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## ***AEQVOR: THE SEA OF PROPHECIES IN VIRGIL'S AENEID***

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The Classical Quarterly / Volume 64 / Issue 02 / December 2014, pp 694 - 706

DOI: 10.1017/S0009838814000159, Published online: 20 November 2014

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### **How to cite this article:**

M. Pilar García Ruiz (2014). *AEQVOR: THE SEA OF PROPHECIES IN VIRGIL'S AENEID*. The Classical Quarterly, 64, pp 694-706 doi:10.1017/S0009838814000159

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## AEQVOR: THE SEA OF PROPHECIES IN VIRGIL'S *AENEID*\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In a well-known article, Hodnett pointed out that Virgil emphasizes the peacefulness and quiet of the sea, its immensity and limitlessness, in contrast to the view articulated by the Roman poets of the Republic, which presents the sea as deceptive and fearsome.<sup>1</sup> Among the many terms used in the *Aeneid* to denote the sea, *aequor* stands out precisely because it is the term most frequently used by Virgil in place of the word *mare*.<sup>2</sup>

*Aequor* is a poetic term, a derivation of the adjective *aequus*, whose primary meaning connotes any form of flat surface. In Republican times, the term was used in a number of figurative senses, moving from 'the flatness of the land' to 'the surface of the sea', and thus coming to mean 'the calm sea'. Both Varro and Cicero observe that the word *aequor* used in reference to the sea pertained to the language of poets;<sup>3</sup> in fact, the first instances of the term in prose coloured by its poetic use date to the work of Seneca the Elder.<sup>4</sup>

The image of the sea as a simile or metaphor for 'plain' or 'flat surface' probably comes from Homer. In Latin poetry, the image is found in the work of Ennius, only a few examples of which are extant,<sup>5</sup> and in Lucretius, who also used the term *aequor* in a simile. For Lucretius, *aequor* denotes a sea that is calm at first, before being troubled by the buffeting of the wind.<sup>6</sup>

Deployed in a tentative way in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*,<sup>7</sup> the sea begins to play a more prominent role in the *Aeneid*, the story of the adventures of the Trojan hero, where *aequor* displaces other terms that denote the sea. We can trace 90 instances of *aequor* used in a marine sense in the three works; 75 of these uses occur in the *Aeneid*,<sup>8</sup> 55 of which are to be found in the first six books, covering Aeneas' wanderings, and 20 in the second half of the narrative.

\* I am grateful to V. Cristóbal, C. Castillo, J.B. Torres, E. Reinhardt, and particularly to the anonymous *CQ* reviewer and to this journal's editor, B. Gibson, for advice that clarified the argument. My interest in *aequor* is due to one of my students, N. Alvarez Castro, who wrote an essay on '*Aequor*: its presence in similes in the *Aeneid*'. Some data were taken from there and are used with her consent.

<sup>1</sup> M.P. Hodnett, 'The sea in Roman poetry', *CJ* 15 (1919), 67–82, at 71, recently echoed by J. Luque Moreno, *Mare nostrum: reflexiones sobre el léxico latino del mar* (Granada, 2011), 17.

<sup>2</sup> In terms of frequency of use, *aequor* is followed by *mare*, *pelagus*, *fluctus*, *pontus*, *altum*, *fretum*, *uada*, *salum*, *sal*, etc.; see H.H. Warwick, *A Virgil Concordance* (Minneapolis, MN, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> Varro, *Ling.* 7.1–2, 23; Cic. *Acad.* 2 (cited by Non. 65.2).

<sup>4</sup> A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine: histoire des mots* (Paris, 1959); G. Aricò, s.v. *aequor*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 1.37–8.

<sup>5</sup> Enn. *Ann.* 124, 505 Skutsch.

<sup>6</sup> Lucr. 1.8; 2.1, 375–6, 766, 772, 781; 3.1002; 4.411; 5.266, 388, 1227; 6.440, 621, 623, 634.

<sup>7</sup> Verg. *Ecl.* 9.57: *Et nunc omne tibi stratam silet aequor*; *G.* 3.201: *ille uolat simul arua fuga simul aequora uerrens*; *G.* 3.359: *nec cum | praecipitem Oceani rubro lauit aequore currum*.

<sup>8</sup> Virgil's work includes a total of 110 uses of the word *aequor*, used most commonly to mean 'sea' (90 instances), with 20 uses referring to the 'flatness of the land'.

The use of *aequor* and other metaphorical terms such as *altum*, *fluctus*, and *sal*, and of Greek loan words such as *pelagus* and *pontus*, has been read as a requirement of *uariatio* in expression: sonorous and evocative terms, κύρια ὀνόματα,<sup>9</sup> used instead of the common noun.<sup>10</sup> However, metrical necessity should not be overlooked as a selection criterion in this regard: the spondee *aequor* and the dactylic forms *aequore* and *aequora* are easier to combine for the purposes of prosody than the derivative forms of the word *mare* such as *maria*.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, a lexical-stylistic reason for the use of *aequor* in a figurative sense should also be noted: by using *aequor* to mean a 'smooth sea', the poet implies that the sea is calm, thus setting aside other terms such as *altum*, *pelagus*, and *pontus*, which connote the danger, mystery, or uncertainty often associated with the image of the ocean.<sup>12</sup> However, a close reading of the passages in which *aequor* occurs in the *Aeneid* discloses that the metaphor has at times been lexicalized and simply denotes the sea as such. Perhaps the word functions as a metaphor only in certain contexts or selection criteria other than those set out above may underlie its use. The issue requires more wide-ranging study.

My reading of the passages in which the word *aequor* occurs appears to reveal a heretofore undiscovered pattern in Virgil's poem, which comprises the core of the argument pursued in this paper: a series of interlinked scenes in which, through religious language and in the form of prophecies, Aeneas progressively discovers the main elements of his destiny. Each scene involves an announcement made to him by the gods: the Trojans have to cross a sea (referred to as *aequor*, without exception) and are also given a promise of lands, *arua*, awaiting them on the far side of the sea.<sup>13</sup> These repeated instances amount to more than formulaic repetition; they comprise an ordered sequence in the form of a short narrative.<sup>14</sup> The textual coherence of these scenes, as well as the meaning and function of the term *aequor* in them, is explored below.

## II. AEQUOR IN THE PROPHECIES IN THE AENEID<sup>15</sup>

### 1. Creusa prophecies to Aeneas a long voyage leading to a happy landing (2.780–2)

Just as he is about to set out from Troy, Aeneas is told for the first time through Creusa about how the expedition will go and what the final destination of the voyage is to be:

<sup>9</sup> M. Leumann, 'La lingua poetica latina', in A. Lunelli (ed.), *La lingua poetica latina* (Bologna, 1974), 131–78, esp. 174–5.

<sup>10</sup> Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.16.

<sup>11</sup> Ancient critics drew attention to this criterion, above all in relation to dactylic poetry: Cic. *De or.* 202; Quint. *Inst.* 1.6.2; Serv. *Ecl.* 5.36.

<sup>12</sup> R.G. Tanner, s.v. *mare*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 3.371–2; A. Borgo, s.v. *pelagus, pontus*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 4.4–6, 206–8.

<sup>13</sup> These texts represent sixteen examples of *aequor* and constitute the basis for the present article.

<sup>14</sup> On the difference between repetitions as compositional units and formulaic repetition as a form of transfer and the so-called *tibicines*, see W. Moskalew, *Formular Language and Poetic Design in the Aeneid* (Leiden, 1982), 73–80, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Prophecies that do not contain the promise of a voyage and a land have not been included in this study: 1.257–96 (Jupiter to Venus); 2.289–95 (Hector to Aeneas); 3.94–8 (Apollo to Anchises in

longa tibi exsilia et uastum maris aequor arandum,  
 et terram Hesperiam uenies, ubi Lydius arua  
 inter opima uirum leni fluit agmine Thybris. (2.780–2)<sup>16</sup>

Long exile is your lot, a vast stretch of sea you must plough; and you will come to the land of Hesperia, where amid the rich fields of husbandmen the Lydian Tiber flows with gentle sweep.

What does *uastum maris aequor arandum* mean? How is one to find a Lydian river in a Western land? Certainly, to Aeneas himself Creusa's language must sound riddling and oracular. Throughout the poem, and thanks to the fulfilment of prophecies, the hero will find answers to his perplexity.

The shade of Creusa<sup>17</sup> forewarns Aeneas of a tiring voyage, a 'long exile' in which 'you must plough a vast stretch of sea'. The phrase *maris aequor* echoes the formulas used by Ennius and Lucretius: *ponti/maris/campi aequor*.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, *aequor arandum* is an expression of Virgil's own making, a beautiful image that harks back to the poet's voice in the *Georgics*, which views the length and trials of the mission ahead through the eyes of a farm labourer. The dangers of storms and sea monsters to befall him in the future are overlooked here.

The destination is Hesperia, an indeterminate land that lies to the west, which could be either Italy or Hispania.<sup>19</sup> The poet's approach at the beginning is ambiguous. The final destination of the journey is to be revealed in the subsequent omens.<sup>20</sup> 'The Lydian Tiber flows with gentle sweep ...':<sup>21</sup> since ancient times, the Etruscans were regarded as having come from the region of Lydia in Asia Minor, hence the use of the adjective 'Lydian' in relation to the Tiber.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Virgil emphasizes the ethnic identity that binds the place of departure to the journey's destination.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the lands that await Aeneas as his new homeland are *arua opima*, fertile fields;<sup>24</sup> and they are repeatedly referred to as *arua* in the sequence of prophecies.<sup>25</sup>

Two echoes of this prophecy are especially noteworthy. In saying goodbye to Helenus and Andromache, Aeneas draws a sharp contrast between the peace which his relatives have already achieved and his own fate:

Delos); 3.245–57 (the Fury Celenus to the Trojans); 6.83–97 (the Sibyl to Aeneas); 6.756–853 and 868–86 (Anchises to Aeneas); and 12.834–40 (Jupiter to Juno).

<sup>16</sup> Latin text from R.A.B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis: Opera* (Oxford, 1969); translations into English: H.R. Fairclough, *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid*, Loeb Classical Library 63 and 64 (Cambridge, MA, 1916, rev. G.P. Goold, 2000), with minor modifications.

<sup>17</sup> The shades of the dead also possess the gift of prophecy in the *Aeneid*: see Serv. *Aen.* 10.470.

<sup>18</sup> *Aequora campi*: Enn. *Ann.* 124 Skutsch; Lucr. 3.1002; *aequora ponti/maris* Lucr. 1.9; 2.772, 781; 4.411; 5.1001; 6.440, 628; *maris aequor*: Verg. *Aen.* 2.780, 3.495; *ponti aequor*: Verg. *G.* 1.469.

<sup>19</sup> Serv. *Aen.* 1.530: *aut enim Hesperiam solam dicis et significas Italiam, aut addis ultimam et significas Hispaniam, quae in occidentis est fine.*

<sup>20</sup> On the repetition of *Ausonia*, *Hesperia*, *Italia*, and *Thybris* as keywords in the prophecies, see Moskalew (n. 14), 111–12; Virgil plays on the scepticism and lack of understanding among the Trojans as regards the prophecies. Hence, a certain dramatic tension is generated between the future as revealed in the prophecies and what the characters presume may be the case. This may also explain the inconsistency between this passage and the beginning of Book 3: *incerti quo fata ferant, ubi sistere detur* (3.7).

<sup>21</sup> Virgil has taken over Enn. *Ann.* 163 Skutsch; Lucr. 5.271, 6.637.

<sup>22</sup> *Lydia regna* in 8.479–80.

<sup>23</sup> R. Austin, *P. Vergilii Maronis: Aeneidos: Liber secundus* (Oxford, 1964), 283; E. Paratore, *Eneide* (Rome, 1990–7), 1.362.

<sup>24</sup> *Opima*, a hypallage of *uirum*; see Austin (n. 23), ad. loc.

<sup>25</sup> 3.171 (the Penates to Aeneas); 418, 496 (Aeneas to Helenus and Andromache); 4.311 (Dido to Aeneas); 8.38 (Tiber to Aeneas); and 9.100 (Jupiter to his mother, Cybele-Berecynthia).



The native gods that accompany him on the journey acknowledge the difficulty of the task and try to encourage him: ‘We followed you and your arms when Dardania was burned; under you we traversed on ships the swelling sea; ... [do not] shrink from the long toil of flight.’ The use of the expression *tumidum aequor*, an oxymoronic phrase (‘the swelling sea’), is striking since other, more dramatic nouns are available, such as *pontus*, *pelagus*, or *altum*. In two other passages, Neptune calms the waters of a *tumidum aequor*; and in both passages *aequor* may be read as the sea that settles after the divine intervention of Neptune to calm troubled waters (Verg. *Aen.* 1.142: *dicto citis tumida aequora placat*; 5.820–1: *subsidunt undae tumidumque sub axe tonanti | sternitur aequor aquis*).<sup>27</sup> The meaning of the word *aequor* may have a proleptic function in the three cases: the sea is *aequor* because it will be calmed by the gods who accompany Aeneas on his voyage, Delius Apollo (3.162) and Jupiter (3.171), and send him the oracle.

The Penates again speak of Hesperia as Virgil’s destination, giving it the name Italy, whence came his distant ancestor Dardanus,<sup>28</sup> ‘to seek Corythus and the lands of Ausonia’;<sup>29</sup> the toponym Corythus or Corythum<sup>30</sup> is usually identified with the Etruscan city of Cortona. Hence, the expedition to Italy is a return to the homeland of Dardanus, Aeneas’ ancestor and the founder of Troy (Hom. *Il.* 20.215–18). The lands and the port of Ausonia stand for journey’s end in both the prophecy of the Penates (3.171) and the prophecy of Helenus (3.378). In the *Aeneid*, Ausonia stretches over the land of Latium, with the river Tiber forming a natural border to the north.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. Helenus warns of the dangers ahead and sets out the stages in the journey (3.374–462, 475–9)

The Trojans come ashore at the port of Buthrotum in Epirus, and there Helenus, Hector’s brother and a priest of Apollo, speaks an oracle in Aeneas’ presence:

Nate dea (nam te maioribus ire per altum  
auspiciis manifesta fides; sic fata deum rex  
sortitur uoluitque uices, is uertitur ordo),  
pauca tibi e multis, quo tutior hospita lustres  
*aequora et Ausonio* possis considerare *portu*,  
expediam dictis. (3.374–9)

Goddess-born, since there is clear proof that under higher auspices you journey over the sea – for thus the king of the gods allots the destinies and rolls the wheel of change, and such is the circling course – a few things out of many I will unfold to you in speech, that so more safely you may traverse the seas of your sojourn, and find rest in Ausonia’s haven.

He warns the hero of the dangers which he must avoid so as to journey more safely over *hospita aequora* and reach the port of Ausonia. The verb *lustres* (377) has religious

<sup>27</sup> Other passages in which the adjective *tumidus* appears are Verg. *Aen.* 5.125, 8.671, 11.393.

<sup>28</sup> Serv. *Aen.* 3.167 confirms Virgil’s version of the origins of Dardanus, by citing a legend in which Dardanus was the son of Corythus and left the city named after his father, setting out in the direction of Troad.

<sup>29</sup> Ausonia is a poetic term for Italy; the name comes from Auson, son of Ulysses and Circe or Calypso: Serv. ad *Aen.* 3.171.

<sup>30</sup> Serv. *Aen.* 1.380, 3.167, 7.209, 10.719; Serv. auct. *Aen.* 3.170.

<sup>31</sup> M. Cancellieri, s.v. *Ausonia*, in *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* 1.421–2.

connotations; strictly speaking, it means 'to purify oneself', but in the context of the sea and seafaring it means 'to make a crossing'.<sup>32</sup> The Trojans cannot simply drop anchor on any stretch of coast they find, because many of those lands are inhabited by hostile Greeks (3.396–8); instead, they must go round Sicily and head for Campania (3.412–13, 429–30), where the Sibyl will instruct them concerning how to overcome future dangers (3.441–7, 456–60). In fact, it is Anchises who speaks to him of these matters from the world beyond the grave; the repetition of the final verse cited above (3.459) at 6.892 puts this beyond question.<sup>33</sup>

Helenus also speaks a brief prophecy to Anchises (3.477–9):

ecce tibi Ausoniae *tellus*: hanc arripe uelis.  
et tamen hanc *pelago* praeterlabare necesse est:  
Ausoniae *pars* illa procul quam pandit Apollo.

Before you is the land of Ausonia! Make sail and seize it! And yet past this shore you must drift upon the sea; far away is that part of Ausonia which Apollo reveals.

This prophecy tells again of the need to journey towards Ausonia, even though they may be unable to land on the coast of Italy immediately.<sup>34</sup> To my mind, the slight variation marked by the use of *tellus* rather than *arua*, and *pelagus* instead of *aequor*, reinforces the lexical chain selected by the poet in this sequence of prophetic texts: the sea and the land of Ausonia promised to the Trojans are *aequor* and *arua Ausonia*, whereas those envisaged by Anchises, albeit lands of Ausonia, are not the ones that Apollo has destined for them. Apollo is referred to here once again as the guide to their expedition.

#### 4. The river Tiber promises help to Aeneas and calms its waters (8.36–65, 86–96)

The climax of the first part of the poem is marked by the descent into hell. The second part opens as Aeneas and his men sail into the port (7.6–7) where the waters of the Tiber meet the sea (7.30–2). The Trojans set up camp on the banks of the river; the first incidents occur after their visit to King Latinus. Taking the form of an old man with a long flowing beard, the god Tiberinus appears to Aeneas in a dream (8.36–65), assuring him that he has arrived at his destination and bidding him welcome to his lands:

expectate solo Laurenti *aruisque Latinis*,  
hic tibi certa domus, certi (ne absiste) penates.  
neu belli terrere minis. (8.38–40)

<sup>32</sup> R.D. Williams, *P. Vergilii Maronis: Aeneidos: Liber tertius, comm.* (Oxford, 1962), ad loc.

<sup>33</sup> 3.459: *et quo quemque modo fugiasque ferasque laborem*; 6.892: *et quo quemque modo fugiatque feratque laborem*. G. Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Ann Arbor, MI, and London, 1933), 104, 115, maintains that this discrepancy is not an oversight or mistake; rather, it is a narrative device on the poet's part to mask the death of the old man until the time is right. See also J.J. O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 28.

<sup>34</sup> When Anchises tells them of the destination of their wandering voyage (3.182–6), he recalls that Cassandra had often spoken to him of Hesperia and the Italic kingdoms, but he did not pay attention. This remark would appear to confirm what was noted above (n. 20) regarding the Trojans' sceptical attitude to the prophecies.

You who have been long looked for on Laurentine ground and Latin fields, here your home is sure – draw not back – and sure are your gods. Be not scared by threats of war.

These territories were ruled by Latinus, with whom Aeneas had just arranged a marriage pact; some time before, a prophecy had revealed to Latinus that his daughter was to marry a foreigner. Laurentum was the kingdom that Anchises had foreseen for his son in Elysium, *Laurentisque docet populos urbemque Latini* (6.891). Thus, the *arua Latina* and the *certa domus*<sup>35</sup> stand for the endpoint of the journey, although the battles foretold for control of the territory were still to come.

The Tiber promises to flow in such a way as to allow the travellers to overcome the cross-currents in the river, so the ships may sail unhindered:

‘ipse ego te ripis et recto flumine ducam,  
aduersum remis superes subuectus ut amnem’ ...  
Thybris ea fluuium, quam longa est, nocte tumentem  
leniit, et tacita refluens ita substitit unda,  
mitis ut in morem stagni placidaeque paludis  
sterneret *aequor* aquis, remo ut luctamen abesset. (8.57–8, 86–9)

‘I myself will guide you along the banks straight up the stream, that so, impelled by your oars, you may overcome the opposing current’ ... All that night long Tiber calmed his swelling flood, and flowing back with silent wave so halted that like a gentle pool or quiet mere he smoothed his watery plain, so that the oars might know no struggle.

Virgil recalls this beautiful image shortly afterwards:

olli remigio noctemque diemque fatigant  
et longos superant flexus, uariisque teguntur  
arboribus, uiridisque secant *placido aequore* siluas. (8.94–6)

They with their rowing give night and day no rest, pass the long bends, are shaded with diverse trees, and cleave the green woods on the calm surface.

In other words, the Trojans ‘cleave’ through the reflection of the green trees in the smooth surface of the water with their oars.<sup>36</sup> Once again, the poet describes sailing by drawing on turns of phrase linked to farm work.<sup>37</sup> *Placidum aequor* is another sign of the good omens wished for the Trojans by the god of the river.<sup>38</sup>

### 5. *The Trojan ships are turned into nymphs by the power of Cybele (9.91–103, 114–17)*

Having been told by Iris of Aeneas’ absence, Turnus lays siege to the Trojan camp and attempts to burn their ships. The poet now reveals that when Aeneas was putting his

<sup>35</sup> Cf. n. 26 above.

<sup>36</sup> Servius ad loc. interprets *aequor* metaphorically, a reading that a number of scholars including Conington and Warde Fowler regard as too modern; cf. Paratore (n. 23), ad loc.

<sup>37</sup> *Secare* is joined to *aequor* at 8.96, 674; 9.103, 222.

<sup>38</sup> In contrast with the benevolent stillness of the Tiber here, see *Aen.* 8.330–2, where the decision of the Italians to name the river after the monstrous king Thybris suggests the other aspect of the river, i.e. its capacity to flood and to destroy the surrounding land.



fleet together near Mount Ida, the goddess Cybele asked her son Jupiter to ensure that ships built from wood felled in the sacred forest would not be destroyed:<sup>39</sup>

In turn, Jupiter promises that they are to enjoy a unique fate:

immo, ubi defunctae finem *portusque* tenebunt  
*Ausonios* olim, quaecumque euaserit undis  
 Dardaniumque ducem *Laurentia* uexerit *arua*,  
 mortalem eripiam formam *magnique* iubebo  
*aequoris esse deas*, qualis Nereia Doto  
 et Galatea secant spumantem pectore pontum. (9.98–103)

‘Nay, when one day, their service done, they gain an Ausonian haven, from all the ships that have escaped the waves, and borne the Dardan chief to the fields of Laurentum, I will take away their mortal shape, and bid them be goddesses of the great sea, like Doto, Nereus’ child, and Galatea, who cleave with their breasts the foaming deep.’

The ships that succeeded in accomplishing their mission of landing at *portus Ausonios* and bringing the young Dardan chief to the Laurentine fields (8.38) would be stripped of their mortal form and transformed by Jupiter into goddesses of the ‘great sea’; *magnum aequor* is an apt description of a sea flush with divine beings, but it is also foretells how that same sea will lap the shores of many lands to be conquered by the descendants of the noble Dardanus.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, before Turnus can do his worst to the Trojan ships, Cybele in her role as Berecynthia<sup>41</sup> works the necessary miracle:

‘uos ite solutae,  
 ite *deae pelagi*; genetrix iubet.’ et sua quaeque  
 continuo puppes abrumpunt uincla ripis  
 delphinumque modo demersis *aequora* rostris  
 ima petunt. hinc uirgineae (mirabile monstrum)  
 reddunt se totidem facies pontoque feruntur. (9.116–22)

‘Go free, go, goddesses of ocean, the Mother bids it.’ And at once each ship breaks her cable from the bank, and like dolphins they dip their beaks and dive to the water’s depths; then as maiden forms –wondrous portent! – they resurface in like number and swim in the sea.

The vessels begin to dip their keels into the sea, dive like dolphins down to the sea bed, and surface in the form of young maidens. Where once they resembled the Nereids, ‘who cleave with their breasts the foaming deep’ (9.102–3), now they look like dolphins sporting in the waves. The simile of the dolphins is not simply decorative; it will also play a significant role in the relationship between the world of Aeneas and the world of Augustus.

Cybele refers to the nymphs as *deae pelagi*; the use of the word *pelagi* may sound a certain dissonance with the preferential use of the term *aequor* argued for here. However, a reading of the passage as a whole discloses the poet’s use of a number

<sup>39</sup> Virgil is the first epic poet to pause the plot so as to provide a detailed description of a prophecy immediately before its fulfilment, thus creating a brief burst of dramatic tension: Duckworth (n. 33), 42–3.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.278–9: *His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono | imperium sine fine dedi.* Nevertheless, it cannot be concluded, as E. Saint-Denis, *Le Role de la mer dans la poésie latine* (Lyon, 1935), 484, argues, that Virgil articulates a sense of ownership of the sea.

<sup>41</sup> Regarding the origin of the epithet ‘Berecynthia’ for Cybele and the cult of Cybele-Rea in Rome, see the commentary by Paratore (n. 23) in volumes 3 and 5 to 6.784 and 9.82.

of variations for ‘sea’, besides *pelagi: ponto* (103, 122), *maria* (115), and *aequora* (120); as well as variant terms for ‘ship’: *nauis* (114), *pinus* (116), and *puppis* (118). Nevertheless, that the use of *aequor* is reserved for the charming image of the dolphins is noteworthy in this regard, *delphinumque modo demersis aequora rostris | ima petunt* (119–20), as is the fact that this link between *aequor* and dolphins is retained in a number of the other passages explored below.

### 6. *The nymph Cymodocea warns Aeneas of the dangers awaiting the Trojans (10.219–45)*

The nymphs do not depart the scene; rather, they stay and ally themselves to the Trojan cause. They go out to meet Aeneas, and Cymodocea, most skilled in speech, draws him into the working of the wonder they perform:

‘uigilasne, deum gens,  
Aenea? uigila et uelis immitte rudentis.  
nos sumus, Idaeae sacro de uertice pinus,  
nunc *pelagi nymphae*, classis tua ...  
rupimus inuitae tua uincula teque *per aequor*  
quaerimus.’ (10.228–31, 233–4)

‘Are you awake, Aeneas, scion of gods? Wake and fling loose the sheets of your sails. We – pines of Ida, from her sacred crest, now nymphs of the sea– are your fleet! ... we reluctantly broke your moorings ... and we are seeking you over the sea.’

In a paraphrase of 9.116–22 (cited above), Cymodocea explains that the nymphs are Aeneas’ fleet (10.231), whom mother Cybele commanded to be goddesses of the sea, to transform from ships into nymphs (10.221).<sup>42</sup> Again, this passage exhibits a number of variations for ‘sea’: *maris* (221), *pelagi* (231), *fluctus* (222), *aequor* (233), and *undis* (227, 235); and for ‘ship’: *nauis* (221), *pinus* (230), and *classis* (231).

However, what is distinctive about the passage is that Cymodocea alerts Aeneas to the dangers which his men are facing and urges him to issue a call-to-arms to his allies: *et clipeum cape quem dedit ipse | inuictum ignipotens atque oras ambiit auro* (‘and take the invincible shield which the Lord of Fire himself gave you and rimmed with gold’, 10.242–3). My view is that the reference to the gold rim on the shield comprises another textual echo linking the world of the nymphs, the goddesses of the sea of Aeneas, to the sea surrounding the scenes depicted on the shield, which is described in detail in Book 8 (as discussed below).

### 7. *Aequor in the ekphrasis of the shield (8.626–731)*

Following the overview of scenes which contain echoes of the Trojan legend outlined above, the focus shifts to discerning traces of *aequor* and *arua* in recent history in the *ekphrasis* of the shield, which comes before the intervention of the nymphs (see sections 5 and 6 above). The fabulous shield forged for Aeneas by Vulcan was decorated with scenes representing the history of Rome: the first part depicts memorable events from legendary times and the Republic (8.626–70); the second part shows the Battle

<sup>42</sup> 10.220–21: *quas alma Cybebe | numen habere maris nymphasque e nauibus esse*; cf. 9.101–2, 117.

of Actium and the triumph of Augustus (8.675–731). The two sections are said to be divided by a sea engraved in gold with a school of silver dolphins leaping through the blue waves:

*haec inter tumidi late maris ibat imago  
aurea, sed fluctu spumabant caerulea cano,  
et circum argento clari delphines in orbem  
aequora uerrebant caudis aestumque secabant.  
in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,  
cernere erat ...* (8.671–6)

Among these scenes flowed wide the likeness of the swelling sea, all gold, but the blue water foamed with white billows, and round about dolphins, shining in silver, swept the seas with their tails in circles, and cleft the tide. In the centre could be seen bronze ships – the battle of Actium ...

To my mind, a reading of this text implies that the poet is describing *two* seas: a swelling sea engraved in gold (*tumidi maris imago aurea*) and a bluish sea (*caerulea*) with white-topped waves, its surface (*aequora*) whipped into foam by the dolphins' tails.<sup>43</sup> Not only are they of different colours, but they are in different states: one is in motion, the other is a peaceful sea. As regards the layout of the shield as a whole, the first (*tumidi maris ... imago aurea*) is located *haec inter*, between the scenes in the first part – that is, it provides a kind of background. The use of the conjunction *sed* suggests that the second sea (*caerulea*) encircles (*circum*) the central scene, which portrays the battle of Actium and the triumph of Augustus (8.675–728).<sup>44</sup>

Thus, *tumidi maris imago aurea* is a golden sea that fills the space, *late ibat*, between the scenes depicting legendary Rome. The nymph Cymodocea refers to the shield at 10.242–3, noting that it is rimmed with gold: *oras ambiit auro*. The sea was the only golden element on the edge of the shield; the other golden details on the shield are to be found in interior scenes: the porticoes of the Capitol (8.655), the hairpieces and garments (659), the necklaces (661) worn by the Gauls, and the waves in the central scene of the battle of Actium (677). The engraving of the sea on the edge of the shield of Aeneas mirrors the location of the Oceanus on the rim of the shield of Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 18.607–8), a passage on which Virgil clearly draws in composing this *ekphrasis*.<sup>45</sup>

In the central ring, a blue sea foamed with white waves (*fluctu spumabant cano*) and dolphins whipped the surface of the water, *aequor*, with their tails,<sup>46</sup> cutting through the tide. The presence of dolphins is a traditional sign of a calm sea. In the light of possible

<sup>43</sup> P.T. Eden, *Virgil: Aeneid VIII* (Leiden, 1975), 178, came to a similar conclusion, though without detailed elaboration.

<sup>44</sup> However, the consensus among commentators on this point is that the reference is to a single sea. Most see the image as a concentric circle (*circum, in orbem*) around the central scene; whereas C. Becker, 'Der Schild des Aeneas', *WS* 77 (1964), 111–27, holds that the sea is around all the scenes and on the outer edge, functioning as a kind of backdrop, *haec inter*.

<sup>45</sup> On Homer's influence in the shield of Aeneas, see Becker (n. 44); G. Binder, *Aeneas und Augustus: Interpretationen zum 8. Buch der Aeneis* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1971), 213; D.A. West, 'Cernere erat: the shield of Aeneas', in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford, 1990), 295–304, at 295.

<sup>46</sup> *Aequora uerrere*, an image of smoothness applied to the sea, also found at Verg. *G.* 3.201: *aequora uerrrens (Aquila)* and *Aen.* 3.290: *certatim socii feriunt mare et aequora uerrunt* (= 5.778); it comes from the Latin poetic tradition (Enn. *Ann.* 377 Skutsch: *uerrunt extemplo placide mare*) and is linked to *aequora* in Lucr. 5.266 (=5.388), 1227; 6.624; and in Cat. 64.7: *caerulea*

literary echoes, the image of dolphins may allude to the description of *The Shield of Hercules* attributed to Hesiod,<sup>47</sup> in which the dolphins appear not to have any special symbolic function. Nor does the context preclude the possibility that the dolphins refer to Apollo: under the title Apollo Delphinios, he was commonly depicted surrounded by dolphins,<sup>48</sup> since Augustus held that the divine intervention of Apollo had played a decisive role in the victory at Actium. Indeed, shortly afterwards in the text (8.704–5), Virgil himself depicts Apollo Actiacus fighting with the Romans in the naval battle.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, just as in the mythical world, where Aeneas' ships dive into the water, *aequor* ('like dolphins they dip their beaks *into the water*'), and resurface in the form of sea goddesses to protect the Trojans, so too do the dolphins, in the *aequor* that frames the triumphant victory of Augustus, symbolize the protection and favour of the gods, especially of Apollo,<sup>50</sup> for Augustus. A continuum is established from the sea adventures of the Trojans to the sea that laps the shores of Augustus' territories. Such symbols reflect what is depicted explicitly in other aspects of the Actium scene: Virgil's intention to enact a link between Augustus and Aeneas, the mythical Trojan hero.<sup>51</sup>

A final echo of *aequor-aru*a may be found within the central scenes on the shield of Aeneas portraying the battle of Actium, although they are now presented in a darker light:

ac totum spumare reductis  
*conuulsum* remis rostrisque tridentibus *aequor*.  
*alta* petunt; *pelago* credas innare reulsas  
 Cycladas ...  
 ... *aru*a noua *Neptunia* caede rubescunt. (8.689–92, 695)

... and the whole sea foams, torn up by the sweeping oars and triple-pointed beaks. To the deep they race; you would think that the Cyclades, uprooted, were floating on the main ... Neptune's fields reddened with strange slaughter.

The sea is referred to as *conuulsum aequor* (689–90), *alta, pelago* (691), and *aru*a *Neptunia* (695) in this passage. The use of the word *aequor* to describe the sea in times of naval battle may seem contradictory; the oxymoron *conuulsum aequor* reflects the paradox of a sea that should be a smooth plain, but is not.

*verrentes abiegnis aequora palmis*. See M. Wigodsky, *Virgil and Early Latin Poetry* (Wiesbaden, 1972), 49–50; Luque Moreno (n. 1), 115.

<sup>47</sup> [Hes.] *Sc.*, 207–12; K.W. Gransden, *Virgil: Aeneid VIII* (Cambridge, 1976), 174; R. Faber, 'Virgil's "Shield of Aeneas" (*Aeneid* 8.617–731) and the shield of Heracles', *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000), 49–57, at 54.

<sup>48</sup> The Homeric hymn to Apollo (*Hym. hom.* 3.400–3, 494–7) links the epithet *Delphinios* to the miracle in which Apollo turned himself into a dolphin to draw priests from Crete to his sanctuary on Delphos.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Prop. 3.11. 69–72, where the poet remembers *Apollo Leucadius* because of the proximity of the battle of Actium, but invites a sailor to keep in mind Caesar (i.e. Octavius Augustus) *in toto Ionio*. On Apollo and Augustus, see John Miller's recent monograph: *Apollo, Augustus and the Poets* (Cambridge, 2009), 66–75, on this passage.

<sup>50</sup> Also of Neptune, Venus, and Minerva (8.699–700).

<sup>51</sup> This intention appears particularly in the formula *stans celsa in puppi* (8.680), in which the shield depicts Augustus readied for combat and which is applied both before and afterwards to Aeneas in 4.554 and 10.260 (in the latter instance, Aeneas goes upriver to confront the Rutulians on the word of the nymph Cymodocea). It is also applied to Anchises at 3.525: see Moskalew (n. 14), 136–7; R. Gurval, *Actium and Augustus* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998), 210–11.

In *arua noua Neptunia caede rubescunt* (8.695), Virgil plays on words once again, describing the sea in terms of farmland, an association that inaugurated this sequence of texts. The image highlights the role of the gods in the battle,<sup>52</sup> while also giving a sense of the desolation wrought by death, *noua caede*, and presenting the shedding of blood as a profanation of the dominion of a god, *arua Neptunia*.

These are the only *arua* that Virgil associates with Augustus in the *Aeneid*: the *arua Neptunia* that were stained red with blood, rather than the prosperous Italic lands reached by his ancestor, Aeneas. Perhaps this association amounts to a refusal on the poet's part to celebrate Actium as a victory, and a desire to perpetuate the recent defeats which the Romans had experienced. While it is true that the passage concludes with Augustus' triple triumph before the temple of Apollo (8.714–28), it may be argued – as Gurval has done – that the purpose of the verses is not so much to celebrate a military success as to mark the end of hostilities and the dawn of a new era.<sup>53</sup>

### III. FINAL REMARKS

Virgil constructs a sequence centring on the sea and the lands awaiting Aeneas and the sea of Augustus through a set of passages comprising the prophecies of Creusa, the Penates, Helenus, the river Tiber, Cymodocea the nymph, and the *ekphrasis* of the shield. Aeneas is guided from on high towards his final destination. The first *aequora* prophesied to him are the waters of the sea across which he must sail to reach the *portus Ausonius*; later, the *aequora* form the stream of the river Tiber. In a stage-by-stage process of nearing his destination, the location of the *arua* shifts gradually from Hesperia to Ausonia, to Latium, until it finally settles at Laurentum. Once the Trojans have arrived at Latium, their ships are transformed into nymphs of a *magnum aequor*. The poet had already drawn on this image in the *ekphrasis* of the shield: the dolphins sweeping through the *aequora* of Rome pacified by Augustus are a symbol of the patronage of Apollo in the same way as the nymphs symbolize the divine protection enjoyed by Aeneas and his men. In marked contrast, however, the *arua Neptunia* in the *conuulsum aequor* at Actium may articulate a guarded rebuke for recent wars, amounting to a lament for the fallen. To sum up, it may be concluded that the echoes of the twofold expression *aequor–arua* comprise an effect of poetic composition. The repetition of these terms shapes prophecies that guide the hero, prophecies that are fulfilled in the end. The words *aequor* and *arua* function as marked terms referring to the sea and the promised land, in contrast to unmarked terms such as *tellus* and *pelagus* at 3.477–8, for instance.

The meaning of 'smooth sea' or 'calm sea' is clearly reflected in verses 2.780, 3.495, 8.89, 96, and 674, whereas that metaphorical sense appears to be absent in verses 3.157, 377, 8.690, 9.102, and 10.234. The poet describes sailing in terms of arduous farm work: to plough a stretch of sea (2.780 and 3.495). To a certain extent, the linking of *aequor* and *arua* likewise mirrors this vision because the journey and its end are figured in terms relating to the countryside. Moreover, phrases such as *aequora uerrere* (8.674) and *secare fluctus* (*pontum*, *aestum*) also denote the idea of smoothness or calm in the context of the sea. Finally, the locution *arua Neptunia*, whereby the poet depicts the

<sup>52</sup> Gransden (n. 47), 179.

<sup>53</sup> Gurval (n. 51), 244.

deaths at the battle of Actium as an abominable crime, seems to parallel the profanation of cultivated land used as sacred ground by the shedding of blood.

At the same time, the second meaning – that of ‘a sea protected by the gods’ – is also reflected in all the passages that comprise the sequence. This interpretation is prompted by most of the adjectives used to qualify the noun *aequor*: Helenus asserts that the Ausonian seas will be *hospital*, and the *placidum aequor* of the Tiber are a good omen of the Trojans’ arrival and of their success in the battles to come. In Latium, the *magnum aequor* surrounding Aeneas is not only ‘great’ in size, a harbinger of the great territory of the empire in the future, but also ‘great’ in dignity, inhabited by divine beings who watch over the safety of the hero and his descendants. In the two instances where *aequor* is qualified by apparently oxymoronic adjectives, *tumidum aequor* (3.157) and *conuulsum aequor* (8.690), the argument advanced here is that the word then has a proleptic function, denoting the future state of peace and prosperity promised by the gods Jupiter and Apollo, both to the Rome of Aeneas and to the Rome of Augustus. At 3.157, the Penates say that they have crossed a ‘swelling sea’, while at the same time urging the Trojans not to abandon their voyage because, in the end, it will be smooth sailing for them on a calm sea. In addition, at 8.690, the poet describes the sea as *conuulsum* during the battle of Actium, but he uses the word *aequor* because it is a sea of promise, because peace will come after the war, a state of peace that is represented in symbolic terms by the dolphins of Apollo.

From a lexical-stylistic point of view, therefore, in the prophetic texts in the *Aeneid*, the original meaning of the metaphor *aequor* (smooth or calm sea) yields to a more specific sense in the prophetic passages, to denote a sea which, unlike other seas, enjoys the protection of the gods, both for the Trojan voyage and for the new era being inaugurated by the reign of Augustus.

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