

University of Alabama in Huntsville

LOUIS

Honors Capstone Projects and Theses

Honors College

5-1-2003

The Aeneid and The Tempest: Reflections On Authority

Bradley Bain

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/honors-capstones>

Recommended Citation

Bain, Bradley, "The Aeneid and The Tempest: Reflections On Authority" (2003). *Honors Capstone Projects and Theses*. 30.

<https://louis.uah.edu/honors-capstones/30>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Capstone Projects and Theses by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.

The Aeneid and *The Tempest*:
Reflections on Authority

Bradley Bain
May 1, 2003

**Honors Senior Project
Approval**

Form 3 – Submit with completed thesis. All signatures must be obtained.

Name of candidate: Bradley Bain

Department: English

Degree: B.A.

Full title of project: The Aeneid and The Tempest: Reflections on Authority

Approved by:

John L. Meheere

Project Advisor

May 8, 2003

Date

David L. Huff

Department Chair

5/20/03

Date

John L. Meheere

Honors Program Director for Honors Council

May 8, 2003

Date

Abstract

The *Aeneid* has for centuries been considered one of the most panegyric works of art in history. The character of Aeneas portrays Caesar Augustus, and in several instances Virgil praises the newly established Principate in Rome. In Aeneas' actions in Book 12, however, Virgil also criticizes the method of Augustus' rise to power and reveals a doubt of the new regime's ability to provide the peace for which it boasts. Likewise, *The Tempest* discusses the political tensions of early seventeenth-century England through its representation of King James as the protagonist, Prospero. In Prospero's dialogue with the other characters and the play's conclusion, Shakespeare suggests to the king a more constitutional form of government than what the king currently maintained. This senior project illustrates Shakespeare's and Virgil's ability to participate in current political discourses through the use of a literary representation of the ruler.

Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks is given to Dr. John S. Mebane for his constant support through the completion of this project. His dedication to his students encouraged me to pursue the project, and finishing the project was only possible because of his advisement. I also wish to thank Dr. Richard Gerberding for his informative lectures and sources on the early Roman Principate and the *Aeneid*. Additionally, Betty Cole deserves thanks and recognition for her tireless efforts in making the Honors Program run smoothly.

Introduction

The role of the poet holds an important position of political influence throughout history, for he or she helps the ruler judge political situations by providing a literary representation of them. One such device, called the *speculum regis*, or "mirror of the king," allows the ruler to view images or types of his or her own rule, and in some cases an alternative method to that rule. Virgil employs this device exceptionally well in the *Aeneid*, where he both encourages and challenges the role of the early Principate in Rome. One can understand the poem as strictly a work of tribute to Augustus, but Virgil's treatment of absolute authority frustrates any such one-sided interpretation. He challenges the imperial ideology throughout the poem but particularly in Book 12 with its abrupt and poignant end. Centuries later, Shakespeare follows suit by complicating statements about authority in *The Tempest*. The *Aeneid* maintained a great deal of literary sway in the Renaissance, and some scholars such as Donna B. Hamilton have demonstrated the way *The Tempest* imitates the *Aeneid* in both language and plot. Though the extent Shakespeare imitates Virgil in his political influence is not easily determined, he essentially accomplishes the same objective. Some read *The Tempest* as supporting an absolutist or colonialist ideology, but such a reading seems to undervalue the complications of the final act, where Prospero relinquishes his power and regains a position of shared political responsibility. Like similar readings of the *Aeneid*, an absolutist interpretation of *The Tempest* oversimplifies Shakespeare's stance and underestimates the ability of the poet to influence those in power.

The examination will continue in three stages. First, we will observe Virgil's complicated reflections of the early Principate in Rome. Early in the poem, but culminating

in Book 6, Virgil begins to praise the imperialist ideology, in particular, the leader of the new imperial regime. By the final book, however, he complicates his view by his language and obvious comparison to Homer's tragic *Iliad*. In his final portrayal of the new Caesar, Virgil creates an ambivalent image of the Principate in the enigmatic and abrupt conclusion of Book 12, where Aeneas brutally kills Turnus when he begs for mercy.

Second, we will explore the role of *The Tempest* in the court of King James I and its encouragement to James to adopt a more constitutional form of monarchy. The final act reveals a poignant challenge to absolutism in the treatment of Miranda, Caliban and Ariel, and his own magic. We will explore Prospero's voluntary loss of power to regain a political title, and the implications that Shakespeare seems to make in reference to the political debate going on in early seventeenth-century England.

Last, we will review the extent that *The Tempest* alludes to or imitates the *Aeneid*. Among others, Donna B. Hamilton identifies justifiable connections between the play with its predecessor and proposes that the work imitates it in both language and content. We will consider these connections and further discuss the similarity of style and content in the two works' endings. Whereas Hamilton suggests that *The Tempest* is an imitation of the major "kernels" of the first six books of the *Aeneid*, I wish to point out a reworking of the *speculum regis* as it is used by Virgil and then Shakespeare. Other models, especially epics such as the *Faerie Queen* or *Orlando Furioso*, unabashedly praise the rulers of their time; however, these two works both challenge the leaders through the portrayal of their literary counterparts and their corresponding circumstances.

Virgil and the Imperial Ideology

Virgil entered the public sphere just as the age-old Senatorial power was being consolidated into the hands of the early Principate. He had witnessed Julius Caesar's triumphal entry into Rome, his assassination, and the consequent scramble for *imperium*, or military might, among the members of the second Triumvirate. He now found himself at the conclusion of nearly a century of bloodshed and civil war. This type of peace created an atmosphere conducive to poets and artists, and the new Emperor established a mechanism to create art that propagated a particular image of him, that is, through the use of patrons such as Maecenas. The *Aeneid* is generally considered a work of praise in honor of Augustus and one that justifies his actions and ideology. Nevertheless, through its imitation of Homeric images and characters, the *Aeneid* simultaneously challenges the imperial ideology and the character of Augustus.

Octavian donned the name Caesar Augustus and took the position of Princeps, or "first citizen," after his army finally conquered those of Marc Antony and Cleopatra in the famous battle of Actium in 31 B.C., a victory which most historians date as the dawn of the Roman Empire. Historian Colin Wells writes that contemporaries would have viewed Augustus in one of two ways: either he assumed his position in Rome out of "filial duty" to provide a necessary remedy for political divisions, or he seized the *imperium* out of an unadulterated lust for power. Nevertheless, as Wells puts it, "Most people did not care. Peace was everything" (30). By the time Augustus reached the Palatine, libations were already being poured out to his genius. To be sure, Octavian would have seemed a god, a redeemer, and a deliverer to those who had witnessed both the despotism of Caesar and the chaos of civil war.

One should note that Virgil and his contemporaries never saw the Republic in its prime. "There was a younger generation, sprung up since the victory of Actium," the Roman historian Tacitus explains, "and even many of the older men had been born during the civil wars. How few were left who had seen the Republic!" (*Annals* i.3). The poet was only a teenager when Julius Caesar governed Rome with an iron fist, completely disregarding the ancient customs and dignities of the Senate (Wells 12). Consequently, Augustus was faced with the unique problem of unifying an age-old idea with a new position of authority. Unlike the earlier dictator, the new Caesar carefully shrouded his power in language and metaphor that respected the Senate and the republican way of life. Producing an image of himself as Rome's redeemer without the tainted appearance of his uncle became a mission of political survival for Augustus.

The new Emperor quickly employed young poets to create a version of him through literary and architectural works. Perhaps the immediate past provided Virgil and his contemporaries with the thankfulness that emanates from the work of the Augustan Age, but no writer aided the ruler with "more zeal and sincerity in his plans; and no one has been more useful in communicating to his contemporaries . . . the sentiments that he wished to give them" (Anthony 8). In the *Aeneid*, we find virtues that are particularly Roman, such as piety to the gods and loyalty to the glory of future Rome. We find that the main character Aeneas exemplifies, specifically in the first six books, these positive qualities that a ruler should possess while mirroring the newly empowered Augustus. In Book 4, Aeneas dutifully prays to the gods and obeys their answer, even though it costs him his newfound life with Dido. Aeneas (and by extension, Augustus) does not make the same mistake that Antony makes by engaging himself with a foreign woman.

Augustus was faced with justifying his newly created power to a people who had lived under a republic for nearly three centuries. The epic eulogizes Augustus in many places, and more importantly, by using the rhetoric of ancient prophecy, the *Aeneid* justifies the reign of Augustus by looking to the past. For a people who valued tradition and history, as did the Romans, proper historical propaganda was vital for the success of the new regime. Virgil excelled among all others, especially in re-establishing Roman religion and imposing into it an image of Augustus. In Book 6, Anchises voices the prophecies of Augustus and Rome and furthermore establishes the idea of a dynasty starting with Caesar and culminating with Marcellus, Augustus' son who died before taking the throne (Virgil 170-173). In many ways, Book 6 exists solely for this mode of propaganda, where religious prophecy mixes with history to suggest that the gods ordained the current ideology of Roman politics:

Round imperial aims, religious observances, rural customs, round Italy and Rome, Vergil sets a halo of high association. The sanctions are more than historic. They are divine. So he welds together the historical and the mythological epic. The gods have cared for Rome from heroic times. The ages have been ordained to shape her destiny. Aeneas is the pattern of an emperor who shall be the father to his people . . . the Aeneadae. (Anthony 10)

Through his foretelling Anchises voices the quintessential imperial doctrine, as he loudly proclaims, "How can hesitation / Keep us from deeds to make our prowess greater?" (171). Virgil justifies this type of thinking by linking it to the minds of the gods and the ancient ways of the "heroic past."

Current scholarship reads portions of the *Aeneid* as propaganda, but unlike

previous generations, many scholars also respect the complicated tone in which Virgil presents his epic. Loosely called “anti-Augustan,” some views insist that the inherent sadness in the book rejects the victory of the glory of Rome when weighed against the costly duty of war on the human spirit (Tarrant 180). Because of this pessimistic argument, few scholars agree with R.E. Anthony in saying it fully supports Augustus and all of his philosophy (10). One view I find particularly palatable is spoken by R.J. Tarrant, who says, “A more adequate description of Virgil’s outlook might be ambivalence, but only if that term is understood neither as a gentler name for pessimism nor as a diluted compromise between strong positions, but as a powerful and continuing tension of opposites” (180).

The shocking and abrupt conclusion to Book 12 alone should hinder readers from viewing the epic as completely a work of praise. The final book requires reservation toward the reign of Augustus. First, the plot corresponds with the reality in Rome, but does not reflect Augustus as being the ideal diplomat. Second, the poem harkens back to the *Iliad* for its style and theme, casting a grim shadow over the final judgment of the new regime. These combined elements produce an effective criticism of Augustus and his ideology just as the prophecies of Book 6 justify the regime.

The negotiations between Aeneas and Latinus, the king of the Latins, correspond with Augustus’ claims to the Roman Senate in his early reign. In book 12, Aeneas makes a diplomatic agreement with Latinus after invading Italy. He is to fight the war hero Turnus and promises to retain the Latins’ traditions and laws, even if he wins the battle:

But if Victory grants us,

As I expect, and may the gods confirm it,

To win the battle, I will not have Italians
Be subject to the Trojans; I crave no kingdom,
Not for myself: let both, unbeaten nations,
On equal terms enter eternal concord.
I will establish gods and ceremonial;
My sire, Latinus, keep his arms, his sceptre. (342)

The agreement matches that of Augustus and the Senate after 31 B.C. where Augustus promises to restore the Roman Republic. Soon after his victorious entry into Rome, Augustus took the incredibly powerful position of *pontifex maximus*, or high priest. Augustus boasts in his *Res Gestae* of renovating 71 temples in Rome, a boast which mirrors Aeneas' pledge to "establish gods and ceremonial." Furthermore, just as Aeneas claims to allow Latinus retain his title and power, Augustus insisted that he craved only to re-establish the Republic and was careful to avoid overt worship in the city of Rome and refused the title of a king. As a sign of good faith toward the senate, he allowed two consuls to stay in office, and he relieved himself of the consulship. He nevertheless retained his influence over them.

But it is this overt piety on which Virgil capitalizes to create an ironic complication in his illustration of Augustus. Like the uncertainty underlying all the events in Rome after Actium, the question at the end of the *Aeneid* is particularly one of who holds the *imperium*. Although he makes a great show of deferring any regal position, Aeneas clearly holds all military power with no opposition after he kills Turnus, precisely as Augustus did after Actium. The final scene of the poem is a replay of the battle still fresh on the Roman mind when Virgil wrote it. K. W. Gransden elaborates on Latinus' position and its political

echoes in Rome:

Latinus shall keep his *imperium*: the Roman concept of a duumvirate is strongly felt here, but in the defeat of Latinus after the breaking of the treaty the implied reader may also have to consider the kind of necessity whereby in defiance of all the proclaimed republican principles which stand against allowing all power to flow into one man's hands, Augustus himself nevertheless after Actium assumed all power and established the Principate. (132)

Augustus' promise to the Senate is generally considered a formality; he in fact did possess the *imperium*. Though he promised to restore Republican virtue, and arguably did in some ways, he ultimately controlled the direction of the Senate and commanded all but two of the 29 legions in Rome's army. The poem's ending signifies the beginning of the Empire, and Aeneas' situation matches perfectly with that of Augustus.

Though Virgil does not overtly decry the governmental regime, he does criticize its victor and its mode of victory. Before the agreement is finalized in Book 12, the gods intervene and cause the Latins to attack Aeneas and his Trojan army. Aeneas finally confronts Turnus and kills him while Turnus begs for his body to be honored after he is dead. Virgil ends the long epic with this disturbing image. Virgil has Aeneas fight only out of necessity; however, the initiation of such a situation cannot rest on the Latins but on Aeneas, and thus the final book of the Aeneid is perhaps Virgil's clearest criticism of imperial ideology. Like that of Achilles in the *Iliad* who is almost universally criticized for his wrath and viciousness, Aeneas' final blow to Turnus cannot be looked upon as virtuous, not because he is impious, but because of the mode of his action and its inevitable result. Virgil builds the wrath motif in the comparison of Turnus and Aeneas.

Each leaving devastation, so Aeneas
And Turnus swept the battle, anger surging,
Surging in those great hearts, swollen to bursting,
Not knowing how to yield, all strength devoted
To death and wounds. (354-355)

The warriors are alike in their destructiveness, their anger, and their cruelty. One cannot distinguish the hero from the enemy. Aeneas, like Turnus, is dominated by his own irrational temperament, where he does not know “how to yield.” Does one need to guess Virgil’s intention in implying that “all strength devoted / To death and wounds” is a fruitless endeavor, especially when the two groups fighting are destined to be a united nation? The fact that the gods mislead the two opposing forces to keep them from compromising implies Virgil’s regret for the previous century of bloodshed. Though his grief is implicit, readers often overlook the criticism of the victor of the wars. In the end, compromise and peace are not the spoils of these agreements, but the irrefutable attainment of *imperium*. “Thus Aeneas in his hour victory will complete his prefiguration of Augustus at Actium and,” writes Gransden, “with whatever reluctance or show of reluctance, accept supreme power” (138).

Ironically, Virgil uses Homer’s *Iliad* to illustrate his view. The last six books of the *Aeneid* are themselves a work of imitation. Following the general problem that Homer presents in the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid* continues the former’s grace and eloquence along with its tone of pervading sadness. Whereas the *Iliad* illustrates the tragic and violent aftermath of the soldier, Book 12 of the *Aeneid* draws its sense of tragedy from events contemporary with its publication. Actium required Octavian to finally destroy his fellow Roman, though

he justified such an action by slandering Antony any way that he could.

Part of the sadness of Book 12 comes from the fact that Turnus is quite heroic, even to the point of begging his parents to allow him to trade “death for renown” in chances of saving his city. We see him angry that Aeneas’ army has encroached Italy, his land; violently, he attempts to protect it. Turnus’ literary model is of course the Trojan Hector, creating overtones of patriotism even from the image of Aeneas’ enemy. Furthermore, when Aeneas does attack, he allows his anger “free reign.” The design of the *Aeneid*’s last six books, which incidentally Virgil considered to be the weightier half, matches perfectly the plot of the *Iliad*, both with the betrothal of Hector’s sister to Aeneas and the death of Pallas, whom Aeneas watches over. But in Virgil’s epic, Turnus takes the place of Hector and Aeneas takes that of Achilles. As a result, in the final scenario, Aeneas matches the actions of Achilles, and because of that language in which Virgil describes him (free reigning anger, uncontrolled wrath), his character matches the wrathful Achaean as well.

Though the last six books of the *Aeneid* follow Homeric patterns in the *Iliad*, we do not see the resolution to the “wrath” motif that we find in Homer. Achilles in many ways attains a status of hero in the instant he pardons Priam and grants the king his son’s body. The conclusion of the *Iliad* leaves the audience with the sense that the victory is won only when the hero contains within himself both strength and pity. Virgil, on the contrary, ends his poem when Aeneas is most like the unrestrained Achilles, forfeiting any satisfactory closure to the wounds so fiercely endured. Consequently, any reservation we have toward the undeveloped Achilles, we must share with Aeneas, and by extension, Augustus.

I agree with Gransden in saying that in this final scene, we witness an “authorial intention which has not been fully recognized” (137). We are reminded of the sadness of Aeneas' fate and Virgil seems to condemn the fact that Augustus fought in a civil war at all. The abrupt ending of Book 12 cuts the future off. We cannot rest comfortably with the final image of Aeneas, and Virgil implies an uncertainty about the future of the new Principate and his faith in its ability to fulfill its promises. Through the ambiguity of the immediate future, the abrupt conclusion, and the despairing tone, we must view the text as a reluctant endorsement of the imperial ideology, one characterized more by fear and mourning than by triumph.

Shakespeare and Absolutist Monarchy

We will now shift our attention sixteen hundred years later. By the year 1611, when Shakespeare's *The Tempest* was first performed, a dialogue between King James I and Parliament regarding absolutist or constitutional monarchy dominated the political climate in England. The King proposed that he alone was the *Pater Patriae*, a name that Augustus also claimed for himself, and should rule the country accordingly. Those who criticized the King's view reminded him of a monarch's obligation to the commonweal. Shakespeare contributed to this discussion through the medium of the *The Tempest*, where the characters voice both opinions under various circumstances. Though a significant amount of scholarship submits that Shakespeare's works are unconscious reflections of the imperial and authoritarian ideology, the similarity between the language of *The Tempest* and dialogue of James and the Parliament reveals Shakespeare's conscious and purposeful critique of the absolute monarchy.

The breadth of scholarship on Shakespeare's voice in court policy is as great as the sweeping presence of his characters on the stage. Most scholarship would agree with Alvin Kernan in saying that Shakespeare's plays were "deep searching portrayals of the most serious political and social issues" (183). However, many would part ways with Kernan, as would I, in saying that the play served the court by "legitimizing official values in new ways, locating them in some unfamiliar scene, grounding them in some human and natural bedrock" (184). Although Shakespeare does place the discussion in "unfamiliar scenes," he does not fully support the king's philosophy in *The Tempest*; instead, we find a driving debate concurrent with real-life situations in England where the conclusion far from legitimizes an absolutist viewpoint. Through his use of the *speculum regis*,

Shakespeare challenges the king's phraseology and the metaphorical justifications of his right to rule.

To mirror the King, Shakespeare created a protagonist in Prospero who is generally well liked but is involved in circumstances which sometimes reflect upon him unfavorably, such as in the manipulations of Ariel and Caliban, Ferdinand and Miranda, and the entire wandering crew. Prospero's language and behavior identify him as a monarch, and essentially every player comes under his persuasion as an individual at some point in the play and corporately by Act 4, as Prospero brags, "At this hour / Lies at my mercy all mine enemies" (4.1.262-263). Virginia and Alden Vaughan point out, "Throughout the play Prospero displays 'a superb combination of power and control' in his relations to others. His stance throughout is authoritarian" (Vaughan 25). Shakespeare reveals his view through these interactions and the other characters' responses to Prospero, for in the conclusion Prospero's complete discarding of his title and power implies that perhaps the most competent form of government is a shared one. The following discussion will be dedicated to this consideration, showing how Prospero gives up his position of authority in relation to Miranda, Ariel and Caliban, and his own magic.

First, Prospero relinquishes his patriarchal influence over Miranda by designing a strategic marriage for her. This action mirrors King James and the preparation of a political marriage for his daughter in 1611; in fact, the play's second showing was performed before the king on November 1, 1611, as a celebration of Princess Elizabeth's betrothal to the Elector Palatine (Vaughan 6). The parallel is unmistakable. Prospero, like James, designs a marriage that will ensure political stability: for the protagonist, a regained dukedom, for his real-life counterpart, a hope for stability of office on religious grounds.

Negotiations between James and the duke of Savoy were in progress throughout 1610 to marry Elizabeth to a Catholic; nevertheless, he eventually conceded the marriage of Elizabeth to the Protestant Elector Palatine (Hamilton 41).

More important than the parallel between Miranda and Elizabeth, the betrothal masque suggests that the James should surrender his emphatic claim to the title, or at least his particular interpretation, of the *Parens Patriae*. Prospero is indeed the “patriarchal ruler” of the island, taking reign over the indigenous children of the island as well as his own daughter (Kernan 158). The father/daughter image composes a metaphor of ruler/subject interaction, elucidated by James’ own words: “Kings are also compared to Fathers of families; for a king is trewly *Parens patriae*, the political father of his people” (McIlwain as qtd. in Hamilton 46). As the political father of the island, Prospero embodies what Hamilton calls the “most mystifying terms of royal ideological representation” (43).

Inasmuch as Prospero represents the royal ideology, his betrothal scheme involving Miranda frustrates the absolutist's argument. When he informs Alonso of the newly arranged marriage between his son and Miranda, Prospero focuses his language around the word "loss":

Alonso: You the like loss?

Prospero: As great to me as late; and supportable
To make the dear loss have I means much weaker
Than you may call to comfort you, for I
Have lost my daughter. (5.1.144-148)

The language strongly emphasizes the sense of injury to his position as father and, interestingly, as ruler. Some editors have inferred an allusion to Alonso's position as duke

from the phrase “means . . . you may call to comfort you” (Vaughan 272). If so, the term “daughter” may in fact refer to a ruler/subject relationship exemplified through Prospero and Miranda. Even if this reference means only the loss of Miranda as a daughter, the implication is not significantly weakened, for Prospero will now share his patriarchal authority over his daughter with both Ferdinand and Alonso. The loss of Prospero’s daughter gains significance because King James so emphatically attached meaning to the term “father.” Inserted into the metaphorically charged discussion of 1610 and 1611, Prospero’s arrangement with his opponents in the marriage of his daughter carries political weight suggesting a more mutual form of government between the King and Parliament.

Second, through his interaction with Caliban and Ariel, who remain his subjects during the play, Prospero represents King James’ exchange with the House of Commons. Part of James’ primary concern in 1610 was the court’s fiscal situation and the kingdom’s obligation to financially support the monarchy. The House of Commons’ purpose was to protect the individual’s land and property, and some felt that the king’s constant pursuit of his own welfare would soon eliminate their voice from being heard in Parliament. The Petition of Right (May 23, 1610) and the Petition of Temporal Grievances (July 7, 1610) brought any dissension to a head, with the primary argument focusing on the monarch’s responsibility to his subjects. In other words, the Commons questioned what James would do in response to an increase in the court’s supply. Both petitions represented Parliament’s concern with the king’s overarching power and their inherent right to appeal to the king to protect the subjects’ land and property. They wanted to make clear that his power existed solely in the “King in Parliament” (Hamilton 51). The king’s power was drawn from them just as they depended on him. Instead of granting the Commons the peace of mind they

pursued, James asserted an absolutist framework into this tense state of affairs.

Shakespeare capitalizes on this argument. A give-and-take dialogue runs throughout the play and can be heard first in the voice of Ariel when he disputes Prospero saying, "Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains, / Let me remember thee what thou hast promised, / Which is not yet performed me" (1.2.242-244). Prospero's patronizing response silences Ariel's complaints until Prospero finally reiterates his promise to free the spirit. Unlike Prospero, James simply silenced Parliament without reaching a consensus. Because in an ideal government, a king's sovereignty promises his subjects liberty, Prospero's promise to Ariel, "Thou shalt be free" (5.241), resonates the issue of King James and Parliament.

The words of Prospero, Caliban, and Ariel furthermore question appropriate limits for rulers in relation to the commoner. Caliban is Prospero's slave and, to be sure, an unbecoming creature. Nevertheless, Prospero's control over him seems equally unbecoming while he humiliates, manipulates, and treats him cruelly. Some scholars believe Caliban represents the voice of those conquered in British colonies, but his involvement with Prospero does not necessarily imply any such condition. Their interaction does in fact represent the relationship between the king and the common, or the vulgar, of English society. By stressing the social tension in their dialogue, Shakespeare also accentuates Prospero's final release of his subjects from his magic. The implication is resonant. Prospero need not lose a superior status to Caliban, but he does, as he puts it, "untie the spell" (5.1.254). By releasing Ariel and Caliban back to the island, Prospero provides them with a new liberty. In relation to the current debate of the time, the pronouncement seems to echo what the Commons longed to hear James promise.

Finally, the philosopher resigns his role as magician. Not only did King James pursue the recognition as the philosopher-king, just as Prospero, but magic in the Renaissance had also become a type for kingly authority based on a divine hierarchy. John S. Mebane explains how Prospero "has brought his own soul into harmony with the cosmic order, and consequently his art is a means through which God's will is accomplished" (Mebane 176). The view of divine-right monarchy is much the same, that is, the king is an extension of God's will. Thus, magic becomes in the Renaissance a symbol for kingly power.

Through this symbol, Shakespeare frames an argument against an absolutist viewpoint. Prospero's magic controls all the other characters in the play and holds them to the island; it is also the source of the storm that brought the characters under him. In the final scene of the play, we find the king giving up his power and drowning his book of supernatural knowledge. "It is" as Harry Berger Jr. writes, "our first view of Prospero in the real world, standing beyond the confines of his magic circle, preparing to confront life with only the ordinary means of persuasion" (Berger 41). Perhaps no more clearly than in the epilogue could we see the elegant comparisons first between Prospero's magic and James' authority, then of the renunciation of the art and the possibility of constitutional monarchy. In the end, we see a ruler still in authority, but he is no longer the sole one. The language acknowledges and invites an interdependency between the speaker, Prospero, and his listeners:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint. Now 'tis true

I must be here confined by you

Or sent to Naples. (Epilogue 1-5)

Not only does he admit that his power is “most faint,” the final two lines quoted represent a supplication to and a reliance upon the listener. King James was most certainly opposed to any image of himself as being subject to his own Parliament. Furthermore, Prospero continues to fulfill the very persona with which the Commons desired King James to identify. He again asserts his need for the audience saying, “Gentle breath of yours my sails / Must fill, or else my project fails, / Which was to please” (Epilogue 11-13). This diction corresponds with Parliament’s claim that the King’s position existed to ensure peace and protection to his subjects. By placing the success of his “project” on the amount he satisfied his clients, Prospero educes a distinct analysis of his final act of renunciation. In light of Prospero’s loss, and James’ incessant grip on a title of unqualified power, are we to conclude anything other than that Shakespeare is suggesting a new mode of discussion for the problem of power?

Moreover, by giving up his magic, Prospero not only releases his captives on the island, he enters into a shared political arrangement. He no longer solely controls the inhabitants of the island, but he gains his authority through the title of the Duke of Milan. A constitutional monarchy in England would require King James to relinquish a claim to unconditional rule, and particularly the diction and metaphor of father or magician. It is important to note that Prospero comes of his own accord to an understanding of his own limitations and his responsibility to those under him, as Barbara Traister points out: “Prospero’s renunciation of magic is a well-considered choice, consonant with his other actions in the play, for Prospero knows the limits of his power” (120). Because the

protagonist has this unique knowledge, Shakespeare can use him to represent the king, and through doing so offer the king an alternative mode of self-perception.

Prospero's resigning his science indicates Shakespeare's ambivalence toward the king's argument and promotes a shared political responsibility based on mutual consent of the governor and the governed. He does not so strongly oppose monarchy as a political regime in itself; Shakespeare is not a political activist. Shakespeare's statements center on the appropriate limits of authority and the solution found in constitutional monarchy. His use of the *speculum regis* in Prospero elucidates both James current stance and the possibility of a transformation of policy. Shakespeare illuminates the current court debate and offers a means by which to interpret the opposing philosophies and potential outcomes. In the end, Prospero's part in the play both reflects and instructs King James, allowing him to see how his standing with Parliament could improve by expressing a little more understanding to his opponents.

The Shared Symbolism of Virgil and Shakespeare

The extent to which Shakespeare imitates Virgil is a tough question. Many motifs, expressions, and images from the *Aeneid* find their way into *The Tempest* for thematic reasons. As we have already discussed, Shakespeare used the same type of literary device as Virgil, the *speculum regis*, to produce a restrained criticism of his own sovereign and his language, philosophy, and political arrangement. As Virgil's Aeneas is to Augustus, Prospero is to King James. In both cases, the final act of the literary work produces a complicated yet somewhat obscure objection to the current state of affairs and to the respective ruler.

One major difference between the two works lies in the intention of the authors. Virgil provided a subtle and intellectually supple assessment of Augustus and the early Principate. He expressed “quiet despair” over the tragic civil wars in Rome; however, the saddest tones of the poem come from an uncertainty of Augustus’ promises and, awkwardly, of his own prophesy of Rome’s future glory. Nevertheless, at no point does Virgil propose a new regime. The Republic had failed, and though Augustus claimed to restore it, one must question whether anyone wanted to completely return to an impotent administration. Virgil’s criticisms can be seen then as an analytical representation of the emperor; therefore, its primary function to Augustus was not necessarily didactic in nature. Shakespeare, on the other hand, provided King James with a production intentionally instructive. Shakespeare uses a combination of symbols and communication between characters to suggest a constitutional monarchy more productive than the current absolute one. Shakespeare’s criticism focuses on a resolvable problem and offers a resolution-something Virgil in spite of his aptitude was powerless to accomplish.

By 1611, the *Aeneid* held its primary spot in the literary canon with an iron grip; consequently, Shakespeare could express immeasurably more by interweaving allusions to the poem into his depiction of King James. Shakespeare did bring in many details of the *Aeneid* that created a heuristic by which to read *The Tempest*. Barbara Mowat explains the implications of infracontexts in *The Tempest*, pointing out that Shakespeare's allusions do not simply catalog classical sources but actually alter the reading of each passage (28). In light of such alterations, Donna B. Hamilton illustrates how Shakespeare uses Virgil's symbols, images, and language to speak into his own time:

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare both naturalized and problematized the Virgilian idiom in such a way as to bring the Virgilian text into dialogue with the problems of power as they were being experienced in his own time, and specifically as they were being expressed through the discourses of constitutionalism and colonization. (66)

Conflicting opinions in the Renaissance about Augustus and the *Aeneid* complicate any definitive answer to how Shakespeare viewed Augustus, either as a purely historical figure or as portrayed through Virgil's Aeneas. Consequently, one must question the extent that he would have imitated or even recognized Virgil's ambivalence toward Augustus in Book 12 of the *Aeneid*. Contemporary to Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney said the following about Aeneas:

Onely let *Aeneas* bee worne in the Tablet of your memorie, how hee governeth himselfe in the ruine of his Countrey, in the preserving his olde Father, and carrying away his religious Ceremonies, in obeying Gods Commaunment, to leave *Dido*, though not onelie all passionate kindnesse, but even the humane

consideration of vertuous gratefulnesse, would have craved other of him. . .

Lastly, how in his inward selfe, and howe in his outward government, and I thinke in a minde moste prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, Hee will bee founde in excellencie fruitefull. (Sidney 25)

On the other hand, Virgil strongly implies Aeneas' likeness to Augustus, yet Ludivico Ariosto argues that "Augustus Caesar was not such a saint, / as Virgill maketh him by his description" (Hamilton 34). These two examples of the Virgil's *speculum regis* and its referent give us an insight into how valid the device may have been perceived by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In other words, Virgil was successful in making an accurate representation of the Emperor insomuch as he forces his readers to evaluate Augustus, his promises, and the situation in Rome.

Regardless of whether Shakespeare's portrayal of King James imitates Virgil's use of Aeneas, Prospero does in fact draw from and contributes to the tradition. Unlike other kingly representations that unabashedly praise the rulers of their time, however, these two works both criticize the leaders and even extend to them an alternative means of self-perception. From our point of view, the two works lend incredible ability to understand the times, the debates of power, and rulers' response to those debates. Just as the *Aeneid* and *The Tempest* are considerate of the opposing viewpoints of their own times, the understanding the works give us about Augustus and King James and their unique political pressures creates in us a complex blend of disapproval and sympathy.

Works Cited

- Anthony, R. E. Anachronisms in Vergil's Aeneid. Nashville: George Peabody College.
1930.
- Berger, Harry Jr. "Miraculous Harp: A Reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*." Rpt. Modern Critical Interpretations: William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Ed. Harold Bloom.
New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 113-130.
- Gransden, K. W. "War and Peace." Modern Critical Interpretations: The Aeneid. Ed.
Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Pub. 1987. 127-147.
- Fowler, Elizabeth. "The Ship Adrift." Rpt. in Hulme.
- Hamilton, Donna B. Virgil and the Tempest: The Politics of Imitation. Columbus: Ohio
State Univ. Press, 1990.
- Hulme, Peter and William H. Sherman. The Tempest and Its Travels. Philadelphia:
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Kernan, Alvin. Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603-
1613. London: Yale Univ. Press, 1995.
- Mebane, John S. Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult
Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare. Lincoln and London: Univ. of
Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Mowat, Barbara A. "'Knowing I loved my books': Reading *The Tempest* Intertextually."
Rpt. in Hulme.
- Sidney, Phillip. The Defence of Poesie: Political Discourses. Ed. Albert Feuillerat.
London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1963.
- Tarrant, R.J. "Poetry and Power: Virgil's Poetry in Contemporary Context." Rpt. in The

Cambridge Companion to Virgil. Ed. Charles Martindale. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997. 169-187.

Tacitus. The Annals and the Histories. Trans. A.J. Church and W.J. Brodribb. Ed. Hugh Lloyd Jones. New York: Washington Square Press, 1964.

Traister, Barbara Howard. "Prospero: Master of Self-Knowledge." Rpt. in Modern Critical Interpretations: William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 113-130.

Wells, Colin. The Roman Empire. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press. 2nd ed. 1992.

Vaughan, Virginia Mason and Alden T. Vaughan. Introduction to The Arden Shakespeare: The Tempest. Surrey: Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1999.

Virgil. The Aeneid. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1951.