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## VIRGIL'S FOURTH ECLOGUE IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Virgil's fourth Eclogue is one of the most quoted, adapted and discussed works of classical literature. This study traces the fortunes of *Eclogue 4* in the literature and art of the Italian Renaissance. It sheds new light on some of the most canonical works of Western art and literature, as well as introducing a large number of other, lesser-known items, some of which have not appeared in print since their original publication, while others are extant only in manuscript. Individual chapters are devoted to the uses made of the fourth Eclogue in the political panegyric of Medici Florence, the Venetian Republic and the Renaissance papacy, and to religious appropriations of the Virgilian text in the genres of epic and pastoral poetry. The book also investigates the appearance of quotations from the poem in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century fresco cycles representing the prophetic Sibyls in Italian churches.

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L. B. T. HOUGHTON

*Rugby School*



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To my mother  
and to the memory of my father

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## *Preface*

'Few literary works from antiquity took hold on the imagination of later ages as much as Vergil's "Messianic" *Eclogue*' (Galinsky 1996: 91); 'words which have never been forgotten in the history of the West' (Yates 1975: 33); '[l]a fortune immense des *Saturnia Regna virgiliens*' (Gambino Longo 2016: 143). Maybe there is a reason why the reception of Virgil's fourth Eclogue has received (with a few honourable exceptions) so little sustained scholarly attention – but even if one can hope to do little more than chip away at an enormous and intractable mass, the prolific post-classical career of this versatile poem, forming as it does a significant and substantial strand running through centuries of cultural and intellectual history, deserves better. As so often happens, this is not the book its author set out to write; but if it serves to encourage others to take up the baton and pursue the enquiry further, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

The principal value of this study, in my view, lies in its collection of illustrative examples. It cannot claim to contribute any methodological or theoretical advances to the study of its subject, but it offers new or more detailed interpretations of a number of central works of the European literary and artistic canon, highlights some unnoticed allusions to and reworkings of Virgil's poetry in other venues, and brings to light several lesser-known (in some cases almost entirely unknown) items. Some of the texts and artworks analysed here are very familiar, while others have scarcely been read in printed editions for five hundred years or more, and still others have never appeared in print, although I have made no systematic attempt to investigate manuscript material. I have therefore been generous with quotations and translations (my own, unless otherwise indicated) from the works discussed, in the hope that this will allow readers to appreciate in detail the ways in which literary and artistic interactions with the fourth Eclogue operate on a practical level, something not consistently apparent from earlier scholarship on the subject. With some reluctance, I have edited texts to conform to modern orthographical

standards. Few if any of the inferences drawn from the texts quoted here are affected by the choice of a particular spelling or punctuation, and readers concerned to discover the orthographical practices adopted in earlier printings of the passages in question should be able to locate the editions I have used without too much difficulty – though they should be aware that similar standardisation (e.g. u for v, i for j, ae for æ and ę, expansion of abbreviations) has been applied to Latin titles as well, so there may be minor variations between the titles given in text, notes and bibliography and the way the same works appear in catalogues.

Funding for much of the research which informs Chapter 4 was generously provided by the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation of New York. I am also grateful to the British School at Rome for the award of the Hugh Last Fellowship in 2010, which enabled me to make significant progress on this project (albeit then with a rather broader focus) in a highly congenial setting; to the Warburg Institute, University of London, where I held a short-term Frances A. Yates Fellowship in early 2011; and to the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies in Innsbruck, for a very productive visiting fellowship in the first half of 2014. During the first two of these periods my research was facilitated by leave from regular academic and administrative duties at the University of Glasgow, which offered opportunities to concentrate on study and writing which otherwise would not have been possible.

Portions of several chapters have appeared previously in other publications, and I am grateful to the following for permission to reproduce material published elsewhere: Robert Bjork, Todd Halvorsen and the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Chapter 2, from Houghton and Sgarbi 2018); Max Engammare and Librairie Droz (Chapter 3, from *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*); Richard Hunter, Stephen Oakley and Cambridge University Press (Chapter 4, from *Latin Literature and Its Transmission*); the editors of *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (Chapter 5); Dirk Sacré, the editors of *Humanistica Lovaniensia* and Leuven University Press (Chapter 9, from Houghton 2017b); and Mark Bradley, the British School at Rome and Cambridge University Press (Chapter 10, from Houghton 2015). Image credits are given in the list of figures. Revisiting previously handled material has provided a welcome opportunity to correct earlier errors and add further relevant passages: the versions presented here should be regarded as superseding my previous publications on all material covered. For the errors that remain (it is not a case of *si qua* . . .) I share responsibility with the circumstances under which much of this book was written.

*Preface*

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The personal and professional cost of writing this book has been enormous; it would certainly never have been finished without the help and support of friends, family and colleagues. Particular mention must go to Peter Black, David Bloch, Sheldon Brammall, Alice Bygraves, Robert Coates-Stephens, Gian Biagio Conte, Sam Eidinow, Peter Fane-Saunders, Ian Fielding, Patrick Finglass, William Fitzgerald, Matthew Fox, Ian Goh, Francesca Goodwin, Roger Green, Paul Gwynne, Daniel Hadas, Katie Halsey, Philip Hardie, Stephen Harrison, Stephen Heath, Gabrielle Higgins and Mark Wonnacott, Rachael Hopley, Hugh and Josephine Houghton, Tanya Houghton and Trevor Agus, Jill Kraye, Andrew Laird, Alexander and Marie Sebban Lee, Dunstan Lowe and Kelli Rudolph, Fiachra Mac Góráin, Peter Mack, Gesine Manuwald, Marie Martin, Jenny McAuley, David McOmish, Victoria Mercer, Victoria Moul, Thomas Murgatroyd, Lucy Nicholas, Matthew and Eleanor Nicholls, James and Robyn O'Connor, Costas Panayotakis, Geraldine Parsons, Simon Pulleyn, Michael Reeve, Steven Reid, Nicholas Richardson, Peter Riedlberger, Andrew Rudd, Susan Russell, Marco Sgarbi, Jane Slinn, Christopher Smith, Stefan Tilg, Claire Trillot, Carlo Vessella, Angus Vine and Maria Wyke. Audiences in Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Innsbruck, Liverpool, London, Mantua and Rome have provided helpful comments and prompted necessary clarifications. The acute and detailed responses of two anonymous readers have effected numerous improvements, and I am very grateful to Michael Sharp, Sophie Taylor and Sarah Starkey at Cambridge University Press, who saw through to publication with patience and good humour a complicated and recalcitrant manuscript.

I am not sure whether my father would have regarded this book with pride or with amusement (probably both) – but to him and to my mother it is dedicated, with love and gratitude.

## Eclogue 4: *Text and Translation*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus!<br>Non omnis arbusta iuuant humilesque myricae;<br>si canimus siluas, siluae sint consule dignae.             |    |
| Ultima Cumaei uenit iam carminis aetas;<br>magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.   | 5  |
| Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,<br>iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto.   |    |
| Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum<br>desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  |    |
| casta faue Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo.   | 10 |
| Teque adeo decus hoc aeui, te consule, inibit,<br>Pollio, et incipient magni procedere menses;   |    |
| te duce, si qua manent sceleris uestigia nostri,<br>inrita perpetua soluent formidine terras.  |    |
| Ille deum uitam accipiet diuisque uidebit<br>permixtos heroas et ipse uidebitur illis,   | 15 |
| pacatumque reget patriis uirtutibus orbem.   |    |
| At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu<br>errantis hederas passim cum baccare tellus   |    |
| mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.   | 20 |
| Ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae<br>ubera, nec magnos metuent armenta leones;  |    |
| ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.   |    |
| Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba ueneni<br>occidet; Assyrium uulgo nascetur amomum.   | 25 |
| At simul heroum laudes et facta parentis<br>iam legere et quae sit poteris cognoscere uirtus,  |    |
| molli paulatim flauescet campus arista<br>incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uua   |    |
| et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.   | 30 |
| Pauca tamen suberunt priscae uestigia fraudis,<br>quae temptare Thetim ratibus, quae cingere muris<br>oppida, quae iubeant telluri infindere sulcos. |    |

Eclogue 4: *Text and Translation*

xv

Sicilian Muses, let us sing things a little greater. Not everyone do orchards and low-lying tamarisks delight. If we sing of woods, let the woods be worthy of a consul.

Now has come the last age of Cumaean song; the great sequence of the ages is born anew. Now the Virgin too returns, the reign of Saturn returns, now a new offspring is sent down from heaven on high. You, chaste Lucina, just grant your favour to the child being born, at whose coming the iron race first shall cease, and the golden race arise throughout the world: your own Apollo now reigns. And in your consulship – yours, Pollio – this adornment of the age shall make its entrance, and the mighty months shall begin to go forth; under your leadership, if any traces of our crime remain, brought to nothing they shall free the earth from its constant dread. He shall receive the life of the gods, and shall see heroes mingled with gods, and he himself shall be seen by them; and he shall rule a world pacified by his father's prowess.

But for you, child, with no cultivation shall the earth pour out its first little gifts – wandering ivy together with foxglove everywhere, and Egyptian bean mingled with smiling acanthus. Of their own accord the she-goats will bring home udders swollen with milk, nor shall the herds fear great lions; of its own accord will your cradle pour forth for you charming flowers. The serpent, too, shall perish, and the grass that conceals its poison shall perish; on all sides will come forth Assyrian *amomum*. Yet as soon as you will be able to read of the glories of heroes and the deeds of your father, and to learn what valour is, gradually the plain will grow yellow with soft corn, and the blushing grape will hang from untended brambles, and hard oaks will sweat dewy honey. A few traces, however, will survive of ancient wrong, to bid us make trial of the sea with ships, encircle towns with walls, cut furrows in the earth.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae uehat Argo<br>delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella<br>atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles.   | 35 |
| Hinc, ubi iam firmata uirum te fecerit aetas,<br>cedet et ipse mari uector, nec nautica pinus<br>mutabit merces; omnis feret omnia tellus.   |    |
| Non rastros patietur humus, non uinea falcem;<br>robustus quoque iam tauris iuga soluet arator.  | 40 |
| Nec uarios discet mentiri lana colores,<br>ipse sed in pratis aries iam suaue rubenti<br>murice, iam croceo mutabit uellera luto;<br>sponte sua sandyx pascentis uestiet agnos.              | 45 |
| ‘Talia saecula’ suis dixerunt ‘currite’ fusis<br>concordes stabili fatorum numine Parcae.<br>Adgredere o magnos (aderit iam tempus) honores,<br>cara deum suboles, magnum Iouis incrementum! |    |
| Aspice conuexo nutantem pondere mundum,<br>terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum;<br>aspice, uenturo laetentur ut omnia saeclo!   | 50 |
| O mihi tum longae maneat pars ultima uitae,<br>spiritus et quantum sat erit tua dicere facta!  |    |
| Non me carminibus uincet nec Thracius Orpheus<br>nec Linus, huic mater quamuis atque huic pater adsit,<br>Orphei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.  | 55 |
| Pan etiam, Arcadia mecum si iudice certet,<br>Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice uictum.  |    |
| Incipe, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem<br>(matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses)   | 60 |
| incipere, parue puer: qui [or ‘cui’] non risere parentes [or ‘qui non risere parenti’],<br>nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubili est.  |    |



Eclogue 4: *Text and Translation*

xvii

Then will there be a second Tiphys, and a second Argo to carry chosen heroes; there shall also be further wars, and again will mighty Achilles be sent to Troy. After this, when now your age, grown in strength, has made you a man, even the trader himself will abandon the sea, nor will the seafaring pine exchange merchandise; every land shall produce everything. The soil will not endure harrows, nor the vine the pruning-hook; the hardy ploughman too will now loose the yoke from his bulls. Nor shall wool learn to fake different colours, but of his own accord will the ram in the meadows change his fleece now to sweetly blushing purple, now to saffron yellow; spontaneously will crimson clothe the grazing lambs.

‘Such ages as these, run on!’ said the Parcae to their spindles, harmonious in the fixed will of the fates. O enter upon your great honours (the time will now be here), dear offspring of gods, great augment of Jupiter! See the world nodding with its arched weight, the earth and the expanses of sea and the deep heaven; see how all things rejoice in the age to come! O, may the final part of a long life then remain for me, and breath – as much as will be enough to tell of your deeds! Neither Thracian Orpheus nor Linus will defeat me in song, for all that the one may have his mother’s aid, the other his father’s – for Orpheus Calliope, for Linus handsome Apollo. Even Pan, were he to compete with me with Arcadia as judge, even Pan would admit himself beaten, with Arcadia as judge.

Begin, little boy, to recognise your mother from her smile [or ‘with a smile’] (ten months have brought your mother long weariness); begin, little boy – those on whom their parents have not smiled [or ‘those who have not smiled at their parent’],<sup>1</sup> this man no god has deemed worthy of his table, no goddess of her bed.

<sup>1</sup> For bibliography on the text of line 62, see below, p. 324 n. 8.

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