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# Dryden's Virgilian Kings

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Under which King, Besonian? speake, or dye.<sup>1</sup>

Ancient Pistol's rumbustious challenge to the hapless Justice Shallow on the accession of King Henry V might well have been put to Dryden in the early months of 1689, albeit in less bombastic terms. Under which king? It would not have been altogether easy for him to answer. As a faithful adherent of James II he regarded William III as a usurper, and yet he came to accept William as the country's de facto ruler whom it was prudent—for reasons of both personal and public quiet—for him to obey. But there was another dimension to the question. As a Catholic, Dryden subscribed to a faith which was at once the ultimate symbolic order and a counter-cultural challenge to the prevailing settlement. As the new government had for Dryden no sacred character, he would have been aware of the increasing distance between those two cities defined by St Augustine, the earthly and the heavenly kingdoms; and he certainly recognized his own displacement from that cultural and political milieu in which he had been such a prominent presence for more than twenty years. But he had always considered monarchy with a mixture of reverence and amusement, as Absalom and Achitophel illustrates. In 1676, in good King Charles' golden days as some might say, he

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This is the revised text of a lecture delivered at the conference on the Restoration monarchy at Bangor University in July 2013, an event held in memory of Professor Kevin Sharpe. In preparing it for publication I have largely preserved the style of oral delivery. I am grateful to Professor Tony Claydon and Professor Tom Corns for the original invitation, and to Professor David Hopkins of the University of Bristol for his valuable comments.

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth*, I iii 110. Quoted from *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Herbert Farjeon, 4 vols (London; Nonesuch Press, 1953).

had depicted in *Mac Flecknoe* the succession of Thomas Shadwell to Richard Flecknoe's throne as the laureate of dullness; in 1689 Dryden was deprived of his appointment as Poet Laureate to be succeeded by that same Shadwell, an example of life imitating art, of history repeating itself—occurring the first time as literary farce, and the second time as political farce.

Dryden's inner response to these events is hard to know. 'Here is a Field of Satire open'd to me', he reflected, 'But since the Revolution, I have wholly renounc'd that Talent. For who wou'd give Physick to the Great when he is uncall'd?' He would not engage his poetic abilities in polemic, would not give voice to his thoughts in that public poetry of which he had become the undoubted master. "'Tis enough for me, if the Government will let me pass unquestion'd.'<sup>2</sup> He would be grateful if no one challenged him to speak or die. He returned to the theatre to eke out a living, but his deeper creativity sought a field for his poetry in a move to the classical world, in the making of translations from Juvenal and Persius, from Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, and from the mediaeval masters Boccaccio and Chaucer. These poets offered Dryden imagined worlds which were alternative kingdoms, each of them a *mundus alter et idem* in which he could explore different structures of thought, political forms, and moral codes, other ways of understanding man's place in the universe through a searching poetic engagement with ideas which might not command personal assent, but which could be entertained temporarily as imagined possibilities: indeed, one of the attractions of translation was no doubt precisely the occlusion of any personal

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<sup>2</sup> 'Postscript to the *Aeneis*', in *The Works of Virgil: Containing His Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis. Translated into English Verse; By Mr. Dryden* (London, 1697), pp. 621-2. All quotations from Dryden's translation of Virgil are taken from this first edition. Virgil is quoted from *P. Virgilii Maronis Opera, interpretatione et notis illustravit Carolus Ruaeus* (London, 1695). (Note that in this edition the additional lines at the beginning of Book I deleted from modern editions are included, and so alter the line numbering.) Ruaeus' edition is known to have been one of the many editions and translations which Dryden consulted: see J McG. Bottkol, 'Dryden's Latin Scholarship', *Modern Philology*, 40 (1943) 241-54, and *The Works of John Dryden*, edited by H. T. Swedenberg et al., 20 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956-2000) vi 859-70. Prose translations of Virgil within square brackets are usually based (sometimes with modifications) on the Loeb edition: *Virgil, Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid*, edited by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999-2000).

endorsement of the text in favour of the play of multiple voices of poet, translator, and character.

The work which absorbed much of Dryden's energy in his last decade was his translation of Virgil, and the *Aeneid* in particular provided a multifaceted text in which he could reflect *inter alia* on different modes of government. While some readers of Virgil have seen his poem as a celebration of the *Pax Augusta*, it is much more than a panegyric to Rome's new order, and in some respects its vision is a tragic one. I have argued elsewhere that Dryden's version—published in 1697—drew out the motifs of exile,<sup>3</sup> of dislocation, of the struggle of man facing the seemingly arbitrary blows of Fate and Fortune, and responded particularly to Virgil's poem as an epic of loss.<sup>4</sup> The world of Troy is destroyed; the lucky ones escaped into exile, though Aeneas reflects at one point that perhaps the truly fortunate Trojans were those who died in the shadow of their city's walls when those walls were still standing.<sup>5</sup> There is no going back: for Aeneas and his party there is only a going forward into a future which promises a new foundation, and yet this divine promise is ambiguous and misinterpreted. At the end of the poem no new city has arisen. For Dryden in the 1690s the parallels were plentiful.

As a tribute to the rich work of Kevin Sharpe on images of monarchy, I would like to consider Dryden's *Aeneis* as a milieu in which the poet created for himself, through translation, the freedom to reflect on kingship, on the different forms which it takes, and on the qualities of the various leaders whom Virgil describes. Through his use of terms drawn from the political and religious language of Dryden's own time, his *Aeneis* invites the reader to contemplate aspects of his own culture as well as the wonderfully distinct world of Virgil's imagination; and one element in Dryden's encounter with the Latin epic is a thread of reflections on government and self-government. In his Preface to *Ovid's Epistles* in 1680 Dryden had defined three modes of translation: metaphrase, or a word-for-word rendering; imitation, a new poem with only a loose connection to the original; and the Aristotelian

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<sup>3</sup> The opening of Dryden's translation renders Virgil's *fato profugus* [exiled by fate] (i 2) as 'Expell'd and exil'd' (i 3), with emphatic alliteration.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 218-82.

<sup>5</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, i 94-101.

midway between these two extremes, which he calls paraphrase.<sup>6</sup> In his own practice Dryden uses all three methods, but in his *Aeneis* he tends mainly to paraphrase his original, staying fairly close to Virgil's sense while allowing himself occasional elaborations; and of course the vocabulary of his translation calls into being a world which is an English understanding of Rome. As a commentary on his own times, therefore, the resulting poem is necessarily oblique: the narrative structure is Virgil's, and to some degree the conceptual structure is Virgil's; the language is Dryden's, and even those terms such as 'Fate' and 'Fortune' which appear to be direct translations of a Latin word carry their own contemporary semantic field. The world which is created through this conjunction of past and present permits discontinuous, intermittent reflections on the England of the 1690s.<sup>7</sup>

Dryden's Dedication to the *Aeneis* educates his public into a method of discontinuous politicized reading as he implies a partial parallel between the times in which Virgil wrote and his own day:

Virgil having maturely weigh'd the Condition of the Times in which he liv'd: that an entire Liberty was not to be retriev'd: that the present Settlement had the prospect of a long continuance in the same Family, or those adopted into it: that he held his Paternal Estate from the Bounty of the Conqueror, by whom he was likewise enrich'd, esteem'd and cherish'd: that this Conquerour, though of a bad kind, was the very best of it: that the Arts of Peace flourish'd under him: that all men might be happy if they would be quiet: that now he was in possession of the whole, yet he shar'd a great part of his Authority with the Senate: That he would be chosen into the Ancient Offices of the Commonwealth, and Rul'd by the Power which he deriv'd from them; and Prorogu'd his Government from time to time: Still, as it were, threatening to dismiss himself from Publick Cares, which he excercis'd more for the common Good, than for any delight he took in greatness: These things, I say, being consider'd by the Poet, he concluded it to be the Interest of his Country to be so Govern'd: To infuse an awful

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<sup>6</sup> The Poems of John Dryden, edited by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, 5 vols (London: Longman, 1995-2005), i 376-91.

<sup>7</sup> Cp. my 'The Interplay of Past and Present in Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite"', *The Seventeenth Century*, 23 (2008) 142-59.

Respect into the People, towards such a Prince: By that respect to confirm their Obedience to him; and by that Obedience to make them Happy.<sup>8</sup>

This and similar passages in the Dedication<sup>9</sup> at once offer and impede a parallel between Augustan Rome and late Restoration England. The current ruler owes his position to conquest, not hereditary right; the present settlement looks likely to continue; it is in the interest of the country that this government should be accepted by the people. Dryden might well have said the same of William III. But if we have started to fashion a simple allegory, other parts of this passage tease and thwart us. Do the arts of peace flourish under William? Does he govern for the common good? Does he wish to retire into private life? The reader who has embarked on the pursuit of contemporary parallels finds the passage shifting between panegyric and satire. One thing at least is certain: Dryden could not say of himself—as he says of Virgil—that he held his ‘Estate from the Bounty of the Conqueror, by whom he was likewise enrich’d, esteem’d and cherish’d’. On the contrary, Dryden noted in his Postscript the poignant lack of a parallel between his personal circumstances and those of Virgil: ‘WHAT Virgil wrote in the vigour of his Age, in Plenty and at Ease, I have undertaken to Translate in my Declining Years: struggling with Wants, oppress’d with Sickness, curb’d in my Genius, lyable to be misconstrued in all I write’.<sup>10</sup> To read Dryden’s *Aeneis* allegorically would be one way of misconstruing him; but it undoubtedly is an intermittent commentary on the contemporary world, an interrogative text which prompts its reader into reflecting on similarity and difference, on the connections and the mismatch between William and Aeneas—and on the arts of reading. But in reflecting on kingship it does much more than this, for Dryden’s poem fashions a world where leaders face both interior and exterior challenges, and where there are in fact several different examples of leadership for us to ponder: not only Aeneas, but the pious Evander, the well-intentioned but weak Latinus, the atheistic tyrant Mezentius, and the heroic, passionate, but ultimately doomed Turnus.

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<sup>8</sup> Dryden’s Dedication of the *Æneis* to the Marquess of Normanby, *The Works of Virgil*, sig. (b)<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Cp. ‘We are to consider him as writing his Poem in a time when the Old Form of Government was subverted, and a new one just Established by Octavius Cæsar: In effect by force of Arms, but seemingly by the Consent of the Roman People’ (*The Works of Virgil*, sig. (a)4<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> *The Works of Virgil*, p. 621.

Braided through the text of Dryden's poem are words which resonate with the political discourses of Restoration England. Eight times Dryden uses the words 'usurp' and 'usurper' without any explicit prompt from Virgil;<sup>11</sup> four times he uses the word 'arbitrary', which was common currency in contemporary debates about the absolutist tendencies of the Stuarts;<sup>12</sup> five times he uses the word 'succession' or 'successive', and he chooses to discuss the differences between elective and hereditary government in his prefatory Dedication to the Earl of Mulgrave.<sup>13</sup> But we need to be cautious in interpreting such language and the

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<sup>11</sup> For example:

And Latium call'd the Land where safe he lay,  
From his Unduteous Son, and his Usurping Sway.  
With his mild Empire, Peace and Plenty came:  
And hence the Golden Times deriv'd their name. (viii 429-32)

Latiumque vocari  
Maluit, his quoniam latuisset tutus in oris.  
Aurea, quæ perhibent, illo sub rege fuerunt  
Sæcula; sic placida populos in pace regebat. (viii 322-5)

[and he chose that the land be called Latium, since in these borders he had found a safe hiding place. Under his reign were the golden ages men tell of: in such perfect peace he ruled the nations.]

It is possible that Pope, reading Dryden's text with Jacobite sympathies, may have recalled the phrase 'Peace and Plenty' and its context when composing a passage in *Windsor-Forest* (1713) which criticizes the reign of William III in a passage culminating in the line 'And Peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns' (*Windsor-Forest*, l. 42; Alexander Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, edited by E. Audra and Aubrey Williams (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 152).

<sup>12</sup> For example: 'Then Kings, Gygantick Tybris, and the rest, | With Arbitrary Sway the Land oppress'd.' (viii 437-8) for Virgil's *Tum reges, asperque immani corpore Tybris* [then kings arose, and fierce Thybris with giant bulk] (viii 330).

<sup>13</sup> Dryden also calls Drances 'A closs Caballer' (xi 514): 'cabal' is a Restoration term for a secret political clique, and the OED's first example of 'caballer' comes from 1686. In describing the Trojan crowds as 'mad with Zeal' (ii 320) where Virgil has *caecique furore* [blind with rage] (ii 244) Dryden is using a word, 'Zeal', which for him has negative

parallels which it implies. These are comparatively rare occurrences in what is a long poem, and they are hardly ever deployed in such a blatant way as to constitute an overtly oppositional stance. After all, the subscribers who financed the project were drawn from diverse political groupings, and the poem was considered a national, rather than a partisan, achievement.<sup>14</sup> Parallels work implicitly and subtly. Dryden says in his Dedication that Virgil suggested to Augustus through his poem the best way for the new ruler to 'behave himself in his new Monarchy, so as to gain the Affections of his Subjects, and deserve to be call'd the Father of his Country. From this Consideration it is, that he chose for the ground-work of his Poem, one Empire destroy'd, and another rais'd from the Ruins of it. This was just the Parallel.'<sup>15</sup> As well as exploring the analogy which Virgil may have suggested between his hero Aeneas and his ruler Augustus, Dryden's Dedication reflects on how Augustus himself may have read Roman history as a lesson for his own mode of government:

For his Conscience could not but whisper to the Arbitrary Monarch, that the Kings of Rome were at first Elective, and Govern'd not without a Senate: That Romulus was no Hereditary Prince, and though, after his Death, he receiv'd Divine Honours, for the good he did on Earth, yet he was but a God of their own making: that the last Tarquin was Expell'd justly, for Overt-Acts of Tyranny, and Male-Administration; for such are the Conditions of an Elective Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

Some readers might imagine a parallel between Tarquin and James, expelled if not for tyranny then arguably for maladministration. But the passage also suggests a reflection on William. The early kings of Rome were elected; Romulus received divine honours, but was merely a god of the people's own making; tyranny and maladministration are the conditions of an elective kingdom. Then Dryden adds a comment which begins by suggesting that he has no wish to meddle in politics, but there is a sting in the tail:

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connotations of extreme Protestant enthusiasm (cp. *Religio Laici*, l. 416; *The Poems of John Dryden*, ii 131).

<sup>14</sup> For the diverse constituencies from which the subscribers were drawn see John Barnard, 'Dryden, Tonson, and the Patrons of *The Works of Virgil* (1697)', in *John Dryden: Tercentenary Essays*, edited by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 174-239, quoting on p. 180 Dr Johnson's comment that the nation considered its honour to be interested in the translation.

<sup>15</sup> *The Works of Virgil*, sig. (b)2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> *The Works of Virgil*, sig. (b) <sup>r</sup>.

And I meddle not with others: being, for my own Opinion, of Montaigns principles, that an Honest Man ought to be contented with that Form of Government, and with those Fundamental Constitutions of it, which he receiv'd from his Ancestors, and under which himself was Born.<sup>17</sup>

Like Montaigne, Dryden is contented with the ancient constitution; implicitly, however, the Whigs who offered the crown to William had violated that fundamental constitution and in so doing made Dryden's honesty suspect and his contentment nugatory.

Parallels between Aeneas and William are double-edged. Aeneas himself had no hereditary right to the kingship, since he was not one of Priam's sons; instead, 'Aeneas had only Married Creusa, Priam's Daughter, and by her could have no Title, while any of the Male Issue were remaining. In this case, the Poet gave him the next Title, which is, that of an Elective King.'<sup>18</sup> So it might seem that typologically Aeneas prefigures William, and the translation might turn out to be an extended compliment to the conqueror. But 'Aeneas, tho' he Married the Heiress of the Crown, yet claim'd no Title to it during the Life of his Father-in-Law,'<sup>19</sup> a discretion not imitated by William. Dryden's exposition of Roman history continues to disconcert the maker of parallels. The Roman empire was, he says, a gift from the people, not something inherited as of right, and 'what was introduc'd by force, by force may be remov'd. 'Twas better for the People that they should give, than he should take. Since that Gift was indeed no more at bottom than a Trust.'<sup>20</sup> That last sentence could have been written by Milton, with its insistence that a ruler is only entrusted with authority by the people, who have the right to withdraw that trust.<sup>21</sup> If, prompted by Dryden's exploration of parallels between Aeneas and Augustus, his readers begin to pursue parallels between Aeneas and William, they may be led to conclude that the English monarchy is now elective not hereditary, and has passed from being *jure divino* to being dependent upon popular assent, an arrangement whereby power is lent to the chief magistrate by the people and may be recalled

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<sup>17</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)<sup>2f</sup>. Cp. the passage on an ancient tradition of elected kings in Dryden's *The Tenth Satire of Juvenal*, ll. 124-31, discussed by David Hopkins in his *Conversing with Antiquity: English Poets and the Classics, from Shakespeare to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 140-1.

<sup>19</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)<sup>2v</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)<sup>2v</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> See Paul Hammond, *Milton and the People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

whenever they wish. Like Rome, England has become a monarchical republic. That might seem an acceptable development, at least at the pragmatic level of an arrangement which secures public peace; and yet there is a further twist, in that Dryden's Virgilian example of such a king who is entrusted with rule by the people is the godless Mezentius: 'He Govern'd Arbitrarily, he was expell'd: And came to the deserv'd End of all Tyrants.'<sup>22</sup>



If we turn to the contemporary political vocabulary which Dryden introduces into his translation, we find that some clear parallels emerge while others tease the reader with indeterminate implications. To say that Alecto's role is to 'kindle kindred Blood to mutual Hate' (vii 469) is a slight expansion of Virgil's *odiis versare domos* [overturn homes with hate] (vii 336) which allows, while not requiring, a reflection on the children of James II. Often Dryden suppresses proper names and creates a generalized wording which is faithful to Virgil's meaning whilst mischievously suggesting something more; so *Consiliumque omnemque domum vertisse Latini* [and had overturned Latinus' purpose and all his household] (vii 407) becomes 'The Royal House embroil'd in Civil War' (vii 568). And consider this apparently barbed allusion in Book VI, when amongst those being punished in the underworld Aeneas sees some

who Brothers better Claim disown,

Expel their Parents, and usurp the Throne; (vi 824-5)

Surely this is an allusion to the undutiful Queen Mary?<sup>23</sup> It is indeed a carefully crafted mistranslation:

Hic quibus invisi fratres, dum vita manebat,

Pulsatusve parens. (vi 608-9)

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<sup>22</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)2<sup>v</sup>. Dryden in his translation of Book VIII says that Mezentius 'in a fatal Hour, | Assum'd the Crown, with Arbitrary Pow'r' (viii 630-1), where Virgil has no equivalent to 'Arbitrary' (he says *superbo | Imperio* [arrogant sway] (viii 481-2)).

<sup>23</sup> Dryden seems to have drawn inspiration here from the translation by Richard Maitland, fourth Earl of Lauderdale (1653-95), a Jacobite and Catholic, who has: 'Here those who Brothers for a Crown disown, | Turn out their Parents and usurp the Throne' (see The Works of John Dryden, vi 1038). Dryden appears to have drawn extensively on Lauderdale's manuscript translation, which was first printed c. 1707 (see Works of John Dryden, vi 866-70).

We might translate this as: 'Here were those who in their lifetime hated their brothers or beat a parent'. The additions 'better Claim' and 'usurp the Throne' and the witty mistranslation of *pulsatus* as 'expel' rather than 'beat' allow an allusion to Mary without entirely betraying the Latin text. A few lines later we find

Hosts of Deserters, who their Honour sold,  
And basely broke their Faith for Bribes of Gold. (vi 832-3)

*quique arma secuti*

*Impia, nec veriti dominorum fallere dextras.* (vi 612-13)

[and who followed the standard of treason, and did not fear to break faith with their lords]

—a couplet which is at once innocuous and deadly.

If we move on to Book VIII, we find Latinus explaining to Aeneas that prophecy had foretold that his son-in-law would be a foreigner; perhaps Aeneas is the promised one, for

in you combine

A Manly Vigour, and a Foreign Line.  
Where Fate and smiling Fortune shew the Way,  
Pursue the ready Path to Sov'raign Sway. (viii 674-7)

*Tu cujus & annis*

*Et generi fatum indulget, quem numina poscunt,  
Ingredere, ô Teucrûm atque Italûm fortissime ductor.* (viii 511-13)

[You, to whom fate is kind in respect of both your years and your race, whom heaven calls, proceed, O most valiant leader of both Trojans and Italians.]

Here Dryden's wording might suggest a compliment to William III, who was known for his military leadership as well as being obviously from a foreign line—a detail which is implicit in the Latin but which Dryden spells out. It is perhaps Dryden's addition of 'Sov'raign Sway' which particularly gives the lines a modern touch and makes them a potential comment on William's divine destiny as England's Virgilian sovereign. But any such interpretation would be double-edged, for there is an important distinction between advancing as *ductor* [leader] of your people, and pursuing 'Sov'raign Sway' for yourself. There is also a subtle undercurrent in the replacement of *fatum* and *numina* with 'Fate and smiling Fortune': Virgil does not mention Fortune, but for Dryden Fortune was, throughout his

writings, an amoral figure who gives and snatches away the good things of life.<sup>24</sup> The leader who pursues the path which smiling Fortune points out to him may indeed be a successful Machiavellian conqueror, but he is not a godly king: 'Fortune' is not a translation of numina (divine powers) but almost its opposite. In so far as this is construed as an allusion to William, it places his success, or his succession, in the world of opportunism, not of right.

A little further on in Book VIII there is another example of the complexity and subtlety of Dryden's near-allusions. Amongst the scenes on the shield forged by Vulcan for Aeneas we see that

There, Porsena to Rome proud Tarquin brings;  
And wou'd by Force restore the banish'd Kings.  
One Tyrant, for his fellow Tyrant fights:  
The Roman Youth assert their Native Rights. (viii 857-60)

Nec non Tarquinius ejectum Porsenna iubebat  
Accipere, ingentique urbem obsidione premebat.  
Aeneadæ in ferrum pro libertate ruebant. (viii 645-7)

[There too was Porsenna, bidding them admit the banished Tarquin, and oppressing the city with mighty siege: the sons of Aeneas rushing on the sword for freedom's sake.]

Some who were sympathetic to the exiled James II would no doubt have wished to restore the banished king by force, but these lines refer to an attempt to restore a banished tyrant; tyrants

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<sup>24</sup> See Paul Hammond, 'Dryden's Philosophy of Fortune', *Modern Language Review*, 80 (1985) 769-85. At one point Dryden interpolates wording which associates Fortune with the instability of worldly power described in the famous chorus from Seneca's *Thyestes*: Dryden's 'Then shew'd the slippery state of Humane-kind, | And fickle Fortune; warn'd him to beware:' (x 225-6), which renders Virgil's *humanis quæ sit fiducia rebus, | Admonet [warns him what faith may be put in human things] (x 152-3)*, draws on Seneca's *stet quicumque volet potens | aulae culimine lubrico [let whoever wishes stand on the slippery pinnacle] (Thyestes, ll. 391-2)*. Several English poets translated this chorus, including Cowley in his essay 'Of Obscurity', whose translation begins, 'Upon the slippery tops of humane State', wording which may well have shaped Dryden's line (Abraham Cowley, *Essays, Plays and Sundry Verses*, edited by A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906) p. 399).

aid one another, as Dryden notes, but Virgil does not.<sup>25</sup> Virgil's Romans fight for their freedom (pro libertate) while Dryden's 'assert their Native Rights': in contemporary terms, perhaps, assert the ancient English constitution and their right not have a foreign ruler imposed on them by force. The language of the translation points in different political directions. Instead of providing a coded description of contemporary events, then, such lines may be better understood as activating the reader's own language and experience—in this case, the language of tyranny and native right—to draw him into a deeper and more understanding engagement with the Roman narrative across the gap of centuries.



The conceptual gap which we noticed between numina and 'Fortune' invites us to ask how Dryden translates Virgil's religious vocabulary, into what newly shaped conceptual field he transposes the poem's continual attentiveness to the divine. Aeneas, we know, is repeatedly characterized by Virgil as pius, and Dryden explains that the Roman concept of pietas is more than reverence for the divine: 'the word in Latin is more full than it can possibly be express in any Modern Language; for there it comprehends not only Devotion to the Gods, but Filial Love and tender Affection to Relations of all sorts'.<sup>26</sup> Pietas binds together religious duty, the service of the state, and care for one's family.<sup>27</sup> But how could such pietas be for Dryden a characteristic of the post-revolutionary monarchy in England if it has violated family bonds, abrogated the ancient constitution, and consolidated an heretical sect as the national church? In Dryden's handling of the deeply religious mindset of the Aeneid we often see Aeneas searching for guidance, turning to the gods not to enhance his power and authority but subjecting himself to enlightenment and correction. He approaches the gods in order to understand their will when everything, it seems, has fallen apart: his city has been destroyed, his king murdered, his wife lost, and the holy places at which he worshipped have been desecrated. A strong sense of loss inflects Dryden's translation of those passages in which Virgil describes the holy places of Troy:

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<sup>25</sup> One puzzle relating to Dryden's Jacobitism, which generally seems to have been a passive commitment rather than one which endorsed armed resistance, is the overt call to arms in 'The Lady's Song' (1691), which was not printed in Dryden's lifetime but did circulate in manuscript: see *The Poems of John Dryden*, iii 244-8.

<sup>26</sup> *The Works of Virgil*, sig. (b)3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> See James D. Garrison, *'Pietas' from Vergil to Dryden* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

He said, and brought me, from their blest abodes,  
The venerable Statues of the Gods:  
With ancient Vesta from the sacred Quire,  
The Wreaths and Relicks of th' Immortal Fire. (ii 393-6)  
Sic ait, & manibus vittas, Vestamque potentem.  
Æternumque adytis effert penetralibus ignem. (ii 296-7)

[So he speaks, and in his hands brings forth from the inner shrine the fillets, great Vesta, and the undying fire.]

The wording blends English and Roman worlds, with 'sacred Quire' specifically suggesting the chancel of an English cathedral, or one of those 'Bare ruin'd quiers, where late the sweet birds sang',<sup>28</sup> painful sites of loss for Catholic readers.<sup>29</sup> Other words recall Catholic ritual, such as 'Statues' and 'Relicks'—two ideas which are Dryden's interpolations. The antiquity of the worship is emphasised when Dryden translates *aeternum* twice, first as 'venerable' and then as 'ancient',<sup>30</sup> while the single word 'Relicks' has a double function: to describe the remnant of the sacred fire which the priest retrieves from the temple, and also to evoke the relics of the saints and martyrs whose blood (as Tertullian said) was the seed of the church, such as those relics of the English martyrs which Dryden's Catholic contemporaries were reverently preserving. Virgil's priest brings out the eternal flame itself, whereas Dryden's priest brings only its relics, the fragment which is left behind after the destruction.

Sympathetic readers of Dryden's passage will include those who themselves preserve, in their own way, the relics of Catholic practice in an adverse age. (The word 'relic' recurs eleven times through the first six books of the poem,<sup>31</sup> and is repeatedly applied to the exiled Trojans

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<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare, Sonnet 73, l. 4; quoted from *Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Original-Spelling Text*, edited by Paul Hammond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Cp. the rendering by Sir John Denham: 'Then brings old Vesta from her sacred Quire, | Her holy Wreaths, and her eternall Fire' (*The Destruction of Troy, An Essay upon the Second Book of Virgils Æneis* (London, 1656), p. 15).

<sup>30</sup> While *aeternus* is of course part of Virgil's text, it has acquired a special resonance in contexts of mourning, where the faithful pray that the departed may enjoy *requiem aeternam*.

<sup>31</sup> Added by Dryden for instance at ii 431, where the priest is 'With Reliques loaden', and at ii 974.

themselves, as 'relics' of their lost city.<sup>32</sup>) Later in Book II we read that the Greeks 'defile' the Trojan temples (471), a detail not in Virgil, while the prophetess Cassandra is dragged along by 'sacrilegious Hands' (546). And when Dryden describes the rituals which attend the various attempts to understand the will of the gods,<sup>33</sup> there is one repeated touch which associates these prayers with Catholic ritual: his interest in incense. In several places Dryden adds the detail that incense is cast into the flames in front of a shrine (i 395; iii 236); King Numa, exemplifying the sacredness of kingship, carries a censer and wears 'holy Vestments' (vi 1105; for censers cp. xi 727); and in one description of ritual, where Virgil writes that the worshippers move round the burning altars (*incensa altaria circum*: viii 285) Dryden says that the priests 'cense his Altars round' (viii 377), like a Catholic celebrant censuring the altar by moving around it swinging the thurible.<sup>34</sup> Such details might remind Catholic readers of the world which they have lost, and of the faith which, like Aeneas, they have to carry with them in time of exile. And yet these are not exclusively sectarian gestures, and could be accepted by readers of any persuasion as an appropriate way of re-imagining forms of reverence in the ancient world.

One particular form of *pietas* which Aeneas displays, then, is a care for the images and the traces of vandalized and defiled religious sites, a form of kingship which cannot be associated with William III, and could only ever have been doubtfully linked to James II, whose creed Dryden shared, but whose political judgement in attempting to promote that creed Dryden had thought naïve and likely to be counterproductive—rightly, as it turned out.<sup>35</sup> But there is much more to Virgil's Aeneas, and to Dryden's Aeneas, than piety. There is passion. The Aeneas of Book IV is seen to be culpable when he indulges his passion for

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<sup>32</sup> e.g. Dryden's translation, i 841 (the Trojan refugees), ii 953 (Ascanius).

<sup>33</sup> In Dryden's translation of Book III the passages describing the funeral rites for Polydore (ll. 89ff.) and the visit of Aeneas to the temple of Apollo on Delos (ll. 105ff.) show a specially sympathetic engagement with religious ritual.

<sup>34</sup> Dryden also adds mention of 'Rites Divine' at i 341, 394, viii 242; 'Holy Rites' at vi 867, viii 232; and 'Religious Rites' at xii 286.

<sup>35</sup> On 16 February 1687 Dryden wrote to Sir George Etherege: 'Oh that our Monarch wou'd encourage noble idleness by his own example, as he of blessed memory did before him for my minde misgives me, that he will not much advance his affaires by Stirring' (The Letters of John Dryden, edited by Charles E. Ward (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1942), p. 27).

Dido. When Virgil comments that the couple are *oblitos famæ melioris* (iv 221), forgetful of their better fame, Dryden adds two lines to accentuate the narrator's moral verdict:

The lustful Pair, in lawless pleasure drown'd.  
Lost in their Loves, insensible of Shame;  
And both forgetful of their better Fame. (iv 323-5)

(‘Lawless’ seems rather harsh, since both Dido and Aeneas were widowed, and in that respect were surely free agents.) Jove himself describes Aeneas as ‘the Trojan Chief, who wastes his Days | In sloathful Riot, and inglorious Ease’ (iv 330-1), an addition to Virgil.

Mercury finds Aeneas in a decidedly unmartial state:

A Purple Scarf, with Gold embroider'd o're,  
(Queen Dido's Gift) about his Waste he wore;  
A Sword with glitt'ring Gems diversify'd,  
For Ornament, not use, hung idly by his side. (iv 384-7)

atque illi stellatus Jaspide fulvâ  
Ensis erat, Tyrioque ardebat murice læna  
Demissa ex humeris: dives quæ munera Dido  
Fecerat, & tenui telas discreverat auro. (iv 261-4)

[And his sword was starred with yellow jasper, and a cloak hung from his shoulders ablaze with Tyrian purple—a gift that wealthy Dido had wrought, interweaving the web with thread of gold.]

and he addresses him as ‘degenerate Man, | Thou Woman's Property’, where Virgil has the single adjective *uxorius*. If we are looking for contemporary parallels, the example which most readily comes to mind is that of Charles II, whose conduct might indeed have merited some of this condemnatory language. Other readers might think of Louis XIV. But this is epic, not allegory, and Aeneas does, of course, recover his sense of duty towards the gods and his care for his followers.

Aeneas' state of mind is, however, persistently troubled, and Dryden frequently writes of his anxious cares, reviving a language which he had used in *Sylvæ* (1685) when translating odes from Horace and passages from Lucretius against anxiety, care, and the troubles of a mind enslaved to Fortune.<sup>36</sup> Juno, says Dryden, ‘Involv'd his anxious Life in endless Cares’

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<sup>36</sup> See Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 156-79; *Poems of John Dryden*, ii 370, note to l. 10 on the repeated vocabulary of care and anxiety.

(i 15), whereas Virgil has tot adire labores [face so many toils] (i 14). When Aeneas tells the Cumaean Sibyl,

Non ulla laborum,  
O virgo, nova mî facies inopinave surgit:  
Omnia præcepi, atque animo mecum ante peregi. (vi 103-5)

[For me no form of toils arises, O maiden, strange or unlooked for; all this have I foreseen and debated in my mind.]

Dryden translates this as:

no Terror to my view,  
No frightful Face of Danger can be new.  
Inur'd to suffer, and resolv'd to dare,  
The Fates, without my Pow'r, shall be without my Care. (vi 155-8)

That last line is entirely Dryden's invention, and brings into his poem a thread of reflection which he had explored in *Sylvæ*:

leave thy business and thy care...  
Enjoy the present smiling hour,  
And put it out of Fortune's power.<sup>37</sup>  
Eternal troubles haunt thy anxious mind,  
Whose cause and cure thou never hop'st to find.<sup>38</sup>

When contemplating the fate of his companions in Book VI, Aeneas is shown 'Revolving anxious Thoughts within his Breast' (vi 454), a phrase without a precedent in Virgil other than *Multa putans* [thinking of many things] (vi 332); and at the beginning of Book VIII,

The Trojan floating in a Flood of Care,  
Beholds the Tempest which his Foes prepare.  
This way and that he turns his anxious Mind;  
Thinks, and rejects the Counsels he design'd.  
Explores himself in vain, in ev'ry part,  
And gives no rest to his distracted Heart. (viii 28-33)

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<sup>37</sup> Dryden, 'Horace; Odes III xxix', ll. 10, 50-51; *The Poems of John Dryden*, ii 371-3.

<sup>38</sup> Dryden, 'Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death', ll. 267-8; *The Poems of John Dryden*, ii 329. The connection with Dryden's *Lucretius* is noted in *The Works of John Dryden*, vi 1030.

quæ Laomedontius heros

Cuncta videns magno curarum fluctuat æstu:

Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc,

In partisque rapit varias, perque omnia versat. (viii 18-21)

[The hero of Laomedon's line, seeing it all, tosses on a mighty sea of troubles; and now this way, now that he swiftly throws his mind, casting it in diverse ways, and turning it to every shift.]

This anxious and distracted Aeneas is in one important respect unlike the addressee of Horace's odes or Lucretius' *consolatio* in Book III of *De Rerum Natura*, for they were distracted by anxious care for their worldly goods, or by their fear of death; Aeneas is troubled by pious care for his companions, and an anxiety to discover and perform the will of the gods.

One of the figures who exemplifies the religious duties of kingship is Evander, who welcomes Aeneas to his city of Pallanteum in Italy. He explains to Aeneas the ritual which he observes, for

These Rites, these Altars, and this Feast, O King,

From no vain Fears, or Superstition spring:

Or blind Devotion, or from blinder Chance;

Or heady Zeal, or brutal Ignorance:

But, sav'd from Danger, with a grateful Sence,

The Labours of a God we recompence. (viii 246-51)

non hæc solemnia nobis,

Has ex more dapes, hanc tanti numinis aram,

Vana superstitio veterumve ignara Deorum

imposuit: sævis, hospes Trojane, periclis

servati facimus, meritosque novamus honores. (viii 185-90)

[These solemn rites, this customary feast, this altar of a mighty god—no empty superstition ignorant of the ancient gods has imposed them on us. Saved from cruel dangers, Trojan guest, we celebrate the rites which are due.]

The passage works properly in the narrative as a translation of the Latin, but in small but significant additions to Virgil (most of the second and third lines of the quotation) Dryden indicates those elements which true religion rejects: the zeal of the Protestant fanatics, the adherence to blind chance of the Lucretian atheists, who assume that religion is motivated by

'vain Fears'; and he wards off the allegation of superstition often levelled at religious ritual by anti-Catholic polemic. The whole serves as a definition of true religious practice under a devout and enlightened king. Evander's lifestyle is simple; Virgil's adjective for him is pauper [poor] (viii 360) and for his house humilis [humble] (455); he dresses humbly in sandals and a tunic. What grounds his rule, and the life of his people, is reverence for the gods.



This is one mode of kingship. Another is seen in the case of Latinus, who 'is describ'd a just and a gracious Prince; solicitous for the Welfare of his People; always Consulting with his Senate to promote the common Good... And this is the proper Character of a King by Inheritance, who is born a Father of his Country'.<sup>39</sup> But the reign of this king by hereditary right is more troubled than this preliminary account would suggest, for in the latter books of the *Aeneid* Virgil offered Dryden an opportunity to reflect upon the sometimes tragic dilemmas of royal power, and the struggles which kings experience when trying to rule an often fractious people. By contrast with the modesty of Evander's dwelling, the palace of Latinus is spectacular and imposing: 'Supported by a hundred Pillars', it 'Surpriz'd at once with Reverence and Delight' (vii 230, 233), but it is also a 'House of Pray'r' (vii 237). (Virgil calls it a *templum* (vii 174)). Latinus is a thoughtful and prayerful ruler, who greets the speech of Aeneas' ambassador Ilioneus with silence, moved not by the rich gifts which the envoy proffers, but by his reflections on how the will of the gods might be fulfilled. He sees Aeneas as the foreign prince who, as ancient prophecies have foretold, will marry his daughter and rule after him. But his prospective son-in-law Turnus, and his own people, have other ideas:

With Fates averse, the Rout in Arms resort,  
To Force their Monarch, and insult the Court.  
But like a Rock unmov'd, a Rock that braves  
The raging Tempest and the rising Waves,  
Prop'd on himself he stands: His solid sides  
Wash off the Sea-weeds, and the sounding Tides:  
So stood the Pious Prince unmou'd and long  
Sustain'd the madness of the noisie Throng. (vii 807-14)

*Contra fata Deûm, perverso numine poscunt.*

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<sup>39</sup> The Works of Virgil, sig. (b)2<sup>v</sup>.

Certatim regis circumstant tecta Latini.  
Ille, velut pelagi rupes immota, resistit:  
Ut pelagi rupes, magno veniente fragore,  
Quae sese, multis circumlatrantibus undis,  
Mole tenet: scopuli nequiquam & spumea circum  
Saxa fremunt, laterique illisa refunditur alga. (vii 584-90)

[Despite the oracles of the gods, with a perverse will they clamour for unholy war. With emulous zeal they swarm round Latinus' palace. He, like an unmoved ocean cliff, resists; like an ocean cliff which, when a great crash comes, stands steadfast in its bulk amid many howling waves; in vain the crags and foaming rocks roar about, and the seaweed, dashed upon its sides, is whirled back.]

Dryden adds the term 'Rout' and the detail that they are an armed crowd. They do not simply swarm round the palace—*regis circumstant tecta*—but try to force the King and 'insult' the court, the verb 'insult' carrying here the double meaning of 'speak insolently' (OED 2) and the Latinate sense 'attack' (OED 4). The last two lines of the quotation are Dryden's addition, and explicitly present the godfearing ruler confronting unmoved the madness of the rabble.<sup>40</sup> But not for long. Soon he is forced to give way:

He said no more, but in his Walls confin'd,  
Shut out the Woes which he too well divin'd:  
Nor with the rising Storm wou'd vainly strive,  
But left the Helm, and let the Vessel drive. (vii 829-32)

Nec plura locutus,  
Sæpsit se tectis, rerumque reliquit habenas. (vii 599-600)

[And saying no more he shut himself in the palace, and let fall the reins of rule.]

In place of Virgil's image of Latinus dropping the reins of rule (*rerumque reliquit habenas*) Dryden adds two lines whose image of the storm-tossed ship of state recalls the passage in

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<sup>40</sup> At several points Dryden shows his distaste for the crowd, e.g.

The giddy Vulgar, as their Fancies guide,  
With Noise say nothing, and in parts divide. (ii 50-1)  
scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus. (ii 39)

[The wavering crowd is torn into opposing factions.]

Absalom and Achitophel which represents Shafesbury as a dangerous pilot who actually seeks the storms:

A daring pilot in extremity:

Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high

He sought the storms.<sup>41</sup>

Latinus refuses to exercise either political power or religious authority, and will not unbar the gates which symbolically unleash war:

These Rites of old by Sov'raign Princes us'd,

Were the King's Office, but the King refus'd.

Deaf to their Cries, nor wou'd the Gates unbar

Of sacred Peace, or loose th' imprison'd War:

But hid his Head, and, safe from loud Alarms,

Abhor'd the wicked Ministry of Arms. (vii 851-6)

Hoc & tum Æneadis indicere bella Latinus

More jubebatur, tristisque recludere portas.

Abstinit tactu pater, aversusque refugit

Fœda ministeria, & caecis se condidit umbris. (vii 616-19)

[In this manner, then, too, Latinus was bidden to proclaim war on the sons of Aeneas, and to open the grim gates. But the father withheld his hand, shrank back from the hateful office, and hid himself in blind darkness.]

Fœda ministeria is the hateful role or function of opening the gates, but Dryden's phrase 'wicked Ministry of Arms' seems to be a creative mistranslation in that it moves from Latinus' ceremonial role to evoking the actual acts of war in which the very deployment of

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<sup>41</sup> Absalom and Achitophel, ll. 159-61 (The Poems of John Dryden, i 469). This passage in Absalom and Achitophel derives from Aeneid, i 55-6, in patriam, loca fœta furentibus Austris, | Æoliam venit [she came to Aeolia, motherland of storm clouds, tracts teeming with furious blasts]; and when Dryden came to translate these lines from Virgil he recalled his own earlier phrasing in Absalom and Achitophel and wrote: 'The restless Regions of the Storms she sought' (i 77), taking 'restless' from another part of his portrait of Shaftesbury as Achitophel, 'Restless, unfixed in principles and place' (l. 154).

force is seen to be wicked—a far cry from the militaristic preoccupations of William III, or, indeed, of Louis XIV.

Later on, when he sees his city about to fall to the Trojans, Latinus admits that he has been weak as a ruler in acquiescing to his people's demands to violate the treaty with Aeneas:

Good old Latinus, when he saw, too late,  
The gath'ring Storm, just breaking on the State,  
Dismiss'd the Council, 'till a fitter time.  
And own'd his easie Temper as his Crime:  
Who, forc'd against his reason, had comply'd  
To break the Treaty for the promis'd Bride. (xi 711-16)

Concilium ipse pater & magna incepta Latinus  
deserit, ac tristi turbatus tempore differt.  
Multaque se incusat qui non acceperit ultro  
Dardanium Ænean, generumque asciverit urbi. (xi 469-72)

[Father Latinus himself, dismayed by the grimness of the hour, leaves the council and postpones his high designs, often chiding himself that he did not give a ready welcome to Dardan Aeneas and did not, for the city's sake, adopt him as a son.]

The image of the gathering storm is Dryden's addition, and links the violence of the besieging Trojans with the previous violence of the Latian mob. There is no equivalent in the Latin to 'easie Temper', which might remind us of the indolence of Charles II, a ruler who was 'charmed into ease' as Absalom observed;<sup>42</sup> nor does Virgil say that Latinus was forced against his reason to break the treaty. These are Dryden's reflections on the limits of monarchical power and the fallibility of well-intentioned but weak rulers, and they also form part of a sequence of passages in which Dryden intensifies Virgil's descriptions of turbulent and irrational crowds—of the 'vulgar'. Unable to impose his will,

The helpless King is hurry'd in the Throng;  
And what e're Tide prevails, is born along. (xii 859-60)

ipsumque trahunt in mœnia regem: (xii 585)

[and drag the king himself to the ramparts]

Again Dryden's emphasis—adding 'helpless', 'Throng', and the image of the tide—is on the crowd sweeping away the King, as nearly happened during the turbulent street politics of the

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<sup>42</sup> Absalom and Achitophel, l. 708; *The Poems of John Dryden*, i 511.

Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis. When Latinus laments the disaster which he has unwillingly brought about,

much he blames the softness of his Mind,  
Obnoxious to the Charms of Womankind,  
And soon seduc'd to change, what he so well design'd: (xii 895-7)

(‘Obnoxious’ here means ‘susceptible, submissive’: OED 2). This is Dryden’s addition to Virgil, focussing not on the suicide of Latinus’ wife but on the king’s fatal readiness to listen to women.



Virgil’s most complex leader is probably Turnus, who expected to be the heir of Latinus, who leads a revolt of the Latins against Aeneas, and who in the poem’s closing lines is killed by the Trojan chief while begging for his life. Aeneas and Turnus exhibit similar strengths and weaknesses, and their confrontation prevents us from simplifying Aeneas into a straightforwardly virtuous hero as we see each as a reflection of, and a commentary on, his rival. In both characters, but particularly in the case of Turnus, Virgil shows us conflicted states of mind, and Dryden follows Virgil’s interest in the disturbed emotions and psychology of this leader. Turnus is courageous, though this sometimes takes the form of an animal anger: he ranges over the plain like a wolf, ‘Sharp with Desire, and furious with Disdain’ (ix 75; Dryden’s addition); he is like ‘a fierce Tyger’ (ix 986), and his

boiling Youth, and blind Desire of Blood,  
Push'd on his Fury, to pursue the Crowd: (ix 1024-5)<sup>43</sup>

Sed furor ardentem cædisque insana cupido  
Egit in adversos. (ix 760-1)

[But rage and the mad lust of slaughter drove him in fury on the enemy facing him.]

Turnus is frequently described as ‘haughty’, and displays a manly contempt for what he regards as the effeminate Trojans (Dryden, xii 151-66). But he is a genuine hero, and moves ‘With Godlike Grace’ (xi 740)<sup>44</sup>; Virgil has *Fulgebat... aureus* [he shone with gold] (Virgil,

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<sup>43</sup> With Dryden’s ‘boiling Youth’ here cp. his description of Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth) whose ‘warm excesses... | Were construed youth that purged by boiling o’er’ (Absalom and Achitophel, ll. 37-9 in *The Poems of John Dryden*, i 457).

<sup>44</sup> Cp. the epithet ‘godlike’ which Dryden applies to David (King Charles) in Absalom and Achitophel, l. 14; *The Poems of John Dryden*, i 455.

xi 490). He is devout: he respects omens (Dryden, ix 23) and is devoted to his protectress Juno (Dryden, vii 617); indeed, Juno herself pleads with Jove for the life of the 'pious' and 'guiltless Youth' (x 873, 892) who 'devoutly pays you Rites Divine, | And offers daily Incense at your Shrine' (x 876-7).<sup>45</sup> But however devout he may be, Turnus also lives in the world of chance, fate, and fortune, while being only imperfectly aware of what this entails. In an addition to Virgil's Latin, Dryden says that 'He takes the wish'd Occasion' (ix 82), which places Turnus as a follower of the amoral and capricious Occasio or Fortuna, in a direct echo of what Dryden had said of the Machiavellian Achitophel: 'The wished occasion of the Plot he takes'.<sup>46</sup> We shall see the consequences of Turnus' exploitation of Fortune at the end of the poem. Virgil attends closely to the inner workings of Turnus' mind, soul, and passions, and Dryden tends to expand on such passages. Goaded by hostility from his own people as the Latins face defeat, he rouses himself for single combat with Aeneas:

Himself become the Mark of publick Spight,  
His Honour question'd for the promis'd Fight:  
The more he was with Vulgar hate oppress'd;  
The more his Fury boil'd within his Breast:  
He rowz'd his Vigour for the last Debate;  
And rais'd his haughty Soul, to meet his Fate. (xii 3-8)

sua nunc promissa reposci,  
Se signari oculis: ultro implacabilis ardet,  
Attollitque animos. (xii 2-4)

[his own pledge now claimed, and himself the mark of every eye, forthwith he blazes implacable with wrath and raises his courage.]

Dryden accentuates here the isolation of Turnus as 'the Mark of publick Spight', an expansion of Virgil's *Se signari oculis* [himself the mark of every eye], and as one who is 'with Vulgar hate oppress'd' (which has no direct basis in the Latin). Virgil sees Turnus blazing *ultro implacabilis* [implacable with wrath], and summoning up his courage, *Attollitque animos*. Dryden sees Turnus offended by the public disparagement of his honour, rousing his 'vigour' and his 'haughty Soul'; and for Dryden Turnus is explicitly preparing

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<sup>45</sup> Virgil has *et tua largâ | Sæpe manu multisque oneravit limina donis* [and often he has heaped your threshold with many a gift from a lavish hand] (x 619-20).

<sup>46</sup> Absalom and Achitophel, l. 208; *The Poems of John Dryden*, i 473.

himself for death, 'to meet his Fate' in the final conflict with Aeneas. ('Debate' here means 'quarrel' physical conflict': OED 1).

As Book XII unfolds, Turnus's mental state is increasingly 'disorder'd',<sup>47</sup> and there is an extended analysis of his psychology as the tide of battle turns against him:

Stupid he sate, his Eyes on Earth declin'd,  
And various Cares revolving in his Mind:  
Rage boiling from the bottom of his Breast,  
And Sorrow mix'd with Shame, his Soul oppress'd:  
And conscious Worth lay lab'ring in his Thought;  
And Love by Jealousie to Madness wrought.  
By slow degrees his Reason drove away  
The Mists of Passion, and resum'd her Sway. (xii 967-74)

Obstupuit variâ confusus imagine rerum  
Turnus, & obtutu tacito stetit: æstuat ingens  
Imo in corde pudor, mixtoque insania luctu,  
Et furiis agitatus amor, & conscia virtus.  
Ut primum dicussae umbræ, & lux reddita menti... (xii 665-9)

[Aghast and bewildered by the changing picture of disaster, Turnus stood mutely gazing; within that single heart surges mighty shame, and madness mingled with grief, and love stung by fury, and the consciousness of worth. As soon as the shadows scattered and light dawned afresh on his mind...]

Virgil's Turnus stands looking (stetit), astonished and confused, at the changing picture of events (varia confusus imagine rerum), whereas Dryden's Turnus sits with his eyes cast down, pondering his 'various Cares'. As part of his increased emphasis on inwardness, Dryden takes Virgil's varia and applies it to internal rather than external confusion. Both Virgil and Dryden analyse his emotions, and then Virgil says that the shadows clear and light returns to his mind; Dryden has 'mists' rather than shadows, and they are explicitly the mists created by passion. Reason drives them away and resumes her rightful 'Sway'. Dryden is depicting a leader whose reason does not always rule his passions, and who struggles to attain self-government.

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<sup>47</sup> Dryden, xii 1067, 1306; cp. præcipitem [headlong] in Virgil, xii 735; and se, nec cognoscit [he does not recognize himself] in Virgil, xii 903).

Ultimately, it is, one might say, a lack of self-government which leads Turnus unaware into actions which contribute to his own downfall. Having killed young Pallas, Turnus snatches his golden belt:

In an ill Hour insulting Turnus tore  
Those Golden Spoils, and in a worse he wore.  
O Mortals! blind in Fate, who never know  
To bear high Fortune, or endure the low! (x 696-9)  
Quo nunc Turnus ovat spolio gaudetque potitus.  
Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futuræ,  
Et servare modum, rebus sublata secundis! (x 500-2)

[Now Turnus exults in the spoil, and glories in the winning. O mind of man, knowing not fate or coming doom, or how to keep bounds when uplifted with favouring fortune!]

Dryden seizes on Virgil's *nunc* [now] to develop a sense of the ominous significance of this moment, an 'ill Hour', and one in which Turnus foolishly grasps what Fortune gives him. Virgil does not mention Fortune, which is part of Dryden's particular vocabulary for a world subjected to arbitrary and chance events. Dryden's 'insulting' is darker than Virgil's *ovet* [he exults], as it implies contempt for the dead as well as triumph. Later in the poem, when Aeneas has Turnus at his mercy, the Trojan leader at

ev'ry Moment felt

His manly Soul with more Compassion melt. (xii 1362-3)

This is Dryden's replacement for Virgil's account of how Turnus' speech of supplication begins to move Aeneas more and more:

Et jam jamque magis cunctantem flectere sermo  
Cœperat. (xii 940-1)

[and now, as he paused, these words began to sway him more and more]

In Dryden's text here we see the Aeneas whom he had defended in his *Dedication* against those critics who complained about his propensity to weep;<sup>48</sup> this Aeneas is compassionate but also unquestionably 'manly', a detail which Virgil did not need to add. Compassionate, but vengeful. He notices that Turnus is wearing the belt ripped from the body of young Pallas, 'The fatal Spoils which haughty Turnus tore | From dying Pallas' (xii 1366-7).

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<sup>48</sup> The Works of Virgil, sigs. (b)4<sup>v</sup>-(c)<sup>r</sup>.

Aeneas' compassion gives way to rage, and, acting in the name of the dead Pallas, he thrusts his sword into the breast of the disarmed and suppliant Turnus. And here the poem ends—abruptly, some have thought—with the brutal necessity of killing one's enemy. Such is kingship.



When Virgil died in 19 BC, less than a decade had passed since Octavian had received the title Augustus from a grateful Senate and embarked upon the consolidation of his power. The civil war was of all-too-recent memory, and the new settlement still insecure. When Dryden published his translation of the *Aeneid* in 1697, less than a decade had passed since the revolution—glorious or inglorious according to your perspective—which had placed William III on the throne.<sup>49</sup> I have suggested that Dryden's poem is not an allegory—or if it does have allegorical elements these are intermittent, discontinuous, and often teasing allusions. Primarily it is a text which understands that there are contemporary reasons for asking how to live amid the bare ruined choirs, in a world where one has been exiled from one's homeland, be that homeland a political or a religious fabric. If it is indeed the purpose of epic 'to form the Mind to heroick Virtue by Example', and if such a poem 'raises the Soul and hardens it to Virtue',<sup>50</sup> then the virtue which Dryden's translation encourages is not the simple one of military prowess but the more complex and nuanced virtue of faithfulness in an adverse world—of the forms which *pietas* might take in the late seventeenth century. As Dido says to Aeneas,

Like you an Alien in a Land unknown;  
I learn to pity Woes, so like my own. (i 890-1)<sup>51</sup>

The question 'Under which king?' is one which Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid* poses to its readers. The answer which it invites is not so much the partisan response 'James' or 'William' as a reflection on kinds of kingship, on the qualities of government and self-

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<sup>49</sup> Dryden characterizes the period of the Trojans' exile as 'sev'n long Years' (i 46), which is roughly the period between the Revolution of 1688-9 and the completion of Dryden's *Virgil*, which was published in 1697. *Virgil* simply has *multosque per annos* [through many years] (i 35).

<sup>50</sup> *The Works of Virgil*, sig. (a)<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> *Virgil* has: *Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco* [not ignorant of ill, I learn to aid distress] (i 634).

government: on the characteristics of reverence, self-control, and courage which the ideal king needs to have—and which the ordinary citizen also requires in order to survive unchallenged, even under the most benevolent of kings.

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