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TREE VIOLATION AND AMBIVALENCE IN VIRGIL

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I

Perhaps the most stimulating critical issue to have concerned writers on the *Aeneid* over the last several decades has been the status of Aeneas and his Trojans in their contacts with the individuals and nations encountered through the course of the epic. The issue is clearly of paramount importance for our judgement of Aeneas' achievement, and it is at the same time a sensitive issue, for the actions and attitudes of Aeneas are, at whatever remove and with whatever qualification, emblematic of those of Virgil's contemporaries, chiefly Augustus.[1] The *imperium* towards which we see Aeneas striving is a prototype of the one which was being realized in the actual, historical world even as Virgil was writing the poem. While we can never quite say, without reducing the *Aeneid* to something less than what it is, that Aeneas *is* Augustus, at the same time to deny a general correspondence and relationship between the two would be to suggest that Virgil was isolated from the great events through which he lived—an isolation which would be at odds with his attitude in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, and which would in any case be intrinsically unlikely. Inevitably, then, as we judge Virgil's Aeneas, so we judge, to some extent, his view of Augustus and his view of the cultural experience of which he was a close witness. Ambivalence about Aeneas and ambivalence about Augustus and contemporary Rome go hand in hand.

In that criticism is a more concrete art than poetry, this very act of judgement runs the risk of failing to respond to the complexities which the poet constructs through suggestiveness rather than through decisive partisanship. But the *Aeneid* does invite or even impel us to take sides, if only (eventually) to frustrate the judgements we have made, to impress on us the fact that choices are not in the Virgilian system clear-cut, easy or comfortable, and that victory carries with it defeat; life, death; and success, failure. Critics who address the issue outlined in the preceding paragraph, even those who find Virgil's attitude complex and by no means black and white, inevitably betray preferences and make choices. The issue frequently produces "criticism of the concessive," both on the optimistic side (e.g., "although we feel the tragedy of a Dido or a Turnus, such tragedy cannot vitiate the ultimate necessity and justice of Aeneas' actions") and on the pessimistic (e.g., "although Aeneas must succeed in establishing *imperium*, his success is vitiated by the fates of Dido and Turnus").

[1] For a comprehensive treatment of the allegorical connections of the poem, see the now standard work of G. Binder, *Aeneas und Augustus, Interpretationen zum 8. Buch der Aeneis*, Beitr. zur klass. Philol. 38 (1971).

W. R. Johnson[2] has warned against criticism of the *Aeneid* which separates its players into heroes and monsters, but the fact is that some such separation is inevitable, and need only detract from the complexity of the poem if we represent one view or the other as *complete* criticism.

The present paper offers some further, concrete observations on Virgil's ambivalence towards the achievement of Aeneas. If one word may characterize the negative aspect of those achievements throughout the poem that word is *uis*, a quality without which empire cannot be won, but which at the same time may taint the virtue of its practitioner.[3] Dido and Camilla, Lausus and Turnus, indirectly Evander, and even Mezentius, these and others are the figures who feel the effects of empire, the figures against whom the force of Aeneas and the Trojans is directed. There is no need to rehearse the critical debate on this issue or to study each of the passages involved. Suffice it to say, as has been said by many, that none of the "obstacles" to the mission of Aeneas is simply or quietly removed; in each case Virgil focuses on the final moment in such a way as to create sympathy for the defeated and dying, and so evoke at least uneasiness over the "success" of the victor.[4]

II

honce loucom ne quis uiolatod ... CIL $1^2.366$

Critical investigation into the violence of Aeneas, and the ambivalence engendered in the reader by that violence, has generally focused on his actions towards individuals, and in this respect the present paper departs somewhat from the tradition.[5] But the *nature* of violence directed against living but non-human objects is in the Virgilian scheme of things not inherently distinguishable from that directed against man. That is the lesson of the *Georgics*, where we

[2] *Darkness Visible, A Study of Virgil's Aeneid* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1976) 115–16.

[3] To the "historicist" argument that the Roman mentality was less troubled than ours by issues of imperialism and force, the response must be that we are dealing in the *Aeneid* with the *Virgilian* mentality, which is not quite the same as the *Roman* mentality—whatever that is; the fact that a certain modern sensibility might not be verifiable for the Roman world from the political writings of, for instance, Cicero seems to me all but irrelevant in a discussion of Virgil.

[4] This emerges well from the treatment of the most brutal of Aeneas' enemies, Mezentius; as H. C. Gotoff has shown ("The Transformation of Mezentius," *TAPA* 114 [1984] 191–218) "by the end of Book 10 Mezentius has become a tragic figure; his death makes demands on the sympathy of the audience and leaves Aeneas speechless" (192).

[5] Among numerous articles focusing, with different emphases, on this ambivalence, cf. R. Beare, "Invidious Success: Some Thoughts on the End of the *Aeneid*," *PVS* 4 (1964–65) 18–30; M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the* Aeneid (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) 151–201; W. V. Clausen, "An Interpretation of the *Aeneid*," in S. Commager (ed.) *Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs 1966) 75–88; W. R. Nethercut, "Invasion in the *Aeneid*," *G&R* 15 (1968) 82–95; W. R. Johnson, (above, note 2) 114–34.

consistently see the application of Virgil's animism: vines, trees, beasts and bees, even the soil, are all sentient; they feel joy and suffering, success and faliure, not always as paradigms for humanity, but often in their own right, as constituent elements of the world as it surely existed for Virgil.

Much of the criticism that finds ambivalence in the *Aeneid* has been condemned as subjective, or as being rooted in modern sensibility and preconceptions, and while such objections, particularly the latter, are in any case unreasonably rigid in their premise that Virgil cannot have conceived of ideas that are not verified in the contemporary literature or documents, they can in any case be dismissed in the present study. Every piece of relevant evidence from Greece and Rome, as from numerous other societies, conspires to demonstrate that the cutting of trees is a hazardous act, stigmatized by society and divinity alike.[6] Inscriptional evidence from Greece[7] and from Rome[8] shows unequivocally the attitude towards the desecration or unsanctioned use of groves. Uneasiness emerges particularly in the case of the inviolate sacred grove. And, apart from the inscriptional evidence, Lysias 7 (Περὶ τοῦ σηκοῦ) provides a clear demonstration of the real danger resulting from such transgression, whether the basis of the injunction is religious or economic.

Tree spirits are obviously hard to detect, and any tree is therefore potentially numinous, any tree felling potentially hazardous. Such is the danger that Cato records a prayer to be recited before the thinning of a grove; his wording reveals that the formula is to be recited whether or not one knows the identity of the

[6] Cf. J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (3rd ed. London 1811), Part 1, vol. II, 7–58.

[7] From the sanctuary of Erithasean Apollo in Attica (Dittenberger, *SIG* no. 986), from Andania in Messenia (Dittenberger, no. 736.78ff., II p. 408), and from the precinct of Dictaean Zeus in Crete (Dittenberger, no. 685.80ff., II. p. 278). For these see J. G. Frazer, *Publii Ovidii Nasonis Fastorum libri sex* (London 1929), vol. III, 351; and further, B. Jordan and J. Perlin, "On the Protection of Sacred Groves," *GRBS* Monographs 10 (1984) 153–59.

[8] *CIL* 1^2.366 is an inscription from Spoleto forbidding the violation of a grove, including, among other things, the cutting of trees, which may occur only on certain days:

> honce loucom ne qu<i>s uiolatod neque exuehito neque exferto quod louci siet, neque cedito, nesei quo die res deina anua fiet. eod die, quod rei dinai cau[s]a [f]iat, sine dolo cedre [l]icetod. sei quis uiolasit, Ioue bouid piaclum datod. seiquis scies uiolasit dolo malo, Iouei bouid piaclum datod et a(sses) CCC moltai suntod. eius piacli moltaique dictator[ei] exactio est[od].

Even violation through negligence, although not as serious as willful desecration, calls for punishment. A second version of the inscription is now to be found at *CIL* 1^2.2872. I am grateful for this to my colleague Professor John Bodel, who also points out to me that the *Acta* of the Arval Brethren prescribed *piacula* to be performed even with such apparently innocuous actions as the removal of dead branches; cf. W. Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium quae supersunt* (Berlin 1874) 127–49. See also *CIL* 1^2.401, a similar inscription from Luceria, prohibiting the contamination of a grove.

deity to whom the grove is sacred, and therefore, presumably, before the thinning of any grove, whether or not it is known to be numinous:

> lucum conlucare Romano more sic oportet. porco piaculo facito,
> sic uerba concipito: "si deus, si dea es, quoium illud sacrum
> est..."(*Agr.* 139)

The same precaution against even negligent desecration is apparent from the shepherd's prayer given by Ovid at *Fast.* 4.747–76:

> si nemus intraui uetitum, nostrisue fugatae
> sunt oculis nymphae semicaperque deus:
> **si mea falx ramo lucum spoliauit opaco,**
> unde data est aegrae fiscina frondis oui:
> da ueniam culpae... (751–5)

The first line makes it clear that the transgression is so serious that extreme caution is to be applied before entering or using any grove, since it may be sacred.

On the level of myth this whole complex is exemplified by the story of Erysichthon, narrated with ample detail in Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* and in Ovid's version at *Met.* 8.738–878. The story is well-known:[9] Erysichthon, son of Triopas, invades a sacred grove and recklessly proceeds to chop down a tree, in Callimachus a poplar, in Ovid an oak;[10] in both versions the particular tree is numinous, and in neither is there any apotropaic prayer. There is no need to examine this fascinating myth in any detail, but various points may be noted. Erysichthon proceeds in spite of warnings, and in Ovid's version he even kills an attendant who has attempted to prevent the desecration (765–69). Ovid's oak is particularly animate: it trembles, groans and grows pale before the first strike is delivered, and after the attack it bleeds profusely and dies, but only after a tree nymph from within has prophesied punishment for Erysichthon. There is absolutely no doubt that this punishment will ensue, and it comes in the form of perpetual and raging hunger, terminated in Ovid's version only by Erysichthon's autophagy (875–78). The story of Erysichthon, then, may be regarded as the literary and mythical *exemplum* (corresponding to prohibitions in cult) directed towards demonstrating the implications of tree violation.

[9] Cf. K. J. McKay, *Erysichthon, A Callimachean Comedy,* Mnemos. Supp. 7 (1962) 5, *passim*; A. Henrichs, "Thou shalt not kill a tree: Greek, Manichean and Indian tales," *BASP* 16 (1979) 85–108 (particularly useful in its collection of comparative material); N. Hopkinson, *Callimachus, Hymn to Demeter* (Cambridge 1984) 18–31. It is not my purpose here to examine the question of Ovid's non-Callimachean sources (for which see A. S. Hollis, *Ovid, Metamorphoses Book VIII* [Oxford 1970] 128–33), but the existence of such sources indicates the wide currency of the story.

[10] Perhaps Ovid conflates. At Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.475–86 Phineus tells of the toilsome life of his friend Paraebius, imposed by the curse of a nymph who had unsuccessfully begged Paraebius' father not to cut down a tree. The details are very much like those of the Erysichthon story, and the tree, like Ovid's, is an oak.

In short, both documentary and literary evidence conspire to show that in Greek and Roman society, as in so many others, the felling of trees was an extremely hazardous enterprise and was, if performed without due reverence, likely to be met with retribution exacted either by the gods or by society. So widespread is this evidence that it is virtually inconceivable that an account of such violation would not be attended by at least a suggestion of retribution.

How curious, then, that in the *Aeneid* Virgil, whose animistic outlook is pervasive and beyond dispute, who as much as any other poet of Rome is aware of and draws from the religious and cultic conventions of his and others' societies, and for whom Callimachus is a major model, should on three separate occasions depict the violation of trees, but at the same time fail to allude in any way to the necessary retribution. This failure is unique in the literature and documents of the ancient world. It is, of course, a failure that is completely intentional. None of the Virgilian episodes is unfamiliar, but they have not to my knowledge been examined both as a group (which is clearly what they constitute) and in terms of the ancient attitudes towards the violation of trees.[11]

The first landfall of the Trojans in *Aeneid* 3 is in Thrace. Aeneas founds a city and proceeds with a sacrifice to Venus. He needs foliage for the altar and notices a mound with cornel shrubs and myrtles growing on it. It will, of course, turn out to be the grave of Polydorus, whose shade is soon to address Aeneas. The place is presented in the style of an ecphrasis, with the verb *esse* prominently placed, and with a relative clause providing details:

> forte fuit iuxta tumulus, quo cornea summo
> uirgulta et densis hastilibus horrida myrtus. (*Aen.* 3.22–23)

The reader familiar with Callimachus' story of Erysichthon will recall that the violated poplar was introduced and given prominence in the same fashion:

> ἦς δέ τις αἴγειρος, μέγα δένδρεον αἰθέρι κῦρον,
> τῶι ἔπι ταὶ νύμφαι ποτὶ τῶνδιον ψιόωνται. (*H.* 6.37–38)

Ovid was to continue the tradition, using *stare* for *esse*:[12]

> **stabat** in his ingens annoso robore quercus,
> una nemus. (*M.* 8.743–744)

[11] W. R. Nethercut (above, note 5) 88–89 has treated the issue, briefly referring to two of the three instances of violation, but without setting them in a larger literary or cultural context. A reader for this journal has brought to my notice an essay by K. J. Reckford, "Some Trees in Virgil and Tolkien," in *Perspectives of Roman Poetry*, ed. G. K. Galinsky (Austin 1974) 57–91. This work examines much of the same Virgilian evidence, and is of interest from a comparative point of view, but the conclusions are less negative than those of the present paper, perhaps because Reckford does not treat the larger ancient tradition of violation.

[12] Cf. also, from two passages to which we will return later, Virg. *Aen.* 12.766–67 (*forte sacer Fauno foliis oleaster amaris/* ***steterat***) and Lucan 3.399 (***lucus erat*** *longo numquam uiolatus ab aeuo*).

Having seen the trees Aeneas attempts, without a single apotropaic gesture, to pull them out, apparently unconcerned at the possibility of a double violation of both *tumulus* and *silua*:

> accessi uiridemque ab humo conuellere siluam
> conatus... (24–25)

The result is chilling, although it is not a result which surprises the reader familiar with the tradition that lies behind the passage:

> nam qua prima solo ruptis radicibus arbos
> uellitur, huic atro liquuntur sanguine guttae
> et terram tabo maculant... (27–29)

Aeneas is seized by terror, a natural reaction. But the same cannot be said of his next act, which indicates that he is totally uncomprehending of the nature of his action: he immediately and again without precaution proceeds to pull up a second shoot, with a similar result: *ater et alterius sequitur de cortice sanguis* (33). Ovid's oak, assaulted by Erysichthon, was to react in the same way (*fluxit discusso* ***cortice sanguis***, *M.* 8.672). At this point Aeneas is at least impelled to pray to the woodland nymphs and to Mars, who rules over the Getans, but he nevertheless does not hesitate to make a third, more violent, assault (*maiore...nisu*, 37) which draws piteous groans from the mound (*gemitus lacrimabilis*, 39), recalling the reaction of the violated poplar in Callimachus' poem (κακὸν μέλος ἴαχεν, *H.* 6.39); and Ovid's oak was to react in the same way (*gemitumque dedit*, *M.* 8.758). So, as Polydorus' voice is heard from within the *tumulus* (*uox reddita*, 40), in Ovid's version a tree-nymph speaks from within (*redditus...sonus*, *M.* 8,771). Indeed Ovid seems to be commenting on the actions of Aeneas, suggesting that they are indistinguishable from those of his own Erysichthon.[13]

Let us leave *Aeneid* 3, with uneasy thoughts but withholding judgment, and proceed to the second event, that involving the golden bough itself in Book 6. It is not necessary here to go into the folkloristic and religious background, which are covered in detail by Frazer and Norden,[14] but we should rather look at the incident purely in terms of the way Virgil depicts Aeneas' actions and connects them to the pattern of violation elsewhere in the poem. Here too, as was the case with Ovid's reference to the Polydorus incident, we will find external corroboration. The bough must be removed if Aeneas is to have access to the Underworld—the Sibyl stipulates that. But she also states that it will come easily if Aeneas' venture is favored by the fates:

> namque ipse uolens facilisque sequetur
> si te fata uocant... (6.146–47)

The reality is very different, as is well known; when Aeneas finds the bough 50 lines later its plucking is by no means easy:

[13] For the manner of reference here claimed for Ovid, cf. below, note 19.

[14] J. G. Frazer (above, note 6), Part 7, vol. II, pp. 279–303; E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro, Aeneis Buch VI*, (5th ed. Stuttgart 1970) 163–75.

corripit Aeneas extemplo auidusque refringit
cunctantem... (210–11)

The disjunction between the two passages and the wording of the second have left readers ill at ease since Servius, who decided that *cunctantem* was to be explained as a relative term: so eager (*auidus*) was Aeneas that even though the bough came off easily it seemed to him to resist. This is a typical piece of Servian rationalization: he resorts to distorting the natural language of Virgil in order to avoid a necessary but far from positive intepretation.[15] That he is followed by various modern critics, who also find equally implausible ways of making the lines reassuring, is not surprising, but the arguments of others, particularly of D'Arms[16] and Segal,[17] are clearly correct, and now probably represent the *communis opinio*: the state of mind of Aeneas (*auidus*),[18] the manner of his actions (*corripit...refringit*), and the resistant animism ascribed to the bough (*cunctantem*) create an uneasiness not dissimilar from that generated at the beginning of Book 3. Indeed the very resistance of the bough was already prefigured there: the shoot which Aeneas tried to pull from Polydorus' mound was described as *lentum* (3.31), which is merely a more neutral epithet for the personifying *cunctantem* here in Book 6.

A passage between the Sibyl's instructions and the plucking of the bough reinforces this sense, and prepares us for the disjunction between the instructions and the actual event. At 6.179–82 Virgil conflates Homer (*Il.* 23.114–20) and Ennius (*Ann.* 175–79 Skutsch) as he describes the Trojans' cutting of timber for the funeral rites of Misenus:

itur in antiquam siluam, stabula alta ferarum;
procumbunt piceae, sonat icta securibus ilex
fraxineaeque trabes cuneis et fissile robur
scinditur, aduoluunt ingentis montibus ornos. (*Aen.* 6.179–82)

As Skutsch remarks in passing of Virgil's lines, "the enormous preparations for the funeral of one man, Misenus, are astonishing." And as he implies, we cannot explain the excess merely by pointing to the model; for Virgil always adapts with a purpose. The Sibyl's instructions, moreover, had been, in contrast to the carrying out of those instructions, austere: *sedibus hunc refer ante suis et*

[15] Cf. the interpretation of *Geo.* 2.172 (*imbellem auertis Romanis arcibus Indum*): *id est auertendo reddis imbellem.* On the difficulties of thus taking *imbellem* predicatively, see R. F. Thomas, *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition*, Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc., Supp. 7 (1982) 48–49. Cf. also below, p. 270 for Servius' rationalizing of *iratus* at *Geo.* 2.207.

[16] J. H. D'Arms, "Vergil's *Cunctantem (Ramum)*: *Aeneid* 6.211," *CJ* 59 (1964) 265–68.

[17] C. Segal, "The Hesitation of the Golden Bough: A Reexamination," *Hermes* 96 (1968) 74–79.

[18] The adjective has at least potential negative force in Latin, connoting excessive desire. Where it is positive it gains such force from its context, as at *Aen.* 1.514 *auidi coniungere dextras.* Cf. on the other hand the opposite context at *Aen.* 12.290 *auidus confundere foedus*; given the company *auidus* keeps at *Aen.* 6.210–211, there can be little doubt that its affect is intended to disturb.

conde sepulcro, 152.[19] Aeneas, then, urges his men on and leads them in what is clearly presented as a battle: *nec non Aeneas opera inter talia primus/ hortatur socios paribusque accingitur armis* (183–84). Apart from the suggestion of excessive action in 179–82, there is in the words *itur in antiquam siluam, stabula alta ferarum* (179) a note of empathy and animism not found in Virgil's models, and the words *antiquam siluam* imply that the woods could be numinous, and that we are dealing with the disruption of an old order[20]—that there are two sides to Aeneas' civilizing.

It was suggested earlier that Ovid's depiction of Erysichthon functions in part as a commentary on Virgil's account of Aeneas' actions on the Thracian shore. In the present instance also a later poet provides external corroboration of the negative aspects of Aeneas' violation.[21] Lucan, at *B.C.* 3.399–452, describes Julius Caesar's clearing of a sacred grove in order to facilitate the siege of Massilia. The episode seems to have no historical validity,[22] but serves to paint Caesar in a negative light. Scholars have for some time recognized that Lucan associates Caesar's acts with those of Ovid's Erysichthon,[23] but it also seems that Lucan, who was one of Virgil's most careful readers and adapters, has drawn from Caesar's ancestor, the Virgilian Aeneas, in creating his depiction. The grove is presented through an ecphrasis (399, *lucus erat*);[24] although ominous, it is sacred, and like the forest of *Aen.* 6.179–82 has been undisturbed through the centuries (399, *longo numquam uiolatus ab aeuo*); Caesar, like Aeneas at 6.183, leads the attack (433–34, *primus raptam librare bipennem/ ausus et aeriam ferro proscindere quercum*); and Lucan, in his description of the felling of this grove, has a catalogue of five trees (3.440–42) which refers unmistakably to the three-line, five-tree catalogue at *Aen.* 6.180–82, with the first line (440, ***procumbunt** orni, nodosa impellitur **ilex***) reshaping Virgil's first (180, ***procumbunt** piceae, sonat icta securibus*

[19] This line suggests yet another lapse in the ceremonial procedure of Aeneas. *Ante* would seem to refer to the need to provide burial before the taking of the golden bough—"first duly set him in his own place and hide him in the tomb (before taking the bough)." This seems preferable to having it establish a temporal order between *refer* and *conde*, for which *ante* would be too emphatic. And indeed this is the order in which Aeneas' men proceed: at 160–84 they set about making burial arrangements for Misenus; but at 185–89 Aeneas allows his mind to wander from the prescribed task as he prays that he might find the bough *before* performing the burial—which in fact occurs. And the wording of 185 suggest an independence of mind not appropriate to one who has just received oracular instructions: *atque haec **ipse suo** tristi cum corde uolutat.*

[20] See below, p. 270 for the adjective in a similar context.

[21] This sort of "commentary through allusion" seems to provide a useful critical tool, in that the "alluding" poets (here Ovid and Lucan) are closer in time and spirit than any ancient commentary we have, and potentially give us not only their own readings of the earlier (here Virgilian) text, but quite possibly some sort of general critical consensus.

[22] Cf. O. C. Phillips, "Lucan's Grove," *CP* 63 (1968) 296.

[23] Cf. Phillips (above, note 22) 296–300.

[24] See above, pp. 263.

ilex).[25] Quite clearly, then, Lucan saw, and brought out, the ambivalent nature of the tree-felling in *Aeneid* 6.

The final and most explicit violation of the *Aeneid* occurs towards the end of the poem; Virgil begins with another ecphrasis:[26]

> forte sacer Fauno foliis oleaster amaris
> hic **steterat**... (12.766–67)

Steterat—the tree stands no more. In this incident the *type* of tree matters. While it stood not only was it a sacred tree (767 *uenerabile lignum*), but it was an *oleaster*, or wild olive, and the *oleaster* is the archetypal *wild* tree of the *Georgics*, the tree which in that poem represents the stage before man's propagation arrives, and which stands in opposition to the civilizing ventures of man.[27] Appropriately here at the end of the *Aeneid* the *oleaster* no longer stands, for it has been indiscriminately cut down by the Trojans in their own civilizing ventures; and Virgil actually calls it a violation:[28]

> sed stirpem Teucri nullo discrimine sacrum
> sustulerant... (770–71)

The motives of the Trojans make sense in terms of military strategy (771 *puro ut possent concurrere campo*), and in fact Lucan, in the sequence to which we have already alluded, may well have drawn from Virgil, once again, in motivating Caesar's sacrilege:

> hanc iubet immisso siluam procumbere ferro;
> nam uicina operi ... (*B.C.* 3.426–27)

If so, we again find Lucan not merely making use of the text of Virgil but interpreting it as well. But in neither case does military expediency ensure religious impunity, and in *Aeneid* 12 it looks at first as if the destruction of the

[25] Three of the five trees are common to both passages (mountain-ash, ilex and oak).

[26] Cf. above, pp. 263.

[27] At *Geo.* 2.314, after man's works have been destroyed by the fire in the oliveyard, only the barren wild olive is left standing: *infelix superat foliis oleaster amaris*. In this poem *felix* and *infelix* respectively define the cultivated and the wild, on a mythical level the ages of Jupiter and Saturn. On this see R. F. Thomas, *Virgil, Georgics* (Cambridge 1988), vol. 1, on 2.303–14, 314. At 2.182 an oleaster growing in the wild, and strewing the ground "with wild berries" (*bacis siluestribus*), indicates soil suitable for the olive, the cultivated tree which Virgil (falsely) claims needs "no cultivation" (2.420 *non ulla est oleis cultura*).

[28] It is notable that most critics almost completely ignore this incident. Jackson Knight, Otis and Quinn are typical in passing it over completely, V. Pöschl (*Die Dichtkunst Virgils* [Vienna 1964] 233) mentions it in passing and without concern. Putnam (above, note 5) 189–90 focusses on it, although his concern is chiefly with the demonstration that Faunus is shown as incapable of protecting his own. And Nethercut (above, note 5) has a treatment which, while brief, fully recognizes the force of *nullo discrimine* at 770. The passage is clearly an obstacle to a purely positive reading of the *Aeneid*, and its placement shortly before the disturbing culmination of the poem makes it all the more powerful.

sacred tree will be met, as the tradition demands, with retribution. Aeneas throws his spear at Turnus; it misses and lands in the remaining stump of the sacred *oleaster*. Turnus then delivers a prayer to Faunus, asking that the spear be held fast, and invoking Aeneas' desecration:

> ...colui uestros si semper honores,
> quos contra Aeneadae bello fecere profanos. (778–79)

Servius Auctus rightly connects the use of *profanos* with the desecration of the tree, and brings out the heavy religious overtones of the word.[29] Faunus responds by holding the spear fast, but his aid is only temporarily effective. As the Italian Turnus is soon to fail before the civilizer Aeneas, so the Italic woodland deity no longer has power even over his own realm—the Olympian Venus pulls from the stump the spear with which, 100 lines later in the poem, Aeneas will disable Turnus:[30] *accessit telumque alta ab radice reuellit* (787).

With these words Virgil takes us back to the actions of Aeneas himself on the Thracian shore in Book 3, and to the first such violation of the poem, a violation also in a foreign land and carried out on behalf of the same Venus. Linguistic as well as thematic similarities bind the two acts together:

> accessi uiridemque ab humo conuellere siluam
> conatus... (3.24–25)

When the sacred grove is felled by Caesar in Lucan's poem, the Massilians whom he is besieging rejoice, for they know that retribution must attend such violations:

> ...quis enim laesos inpune putaret
> esse deos?... (*B.C.* 3.447–48)

If we as readers of the *Aeneid* are aware of the reverence in which groves, sacred or otherwise, are held in the normal world, this will be our reaction to the three separate but linked acts of Aeneas. That tangible punishment does not attend these acts is one of the many signs that the world which we see Aeneas creating is to be very different from the one he found. Civilization will bring with it peace and order (although this poem ends before their arrival), but there will be a price. That Virgil was troubled by the price, and that the loss which it brought with it is one of the major undercurrents of the poem, cannot be doubted.

This suggestion, that the price in spiritual loss attending the advent of civilization may, in the last analysis, not be worth the result, did not first occur

[29] Cf. *ad* 12.779 *"profanum" proprie dicitur quod ex religiosa re in hominum usum conuertitur, ut hic plenissime ostenditur: dicens enim Turnus "colui...profanos" <ostendit> et sibi religiosam fuisse arborem, et a Troianis in usum communem fuisse praesumptam.*

[30] This action is the final instance of the replacing of the Saturnian (Latin) order by the Jovian (Trojan). In conflict with Anchises' prophecy in Book 6 (*Augustus Caesar...aurea condet /saecula*, 792–93), it is in fact the Latins who are emphatically associated with Saturn (*Aen.* 7.45–49, 202–4), the Trojans, and particularly Aeneas, even more emphatically, with Jupiter (7.219–20); see Thomas (above, note 15) 100–103.

to Virgil as he wrote the *Aeneid*, but had been explored in a particularly relevant way in the *Georgics*.[31] The conventional view of Book 2 of that poem is that the tenets of *labor* are effectively and successfully applied to the propagation and cultivation of trees. There is no such destructive storm or civil war as vitiates Book 1, nor any of the fury of passion or plague that sweeps away man's works in Book 3. Wilkinson represents the positive view: "To turn from the end of Book 1 to the beginning of Book 2 is like waking up from a nightmare on a fine morning."[32]

The nightmare does not end, however; its images are merely drawn in more subtle terms. In Book 2 *labor* succeeds; by its end the tree is growing and producing, as a result of man's controlling and civilizing its wild tendencies. Two processes typify this control, pruning and grafting. Both are necessary in the real arboricultural world, but both involve the application of force against the natural condition of the tree.[33] First pruning:

> inde ubi iam ualidis amplexae stirpibus ulmos
> exierint, tum stringe comas, tum bracchia tonde
> (ante reformidant ferrum), tum denique dura
> exerce imperia et ramos compesce fluentis. (2.367–70)

"Strip off its hair, clip back its arms, execute harsh commands and curb its flowing branches." Viticulture is warfare, to be waged against the animated trees, as Virgil had suggested earlier in the book, at 279–283, when the *quincunx*, the orderly arrangement of the vines, was compared in an extended simile to a legion waiting for the clash of battle.

Grafting is magnified by Virgil far out of proportion to its importance in the real tradition as represented by Theophrastus and Varro. They mention only real grafts, occurring within species, while Virgil gives us six instances, all of which are between species, and therefore most unlikely, and four of which are between members of different families, and therefore quite impossible (2.32–34, 69–72).[34] These fantastic unions conclude with a chilling characterization of man's distortion of the natural world:

> ...nec longum tempus, et ingens
> exiit ad caelum ramis felicibus arbos,
> miratastque nouas frondes et non sua poma. (80–82)

[31] This is, in principle, hardly a surprising assertion, although it is fair to say that the generic differences among the works of Virgil have somewhat discouraged critics from pursuing the evolution or continuance of themes from one poem into another.

[32] L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil* (Cambridge 1969) 85.

[33] For a more detailed examination of the troubling aspects of *Georgics* 2, see Thomas (above, note 27), vol. 1, "Introduction," pp. 19–21; *passim*.

[34] For much of this see D. O. Ross, "*Non sua poma*. Varro, Virgil and Grafting," *ICS* 5 (1980) 63–71; *Virgil's Elements. Physics and Poetry in the Georgics* (Princeton 1987) 104–9; R. F. Thomas, "Prose into Poetry. Tradition and Meaning in Virgil's *Georgics*," *HSCP* 91 (1987) 244–46.

Ramis felicibus—the tree is now fruitful, "civilized"; *felix* is reserved in this book to describe trees which are propagated by arboriculture and which produce fruit. The final line, however, is disturbing: "it stands in surprise at its strange new leaves and at fruits not its own." Successful arboriculture is carried out at the price of transforming a natural, heavily personified tree, which fails in the end to recognize itself because of that transformation.

Finally, there is a passage in this book of the *Georgics* which brings together the two strands we have been tracing—the violation of groves and trees as it is seen in a straightforward way in the *Aeneid*, and the troubling violence towards and transformation of trees carried out by the pruner and and grafter in the earlier poem. In the middle of the book Virgil is discussing different types of soil; one of the richest types is that converted from woodland:[35]

> aut unde iratus siluam deuexit arator
> et nemora euertit multos ignaua per annos,
> antiquasque domos auium cum stirpibus imis
> eruit; illae altum nidis petiere relictis,
> at rudis enituit impulso uomere campus. (207–11)

This is more than a mere description of the clearing of land: the ploughman acts in anger (*iratus*)—Servius again rationalizes by suggesting that the anger is justified by the fact that the land has been unused for so long,[36] but *ira* is nowhere else a positive quality in Virgil. The expression *nemora euertit* is extremely strong, and again suggests religious desecration, akin to Ovid's *nemus uiolasse* of Erysichthon (*M.* 8.741) or Lucan's *procumbunt nemora et spoliantur robore siluae* of Caesar (*B.C.* 3.395); and the whole action is presented from the viewpoint of the birds whose *antiquae domus* are overturned by their deepest roots.[37] And *eruere* belongs to the language of sacking cities, bringing us, again, back to the *Aeneid*, to the famous simile at 2.626–31. Troy is falling:[38]

> ac ueluti summis **antiquam** in montibus ornum
> cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant
> **eruere** agricolae certatim, illa usque minatur

[35] Reckford (above, note 11) 64, note 4 also invokes these lines, but his reading of the crucial line 2.211 is different from my own. G. B. Miles (*Virgil's* Georgics: *A New Interpretation* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980]) notes: "The angry plowman does succeed in cultivating his land but only by doing positive violence to it" (132). For other expressions of uneasiness at these lines cf. A. Betensky, "The Farmer's Battles," in A. J. Boyle, ed. *Virgil's Ascraean Song* (Melbourne 1979) 112; M. C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Poem of the Earth* (Princeton 1979) 110–11.

[36] And he is echoed by T. E. Page, for whom the *labor* of the *Georgics*, as it has been for most until recently, is a simple and positive ideal whose interests vanquish all obstacles, physical or moral.

[37] For the implications of *antiquus* in such a context, cf. above, p. 266.

[38] The connection is also made by Reckford (above, note 11) 65–67; cf. also W. W. Briggs Jr., *Narrative and Simile from the Georgics in the Aeneid*, Mnemos. Supp. 58 (1980) 33–35.

et tremefacta comam concusso uertice nutat,
uulneribus donec paulatim euicta supremum
congemuit traxitque iugis auulsa ruinam.

This tree, like those attacked by Aeneas on the Trojan shore, and like the one attacked by Erysichthon in the accounts of Callimachus and Ovid, groans as it dies. That is how Aeneas sees the fall of his city. That he and his men will become through the course of the poem identified with the *agricolae* of this simile, and will themselves carry out the precise actions of this simile, is one of the dark themes of the *Aeneid.*

At *Georgics* 2.211 the deforested land is described in a single line: *at rudis enituit impulso uomere campus,* "but the virgin land glistens under the driven ploughshare." It is ready to benefit civilized and civilizing man. But somehow the image of what is lost, of what must be destroyed in this process, persists and, as in the *Aeneid*, colours the achievement, and it is ultimately only with the aid of critical violence that we can remove such ambivalence.[39]

[39] I am indebted for useful advice to two anonymous readers.