The Problem of Originality in Vergil

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THE PROBLEM OF ORIGINALITY IN VERGIL

by

Arthur Vincent Kanuch, S. J.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Loyola University.

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VITA AUCTORIS

Mr. Arthur Vincent Kanuch, S. J. was born in St. Louis, Missouri on August 24, 1907. He attended the parochial school of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin in Cleveland, Ohio, where his parents moved in 1918. He attended the South High School for two years and after an interruption of three years, which were spent doing clerical work, he resumed his high school education at Campion Academy, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. He was graduated from Campion in June 1928 and entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio in August of the same year. After four years at Milford he was transferred to the University of St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, where he studied Philosophy and Science. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from this University in June 1933. After two years in St. Louis he was transferred to West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana. Here he completed his three year course of Philosophy and Science. In August 1935, he was sent to teach Latin and Mathematics at St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois.
INTRODUCTION

The poetic prophecy, 'Exegi Monumentum' can be as truly said of Publius Vergilius Maro as of the composer of the lines. For Vergil's splendid monument has continued to shine resplendent from his own to our day. The Eclogues and Georgics were the works which brought Vergil to the foreground among his contemporaries at Rome. Literary ability coupled with a gracious patronage unfolded and gave birth to the poet of Rome and of all Italy. The common opinion of Vergil, which was held by the people of his own age, is given to us by Quintilian.

"I will tell you in the very same words in which I was informed by Afrus Domnitius. When I was a young man I asked him whom he thought made the closest approach to Homer. 'Vergil', he said, 'is second, but he is much closer to first than to third.'" 1

Horace thought so much of Vergil that he called him his animae dimidium. 2

Imitation and emulation of the Mantuan grew with the ages; although at times it was exaggerated and undiscriminating. Seneca, Petronius, and Juvenal learned from him the possibilities of their native tongue. The Vergilianism contained in Tacitus, teaches one to appreciate more and more the happy influence spread by the poet of Rome. We read that St. Augustin...
Vergil as the highest bloom of pagan art. A legend of the middle ages relates that St. Paul, having visited the tomb of Vergil, exclaimed, "What a man I should have made of you if I had met you in your life, 0 greatest of poets." 3

More than literary esteem and appreciation were bestowed upon Vergil during the middle ages. He was honored, by not a few, with the veneration due to a saint. Silius Italicus and Statius kept Vergil's birthday by revering his tomb. Martial regarded the Ides of October as a holyday. "Octobres Maro consecravit Idus." 4 Various legends grew up around the name of Vergil, making him appear, now as a prophet, now as a necromancer. The fact that the Emperor Hadrian as well as his more humble subjects had recourse to the Sortes Vergiliane indicates the universal enthusiasm directed toward Vergil.

But aside from the exaggerated emotional favoritism shown Vergil during this period, there was also a sane literary appreciation of his lofty art. Dante praises him with the illustrious titles:

"Tu duca, tu signore, e tu maestro." 5

Dante also acknowledges the great literary benefit he received from Vergil, and prophesies a glorious immortality to the verse of his master.

"Thou art my master and my author; thou alone art he from whom I took the good style that hath done me honour. 6"
Bacon calls him, "the chastest poet and royalest that is the memory of man to know." After adroitly delineating the qualities and excellencies of the greatest literary producers, Cardinal Newman inserts Vergil's name as the poet of Rome.

"He writes passionately, because he feels keenly; forcibly because he conceives vividly; he sees too clearly to be vague; he is too serious to be otiose; he can analyze his subject and therefore he is rich; he embraces it as a whole and in its parts, and therefore he is consistent; he has a firm hold of it, and therefore he is luminous. When his imagination wells up, it overflows in ornament; when his heart is touched, it thrills along his verse. He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief, it is because few words suffice; when he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say; and his sayings pass into proverbs among his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tesselated with rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign lands, the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces.

Such pre-eminently is Shakespeare among ourselves; such pre-eminently Vergil among the Latins; such in their degree are those writers who in every nation go by the name of Classics."
NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Quintiliani Institutiones Oratoriae, Liber X. 1. 85.


3. "Quem te, inquit, reddidissetem.  
Si te vivum invenissetem,  
Poetarum maxime."


7. Ibid., II, 58 - 60.


Loyola University Press, 1927.
CHAPTER II

MR. SAINTSBURY'S 'HAERESIS VERGILIANA'

In the nineteenth century a wave of adverse criticism rose to wash away the qualities of genius and greatness which were inherent in the works of Vergil. The attacks were launched first by the modern German critics. Professor Niebuhr in his epoch-making lectures, was foremost in questioning Vergil's distinguished seat among the greatest of the world's poets.

He remarks:

"It never occurs to me to place Vergil among the Roman poets of the first order. 1 He did not possess the fertility of genius nor the inventive powers which are required for his task. His Eclogues are anything but a successful imitation of the Idyls of Theocritus..... His didactic poem on agriculture is more successful..... His Aeneid, on the other hand is a complete failure; it is an unhappy idea from beginning to end.

It was surely no affectation in Vergil when he desired to have the Aeneid burnt; he had made that poem the task of his life, and in his last moments he had the feeling that he had failed in it." 2

Bernhardy and Teuffel deny Vergil all creative power. To Andrew Lang, Vergil dwindles into insignificance before the brilliance of the rediscovered Homer.

"But to us who know Homer, Vergil's Epic is indeed 'like moonlight unto sunshine';
is a beautiful empty world, where no real life stirs, a world that shines with a silver lustre not its own, but borrowed from 'the sun of Greece'. 3

"Of all that he (Homer) knew he sang, but Vergil could only follow and imitate with a pale antiquarian interest the things that were alive for Homer." 4

To Mr. William Lawton the works of Vergil are nothing more than a fine mosaic, the stones of which are carefully chosen from by-gone masterpieces. He writes of Vergil's borrowing:

"This high privilege is used above all by Vergil. He borrows royally from nearly every older master of style. Yet the result, if a mosaic at least remains clear, beautiful, even harmonious, in its general design and effect." 5

But the author of the great modern "Haeresis Vergiliana" is the well known critic, Mr. George Saintsbury. He very ostentatiously published his choice of the greatest poets in the world. His panel of 'greatests' as he calls it, was published in his volume, A Scrap Book. 6

"Homer, Aeschylus, Lucretius, Malory, Spenser, Shakespeare, Shelley, Heine, and Victor Hugo. Add to the above mentioned - Dante, Tennyson and Thackery - and I think you have my panel of 'greatests' - though of course, I could add twelves on twelves on twelves almost ad infinitum from all but 'firsts' like Plato and Catullus, like Keats and Baudelaire."

The omission of Vergil's name was a shock to many an admirer of the great Roman poet, and they wrote their strong disapprovals to the author of the Scrap Book.
These letters brought forth a strong disavowal of Vergil's greatness from Mr. Saintsbury in his A Second Scrap Book. 7

"All my life I have been a heretic as to Vergil, and have shocked many good men by being so. In order not to shock them more I have, I think, never given them reasons in anything like detail for the unfaith that is in me. A page or two here devoted to these reasons may not, therefore, be quite improper."

Mr. Saintsbury begins with the complaint of second-handness.

"Little need be said about complete and allowed second-handness. Shakespeare is often second-hand in this or that respect, but seems sometimes, if not always, to be so mainly in order that he may transcend his original. With Vergil it is just the other way." 8

It is true that Vergil borrowed much from his predecessors. Numerous incidents and characters were adopted into his poems, but they were external matter into which Vergil fused a new soul. He did not copy from others; he absorbed material from them and instilled it into his own creation. It is a truism, of course, that, as Sir Sidney Lee has observed, "every great national literature is a fruit of much foreign sustenance and refreshment, however, capable the national spirit may prove of mastering the foreign element." 9 After all the test of a great poet is not what he takes from others but what he makes out of it. The soul of the Aeneid was created by Vergil; the matter, to some extent, he found and borrowed from others.
It is interesting to know that Spenser, who is listed in Mr. Saintsbury's panel of 'greatests' obtained much of his material from his predecessors, as Spenser himself tells us. Brother Leo mentions this fact in his article Nationalism in English Literature; yet he does not call Spenser a second-hand poet or question his originality. Brother Leo writes:

"Spenser's debt to non-English literature is impressive, and in the case of The Shepherd's Calendar at least, was cheerfully acknowledged by the poet himself; even the title comes from a popular French tract, Le Kalendrier des Bergiers. In his epistle to Gabriel Harvey, prefixed to the poem, Spenser mentions Petrarca, Mantuan, Sannazaro, Marot, 'and divers others excellent both Italian and French poets, whose footing this author everie where followeth, yet so as few, but they be well sented can trace him out.' Comparative literature has developed a goodly number of 'well sented' scholars, and the tracing out of Spenser's foreign sources is to-day no difficult task. The Faerie Queene is an elaborate censer so embellished with classical jewels and ornaments of foreign manufacture that its intrinsic splendor dims alike the patriotic devotion of its bearer and the person of the royal divinity beneath whose avid nostrils the wreathing smoke ascended. In Ariosto, Spenser found the model for his Faerie Queene, and in the Italian Ottava Rima the structure of the stanza which now bears his name."

Brother Leo goes on to quote a short passage of Spenser's Faerie Queene, which is nothing more than a translation from Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata. Spenser's words are:
"Gather therefore the rose whilst yet is prime,
For soon comes age that will her pride deflow'r;
Gather the rose of love whilst yet is time." 11

While Tasso's original is as follows:

"Cogliam la rosa in sul mattino adorno
Di queste di, che tosto il seren perde;
Cogliam d'amor la rosa." 12

Shelley too, who graces the panel of Saintsbury's 'greatests' found sustenance in alien poetic meads. His reliance on Dante is astounding, as Professor Kuhns so well says: 13

"It reveals itself on almost every page; it hovers like an atmosphere over his entire later works; it rises in his theories of love, and visions of abstract beauty; it reveals itself by sudden flashes in metaphor and figure, or even single words and expressions.... The extent to which the spirit of Dante pervades the whole of Shelley's poetry can only be fully appreciated by those who carefully compare the two poets."

In fact where can we find a truly great poet who has not received aid and inspiration from the literature of the world? Shakespeare, Dante, Aeschylus, and all the 'greatests' borrowed or based their works upon the literature of others. Homer himself is said to have drawn from innumerable legends which had grown up and become popular with the people.

Mr. Saintsbury next reveals his extreme disgust with the hero Aeneas.
"For a more disgusting hero than Aeneas there is not in the range of epic. And in some astonishing manner he combines uninterestingness with disgust. He is such a poor creature that you would almost be ashamed to kick him, as he deserves, because he would begin complaining to his mother, and you wouldn't like to annoy her." 14

It may well be conceded that Aeneas does not possess the fire, dash and passion of Achilles or Ulysses. But after all the characters of a poem must be subject to the final end and intention of the work. Vergil had no intention of portraying the craftiness and adroitness of a self-vindicating Ulysses. He did not wish to reveal the spirited pride and passion of a selfish Achilles. The Aeneid was to portray the ideal of social, political and religious life of Rome, and its chief character had to possess those traits and virtues, which the ideal Roman citizen, governor, and leader should have. The pietas of Aeneas along with his other high qualities well befit a man of such destiny. As to his valor, I think there are sufficient examples in the latter half of the poem to show that he is far from being a coward. Although he may not show that blind impassioned daring of the Homeric heroes, he does show a heroic boldness, which is tempered with prudence and God-like kindness.

We do agree with Mr. Saintsbury, that Vergil was a polisher and decorator, but we still insist that he was also a 'maker'. Mr. Saintsbury writes: 15
"That Vergil belongs rather to the polishers and decorators than to the real 'makers' I can hardly believe to be seriously denied by anybody save fanatics or hopeless traditionalists. But his polishing and decorating seem to appear to some so exquisite that they make him a 'maker'. It may be mea maxima culpa but I cannot see it. There is a sort of synthetic character about his jewels, even the famous and constantly cited,

'Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore'

owes most of its beauty to artful construction and has not the sudden earth-born blaze of,

'νείναι μέγας μεγάλωτος ἡ κατηθυμένος ἵπποινών'

We may stop to note that in Professor Saintsbury's single-line comparison of Vergil and Homer, it is Homer's not Vergil's line which owes much of its beauty to artful construction. Vergil's line is justly admired because it projects in a dramatic manner, a living picture full of meaning. Yet the two lines are hardly comparable. The Latin author is in a pensive mood, and portrays the pathetic longing of the dejected crew; while Homer was aroused by the thrill of battle, and wrote in a corresponding high pitch of emotion. The circumstances of the two lines are too different to bear comparison. And furthermore, the value of a poem, especially of an epic poem, does not depend upon its single line effects. But let us hear Mr. Saintsbury out. He continues:

"Even where magnificence is not required, and even if we confine comparison to his
own country, time, and language, how far does he fall short of Lucretius and Catullus, nay, of Horace himself at his very best -- I do not say of Ovid. Where has Vergil anything to match the Ave Frater in passionate tenderness, and

'Et, quod vides perisse, perditum ducas,'

in passion unfortunate? No. Vergil is essentially not a 'greatests'. He is a master of rhetoric in the wide but proper sense -- of tropes and figures, of ordonnance and ornament, of convention and rule."

Mr. Saintsbury states that Vergil is a master of rhetoric. It is true, but he is likewise a master of poetry. Poetic ability is in no wise incompatible with rhetorical skill. Cardinal Newman in his essay on Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics carefully explains the difference between the talent for composition and true poetical ability. 17

"A talent for composition, then, is no essential part of poetry, though indispensable to its exhibition. Hence it would seem that attention to the language, for its own sake, evidences not the true poet, but the mere artist."

He then proceeds to contrast the achievements of Pope and Vergil.

"Pope is said to have tuned our tongue. We certainly owe much to him -- his diction is rich, musical, and expressive; still he is not on this account a poet; he elaborated his composition for its own sake. If we give him poetical praise on this account, we may as appropriately bestow it on a tasteful cabinet-maker. This does not forbid us to ascribe the grace of his verse to an inward principle..."
of poetry, which supplied him with archetypes of the beautiful and splendid to work by. But a similar gift must direct the skill of every fancy-artist who subserves the luxuries and elegances of life. On the other hand, though Vergil is celebrated as a master of composition, yet his style is so identified with his conceptions, and their outward development, as to preclude the possibility of our viewing the one apart from the other."

We will see instances of this rhetorical ability coupled with poetic excellence in the latter part of this discussion.

Vergil is far surpassed by the lyric poets, asserts Mr. Saintsbury. It seems a bit incongruous to compare epic with lyric poetry. Essentially, both forms are the same, but the brief, passionate lyric is meant to produce a deep personal feeling, while the chief characteristic of the narrative epic is sustained interest and admiration, owing to the greatness and nobility of the action. Should we concede that the Aeneid has nothing to match the passionate tenderness of the "Ave atque Vale" of Catullus, would it follow that the epic poem is a failure because it does not match or excel a lyric poem in those qualities which belong to a lyric poem? An honest critic would hardly compare Homer with the Greek lyric poets; Dante with Leopardi or Carducci; Shakespeare with Shelley; Milton with Keats. The Aeneid ranks high among great epics if it excels, and it does excel, in those characteristics which are due to a great epic.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


2. Ibid. pp. 662 - 3.


4. Ibid. p. 76.


8. Ibid. p. 253.


15. Ibid. p. 255.


CHAPTER III

MACROBIUS AND VERGIL

We need not be surprised at this disdainful opposition to Vergil. Like all great men, he was always subject to adverse criticism. Suetonius says of him: 1

"Vergil never lacked detractors, which is not strange, for neither did Homer. When the Bucolics appeared, a certain Numintorius wrote Anti-Bucolics, consisting of but two poems, which were a very insipid parody. There is also a book in criticism of the Aeneid by Carvilius Pictor, called Aeneomastix. Marcus Vipsanius called Vergil a supposititious child of Maecenas, that inventor of a new kind of affected language, neither bombastic nor of studied simplicity, but in ordinary words and hence less obvious. Herennius made selections confined to his defects, and Perellius Fausta to his pilferings. More than that, the eight volumes of Quintus Octavius Avitus, entitled Resemblances contain the verses which he borrowed, with their sources. Asconius Pedianus, in a book, which he wrote 'Against the Detractors of Vergil' sets forth a very few of the charges against him, and those for the most part dealing with history and with the accusation that he borrowed a great deal from Homer."

In his Noctes Atticae, Aulus Gellius mentions a number of critics and detractors of Vergil and then devotes several chapters of his book to the defense and exculpation of the Roman poet. The chief charge against Vergil which Aulus Gellius mentions, is
unqualified pilfering. 2

"And in fact we see that Vergil imitated, not only single words of Lucretius, but often almost whole lines and passages."

But it is in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius, which was written in the fourth century, that we find the clearest and most comprehensive account of Vergil's detractors. Macrobius gathered the writings of the ancient critics, grammarians, and interpreters, and after a careful analysis and summarization of their works gave an answer to practically all the serious objections which have been made against Vergil. All of books five and six are taken up with a defense and eulogy of Vergil's works. Twelve chapters of the fifth book consist of excerpts from Homer, which are compared to Vergil's own lines. Macrobius admits that some of Vergil's imitations are inferior to Homer's, but he, nevertheless, is able to fill out a chapter of quotations which are equal to, and another which surpasses the original lines of Homer. He says: 3

"If you ask my opinion, I will say that Vergil not infrequently has improved upon the original in his work of emulation."

Macrobius admits and insists that Vergil was assisted by Homer and the other poets. In fact all his works are interwoven with homeric texts.

"Quod totum Homericis texuit." 4
But Vergil did not merely copy, or even imitate. He looked at Homer with a discerning eye, and emulated him.

"Acriter enim in Homerum oculos intendit, ut aemularetur non modo magnitudinem sed et simplicitatem et praesentiam orationis et tacitam maiestatem." 5

It was indeed no easy matter to take material from another and assimilate it into one's own composition. Whenever Vergil was harried by his critics because of his borrowed material, he was wont to say: 6

"Why don't my critics also attempt the same thefts? If they do they will realize that it is easier to filch his club from Hercules than a line from Homer."

It was a custom among the ancient poets to borrow, in a manifest manner, from their great predecessors, and infuse this material into their own masterpiece. This appropriation was conceded to authors as an achievement, provided the material became alive in the form of the poem. It was only the ignorant or the malignant who would bring harsh accusations against an author for emulating others, says Macrobius. 7

"While I desire to show what assistance our Vergil derived from the perusal of the ancient writers and what flowers he plucked, or what distinctions he took to grace his poems, I fear that I will offer an occasion for reprehension to ignorant and malicious men, who begrudge so great a man the use of another's works. They do not realize that the fruit of this reading is to emulate what you approve of in others and by a skillful twist to turn to your own
advantage what you admire in others. This practice has long been carried on among our own as well as among the famous Grecian poets."

Why then do we begrudge Vergil this practice, asks Macrobius, which was held as commendatory, among the older poets, and rate him as a second-handed poet and thief, because he absorbed matter from evident sources? 8

"Quod si haec societas et rerum communio poetis scriptoribusque omnibus inter se exercenda concessa est, quis fraudi Vergilio vortat, si ad excellendum se quaedam ab antiquoribus mutuatus sit?"
NOTES TO CHAPTER III


5. Macrobius. Ibid. V. XIII. p. 419.


CHAPTER IV

POETIC CREATION

We find implied in this criticism of Macrobius the great problem which confronts every student of literary history. This problem deals with the nature of originality. Did Vergil possess originality? Were his works, especially the Aeneid creations of his own, or something manufactured from others, as Professor Saintsbury would have them? He says of the great poets, excluding Vergil: 1

"The poet makes, but he does not manufacture."

The true poet, like all artists, seems to produce from somewhere in the hidden soul, forms of beauty, new and sublime. The poet himself knows not the workings of this secret power, but, somehow, the created thing of beauty is conceived and executed. From whence does it come? Does he in some strange way make use of the prerogative of the Creator of all things? This cannot be as Mr. Chesterton well says: 2

"Of course it is not easy to point to anything that is entirely creative. In ultimate philosophy as in ultimate theology, men are not capable of creation, but only combination. But there is a workable meaning of the word, which I take to be this: some image evoked by the individual imagination which might never have been evoked by any other imagination, and adds something to the imagery of the world."
No, the artist does not produce his masterpiece out of nothing. He must have apt material for his skillful faculties to work upon. The imagery of the world makes an entrance through the vitalized sense organs of man. They may be gathered at random from nature, or from the beautifully ordered, image inspiring, works of art. "There is," says Goethe: "through all art a filiation. If you see a great master, you will always find that he uses what was good in his predecessors, and that it was this which made him great. Men like Raphael do not spring out of the ground. They took their root in the antique and in the best which had been done before them. Had they not used the advantages of their times there would be little to say about them." 3

Countless ideas and images gathered from nature and literature and stored in the memory, constitute the gross material upon which the poet plies his art. These impressions sink into the unconscious, but they leave their trace, never completely obliterated. There they reside in some mysterious form. They merge and intermingle, grow and develop, under the unifying influence of the living soul. These images are, as it were, set into motion, and sent fluttering about in the hidden cave of the memory, like leaves of all shades and colors blown about by the wind. They are, as it were, drawn into new and fascinating designs under the magnetic forces of the mind. These new creations are then transmitted and expressed through physical media, and rendered understandable to others.
How the magnetic qualities of the mind recast and fashion, -- create new forms of beauty, is a mystery to the artist himself. But that the mind works upon predisposed matter, and not on a "tabula rasa", is evident. God alone is possessed of the power of creation in the true sense of the word, -- the making of something out of nothing. If we were to understand artistic creation in this sense, we could claim no original artists. Mr. John Livingston Lowes, about whom we will hear more later, writes of that erroneous conception of literary creation.4

"The notion that creative imagination, especially in its highest exercise, has little or nothing to do with facts, is one of the pseudodoxia epidemica which die hard. For the imagination never operates in a vacuum. Its stuff is always fact of some order somehow experienced.

But 'creation' like 'creative' is one of those hypnotic words which are prone to cast a spell upon the understanding and dissolve our thinking into haze. And out of this nebulous state of the intellect springs a strange but widely prevalent idea. The shaping spirit of the imagination sits aloof, like God as He is commonly conceived, creating in some thaumaturgic fashion out of nothing its visionary world. That and that only is deemed to be 'originality', -- that, and not the imperial moulding of old matter into imperishably new forms."

Yet creation in the artistic sense is entirely different from transcribing the lines of another, as it were, by rote. To be original the poet must so comprehend and possess his accumulated images until they are, as it were, identified with
himself. He then draws from this rich source all those combined and united qualities which go to make up the well ordered composition.

A fine example and explanation of the workings of the creative imagination is offered us by Mr. John Livingston Lowes, in his book, The Road to Xanadu. It happened that Mr. Lowes discovered a small note book kept by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This little book contained notes and jottings on anything that made a deep impression on the assimilative mind of Coleridge. It contained personal observations, excerpts from his wide readings, bits of verse, clever thoughts, -- a veritable treasure-bag full of purple patches. Mr. Lowes tells us that Coleridge was an omnivorous reader. He read with a falcon eye and took careful note of appealing passages, passages which would serve as raw material for striking darts of poetic beauty. He verified quotations and followed out references. He left a record in his note book of the most interesting books he had read.

With the aid of this manuscript volume of notes, as well as the other works of Coleridge, Mr. Lowes was able to secure and reread the old tales of history, travel, and adventure which were wont to delight the imagination of Mr. Coleridge. After Lowes had reread the books noted down by Coleridge, he was able to identify the sources which, beyond any doubt, gave rise to the poetry in, The Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, and Christabel. For the sake of an example, I shall quote passages
from books which, according to Mr. Lowes' convictions have been carefully read and pondered over by Coleridge. These passages, claims Mr. Lowes, are undoubtedly the sources for parts of The Ancient Mariner. The evidence is overwhelming when the verses of the Ancient Mariner are compared with the original sources. The first passage is originally taken from a letter of Father Bourze. 5

"In my voyage to the Indies... when the ship ran a pace, we often observed a great light in the wake of the ship.... The wake seemed then like a river of milk. Particularly, on the 12th of June, the wake of the vessel was full of large Vortices of Light.... sailed slowly, the Vortices appeared and disappeared again immediately like flashes of lightning. Not only the wake of a Ship produces this Light, but Fishes also in swimming leave behind 'em a luminous track.... I have sometimes seen a great many Fishes playing in the sea, which have made a kind of artificial fire in the water, that was very pleasant to look on."

The following passage is taken from Cook's voyage to the Pacific Ocean. 6

"During a calm, on the morning of the 2nd, some parts of the sea seemed covered with a kind of slime; and some small sea animals were swimming about. The most conspicuous of which were the gelatinous... kind, almost globular; and another sort smaller, that had a white, or shining appearance, and were very numerous. Some of these last were taken up and put into a glass cup, with some salt water.... When they began to swim about, which they did with equal ease, upon their backs, sides, or belly, they emitted the brightest colours
of the most precious gems. Sometimes they assum{ed} various tints of blue... which were frequently mixed with ruby, or opaline redness; and glowed with a strength sufficient to illuminate the vessel and water.... But with candle light, the colour was chiefly a beauti-
ful pale green tinged with a burnished gloss; and in the dark, it had a faint appearance of glowing fire. They proved to be.... probably, an animal which has a share in producing some sorts of the lucid appearance, often observed near ships at sea, in the night."

This is a description of a fish given by Bartram in his Travels, publishes in 1791. 7

"What a beautiful little creature is this fish before me gliding to and fro, and figuring in the still clear waters, with his orient attendants and associates. The whole fish is of a pale gold (or burnished brass) colour... the scales are powdered with red russet, silver, blue and green specks, 'while at the gills is' a little spatula.... encircled with silver, and velvet black."

Sir Richard Hawkins obtained this interesting observation when voyaging through the South Seas. 8

"... an instance of wherefo he (Hawkins) sheweth in the Queenes Navie, in the yeere of Our Lord 1590, at the Asores many moneths becalmed the Sea thereby being replenished with seuerall sorts of gellies and formes of Serpents, Adders, and Snakes, Green, Yellow, Black, White, and some partie-coloured wherefo many had life, being a yard and a halfe, or two yards long. And they could hardly draw a Bucket of Water, cleare of some corruption withall."
The description of snakes seems to have made a remarkable impression on Coleridge. 9

"In the Sea we saw... Abundance of Water Snakes of several Sorts and Sixes; This day we saw two Water snakes. The Snake swam away very fast, keeping his head above water."

The shadows in the following passage have so strong a resemblance to those in the poem of Coleridge, that it is hard to doubt the influence. 10

"Commonly we see this (bow) before the Ship and sometimes also behind to the Lee-ward.... over-against the Sen, where the Shadow of the Sail falleth. It is not the shadow of the Sail, but a Bow shereth itself in the shadow of the Sail. We see this pleasant reflection, in the small drops of the Salt-water of several colours, like the Rainbows in the Skies."

Now after carefully reading the above passages, note the similarity of certain pictures and ideas contained there, and in the following verses of the Ancient Mariner. This creative imagination of Coleridge drew forth from the deep well of buried material, which his 'Falcon Eye' had plucked and stored away, the following creation. 11

"Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes."
Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire;
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire."

Although these passages just quoted may contain the dead words and naked ideas which go to make up Coleridge's passages, they in no way contain the soul and spirit of Coleridge's creation. Coleridge indeed took from this raw material, but he transformed, revivified, informed it with a new soul. This new principle of order and meaning, is all that any poet can create. If man would make anything, he must make it out of something, for creation in its strict sense is an attribute of God alone.

Mr. Lowes attempts to explain the constituents of a new creation. It consists of the form which is the unifying and characterizing principle of the poem. This form is intimately united to those chosen ideas and phantasms which have been floating about in the storehouse of the memory, and together they constitute the new composition. Mr. Lowes writes: 12

"Behind The Rime of the Ancient Mariner lie crowding masses of impressions, incredible in their richness and variety. That admits no doubt. But the poem is not the sum of the impressions, as a heap of diamond dust is the sum of its shining particles; nor is the poet merely a sensitized medium for their reception and transmission. Beneath the poem lie also innumerable blendings and fusions of impressions brought about below the level of conscious mental processes. That too is no longer open to question.
But the poem is not the confluence of unconsciously merging images, as a pool of water forms from the coalescence of scattered drops; nor is the poet a somnambulist in a subliminal world. Neither the conscious impressions nor their unconscious interpenetrations constitute the poem. They are inseparable from it, but it is an entity which they do not create. On the contrary, every impression, every new creature rising from the potent waters of the Well, is what it now is through its participation in the whole, foreseen as a whole in each integral part—a whole which is the working out of a controlling imaginative design. The incommunicable, unique essence of the poem is its form.

Yet the pieces that compose the pattern are not new. In the world of the shaping spirit, save for its pattern, there is nothing new that was not old. For the work of the creator is the mastery and transmutation and reordering into shapes of beauty of the given universe within us and without us."

We may justly infer that Vergil in like manner, drew from materials which were not new, and that he shaped and remodelled this old material into a new composition. It was the form of his great poem, produced by his own creative genius, which made an original masterpiece out of well-worn materials. Hence the charge of second-handness made by Mr. Saintsbury against Vergil dissolves in the face of true evidence, and remains powerless to deprive Vergil of his greatness and originality.
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV


CHAPTER V

VERGIL'S ORIGINALITY AND GREATNESS

We will now look at Vergil's works and attempt to catch a glimpse of his greatness and originality. Since space will not allow for a discussion on all his works, we will limit ourselves to the Aeneid, especially since the Aeneid, as Mr. Saintsbury says, "is the piece which, as being most ambitious, shows his failures most." 1

The general characteristics of a great epic are greatness of action, unity of composition, and sustained interest. That the Aeneid excels in these characteristics is easily shown. In order to appreciate, first of all, the greatness of the Aeneid, it is necessary to understand the author's purpose in composing the poem. He wished above all to produce a great epic, which would represent and commemorate the ideals of the Roman world, in its social, religious, and political aspects. Vergil was preeminently fitted for the supreme task of creating the great Roman ideal. He was not only the greatest of Latin poets, but he was imbued with Roman culture to the finger tips, as Mr. J. W. Mackail observes. 2

"Vergil is the foremost name in Latin poetry. But he also combines in himself, in a unique way and to a unique extent, the racial and cultural elements out of which the Latin civilization was
compounded. He looked, as few have done, before and after. Standing at the point of junction between two worlds, he is the interpreter, we may even call him the creator, of a great national ideal. That ideal was at once political, social and religious. The supremacy of Rome assumed in his hands the aspect of an ordinance of Providence, towards which all previous history had been leading up under divine guidance. It meant the establishment of an empire to which no limit of time or space was set, and in which the human race should find ordered peace, settled government, material prosperity, the reign of law and the commonwealth of freedom. His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora ponit, such is the decree of the Lord of Heaven."

Throughout the poem it is easy to note the patriotic affection Vergil had for his country. To spread the idea of unity among the people, he made the names of Italy, and the Livinian Shores, synonymous with Rome. In the very first lines he mentions the shores of Italy and Livinia, as the destination of the Trojans and the foundation for the high walls of Rome. 3

"Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus
ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit
Litora.....
Inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae."

The Aeneid is the epic of the nation, as Albert Garnier so well says. 4
"Virgil's imagination constantly takes its stand on Roman realities, on direct knowledge of the land and things of Italy, on national history, and on the political conception of Augustus. In spite of the transposition of subject into the realm of myth the Aeneid is truly the epic of Rome as mistress of the world, of Italy and of Latium, the epic of the moral and material restoration for which Augustus strove."

Secondly, Vergil wished to glorify the Emperor Augustus. While singing the praises of the Emperor and his happy reign, he at the same time enkindles flames of devotion and loyalty in the hearts of the people, toward their leader and his rule. "For a century," writes Mr. Mackail, "the Roman world had been subjected to shattering disturbances, economical and social no less than political. An immense influx of wealth from the conquest or annexation of new territory had been followed and outrun by wasteful administration and profligate expenditure. The resources of the provinces had been mercilessly exploited. The flower of Italian population had been drafted into the armies. Agriculture, the staple industry of Italy and the foundation of its solid prosperity, had fallen into a deplorable condition. Much land was derelict and had relapsed into thicket or morass. The class of yeomen farmers whose industry, piety, and domestic virtue had made Rome great was dwindling away. Many of them had perished in war; many more had a worse fate. Unable to face the competition of cheap foreign foodstuffs, raised by slave-labour, that poured in from all parts of the
Mediterranean, and affected by the universal restlessness which had come over the world, they drifted into towns and became an unemployed and discontented proletariat, a loose ballast which was a constant danger to the ship of state as it laboured through the waves of political revolution." 5

This was the situation which Augustus was set to govern. He strove to rid the country of the dogs of war, and restore peace and prosperity. Note the distaste with which Vergil speaks of war: 6 - 7

"Dicam horrida bello,
Dicam acies actosque animis in funera reges."

"Inferre manu lacrimabile bellum."

When Vergil sang of arma, he did not, like Homer, exult in the clash of arms and the glory of the battle. He saw the grim reality of war, and despised its insane folly. The action of Turnus, when he was struck by the war-poisoned fire-brand of Allecto, is symbolic of war's madness. 8 - 9

"Olli somnum ingens rumpit pavor,ossaque
et artus perfundit toto proruptus corpore sudor.
Arma amens fremit, arma toro tectisque requirit.
Saevit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli, ira super."

"A giant terror breaks his sleep,
And, bursting forth, big sweat-drops steep his body, bone and limb.
'My sword, my sword,' he madly shrieks;
His sword he through the chamber seeks
And all the mansion o'er:
Burns the fierce fever of the steel,
The guilty madness warriors feel,
And jealous wrath yet more."

When Aeneas has slain his fierce opponent, Lausus, we see a touch of the Lacrimae rerum portrayed in Vergil's words. He beholds the pathetic sadness of a mother's love behind the disastrous deed. 10

"Validum namque exigit ensem
Per medium Aeneas iuvenem tē tumque recondit.
Transit et permam mucro, levia arma minaci
Et tunicam molli mater quam neverat auro,
Implevitque sinum sanguis."

"Lo, with full force Aeneas drives
The weapon, and his bosom rives,
Through the light shield that made him bold,
The vest his mother wove with gold,
The blade held on: his breast runs o'er
With gurgling rivulets of gore."

Vergil succeeded well in divesting war of its false colours and bright flare. He portrayed its true picture in all its fierce reality. The false god of war was unmasked before the children of peace. They had the great Augustus to thank for the peace which they now enjoyed. The prophesy of Anchises rightly exults him as the much awaited founder of the golden age, which they were now enjoying. 11

"Hic vir, his est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
Saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
Saturno quondam, super et Garmanantes et Indos
Proferet imperium... iacet extra sidera tellus."

"This, this is he, so oft the theme
Of your prophetic fancy's dream,
Augustus Caesar, god by birth;
Restorer of the age of gold
In lands where Saturn ruled of old;
O'er Ind and Garamant extreme
Shall stretch his reign, that spans the earth."

How could they help admiring the illustrious descendent of Aeneas, who so admirably governed the vast empire of which they were so proud?

"Externi venient generi, qui sanguine nostrum
Nomen in astra ferant, quorumque a stirpe nepotes
Omnia sub pedibus, qua sol utrumque recurrens
Aspicit oceanum, vertique regique videbunt."

"Lo, foreign bridegrooms come, whose fame
To heaven shall elevate our name:
The sons who from their loins have birth
Shall see one day the whole broad earth,
From main to main, from pole to pole,
Beneath them bow, beneath them roll."

The awesome portrayal of the supernatural agencies was another means of impressing the sublimity of the action on the mind of the readers. Although the interference of the gods serves as efficient causality in the flow of events, their action
was not altogether necessary. In almost every case the results might have been produced by natural agencies. Yet because the supernatural makes such a strong appeal to the small mind of man, Vergil introduces the great Jupiter and Juno, Venus, Alecto, and Vulcan, and the other Grecian deities. They are not, however, the gods in whom Vergil and the Roman people placed their belief. "If for poetic purposes," says Mr. Wight Duff, "he accepts the gods from mythology, he does not believe in the mythological representation. He turns critically upon his account, with a saving clause, 'si credere dignum est' (VI, 173) or with a question, 'tantaene animis caelestibus irae?' (I, 2)." 

The real Roman gods were the sacred 'penates', carried from the altars of ruined Troy. 

"Tu, genitor, cape sacra manu patriosque penates."

Vergil embraced his religion in his philosophic concept of the universe. He explains his belief in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, in a sense which would appeal to the mind of the Roman people. By means of this doctrine he is able to propound the line of Rome's illustrious progeny; for the souls which are to animate the great men of the nation are waiting in the happy fields of Elysium. After drinking the waters of forgetfulness they will desire to return again and take up their abode in the land of physical material existence.
"His omnis, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,
Lethaeum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno,
Scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant
Rursus et incipient in corpora velle reverti."

"All these, when centuries ten times told
The wheel of destiny have rolled,
The voice divine from far and wide
Calls up to Leathe's river-side,
That earthward they may pass once more
Remembering not the things before
And with a blind propension yearn
To fleshy bodies to return."

Anchises then points out the souls who are to become the leading men of Rome. 16

"Nunc age, Dardaniam prolem quae deinde sequatur
Gloria, qui maneant Itala de gente nepotes,
Inlustris animos nostrumque in nomen ituras
Expediam dictis, et te tua fata docebo."

"Now listen what the future fame
Shall follow the Dardanian name,
What glorious spirits wait
Our progeny to furnish forth:
My tongue shall name each soul of worth,
And show you of your fate."

Then the parade of Rome's greatest proceeds before the eyes of Aeneas, those famous men, whose lives were known and loved by the Roman people. This religious explanation of the great Roman heros must have made a great impression on the patriotic sons of so noble a race.
The greatness of the epic is enhanced also by the incorporation of the ancient legends which were well known to the people. The wanderings of Aeneas were recounted by Naevius, in his *Bella Punica*. The gods, with their characteristic traits and lineage were known from Grecian literature. Vergil covered the field of history and legend from the earliest days, in all that was vitally concerned with Rome. And for the first time he throws the stories of Troy and Rome into the light of a universal providence. The Homeric and Roman epics become the epics of the civilized world, as Mr. Conway points out. 17

"It is not, we now discover, the fate of a few exiles which is at stake; it is the purpose of creation itself; the whole divine ordering of the world from the first stirring of fiery breath in præmæval chaos, from the first imparting of divine life to individual man and other creatures down to the process of civilizing barbarous humanity; the process of which the Roman Empire was to be the consummation."

The all-embracing eye of Vergil took in the entire universe; his poetic genius grasped the opportunity and executed a splendid vision which caught the eye not only of the people it mirrored but of all mankind. Mr. Mackail says of Virgil's happy accomplishment: 18

"To the kingdom of poetry Virgil thus strove to annex the provinces of human knowledge, history, archaeology, philosophy. Such an attempt was never made again until Dante; it is never likely to be made again with anything like equal success until a poet of immense learning
and genius comes to birth just as the precise time which is, as Virgil's time was, the critical point of passage from an old to a new world. Or it may be that the genius makes his own time rather than is made by it. In any case, the anima mundi works both in the poet and in his environment.... in Virgil and the Aeneid was heard not only the imperial and prophetic voice of Rome, but the very voice of mankind itself speaking, with majestic tenderness of patience and obedience, of honour in life, of hope beyond death."

It is evident that the quality of greatness is contained in the Aeneid.

Unity of the poem is preserved by its singleness of purpose. All tends toward the establishment of the new Trojan colony, which was destined to grow into magnificent Rome. Within the unified whole the Aeneid contains lesser unities which have a completeness in themselves, but none the less are organically united to form the artistic whole. The poem is divided into two main sections. The wanderings of Aeneas over land and sea constitute the first part, while the second is taken up with his conquest of Latium. Each half of the poem is composed of lesser unities. In fact, practically each book in itself is designed as a separate part, complete in itself. How then does Vergil join each individual section into a unified whole?

Mr. Robert Seymour Conway answers this question very satisfactorily. 19
"It is the governing power of its crowning book, which Vergil has placed in the center, to unite all that stands before it and all that stands after."

Far from being an imitation of the eleventh book of the Odyssey, a mere episode, Vergil has made of the sixth book what Mr. Conway calls "the keystone of the whole poem,"--so profound is the influence of the book upon our feelings about what has preceded and what is to follow." 20 The trials and disasters of his wanderings has often filled Aeneas with discouragement and despair. He is particularly dejected when his ships are fired by the Trojan dames, immediately following the funeral games, and half intends to give up his search for Italy. 21

"But good Aeneas, all distraught
By that too cruel blow
In dire perplexity of thought
Alternates to and fro.
Still doubting, should he take his rest
Unmindful of the Fates behest,
In Sicily, or seek once more
To compass the Italian shore."

It was at this point that the sorely afflicted Aeneas receives aid from his beloved father. Anchises appears to Aeneas at the behest of Jupiter, and induces him to continue his search for the Latian fields. The words of Anchises are indeed very heartening. 22

"Nate, mihi vita quondam, dum vita manebat,
Care magis, Nate, Iliacis exercite fatis,
... Lectos iuvenes, fortissima corda defer in Italium."
"My son, more dear, while life remained, 
E'en than that life to me, 
My son, exercised and trained 
In Ilium's destiny.... 
Picked youths, the bravest of the brave, 
Be these your comrads o'er the wave."

Although Aeneas is filled with hope by the vision and words of his father, he is, however, not sufficiently disposed to complete the great work of founding the Roman race. He could imagine the fierce reality of the ominous words of Anchises. 23

"Gens dura atque aspera cultu 
Bebellanda tibi Latio est."

"For haughty are the tribes and rude 
That Latium has to be subdued."

Anchises would have Aeneas visit him in the happy grove of Elysium. Anchises has, as it were, already arranged an audience and secured a guide for his devoted son. 24

"Dis tamen ante 
Infernas accede domos et Averna per alta 
Congressus pete, Nate, meos. Non me impia namque 
Tartara habent, tristes umbrae, sed amoena piorum 
Concilia Elysiumque colo. Huc casta Sibylla Nigrarum multo pecudum te sanguine ducet."

"But ere you yet confront the foe, 
First seek the halls of Dis below, 
Pass deep Avernus' vale, and meet 
Your father in his own retreat. 
Not Tartarus' prison-house of crime 
Detains me, nor the mournful shades: 
My home is in the Elysian clime, 
With righteous souls, 'mid happy glades. 
The virgin Sibyl with the gore 
Of sable sheep shall ope the door."
It is a father's love for his devoted son, which induces Anchises to summon Aeneas into the lower world. But it is not personal affection alone. Anchises is extremely anxious and concerned about his son's achievements. Anchises has realized the vacillating mood which has come upon the Trojan leader. A remedy must be found to heal the ailing mind of Aeneas and strengthen his spirit with renewed hope and bold determination. This remedy, which can secure victory to Aeneas and bring honor and glory to the Trojan race, lies in the hands of Anchises. A glimpse of Rome's magnificent heroes, a glance at her immense power and glorious destiny will be enough to change the crest-fallen Aeneas, all but beaten by fate and misfortune, into an eager and courageous leader, who will overcome the armies of Latium and the evil designs of the gods and men. Only a hint of all this is given to Aeneas by the simple promise: 25

"Tum genus omne tuum et quae dentur moenia disces."

"Then shall you learn your future line And what the walls the Fates assign."

It rests upon the good will and loyal devotion of the pious Aeneas to go to all the trouble of visiting this strange and mysterious world, if the imperial destiny of Rome be achieved. All depended upon the loyalty and love of Aeneas toward his father. If his parental affection were strong enough to induce him into the lower world, the achievement of Rome's destiny would be assured. If love and loyalty were not strong enough to compel the arduous
descent, would Aeneas have been brave enough, without the pro-
phetic inspiration, to complete the task of laying the corner-
stone of the empire? The fact that Aeneas did make the descent
into hell and secure the needed inspiration does not make the
contrary, antecedently impossible. The heroic nature of Aeneas,
however, won him his destiny, by venturing through the mysteri-
ous world of Dis. "Vicit iter durum pietas." 26

The spiritualizing effect of this book upon Aeneas
pervades and envelopes the entire action. Mr. J. W. Mackail
calls it a transcendent stroke of genius. 27

"Then the transcendent stroke of genius
came. The sixth book slips the keystone
into the interrupted arch, and locks the
whole structure. It is even more than
that. The two epics, as by this time
we may call them, the epic of Troy and
Carthage and the epic of Italy, are
brought into unity; but they are brought
into unity, if I may borrow a phrase from
the mathematicians, through a fourth
dimension. The vision of the sixth book
does not merely unify, but transcends and
absorbs, the whole action of the poem."

Interest is held through by a happy selection of
episodes. The gripping adventures which Aeneas must undergo,
dum conderet urbem, 28 carry the reader through the recurring
moods of saddening despair, exultant joy, dire longing, and the
felicity of hopes attained. The reader is made to realize and
appreciate the truth of the line, 29

"Tantae molis erat Romam condere gentem"
"So vast the labour to create
The fabric of the Roman state."

Notice how graphically Vergil describes the fury of a storm. 30

"Ac venti velut agmine facto,
Qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine
perflant,
Incubere mari totumque a sedibus imis
Una Eurusque notusque ruunt creberque
procellis
Africus et vastos volvunt ad litora
fluctus."

"At once, like soldiers in a band,
Forth rush the winds, and scour the land:
Then lighting heavily on the main,
East, South, and West with storms in train,
Heave from its depth the watery floor,
And roll great billows to the shore."

Immediately attention is drawn to the noise and confusion on the ship, tossed about on the waves. 31

"Insequitur clamorque virum stridorque
rudentem."

"Then come the clamour and the shriek,
The sailors shout, the main-ropes creak."

The sky becomes dark amid the flashes of fire and the pealing rolls of thunder. The threat of death is seen in the elements. 32

"Eripiunt subito nubes caelumque diemque
Teucrorum ex oculis, ponto nox incubat
atra;
Intonuere poli et crebris micat ignibus
aether,
Praesentemque viris intentant omnia mortem."
"All in a moment sun and skies
Are blotted from the Trojans' eyes:
Black night is brooding o'er the deep.
Sharp thunder peals, live lightning leap
The stoutest warrior holds his breath,
And looks as on the face of death."

The ships are rendered helpless by the sudden turn of the winds.
They flounder over the edge of a mountain wave and are let down
into the trough near the sand. 33

"Talia iactanti stridens Aquilone procella
Velum adversa ferit, fluctusque ad sidera
tollit.
Franguntur remi, tum prora avertit et undis
Dat latus, insequitur cumulo praeruptus
aquae mons.
Hi summio in fluctu pendent, his unda
dehiscens
Terram inter fluctus aperit, furit aestus
harenis."

"Now, howling from the north, the gale
While thus he moans him, strikes his sail:
The swelling surges climb the sky;
The shattered oars in splinters fly;
The prow turns round, and to the tide
Lays broad and bare the vessel's side;
On comes a billow, mountain-steep,
Bears down, and tumbles in a heap.
These stagger on the billow's crest;
These to the yawning depth deprest
See land appearing 'mid the waves,
While surf with sand in turmoil raves."

This storm recalls the burden of responsibility resting upon the
despondent heart of Aeneas, and he envies the noble death of the
Trojans who were swept down the waves of Simois. 34

"Mene Iliacis occumbere campis
Non potuisse tuaque animam hanc effundere
dextra,
Saevus ubi Aeacidae telo iacet Hector,
ubi ingens;
Sarpedon, ubi tot Simois correpta sub
undis
Scuta visum galeasque et fortia corpora
volvit."

"Why pressed I not the plain that day,
Yielding my life to you,
Where stretched beneath a Phrygian sky
Fierce Hector, tall Sarpedon lie;
Where Simois tumbles 'neath his wave
Shields, helms, and bodies of the brave?"

For a scene of action, observe the dashing Laocoon as he rushes out from the gates of Troy. 35

"Laocoon ardens summa decurrit ab arce"

And having spoken his distrust of the Argives, 36

"Quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis."

he lets his weapon fly into the ribs of the groaning monstrous horse. 37

"Validis ingentem viribus hastam
In latus inque feri curvam campagibus alvum
Contorsit. Stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso
Insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae."

"And with his arm's full force
Straight at the belly of the horse
His mighty spear he cast:
Quivering it stood: the sharp rebound
Shook the huge monster: and a sound
Through all its caverns passed."
Pity and pathos lie in the failure of the crowd to recognize the
disastrous trap which wrought the destruction of the city. But
it seems the fates decreed it so. 38

"Et, si fata deum, si mens non laeva
fuisset
Impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare
latebras
Troiaque nunc staret, priamique arx alta
maneres."

"And then, had fate our weal designed
Nor given us a perverted mind,
Then had we moved us to deface
The Greeks' accursed lurking-place,
And Troy had been abiding still,
And Priam's tower yet crowned the hill."

Note the delicate portrayal of human nature, as the children run
up and touch the rope attached to the monster. 39

"Pueri circum innuptaeque puellae
Sacra canunt funemque manu contingere
gaudent."

"While youths and maidens sing glad songs
And joy to touch the harness-thong."

A striking example of the virtuous devotion of Aeneas is seen in
his departure from the burning Troy. Bracing his aged father,
followed by his loving wife, and grasping the little hand of
Julius, he makes his way. 40 - 41

"Ergo age, care pater, cervici imponere
nostrae;
Ipse subibo umeris, nec me labor iste
gravabit."
Quo res cumque cadent, unum et commune periclum;
Una salus ambobus erit. Mihi parvus Iulus.
Sit comes, et longe servet vestigia conjunx...
Dextrae se parvus Iulus
Implicuit sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis
Pone subit coniunx."

"Come, mount my shoulders, "dear my sire:
Such load my strength shall never tire.
Now, whether fortune smiles or lowers,
One risk, one safety shall be ours.
My son shall journey at my side,
My wife her steps by mine shall guide,
At distance safe.....
Iulus fastens to my side,
His steps scarce matching with my stride;
My wife behind me takes her road."

Witness his anxious search for his lost wife through the house filled with lurking dangers. 42

"Stat casus renovare omnis omnemque reverti
Per Troiam et rursus caput obiectare periculis."

Yet in accord with the will of the gods he is resigned to depart without her.

See the paternal joy, with which he fills the heart of his father, Anchises, when they first meet in the Elysian fields. 43

"Alacris palmas utrasque tetendit,
Effusaeque genis lacrimae et vox excidit ore:
'Venisti tandem, tuaque expectata parenti
Vicit iter durum pietas? datur ora tueri
Nate, tua et notas audire et reddere voces!'"
"With eager act both hands he spread,  
And bathed his checks with tears, and said:  
'At last, and are you come at last?  
Has filial tenderness o'er past  
Hard toil and peril sore?  
And may I hear that well-known tone,  
And speak in accents of my own,  
And see that face once more?'"

The touching incident of Nisus and Euryalus constitutes one of the most interesting episodes of the poem. Their like age and common aspirations, draw them into a close friendship.  

"His amor unus erat pariterque in bella ruebant."

"Love made them one in every thought,  
In battle side by side they fought."

When Nisus proposed his daring mid-night expedition, Euryalus would not be left behind.  

"Mene igitur socium summis adiungere rebus,  
Nise fugis? Solum te in tanta pericula mittam?"

"Can Nisus aim at heights so great  
Nor take his friend to share his fate?  
Shall I look on and let you go  
Alone to venture 'mid the foe?"

This noble spontaneous offering of themselves brought forth words of praise and commendation. The gods would spare the race for such heoric worth.  

"Di patrii, quorum semper sub numine Troia est  
Non tamen omnino Teucros delere paratis
Cum talis animos iuvenem et tam certa
tulistis pectora."

"Ye gods, who still are Ilium's stay
No, no, ye mean not to destroy
Down to the ground the race of Troy
When such the spirit of her youth
And such the might of patriot truth."

The adventurers then make their way through the night and come to the camp of the enemy. There they see the incautious enemy sprawled about the camp, -- an irresistible temptation to their sharp swords. 47

"Euryale audendum dextra, Nunc ipsa
vocat res,
Hoc iter est."

"'Now,' Nisus cries, 'for hearts and hands:
This, this the hour our force demands.
Here pass we.'"

As they depart through the path of slain enemies, Euryalus, loath to see the beautiful spoils left behind must snatch the fateful helmet of Messapus. This glittering prize betrays the two adventurers, as they continue their journey through the woods. 48

"Et galea Euryalum sublustrum noxitis in
umbra
Prodidit immemorem radiisque adversa
refulsit."

"The helmet through the glimmering shade,
At once the unwary boy betrayed,
Seen in the moon's full light."
Hindered in the ensuing flight by his heavy headgear, Euryalus falls behind. Nisus, on discovering his absence, returns to search for his companion. He finds Euryalus in the midst of the enemy. Not knowing what else to do, Nisus hurls his spear from the dark. Consternation seizes the unwary group. Incensed with the death of his men, Volcens the leader, seeks revenge on Euryalus, and rushes upon him with raised sword. Here we see the extraordinary tenderness and love which Nisus had for his friend. He cries out, as he dashes from cover:

"Me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum
0 Rutuli, mea fraus omnis, nihil iste nec ausus
Nec potuit: Caelum hoc et conscia sidera testor;
Tantum infeliciem nimium delexit amicum."

"Me, guilty me, make me your aim,
0 Rutules, mine is all the blame;
He did no wrong, nor e'er could do;
That sky, those stars attest 'tis true;
Love for his friend so freely shown,
This was his crime, and this alone."

Thus does Vergil portray his conception of a true friendship.

Note the details in this picture of the departing army and the watching mothers.

"Stant pavidae in muris matres oculisque sequuntur
Pulveram nubem et fulgentis aere catervos.
Olli per dumos, qua proxima meta viarum,
Armati tendunt; it clamor, et agmine facto
Quadripedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum."
"The matrons on the rampart stand;  
Their straining eyes pursue  
The dusty cloud, the mail-clad band  
Yet glimmering on the view.  
Through thicket and entangled brake  
The mearest road the warriors take,  
And hark, the war-cry's sound;  
The column forms, and horny feet  
Recurrently the campaign beat  
And shake the crumbling ground."

See how the eyes of all draw attention to the maiden-warrior Camilla. 51

"Illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa  
inventus  
Turbaque miratur matrum et prospectat  
euntem,  
Attonitis inhians animis ut regius ostro  
Velet honos levis umeros, ut fibula crinem  
Auro internectat, Lyciam ut gerat ipsa  
pharetram  
Et Pastoralem praeefixa cuspide myrtum."

"Where'er she moves, from house and land  
The youths and ancient matrons throng,  
And fixed in greedy wonder stand  
Beholding as she speeds along;  
In kingly dye that scarf was dipped;  
'Tis gold confines those tresses' flow:  
Her pastoral wand with steel is tipped,  
And Lycian are her shafts and bow."

Any number of incidents could be mentioned to exemplify the descriptive and emotional powers of Vergil. His ability to read the human heart is revealed in his character, Queen Dido. The complete agony of her soul is expressed by her desire for the light of life, which she is unable to endure. 52

"Quaesivit caelo lucem, ingemuitque reperta."
A mood of mysterious expectancy is aroused by the sonorous lines,

"Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram
Perque domos ditis vacuas et inania regna,
Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter in silvis, ubi caelum condidit umbra
Juppiter et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem.
Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae
Pallentesque habitant Morbi, tristisque Senectus
Et Metus et malesuada Fames ac turpis Egestas,
Terribiles visu formae, Letumque Labosque,
Tum consanguineus Leti Sopor et mala mentis
Gaudia mortiferumque adverso in limine Bellum
Ferreique Eumendium thalami et Discordia demens
Vipereum crinem vitiis innexa cruentis."

"Along the illimitable shade
Darkling and lone their way they made
Through the vast kingdom of the dead,
An empty void, though tenanted:
So travellers in a forest move
With but the uncertain moon above,
Beneath her niggard light,
When Jupiter has hid from view
The heaven, and Nature's every hue
Is lost in blinding night.
At Orcus' portais hold their lair
Wild Sorrow and avenging Care;
And pale Diseases cluster there,
And pleasureless Decay,
Foul penury, and Fears that kill,
And Hunger, counsellor of ill,
A ghastly presence they;
Suffering and Death the threshold keep,
And with them Death's blood-brother Sleep:
Ill Joys with seducing spells
And deadly War are at the door;
The Furies couch in iron cells,
And Discord maddens and rebels;
Her snake-locks hiss, her wreaths
drip gore."
Aeneas and his guide hurry on to explore the wonders of the dark world of destiny. The fierce suffering of the evil, fill them with horror. They pass on to the happy fields of the blessed. Here the marvelous vision of Rome's future greatness is shown to Aeneas. As an introduction to this vision, Vergil begins his explanation of the divine origin of life and the transmigration of souls, with the stately Lucretian line, 54

"Principio caelum ac terras camposque liquentes."

Then the glory of future Rome passes by. The stately figures are identified by Anchises, whose words now possess the virtue of prophesy. Romulus the father of the country, with his two great descendants, Caesar and Augustus, are magnificent in the eyes of Aeneas. He beholds the line of ancient kings, Brutus the Liberator, Camillus, Pompey, Cato, the Gracchi, Fabius, Fabricius, and others. Vergil then inserts that supreme characterization of Rome's genius for conquering in war, and governing in peace. 55

"Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera
Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore voltus,
Orabunt causas melius caelique meatus
Describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent;
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
Hae tibi erunt artes pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos."

"Others, belike with happier grace
From bronze or stone shall call the face
Plead doubtful causes, map the skies,
And tell when planets set or rise;
But, Roman, thou, do thou control
The nations far and wide;
Be this thy genius, to impose
The rule of peace on vanquished foes,
Show pity to the humbled soul,
And crush the sons of pride."

This vision fills Aeneas with courage and determination with hope and confidence in his great enterprise. But following this magnificent flight of glorious accomplishment is the beautiful yet pathetic dirge over the young Marcellus. The sharp contrast between the two passages is very striking. There is little wonder that Augustus and Octavia were so strongly affected when hearing this account read to them by Vergil. 56

"'O gnate, ingentem luctum ne quaere tuorum. Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata neque ultra Esse sinent. Nimium vobis Romana propago Visa potens, superi, propria haec si dona fuissent.
Quantos ille virum magnam mavortis ad urbem Campus aget gemitus. Vel quae, Tiberine, videbis Funera, cum tumulum praeterlabere recentem. Nec puer Iliaca quisquam de gente Latinos In tantum spe tollet avos, nec Romula quondam Ullo se tantum tellus jactabit alumno......
Heu miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas. Tu Marcellus eris. Manibus date lilia plenis. Purpureos spargam flores animamque nepotis His saltem accumulem donis et fungar inani munere."

"'Ah, son, compel me not to speak
The sorrow of our race.
That youth the Fates but just display
To earth, nor let him longer stay:
With gifts like these for aye to hold,
Rome's heart had e'en been overbold.
Ah, what a groan from Mar's plain
Shall o'er the city sound.
How wilt thou gaze on that long train,
Old Tiber, rolling to the main
Beside his new-raised mound.

No youth of Ilium's seed inspires
With hope as fair his Latian sires;
Nor Rome shall dandle on her knee
A nursling so adorned as he.....

Hear child of pity; shouldst thou burst
The dungeon-bars of Fate accurst,
Our own Marcellus thou,

Bring lillies here, in handfuls bring;
Their lustrous blooms I fain would fling:
Such honour to a grandson's shade
By grandsire hands may well be paid:
Yet 0, its vails not now.'"
"How dews percipitate the night,
And setting stars to rest invite."

The slowness of this line insinuates the impatience of the speaker, 61

"Festinate viri nam quae tam sera moratur."

"Bestir you, gallants, why so slack?"

while the speed of the action is caught up by the words in, 62

"Insequitur iam iamque manu tenet et premit hasta."

"(While Pyrrhus) follows in his rear
With outstretched hand and levelled spear."

How well the weighty words express the monstrosity of the idea. 63

"Monstrum horrendum informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum."

"Huge, awful, hideous, ghastly, blind."

Note the onomatopoeia contained in the line, 64

"Exoritur clamorque virum clangoque tubarum."

"Then come the clamour and the flare
And shouts and clarions rend the air."

How tersely yet truthfully he expresses the woes and sorrows of mankind. 65
"Sunt lacrimae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt."

"E'en here the tear of pity springs
And hearts are touched by human things."

Note the pathos in the words, 66

"Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus."

"'Tis come, our fated day of death."

It is impossible to exemplify even the more beautiful lines and passages of Vergil's deep and pure poetry. His words, thought and feeling, are charged with noble beauty. Mr. Wight Duff asserts that beauty is the characteristic of Vergil's style. 67

"But it is to beauty that, like Dante, one returns as the final fact and feature of his style. Under Vergil's verbal sorcery, Latin becomes a golden language of exquisite richness, veined with a delicate melancholy and wistful reverie upon the abundant travail of life. If his wealth of tremulous pities and mystic dreams do not make true poetry, then poetry was never written."
NOTES TO CHAPTER V


The following translations from Vergil will be taken from Conington.


15. Bk. VI, 748-52.

16. Bk. VI, 756-60.


25. Bk. V. 737.
29. I. 33.
31. I. 87.
32. I. 88-92.
33. I. 97-103.
34. I. 103-8.
35. Aeneid. II. 41.
36. Aeneid. II. 49.
37. II. 50-54.
38. II. 55-58.
39. II. 238-9.
40. Aeneid. II. 723-6.
41. II. 707-12.
42. Aeneid. II. 750-52.
43. VI. 685-90.
44. IX. 182.
45. IX. 199-200.
46. IX. 247-51.
47. IX. 320-23.
48. IX. 373-5.
49. IX. 426-30.
50. VIII. 592-7.
51. VII. 812-7.
52. Aeneid. VI. 692.
53. VI. 268-81.
54. Aeneid. VI. 724.
55. VI. 847-63.
56. VI. 868-77, 882-6.
58. I. 630.
59. III. 56.
60. II. 8-10.
61. II. 373.
62. II. 530.
63. III. 658.
64. II. 313.
65. I. 462.
66. II. 324.
CONCLUSION

We may conclude, therefore, by stating that Vergil is one of the greatest and deserves to be ranked with Homer, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Dante, and the others. We have seen that Vergil's achievement was favorably appraised by competent critics not only of his own day, but of the succeeding ages. In contrast to these favorable critics, we find harping detractors, whose purpose seems to have been to dethrone the Roman poet from the lofty seat on which the acclaim of his work had placed him.

The presumably original criticisms of Mr. George Saintsbury, which were meant to destroy the reputation of Vergil, had been refuted, by a sort of anticipatory justice, centuries ago by the keen Roman critic, Macrobius. To this modern 'Haeresis Vergiliana' and its type, Vergil was a second-handed copyist, with no other quality than the art of rhetoric. Saintsbury rates Vergil as a manufacturer not a maker. Does he expect every poet to be Divine, and make something out of nothing? He is disgusted with the great Vergilian hero, but gives no credit to the appropriate qualities of Aeneas which create the exalted spirit of the whole Aeneid. Though the Vergilian epic should be outclassed by passionate Lyrics in single line comparisons, our able critic seems to be unaware of the incongruity of comparing the stately epic with the highly emotional lyric.
Mr. Saintsbury's chief complaint against Vergil is his second-handness. Macrobius had long since taken the wind from the sails of this complaint, by showing that, though Vergil did gather much material from his predecessors, he did not make a practice of wholesale borrowing, but rather practiced true poetic emulation.

The cause of Mr. Saintsbury's complaint seems to rest upon a misunderstanding of the true nature of poetic originality. In *The Road to Xanadu*, Mr. John Livingston Lowes shows by theory and example that a thaumaturgic production of a masterpiece, which is not greatly influenced by the poet's previous literary absorption, is absurd. A poem is made up of matter and form. The matter, which consists of images, ideas, and rhetorical expressions, is reaped from the harvest of ready literature and from nature itself. But the form, which gives each poem its own peculiar individuality is conceived by the poet, suggested perhaps, by something the poet has seen or heard. The infusion of the form into the already existing matter, from which results a composite whole, is accomplished by the poetic soul of the artist. Would Mr. Saintsbury say that the combination of this original form and the collected matter, was entirely borrowed from Homer and the other great writers who have gone before?

Mr. Saintsbury judges of the greatness of Vergil, to a large extent by the Aeneid, and then with a cavalier gesture sweeps the Aeneid aside, thinking that he has thus swept aside
also the poet's fame and glory. If, however, we judge the 
Aeneid according to the rules of its type, we find that it not 
only corresponds in a surpassing way to the literary obligations 
of an epic, but that it serves, frequently, as a model by which 
other epics are judged. The greatness of action, the unity of 
composition, and the sustained interest are equally prominent. 
As for feeling and emotional appeal, we see passages which bear 
comparison with the strongly intense lines of the lyric. 
Mr. Wight Duff summarizes the qualities which make Vergil great:

"His amazing verbal art is one. His 
power to touch the feelings is another. 
His influence on literature and even his 
fame in the Middle Ages, are others still. 
But his historic position as the poet of 
the empire, would assure him one of the 
highest places. To minimize his creative 
gifts -- either on the ground of his 
borrowings and conventions, as if he were 
a second-hand plagiarist, or on the ground 
of his conscious aim, as if he overdid the 
didactic -- is to miss the significance of 
Vergil's relation to his age."

Vergil's works have survived the ages, and they will 
continue until the end of time, because of their greatness. 
Their influence for good is immeasurable, and with Lionel John-
son, we may find some likeness between the call of Vergil to 
high poesy and the priestly vocation.

"If he did not with authority go about 
doing good to men, none has more fully 
and perfectly given a voice to the 
infinite longing of their souls, nor 
spoken with a tenderer austerity."
NOTES TO CONCLUSION


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