

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## VIRGIL IN THE RENAISSANCE

The disciplines of classical scholarship were established in their modern form between 1300 and 1600, and Virgil was a test case for many of them. This book is concerned with what became of Virgil in this period, how he was understood, and how his poems were recycled. What did readers assume about Virgil in the long decades between Dante and Sidney, Petrarch and Spenser, Boccaccio and Ariosto? Which commentators had the most influence? What story, if any, was Virgil's *Eclogues* supposed to tell? What was the status of his *Georgics*? Which parts of his epic attracted the most imitators? Building on specialized scholarship of the last hundred years, this book provides a panoramic synthesis of what scholars and poets from across Europe believed they could know about Virgil's life and poetry.

DAVID SCOTT WILSON-OKAMURA received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He is an Associate Professor of English at East Carolina University.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# VIRGIL IN THE RENAISSANCE

DAVID SCOTT WILSON-OKAMURA

*East Carolina University*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
 David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
 São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org  
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521198127

© David Scott Wilson-Okamura 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
 no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
 permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*  
 Wilson-Okamura, David Scott, 1970–  
 Virgil in the Renaissance / David Scott Wilson-Okamura.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-521-19812-7 (hardback)

1. Virgil – Appreciation – Europe. 2. Virgil – Influence. 3. European literature – Renaissance,  
 1450–1600 – Classical influences. 4. Literature, Medieval – Classical influences. 5. Authors and  
 readers – Europe – History – To 1500. 6. Authors and readers – Europe – History –  
 16th century. I. Title.

PA6825.W537 2010  
 873'.01–dc22  
 2010000070

ISBN 978-0-521-19812-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
 accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to  
 in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such  
 websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque  
quae nunc sunt in honore . . .

## *Contents*

<i>Illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Texts and abbreviations</i>	xii
Introduction	I
Method	3
Lacunae	6
Models	8
Plan	10
PART I PUBLICATION	13
I Virgil with an <i>i</i>	15
Poliziano's proof	15
How they reacted to Poliziano's bombshell	18
The market for Virgil editions and commentaries	20
The state of publishing in England; or Did the Reformation make any difference?	27
Servius and Donatus: the authority of antiquity	31
Landino vs. Badius: originality vs. utility	35
Valeriano: the scholarly argument for <i>i</i>	37
Innovation vs. influence	40
Latin: dead language or living?	42
PART II REPUTATION	45
2 Patronage and the <i>Eclogues</i>	47
The idea of Virgil and its ancient sources	47
How Virgil got rich	50
Virgil as counselor to the prince	54
<i>Eclogues</i> as encomia	56

Was Virgil a flatterer?	59
Maecenas as the model patron	60
Darkness invisible	64
Imitating Theocritus: the bookishness of Virgilian pastoral	66
Love among the shepherds	69
Christian prophecy and Epicureanism	70
Variety and the low style	73
<b>3 Variety and the <i>Georgics</i></b>	<b>77</b>
The ancient tradition of Virgil's erudition	78
Science or poetry?	81
Labor and the plow	82
Looking for the <i>Georgics</i> in Renaissance poetry	83
"Ille ego qui quondam"	85
Generic substitution	87
A spectrum of styles	89
The myth of Virgil's Wheel	90
Style and genre	91
Style and variety	93
Listing variety	95
Virgil as second Nature	96
<b>4 Morals and minimalism</b>	<b>101</b>
Virgil the reviser	101
Style and character	103
Virgil's chastity	106
Rumors about Virgil's sex life	108
Nisus and Euryalus	109
Virgil's gay eclogue	113
Defense by forgery	115
Perfect poetry	119
Virgil and Ennius	120
Virgil as imitator of Homer	124
Refining Homer	128
Brevity as chastity	129
Defenders of Homer against Virgil	132
Why brevity is better	134
Style: Virgil's last stand	138
<b>PART III INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>5 Virgil's <i>Odyssey</i></b>	<b>145</b>
Prioritizing episodes	145
Troy in the <i>Odyssey</i>	146

<i>Contents</i>		ix
The weight of the underworld		149
The Gates of Sleep		153
Descent by murder		157
Character by example		163
Pluto's daughter: hell as riches		166
Mourir, c'est facile: hell as habit		170
Life in hell		172
Purgatory		173
"Sinfull mire": the moral status of matter		178
Resurrection		181
Imitation: competition or assimilation?		185
Dynastic prophecy		187
<b>6 Virgil's Iliad</b>		<b>191</b>
Turnus as tragic hero		191
Modern relativism		194
Defining <i>pietas</i>		196
Weighing anger		199
Organizing interpretation I: classroom techniques		203
Organizing interpretation II: the ideal man theory		208
Organizing interpretation III: repetition and rereading		212
Six-book readers vs. twelve-book readers		215
The renaissance of Virgil's Iliad		220
Camilla		227
The modernity of romance		230
Dido and Lavinia: the importance of <i>Eneas</i>		233
Vegio's sequel: the missing link with the Middle Ages		237
Vegio's influence		247
Epilogue		248
<i>Appendix A Virgil commentaries in Latin editions, 1469–1599</i>		252
<i>Appendix B Virgil commentaries ranked by number of printings</i>		267
<i>Index</i>		282

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## *Illustrations*

1	Virgil and Ovid: Latin texts and commentaries published in France, 1469–1599	<i>page</i> 22
2	Geography of printed editions	34
3	Geography of new commentaries	34
4	Prompted by Venus (viz., beauty), Aeneas woos Lavinia	244
5	Lavinia's wooing and wedding feast	246



Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-19812-7 - Virgil in the Renaissance  
David Scott Wilson-Okamura  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## *Acknowledgements*

My cup is full. This book was written with the aid of several institutions: the University of Chicago, the Mellon Foundation, the Newberry Library, Macalester College, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (through its Gallica collection), the Rare Book Library of Duke University, the Rare Book Collection of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Thomas Harriott College of Arts and Sciences at East Carolina University. Special thanks are due to Sarah Stanton, Sarah Roberts, and Rebecca Jones of Cambridge University Press; my copy-editor Caroline Howlett; and two anonymous readers. I am grateful to the many friends, classmates, colleagues, and teachers who answered questions, commented on drafts, made gifts of their books, and offered fellowship: Joel Baer, David Bevington, Garth Bond, April Brewer, Jean R. Brink, Colin Burrow, Nina E. Cannizzaro, Alan Cottrell, Raymond J. Cormier, my research assistant LeAnna Cox, Jeff Dolven, Charles Fantazzi, Robert Fehrenbach, Julia Haig Gaisser, Mario Geymonat, John Given, Timothy C. Graham, Peter Green, Andrew Hadfield, A. C. Hamilton, Richard F. Hardin, Peter C. Herman, Thomas Herron, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Craig Kallendorf, Carol V. Kaske, Arthur Kinney, Christopher Kleinhenz, Roger Kuin, Elisabeth Leedham-Green, Allen Mandelbaum, Stuart McDougal, Scott McGill, David Lee Miller, Jerry Leath Mills, Janel Mueller, James Nohrnberg, Jim O'Hara, Wendy Olmsted, William Oram, Anthony Papalas, Adrian Pay, Lee Piepho, Joshua Phillips, Tanya Pollard, Anne Lake Prescott, Michael C. J. Putnam, Thomas P. Roche, Jr., Frank Romer, Charles Ross, Sarah Skwire, Andrew Smyth, John Stevens, Richard Strier, Sandra Tawake, Bart van Es, Matteo Venier, and Jan M. Ziolkowski. In particular I wish to thank W. R. Johnson, Joshua Scodel, my classmate Greg Kneidel, and Michael Murrin, *il mar di tutto 'l senno*. I am especially grateful to my in-laws, Arnold and Patricia Okamura, and my learned wife, Tricia Wilson-Okamura, who labored with me on the index. This book is dedicated to my parents, Ralph and Jean Wilson.

## *Texts and abbreviations*

Virgil's works are cited from *P. Virgilio Maronis Opera . . .* (Venice: Heirs of Luca Antonio Giunta, 1544), facsimile repr., *The Renaissance and the Gods*, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1976), as are the *Supplementum* of Maffeo Vegio; the life of Virgil by Aelius Donatus; and the Virgil commentaries of Marius Servius Honoratus, Tiberius Claudius Donatus, Pierio Valeriano, Agostino Dati, Antonio Mancinelli, and Jodocus Badius Ascensius; in the notes, this edition is cited as "Giunta 1544." The Bible is cited from *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). Except in the appendices, where Latin names are used throughout, the names of Renaissance authors are given in whatever form seems familiar now: hence "Jodocus Badius Ascensius" for "Josse Bade van Asche," but "Cristoforo Landino" instead of "Christophorus Landinus." Abbreviations, with the exception of *œ*, have been silently expanded. Translations are mine except where otherwise noted.

<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid.</i>
<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogues.</i>
<i>ECE</i>	<i>Elizabethan Critical Essays</i> , ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1904). Repr. 1937.
<i>FQ</i>	Edmund Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> , ed. A. C. Hamilton, 2nd edn. (Harlow: Pearson, Longman, 2001).
<i>Geo.</i>	<i>Georgics.</i>
Giunta 1544	<i>P. Virgilio Maronis Opera . . .</i> (Venice: Heirs of Luca Antonio Giunta, 1544), facsimile repr., <i>The Renaissance and the Gods</i> , 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1976).
<i>GL</i>	Torquato Tasso, <i>Gerusalemme liberata</i> (1582), ed. Lanfranco Caretti (1971; repr. Turin: Einaudi, 1993).
<i>OF</i>	Ludovico Ariosto, <i>Orlando furioso</i> (1532), ed. Cesare Segre, I Meridiani (Vicenza: Mondadori, 1976).

*Texts and abbreviations*

xiii

- OI* Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato* (1482, 1494), ed. Giuseppe Anceschi, I Grandi Libri, 2 vols. (Milan: Garzanti, 1978).
- SC* Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender*, in *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London: Penguin, 1999).
- STC* A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, 2nd edn., rev. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986–91), supplemented by *English Short Title Catalogue* [database], Online, British Library and North American Center for ESTC, 1997.
- Supp.* Maphaeus Vegius, *Libri XII Aeneidos supplementum* (1428), in Giunta 1544.
- VT* Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C. J. Putnam (eds.), *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Where two page numbers are provided (e.g., “279/280”), the first number indicates a Latin original, the second an English translation.