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# Furor

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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 associated 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 personified Night (A. 12.845–47; see PERSONIFICATION), and they have serpentine hair and wings (A. 12.848; see SNAKES).

Virgil frequently puns on the ancient ETYMOLOGY of their name, *deum ira* “the wrath of the god” (e.g., A. 3.215), especially when he connects them with WAR. For instance, JUNO employs the Fury Allecto as the instigator of the clash between Trojans and Latins (A. 7.323–571), while a Fury is used as a metonymy for TROY’ destruction (A. 2.337–38; see SARCOPHAGUS). Furies are also identified with DISCORDIA, as in the DESCRIPTIO of the battle of ACTIUM on the FIELD OF AEAEA (A. 8.701–3; see also ECPHRASIS). Yet at the end of the poem they are found on JUPITER’ threshold and are described as inducing FEAR among mortals and inflicting illness (recalling G. 3.551–53, where Tisiphone emerges from Stygian darkness as the PLAGUE gathers strength), DEATH, and war as punishment (A. 12.845–52).

In two instances (A. 4.469, 6.571–72) the Furies are described as being in *agmina*, an odd term to use for a threesome. On the basis of SCHOLIA that are preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, M lat. 7930), it has been hypothesized that Virgil was aware from VARRO that the three sisters had the Roman names *Agmentis*, *Pecmenti*, and *Furina*, and that by *agmina* he alludes to the first and last of these (Waszink 1963).

### References

Waszink, J.H. 1963. “Agmina Furiarum.” *Harvard Theological Review* 56: 7–11.

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*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 characters and all animate beings (G. 3.242–44; compare G. 3.266–83, where it afflicts mares at the climax of this lengthy passage; see ANIMALS, DOMESTIC), although WOMEN or female deities 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 EURYDICE (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 Dido’s 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 metaphorical (e.g., Dido at A. 4.300–301; the SIBYL at A. 6.77–78) or literal (AMATAS at A. 7.373–405), often resulting in SUIKIDE (e.g., Dido at A. 4.645–47; Amata at A. 12.601–3; see MAELICIOUS; METAPHOR).

*Furor* is also found in nature, affecting inanimate forces such as WINDS (e.g., A. 1.51, 2.304), the SEA (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 HIPPOMANES, on which see Thomas 1988, 2: 94–95; compare G. 3.458 of ailing sheep). 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 PESSIMISM).

See also EMOTIONS; STOICISM

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### Further Reading

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