

Virgil, Shakespeare, and Romance

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It is not often enough recognised that Jonson's well-known words from the First Folio elegy on Shakespeare—'Though thou had'st small Latin and less Greek'—commonly taken as a slyly malicious comment on a man who was a friend but also a rival, actually lead into a compliment: Jonson says that it is not hard to find classical comparisons for either Shakespeare's tragedies or his comedies among the best of 'insolent Greece or haughty Rome'. Nonetheless, no one would dispute that by the standards of Jonson, educated at Westminster School, able to footnote the classical references in his own works from all the latest editions and commentaries, Shakespeare's knowledge of classical literature in the original was not outstanding. The hard line still seems to be that of J.K. Thomson, who concedes that Shakespeare knew Erasmus's *Colloquies*, Seneca's plays, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the original, but not much else.¹ As far as Virgil is concerned, there was until comparatively recently little interest in relations between his texts and Shakespeare's, although this situation has now changed considerably. T.H. Baldwin in *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Less Greeke* believed that he had a 'firm and lasting knowledge' of at least *Aeneid* 1, 2, 4, and 6, since this was 'the minimum of Virgil for polite society'.² But the major studies of Shakespeare's sources, by Muir and Bullough,³ do not reflect this 'firm and lasting knowledge', whether in translation or not. In Bullough, it is the other Virgil, Polydore, Henry VIIIth's historian, who emerges as a more important source for Shakespeare than the author of the *Aeneid*. John Pitcher, in an article that makes a strong case for a Virgilian presence in *The Tempest*, considers that Bullough's neglect of the *Aeneid* in the short term will probably ensure that it remains 'peripheral' to any reading of the play.⁴

On the other hand, concepts of literary influence and of what

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constitutes source-texts have recently undergone much revision; critics such as Reuben Brower, Gary Schmidgall, Barbara Bono and Donna B. Hamilton⁵ have written at length of relations between Shakespeare's texts and those of classical authors, particularly Virgil, without finding it necessary to spend much time conjecturing the extent of Shakespeare's familiarity with them in the original languages. Brower, for example, writes of Virgil's description of the death of Priam in *Aeneid* 2 as 'the most famous of his war scenes, one that made a vivid impression on Shakespeare', and asserts that 'many Elizabethan writers knew something of Seneca...but many more like Shakespeare must have known Virgil even better, an example of the heroic style they could not have missed.'⁶ Schmidgall, in a study that acknowledges the influence of Brower, finds that 'the *Aeneid* figures more powerfully in the background of *The Tempest* than we have hitherto imagined.' For him it is the temperamental and ideological parallels he traces between Virgil and Shakespeare, both of whom 'respected the resident power structure and were convinced of the efficacy of their ruling monarchs',⁷ which constitute this presence, and they do not require the reinforcement of close textual connections such as Shakespeare could have acquired only from knowledge of Virgil in Latin and at first hand. Bono, aware of the need for 'a more precise lexicon of literary imitation and influence, one that can mediate between narrowly defined source studies and sweeping claims about the patterns and directions of culture', found it in the notion of transvaluation; this she defines as 'an artistic act of historical self-consciousness that at once acknowledges the perceived values of the antecedent text and transforms them to serve the uses of the present.'⁸ In this sense, while recognising the primacy of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (in North's translation) as the source of *Antony and Cleopatra*, she would regard *Antony and Cleopatra* as a transvaluation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Her learned and stimulating book contains no explicit discussion of the nature of Shakespeare's knowledge of Virgil's text, although it is everywhere assumed in some form; Shakespeare is said more than once to be 'preoccupied' with the *Aeneid*. Hamilton is content to assert that for Shakespeare, Virgil was 'the poet he had confronted and rewritten almost obsessively throughout his career', and that his 'investment in Virgil's text is so great as to constitute a formal and rigorous rhetorical imitation of the major narrative kernels of *Aeneid* 1–6'⁹ without raising at all the question of his knowledge of Latin.

There is undeniably a tremendous excitement in the exploration of transcultural relations of whatever nature between the major texts of great writers; but this is notably enhanced when it is possible to argue for precise and specific connections. Although I do not accept Hamilton's account of the play as a 'formal imitation of the first six books of the *Aeneid*, both in its larger patterns of theme and structure and its smaller details of vocabulary and syntax',¹⁰ I hope to show that there are close relations between Virgil's *Aeneid* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* of several different kinds; and that whereas one can discern something of a network of Virgilian motifs linking plays from different points of Shakespeare's career, Virgilian influence culminates in *The Tempest*, where the presence of the prior text is felt in a completely different way from anything in the other plays. I have no wish to suggest that the *Aeneid* constituted Shakespeare's sole or necessarily prime classical source for the play, and I am much persuaded by Jonathan Bate's reading of it,¹¹ which would assign this role to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, undeniably a more important classical source for Shakespeare overall; my emphasis is rather on the place of the *Aeneid* in *The Tempest* in relation to the series of other connections I wish to trace. Shakespeare probably knew the sixteenth-century translations of the *Aeneid* by Surrey, Stanihurst, Phaer and Twyne,¹² but he also knew at least parts of the poem in Latin, and knew them well; and there were certain Virgilian motifs which captured his imagination at an early stage and recurred in his work till the very last. From the viewpoint of a study of the romances, particularly *Pericles*, and *The Tempest*, the most important of these is death by drowning.

It is in *Richard III*, not otherwise a conspicuously classical play,¹³ that this motif first occurs, in a section stylistically rather separate from the rest of the play, the scene in which the imprisoned Clarence recounts to his keeper his guilt-stricken dream of being accidentally pushed overboard by his brother Gloucester:

O Lord! methought what pain it was to drown,
 What dreadful noise of waters in my ears,
 What sights of ugly death within my eyes.
 Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks,
 Ten thousand men that fishes gnawed upon,
 Wedges of gold, great owches, heaps of pearl,
 Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,

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All scattered in the bottom of the sea.
Some lay in dead men's skulls; and in those holes
Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept—
As 'twere in scorn of eyes—reflecting gems,
Which wooed the slimy bottom of the deep,
And mocked the dead bones which lay scattered by.
(I.iv.20–33)¹⁴

At the keeper's prompting, Clarence continues his account with a description of his long drawn out dying struggle for breath, followed by a visit to the underworld:

I passed, methought, the melancholy flood,
With that sour ferryman the poets write of,
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
The first that there did greet my stranger soul
Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,
Who cried aloud, 'What scourge for perjury
Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?'
And so he vanished. Then came wand'ring by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair,
Dabbled in blood, and he shrieked out aloud
'Clarence is come: false, fleeting, perjur'd Clarence,
Seize on him, furies! Take him into torment.'
(I.iv.45–57)

Although there is much in these lines that is not Virgilian, such as the howling fiends, and the strange vision of skulls with gem-studded eye-sockets, the passage has clear affinities with Virgil's account of Palinurus the helmsman falling into the sea (*Aeneid* 5.834–61), and Aeneas's subsequent meeting with his unburied ghost in the underworld in Book 6. Palinurus is standing on the 'high poop deck'¹⁵ (*puppique...in alta*) when the God of sleep sits down by him in disguise and flings him, struggling, overboard (*cumque gubernaclo liquidas proiecit in undas | praecipitem, Aeneid* 5.841, 859–60). The location, the god's insidious approach, the reluctance of the doomed man to let go, all these details find a place in Clarence's narrative, together with Palinurus's account of his three days and nights tossed on the waves before he finds the relief of death. So too

do a number of others from *Aeneid* 6. Virgil's description of the rivers of Hades, and of Aeneas's meeting with Charon (in Virgil *portitor horrendus* or *navita tristis*, in Shakespeare 'that sour ferryman') on the banks of Cocytus seem to have gripped Shakespeare's imagination; perhaps the whirlpool that empties itself into Cocytus does not find a direct parallel, but the evocative sound-qualities of the language (*turbidus hic caeno vastaque voragine gurges | aestuat atque omnem Cocyto eructat harenam*, 'Thick with mud, | A whirlpool out of a vast abyss | boils up and belches all the silt it carries | Into Cocytus', *Aeneid* 6.296–7) seem echoed in Clarence's lines on his dream of dying:

...often did I strive
 To yield the ghost, but still the envious flood
 Stopp'd in my soul, and would not let it forth
 To find the empty, vast, and wand'ring air,
 But smothered it within my panting bulk,
 Who almost burst to belch it in the sea.
 (I.iv.37–41)

The same lines seem to have lingered in Shakespeare's memory when he came to write *The Tempest*. Clarence's dream also recalls more directly the crowd of shades (*inops inhumataque turba*) streaming to the river banks, and, though the mood is different, the vengeful ghosts of Warwick and of Prince Edward are reworked in the uncomfortable encounter between Aeneas and the plaintive Palinurus begging for burial.

I have dwelt at some length on this episode from the *Aeneid*, to suggest something of the imaginative appeal it seems to have held for Shakespeare. Emrys Jones¹⁶ considers that Shakespeare's borrowing in *Richard III* may well have been unconscious, but in view of the way in which the material is to recur in *The Tempest* this seems to me to be unlikely, though this is not of course to make any assumptions about his intentions, or to imply that an Elizabethan audience would have been expected to recognise the allusion. It is not impossible that Clarence's dream may have come from Virgil via *The Mirror for Magistrates*, which includes in its Induction a vision of hell directly translated from *Aeneid* 6.245–50,¹⁷ though the verbal connections are such as to suggest that Shakespeare was clearly acquainted with Virgil's Latin. The richly poetic texture of Clarence's dream relates to the resonance with which

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Shakespeare regularly invests stories of shipwreck and storms at sea throughout his dramatic career, from *The Comedy of Errors*, with its Plautine story of Mediterranean sea-wandering and shipwreck, to *The Tempest*. As with *The Comedy of Errors* (and with *Twelfth Night* and *Pericles*) the marine narratives derive more directly from other sources; but I want to suggest that the shadow of what was to the Elizabethans the most famous sea-wanderer of all, Aeneas, is behind them all, and that it assumes more shape and definition in Shakespeare's great romance, *The Tempest*, which has also been seen as a kind of reduced epic.¹⁸ Here it links up with two other Virgilian themes which also pervade Shakespeare's plays, the fall of Troy, and the love of Dido and Aeneas. But before arriving at *The Tempest* I too wish to make a journey, via two other plays concerned with wandering, sea-voyages, and the finding of brides in distant lands, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*.

The place of *Pericles* within an account of Shakespeare's relations to Virgil is, admittedly, uncertain; but it gains some credibility if seen in the light of a general network of connections. Its source, the Greek romance *Apollonius of Tyre*, is enough to explain its Mediterranean geography and its use of Dido's birthplace for its hero. In such a story, sufferings at sea and recountings of misfortunes are almost inevitable. Yet there are lines in the play that may seem to have more specific resonance. When Pericles, having sailed from Tyre to avoid an angry king who wishes to murder him, arrives in famine-stricken Tarsus, he greets the governor with words that distantly recall the accents of Aeneas's tale of misfortune:

We have heard your miseries as far as Tyre,
And seen the desolation of your streets.
(I.iv.88–9)

Hounded from Tarsus, he is shipwrecked off the coast of North Africa:

Alas the seas hath cast me on the rocks,
Wash'd me from shore to shore
(II.i.5–6)

Attempting to return to Tyre, he is caught in a storm at sea, and his ship blown off course; he begs Neptune, then Aeolus, to calm the tempest:

The god of this great vast, rebuke these surges,
Which wash both heaven and hell; and thou that hast
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
Having call'd them from the deep.

(III.i.1–4)

During the storm his wife dies in childbirth, and her body, 'scarcely coffin'd', is abandoned at sea. Finally, after long years of suffering, Pericles is reunited with his wife, miraculously recovered from death, at the temple in Ephesus; he cannot believe his good fortune:

...No more. You gods, your present kindness
Makes my past miseries sports.

(V.iii.40–1)

None of these passages constitutes anything approaching a direct borrowing or parallel, yet the misfortunes of the storm-buffed Pericles are strangely adumbrated in the closing lines of Aeneas's tale to Dido, at the end of *Aeneid* 3:

...*hic pelagi tot tempestatibus actus*
...
hic labor extremus, longarum haec meta viarum,
hinc me digressum vestris deus appulit oris.

(708, 714–5)

For after seas had buffeted me so often | ...here was my final
sorrow, here the goal | Of all my seafaring. When after this | I
put to sea, god drove me to your shores.

Pericles, fragmented and unsatisfactory though its textual condition is, bears closely upon *The Tempest*. An intervening stage between the two plays, however, is supplied in the second of Shakespeare's late plays, *Cymbeline*; its relation to the *Aeneid* is more oblique, but it does develop a Virgilian theme less significant in *Pericles* but important for *The Tempest*, the founding of a dynasty. *Cymbeline* was in fact the Romano-British king Cunobellus, who had been brought up in the household of Augustus Caesar and ruled Southern England at the time of the

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birth of Christ. The main action of the play concerns the king's loss and regaining of his heirs. Some aspects of it may have held a topical significance for the Jacobeans, particularly if the play can be dated around 1610, since in this year King James's son, the popular Prince Henry, was invested as Prince of Wales.¹⁹ The Welsh location in which the King's two sons are secreted, the repeated references to Milford Haven (a symbolic location for the Tudor dynasty, since it was here that Henry Richmond landed when he came to dethrone Richard III), and the very structure of the king's family (two sons and a daughter, like James's own) may have operated in combination to create this topicality. At the same time, there are indications of connections with the dynasty whose founding Virgil celebrates in his poem. A minor one may be the name Posthumus, husband to Imogen, Cymbeline's daughter, which, according to Holinshed,²⁰ one of Shakespeare's sources for the play, was the name of the son of Aeneas and Lavinia, and the grandfather of Brute (or Brutus), legendary founder of Britain. Another may be the likeness between Cymbeline's sons, brought up motherless in the wilds of Wales, and Romulus and Remus, especially perhaps in the light of their connection in *Cymbeline* with the prophecy by a soothsayer of peace for Britain:

The lofty cedar, royal Cymbeline,
Personates thee, and thy lopp'd branches point
Thy two sons forth, who . . .
For many years thought dead, are now reviv'd
To the majestic cedar join'd, whose issue
Promises Britain peace and plenty.

(V.iii.455–60)

The play ends with a pact between Rome and Britain; the soothsayer announces an omen foretelling a divinely ordained reign of peace and plenty, in short, though the words are not used, of a golden age. One is put in mind of Jupiter's prophecy to Venus in *Aeneid* 1.257–97, telling of Aeneas's successors in Italy, and the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus:

*his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:
imperium sine fine dedi.*

For these I set no limits, world or time,
But make the gift of empire without end. (1.278–9)

At the time *Cymbeline* was written Golden Age imagery was regularly used to glorify the reign of James I, particularly by Jonson, who more than once draws parallels between his ruler's own age and that of Augustus, even honouring the monarch in a masque of 1615 entitled *The Golden Age Restored*. In the City triumph of 1604 a figure in one of the arches erected for the occasion carries the motto *redeunt Saturnia regna* (*Ecl.* 4.6), and Jonson explained the allusion thus: 'Out of *Virgil*, to shew that now those golden times were returned againe, wherein *Peace* was with us so advanced, *Rest* received, *Libertie* restored, *Safetie* assured, and all *Blessednesse* appearing in every of these vertues her particular triumph over her opposite evill.'²¹ The Augustan references in *Cymbeline* are thus very much part of current royalist iconography, but this need not detract from their significance in relation to the sequence of allusion in Shakespeare's late plays.²²

In *The Tempest*, written soon after *Cymbeline*, various strands of Virgilian allusion come together in a text that exemplifies Shakespeare's most creative response to the *Aeneid*. The play was performed at court in November 1611, and again in 1612/3 as part of the festivities preceding the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine. These facts have encouraged speculations as to whether it was actually written, or alternatively, by the addition of the marriage masque, adapted, to suit royal purposes,²³ but the issue has never been resolved. Even if the play was in no way designed to compliment the royal house, it has strong dynastic themes which link it with the *Aeneid*, and of course it is very much a providential tale of suffering and destiny. Other such narratives of adventure are nearer to the surface of the play, and, for a contemporary audience, were no doubt more compelling. It is very clearly based on a group of pamphlets describing a large colonising expedition to Virginia in 1609 which tell of a storm at sea, a shipwreck, and the lucky survival of all from the wrecked vessel on the 'dangerous and dreaded Iland... Bermuda',²⁴ which turned out providentially replete with fresh water and livestock. But not only does the *Aeneid*, particularly Book 1, have a closer general correspondence with the way the story and themes of the play are shaped than the Bermuda pamphlets, there are also specific references to, and even borrowings from, Virgil's text such as to justify the phrase 'pervasive influence'.²⁵

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I want to suggest that the relation between Virgil's text and Shakespeare's may be observed in four areas, constituting a unique instance of this particular intertextual pairing: in the general pattern of events, in emotional tone, in specific references, and in an interconnected series of references to, and parallels between, the play and the first book of Virgil's poem. The pattern is partly one of geography but also one of the shaping of events. As John Pitcher has said, 'Among critics, the feeling seems to be that, on a Mediterranean sea route between Africa and Italy, it would be difficult not to bump into the story of how the Trojans came home to build their new city, and stopped off at nearly every island on the way.'²⁶ This may be so, but Shakespeare ensures that the connection is integral and not fortuitous. Prospero's journey, from Milan, to the island, and back again to Milan, is intersected by that of the courtiers, who have sailed to Tunis for a wedding, and been shipwrecked on the island on their return to Italy. In II.i, the scene which introduces the courtiers, attention is specifically drawn to the significance of Tunis as the scene for a wedding. The courtiers banter amongst themselves, the earnest efforts of old Gonzalo to make the best of their situation undermined by the cynicism of Sebastian and Antonio:

Gonzalo: Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when
we put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of the King's
fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis.

Sebastian: 'Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in
our return.

Adrian: Tunis was never grac'd before with such a paragon to
their queen.

Gonzalo: Not since widow Dido's time.

Antonio: Widow? a pox o'that. How came that widow in?
Widow Dido!

Sebastian: What if he had said widower Aeneas too? Good
Lord, how you take it.

Adrian: Widow Dido, said you? You make me study of that.
She was of Carthage, not of Tunis.

Gonzalo: This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.

Adrian: Carthage?

Gonzalo: I assure you, Carthage. (II.i.73–90)

To emphasize the point, the substance of the conversation is briefly reprised, a moment later, for Alonso's benefit. Critics have often puzzled over this snippet, at once so apparently pointed and yet so irrelevant, for Claribel and her spouse are never to appear;²⁷ but Antonio's cynical response to the legend suggests the ambiguity of the relation between past and present, and in relation to other references yet to be mentioned reflects how the one revises and refigures the other. The parallels in the emotional patterning of the two stories are perhaps closer. Shakespeare's shipwrecked travellers, first Prospero, and then Alonso, look back on a past of loss; Prospero contemplates his betrayal at the hands of his closest kin—'I pray thee mark me, that a brother should be | So perfidious' (I.ii.67–8)—and Alonso mourns that he has lost his son and heir and that he will never see his daughter again. But the lives of both men are shaped in unexpected ways by the action of destiny; 'By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune, | (Now my dear lady)' (I.ii.178–9) has delivered Prospero's enemies to the shore of his island, and has intervened in Alonso's life to teach him and his allies a lesson, as Ariel points out:

You are three men of sin, whom Destiny,—
That hath to instrument this lower world
And what is in't,—the never surfeited sea
Hath caus'd to belch up you; and on this island
Where man doth not inhabit.

(III.iii.53–7)

This intervention is necessary, not only in the interests of moral reform but also, more importantly, of dynastic alliance; Ferdinand, Alonso's son and heir to the kingdom of Naples, would never have met Miranda, Prospero's daughter and rightful heir to the throne of Milan, without the shipwreck. Gonzalo is on hand at the play's conclusion to make this point:

Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue
Should become kings of Naples? O rejoice
Beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis
And Ferdinand her brother found a wife

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Where he himself was lost.
(V.i.207–13)

Like Aeneas, Ferdinand must travel and know sorrow before he can find his destined bride; but Claribel, a comic Dido, gets a husband in Tunis and lives happily ever after.

The emotional tone of the *Aeneid* enriches *The Tempest*. Books 1, 2 and 6 of the poem especially are narratives of suffering and grief; *dolor* is the keynote, sounded first in Aeneas's words of consolation to his travel-weary companions when they land on the shore of North Africa:

*O socii (neque enim ignari sumus ante malorum)
o passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem.*

...

*...revocate animos maestumque timorem
mittite; forsán et haec olim meminisse iuvabit.*

Friends and companions, | Have we not known hard hours
before this? | my men, who have endured still greater
dangers, | god will grant us an end to these as well... now
call back | Your courage, and have done with fear and sor-
row. Some day, perhaps, remembering even this | will be a
pleasure. (1.198–9, 202–3)

This tone is echoed in the *lacrimae rerum* speech by Aeneas to Achates in the temple of Juno at Carthage:

*'quis iam locus', inquit, 'Achate,
quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?'*

'What spot on earth,' | he said, 'what region of the earth,
Achates, | Is not full of the story of our sorrow?' (1.459–60)

Aeneas learns to leave behind the past with its familiar attachments; according to Otis, he can only do this after meeting his father Anchises in the underworld, hearing his prophecy and seeing his vision of Romans of the future.²⁹ Prospero too has much to leave behind, in particular the magic he has cultivated through study and self-discipline, for which he

lost his dukedom. Because he was ‘transported | And rapt in secret studies’ (I.ii.76–7) he lost his hold on temporal power; on the island he has acquired supernatural abilities, to command the elements and even open up graves (V.i). But at the end of the play he must give up this power, and consign it to the past: ‘This rough magic | I here abjure’ (V.i.50–1). Now he must look towards an uncertain future, retirement in Milan, where ‘every third thought shall be my grave’ (V.i.311). His vision of the world, like Aeneas’s, is shot through with sadness; ‘our revels now are ended’ rivals *sunt lacrimae rerum* in its familiarity.

The relations between the *Aeneid* and *The Tempest* so far suggested may perhaps be described as impressionistic, more perceptible to intuitive sense than to rational apprehension. But there are relations of a different kind, pointed out as much by critics who wish to minimise the Virgilian connection as by those who wish to maximise it. The first is the harpy reference in III.iii. At this point, Alonso and his party, having wandered the island to no avail, are tired and disconsolate; to their amazement they are suddenly presented by spirits with a magical banquet, but, as they prepare to eat, there is the sound of thunder and lightning, Ariel appears, as one of the play’s unusually full stage directions³⁰ has it, ‘like a Harpy’ and ‘claps his wings upon the table’, which vanishes. He addresses himself to Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian:

You are three men of sin, whom Destiny,—
That hath to instrument this lower world
And what is in’t,—the never surfeited sea
Hath caus’d to belch up you.

(III.iii.53–6)

The scene derives from *Aeneid* 3.225 ff., where Aeneas and his men shelter from a storm at sea on the Ionian Strophades, islands inhabited by the harpies and their leader Celaeno. After they have landed they find, not exactly a magical banquet, but apparently a godsend in the shape of herds of cattle and goats pastured, unattended, in the fields. As they prepare, delighted, for a feast, harpies descend, *horrifico lapsu* (‘grotesquely whirring down’), and foul the meat as they clap their wings with deafening beat (*magnis quatiunt clangoribus alas*), which perhaps Shakespeare echoed in the stage direction for Ariel to ‘clap his wings’.

Aeneas and his company attack the birds but cannot harm them: *Sed*

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neque vim plumis ullam nec vulnera tergo | accipiunt ('But they received no impact on their feathers, | Took on their backs no wounding cut') (3.242–3). Alonso and his fellows are equally unsuccessful, as Ariel's words make clear:

You fools! I and my fellows
Are ministers of Fate; the elements
Of whom your swords are temper'd, may as well
Wound the loud winds, or with bemock'd at stabs
Kill the still-closing waters, as diminish
One dowle that's in my plume: my fellow-ministers
Are like invulnerable. (III.iii.60–6)

Celaeno prophesies cryptically that the Trojans will never build their destined city until famine has reduced them to gnawing their own tables in desperation; this turns out to be a kind of riddling joke, in that when the Trojans make their first meal on Italian soil it is on platters made of wheat-cake, which they devour at the end of the meal: *Heus, etiam mensas consumimus?* inquit Iulus...*adludens* ('"Look, how we're devouring our tables even!" Iulus playfully said') (7.116–17).³¹ So too Ariel, when he informs Alonso that he has lost his son in the tempest, is not literally telling the truth, for Ferdinand will be 'found' in the play's final scene. Both episodes in play and poem have a mysterious, potentially ominous quality, and the travellers are smitten with horror. Aeneas and his company feel their blood run cold (*at sociis subita gelidus formidine sanguis | deriguit*, 3.259–60), and Anchises begs the gods to avert the threatened disaster; Alonso is struck with remorse for his crimes against Prospero, and plans to share his son's watery death: 'Therefore my son i'th'ooze is bedded; and | I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded, | And with him there lie mudded' (III.iii.99–101).

This brings us to the second of the more specific connections between the two works, that is, the motif of death by drowning, already discussed in relation to Clarence's dream in *Richard III*. The mystery and horror in the idea of the unburied corpse at the bottom of the sea attach in *The Tempest* to the figure of Ferdinand, the young prince and heir to the kingdom of Naples, whose father believes him dead. Alonso's speech in the harpies scene is echoed in the last scene; so keen is his remorse at what he believes to be the loss of both his heirs that he wishes 'myself

were mudded in that oozy bed | Where my son lies' (V.i.151–2). The choice of 'mudded' for the more usual 'buried' at this point (and at V.i.151) is striking. Shakespeare seems imaginatively fascinated with the ideas of mud, ooze and slime; and I have already suggested that Virgil's lines about the mud of Acheron from *Aeneid* 6.295 (*turbidus hic caeno...*) influenced his evocation of watery death in *Richard III*. Ferdinand for his part also thinks his father to be dead, but his vision of the body, on the sea-bed, expressed through Ariel's song, reverts to the jewel-studded corpse of *Richard III* and its Ovidian transformation—'Those are pearls that were his eyes' (I.ii.400). The idea of death at sea haunts the whole play. Gonzalo voices a general fear in his wish above all things to 'die a dry death' (I.i.67). Ariel, however, tells the three men of sin in III.iii. that Destiny has caused 'the never-surfeited sea...to belch up you', rather than swallowing them, as would be more natural. 'Belch' may recall Virgil's *eructat* (6.296), but the sea which gives life rather than death is not a Virgilian conception; the source here is more probably the Virginia pamphlets,³² where divine providence is credited with ensuring that none of the mariners perished. A further specific Virgilian reference, albeit a very minor one, comes in the lines spoken by Ceres in the masque scene to describe Iris: 'Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flowers | Diffusest honey-drops' (IV.i.78–9), which recall Virgil: *ergo Iris croceis per caelum roscida pinnis...devolat* (4.701 ff.) ('So humid Iris through bright heaven flew | On saffron-coloured wings'). Shakespeare may have drawn on Phaer's translation here: 'Dame rainbow... with safron wings of dropping shours'. But more interesting, perhaps, than the precise nature of the debt is the context of Virgil's lines, which describe how Iris descends to the body of the newly dead Dido to release her spirit by cutting a lock of her hair.³³

The acknowledgment of the existence of a range of miscellaneous and fragmented connections between *The Tempest* and the *Aeneid* may perhaps set the scene for a more extended comparison between the first book of the poem and the dramatic shape of the whole play. There is no intention to attempt to demonstrate that such a comparison was consciously made by Shakespeare, although this is not impossible; and such coincidences of structure and theme as exist may be seen to throw light on differences as well as similarities between the two works. Bono, who has observed an echo of Aeneas's tale to Dido in Prospero's retrospective narrative to Miranda in I.ii., though not the more extended parallels I

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wish to delineate, suggests one way of interpreting these differences: 'Shakespeare makes human the skeptical quest of the *Aeneid*.'³⁴

The parallels may be traced through four phases of action. The first takes in the openings of the two works. The *Aeneid* begins, after introductory lines in which Aeneas is described as an exile, *fato profugus*, with Juno causing Aeolus to raise a storm; it disperses Aeneas's fleet before Neptune manages to calm it. Aeneas lands on an island; he comforts his people, though at heart despairing. Venus, upset by the suffering of her son, appeals to her father Jupiter, who consoles her:

*Olli subridens hominum sator atque deorum
vultu, quo caelum tempestatesque serenat,
oscula libavit natae, dehinc talia fatur:
'parce metu, Cytherea.'*

He smiled at her, the father of gods and men,
With that serenity that calms the weather,
And lightly kissed his daughter; then he said:
'No need to be afraid, Cytherea.' (1.254–7)

In the early scenes of *The Tempest* all these events occur, but redistributed amongst different characters, and in a slightly different order. The play opens with a storm, apparently a natural one, which seems to destroy the ship in which Alonso and his company are travelling on their return from North Africa to Italy. In the second scene it turns out that the storm has been raised by Prospero. His daughter, Miranda, is concerned for the loss of life, but he assures her that none has occurred:

Be collected:
No more amazement: tell your piteous heart
There's no harm done. (I.ii.13–15)

All has been provided for by his magic powers:

... Wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort.
The direful spectacle of the wrack...
I have with such provision in mine Art
So safely ordered... (I.ii.24–5, 28–9)

The next scene shows the shipwrecked travellers newly landed on the island. Gonzalo attempts consolation:

Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,
So have we all, of joy; for our escape
Is much beyond our loss. (II.i.1–3)

The second phase of action is more concise. Next day, in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas and Achates go hunting. They encounter a young huntswoman, Venus in disguise. Aeneas instinctively recognises her divinity, though not her identity:

*o quam te memorem, virgo? namque haud tibi vultus
mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat; o, dea certe*

how | Shall I address you, girl? Your look's not mortal, | Nei-
ther has your accent a mortal ring. | O goddess, beyond doubt!
(1.327–8)

Venus replies modestly:

haud equidem tali me dignor honore

be sure I am not fit for any such devotion (1.335)

In *The Tempest* this encounter is reworked when Ferdinand, led to Prospero's cave by Ariel's magical song, first sees Miranda:

Most sure, the goddess
On whom these airs attend! ...
... my prime request
Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder!
If you be maid or no?

Miranda, like Venus, is self-deprecating in her reply:

No wonder, sir;
But certainly a maid.
(I.ii.424–5, 428–31)

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The disguised Venus goes on to tell her son the story of Dido's marriage and her founding of Carthage, questions him about his journey, and comforts him with news of the preservation of his ships:

*namque tibi reduces socios classemque relatam
nuntio et in tutum versis aquilonibus actam
. . . puppesque tuae pubesque tuorum
aut portum tenet aut pleno subit ostia velo.*
(1.390–1, 399–400)

Your friends are back. This is my news for you: | Your ships
were saved and brought to shore again | By winds shifting
north... | your ships and your ships' companies | Are either
in port or entering under sail.

This account of the supernatural preservation of the mariners and their fleet is reworked in *The Tempest*, partly in Prospero's account to Miranda in I.ii., and partly in the imaginative elaboration of the experience of returning from death given by the Boatswain near the end of the play (V.i.222–4, 229–39).

The third phase continues the reworking of the role of Venus in *The Tempest*. In the *Aeneid* she has many roles, as Jupiter's tearful daughter, as Aeneas's mother, teasing him with her disguise but also protecting him, and comforting him with the news that his ships have been preserved. At the end of Book 1 she intervenes crucially in his fortunes, disguising Cupid as Ascanius, and using him to win Dido's love for Aeneas (Dido, *infelix, pesti devota futurae*—luckless, already given over to ruin 1.712). In *The Tempest* classical goddesses appear on stage in the betrothal masque Prospero arranges for Ferdinand and Miranda; but, as in I.ii., Venus is an absent presence. Perhaps as a joke,³⁵ the familiar stride, which betrayed her to Aeneas (*vera incessu patuit dea*, 1.405) is now transferred to Juno:

Highest queen of state
Great Juno comes; I know her by her gait.
(IV.i.101–2)

The absence of Venus is specifically remarked upon; Ceres checks that

she and Cupid will not be in attendance, and is assured by Iris that they are on their way to Paphos:

here thought they to have done
Some wanton charm upon this man and maid,
Whose vows are, that no bed-right shall be paid
Till Hymen's torch be lighted; but in vain.
(IV.i.94-7)

Majestic Juno, in the *Aeneid* Venus's opponent goddess and enemy to Aeneas, is here the one to bless the lovers' union. It seems to be almost explicit that Venus's intervention is not required in Shakespeare's scheme of things. Ferdinand, the play's Aeneas, has no Dido to distract him from his destiny. If anything, his sister, the unseen Claribel, is a Dido figure, her destiny comically inverted. This Aeneas meets his Lavinia, only daughter to Prospero as Lavinia is to Latinus, early on, by divine guidance; she is, as he tells her, not the first lady he has wooed, but he has no doubt of the place she is to take in his life:

O, if a virgin
And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you
The Queen of Naples. (I.ii.450-2)

The form of his declaration may be significant; he does not so much promise to make her his wife as his dynastic partner, and although he does not at this stage know it, she will, as heir to the dukedom of Milan, bring him a dynasty to unite with his.³⁶

Aeneid 1 ends with feasting, and preparation for story-telling as Dido urges Aeneas to recount his adventures. *The Tempest* parallels this with Prospero's invitation to Alonso and the rest to his 'poor cell' where they will pass the night

With such discourse as, I not doubt, shall make it
Go quick away; the story of my life,
And the particular accidents gone by
Since I came to this isle. (V.i.303-6)

But whereas for Aeneas the past has still to be recounted and reworked

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before life can be renewed and the destined future come about, Prospero is released from his past and ready to sail for home. In this sense, Shakespeare's use of the *Aeneid* can be seen to reflect optimistically on the world of the play, as sustaining an order that operates more comprehensively and benevolently than that of Virgil's poem; though the play's epilogue, spoken by Prospero, with its appeal for applause—

...release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands;
Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill, or else my project fails,
Which was to please—

implies that this order may be only a fiction, sustained by the complicity of audience and actors.

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NOTES

1. J.A.K. Thomson, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1952) 154.
2. T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1944) 2, 496.
3. Kenneth Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (London, Methuen, 1977) and Geoffrey Bullough, *The Narrative and Dramatic sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966–75).
4. John Pitcher, 'A theatre of the future: The *Aeneid* and the *Tempest*', *Essays in Criticism* 34 (1984) 193–215.
5. Reuben Brower, *Hero and Saint. Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), Gary Schmidgall, *Shakespeare and the Courtly Aesthetic* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981), Barbara J. Bono, *Literary Transvaluation. From Vergilian Epic to Shakespearean Tragicomedy* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), and Donna B. Hamilton, *Vergil and 'The Tempest'* (Columbia, Ohio State University Press, 1990). I came across Hamilton's book only after the majority of work for this article had been done. Naturally I find that Hamilton and I make some of the same points; but since I cannot accept her premise that Shakespeare throughout his play was consciously imitating Virgil's poem to the extent that not only Prospero, but also Ferdinand, and 'nearly all the male characters in the play' (p. 26) are modelled on Aeneas, I find her conclusions about the nature of the relationship between the two texts unconvincing.
6. Brower, 89, 95–6.

7. Schmidgall, xviii, 74.
8. Bono, 1.
9. Hamilton, 134, x.
10. *Ibid.*, 4.
11. In his excellent *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993).
12. See Brower's useful discussion of Renaissance versions of Virgil, 103–13.
13. The sources for *Richard III* are mainly English chronicle histories, though Shakespeare may have used Seneca's *Hercules Furens*. See Bullough, 3, 221–40, and *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, Arden Shakespeare, (London, Methuen, 1981) pp. 73–97. Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977) 208, briefly draws attention to the Palinurus connection.
14. All Shakespeare plays are cited from the Arden editions.
15. The edition of Virgil cited is by R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969). The English translation of the *Aeneid* I have used is by Robert Fitzgerald (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1983).
16. Jones, 208.
17. The lines are as follows:

We passed on so far furth tyl we sawe
 Rude Acheron, a lothsome lake to tell
 That boyles and bubs up swelth as blacke as hell,
 Where grisly Charon at theyr fixed tide
 Stil ferries ghostes unto the farder side.
- See Bullough, 3, 233.
18. Schmidgall, xvii. Bate, *op. cit.*, 244, calls *The Tempest* a 'romance-style reworking of epic material', although he is generally rather sceptical about Virgilian readings of the play.
19. The editor of the Arden *Cymbeline*, J.M. Nosworthy, (London, Methuen, 1955), hedges his bets about the precise dating of the play, but inclines to 1608–9.
20. As cited in Bullough, 8, 38.
21. Ben Jonson, *The Works*, 11 vols, ed. C.H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935–52) vii, 100. For a discussion of Golden age imagery in Jacobean literature, see Schmidgall, 76–8.
22. Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge, CUP, 1983) also discusses Augustan references in this play, esp. in Ch. 7.
23. For discussions of this issue see editions of *The Tempest* by Frank Kermode, Arden Shakespeare (London, Methuen, 1954, 1962) xxii–iv, lxxi–lxxiv, and Stephen Orgel, Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, OUP, 1987) 44.
24. Bullough, 8, 274–99, gives extracts from these pamphlets. For quoted phrase see 280.
25. The phrase belongs to J.M. Nosworthy, whose article, 'The Narrative Sources of *The Tempest*', *RES* 24 (1948) 281–94, gives the first listing of Shakespeare's borrowings from the *Aeneid* for the play. Orgel mentions it in his useful brief discussion of the *Aeneid* in his edition of *The Tempest*, 88–92. See also Robert Wiltenburg, 'The 'Aeneid' in "The Tempest"', *Shakespeare Survey* 39 (1987) 159–68, who sees the *Aeneid* as 'the work to which Shakespeare is primarily responding, the story he is retelling' (159).

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26. Pitcher, 196.

27. For discussions of this passage, see esp. Pitcher, 201–2, Kermode, 46–7, Orgel, 40, and Wiltenburg, 162–3. Jan Kott, ‘The *Aeneid* and *The Tempest*’, *Arion* N.S. 3 (1975) 424. Kott in this article and also in ‘The *Tempest*, or Repetition’, *Mosaic* X (1976–7) 9–36, sets up an extremely elaborate set of parallels between the two texts, many of which seem to me fanciful and unconvincing.

28. Brower’s comment, *Hero and Saint*, 93, that the *Aeneid* is ‘a drama of fathers and sons’ suggests another connection with *The Tempest*.

29. Brooks Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilised Poetry* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963) 307.

30. On the stage directions, see Kermode, xi–xiii. The wording of these may not in fact be Shakespeare’s, but that of Ralph Crane, scrivener for the Kings’ Men.

31. See also Pitcher, 196, and Bate, 244, who mentions an alternative source for this scene in Sabinus’ commentary on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 13.

32. See Bullough, 8, 280, 298, 296.

33. Baldwin, 2, 480, discusses the lines and their origins.

34. Bono, 224.

35. Kermode, in his footnote to the passage, says the idea was commonplace in the period, and cites Erasmus, *Adagia* (II.481).

36. A further possible Virgilian allusion occurs in the masque scene, though to *Georgic* 2, rather than to the *Aeneid*. Ceres’ promise of the earth’s bounty in her blessing to Ferdinand and Miranda:

Earth’s increase, foison plenty,
Barns and garners never empty;
Vines with clust’ring bunches growing,
Plants with goodly burthen bowing

(IV.i.110–13)

recalls lines at the end of *Georgic* 2, especially ll. 516–18:

*nec requies, quin aut pomis exuberet annus
aut fetu pecorum aut Cerealis mergite culmi
proventuque oneret sulcos atque horrea vincat.*

No respite! still the year o’erflows with fruit, | Or young of kine, or
Ceres’ wheaten sheaf, | With crops the furrow loads, and bursts the
barns.

I am indebted for this reference to Jonathan Foster of the Virgil Society.