

TRANSLATING VIRGIL

Virgil remains one of the most important poets in the history of literature. This emerges in the rich translation history of his poems. Hardly a European language exists into which at least one of his poems has not been translated, from Basque to Ukrainian and Dutch to Turkish. Susanna Braund's book is the first synthesis and analysis of this history. It asks when, where, why, by whom, for whom and how Virgil's poems were translated into a range of languages. Chronologically it spans the eleventh- and twelfth-century adaptations of the *Aeneid* down to present-day translation activity, in which women are better represented than in earlier eras. The book makes a major contribution to Western intellectual history. It challenges classicists and other literary scholars to reassess the features of Virgil's poems to which the translators respond and offers a treasure trove of insights to translation theorists and classicists alike.

SUSANNA MORTON BRAUND is Professor Emeritus of Latin Poetry and its Reception at the University of British Columbia. She has published widely on Latin poetry and is the co-editor of *Virgil in Translation* (with Zara Torlone, 2018).

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TRANSLATING VIRGIL

*A Cultural History of the Western Tradition
from the Eleventh Century to the Present*

SUSANNA MORTON BRAUND

University of British Columbia, Vancouver



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*For Dan,
and remembering
my constant carers,
Amos† and Adam†*

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Prelude
A Treasure Trove of Virgil Translations

My research for this project has turned up a veritable treasure trove of unexpected and sometimes delightful and astonishing curiosities. I discovered that the neglected Jewish Italian translator Giovanna Bemporad, as an adolescent schoolgirl in the late 1930s, devoted thirty-six feverish nights to translating the *Aeneid*, closeting herself in her family's kitchen from evening till morning before going to school. I found a Ukrainian coin minted in 1998 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the travesty translation of the *Aeneid* by Ivan Kotlyarevsky, in which the Trojans are transformed into Cossacks; this work remains the foundational text of Ukrainian literature and has been adapted to modern forms, including rock opera and animated movie. I discovered Golden Age Dutch versions of the *Eclogues* juxtaposed with one another in friendly rivalry, produced by two young friends, Jan den Uyl's straight version in rhymed couplets, followed by Willem Godschalk van Focquenbroch's burlesque version in iambic tetrameters. I delved into the prosopography of the female addressees of the multi-authored Italian translation of *Aeneid* 1–6 in Cinquecento Siena to illuminate the tight family connections between the male translators and the female dedicatees. I was amazed at the feistiness of the autodidact Marie de Gournay, the adopted daughter and editor of Montaigne, who in her translations from the *Aeneid* took on the hostile male establishment by explicitly inviting comparison with the translation of a recently deceased churchman: she incorporated excerpts of his version in her own translation of Book 2, creating a direct confrontation between, in her own words, the distaff ('quenouille') and the episcopal cross.

I boggled at the *Eclogues* translation by Urbain Domergue designed to support orthographic reform in Napoleonic France. I was surprised that Victor Hugo translated Virgil during his schooldays, starting with *Eclogue* 1, a translation which irritated his jealous schoolmaster enough to try to stop him writing, even at night, when he ordered the young Victor to snuff his candle. One of the many fascinating metrical matters was the oscillating

fortune of the hexameter as a metre for translating Virgil. The Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, whose influential version of *Eclogue* 9 was published just before the outbreak of World War II, asked in one of his original eclogues, composed in a labour camp just before he was murdered by Nazi collaborators, ‘Say, is there a country where someone still knows the hexameter?’

I found out that there is the possibility that Goebbels translated the *Georgics*. I came across two translations of the *Georgics* from outposts of empire. One was written by the Parisian classicist Paul Auguste Nicolas, who took a study trip to Tunisia and in 1901 decided to settle there, clearing the land and becoming the spokesman for French settlers. His translation of the *Georgics*, completed under German occupation and published posthumously in 1948, was designed to demonstrate that to translate Virgil we need to ‘know agriculture as well as we know Latin’. The other was written by the English headmaster L. A. S. Jermyn under the ghastly deprivations of internment in Changi Gaol and Sime Road Camp, Singapore, between February 1942 and September 1945 and published by Blackwell in Oxford in 1947.

It even appears possible to link the undertaking and abandonment of an *Aeneid* translation project to the colonization of Virginia in the early seventeenth century: there is reason to think that George Sandys, later the treasurer of the Virginia Company, translated *Aeneid* 1 with Dido’s generous speech of welcome to the Trojans soon after the marriage in 1614 of the Indian princess Pocahontas to the colonist John Rolfe that seemed to offer so many possibilities, which were soon disappointed. Then there is the apparently bizarre phenomenon of translations of the *Georgics* and *Aeneid* written in Homeric Greek in Novorossiia (modern Ukraine) by the archbishop Eugenios Voulgaris. His translations, directed at the Greek families who had fled to Crimea and Ukraine after an unsuccessful uprising against the Ottomans in 1770, formed part of Catherine the Great’s ambitious ‘Greek Project’, which aimed to establish a Greco-Slavic Orthodox community. But these were not the first translations of Virgil into Homeric Greek: Voulgaris was anticipated by two Oxford Regius Professors of Greek, John Harpsfield and George Etheridge, who turned *Aeneid* 1 and 2 into Homeric Greek in the 1540s and 1550s, and by the scholars Joseph Scaliger and Daniel Heinsius, who in 1603 set about publishing side-by-side translations of Virgil’s tenth *Eclogue* in Doric Greek. Another surprise was the interest in Virgil translation from Romantic poets who are usually pigeonholed as Hellenophiles, including Schiller, Hölderlin, Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth. More remarkable

than surprising was the gorgeous artefact of *The Aeneids* by polymath and Arts and Crafts guru William Morris, published in a limited-edition luxury folio format on handmade paper.

Because my first academic position was at the University of Exeter, I was already familiar with stories about W. F. Jackson Knight (he taught Classics there from 1936 to 1964 and I was Warden of the same Hall of Residence as he had been), author of the first Penguin Classics translation of the *Aeneid*. Jackson Knight engaged in spiritualist communications with Virgil. At first it was his friend T. J. Haarhoff in South Africa, himself the translator of the *Georgics* into Afrikaans, who put questions to Virgil, who, he claimed, visited him every Tuesday evening. In a letter to Jackson Knight dated 11 March 1964, Haarhoff writes: 'I will put your questions to Vergil when I can. He is much interested in your Penguin effort and praises your industry. He thinks very highly of you. But you must not *worry* or overtire yourself. He sends his love and greeting.' Subsequently Knight claimed that Virgil started contacting him directly at Exeter, warning him 'to go slow and be extra careful with the "second half"'.¹

I was previously unaware of the phenomenon of translators who chose to translate the Latin supplement to the *Aeneid* written by Maffeo Vegio in 1428. This thirteenth book provides a happy conclusion to the poem, culminating in Aeneas' removal to heaven. Most of the translators who tackle the supplement add it to the rest of the poem, but a handful have published stand-alone versions, including the Quaker Mary Leadbeater's translation from early nineteenth-century rural Ireland. One translator even supplemented the supplement: the Victorian Major Thomas Seymour Burt furnished materials for a Book 14 based on the early chapters of Livy's *History of Rome*.

These are some of the more startling treasures that came to light as I dug down and unearthed the translation history of Virgil. There are many more in this book and, doubtless, many more to be discovered by other treasure hunters. I hope they whet your appetite to lay your hands on these treasures, to hold them to the light and to examine them from all angles.¹

¹ I am grateful to the series editors for suggesting this Prelude, a term that appealed to me as a musician and that appropriately has the root 'play', given the element of surprise in the examples I selected. I considered reworking Homi Bhabha's 'Unpacking My Library Again', his 1995 adaptation of Walter Benjamin's 1931 essay 'Unpacking My Library' (see Benjamin 1968), because at various points my bookshelves did present some remarkable collocations, but the 'treasure' motif seems to me to better convey the idea of the value of these Virgil translations.

Acknowledgements

This is a book that could not have been written a few decades ago. The scope of modern online search engines and especially the digitization of so many library collections have been vital to my project; I am hugely grateful to the visionaries behind such collections as Early English Books Online and the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Another vital ingredient has been the gift of time, which has enabled me to load up into my puny human brain the complex data involved in such a broad-ranging and synthesizing project. My Canada Research Chair (awarded in 2007 and renewed in 2014) gifted me with a lighter teaching load than my colleagues. I am more grateful than words can express to the Killam Trusts and the Canada Council for the Arts for the award of a two-year Killam Research Fellowship (2016–18), which allowed me to devote myself without distractions or interruptions to this study. Prior to that I benefitted from the award of a Standard Research Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in 2010, which enabled me to stage a conference on ‘Virgil Translated’ in Vancouver in 2012. The Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC) funded an Exploratory Workshop on ‘Translation and Authority’ in 2009 and a bilingual Wall Colloquium Abroad on ‘Virgil Translated’ (with a French emphasis) at the Institut d’Études Avancées in Paris in 2014 and nominated me as Wall Scholar in Residence at the Collège de France: that month in Paris was vital for the access it gave me to a vast number of French materials.

Above all, I wish to thank the many interlocutors and informants from whom I have learned so much while researching this book. I have been beyond fortunate in my interlocutors. In a category of their own are three individuals. Craig Kallendorf† could have written this book but instead elected to help me, in so many ways, especially as I was formulating the structure of the book. I have been enjoying conversations with Stuart Gillespie on this topic for some fifteen years and am deeply in his debt

Acknowledgements

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for his suggestions and feedback, which are always rigorous and always helpful. Zara Martirosova Torlone has been an inspiring collaborator as we together co-edited the fruits of three conferences on the topic of translators of Virgil; we are proud of the resulting volume, *Virgil and His Translators*, published by Oxford University Press in 2018 in the Classical Presences series. We plan a further co-authored volume on the travesties of Virgil.

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Abbreviations

BEPEV	Craig Kallendorf, <i>A Bibliography of the Early Printed Editions of Virgil 1469–1850</i> . New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2012. Updates to BEPEV are at https://bibsite.org/Detail/objects/30
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek
CK	Craig Kallendorf, <i>A Bibliography of Renaissance Italian Translations of Virgil</i> . Biblioteca di bibliografia italiana 136. Florence: Olschki, 1994
ECCO	Eighteenth Century Collections Online
EEBO	Early English Books Online
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue
EV	Francesco della Corte (ed.), <i>Enciclopedia Virgiliana</i> , 5 vols. Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1984–91
FRBNF	Catalogue number in Bibliothèque nationale de France
M	Giuliano Mambelli, <i>Gli annali delle edizioni virgiliane</i> . Florence: Olschki, 1954
ODE	Angus Stevenson (ed.), <i>Oxford Dictionary of English</i> . Oxford University Press, 3rd ed. 2010
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> . Oxford University Press, 2004
OED	John Simpson and Edmund Weiner (eds.), <i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed. 1989
STC	Alfred W. Pollard and Gilbert R. Redgrave (eds.), <i>Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , 3 vols. 2nd ed. revised and enlarged by William A. Jackson, Frederic

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- USTC* S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer. London: Bibliographical Society, 1986–91
Universal Short Title Catalogue, at ustc.ac.uk
VE Richard F. Thomas and Jan M. Ziolkowski (eds.), *The Virgil Encyclopedia*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014
Vita SD *Vita Suetonii vulgo Donatiana*
VT Jan Ziolkowski and Michael C. J. Putnam (eds.), *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008