

## In the footsteps of Virgil's *The Aeneid*: John Gay's *Polly*, a Female Aeneas''

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### ABSTRACT

Generally, critics have read John Gay's *Polly* (1729) as a satire of the political and social corruption that marked his own era. Other studies have attempted to explain the play as an anti-slavery and anti-imperial voice. My proposal looks beyond the immediate contemporary context of the play and attempts to read it as a propaganda for the futuristic imperial aspirations of Britain. This is revealed through constructing a structural comparison between *Polly* and Virgil's *The Aeneid*. Like the ancient Roman poet, Gay emerges obsessed with the time not as a simple historical fact, but as a vehicle for imperial ideology and legacy. Thus, the structure of *The Aeneid* has found its way into *Polly*, asserting the indispensable literary and ideological legacy of the Imperium Romanum. Gay promotes Britain's imperial agenda through emulating the structure of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Like that of the imperial epic, *Polly*'s structure is based on the dynamic of struggle where the heroine occupies a central position similar to that of Aeneas. Like the *Aeneid*, *Polly*'s structure is of three stages; exodus, sea voyage and the Promised Land. Both characters follow the same structure in search of new life in a new land. Aeneas who reaches Italy from the destroyed Troy founded the Roman Empire through marrying the Princess of Latium. *Polly* ends her struggle by marrying Prince Cawwawkee, the heir to of the Indian throne. The bond between them legalizes the British dominance in the West Indies and by extension the creation of the British Empire. By following Virgil's steps and his Roman empire, Gay finds his way well charted.

**Keywords:** Gay, Virgil, *Polly*, Aeneas, West Indies, Rome

### 1. Introduction

The dominant critical readings of John Gay's *Polly* focus on the dramatic presentation of slavery, colonization, the political and social corruption of his era. Albert Wertheim considers Gay's *Polly* as a condemnation of colonization. To him Gay dramatizes colonial expansion not as a romantic enterprise but as a "sordid economic" reality (Wertheim, 1990). Clement Hawes endorses Wertheim's perception and considers *Polly* as an unsympathetic presentation of colonization. She argues that Gay "defines colonialism as nothing more than glorified piracy" (Hawes, 1998). Dianne Dugaw concludes that Gay's *Polly* is a "deep play ... entail[ing] a strong dose of condemnation for a world whose

conventions and values are being transformed by profiteering" (Dugaw, 2001). Calhoun Winton argues that *Polly* questions the western ideal of heroism through attacking the politicians of the period headed by Walpole and the kind of values they promoted (Winton, 1993; Pearce, 2008). Robert G. Dryden supports this line of argument and states that Gay's

Representations do not flatter English colonization at all ... [he] condemns the British planter, soldier, and slave trade, the transportation of British criminals, and the pirates .... In a thoroughly Swiftian style, the author condemns all characters as being either fools or knaves except *Polly* and the native Indians (Dryden, 2001).

John Richardson opposes such views, as he believes that *Polly* is not "the blistering attack on colonization that some might have taken it to be" (Richardson, 2002).

This paper endorses Richardson's rejection of *Polly*'s reading as an attack on colonization and proposes to read it as imperial propaganda for the emerging British

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Empire. This is to be revealed through comparing Polly's structure with that of Virgil's the *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* is considered to be the most important poem celebrating the imperial agenda of the Roman Empire in general and the first Roman Emperor, Augustus's period in particular (Adler, 2003; Thomas, 2001). In the *Aeneid*, Jupiter, the divine god of heaven, grants Rome an Empire that is not limited to time or place. This empire will extend its territories through wars to establish its peaceful rule (Thomas 2001). This prophecy came down through the Trojan Prince Aeneas, the son of Venus, who survived the destruction of Troy and sailed to Italy where he settled with his companions. The Prince's descendants established the city of Rome which turned into a formidable empire (Erskin, 2001). The myth of the Trojans' origin "is envisaged as a fundamental feature of the Romans' view of themselves" (Erskin, 2001). Thus, the Romans used Aeneas's legend to "justify and legitimize" the dominance of their Empire. To Augustus (63 BC-19 AD), the first Roman Emperor, who sponsored Virgil to write the *Aeneid*,

Troy and Aeneas were part of the ideology of the new regime, symbolizing the re-foundation and regeneration of Rome after the destruction of the civil wars. (Erskin, 2001)

Brooks Otis explains that Virgil is fully aware of the ideological connection between his *Aeneid* and Rome as an imperial power. He argues that Virgil... saw in Rome the paradigm and goal of all historical activity, in Roman **pietas**, **virtus**, and **consilium** the only hope of peace and social order, of humane behaviour associated with strong government. (Otis, 1995)

When Gay was writing for the stage during the second quarter of the eighteenth century, Rome and not Greece was the preferred model for political and artistic analogies (Ayres, 1997). England was in a position similar to that of Virgil's Rome. Like Augustus's Rome, England had just emerged from a long and bloody war – the War of Spanish Succession. The two periods were similar to the extent that the English called their era from 1714 to the death of Alexander Pope in 1744 the Augustan age. Ayres argues:

As Britain's power increased abroad, analogies with the classical world became less and less deferential, developing a strongly expansionist aspect (Ayres, 1997).

Like Augustus's Rome, Augustan Britain was aware of its increasing power and expanding domains. As a result, the conception of Britain and its domain as an Empire was growing. The English, Scots, Welsh and Irish consolidated their identity as British. The same concept was to be traced in the overseas British domains. David Armitage argues:

The Anglophone inhabitants of the Atlantic world began for the first time habitually to describe their community as the "British Empire." the British Empire include the United Kingdom of Great Britain and its dependencies within Europe; Britain's ... Possessions in the West Indies; and the continental colonies of British North America (Armitage, 2000).

Alexander Pope was aware of Britain's growing power. To him

the time was near when Britain would be acknowledged the equal of Greece and Rome for her attainments in peace and war. (Ayres, 1997)

In his "Epistle to Mr. Addison", Pope verses Britain's aspiration to take its place next to the ancient imperial powers of Greece and Rome.

Oh when shall Britain, conscious of her claim,  
Stand emulous of Greek and Roman fame?  
Then future ages with delight shall see  
How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's looks agree;  
Or in fair series laurelled Bards be shown,  
A Virgil there, and here an Addison.

Pope's literary sentiment is a faithful reflection of the era. Linda Colley argues that

Classical literature was doubly congenial because the kind of patriotic achievement it celebrated was a highly specific one. The Heroes of Homer, Cicero and Plutarch were emphatically men of rank and title. As such, they remind Britain's ruling elite of its duty to serve and fight. (Colley, 1992)

In such a heavily ideological literary environment, Gay finds it suitable to promote Britain's imperial aspirations through emulating the structure of Aeneas's struggle to build himself a new life in Italy and away from the destroyed Troy (Altman 2008; Putnam, 2010). Like that of the *Aeneid*, *Polly*'s structure is based on the dynamics of struggle (Hunt, 1973; Camps, 1997). It should be noted that at the heart of the struggle *Polly* and Aeneas stand as the events shaping and developing force.

The struggle of both Polly and Aeneas consists of three determining stages: the exodus, the sea voyage and the Promised Land. The exodus of Polly and Aeneas is marked by their departure from their destroyed homelands. Polly departs from London while Aeneas is driven out of Troy. To reach their promised lands and forge a new life they each undertake a dangerous sea voyage. The promised land of Polly emerges as the West Indies; while Aeneas's is Italy. Significantly enough, both destinations possess outstanding imperial ties. Italy is the land of the Romans who established the Roman Empire that ruled the world for eight hundred years. When Gay was writing *Polly*, the West Indies was at the heart of the emerging British Empire. It played a central geopolitical and economic role in sustaining Britain's stand as an Empire. Significantly, Polly and Aeneas attached themselves through marriage into the ruling families of the imperially charged domains, Rome and the West Indies. The Trojan Prince marries Princess Lavinia, the heiress to the Land of Latium. Polly's fate is no different as she marries prince Cawwawkee, the Indian heir. By emulating the structure of the *Aeneid*, Gay turns *Polly* into an ideological bridge through which he links the past Roman Empire with the future that is dominated by the British Empire.

### **The Exodus:**

Polly's exodus displays profound affinities with that of Aeneas. The affinities involve the context and the narrative outlines of their exodus. After her arrival in the West Indies from London, Polly relates "the misfortunes of [her] family" (1.5.4). Her misfortunes involve the destruction of her world which can be perceived through the execution of her father Peachum and deportation of her husband Macheath. Upon her accidental meeting with Mrs Trapes, an old friend of her dead father, Polly narrates her tragic fate. She tells her, "... you must have heard, Madam, that I was unhappy in my marriage. When Macheath was transported all my peace was banished with him" (1.5.28-30). The transportation of her criminal husband to the West Indies after his arrest and trial is not the only tragedy she has faced. Her father Peachum, a notorious thief and thief catcher, was also arrested, trialled and hanged. Polly points out that it is her father's profession as a thief catcher and thief that is responsible

for the destruction of their world:

Would my papa had never taken it up; ... He was in too much haste to be rich. (1.5.14-16; 42-43)

Polly makes it clear that her father's rash ambition to be rich through criminal means is the essential factor behind their undoing. The death of her father and absence of her husband make her lonely and miserable in London. Consequently, she finds herself at "liberty to pursue [her] inclinations" and leaves London in pursuit of a better life.

Virgil's Aeneas's situation is no different from that of Polly. In Carthage, he finds himself narrating the story of his exodus from Troy to Dido, queen of Carthage. The Theme of exile from one's native city is dominant in Latin literature. With the help of Aeneas, Virgil makes exile a major theme (Putnam, 2010). The exiled Aeneas finds the queen familiar with his tragedy. She has constructed a Temple with walls depicting the tragic fall of city and its legendary heroes. The sympathetic queen asks Aeneas to narrate the story of his exile. She pleads,

But come, my guest, tell us from the start all the Greek trickery, your men's mishaps, and your wanderings: (1.753-755)

Encouraged by the queen's apparent sympathy with their sufferings, Aeneas summarises the fate of a city under ruthless attack:

Then In truth all Ilium seemed to me to sink in flames.

And Neptune's Troy was toppled from her base (2.624-625).

The horrors inflicted on the physical structure of Troy leaves the city beyond redemption (Ross, 2007). The inhabitants' fate is no different from that of their city. Death claims the lives of key figures in Aeneas's life. However, in this particular context we will be concerned with the death of Priam, King of Troy and Creusa, Aeneas's beloved wife. Aeneas describes Priam's murder by Pyrrhus, Achilles's son who

...raised the glittering sword

and buried it to the hilt in his side. (2.552-553)

With the death of Priam, Aeneas witnesses the complete annihilation of Troy as a political entity. The other key figure Aeneas loses is his beloved wife who was killed while attempting to flee the burning city. Aeneas finds her ghost, who informs him that the ruler of great Olympus does not

let you take Creusa with you, away from here. Now farewell, and preserve your love for the son we share. (2.780-81;790)

In spite of the fact that Priam and Creusa occupy very little space in the epic, yet their death has a profound significance on Aeneas's future actions (Ross, 2007). Their death is one of the central factors behind his exodus and search for new life. Like Polly, Aeneas points to theft and haste as the primary reasons for the utter destruction of his world. The Trojans believe that the stealing of Helen from her husband, Menelaus, the Spartan King, by Paris is the main factor behind the bloody ten years war with the Greeks. Aeneas points out,

I saw the daughter of Tyndareus,  
she, the mutual curse of Troy and her own country. (2.567; 573)

Aeneas explains that Helen's hands are covered with Trojan and Greek blood. Had she stayed with her husband, Troy would not have been sacked. The other factor that stands responsible for their undoing, according to Aeneas's judgement, is haste. In their haste to resume normal life, the Trojans drag the wooden horse that the Greeks have left on their shores inside the walls of the city. Aeneas recalls,

That engine of fate mounts our walls  
pregnant with armed men  
Four times it sticks at the threshold  
of the gates,  
yet we press on regardless, blind with frenzy, (2.237-38; 242-244)

Eager to resume their normal life after long and bloody wars, the Trojans fail to read the warning signs against admitting the horse inside their walls.

In such context, the consequences of the Trojans' haste to go back to their normal life is no different from Polly's father's haste to be wealthy. Both face a tragic end to their existence. It should be noted that the destruction of Polly's and Aeneas's worlds has taken place outside the scope of the target texts. We are introduced to their past lives through the same medium of narration. The time space that separates Polly's and Aeneas's narratives from the actual events of their past provides them with space to analyse and understand. Such attitude provides their authors with the chance to present them as independent, rooted entities with a strong

moral stand. By making them so, Virgil and Gay are preparing their protagonists to be a medium through which they promote and justify the imperial ideology of Rome and Britain, respectively.

### **The Sea Voyage:**

The protagonists' sea voyage is at the centre of the imperial message of Gay and Virgil. This can be perceived through the imperial connotations surrounding the destination of both Polly and Aeneas. Polly is destined to go to the West Indies while Aeneas to Italy. In addition to their imperial destinations, the sea voyage enterprises turn out to be identical. Polly and Aeneas encounter dangerous storms that cause a temporary discontinuation of their quest for a new life. Polly makes it clear that she is driven to the West Indies by powers above her own. Thus, the presence of the virtuous British Polly in the West Indies to start a new life is not a coincidence and certainly cannot be perceived from purely dramatic necessity. The English invaded Jamaica in 1655 and pushed out the Spanish who were in control. Trevor Burnard writes:

Jamaica in the eighteenth century was the jewel in Britain's imperial Crown. According to any number of criteria, Jamaica was the most important colony held by Britain in British North America. Jamaica contributed the most of any colony to the imperial coffers (Burnard, 1994).

Jamaica became a source of unprecedented wealth because of its sugar plantation and slave trade (Sheridan, 1974). Throughout his writing career, Gay had a direct and indirect connection with Britain's imperial agenda. The Asiento Clause, which granted the British thirty years' monopoly of the Spanish slave trade as part of the Treaty of Utrecht, was signed in 1713 by the Tory Ministry to which he was a close associate (Frey, 1995). The same ministry which was under Robert Harley founded the South Sea Company to exploit slave trade in which Gay had shares (Richardson, 2014). Most of the African slaves were transported to Jamaica, where *Polly's* events took place (Burnard, 1994). As a result of the thriving plantation and slave trade, many British moved to Jamaica in search of a new life and wealth. Burnard explains the unprecedented wealth and power the leading inhabitants of Jamaica enjoyed:

Its leading inhabitants were the wealthiest citizens in the British Empire and among the wealthiest of the subjects of the British Monarchy. Moreover, the only colonials to play any significant role within the British establishment were Jamaicans (Burnard, 1994).

The rich planter, Mr Ducate, is a good example of the British citizens who moved to Jamaica and established their wealth through slavery and plantations. Polly, like many of her fellow British citizens, is in Jamaica in search of a new life. Her strong love for her husband Macheath and desire to be reunited with him are the reasons for her voyage. She tells Mrs Trapes:

In following him, I am in pursuit of my quiet.

I love him and like a troubled ghost shall never be  
at rest till I appear to him (1.5.51-53).

Polly insists that by finding Macheath she will find her peace. She also explains that without him, she is like a restless ghost that will not rest before achieving its goal. The fact that Polly perceives her search for Macheath as a ghost-like obsession can be perceived as the power of fate. She is being pushed by fate to look for a new life in the heart of Britain's land of imperial power.

Like the West Indies for the British, Italy had an ideological significance for imperial Rome. The connection between Polly's personal motives and ideology that underlined her voyage destination is to be traced in the *Aeneid*. Virgil takes a journey back in time away from his contemporary Rome with its formidable imperial power to Aeneas's obscure land of Latium. Critics have long argued that the *Aeneid* is designed to legitimize the power of Emperor Augustus and imperial Rome (Enenkel and Pfeijffer, 2005). It all begins as a purely personal note for Aeneas. In harmony with his reputation as a pious man, Aeneas's departure is motivated by his duty toward his family. In the middle of death and chaos that engulfed Troy, Aeneas is advised to depart and save his family. The dead Hector, King Priam's son, his mother and wife all urges him to cross the sea. The ghost of his dead wife, Cruesa pleads for his departure:

... Yours is long exile, you must plough a vast reach  
of sea: and you will come to Hesperia's land, where  
Lydian Tiber flows in gentle course among the farmers'  
rich fields. There, happiness, kingship and a royal wife  
will be yours (2.751-755).

Cruesa's ghost makes it clear that Aeneas is pushed by fate to reach Italy where he is going to re-establish the royal line of Troy through his marriage to a Latin princess. With such narrative, Virgil is simply connecting the dominating Roman Empire with its origin. He makes it clear that Rome's glorious present is a fulfilment of destiny which was started by the Trojan Prince Aeneas. In such context, Polly emerges to be like Aeneas; an agent of fate chosen to be an instrument in shaping the British Empire.

### **The Storm:**

The other feature that marked Polly's and Aeneas's voyages is the storm they each encountered. Interestingly, the identical nature of their sea experience goes beyond the storm as a physical event to embrace its aftermath. The devastating storm destroys their possessions and interrupts their search for a new life. As a result of losing her possessions in the storm, Polly finds herself desolate and poor. She encounters Mrs Trapes, an old friend of her father, to whom she relates her misfortune:

I brought ... a sum of money with me, but my chest  
was broke open at sea and I am now a wretched  
vagabond exposed to hunger and want, unless charity  
relieve me (1.6.88-91).

The loss of her belongings and her presence in a strange land render her vulnerable. The seemingly sympathetic Mrs Trapes offers Polly immediate employment with Mrs Ducat, wife of a wealthy English Planter. She informs Polly:

Sure never anything happened so luckily! Madam  
Ducat just now wants a servant, and I won't leave it till I  
have settled you ... you are in a rich, creditable family  
(1.6.102-110).

Grateful for such immediate recovery of fortune, Polly accepts Mrs Trapes's help "with ten thousand obligations" (1.6.124-125).

Misfortune proves to be the fate of Aeneas and his fleet. The Trojans face a dangerous sea storm that destroys their fleet and interrupts the voyage. The blowing wind

lifts the seas to heaven:

men's weapons, planking, Trojan treasure in the  
waves.

(1.103; 119)

As a result of the storm, Aeneas has lost many of his ships, men and treasures. On the coast of Libya where the storm forced his ships to land, he encounters a sympathetic figure, to whom he explains his desperate condition

I am that Aeneas, the virtuous ...

I seek my country Italy, and a people born of Jupiter on high.

I embarked on the Phrygian sea with twenty ships,

barely seven are left, wrenched from the wind and waves.

I myself wander, destitute and unknown, in the Libyan desert,

driven from Europe and Asia. (1.378; 38-2; 384)

The sympathetic figure is his mother disguised as a "Spartan girl." Upon hearing Aeneas's tragic story, the disguised goddess, in a manner similar to that of Mrs Trapes, provides Aeneas with immediate help. She advises him to seek Dido, the queen of Carthage, the land where they landed. She orders him, "take yourself to the queen's threshold" (1.389). Aeneas misfortune, leaves him in a situation identical to that of Polly. Like her he finds himself vulnerable and desperate for help. Thus, the prospect of meeting Dido, queen of Carthage gives Aeneas hope "for safety, and greater trust in his afflicted fortunes" (1. 452).

### Quest Interruption:

The sense of security that Polly and Aeneas experience after surviving the storm proves to be an illusion. Their rescuers play a central role in discontinuing their quest for a new life. Polly finds herself trapped as a sex slave to Mr Ducate, the rich English Planter, while Aeneas is overwhelmed by queen Dido's love. Mrs Tapes sells her to the rich planter under the pretension it is as a domestic servant. Polly realizes the tragedy of her situation as a result of his unsolicited sexual advances. Polly asks, "Am I then betrayed and sold!" (1.11.62). Indignant at Polly's rejection of his advances, he confirms her status as his slave,

"Yes hussy, that you are, and as legally my property as any woman is her husband's who sells herself in marriage" (1.11.63-65). He warns her

I'll have non of these airs. 'Tis impertinent in a servant to have scruples of any kind. ... And so, to be

plain with you, you obstinate slut, you shall either contribute to my pleasures or my profit, and if you refuse play in the bedchamber, you shall go work in the fields among the planters (1.11.86-93).

Fully aware of her difficult situation Polly refuses to submit. She informs him,

My freedom may be lost, but you cannot rob me of my virtue and integrity (1.11.94-96).

Obviously, as a slave Polly is unable to continue her search for a new life. However, in spite of her vulnerable position, she remains true to her goal and refuses to compromise her virtue.

In his turn, Aeneas becomes slave to his passion for his rescuer, Dido queen of Carthage. Under the influence of the queen's love and the luxurious comfort of her Royal palace, the Trojan prince has lost his interest in reaching the land of Latium. Aeneas's and Dido's love is exposed. Rumours spread their love story,

they're spending

the whole winter together in indulgence, forgetting

their royalty, trapped by shameless passion (4.192-194).

Indeed, Dido and Aeneas live a short love story which the god, Jupiter commands to end. Jupiter expresses his resentment of Aeneas's long stay in Carthage:

What does he plan? With what hopes does he stay

among alien people, forgetting Ausonia and the Lavinian fields? (4.235-236)

Jupiter questions Aeneas's suitability for reaching Italy. He states:

This is not what his loveliest of mothers suggested to me,

he was to be one who'd rule Italy, pregnant with empire,

and crying out for war, he'd produce a people of Teucer's

high blood, and bring the whole world under the rule of law.

(4.227-231)

Aeneas's hopeless love for Dido and desire to settle with her in Carthage, enables Virgil to display his protagonist's human side. This emotional vulnerability brings Aeneas close to Polly who is also driven by her love for Macheath.

### **Quest Continuation:**

To continue their quest, it is necessary for Polly and Aeneas to regain their freedom. To that end Gay and Virgil ensure that their protagonists receive the necessary help to be free. Polly escapes slavery through the unexpected aid of her master's jealous wife, Mrs Ducat. Aeneas escapes Carthage and Dido's love with the divine help of the gods. The desperate Polly explains the treacherous behaviour of the "inhuman" Mrs Trapes. She informs Mrs Ducat that Mrs Trapes has

... proposed to me the service of a lady, of which I readily accepted. 'Twas under that pretense that she treacherously sold me to your husband as a mistress. I fling at your feet for protection. (1.14.74-78)

Indeed, Mrs Ducat proves to be Polly's saviour as she informs her:

A woman so young and handsome must be exposed to continual dangers. I have a suit of clothes be me of my nephew's, who is dead. In a man's habit you will run fewer risks. I'll assist you with some money ..., and as a traveler, you may with greater safety make inquiries after your husband. (1.14.103-109)

Mrs Ducat's understanding and generosity enable Polly to escape slavery and continue her quest.

Like Polly, Aeneas receives unexpected aid to continue his journey. Through Mercury, the gods' messenger, Determined to execute his divine Jupiter order Aeneas to leave Carthage and sail to Italy. Jupiter commands, "Let him sail: that's it in total, let that be my message" (4.237). Aeneas is "Shocked by the warning and divine command" (4.282). As a result, he "was eager to be gone, in flight, and leave that sweet Land" (4.281). Indeed, Aeneas obeys Jupiter's command and gives his men orders to sail immediately. He

called Mnesteus, Sergestus and brave Serestus,  
telling them to fit out the fleet in silence, gather the men  
on the shore, ready the ships' tackle (4.289-291).

Under the influence of Jupiter's divine command Aeneas frees himself from Dido's love and escapes Carthage. Once again he finds himself in the middle of the sea sailing towards Italy.

### **The Promised Land**

To Polly and Aeneas marriage into the local royals of

the West Indies and land of Latium is the element that enables them to find their promised land. Polly marries the heir to the Indian throne, Prince Cawwawkee, thus making the West Indies her promised land. Italy proves to be Aeneas's promised land as he marries Lavinia, Princess of Latium. To secure the protagonists' royal marriages, they are provided with the necessary help to eliminate the obstacles they face which are of internal and external nature. The internal obstacle is of an emotional nature while the external obstacle takes the form of rivalry. To win their inner battles and demolish their emotional barriers, Polly and Aeneas face revealing experiences that prove decisive in shaping their future. Polly's internal problem is the result of allowing her past to shape the future. Her love for the morally deprived Macheath prevents her from embracing a future free of his destructive presence. Polly's encounter with the heir to the Indian throne, Prince Cawwawkee, after escaping slavery, proves decisive in breaking her bond with Macheath. Disguised as a man, Polly is captured and imprisoned by the pirates. Capstern, the pirate, announces, "I see a booty ... Let us seize him" (2.2.32-33). Though physically imprisoned, Polly finds the freedom of her soul. For the first time she hears a virtuous voice similar to her own. Her fellow prisoner, Prince Cawwawkee, who is captured by the pirates, expresses moral sentiments that match her own. The Prince shows moral fortitude in the face of the evil pirate Morano who is Macheath in disguise. When threatened with torture and death, the Prince answers:

I have resolution and pain shall neither make me  
lie or betray. I tell thee once more European I am no  
coward. (2.8.62-64)

Impressed by his moral values, she declares her appreciation:

Unfortunate Prince! ... I tell you  
that I admire your virtues and share in your  
misfortunes. (2.11.1-3)

She assures him, "My heart feels your sentiments, and my tongue longs to join in 'em" (2.11.38-39). Indeed the love of virtue gained her the friendship of the Prince who after their escape tells his father King Pohetohee:

Let this youth then receive your thanks. To him are  
owing my life and liberty.

And the love of virtue alone gained me his friendship.

(3.2.4-6)

The fact that Polly meets the virtuous Indian prince with whom she shares deep appreciation of virtue makes her ability to accept a new life without her morally corrupt husband Macheath possible.

Aeneas's orienting experience is the result of his dangerous journey to the underworld. Aeneas pleads his intention behind such a dangerous task to the Sibyle of Cumae:

One thing I ask: for they say the gate of the King of Darkness is here, and the shadowy marsh, Acheron's overflow: let me have sight of my dear father. (6. 106-108)

Aeneas explains to the gatekeeper of the underworld that visiting the underworld he is honouring his father's wish. He tells the Sibyle, "He ordered me, with prayers, to seek you out" (6.115-116).

The Sibyle warns Aeneas against such a dangerous task. The prophetess warns:

the path to hell is easy: but to retrace your steps, and go out to the air above, that is work, that is the task. (6.125-128)

Mindless of the danger, Aeneas is determined to undertake the task. He passes the dark waters of Tartarus into Elysium, the land of the blessed. In Elysium, Aeneas meets the spirit of his father Anchises, who tells him:

Come, I will now explain what glory will pursue the children of Dardanus, what descendants await you of the Italian race. (6.756-757)

Indeed, Anchises reveals to his son the glorious outcome of his marriage to Princess Lavinia of Latium. He points to his future descendent, his son:

See that boy, your last-born son, who your wife Lavinia, late in your old age, will give birth to in the wood, a king and the father of kings, through whom our race will rule in Alba Longa. (6.759-764)

Aeneas's marriage to Princess Lavinia is the key to the glorious future of his race. Silvius, his last son will redeem the tragic end of Troy. Through him the Trojans will rule yet again but this time in Alba Longa of Italy. Anchises reveals more of the glory to come to the children of Dardanus. He asks Aeneas:

Now direct your eyes here, gaze at this people, your own Romans. Here is Caesar, and all the offspring of Iulus. This is the man, this is him, whom you so often

hear promised you, Augustus Caesar, son of the Deified, who will make a Golden Age again in the fields where Saturn once reigned, and extend the empire beyond the Libyans and the Indians. (6.788-795)

Anchises points out that his descendants are destined to be the masters of the universe. They will extend their territories and found a great empire. One of the great descendants is Julius Caesar who will pave the road for the Romans to start their empire (Stevenson, 2014). He also points to Augustus who will shape the empire, extend its territories and establish a golden era of peace and prosperity (Goldsworthy, 2014). With such a glorious future awaiting, Aeneas is no longer in any doubt as to the profound significance of his tragic departure from Troy and the perilous voyage he must undertake to reach the land of Latium. As a result, he is determined to fulfil his fate and take all the necessary steps to marry Princess Lavinia and establish a new life in the land of Latium. With such revelation Aeneas is not the only one expected to submit to the divine power of fate. Virgil's contemporary audience who were living in the glorious reality of their empire were expected to believe in its divinity.

Death emerges as the method employed by Gay and Virgil to prevent the rivals from obstructing the protagonists' royal marriages. It is interesting to note that each protagonist plays a central role in the death of their rival, thus, eliminating the external obstacle. After her escape from imprisonment, Polly finds herself fighting along the side of the Indian heir in his war against the pirates. Believing in the just cause of the Indians she risks her life and forgets about Macheath. The Prince asks his father:

May this young man be my companion in the war? He knows our cause is just (3.4.1-3).

The disguised Polly plays an essential role in arresting and executing Morano who turns out to be Macheath in disguise. The fact that British Polly fights alongside the natives to win the war and bring the pirate Morano/Macheath to justice is a reminder of the British attempts to bring peace to the island (Cundall, 2014). The West Indies was plagued by slave rebellions, wars with the Maroons, and pirates (Price, 1996). The British managed to sign a treaty with the Maroons to end the conflict on the island (Gardner, 1971). Fittingly, the



British Polly announces their victory to Prince Cawwawkee: "Victory is ours" (3.10.5). By using "ours", Polly shows that she perceives herself and the Indians as one front. By extension, they are part of the same political body, the British Empire. The unity between Polly and the Native Indians takes on a further dimension after Prince Cawwawkee's marriage offer. After the death of Macheath/Morano, the prince responds, "Justice has relieved you from the society of a wicked man" (3.15.21-22). Being a free woman, the Prince offers her his heart:

If an honest heart can recompense your loss, you would make me happy in accepting mine (24-3.15.22).

Unable to resist the Prince's virtuous character, she responds to his offer:

I am charmed, Prince, with your generosity and virtues. 'Tis only by the pursuit of those we secure real happiness. Those that know and feel Virtue in themselves, must love it in others (3.15.54-57).

Her meeting with the virtuous Indian Prince, enables her to realize that virtue is the real source of happiness. Thus, the offer of a royal marriage and her acceptance makes the West Indies her promised land. Through Polly's role as a peace maker and marriage to Prince Cawwawkee, Gay desires not only to legitimize the British presence in the West Indies but most importantly to provide it with roots and a future.

The future and legitimacy are at the heart of Aeneas's conflict with his rival Prince Turnus of Ardea. Like Prince Cawwawkee's rival, Macheath, Turnus must die to enable Aeneas to marry Princess Lavinia of Latium. As King Latinus offers his daughter as a bride to Aeneas, Turnus is indignant at the idea of losing the princess to the Trojan Aeneas. The Sibyle warns Aeneas of

War, fierce war,

I see: and the Tiber foaming with much blood (6.86-87).

She further explains the cause of the coming bloodshed.

Once again a foreign bride is the cause of all

these Trojan ills, once more an alien marriage (6.93-94).

These words remind Aeneas of the abduction of Helen of Sparta and the role it has played in the tragic end of Troy. However, he remains firm so as to fulfil his glorious future which his father revealed in the

underworld. He is determined to follow the Sibyle's advice and "not give way to misfortunes" but to "meet them more bravely". She promises him:

The path of safety will open up

for you from where you least imagine it, a Greek city (6.95-97).

Indeed Aeneas wins the war and kills his rival. In the decisive final war, Aeneas

buried his sword deep in Turnus's breast: and then Turnus's limbs grew slack with death, and his life fled, with a moan, angrily, to the Shades (12.884-886).

Turnus's death clears the way for Aeneas to marry Princess Lavinia and fulfil the prophecy of his glorious future. Marriage to the heiress of the Kingdom of Latium makes Italy his promised land. Thus, to the audience of Rome and Britain, the marriages of the virtuous Polly and Aeneas into the native royal families indicate their birth as nations with imperial powers that are moral and legitimate.

### Conclusion

Contrary to conventional readings of Gay's *Polly* as an anti-imperial text, it emerges to be a deliberate endorsement and promotion of Britain's role as a growing imperial power. Considering the ideological nature of his message, Gay found himself at the same historical moment as Virgil when he was writing the *Aeneid*. Under the guidance of Emperor Augustus, Virgil was ushering in a new era of imperial dominance that needed to be sanctified and legitimized. Virgil endows this role on the Trojan prince, Aeneas, who was chosen by the gods to lay the foundation of Rome through his descendants. Consequently, one can say that Gay's Rome is the West Indies. It was the source of British power and wealth that enabled it to control the world and found its own empire. To sanctify Britain's imperial presence, Gay allows Polly to follow the structure of Aeneas's struggle to lay the foundation of the Roman Empire in Italy. Like him, the structure of her endeavour is in three stages: exodus, sea voyage and the arrival at her promised land. The similarities go beyond the general outlines to embrace the inner mechanism and consequently the ideology that underlines it. In both cases marriage, which is a fundamentally private issue, has been employed to promote the public ideology of imperialism. Central to

this approach are the exemplary moral protagonists and the legitimate institution of marriage. It is through this double dimension of morality and legitimacy that we are expected to judge and consequently endorse Virgil's and Gay's empires. We are invited to be impartial to imperialism, not only through the virtuous character of Polly and the legitimacy of marriage but most importantly through Aeneas's character and the glorious legacy of the Roman Empire. The Trojan Aeneas's marriage to the Latin princess Lavinia, which takes place after a long and perilous journey, gives birth to the Roman Empire. In the West Indies, the British virtuous

Polly is rewarded with the encounter with and subsequent marriage to the exemplary Indian Prince Cawwawkee who is heir to his father's kingdom. With such a marriage, Polly like Aeneas is connected to the birth of an Empire that is destined to rule with legitimacy. By imitating the *Aeneid*'s dramatic structure with its imperial message, Gay finds itself in a privileged position. He enjoys the ideological and historical support of the glorious legacy of the Roman Empire. Such support renders his Virgilian endeavour to take his audience on the road of the empire well charted.

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## "على خطى إنيادة فرجل: بولي لجون جاي والنسخة المؤنثة من أنياس"

سامية الشيبان \*

### ملخص

إن غالبية الدراسات النقدية التي تناولت مسرحية الكاتب البريطاني جون جاي بولي التي عرضت للمرة الأولى في لندن عام 1729م، تطرقت إلى كونها نقداً للأوضاع السياسية والفساد الاجتماعي الذي كان سائداً في عصره. ورأت دراسات أخرى أن المسرحية تعكس موقف جاي المناهض للعبودية والاستعمار. إن هذا البحث يحاول أن ينظر إلى المسرحية بعيداً عن البيئة اللصيقة لينظر للصورة الأبعد وتحديد دورها في استشراف الطموح الإمبريالي لبريطانيا. وهذا يتضح من خلال المقاربة البنائية بين بولي وإنيادة لفرجل. مثل الشاعر الروماني القديم بدا جاي مهوساً بالتاريخ ليس أحداثاً فقط بل أداة لنقل الفكر والإرث الاستعماري. قلد جاي بناء إنيادة مؤكداً بذلك على أهمية التركة الاستعمارية للإمبراطورية الرومانية. بولي مثل إنيادة تعتمد على محورية الصراع الذي يتصدر مشهده البطلة. والبناء يتكون من ثلاث مراحل: المنفى، والرحلة البحرية ومن ثم المرحلة الأخيرة وهي الوصول إلى أرض الميعاد. إن هذا البناء السبب في قدرة البطلة بولي وأنياس في بناء حياة جديدة. أرض الميعاد لبطل فيرجل هي إيطاليا التي وصل إليها بعد أن غادر تروي على إثر تدمير اليونانيين لها. في إيطاليا وبعد صراعات مريعة تزوج من أميرة إيطالية وأسس أبنائه مدينة روما التي ظهرت منها الإمبراطورية الرومانية التي سيطرت على العالم. بدورها بولي البريطانية استقرت في جزر الهند الغربية وتحديداً جاميكا وتزوجت من ولي العهد الهندي. وقد أضفى هذا الزواج شرعية للاستعمار البريطاني لجزر الهند الغربية وباقي المناطق التي استولوا عليها. من خلال تبني بنية إنيادة استطاع جاي تتبع خطى فيرجل على طريق الاستعمار التي رسمها الرومان بدقة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** جاي، فيرجل، بولي، أنياس، الهند الغربية، روما، تروي.

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