INTRODUCTION
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a. The Life of Vergil

Vergil's literary pre-eminence since antiquity has made not only his work but also his life the subjects of intense study for two millennia. Reliable information about Vergil's life, however, can be gleaned from our ancient sources only with difficulty or not at all. Contemporary (or nearly so) evidence is limited to a few passing references in other writers (e.g., an allusion by the contemporary elegist Propertius, at 2.34.65–66, to the forthcoming *Aeneid*) which tend to tell us something about the work rather than the person. Allusions to Vergil's friendships with e.g. Varius Rufus (see Quintilian 10.3.8) and Horace (*Odes* 1.3.6, 1.24.10, and perhaps 4.12.13) do little more than confirm what we would be able to surmise without them, i.e., that he was part of a generation of writers who frequented the highest social and intellectual circles. The most reliable tidbit of information is also the most recent to come to light: that is the mention of Vergil among four poets named by the Greek philosopher-poet Philodemus in one of the newly accessible Herculaneum papyri. Vergil's poems themselves contain numerous mentions of historical characters, places, and events, all of which have been used repeatedly by scholars in attempts to reconstruct a biography of Vergil; but their presence in works not of historical data-collecting but of reflective imagination and intertextual richness compromises, to say the least, their reliability as evidence for anything other than Vergil's poetic genius.

Both as a result and perpetuating cause of Vergil's almost overnight inclusion in the Roman school curriculum and speedy ascension to "classic" status in Roman literary tradition, posthumous stories about *Vergilius noster* quickly accumulated and were transmitted, and elaborated upon, through the centuries. The popular historian and celebrity biographer **Suetonius** (c. 70–130 C.E.) included much of this material in his (now fragmentary) *De poetis*; this in turn provided the basis for the *Vita Donati*, attributed to the fourth-century Vergilian commentator **Aelius Donatus**. Donatus was the teacher of both **Servius**, the Vergilian commentator whose surviving work is one of our greatest repositories of both valuable fact and wildly unreliable (dis)information about Vergil's world, and **St. Jerome**, who collected and

translated sources on ancient chronology. Donatus' *Vita Vergilii* is the source of most of the "facts" we think we know about Vergil's life, from his shy and retiring nature and sexual preferences, to the loss of his family's lands during the confiscations after Philippi in 41 B.C.E., the effect of his recitation of *Aeneid* 6 on Marcellus' mother Octavia, and his deathbed wish that the not-yet-perfect *Aeneid* be burned. In fact, these anecdotes and others are far more likely to be based on (mis)readings of Vergil's works than on any historical reality, and bear witness to the velocity with which Vergil became a secular "saint" long before his "Christianization" in late antiquity and the early middle ages.

What we are left with, then, is little more than a skeleton of fact—itself not provable by any scientific means, but agreed upon by most scholars as offering a reliable framework upon which to hang Vergil's work and experience. He was born on October 15, 70 B.C.E., in or near Mantua (modern Mantova) in what was then Cisalpine Gaul. He traveled through the northern Italian cities of Cremona and Milan before coming to Rome; he spent time in and around the Bay of Naples as well. He died on September 21, 19 B.C.E., at Brundisium, and was buried in Naples.

b. The Works of Vergil

Three separate poems or collections of poems are ascribed to Vergil, all composed in dactylic hexameter: the *Eclogues*, a collection of ten primarily bucolic poems; the *Georgics*, a didactic poem in four books; and the *Aeneid*, an epic poem in twelve books. A fourth collection, the so-called *Appendix Vergiliana*, consisting of a wide variety of poems, has been ascribed to Vergil since antiquity, but most scholars now agree that the works in this compendium are by and large the efforts of Vergilian imitators, rather than authentic juvenilia from the poet's hand. Ranging from epigrams and Catullan-style short lyrics to the mock-epic epyllia (the term "epyllion," meaning "little epic," is a modern convenience, not an ancient category) *Culex* and *Moretum*, the poems in the *Appendix* open a window onto the poetic aspirations of numerous now-anonymous poets working in Vergil's shadow; they also serve as ample evidence of the degree to which the works of Vergil, especially but not exclusively the *Aeneid*, served as a central component in the "core curriculum" offered to elite youth in the centuries following Vergil's death. Like the Vergilian anecdotes transmitted by Suetonius and Donatus, these poems are evidence not so much of Vergil's career as of the power of the myth of Vergil.

The *Eclogues*, on the other hand, provide valuable insight into the formative influences shaping the young Vergil's literary aspirations. Attributed to the years immediately following the redistribution of land following the

battle of Philippi—an event for which the *Eclogues* are in fact major "evidence" (see above)—these poems bear powerful witness to the political and social turbulence of the late 40s and early 30s B.C.E. Their formal model is the collection of *Idyls* by **Theocritus**, one of the great Alexandrian court poets of the third century B.C.E. Together with **Callimachus** and **Apollonius** (see below), Theocritus articulated a new attitude towards poetry as a mode of communication: unlike the writers of earlier centuries, these men composed in a self-consciously literary, and literate, fashion for a self-consciously literary, and literate, audience. Their readers were by and large elite men, with both the education and the leisure time to enjoy learned texts. It is certainly possible that some at least of this poetry could be performed as well as read—certainly some of the *Idyls*, as well as e.g. Callimachus' *Hymns*, lend themselves to performance. Nonetheless, enjoyment of this kind of poetry was clearly, and intentionally, most accessible to those who could recognize and be entertained by learned allusion: Apollonius' clever deployment of an Homeric *hapax legomenon* in a novel context, or Theocritus' "prequel" to the Homeric Cyclops in his romantic portrayal of Polyphemus. The *Eclogues* too appeal to the reader first and foremost—especially the reader already familiar with the Hellenistic poets, as well as the work of the "new" poets in Rome, like Catullus, Cinna, Varro Atacinus, and Calvus. Aside from Theocritus himself, however, the single greatest influence upon the shape taken by the *Eclogues* is likely to have been exerted by **Gaius Cornelius Gallus**, a contemporary of Vergil whose elegiac *Amores* (and perhaps other works) are known to us not directly (a bare ten lines survive), but through Vergil himself, who makes a fictionalized Gallus the central character in *Eclogue* 10 and whose learning and elegant style are likely to be reflected in the so-called Aristaeus epyllion of *Georgics* 4 (see below).

The dominant themes of the *Eclogues* combine escapist fantasy and nostalgia on the one hand with realistic Italian landscape on the other. Many scholars—this one included—have been tempted to see in the *Eclogues* a desperate, even self-delusive, attempt to replace the harsh realities of the 30s B.C.E. with a better, simpler, and more promising picture of Italy and its inhabitants. *Eclogue* 4 in particular has attracted attention because of its self-fulfilling prophecy of the Golden Age renewed; like the contemporaneous *Epode* 16 of Horace, this *Eclogue* locates at an impossible distance the very escape from the here and now that it imagines. Some readers have found Vergil's love for Italy to be the dominant thematic key to the *Eclogues*, while others have argued that this love itself is compromised by the harsh reality that occasionally intrudes. Whatever the prevailing interpretation of the *Eclogues*, however, one thing remains clear: though these may well be the first formally published work of a young poet (Vergil was 35 in 35 B.C.E.), they reveal a writer already at the top of his form, capable of a delicacy and vividness

of expression and a sensitivity to language and rhythm rarely matched in his day—or any other.

To the modern reader, the *Georgics* may well seem an odd second project—a versified handbook of agricultural lore and advice seems hardly the best means to assert one's claim to major literary status. The tradition of didactic poetry is indeed one which has not translated well into the twentieth- and twenty-first century literary vernacular; for us, didacticism is the stuff of tedious textbooks, while the intimate expression of the self we associate with poetry presumes a density of an entirely different sort. For us, the language of poetry and the language of instruction rarely intersect; mnemonic doggerel (e.g., "Thirty days hath September, ..."; "After *si*, *nisi*, *num*, and *ne*, ...") is the only modern approximation, i.e., it is no equivalent at all. The ancient world, however, provides a very different context for didactic poetry: second only to the Homeric poems in both temporal roots and cultural impact are the compositions of **Hesiod** (fl. 700 B.C.E.), in particular, the *Works and Days*, combining farming advice, seasonal and meteorological lore, and popular morality in a hexameter poem that challenges the boundaries of genre even as it invents didactic. Hesiod's work, and in particular the richness of his didactic voice, were rediscovered in the Hellenistic era, when the scholarly revolution enabled poets to combine the inspiration of the Muses with their own abstruse researches. The impact of Hesiod is visible everywhere in Hellenistic poetry; only the most obvious index of this is the didactic fashion that gave us everything from the *Phaenomena* of **Aratus** (c. 315–240 B.C.E.), a hexameter poem on the constellations and heavens, to the appropriation of the teacher's role by **Nicander** (fl. 130 B.C.E.). His extant poems the *Theriaca* (on poisonous insects and snakes, and remedies for their toxins) and the *Alexipharmaca* (on antidotes found in nature to various toxins) suggest simply by their titles the extremes to which this tradition was prone. We know, furthermore, of many other no-longer-extant poems that trod similar ground, collecting arcane lore of one sort or another; and scholars have now amply demonstrated the role played by all of these influences in Vergil's poetic instruction.

Vergil looks to a native form of didacticism in shaping his didactic voice in the *Georgics*, too. Prose handbooks of agricultural instruction, written primarily for those elite readers who would eventually end up managing vast estates of their own, synthesized centuries of agricultural knowledge and tradition, covering everything from the proper clothing for slaves to the limits of intra-species grafting. Two of these handbooks survive, in whole or in part: **Cato the Elder's** *De agri cultura* (usually dated to 160 B.C.E.) and **Varro's** *De re rustica* (usually dated to 37 B.C.E.). Especially the latter of these, written in Vergil's own lifetime, exerted a great influence on Vergil; scholars have drawn increasing attention in recent years to the way in which Vergil transforms technical prose into Vergilian hexameters.

What is Vergil's own gift, however, is the ability he demonstrates in the *Georgics* (probably completed in 29 B.C.E.) to transform even the most mundane details of a farmer's life into a powerful poetic lesson about the nature of life, especially human life, itself. The hierarchical organization of the poem, with its four books treating crops and vines, trees and shrubs, domestic animals, and bees, respectively, has long been understood to represent the gradual and continuing process by which man brings order to nature, and in the process creates a place for himself within it. Does the *Georgics* present us with a depiction of human interaction with the natural world as a happy cooperation enabled in the first place by the arts of civilization, or as a constant struggle for survival in a hostile universe? This is the fundamental question that has been asked by the poem's readers over the centuries; and this question is further complicated when we look at the world in which Vergil wrote this poem, a world marked by both the supreme accomplishments of human civilization and the chaos of war.

Similar concerns preoccupy both Vergil and his readers when we turn to the *Aeneid*. In undertaking an epic, Vergil appropriates not only the style and subject-matter of the genre established by Homer but also its concern with empire and its symbols. The story Vergil tells—of how Aeneas, escaped from Troy, struggles to bring his people and traditions from Troy to a new home in Italy and there to create a new life for himself and them among the native (at least relatively speaking) peoples of Italy—deals with themes of both national and individual identity, of both personal responsibility and fate, of both the power of desire and the destructiveness of passion. I shall describe more fully below some of the central features of the poem as well as the many literary traditions that informed its creation; here I note simply that there is some evidence to suggest that, having begun the *Aeneid* in 29 B.C.E., Vergil died ten years later with it not quite complete. The numerous half-lines found throughout the poem (but not found in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*) are the most frequently cited indication of the poem's incompleteness; it may be noted, therefore, that at least some of these incomplete hexameters occur at moments of high intensity in the poem, and they can therefore at least be argued to serve the poet's intention in their current state. More subtle indications of the lack of final authorial revision have been detected in studies focusing closely on the technicalities of Vergil's diction and meter. For the purposes of this discussion and throughout my notes, however, I shall speak of the *Aeneid* as a complete poem, bearing ample evidence of its maker's careful fashioning. Perhaps most important from a practical point of view, furthermore, I shall use the poem's allegedly unfinished state only as a last resort to explain away difficulties in the text.

c. The First Century B.C.E. and the Principate of Augustus

The social, intellectual, and political turmoil and its consequences that came increasingly to dominate life in the Roman world after the third Punic War are at the heart of a story both too complex and too familiar to allow full discussion here. Readers are encouraged, therefore, to consult any of a number of up-to-date histories of the late Republic and early Principate; I provide a list of suggested titles at the end of this Introduction, noting as I do so the increasing, and therefore increasingly valuable, appearance of studies that synthesize various aspects of life in this period rather than focusing only on, e.g., Rome's great military leaders or battle outcomes. It is possible, to be sure, to read the *Aeneid* in a cultural vacuum, equipped with little more than a cast of characters and a list of ablative constructions. Such a reading, however, necessarily entails treating the poem as a fiction rather than as both beneficiary and shaper of the defining issues of its day and indeed of Roman culture generally. In order to help my readers make at least a beginning at seeing the *Aeneid* as part of a larger cultural matrix, I have also located at the end of this Introduction a timeline that is meant to illustrate the relative chronology of several landmarks—physical, intellectual, and/or historical—during Vergil's lifetime.

d. The *Aeneid*

i) Models

The epic ancestors of the *Aeneid* have been known since antiquity, yet they continue to provide rich new insights into both the methods and the meanings of Vergil's work. The twelve-book design of the poem, clearly divided into two halves (the Wandering and the War), both acknowledges and inverts the narrative sequence of the **Homeric epics**. This structural principle is echoed on countless occasions in the smallest details of the poem, beginning with the opening two words, *arma virumque*, evoking the central concerns of the *Iliad* (*arma*) and the *Odyssey* (*virum*). The movement back and forth between divine and human perspectives—as well as the occasional confluence or clash of the two—is also a central feature of Homeric narrative. Other Homeric features of Vergil's work will be observed in my notes on the poem.

A second prominent model for Vergil's epic is the ***Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes** (third century B.C.E.), a dactylic-hexameter poem in four books describing the gathering of Jason's companions; their voyage eastward to Colchis; their arrival there and involvement with the ruling family of Aeetes, especially his daughter, Medea; Jason's acquisition of the golden fleece; and the homeward journey of the Argonauts accompanied by the young princess. While the eventual outcome of Jason and Medea's love affair remains in the future from the perspective of Apollonius' narrator, his ancient audience already knew the full story in all its sorrowful detail from earlier literary treatments, especially Euripides' *Medea*. Apollonius' depiction of Medea's infatuation with Jason, therefore, pregnant as it is with foreshadowed doom, had a powerful influence on Vergil's depiction of Dido. New studies of Apollonius have shown, however, that his influence upon Vergil is hardly limited to the Medea/Dido parallel, but rather in its pervasiveness challenges the Homeric poems themselves.

The role of **tragedy**, both Greek and Roman, in the shaping of the *Aeneid* is also clear, although until recently it has generally received less attention from scholars than have epic influences. Indeed, the points of contact are too numerous to list here; instead, therefore, I simply note a few prominent instances worthy of further exploration. **Euripides'** *Medea* has already been alluded to; this play's reworking by **Ennius** (239–169 B.C.E.), of which only fragments now remain, is likely to have been of equal importance. The fall of Troy so vividly depicted in Aeneas' narrative of Book 2 looks back to numerous plays on the Trojan theme, including, e.g., the Euripidean and Ennian *Andromaches*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and Ennius' *Alexander*; the "invasion" of Turnus by Allecto in Book 7 draws on Euripides' *Hercules Furens*; and the final combat between Turnus and Aeneas in Book 12 follows in many details the description of Hercules' engagement with Achelous, competing for Deanira, in **Sophocles'** *Trachiniae*.

The **great Roman poets of earlier generations** must have played a formative role in Vergil's early education; unfortunately, most of their work survives to us only in fragments. First and foremost was undoubtedly **Ennius'** *Annales*, an epic in 15 books following the history of Rome from its foundations down to Ennius' own time. In its early articulation of the dactylic hexameter we find the origins of Vergil's beautifully balanced lines. In the early books of this poem, furthermore, Aeneas was a central character, and his struggle to achieve a Trojan foothold in Italy a central theme. The *Bellum Punicum* of **Naevius** (late third century B.C.E.), too, was important, both in its treatment of the foundation of Rome in the early books and in its focus on the conflict between the two great peoples of the Mediterranean, the Romans and the Carthaginians. Other writers and their works, about whom we know even less, are too numerous to mention here; but whenever we are inclined to question the meaning or purpose of a particular genealogical or topographical detail in Vergil's poem, it is worth remembering how many of the texts that shaped his intellectual world are lost to us.

The interrelationship of all of Vergil's poetry with the *De rerum natura* of **Lucretius** (c. 94–55 B.C.E.) is also evident, although exactly how this relationship should be described is a matter of some debate. Lucretius' hexameter

didactic poem on the physics and metaphysics of Epicurean philosophy is a daring and powerful work, and Vergil's redeployment of Lucretian material—everything from particular words and phrases to images and even whole scenes—is undisputed. Whether Vergil's admiration of Lucretian didactic extended to his philosophy as well, however, is far less clear. On a purely technical level, a juxtaposition of Lucretian and Vergilian hexameter techniques indicates just how singular was Vergil's mastery of his poetic equipment.

Perhaps the single most important model, at least notionally, in fact, is the **Hellenistic poet** renowned for his rejection of epic—at least post-Homeric epic—and his espousal of a learned, self-conscious, and modernist poetics: I mean **Callimachus** (first half of the third century B.C.E.), the author of numerous scholarly and literary works, most of which survive only as a list of titles but an important few of which we have at least in significant fragments. His *Aetia*, a four-book poem in elegiac couplets, was a virtuoso display of different subjects and narrative techniques, comprising a series of otherwise unrelated stories about the origins of various rituals, cults, places, and names. We also have six of his *Hymns*, modeled in some ways on the archaic *Homeric Hymns* but displaying as well the innovative style and intellectual detachment of the *Aetia*, and a large number of his *Epigrams*, again highly polished works that by their very brevity instantiate a rejection of epic values.

Because of Callimachus' evident distaste for post-Homeric epic (though not for Homer himself), scholars have long puzzled over how Vergil was able to find some compromise between the apparent polar opposites of epic and Alexandrianism, and how that compromise is articulated in the *Aeneid.* A more thoughtful appreciation of Vergil's accomplishment is made possible nonetheless—and suggests that no compromise was in fact needed—when one realizes that Callimachus' stance was not against epic *per se*, but against epic in the degraded and tedious form it often took in the centuries following the recording of the Homeric poems. In fact, Vergil's other great Hellenistic model, very much a complement to the poetry of Callimachus, is the epic *Argonautica* of Apollonius (see above)—a new epic, composed with a new sort of literary self-consciousness and in its learnedness very much suited to modern tastes.

Indeed, the depth and range of learning that was first possible in the Hellenistic world so profoundly informed Vergil's poetics that a comprehensive listing of important intellectual influences on his thought and works would be excessively long for the present purposes (if not simply impossible). In this discussion, therefore, I have chosen to focus on the most exemplary models rather than to provide a real catalogue; my readers are encouraged to make new connections on their own, using this short introduction as just that—an entry into a fascinating subject, and nothing more. But even this introduction would not be complete without the inclusion of three other names, each of whom played a direct and virtually unmediated role in the development of Vergil's poetic consciousness: Parthenius, Gallus, and Catullus. **Parthenius** of Nicaea, taken as a captive during the third Macedonian War and brought to Italy in 73 B.C.E., remained after being freed and became a teacher in Naples. Tradition has it that he single-handedly introduced educated elite Roman youth to the poetry of Callimachus and the other Alexandrians, and imbued his pupils with a new poetic aesthetic. While the remains of Latin poetry predating Parthenius demonstrate, scant as they are, that this is both an overstatement and oversimplification of the facts, there can be little doubt that he played a central role in the new cultural and intellectual awareness that characterized almost every aspect of life in the first half of the first century B.C.E. A precious indication of this is the one work of Parthenius of which we have a substantial portion, his *Erotica Pathemata* (Tales of Tormented Lovers), a textbook of sorts addressed to his pupil C. Cornelius Gallus and consisting of brief summaries of mythical love stories, for the most part obscure and for the most part concluding in tragic fashion. This document suggests *in parvo* not only how Hellenistic learning was transmitted to Roman boys but also how Hellenistic literary tastes shaped Roman ones—the stories included by Parthenius are, *mutatis mutandis*, obvious prototypes for, among other things, the story of Dido and Aeneas.

Parthenius' student **Gallus** (c. 69–26 B.C.E.) is an equally important figure, though again we have little to go on from his own hand. The author of (at least) a collection of elegies called the *Amores*, Gallus is best known to modern readers not for the surviving ten lines of elegiac couplets attached to his name but as a figure of inspiration in Vergil's *Eclogues* 6 and 10 and as an elusive shadow behind the so-called Aristaeus epyllion with which the fourth book of the *Georgics* culminates. Whether this episode is inspired by Gallus in its subject, style, and narrative treatment, or whether Vergil composed it to replace an earlier conclusion in which Gallus himself featured, remains a matter of scholarly debate; but the episode clearly illustrates a fashion for which we also have compelling evidence from **Catullus** (c. 85–55 B.C.E.), whose "new poetry" is likely to have made a strong impression on the adolescent Vergil. Catullus' poem 64, an epyllion on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis containing the inset narrative of Ariadne's betrayal by Theseus, has long been recognized to be a pervasive intertextual presence in Vergil's Dido and Aeneas episode; what is now becoming more apparent is that this is only the most obvious indication of Catullus' profound impact not only on Vergil's poetic sensibilities but also on his mode of expression.

Finally, I note—but can hardly do justice to here—Vergil's contemporaries, including particularly the poets **Horace** (65–8 B.C.E.), **Propertius** (c. 54–16 B.C.E.), and **Tibullus** (c. 55–19 B.C.E.). Side-by-side reading of their poetry and Vergil's can only begin to suggest how these poets interacted,

socially, politically, and intellectually; it offers a vivid picture nonetheless of the life-shattering turmoil which each, in his own way, survived and in which each found the inspiration to serve as spokesperson for a generation. The resulting portrait—or perhaps collage would be a better metaphor—renders the Augustan age a period for which there are few comparisons, in terms of both historical significance and creative richness.

ii) Characters and Plot

Aeneas is a relatively minor Homeric character, best known for escaping from duels with both Diomedes and Achilles through divine intervention (*Iliad* Books 5 and 20, respectively). He also figures, at least as a name, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, where the goddess' seduction of the unknowing Anchises is promised to result in the birth of a son. He is likely to have appeared in lesser or greater roles elsewhere as well in the ancient literary record, but we know of no real starring roles before the Roman poets take him up. I have already referred to his place in the poems of Ennius and Naevius; he also was a standard figure in the lists of names of ancestors with which the annalistic historians of Rome legitimized their work. The *Aeneid*, however, is effectively the first poem in which Aeneas is the central character throughout the work.

Much has been made since antiquity of the perceived similarities between the Vergilian Aeneas and the new *princeps*, Augustus, who brought peace to the Roman state after decades of civil strife; and indeed much contemporary evidence extraneous to the *Aeneid* indicates that this analogy was the seemingly natural outcome of a larger program of renewed emphasis on divine and heroic origins and lineage carried out through much of the first century B.C.E. by the *gens Iulia*. Scholars are almost unanimous in their agreement, however, that an allegorical reading of the *Aeneid* (i.e., Aeneas "equals" Augustus) is not only a rash oversimplification of the facts but also ignores the complexities of Vergil's creative genius. The idea that the *Aeneid* is Augustan "propaganda" is both provocative and reductive, better used as the starting-point for a critical reading of the poem than as its conclusion.

Dido makes her first appearance in late fourth-century B.C.E. Hellenistic history, as the expansion of Carthage and other developments in the western Mediterranean give new prominence to the cultural and political reach of the Phoenicians. The encounter of Aeneas and Dido probably appeared in Naevius' *Bellum Punicum*, but at least according to Varro it was Dido's sister Anna, rather than Dido herself, who fell in love with the Trojan leader and committed suicide. The Vergilian version of the cultural confrontation represented by Dido's encounter with Aeneas and her subsequent demise is therefore likely to have been read as an innovation upon the traditional story, and is clearly informed by both contemporary political discourse about foreign, especially Eastern, peoples (of whom the Egyptian ruler Cleopatra is typecast as representative) and the status of women in the Roman world. Insofar as the conflict between Dido and Aeneas has been read as analogous to that between Carthage and Rome, furthermore, Dido has been interpreted as a stand-in of sorts for Hannibal. As with Aeneas, however, the temptation to allegorize is best avoided, at least in its simplest form; for it is clear that the historical models for Dido must share the limelight with her literary forerunners, like Ariadne, Medea, and Deianira.

Turnus, chief of the Rutulians and leader of the anti-Trojan opposition in Italy, is first and foremost the Virgilian equivalent of Homer's Hector, although the fact that Turnus is not Trojan but rather Troy's sworn enemy is only one of many ironies in his depiction. Scholars have also seen Turnus as an analogue for either Antony, or the assassins of Julius Caesar, or both; and while these figures certainly offer some suggestive parallels, they tell us little about Turnus as Vergilian character. Very little is heard of Turnus before his appearance in the *Aeneid*; his name appears linked with Aeneas' as early as the second century B.C.E., but Vergil clearly turned first to both Homer and tragedy to help shape his creation of a fit match for Aeneas. Whether Turnus is better seen as a hotheaded outlaw promoting both a lost and an unjust cause or the true tragic hero of the poem, destroyed by forces beyond his control, remains one of the great questions in Vergilian studies. Equally important, however, are the questions raised by the figure of Turnus about Italian identity and the place of Rome in the history and destiny of the Italian peninsula, questions constantly renewed by our increasing ability to understand the cultural and social politics of the era in which Vergil wrote.

Aside from these three—i.e., Aeneas and his two adversaries—there are **numerous other characters** in the *Aeneid* who play roles of some significance, both Trojans (e.g., Anchises, Ascanius, Priam, Laocoon, Helenus, Palinurus, Achates, Creusa, Nisus, Euryalus) and the ethnically diverse inhabitants of Italy (e.g., Latinus, Lavinia, Evander, Pallas, Camilla, Iuturna, Mezentius, Lausus); the Greeks too are central to the narrative, although their roles are more often described by others than directly depicted (e.g., Odysseus [Ulysses], Achilles, Patroclus, Neoptolemus [Pyrrhus], Helen). All of these characters bear comparison with their Homeric and tragic prototypes; in these notes I shall attempt to indicate at least how to begin such comparative examination.

Arguably, however, **the gods**—or at least a few of them—are even more important than the humans in Vergil's epic narrative: Juno, Venus, Apollo, and Jupiter—as well as traditionally "minor" figures like Aeolus, Iris, and Mercury—are not only constant observers of human action in the poem but also play a central role in shaping human action. It has often been asked with

some skepticism whether Vergil or his first audience, the sophisticated elite of the early principate, would have taken these gods seriously, i.e., whether these gods would have been believed in and believable, both because of their obviously literary origins and because of the apparent absence of religious sentiment, at least in the modern sense, from Roman life in the first century B.C.E. Yet if we ignore the gods in the *Aeneid*, or see them simply as some sort of epic window-dressing, we risk writing off almost half of the poem, including moreover numerous scenes whose fundamental purpose seems to be to show the crucial part played by forces outside ourselves in human affairs: indeed, it is possible to read the *Aeneid* as evidence for the deep religiosity of the Augustan era, a religiosity that is best understood not in terms of belief or morality but in terms of cultural identity. The gods are as central to this identity as is Aeneas himself.

e. Vergil's Influence

The history of Vergil's reception as "the classic of all Europe," as T.S. Eliot called him, and indeed of all the West, can only be given in rough outline here; readers who wish to proceed further into this terrain are therefore advised to look at one or more of the many new treatments of Vergilian reception, and indeed of reception of Roman poetry as a whole, that have emerged in recent years. A few moments from Vergil's rich afterlife can nonetheless be noted here.

First witness to the Vergilian achievement is **Ovid**, who grew up reading Vergil's poetry and was undoubtedly deeply influenced by its language, its cadences, and its central themes. Ovid returns repeatedly in his poetry to Vergilian themes and characters, from the love-letter written by the abandoned Dido to Aeneas (*Heroides* 7) to a rewriting of the *Aeneid*, from a new and sometimes subversive perspective, in the last books of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid even exploits the Vergilian model from his place of exile, Tomis, imagining his departure from Rome in terms that are clearly modeled on Aeneas' escape from Troy (*Tristia* 1.3).

Three centuries after Ovid, the emperor **Constantine** (in a sermon dated to the early 320s C.E.) would read the fourth *Eclogue* as a prophecy of the birth of Jesus and thus of Christianity, and see Vergil therefore as a proto-Christian; and **Augustine** (354–430 C.E.) too would look to Vergil's characters as models for understanding human behavior and emotions, even as he rejected the pagan world-view of Vergil's work.

With Christian hegemony in Europe came an increasing tendency to read Vergil in Christian terms; the culmination of this trend appears in **Dante**, whose first-person narrator throughout the *Divine Comedy* (composed during the first quarter of the fourteenth century) is escorted, at least in the earliest

stages of the poem's journey, by the soul of Vergil, "l'altissimo poeta." Indeed, Dante's relationship to Vergil has been seen by modern scholars as a metaphor of sorts for the way in which great works of art are kept alive, allowed—or even compelled—to transcend the boundaries of their own historical roots.

The resulting tension proved to be fertile ground for the poets of Europe throughout the ensuing centuries, particularly those engaged in the project of viewing epic through the lens of empire, and vice versa. This tradition saw its culmination, at least in some ways, in the work of **John Milton**, whose great poem *Paradise Lost* (1667) is richly Vergilian in its intertextuality even as it equates the empire-building burden of epic with the aspirations of Satan.

I leave for others, some of who are included in the bibliographical list below, to continue this story, never-ending as it is; I mention here only two of the greatest poets of the late twentieth century, **Joseph Brodsky** and **Seamus Heaney**, each of whom has not only paid homage to Vergil but renewed Vergil in his own work. The very fact that you are reading this, before engaging in the interpretive act of translating the *Aeneid*, offers a paradigm for Vergil's vitality: with each (re-)reading the poem is renewed and transformed, as are its readers.

f. Timeline

Augustan Rome - a timetable - *Barbara Weiden Boyd*			
Year(s)	Historical and Political Events	Monuments and Building Projects	Significant Texts/ Literary Events
79 BCE	Pompey's first triumph		
71	Pompey's second triumph		
70			Birth of Virgil
68	Julius Caesar's funeral oration for aunt Julia in Forum Romanum		
65			Birth of Horace
63	C. Octavius born September 23		
60	first Triumvirate formed		
59	Pompey marries Julius Caesar's daughter Julia		
55		Theater of Pompey and Temple of Venus Victrix (first use of *opus reticulatum*)	Deaths of Lucretius and Catullus

54	Julius Caesar's daughter Julia dies	Cicero purchases land for Julius Caesar's Forum (Forum Iulium)	Birth of Propertius (or 47?)
53	Battle of Carrhae – Crassus loses Roman standards to Parthians		
52	Pompey elected sole consul	Curia Hostilia and Basilica Porcia in Forum Romanum burn down	
49	Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon		
48	Battle of Pharsalus – Julius Caesar defeats Pompey		
46	Julius Caesar's triumph in Rome	Dedication of Temple of Venus Genetrix in Forum Iulium	
44	Assassination of Julius Caesar; Antony's funeral oration for Julius Caesar in Roman forum; adoption of Octavian	Altar and column erected in Forum Romanum with inscription PARENTI PATRIAE	
43	Octavian becomes consul; formation of second Triumvirate		Birth of Ovid
42	Battle of Philippi; deification of Julius Caesar; division of empire	Building of temple of Divus Iulius in Forum Romanum decreed; Octavian vows temple to Mars Ultor	
41	Land confiscations		Virgil begins *Eclogues*
40	Antony marries Octavia		
38	Octavian marries Livia		
36	Octavian defeats Sextus Pompey at Naulochus; Lepidus removed from triumvirate		
34	Donations of Alexandria		
32	Octavian reads Antony's will; Antony divorces Octavia		
31	Battle of Actium		
30	Suicides of Antony and Cleopatra	Octavian's campsite memorial built at Actium	Horace publishes *Epodes*

29	Octavian's triple triumph	Curia Iulia in Forum Romanum finished by Octavian; temple of Divus Iulius in Forum Romanum completed	Virgil completes *Georgics*, begins *Aeneid*
28		Forum Iulium and Basilica Iulia finished by Octavian; dedication of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine; Octavian's Mausoleum begun	
27	January 13 – *res publica restituta;* Octavian becomes Augustus		
25	Marriage of Julia and Marcellus		
23	Augustus receives tribunician powers for life; death of Marcellus; Agrippa heads to East	(approx.) Theater of Marcellus begun	Horace publishes *Odes* Books 1-3
21	Marriage of Agrippa and Julia		
20s	Lex Iulia theatralis		
20	Recovery of Roman standards from Parthia; birth of Gaius Caesar	Dedication of small Temple of Mars Ultor on Capitoline?	
19		Arch of Augustus (Parthian Arch) erected in Forum Romanum	Publication of *Aeneid*; deaths of Virgil and Tibullus
18	*Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* and *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*		
17	Birth of Lucius Caesar; Augustus adopts Gaius and Lucius; *Ludi Saeculares*		Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* commissioned
16			Publication of Horace's *Odes* Book 4; death of Propertius
13	Augustus returns from Spain and Gaul	Ara Pacis Augustae vowed by Senate	
12	Death of Lepidus (or late 13?); Augustus is made Pontifex Maximus; Agrippa dies in late March		

11	Tiberius divorces Vipsania, marries Julia; Drusus marries Antonia Minor		
9	Death of Drusus	Dedication of Ara Pacis Augustae	
8			Death of Horace
2	Julia daughter of Augustus is relegated	Dedication of Forum of Augustus, including Temple of Mars Ultor; Augustus receives title PATER PATRIAE	
2 CE	Death of Lucius Caesar		
2–8 CE			Ovid works on *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*
4 CE	Death of Gaius Caesar; adoption of Tiberius by Augustus; adoption of Germanicus son of Drusus by Tiberius		
7 CE	Julia granddaughter of Augustus is relegated; Agrippa Postumus is exiled		
8 CE			Ovid is relegated to Tomis, where he writes *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*
9 CE	*Lex Papia Poppaea* modifies earlier social legislation		
14 CE	Death of Augustus		Augustus' *Res Gestae* read in the Senate by the Vestal Virgins

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See also the valuable chapters on Vergil's reception in the *Companions* edited by Martindale and Horsfall (listed under *Collections of Essays* above).