

DIVINE ACTION IN *AENEID* BOOK TWO

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IN HIS EMPLOYMENT of divine intervention in the second book of the *Aeneid* Virgil is in general guided by the *Iliad* and by the battle-order which the Homeric poet, almost as if to make amends for its lateness, suddenly gives twice over in the twentieth book.¹ A theomachy of the Homeric type in the *Aeneid* is inconceivable,² and would in any case be pointless, since this is Troy's last hour: hence the pro-Trojan deities have now withdrawn. But Troy's old Homeric enemies, Neptune, Juno, and Minerva, are in at the kill (2.608 f.). So too is Jupiter himself (2.617 f.), which accords with Zeus' promise in the *Iliad* that once Hector was gone he would support the Greeks in their final onslaught (*Il.* 15.69 f.).³ And Virgil's brilliant invention of having the flames of the blazing city as the backcloth to the action from the very start of the Greek assault,⁴ as against the usual tradition that the Greeks (much more sensibly) set fire to the city only as they withdrew,⁵ may well derive ultimately from the poet's employment of the Iliadic scheme: for the anti-Trojan Fire-god who displayed such violence in the Homeric theomachy (*Il.* 21.342-382) was surely not to be excluded at such a time as this. Thus the very first glimpse Aeneas gets of Troy's agony reveals Vulcan at work destroying the houses of Deiphobus and Ucalegon (2.310 f.). Now the placing of the god's name at this crucial point in the action, combined as it is with the verb *superante* (311), strongly suggests that what we have here is something more than a mere "dead" usage: but thereafter a striking feature that has been overlooked is

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¹*Il.* 20.33 f. and 67 f. H. Fränkel, *Noten zu den Argonautika des Apollonios* (Munich 1968) 24 f., has emphasized that such postponement of important information is characteristic of Apollonius' sophisticated style: but it is certainly not lacking in Homer. (Note also how the general plan of the *Iliad* does not emerge clearly until Zeus' pronouncement at 13.437 f., and how the enmity of Poseidon towards Troy is not explained till 21.434 f., that of Hera and Athene not till 24.25 f.)

²The theomachy on the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.698 f.), where the Olympians unite to overthrow the monstrous deities of the oriental opposition, is of course very different.

³R. Allain, "Le Merveilleux dans un Épisode Crucial de l'Énéide," *LEC* 17 (1949), misses this connection (326) and sees Jupiter's intervention in *Aeneid* Two as essentially Stoic in conception (328).

⁴R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik*³ (Leipzig 1915) 28, considers this to have been a Hellenistic invention. But see R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Liber Secundus* (Oxford 1964) xiii and commentary *ad* 289. (I am indebted to Austin's commentary throughout this article.)

⁵E.g. Apollod. *Ep.* 5.23; Eur. *Tro.* 1260.

worthy of comment. For subsequently, in spite of constant references to the holocaust,⁶ Virgil avoids using the god's name again in this context, nor does he include Vulcan among "the powers hostile to Troy" revealed later by Venus to Aeneas (2.608 f.). The poet, I would suggest, was conscious of the inconsistency any such emphasis would expose: for while at this point in the poem he wished to employ the anti-Trojan Fire-god of the *Iliad*, who was the husband of Charis and had no association with the pro-Trojan Aphrodite (*Il.* 18.382 f.), he also wished elsewhere in his work to make a pro-Trojan deity of him, basing this on the later tradition of the Fire-god as Aphrodite's husband (*Aen.* 8.370 f., cf. *Od.* 8.266 f.). Here therefore it suited his purpose to make a single reference to Vulcan's anti-Trojan activity and leave it at that.

The high point of the Iliadic guidance in Book Two, however, is reached when Virgil introduces Venus into the action (2.589 f.). For the central motif (a goddess checking a hero from impetuous sword-play and advising him how to behave) is based on the celebrated passage in the *Iliad* where Athene restrains Achilles from attacking Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.193 f.).⁷ And the *Iliad* also provides the poet with a device that proves crucial at this juncture. For Book Two of course is spoken by Aeneas: and epic heroes (unlike epic poets)⁸ normally lack the ability to recognise gods and their activities.⁹ So just as Homer's Athene gives Diomedes a special clarity of vision which enables him to recognise deities on the battlefield (*Il.* 5.129 f.), Virgil's Venus, by a simple but brilliantly effective exploitation of the same device, now provides the great apocalypse which forms the unforgettable climax of the book. She removes the mist obscuring Aeneas' vision, and

*apparent dirae facies inimicae Troiae
numina magna deum. . .*

[2.622-623]

Elsewhere, it should be added, the poet is able to supplement his employment of this device by the simple expedient of referring to shrines and temples, which Aeneas can of course readily identify, and

⁶For refs. see n. 47 below.

⁷This is pointed out by W. Kühn in his (unpublished) dissertation, *Die Götterszenen bei Vergil* (Freiburg 1959) 75, where he rightly goes on to stress the important differences between the two scenes.

⁸*Aen.* 12.318 f., where Virgil confesses ignorance as to whether or not a god was behind the wounding of Aeneas, is an odd departure from the principle of the omniscient epic poet.

⁹Hence the sanctity of a stranger, who might prove to be a god (cf. *Od.* 17.483 f.). Hence also some of the discrepancies between what an epic hero says about divine intervention and what the poet tells us: of which Palinurus provides a good example. The poet knows that a god assailed him (5.854 f.), he himself does not (6.348). (The discrepancy regarding the weather in this context is different, and to be explained on psychological grounds: Palinurus knows he went overboard in a calm sea [5.848 f.], but he can scarcely be expected to tell Aeneas that in his subsequent account [6.349 f.].)

which can, in different ways, convey the notion of a god's activity. Thus, when the two serpents that have devoured Laocoon and his sons disappear into the shrine of Minerva (2.225–226) the obvious implication is that Minerva is the deity responsible for Laocoon's punishment.¹⁰ And the general hostility of Minerva and Juno is vividly symbolized in a similar manner in the action that follows: for it is at Minerva's temple¹¹ that disaster suddenly strikes when the Trojans actually seem, for one brief moment, to have turned the tide (2.396 f. and 2.402 f.); and the very last vignette Virgil gives us of *Troia ruens* (2.761 f.) reveals Greek chieftains on guard over booty and prisoners assembled in the shrine of Juno.

If we bear in mind how the influence of the *Iliad* permeates this book, and especially the Venus scene, it may help us with a vexed textual problem that arises as the scene comes to its close. Aeneas descends from the roof of Priam's palace and extricates himself from the destruction and chaos all around him *ducente deo* (2.632). The phrase we surely expect here (one which has naturally found its way into the tradition, but is less well attested)¹² is *ducente dea*. After all, Venus has just promised her guidance (2.620), and Aeneas has himself previously told Dido how he left Troy *matre dea monstrante viam* (1.382). Why then this sudden switch to the masculine form? The answer, I take it, is that the poet wishes to emphasize here that once Aeneas follows Venus' advice and turns his back on Troy he immediately qualifies for a divine guidance much more significant and far-reaching than that of his divine mother, viz. that of Jupiter himself. Initially (and this, as we have just seen, is typical) the hero fails to identify the deity whose influence he can now feel; and the poet, who could have let him anticipate the subsequent clarification, instead lets him produce this uncertainty in his account (*ducente deo*).¹³ But before long the identity of the *deus* who is especially anxious to promote Aeneas' safe withdrawal is made abundantly clear, since in the last two crises which threaten that withdrawal it is the power of Jupiter that in each case proves decisive.¹⁴ And this brings us back

¹⁰Cf. K. Quinn, *Virgil's Aeneid* (London 1968) 117.

¹¹G. Lieberg, *Atene e Roma* n.s. 11 (1966) 153, overlooks Minerva's importance in this context.

¹²Cf. Austin *ad loc.*

¹³One should not of course exaggerate this uncertainty: in such contexts the vague *deus* is always liable to emerge in due course as Jupiter, as happens here. For the close association of *deus* (*dei*) and Jupiter cf. C. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford 1935) 231; B. Grassmann-Fischer, *Die Prodigien in Vergils Aeneis* (Munich 1966) 19, n. 66.

¹⁴When Anchises refuses to leave (2.637 f.) it is Jupiter's *augurium maximum* that finally changes his mind (2.689 f.); and when Aeneas himself reacts so badly to the loss of Creusa (2.745 f.), it is Jupiter's authority that her ghost cites in order to bring him back to reason (2.776 f.)

to consideration of the *Iliad*, where we find that Zeus' position is entirely in harmony with the above arrangement. For although (as we saw) Zeus there reveals his intention of eventually throwing in his support against the Trojans in general, it is clear from another crucial passage that Aeneas is to be singled out from the rest for special treatment when that time comes. In the passage concerned (*Il.* 20.300 f.) Aeneas is about to succumb to Achilles when Poseidon (who is of course basically anti-Trojan) explains to Hera why he proposes to rescue the Trojan leader: it is Zeus' intention that Aeneas shall emerge unscathed from Troy in order to preserve the stock of Dardanus.¹⁵ And Aeneas will live on to establish a kingship over those Trojans who survive the fall.¹⁶ At *Aen.* 2.632-633, then, the moment has arrived for that prophecy to begin finding its fulfilment: and Jupiter's guidance is at hand to see that it does.

In the introduction to his edition of Book Two Austin has found difficulty in accepting the clash involved here between the previous "apocalypse of devils" and Aeneas blandly going forward in faithful obedience to divine guidance.¹⁷ But we are no doubt *meant* to feel a jolt at this great turning point: and we should not on that account brand the great Venus scene as an afterthought.¹⁸ On the contrary, it is so organic a part of the book and plays so crucial a role in the action¹⁹ that it must have had its place in Virgil's drafting from a very early stage. Austin himself, indeed, in his own analysis of the book, sees Venus' apocalypse not as an alien element superimposed on the rest, but as the "climax" of a "mounting indictment" (xx). And if we refer to Brooks Otis' general analysis,²⁰ in which he stresses the presence of so many corresponding elements in the book's two antiphonal sections (13-267 and 634-729), it seems reasonable to conclude that the Venus scene as a whole acts as a counterpoise to the sinister influence of Minerva in the opening section. Nor does Austin's view of the apocalypse as the product

¹⁵For the historical background to this prophecy cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Iliasstudien*³ (Darmstadt 1966) 125, n.; G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry* (London 1969) 131.

¹⁶That Virgil had this prophecy in mind when composing the *Aeneid* is clear from 3.97 f., where he produces his own version of it, suitably extended in scope, and transferred, as we might expect, from Poseidon to Apollo.

¹⁷*Op. cit.* (above, n. 4) xxi.

¹⁸Elsewhere (xii) Austin cites the presence of two half-lines in the Venus scene as an indication of lateness. But there is surely no necessary connection between incompleteness and order of composition. The Creusa passage matches this one very closely: it has one half-line immediately before it (767) and contains a second (787), while the Venus passage contains one (614) and has a second immediately after it (623). The Helen episode, on the other hand, for all its lateness (see below) contains none.

¹⁹Allain, *op. cit.* (above, n. 3) 334, calls it "un véritable pivot spirituel de l'Énéide."

²⁰Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilised Poetry* (Oxford 1964) 246 f. H. L. Tracy makes a similar antithetical analysis on the basis of the conduct and moods of the opposing sides in "The Pattern of Vergil's *Aeneid* 1-V1," *Phoenix* 4 (1950) 2.

of a sudden outburst of pessimism towards the end of the poet's life seem acceptable.²¹ All we have here, surely, is evidence of that vacillation between despair and hope that is a characteristic feature of the *Aeneid*.²² For Virgil's readers, no less than for Aeneas, it must be a question of striking a balance. The fall of Troy, then, should not be brooded over in isolation, but should be weighed against the emergence from its ashes of a new and greater Troy.²³ Venus indeed knows this already:²⁴ Aeneas will gradually come to know it. At this point in the action the goddess confronts her son with the naked cruelty of the *fata Troiana*: but one day she will show him a very different picture. She will hand over to him the shield forged by Vulcan, and Aeneas will rejoice at the glorious *fata Romana* depicted on it (8.615 f., 729 f.).

In the meantime, however, the Venus passage marks the beginning of Aeneas' progress towards a new kind of heroism.²⁵ Up to now in the action at Troy he has been at the mercy of a series of impulses—an irrational turmoil of anger, courage, grief, recklessness, and sheer frenzy. The call to a more responsible code, in accordance with which he should put the preservation of the Trojan stock and its gods above all else, has failed to find any response, even though it was made at two levels—on the divine,²⁶ by Hector's ghost (2.289 f.), and on the human level by Apollo's priest, Panthus (2.318 f.).²⁷ But now Aeneas' divine mother comes to make a fresh appeal. She supplements, as gods in ancient epic so often do, spontaneous feelings that have already begun to stir (2.559 f.). Indeed, her removal of the mist that has hitherto obscured Aeneas' vision of the gods (2.604 f.) itself symbolizes the disappearance of the *furor* which up to now has stifled his more rational impulses.²⁸ Her appeal, it is true, unlike Hector's, is narrowly based: she begs her son simply to be mindful of his family (2.596 f.).²⁹ But that in fact is precisely

²¹*Op. cit.* (above, n. 4) xxi.

²²This is most often evident in Virgil's dwelling on the individual tragedies that lie behind the making of history, however glorious. Cf. R. D. Williams, *Virgil* (Oxford 1967) 28 f. (with refs.); J. Perret, "Optimisme et Tragédie dans l'Énéide," *REL* 45 (1967) 342–362.

²³Cf. Quinn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10) 120; V. Buchheit, *Vergil über die Sendung Roms* (Heidelberg 1963) 107, n. 437.

²⁴*Aen.* 1.239: *fatis contraria fata rependens*.

²⁵Brooks Otis, *op. cit.* (above, n. 20) 243 f.

²⁶On the divinity of the Roman (as opposed to the Greek) ghost see H. R. Steiner, *Der Traum in der Aeneis* (Berne 1952) 98 f.

²⁷The significance of Panthus in this context rests not so much on his words (2.324 f.), which are so full of despair, but on the fact that he bears the *sacra* (320) just commended to Aeneas' protection by Hector's ghost (293).

²⁸Cf. Kühn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 7) 75; M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) 29; Allain (above, n. 3) 322.

²⁹Venus' role in persuading Aeneas to forget Troy and remember his family is ob-

why she succeeds where Hector failed. For Aeneas, who does not yet grasp the full significance of his mission, will achieve his new heroic stature only gradually and through experience. Through his *pietas* towards his family and towards Anchises in particular he will come to understand what *pietas* means in a wider sense.³⁰

If the *Iliad* supplies the key to an understanding of Book Two's divine action in general, to understand the important role in the opening section of Minerva in particular we need to consider briefly Virgil's handling of material drawn from later sources. In the tradition there were four principal themes, which were originally distinct from each other: and although there may have been some interplay between them before Virgil,³¹ it seems clear that he was the first to bring them together so that they formed a composite whole. These themes were: (a) The stealing of the Palladium by Odysseus and Diomedes (Servius *ad* 2.166). (b) Apollo's punishment of his priest, Laocoon, for unpriestly conduct (Servius *ad* 2.201). (c) The entry into Troy of the Wooden Horse, made by Epeius with the help of Athene (*Od.* 8.492 f.; *Ilias Parva*, OCT Homer 5.107.2-14). (d) The entry into Troy of the disguised Sinon and his raising of a fire-signal (*Iliu Persis*, OCT Homer 5. 107.26-27). Virgil's method of bringing unity to these various elements was to make the theme of the Wooden Horse central, and to impart a direct bearing on this main theme to each of the rest. Thus Sinon's role now is not to give a warning signal to the Greeks (Helen does that: cf. 6.518 f.), but to ensure the entry of the Horse into Troy, and to open it up when he himself receives the signal from them that indicates their approach (2.57 f., 2.250 f.). Similarly the theft of the Palladium does service now in Sinon's argument to get the Horse accepted, forming a crucial element in the rignmarole which so successfully hoodwinks the Trojans (2.162 f.). But it is to the Laocoon story that this process of fusion imparts the most significant changes: for since the Horse is now the focus of interest, Laocoon's sin and punishment (like everything else in this section) have to be given direct reference to it. Laocoon therefore is no longer a priest

viously crucial, but it should not be exaggerated. There is a tendency among scholars to extend its scope further than it really goes: cf., e.g., Allain (above, n. 3) 331-332; J. B. Garstang, "The Crime of Helen and the Concept of *Fatum* in the *Aeneid*," *CJ* 57 (1962) 343; G. K. Galinsky, *Aeneas, Sicily, and Rome* (Princeton 1969) 20. All Venus does for Aeneas is "emphasize his absolute impotence, his inability to do anything but go home" (Brooks Otis, *Gnomon* 41 [1969] 559). As far as divine action goes, the rest lies with Jupiter.

³⁰Cf. Brooks Otis, *op. cit.* (above, n. 20) 250, and in D. R. Dudley (ed.), *Virgil (Studies in Latin Literature and its Influence* 6 [London 1969]) 37.

³¹Cf. F. Klingner, *Virgil* (Zürich 1967) 412. In this context Heinze, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 7-8, influenced by his views on Quintus Smyrnaeus and Tryphiodorus, tends to underestimate the probable extent of Virgil's originality.

of Apollo, committing a sin against his patron deity and paying the penalty in isolation: instead he is now a prominent Trojan who not only opposes the entry of the Horse, but also desecrates its sanctity with his spear (2.40 f.). And his resultant death speeds the entry of the Horse into the city (2.199 f.).

Laocoon's death, indeed, plays a complex role which it is perhaps useful to interpret at three different levels: (a) For the reader following the story it is a simple enough matter: Minerva has clearly punished Laocoon for desecrating the Horse with whose creation she was closely associated, her concern for its welfare being parallel to that of Apollonius' Athene for the welfare of the Argo. The traditional motif of Minerva's co-operation in the production of the Horse appears at the start of the book (2.13 f.); and the destination of the serpents after their terrible mission (2.225 f.) confirms this fairly obvious inference. (b) For the Trojan bystanders the position is not quite so simple. They also rightly³² conclude that Laocoon has been punished for desecrating the Horse: but they do so on a totally different, and of course erroneous, basis. For Virgil lets Sinon, in his lying account, radically alter the nature of Minerva's association with the Horse. It is now a gift to the goddess, offered to atone for the desecration of the Palladium (2.183 f.); and its role as such forms a crucial link in the chain of Sinon's deceit. Hence when Laocoon is destroyed and Minerva's association with the Horse is thus clearly confirmed, the Trojans naturally interpret that association in the sense given to it by Sinon: and, equally naturally, they go on to accept the rest of his story as well—including the promise (2.192 f.) that if they take the Horse into Troy ultimate victory over the Greeks will be theirs. (c) Finally, for the reader taking a broader view of the events at Troy, and for Aeneas himself indeed as he now looks back on them,³³ the destruction of Laocoon and his sons by the serpents assumes all the characteristics of a familiar phenomenon: a neglected prodigy foreshadowing a great catastrophe, as they so often do in the pages of Roman history.³⁴

³²K. Büchner, *RE* 8 A (1958) 1349, and Austin, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 94, both imply that there is in fact no real connection between Laocoon's spear-throwing and his death, and that the notion of his punishment by Minerva is simply an erroneous conclusion arrived at by the Trojan bystanders. But the latter are surely correct on that particular point: where they go astray is simply in interpreting that punishment in Sinon's terms.

³³For the relevance of this shift of viewpoint to the interpretation of 2.575–576 and 2.585–587 see N. L. Hatch, *CP* 54 (1959) 255–257.

³⁴On this aspect of the incident cf. H. Kleinknecht, "Laokoon," *Hermes* 79 (1944) 66–111; Quinn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10) 118; Büchner *op. cit.* (above, n. 32) 1350. Büchner emphasizes the importance of the prodigy to the exclusion of the punishment motif, but the complexity of the event's significance is typical of Virgil, and such a position is too rigid. Klingner, *op. cit.* (above, n. 31) 413–414, suggests that in this retrospective

With reference to Laocoon's priesthood some further points should perhaps be made:

(i) In Virgil's adaptation of the tradition he of course loses his role as a priest of Apollo. The poet, I imagine, must have intended this from the start: his Apollo, whose prophetic activity is so closely identified with the Roman future, was surely not to be associated in any way with Troy's fall, or with the grizzly tale of the death of Laocoon. At the same time, however, Virgil was no doubt conscious of the gap thus created, and to fill it he introduced Panthus, whose association with Apollo, if not his actual priesthood, derives from the *Iliad*.³⁵ And Panthus plays the kind of role we would expect a priest of Apollo to play in the Aeneid, passing on to Aeneas the *sacra* that are to become in due course the symbol of Troy's renewal (2.318 f.).

(ii) In Virgil's working out of the story,³⁶ then, Laocoon is no longer a priest of Apollo, but simply a prominent Trojan whose sudden arrival and intervention in the discussion break in on the action with powerful dramatic effect. The climax of this intervention comes when he casts his spear at the Horse: and for this violation of an object whose construction was sponsored by Minerva he is in due course punished. But only in due course: for Virgil breaks in on the action at this point, and holds up the actual destruction of Laocoon until Sinon has told his lying tale. In this way the intervention of the snakes, when it does at last come, puts the final seal on Sinon's story, and imparts to the action the kind of impetus it needs at this juncture. But such an arrangement presented Virgil with a difficult dramatic problem: what was he to do meanwhile with Laocoon? He could not let him stand his ground and challenge Sinon's story: for although Sinon's tissue of lies is splendid rhetoric, it survives as such only because it is never for one moment exposed to the slightest sceptical probing. Nor on the other hand could he expect the reader to accept that a man of Laocoon's strong and impetuous character would stand silently by while Sinon proceeded to beguile his fellow-countrymen. Virgil's solution was in fact simple, and was no doubt inspired by Laocoon's original role as priest of Apollo. For at the end of Sinon's speech (where the information becomes relevant) the reader is told that Laocoon has in the meantime been busy sacrificing, having earlier been selected by lot as priest of Neptune (2.201 f.). Such sacrifice

role of prodigy we see part of the earlier tradition breaking through. (Cf. *Iliu Persis*, OCT Homer 5.107.25: τῷ τέρατι δυσφορησάντες. According to the rest of that tradition Aeneas and his followers withdrew to Mt. Ida immediately after Laocoon's death.)

³⁵At *Il.* 5.9 f. Hephaestus rescues a son of Dares, because Dares is his priest. Thus when Apollo rescues one son of Panthus (*Il.* 15.521 f.), and takes steps to ensure the protection of the corpse of another (*Il.* 17.70 f.), the inference that Panthus is his priest seems clear enough.

³⁶On the question of whether or not this is original, see Austin *ad* 201.

at this time is wholly appropriate, since the assumption is that the enemy fleet is now at the sea-god's mercy: and Laocoon's new appointment is also reasonable, since the altar of the god by the shore, and the priesthood associated with it, would naturally have been abandoned during the presence of the Greeks.³⁷ Moreover, with such an arrangement Virgil is able to produce an effectively ironical reverse, whereby the sacrificing priest suddenly finds himself to be the victim.³⁸

A word finally about the Helen episode. Austin has argued convincingly that it is Virgil's own work, and that any difficulties it contains can be ascribed to its unfinished state.³⁹ Here we shall do no more than suggest how the passage may have come to be written, basing our approach on the *Iliad*, which we have already seen to be of considerable importance in this context. In the initial stages of his drafting of Book Two it would be typical of Virgil's method to introduce towards the end of the book an intervention by Venus on the Trojan side, as a foil to the sinister activities of Minerva towards the beginning.⁴⁰ And her role would naturally be to bring home to Aeneas the futility of further resistance. The best way she could do this, no doubt, was to stress that the gods were behind Troy's fall: and two passages in the *Iliad* indicated

³⁷Cf. Heinze, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 17-19.

³⁸It is striking how often in Book Two death seems to have sacrificial undertones. Not only does Laocoon die at an altar in the act of sacrificing (201 f.), but even the simile introduced to describe his cries (223 f.) keeps within the same framework of reference. The very first Trojan casualty we hear of, Coroebus, *divae armipotentis ad aram procumbit* (424-425); and the last, King Priam himself, is slaughtered by Pyrrhus at the palace's central altar, which is already drenched with the blood of his son, Polites (550-553). And before all this the motif of human sacrifice forms the ominous basis of Sinon's lying tale (108 f.).

³⁹R. G. Austin, "Virgil, Aeneid 2.567-588," *CQ* n.s. 11 (1961) 185-198. Most scholars agree with Austin's views, or with the similar findings of K. Büchner, *op. cit.* (above, n. 32) 1353 f. Cf. Brooks Otis, *op. cit.* (above, n. 30) 243, n. 1; Quinn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 10) 18, n. 1; Kühn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 7) 70, n. 2; A. Wlosock, *Die Göttin Venus in Vergils Aeneis* (Heidelberg 1967) 80, n. 21; W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford 1969) 123-126; Putnam, *op. cit.* (above, n. 28) 225, n. 2. Klingner remained convinced that the lines were spurious (*op. cit.* [above, n. 31] 418 f.). But his view that the episode breaks in to destroy the connection between Aeneas' thoughts at 560 f. and Venus' suggestion at 594 f. is surely wide of the mark. The truth is rather that before the episode was added there was no obvious need for Venus to intervene: her action simply supplemented feelings which Aeneas was already beginning to harbour of his own accord (560 f.). But by adding the Helen episode Virgil provided the necessary motivation: now Venus *had* to appear in order to recall those earlier sober reflections to a momentarily distracted Aeneas.

Since I wrote this article G. P. Goold has argued against the authenticity of the Helen episode, and questioned the reliability of Servius in this context ("Servius and the Helen Episode," *HSCP* 74 [1970] 101-168.).

⁴⁰The balancing of the activity of one deity against that of another is a constant feature of the *Aeneid*. The most striking example no doubt is the matching of Venus' help in Book Eight against Juno's hostile machinations in Book Seven.

how this might be done. In one (3.177 f.) Helen on Troy's wall identifies for Priam the principal Greek warriors assembled below; and in the other (5.127 f.) Athene removes from Diomedes's eyes the mist that normally prevents mortals from identifying gods. Moreover in the celebrated scene on Troy's wall there was an obvious hint of the argument Venus might use to supplement her revelation: for there Priam tells Helen that not she but the gods are to blame for Troy's troubles (3.164–165). So Virgil began, I would suggest, with a simple arrangement based on these passages, whereby Venus appeared to Aeneas, stressed that the gods not Helen were to blame for Troy's troubles, and proved the point by letting Aeneas identify the gods who were destroying his city. Just one small modification would doubtless be made at the outset, however: for in Venus' argument "not Helen but the gods" would be too specific for Virgil's purpose, and the simple addition "or Paris" would make the antithesis more general and more acceptable (*Aen.* 2.601–602).

The next stage, perhaps, arose from consideration of the main problem with all such scenes of divine intervention, viz., its initial motivation. The departure of a deity after such a scene presents no difficulty: he simply goes back where he belongs. But his motive for intervening in the first place is a different matter, and needs more care. Indeed, a century and a half ago Heyne drew attention to Virgil's weakness in this aspect of his work:⁴¹ and we can be sure that the poet was himself only too conscious that his scenes of divine intervention were not always satisfactorily introduced. This Venus scene, then, was presumably a case in point, with the goddess arriving out of the blue to help her son, introduced perhaps by that lame *interea* which Heyne castigates: and perhaps the poet was conscious that his readers might well wonder why she should suddenly decide to intervene at this point in particular, when she had, after all, remained aloof for so long.

I would suggest next that the solution to Virgil's problem arose from the simple accident whereby the irresistible figure of Helen was already present in his text, as a reference in Venus' argument. For once Virgil had decided to motivate Venus' intervention, the extension of the scene this required was surely bound to centre on her. And since the resultant action was devised to solve a problem rather than for its own sake, with the poet more concerned about the immediate context than about the general plan of action, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a conflict between what Helen is said to do here, and her behaviour elsewhere in the epic.⁴²

⁴¹C. G. Heyne, *P. Virgilius Maro* (London 1821) 3.315–318.

⁴²That there is such a conflict cannot be doubted. After all, if Helen was really terrified of what the Greeks would do to her once they got into Troy (2.572 f.) she would surely hide herself away from the start, not team up with them at the very height of their battle-frenzy (6.523 f.) and then, when they had spared her, proceed to hide (2.574).

Finally as to the form the solution takes: here the influence of several passages can be traced. The motif of taking revenge on Helen already figured in the *Ilias Parva*, where Menelaus draws his sword to kill her, but overwhelmed by her beauty, quickly changes his mind and throws his sword away (schol. *ad Ar. Lys.* 155 f.). So too, Aeneas' soliloquy on the possible repercussions of such a deed (2.583 f.) is based on a similar discussion between Orestes and Pylades in Euripides' *Orestes* (1132 f.). But the most decisive inspiration (as we have already seen) came from the *Iliad* (1.193 f.). And it is perhaps not too much to assume that Virgil, as the supreme connoisseur of Homeric divine interventions, must have always nursed the idea of reproducing his own version of the first and most striking one of all, and now welcomed the opportunity of doing so.⁴³

As a postscript, a few points of detail may be worth adding:

(i) There are two minor features of the Helen episode which support or at least are consistent with the above view that Virgil worked backwards to it from the Venus scene. Firstly, the question of what became of Helen naturally never arises, since the sequel had already been satisfactorily completed before she assumed the status of an active character. And secondly, there is perhaps now just the faintest trace of a clash between Aeneas' encounter with Helen *alone* in the action (2.567 f.) and Venus' subsequent correction of his behaviour in terms of Helen and *Paris* (601–602). Had Virgil worked forward from the Helen episode, Paris would perhaps never have got into the text in the first place. On the other hand once he *was* there (added, I have suggested, to give Venus' words a more general air) there was no real need for Virgil to remove him in the later arrangement.

(ii) The expression *subit ira . . . ulcisci* (2.575–576) is perhaps something more than the rather awkward phrase it is usually taken to be. For how better to hint at the Iliadic flavour of this situation, where Aeneas becomes for a moment a second Achilles, than by an echo of the actual language of the *Iliad*? Could not the use of *ira* in the sense of "angry impulse," and followed by an infinitive, recall Homeric usage, where *θυμὸς* can be used in just the same way (e.g., *Il.* 13.775)? For it seems clear enough that Virgil did experiment in this way with psychological terms, a striking parallel being the way in which, on the analogy of Homeric *ψυχή* usage, he (uniquely?) "stretches" the meaning of *vita* so that it can mean "ghost" instead of "life." Thus the Sibyl tells Aeneas that the ghosts in Hades are *tenuis sine corpore vitas* (6.292); and when Camilla and Turnus are killed it is not the *anima* or the *umbra* that flies

⁴³It is interesting to note that Athene's checking of Achilles forms the subject of one of Pompeii's most magnificent (though sadly damaged) paintings. Cf. L. Richardson, "The Casa dei Dioscuri and its Painters," *MAAR* 23 (1955) 135–136 and plate 33.

off to the underworld bewailing its fate, but in each case the *vita* (*Aen.* 11.831, 12.592, corresponding to *Il.* 16.856 f. and 22.362 f.).⁴⁴ If this suggestion seems reasonable, it would provide strong corroboration of the authenticity of the Helen passage, even though only a very minor point of detail is involved: for such an esoteric feature would surely have been quite beyond any interpolator.

(iii) The visualisation of Helen as a Fury (2.573: *Troiae et patriae communis Erinys*)⁴⁵ may well have a special relevance in the case of Troy which has unfortunately been obscured through the introduction of the secondary idea⁴⁶ that Greece too has suffered as a result of her activities. For Virgil throughout Book Two stresses that the city is ablaze:⁴⁷ and in the Helen episode so compelling does the notion of burning become that, besides introducing fire in the physical sense (569 *incendia*; 581 *arserit igni*; and cf. the brutally literal *cineres*, 587), the poet also employs several associated metaphorical terms (*exarsere ignes animo*, 575; *extinxisse nefas*, 585; *ultriciis flammae*, 587) even though (as Austin stresses, *ad loc.*) the first of these involves an awkward clash between the metaphorical *exarsere* and the literal *arserit* only six lines earlier, as well as an otherwise unvirgilian use of *ignes*. Now we surely ought to ask why Virgil is bent on such an accumulation and confusion of fire-terms hereabouts: and the answer is perhaps bound up with Aeneas' discovery of Helen at this particular point. For fire-raising in the *Aeneid* is above all a feminine occupation. During the voyage of the Trojans it is of course their ships which are primarily involved. In Book Four, for example, Mercury warns Aeneas (560 f.) that if he delays his departure Dido will fire his ships: and just afterwards, when the queen awakens to see the Trojans moving off, her immediate reaction is to cry out (594) *ferte citi flammās*. Indeed, when the ships are in fact set on fire in Book Five, and four are burnt out, the complex operation involves females, divine and human, from start to finish (604 f.): first Juno, then Iris, then the fictitious Beroe, and finally the Trojan matrons.⁴⁸ Moreover, of all females the Fury is the best qualified for such activity, since her

⁴⁴On the relationship between these two pairs of passages cf. my note "The Subtlety of the Oral Poet," *Eranos* (forthcoming).

⁴⁵Heinze, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 49, n., rightly stresses that Virgil's source here was not Aesch. *Ag.* 749 νυμφόκλαυτος Ἑρινύς, but Eur. *Or.* 1388 ξεστῶν Περσέων Ἀπολλωνίων Ἑρινύν: the phrasing is much closer, and, as we have already seen, Virgil draws on Euripides' play for some of Aeneas' soliloquy.

⁴⁶This notion is absent from Virgil's model: see n. 45 above.

⁴⁷289, 311, 327, 329, 337, 353, 374, 431, 505, 566, 600, 632, 664, 705, 758, 764. Cf. Heinze, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4) 27 f.

⁴⁸Similarly, when Turnus advances to set the Trojan ships alight (9.69 f.), the trail he has followed takes us back to Allecto as the instigator (7.445 f.), and ultimately of course to Juno (7.324 f.).

stock weapon is a torch.⁴⁹ Indeed, later in the *Aeneid*, in a passage characterized by a confusion of fire-terms comparable to that in the Helen passage,⁵⁰ the Fury Allecto ends her confrontation of Turnus by thrusting a smoky torch into his breast. Here, then, it seems to Aeneas that he has discovered, cowering by the altar of Vesta, the true source of the conflagration that is now consuming Troy, the *Troiae Erinys* whose torch really set Troy alight long ago.⁵¹

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⁴⁹For the torch as a Fury's standard equipment cf. *Aen.* 6.605 f., where Tisiphone wields one in Tartarus; and Dido's threat (4.384 f.). No doubt when the reader visualizes Helen brandishing a torch on Troy's last night (6.518 f.) the Fury image inevitably returns to his mind in that later passage also. One should, however, distinguish such thoughts from what the poet actually says. For in Deiphobus' account Helen is not actually shown as an avenging Fury (Garstang, *op. cit.* [above, n. 29] 338): there, under the pretext of leading a Bacchic procession to celebrate the end of the siege, she brandishes a torch that is in reality a signal to the Greeks. On the question of Virgil's originality here, cf. E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*⁴ (Darmstadt 1957) 260 f. It seems very probable that Helen's mock revel, which is so simply and directly motivated, gave Virgil the idea for that of Amata (7.385 f.), which is less clearly motivated and takes a much more complex course.

⁵⁰7.445 f. Note *exarsit in iras* (445); *flammea . . . lumina* (448–449); *facem* (456); *fumantis . . . taedas* (457).

⁵¹On Virgil's use of fire as a symbol cf. V. Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil*, translated by G. Seligson (Ann Arbor 1962) 102 f.