸ Poinsette (1979) 167 comes very close to assembling the same verbal constellation which we have been tracing (*furor*; *rabies*, *amentia*, *dementia*, *insania*, and *vesania*) and speaks of "un stock particulièrement bien fourni de vocables spécialisés dans la peinture des symptômes d'un dérèglement de l'âme."

mind that it denounces itself unawares. *Furor* powerfully confirms the thesis that Juvencus' poetic success is built both on "his ability to take part in the traditional codes of classical poetry" and "his ability to make that code say new things."⁷²⁹

Yet we should not imagine that Juvencus' poem, in its semantic complexity and bold renovation of Roman epic, concerns itself only with spiritual or cosmic truths and not also with political realities. The epilogue, a brief but memorable summary of Juvencus' work and aims, connects Juvencus' poetic achievement directly to the reign of Constantine (4.802-12).⁷³⁰

has mea mens fidei vires sanctique timoris
cepit et in tantum lucet mihi gratia Christi,
versibus ut nostris divinae gloria legis
ornamenta libens caperet terrestria linguae.
haec mihi pax Christi tribuit, pax haec mihi saeculi,
quam fovet indulgens terrae regnator apertae
Constantinus, adest cui gratia digna merenti,
qui solus regnum sacri sibi nominis horret
inponi pondus, quo iustis dignior actis
aeternam capiat divina in saecula vitam
per dominum lucis Christum, qui in saecula regnat.

This power of faith and hallowed fear my own mind has put on,
and to such a degree does the grace of Christ shine upon me
that the glory of the divine law in my verses
happily assumes the earthly embellishments of language.
It is the peace of Christ that has bestowed this on me, and the peace of the age,
graciously fostered by Constantine, the ruler of the wide world,
who is deservedly visited by grace worthy of him,
who alone of kings shudders that the weight of a holy name
is placed upon him, so that becoming even more meritorious
by his just acts, he may receive eternal life throughout God's ages
through Christ the Lord of light, who reigns for ever.⁷³¹

The inner *pax Christi* from which Juvencus' poetic inspiration and power spring is matched by the external peace of the age, the achievement of Constantine (806).⁷³² The poem reflects in

⁷²⁹ McGill (2016) 16.

⁷³⁰ McGill (2016) 5: "Juvencus shows that he is in step with historical forces, and he lends his work authority by aligning its Christian content with Constantine's faith."

⁷³¹ The translation is Green's (2006) 4.

⁷³² For evidence of an implied contrast with the warlike Augustus through parallelism with the ending of the *Georgics*, see Roberts (2004) 48-9.

terrestrial adornment (*ornamenta terrestria*, 805) the “glory of the divine law,” even as the reign of the first Christian emperor mirrors the reign of Christ. Not that the emperor indulges in presumption on that account: his humility actually confirms his divine appointment as the vicar of Heaven on earth, and his eventual eternal reward with the Saviour (809-12). In the place of Statius’ poetic *furor*, Juvencus attributes his achievement to a well-ordered *mens* (as in the preface) that draws strength from *fides* and holy *timor*. But his impulse to align cosmic order, his own poetic activity, and the benevolence of a temporal ruler—manifestly without irony—represents a bold and paradoxically traditional challenge to the epic achievements of his predecessors. This is *aemulatio*: Juvencus presents a new, rival version of the centuries-old epic preoccupation with Heaven, Hell, and the empire, and illuminates the shadows of former anxieties and ambiguities with the steady light of the Christian gospel and its imperial champion.

II. The *Cento Vergilianus* of Proba

Quite unlike Vergil, to whom Juvencus bears some resemblance as a semantic pioneer in his innovative redefinition of the *furor*-theme, the Spanish poet produced no immediate successors and does not appear to have inspired a new efflorescence of revolutionary epic until considerable time had passed.⁷³³ Certainly Juvencus’ poetry was later emulated and alluded to by poets who followed him (and appreciated after them by many medieval and Renaissance audiences), but for about a century after the *Evangeliorum Libri* there were simply no new biblical epics in Latin. There was, however, the *Cento Vergilianus* of Proba, an attempt to

⁷³³ Roberts (1985) 76, McGill (2016) 23. Green (2006) 143 suggests that this could be taken as a sign of success: Juvencus’ experimental poem was so effective it deterred casual imitators.

recreate a Vergil “changed for the better by a sacred meaning” (*Maronem | mutatum in melius divino...sensu*, 3-4) through the expression of Christian truth in his borrowed hexameters.⁷³⁴

Proba’s poem, composed by a poet who had lately foresworn a career of writing epics about *crudelia bella*, violated *foedera*, and the *dira cupido* for absolute power—in other words, Roman civil wars and the triumph of political *furor*, Lucan’s specialty⁷³⁵—provides an interesting point of comparison for Juvencus and his treatment of the *furor* theme.⁷³⁶ Though the biblical epic is steeped in Vergilian allusion and reminiscence, Juvencus’ style is actually very different from Vergil’s, his elaborately periphrastic and sometimes turgid constructions contrasting clearly with the limpid and supple verse of the *Aeneid*.⁷³⁷ Proba’s style, on the other hand, is of course almost exactly Vergil’s. Though she is constrained to add in a word or phrase of her own at times and the larger structural patterns of the work—including its division into roughly equal halves representing the Old and New Testaments—are her creation,⁷³⁸ from the unit of the half-line on down her poetry is entirely derived from that of the Augustan master. It could not conceivably be

⁷³⁴ These words are from the 15-line preface to the poem written by an anonymous scribe, and represent a view of the poem which differs somewhat from Proba’s own perspective, which views Vergil more eirenically; see McGill (2007) 174-7. Nevertheless, in my view the line accurately captures the generally corrective tendency of Proba’s method. Even if for her Christian meanings were already latent in Vergil (who did not therefore need to be “changed” at all), she clearly does think it necessary to intervene to make those meanings more obvious, which implies improvement.

⁷³⁵ The war to which Proba alludes was probably the one between Constantius II and Magnentius (Matthews [1992], but see also Sivan [1993]). For the Lucanian character of the prologue see Bažil (2009) 121-2, Jakobi (2005), Green (1997), and Ermini (1909) 102.

⁷³⁶ I hesitate to credit the ingenious suggestion of Bažil (2009) 122-3 that Proba polemically signals her intent to surpass Juvencus by criticizing him “in his own words” for seeking poetic fame, based on a very rare phrase in her prologue (*disquirere laudem*, 18-19) which echoes the same phrase used by the Spanish poet in a relevant context (Jesus on the pursuit of worldly fame, 2.685-6). The echo is real, but grounds for so antagonistic an interpretation are lacking. Cullhed (2015) 121 is rightly skeptical, pointing out that Proba does not actually renounce poetic fame any more than Juvencus does (*Cento* 333-7); see also the comments of Green (1997) 555-6 linking Proba’s desire for fame to that of Juvencus.

⁷³⁷ McGill (2012) 12n58.

⁷³⁸ On Proba’s structural patterning see Cullhed (2015) 137-8.

any more allusive.⁷³⁹ Though Juvenecus may perhaps in places imply that Vergil’s poetry contained latent adumbrations of Christian truth,⁷⁴⁰ Proba forces the issue out into the open: she will declare that “Vergil sang the righteous deeds of Christ” (*Vergilium cecinisse...pia munera Christi*, 23).⁷⁴¹ Whether or not she really believes this of Vergil or is merely stating her intent to create that effect, her Vergil will relate sacred history to Proba’s audience—willingly or unwillingly.⁷⁴² As Sandnes has shrewdly observed, “Proba’s whole undertaking...implies that also the Bible needs amelioration with help from Maro.”⁷⁴³ Vergil’s elevation of epic to cosmic proportions makes it possible for Proba to present Christianity more comprehensively than does Juvenecus as “the fulfillment of Roman history,” a metanarrative which has a more legitimate claim on Heaven, Hell, and the human race than the story of the Trojan hero or of his warlike descendants.⁷⁴⁴ It is Christ, the New Adam, who fulfills the golden dream of *imperium sine fine* (405-12), and it is Vergil whose poetry can fashion Christ into the yearned-for Roman *puer* of Eclogue 4.⁷⁴⁵ The famous death sentence of Palinurus—*unum pro multis dabitur caput* (*Aen.*

⁷³⁹ Cf. McGill (2005) 25, cited in Cullhed (2015) 14: “there is no such thing as an allusively inert verse unit in any cento.”

⁷⁴⁰ Roberts (2004) 48.

⁷⁴¹ I have used the text of Cullhed (2015) throughout.

⁷⁴² On the ambiguity see Deproost (1998) 103; see also Cullhed (2015) 127: “It is difficult to judge whether Proba...expresses a radical conviction that the Christian truth was already present on a deeper level in Virgil’s works, delivered through centonization, or the slightly more conventional position that several isolated passages in Virgil can be interpreted allegorically as referring to Christ and that these will be highlighted in the *Cento*.” McGill (2007) 176 argues for the former view: “Presumably Proba’s idea is that the Christian content lay latently in the semiotic depths of Virgil’s lines, and that the centonist simply releases that content.” For the latter view see Green (1997) 556.

⁷⁴³ Sandnes (2011) 147.

⁷⁴⁴ Cullhed (2015) 16. Proba characterizes her previous poetry as *levium spectacula rerum* (47) and so “puts traditional epic in its place” (Green [1997] 559). Jakobi (2005) argues for a more radical repudiation of classical epic.

⁷⁴⁵ In her preface Proba promises to tell of the *nova progenies* (*Cento* 34), alluding to *Ecl.* 4.4-7. On the significance of this phrase for Proba’s whole work see Sandnes (2011) 155-9.

5.815)—is finally united to the far more glorious truth it had long adumbrated, for whose advent “the necessary adjustment had already been made by Vergil.”⁷⁴⁶

As we shall see, the *Cento* illustrates by contrast how little the classical material in Juvenecus’ *Evangeliorum Libri* is allowed to modify the biblical message of the gospels. Proba’s work is a foil for the careful labour of the poets of biblical epic, which drew attention to the momentous differences between the Christian worldview and the pagan universe of Vergil and his successors, even as they skillfully re-purposed the traditional diction and conceptual categories of the classical poets. In Proba’s poem, on the other hand, the impact of an exclusive restriction to the *ipsissima verba* of Vergil, together with the force of Proba’s own apparent theological convictions reshapes the biblical source material at key moments.⁷⁴⁷ This confirms the truth of the thesis that drawing a hard form/content distinction when speaking of late antique Latin Christian poetry ignores the enormous potential for mutual contamination and cooperative synthesis between both the matter *and* the expression of the two traditions.⁷⁴⁸ The effect of Vergilian language on biblical narrative is very evident, for instance, in Proba’s characterization of God, including a highly original appearance of *furor Dei*—a semantic subset avoided by Juvenecus—and results in some other interesting mutations of epic madness. For the first time, we may also say that *furor* is disproportionately gendered in the Christian epic imagination, pursuing Vergilian hints considerably beyond what is suggested by their original context. Though it has been said that it is impossible to “unequivocally penetrate all the significance inherent in a

⁷⁴⁶ Hardie (1993) 58.

⁷⁴⁷ I agree with Clark and Hatch (1981) 125 that Proba’s “own interpretation of Christianity” accounts for some of the “peculiarities” of her poem, but I place greater weight than they do on the effect of the limitation to Vergil’s words.

⁷⁴⁸ Šubr (1993) 10. The Ciceronian opposition between *res/verba* applied by Sandnes (2011) 233-3 and *passim*, though useful at many levels of interpretation, seems inadequate in this respect.

described action or thought or event” in the *Cento*, and it is difficult to know when to stop interpreting—to some degree this riddling quality is the point of the form⁷⁴⁹—this section will make an attempt to plumb at least partially the meaning of *furor* in Proba’s poem.⁷⁵⁰

In the *Cento*’s pericope of Genesis, the God of the biblical account is sometimes made to experience Vergilian emotions that correspond rather inexactly to the biblical hypotext.⁷⁵¹ This seems an inevitable consequence of the cento technique, and must in some sense actually have been part of the appeal of the project—but the result is sometimes jarring.⁷⁵² For instance, just before the creation of man, God pauses to survey all he has made (107-11):

et omne
hoc virtutis opus divinae mentis et haustus
prospiciens genitor perfectis ordine rebus
expleri mentem nequit ardescitque tuendo
terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum...

and as this whole work of virtue and these sips of a divine mind
were examined by the Father, once things had been fulfilled in due order,
he could not satiate his mind and burned when beholding
the earth, the regions of the sea and the deep sky...⁷⁵³

Line 110 is taken over in its entirety from Vergil’s account of Dido’s growing infatuation with Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.713), and her accelerating amatory *furor* (described, as so often in Latin poetry, by the vocabulary of fire) is here transferred to the Creator. As he observes with satisfaction the goodness of all he has made, he cannot get his fill of it all and “burns” with desire at the sight.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴⁹ Pollmann (2004) 96n100 (cited in Cullhed [2015] 17): “The character of riddle and allusion are an essential part of a *cento*.”

⁷⁵⁰ Pavlovskis (1989) 75.

⁷⁵¹ The terms “hypertext” and “hypotext”—denoting here the *Cento* and Vergil/the Bible, respectively—are derived from Genette (1997 [paratexts]). I follow Cullhed (2015) 15 and others in using them.

⁷⁵² On anthropomorphism in Proba’s creation account, see Clark and Hatch (1981) 128.

⁷⁵³ Translations of Proba are taken from Clark and Hatch (1981).

⁷⁵⁴ I cannot agree with Nides (1993) 82 that “no better line could have been found to emphasize the goodness of the creation.”

Via Proba's *interpretatio Christiana*, the passage's imported *eros* gives way before *agape*,⁷⁵⁵ and God's disinterested delight in and affection for the work of his hands is represented by the same words which previously marked the dangerous passion of Carthage's queen.⁷⁵⁶ Perhaps this is a kind of *Kontrastimitation*: Dido's disordered love is recalled (and condemned?) by implication, through comparison with the perfect order of divine love;⁷⁵⁷ *furor* is redeemed. Or perhaps Dido and her context are simply neutralized⁷⁵⁸ to make way for another meaning entirely.

After Adam and Eve appear on the scene, however, *furor* enters the world in its more traditionally negative aspect, together with sin. Eve is the first to eat of the apple, and she offers it to Adam in turn (201-5):

mirataque novas frondes et non sua poma,
causa mali tanti, summo tenus attigit ore.
maius adorta nefas maioremque orsa furorem
heu misero coniunx aliena ex arbore germen
obicit atque animum subita dulcedine movit.

She marveled at the new leaves and at the fruit that was not hers,
the cause of so much evil, and she touched it lightly with her lips.
Approaching a greater crime, beginning a greater madness
the wife offered the fruit to her unfortunate husband from the tree
that did not belong to them, and touched his heart with a sudden
sweetness.

Amata and Allecto brood behind Eve's mad act (*Aen.* 7.386).⁷⁵⁹ In the corresponding passage, the frenzied Latin queen absconds with Lavinia into the woods under the false guise of a

⁷⁵⁵ Schmid (1953, *Tityrus Christianus*) investigates the use of erotic language for human *amor dei*; here the relationship is reversed (*dei* as subjective rather than objective genitive) and erotic language describes God's love for his creation.

⁷⁵⁶ It may be worth noting here the argument of Cullhed (2015) 163 that Proba elsewhere creates analogies between God and Venus as well as Christ and Cupid so as to highlight the role of love (understood in an undifferentiated sense) in the divine nature and in the redemption of humanity.

⁷⁵⁷ Ostensibly the implication could run the other way as well—that is, to the effect that Dido's love is cast in a sympathetic light by virtue of the comparison (see preceding note).

⁷⁵⁸ This is Herzog's term (1975) 25-6. See also Cullhed (2015) 172, which claims that 'neutralization' "does not necessarily entail oblivion of the original context," though this is to redefine Herzog's meaning.

⁷⁵⁹ Cullhed (2015) 145, Clark and Hatch (1981) 156.

spontaneous Bacchic rite in order to prevent her marriage to Aeneas (the original *maius nefas* and *maior furor* of these lines), all under the baneful influence of the *furiale malum* of a *serpens* dispatched by the Fury (7.375). Proba uses *serpentis furiale malum* of Satan in her depiction of Christ's temptation, but clearly the words would have fit even more aptly here in the wake of that ancient serpent's greatest achievement. Eve's *furor* is the classic madness of unbelief, as we have seen it in the patristic tradition—she has taken the word of the serpent over God's—but in one sense the human pair do not suffer the blindness typically associated with spiritual rebellion in Christian literature. Just the opposite: their eyes are opened by a disquieting new light (*nova lux oculis effulsit*, 206), one that betokens *furor* in not one but two Vergilian intertexts.⁷⁶⁰ What the first couple sees—their own naked bodies, for the first time a source of shame—terrifies them (*terrentur visu subito*, 207).⁷⁶¹ This conforms to a notion familiar from classical tragedy, that “mad seeing” can either mean seeing false things that are not there or (as in this case) things which are real, but had better never been seen at all.⁷⁶² Later, however, it will become clear that the Fall has left man “deprived of true senses,” in contrast to the “sensuous delights” of the Garden of Eden.⁷⁶³ This paradoxical alternation between different kinds of vision and blindness is also a key element in the *furor*-theme in Avitus, as we shall see.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁰ Adam and Eve's *nova lux* is modeled on the one that shines in Turnus' eyes signalling his re-kindled battle-*furor* in the Trojan camp (*Aen.* 9.731). It also resembles the light that shines around Proba's Eve at her creation (*claraque in luce refulsit*, 130), which in turn echoes the gleaming of Aeneas at his first meeting with Dido (*Aen.* 1.588), the first impetus for her disastrous erotic *furor*. See Cullhed (2015) 142-3 and Kyriakidis (1992) 126-7.

⁷⁶¹ Comparing these lines with their Vergilian hypotext (Turnus' entrapment in the Trojan camp) Cullhed (2015) 144 says the scene “highlights the change that Adam and Eve undergo: they are suddenly transformed into enemies in unknown territory.”

⁷⁶² Padel (1995) 65-89.

⁷⁶³ Cullhed (2015) 149-50.

⁷⁶⁴ See Chapter 5 below.

Eve's sin will also set in motion far more terrible consequences. In response to her fall God foresees awful crimes, including *caedes et facta tyranni* (211), a phrase used of Mezentius' oppressive reign at *Aen.* 8.483. From her disobedience will spring the sad stream of human depravity that flows through every subsequent age. The connection is explicit: the Lord "intuited beforehand" (*praesensit*, 212) the tragedies to come, for "he knew what an insane woman"—or perhaps "insane Woman," (*furens femina*)—"could do" (212). Like the Trojans who catch a glimpse of Dido's funeral pyre from Aeneas' ships and are struck by deep foreboding (*Aen.* 5.6), Proba's God recognizes the uniquely dangerous combination of extreme emotion—here, intense desire for the forbidden—and femininity.⁷⁶⁵ It is not just that Eve is blinded by *furor*; it is that she exemplifies a particularly *female* order of madness, both in the relational nature of her destructive act (seducing a man away from the truth with her charm, or *dulcedo*) as well as in a heightened, representative sense.⁷⁶⁶ As the newly-created mother of the human race, she stands archetypically for the folly of every madwoman, every temptress, for what we might call *furor muliebris*.⁷⁶⁷ What is more, the *furor* of the *Aeneid*'s female figures, both mortal and

⁷⁶⁵ Clark and Hatch (1981) 153 believe that "Proba's depiction of the first woman's frenzy" is "of a piece" with the classical theme of erotic frenzy. They also note, however, that Proba omits most of the female-specific curse (subjection to men, pain in childbearing) of Genesis after the Fall, one of only a few cases in which Proba "alters the text in ways which could be considered favorable to females" (153).

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. Kyriakidis (1992) 128: "any definitions which are used to characterise the first Woman acquire an almost axiomatic colour..."

⁷⁶⁷ Cf. Clark and Hatch (1981) 155: "When we survey the lines [Proba] borrows from Virgil, we are startled at the number of them derived from episodes in which females are seen as menacing, dangerous, or outright evil"; so also Kyriakidis (1992) 151. Though Cullhed (2015) 145 is right to point out that persistent evocations of Dido may also prompt "conflicting feelings of compassion for Eve" in Proba's readers, these are not mutually exclusive of the justice of divine judgment, and it goes beyond the evidence to say that via such evocations "Eve seems fated to her transgression, and she does not choose to eat the forbidden fruit any more than Dido chooses to fall passionately in love with Aeneas." Cf. the skepticism of Kyriakidis (1992) 130 about the possibility that Proba views Eve as a victim of fate.

superhuman, seems to have supplied Proba with disproportionately more material for the portrayal of her own poem's *furores*, to the comparative neglect of male Vergilian madness.⁷⁶⁸

The peculiarly male shudder that passes through the Trojan sailors in Vergil's line here receives a sort of divine authorization and universal significance which far transcends the intertwined national destinies of Rome and Carthage. Woman, although (or perhaps *because*) she is quite literally a derivative creature, outstrips man in being the first to experience and inspire human *furor*. As we have seen, the *Aeneid* (particularly the first six books) emphasizes specifically feminine *furor* on multiple occasions. If this were not the case, Proba could not have expressed the arrival of *furor* in human life with Vergilian verses in conspicuously feminine terms. But Eve's spiritual lunacy elevates female frenzy beyond its profile in human women like Dido or Amata, to take on even more paradigmatic cosmic importance under the theological pressure of the Christian metanarrative.

In the immediate aftermath of the Fall, God reacts to the first human transgression with terrifying wrath. There is no parallel in Genesis for Proba's portrayal of the frightening anger of the Almighty (213-18):

continuo invadit: "procul, o procul este profani"
conclamat, caelum ac terras qui numine firmat.
atque illi longe gradientem ac dira frementem
ut videre, metu versi retro ruentes
diffugiunt silvasque et sicubi concava furtim
saxa petunt.

Then immediately he assailed them with words: "Away, unjust, away with you!" he cried, he who upholds heaven and earth through his divine power. But as they saw him coming with wide strides and roaring with anger, they turned around in fear, ran backwards, took flight and stole away into the forest and the hollow rocks.

The biblical account merely says that

⁷⁶⁸ See the evidence collected in Clark and Hatch (1981) 155-9.

they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:8-9)

There is no mention of divine anger, even in the record of the curses on creation which follows, and the Lord seeks out the human couple of his own accord—not only to pronounce judgment, but also to sustain them with signs of future mercy. The serpent will strike the woman's offspring, but her child will "bruise" Satan's head (Gen. 3:15), a promise widely held by Christian interpreters from the church's early days onward to refer to Christ's triumph over sin and the Devil on the cross. God also kindly clothes the wretches in animal skins to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:21), signaling his enduring provision for their needs.

Strikingly, Proba for her part omits both of these mitigating moments of hope and greatly increases the horror of God's response to his errant creations. He thunders against their ritual unsuitability in the words of Vergil's Sibyl (*Aen.* 6.258) and commands them to quit Eden; he does not seek them out with concern. In the Bible, they hide in anticipation of his presence; in Proba, they flee in reaction to his "terrible roaring" (*dira frementem*, 215), a phrase which together with the immediately following *retro ruentes* comes from a vivid scene in the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas, raging in martial fury (*desaevit*) across a battle plain, puts his enemies to flight like one of the terrible hundred-handers who fought Jove (10.565-74). One of the very few hints of pity in the passage occurs when God addresses Adam as *miserande puer* (254), but this brief interjection is overwhelmed by the relentlessly hard terms of human atonement. In Proba Aeneas' rage becomes the *furor Dei*, the justified wrath of God, before which the human couple scramble for cover like dumb beasts. The characterization decisively alters the tone and implications of the biblical model, in which God's judgment is severe but not hopeless; all-knowing, but not peremptory; grave, but not enraged. Proba's intertextual choices exert enough pressure on the scriptural narrative to change its theological trajectory in ways that are inevitably eye-catching.

One of the things gained by this reshaping, this implicit exegetical innovation, is again a more prominent role for *furor*, in this case as the sort of divine wrath prophesied by the Hebrew prophets in the Old Latin versions. Juvenius had not expressed things this way, but his priorities were not Proba's; his interactions with classical epic were at once less violently innovative in favour of the new worldview, and less doggedly devoted to the language of the old.⁷⁶⁹

God's pity may also be evoked when he first upbraids Adam, calling him *infelix* (224) and echoing Aeneas' concerned intervention in *Aen.* 5.465 to save the headstrong Dares from the raging boxer Entellus. Once more *furor* is in the foreground, and the passage is "almost an index to the keywords that Vergil uses to describe fury and irrational outbursts in the *Aeneid*"⁷⁷⁰ (224-7):

"infelix, quae tanta animum dementia cepit?
quis furor iste novus? quo nunc, quo tenditis," inquit,
"regnorum immemores, quae mentem insania mutat?
dicite, quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido?"

"Wretched man, what foolishness has gripped your spirit?
What is this new madness? Where to now, where will you go?"
he said, "forgetful of my kingdom, what insanity alters your mind?
Tell me, what dreadful longing for light seizes you in your wretchedness?"

The Vergilian lines also recall Ascanius' rebuke to the Trojan women who burn the fleet at anchor (5.670) and Dido's self-recriminations (4.595), among other passages; Adam and Eve are like Aeneas and Dido, blinded by amatory *furor* and forgetful of their kingdom (i.e. Eden, or perhaps the whole earth).⁷⁷¹ The Lord, in his righteous *furor* against their reckless transgression, castigates a very different kind of *furor* in his creations, their spiritual blindness and tragic

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. Formisano (2007) 284: "the *cento* proves to be an extreme sort of genre existing in the tension between the strictest respect for the language of the Virgilian text and the highest standard of innovation in the construction of content."

⁷⁷⁰ Gao (2002) 162.

⁷⁷¹ Cullhed's translation (2015) 205 suggests that it is God's kingdom which they have forgotten, but to my mind the parallel to Aeneas and Dido points rather to humanity's universal rule over creation.

perversion of *mens*. Though she was unaware of it in her folly, Eve had unnaturally “bent all her thoughts” toward death (*nunc morere...tota quod mente petisti*, 267), an alarming inversion of the royal mandate to multiply and fill the earth. A *saevissima coniunx* (263)—the adjective is Proba’s own harsh innovation on *Aen.* 11.158, which describes Evander’s queen as *sanctissima coniunx*—she has become like Turnus the *caput horum et causa malorum* (264).⁷⁷²

Adam and Eve’s posterity illustrate the continual festering of this *furor* in human life. Post-lapsarian man is plagued by *belli rabies* (301) and perpetually incited to violence by uncontrollable *furor iraque* (303-4). Civil war is endemic to the race (*gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum*, 304), a sentiment taken over without much change of significance from the *Georgics* (2.510). As in the *Aeneid*, *pietas* seems sometimes to be opposed to manifestations of *furor*: man before the Fall was created to be a *pietatis imago* (118; *Aen.* 6.405, applied there by the Sibyl to Aeneas’ errand to Anchises in the underworld), and in the midst of his corrupt generation, characterized by the worst excesses of post-lapsarian depravity, Noah is celebrated for his *pietas* a few lines after the dismal descriptions above (313). In God’s judgment on the serpent, Satan—the ultimate source of *furor* in the biblical universe—is described in terms which Vergil’s Venus bitterly applies to Juno: he is one whom *pietas nec mitigat ulla* (247; *Aen.* 5.783). But the verbal contrast is not consistently maintained, though various other enemies of the faithful are duly introduced: the Egyptians and especially their Pharaoh, who is subject to *magnus inflammans furor* (329)—inspired by a case of *amor-furor* in the hypotext (Orestes raging for his stolen bride *magno flammatus amore* and *furiis agitated*, *Aen.* 3.330-1), here converted to battle-frenzy; Herod the Great in the slaughter of the innocents, reminiscent of Juvenecus’ portrait (*ut primum cessit furor et rabida ora quierunt*, 381, originally of the Sibyl at *Aen.* 6.102); the Jewish leaders,

⁷⁷² Kyriakidis (1992) 150, 131. Eve is also called *infanda coniunx* by the narrator at *Cento* 171, a phrase which in Vergil refers to Clytemnestra.

whom Christ accuses of *insania* because of their materialistic pollution of the temple courts (575), and the crowd, which “rages” (*saevit*, 606) in favour of crucifixion and blindly mocks the Messiah (*nescia mens hominum*, 612). Only Christ’s triumphant resurrection will ensure the return of the true golden age, the mere shadow of which had so inspired pagan poets for centuries.⁷⁷³

The most famous deformation of the biblical narrative in Proba (among others that might be mentioned)⁷⁷⁴ occurs at the climax of the crucifixion, when Christ unexpectedly vows retribution to those who mock him and declares the certainty of their punishment (*tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri? | post mihi non simili poena commissa luetis*, 622-3), a far cry from “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). In this scene Christ echoes the words of Neptune as he rebukes the *furor* of the winds set loose by Aeolus at Juno’s command (*Aen.* 1.132, 136), a moment that occasions the *Aeneid*’s first simile (the orator calming the *furor* of the crowd, 1.150). This picture of Christ as avenger of *furor*, in which he is like God the Father, is disconcerting simply because of the contrast, at this particular moment, with the biblical account.⁷⁷⁵ But seen against the background of some of Proba’s other innovations—a God who “burns” with desire for his creation, and who stomps through Eden roaring with rage like a lion; an Eve who prefigures the characteristic failings of all women, in

⁷⁷³ Cullhed (2015) 159-60.

⁷⁷⁴ E.g. Jesus’ advice to the rich young man, on which see the discussion in Cullhed (2015) 173-6 and bibliography in n29-31.

⁷⁷⁵ For criticism of this scene see Opelt (1964) 115-16, Clark and Hatch (1981) 132, Fontaine (1981) 104, Poinssotte (1986) 103-111, and Sandnes (2011) 173-4. Pavlovskis (1989) 76 connects it to the authorial apostrophe which follows, explaining that the vengeful Christ articulates “[Proba’s] own deep sense of anguish at His betrayal, with the resulting desire to hurt His enemies.” Cullhed (2015) 183 defends the scene rather less convincingly: “perhaps it is not uncommon that people fail to see a contradiction between warfare and their religion’s message of peace”; for her the scene is “comprehensible from a hypertextual perspective.” True enough, on both counts; but surely Proba’s striking divergence from the biblical text here should prompt more reflection on the precarious balance struck between the Vergilian and biblical world views by Proba’s method.

every age, and their typical enslavement to the passions—it seems less surprising. Proba’s *furor* is fundamentally female, fundamentally human, and even (in quite another sense) fundamentally divine, if not quite fundamentally biblical. *Furor* is woman’s nature, man’s curse, and God’s prerogative.

Some of these reflexes of the *furor* theme will be developed with much greater nuance and fidelity to the biblical source material by Juvenicus’ successors in the genre of biblical epic proper, and the strangeness of Proba’s work—an eccentricity not totally ascribable to modern literary-aesthetic prejudices⁷⁷⁶—does not mean that all of her instincts about points of intersection between classical and Christian thinking were far off the mark of what her co-religionists found productive in such literary encounters. Indeed Proba’s attempt to expand the area of interaction between the classical tradition and the Christian worldview by incorporating in her work the whole history of redemption, including creation and key moments from the narrative of the Old Testament, anticipates the biblical poetry of Sedulius, Cyprian the Gaul, and Marius Victorius at the beginning of the fifth century and Avitus’ in the sixth.⁷⁷⁷

But Proba’s short poem can also throw a sort of side-light for us on the more finely-grained finesse of the pathfinding epic undertaken by Juvenicus, a work in which it is more rarely the case that the “didactic directionality” that moves a reader from reading Vergilian epic to reading the

⁷⁷⁶ To my mind the strangeness of Proba’s work derives not so much from her repurposing of Vergil or any perceived affront to the authority of the canon—the basis of the literary-critical animus attacked by Cullhed (2015) 79—but from the seismic shifts in tone and emphasis it imposes on its biblical hypotext. It seems unlikely that anyone would have mistaken Proba’s Vergil for the original—Proba explicitly signals that the Augustan poet has been “changed for the better,” *mutatus in melius*—but the same is not true of Proba’s Bible (that is, her portrayal of the Christian metanarrative), which she claims to represent truly and under divine inspiration as against the mendacious *error* of pagan poets (15). It is strange that she proceeds anyway to significantly reshape its ethical content under the influence of a Vergilian aesthetic, and stranger still that so few of her admiring medieval and Renaissance readers seem to have noticed (or cared). On Proba’s reception see especially Cullhed (2015) 18-81.

⁷⁷⁷ Clark and Hatch (1981) 6.

Bible is inverted.⁷⁷⁸ Schnapp is surely right to conclude that “like all works of appropriation, Proba’s is potentially reversible... That which is reformed can also deform.”⁷⁷⁹ This seems less often true of late antique biblical epic, in which the hegemony of Christian exegesis and biblical narrative as “arch-text” over classical ideas and language is more firmly maintained.⁷⁸⁰ The *cento* thus also whets the literary historian’s appetite for the later, more elaborate attempt of one of Juvenecus’ most talented successors, Avitus, to explore anew the “immanent epic potential”⁷⁸¹ of Genesis (among other books) first tapped by Proba and to compose novel and intriguing variations on Christian and classical *furor*. It is to Avitus’ achievement that we now turn.

⁷⁷⁸ Schnapp (1992) 117. This is not to say that Juvenecus did not have exegetical intentions in composing his work. But they are unobtrusive in comparison with Proba and the biblical epic poets who came later, and not so momentous as has sometimes been claimed (see Green [2007] 73-5). For another view see Fichtner (1994) 196, 200, 205.

⁷⁷⁹ Schnapp (1992) 123.

⁷⁸⁰ Stella (2005) 143.

⁷⁸¹ Šubrt (1993) 10.

CHAPTER 5

Avitus and the Path to Paradise

I now must change
Those notes to tragic; foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt,
And disobedience: on the part of Heaven
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgment given,
That brought into this world a world of woe.
Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery
Death's harbinger: Sad talk, yet argument
Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespoused;
Or Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplexed the Greek, and Cytherea's son.

Paradise Lost, 9.5-19

In the Introduction, I briefly discussed a passage from Avitus' late fifth-century biblical epic, *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*, as a way of showcasing the interpretive challenges posed by the changing contexts of *furor* in Latin epic.⁷⁸² It is now time to return to that passage, along with many others in Avitus' roughly 2,500-line poem, in order to complete our investigation of how the *furor*-theme was taken over from classical predecessors, developed, and revised by Christian poets in late antiquity. In the course of this investigation, which is intended to be representative rather than exhaustive, much has perforce been omitted. An examination of *furor* in the biblical epic poetry of Sedulius, 'Cyprianus Gallus', Dracontius, Marius Victorius, and Arator—that is, the other major biblical epic poets—though perhaps desirable for the sake of completeness,

⁷⁸² For an introduction to Avitus, his works, and his times, see *inter alios* Kühneweg (2004), Shanzer and Wood (2002), and Wood (1979).

would unduly prolong our discussion and is better left for a later time.⁷⁸³ Nor is the evidence furnished by the works of these other poets strictly necessary to illustrate the central thesis of this study, namely that Christian poets of late antiquity found in the *furor*-theme of classical epic an ideal vehicle and inspiration for their own innovative treatments of the order/chaos, Heaven/Hell polarity which seems endemic to the genre. It will be sufficient, rather, having traced the development of this key concept through the pioneering verses of Juvencus and the forceful adaptation of Proba, to follow it finally to the work of a poet who used the word and its cognates more frequently (in both relative and absolute terms) than any other writer of biblical epic, in fact about as often as had Vergil in his *Aeneid*.⁷⁸⁴

Avitus' poem (hereafter the *SHG*) has often earned praise from critics, particularly for its originality and careful attention to structure and continuity; indeed, it has often been judged to be the highpoint of the genre before Milton.⁷⁸⁵ The analyses presented below tend to confirm the essential justice of this favourable view. Avitus did incur meaningful debts, of course, to his predecessors (including Juvencus, among others), and as we shall see some aspects of his

⁷⁸³ Such an examination, including not only these major poets but also a number of more minor works, is planned as an expansion of the current project.

⁷⁸⁴ That is, on average of about once for every hundred lines, as in the *Aeneid*, or about 23 times total, significantly outdistancing his nearest competitors in biblical epic (Sedulius and Arator, 11 times each).

⁷⁸⁵ Roberts (1985) 103 and bibliography collected in n163; 219 and n1. Roberts' praise is measured: the work "transcends the paraphrase and succeeds as an imaginative work of literature in its own right," and "for the first time the whole adds up to something more than the sum of the biblical parts..." (218-9); See also Nodes (1993) 55; 118-19, who cites "the general viewpoint that the various elements that make up the biblical epic genre were...brought together most successfully in Avitus' poem. By skilfully harmonizing rhetorical motifs and exegetical traditions, Avitus offers us in many respects the best combination of style and substance that the genre produced." The verdict of Fontaine (1981) 257 is expressed with typical panache; he credits Avitus with "...une certaine élégance linéaire de l'énoncé, qui, dans les meilleures pages, rejoint, à sa manière, l'abstraction des développements philosophiques de Lucrèce—passion et imagination en moins. Ce virgiliisme tamisé, et même souvent guindé, n'a même plus la souplesse d'écriture de Juvencus. C'est une paraphrase élégante, mais le plus souvent froide, sinon sans grâce." For Costanza (1971) 20, Avitus' chief virtues are "vivacità drammatica e penetrazione psicologica," his principal defects "frequenza e ampiezza di digressioni, prolissità del racconto, abuso di alcuni mezzi letterari" (40). Kühneweg (2004) 134 calls him the "perfecter" of the biblical epic tradition.

handling of the *furor*-theme are anticipated in earlier biblical poets.⁷⁸⁶ Nevertheless, his thematically-arranged poem—each of the five books comprises a distinct biblical episode that illuminates the ‘history of redemption,’ Creation in Book 1, the Fall in Book 2, The Expulsion from Eden in Book 3, the Flood in Book 4, and the Crossing of the Red Sea in Book 5—displays an internal conceptual consistency that surpasses that of Juvenius’ poem for depth and critical interest.⁷⁸⁷ On the basis of its treatment of the *furor* theme alone it can make a strong claim to be the late antique biblical epic *par excellence*.

As with the other poets investigated so far, this chapter will move through the work in mainly chronological fashion, building a thematic picture of *furor* as Avitus developed it throughout his five books and highlighting significant points of comparison with the older classical and Christian traditions *en route*. Once again, it will be clear that epic *furor* is not easily separable from the central thread of the poet’s thought, and that the outstanding characteristic of the tradition of Latin epic of which the *SHG* is undeniably a part is a densely reflexive inner coherence of language and conception. Gerard O’Daly has neatly summarized the *communis opinio* on which I rely throughout: “the key to understanding the work lies in assimilating its subtle unity.” This subtle unity will yield rich interpretive rewards if read with patience and sensitivity.⁷⁸⁸ There is an important correspondence between Avitus’ literary strategies and the content of his poem; the former

⁷⁸⁶ These debts are exhaustively catalogued by the commentaries of Hecquet-Noti (1999, 2005) on the whole poem, Hoffmann (2005) on Book 3, Arweiler (1999) on parts of Books 4 and 5, and Morisi (1996) and Schippers (1945) on Book 1. On parallels between Avitus’ treatment of certain NT passages in his poem *De Virginitate* and Juvenius, see Flury (1988).

⁷⁸⁷ Hoffmann (2005) 294 speaks of “ein innerer Konnex” between the episodes; on the essential unity of the poem see also Hoffmann (2007), Arweiler (1999), and Nodes (1985) 2. The view of Costanza (1971) 19-20, which finds the ties that bind the various parts of the poems together to be inadequate, remains a minority one.

⁷⁸⁸ O’Daly (2006).

depend upon and are nourished by his vision of the historical *plenum* which stretches from Creation to the *eschaton*, in which the significance of every act is understood only in terms of the totality and especially of the end. The historical *totum simul* is the source of all signification.⁷⁸⁹

In no other biblical epic is the ancient Christian worldview so effectively represented in its temporal and hermeneutic unity; in no other biblical epic is the passion for typology and teleology which characterizes Vergil's *Aeneid* and its successors more prominently on display.⁷⁹⁰ Avitus' purpose was "to write a religious work which was dogmatically accurate and at the same time artistically elegant" on the basis of the book of Genesis.⁷⁹¹ This book was the most popular object of study and meditation for early Christian theologians and poets alike at least in part because so much of what was important in Christian thought could be discerned—at least *in ovo*, and by those with eyes to see—in its pages.⁷⁹²

Though this should make Avitus' poem very fertile ground for evaluating the relationship between *furor* and the Christian cosmos of biblical epic, little has been said about *furor* in the *SHG*, and much of that only in passing; only Hecquet-Noti has attempted even a brief comparison of the poem with the thematic testimony of the classical epics on this score.⁷⁹³ In what follows, I attempt to imitate the best recent research on Avitus by plotting a course between

⁷⁸⁹ Shea (1997) 68. Shea's introduction to the work, though it stands off to one side of the main current of Avitan scholarship, is remarkable for its determination to strive after broader insights beyond the limited horizon of *Quellenforschung*.

⁷⁹⁰ Hoffmann (2005) xlvi calls the *SHG* a "Weiterentwicklung des vergilischen Ansatzes" with justification; see his discussion at xlvi-xlvi.

⁷⁹¹ Nodes (1993) 9, 17. For a full and illuminating discussion of the dedicatory letter which is frequently taken as an informal preface to Avitus' poem—but which is largely irrelevant to our purposes here—see Roberts (1980).

⁷⁹² Gamber (1899) 47. On the importance of Genesis in this period see also McClure (1981) 310.

⁷⁹³ Hecquet-Noti (1999) 46. My reading diverges from hers to some degree because we read the *Aeneid* and its complex relationships between *furor*, *pietas*, and *virtus* differently, but in most respects I endeavour to build upon and complement her thorough work. Relevant disagreements will be registered in the appropriate places below, as dictated by Avitus' text. In the main body of the commentary, Hecquet-Noti (1999) 46n1 simply notes that "le terme *furor* est utilisé par Avit pour désigner le désordre mental qui s'empare de l'homme après le péché originel (2.239)." I intend to expand upon this beginning.

the temptation to collect classical *fontes* for their own sake on the one hand, and an exclusive focus on Avitus' Christian exegesis on the other, in favour of a properly holistic perspective on *furor* in the *SHG* which does justice to both its complex interactions with Vergilian epic and its innovative versification of the patristic tradition. To some extent this means slighting both sides at important points—I am unable to consider here the full impact of Ambrose and Augustine on Avitus' language, for instance, or to trace in detail the relative influence of Lucan or Silius on Avitus' theology—but the objective is at least to capture the key colours which make up the stained-glass glory of Avitus' "Christian cosmic vision," and to relate them as fully as possible to the perspectives investigated in the preceding chapters.⁷⁹⁴

I. Book 1: Adam and the Animals

Avitus' first book, the shortest of the five books of the *SHG* at 325 lines, is a compact retelling of the first chapters of Genesis which climaxes with the creation of Adam and Eve and ends ominously with God's ban against eating from the tree of the fruit of Good and Evil.⁷⁹⁵ In keeping with Avitus' general method its relative brevity nevertheless includes considerable enhancement of the narrative.⁷⁹⁶ Throughout the book Avitus' interpretations of and comments

⁷⁹⁴ The metaphor and quotation are both from Shea (1997) 20.

⁷⁹⁵ I have used the text of Peiper (1883) throughout.

⁷⁹⁶ On Avitus' exegetical habits Nides (1993) has not been displaced; see now also among others Wood's short study (2001) of the pervasive influence of Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram* on the *SHG*, which has typically been underestimated (265). In that treatise the bishop of Hippo uses the word *furor* only once (in an unremarkable context) and its associated language hardly at all. For Augustinianism more generally in Avitus see Nides (1984) 185. On poetic theology in Avitus see Stella (2001) 129-137.

on scripture take both implicit and explicit form.⁷⁹⁷ Often his hermeneutical interest in a particular act or event is closely bound up with its retelling (e.g. 1.26-7, when he glosses the appearance of greenery on the earth with *accepere genus sine germine iussa creari | et semen voluisse fuit*, translated by Shea as “what was ordered to be made received its being without the germ of procreation, and His mere willing of it was its seed”.)⁷⁹⁸ At other moments the intrusion of a homiletical tone is more marked, as when Avitus interrupts his story at a dramatic point just after a rib is extracted from Adam (to make Eve) in order to explain that Adam’s supernaturally induced anesthetic sleep is an *indicium*, a sign or type, of Christ’s “sleep” in the grave; the Church was born from the “rib” that he lost when the soldier pierced his side on the cross (1.160-9).⁷⁹⁹ The poet’s overt exegetical and emotional meditations on what he narrates are mostly restricted to moments of peak structural significance, such as the poem’s opening (1.1-13), where a striking apostrophe to Adam begins the work by linking contemporary humanity (including of course Avitus himself, together with his readers) to the biblical drama of sin and redemption which will unfold in what follows.⁸⁰⁰ This opening proem is highly traditional and offers an

⁷⁹⁷ There is a marked difference in perception among commentators about how often Avitus does this. Roberts (1985) 195 suggests that “Christian typology is rarely openly invoked in the body of the work,” but contrast Nodes (1993) 62: “...references to Christ’s saving work amid professions of the initial goodness of the Father’s creation abound in the poem...”, and there are “numerous direct commentaries on Christ’s saving work” (66); in the *SHG*, says Nodes, both implicit and explicit exegetical comments “appear frequently and even guide the reader toward an appreciation of God as both creator and redeemer, whose identity is concealed in Genesis and Exodus and then revealed in the New Testament” (67-8).

⁷⁹⁸ Shea (1997) 73.

⁷⁹⁹ On this passage see e.g. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 150n3.

⁸⁰⁰ Roberts (1985) 195. On the relationship of the proem to Avitus’ contemporary theological milieu, see Nodes (1984).

abstract of the central theme (if not exactly a précis of the contents) of the *SHG*'s five books.⁸⁰¹ It is worth quoting in full:

Quidquid agit varios humana in gente labores,
unde brevem carpunt mortalia tempora vitam,
vel quod polluti vitiantur origine mores,
quos aliena premunt priscorum facta parentum,
addatur quamquam nostra de parte reatus,
quod tamen amisso dudum peccatur honore,
adscribam tibi, prime pater, qui semine mortis
tollis succiduae vitalia germina proli.
et licet hoc totum Christus persolverit in se,
contraxit quantum percussa in stirpe propago.
attamen auctoris vitio, qui debita leti
instituit morbosque suis ac funera misit,
vivit peccati moribunda in carne cicatrix.

The cause of mankind's various suffering, the reason why our mortal life possesses so brief a span, or the fact that our tainted nature is in its very origin infected, that nature which not our acts but those of our ancient parents still weigh down—although our own guilt plays its part as well, the fact that our natural dignity has for all this time continued to be lost in sin I shall ascribe to you, Adam, our first father, who with the seed of death destroyed the living shoots of the doomed race of your successors. And although Christ discharged all this our debt upon himself, as much as our race in its stricken stock did owe, nevertheless, because of the sin of our author, who contracted the debt of mortality and sent sickness and death upon his descendants, the scar of his transgression lives in our death-ridden flesh.⁸⁰²

Avitus' subject is thus "the universal history of humanity,"⁸⁰³ the grandest possible stage on which heroic action and divine power could be portrayed. The hero of the poem, as Roberts has argued, is mankind itself, as represented imperfectly by Adam, Noah, and Moses in anticipation of Christ, the consummation of human holiness.⁸⁰⁴ The stakes are cosmic, encompassing the

⁸⁰¹ See Hecquet-Noti (1999) 112: "[Avit] traitera tout d'abord des circonstances et des mécanismes du péché originel, comme il le dit dans les v.1-8 qui annoncent les chants 1 à 3...ensuite, il montre l'espoir de Rédemption apporté par le Christ médiateur de la grâce divine (v. 9-13), ce qui sera le sujet des chants 4 et 5." On p. 127 Hecquet-Noti notes classical and Christian parallels, and rightly singles out for structural comparison Verg. *Georg.* 1.1-5; each successive indirect question adds detail and precision to the general theme. Although the traditional divine invocation and address to a dedicatee are missing, these elements are in a sense supplied respectively by the apostrophe to Adam—no divinity, but certainly the most potent symbol of the spiritual disaster and recovery that Avitus intends to describe—and by Avitus' own letter of dedication to the bishop Apollinaris (on which see Roberts [1980]).

⁸⁰² The translation is Shea's (1997), slightly modified. All block-quote translations of Avitus in this chapter are taken from Shea. Translations of phrases and individual lines in the body text are generally mine unless otherwise noted.

⁸⁰³ Roberts (1985) 225.

⁸⁰⁴ Roberts (1985) 225.

whole of the created order, which is implicated in the destiny of man more emphatically in Avitus' retelling of Genesis than in the gospel-bound narrative of Juvencus.⁸⁰⁵ The crown of God's creation, the bearers of his very image and rulers of the world he has made, hang in the balance between the temptations of Hell and the laws of Heaven, and the story of the struggle—artfully abridged by Avitus—spans all of human history, between the sixth day of creation and the composition of the *SHG* itself (*vivit...cicatrix*, 13).

As we have seen, the New Testament epic of Juvencus and Proba's *Cento* also aim at cosmic proportions. Proba's intensive exploitation of Vergil in itself made anything less impossible, though ultimately any recasting of scripture that presupposes the Christian meta-narrative cannot avoid it.⁸⁰⁶ In Vergil the cosmic perspective is deeply entwined with the saga of Aeneas, but much of the enduring appeal of that poem springs precisely from our awareness, as C.S. Lewis pointed out,⁸⁰⁷ that it need not have been; *es könnte auch anders sein*. One cannot say the same for biblical epic. For orthodox believers in late antiquity, the story of Christ was unintelligible apart from the grand sweep of redemptive history of which it was the centerpiece, and that history began in Eden.⁸⁰⁸ The full history might be invoked elliptically where it was not told, as it is in the gospels on which Juvencus drew, but Avitus enjoys an advantage here because his choice of subject matter allows him both to relate more of the history of redemption and to

⁸⁰⁵ On the *Weltordnung* in Avitus and the juridical terminology the poet employs to describe it, as well as its indebtedness to the Stoic influence of Seneca and Lucan, see Arweiler (1999) 311-17. On the concept of natural and other kinds of law in Avitus see Wood (2001) 270-3.

⁸⁰⁶ On Proba's cosmos see Clark and Hatch (1981) 137-49. Interestingly, Proba's work was frequently lumped together in collections of medieval manuscripts with cosmological texts, "suggesting new appropriations of the *Cento* focusing on the way it expresses cosmological matters" (Cullhed [2015] 93).

⁸⁰⁷ Lewis (1961) 33-4.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. Gamber (1899) 47 (quoted in Nides [1993] 76): Christian history after the New Testament was "l'épilogue d'un drame grandiose, devaient donner un intérêt plus vif et un charme plus grand aux premières scènes et au prologue qui s'était accompli sous les ombrages de l'Eden."

cleave closer to the conventions of epic.⁸⁰⁹ His narrative, though it points to Christ and the lived experience of the church at every opportunity, is more directly concerned with a broader range of world-historical events. It is rigorously teleological, like the *Aeneid*: if one exchanges the rise of Roman dominion with the salvation of mankind, or the *fata* and the will of Jupiter with God's sovereign plan, or the return of an earthly golden age with the Christian's transposition to Heaven, the basic pattern remains unaffected.⁸¹⁰ The nature of *furor* in each poem, however, is not interchangeable in every case, and rewards careful scrutiny.

The *Aeneid*-like teleological orientation of the *SHG* becomes particularly obvious in the various creational mandates enjoined on Adam and Eve by God, several of which echo elements of Aeneas' imperial mission. These include the Lord's paradigmatic warning against idolatry, a reminder of man's most important identity as a single-minded worshipper of the one true God (*usibus ista tuis, non cultibus, esse memento*, 1.142); the mandate to multiply immortal offspring (*non annis numerus vitae nec terminus esto | progeniem sine fine dedi*, 174-5); and the gift of every plant for food (*haec cuncta dabuntur | ad vestros sine fine cibos*, 306).⁸¹¹ To borrow Feeney's memorable phrase, these lines describe the "keys to the cosmos," the divine authorization of a golden-age empire.⁸¹² To be sure, a narrower narrative focus on Christ and his miracles, say, as Juvencus attempted, also provided fruitful opportunities for interacting with

⁸⁰⁹ Cf. Roberts (1985) 198, 225: "By contrast [with the New Testament poetry] the Old Testament poets retain to a much greater degree their fidelity to the epic tradition...Of the biblical poets of late antiquity it is Avitus who corresponds most closely to the norms of the epic genre." See also Witke (1971) 190, who calls him "a poet of remarkable ability...His effect lies in in his understanding better than the others the function of the genre in which he was performing."

⁸¹⁰ Hoffmann (2005) 294.

⁸¹¹ Other Christian poets (e.g. Proba, 141-44) exploited the same language in similar ways, though Avitus is unique for example in applying Vergil's *sine fine* to Adam and Eve's eternal offspring; cf. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 151n7, Morisi (1996) 103.

⁸¹² Feeney (1991) 285.

classical traditions of epic heroism (especially via *Kontrastimitation*) and didactic poetry. But the Bible's Old Testament narratives, prophecies, and trans-national sagas seem ultimately to have been more congenial to the language and spirit of the Vergilian tradition in which both Juvenecus and Avitus were working. The first book of the *SHG* testifies to the truth of this notion, as *furor* furnishes the poet with a means of differentiating the roles of man and beast in the "new-created world" in such a way as to bring man's later prostration before sin—and his participation in the insanity of Satan—into vivid contrast with the glory of his original state.

Adam's *raison d'être*, a point on which the text of Genesis says nothing explicitly, is articulated in the *SHG* by *Sapientia*, a personification of the mind of God drawn from Proverbs 8:22-31 (where "Wisdom" recounts her participation in Creation).⁸¹³ She says that Adam's purpose is to bring about a greater fullness of joy by taking possession of the beautiful world that God has made: *Quid iuvat ulterius nullo cultore teneri?* (1.54). *Cultor* is surely polysemous here ("cultivator"; "inhabitant"; perhaps also "worshipper"),⁸¹⁴ though the next line indicates the primacy of the first meaning, equivalent to *custos*: man must be created lest "long idleness leave the new earth in gloom" (*ne longa novam contristent otia terram*, 55).⁸¹⁵ Adam's energetic activity in ordering and cultivating the world's vast potential averts an alternate universe in which unrelieved wilderness settles into a kind of dreary eternal neglect. His chief endowment for the task of enlivening creation with his organizing zeal is the *celsus honor* of God's image,

⁸¹³ On the exegetical tradition of reasons for man's creation see Hecquet-Noti (1999) 113-14. For the theological implications of Avitus' use of *Sapientia* consult Nodes (1993) 63-65.

⁸¹⁴ Hecquet-Noti (1999) 135n2 makes the same observation, though she suggests only "worshipper" and "custodian."

⁸¹⁵ As Hecquet-Noti (1999) 135n2 points out, this is probably inspired by the text of Genesis 2:5 and 2:15, which note that "there was no man to work the ground" and that the Lord put Adam in the garden to "work and keep it" (in the OL, *ut operaretur et custodiret illum*). So also Schippers (1945) 59.

stamped on his “beautiful mind” (57-8); that is, his reason.⁸¹⁶ His destiny is to rule over an obedient world, bound to him by an *aeternum foedus* (60), a covenant established on his behalf by God. Both of these elements, Adam’s pristine rational faculty and his covenantal relationship to the rest of creation, will be of central importance in the second book, in which *furor* deals each a mortal wound.

Adam’s first mission is to tame the beasts and impose both laws and names on them (61); he must also learn (*discat*) astronomy and the celestial signs (62-3).⁸¹⁷ Genesis mentions only God’s command to “subdue the earth” and “have dominion” over it (1:26, 28), without defining what exactly this will entail, but Avitus freely expands the passage (1.64-72):

Subiciat pelagus saevum ingenioque tenaci
 possideat, quaecumque videt: cui bestia frendens
 serviat et posito discant mansueta furore
 imperium iumenta pati iussique ligari
 festinent trepidi consueta in vincla iuveni.
 quoque magis natura hominis sublimior extet,
 accipiat rectos in caelum tollere vultus:
 factorem quaerat proprium, cui mente fideli
 inpendat famulam longaevo in tempore vitam.

“Let him subdue the savage sea and with his tenacious ingenuity possess whatever he sees. Let the beast with gnashing teeth serve him and let bulls and horses be tamed, once their fury is put aside. Let them learn to endure his rule and let the frightened pack animals hasten at his command to be bound with fetters they know and accept. And so that Man’s nature may stand out as even more sublime, let it be his special gift to carry a countenance that gazes up to Heaven. Let him seek out his own Maker to Whom he may, long-lived in years, devoutly render a life of servitude.”

The sea is *saevus* by nature; its savagery is not a consequence of creation’s degradation in the Fall but an inevitable corollary of its raw power, until it will be brought to heel by man’s

⁸¹⁶ *Celsus...honor* is a Juvencan collocation (Hecquet-Noti [1999] 135n5) and in a key passage of Juvencus’ poem, as we have seen, it describes the glory of Christ seated at the right hand of God (*Evangeliorum Libri* 3.541). Given Christ’s role in Avitus as a *novissimus Adam* the resemblance is entirely appropriate. For Schippers (1945) 60 *celsus* is meant to distinguish man from the animals.

⁸¹⁷ Simonetti Abbolito (1982) 61-2, repeated by Hecquet-Noti (1999) 135n6, suggests that Avitus here alludes to *Aen.* 6.847-53 and Anchises’ mandate to the Roman people, as parallel to the dominion of Adam over the whole world. Is this an example of *Konstrastimitation*? Anchises lists astronomical knowledge as one of the fields for other nations, and emphatically *not* the Romans, to master; their art is to be exercising dominion over the world. Adam’s mission includes the *artes* explicitly ruled out by Anchises.

ingenuity through the invention of seafaring.⁸¹⁸ The very act that Valerius Flaccus' Boreas had denounced as madness, the launching of the first ship (that *insana ratis* the *Argo*, 1.605), is here obliquely portrayed in completely opposite terms: Adam's progeny will civilize the ferocity of the ocean, which is of a piece with the natural *furor* of the wild beasts in the following two lines.⁸¹⁹ The unbridled raging of primordial powers—good in and of themselves, but as yet undeveloped—will yield to improving *ingenium*. The gnashing teeth of the wild animal (*bestia frendens*) must give way to the rule of mankind, and *furor* is an innate quality that must nevertheless be “put off” (*posito*, 66).⁸²⁰

In classical epic, as we have seen, bestial *furor* generally functions as a proxy for human frenzy on the battlefield and occasionally in other contexts.⁸²¹ Here in *Avitus*, it sets up an antithesis, functioning as a foil for the uniqueness of man's intellect rather than merely a descriptive vehicle for extreme human emotion; indeed it represents the absence of the characteristically human talent for self-possession which asserts calm control over the animal world. In classical epic animal *furor* is most often a vivid picture of love's passion, or the warrior's rage; it never appears in epic except as an oblique commentary on the strange transformation that sometimes afflicts beings with a superior *mens*, with the ability to reason. The customary hegemony of this special ability makes it that much more terrifying when humans

⁸¹⁸ Morisi (1996) 79 rightly points out that “*saevum* non valga in questo caso ‘crudele’ ma tecnicamente ‘tempestoso.’”

⁸¹⁹ Schippers (1945) 63 notes the contrast with the classical idea of the impiety of seafaring, citing Prop. 1.17.13: *ah pereat, quicumque rates et vela paravit | primus et invito gurgite fecit iter*, and pointing out that in *Avitus* the taming of the sea is an expression of man's dignity as a bearer of the divine image.

⁸²⁰ Overlooking this passage Nodes (1993) 121 claims that “there is no reference to natural predatory tendencies of the animals prior to the Fall of Adam and Eve...In the hexaemeral section...the poet presents only the animals' receiving their forms and running about the lands most innocently. Only the adjective *taetras* contains any hint of foreboding regarding their later threat to mankind...” As we shall see, these lines take on added significance in light of the fact that the animals will take up their wonted *furor* again after the Fall.

⁸²¹ Stephens (1990). On bestial *furor*, see pp. 45-7 above.

seem to *lose* their reason and act savagely, as though ruled by brute instinct alone. In the ancient view, beasts lack reason by nature, and so when they appear to “rage” (as though they possess a *mens* which can be overthrown, on analogy with human behaviour) they are simply acting in accordance with that nature. For Avitus, man’s dominion over nature means that as he learns by divine command (*discat*, 63) to alter his environment and subject it to his *ingenium*, he becomes more like himself, more like his true nature—he displays in ever increasing degrees his noble endowment with the *imago Dei*, which is *ratio*. He fulfills his design. For the animals over which he rules, however, the process moves in the opposite direction. They too must learn (*discant*, 66). But the more they submit to Adam’s dominion, the less like themselves they become; their natural state of *furor* (in the sense of unreasoning, spontaneous aggression) is replaced by an unnatural though divinely ordained subservience to the *imperium* (67) of a superior creature. Their *furor*—which can have no sinister connotations, at least before the Fall—points up the greatest glory of man, his exalted *mens*, the thing that makes him godlike. By an alarming transference of traits, however, only man is described by *frendere* from the second book on, in close association with the catastrophic effects of the Fall. When he rebels against the *imperium* to which *he* owes fealty, God’s ultimate rule, he resembles the beasts before their taming. In them, this was no fault but simply a fact of nature, but for mankind it will represent both moral and physical abasement.

Man’s proper order-bringing function is powerfully expressed in the benign fetters with which he binds the frightened beasts (68). This is not like the binding of *Furor impius* in the *Aeneid*, in which human evil is symbolized by a bestial demon and restrained by divine power. Rather, it is the expression of what we might call a progressive view of creation. Man and the other creatures are not to repose in static perfection, but are designed to increase, develop, and

evolve, to grow into a new relationship with one another and with their surroundings. The binding of the lower creatures is also a harnessing of their creational potential: they will be draught animals and beasts of burden, to till the soil and service man's needs. And in order that man's nature may stand out as more sublime, Avitus says, God will endow him with an upright posture, that he may always look to his Creator (69-72).⁸²² The very *mens* with which he was endowed and which separates him from the beasts is to be offered back faithfully in turn to God in worship (*mente fidei...impendant famulam...vitam*, 71-2). This tripartite hierarchy of creation, man, and God is re-expressed after the Lord actually fashions the human body: *Tu mihi, cuncta tibi famulentur; maximus ordo est, | te parere pio qui subdidit omnia patri* (1.136-7). After receiving the breath of life, the first man is given *prudentia* which illuminates his mind "with the pure light of reason" (1.128-9), a dramatic pledge of his unique status among all the other living creatures. This symbol, however, like man himself, is susceptible to major distortion: when the *maximus ordo* of the harmonious pre-lapsarian universe is violated in Book 2, Adam will be illuminated again with a very different kind of light, ironically marking not his privileged status above the brute animals but his tragic imitation of their unsuitability for participation in the divine nature.

⁸²² Hecquet-Noti (1999) 137n3 points out with examples that this was an anthropological *topos* in antiquity, in both pagan and Christian authors. See also Morisi (1996) 80. The obvious *comparandum* is Ovid, *Met.* 1.85: *os homini sublime dedit...iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus*.

II. Book 2: Satan and the Fall

The first human pair continues to enjoy untroubled bliss in their innocence and holiness through the first short section of the second book, until their great lying enemy (*fallax hostis*, 37), man's primary antagonist in the *SHG*, is introduced (2.38-48):

Angelus hic dudum fuerat, sed crimine postquam
succensus proprio tumidos exarsit in ausus,
se semet fecisse putans, suus ipse creator
ut fuerit, rabido concepit corde furorem
auctoremque negans: 'Divinum consequar, inquit,
nomen et aeternam ponam super aethera sedem
excelso similis summis nec viribus impar.'
Talia iactantem praecelsa potentia caelo
iecit et eiectum prisco spoliavit honore.
Quique creaturae praefulsit in ordine primus,
primas venturo pendet sub iudice poenas.

He had formerly been an angel, but after he had been set aflame by his own sin and burned to accomplish proud deeds of boldness, imagining that he had made himself, that he himself had been his own creator, he conceived a mad fury in his raging heart and denied his own author. "I shall acquire," he said, "a name divine and shall establish my eternal abode higher than Heaven's vault, I, who will be like God on high and not unequal to His mightiest power." As he boasted in this way, Power pre-eminent threw him from Heaven and took from the exile his ancient honor. He who had been brilliant and who had held the first rank among creatures paid the first penalties under the verdict of the Judge who was to come.

Avitus' Satan is defined principally by self-inflicted *furor* (41) and a heart which is *rabidus*; inflamed by his own thoughts (*succensus*) he "blazed up" (*exarsit*, 39) into deeds of wicked daring.⁸²³ His mad passion, so designated by the customary combustion vocabulary,⁸²⁴ consists in "thinking that he had made himself" (*se semet fecisse putans*, 40), that he was his own creator (*suus ipse creator* | *ut fuerit*).⁸²⁵ This necessarily entails denying his real maker (42), and thus he

⁸²³ The picture is Vergilian; cf. Deproost (1996) 49 and n20: "Satan partage son orgueil avec les puissances néfastes de l'épopée, telles que la furie Allecto, Turnus, ou encore les damnés des enfers virgiliens, avant de concevoir un délire semblable à celui que nourrit Didon affolée par son dessein suicidaire." See also Simonetti Abbolito (1982) 64-5. On Avitus' theology of Satan generally see Capponi (1967a).

⁸²⁴ In addition to *succensus* and *exarsit*, the phrase *concepit...furorem* may suggest the poetic idiom *concupere flammis*, found in Ovid (e.g. *Met.* 1.255) and elsewhere.

⁸²⁵ A similar idea appears in Prudentius, *Hamar.* 171-3 (cited in Nides [1985] 32): *persuasit propriis genitum se viribus ex se | materiam sumpsisse sibi, qua primitus esse | inciperet, nascique suum sine principe coeptum.*

sets himself at loggerheads to the chief objective reality of the universe. The soundness of his intellect is permanently impaired and he represents “a creature in the clutches of a false consciousness.”⁸²⁶ He embodies the spiritualized Christian equivalent of Cicero’s civic-minded definition of *furor*: *non cognoscere homines, non cognoscere leges, non senatum, non civitatem* (*In Pis.* 47.12). As so often in the Church Fathers, the ultimate impiety and the root of all madness is *non cognoscere deum*. Of this species Satan’s deliberate madness is the original, and Avitus here treats not a derivative human version but the cosmic fountainhead of *furor*.

The primary manifestation of his voluntary irrationality, his insanity—for this, more than simple “rage” (as yet unmotivated), must be the dominant meaning of *furor* at 41—is his pursuit of godhead (*divinum consequar nomen*). Its immediate consequence, in instant refutation of his pretensions to equality (*nec viribus inpar*), is a catastrophic encounter with real heavenly *potentia* (45). Satan’s fall deprives him of his ancient dignity (*prisco spoliavit honore*, 46) in language which resembles Adam’s own loss of glory in the poem’s preface (*amisso...honore*, 1.6),⁸²⁷ still to come in narrative sequence. That glory flowed chiefly, it will be remembered, from the gift of godlike reason (described as *celsus honor* at 1.57). Satan’s rejection of reason, which both foreshadows and in fact directly instigates the blinding of the human *mens* in the Fall shortly to be narrated, means that his violent descent from heaven represents a loss of mind as well as of station. In the same way, Adam and Eve will surrender their reason and with it their

Prudentius rejects this account on the basis of Christian *ratio* (180). Capponi (1967b) 159-60 sharply criticizes Satan’s portrayal here as a failed attempt at didacticism, an effort to paint a vivid, moralizing picture about the dangers of pride which is at variance with logic, the biblical account, and Avitus’ own rejection of rivolous embellishment (the province of pagan poets). But Capponi misses the mark: the absurd negation of Satan’s own intelligence is precisely the point and illustrates one of Avitus’ central themes: that *furor*, the power of sin, vitiates angelic (as well as human) intelligence entirely because it is fundamentally out of harmony with the creation order—with divinely ordained reality.

⁸²⁶ Shea (1997) 22.

⁸²⁷ Schippers (1945) 47 notes the parallel.

exalted abode (in Eden) under God’s judgment. Satan “paid the first penalties,” but not the last; humanity will follow his lead. He is determined to incise this unholy affinity into the still-malleable heart of the new world: *sit comes excidii, subeat consortia poenae...quae me iactantia regno | depulit, haec hominem paradisi limine pellet* (111, 115-6).

For Avitus, the Devil is the archetypal teacher of wickedness: whatever evil will be done on the earth is learned from him (*nam quidquid toto dirum committitur orbe | iste docet*, 2.57-8). The poet’s vision leaps ahead to the time when Satan will delude all mankind with empty promises just as he deluded himself (68), and will fire their spirits with the same kindled passion, the same *furor*, which prompted his own mad apostasy (*protrahit ardentis obscena in gaudia visus*, 65; *accenditque animos* 67). He has been transformed into something savage (*saevus*, 73), like the ferocious visages of the animals he can impersonate (*saeva ferarum | ...ora*, 60-1). The blameless, instinctual *furor* which characterizes the humble beasts now cloaks the profoundly immoral, profoundly willful *furor* he has embraced. *Furor*-as-sin, a hitherto-unknown quality, has entered the universe for the first time. Later, as punishment, Satan will be bound by “living chains” (*viventia vincula*, 3.125) in the sinuous body of the beast he has defiled, and will lose all claim on the upright posture that distinguishes the noble creatures (including man) from the base (3.121-5).⁸²⁸ Because of his spiritual *furor* he will mimic the bestial *furor* of the innocent animals, a humiliating penalty for a creature endowed, like man, with reason.

⁸²⁸ Satan’s *vincula* are not in any meaningful way parallel to the chains that bind Vergil’s *Furor impius*, representing the tempter’s judicial degradation rather than true restraint of his evil; as Avitus’ next book makes clear, the Devil’s temptations wreak unfettered havoc on the human race, which is like helpless prey (*praeda*, 3.402) before him without Christ.

When he comes upon the happy couple he burns with jealousy, and as in some of the patristic texts we discussed earlier,⁸²⁹ *livor* is closely connected to the source of his mad rage (2.81-2):

Commovit subitum zeli scintilla vaporem
excrevitque calens in saeva incendia livor.

A spark of jealousy produced a sudden ardor in his breast
and his seething malice rose to a violent boil.

At the root of this resentment is a galling *translatio imperii*: earth now possesses the heaven Satan has lost (*caelum terra tenet...nobisque perit translata potestas*, 93-4), though he still maintains some power to do harm, what he calls his *virtus nocendi* (96), a phrase that recalls Allecto's notorious *mille nocendi artes* (*Aen.* 7.338),⁸³⁰ as well as perhaps the *vis...nocendi* of the confederation of demons called *Legio* in Juvenecus.⁸³¹ Like Vergil's Juno,⁸³² Satan broods over past injury (*hoc recolens casumque premens in corde recentem*, 85) and vows to do all the damage he can to the new imperial race (*fons generis pereat*, 103).⁸³³ His explicit goal is to preempt the Vergilian *sine fine* promises made to Adam and Eve by God and to nip their fruitfulness in the bud before they can fill the earth with immortal offspring (*priusquam | fecundam mittant aeterna in saecula prolem*, 101). A line which echoes Juvenecus promises a distressingly mutable world, the gloomy state of affairs that the Constantinian poet had

⁸²⁹ Cf. p. 197-9 above.

⁸³⁰ Deproost (1996) 54. Avitus reuses the Vergilian phrase *verbatim* in his *De Virginitate*, again with reference to Satan: *mille nocendi artes stimulis inflammat amaris* (512).

⁸³¹ *Evangeliorum Libri* 2.59.

⁸³² See the detailed comparison in Simonetti Abbolito (1982) 62-4.

⁸³³ Deproost (1996) 55. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 199n5 also links the intense malice of Satan's speech here to the venomous diatribe of Juno at *Aen.* 7.293-322. Cf. especially Juno's acknowledgment that her power to do harm is limited, though she will do her worst, with Satan's more confident *non tamen [virtus] in totum perit: pars magna retentat | vim propriam summaque cluit virtute nocendi* (2.95-6). Hoffman (2005) xlviin47 expresses the similarity of the two figures according to Satan's role as "Gegenspieler Gottes" more generally.

recognized two centuries earlier in his famous preface: *immortale nihil terra prodire sinendum est* (102).⁸³⁴

In an immediate sense Satan succeeds in dealing a mortal blow to the race, but his murderous *furor* portends its own defeat. *Cuncti feriantur in uno*, he says, “let them all be struck in this one man,” meaning Adam (105), and indeed Adam fulfills (or rather inverts) the familiar epic typology of the “synecdochic hero” who suffers for his people:⁸³⁵ the first man will bring suffering on his whole people, not deliver them from it. But in the same line another man, the Messiah to whom Avitus’ attention is constantly attuned, is likely represented too; all will be “stricken” with God’s judgment in him, and thus restoration will become possible. This is not the only place Satan’s own language recoils on him. His *virtus nocendi* is later echoed ironically by God in the aftermath of the Fall in Book 3, when sentence is pronounced on the serpent. Despite the Devil’s best efforts, the woman’s seed will continue into future ages and hand on from generation to generation the *vota nocendi* of their hatred of the deceiver (3.134). Like Dido, Eve will have her avenger; she will crush Satan’s head (3.135-6), a prophecy often understood in Avitus’ time to refer to Christ (the so-called *protoevangelium*).⁸³⁶ The cosmic warfare adumbrated by such moments, moving back and forth from creation to Christ, transcends the near-universal scope of classical epic, even as it pays homage to its generic predecessors. Avitus’ drama of chaos and order embraces all mankind, all time, and every realm (Heaven, Earth, and

⁸³⁴ Cf. *Evangeliorum Libri praef. 1: Immortale nihil mundi conpage tenetur*. Another reminiscence in Avitus may occur 9 lines earlier when Satan complains of man’s unsuitability for universal rule: *vili conpage levata | regnat humus* (2.93-4).

⁸³⁵ The phrase is from Hardie (1993) 4. Hardie observes in passing that “the line of such heroes leads eventually to the Adam and Christ of *Paradise Lost*”; again, late antique biblical epic supplies a missing link.

⁸³⁶ On the history of the *protoevangelium* in Latin patristic interpretation see J.P. Lewis (1991) 310-313, Michl (1952), and Ojewole (2002); for its intra-textual meaning in the Bible see Hamilton (2006). It must be admitted that there is a certain ambiguity in Avitus’ text here. Pace Shea (1997) 30, who inexplicably claims that “Avitus...is quick to note that the final words of this sentence constitute the first signification of Christ’s incarnation,” the text itself does not explicitly endorse the typological reading, though we may guess that Avitus probably had it in mind.

Hell) by necessity: the biblical story could not be (re-)told any other way. *Mens* and *furor*, in both men and gods, lie at its heart.

Satan's primary weapon for assaulting the virtue of Adam and Eve is *astus* (2.118), knowledge perverted into craftiness. His claim to secret understanding is introduced under the cloak of feigned ignorance: "I wish to know," (*scire velim*, 159), he says, who commanded Eve not to eat from one particular tree. All dominion has been given to her, and dissembling his own *livor* he protests *nec equidem invideo, miror magis* (157); but who is it that begrudges (*invidet*, 160) their present prosperity by issuing such a prohibition? Here Avitus abruptly interrupts his own narrative to castigate Eve's naïveté: *Quis stupor, o mulier, mentem caligine clausit...?* (162).⁸³⁷ The line sounds like other "calling to account" moments in Latin epic, including of course the long chain of *Quis furor...?* interrogations that ranges from Vergil to Silius.⁸³⁸ It is Eve's *mens*, her capacity to reason, that has failed, as in similar scenes when epic characters are alarmed by the rash actions of a person gone mad. How could she deign to converse with a brute beast—the poet flogs the point with *brutus* (163), *belva* (164), and *monstrum* (165) in quick succession⁸³⁹—without feeling shame, or recognizing that it was more than what it appeared to be? Avitus knows that its brutish appearance masks a much more dangerous kind of *furor* than the dumb gnashing of the wild animals. How could Eve fail to see it? She has already begun to fall under the influence of Satan's *furor*, his failure to grasp the reality of the created order. Unlike Adam, she has found a suitable partner among the beasts,⁸⁴⁰ and she partakes of his *caecitas mentis*.

⁸³⁷ On this apostrophe see the discussion in Homey (2009) 483-88.

⁸³⁸ See Chapter 2 above.

⁸³⁹ Noted also by Deproost (1996) 56n42 and Homey (2009) 487.

⁸⁴⁰ Homey (2009) 487.

Eve praises the serpent's eloquence at once, marveling at its *suavia dicta* (169); she is ready almost immediately to recognize him as *doctissimus* (181) and to assume that she and Adam are *rudes* by comparison (182).⁸⁴¹ Taking full advantage of the opening, Satan tells Eve that God is deliberately seeking to keep the humans' minds imprisoned and blind, like those of the animals. With outrageous temerity he parodies the very rationale that *Sapientia* had given for man's existence in the first place, twisting her words from the first book: *Quid iuvat ornatum conprendi aut cernere mundum | et caecas misero concludi carcere mentes?* (189-90); what good is such a beautiful creation without a properly enlightened witness to behold and appreciate it?⁸⁴² Satan's reasoning subtly perverts the creation order by drawing false conclusions from true premises: since even the animals have eyes, Eve ought to raise her mind to supernal heights by eating the fruit, in keeping with her superior nature and upright posture (194-5). The tempter promises true vision (261-3):

Mox purgata tuo facient te lumina visu
 aequiperare deos, sic sancta ut noxia nosse,
 iniustum recto, falsum discernere vero.

Your eyes will soon become clear and make your vision equal to that of gods, in knowing what is holy as well as what is evil, in distinguishing between right and wrong, truth and falsehood.

Human disobedience will ironically result in total blindness, however, as Eve's *mens* is thrown into chaos by waves of conflicting emotion (*rapiunt contraria mentem | hinc amor, inde metus,* 221-2).⁸⁴³

⁸⁴¹ Homey (2009) 495-6 aptly observes that by adopting this posture and exchanging God for the Devil as her teacher, Eve "stands the divine order on its head."

⁸⁴² Compare from Book 1: *Ergo ubi conpletis fulserunt omnia rebus, | ornatuque suo perfectus constitit orbis...placet ipsa tuenti | artifici factura suo laudatque creator | dispositum pulchro, quem condidit, ordine mundum. | Tum demum tali sapientia voce locuta est: | En praeclara nitet mundano machina cultu. | Et tamen impletum perfectis omnibus orbem | quid iuvat ulterius nullo cultore teneri?* (1.44-5, 48-54). Among Avitus' commentators only Vinay (1937) 448 comments on the parallel.

⁸⁴³ A similar line occurs in a similar context in Avitus' *De Virginitate* 687: *hinc furor, inde fides*. Deproost (1996) 65 sees in certain verbal parallels here the divided mind of not only Dido but also of Aeneas as a model for Eve.

At last the serpent's bestial conquest (*ferum...triumphum, victoria saeva*, 234) is accomplished and she is won over. It only remains to corrupt Adam as well. His *firma mens* (140), what God later calls his *sensus virilis* (3.112), avails not at all; in fact it hastens their total ruin. As Eve approaches her husband, Avitus emphasizes the peculiarly feminine nature of her madness (*femineos...furores*, 239), though rather less pointedly than does Proba.⁸⁴⁴ This madness seems to consist not only in the unscrupulous use of her erotic influence—Adam comes to her seeking *coniugis amplexus atque oscula casta* (237), implying a certain Dido-esque susceptibility⁸⁴⁵ of which she takes advantage—but also presumption and the usurpation of male leadership. She proudly vaunts her superior knowledge (*non hoc tibi nescia donum | sed iam docta feram*, 244-5), pointedly challenging Adam's masculine pride: "it is a disgrace for the male mind (*mentem...virilem*) to hesitate over what I, a woman, have been able to do" (247-8). Like the dutiful captain of an imperial race, effectively reversing Proba's portrayal of the couple as Dido and Aeneas *immemores regnorum*, she raises before him the prospect of future glory: *cur prospera vota moraris | venturoque diu tempus furaris honori?* (250-1). It is a sort of perverse incitement to *conscia virtus*, a moment that justifies the epithet *primaeva virago*, bestowed on

Like the former, she gives way before *amor*; unlike the latter, she fails to obey a divine command with pious *metus*. On this line and its classical antecedents see also Hecquet-Noti (2007) 6 and Simonetti Abbolito (1982) 66-7.

⁸⁴⁴ In her commentary Hecquet-Noti (1999) 218n2 links Eve's *furor* to "les traits d'une femme possédée dans la tradition des Bacchantes," perhaps following Vinay (1937) 449 who calls it "un'audacia bacchica," in my opinion with no justification in this passage. Hecquet-Noti observes that the phrase *feminei...furores* occurs in the *Epigramma* (54) of Paulinus of Béziers, a 5th-century bishop, "pour désigner le péché d'Ève" but the phrase seems actually to have a much more general meaning there. In a later article, Hecquet-Noti (2007) 11 shifts the emphasis of these lines to a picture of Eve as possessing "les traits d'une femme en proie à un furor qui évoque l'égarément de l'amoureuse séduite puis délaissée." Döpp (2009) 89 likewise highlights Eve's affinity with Dido as an exponent of "Liebeswahnsinn," corresponding to what I have termed amatory *furor*. It hard to see, however, how Eve's seduction of Adam marks *her* as possessed by a Dido-like passion; if anything it should be Adam who is the victim of the *amor-furor* pairing here, though Avitus leaves this implicit.

⁸⁴⁵ Deproost (1996) 67 notes the Vergilian parallel (*Aen.* 1.687: *cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet*) observing, however, that Adam seeks out these kisses innocently whereas Dido is already under the sway of *furor* (like Eve, the object of the *oscula* in Avitus). Shea (1997) 25 sees Adam as "predisposed...to temptation and compliance" by his love.

her later in the book (405) with heavy irony. Eve clearly challenges her mate to refute the charge of cowardice (*praecedere forte timebas*, 248) and he is thus tricked into displaying the masculine virtue of *constantia* at precisely the wrong moment, to his own destruction (*constanter rapit inconstans dotale venenum*, 259).⁸⁴⁶ *Furor* co-opts the very essence of manhood (*vir-tus*) in the first man, and as often in classical epic manly daring compounds the destructive effects of mad passion.⁸⁴⁷

Rising to meet the challenge, Adam fearlessly tastes the apple with less hesitation than Eve had (256-7), and the consequence is immediate and paradoxical. The eyes of both are opened by a strange new light: *ecce repentinus fulgor circumstetit ora | lugendoque novos respersit lumine visus* (263-4). This light is an ominous perversion of the “light of reason” that shone within Adam at his creation in Book 1, and in fact signifies (as it does in Proba) the loss of humanity’s pristine *ratio* and its collective descent into spiritual blindness. Avitus again intrudes on the narrative to confirm their new moral and mental darkness, even as they see more than they did before (265-70):

Non caecos natura dedit nec luminis usu
privatam faciem peperit perfectio formae.
nunc mage caecus eris, cui iam non sufficit illud
noscere, quod tantus voluit te nosse creator.
ad vitam vobis cernendi facta facultas:

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 220n2: “sa fermeté de caractère, habituellement considérée comme une qualité, se marque dans le geste fatal qui conduit l’humanité dans le péché.”

⁸⁴⁷ At this juncture I demur from the view of Hecquet-Noti (1999) 46, which sees Adam as “a sort of anti-Aeneas” insofar as he is “full of the *furor impius* that Vergil denounces,” and which views the story of humanity’s Fall as an “anti-Aeneid” or Lucanian epic. To my mind this is overstatement. Avitus’ poem does not so much set Adam and Aeneas up as opposites—the one devoid of *pietas*, the other its flawless exemplar—as it draws them together for readers of the *SHG* in “une conjugaison de valeurs esthétiques et spirituelles” (Deproost [1997] 91). At times both represent, in different spiritual contexts but in a similar way, the best of human virtue as well as the tragedy of moral blindness. According to Roberts (1985) 225 the hero of the *SHG* is not Adam or Noah or Moses individually but humanity itself, which is perpetually torn between the destructive dictates of *furor* and the beauty of *virtus*, *pietas*, and *fides*. One might even say that Avitus’ Adam proves himself to be the true ancestor of Vergil’s Aeneas inasmuch as both men illustrate the “crooked timber” of fallen human nature (Kant, cited in Tarrant [2012] 29), the very legacy of Adam himself. As Tarrant notes, “‘optimist interpretations’” of the *Aeneid*—and I suspect Avitus probably fell into this camp—“can tolerate a high degree of imperfection in human actors” (29n118).

vos etiam letum vestra sed sponte videtis.

It was not Nature, you see, that caused blindness in mankind. No, our perfect species did not bring forth faces deprived of the use of light. But rather now, Adam, you will be blind, you who were not satisfied to know what your Almighty Creator wanted you to know. The power of sight was created for you for use in life, but now, by your own choice, you will look upon death as well.

The *furor* of Satan, driven by *livor* to seek companions in destruction, tempts humanity with the promise of celestial knowledge and true sight but delivers only a permanently debilitating *caecitas spiritus*, a blindness of the mind and heart.⁸⁴⁸ Healing will come through the Christ who waits just beyond the horizon of the *SHG*, but all of human history is inescapably implicated in the aftereffects of the first sin.

Avitus emphasizes the chronological reach of the consequences of the Fall by leap-frogging forward through Genesis to the story of “another Eve,” Lot’s wife, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he presents as a mirror image of the events in Eden. After relating how Eve’s unholy longing to look into hidden matters gave birth to a general *spiritus erroris* which “rages” (*bacchatur*, 321) among all those devoted to magical arts, the poet tells the story of two cities utterly devoted to transgressing God’s laws. “A burning passion for sinning had inflamed” Sodom and Gomorrah (*peccandi...fervor succenderat urbes*, 329) to such an extent that they became unable to distinguish right from wrong, demonstrating the lie in Satan’s promise to grant Adam and Eve knowledge of good and evil. The cities, full of every kind of evil and especially of *lascivus furor*—unbridled lustful passion—provoke extreme divine wrath. God rages (*fureret*, 339) against them and warns Lot that their destruction is imminent. Once again, vision, *ratio*, and moral knowledge are central (360-1):

vos nescite malum; poenas, quicumque subibit
aspiciat mortisque suae spectacula secum
qui meruere, ferant...

⁸⁴⁸ On this paradox see Hecquet-Noti (1999) 221n6. Cf. also Nides (1993) 127: Avitus’ poem is “consistent with a world view traditionally professing man’s incapacity for grasping the world’s great mysteries and which is nevertheless capable of refuting those who claim to have attained such knowledge.”

Be ignorant of the evil. Let him who will suffer the punishment look upon it, and let those who have deserved it bear off with themselves the spectacle of their own death...

Once more a dark *caligo* settles over the scene (365) and the *callidus serpens*, “who knows how to influence a woman’s mind” (374) avoids the *animus virilis* (here of Lot) and induces mad desire in a fallible Eve to know what she ought not to know. Seized by a *dira cupido* (382), Lot’s wife looks back to see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, prompting an exclamation from the narrator at her senseless *furor*: *O demens animi!* (378). This neatly parallels Avitus’ earlier apostrophe to Eve, *Quis stupor...?* (168).⁸⁴⁹ With eyes wide open Lot’s wife is transformed into a pillar of salt, suffused—and here Avitus introduces an original detail—with an unearthly light (*horrendo perlucens...nitore*, 393), presumably cast by the conflagration before her. This lurid glow, together with the emphasis on her eyes (391), parallels the “grievous illumination” which envelops Adam and Eve immediately after their Fall and draws a second contrast with the light of reason that had dawned at the creation the first man. Just as the first human beings forfeited the godlike glory of *ratio* in a spasm of *furor* in Eden, imitating the insanity of the Devil before them, so Lot’s wife, overcome by the same nefarious forces, loses both her mind and her vision by giving in to sin. The failure of her wits draws an irresistible pun from Avitus at her expense: *plus salsum sine mente sapit* (398).

In following the example of Satan’s un-reason, his mad rejection of the creation order and of submission to God, Adam and Eve subject the entire human race to the hegemony of *furor* and deface the image of the Almighty imprinted upon their very nature. The book closes with the Devil’s gleeful recognition of this new reality, one of Avitus’ most striking innovations on his biblical material. In a final taunt, Satan claims ownership of the human couple and their progeny

⁸⁴⁹ Homey (2009) 491.

by right. “Dissimulating no longer,” he issues a triumphant parting shot, like an epic hero
vaunting over a defeated enemy (2.413-21):⁸⁵⁰

quidquid scire meum potuit, iam credite vestrum est;
omnia monstravi sensumque per abdita duxi
et quodcumque malum sollers natura negabat,
institui dextrisque dedi coniungere laevum.
Istinc perpetua vosmet mihi sorte dicavi.
Nec deus in vobis, quamquam formaverit ante,
iam plus iuris habet: teneat, quod condidit ipse;
quod docui, meum est; maior mihi portio restat.
Multa creatori debetis, plura magistro.

Whatever knowledge was within my grasp, trust now that it is yours. I have shown you everything, have guided your senses through what was hidden, and whatever evil ingenious nature had denied to you, this I have taught, allowing man to join left and right, foul and fitting. And so your fate is sealed forever and I have consecrated you to myself. Nor does God, although He formed you earlier, have greater rights in you. Let Him hold what He Himself made. What I taught is mine, and the greater portion remains with me. You owe much to your Creator—but more to your teacher.

On this bleak note the book ends, with the terrible acknowledgment that Satan has effected “a kind of cognitive revolution,” the birth of *furor* in the human race.⁸⁵¹ There is a strong hint in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah about what is coming in Book 3. In Avitus’ retelling of that episode God had “raged” in holy *furor* against the sins of the polluted cities, his wrath against evil providing a stark counterpoint to the Sodomites’ passionate frenzy for wrongdoing. Avitus’ reader is led by the episode’s explicit parallelism with the story of Adam and Eve to expect that God’s wrath will “rage” against their sin, too; they have aligned themselves with the Devil’s party, as that malevolent spirit is only too pleased to point out. Surely more divine *furor* is yet to come.

As I noted at the outset of this study, it seems unlikely that there is any true polysemy at work in God’s *furor* here.⁸⁵² It straightforwardly communicates his justified anger at human sin.

⁸⁵⁰ Deproost (1996) 70-71.

⁸⁵¹ Shea (1997) 28. See also Nodes (1993) 127.

⁸⁵² See p. 3 above.

We have now seen the same thing in patristic texts and especially the Old Testament prophets of the *Vetus Latina* in Chapter 3, and can answer in the negative our earlier question about whether or not Avitus' diction would have seemed startling by the literary standards of his age. But this does not mean that we should reject the invitation, posed by their shared context, to relate God's *furor* to that of the Sodomites, of Lot's wife, of Adam and Eve, and even of Satan.

Indeed, for Avitus *furor* is the only possible divine response to the madness of impiety, and so we may almost call it "homeopathic" *furor* in the sense that the word designates both an indispensable tool of universal order and the intransigence it seeks to control. We may almost call it that, but not quite; the homeopathy exists really only on the verbal level. Aside from the repetition of the word itself, divine *furor* differs sharply from the human (or demonic) variety in nearly every way, and in this the tradition of biblical epic diverges sharply from Vergil and his successors, who so often seem deliberately to blur the boundaries between agents of universal order and cosmic dissolution. In Christian epic divine *furor* denotes emotion, but in a being traditionally understood to be impassive and incapable, by definition, of excess; it never represents a private *virtus nocendi* but is purely judicial in character; it is fully compatible with pristine *ratio* and has nothing in common with the disordered *mens*. In Avitus' poem it most likely appears under the influence of the Latin scriptures, though it is not impossible that Proba's *Cento* or Dracontius' *De Laudibus Dei*, which respectively suggest and employ *furor* as a descriptor of God's wrath, exercised some influence.⁸⁵³

Yet the *furor* of the Sodomites and the *furor* of God have at least this much in common: each suggests, from opposite ends as it were, the cosmic polarity at the heart of the Christian worldview. This is a structural opposition not so much of balanced powers—the impression

⁸⁵³ For Dracontius' use of *furor* of God's wrath see e.g. *De Laudibus Dei* 1.100 and 106; 2.809-11. I hope to treat these passages in the expanded version of this project.

which often arises from the endless jockeying of divine rivals in classical epic, one which is decisively ruled out by the Christian doctrine of omnipotence—as of human possibilities and human destiny. Avitus’ retelling of the parable of Dives and Lazarus in the third book, in which a sharp contrast is drawn between the fate of the wicked and the righteous, brings this dynamic to the fore:

The time and space of earth are morally undetermined, open to grace and the workings of the human will. The map of Heaven and Hell is, as the parable teaches, a map of morally closed places where the destinies of their inhabitants are forever fixed.⁸⁵⁴

Heaven and Hell, the kingdoms of righteousness and of spiritual rebellion respectively, are unequal in power and unequal in the allegiance they command among the teeming masses of humanity. Heaven’s power cannot be challenged; Hell’s appeal cannot be denied. There is a symmetry here, but as the biblical epics often make clear—one thinks especially of Juvenalus’ preface—it is temporary, only as enduring as the earth, more apparent than real in the light of eternity. In the end, *furor* will not merely be chained, perhaps to escape and work woe once more. It will be incapacitated forever, eternally tormented in the inexhaustible fire. As Avitus says (3.46-65), this is the ultimate reality to which the sudden obliteration of Sodom points.

The close proximity of these two different senses of *furor* in the same passage, whether or not Avitus intended his readers to mark it consciously, can illustrate in miniature much that changed and much that remained the same in late antiquity in the tradition of Latin epic madness. At the beginning of the fifth century in the Christian West, *furor* still delineates the shifting boundaries of cosmic conflict, and still articulates a peculiarly Roman obsession with the frailty of order on earth. That the Heaven and Hell which frame the contest and which receive the victors and the vanquished resemble their classical forbears only superficially does not make the

⁸⁵⁴ Shea (1997) 32.

fact of resemblance itself any less remarkable. The extraordinary compatibility of the diction of classical epic with Christian ideas about the universe is easy to appreciate in passages like Avitus' Sodom story even when late antique innovation—like the holy *furor* of God—is most apparent.

III. Books 3 & 4: Humanity and the Cosmos

With the discovery of Adam and Eve's sin, the *furor Dei* that might be expected based on the judgment of God in the Sodom episode never quite materializes. Avitus is more concerned to develop his picture of human *furor* than to explore divine wrath—no doubt in keeping with his primary interest in the history of redemption—and in fact divine *furor* is explicitly mentioned only once more in the poem.⁸⁵⁵ Instead the third book begins with a renewed emphasis on the *furor* of human disobedience, compounded now by Adam and Eve's painful consciousness of sin and the resulting shame. Attempting to cover their nakedness, both spiritual and physical, Adam fashions fig-leaf garments, but this futile attempt to dispel the guilt of humanity's altered state is attributed by Avitus to the same *fallax insania* that prompted them to eat of the forbidden tree in the first place (17-18).⁸⁵⁶ This insanity is personified as the cause of their miserable Fall and its consequences: it snatched away (*rapit*) their wits with the cursed apple, stripped them naked (*nudos | reddidit*), and now clothes them “more oppressively” with a slender branch (*textit*, 19). The image of the *arbor* allows the poet to link the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fig tree, the Cross, and even Moses' bronze serpent in a single typological meditation on the

⁸⁵⁵ See pp. 286-7 below.

⁸⁵⁶ Hecquet-Noti (1999) 259n5 notes that this phrase may recall the description of Satan as a *fallax hostis* at 2.37.

effects of *furor* and their ultimate cure, the *medicamina vitae* administered by Christ the Healer (20-6).⁸⁵⁷ The counterpart to the reckless madness of sin will come in the form of a *novissimus Adam*, who will be symbolized by (of all things) another *serpens*, a token of salvation which will redeem even the disgraced *forma* of the lowest of animals (24-6).

God's arrival in the garden coincides with the dewy evening breezes (3, 27) and the guilty pair are immediately aware of his coming with the winds.⁸⁵⁸ The sunset becomes a "sad and loathsome light" (*tristi...luce perosa*, 30) to them and they fear the remnants of daylight.⁸⁵⁹ They long for death, as will guilty mankind at the far more violent and terrifying advent of Judgment Day, when the world will be lit by a sudden fearful radiance (43) and the last trumpet will terrify the earth. Avitus takes the opportunity to give a detailed and harrowing description of the future fires of Hell, separated from Heaven by chaos (48); the effect is impressive, but the imagined scene confers by contrast a sense of restraint on the comparatively subdued confrontation which follows. God finds Adam and Eve rushing headlong (*ruunt*) through the shadows, vainly trying to hide—Proba had represented them running away (*ruent*) in response to God's wrath, not in anticipation of it—moving like those driven by *furor*.⁸⁶⁰ He rebukes them with a frightening

⁸⁵⁷ On exegetical precedents for these typologies see Hoffmann (2005) 41-2 and Hecquet-Noti (1999) 261n4. For a similar accumulation of significations around trees, the serpent, and the cross via Vergilian reminiscence in Proba, see Cullhed (2015) 152-4.

⁸⁵⁸ Hoffmann (2005) 44 points out that the mild climate is one of many features that mark out Eden as a *locus amoenus*—though of course it will not so continue for much longer.

⁸⁵⁹ Hoffmann (2005) 46: "Die Flucht vor dem Licht (vv. 30-1) ist nicht nur die Flucht vor der Sonne als Aufdeckerin des Verborgenen, sondern auch die Flucht vor Gott als dem Erforscher der Herzen, dessen Kennzeichen das Licht ist."

⁸⁶⁰ *Ruere* is habitually coupled with descriptions of *furor* in Latin poetry. Cf. e.g. Vergil *Geo.* 3.244. *Aen.* 5.694-5, 10.385-6; Ovid *Met.* 3.715-16, 8.343; *Consol. ad Liv.* 317-18, 373; *Ilias Latina* 557; Valerius Flaccus *Arg.* 1.698-9; Silius Italicus *Pun.* 13.216-17; Juvenecus 2.4-5; Prudentius *Psych.* 351-2. It is also worth noting that Avitus' exegetical model, Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, interpolates something like *furor* at this point in the biblical narrative: "*Et absconderunt se Adam et mulier eius a facie Domini in medio ligno quod est in paradiso.*" *Cum Deus avertit intrinsecus faciem suam, et fit homo conturbatus; non miremur haec fieri, quae similia sunt demenciae, per nimium pudorem ac timorem...* (XI.33.44).

voice (*terribili...increpat ore*), questioning Adam about his behaviour (74-5).⁸⁶¹ This is, to be sure, a more muted response than Proba's alarming *procul! procul este profani* and *dira fremens*.⁸⁶² God asks "whence comes this new vision?", meaning Adam and Eve's new consciousness of their nakedness, and laments the breaking of the covenant between them and himself (*foedere rupto*, 85) on which the order of creation depends,⁸⁶³ giving Adam a chance to explain his actions.

Rather than seize the chance to prostrate himself as a *supplex* before the Lord (94), Adam instead launches a bitter attack on Eve as the source of his misfortune. *Miser* but not yet *miserabilis* (95), he is "roused by the consciousness of his sin and kindled by swelling complaints"⁸⁶⁴ (*erigitur sensu tumidisque accensa querellis*, 96). As Hoffmann notes, *erigere* and *rectus* are key words in Avitus, and here the original heavenward orientation of the human body (*accipiat [homo] rectos in caelum tollere vultus: | factorem quaerat proprium*, 1.70-1), which was supposed to incline man to seek his Creator, now suffers a spiritual inversion under the malicious influence of Satan, who had deceitfully urged Eve *mentemque supernis | insere et erectos in caelum porrigere sensus* (2.194-5).⁸⁶⁵ Adam seems to renew his earlier *furor* under the influence of *superbia*, which prompts "mad words" (*insanas...voces*, 97) against his companion and by implication against God himself: "I was too trusting, but then, you taught me to trust, giving me marriage..." (103-4). Once again it is a rebellious rejection of the creation order, including the

⁸⁶¹ For the exegetical background and a comparison with the treatment of this scene in other biblical epic poets, see Hoffmann (2005) 78.

⁸⁶² Hoffmann (2007) 142 sees in God's forbearance "a tantalising glimpse of what might have been" had Adam humbled himself immediately.

⁸⁶³ Hoffmann (2005) 83.

⁸⁶⁴ This translation is mostly identical to Shea's (1997) 92.

⁸⁶⁵ Hoffmann (2005) 89. See also Hecquet-Noti (1999) 271n4.

divinely established marriage covenant (*foedera*, 107), which prompts the language of epic madness in Avitus' poem.⁸⁶⁶ Adam's creator is finally incensed (*commotus*) against his creature because of the man's "hardened mind" (*rigida mens*, 108)—a corruption of the *firma mens* which should have conquered the temptation in Eden—but first castigates Eve in explicitly feminine terms: she is a *deceptrix femina* who has "cast Adam's masculine good sense down from its citadel" (111-12),⁸⁶⁷ a second condemnation of what Avitus had earlier called her uniquely *feminei furores*, so dangerous to human *ratio*. Eve in turn blames the serpent, against whom God pronounces the first sentence; next he is *commotus* against Eve herself, and finally Adam receives his *terribilis...sententia* (154).

This includes the promise that the earth itself will "follow [Adam's] example, rebellious" and resist cultivation (160).⁸⁶⁸ The broken *foedus* between man and God unleashes a chain reaction which results in the rupture of the bond between man and creation as well.⁸⁶⁹ The Fall releases a previously restrained *malis laxata potestas* ("power loosed for evils")⁸⁷⁰ which inheres in matter itself, a sort of photo-negative alternative cosmos or rather *un-cosmos*, what Shea calls the "underside" of creation's "longing for its divine destiny"; taking our cue from Hardie we might simply call it Hell on earth.⁸⁷¹ The symptoms of cosmic dissolution flood the earth: as in

⁸⁶⁶ Hecquet-Noti (1999) 153n3 notes the parallel between the *foedus* of the first marriage and the covenant between man and nature.

⁸⁶⁷ Hoffmann (2005) 95 explains: "*arce* ist der Kopf als Sitz der Vernunft gemeint," citing a parallel use at 1.82-4, where God fashions the human head.

⁸⁶⁸ Cf. Hoffmann (2005) 123 for a close parallel in Marius Victorius' *Alethia* (1.514-5): *tu mihi desisti mente inservire fideli: | nec tibi terra fidem servet.*

⁸⁶⁹ Hoffmann (2005) 124: "Nach dem Sündenfall findet die Auflehnung des Menschen gegen Gott ihre Entsprechung in der Feindseligkeit der Natur gegenüber dem Menschen."

⁸⁷⁰ On the translation of this obscure phrase see Hoffmann (2005) 217, who compares the renderings of Shea and Hecquet-Noti and concludes that *malis* is most likely a dative of advantage here.

⁸⁷¹ Shea (1997) 22.

Proba's *Cento* in the same context, disease, pain, and poison spread abroad (316-19).⁸⁷² The beasts which had laid aside their natural *furor* in Book 1 under the covenant of man's dominion are now awoken to a new kind of violence, and shaking off their fear they rage (*saevire*) and declare war (*pugna*) on their former masters (320-1). Their suddenly *conscia virtus*—a heroic tag remarkably repurposed here, now an instrument of Satan's *virtus nocendi*—arms them for battle with man, red in *unguis, dens, ungula, cornu* (322).⁸⁷³ The elements themselves strive with one another in violating the former *leges* and *fides* which bound them to serve and not to harm mankind (323-4); cosmic consequences like this attend on the catastrophic battle between Jupiter and the Titans in Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* (*paene reluctatis iterum pugnantia rebus | rupissent elementa fidem...*, 1.42-5).⁸⁷⁴ The sea, which had also submitted its raging to the welfare of man in the first book, swells with new agitation, as earth and sky turn on each other in internecine conflict (325-32). A long catalogue of purely human evils, of which war is the worst, follows: mad strife is man's destiny, whether *arma fremunt* or, in the brief pauses in the fighting, *furere in certamina lites* (340, 349).⁸⁷⁵ Homer and Vergil themselves could not tell the full tale of human woe (336-7) which is synonymous with the unleashing of *furor* into the well-ordered world, no longer preserved in harmony by the double *foedus* between God, man, and creation.

⁸⁷² Hoffmann (2005) 217 notes the parallel in Proba.

⁸⁷³ On *conscia virtus* and its Vergilian heritage see Hoffman (2005) 222 and Hecquet-Noti (1999) 301n6. The armament of the animals is another apparent allusion to Marius Victorius (1.353): *armavitque genitor manu, cornu, pede, dente, veneno*; see the long discussion in Hoffmann (2005) 218-24.

⁸⁷⁴ Spotted by Hoffmann (2005) 225.

⁸⁷⁵ Costanza (1971) 35 suspects that Avitus' vivid picture of human depravity draws on the poet's own experience of the terrifying instability attendant on the Gothic invasions of his time, but such biographical inferences must remain pure speculation in the absence of any overt clues. Among others Shea (1997) also sometimes indulges this instinct (e.g. 33 on antediluvian litigiousness).

For relief Avitus turns again to Christ in an emotional apostrophe, incorporating New Testament examples of his mercy and drawing Book 3 to a close with a plea for a return to paradise, whence Satan's *livida ira* has driven humanity (362-425); Hecquet-Noti calls this "le passage central du *De gestis*."⁸⁷⁶ As in Juvencus, Christ's *virtus*, the *virtus verbi* (366), is the answer to earthly suffering and the only power that can rescue mankind from the power of *furor*.⁸⁷⁷ Like the man found beaten along the side of the road by the Good Samaritan, "we have sometimes been preyed upon by mad fury" (*nos fuimus quondam rabido data praeda furori*, 402) and stand in desperate need of healing.⁸⁷⁸ The narrator strikingly personalizes humanity's plight for himself and his readers and once again, as in the first and second books, he draws together OT history, NT redemption, and the present distresses of life on earth into a tightly interwoven thematic unity, through the center of which *furor* runs like a red thread.

In the fourth book, Avitus deepens his exploration of human depravity and the devastating consequences of the Fall in anticipation of the Flood, the book's main event. Throughout, the poet makes liberal use of striking paradox and antitheses, as for instance when he begins by characterizing the fallen world as pervaded by a perverse consensus in *vitia concordia* (4.1) and *legitimum...nefas* (2) even as each man behaves as a law unto himself at enmity with his neighbours (12-13). This aesthetic owes something to Lucan (cf. *concordia discors*, 1.98, and *ius datum sceleri*, 1.2),⁸⁷⁹ and just as *virtus* undergoes significant moral slippage in the *Bellum Civile* and becomes a potent symbol of the depravity of civil war, Avitus uses it ironically to articulate

⁸⁷⁶ Hecquet-Noti (1999) 41.

⁸⁷⁷ The phrase recurs in Avitus' poem *De Virginitate* as an epithet for Christ's teaching (638).

⁸⁷⁸ Cf. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 313n6: "Furor désigne le péché, dont les premiers effets ont été désignés précédemment par ce même terme (2.239). Ce vers est aussi un écho à 2.41, où est évoqué l'orgueil du diable."

⁸⁷⁹ Hecquet-Noti (2005) 34 notes that the oxymoron is also found in Horace (*Epist.* 1.12.19) and Ovid (*Met.* 1.433).

the high water mark of human sin, in a time when there was no justice at all (*ius adeo nullum*, 14). “Each was his own master when it came to the power of doing injury” (*sed princeps sibi quisque fuit virtute nocendi*, 18). It is as though one part of the semantic range of *virtus* (“power”) is deliberately set against another (“virtue”) in a sort of internally contradictory verbal equation, as if to say “in the time of the flood the only virtue was power, and power was no virtue.” It is also worth noting that the phrase *virtus nocendi* aligns fallen humanity with Satan, whom it also describes.⁸⁸⁰ The Devil’s only recourse in the face of God’s omnipotence is to gratify his malice by harming and marring what he cannot wholly destroy, and mankind thus fulfills the Devil’s confident boast at the end of Book 2 that he has so thoroughly corrupted the race that it now owes more to him than to its true Creator.

Humanity not only becomes more like the Devil, but also more like the irrational beasts, forsaking the upright *mens* with which it had been endowed: “the mind dedicated itself to descending to the ways of beasts and condemned men to lives of bestial behaviour” (21-22).⁸⁸¹ This includes tearing raw flesh like predators and drinking blood (23-27) as well as sexual debasement (*pecorum ritu*, 28). Mankind adopts a brutish senselessness (4.32-6):

Talibus ac tantis hominum gens improba gestis
silvestres animos naturae foedere rupto
induerat pulsaque simul ratione furebat
et deserta iacens domini caelestis imago
omne decus mentis turpi deiecerat actu.

The wicked race of men, with deeds of this kind and of this enormity, broke nature’s contract and took on a crude rustic ferocity, at once abandoning reason and growing wild. The image of their celestial Lord lay forsaken, and because of this foul rejection their minds were deprived of all dignity.

The beasts themselves were the first to take advantage of the broken covenant between man and animal, as a consequence of the rupture between man and God, but now humanity embraces the

⁸⁸⁰ On 4.13-14 Shea (1997) 36 remarks that “Avitus emphasizes humanity’s inheritance of Satan’s false autonomy.”

⁸⁸¹ Shea’s translation (1997) 100.

breach as well—ironically, by becoming more like their wild inferiors in fulfillment of God’s curse (*aequalis brutis...vita*, 3.170) and less like themselves.⁸⁸² The language of their transformation (*pulsa...ratione*, 34) mirrors that of the beasts’ original submission to man (*posito...furore*, 1.66); mankind has descended to their level and shamefully abased itself, adopting *furor* as a way of life (34) and putting off the image of God in which the distinctive glory of man had consisted. Yet at the same time, paradoxically, every generation grows increasingly adept and clever in the art of sinning, mimicking the combination of feral *insania* and wily *astus* that characterizes Avitus’ Satan (59-61):

Et tamen auctorem vitii culpaeque magistrum
doctior errorum lapsuque peritior omni
succiduae prolis crescens audacia vicit.

And yet, the increasing boldness of each generation’s decadent descendents grew even shrewder and more skilled with every lapse into error, as each man surpassed the inventor of his vice and the teacher of his crime.

The superficial appearance of *ratio* in human beings who have abandoned their reason in an excess of spiritual self-degradation is a theme familiar from patristic texts, which as we saw frequently expatiate on the same “foolishness of the wise.” The idea is ultimately a biblical one, but in Avitus’ hands it acquires the added dramatic weight of the long tradition of epic *furor*. This is accomplished partly through devices like the long simile which immediately follows the opening description of antediluvian depravity.⁸⁸³ Human sin is compared to a rushing mountain torrent, which descends from small beginnings to grow rapidly under its own ferocity (*saevior accessu longoque furore potitus*, 74) until it swallows up others streams, deluges farmland, and inundates the coastlands. Clearly the image anticipates the actual Flood which will occupy most

⁸⁸² Cf. Augustine *Civ. Dei* 14.13 (cited in Shea [1997] 31n21), who says that in seeking more, man became less: *plus autem appetendo minus est*.

⁸⁸³ See Hecquet-Noti (2005) 42n2 and 43n3 for classical sources of Avitus’ imagery.

of the book, and Avitus links the *insanae mentes* of fallen humanity to the unruly chaos of the floodwaters themselves (78). The vain labour of the Tower of Babel, a late manifestation of *furor* that is still imitated even after the Flood, results only in greater *discordia* among humanity (118-22) and the diverse peoples rage madly (*insana frementes*, 133) before the Lord, who eventually concludes that no recovery is possible for the *praeceps...mens* of man (141). Humanity has become an *effera gens*, subject to nothing but the ancient serpent (146-7); not content with the horror of original sin, each generation “strives to merit death in its own power” (*propria virtute*, 152).

Amid the flood of moral dissipation, a single man, Noah, preserves a *mens honesta*, a mind free from the derangement of the prevailing *furor* (168), though ironically his righteousness will seem like insanity to the wicked scoffers around him (328-9). As in several patristic texts, only the sane appear mad to those in the grip of *furor*. Noah’s family traits, inherited from his illustrious ancestor Enoch, who never tasted death, are *prisca fides et conscia virtus* (173),⁸⁸⁴ the opposite of the faithless and witless *virtus* of fallen man. A figurative anticipation of Christ, he will be a vessel of salvation for his people (189). He is a *heros* (222) who has learned to tread the love of pleasure underfoot (232), perhaps a partial fulfillment of God’s promise that Eve’s offspring would crush the serpent with its heel. Significantly, each time Noah is called a hero he also trembles with reverent fear (*perterritus heros*, 222; *heroem trepidum*, 285).⁸⁸⁵ Though his heroism is paradoxically expressed, like Aeneas’, by a failure of nerve before divine power (for instance in his fear before Gabriel, which echoes Aeneas’ frightened reception of Mercury at *Aen.* 4.279-80) his unwarlike humility marks him as a very different kind of *providus conditor*

⁸⁸⁴ Both expressions are Vergilian; Hecquet-Noti (2005) 55n4 remarks that “la *virtus* de Hénoch n’est pas le courage du héros épique, mais sa pureté morale.”

⁸⁸⁵ On Noah’s heroism see Deproost (1997) 30.

(344).⁸⁸⁶ In the catastrophe of cosmic dissolution, as the whole world totters (252),⁸⁸⁷ Noah will be a *secundus...auctor* of the human race, like Christ a new Adam (257), and for his sake God will temporarily restore the tame obedience of the animals. The angel Gabriel confirms this new dispensation with reassuring words (269-73):

Nec timeas, ne forte feros animantia motus
servent aut solitis praesumant rictibus iras.
foedus erit totis, quae discordantia profert
per varios natura modos, et pace fideli
parebit iussis, quidquid concluderis illic.

Do not be afraid that the animals will continue in their wild behaviour or angrily threaten with their jaws as they generally do. There will be a compact among all whom nature has made quarrelsome in one way or another, and whatever animal you enclose there, trusting and in peace, will obey your commands.

The effects of Adam and Eve's *furor* on creation will be undone for a time, and the old *fides* of the *foedus* between man and animals will restrain bestial savagery—except of course for that of the serpent, of whose propensity to do harm (*nocere*, 279) this second Adam must still beware, warned by his ancestor's example (274-81). Noah's obedience to God is the guarantee of a world briefly restored, in microcosm, to the peace and glory of paradise, where man fulfills his imperial destiny under divine authority.⁸⁸⁸ Just as the animals obey the patriarch's commands, so must he observe all that the Lord has commanded with the sobering example of Adam's disobedience in mind. A renewed imperial mandate in the Vergilian mould is issued to the second Adam: *tu post exemplum iussis servire memento* (282).

When the animals enter the ark *deposita feritate* (347), echoing the bridling of their *furor* in Book 1, they reveal by their obedient terror the true bestiality of fallen man, who in an explicit

⁸⁸⁶ Mercury: Costanza (1971) 37, Hecquet-Noti (2005) 61n2. Paradoxical epithets: Arweiler (1999) 64-5.

⁸⁸⁷ On the imagery of cosmic dissolution in Avitus, see Lapidge (1980) 829-30, who concludes that Avitus' model for the Flood "is unmistakably the storm brought on by Caesar in Book V of Lucan's *Pharsalia*..." Hecquet-Noti (2000) substantiates Lucanian elements and other inspirations.

⁸⁸⁸ Hecquet-Noti (2005) 66n1. Various other parallels between Books 1 and 4 are summarized by Hecquet-Noti (1999) 47-9.

contrast drawn by the poet refuses to be similarly ruled by a salutary fear of death (*terrore salubri*, 357).⁸⁸⁹ Eventually *terror* will touch their *insanas...mentes* (431) anyway,⁸⁹⁰ but by then it will be too late for repentance as the flood waters surge over the earth and the elements conspire in mad fury for slaughter (*iunctoque furore | coniurant elementa neci*, 451-2; *saevit...umor*, 455). Unlike the temporarily tame animals, the sea bucks all restraint and reaches new heights of frenzy, repeating on a grander scale the fury unleashed initially by the Fall (463-5):

exiret rumpensque fidem perfunderet arva.
dissipat aeternas leges et sede relicta
regna aliena petens naturae foedera turbat.

Breaking its trust, the sea utterly inundated the dry land. It shattered the eternal laws and, leaving its own place, made for strange realms as it threw nature's covenants into confusion.

Its *furores* (466), though an instrument of divine wrath and originating in God's sovereign command, nearly upset the ark with *insani motus* (489) and its power is labeled *vis inproba* (491), as though the raging waters partake of the sinful human excess which they were sent to punish.⁸⁹¹ In a sense the madness of the Flood does correspond to the madness of humanity in rejecting the creation order and scuttling the covenants that bind the elements together, and may approximate something like Tarrant's "homeopathic *furor*" more closely than does God's own mind in Avitus. In this case a judicial *lex talionis* which punishes human frenzy in kind serves as an agent of divine anger without attributing *furor* directly to God, sidestepping the need for the

⁸⁸⁹ Arweiler (1999) 75.

⁸⁹⁰ Arweiler (1999) 75 adduces as parallels Juvencus 2.625 and Prudentius, *Psych.* 351 (*quis furor insanas agitat caligine mentes?* Sobrietas upbraids the rest of the Virtues for falling under the spell of Luxuria). The presence of *furor* in each scene is palpable, though Avitus does not use the word here.

⁸⁹¹ *Insanus* as a label for natural fury has classical precedents: Seneca, *Ag.* 540 (*insanum mare*), Vergil, *Ecl.* 9.43 (*insani...fluctus*), Silius, 1.251 (*insanos imbres*); see Arweiler (1999) 105. Hecquet-Noti (2005) 94n1 notes a similar use of *improbus* of a river in a simile in Silius (12.186), where it also seems to mean "excessive, immoderate." Moreover, as Arweiler (1999) 106 points out, Avitus' *non penetrat vis inproba* bears some resemblance to a line of Juvencus (2.721-2) describing demonic activity: *associat septem similes glomerando furores | vis inimica homini penetratque in viscera serpens*.

reader to make a semantic adjustment. The *furor* that indirectly expresses his wrath has in common with the human *furor* it punishes a certain reflected savagery.

Avitus is quick to take advantage of the typological possibilities of the ark throughout the book, and especially at lines 493-501, which approach the full constellation of Vergilian *furor*-language more nearly than any other passage in the poem.⁸⁹²

Non aliter crebras ecclesia vera procellas
sustinet et saevis sic nunc vexatur ab undis.
hinc gentilis agit tumidos sine more furores,
hinc Iudaea fremit rabidoque inliditur ore,
provocat inde furens heresum vesana charybdis:
turgida Graiorum sapientia philosophorum
inter se tumidos gaudet committere fluctus.
Obloquiis vanos sufflant mendacia ventos,
sed clausam vacuo pulsant inpune latratu.

In the same way the true Church endures many storms and even now is troubled by violent waves. On one side the uncouth pagan rouses his swollen fury, on the other Judaea rages and raises against it its raving voice. On yet another side, in a frenzy, the wild Charybdis of heresy provokes it, and the pompous wisdom of the Greek philosophers is happy to commit itself to the struggle among the swelling waves. False claims stir empty winds with their slander but beat in vain against the bulwark of the Church with their empty roar.

Avitus identifies four major groups who compass the Church around on every side with frenzied assaults right up to his own day: pagans, Jews, heretics, and Greek philosophers. Like the savage waves of the sea beating the ark, each enemy of the kingdom of God launches incessant attacks in their mad passion to destroy the faith of believers. They represent “false readings of the text of nature and of history,” intellectually and morally intransigent threats to Christian truth.⁸⁹³ Here the Greek philosophers take the place of the persecutors in the usual patristic grouping of agents of *furor* (pagans, Jews, heretics, and persecutors)⁸⁹⁴ but all four categories seem in the poet’s

⁸⁹² Hecquet-Noti (2005) 95n3 simply attributes Avitus’ language here to “un style virgilien” and notes the origin of *rabido...ore* in the *Aeneid* (6.80). By Avitus’ time this allegorical reading of the ark was already traditional; cf. Hecquet-Noti (2005) 94n2.

⁸⁹³ Shea (1997) 43.

⁸⁹⁴ Hecquet-Noti (2002) 315 and n96 also connects Avitus’ thought here to the *furor Iudaicus* in patristic literature, as does Poinssotte (1979) 153, who mentions this Avitian passage in n548. Avitus follows the same order (pagans > Jews > heretics) as Cyprian (*Epist.* 12.2), who also compares their attacks to savage waves (beating on the rock of

image to participate in persecuting the Church, not only in the past but into Avitus' present as well. This aside is yet another point of connection between the remote antiquity of Genesis, the watershed significance of the Cross—in this case the embattled life of the Church on earth—and, explicitly, the poet's contemporary lived experience (*sic nunc*, 594), including no doubt Avitus' own long rearguard fight against the *haeretici* peddling Arianism in 6th-century Gaul.⁸⁹⁵

In the end all their opposition will result only in blessing for the Church, just as the *furor* of the Flood actually preserves the ark like a precious treasure or deposit, to be returned when peace has returned to the earth (512-13); as a symbol of baptism its violence ultimately portends redemption and a salvation beyond hope (639, 651). The Jews are nevertheless singled out before the end of the book for a harsh rebuke: like the raven released by Noah that did not return, the Jewish people do not know how to keep faith with God their master (*sic nescis, Iudaeae, fidem servare magistro*, 569) and suffer from a “wandering mind” (*mens vaga*, 572) that causes them, Adam-like, to violate the covenant and break faith (*sic foedera legis | rupisti et primum violasti perfide pactum*, 572-3), just as did the first man, the beasts, and ultimately even the elements themselves under the powerful influence of *furor*.⁸⁹⁶ It is nevertheless the Jewish people's ancient struggle with the mad frenzy of their greatest enemy, the Egyptian oppressor, which will furnish the subject of Avitus' next book and provide a heroic foil for the spiritual blindness of Pharaoh and his armies.

faith): *stabilis atque inconcussa virtus contra omnes incursus atque impetus oblatrantium fluctuum, velut petrae obiacentis fortitudine et mole, debet obsistere.*

⁸⁹⁵ Hecquet-Noti (2005) 95n3; for historical background see Nides (1993) 57-8. Gamber (1899) 157 plausibly views the passage as a reflection of the anxieties caused by the social and political upheavals of Avitus' time as well, in which many Christians had difficulty accepting the disappearance of the empire and the emergence of barbarian rule. If he is right, that would lend an additional gradation of meaning—*furor barbaricus*—to this passage.

⁸⁹⁶ On this diatribe see Hecquet-Noti (2005) 104n2 and Hecquet-Noti (2002). In her 2002 article she briefly notes the classical epic significance of the *furor* of the Jews in Avitus and similarly links it to their *mens vaga* and rupturing of the *foedera* of faith (316). See also the comments of Shea (1997) 43-4 and Poinssotte (1979) 154n554.

IV. Book 5: Pharaoh and the Egyptians

At the beginning of his fifth book, Avitus promises to move on from the raging fury of the floodwaters which pursued the wicked inhabitants of the polluted earth, to the story of thousands of madmen who sought out a death amid the waves of their own accord, “set aflame by a surfeit of frenzy” (*[milia] pleno succensa furore*, 5.4). These of course are the Egyptians, a “people destined to die” (*peritura gens*, 5) ruled by a *saevus tyrannus* who gnashes his teeth (*frendens*, 24) against the Hebrews dwelling in his land in ever-increasing numbers, in fact a man just like Juvenecus’ Herod (also described as a *saevus tyrannus*, 1.252).⁸⁹⁷ The cruel king’s *furor* merely ensures the blessing of the holy people, whom God is determined to multiply; the more he persecutes them at the instigation of his spiritual darkness the stronger they will grow (31-2):

Quoque magis mens caeca trahit crudelia vota,
hoc plus ad crescunt tenerae primordia gentis.

And to the extent that the king’s blind mind conceived even crueller designs, the seeds of the young nation flourished even more.

Pharaoh responds to Moses’ petition for relief with rage (*fremens*, 48). Denying the authority of the unknown Hebrew god, he invokes his own god Anubis “when he howls in fury”⁸⁹⁸ (*cum rabidus latrat*, 65) to vow that Moses will face severe punishment if he comes before his throne again.⁸⁹⁹ The *legifer heros* of the Hebrews (67) responds with a display of divine power (*virtutis...spectacula*, 101), the miracle of the staff that transforms into a snake. Pharaoh must

⁸⁹⁷ The parallel is noted in Roberts (1983) 45n38.

⁸⁹⁸ Shea’s rendering (1997) 117.

⁸⁹⁹ Anubis’ barking is an old *topos* (Hecquet-Noti [2005] 156n1); cf. *Aen.* 8.698. *Rabidus* here may do double duty: Pharaoh is mad just like his god, the mad/rabid dog Anubis (cf. Lewis and Short s.v.). The punning potential of *rabies* to characterize both humans and dogs (or dog-like humans) was not lost on Plautus: *non abire possum ab his regionibus, | ita illa me ab laeva rabiosa femina adservat canis* (*Men.* 836-7). In the *Aeneid*, Allecto inspires Ascanius’ hunting dogs with *rabies* so that they will attack the tame stag of Tyrrhus (7.479).

hide his terror and pretend not to believe in the supernatural marvel (75-9), refusing to acknowledge what he knows to be true (*quae cognoscens nolens tamen ipse fateri*, 100). His blindness is willful. Gnashing his teeth terribly once again (*dirum frendens*, 98) he is seized by *consciūs ardor*, a “guilty passion” (98); he consciously rejects the reality he sees before him just as Satan had in Book 1. The Hebrews pray to God to restrain the *fremitus* of the Egyptian *gens* (103) as it threatens war against Heaven (*ipsis quin etiam caelestibus arma minantem*, 105) and cosmic conflict.⁹⁰⁰ As in previous books God reassures his righteous people of their imperial destiny in Vergilian terms (118-20):

Ibitis ad magnas post fortia proelia sedes,
qua vocat expectans praefertilis ubere terra
et claras victis condetis gentibus urbes.

After brave campaigns, you will go to a great homeland where the rich and fertile earth that awaits you beckons and, after defeating the neighbouring peoples, you will build famous cities there.

They will accomplish great labours and *ingentia facta* if only they will practice a joyful valour (*laeta...virtus*, 123) in reliance on God.

Pharaoh’s teeth are set to gnashing once more by the unbearable indignity of the plague of frogs (*frendet subcumbere ranis*, 160) and his people suffer terribly from boils. Though they think their pain is the result of mere chance, Avitus avers that it is “the disease of their minds”—their rejection of the Lord—that ultimately causes their bodily suffering (*sed morbus mentis discrimina corporis urget*, 180). The whole nation is a rebel before God (225) and nature becomes his instrument of justice as the whole world once again totters (*labentis...mundi*, 260), as it had after the Fall and during the Flood. And it is not nature only through which divine

⁹⁰⁰ The frenzy of the Egyptians against God, says Roberts (1983) 78, constitutes “a basic dissimilarity” between the battle at the Red Sea and the traditional epic battle narratives evoked by Avitus.

vengeance is revealed: at the climax of the series of devastating plagues, God dispatches the angel of death on the night of the first Passover to destroy all the firstborn of Egypt.

The divine executioner is strikingly described as one *exerto missus qui saeviat ense* (268). Shea is understandably compelled to soften the language (“sent by God to wreak havoc with his drawn blade”) but the key word *saevire*—“rage” or “rampage,” frequently a synonym for *furere* as we have seen so many times—clearly indicates a more frightening intensity of violence, even as the angel paradoxically stalks in terrifying stillness (*tacito per dira silentia motu*, 267). Yet the most calamitous of God’s acts of judgment, at least before the destruction of the Egyptian army later in the book, is also a symbol of his greatest act of mercy as once again Avitus links the Old Testament events to Christ, and Christ to his own day. The Passover is a type of the Cross, and the poet directly advises his reader to meditate on his membership in the community of redemption, not now the people of Israel but the church (*tu cognosce tuam salvanda in plebe figuram*, 254). The new chosen race is marked, in contrast to the *mens caeca* of Pharaoh and the *morbus mentis* of his ruthless people, by “a radiant mind” (*nitidae...mentis*, 259), one cleansed of sin.

When the Egyptian people finally cry out in the presence of Pharaoh under the weight of their suffering, they attribute Egypt’s misfortunes at last to the mysterious power of Israel’s God (310-17):

Heu nimium nostris adversa potentia rebus
Hebraeum populi, totiens cui vindice dextra
militat omne malum, totus cui denique mundus
pugnat et irato succedunt prospera caelo.
vis quaedam secreta dei maiorque potestas
haec in sceptris furit gentemque ulciscitur ipsam
orbis iactura: solos pereuntia salvant
victores elementa suos redimuntque cadendo.

Alas, too great is the power turned against our state by the Hebrew people, for whom every evil again and again takes up arms with a vengeful hand, for whom the whole world finally fights, for whom only blessings descend from the otherwise angry sky. Some secret power of God, some greater force rages

against this kingdom and avenges that nation at the cost of the rest of the world. The elements, as they decay, preserve these victorious people as if they were their own and redeem them with their own collapse.

The Egyptians recognize the cosmic scale of the contest between their king and the God of the Hebrews, who seems to them to rage (*furit*, 315) against the land and to vent his wrath through the natural world, such that even the sky heralds his anger.⁹⁰¹ The notion articulated by *elementa...redimunt cadendo* (317), that the *furor* of God's wrath as expressed through the violence of nature is a redemptive blessing for his people—salvation through judgment, as it were, *salus via furor*—helps explain the raging of the elements in the Flood of Book 4, which expresses not only God's justice but also his mercy. There the sea is a picture of elemental frenzy but also *sacer* (4.558), trustworthy guardian of the ark and symbol of the cleansing waters of baptism.

The Israelites escape from the midst of raging fury (*inter ferventes inimica in sede furores*, 346) and plunder their willing foes, though the peace of their departure is short lived. The Egyptians soon reproach themselves for their capitulation, rashly recoiling from what they regard as a temporary fit of madness (469-73):⁹⁰²

Ecce iterum Phariis insedit mentibus ira
et populus sine more ferox his vocibus armat
tandem postremos vicina morte furores:
“O nimium stultis inludens mentibus error
praestigiaeque satis nebulosa in fraude peractae...”

But see, once again anger settled upon the Egyptians' minds, and that savage and uncouth people, even as their death approached, forged one final madness, crying out: “Alas for the error that carries too far the mockery of foolish minds! Alas for the illusions it presents with its all too cloudy deception!”

⁹⁰¹ On the war of the elements against fallen man as a major theme of the *SHG* and key constituent of its inner unity, see Hoffmann (2005) xxxvi and n27.

⁹⁰² Cf. Roberts (1983) 34: the speech “is of the kind that might be spoken in pagan epic by a rash general or unscrupulous mob orator before battle. Facts are distorted and emotive language used to persuade to a dangerous and irresponsible course of action.”

The Egyptians' self-styled recovery of *ratio*—really nothing of the kind—will ironically plunge them into a final, fatal passion as they seek to glut their *furores* with the sword (495).⁹⁰³ It is the “group emotion” that matters here in Avitus' narrative, and the evocation of a familiar epic pattern of ill-omened boasting before disaster; the usual response to a perceived source of *indignatio*, here not unlike that perceived by Vergil's Juno when the Trojans arrive in Italy unharmed at *Aen.* 7.293-6, is *furor*.⁹⁰⁴ The phrase *sine more ferox* is also very close to the Vergilian *sine more furit*—used of a fierce storm at *Aen.* 5.694 and of the Allecto-induced rage of Amata, 7.377; Prudentius had also described the personified demon *Ira* as *sine more furens*, *Psych.* 130⁹⁰⁵—and indicates that the doomed martial frenzy of the Egyptians is firmly in the tradition of the *mos* of classical epic warrior-madness at this moment. Their faces are terrifying in their rage, too savage even to look upon (*quis namque furentes | spectet*, 515).⁹⁰⁶ Yet Pharaoh outdoes them all. Nightfall would not have prevented him from giving full vent to his *ardentes irae* and *furor* (535-6), had not the terrifying pillar of fire protected the Israelites from assault. The Israelites had also initially reacted to the miraculous pillar with fear, but their terror had been transformed into delight (*amor*, 414) in its radiance; the very instrument of God's opposition to Pharaoh becomes an object of love to God's people, and perhaps even ultimately a symbol of Christ's divine protection.⁹⁰⁷ But the king of Egypt fears God's conflagration as vehemently as

⁹⁰³ Roberts (1983) 33 draws attention to verbal connections between this speech and an earlier one (5.310-30) in which the Egyptians speak *en masse* about the plagues: “The Egyptians have all too quickly forgotten the lesson of the plagues...the comparison highlights the volatile, unreasoning emotions of the Egyptians.”

⁹⁰⁴ Roberts (1983) 34-5 and n20. Roberts also notes a telling parallel in Lucan (6.165).

⁹⁰⁵ Hecquet-Noti (2005) 201n5.

⁹⁰⁶ Not only because they are contorted by fury, but also because they are black; on the symbolism of the racial detail see Roberts (1983) 54.

⁹⁰⁷ This paradoxical duality is best expressed by Avitus' near contemporary and fellow epic poet Dracontius in words also written about the Exodus: *una eademque die populis datur ecce duobus | ira furens pietasque simul* (*De Laudibus Dei* 2.809-10). Cf. also Roberts (1983) 58-9. Arweiler (1999) 125 sees things in the same terms:

he burns and seethes with inward bloodlust: “Gazing on that miraculous light, the king himself dreaded the fire just as much as he was aflame and boiling with passion within” (*contemplans rex ipse tamen mirabile lumen | sic ignem metuit, quod sensu fervidus ardet*, 541).⁹⁰⁸

Avitus here cunningly exploits the standard fire-diction of strong emotion in Latin poetry to draw a conceptual and almost visual antithesis between the *furor* of Pharaoh and the wrath of God, as symbolized by the pillar of fire which shields the vulnerable Israelites and prevents the Egyptians from attacking. In the midst of a “traditional epic battle narrative,”⁹⁰⁹ Pharaoh has met his match, and the implication is that his raging frenzy has ground to a halt in the face of an opposing force of similar (or much greater) intensity;⁹¹⁰ God fights fire with fire, or rather the unholy *furor* of the impious king with the holy *furor* of his just wrath. Admittedly Avitus does not explicitly call God’s wrath *furor* here, but his poem reinforces at every opportunity the parallelism between the resurgent Red Sea and the waters of the deluge; both are agents of divine judgment and anger, both symbols of holy baptism and the Christian’s earthly struggle with sin (704-16). God’s demonstration of elemental protection over the Jews in the columns is a suggestive prelude: the priests tell the frightened people, *nempe videtis | ut mediaticis curet tutela columnae...caeli pugnabitur ira* (565-6, 573) and on the morning of the day of battle, the

“...kontrastiert Avitus die Reaktion der Israeliten auf das Phänomen der Feuersäule mit der des Pharaos und zeigt so den ambivalenten Charakter: für das auserwählte Volk ist es Schutz und Beistand, für den Gottesverächter Bedrohung.”

⁹⁰⁸ Shea (1997) 128 seems to misconstrue *quod* here as causal (“the king himself, however, as he looked upon that miraculous light, feared its fire, because his own senses seethed with heat and he himself was on fire”). Costanza (1971) 109-10 translates similarly: “Lo stesso re tuttavia guardando con stupore temette quella meravigliosa luce, ne temette pertanto il fuoco, perché col suo ardore bruciava ogni senso.” I can make little sense of this interpretation—why should Pharaoh’s inner passion motivate him to fear the pillar of fire? Hecquet-Noti (2005) 209n5, following earlier interpreters, clarifies matters: *sic...quod* introduces a comparative clause according to typical late antique usage, where *quod* replaces *ut*. Hecquet-Noti translates, “Le roi lui-même, contemplant la prodigieuse lumière, redoute pourtant autant ce feu qu’il brûle de combattre, l’esprit enflammé.” See also Arweiler (1999) 126.

⁹⁰⁹ Roberts (1983) 29.

⁹¹⁰ Arweiler (1999) 125 observes that the pillar of fire forces Pharaoh’s *furor* into the role of a mere spectator.

Lord again acts through fire to set the waters aflame and consume the sea in anticipation of the great miracle (577-80). From the pillar of cloud he bids Moses give the command to cast the sea back on the pursuing army (650-1).

In Pharaoh's confrontation with the ominous pillar of flame the night before, we again encounter something resembling the "homeopathic *furor*" of classical Latin epic, in which the forces of order effectively deploy chaos' own arsenal to restrain it, but with an important difference: here one finds no trace of the spiritual ambiguity endemic to classical epic. The Christian worldview adjusts the formula just enough to conform it to the unassailable holiness of God, but without altering the theme beyond recognition or forfeiting its powerful traditional resonances. The result is that Heaven may, so to speak, "have its cake and eat it too." Righteous divine anger, embodied in elemental *furor* just as it was in the Flood, is able to punish human insanity with a fury that fittingly reflects the frenzied passion of human sin without reproducing it. Avitus' great achievement is to make this possible and yet avoid compromising God's own nature by implicating it in spiritual disorder or moral confusion, conditions which had generally accompanied *furor* in men and sometimes gods in the tradition of classical epic.

Just before the Egyptian army rushes onto the dry seabed to pursue the Israelites, Avitus singles out an anonymous soldier to deliver a dramatic foreboding of the momentous wonder that is about to occur (618-28):⁹¹¹

Atque aliquis, cui vel tenuem permota calorem
tunc scintilla dabat cordis, sic forte locutus:
"Quis deus a prisco detorquet cardine mundum
lege nova mutatque vices et condita turbat?
Nam si servatur rebus natura creatis,
monstriferae qua causa viae? quid denique restat,
si mare transitur gressu, nisi navibus arva
sulcentur caelumque suo decurrat ab axe,
in superos inferna levent, plaga ferbida caeli

⁹¹¹ On Avitus' dramatic technique here see Roberts (1985) 146n104.

algeat, adflatam succendat scorpius ursam:
haec nisi confusus rerum subverterit ordo.

Then some man to whose heart a kindled spark gave a feeble fire, happened to call out: “What god twists the world from its ancient hinge, alters its orderly behaviour with a new law and throws into confusion all that He has built? For if the nature of each created thing abides, what then is the cause of this monstrous path? And if the sea can be crossed on foot, what remains at last but for fields to be ploughed by ships, for Heaven to drop down from its own vault, for Hell to be raised up to Heaven, for the hot regions of the sky to grow cold and the Scorpion to set the Bear aflame with its blast? What remains but to believe that some confusion in the order of nature turns these things upside down?”

Despite Avitus’ depreciation of the soldier’s small courage—perhaps his weak spark is really a virtue amidst the crowd that burns with discord (*ardens cum seditione tumultus*, 636) and disregards his warnings—the Egyptian clearly diagnoses the dire nature of the miracle correctly.⁹¹² The terms in which he characterizes the *adynata* which he sees are arresting: even accounting for some measure of focalization (for him the mysterious deity must be an evil or hostile one), he is right that the parting of the sea represents a rupture of the usual *foedera* of nature, a cosmic inversion that appears to embroil Heaven with Hell and overturn the settled order of the universe. The language of cosmic dissolution here recalls Lucan and other *loci classici*,⁹¹³ but again with a major difference: the chaos of the elements is not the *furor* of human impiety overwhelming the ties that bind all things together as the capricious gods watch helplessly (or gleefully), as often in classical epic, but the deliberate and controlled *furor* of justified divine anger unleashed against mankind’s iniquities. At the same time, the Egyptian’s speech highlights the state of mind of his audience that abundantly justifies such divine anger.⁹¹⁴

Heaven and Hell will not really dissolve into one another in the *SHG*, as seems to happen at certain moments in the poetry of Vergil and his successors—it just looks that way to the

⁹¹² Fontaine (1981) 259 likens him to “le personnage de Cassandre avertissant les Troyens.”

⁹¹³ For a discussion of the sources of Avitus’ cosmological language see Hecquet-Noti (2005) 221n5, Arweiler (1999) 172-3, 316, and Lapidge (1980) 829-31.

⁹¹⁴ Roberts (1983) 33.

enemies of an angry God bent on vengeance, in accordance with his will for their punishment. In a sense, nature really does come apart for them. But in biblical epic the absolute hegemony of God over the natural world, as viewed from the perspective of his faithful worshippers, is never more apparent than when he, the universe's creator, sovereignly subjects his creation to violent upheaval in order to accomplish both judgment for the wicked and salvation for the objects of his mercy. God's *furor* is ambivalent only in the sense that much depends upon the eye of the beholder; it portends destruction to the wicked, but recovery and salvation to the chosen people. God's omnipotence is convincingly demonstrated by the supernatural manipulation of earthly powers in the Flood and (here) the exodus; the immense destruction and violation of natural laws that attend on those events reveals not a threatening instability inherent in the very fabric of the universe, an interminable tug-of-war between order and chaos, but rather an absolute authority that stands above all others and guarantees the ultimate failure of cosmic rebellion. The *furor* of God is a blessing to his people and a terror to his adversaries, and reveals a vast gulf between the pretensions and emotions of human sin and the realities of divine power and justice.

Of course, Pharaoh and the bulk of his forces lack the special prophetic insight of the anonymous soldier, and plunge madly ahead onto the dry seabed in their insane lust to destroy the Israelites, prompting Avitus to ask rhetorically, *quid non furor audeat amens?* (644).⁹¹⁵ The question applies just as well to Satan,⁹¹⁶ Adam and Eve, antediluvian man, Sodom and

⁹¹⁵ Arweiler (1999) 188 explains that this is a traditional formula which typically “makes the reader aware of the power of passion or of human wrongdoing.” The closest parallels collected by Arweiler seem to be Ovid, *Fast.* 2.331 (*quid non amor improbus audeat?*), Prudentius, *Apoth.* 104 (*quid non malus audeat error?*), and *Apoth. praef.* 17 (*quid non libido mentis humanae struat?*); see also Hecquet-Noti (2005) 225n4. To these parallels I would add Marius Victorius, *Alethia* 2.227-8: *quid non miseros furiosa libido | quid non ira recens, odium vetus, improba cogant...?* (on Cain murdering Abel) and 3.247: *en terrena phalanx quid non furiosa resignet...?* (on the building of the Tower of Babel), both of which are closer to Avitus' usage and context.

⁹¹⁶ Roberts (1984) 124 notes that Avitus implicitly associates Pharaoh with the Devil; to his evidence we may add the repeated and shared characterization by *furor* of both characters. Cf. Arweiler (1999) 335.

Gomorrah, and the pagans, heretics, and Jews of Avitus' own day, and differs little from the terms in which many patristic writers posed their own complaints about the deeply flawed life of humanity on earth: what will not the mad frenzy of human sin attempt in its impious striving with God?⁹¹⁷ Taken together, however, the whole poem follows and even improves upon the prescription of Juvenecus for the amelioration of persistent human madness. The soul-altering mercy and power of God, as expressed preeminently through the suffering and resurrection of Christ on the cross, can uproot the deep evil stubbornly rooted in the human heart, but this process inescapably involves divine judgment and the consequences of God's answering *furor*. The universal canvas of Genesis enables Avitus to enlarge the application of the *furor* theme to its maximum possible extent, at an even grander scale than in the *Evangeliorum Libri*, at the same time as he redeems the anguished spiritual ambiguity of much classical epic by glorifying new life in Christ as the answer to the tragic contradictions of fallen human nature.

Avitus' poem is a redeeming epic in more than one sense. It compels its readers to recognize and acknowledge their own participation—simply by virtue of their humanity—in the *furor* of Adam and its consequences, and their desperate need for liberation from it through Christ: *nos fuimus quondam rabido data praeda furori* (3.402).⁹¹⁸ Reader, author, and God are brought into relationship, as in the context of this line Avitus simultaneously addresses Christ (who is also the object of the narrative), takes authorial initiative to guide interpretation of the larger story of redemption, and draws his reader into the significance of the biblical

⁹¹⁷ E.g. Augustine, *Contra Cresc.*, IV.38 (PL 43 [1884] 573): *quid non audeat humana temeritas...?*; Jerome, *Comment. in Dan.*, XII (PL 25 [1884] 575C): *quid non facit pertinacia?*; Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei* IV.XVI (PL 53 [1884] 88C): *quid non ausae sint improbae mentes?*

⁹¹⁸ Cf. Hecquet-Noti (1999) 65.

metanarrative.⁹¹⁹ The context makes it clear that *nos* means not only Avitus but also his fellow human beings, especially those of the faith, on whose behalf the poet prays earnestly (*famulis tu redde tuis quod perdidit Adam*, 3.390; *suscipe... | quos confessa tibi gemitus pia pectora fundunt*, 408).⁹²⁰

The *furor* of the *Aeneid* is also laden with implications for its readers, and of no one was this more true than of its audiences throughout the first four centuries AD, before the fall of the empire, to whom the words *tu...Romane, memento* (6.851) are prophetically addressed. Vergil's vision of *Romanitas* encompasses not only his famously stalwart republican forebears and his own contemporaries, hopeful for the dawning of a new age of Roman greatness under Augustus, but also future generations who will rise to inherit the mantle of *virtus* and *pietas* passed down *prisco de sanguine*; they will also inherit the perennial menace of *Furor impius* and resurgent civil strife. Vergil's successors likewise invite their readers into the poetic worlds they construct in a variety of ways, by connecting the events they narrate to the contemporary political scene (often through dedications) and through explicit expressions of identification with Roman soldiers or references to extra-diegetic episodes of Roman history. All, in one sense or another, implicate their audience in contamination by, or resistance to, or lament over the cosmic influence of epic madness. With Juvenecus, however, the participatory implications of epic storytelling take a turn that is at once more personal and more universal—the preface to the *Evangeliorum libri* speaks both of the poet's own salvation and of the ultimate fate of the whole

⁹¹⁹ With typical ingenuity Stella (2007) 49 coins the term “semiotic triangulation” (also, more perspicuously, “the triangle of Christian communication”) to express the connection between “author, God, and public, of which a theologian could audaciously make an analogy with the circular communication between the three personages of the Holy Trinity.”

⁹²⁰ Stella (2011) 326 calls this “the ‘parenetical’ and absorbing use of the first person plural which presents sacred history and its meanings as a collective heritage.” See also Malsbary (1985) 62 on the typical biblical epic emphasis on “personal devotion,” and Arweiler (2007) 164-5 on the phenomenon of first-person plural rhetoric in Dracontius as a means of constituting “a community of faith” between author, readers, and “the Divine *tu*.”

created universe, knowledge of which imposes on every human being a choice between one or other of the spiritual destinies Juvenecus contemplates (the flames or eternal communion with Christ). His subject, the deeds and words of Christ on earth as represented by the gospels, likewise insists on a response. Proba too inserts herself into the history of redemption and expects the participation of her audience in perpetuating the blessings of biblical truth.⁹²¹

Avitus elaborates this modification of the Vergilian tradition by confronting his readers' personal relationship to *furor* far more directly. They suffer its privations not as subjects of an earthly empire only, but also as members of the human race and as souls in exile from the New Jerusalem, their ultimate home. The church wars while on earth against the *noxia facta* of indwelling sin and corrupted human nature, purging away the contagion of evil in the waters of baptism just as the threatening *furor* of Pharaoh was overwhelmed by the waters of the Red Sea (5.704-21).⁹²² In other passages, such as the story of Dives and Lazarus, Avitus is explicitly concerned "to encourage the reader to recognize his own opportunity for reconciliation in this life."⁹²³ The reader is also invited to recognize the true nature of *furor*, as manifested with striking consistency from the first book to the fifth: it is fundamentally the spiritual blindness which punishes a rejection of God as sovereign Creator and Lawgiver of the universe and results in the degradation of the relationships established by the created order, the near-dissolution of the physical cosmos, and the helpless enslavement of man to sin. Though in Avitus the word can also denote the innocent operations of nature—as in the pre-lapsarian raging of the sea and the wildness of the animals—even this usage serves only to emphasize in the end the disastrous

⁹²¹ See Pollmann (2004) 91; Herzog (1975) 46-51.

⁹²² Roberts (1983) 79.

⁹²³ Nides (1985) 3.

deformation of the world's original state by the Fall, after which men become like beasts and beasts like demons. Both become ruthless predators and reflect the insidious influence of the originator of universal *furor*, Satan himself. Human madness provokes divine wrath, and God's justice turns the violence of *furor* against its practitioners through the intermediate agency of the elements and angelic beings; by the very same acts of judgments he also provides a means of escape and salvation for his redeemed people.

The semantic field of *furor* and the usual verbal cluster—deployed in its full panoply less often than in classical epic, and even than in Juvencus⁹²⁴—is noticeably consolidated in Avitus' poem. On the one hand, the madness of amatory passion, supernatural possession, prophetic mania, and the substantive use of *furor* (especially in the plural) for fallen angels are omitted.⁹²⁵ On the other, battle fury, rebellion, bestial frenzy, the raging of natural forces, the irrational denial of truth, the mad antagonism of the church's foes, and the wrath of God all appear, though all are tightly integrated and resist easy differentiation. In fact, despite the much greater unity of Avitus' relatively short episodic poem, it mirrors Ovid's massive *Metamorphoses* (with which it may naturally be compared)⁹²⁶ in pairing with its overarching *Auswahlprinzip*—transformation in Ovid, redemption history in Avitus—a similarly overarching interpretation of *furor*, which makes room for more than one meaning but ultimately subsumes them all under a single thematic head.⁹²⁷ In the *Metamorphoses* this was *amor*; in the *SHG* it is *caecitas spiritus*, a concept

⁹²⁴ *Vesanus/-ia*, *lymphatus*, and *Furia/furia* are entirely lacking, while *amens* and *demens* appear only once each (treated above).

⁹²⁵ Unless perhaps we consider the debased sexuality of post-lapsarian man in the third book to be an erotic manifestation of spiritual *furor*, but such a reading seems too far abstracted from Avitus' actual language there.

⁹²⁶ For commonalities and differences between Ovid and Avitus, see Hoffmann (2005) xlv-xlvi and Arweiler (1999) 54.

⁹²⁷ See pp. 77-8 above.

explored in greater depth than in Juvenecus but also projected across a far vaster canvas, and portrayed with far greater fidelity to the biblical roots of the comprehensive Christian worldview than in Proba.

Avitus is captivated by “the illusion of human competence...when not informed by divine will,” and his Augustinian poem places its faith entirely in the city of God as contrasted with the irrational, immoral, and teleologically barren city of man.⁹²⁸ Though he makes use of a great deal of classical material (including not least Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*) in which a cosmic perspective already inheres, Avitus is no slavish imitator and boldly re-purposes the *furor*-theme for the articulation of a distinctly Christian cosmos, one which follows the lead of both the *Evangeliorum Libri* and Proba’s *Cento* in abandoning the uncertainty and instability of the traditional earthly golden age in favour of heavenly glory beyond all reach of spiritual corruption and the bitter disappointments of temporal empire.⁹²⁹ His poem ends on a “final note of unqualified rejoicing, the melodramatic victory of good over evil rather than the elegiac ambiguity of much secular epic.”⁹³⁰ It is no wonder then that some have seen in Avitus’ epic the pinnacle of the “edificatory” aims of biblical epic.⁹³¹ Lapidge may be right that the unanimous interest of late Latin poets in universal order can be traced back to the existential anxiety induced by the gathering storm of the barbarian invasions,⁹³² but the tradition of classical epic surely

⁹²⁸ Shea (1997) 55, 70.

⁹²⁹ Shea (1997) 70 speaks of Avitus transcending “the Roman hope for establishing an orderly realm in which human pain is curtailed and a civilized and tranquil commonwealth secured.”

⁹³⁰ Roberts (1985) 226.

⁹³¹ Deproost (1997) 22, with reference to Herzog’s *Erbaulichkeit* (1975).

⁹³² Lapidge (1980) 830.

provided challenge enough on its own to inspire practitioners of the new faith to rebuild the cosmos on a surer foundation.

CONCLUSION

The semantic biography of *furor* in Latin epic cannot be deduced from a lexicon. Relying on a contextual analysis of a range of Latin texts spanning approximately six hundred years, I have tried to capture the mobile complexity of epic madness as it evolves across epochs, and to demonstrate how closely it is bound up with the larger theme of cosmic order in the classical and Christian traditions. Though this study has necessarily been limited to representative readings (rather than a comprehensive survey), the picture of *furor* that emerges from the foregoing chapters brings into focus for the first time the polysemic evolution of a key theme in the narrative poetry of Vergil and his successors, including the poets of late antique biblical epic.

That theme is a challenging one to define, in part because of the sheer quantity and diversity of relevant evidence, and in part because of the highly porous relationship between madness—itsself an elusive concept—and the wide variety of powerful human emotions with which it is closely associated in Latin literature. It does not help that our standard dictionaries seem often to overestimate the extent to which the Romans spoke hyperbolically when they attributed madness to the lovesick, or the politically dangerous, or the bellicose. Their understanding of what made a person mad, and how long he might remain so, and whether it was his body or mind or heart that harbored the disease, does not always correspond very precisely to modern ideas. In the literature of the republican period, *ratio* was not only endangered by the inner agitations of human emotion; *furor* might come from outside a person as well. Prophets, poets, and bacchants testified to the power of unseen actors in the universe, whose impact on human life was often unpredictable and frightening.

Mortals, too, could be called *furores* in an objective sense, as the cause of frenzy or lust or rage in others, perhaps in imitation of those most terrifying of supernatural agitators, the *Furiae*. These counterparts to the Greek Eumenides experienced the very derangement they inspired in their victims, and ultimately gave their name to less personal but more concretized representations of madness, called *furiae*. *Furor* is found in many contexts in Roman literature, but to none was it better suited, seemingly, than the battlefield, where a lust for war—usually a potent cocktail of anger, prowess, and ambition—reproduces what in Homer was called μένος, the passionate energy of the warrior. Though it is vanishingly rare before the Augustan period, during which it was given its definitive expression by Vergil, this variety of *furor* typically expresses the appearance of madness as seen through the eyes of an enemy on the receiving end of armed aggression. Even as this sense attained greater currency, it continued to coexist and interact with older meanings of *furor*, following the general pattern of expanding polysemy described by Lewis, Empson, and Williams. It joined the savagery of animals, the violence of nature, the power of love, and the horror of civil war in the complex of significations that had gradually been built up around *furor* and its cognates by three of Rome's greatest poets: Ennius, Lucretius, and Catullus. In the decades leading up to the publication of the *Aeneid*, *furor* drew additional flexibility and meaning from the bold innovations of the elegists, such that Vergil found ready to hand a sophisticated semantic constellation—including not just *furor* but also a range of closely related words—that could vividly express and interpret a broad spectrum of human (and non-human) behaviour.

The *Aeneid* exploits this semantic cluster to the full, further developing in particular the *furor* of the warrior on the battlefield and framing it, together with virtually every other sense of the word, within the universal struggle between order and chaos. The central symbol of this

complex web of meanings is the personified *Furor impius* of 1.293-6, the first such image in Roman epic and a vivid representation of the forces of cosmic disorder. Throughout the poem, however, the boundaries between order and its opposite are blurred as disquieting resemblances impose themselves on the reader's consciousness through verbal parallels. The most important representative of this intratextual phenomenon is Aeneas himself, who stands *furiis accensus* in the poem's controversial final scene at the intersection of heroic *aristeia* and malevolent Junonian frenzy. Some critics have seen in his execution of the suppliant Turnus a manifestation of "homeopathic" *furor*, a regrettable madness that nevertheless brings about an end to justify all means—a revived Golden Age—by confronting the horror of chaos and using its own arsenal against it. Though it seems more likely that the poem is designed to stimulate an ambivalent interpretation of these events, aimed at critiquing—if not quite repudiating—the imperial prize for which so high a price is paid, the notion that the power of *furor* exists in a sort of symbiotic relationship with Roman *imperium* (both resisting and renewing it) is persuasive. *Furor* articulates what we might call the Vergilian worldview, one which sees humanity in its cosmic context as a tragically flawed actor in the great war between order and disorder, fighting on both sides of the conflict, alternately founding and destroying the lasting peace for which it longs.

In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid enriches and expands the possibilities of *furor*, especially under its amatory aspect, the controlling principle to which all other forms of madness or frenzy in his poem are subordinate. He remodels the semantics of *furor* to suit his own favourite theme—which, following Vergil, aspires to cosmic significance—and sets a precedent of poetic independence which will be taken up by Vergil's later successors, even as he does not conceal a deep indebtedness to the tradition of Rome's new national epic. The *furor* theme assumes larger significance in Lucan's *Bellum Civile* under the influence of the turbulent political realities of the

Neronian age. In Lucan's poem *furor* sets off a universal conflagration with the spark of Roman civil strife; using more or less the same semantic constellation employed by Vergil and Ovid, Lucan portrays a cosmos on the threshold of total dissolution, in which civil war has poisoned the wells of *virtus* and *pietas* at the heart of Roman life. *Rabies* and *furor* become impossible to distinguish from *ius* in such times, and madness manifests itself in ways that disturbingly resemble rationality. Unlike Vergil and Ovid, Lucan omits amatory *furor* and the presence of the *Furiae/furiae*, and chooses instead to emphasize the political madness of sedition and internecine slaughter.

Statius, whose *Thebaid* outdoes its predecessors when it comes to *furor* on both the verbal and thematic level, makes extensive use of the *furiae*, which appear more often in his poem than in any of the others. *Furor* does not wholly merge with its opposites, as in Lucan, but in keeping with Statius' theme of a house divided, it seems to fracture along various lines (including gender). It also attains a new visibility as a persistent character in its own right, taking its cue from Vergil's personified *Furor impius*. In Polynices and Eteocles, human *furor* outstrips even its divine instigators. Statius is also the first to connect his own activity as a poet to the *furor* he narrates: no one could perform the tale without being possessed by madness himself. In the poems of Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus, still more possibilities for the *furor* theme are explored in ways that demonstrate the almost inexhaustible richness of Vergil's universalizing redefinition of epic, on which the later poets of biblical epic will also draw. Valerius revives the semantics of "good" *furor* in his encomium of the future emperor Titus. The *Argonautica* provides fodder for a new iteration of the optimism/pessimism debate over the *Aeneid*: the voyage of the *Argo* is implicated in both the remediation of *furor* (in the ship's role as a "culture hero") and its proliferation (e.g. in the anguished passion of Medea). Negative consequences

attend on heroic (and Roman) success, even as blows are struck for cosmic order. Finally, Silius' epic of the Punic Wars focuses almost entirely on battle frenzy, which offers examples of both "good" and "bad" *furor* throughout the poem, including Hannibal, Juno, and foolish Roman commanders on the one hand, and the heroic figures of Fabius and Scipio on the other. Fabius in particular offers outstanding examples of "good" or rightly directed homeopathic *furor*. Silius omits amatory *furor* and says little about the *Furiae* (or *furiae*). The *Punica* seems to promise another subjugation of cosmic disorder, though some critics see in it ominous anticipations of contemporary Flavian disquiet.

The rhetoric of *furor* as a defense against threats to the social, political, and cosmic order is renewed, after the lapse of a long period from which little Latin literature (especially poetry) survives, by the early Christian apologists and exegetes to characterize the pagan neighbours whose educational and cultural milieu they shared. Such language enabled Christian writers to articulate a new kind of *Romanitas*, one that had absorbed the familiar terms of a universalizing ideology but re-oriented their allegiance toward the Kingdom of God, a manifestation of a far better, far truer Golden Age. Stoic concepts mediated through Cicero and Seneca that were superficially compatible with a Christian worldview allowed the Latin Fathers easily to assimilate notions like *caecitas mentis*, represented by the traditional language of *furor*, to their own perspective. Aside from pagans, whose vain entertainments exposed their spiritual blindness, the early patristic writers also attacked heretics and Jews as agents of insanity and cosmic disorder—the forces of darkness, now unified under the banner of the biblical Satan. In the process they gradually Christianized the semantics of *furor*. The *Furiae/furiae* of classical vintage, though they still appear in somewhat fossilized form, are replaced by the *daemones* as external instigators of *furor* and possession. Concern for the security of the state is replaced by

concern for the unity of the church, while true *ratio* is increasingly identified with Christian orthodoxy. The Fathers' colourful combination of Vergilian quotation and biblical interpretation, together with their insistence on both the cosmic and personal implications of faith in (or rejection of) Christ, anticipates the blended aesthetic of biblical epic, even as attempts to equate the *furor* of pagan persecutors and the holy zeal of the martyrs recall the homeopathy of *furor* in classical epic. Rare uses of the typical semantic cluster to refer indirectly to the just wrath of God, via the tumults of nature, are countered by efforts to distinguish sharply between the operations of the divine and human minds.

A separate tradition of translating biblical texts—especially those that deal with God's wrath against sinners, as in the Hebrew prophets—by the vocabulary of *furor* flourishes in late antiquity. This use of *furor* (most commonly corresponding to θυμός and ὀργή in the LXX and Greek NT) is not the result of slavish literalness, as was once thought, but reflects the considered judgment of able interpreters; sometimes multiple senses of *furor*, as in classical and patristic literature, are combined or overlap in a single use. *Furor* as an external phenomenon no longer marks the inspiration of prophets, but is replaced by supernaturally secured *ratio*, a kind of heightened cognition. The semantic range of *furor* and its cognates in the *Vetus Latina* is considerably more limited than in the wider world of Latin literature, and even compared to the Christian works of the first four hundred years AD, encompassing little besides divine wrath and a narrowed range of verbal forms. The Old Latin versions seem to have had little immediate influence over contemporary patristic usage, certainly as compared to the heritage of classical rhetoric, though that state of affairs gradually changed.

Juvencus' *Evangeliorum Libri*, the first Christian epic, forges a new expression of biblical cosmology, inspired not by Statius' poetic *furor* but rather by the Holy Spirit, in the manner of

the scriptural prophets. Adopting an eschatological viewpoint, his poem displaces Rome as the ultimate point of poetic reference and substitutes a Christian cosmos that makes totalizing demands of its readers: they must choose to be identified either with Christ or with the forces of *furor*, the enemies of the Kingdom of God. Juvencus enhances considerably the duality of chaos and *logos* already embedded in the biblical source material by repurposing the semantic constellation attached to *furor*, characterizing major figures within his borrowed narrative—including Herod, the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, Judas, and the Jews collectively—as exponents of spiritual blindness, a transposition of the *caecitas mentis* expounded by Cicero and renovated by the Latin Fathers. Epic conventions enhance theological reality, and in many places a form of *furor* represents an addition to the gospel narrative that perpetuates both the spirit of the New Testament story and the compelling appeal of Roman epic discord. Juvencus’ Christ restores *ratio* both to those oppressed by physical affliction and those harassed by the forces of cosmic evil, including *daemones* (metonymically called *furores* for the first time).

The development of an “inner grammar” emerges in Juvencus’ project, which argues for the profound insanity of those who reject the Kingdom of God, whether at the impetus of their own wickedness or through the intervention of demonic powers of *livor*. Amatory *furor*, together with battle rage and *furiae*, is scarcely in evidence, though a kind of politically seditious *furor* occurs, and natural upheavals use the characteristic language of frenzy to represent indirectly the wrath of God, just as in early patristic literature. *Furor* is never directly attributed to God, however, and divine wrath is described by other means, displaying no sign of verbal influence from contemporary OL versions of the scriptures; possibly this is to be explained by a desire to avoid seeming to align the God of the gospels with the tradition of disquieting celestial *ira* represented by Vergil’s Juno and her later iterations. There is no “good” *furor* in Juvencus’ poem,

which signals a sealing off of the more permeable moral duality of classical Latin epic. From a structural perspective *furor* occupies a space in Juvencus analogous to that which it occupies in the *Aeneid*, even as it differs radically in its significance: it brings the story to its final climax—in Juvencus’ case, the Cross—which asserts not the troubling cost of ephemeral worldly empire but the eternal victory of Heaven over Hell, of life over death. In this way Juvencus redeems the epic tradition of which he is an heir. His impulse to align cosmic order, his own poetic activity, and the qualities of a temporal ruler (Constantine) represents a bold and paradoxically traditional challenge to the epic achievements of his predecessors.

Proba’s *Cento*, a work of very different character but dedicated to parallel aims, allows its Vergilian language to exert considerably more pressure on the biblical source, incidentally demonstrating the general scriptural fidelity of Juvencus and his later successors. Proba’s God evinces *furor* and betrays a wrathful response to Adam and Eve that greatly exceeds the testimony of Genesis. His punishment of the guilty pair’s *furor* is disproportionately gendered to a degree not encountered in classical epic, at least outside of the *Thebaid*’s portrayal of bacchic vs. martial frenzy on the battlefield. Since Juvencus had avoided associating *furor* with the wrath of God, this is a new development, and like certain other elements of Proba’s presentation of biblical stories it proves programmatic for future Latin biblical epics, though the “didactic directionality” of the later poems is considerably less “reversible” than that of the *Cento*.

In Avitus’ *De Spiritalis Historiae Gestis*, written nearly a century and a half after Proba’s *Cento*, many threads that we have traced throughout classical epic, patristic literature, and the first Christian *hexameters* are gathered together. The Bishop of Vienne selects and arranges his biblical material to produce an epic which encompasses the whole of the created order, and which embraces the fate not just of his characters and his readers, but of every human being who

has ever lived. Avitus raises the stakes of epic to heights reached only implicitly in Vergil, explicitly incorporating all of history from the first day of creation to the reader's present. The poem surpasses those of Juvencus and Proba in its accommodation of a far larger world-historical frame, and develops a teleological focus—the fulfillment of all typologies and the consummation of redemptive history in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ—more insistently even than the *Aeneid*. In the *SHG*, *furor* at first distinguishes man from beast, and then both man and beast from the undeveloped wildness of the earth. Ultimately, however, after the horrendous consequences of the Fall, *furor* unites man and beast again in enslavement to the destructive agenda of Satan, who embraces irrationality in its purest form by denying the one truth which ought to be least susceptible to corruption: that God is God and everything else is his contingent creation.

Satan's infernal *livor*, through the deception of Eve, plunges humanity's rational faculty into the darkness of *caecitas spiritus*, a concept derived by Avitus' poem from the Bible, the Latin Fathers, and classical rhetoric. The debasement of *ratio* constitutes a central theme of the work, and eventually provokes the wrath of God, as symbolized in the Flood and the pillar of fire in Egypt. The *furor Dei* in Avitus introduces an element of homeopathy—especially in the retelling of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah—which nevertheless compares only superficially to the same phenomenon in classical epic, as the wrath of God differs in almost every way from the mad and impious rage of human beings. Righteous divine anger, embodied in elemental *furor*, is able to punish human insanity with a fury that fittingly reflects the frenzied passion of human sin without reproducing it. To the wicked it is a terror, but to the people of God his *furor* brings only blessing. This is the perspective that caused Tertullian to rejoice so heartily in his anticipation of the Last Judgment, which would repay his foes in keeping with their deeds. The

apparent symmetry between the forces of Heaven and Hell, the cosmic mirroring so susceptible to confusion in classical epic, is revealed to be an optical illusion produced by an earthly vantage point. In reality the opposition is asymmetrical, and Heaven will not fail to provide for the redeemed of mankind what the *Aeneid* could only promise doubtfully, and with dreadful forebodings of failure: the permanent destruction of *Furor impius*. Avitus' biblical epic aims at the redemption not just of the Vergilian poetic tradition, but also of his readers, whom he draws into his depiction of *furor* through their common humanity. The epics of the classical poets, followed by the poems of Juvencus and Proba, are also "participatory" in one sense or another, but the *SHG* makes a far more forceful case for the reader's share in the spiritual blindness of sin and his need for the Christ proclaimed by Avitus' poem. The semantics of *furor* in Avitus are still evolving in ways anticipated during the republican period, but also show Juvencus' influence in continuing to deepen the meaning of *furor* as opposition to the Kingdom of God. Several typical uses of the word and its cognates never appear in the *SHG*, but as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* this is the consequence of a subordination of semantic diversity to thematic unity.

The biblical epics' original blending of the classical, patristic, and biblical traditions represents on a small scale the greater hybridity of Roman late antiquity, and the work of the Christian poets is in many ways a microcosm of the sweeping cultural changes taking place in the fourth and fifth centuries. It also represents a revealing point of entry for new investigations into the creative matrix of the classical epics, which, especially after Vergil, fruitfully combine language and ideas drawn from many different genres of Latin literature. The numinous power of the *Aeneid*, which it bequeaths to its poetic successors, depends on a sort of magnetic balance between antithetical poles. This antithesis is not between "public" and "private" voices, which

ultimately privileges the latter at the expense of the former,⁹³³ but between two visions of human possibility—Heaven and Hell—which exert competing aesthetic and spiritual force, striving in unresolvable tension. In the Vergilian worldview, the universe testifies to the reality of both the “doubtful doom” of humankind and the “blissful years again to be,” tilting now toward one pole, now toward the other. To parse Vergil’s epic this way is not, as some have alleged, mere modish obeisance to postmodern *aporia* or a self-indulgent retreat into enigmas. It is rather to recognize the way things really are on earth, for the Augustan poet and for us, and to avow the *Aeneid*’s profound penetration into this truth. As I have argued, the entry of the Christian gospel into the Vergilian worldview via biblical epic both acknowledges *and* relieves precisely this spiritual impasse, by confronting squarely the brokenness of humanity while celebrating new hope for its recovery through Christ. *Furor* itself is redeemed as it becomes part of the universal story of Heaven’s ultimate victory over Hell, and epic evolves into good news—into *the* Good News—for the classical tradition and its heirs.

⁹³³ Tarrant (2012) 17n67.

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