VIRGILIAN IDENTITIES IN THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE

Phillip John Usher and Isabelle Fernbach

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Edited by

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and
Isabelle Fernbach

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Pour mon acolyte
Phillip

FOREWORD

Timothy Hampton

In 1546, virtually at the mid-point of the sixteenth century in Europe, François Rabelais published his *Tiers Livre*, or *Third Book*, in which he depicts the foolish and willful character Panurge seeking advice as to whether he should marry. After an initial discussion with his friends regarding several fine points of conjugal life and a momentary flirtation with dicing, Panurge, on the advice of the giant Pantagruel, sets out on a series of consultations that will eventually bring him into contact with a whole series of authorities, from philosophers and judges to witches and poets. Yet his first move is to seek advice from the writings of a long-dead author. That author is Virgil. Panurge starts his quest by engaging in the time-honored practice of the *sortes virgilianae*, the technique of opening Virgil's works at random as a way of gaining guidance – something like the Renaissance version of the fortune cookie. And, to be sure, each passage he draws, from the *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid*, has an obvious resonance with his situation. Unfortunately, he is too perplexed to interpret them in any way that would lead him to decisive action – and so his search continues.

It is not by accident that the greatest fiction writer of the French Renaissance should place Virgil at the beginning of a great quest for identity and certainty. For the Latin Middle Ages Virgil was, of course, the great poet of empire. As seer, prophet and necromancer his work provided a monumental achievement, such that Dante, as we remember, takes him as his guide through the other world. Virgil's authority did not come merely from the powerful fiction of the *Aeneid*, with its appropriation of earlier epic for the new purposes of Roman Latinity, or from the elegance of his pastoral and georgic songs. It may be traced to the unique combination of history and moral reflection provided by his works. Through the *Aeneid*, Virgil forged the great myth of Western empire, even as he constantly offered reflection on the nature of that myth – on what it meant, in fact, to write history or poetry. Thus he was both historian and philosopher of history. His work offered no opposition between fiction and commentary, thereby seeming to transcend the famous opposition between philosophy and fiction posited earlier by Plato. Similarly, in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* he offered both parables of everyday life and reflections on the limits of his own fiction, on the fragility of song and

the loss that haunts writing. The stories of Aeneas' abandonment of Dido, of the exile of Melibœus, and of the mourning of Andromache, to take only the most famous examples, offered material for moral reflection that could speak to Christian readers both secular and saintly, male and female.

The combination of moral or ethical commentary and historical narrative is one of the things that makes Virgil's central role in the French Renaissance – the topic of this excellent collection of essays – so complex. It had been Virgil's countryman Ovid who had been the great "French" poet of the Middle Ages. Ovid's accounts of changing shapes, of the nature of desire, and of the art of love had been central to such masterworks as the *Romance of the Rose* and had been appropriated for Christian moral philosophy in the fourteenth-century *Ovide moralisé*. Yet the onset of rapid political transformations in the early sixteenth century rendered Virgil's more politically inflected accounts of human action relevant in new ways. Such great Virgilian themes as the tension between history and prophecy, the nature of leisure, the relation of city and country, and the moral duty of the hero became central concerns of the new humanist-influenced court culture that emerged as a consequence of both political centralization and rapid social transformation. Thus Virgil's texts, as these essays show, emerged as central mediating elements through which Renaissance French writers sought to understand their own positions in history and society.

Yet Virgil's influence does not end with the Renaissance. His example and fictions remain cogent for all of subsequent French culture, from post-Renaissance parodies such as Paul Scarron's *Virgile travesti* to André Gide's life-long obsession with the *Eclogues*. Indeed, just as it is impossible to understand French political rhetoric and philosophy without a knowledge of Cicero, so are the great narratives of French identity deeply interwoven with the history of the reception of Virgil. These essays, with their focus on the sixteenth century, define the terms whereby Virgil is made modern and made French. As such, they open the way to a renewed sense that the reception and transformation of Virgil's legacy – across all of his works – is central to our understanding of all of French culture, from literature to the visual arts, to architecture. These essays speak of the dynamic dialogue between the Latin tradition and the French tradition. This is a dialogue that continues to this day, in the work of such authors as Francis Ponge and Pascal Quignard. Yet it is also a dialogue that much recent critical writing on French literature has tended to neglect or ignore altogether. Thus we can understand these essays as both contributions to Renaissance Studies, and as instances of the kind of focused critical reflection that is necessary to the future re-imagination of French Studies. This volume reminds us that Virgil's texts, like resonant songs of his shepherds, echo through the history of French literature. Whether we hear those texts or foolishly disregard them like Rabelais's Panurge, this volume at least provides us with superb examples of how to listen.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTE ON EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in Latin from Virgil's *Works* are from the two-volume edition in the Loeb Library by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). English translations throughout, unless otherwise noted, are also based on this edition, although frequently modified.

All other translations are by the authors of the individual articles or by the editors and approved by the authors.

Introduction

PHILLIP JOHN USHER AND ISABELLE FERNBACH

Virgil's three main texts – the *Eclogues* (or *Bucolics*), the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* – were widely read in Renaissance France. Despite this fact and although many recent studies demonstrate a renewed interest in the ways that Virgil has been read, translated and appropriated in different places and at different periods, to this day no monograph has been dedicated to Virgil's place in sixteenth-century France.[1] The most complete study to date is an article by Alice Hulubei published in 1931, a thorough account that nevertheless awaits a successor.[2] The essays of the present study, a partial and far from exhaustive response to this lack, investigate authorial, political and communitarian models by tracing how authors in sixteenth-century France read, interpreted and translated Virgil's three works. Such an undertaking seems to call for a framework that relates (to) the three different Virgilian genres. The history of Virgilian criticism suggests that we might turn to the medieval interpretive tool of the *Rota Virgilii* (Wheel of Virgil), which posits an alignment between Virgil's three modes (pastoral, georgic, epic), three spaces (countryside, field, town or city/nation), three trees (beech, fruit-tree, laurel or cedar), three implements (crook, plow, sword), three animals (sheep, cow, horse), and three corresponding social ranks (shepherd, farmer,

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[1]   Important recent scholarship on this topic includes Craig Kallendorf, *The Virgilian Tradition. Book History and the History of Reading in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot UK: Ashgate, 2007) and *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*, edd. Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C.J. Putnam (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2008). Appearing too late to be taken into account by the authors or editors of this book is David Scott Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), reviewed by Lee Fratantuono in the online *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (2011.03.60) http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2011/2011-03-60.html. Forthcoming is the *Virgil Encyclopedia*, edd. Richard Thomas and Jan Ziolkowski (Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming). A bibliography pullulates – a regularly updated bibliography for Virgilian studies is to be found on David Wilson-Okamura's site: www.virgil.org.

[2]   Alice Hulubei, "Virgile en France au XVIe siècle," *Revue du XVIe siècle*, 18 (1931): 1–77.

soldier).[3] The *rota* would seem a particularly pertinent tool here, for it sche-matizes the connections between Virgil's works and questions of form and function that have to do precisely with authorial, political and communitarian identities. Indeed, the collection would like both to foreground the specifi-cities of each of the three works and to situate them within the context of Virgil's triadic oeuvre. The *rota* in a sense reaches back even further: the idea of Virgil's tripartite career is already present in the Virgilian *Vitae,* which "impose on the poet's life a strong pattern of linear development, a teleology which constructs the *Aeneid* as the simultaneous closure – ideological and narrative – of Virgil's life and his writings."[4] The *Rota Virgilii* suggests, moreover, not just the plan of a career, but how the various genres relate to social rank and to questions of collective identity.[5] Despite the long history of the triadic organization – bucolic, georgic, epic – that harkens back to the *Vitae* and the *rota*, the tripartite model is singularly challenged by the facts on the ground in Renaissance France. The model would, ultimately, show its limits or, perhaps, its internal coherences.

Firstly, epic was clearly a much more significant genre than either the bucolic or the georgic, quantitatively and qualitatively, in Renaissance France. Du Bellay, in his *Deffence*, and his successors all placed significant emphasis on the centrality of epic to the definition and promised success of a French national literature,[6] a topic widely discussed by many critics.[7]

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[3]   For an image of the *rota*, see Edmond Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1962), p. 87.

[4]   Elena Theodorakopoulos, "Closure: The Book of Virgil," *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 155. On the *Vitae*, see also see Theodore Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 27–56.

[5]   For further comment on the *rota*, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 201 n. 35, p. 232. See especially A. T. Laugesen, "La Roue de Virgile. Une page de la théorie littéraire du Moyen Age," *Classicalia & Medievalia*, 23 (1962): 248–73.

[6]   Du Bellay announced that a French epic "fer[a] hausser la tête [à notre pauvre langage]" (will allow our poor language to raise its head proudly) and bestow on the vernacular such glory as to make it equal "aux superbes langues grecque et latine" (to the stately Greek and Latin tongues). Joachim Du Bellay, *Les regrets. Les Antiquités de Rome: La défense et illustration de la langue française*, ed. S. de Sacy (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 240–1. Jacques Peleter du Mans notes that "L'œuvre héroïque est celui qui donne le prix, et le vrai titre de Poète" (The heroic *opus* is the one that decides the poet's worth and bestows on him true title of poet) (*L'art poëtique*. Lyon: J. de Tournes et G. Gazeau, 1555), p. 75.

[7]   See Denis Bjaï and Klára Csűrös, "Le long poème narratif à la Renaissance: essai de présentation," *Nouvelle revue du seizième siècle*, 15:1 (1997): 7–25; Denis Bjaï and Klára Csűrös, "Le long poème narratif à la Renaissance: tableau chronologique," *Nouvelle revue du seizième siècle*, 15:1 (1997): 185–214. See also Siegbert Himmelsbach, *L'Epopée ou la case vide* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988), Klára Csűrös, *Variétés et vicissitudes du genre épique de Ronsard à Voltaire* (Paris: Champion, 1999), and Bruno Méniel, *Renaissance*

The *Aeneid* itself was translated earlier and more frequently: Guillaume Le Roy published the *Enéides* in 1485 and Octovien de Saint-Gelais' fuller *Enéide* appeared in 1509; whereas the *Bucolics* only become available in French in 1516 (translated by Michel Guillaume) and the *Georgics* only in 1519. And the impact of Virgilian epic on French Renaissance literature far outstrips the impact of either of the other two genres. Of the some two hundred epics written in Renaissance France, a significant majority situate themselves within a Virgilian trajectory, from works like Valerand de la Varanne's heavily Virgilian – and unfortunately more or less forgotten – epic poem about Joan of Arc, *De gestis Joanne virginis* (1516)[8] to Ronsard's much more famous *Franciade* (1572).[9] Secondly, the line separating the bucolic and georgic modes became rather blurred throughout the sixteenth century, as will be explored in the next section of this introduction. For these two main reasons, then, the present volume adopts a two-part structure instead of the three parts that might seem the more obvious choice.

The Pastoral Mode and Georgicization

The first part of this volume gathers together chapters about two different modes, namely the pastoral and the georgic, represented in Virgil's career by the *Bucolics* and the *Georgics*.[10] While Virgil did not invent the eclogue format, namely a short poem in a dialogic form dealing with rural life, pastoralism generally refers to the Virgilian tradition, as opposed notably to Theocritus' idylls, where the correspondence between literary mode and the protagonists' way of life is less obvious, and the shepherd's *otium* less frequently portrayed. Virgil's shepherds in the *Bucolics*, on the other hand, are characterized by a more sophisticated style;[11] they belong to a tighter, more limited, poetic circle at the origin of the amœbean discourse, and their songs,

de l'épopée. La poésie épique en France de 1572 à 1623 (Geneva: Droz, 2004). See also Phillip John Usher, *Epic Arts in Renaissance France* (forthcoming).

[8] A biographical sketch of this author is available in James K. Farge, *Biographical Register of Paris Doctors of Theology* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980), entry no. 269. On his Joan of Arc epic, see D. Murarasu, *La Poésie néo-latine et la renaissance des lettres antiques en France (1500–1549)* (Paris: Gamber, 1928), pp. 63–69.

[9] A recent English translation, with introduction, is provided by Phillip John Usher, *Ronsard's Franciad* (New York: AMS Press, 2010).

[10] "Mode" is here preferred to "genre," to the extent that pastoral and georgic are closer to a mood or a spirit and can thus be expressed through various forms, in prose or verse, and within different genres, such as satire or comedy. On the difference between genre and mode, see Paul J. Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 44–78, and Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 7–12.

[11] On the 'birth' of pastoral as a genre, see E. de Saint-Denis' introduction to Virgile, *Bucoliques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), pp. 2–4, pp. 8–20. See also Nancy Lindheim,

eventually, are all inscribed in a form of trade or exchange, mirroring the patronage system. As has often been noticed, Virgil's *Bucolics* revolve around a tension, determined by the Civil Wars on the one hand, and the peaceful setting of the eclogues on the other; Tityrus' carefree idleness responds to Melibœus' forced exile, and silence stands in opposition to singing. Margaret Harp's study of Jacques Yver's *Le Printemps* in the present volume illustrates the appropriation of the pastoral genre in sixteenth-century France. There, as elsewhere, pastoralism functions primarily as literary escape from the tensions tied to the contemporary Wars of Religion, as illustrated by Harp, a conclusion that echoes Norbert Elias' thoughts on the pastoral as articulating escape from oppressive court culture.[12] It is only in the background of Yver's *Le Printemps* that war is represented, at a far remove from bucolic scenes devoid of tension or opposition between the protagonists and their immediate environment. Another example of this use of pastoral can be found in Rémy Belleau's *Bergerie* (1565), with its lengthy description of shepherds whose work transforms them, for a moment, into bird-catchers and grape-pickers.[13] The *Bergerie* remains nonetheless an idealized representation of the court of Antoinette de Bourbon, widow of the first Duke of Guise. Belleau's text uses the bucolic setting as a diversion from the French Wars of Religion, just like the landscapes of Virgil's *Bucolics*, written during the Civil Wars, function as literary escapism. Yet, as Harp shows, through a subtle parallel between religious conflict and gender tensions between courtiers, Yver's pastoralism also suggests that court rivalries, just like civil war, pose a threat to social harmony.

Yver's advocacy for a politics of peace shares a similar ideal with Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Temple d'Honneur et de vertu*, as the studies of Michael Randall and Stéphanie Robert-Lecompte in this volume show, where the poet makes a similar plea to his king. The question of the poet's status, and his role as the prince's counselor, is further seen with Marot's translation of Virgil's first eclogue, which illustrates the same need for poetic recognition, and where pastoral also appears as an acknowledgment of the poet's courtly functions. The importance of Virgil for Marot is studied by Bernd Renner, whose chapter on the translation of the first eclogue in the *Adolescence clémentine* focuses on appropriation of literary authority. The article shows how Marot constructs an idea of authorship through the rewriting of pastoral, enabling the poet to embody the turning point from the era of the *Rhétoriqueurs* to that of the *Pléiade*, and ultimately to establish Marot's own literary voice. These examples show the allegorical function to be a main component of

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The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 2005), pp. 6–12.

[12]   See Norbet Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 224–66.

[13]   See Rémy Belleau, *La Bergerie* (Genève: Droz, 1954), pp. 57–59.

pastoral, at the origin of its success throughout the centuries, especially in comparison with the georgic mode.[14] In addition to voicing criticism against official authorities and, as studied by Annabel Patterson, countering censorship, pastoral also became a courtly genre *par excellence* as its allegorical properties, the idleness of its protagonists, the dialogism and wit displayed in the songs, evoking the quality of *inventio* dear to Castiglione's courtier, all mirror court culture.[15]

Both pastoral and georgic modes situate action within landscapes, but with different characters (shepherds versus farmers), and to different ends. Although in Virgil's works the two modes are in many ways distinct – "nature's uncertainties and harshness are more prominent [in the *Georgics*], because it is conceived as the habitation of farmers"[16] – the two modes are not completely separate and, by the Renaissance, come to exert a clear influence on each other. The merging of the genres, for Paul Alpers, happened "largely because in Christian thought ideas of humility are connected with the curse of labor",[17] thus leading to a contamination of one mode (the pastoral) by the other (the georgic). Annabel Patterson has identified this phenomenon in the context of English Renaissance literature, with an emphasis on how georgicization often reveals critical attitudes towards government.[18]

The contamination of pastoral by the georgic mode can be seen in France as well, with Ronsard's long decasyllabic poem *La salade* (c. 1568) for instance, where the detailed preparation of a lettuce gives way to an aggressive criticism of the French court. Fernbach's chapter in this volume highlights this Early Modern revisiting of the georgic tradition in France whereby tending the land, once reminiscent of the fall of mankind, becomes a promise of return to the Golden Age.[19] Fernbach examines the case of Joachim Du Bellay's "Moretum de Virgile," published in his *Divers jeux rustiques* (1559), where the author's very choice of a georgic topic appears as an open criticism of the court system. The tone remains that of a courtier, though, as Marsault

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[14]   As Paul Alpers explains, "poetic representations of nature or landscape are not all of a piece; they answer to and express various human needs and concerns; *pastoral* landscapes are those of which the human centres are herdsmen or their equivalent" (Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 28.)

[15]   See Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 18–20 and, by the same authors, "Pastoral versus Georgic: The Politics of Virgilian Quotations," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[16]   Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 28.

[17]   Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, p. 28.

[18]   See Patterson, "Pastoral versus Georgic," p. 38.

[19]   While attributing agricultural labor to Jupiter's will, Virgil also shows the god's benevolence towards men, who "has willed that the path of husbandry should not run smooth, … sharpening men's wits by care, not letting his kingdom slumber in heavy lethargy" (*Georgics* 1:121–24).

the plowman is presented tending his garden rather than plowing a field. Still, this poem reads as a very clear example of the use and function of Virgilian genres within a political discourse.

The articles by Michael Randall and Stéphanie Robert-Lecompte illustrate particularly well the ambiguous interest, in Early Modern France, in the georgic tradition. While both authors discuss the third *Georgics'* description of the temple of Octavian, their analysis of the sixteenth-century *topos* of the Temple of Virtue leads to a courtly portrait of the ideal prince. Michael Randall compares Jean Lemaire de Belges's *Temple d'honneur et de vertus* (1503) to the proem of the third *Georgic*. In Lemaire's eulogy to his patron, the recently deceased Pierre II de Bourbon, Randall notices a strong pastoral influence, illustrated by the presence of shepherds, whose depiction is heavily influenced by the Virgilian eclogues. As Randall demonstrates, Lemaire's *Temple* describes statues used to symbolize the virtues of the deceased king, in the same way Virgil does in his *Georgics* for Octavian. Commenting on the breathing statues (*spirantia signa*), Randall shows how the author is able to enunciate his prince's greatness rather than represent it, as happens in Du Bellay's and Ronsard's respective temples. In the same spirit, Bernard Palissy's project of teaching statues, built nearby a temple, may be read as another instance of the incarnation of virtue, in this case a direct illustration of Calvinist precepts to the visitor of his garden.[20] Lemaire's *Temple* offers yet another insight into the poet's self-fashioning as a prince's adviser, a prelude maybe to his ambassadorial functions for Margaret of Austria. Unlike the temples of Virgil, Ronsard and Du Bellay, whose display of the king's warfare link them to epic tradition, Lemaire's pastoral temple emphasizes diplomacy and philosophical wisdom serving politics, through the opposition, for instance, of a series of murderous kings to a peaceful sovereign. In the context of an individual address to the prince, Lemaire's appropriation of the Octavian temple also suggests that the Virgilian model provides, here again, a space for authorial voice.

Stéphanie Robert-Lecompte compares the early example of Lemaire's *Temple d'Honneur et de Vertu* (1503), again, with François Habert's *Temple de Vertu* (1542)*,* chapter 57 of Rabelais' *Quart Livre* (1552), and Ronsard's "Discours" addressed to Jérôme de la Rovère in the *Bocage Royal* (1560)*.* Lemaire's temple of virtue appears as a place of memory, a glorification of Aeneas' followers on the path to a "contemplative life," and the divine. While distancing themselves from Virgil, Lemaire's successors became critical of his neoplatonist reading, which they either reject or mock in favour of a Christian vision. Habert and Ronsard interact with Virgil, as their temples found their model once again in the *Georgics*. Yet both poets present the

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[20] See Bernard Palissy, *Recette véritable*, ed. F. Lestringant (Paris: Macula, 1996), pp. 166–68.

rejection of sensual pleasures in favour of civil or Christian virtue, thus giving an unambiguous, moralizing version of the motif of the temple of virtue. The only work that preserves the polysemy of the *Georgics* is Rabelais' description of Gaster's manor, whose parodic dimension creates the possibility for multiple interpretations.

Although all these variations on the temple of virtue find a model in the proem of the *Georgics*, their various representations of wisdom are not georgic in spirit. The temple is here portrayed as a refuge to the traditional values of frugality, chastity, and piety, but the celebratory songs, and the various dignitaries present in each temple make it closer to courtly idleness than to an ethic of work. Although the articles selected for this volume discuss only a small number of specific moments of translation and appropriation of the pastoral and georgic genres, they give an accurate representation of the general disaffection for Virgil's second major work. Studies on pastoral texts, on the other hand, show that authors rely on this mode to reassert literary authority, in the case of Marot, as well as political and courtly allegiance, in the case of Jacques Yver or Jean Lemaire de Belges, through the tradition and prestige associated with Virgil's name. In addition to illustrating the potential political function of literary genres, this imbalance between pastoral and georgic modes also presents texts featuring an ethic of work as oddities, oftentimes relegated in the minor works category. It also elicits a new interest as to the author's choice of such a mode, potentially questioning our very definition of minor literature.

I.F.

Epic

The *Aeneid* tells the epic story of Aeneas' flight from Troy, his arrival in Carthage and brief love story with Dido and his eventual arrival in Italy where he fights Turnus and becomes the ancestor of Augustan Rome. As Virgil's last work, the *Aeneid* (composed 29–19 BCE) is often seen as the third part of a teleological progression through the poet's career and the three modes he practiced. As the *Eclogues* (4:1–2) announced the *Georgics*, so the latter announced the *Aeneid*: "mox tamen ardentis accingar dicere pugnas / Caesaris et nomen fama tot ferre per annos, / Tithoni prima quota best ab origine Caesar" (Yet anon I will gird me to sing Caesar's fiery fights, and bear his name in story through many years as Caesar is distant from the far-off birth of Tithonus) (*Georgics* 3:46–8).[21] The *Aeneid* sits at the end of Virgil's career and as the completion of a literary project that stretched across genres, as if one genre succeeded another until Virgil reached epic.[22] Before

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21 Tithonus is the brother of Priam.
22 See Duncan F. Kennedy, "Virgilian Epic," *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 145–6.

developing this idea in the context of sixteenth-century France, it is worth recalling just how important a text the *Aeneid* has remained and how often it has been translated, appropriated and reworked.

Almost immediately, the *Aeneid* entered into an interpretive controversy. Just as quickly and with ever-greater momentum as the text was transmitted to other countries and languages, Virgil's epic began to be appropriated.[23] To begin at the end, so to speak, one might think of how in the 1930s and '40s, in the contexts of fascism and National Socialism, the Augustan reading of the *Aeneid*, according to which the epic is read as supporting empire, "created an easy link between Virgil and contemporary leader-cult."[24] As well as political appropriations, throughout the century, the *Aeneid* influenced writers as different as Cyril Connolly (author of the ironic modernization of the *Aeneid* called *The Unquiet Grave* [1944]) and T.S. Eliot.[25] The so-called Harvard pessimistic school of post-Vietnam reading of the *Aeneid*, according to which the epic is not pro-Augustan, but rather that it offers a critique of the emperor, is actually of much more distant pedigree, dating back to the Early Modern period and even much closer to the time of the text's first publication.[26] To return to the period that interests us here, one can begin by noting that Renaissance France inherited a medieval and Christianized *Aeneid* under which it strived to rediscover a Roman author through the application of new philological and editorial methodologies; on the other hand, Renaissance authors, as they penned their own works in dialogue with the Ancients, would re-appropriate Virgil from Rome into France, allowing his texts and ideas to shape their own literary enterprises related to the historical and political context of a nation in the throes of defining itself.

The first development, from a medieval back to a Roman Virgil, can be usefully framed by a change in editorial strategies between the beginning and end of the century. The Latin editions of Virgil published in Paris by Josse Bade between 1500 and the 1530s were heavily cloaked in commentary, which emphasized both medieval allegorization and Italian Neoplatonism.

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[23] Much has been written about the *Aeneid*'s influence and about how the text has been appropriated. As a starting point, see the chapters of the first section ("Translation and reception") in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Martindale, especially Duncan F. Kennedy, "Modern Receptions and Their Interpretive Implications" (pp. 38–55), R. J. Tarrant, "Aspects of Virgil's Reception in Antiquity" (pp. 56–72), and Colin Burrow, "Virgils, from Dante to Milton" (pp. 79–90).

[24] Richard F. Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 223. For a wider perspective on twentieth-century reception-appropriation of the *Aeneid*, see *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid,* ed. Stephen J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 1–20.

[25] For a thorough study of Virgil's influence in the twentieth century, especially between the two world wars, see Theodore Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[26] See Craig Kallendorf's recent (and excellent) *The Other Virgil: 'Pessimistic' Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Beneath Virgil's paganism was sought a message of moral virtue and Christian piety, to be found in the *Aeneid* of course, as well as in the *Bucolics* and, to a lesser, degree, the *Georgics*. The assertion made first by Lactantius (c. 240–c. 320) about the fourth eclogue still had a certain amount of currency. And the *Aeneid* was to be read as a kind of *Bildungsroman* wherein the hero evolved from birth to maturity and from Trojan laziness, through a period of active life in Carthage, and finally to a contemplative life in Italy. This trend continued well into the century. Beginning in 1500, each of the volumes – the *Bucolics*, the *Georgics*, followed by the *Virgiliana* (texts attributed to Virgil by Servius), and finally the *Aeneid* – was preceded by a prefatory epistle that underlined the moral value of the texts. The *Aeneid* was also accompanied by the preface written for the Italian edition by Cristoforo Landino. Over the next three decades, Bade would continue to add more commentary, so that his final editions would include ten commentaries, Maffeo Vegio's *Aeneidos Liber XIII*, and other texts.[27] The weight of commentary and medieval allegory soon gave way to (literally) lighter editions, as smaller in-16 and in-8 editions replaced folios. Although a small-size Latin edition was initially issued in 1507, this would become the rule from the 1530s. A major turn occurred with Peter Ramus' editions beginning in the 1550s and those of Henri Estienne starting in 1577. In his *praelectiones*, Ramus clearly criticizes allegorization; Estienne's paratextual matter, furthering Ramus' critique, would be even more polemical, suggesting a new awareness for the need to read Virgil *purely*. Estienne's *Aeneid* has thus been said to be "le résultat définitif des recherches de tout un siècle" (the final product of a whole century's research).[28] This evolution from excess commentary to more modern philology results in Virgil returning to his Roman and pagan roots.

The chapters of this volume that deal with the *Aeneid* relate to both of these developments, i.e. to how the epic was, in a sense, progressively re-Romanized and de-allegorized *and* to how it was simultaneously appropriated by French writers and *made French*. As Philip Ford notes at the beginning of his contribution to this volume, Virgil's texts, unlike Homer's, were never *lost*. The *Aeneid* was an important text in medieval Europe. Read, translated and variously appropriated, it was seen as something closer to a *chanson de geste* or medieval romance than as the successor to the (unavailable) *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.[29] (The trend was not, of course, limited to France: in

[27] For a modern edition and translation, see Maffeo Vegio, *Short Epics*, ed. Michael J. Putnam (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press/I Tatti Renaissance Library, 2004).

[28] Alice Hulubei, "Virgile en France au XVIe siècle," p. 21.

[29] For the place occupied by the *Aeneid* in medieval France, see especially Francine Mora, *L'Enéide médiévale et la chanson de geste* (Paris: Champion, 1994) and, by the same author, *L'Enéide médiévale et la naissance du roman* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994). For a more general perspective on the *Aeneid*'s place in medieval Europe, see the dated but invaluable study by Domenico Comparetti, *Virgilio nel medio*

medieval England, too, there grew a tradition of the romance *Aeneid* thanks
to the *Roman d'Enéas*,[30] penned in and for Henry II's Anglo-Norman court,
and Chaucer's *House of Fame* and *Legend of Good Women*.) [31] How, then,
do we begin making sense of the *Aeneid*'s place in Renaissance France? By
studying seven full or partial translations of the *Aeneid* realized between 1483
and 1582, Valerie Worth-Stylianou makes several trends clear in terms of how
translation functions as appropriation and how appropriation is always in one
sense a reflection on the text's genre and place within the Virgilian corpus.[32]
She shows that a first pattern, echoing the growth of humanist scholarship and
largely in line with what is known of the history of print culture in general, is
a gradual but definite shift from prose to verse, a change that relates directly
to the text's perceived genre, i.e. the *Aeneid*, often seen as a prose romance
in the early years of sixteenth-century France, again earned its full status
as verse epic. As Worth is careful to point out, the development was not
perfectly linear. Indeed, the famous remark (made by D.R. Stuart) that every
age "has tended to fashion a Virgil after its own image," proves quickly
insufficient, in that many ages (and Early Modern France is no exception)
fashion many Virgils for many reasons.[33] Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Quatre
Premiers Livres des Eneydes du treselegant poete Virgil* (1541) is a prose
romance version of the *Aeneid* which discounts Octovien de Saint-Gelais'
preference for rhyming decasyllabic couplets in his 1509 translation. Even

evo (Florence: B. Seeber, 1896), available as *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M.
Benecke, intro. Robinson Ellis (Hamden CT: Archon Books, 1966).

[30] A modern French translation is provided by *Le Roman d'Enéas*, trans. Martine
Thiry-Stassin (Paris: Champion, 1985). For perspectives on its status as romance, see
Raymond Cormier*, One Heart, One Mind: The Rebirth of Virgil's Hero in Medieval
French Romance* (University, Mississippi: Romance Monographs, 1973); Jean-Charles
Huchet, *Le Roman médiéval* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984); Jerome
Singerman, *Under Clouds of Poesy: Poetry and Truth in French and English Rework-
ings of the Aeneid, 1160–1513* (New York: Garland, 1986). On the key topic of *fatum* (a
defining characteristic of epic, but here in romance), see Dirk Jürgen Blask, *Geschehen
und Geschick im altfranzösischen Eneas-Roman* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 1984).

[31] On these works as romance versions of the *Aeneid*, see Chapter 5 (*Roman d'Eneas*)
and Chapter 6 (Chaucer) of Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring
the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1995).

[32] In addition to the anonymous author of the *Livre des Eneydes* (1483), the transla-
tors are Octovien de Saint-Gelais, Hélisenne de Crenne, Louis Des Masures, Joachim
Du Bellay, Pierre Trédéhan, and the two brothers Robert and Antoine Le Chevalier
d'Agneaux.

[33] D.R. Stuart, quoted from Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns*, p. 27. In his review
of Ziolkowski's book, William M. Porter makes a similar critique of Stuart's phrase,
suggesting that *Virgil and the Moderns* shows "that a single age can possess an almost
mind-boggling diversity of Virgils: a popularized Virgil, a protofascist Virgil, a proto-
Christian Virgil, a hermetic Virgil, a millenarist Virgil, an agrarian Virgil, and so on and
so on" (*Modern Philology*, 91:1 [August 1996]: 60–63, p. 61).

this exception, though, connects the wider ongoing debate between epic verse and prose romance, as evidenced, for example, by Etienne Dolet's recasting of his Latin mini-epic – *Francisci Valesii, Gallorum regis, fata* (The Fates of the King of the Gauls, François Ier) (1539) – into French prose as *Les Gestes de Françoys de Valoys* (1540), a generic shift that Worth has studied elsewhere.[34] Domestication of the *Aeneid* in medieval Europe often went hand-in-hand with allegorization.[35] This, too, is something that reverses itself throughout the Early Modern period. The second main trend identified by Worth (in addition to this shift from prose romance to verse epic) is that the *Aeneid* was, in sixteenth-century French translations, repeatedly appropriated in matters of national identity. One of Worth's closing comments is particularly striking, that the most successful translation of *Aeneid* in sixteenth-century France, Louis Des Masures' *L'Eneide de Virgile* (1547–1560), was also the least politicized, the one that most greatly emphasized not appropriation, but rather that epic's timeless and eternal qualities as text.[36]

The other chapters of the volume that deal with the *Aeneid* develop within this overall framework, showing that the *Aeneid* was not much appropriated in the first half of the sixteenth century in France, as evidenced *inter alia* by the small number of Virgilian epics written at this period. It would take many decades for the allegorized medieval *Aeneid* to give way to something more modern. To approach this topic, Phillip John Usher studies a series of eighty-two enamels, produced in Limoges in the 1530s, which recount visually the story of Aeneas' journey from Troy to Italy. Based on engravings executed by Sebastian Brant for a 1502 edition of the *Aeneid* by Johannis Grüninger, the French enamels have their own style and priorities. In Usher's article, they function to enter into a discussion about the plurality of readerly approaches to the *Aeneid* in 1530s France. Although retaining much of Brant's original style, the French enamels testify to the presence of a classicizing and Italianate influence. In addition to emphasizing Aeneas' role as hermeneutic guide, and de-emphasizing Roman glory, the enamels are of interest in their depiction of *Aeneid* 6. Following the lead of medieval allegorization in general and of Silvestris in particular, the Limoges enamels give specific attention to the sixth book. The enamels pursue and publicize

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[34] See Valerie Worth, "Etienne Dolet: From a Neo-Latin Epic Poem to a Chronicle in French Prose," *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Sanctandreani*, ed. I.D. McFarlane (Binghampton NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1986), pp. 423–9. See also the appropriate sections in the same author's *Practising Translation in Renaissance France. The Example of Etienne Dolet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). For a recent perspective on this text and on a reflection on its status as epic, see Phillip John Usher, "Narrating National Defeat: Recuperative Epic in Renaissance France," *Romance Studies*, 28:3 (2010): 166–78.

[35] See Chapters 3 and 4 of Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*.

[36] Louis Des Masures published the first two books in 1547, the first four in 1552, the fifth book in 1557, and all twelve books in 1560.