

HOW VERGIL EXPANDED THE UNDERWORLD IN AENEID 6

In a recent article published in the *CQ* I argued the likelihood that in comparable underworld scenes Vergil modelled Charon's challenge to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 6.388–97 on Aeacus' challenge to Heracles in a surviving fragment of the tragedy *Pirithous* composed by either Euripides or Critias,¹ and I took the episode to be a reinforcement or a possible modification of E. Norden's suggestion that Aeneas' descent into the Underworld is modelled on a *catabasis* of Heracles.² In the play Aeacus sees a figure approaching him and demands to know of the stranger both his identity and his business in coming. Heracles responds by giving his name and explaining that he has come hither at Eurystheus' command to fetch Cerberus alive from Hades and bring him to Mycenae's gates. Heracles must then have overcome Aeacus, for we next find Theseus and Heracles conversing in the Underworld about Pirithous. Earlier in the play Pirithous had lamented that he still languishes in Hades for having attempted, with Theseus as his accomplice, to carry off from the world below the goddess Persephone to be his bride. In the usual version both heroes are caught and punished in the world below and only Theseus is rescued by Heracles. In this play, however, Heracles now heaps praise

¹ See my 'P.Oxy. 2078, Vat.Gr. 2228, and Vergil's Charon', *CQ* 50 (2000) 192–6. Aeacus says:

ἔα, τί χοῖμα· δέρομαι σπουδῆι τινα
δεῦθ' ἐγκονοῦντα καὶ μάλ' εὐτόλμοι φρενί.
εἰπεῖν δίκαιον, ὦ ξέν', ὅστις ὦν τόπους
εἰς τοῦσδε χοῖμπτῃ καὶ καθ' ἥντιν' αἰτίαν.
(Vat. gr. 2228 f. 482')

What is this? I see a figure hastening hither apace – bold is his spirit indeed! Stranger, you must tell me who you are that come near these regions, and what matter brings you.

For the text with translation and Heracles' reply, see D. L. Page, *Select Papyri* III (Cambridge, MA 1942) 122f., vss. 16–19 and 20–31 between frs. 1 and 2 of *P.Oxy.* 2078. Both speeches follow immediately after a hypothesis of the play all preserved by the otherwise unknown writer Johannes Diaconus and Logothetes as F 1 in Bruno Snell's second ed. of the frs. collected in his *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen 1986) I.171–8 under 43 Critias as F 1–14, with R. Kannicht's important addendum of *P.Oxy.* 3531, first edited by H. M. Cockle (London 1983) 29–36, as F 4a on pp. 349–51; two further papyri are doubtfully ascribed to the play as F 658 among the *Adespota* in Snell and Kannicht II (Göttingen 1981) 240–2.

Authorship of *Pirithous* is ascribed to Euripides by Page, to 'Euripides (or Critias)' by Cockle, and to Critias by Snell and Kannicht, as it is by J. Diggle, who makes the main fragments readily available in his *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta Selecta* (Oxford 1998) 172–6 under ΚΡΙΤΙΑΣ ΠΕΙΡΙΘΟΥΣ. The question of authorship will arise later, but the task of establishing where Aeacus is located in the Underworld, on which the first section of this paper focuses, ultimately does not hinge on it.

² As indicated in n. 20 below.

upon Theseus for his loyalty in electing to stay with his friend Pirithous in Hades. Heracles then rescues both heroes.³

The purpose of the present article is to bring this identification of a new source into a discussion of the ways in which Vergil extends the geography of the Underworld so as to increase the reader's sense of the vastness of Aeneas' infernal journey. The focus will be upon the segment of the Underworld between the point of Aeneas' departure below the earth and the waters of Styx – more precisely between the point of descent and the near bank of the Styx where Aeneas encounters Charon, that is to say the shore first reached by the souls of the dead before they cross over to the far shore of the infernal waters.⁴ Since no actual Αἰνείου κατάβασις existed before Vergil,⁵ Aeneas' journey through the netherworld is the product of Vergil's creation fashioned by extensive adaptation of earlier descents made by other catabatic heroes. By exploring Vergil's innovative technique we shall see how Vergil expands, or gives the impression of expanding, this segment of the netherworld. He achieves this effect by transferring to it episodes that Aeneas' counterparts Heracles, Dionysus, and Orpheus experienced later in their infernal journeys – episodes, moreover, that impart to Vergil's readers a sense of familiarity with Underworld topography and personnel, even though Aeneas' journey through the world of ghosts is new.

That Aeacus in *Pirithous* is somewhere in the nether regions when he asks Heracles to say why he has come 'into these places', τόπους εἰς τούσδε, is obvious. He must be in some sense 'guarding' the infernal regions when he issues his challenge to Heracles, a challenge which Vergil transfers to Charon and transforms into the ultimate test of Aeneas' fitness to continue his journey beyond the Styx.⁶ But precisely where in the Underworld Heracles encounters Aeacus when he challenges Heracles is far from obvious.

³ The uniqueness of the descent-version in *Pirithous* is documented more fully in my article (n. 1) 193f., to which I add here, *exempli gratia*, comparison with a scene painted on the Nekyia Krater now in New York by a contemporary of Euripides and Critias. This shows Hades and Persephone inside their house both ruling from their thrones over their subjects, which include Theseus and Pirithous held fast on chairs under the terrible gaze of Persephone. Several other versions portray the pair growing to a rock. By contrast, in the hypothesis of *Pirithous* preserved by Johannes Diaconus (n. 1), Pirithous is said to sit, alone, upon a rock. For the Krater scene, see P. Jacobsthal, 'The Nekyia Krater in New York', *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 5 (1934–6) 117–18; P. Friedländer, 'Zur New Yorker Nekyia', *AA* (1935) 20–1. Heracles' pro-Athenian sympathies towards Theseus in *Pirithous* are noteworthy: cf. n. 20 below. They are in marked contrast to Charon's towards Theseus, Pirithous, and Heracles in Verg. *Aen.* 6.392ff.

⁴ A quite different approach is taken here from that pursued by Andrew Feldherr, 'Putting Dido on the Map: Genre and Geography in Vergil's Underworld', *Arethusa* 32 (1999) 85–122, who is concerned to show how Vergil's netherworld beyond the Styx is arranged in territorial and administrative entities reflecting a Roman conceptualization of space and power under the principate and is, in short, a mirror image of Rome's own imperial sway.

⁵ If, as is mentioned in my article (n. 1) 194, Vergil derived ideas for Aeneas' *catabasis* from either Naevius' *nekymanteion* depicting an *evocatio* by Aeneas of his father on the shore of Avernus (conjectured by P. Corssen, 'Die Sibylle im sechsten Buch der Aeneis', *Sokrates* 1 (1913) 12) or Fabius Pictor's dream-version of Aeneas' descent *ap. Cic. De Div.* 1.21.43 (on which see J. Perret, *Virgile: connaissance des lettres* (Paris 1965) 115–16), it is unlikely that he found an extensive topography of the Underworld in either source.

⁶ Clark (n. 1) 195–6.

Apart from the three Greek words just quoted there are no other clues pertaining to Aeacus' whereabouts in the surviving portions of the play. It is conceivable that he was guarding the entrance-gates which separate the world of the living from the world of the dead.⁷ This might be the location implied by U. von Wilamowitz when he infers that Aeacus in *Pirithous* was performing the role of *ianitor Orci*.⁸ It is at any rate where later editors Cockle, Snell, and Diggle place him, though with what accuracy is questionable. Cockle offers the fullest explanation for this view:

since Aeacus is in some sources the doorkeeper of Hades (Roscher, s.v. Aiakos 112–13 and Lucian, *D. Mort.* 20.1 and especially *De Luctu* 4), he would be one of the first people encountered by Heracles ... [T]here is no reason to believe that it [the play's action] was enacted anywhere but in Hades – and indeed probably somewhere near the entrance. Such a location would suit the appearance of Aeacus in his capacity as doorkeeper. To support this idea, we know from Apollod. 2.5.12 that Heracles found Theseus and Pirithous when he came near the gates of Hades.⁹

In fact, as will be shown below, the passages by Lucian and Apollodorus provide no proof that Aeacus in *Pirithous* must be at or near the entrance to Hades. It is quite plausible that Aeacus could have uttered these words in a location further into the Underworld. In his edition of the play D. L. Page, while not specifically raising the question of Aeacus' location, does invite readers to 'cf. further the part of Aeacus' with Aristophanes' comedy *Frogs*.¹⁰ The advice to compare Aeacus in the two plays, which are contemporary and have in common not only a 'descent to Hades' by Heracles but also a chorus of initiate souls appearing in Hades, offers a lead we shall now follow.

In the *Frogs* Heracles draws upon the experience of his own trip to Hell and back when he directs Dionysus and his slave Xanthias how to go there themselves. They must first find and cross the 'great big bottomless lake' (λίμνην μεγάλην ἥξειε πάνυ ἄβυσσον, 137–8), probably Acheron, where the ferryman Charon has his barque.¹¹ Next they will encounter snakes and horrible monsters in their thousands (143–4), and finally will pass the Great Muck Marsh (βόρβορον πολὺν, 145) and Eternal River of

⁷ References to Hades' gates as entrances to this god's realm below earth's thin crust (Hom. *Il.* 22.61ff.) are collected by E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1979) 35–6 with 219 n. 62. See also at n. 32 below.

⁸ U. von Wilamowitz so designates Aeacus when discussing Heracles' fight with Cerberus in *Euripides Herakles* (Berlin 1889) II.138 ad 612 thus: 'Die etappen der entwicklung sind (1) ... (2) kampf um den hund mit dem Tode in gestalt des titanen Menoitios oder des 'ianitor orci' (*sic*), der seit Kritias Aiakos heisst.' Wilamowitz here refers to Critias as author of *Pirithous*.

⁹ Cockle (n. 1) 30. Snell (n. 1) 172, too, cites Lucian, *De Luctu* 4, and adds, 'Wil. ms.'. Diggle (n. 1) 173 gives Aeacus' speech, printed as fr. 1, the heading 'fabulae exordium?'

¹⁰ Page (n. 1) 121–2.

¹¹ Acheron is named by Euripides in *Alc.* 444 as a 'lake' upon which Charon sails, but the lake is at first unnamed in 253, as in the *Frogs*. K. J. Dover, *Aristophanes Frogs* (Oxford 1993) 254 linking *Frogs* 470–3 to *Od.* 10.513–4 suggests that Acheron may have been a lake for Homer also.

Dung (σζῶρ ἀείνων, 146),¹² where certain sinners are in evidence, before they arrive at Pluto's house. With these directions in mind Dionysus and his slave both journey there;¹³ Dionysus knocks at the door of the house and Aeacus opens it. This is not the door that separates the world of the living from that of the dead. It belongs rather to Hades' house much deeper in the Underworld on the far side of the infernal lake. Given other similarities between the two plays, the likelihood is that this is also where Heracles encountered Aeacus in *Pirithous*.

As Wilamowitz observed, Aeacus in *Pirithous* performs the function of *ianitor Orci*.¹⁴ In this capacity he traditionally holds the keys to the house of Orcus, known also as Dis, Pluto or Hades.¹⁵ Isocrates, however, reports Aeacus sitting as an assessor, πάρεδρος, with Pluto and Persephone.¹⁶ So one might argue that Aeacus in *Pirithous* was sitting on a judgement-seat when he saw Heracles; the considered manner in which he asks Heracles who he is, and what his business is, compared to the brusque and colloquial manner of Vergil's Charon, might further suggest (but see below) that he is of a higher status than door-keeper. Plato gives Aeacus a similar function but in a different setting, associating him instead with the infernal judges Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Triptolemus at the dividing of the road within the infernal meadow,¹⁷ a location in Hades that is for him unusual.¹⁸ Aeacus also appears

¹² These colourful renderings of infernal names are David Barrett's from his translation *Aristophanes: The Wasps, The Poet and the Women, The Frogs* (Harmondsworth 1964, with reprints) 161.

¹³ Dover (n. 11) 227–8 *ad* 273 discusses at length an apparent reversal of Heracles' sequence of events, as Dionysus and Xanthus seem to see the sinners in the mud before the monsters. The sinners, in truth, are barely touched upon, being quickly disposed of with a comic glance at the audience, perhaps to suppress conflict with the location of the main dead beyond the door of Pluto's house, from which they exit with Aeschylus and Euripides onto the stage at 830ff. Comparable with the scene in the *Frogs* is Polygnotus' mid-fifth-century wall-painting *ap.* Paus. 10.28.4, 5, and 7 depicting sinners and monsters on Acheron's bank (the far bank, no doubt, since Odysseus is said in section 1 to be already in Hell) with other figures spreading out from there. Not only does each version include among its sinners one who has maltreated a father, but Polygnotus' flesh-eating demon Eurynomus corresponds to the malignant creature Empusa in *Frogs* 293.

¹⁴ See at n. 8 above.

¹⁵ Aeacus is both Hades' gate-keeper invoked as Ἄϊδεω πύλαουγέ in a 2nd-c. BC epitaph from Smyrna (*GVI* I.1179.7) and Hades' key-holder, who τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ Ἄϊδου φυλάττει at Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.12.6 and is called κληδοῦχος in a later epitaph from a tomb at Rome (*IG* XIV.1746.4). The Table of Colotes at Olympus described by Paus. 5.20.3 depicts Hades holding his own key in the role of κληδοῦχος usually assigned to Aeacus.

¹⁶ *Evag.* 15.

¹⁷ *Apol.* 41a. *Gorg.* 523e ff., esp. 524a and 526c.

¹⁸ Only in Plato is Aeacus' court placed at the Dividing of the Ways and in this meadow. E. R. Dodds, *Plato Gorgias* (Oxford 1959) 375 suggests that Plato's meadow and all other infernal meadows originate from Homer's 'asphodel meadow' (*Od.* 11.538–9). If Dodds' suggestion is correct, the meadow in which Aeacus holds court can be imagined as lying beyond infernal waters (cf. *Od.* 11.157–9), though Plato himself does not say so. Other infernal topographies support this conjecture: beyond infernal waters we find not only Aristophanes' Meadow of Initiates in *Frogs* 326, but also Vergil's Fields of Mourning (*Lugentes campi*), Division of the Ways (*partes ... se via findit in ambas*) and Fields of Joy (*locos laetos ... campos*) in *Aen.* 6.441, 540, and 638–40 respectively. Another link between Aeacus and Plato's meadow is Achilles, a descendant of Aeacus (Hom. loc. cit.), who strode through Homer's asphodel meadow after death (*Od.* 11.539).

(sometimes named) with these judges on red-figure vases of the fourth century, where he is given the form of a venerable old man leaning on a distinctive long knobby stick;¹⁹ in Latin literature, however, Aeacus is not in their company when he judges the dead in Hades (Horace, *Odes* 2.13.22, *Ov. Met.* 13.25, *Sen. Apoc.* 14–15). Just as fluid are Aeacus' various Underworld locations in different passages by Lucian that parody his traditional roles. He is guardian of a gate of unspecified location in two of Lucian's dialogues (*Menippus* 8, *Dial. Mort.* 11.2). Two others suggest that Aeacus is active close to the entrance of the infernal region well before Charon's station (*De Luctu* 4, *Apologia* 1, *Cataplus* 4). Yet another refers to him as gate-keeper (πυλωρεῖς) on the far side of the infernal river Pyriphlegethon and the lake upon which Charon sails (*Dial. Mort.* 6.1). At the entrance-way before the lake is reached Aeacus' function is to keep tally as the dead enter Hades (*Cataplus* 4), but he must be deeper within Hades when, as τελώνης, he inspects their fares (*Charon* 2). In this capacity he is an 'assessor' of sorts, with the power to have Charon flogged should the latter not collect all fares from the souls boarding his barque (*Dial. Mort.* 2.3). Beyond the lake he conducts a guided tour, which he breaks off to check that no soul has escaped (*id.* 6.6), since his duty there, Cerberus-like, is to prevent souls from leaving once they have crossed over Charon's lake and passed through the entrance beyond (*id.* 13.3). He can, by contrast, send back to earth those who had already begun lawsuits but died before receiving a fair trial (*Bis Accus.* 12). He also checks out the dead before receiving them (*Peregrinus* 45), allocates them space (*Charon* 25, *Menippus* 17), interrogates a soul until it recognizes the truth about itself in a dispute among the dead (*Dial. Mort.* 27), and with Charon attends Pluto's court (*Philopseudes* 25).

Within this tradition it seems to me entirely consistent with the evidence to propose that the two functions of 'door-keeper' and 'assessor', so often found separate, had converged early on, so that Aeacus' power as judge to interrogate the souls of the dead in Hades and his capacity as *ianitor Orci* are two sides of his office. Hence the comic effect in the *Frogs* at 464, where Aeacus upon opening the door and seeing Dionysus in a lion-skin, immediately reacts violently, falls for a lie, and jumps to the false conclusion that Dionysus is Heracles and criminally guilty. Humour is similarly sustained when Aeacus goes inside the house and at 478 reappears with threats to mete out punishments forthwith and at 605 commands two slaves to arrest the 'dog-thief'; by 608 he gives the word for three Scythian policemen to quell the prisoner's resistance. Furthermore, the double function of door-keeper and assessor found in the *Frogs* is consistent with the manner of Aeacus' interrogation of Heracles in *Pirithous*, which, as we have seen, in all likelihood took place also at Hades' house beyond the infernal lake. In short, Heracles, who earns the epithet 'gate-wrecking' (ἔρειψιπύλαν) in Bacchylides 5.56, meets

¹⁹ J. Boardman, *et al.* (eds.), *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich 1981–), s.v. Aiakos with pl. 1. 3. It would seem that this stick is not the staff, ῥάβδος, put in his hand by Plato, *Gorg.* 526c, as his judge's badge of office, but see below at n. 29.

Aeacus at this gate in an encounter deep within Hades, to which Aristophanes gives a comic twist.²⁰

One commentator has argued that it is a mistake to think that Aeacus belongs in Aristophanes' play at all. Thus before leaving my comparison of this figure in the two plays, I shall address a series of arguments that led to this claim. It arises from the fact that the text of the *Frogs* during the Hellenistic period was devoid of *sigla* denoting speakers. Moreover, though most MSS assign to Aeacus three sets of dialogues beginning at 464 and 605 and (with less MS support) 738, neither the MSS nor the ancient scholia are unanimous in their ascriptions to Aeacus (for instance Σ^ε, the only scholion on 738, ascribes the dialogue to Πλούτωνος οἰκέτης).²¹ Dover, the commentator and editor of the *Frogs* who puts the case for dismissing Aeacus from it, highlights in support of his hypothesis scholiast Σ^ν on 464 who rejects as 'implausible' the frequent ascription of this speech to Aeacus, saying εἷς τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου λέγει· τινές δὲ τὸν Αἰακὸν λέγουσιν ἀποκρίνασθαι ὅπερ ἀπίθανον. Dover supposes that the scholiast arrives at this judgement because he perceived that in Aristophanes' day Aeacus enjoyed a higher status than the role of door-keeper he allegedly performs in the *Frogs*. At that time Aeacus was, after all, a hero of exceptional piety, endowed with a sanctuary at Athens (Hdt. 5.89.3), and after his death was portrayed as an august judge by Isocrates and Plato. To distinguish between early and late conceptions of Aeacus, Dover argues that Aeacus' slow 'decline from tribal to janitor's lodge is explicable in terms of the overlapping connotations of κληδοῦχος, πυλωρός, and θυρωρός,' each of which he ranks as follows:²² κληδοῦχος

²⁰ To my mind Aristophanes' exploitation of *Pirithous* does not refute E. Norden's hypothesis supported by H. Lloyd-Jones that an early epic account of the descent of Heracles lay behind the description of Dionysus' descent in the *Frogs*. See, respectively, *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis Buch VI* (Leipzig and Berlin 1926) 5 with n. 2, and 'Heracles at Eleusis: *P.Oxy.* 2622 and *PSI* 1391'. *Maia* 19 (1967) 206–29 = *Greek Epic, Lyric and Tragedy* (Oxford 1990) 167–87. According to Norden, Apollodorus 2.5.12 summarized an epic version of Heracles' descent known to Vergil, most probably, he thought, through a mythological handbook, after the epic had directly influenced Bacchylides and Aristophanes. Lloyd-Jones adds to these authors Euripides (e.g., at *Her.* 610–13) and Pindar (*P.Oxy.* 2622) and infers from Heracles' pro-Athenian sympathies and connection with Eleusis that the epic was composed c.550 BC by an Athenian or a person belonging to the orbit of Athenian culture. N. Robertson, *Hermes* 108 (1989) 274–300 thinks it may have formed part of the Hesiodic *Aegymnus* frs. 294–301 M-W attributed to Cecrops of Miletus. In my article (n. 1) 195 I express the view that the epic could have survived to Vergil's day as many epics did, but Vergil, as Aristophanes, would have taken every chance to read also whatever separate literary treatments existed in the articulate and well-developed tradition about Heracles' descent, including *Pirithous*.

²¹ Dover (n. 11) 51–2 provides a conspectus of *sigla* and scholia. The fact that R, the mid-10th-c and oldest MS of the *Frogs*, names Aeacus at 464–5, 630ff. and 738, but not thereafter in the last scene, nor at all in the list of *dramatis personae* that refers only to Θεράπων Πλούτωνος, does indeed betray confusion over the *sigla* naming Aeacus. The question to be faced, though, is not whether such *sigla* go back to Aristophanes' text, but whether those who inserted *sigla* were correct to identify Aeacus as the speaker of certain verses in the *Frogs*. Indeed the *sigla* probably do not derive from Aristophanes if J. C. B. Lowe, 'The Manuscript Evidence for Changes of Speaker in Aristophanes', *BICS* 9 (1962) 27–42 is right to infer that all changes of speaker in Greek dramatic texts were marked originally by diacritical marks only, or possibly by mere spaces with or without an accompanying *paragraphos*.

²² Here I give no more than one or two instances cited by Dover for each term. For a fuller list, see Dover's valuable collection of references (n. 11) 52–3. To the divine door-keepers there listed I add (n. 39) Hecate in her role in *Aen.* 6.

is the grandest term usable of a deity (e.g. Athene in Ar. *Th.* 1142, Hades in Paus. at n. 15 above), or priest (A. *Supp.* 291), or functionary in charge of a sanctuary (*IG* II².974.23 s. II^a); πυλωρός (Callim. fr. 202.29) is a less grand designation; while θυρωρός denotes a janitor of lowly status (a eunuch in Pl. *Prt.* 314c-d). In the belief that this last designation aptly describes the door-keeper who answers the knock and cry of παῖ παῖ at *Frogs* 464, undoubtedly a slave since at 670 and 746 he calls Pluto his master (ὁ δεσπότης),²³ and believing also that this role of lowly janitor belongs to a later conception of Aeacus, Dover takes the naming of Aeacus in the text of the *Frogs* to be an unjustified inference from a post-Aristophanic conception of him by the scribes of Roman or late Hellenistic date who attached names to characters. Accordingly he rejects the *siglum* Aeacus in all places where the MSS name him and instead at 464 and 605 conjectures the *siglum* θυρωρός, and at 738 reads with some MSS and Σ^E quoted above the *siglum* οἰκέτης denoting a second household-slave.

Dover, finally, couples with this hypothesis another to hold his argument in place. Observing that no ancient commentator on the *Frogs* refers to *Pirithous*, whose date is unknown, he assigns the latter to Critias rather than Euripides – they died respectively in 403 and 406 BC – and wonders whether *Pirithous* was either not produced at all but circulated as a literary text, or was produced at the Lenaea two years after the *Frogs*, which won first prize at the Lenaea in 405 BC. To his mind, *Pirithous* dates to the last year of Critias' life after he had returned from exile in 403 BC. On the basis of these hypotheses, Dover sweeps Aeacus from Aristophanes' *Frogs* entirely and claims the play is not modelled on *Pirithous* after all. Moreover, the appearance of an Underworld chorus of initiates in both plays might then be due (he thinks) either to Critias' borrowing from Aristophanes, in the reverse order of borrowing from that usually assumed (*Pirithous* must of course be the earlier play if Euripides is the author), or to both poets using initiates for an Underworld chorus independently of each other.²⁴

The twin objections I see to the case for dismissing Aeacus from the *Frogs* are that, firstly, it does not take sufficient account of Aristophanes' humour, which has the power to distort the historical accuracy of characters portrayed, and, secondly, it focuses on Aeacus in the *Frogs* as door-keeper rather than judge. As Dover rightly points out in regard to the various designations applicable to door-keepers, the holder of the key of a sanctuary or realm was in origin not lowly. This fact together with another – that Aeacus was the august judge of the dead in Aristophanes' own age – is precisely the point underlying the humour of successive scenes in the *Frogs*. No prodding is needed to provoke the laughter of the audience as it witnesses at 464 the rush to judgement by this judge of the dead (which this personage undoubtedly is as well as door-keeper), whose judgement is plainly wrong, based as it is on an error of mistaken identity made

²³ The significance of this appellation for Aeacus' slave-status was recognized by F. V. Fritzsche, *Aristophanis Ranae* (Zürich 1845) 233, reaffirmed by Dover (n. 11) 50, but denied (on the ground of the tragic tone of 464ff.) by L. Radermacher, *Aristophanes' 'Frösche': Einleitung, Text und Kommentar*³ (reissued Graz-Vienna-Cologne 1967) 211.

²⁴ Dover (n. 11) 55.

almost as soon as he opens Hades' door. To attribute Aeacus' own identity to a later conception because his Aristophanic role as lowly janitor is without parallel in Aristophanes' day overlooks the playwright's power to distort and caricature. The demotion of this august judge and door-keeper to servile status in the household of the deity Pluto, who with Persephone does, after all, have supreme jurisdiction over his own kingdom, is all part of the humour to put Aeacus on a level with Xanthias for comic reasons:²⁵ neither, incidentally, is very subservient to their masters. Aeacus is still the absolute judge, who not only guards the entrance to Hades' house but also wields managerial power over the slaves and policemen whose job it is to arrest and subdue prisoners;²⁶ he also wields executive power to carry out to the full the punishment he assigns.

We have just seen that Dover attributes the authorship of *Pirithous* to Critias and believes that his tragedy was produced in 403 BC, two years after Aristophanes' comedy won first prize at the Lenaea. This late date for the production of *Pirithous* is, however, problematic and unlikely. A. H. Sommerstein points out that if the plays were produced in this sequence, Critias could not actually have seen Aristophanes' *Frogs*, since he was in exile when it was produced. On the premise that the similarities between the two plays are not accidental, so that one of them is modelled on the other, he thinks for the reason just given that it is more likely that Aristophanes is imitating Critias than vice versa. But if *Pirithous* is the earlier play, both Euripides and Critias are candidates for authorship. Since the testimony of antiquity is divided between them and the internal clues in the plays are not decisive, we are left to wonder whether it is more likely that Critias' play was passed off as Euripides' or vice versa. To this question Sommerstein offers the plausible answer that fourth-century booksellers are likely to have thought that a play bearing Euripides' name was more saleable than one bearing the name of an oligarchic extremist. Critias had not, of course, acquired that reputation at the time Aristophanes chose to model his comedy upon *Pirithous*.²⁷

In the final analysis Dover expresses himself ready to yield on the absoluteness of early and late conceptions of Aeacus when he acknowledges that 'if *Peirithoos* was produced before the *Frogs*, we could not reasonably resist the hypothesis that in the Doorkeeper Aristophanes means us to see the tragic Aiakos, even though the dialogue between Aiakos and Herakles in *Peirithoos* is courteous. And if no allusion is made in the *Frogs* to the name of Aiakos, that could be because the allusion to the tragedy was

²⁵ Aeacus' indulgence to a fellow-slave probably also has political overtones. Slaves who took part in the Athenian victory at Arginusae in 406 (Xen. *HG* 1.6.24) were given freedom and the rights of citizenship (Hellanicus, *FGrHist* 323a F25), the point underlying *Frogs* 33–4, 190–2, and 693–9.

²⁶ This power was observed by G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London 1981) 505–6.

²⁷ A. H. Sommerstein, *Frogs* (Warminster 1996) 10 with references to Critias' political activity. The same argument applies to three other plays of disputed authorship, namely *Tennes*, *Rhadamanthys*, and *Sisyphus*. U. von Wilamowitz, *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin 1931–7) I. 449–50, likewise put the performance of *Pirithous* in a period before Critias went into exile from Athens, i.e. before the summer of 406 BC (Xen. *HG* 2.3.15 and 36).

so obvious that the name was not needed.²⁸ He further suggests that if Aeacus does appear in the *Frogs* it is possible that he beats Dionysus and Xanthias with the long knobby stick he carries in the vase-paintings mentioned above that depict him as an old man leaning upon it. Sommerstein adds an excellent point, that instead of naming Aeacus Aristophanes may simply have given him this stick as a clearly recognizable attribute.²⁹ In that case, it acts virtually as a symbol of office, like the ῥάβδος put in his hand by Plato mentioned above.

I conclude that, whatever the merits of seeing *Pirithous* as the later play, which I think to be less likely than the reverse, Aeacus does speak in the *Frogs*. The conclusions concerning his location and function in the Underworld reached at the outset of this article therefore remain apt.

Vergil, then, it seems, has artfully transferred the scene of the challenge of Heracles by Aeacus from deep inside the Underworld at Pluto's gate beyond the infernal lake to an earlier location where Aeneas meets Charon on the near shore of the infernal waters. Though Charon does not of course replace Aeacus as *ianitor Orci* – a term reserved for Cerberus standing on guard on the far side of the Underworld waters³⁰ – Vergil has nevertheless endowed him with an assessor's interrogating power, which Charon exercises in brusque manner as virtual guardian of the infernal regions beyond. I have used the word 'guardian' advisedly, because this harbour-master (*portitor*) is said at *Aen.* 6.298 to 'guard' (*servat*) the waters that bar access to the inner world of souls. These waters include both Acheron and Cocytus in addition to Styx, because Charon is said in the *Aeneid* to ply his barque over the Stygian 'marsh' or 'lake' (*Stygiam ... paludem*, 6.323, or *lacu*, 6.393) at the confluence of Acheron and Cocytus (6.295ff.), where these rivers flow into it. It is from here, in his barque close to the near bank of the infernal waters, that Charon rails in Aeneas' presence against the earlier transgressions of Heracles, Theseus and Pirithous – the very catabatic figures featured in *Pirithous*.³¹ After getting Aeneas to stop short of the shore (*fare age, quid venias, iam istinc et comprime gressum*, 6.389), Charon forbids the newcomer to advance – at least, until the Sibyl produces the Golden Bough, the symbol of Aeneas' legitimacy revealing him to be a new kind of catabatic Hero of Fate.

Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has recently offered an outline of the different steps by which the souls of the dead journeyed to Hades in the Homeric epics and in the fifth century BC. In the epics the passage between the two worlds of life and of death was safeguarded by the shades themselves, who prevented the unburied from crossing the river (*Il.* 23.72–3) and who were under the supreme jurisdiction of Hades and Persephone. It was also safeguarded by the gates of the Underworld and Cerberus. By the fifth century the process was more elaborate. As Sourvinou-

²⁸ Dover (n. 11) 55.

²⁹ See Dover loc. cit. Sommerstein (n. 27) 198f. *ad* 464, and for the vase-paintings n. 19 above.

³⁰ Cerberus, the *Tartareum ... custodem* of *Aen.* 6.395, is called *ianitor* at *Aen.* 6.400 and *ianitor Orci* at *Aen.* 8.296.

³¹ See n. 3 above.

Inwood says, the dead made the journey first under the guidance of the god Hermes Chthonios, who presided over the separation from life but did not lead the dead into Hades proper. Next the ferryman Charon, mentioned for the first time in the epic *Minyas* (fr. 1 Kinkel, p. 215) attributed to Prodicus of Phocaea by Pausanias 4.33.7, received from Hermes the shades for ferrying over the waters. Thus the shades were still under the jurisdiction of Hades and Persephone, the gates played the same role, and Cerberus still controlled the exit out of Hades but now in conjunction with Charon.³² However, this analysis omits altogether the role of Aeacus, which as we have seen has played its part in the finer details of Vergil's re-organization of catabatic tradition.

Significantly, Vergil dovetails into the scheme of his structural re-arrangement another motif taken from Heracles' Underworld journey. We have just seen how the challenge issued by Aeacus to the descending hero Heracles deep within the Underworld has been reassigned to Charon, who issues Aeneas a challenge on the near shore of the Styx. In Bacchylides' fifth *Epinician*, Heracles has already traversed the Underworld when he sees the ghostly Meleager 'beside the waters of Cocytus' (παρὰ Κωκυτοῦ ῥεέθροισι, 64) among the spirits of wretched mortals 'like leaves aqiver in the wind upon Ida's gleaming headlands grazed by sheep' (οἷά τε φύλλ' ἄνεμος | Ἰδαῖς ἀνά μίλοβότους | πρῶνας ἀργηστάς δονεῖ, 65–7). The leaf-like ghosts are presumably in their final-resting place on the far bank of Cocytus when Heracles catches sight of them. In the *Georgics* at 4.471–4 and 478–80 Orpheus, in imitation of Heracles no doubt, also sees the souls of the dead beyond the infernal waters, here defined as Cocytus and encircling Styx. The thronging ghosts seen by Orpheus are compared to the thousands of birds hiding in amongst the leaves when the evening star or a wintry shower drives them from the hills. In a fragment of Heracles' descent preserved in *P.Oxy.* 2622, which has been ascribed to Pindar, Heracles similarly encounters Meleager and other ghosts. The detail of location that is common to Bacchylides' poem and Vergil's *Georgics* is not preserved in the surviving fragment of Pindar's poem, but Heracles may be presumed to be in the same region when he sees the countless ghosts (ὄσα like Vergil's *quam multa* in *Georg.* 4.473 or *quam multa* | *quam multae* in *Aen.* 6.309ff., rather than Bacchylides' οἷά) compared now in a double simile almost certainly to waves as well as leaves.³³

³² C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading 'Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford 1995) 306–9 discounts Hermes Chthonios in Hom. *Od.* 24 as being the work of the 'Continuator', and relying on Eur. *Alc.* 357–62, where Admetus assures Alcestis that he would go to Hades if he had Orpheus' charms so that neither Cerberus nor Charon would stop him from restoring her to life, argues that Charon controls the movement not only into but also (like Cerberus) out of Hades.

³³ For reconstruction of the fragmentary Pindaric similes and their location, see respectively Lloyd-Jones (n. 20) 215f. = 175f. and my 'Two Virgilian Similes and the Ἡρακλέους κατάβασις', *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 244–55. S. Lavecchia, *P.Oxy.* 2622 e il "Secondo Ditirambo" di Pindaro', *ZPE* 110 (1996) 1–26, leaves their location unmentioned in his re-examination of the fragment. E. Lobel, the first editor of *P.Oxy.* 2622 (London 1967) 63–5, inferred the inclusion of Meleager in the ghost-scene from the mention of Με]λέαργον a few lines below the similes.

In the sixth book of the *Aeneid* at 309–12 Vergil not only adapts but relocates this part of the ghost-scene.³⁴ He recasts the double simile of ghosts compared to leaves and waves into leaves and birds and advances the ghosts being compared onto the near shore of the infernal waters, now defined as Cocytus, Styx, and Acheron, where Aeneas sees them *before* he crosses the waters – *before* he encounters Charon even. Aeneas' vision thus occurs much sooner than the sightings of these souls of the dead by either Heracles (in Bacchylides and in all probability Pindar) or Orpheus (in Vergil's *Georgics*), and sooner than Odysseus, albeit in the different context of the trench-scene at *Od.* 11.36–41, saw the ghostly prototypes that Vergil incorporates into each set of his similes (*Georg.* 4.475–7 = *Aen.* 6.306–8).³⁵ Mynors draws a fine contrast between the imagery of the bird-similes in the *Georgics* (shades are like birds in woodland as twilight comes on) and in the *Aeneid* (like migrating birds the shades come flocking down to the river bank), but he does not notice that they appear on opposite sides of the infernal bank.³⁶

In sum so far: Aeneas sees the crowds of ghosts compared in similes beside the infernal waters and experiences Charon's challenge much earlier in the Underworld than his counterparts face each comparable episode. The ghost-scene, moreover, is carefully orchestrated to take place before Aeneas catches sight of the ferryman Charon. Some sense of how thickly the ghosts crowd the shore is thereby imparted to the reader. The effect of the transfer forward of both motifs is to delay Aeneas' crossing over the Styx, which in consequence appears, impressionistically at least if not geographically, to be pushed deeper into the Underworld, since Aeneas is troubled both by the sudden pathos at the sight of the ghosts and by the shock of Charon's subsequent challenge before he can fully approach and cross the infernal waters.

³⁴ In response to my proposed ancestry of the Vergilian similes in my article (n. 33) 250–3, R. F. Thomas, *Reading Virgil and his Texts: Studies in Intertextuality* (Ann Arbor 1999) 267–87, esp. 278–81, thinks that Homer's leaf and bird similes at *Il.* 6.146–9 and 3.2–7, and Apollonius' wave, leaf and bird similes at *Argon.* 4.214–19 and 238–40 were sufficient models for Vergil's inventiveness without the help of Bacchylides or Pindar or Norden's hypothetical epic *catabasis* mentioned in n. 20 above. However, Vergil did not learn their location beside Cocytus from Homer, whose similes are comparisons to men-in-this-life and not ghosts-in-the-next, or from Apollonius, who applies his similes to the Colchians pouring along the river bank or over the sea in the faintly catabatic framework of Jason's voyage. Consideration of Vergil's sources for the similes, it seems to me, should not be isolated from the other main motif to be discussed below in the same ghost-scene. Since motifs now appearing as separate episodes in Aeneas' infernal journey once appeared together in the same scene, it is highly unlikely that Vergil re-invented one motif, namely the similes comparing ghosts seen by the descending hero beside Cocytus, from sources unconnected with Heracles' descent but borrowed the other from the same scene in Heracles' infernal journey. For reasons too lengthy to detail here, I suspect with Norden and Lloyd-Jones that Vergil knew the common account.

³⁵ In determining the relative location of these Homeric ghosts, observe the following references: *Od.* 10.508–12 refer to Odysseus about to cross Ocean and enter Hades' house; 513–14 to Cocytus (called a branch of Styx) and Pyriphlegethon as rivers flowing into Acheron, itself perhaps a lake formed at their confluence marked by a rock (see n. 11 above); 527–9 to sacrifices beside the trench as Odysseus looks backwards at a streaming river; and 530ff. to ghosts rising from the trench. After Odysseus makes the Ocean-crossing in *Od.* 11.21–2, his mother points out in 155–9 that he has also passed over the infernal rivers (cf. 10.513–14) before seeing her and the other ghosts that have been rising from the trench continuously since 36.

³⁶ R. A. B. Mynors, *Virgil: Georgics* (Oxford 1990) 316–7 on *Georg.* 4.471–4.

To reinforce how pervasive Vergil's artistic technique is in respect to his rearrangement of earlier experiences by other descending heroes, attention will now be drawn to yet another instance. Yet again Vergil brings forward a traditional catabatic motif. This time it requires a radical topographical rearrangement of the netherworld, repositioning as it does Pluto's house.

The motif in question concerns the warning given to the frightened descending hero not to shoot at a mere wraith. In Bacchylides 5.71–84 Meleager's ghost is on Cocytus' far shore, as has been shown above, when it admonishes Heracles against shooting an arrow at its ghostly self. It assures him that there is nothing to fear from a ghost (οὐ τοι δέος).³⁷ Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.5.12), too, knows a version of Heracles' visit to Meleager and the shades. Here it is Hermes, playing the role of Heracles' helper in the Underworld, who admonishes Heracles not to thrust his sword at the insubstantial phantom of the Gorgon Medusa. Apollodorus does not locate the episode. But since he reports that Heracles sees Theseus and Pirithous as he approaches Hades' gates *after this experience*, these gates cannot be at the entrance separating the world of the living from the world of the dead where Cockle (at n. 9 above) imagines them to be. They must belong to Hades' house across the lake. Likewise in Aristophanes' *Frogs* at 564 ff., in what appears to be a comic parody of the theme, two female keepers of the kitchen tell Dionysus, who had knocked on Pluto's door across the lake, how Heracles had drawn his sword upon *them*. These formidable females are, it seems, comic doublets of the Gorgons whom Dionysus and Xanthias might have expected to meet with other monsters immediately after crossing lake Acheron (*Frogs* 143f., cf. 278ff.), though actually they reside within Pluto's palace, as Aeneas tells us at 472–8, in the company of other snake-like creatures of torture and the two females themselves.³⁸

The function performed in different versions by Meleager's ghost or Hermes, Vergil reassigns unequivocally to the Sibyl. At *Aen.* 6.290–4 she admonishes Aeneas for attempting to use his sword against not only Gorgons but Harpies and other bodiless shapes as well. By reassigning this role to Aeneas' Underworld guide and by simultaneously transferring the scene forward from the far side of the infernal water, where Aristophanes and, as I have argued, Bacchylides and Apollodorus both locate it, to a point just inside the entrance to Hades, Vergil heightens emotions at the very beginning of the Underworld journey as Aeneas reacts from sheer fright at the terror inspired by the monstrous shapes living there. To complete his reworking

³⁷ C. W. Marshall, 'The So-called False Digamma in Bacchylides *Ode* 5.75', *Mnemosyne* 47 (1994) 373–5 rightly, it seems to me, understands *ίόν* with a digamma here as meaning 'poison', put as metonymy for an arrow Heracles has dipped in the poison of the Hydra slain in an earlier labour. On Heracles' bow as a dubious emblem, see F. M. Dunn, 'Ends and Means in Euripides', in D. H. Roberts *et al.* (eds.), *Classical Closure* (Princeton 1997) 96–8.

³⁸ The correspondence between both sets of females was first observed, later accepted by Dover (n. 11) 263, in my article (n. 33) 252 n. 22, where at the time it escaped my notice that they also both occupy the same residence. This correspondence extends the comparisons with the Gorgon-motif made by C. G. Brown in 'Empousa, Dionysus and the Mysteries: Aristophanes, *Frogs* 285 ff.', *CQ* 41 (1991) 41–50.

of the whole episode Vergil also radically rearranges the topography of the Underworld as regards both the location of Pluto's house within it and the dwelling of the monsters.

At *Aen.* 6.106 Aeneas speaks of the 'gate of the infernal king' denoting the entrance to the lower world, called at 127 the 'gate of Dis'. The Sibyl is then asked by Aeneas to open this sacred gate ('*sacra ostia pandas*', 109), which she does through ritual, though conceivably Hecate opens it physically from inside the Underworld after Aeneas in the presence of the Sibyl, who is her priestess, invokes her (35, 118f., 247). Thus Hecate is another deity acting as door-keeper.³⁹ The gate, incidentally, appears to be a cave that is 'guarded' (*tuta*, 238) in the upperworld by the darkness of the Avernian lake within Hecate's grove, though, as I understand the scene, it is marked by the Golden Bough growing beside it.⁴⁰ At any rate, at 258 the chthonic goddess Hecate approaches the cave with her infernal hounds (257) from within the netherworld (*advantante dea*), as the ground quakes (256). The imagery of the gate and the passageway of the cave beside *lacus Avernus* are intricately bound together. Aeneas and the Sibyl find themselves in the great beyond once they have passed through the '*antrum apertum*' (262) – a cave that 'opened', surely, from somewhere within, rather than already 'open', even if it is said to gape wide open at its entrance-way (*vasto immanis hiatus*, 237), and even if, at 127, Death's gate is also said metaphorically to lie ever open (*noctes atque dies patet*).

As Vergil arranges his text, the 'gate of Dis' (*ianua Ditis*) at 127, the 'jaws of pungent Avernus' (*fauces grave olentis Averni*) at 201, the 'black jaws' (*atris faucibus*) at 240–1, and the 'cave that opened' (*antro ... aperto*) at 262 are all synonyms arranged paratactically to denote the same passageway, namely: the cavernous opening or gate or jaws or throat of Dis imagined as a vertical fissure in the ground extending from the upper reaches of the cave entered by Aeneas down into the lower realm, where, changing the imagery, Vergil equates Orcus' jaws at their lower reaches with a door to the forecourt of his infernal palace (*vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci*, 273).⁴¹ Aeneas and the Sibyl enter and cross to a facing doorway (*adverso in limine*, 279) leading to a peristyle-court (*in medio*, 282) and then an outer doorway (*in foribus*, 286) marking the residence of the Gorgons whom Aeneas vainly tried to cleave. Ghastly monsters of the kind that Heracles meets on the far shore of the infernal lake or still deeper within the underworld in Pluto's palace,⁴² and others that are not traditional

³⁹ Since Hecate holds no keys she is not quite κληδοῦχος, for which title see at nn. 15 and 22 above. Accordingly in my 'Vergil. *Aeneid* 6: The Bough by Hades' Gate' in R. M. Wilhelm and H. Jones (eds.), *The Two Worlds of the Poet: New Perspectives on Vergil* (Detroit 1992) 167 I have referred to Hecate in this passage, after Eitrem, as ὄρηξιπύλη (*PGM.* 4.2751) and προθυραία (Procl. *Hymn* 6.2.14, cf. *PGM.* 4.2719, κλυθι διαξεύζασα πύλας ἄλυτος ἀδάμαντος).

⁴⁰ For more on this interpretation, see my article (n. 39) 167–78.

⁴¹ With this vertical fissure cf. also *Georg.* 4.467 and *Aen.* 7.570. On the various Vergilian passages as synonyms and on the layout of the house, see, respectively my article (n. 39) 174 and E. Wistrand, 'Virgil's Palaces in the *Aeneid*', *Klio* 38 (1960) 146–54.

⁴² For instances see those mentioned in or at nn. 13 and 38 above.

monsters of Hell,⁴³ are all housed by Vergil between the first doorway of the forecourt and the outer doors of Pluto's house itself now located in the antechamber, as it were, of the Underworld just inside Pluto's gate separating the land of the living from the world of the dead. Aeneas and the Sibyl pass, as they must, through the house here, peristyle and all, before they embark on the path that leads to the water and the whole kingdom of the dead beyond. And instead of arriving at the God of Death's house beyond the infernal waters, as do Dionysus and Xanthias in the *Frogs* and Heracles in the version summarized by Apollodorus, they come to the 'walls of Dis' (*Ditis ... moenia*, *Aen.* 6.541, cf. 630 f.) denoting the battlements of a whole city of Joy lying beyond the Mourning Fields and the division of the ways.

In sum, Vergil has once again displaced forward Aeneas' catabatic experience, with the obvious effect here of not merely heightening the horrors he faces at the very beginning of his descent but also putting space between the beginning of the Underworld journey and the near shore of the infernal bank, where Aeneas undergoes the challenge transferred from Aeacus to Charon as the ultimate test of his fitness to go further. Indeed, the poet seems for the purpose of his own grand design to have made a point of consistently putting Aeneas through more traditional catabatic experiences earlier within his Underworld journey than his prototypes Heracles, Dionysus, or Orpheus. The sense of spacial dimension is thereby increased in Aeneas' infernal journey through Vergil's re-arranged Underworld as exploit after exploit is built up before the Styx is crossed by this new catabatic Hero of Fate, who goes on to experience beyond the waters a whole series of encounters and sights, which culminate in the futuristic vision of heroes bordering on the sunlit plains of Elysium.⁴⁴

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⁴³ E.g. the Harpies, coupled by Vergil with Gorgons, *Gorgones Harpyiaequae*, at *Aen.* 6.289. The comment by R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus* (Oxford 1977) 122 that they are death-spirits in Hom. *Od.* 20.77–8 explains their nature but not their location in Pluto's infernal palace. H. W. Stubbs, 'Vergil's Harpies: A Study in *Aeneid* III', *Vergilius* 44 (1998) 3–12 more helpfully notes that they have been relocated by Vergil's inventiveness from one underground cavernous location to another. No longer inhabitants of the cave beneath Mount Dicte in Crete, whither according to Apollonius they had fled (*Argon.* 2.424) from the Strophades Islands (cf. *Aen.* 3.209–11) after being chased to these islands (*Argon.* 2.223–34), they were transported by Vergil from beneath that cave to beneath the cave leading to the netherworld at *lacus Avernus* in Italy.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to both of the journal's referees for their helpful observations, in particular to Colin Austin for his detailed comments. For support of my research I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.