Furor

Vassiliki Panoussi

College of William and Mary, panoussi@wm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/asbookchapters

Part of the Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wm.edu/asbookchapters/62

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Arts and Sciences at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Arts & Sciences Book Chapters by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
with the Greek terms Erinyes and Eumenides; the Latin terms Furiae and Dirae (from the adjective dirus “dire” or “dreadful”) also appear to apply to them interchangeably. According to Servius on A. 4.609, the Furies live on earth, the Dirae in heaven, and the Eumenides in the underworld, but this schematization is clearly late. Human beings are also asociated with Furies (e.g., Hele at A. 2.573; Dido at A. 4.376, 4.474; Clytemnestra at A. 4.472), as are the monstrous Harpies (A. 3.252; compare Homer, Odyssey 20.78; Aeschylus, Eumenides 50–51; Apollo ius of Rhodes, Argonautica 2.220). The Furies display chthonic attributes: they dwell in Hades (A. 6.280–81; 6.289), their mother is peronified Night (A. 12.845–47; see per onification ), and they have serpentine hair and wing (A. 12.848; see s akes).

Virgil frequently pu s on the ancient ETYMOL­Ogy of their name, deum ira "the wrath of the god " (e.g., A. 3.215), e pecially when he connect them with war. For in tance, Ju o employs the Fury Allecto as the instigator of the cla h between Trojans and Latin (A. 7.323–571), while a Fury i used as a metonymy for Tro y’ de truction (A. 2.337–38; ee SA 22). Furies are al o identified with Discordia, a in the de criptio of the battle of Actium on the field of AeEA (A. 8.701–3; see also ecphrasi ). Yet at the end of the poem they are found on Jupi ter’ threshold and are described as inducing fear among mortal and inflicting illness (recalling G. 3.551–53, where Tisiphone emerge from Stygian darkne a the plague gathers strength), death, and war a pun­ishment (A. 12.845–52).

In two instance (A. 4.469, 6.571–72) the Furies are described as being in agmina, an odd term to use for a three ome. On the ba is of CHOLIA that are preserved in an eleventh-century manu cript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, M lat. 7930), it ha been hypothesized that Virgil wa aware from Varro that the three sister had the Roman names Agmentis, Pecmenti , and Furina, and that by agmina he allude to the fir t and la t of these (Waszink 1963).

**References**


VASSILIKI PANOUSSI

**furor** Literally “fury” or “madness.” Instances of furor are found in Virgil’s work in the context of martial anger and bloodlust, god-inflicted madness, and similarly inflicted or otherwise generated erotic madness. It is mostly present in A., where it is often personified as a supernatural force akin to or caused by the Furiae (“Furies”), to which it is etymologically linked (see etymol­ogy; personification). Both words derive from the verb furere “to rage” or “to be crazed”; related adjec­tival forms include furialis (e.g., A. 7.375 of the Fury Allecto’s venom), furibundus (e.g., A. 4.646 of Dido), and furiatus (e.g., A. 2.407 of Coroebus’ state of mind). Furor affects both male and female character and all animate beings (G. 3.242–44; compare G. 3.266–83, where it afflicts mares the climax of this lengthy passage; see animals, domestic), although women or female deity appear more susceptible to it (see gender).

**Furor** is a major theme connected with love in humans and animals (G. 3.209–83) and also causes the downfall of Orpheus in his fateful backward glance at Eur ydice (G. 4.494–95, where Eurydice imputes her own and Orpheus’ downfall to furor). This recalls the erotic furor of Gallus, for which he claims there is no remedy (E. 10.60 medicina furoris). Similarly in A., erotic furor characterizes Didos’ love for Aeneas (e.g., A. 4.65–66) and the madness that results from his abandonment of her (e.g., A. 4.501). The word or related forms appear sixteen times in connection to Dido, more than any other character in the epic. Once stricken by furor, women are described as engaging in maenadic behavior, either meta-phorical (e.g., Dido at A. 4.300–301; the Sibyl at A. 6.77–78) or literal (Amatas at A. 7.373–405), often re ulting in sui ide (e.g., Dido at A. 4.645–47; Amata at A. 12.601–3; ee mae ads; metaphor).

**Furor** is also found in nature, affecting inanimate forces such as w inds (e.g., A. 1.51, 2.304), the EA (A. 1.107), rivers (A. 2.498), rain (A. 5.694), fire (A. 4.670) or animals (G. 3.266 of horses, with reference to Hippomenes, on which see Thomas 1988, 2: 94–95; compare G. 3.458 of ailing heep). Images of fire and madness are employed in the description of disease, in particular the plague (G. 3.440–566). Here we find vocabulary very similar to that which is used to describe the symptoms of love. Instances of furor in nature and in animals...
have been interpreted as symbolic of its influence on the human realm (see especially A. 1.81–156).

*Furor* is linked with the supernatural, as it is synonymous with divinely inspired prophetic madness (e.g., CASSANDRA at A. 2.345; the Sibyl at A. 6.100, 6.102, 6.262; see PROPHECY). It is also itself one of the epic's major supernatural powers, often (though not exclusively) controlled by JUNO. The most notable example in this regard is the Fury Allecto, who at Juno's bidding injects with madness Amata (A. 7.341–58), TURNUS (A. 7.406–74), the hounds of ASCANIUS (A. 7.475–81), and, indirectly, the Latins so as to start the war with Aeneas (A. 7.580–82, 7.624–25; see LATIUM AND LATINI). Allecto's action on Amata is a flesh and blood imposition of madness in the form of a snake by gods on humans (A. 7.341–58; see SNAKES), but at the same time Allecto may be seen as merely bringing out what is already present in the queen's psyche (A. 7.343–45; see PSYCHOLOGY). *Furor* is personified as a monstrous creature (most notably at A. 1.294–96, where it is designated as *impius*); as such, it stands for the madness of CIVIL WAR and is opposed to Aeneas' PIETAS and AUGUSTAN IDEOLOGY.

Other aspects of *furor* render it synonymous with the fury and madness in battle that causes DEATH or other atrocities (e.g., A. 10.510–605). It is particularly associated with Turnus' actions and eventual death. *Furor* first affects Turnus in the guise of Allecto's serpents (A. 7.445–74) and, as in the case of Amata, the Fury has been seen by some as preying on his current state of mind (e.g., A. 7.409, 7.475, where Turnus is described as already *audax* "bold" or "rash," an adjective that attests to his susceptibility to the forces of madness). *Furor* continues to affect Turnus' actions throughout the war (e.g., A. 9.691, 9.760, 11.486) but is also used of Aeneas almost as frequently (e.g., A. 2.595, 10.545).

An intense scholarly debate surrounds the ultimate role of *furor* in A. While it has been traditionally interpreted as justifiable and necessary, many see Aeneas' killing of Turnus at the end of A. as a triumph of *furor over pietas* (see AENEID, ENDING OF). Cairns (1989: 82–84) notes that it is significant that A. 12.946 does not contain the word *furor* but *furiae*, claiming that *furiae* can be justified (as it is during the Etruscans' revolt against MEZENTIUS at A. 8.494). Thomas (1991) argues in response that both *furiae* and *furor* are condemnatory terms and that any attempt at a distinction between them only seeks to justify Aeneas' actions. By contrast, Galinsky (1988) had pointed out that, viewed from an Aristotelian perspective, Aeneas' *furor* emerges as completely justified (see ARISTOTLE; PHILOSOPHY). Others, for instance Putnam (1995) and the so-called HARVARD SCHOOL, highlight Aeneas' ethical and moral failures, arguing that his final act is not dictated by *pietas* but occurs "under the direct impulse of Furies" (Putnam 1995: 194). This divergence of scholarly opinion falls within the larger debate on A's overall optimism or pessimism regarding Augustan ideology (see OPTIMISM AND PESSMISM).

See also EMOTIONS; STOICISM

References

Further Reading