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Phillip John Usher and Isabelle Fernbach, eds., *Virgilian Identities in the French Renaissance. Gallica*, 27. Woodbridge; Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2012. xiii + 260 pp. \$99.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9781843843177.

Review by Louisa Mackenzie, University of Washington, Seattle.

This edited volume is a timely and important contribution to Virgilian reception history, which has been enjoying something of a revival; indeed this collection was published in the same year (2012) as the landmark *Virgil Encyclopedia*.<sup>[1]</sup> *Virgilian Identities* is published in Sarah Kay's Gallica series, which is dedicated to scholarship on medieval and Renaissance French literary history. The volume's editors, Phillip John Usher and Isabelle Fernbach, have assembled an impressive quorum of authors, all of whom are primarily early modernists rather than classicists, although some—especially the late Philip Ford whose presence in this volume is especially welcome—have scholarly pedigrees as neo-Latinists. Each chapter does deeply specific work that shows the interest of slowing down to appreciate the significance of Virgil's corpus to particular historical moments of Renaissance France. As the editors note in their introduction, this is the first publication to be entirely devoted to Virgil in the French Renaissance, and the range of subject matter and approaches in the eleven chapters show that a book-length project is entirely justified. The editors also note several absences from the collection (especially a contribution on Montaigne) and helpfully indicate possibilities for further research. It is one of this collection's strengths, in fact, that it explicitly makes no claim to exhaustivity, nor does it impose any overarching interpretive frame on its contributors. Certain unifying themes do emerge, but not in a forced way.

Timothy Hampton's foreword provides a concise general sense of the significance of the three Virgilian modes—epic, pastoral, and georgic—to poetic, moral, and political reflection in the French sixteenth century. Hampton attributes this status to Virgil's unique blending, in all three modes, of narrative and commentary, including self-reflexive commentary on what it meant to be a writer and mythmaker. This textual and thematic plasticity means that Virgil is always being re-imagined, being "made French" even beyond the Renaissance.

The introduction by co-editors Usher and Fernbach packs a lot into its eighteen pages. From the start, Usher and Fernbach indicate the problems of simple transposition of the medieval tripartite Virgilian *rota*: the three principal genres of Virgil's corpus, epic, pastoral, and georgic, along with concomitant symbols, styles, objects, etc. They argue that while epic maintained a distinct influence throughout the sixteenth century in France, pastoral and georgic were often conflated. This observation provides intellectual justification for the two-part structure of the volume, which divides up the essays as focussed either on epic, or on pastoral and georgic considered together. As Fernbach explains in her single-authored section, while there is still some sense of the specificity of each genre and a general preference for pastoral, there is also a blurring of the boundaries. Usher's section on epic notes that the traditional generic teleology, according to which the *Aeneid* was the pinnacle of Virgil's achievements, was sustained in the Renaissance. The medieval Christian-allegorical appropriation of the *Aeneid* gave way to the more philological reception history of Renaissance humanism keen to rediscover a purer, more Roman text. Thus, as Usher deftly notes, while the Latin epic's ideological work of providing a

founding myth for empire was “made French,” it was also “re-Romanized” (p. 9). Usher nicely holds the dialectic tensions between Rome and France, ancient and modern, as he teases out the *Aeneid*'s influence in the sixteenth century: the text's cultural authority had to be recognised but also challenged as it was deployed in discourses of French statehood, linguistic authority (vernacular French versus Latin), and the authority of modern authors relative to their classical exemplars.

Identity, whether poetic or national, is central to the uptake of Virgil in the French Renaissance. As Usher and Fernbach put it, “Virgil can be read not just as a source of French Renaissance literature, but as a set of mores through which identities—authorial, communitarian, and national—were negotiated” (p. 15). Each of the volume's chapters shows sensitivity to this process of negotiation and identity formation. The first part, on pastoral and georgic modes, is opened by Berndt Renner, an established Marot scholar, who offers a tightly-structured reflection on how Clément Marot appropriates for himself the reputation and name of Virgil, through translation of the latter's first eclogue, and exploitation of the homophony between his own name and Virgil's (Publius Vergilius Maro). Marot thus bolsters his own status as an *auctor*, by appropriating Virgil's *auctoritas*. This is more than wordplay, as Renner shows: the homophony serves as a means by which Marot explores his various professional relations, actively transforming Virgil rather than passively imitating him, and establishing his own poetic *persona*. This chapter contributes to Marot scholarship more broadly by arguing for Marot's status as a self-styled professional poet, theorist, and innovator, before the generation of the Pléiade to whom scholars typically ascribe more elevated poetic status.

Of all the literature-focussed chapters, Margaret Harp's deals with the least-known text and author, and makes a strong case for its interest and for “minor” literature in general. She argues that *Le printemps d'Yver* (1572) by Jacques Yver engages Virgilian pastoral actively, and that it reflects some very specific tensions of French society at the time. Following Nancy Lindheim's notion of pastoral suspension in Virgil,<sup>[2]</sup> Harp identifies an “uneasy balance between sadness and peace” (p. 39) in Yver's text. She shows how Yver relocates the thematics of Virgil's first and ninth eclogue in particular to reflect the mitigated hope of the (temporary) peace of Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1570, sidestepping devastating partisanship and offering a fragile dream of a world in which religious allegiances did not matter. Harp's chapter will also be of interest to Marguerite de Navarre scholars, as Yver's *Printemps* is modeled on a similar premise of stories told by men and women taking refuge from the trials of the religious wars; indeed, it sometimes seemed as if Navarre might be a more significant intertext than Virgil.

Michael Randall's chapter is also a demonstration of the importance of Virgilian themes to Renaissance poetry, in a long work by Jean Lemaire in particular. Randall shows the originality of Lemaire's *imitatio* of the statues in Virgil's third Georgic, comparing it with that of Ronsard and Du Bellay. Randall provides an overview of the Renaissance poetic transformations of Virgil's temple to Caesar Octavian, in particular the descriptor “spirantia signa” (statues that breathe). While Ronsard and Du Bellay, in their versions, understand the statues as life-like and as testaments to artistic mimesis, Lemaire's statues shift from mimesis to magic: they live and talk, serving a “performative rather than a mimetic function” (p. 67), both commemorative and predictive. Ultimately, Randall argues, Lemaire's transformation of the georgic statues provides a way to read the *Temple* as a more unified work than had been the case until now.

Stéphanie Lecompte's chapter also considers Lemaire's reworkings of Virgil's georgic temple. She considers the temples in both the *Temple* and *La concorde des deux langages* (1511) as reflections of the Virgilian exegetic tradition, with an emphasis on how they allegorize spiritual perfection. In a particularly strong section, Lecompte provides a long view of the exegetic tradition of the *Aeneid*, from the fourth century on (Servius, Macrobius, etc.), tracing how Aeneas's journey becomes glossed as a purifying journey of the soul, from the active to the contemplative and wise life. Lemaire, she convincingly shows, is strongly influenced by this tradition in his representation of the temple, especially in the *Concorde* where the Actor's quest parallels Aeneas's in a quest for wisdom and a

*translatio* of this wisdom from Italy to France. Lecompte continues with three texts—by Habert, Ronsard, and Rabelais—which diversely break with the Neoplatonist exegetic tradition: the first two provide a more unambiguously moralizing interpretation (Christian for Hebert, civic for Ronsard), while Rabelais turns Neoplatonist journey into parodic multiplication of meaning in the storm scene of his *Quart Livre*.

The last chapter of this part is co-editor Isabelle Fernbach, who reads Du Bellay's *Divers jeux rustiques* (1558) through the double lens of rusticity and satire. Du Bellay's georgicism both critiques court culture and makes a claim for the poet's status within that culture, and as he does so, Virgil becomes his poetic double and authorizing sponsor (similar to Renner's reading of Marot in this volume). In an elegant close reading, Fernbach identifies two Virgils in the *Jeux* who represent the contradictions of Du Bellay's position at court: the marginal Bertrand Berger is Virgil's Meliboeus in exile, while the favoured Olivier de Magny is Tityrus. Fernbach's conclusions from her readings are particularly compelling and readers might wish to see them fleshed out more: the use of Virgil in the *Jeux*, she argues, shows a passage from poetry to autobiography, and more broadly "offers a new understanding of Early Modern literary identities and of their social challenges" (p. 113).

The second part on epic starts with a strong contribution by Valerie Worth-Stylianou, who provides an overview of French translations of the *Aeneid* from 1483-1582. She considers each one both as a textual artefact of print culture, and in terms of the political appropriation of Virgil's epic to French contexts. Her chapter provides archival support for the shift from medieval prose romance to humanist verse epic in Virgil translations, and considers two important mid-century exceptions. The publication frequency of translations of the *Aeneid* shows that "a verse translation of the entire *Aeneid* would rarely have been unavailable to any who wished to own it" (p. 121). Bilingual versions were also successful and survived well into the seventeenth century. In her last section Worth-Stylianou demonstrates, through careful close readings of extracts from the Anchises episode in three different translations, that Renaissance translators variously emphasise different aspects of Aeneas's identity as a hero or as a fugitive and of the glory of Rome, depending on their own political engagements. Thus the *Aeneid* was a work "poised between two cultures" (p. 126) both typographically and thematically.

Philip Ford, author of a major book on Homeric traditions in the Renaissance,<sup>[3]</sup> contributed a compelling comparison of the reception histories of Homer and Virgil. Like the previous chapter, Ford's is more intellectual history than literary analysis, and provides important contextualization of the specificity of Virgilian models in the Renaissance. The "rediscovery" of Homer in the sixteenth century led to a comparative reevaluation of Virgil, as humanists realised how much he had borrowed from Homer. Many Renaissance authors were themselves greatly interested in the notion and creation of the *auctor* (as several chapters in this volume show), and often cast their comparisons between these two classical authorities as a rivalry. Ford deftly uses the key distinction between *inventio* and *elocutio* to structure his analysis of this Renaissance poetic debate. More than a mere finer point of rhetoric, the distinction is as Ford shows a useful way to understand sixteenth-century reception of Homer and Virgil: the former was appreciated for his broad-ranging subjects and descriptions (*inventio*), whereas Virgil was more often revered as a stylistic model of eloquence (*elocutio*) and as an exemplary practitioner of dynamic *imitatio*. Ford reminds us of the stakes of this *paragone* by turning to Scaliger, for whom it came to anchor the classical norms of French poetry as they shifted—broadly—from copiousness to sobriety. Virgil was instrumental not only as a formal model, Ford argues, but also as a source for translation in all senses, linguistic, cultural, political, into French contexts.

Co-editor Phillip John Usher's fascinating chapter stands out in this volume in its sustained attention to reception history in the visual arts. As he does in his book-length work on the subject, Usher shows how the literary tradition of the epic migrated into the fine arts where it took on an interpretive life of its own, indeed it became a reflection on the process of interpretation itself.<sup>[4]</sup> Under consideration is a unique series of over eighty enamels produced in Limoges, illuminating scenes from books 1 through 9

of the *Aeneid*. Usher combines art-historical analysis of their form with a convincing close reading of how their content provides a kind of reading lesson of the *Aeneid*. He suggests that the enamels are a “re-mythologizing of Aeneas’ own mission” (p. 171), a commentary on the importance of reading allegorically. Usher convincingly argues that the enamels, in underlining the moral interpretive possibilities, exhibit a “nostalgia for an earlier *Aeneid*, an allegory for the good Christian life” (p. 179).

Corinne Noirot-Maguire’s chapter is an intriguing thematic reading: she identifies and uses the compelling figure of the second-in-command to read the death of Aeneas’s pilot Palinurus in Du Bellay’s *Recueil de Poësies* (1552). Noirot shows how the pilot’s paradoxical status (exemplary and virtuous yet secondary and sacrificable) ties in with the rich polysemy of Renaissance *translatio* and the poetic endeavour itself. Palinurus’s death shows an underlying skepticism about *translatio imperii* even as Du Bellay engages in *translatio studii*. Du Bellay is also working through his own position as second to Ronsard at the French court, Noirot argues, and develops a semantic network of ships, storms, monsters, and courageous virtuous *seconds*, to suggest that being tossed in the storms of “secondness” like Palinurus (or Du Bellay) is a moral ground just as high as that occupied by princes like Aeneas (or the “Prince des poètes,” Ronsard). Noirot’s foregrounding of the theme of being-second is rich indeed, and one could imagine a book-length project on its importance in Renaissance poetry.

An equally subtle analysis of a Virgilian figure in Du Bellay is provided in the next chapter by Todd Reeser. Like Noirot, Reeser deals with Du Bellay’s *Recueil de Poësies* and questions of translation, but he does so in order to engage a specific critical question: why Du Bellay’s attitude to translation seemed to have shifted in 1552 from his more negative appraisal in the earlier *Deffence* (1549). He adds to theories about why this shift happened by reflecting on the relationship between the content of the translation and the act of translating itself, and on the distinction between *translation* and *traduction*. The meaning of Du Bellay’s Virgil translations is constituted, Reeser argues, by a give-and-take between semantic and thematic links between French and Latin languages and texts. For example, the linear empire building of the *Aeneid*, in which Dido is a source of “errance” for Du Bellay, is contrasted by the following translation from Ovid’s *Heroides*, in which Dido speaks back to and resists this princely nationalism project. Reeser shows very well the interest of close reading and of poetics to the production of meaning; for example the rhyming in Du Bellay’s French of *mort* and *tort* highlights the losses incurred by epic state building. Overall, Du Bellay has developed a practice of *translation*, of active transformation, that transcends the merely mechanical *traduction* he dismissed in the *Deffence*.

Katherine Maynard’s chapter on Ronsard’s epic closes the volume. Articulating recent work on the intersections of spatial representations and national ideologies, with David Quint’s work on epic and empire,<sup>[5]</sup> Maynard deftly shows how Ronsard in his French epic *La Franciade* responded to the challenge of relocating Virgil’s Roman spaces into France. The authority of the *Aeneid* is essential to Ronsard in establishing his own epic credentials, but it must also be forgotten or overwritten as Ronsard creates the conceptual space of French empire. Thus, Maynard argues, Ronsard’s epic spaces are indeterminate, places of amnesia rather than places of memory. Ronsard does not use Virgilian epic uncritically though; Maynard’s fine reading suggests rather than he presents a dream of “epic without violence” (p. 251). In an interesting final move to land-use history, and with reference to Ronsard’s own experience of conflict over land boundaries, Maynard notes that territory “is not just a site of conflict, but also a *source* of conflict” (p. 254). A comparison with the more intentionally French spaces of Ronsard’s pastoral could have added to this already strong chapter; structurally, pastoral would seem to occupy the negative space in epic identified by Maynard.

The tension between war and peace, epic conquest and pastoral-georgic idyll, is not only key to understanding the Virgilian corpus but also, as Maynard and other contributors demonstrate, its particular pertinence to a Renaissance France divided by civil war. Virgilian meditations on authorship and authority are likewise privileged sites for French authors to ponder their own and France’s status as the nation distinguished itself from modern and ancient Italy. If the chapters do all show, as Timothy

Hampton puts it in his foreword, how Virgil's texts "emerged as central mediating elements through which Renaissance French writers sought to understand their own positions in history and society" (p. x), this is not a foregone conclusion but one that emerges organically in each chapter through meticulous analysis. Whether reflecting on the formation of a poetic *persona* or literary *auctor*, or the respective politics of late republican Rome and the early modern French state, the contributors makes a powerful case for Virgil as a central model. Usher and Fernbach are to be congratulated for a volume that is both a significant contribution to Renaissance Studies and, as Timothy Hampton suggests, an example of the kind of focused study that will be "necessary to the future re-imagination of French Studies" (p. x).

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Berndt Renner, "Virgil and Marot: Imitation, Satire and Personal Identity."

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Katherine Maynard, "Avec la terre on possède la guerre": The Problem of Place in Ronsard's *Franciade*."

#### NOTES

[1] Richard F. Thomas and Jan M. Ziolkowski, eds., *The Virgil Encyclopedia* (3 vols.) (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/book/10.1002/9781118351352>, accessed August 2015.

[2] Nancy Lindheim, *The Virgilian Pastoral Tradition: From the Renaissance to the Modern Era* (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 2005).

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- [3] Philip Ford, *De Troie à Ithaque: Réception des épopées homériques à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 2007).
- [4] Phillip John Usher, *Epic Arts in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- [5] David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

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