

# Vimque deum infernam: Virgil's God of the Underworld

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## Abstract

The god Hades is referenced several times in the Virgilian corpus, in passages of high emotional import (the drama of Orpheus and Eurydice; the death of Dido; Aeneas' voyage to the underworld). Careful study of these allusions to the underworld lord reveal a Virgilian preoccupation with the problem of the stability of the Olympian order, and the looming question of the fate of the individual human soul after death. Hades and the infernal powers of his realm figure as key players in the ultimate resolution of the war in Latium, and the coming into being of the new order of Trojan rebirth.

## Key words

Allecto; Dira; Dis; Furies; Hades; Jupiter; Pluto; Virgil

The underworld lord Hades figures infrequently but significantly in the Virgilian corpus.<sup>1</sup> We shall examine closely all of the references to the god in the poet's works, with the aim of illustrating how Virgil uses Hades as an important figure in the theology and eschatology of the *Aeneid*, in particular as a divine image in relation to the supreme god Jupiter.<sup>2</sup> We shall see that the Virgilian Hades (under the names Dis and Pluto) plays an important role in the poet's reflections on the fate of the human soul, and the possibility of rebirth and new life after the grave.<sup>3</sup> Close analysis of the Virgilian allusions to Hades will reveal the poet's concern with the problem of the lasting stability of the Olympian, Jovian order, as well as the problem of the fate of the individual human soul *post mortem*

1 "In Virgil Dis is for the most part a pallid figure, a mere synonym, almost geographical, for the lower world." (Bailey 1935: p. 250). Cf. S. Fasce, "Dite," in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* (1985: Vol. II, p. 101); "Plutone," in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* (1988: Vol. IV, p. 151; with illustration). I am grateful to the suggestions and corrections of the anonymous referees; all errors that remain are my own.

2 Virgil refers to Hades throughout his works as "Dis," with the exception of one reference to "Pluton".

3 On the many names of the god see Gantz (1993: pp. 72–73): "In Homer, he is Aides or Aidoneus but, on one occasion, Zeus Katakthonios ... Thus it appears that at times Zeus and Hades represented simply different facets of a single extended divine power ... The name 'Plouton' for the god *may* appear in a list of gods on an inscription of the early fifth century."

(especially in light of Virgil's reception of Lucretian eschatology). Hades and his underworld apparatus of infernal powers will be shown to function as significant players in the Virgilian presentation of the coming into being of the new order of Trojan rebirth, and of the sacrifices necessary to achieve the reality of the Roman future.

Dis appears first in Virgil at the dramatic scene of Orpheus' descent into the underworld in the climactic story of the fourth georgic:<sup>4</sup>

*Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis,  
et caligantem nigra formidine lucum  
ingressus, Manisque adiit regemque tremendum  
nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda.* (IV, 467–470)<sup>5</sup>

The setting is dark and pitiless; the king of the underworld inspires fear and trembling.<sup>6</sup> Dis refers both to the god and the place, which shade into one; the name evokes images of wealth (*dives*), and the adjective *alta* conveys a sense both of seemingly bottomless depths, and of the immense stores of wealth in both mineral resources and souls that can be found in the deeply excavated lower regions.<sup>7</sup> Orpheus approaches the Manes and their lord; the hearts that do not become soft due to human entreaty and prayer are either the hearts of the ghosts (if they had them), or, likelier, the heart of the god (and, perhaps implicitly, his infernal bride's).<sup>8</sup> Orpheus will succeed in one sense where all others failed; the terrifying king will be moved – though in the end the victory will be fruitless.

Hades in a sense frames the Orpheus and Eurydice story; once the poet and singer has lost his wife for an irrevocable second time, he wanders abroad alone, lamenting the loss of the bride and boon of the god:

*solus Hyperboreas glacies Tanaimque nivalem  
arvaque Riphæis numquam viduata pruinis  
lustrabat, raptam Eurydicen atque inrita Ditis  
dona querens.* (IV, 517–520)

The hendiadys carefully details the notion of snatching – Eurydice has been seized again, as it were – and also the lack of fulfillment of the gift of the god; Orpheus is bereft of the warmth of both place and spouse as he bemoans his lot and wanders frigid and icy locales.<sup>9</sup> Dis had bestowed a boon on the singer that has not been realized; in a sense,

4 On the tradition of Orpheus' imploring the infernal immortals for the release of his wife (with citations from Euripides and Plato), see West (1983: p. 4).

5 All passages from Virgil are taken from Mynors (1969; corrected reprint 1972).

6 For caves as traditional entrance to the underworld, see Nelis (2001: p. 244).

7 "Ditis Antonomasie für das Totenreich insgesamt..." (Erren, 2003: *ad loc.*).

8 For the Manes see especially Negri (1984: pp. 85–119). On the question of the emotions of the Manes, cf. the fragment of Lucan's *Orpheus* (Servius' note on *Georgics* IV, 492): *gaudent a luce relictam / Eurydicen iterum sperantes Orphea Manes.*

9 On the "frozen landscape" to which Orpheus retreats, see Thomas (1989: *ad loc.*).

the musical hero failed to exercise sufficient caution in the face of the rule that had been prescribed by the infernal gods.<sup>10</sup>

Dis is featured at the opening and close, then, of the Orpheus and Eurydice epyllion, but it is Proserpina (his abducted bride) who is principally credited with the fateful order that Orpheus must not look back at his wife until they have safely reached the upper world (IV, 487 ... *namque hanc dederat Proserpina legem*).<sup>11</sup> To be precise, Virgil notes that the “law” or *lex* given by Proserpina was that Eurydice should follow behind her husband (*pone sequens*); apparently implicit in this requirement is the notion that Orpheus should not look at her.<sup>12</sup> For when Orpheus looks back at Eurydice, she is lost; Virgil notes that at that point, all the effort that had been expended was for naught, and the agreement of the harsh tyrant (i.e., of Dis) was ruptured (IV, 492–493 *effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranni / foedera*).<sup>13</sup> The sequence of details occasions question; it was Proserpina, it seems, who gave the specific instruction about the shade walking behind the living body – and the *foedera* that had been struck with Dis that were shattered by Orpheus’ backward gaze.<sup>14</sup> Certainly Dis and Proserpina are in apparent unity on the conditions for Eurydice’s return; we are left to conclude that Proserpina was the one who made the special requirement.<sup>15</sup> The decision about one married couple was made by another; ultimately, all four parties will be found in the underworld.<sup>16</sup>

The narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice in the fourth georgic is as overlaid as that of Aeneas’ underworld adventure in *Aeneid* VI with the problems of “Orphism” and the Virgilian appropriation of texts both extant and lost.<sup>17</sup> In the context of the fourth

10 Crucial to the scene is IV, 488 ... *dementia cepit amantem* (of Orpheus’ madness); apparently Orpheus’ love for Eurydice was so reckless that he could not resist looking at her. He forgot the instructions of the gods (IV, 491 *immemor*) and was “conquered with respect to his intention” (*victusque animi*) – the victory of eroticism over rational thought and reason. Dis, of course, had been similarly affected by Cupid’s arrow in his mad desire to Proserpina – with rather more successful outcome. On the importance of self-control in the narrative, see Wilkinson (1969: p. 120).

11 Proserpina is introduced rather casually to the narrative.

12 Cf. *Aeneid* II, 725 *pone subit coniunx*, where Creusa follows behind the triad of Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius, in accord with the instruction of Aeneas ... *et longe servet vestigia coniunx* (II, 711; with *subit coniunx* cf. II, 562 ... *subiit deserta Creusa*). Aeneas thus replaces Proserpina as the decide of the rubric for the departure from the doomed city of Troy; unlike Orpheus, he does not look back in search of his wife until he reaches the prearranged meeting site of the temple of Ceres (II, 741 *nec prius amissam respexi...*). When Orpheus looks back at Eurydice, he is described as “forgetful” (*Georgics* IV, 491 *immemor*). Aeneas looks back at Tartarus at VI, 548 *respicit Aeneas subito*.

13 We shall return to the title *tyrannus* below; for the image of Dis’ kingship (especially with respect to Jupiter’s), see especially Cairns (1989: p. 27).

14 And on the veiled Eurydice, whose covering Orpheus apparently draws back, see Mynors (1990: *ad loc.*).

15 There is a possible reference here to the tradition of the requirements for her own release from the underworld in the wake of her abduction; Proserpina is a fitting figure to offer rubrics for transit from hell.

16 Orpheus is something of a victim of the madness of extreme passion, so too Dido. For the former and the death he suffers after he abjures erotic madness, see Putnam (1979: p. 313).

17 The field is replete with what Nicholas Horsfall has rightly called “injudicious speculation,” a problem not helped by the poet’s “disorder or inconsistency in ... localisation of certain figures” and “a certain disregard ... for precise harmonisation of detail and elimination of inconsistencies” (from the editor’s introduction to his edition of *Aeneid* VI).

georgic – the Virgilian book of the bees – the Orpheus and Eurydice epyllion serves as prelude to the narrative of the *bugonia*; Aristaeus' bees will be reborn only after propitiatory offerings to the shades of Orpheus and Eurydice.<sup>18</sup> There is rebirth, then, but only after loss and atonement. The Trojans of Virgil's narrative epic will likewise be afforded a chance at new life, but only after the loss of Aeneas' wife.<sup>19</sup> Creūsa is an image of Trojan maternity and continuity; her loss is a necessary prolegomenon to the union of Aeneas and Lavinia in Italy.

The first named appearance of the god of the underworld in the *Aeneid* comes in a scene that offers something of a reversal of the *Georgics* passage, a scene in which a lover of Aeneas figures (and not a legal spouse). Proserpina had not yet cut a lock of Dido's blonde hair, and so Carthage's queen is unable to die: Eurydice was destined not to leave Avernus, while Dido finds it difficult to enter.<sup>20</sup> On the order of Juno, the rainbow goddess Iris descends to earth to procure the lock as an offering to Dis:

... *hunc ego Diti*  
*sacrum iussa fero teque isto corpore solvo* (IV, 702–703)<sup>21</sup>

The fourth book of Virgil's national epic closes with a sequence that recalls the passage from the fourth georgic; in both cases, Dis is associated with the loss of a young woman.<sup>22</sup> In the georgic, Proserpina gave the order about Orpheus' not indulging in a backward glance at his wife; in the death scene of Dido, the goddess is apparently the one who would normally come to cut a bit of hair as an offering to her infernal spouse.<sup>23</sup> The lock of hair will be sacred to the god; it will be a gift that permits the separation of soul from body.<sup>24</sup> The language about the separation of Dido (*te*) from her body is richly evocative, even as it frustrates precise theological explication; we might equate the personal pronoun *te* with Dido's *anima* or "soul/spirit," but Virgil does not permit any definitive eschatological exegesis. Further, the sequence of Dido's suicide and the difficulty with which her soul escapes to the lower world follows on the queen's own mention to her nurse Barce that she intended to complete the sacred rites for "Stygian Jove," that is, for Dis (IV, 638–640 *sacra Iovi Stygio, quae rite incepta paravi, / perficere est animus finemque imponere curis / Dardaniique rogam capitis permittere flammae*).

The appearance of Dis at the end of *Aeneid* 4 deliberately recalls that of the god near the end of *Georgics* 4; we are thrust into the same world of tragic loss as in the Orphic underworld scene. In the matter of Trojan progression to Hesperia, the relatively brief

18 See further here R. Thomas, "Bugonia," in *The Virgil Encyclopedia* (hereafter *VE*; 2014: Vol. I, pp. 211–212), with reference to optimistic and pessimistic readings of the end of the fourth georgic.

19 On the knowledge that must be acquired before new life is possible, see Miles (1980: p. 291).

20 For an especially sensitive reading of this passage, see Johnson (1976: pp. 66–75).

21 On the place of this passage in the larger context of Book IV, see Kühn (1971: p. 76).

22 For Dido as a youthful girl (*contra* the image of a middle-aged woman), see Clausen (2002: pp. 211–212).

23 Cf. the similar situation with respect to the Golden Bough (VI, 142–143 *hoc sibi pulchra suum ferri Proserpina munus / instituit*); VI, 637 ... *perfecto munere deae*.

24 On the possible onomastic tricks ("Sidonia Dido"/Dis as wealthy, etc.), see Paschalis (1997: pp. 174–175).

union with Dido is as doomed as the marriage to Creüsa; Aeneas will not remain in Carthage, and the relationship with Dido will end in sword and flame.<sup>25</sup>

We should also note that Virgil mentions the mysterious deity Orcus in his description of the episode of Dido's lock (IV, 698–699 *nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem / abstulerat Stygioque caput damnaverat Orco*). Orcus is a shadowy figure, a veritable personification of death; there may be associations with the notion of oath taking and the consequences of broken oaths (cf. below on the oaths of Aeneas and Latinus in *Aeneid* XII).<sup>26</sup> Orcus is not Dis; perhaps it would not be too inaccurate to say that as “Dis” can refer both to god and place, so “Orcus” can identify both god and death. Orcus may have a particularly appropriate place in the Dido death scene, given the question of devotion and loyalty that is associated with the making of oaths and promises of fidelity.<sup>27</sup>

Aeneas was left unsure of the exact circumstances of Creüsa's death; he is also ignorant of the details of Dido's. In the former case, death was apparently easy, and colloquy was possible (however fleeting) with the shade of the dead woman; in the latter instance, death was prolonged and difficult, and there would be silence when the two were briefly reunited in the underworld.

The second reference to the god in the epic comes at V, 731 ff., where the shade of Anchises instructs Aeneas on how he should visit the lower regions and seek counsel with his father before the war that must be fought in Latium:

... *Ditis tamen ante  
infernās accede domos et Averna per alta  
congressus, pete, nate, meos.* (V, 731–733)<sup>28</sup>

The passage does not come at the end of Book V (which is reserved for the drama of the loss of Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus), but it does come as part of a balanced set of references to 1) Anchises, who dies at the end of Book III, and who visits Aeneas in dream apparition in the later movements of Book V; and 2) Creüsa and Dido, whose deaths come at the end of Books II and IV. In the case of Creüsa and Anchises, both offer *post mortem* comments to Aeneas on his destiny. Once again god and place merge into one; in *infernās ... domos* there is a reference to underworld domesticity that evokes memory of the god's abduction of Proserpina, and of the Trojan search for a new home in the aftermath of the destruction of Troy and the loss of so many who were close to Aeneas.

Not surprisingly, Book VI of the *Aeneid* has the most references to Dis. Aeneas refers to the god as the “infernal king” at VI, 106–107 ... *hic inferni ianua regis / dicitur*, as he

25 And, too, with deadly consequences for the future Romans *vis-à-vis* their Carthaginian neighbors.

26 At *Georgics* I, 277, Orcus is linked with the Eumenides (a shared birthday); Charon is the *portitor Orco* at *Georgics* IV, 502. More generally, “Orcus” = Death; so at *Aeneid* II, 398; VI, 273; IX, 527; IX, 785 (and cf. IX, 197, with a possibly personified Mors). On the association of Orcus with Aurora, note Bevilacqua (2009; on the discovery of a curse tablet). More generally on Aurora (including some of the her darker aspects), note Fratantuono (2013).

27 See further B. Gladhill, “Oaths,” in *VE* (2014: Vol. II, p. 923; with reference to Dido's oath about her chaste life at IV, 24–27, and Aeneas' to Dido at IV, 458–460).

28 See here especially Steiner (1952: pp. 55–58).

addresses the Sibyl as part of his discussion about visiting the lower realms.<sup>29</sup> At VI, 127 *noctes atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis*, the Sibyl explains how the descent to Avernus is easy; the door is open night and day.<sup>30</sup> The locus of the underworld is dark; the chromatic reference to blackness (*atri*) highlights the grim gloom of the lower region.<sup>31</sup> Fittingly enough, before his visit to the underworld commences, Aeneas makes sacrificial offerings both to Proserpina and to the “Stygian king” (VI, 252 *tum Stygio regi nocturnas incohat aras*).<sup>32</sup>

The picture of the god’s domain expands at VI, 269 *perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna*, where the emphasis is on the insubstantial nature of a kingdom of souls – an *imperium animarum*, as the poet notes when he invokes the *di* whose realm is one of shades (VI, 264).<sup>33</sup> In a sense the domain of the underworld is both crowded and empty; Dis is king over many and none.

Dis’ ferryman Charon complains to the Sibyl and Aeneas about his experience with living travelers at the Styx; Hercules came to the lower world to fulfill the labor of capturing the hellhound Cerberus, while Theseus and his friend Pirithous conceived the crazed plan to effect a reverse abduction of Proserpina:

*Tartareum ille manu custodem in vincla petivit  
ipsius a solio regis traxitque trementem;  
hi dominam Ditis thalamo deducere adorti.* (VI, 395–397)

The oblique, periphrastic reference to Dis as the king of the lower world bears comparison with the label of the god as *tyrannus* from the *Georgics*; Proserpina here, too, is identified as a *domina* or mistress of the lower world, with implied power over underlings. The trembling and fear now are of Hades’ watchdog; both Hercules and the friends Theseus and Pirithous attempt something akin to what Orpheus sought – escape from the underworld with that which should remain in the lower regions. The allusion to the story of the Athenian hero and his friend also introduces the theme of abduction and potential impropriety that is central to Troy lore (i.e., Paris’ absconding with Helen), and to the rebirth of *res Troianae* in Italy (Turnus’ accusation that Aeneas seeks to abduct Lavinia).<sup>34</sup>

Aeneas ventures into the same harrowing locale as his heroic predecessors. At the very crossroads of the underworld, the Sibyl notes that one path leads under the walls of Dis, on the way to Elysium – and the other to dread Tartarus:

29 And cf. VI, 119–120, where Aeneas reminds the Sibyl that Orpheus was permitted to make a journey to Avernus.

30 The journey to the underworld was not easy, of course, for Dido.

31 For the color see Edgeworth (1992: pp. 74–86). Edgeworth notes that *ater* is the first color adjective in the *Aeneid* (I, 60, of Aeolus’ dark caves).

32 Book VI contains several of these oblique references to the god; the purpose is to underscore the notion that one might do better not to use the god’s name and thus perhaps attract his attention. On the *pietas* of the Trojan hero in making his offerings, see Mackie (1988: p. 120).

33 And at VI, 154 ... *regna invia*, the poet refers to the trackless ways of the god’s kingdom. An additional mention of the *regna* of the underworld comes at VI, 417, in the description of Cerberus and his barking.

34 Throughout the epic, Virgil carefully juxtaposes the notion of personal rebirth and the problem of the renewal of a city; on the Virgilian theme of the pathos of the loss of home, cf. Farron (1993: pp. 63–64).

*hic locus est, partis ubi se via findit in ambas:  
 dextera quae Ditis magni sub moenia tendit,  
 hac iter Elysium nobis; at laeva malorum  
 exercet poenas et ad impia Tartara mittit.* (VI, 540–543)

The great god Dis is here associated with the blissful peace of Elysium, with a world devoid of punishment and impiety, a realm removed from the fates of the wicked and the abode of the eternal suffering merited by their deeds.<sup>35</sup> The passage offers an interesting comparison with V, 731–733, where Aeneas was urged by the shade of his father to approach the *infernas domos* and seek congress with his ancestor in Elysium; the emphasis in both places is to the division between Tartarus and the blissful region that will be associated with notions of rebirth and reincarnation.

The god is nowhere in Elysium, however; nor is his dwelling with the souls of *impia Tartara*.<sup>36</sup> The Golden Bough is a talismanic offering to Proserpina; Aeneas will encounter neither the king nor the queen of Avernus. Tartarus is *impius* because of the crimes of its inhabitants; of course one could also note that in the estimation of Ceres, at least, her older brother Hades was exceedingly *impius* in his kidnapping of her daughter. Hades is king over all the dead – the blessed and the accursed – and so fittingly enough his throne and *solium* are not precisely located in either Elysium or Tartarus proper, even as the poet rather deferentially notes that the way to the former proceeds long the foot of the god's walls.

Book VII – the first of the Iliadic *Aeneid* – offers two references to the underworld god, with the first being the one and only reference to “Pluto” in the epic.<sup>37</sup> Both passages concern Allecto, the furious instigator of the war in Latium (again, at the behest of Juno). Allecto, we learn, is hated both by her father and her sisters:

*odit et ipse pater Pluton, odere sorores  
 Tartarae monstrum...* (VII, 327–328)

The passage demands close examination, not least for its unique appellation of the god.<sup>38</sup> All the emphasis is on hate (*odit ... odere*); Allecto may have familial ties to Pluto

35 For the “fortress” of the god, see Horsfall (2013: *ad loc.*). Horsfall also considers the question of the two paths/ways in the lower world, and the connection of such imagery to the tenets of certain philosophical and eschatological schools of thought.

36 The geography of the Virgilian underworld does not permit precise delineation of all locales and venues; we might be tempted to wonder, for example, at where exactly Orpheus' Eurydice fits into the cartography (either before or after her “second” death). For a start to a difficult problem, see Casagrande-Kim (2012). “It is as if a series of set scenes were passing before Aeneas' eyes rather than that he were making a journey in a region with a defined geography.” (Williams, 1983: p. 53).

37 “Virgil uses the Greek Pluton only here: elsewhere his name for the god is the Italic Dis.” (Fordyce, 1977: *ad loc.*).

38 See Horsfall (2000: *ad loc.*) for the Orphic genealogy of the Pluto and Persephone as the parents of the Furies. The unique use of Pluto serves in part to draw special attention to the dramatic intervention of the forces of the underworld on the side of Juno.

and her sisters, but there is discord in the underworld realm (an image of civil war). When Allecto has finished her work, she returns to the *saevi spiracula Ditis*, the “exhalations of savage Dis” – the only occurrence of *spiraculum* in the Virgilian corpus, and with a decidedly violent description of the Fury’s parent in the immediate aftermath of the start of the war in Latium to add to the picture.<sup>39</sup> Allecto is the daughter of Night;<sup>40</sup> Pluto, however, is none other than Dis or “Dis pater” – and *pater* here with Pluto both recalls the name/title of the god, and invests Pluto with *de facto* paternal responsibility for the denizens of his underground realm, as the Zeus of the lower regions.<sup>41</sup>

The previous references to the underworld god are largely concerned with the question of death and rebirth, indeed of what in vague, general terms could be referred to as problem of reincarnation and rebirth, renewal and the chance for a sort of resurrection. Pluto’s “daughter” Allecto marks the entrance of the infernal powers into the upper air, the invasion, as it were, of earth by hell. These underworld powers serve at the behest of Juno in *Aeneid* VII; in Book XII, they will be appropriated by Jupiter in his use of the Dira.

The use of the two names of the underworld god to frame the Allecto sequence highlights something of a disjunction in the relationship of the immortal to his furious quasi-daughter; Pluto hates Allecto (as do the other Furies), but when the infernal spirit is done with her work on behalf of Juno (cf. the work of Iris at the end of Book IV in the matter of Dido’s death), she returns to the abode of Dis – and he is *saevus*.<sup>42</sup> The reference to the savagery of the god refers, we might think, not so much to his feelings toward the Fury as to the general associations of the underworld with gloom and violence; the hated Fury buries herself in its Stygian depths:

... *quis condita Erinyes,*  
*invisum numen, terras caelumque levabat.* (VI, 570–571)

*Invisum* harks back to the opening description of the hatred of parent and siblings for Allecto.<sup>43</sup> The participle *condita* may occasion remembrance of the significance of the verb to the opening of the epic; it foreshadows, too, the recurrence of the same word at the end.<sup>44</sup> Allecto was the Junonian agent for the setting into motion of the deadly conflict in central Italy, and she originates from the abode of the god of the underworld, her surrogate father’s haunt.

The Furies make something of a return in the next reference to the god, this time in the great description of the Shield of Aeneas. Vulcan had depicted the Romulean she-

39 For the possible recollection of Ennius, *Annales* fr. 222 (Skutsch, 1985), see Goldschmidt (2013: pp. 135–136).

40 VII, 331; cf. XII, 845–847 of the Dirae.

41 The mention of the sororial Furies emphasizes or at least highlights, however, the familial import of *pater*.

42 We shall return to his key adjective below.

43 With, too, the attendant notion that she is now unseen (except, of course, by her fellow underworld denizens). *Invisum* is used early in the epic of the Trojan *genus* (I, 28); cf. (among other uses) II, 574 (of Sparta’s queen, in the *Helenaszene*).

44 Cf. I, 5 and XII, 950, the latter instance in an act of violence that Allecto would appreciate.

wolf, and not far from her, the city of Rome (VIII, 635 *nec procul hinc Roma*); far off, in contrast, there was a representation of the underworld and the diverse fates of Tartarean Catiline and Elysian Cato (VIII, 666–670). Here the *alta ostia Ditis* are an integral part of the artwork of the shield; indeed, the underworld of Catiline and Cato is mentioned just before the great description of the god's presentation of Actium.<sup>45</sup> It is an *Aeneid* VI in miniature, with two Roman historical personages for underworld population. We are reminded of the two paths in the lower realm, of the road to Tartarus and that to Elysium.<sup>46</sup> The shield of Aeneas depicts the future events of Roman history, including the dark reality of civil war and internecine strife – an image that was central to the poet's emphasis on how even in the underworld, we find familial hatreds and division (i.e., the relationship between Pluto and the sorority of Furies). The divisions in the underworld are reminiscent of those on Olympus, where Jupiter and Juno are in opposition with respect to the question of the Trojan future.

The threads of reference to the underworld god in the last book of the epic provide solutions to the mysterious involvement of Dis in the Virgilian corpus. First we find Avernus prominently featured in the oath sworn by Latinus as part of the would-be peace settlement between Trojans and Latins:

*haec eadem, Aenea, terram, mare, sidera, iuro  
Latoniaeque genus duplex Ianumque bifrontem,  
vimque deum infernam et duri sacraria Ditis;  
audiat haec genitor qui foedera fulmine sancit.* (XII, 197–200)<sup>47</sup>

The passage has occasioned difficulties, particularly as to the exact referent of *haec eadem*, and the relationship between the deities invoked by Latinus and those named by Aeneas at XII, 175 ff.<sup>48</sup> Apollo and Diana represent the sun and the moon, but also constitute an important immortal pair in the Augustan religious program; Janus is a suitable deity for oversight of the potential union of Latins and Trojans.<sup>49</sup> Dis is described as *durus*, that is, hard and unbending, stubborn and unyielding; the adjective may refer to the finality of death, and to the seemingly harsh demands of the grave.<sup>50</sup> The audience

45 The *alta ostia* recall the same image at *Georgics* IV, 467, the first reference to the god/his abode in Virgil.

46 With implicit commentary on Roman republican history: Catiline is relegated to the place of eternal punishment, and Cato to unending bliss.

47 On this passage see especially Tarrant (2012: *ad loc.*).

48 For the psychology and function of Latinus in the Latin war, note Balk (1968: pp. 74–95). With this prayer of Latinus cf. Aeneas' invocations at VII, 135 ff., where the “double parents” (*duplicis ... parentis*) in heaven and Erebus (i.e., Venus and Anchises).

49 Apollo and Diana – while siblings – are also in something of a state of opposition in the drama of *Aeneid* XI, where the sister supports Camilla and the brother the Volscian heroine's killer Arruns. This is the first reference to the divine twins after the long Camilla sequence, and it comes with a reminder of the conflict between them.

50 As for the god's *sacraria*, the word is quite rare (cf. Lyne, 1978: *ad* 154); Tarrant suggests “abode” as translation. The noun probably implies a notion of sacred offerings and solemnity befitting the god; we may recall *sacrum* of the lock of Dido's hair at IV, 703.

may also recall the poet's highlighting of the god in the Allecto sequence that opened the war in Latium. Any closure to the horrors of the Latin war must make some mention of the great underworld god who is closely identified with the Fury.<sup>51</sup> Latinus' prayer, however, ends with Jupiter – and the supreme god is identified with the lightning bolt that is his proper weapon. In an important sense, the allusion points forward not only to the resolution of the war, but also to the death of Turnus.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, at XII, 849–850 *hae Iovis ad solium saevique in limine regis / apparent*, Virgil describes the locus of the Dira that will be sent to terrify Turnus and his sister Juturna.<sup>53</sup> Here the language and allusions recall imagery associated with Dis, even if the actual god in question is Jupiter; it could be argued that the two brothers become almost as if one.<sup>54</sup> The action of the Fury Allecto in Book VII was associated with Juno and (by fault of parentage and provenance if not affection) Dis. In Book XII, Jupiter employs the hellish Dirae to see to the fulfillment of the destinies of Turnus and Juturna.<sup>55</sup> Pluto and the Furies hated Allecto; Turnus and his sister Juturna remain on good enough terms, but the Dira's action enacts a separation of the siblings: the divine Juturna is compelled to abandon the support of her all too mortal brother.

This passage comes soon after the two divine brothers Jupiter and Dis were closely associated in Latinus' prayer, where the power of the infernal gods was mentioned just before an oblique reference to Jupiter as the one who sanctions treaties with the power of his thunderbolt. In Virgil, there is no clear indication that the two brothers are in opposition, though such conflict might well be implicit in Book VII.<sup>56</sup> Pluto/Dis was instrumental in orchestrating the war in Latium, and now his younger brother Jupiter will employ hellish powers as part of the resolution of the military conflict. Said resolution will reach its climax with the death of Turnus; the Fury Allecto visited the Rutulian hero in Book VII, and now the Dira will visit him soon before his death. In the important sense, the prayer of Latinus has been ratified by divine action – and said intervention of the gods includes the employment of the forces of the lower world.

*Saevus* is a key adjective in the *Aeneid*.<sup>57</sup> Jupiter is described as “savage” because his will, it would seem, demands nothing less than the death of Turnus; the Rutulian's fate is to die, and the supreme god merely yields to the dictates of fate and refuses to counteract the hero's destiny. The savagery of the underworld lord is now associated with that of

51 And, too, the god is *durus* because his actions are always firm and unyielding with respect to the target of wrath and fury; the action of the Dira is not dissimilar to that of Allecto, even if the context and consequences are different.

52 Cf. the image of Turnus as rebellious giant (Hardie, 1986: pp. 147–156).

53 On this passage see especially Reed (2007: p. 52).

54 On the connection of the Dira with the *dei ira* and the question of Jupiter's anger, see O'Hara (1996: p. 240).

55 For a convenient consideration of the larger issue of Jupiter's exercise of justice here, see Henry (1989: pp. 117–178). Cf. too the sensitive reading of the scene by Di Cesare (1974: pp. 227–231).

56 On the very different situation in Statius' *Thebaid*, where Dis is in explicit rebellion from his brother (another image of fraternal strife), see Ganiban (2007: pp. 118–123).

57 There are some seventy-five occurrences in the poet. Note here C. Craca in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* (1988: Vol. IV, pp. 643–645); also de Grummond (1968). The Fury Allecto has *tam saevae facies* at VII, 329.

his younger (yet superior) brother. Once again, the poet emphasizes the notion of sacrifice and loss that precedes the achievement of the destined settlement and resolution of the Trojan problem. Virgil's Jupiter is described as a sender of sickness and war (XII, 851–852); interestingly, the wars of Jupiter are sent to cities that are identified as deserving of the punishment (*meritas ... urbes*). The implication is that the Junonian-inspired fury and war of Book VII was not merited (certainly not by the Latins); the forces of hell have been restrained, as it were, by the rational power of Jupiter – the power that now uses infernal weapons in a controlled, “just” manner. The anger of the gods has not been quelled – rather, it has been entrusted to Jupiter and rendered “moderate,” at least by Jovian standards.

We have noted that the Virgilian Allecto is allusively and even implicitly identified as the offspring of Hades and Persephone, an ascription that can be paralleled in Orphic family trees.<sup>58</sup> Looming over the infernal, underworld imagery of the *Aeneid* is the eschatological question of the possibility of rebirth and renewal, the chance at a second incarnation and new life for lost souls. At XII, 845–852, however, the Dirae summoned by Jupiter are identified as daughters of Nox or Night, sisters of the fury Megaera, just as in Book VII Juno had addressed Allecto as the *virgo sata Nocte*.<sup>59</sup> The Dirae have been identified by some as none other than Allecto and Tisiphone (so that the one Dira sent to earth could indeed be Allecto); this association is not, however, without its difficulties – not least the question of VII, 327, where Pluto is in some sense the father of the Furies.<sup>60</sup>

The sole Virgilian occurrence of Pluto as the name of Hades comes as part of an implicit recollection of the Orphic genealogical ascription of the Furies to Pluto and Persephone. The Virgilian Night is the mother of the Dirae; she is associated with both death in general and, more specifically, the death of Turnus.<sup>61</sup> In his careful arrangement of references to paternity in *Aeneid* VII, Virgil first signals the Orphic tradition of the fatherhood of Pluto, before having Juno in effect correct the family tree by associating Allecto with Nox. When the furious Dirae are summoned by Jove in Book XII, they are closely associated with their mother Nox – and with Jupiter now, not Pluto or Dis.<sup>62</sup> The reconciliation of Juno to the decrees of fate and destiny – and to her brother and husband Jupiter – is in part signaled by the Jovian use of the furious power his sister and queen had employed at the start of the war.<sup>63</sup>

58 See Horsfall (2000: *ad* VII, 327–328) for the citations from Orphic and other literature (e.g., *Hymni Orphici* 29.6; 68.8).

59 VII, 331.

60 See especially here Tarrant *ad loc.* Virgil does not make it entirely explicit whence the Dirae are summoned (i.e., whether or not they are always at the door of Jupiter's abode, or fetched from some subterranean haunt).

61 Cf. L. Fratantuono & R. Thomas, “Night,” in *VE* (2014: Vol. II, pp. 904–905).

62 XII, 846–847; XII, 860.

63 The Dira evokes the *deum ira*; the Dira is a portent of the death of Turnus with which the epic ends. Somewhere in these final dark movements of the epic there is a reflection on if not an answer to the rhetorical question of I, 11 ... *tantaene animis caelestibus irae*, where the *caelestes* are in the end both Juno and the “savage” Jupiter.

The reference to *pater Pluton* comes as the first mention of Hades in the Iliadic *Aeneid*, and it serves as a transition from the Orphic emphases of the first half of the epic to the veritable perpetual night of the second, the dark world of a war engendered by the actions of the arch Fury, even as it closes with the Jovian takeover of the potent forces of the underworld. On finding a reference to *Pluton pater*, one might have guessed that the Virgilian Allecto is a child of Pluto after Orphic fashion; soon enough Juno dispels the notion of such a lineage in her vocative *sata Nocte*, and her ascription of nocturnal parentage is echoed in the emphasis on Night's maternal connection to the Dirae in Book XII.<sup>64</sup> The children of Night thus appear in the first and last movements of the Virgilian books of war (Books VII and XII); the "daughters of Night" serves as a framing device for the *maius opus* of the second half of the poem.<sup>65</sup> In the hellish results of their furious achievements, the Orphic dream of rebirth and renewal is forgotten, as the war in Italy proceeds inexorably to the indignant flights of both Camilla and Turnus to the shadows.<sup>66</sup>

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64 Virgil signals the question of parentage at VI, 250 ... *matri Eumenidum magnae sorori*, where Nox is probably to be identified as the "mother of the Eumenides," and the "great sister" is either Tellus (so Servius) or (perhaps) Juno.

65 Cf. VII, 45.

66 XI, 831; XII, 952. Both are sacrifices necessary to further the Trojan rebirth; said renaissance will be of an Italian, Ausonian character – not a Teucrican. In the implicit suppression of an Orphic dream of rebirth and renewal, the poet aligns himself more closely with Lucretian, Epicurean eschatology.

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