

CHAINS OF IMAGERY IN *PROMETHEUS BOUND*

Aeschylus' imagery has for some time now been discussed as a feature of his dramatic technique which does more than merely adorn his work. Lebeck, for example, has described how images articulate the *Oresteia*:

The images of the *Oresteia* are not isolated units which can be examined separately. Each one is part of a larger whole: a system of kindred imagery. They are connected to one another by verbal similarity rather than verbal duplication. Formulaic (verbatim) repetition is rare, except in the cases of single 'key' words; it is replaced by associative or reminiscent repetition. Such repetition may evoke several different passages, yet correspond exactly to none. Each occurrence adds a new element to those with which it is associated. Often this expansion will be a blend of two images previously separate, preserving features reminiscent of both. In this way the different systems of imagery are intricately interwoven. The significance of a recurrent image unfolds in successive stages, keeping time with the action of the drama.¹

I would not wish to subscribe to every point of Lebeck's subsequent interpretations, but I do think this is a good general description of how imagery in the *Oresteia* works. It has, however, been vigorously denied that recurrent images in the *Oresteia* should be seen as connected, and particularly that they should be understood as having a structural function.² West writes (195):

Aeschylus is not Wagner, placing his Leitmotive to make deliberate links between distant passages, still less organizing them into a 'highly intricate system' (Garvie [n. 1 above], xxxvi). ... Unconscious (or uncaring) repetition of words and phrases is a salient feature of his style. It is the same with imagery. He has certain favourite images and fields of imagery to which he has recourse again and again because he likes them, because they are lodged in his mind like bacteria in a well, because they continue to be appropriate, not because he wishes to recall some earlier passage or prepare for some later one.

Some of the examples West goes on to give of connections made between images by critics do seem strained; but bad examples do not of themselves invalidate any principle. How consciously Aeschylus intended connections between passages cannot be determined; but even if connected imagery belongs to the less conscious part of poetic activity, and even if the connections suggested between images are of very different kinds and degrees, that does not mean that such imagery does not profoundly affect the audience's response to the play or plays in which it is found. Lebeck's approach seems to me to have proved fruitful and to be worth pursuing

¹ Anne Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Structure* (Washington, 1971), 1. See also Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The Motif of the Corrupted Sacrifice in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*', *TAPA* 96 (1965), 463–508, esp. 463. An excellent, and extremely concise, account of the imagery of the *Oresteia* is also to be found in A. F. Garvie (ed.), *Aeschylus: Choephoroi* (Oxford, 1986), xxxvi–xxxviii.

This paper began life as part of a lecture for undergraduates at Oxford University; it was then delivered to a graduate work-in-progress seminar there and finally, in a later incarnation, to a conference on Greek tragedy at the Royal Irish Academy. I am grateful to John Dillon and Pat Easterling for their encouragement and helpful comments on the latter occasion, and to Stephen Heyworth and an anonymous referee for improvements at a later stage. This paper would never have been written had I not at every stage had the benefit of the generous and stimulating conversation of Christopher Pelling, from whose imaginative and sensitive approach I have gained immensely.

² M. L. West, rev. Garvie (n. 1 above), *Gnomon* 59 (1987), 193–8, esp. 195–6.

further. Her account of the image-metaphors of the *Oresteia* can be defended, at least from the charge that she attaches too much importance to the repetition of common metaphors, by recent theoretical work on poetic metaphor, such as that of Lakoff and Turner. They make an important point when they say:

It is a prerequisite to any discussion of metaphor that we make a distinction between basic conceptual metaphors, which are cognitive in nature, and particular linguistic expressions of these conceptual metaphors. Thus, though a particular poetic passage may give a unique linguistic expression of a basic metaphor, the conceptual metaphor underlying it may nonetheless be extremely common.³

They also stress the power of metaphor 'to reveal comprehensive hidden meanings to us, to allow us to find meanings beyond the surface, to interpret texts as wholes, and to make sense of patterns of events',⁴ and this seems very relevant to the subtle ways in which the images underline and support other, more direct and explicit, modes of connection in the *Oresteia*.

I would want to develop from Lebeck's account of the images in the *Oresteia* the idea that an important way in which images are unfolded is through variations in the degree of figurativeness of images being introduced as the trilogy progresses.⁵ So, to take just one very simple example, legal imagery is first applied to the expedition against Troy in *Agamemnon* 41; at the end of *Libation Bearers* Orestes appeals to the Sun to be a witness for him in any future law suit (987 ὥς ἂν παρῇ μοι μάρτυς ἐν δίκῃ ποτὲ). The image from the first play has now therefore become hypothetical reality (still tinged with metaphor because the sense in which the Sun is to be a witness is not a straightforward one), and in the last play the trial scene means that the legal imagery has become actual dramatic reality. I am aware that 'figurative' and 'non-figurative' are rather inadequate terms for describing the subtlety with which some of these effects are created, and perhaps I should try to make myself clearer.

Again, Lakoff and Turner may prove helpful here. They define the metaphoric negatively by saying:

... to the extent that a concept is understood and structured on its own terms—without making use of a structure imported from a completely different conceptual domain—we will say that it is non-metaphorical... A given concept may be metaphorically understood and structured in some respects but not in others... (58) it is misleading to think of concepts as a whole as being either all metaphorical or all nonmetaphorical. Metaphoricity has to do with particular aspects of conceptual structure. Part of a concept's structure can be understood metaphorically, using structure imported from another domain, while part may be understood directly, that is, without metaphor.⁶

This implies a scale, a variation in the extent to which an image-metaphor is understood directly, one end of which I have called 'figurative' (i.e. where concepts are conveyed to the greatest extent by means of structures imported from other domains), the other 'non-figurative', or occasionally 'literal' (i.e. where concepts are to be understood and are structured most on their own terms). Needless to say, individual images can only be placed on this scale relatively to one another, and this need not, and indeed cannot, be done with any great precision.

³ George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason* (Chicago, 1989), 50.

⁴ Lakoff and Turner (n. 3 above), 159.

⁵ See Lebeck (n. 1 above), 2, Garvie (n. 1 above), xxxvii, and especially Zeitlin (n. 1 above), 488.

⁶ Lakoff and Turner (n. 3 above), 57–8. For other accounts of the nature of metaphor, and wide-ranging bibliography on the subject, see M. S. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery* (Cambridge, 1974), esp. 5–14.

This would be true of many texts; it is the more so with a fifth-century text, for many reasons, mostly to do with the extremely incomplete nature of our knowledge of the ancient world. It has also been argued that the distinction between the metaphoric and the literal in many areas before the fourth century was far from clear, conscious or explicit.⁷ This is an important insight which requires some discussion. First, it is clearly not being claimed that the Greeks were unable on any level to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical, even before a specific category of metaphor was invented; just as rhetoric existed in the Homeric poems before it was discussed by Aristotle, so did metaphor.⁸ But, just as it can be argued that the classification of rhetoric changed its nature, so it might be thought that the invention of a specific category of metaphor changed forever the way in which poetic images were perceived.⁹ But, as Lloyd points out, a major way in which the perception of images changed after the invention of this category was that they were devalued: one was able to dismiss them more easily as 'not real'.¹⁰ But the corollary of that assumption is that fifth-century writers presumably regarded metaphorical expressions, which later could be seen as merely ornamental, as all the more integral to their work for being undifferentiated from it. So although it may be difficult in this context to determine to what extent certain expressions are to be understood *via* structures imported from other domains, in some ways it is even more important to try to do it. While we can never be clear that we are right, and while the evidence which can be used to try to establish how figurative an expression may be is almost always patchy and inadequate, refusing to attempt to understand metaphor in these texts is a counsel of despair.¹¹

⁷ See G. E. R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge, 1966), 228 ('it is doubtful whether any general distinction between the literal and metaphorical use of a term was consciously and explicitly drawn before the fourth century'), *The Revolutions of Wisdom: Studies in the Claims and Practice of Ancient Greek Science* (Berkeley, 1987), 172–214; Silk (n. 6 above), 34 n. 1; R. Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, 1992), 10 n. 19, 33–40, 132 and 158.

⁸ See Lloyd (n. 7 above), 192–3; 1987, 174–6. The use of the word *εἰκών* to mean a comparison (e.g. Ar. *Clouds* 559, *Frogs* 906) may suggest that fifth-century Greeks thought of it as functioning as an image, using a metaphor similar to our own to describe metaphor (on the inescapability of this, see Jacques Derrida, 'Le retrait de la métaphore' in *Psyché. Invention de l'autre* [Paris, 1987], 63–93, esp. 64). But Lloyd (n. 7 above [1966], 228) seems to discount this possibility.

⁹ See Lloyd (n. 7 above, [1987]), 175–6: 'before the literal/metaphorical dichotomy is available, while a speaker may have a greater or a lesser sense of some difference between "pour" said of sleep and "pour" said of wine or water, it is truistic to say that the phrase will not be seen as a metaphor. It is that dichotomy that erects that particular would-be perspicuous and definite barrier, even though in practice those who wish to erect it generally find it hard to say precisely where it comes.' Lloyd's concerns are formulated in the context of Greek philosophy, medicine, and science. While it would be wrong to claim that these areas are qualitatively different from poetry, one might still feel that the urge to press the issue of the 'literal' vs. 'metaphorical' use of a term or 'literal belief' vs. 'metaphorical expression' is one felt particularly in the context of tracing what the Greeks believed about the world at any one time. It is no accident that the metaphor in *Prometheus Bound* which is most elusive is the metaphor of sickness and disease. Padel (n. 7 above), 33–40 is well aware of this.

¹⁰ See Lloyd (n. 7 above), 210: 'Aristotle's invention of the metaphorical/literal dichotomy involved the stipulation of criteria for truth that at one stroke downgraded—even ruled out—poetry, most traditional wisdom, and even much of earlier philosophy.' See also Padel (n. 7 above), 158.

¹¹ So also Padel (n. 7 above), 39–40. That such ambivalence can be a productive area for criticism rather than a problem has been demonstrated with regard to the *Oresteia* by Nicole Loraux, 'La métaphore sans métaphore: à propos de l'*Orestie*', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 180.2 (1990), 247–68. I owe this reference to Peter Wilson.

To return to these patterns of 'figurative' and 'non-figurative' in the *Oresteia*, then, it is important that they do not all behave in the same way. Many images begin by being more figurative and progress towards the non-figurative, but others fluctuate more uncertainly between the two, like the bird of prey imagery.¹² Some images are set up at the start of the trilogy and others some way into it, some persist to the end of the trilogy and others are discarded at different points along the way. This too is a way of interweaving the individual systems of imagery. Another (well-known) feature of the image-systems of the *Oresteia* is that some images have both positive and negative impacts at different points in the trilogy.¹³ The most obvious example of this is the red fabric, apparently a symbol of Agamemnon's destruction in the first play, but expressive of the new and more benign nature of the Eumenides in the third. I would like to argue here that one can trace some similar patterns and uses of imagery in *Prometheus Bound*.¹⁴

This is not leading up to an assertion that it was Aeschylus who wrote a *Prometheia* trilogy of which *Prometheus Bound* is a part; I would really like to lay the authorship debate on one side; but it does seem to me that *Prometheus Bound* can convincingly be seen as the centre play of a trilogy, and that the use of imagery fits in with that hypothesis. Very little to do with the exact context of *Prometheus Bound* can be proved, because of the poor state of the evidence, but several scholars, most recently Griffith, have argued convincingly that there was a trilogy by someone consisting of *Prometheus Firebearer* (*Pyrphoros*), *Prometheus Bound*, and *Prometheus Unbound* in that order, and in what follows it is assumed that that was the case.¹⁵ There are some

¹² The simile of the vultures who have lost their chicks at *Ag.* 49ff. gives way to the real eagles who tear apart the pregnant hare at *Ag.* 114–20; but at *Cho.* 247ff. the birds of prey are once again metaphoric.

¹³ See Garvie (n. 1 above), xxxvii, and C. W. Macleod, 'Politics and the *Oresteia*', *JHS* 102 (1982), 124–44, esp. 137–8 (= *Collected Papers*, Oxford 1983, 20–40, esp. 33–4).

¹⁴ In what follows metaphors and similes will be treated indifferently as imagery. This can be justified: metaphors and similes are often just as metaphoric as each other and the difference is merely a matter of expression: see David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London, 1977), 113, where he points out that '... a writer does not always enjoy freedom of choice between expressing a perceived similarity through metaphor or simile because... very often the language he is using does not permit him to use the former trope. Graham Greene, for instance, describes an African baby as "smiling like an open piano" (*In Search of a Character* [1961], p. 18), and it is difficult to see how the analogy could be expressed in metaphor proper. Secondly, the factor of "distance" between tenor and vehicle is more significant than the choice of metaphor or simile. [He then quotes an extended passage from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* [1931], p. 94 as an example.] This is the metaphoric imagination running riot, and the fact that the vision is expressed sometimes through metaphor proper and sometimes through simile doesn't seem to make much difference.' I owe this reference to Michael Lloyd.

¹⁵ For *P. Fire-bearer* see frs. 208 and 208a Radt, and I would understand Aristophanes, *Birds* 1494–552 as a parody of this play's account of the theft of fire (pace P. Rau, *Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes*, *Zetemata* 45 [1967], 175–7). This was first suggested by W. H. van de Sande Bakhuizen, *De Parodia in Comoediis Aristophanis* (Utrecht, 1877), 89–101. See N. Dunbar (ed.), *Aristophanes, Birds* (Oxford, 1995), ad 199–200 and 1494–552 for Aristophanes' familiarity with *Prometheus Bound*. For *P. Unbound* see frs. 190–204 Radt.

For the arguments for the shape of the trilogy see A. D. Fitton-Brown, 'Prometheia', *JHS* 79 (1959), 52–60 and in particular Mark Griffith (ed.), *Aeschylus: Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1983), esp. 281–305. All the evidence is collected there in a most clear and helpful manner. I cannot agree with R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1983), 188–9, or A. L. Brown, 'Prometheus Pyrphoros', *BICS* 37 (1990), 50–6, esp. 52, when they claim that *Prometheus Bound* is devoted to exposition and therefore stood alone or at the start of a trilogy.

fragments which suggest that images familiar from *Prometheus Bound* appeared in the other two plays as well; to these I shall return, but first the imagery within the play we actually have should be considered in some detail.

The major interest of *Prometheus Bound* is the characterization of the relationship between Zeus and Prometheus, and the tracing of Prometheus' emotional movement from despair to renewed self-respect.¹⁶ After the opening binding scene, where the brutal treatment he receives is graphically described and carried out on stage, Prometheus is in a pitiful state, frightened even by the rushing wings of the gentle chorus. But their sympathy, and his account of his wrongs, restore some of his spirit, as his dialogue with Ocean shows, and his great central speeches about his benefactions to mankind help him further and embolden him to mention that he knows a secret which he can hold over Zeus. The Io scene, where his gift of prophecy comes into its own, increases his confidence still further; he threatens Zeus, and remains steadfast even in the face of Hermes and a yet more terrible punishment. The imagery of the play has an important role to play in underlining the characterization of Zeus and Prometheus, and in characterizing Zeus further by means of delineating his treatment of Io.¹⁷ Io is linked to Prometheus by images of horse-breaking or domestication of animals, and of sickness and disease. There is quite a range of uses of these images, some of them discernibly more 'figurative', on the definition I tried to make earlier, than others. Some patterns can be observed in the imagery.

Prometheus' bonds are described with technical terms from horse-breaking (54 ψάλια, 71 μασχαιστήρας; see also 562); the effect of this is to show how Zeus' regime attempts to reduce him to animal status: it adds an edge to the brutality of the binding scene. This is a relatively non-figurative use of the metaphor, since although Prometheus is not a real animal, the bonds are solid enough. The metaphor in 671-2, ἀλλ' ἐπηνάγκαζέ νιν Διὸς χαλινός, used to describe the methods which Zeus uses to force Inachus to drive out Io, is obviously a more figurative one, since there is no indication that real bonds are involved. But it still makes sense to see it in the context of the bonds of Prometheus, since Zeus' treatment of Inachus is similarly violent and harsh. Harder to place is the more elaborate metaphor in Hermes' words to Prometheus at 1009-10, δακὼν δὲ στόμιον ὡς νεοζυγῆς / πῶλος βιάζει καὶ πρὸς ἡνίας μάχηι. Here the stress is on Prometheus' activity rather than on the nature of the bonds, as in the earlier passages, and this reflects Prometheus' greater self-confidence (or unruliness, from Hermes' point of view) at this later stage in the play. Are the bit and reins against which he struggles actually his bonds, or are they more figuratively metaphorical? Hermes leaves it delicately uncertain.

The exposition is certainly not complete, since it leaves us in doubt as to the meaning of 330-1 and 910-12. See Griffith (above), *ad locc.* The slice of myth which the poet has chosen to treat here makes *Prometheus Bound* look like a middle play. From the *Iliad* on, Greek poets were adept at taking a slice out of the middle of a myth and managing to encompass the whole of the story in that slice, but none of the usual foreshadowing and flashback techniques is employed to a sufficient extent in *Prometheus Bound* to make it an independent drama. For the same reasons, I do not find the idea of a trilogy, *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound*, attractive, or think convincing the arguments against the existence of *Prometheus Pyrphoros*, or for its identity with *Prometheus Pyrkaieus*, the satyr play produced with *Persians* in 472. It is surprising, not that we have few fragments of *Fire-bearer*, but that we have so many of *Prometheus Unbound*. Finally, on Griffith's analysis the trilogy would present us with a satisfying sequence: (first play) Crime; (second play) Punishment; (third play) Regeneration. This is like the *Oresteia*, but not exactly like it, which is reassuring. But for a very different explanation of some of the references in *Prometheus Bound*, see now S. West, 'Prometheus Orientalized', *Museum Helveticum* 51.3 (1994), 129-49, esp. 131-2, 146-9.

¹⁶ See Griffith (n. 15 above), esp. 8-10.

¹⁷ See Griffith (n. 15 above), 20-1.

The use of such images to portray Io covers a wider register of figurative and non-figurative. Imagery from domestication and horse-breaking is regularly used in sexual, nuptial, and sometimes sacrificial contexts, of young girls in early lyric poetry and in tragedy;¹⁸ but here, because Io is in dramatic reality half-cow, half-human, the passages which describe her as bovine are ambiguous: they can be understood simultaneously directly and as metaphors. Perhaps the cleverest example of this is at 579–81: *ἐνέζευξας εὐρών ἀμαρτοῦσαν ἐν πημοναΐσιν, / ἔῃ, οἰστρολάτῳ δὲ δέϊματι δειλαίαν / παράκοπον ὥδε τείρεις*; Here the sexual yoking metaphor is combined, with special appropriateness, with the metaphor of being yoked in suffering, and the mention of the ever ambivalent gadfly (is it a real gadfly or not?) reminds us that Io is more like a real heifer than young girls usually are. *σκίρτημα* (599) is properly used of a young animal frisking: but it is used of Polyxena's potential struggles at her sacrifice in Euripides (*Hec.* 526), and is used of the earth quaking in this play at 1085, along with other cow-imagery. All this metaphorical domestication should be compared to the domestication of real animals as taught by Prometheus to mortals: 462–6, especially 462 *κάβευξα πρώτος ἐν ζυγοῖσι κνώδαλα*. There it is one of Prometheus' benefactions, used to the benefit of civilization, but in the metaphors it represents Zeus' outrages.¹⁹

There is a similar range in the images of sickness, but with these images it is even harder to determine how far they should be understood as metaphoric.²⁰ Sometimes sickness is definitely metaphorical, referring to a defect in Zeus' tyranny, for example, at 224–5 *ἐνεσι γάρ πως τοῦτο τῇ τυραννίδι / νόσημα, τοῖς φίλοισι μὴ πεποιθέναι*. The disease (*νόσος*) of foreseeing one's fate is cured by Prometheus with blind hopes at 249–50; they are the *φάρμακον*. Sometimes *νόσος* and related words approach closer to a real sickness by describing an improper state of mind, such as 384 *ἔα με τῇδε τῇ νόσῳ νοσεῖν*. One might compare 977–8, where Hermes calls Prometheus' hatred of the gods *οὐ συμκρὰν νόσον* and Prometheus retorts: *νοσοῖμ' ἄν, εἰ νόσημα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς στυγεῖν*; later, at 1069, the chorus describe disloyalty thus: *κοῦκ ἔστι νόσος / τῇσδ' ἦντιν' ἀπέπτυσμα μάλλον*.²¹ The metaphor is used in a similar register, but expressed more elaborately, when Ocean says at 378 that *ὀργῆς νοσοῦσῆς εἰσὶν ἱατροὶ λόγοι*. Commenting on Prometheus' stubbornness, the chorus call Prometheus a doctor who cannot help himself (473–5): *κακὸς δ' ἱατρὸς ὥς τις ἐς νόσον / πεσὼν ἀθυμεῖς, καὶ σεαυτὸν οὐκ ἔχεις / εὐρεῖν ὁποίοις φαρμάκοις ἰάσιμος*. This image applied to Prometheus is less figurative than when it is applied to words, and is particularly well adapted to its context. Prometheus has begun describing his benefactions to mankind, and the chorus's comment comes just before he describes

¹⁸ See R. A. S. Seaford, 'The Tragic Wedding', *JHS* 107 (1987), 106–30. On the yoking image in this play in general, see E. Petrounias, *Funktion und Thematik der Bilder bei Aischylos (Hypomnemata 48, Göttingen, 1976)*, 108–14.

¹⁹ Griffith (n. 15 above), 21, illustrates the metaphorical register, but does not contrast it with the concrete benefactions of Prometheus.

²⁰ On the images of sickness and disease in this play in general, see Petrounias (n. 18 above), 98–108, with bibliography. See also n. 9 above and Loraux (n. 11 above), pp. 250–7 on the ambivalence of expressions with (e.g.) *φρήν* and *αἷμα*.

²¹ Here I would describe the metaphor in *νόσος* as plainly 'live', the metaphor in *ἀπέπτυσμα* as more difficult to classify in Silk's terms (n. 6 above, 27–56), since, while there seems to be sufficiently regular use of *ἀποπτύω* = 'reject' in a wide range of contexts to describe this meaning as normal usage (see LSJ s.v. *ἀποπτύω* 2, though West ad loc. is surely right to describe Hesiod, *Works and Days* 726 as 'a graphic metaphor'), the equation disloyalty = disease occurs nowhere else. Disease does not seem to be conceived of as the sort of thing one can spit out, and therefore one might argue that the disease metaphor was able to revive the spitting metaphor by their collocation.

how he bestowed the blessings of actual medicine on mankind (478–83). The phrasing in 478–9 perhaps recalls the earlier passage: *εἴ τις ἐς νόσον πέσοι, / οὐκ ἦν ἀλέξημ' οὐδέν*. So initially when the chorus call him a doctor they seem to be using a metaphor, but the beginning of his very next speech transforms it into the literal truth. The shifting nature of this metaphor thus fits its pivotal position in the play.

Io is less figuratively sick, but the exact nature of her illness is hard to pin down because of the ambiguity in the nature of the pursuing gadfly: is her illness wholly physical, or is it mental too? The uncertainty fits the probable appearance of Io as a young woman with horns on her mask. *νόσος* is the usual word for her condition, used both by her and by the chorus (596, 606, 632 and 698). But there is a variation, a more figurative, gnomic use of the sickness metaphor in a speech of Io's which is significant in the context: as she urges Prometheus to tell her of any future troubles and to speak truly, she describes false words as the most shameful of sicknesses (685–6): *νόσημα γάρ / αἰσχιστον εἶναί φημι συνθέτους λόγους*. It is not a sickness which Prometheus suffers from, as his next speeches prove; but Zeus' use of dubious oracles to get at Inachus in Io's preceding narrative comes close to falling under this diagnosis. Zeus is certainly sick with lust and wrath, which need to be physically assuaged (*λωφάω*, 376, 654). Io's sickness will only vanish at the end of all her wanderings, at the touch of Zeus' healing and impregnating hand. One may wonder whether in *Prometheus Unbound* all this imagery of sickness was answered by imagery of healing and health, and how much bearing this image-system had on the way that Zeus' relenting was presented; but the fragments do not help us here. On the other hand, Prometheus' release is already being described with the medical word *λωφάω* at *Prometheus Bound* 27, a clear reference to Heracles, and there is one other possible context in the last play in which this image-system might have recurred. *Prometheus Bound* 1026–9 might prepare for some divine narration in *Prometheus Unbound* of a bargain made with the suffering centaur Chiron to release Prometheus, but the exact nature of this story is obscure, because the relevant passages of Apollodorus are garbled. If the bargain was reported, Chiron might also have been described, like Prometheus, as a doctor unable to heal himself.²²

Less complex, with a more discernible range of figurative and non-figurative forming a more discernible pattern, is the metaphor of binding; from the actual binding instantiated on stage in the first scene, we then find a series of images of binding and entanglement, culminating in the chorus's being entangled in the net of disaster at 1078–9, *εἰς ἀπέραντον δίκτυον ἄτης / ἐμπλεχθήσεσθ' ὑπ' ἀνοίας*. This is of course often combined with the images from horsebreaking which have just been discussed, and the two should probably not be separated out as clearly as they have been here. The real binding of Prometheus remains a dramatic fact throughout the play, but from the first scene on there are lines where the metaphoric dimension of binding is used to describe features of that real binding: there are metaphors, however close to death, in 59 (*δευρὸς γὰρ εὐρεῖν καὶ ἀμηχάνων πόρον*), and 87 (*ὄττωι τρώπῳ τῇσδ' ἐκκυλισθήσῃ τέχνης*), and in the chorus's words at 262 (*ἄθλου δ' ἐκλυσιν ζήτει τινά*).²³ The proximity of figurative and non-figurative is more striking at 112–13, where Prometheus ironically uses a word for his offences against Zeus which has connotations of binding (*ἀμπάκημα*) and juxtaposes it with a reference to his actual bonds, which constitute the punishment for those offences: *τοιῶνδε ποιναῖς*

²² On the possible bargain see Griffith (n. 15 above), *ad* 1026–9 and p. 302. On Chiron as a doctor, see Homer, *Il.* 4. 219, 11. 832, and Pindar, *Pythian* 3. 1–6.

²³ See Silk (n. 6 above), 27–56. The fact that they are used to describe a real binding revives them somewhat.

ἀμπλακημάτων τίνω / ὑπαίθριος δεσμοῖς πεπασσαλευμένος. This juxtaposition is then reprised by Io at 561–4: τίνα φῶ λεύσσειν / τόνδε χαλινοῖς ἐν πετρίνοισιν / χειμαζόμενον; τίνος ἀμπλακίας / ποινὰς δλέκῃ; (cf. also 620).²⁴ So the imagery of binding begins by being as non-figurative as it can possibly be, and then gradually becomes blended with more figurative uses of the same metaphor; and this movement mirrors the way in which Prometheus, at first overwhelmed by his bonds, gradually makes the mental effort to resist them and to overcome even worse torture. So in his speech to Io, one of the landmarks in his return to self-respect, he described himself (perhaps in contrast to Zeus' tricky oracles later in Io's narrative) as not weaving riddles (οὐκ ἐμπλέκων αἰνίγματα, 610).

At 965 the binding image is combined by Hermes with a ship image: ἐς τὰσδε σαυτὸν πημονὰς καθ' ὥρμιας.²⁵ This is another image which may have recurred in the last play: we have a Latin verse translation by Cicero of a speech of Prometheus describing his sorrows to the Titans, apparently from *Prometheus Unbound*, where he compares himself to a ship on a troubled sea which sailors tie up for the night.²⁶ It is of course impossible to say exactly how close a translation this is. It is tempting, though, to posit that the image of Prometheus chained to his rock like a ship represents some metaphor from the original.²⁷ Whether or not it was repeated in the last play, in *Prometheus Bound* this combination of images represents the perversion of yet another gift of Prometheus, seamanship: 467–8, θαλασσόπλαγκτα δ' οὔτις ἄλλος ἀντ' ἐμοῦ / λιωπτερ' ἠῦρε ναυτίλων ὀχήματα. There may have been a contrast between Prometheus' non-figurative ships travelling freely over the sea on their wing-like sails and the captive ship bound to the rock. However that may be, the ship image also connects with the imagery from storms which is similarly applied to both Prometheus and Io. Again, these images are often hard to classify as figurative or non-figurative, because both characters are overwhelmed by a sea of troubles, but are also actually exposed to the elements. This point is well made by Griffith.²⁸

The images which represent what is wrong with Zeus' rule, domestication and sickness, therefore, have their most literal expression in the speeches of Prometheus, and Zeus' actions are thus characterized as perverting the benefits which Prometheus conferred on mortals, and which Zeus should be conferring and is not. Io and Prometheus are linked as victims of Zeus' cruelty by these images, and by using the cow imagery previously used of Io of the earth at the very end of the play, it may be

²⁴ It is hard to resist the idea that in these contexts the metaphor in ἀμπλάκημα would be 'live': it was a well-known feature of the word's derivation. See T. Gaisford (ed.), *Etymologicum Magnum* (Oxford, 1848), s.v. ἀμπλάκημα. Τὸ ἀμάρτημα. Παρὰ τὸ ἀναπλέκεσθαι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τοῦ σχοινίου. ΣΕΙΡΑ γὰρ τὸ σχοινίον λέγεται. Ἐκ τοῦ πλέκω πλακὼ ἀναπλάκημα, καὶ ἀμπλάκημα.

²⁵ See Griffith (n. 15 above) *ad loc.*: the reading is accepted by most recent editors, including M. L. West (ed.), *Aeschylus, Tragoediae* (Stuttgart, 1990).

²⁶ *Tusc. Disp.* 2. 23–25 (see Griffith [n. 15 above], pp. 291–5): 'navem ut horrissona freto / noctem paventes timidi adnectunt navitae. / Saturnius me sic infixit Iuppiter...' It is interesting that the Ciceronian image implies that Zeus is frightened (the sailors are 'timidi').

²⁷ G. B. Townend, 'The Poems', in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Cicero* (London, 1964), 109–34, considers Cicero's tragedy translations to be closer to the originals than the *Aratea* is to Aratus' *Phaenomena*. He says (117): '...they are to be judged...rather as translations of the type normally found in the Loeb classics than those of Dryden or Pope.'

²⁸ See Griffith (n. 15 above), 21. He also points out in *The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge, 1977), 182, that χειμαζομαι is sometimes used as a medical technical term (e.g. Hippocrates, *Prognosticon* 24, of feverish patients). If any of that meaning is felt here, it would be another example of images blending with each other. On the storm imagery see also Petrounias (n. 18 above), 122, Silk (n. 6 above), 226–7, and Padel (n. 7 above), 81–7.

implied that the whole earth is Zeus' victim too. Whether anything was made of this in the last play we are not able to tell; but it is possible that Ge appeared in *Prometheus Unbound*.²⁹

In suggesting the perversion of Prometheus' gifts by Zeus, the sickness and domestication images behave in a parallel way to the other gifts he has given mankind: fire and prophecy. The fire which Prometheus stole to benefit mankind is used to punish him: hence the stress on fire being Hephaestus' *ἄνθος* in the prologue (7), and the emphasis on the fiery nature of the thunderbolt at 1017. Zeus' coercion of Inachus by means of oracles may also imply that he is perverting another of Prometheus' gifts, namely prophecy: but in general this is the one gift of Prometheus that Zeus cannot control or pervert, and it is this which will provide the means of escape, the *πόρος*, which initially seems so far out of reach. And it is supremely appropriate that in giving the benefit of his prophetic skill to an individual mortal, Io, a representative of the mortals he describes himself as helping, Prometheus should work out his own salvation too, both in the short term spiritually, by giving himself courage to threaten Zeus, and in the long term by using prophecy as a weapon and causing his predictions to become self-fulfilling.

These images do seem to have resurfaced at the end of the trilogy, in interesting ways. It can be argued that in the last scene of *Prometheus Unbound* the *aition* of the Athenian torch festival in Prometheus' honour was given, and Athenaeus and Hyginus suggest³⁰ there was some other aetiological material as well, namely the origin of finger-rings and/or crowns as harmless symbols of Prometheus' agreeing to be bound under the will of Zeus. Perhaps, as in the *Oresteia*, there was even some celebration on stage. Perhaps also it was made clear in some way that Zeus would in future share justice and other civic virtues with mankind: one fragment suggests that Prometheus' benefactions to mankind relating to the domestication of animals were recapped.³¹ On this reconstruction, the images could be seen as behaving as follows: the binding image began the second play in non-figurative form in a malign way; then, having been used more in the figurative register later in the second play, may in the third have been reiterated and combined with an image of a ship by Prometheus of himself, again in the figurative register. Then in the *aition* of crowns or finger-rings at the end it was instantiated in harmless or even victorious symbols of the binding which Prometheus overcame, thus becoming non-figurative again, but this time benign; but who knows whether it was prepared for at all in the first play. It is unclear whether the sickness imagery was taken further in the final play, though it may well have been, and in Chiron's physical illness it may also have had more literal expression; we have no idea whether it was prepared for in the first. If the domestication of animals was referred to again, this represented a return to the benign, literal form of domestication which contributes to civilization, as in Prometheus' benefaction speech, not the coercive metaphorical form. A similar benign, non-figurative use of fire would have occurred at the end of the third play in any reference to the founding of the Athenian torch festival. There must have been some non-figurative use of fire in the first play, too, if Prometheus was represented as stealing it; perhaps also benign, so this motif would have had a rather different pattern from those of the more figurative image-metaphors.

²⁹ See Griffith (n. 15 above), 285–6.

³⁰ Athen. 15. 674d; Hygin. *Poet. astr.* 2. 15. See Griffith (n. 15 above), 303–4. On the Athenian torch-festival and Athens' enthusiasm for Prometheus see now Dunbar (n. 15 above) *ad Ar. Birds* 1494–552.

³¹ Plut. *Mor.* 98c, if it comes from this play; see Griffith (n. 15 above), 304.

This would imply a use of imagery that in principle, though not in detail, resembles the use of imagery at the end of the *Oresteia* to underline the change for the better which takes place during *Eumenides*. But the reconstruction of the trilogy espoused here is open to the objection that it is much too like the *Oresteia* to be true. This suspicious resemblance might be offset by the fact that the images within *Prometheus Bound* seem to fall into rather different patterns from the images in the *Oresteia*: patterns of imagery in *Libation Bearers* tend to have been set up in some form in *Agamemnon*. This is not so with all of them, but there is certainly no parallel in the *Oresteia* to the way in which the great central speeches of Prometheus in the second play provide us with a non-figurative benign instance of images which have been and are subsequently used negatively and figuratively before being brought to a non-figurative benign conclusion. There is no such great central gathering point for images in *Libation Bearers*. There is insufficient evidence to explain fully and clearly why this should be so, but it could have something to do with the extraordinary nature of the cast of the *Prometheia*. Perhaps the presence of a great, omniscient central figure is necessary to draw together all the image strands, and that kind of comprehensive survey is not appropriate for, and cannot be carried out by, a group of deluded mortals like the cast of *Libation Bearers*. In any case I hope it has been shown that the imagery of the *Prometheia*, which has been rather looked down upon by critics,³² has its own interest and is adapted well to the poetic purpose of its context. If this is admitted, it means that, whoever he was, the author of the trilogy had sufficient confidence in himself to manipulate the techniques of metaphoric writing found in the *Oresteia* to suit his very different subject matter.³³ That says nothing about his identity, but it does confirm his very real ability as a dramatist and a poet.

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³² Even by Griffith (n. 15 above), 20–1. W. Schmid, *Untersuchungen zum gefesselten Prometheus* (Stuttgart, 1929), 58–62, set the scornful tone. O. Hiltbrunner, *Widerholungs- und Motivtechnik bei Aischylos* (Bern, 1950), 75–7, saw no patterns at all in the imagery, maintaining that the metaphors were entirely unconnected. F. R. Earp, *The Style of Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1948), 93–149, used the imagery of the play to argue against its authenticity, remarking on 168f.: ‘*Prometheus*’s metaphors are generally simpler, both in conception and expression, than Aeschylus’’. *Prometheus Bound* is excluded from consideration at all by Ole Smith, ‘Some Observations on the Structure of Imagery in Aeschylus’, *C & M* 26 (1965), 10–72, on the ground of authenticity. In density of images per line, however, it attains the same ratio as *Suppliants* in the calculations of H. Mielke, *Die Bildersprache des Aischylos* (diss. Breslau, 1934), 5: 1 in 10.9 lines, as against 1 in 8.4 lines in *Agamemnon*. More sympathetic are Petrounias (n. 18 above), 97–126, and S. Saïd, *Sophiste et tyran; ou le problème du Prométhée enchaîné* (Paris, 1985), 74–5, 160–84.

³³ The extremely limited evidence we have as to Aeschylus’ use of imagery in the Theban trilogy seems to suggest another imagery pattern different from that in the *Oresteia*. The imagery in *Seven against Thebes*, which followed *Laius* and *Oedipus*, is interesting and architecturally important (see Howard Don Cameron, *Studies in the Seven Against Thebes of Aeschylus* [The Hague, 1971], 58–95, 98–100); but, unless the description of the shields of the Seven constitutes one (and it is not easy to see how it could), there are no non-figurative uses of images from the earlier plays, leave alone benign non-figurative images. This again would suit the subject-matter. The *Suppliants* trilogy is so uncertain as to be totally beyond speculation: see A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus’ Suppliants: Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge, 1969), 163–233.