Virgil's Fourth Eclogue in the Italian Renaissance

L. B. T. Houghton

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.

L. B. T. HOUGHTON teaches Classics at Rugby School and is an Honorary Research Fellow of the Department of Greek and Latin at University College London. With Maria Wyke, he has edited *Perceptions of Horace* (Cambridge, 2009); with Gesine Manuwald, *Neo-Latin Poetry in the British Isles* (2012); and with Marco Sgarbi, *Virgil and Renaissance Culture* (2018).

VIRGIL'S FOURTH ECLOGUE IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

L. B. T. HOUGHTON
Rugby School

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108499927
DOI: 10.1017/9781108582094

First published 2019

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow Cornwall

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
NAMES: Houghton, L. B. T., 1978– author.
TITLE: Virgil's fourth Eclogue in the Italian Renaissance / L.B.T. Houghton.
DESCRIPTION: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019019520 | ISBN 9781108499927
SUBJECTS: LCSH: Virgil. Bucolica. 4. | Virgil – Influence. | Renaissance – Italy. | Italy – Civilization – Roman influences.
CLASSIFICATION: LCC PA6804.B7 H694 2019 | DDC 872/.01–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019019520

ISBN 978-1-108-49992-7 Hardback

To my mother
and to the memory of my father

Contents

Figures

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.

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

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

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'],[1] this man no god has deemed worthy of his table, no goddess of her bed.

[1] For bibliography on the text of line 62, see below, p. 324 n. 8.

PART I

Prolegomena

CHAPTER I

Introduction: noua progenies

> It may seem a contradiction, but stereotypes and commonplaces have a history. The words may be repeated *ad nauseam*, but their meaning and their associations change as they are employed in different contexts.[1]

Few poems of sixty-three lines can have enjoyed as extensive or as enduring an afterlife as Virgil's fourth Eclogue. From the poet's own reformulation of his earlier vision of the returning Golden Age in the later parts of his *oeuvre* to the imperial acclamations of late antiquity, the treatises of the Church Fathers, classicising homage to popes, emperors, kings, queens and other dignitaries of subsequent centuries, meditations on the Nativity and other episodes in the Christian story, justification of constitutional systems of various shades, and reflections on the meaning, value and progress of art itself, this mysterious yet remarkably persistent poem forms an almost continuous thread in the history of Western civilisation.[2] Whenever writers have sought to ingratiate themselves with a ruler or advertise his or her achievements, to ponder the compatibility or dissonance between Christian revelation and the spiritual wisdom of antiquity, or to express a hope or conviction that some greater state of things is on the point or in the process of coming to pass, they have reached for the enigmatic symbolism and portentous phrasing of the fourth Eclogue. The study of the later fortunes of this constantly revisited text therefore offers a window on to the social, political, intellectual and aesthetic activities and aspirations of centuries of literary and artistic endeavour: a comparative investigation of the uses made of Virgil's poem over a range of times and places could do much to illuminate continuities and divergences between different eras and

[1] Burke 1995a: 160.

[2] In general see Binder 2010; also (mostly on religious manifestations) Kallendorf 2015: 48–58; Ziolkowski and Putnam 2008: 487–503; Benko 1980; Courcelle 1957; Bourne 1916; Conway 1907: 22–8.

societies, at least among individuals with a degree of literary education. The present survey concentrates on interactions with the fourth Eclogue in one particular period and location, the Italian Renaissance, although it will also touch upon treatments of the poem in other times and settings, since engagement with the poetry of Virgil (like any other historical activity) never takes place in a vacuum, and Renaissance authors and their readers were well acquainted with earlier responses to the messianic pronouncements of *Eclogue* 4. This slice of Virgilian reception history, however, represents just one chapter – albeit an especially rich and important one (see below, pp. 13–14) – in a vaster and still more varied story, much of which remains to be traced in its full intricacy and profusion.

The Mystery of the Fourth Eclogue

The widespread diffusion and consistent celebrity of the fourth Eclogue, together with the kinds of context in which allusion to these Virgilian verses is regularly found, mean that consideration of the changes rung on this endlessly evoked and repeatedly reconfigured source serves to bring into focus some of the most fundamental questions surrounding the appropriation of ancient texts and artefacts in later ages: the relationship between literature and power, between Christianity and classical culture, between tradition and innovation. The trail passes through a multitude of media, including original writing in prose and verse, in Latin and vernacular languages; scholarly and pedagogical commentaries and annotations, on printed pages and in the margins of manuscripts;[3] translations of the Roman poet's hexameters into a range of new and alien forms;[4] and a broad spectrum of visual venues. But what was it about Virgil's poem that encouraged its adoption as a recurring point of literary and pictorial reference? A fuller answer to this question will emerge over the course of the following chapters, and we shall return to it in the epilogue. Here it will suffice to outline a few general characteristics which may have recommended this particular text for quotation, adaptation and discussion among authors, artists, advisers and commissioners of subsequent eras. It might reasonably be argued that a large part of the popularity of the

[3] For discussion of the commentary tradition on *Eclogue* 4 (not explored comprehensively here: see below), see e.g. Kennedy 1983: 154–6 and 1985: 82–5; Patterson 1987: 76, 82, 239; Irvine 1994: 120, 150–4; Kallendorf 1995 and 1999: 105–19; Ziolkowski and Putnam 2008: 674–98; Regini 2014–15.

[4] See e.g. Fisher 1982: 177–82, 212–15 and Floyd 2001 on Eusebius; Lessig 1962: 51–6, Bayo 1970: 44–55 and 214–17, and Baldissera 2003 on Spanish translations. For a bibliography of translations from the Italian Renaissance, see Kallendorf 1994.

messianic eclogue stems from its having been in the right place (on, or in the vicinity of, the educational curriculum) at the right time (the centuries leading up to and encompassing the rise of Christianity, with the tenets of which its imagery was thought – at least by some – to cohere so closely). Recognition of this factor is fully compatible, however, with the view that there are also certain intrinsic qualities in Virgil's piece that served to prolong and multiply its continued reuse in an array of different environments.

Probably the most famous feature of the fourth Eclogue, and certainly the issue which has most exercised scholarship on the poem over the centuries since its composition, is the notorious difficulty of determining with any certainty the meaning or contemporary connotations of the exuberant prophecies which make up the body of the work. The author of the treatise *Observations in Illustration of Virgil's Celebrated Fourth Eclogue*, published anonymously in London in 1810, declares that '[t]here is, perhaps, no question in literature upon which so great a diversity and discordancy of opinions have been entertained, as with respect to the genuine object and design of this poem'.[5] Even in antiquity there seems to have been no agreement over the identity of the miraculous boy whose arrival on earth will set in motion the marvels of the restored Golden Age: as early as the generation after Virgil, claims were apparently being made by Pollio's son, C. Asinius Gallus, that he himself was the child in question – a contention that would scarcely have been necessary or tenable had the identification of Virgil's *puer* with any one historical individual been universally accepted.[6]

In part it is precisely this obscurity, this oracular lack of precision and circumstantial detail, that has enabled the fourth Eclogue to be redeployed so widely and for so many different, sometimes even contradictory, purposes. The anonymity of Virgil's *puer* allows, and has been used to license, multiple conjectures regarding the identity of this wondrous but unnamed figure, thereby bestowing on the lines themselves a posterity far more varied and lasting than if the poet had spelled out an explicit association with the offspring of any specific Roman dynast (if indeed he ever meant

[5] [Anon.] 1810: 11. The author has been variously identified as Dr Samuel Henley, Granville Penn and John Penn; ten years later the work was praised by John Ring, who likewise maintains that '[n]othing, in the whole circle of literature, ever occasioned more controversy, or conjecture, than this Eclogue' (Ring 1820: 1.41).

[6] See the late antique commentator Servius (in Daniel's text) on *Ecl.* 4.11: *Asconius Pedianus a Gallo audisse se refert hanc eclogam in honorem eius factam* ('Asconius Pedianus [the commentator on Cicero] reports that he heard from Gallus that this eclogue was composed in his honour').

the child to represent a particular individual, born or unborn, which is itself far from certain).[7] So the newborn child of *Eclogue* 4 has been variously interpreted as the putative issue of the marriage between Mark Antony and Octavia which ratified the pact of Brundisium in 40 BC, the year of Pollio's consulship celebrated as the moment of renewal in *Ecl.* 4.11–12; as an anticipation of a child to be born from the union of Octavian (later the emperor Augustus) and Scribonia in the same year; as Octavian himself; as Augustus' ill-fated heir and nephew Marcellus, whose untimely death Virgil laments at *Aeneid* 6.860–86; or as a son of Pollio himself, Asinius Gallus or his brother Saloninus.[8] More figuratively, the *noua progenies* has been seen as a general personification of a new era in Roman history and politics; as a figure for Virgil's own poetry; or as a more esoteric saviour-figure characteristic of Eastern mystery cults, such as that of the twice-born Dionysus-Zagreus.[9] With the rise of Christianity, the juxtaposition of a divine child with the appearance of a 'Virgin' (*Virgo, Ecl.* 4.6) and the messianic portents of a new age led to an enduring perception of the poem as a conscious or unconscious prophecy of Christ (see Part III below). Any more explicit indication of the child's identity would have rendered such a plurality of proposals impossible, and would thus perhaps have consigned this learned and abstruse poetic novelty to the backwaters of literary history – or at least to a position of no special distinction among the *Eclogues* as a collection.

As it is, '[w]ho could possibly have foretold the extraordinary influence upon the history of the world with which this wise and gentle silence was destined to endue the poet?'[10] Not Virgil, certainly – unless of course he really was blessed with divine foreknowledge of future events. But such reticence may nonetheless have been a deliberate strategy on the part of the poet, aware of the mutability of temporal affairs and of the eternal possibility that immediate hopes, however fervently cherished, might end in

[7] Having said that, *Aen.* 6.791–5 (as we shall see) have also generated a long and copious tradition of adaptations, even though – indeed largely because – they refer specifically to Augustus.

[8] For summaries of the various identifications assigned to Virgil's *puer*, see e.g. Cucchiarelli 2012: 237–42; Perutelli 2001: 60–1; Coleiro 1979: 219–54; Coleman 1977: 150–2; Mattingly 1947: 14–16; Peeters 1933: 27–9; Tarn 1932: 153–5.

[9] New era: e.g. Coleman 1977: 152; Perutelli 2001: 61. Literary figure: Berg 1974: 167–72 ('Virgil's literary hero of the future', 170) and 172–7 (prediction of a Golden Age of Roman poetry); Northrup 1983; Arnold 1994–5 (the *puer* 'embodies a developed literary consciousness', 159). Renewal in nature, Aion: Norden 1924 (*contra*, Jachmann 1952). Orphism and Dionysus-Zagreus: Reinach 1900 (*contra*, Warde Fowler 1907: 50–3, 59–68). Eleusinian Mysteries: Whittaker 2007.

[10] Conway 1907: 30.

disappointment.[11] In the event of the ascendancy of Octavian, of Antony, of both or of neither, the nebulous prophecy of the restored Golden Age might still stand; is it too cynical to see in Virgil's extravagant but unspecific predictions a canny avoidance of contemporary political specifics (with the exception of Pollio's consulship, which could have emerged in hindsight as a turning point for either party), designed to prolong the life of both poem and author whatever the outcome? Maybe so, in view of the seemingly clear suggestion of Octavian in the divine *iuuenis* ('young man') of *Ecl.* 1.42 – and some will no doubt baulk at the suggestion that Virgil's ringing proclamation of the new era might carry all the conviction of the slick (or at least prudent) political operator. But such an expedient would not have been unthinkable in the dangerous and unpredictable world of the late Roman Republic, particularly for an author familiar with Cicero's scathing assessment of the Sibylline Oracles, the very source claimed by Virgil for the *Cumaeum carmen* of *Eclogue* 4, in his *De diuinatione* (2.110–11):

> Callide enim, qui illa composuit, perfecit ut, quodcumque accidisset, praedictum uideretur, hominum et temporum definitione sublata. Adhibuit etiam latebram obscuritatis, ut iidem uersus alias in aliam rem posse accommodari uiderentur.
>
> It was a cunning contrivance on the part of the man who composed those things that whatever had occurred should appear to have been foretold, thanks to the removal of any specification of people and times. He added too the cover of obscurity, so that the very same verses would seem to be able to be fitted to different subjects in different contexts.

A self-preserving polysemy may thus have already been regarded as the defining characteristic of Sibylline prognostication in the intellectual milieu of Virgil's youth. It is perhaps telling that one scholarly attempt to defend a definite historical identification for the *puer* of the fourth Eclogue has fallen back on the otherwise unsupported supposition that the text of the poem was at some point subjected to revision, in order to give the poet's originally opaque composition a discernible political

[11] Cf. Osgood 2006: 196, 'A good prophet remains vague, lest what is foretold never comes to pass. Yet in a prophet's vagueness also lies the opportunity, often readily welcomed, for the listener to match up what is said to some contemporary event . . . Still, the poet (with great foresight) left posterity free to make other identifications . . . '; also Courtney 2010: 38 ('Vergil . . . had carefully avoided anything to tie down his meaning'); Miller 2009: 255 with n. 4; Versnel 1993: 192 ('deliberate vagueness'); Warde Fowler 1907: 84 ('I believe that he intentionally left it wrapped in obscurity and surrounded by appropriate mystery'); and Mayor 1907: 117–20, on Virgil and Isaiah.

reference.[12] Conversely, one late nineteenth-century critic, convinced that the importance of Pollio was insufficient to justify the fulsome prophecies of supernatural renewal later in the poem, was driven to excise the consul's name from the text altogether.[13] The aim of this study, however, is not to discover the 'true' identity of Virgil's *puer*, or to propose a new interpretation of what Jérôme Carcopino called 'the mystery of the fourth Eclogue' in the light of its historical situation,[14] but rather to examine the ways in which the poem was used in the literature and art of the Italian Renaissance. Although it is not the least of the attractions and benefits of the study of the reception of classical authors in later periods that it may serve to enhance current readings of ancient literature, our concern here is less with how the fourth Eclogue should be read now, than with what it has meant to past readers, irrespective of what we take to be the merits or defects of their approaches to the poem. Such objectivity, though loudly trumpeted by previous chroniclers of Virgil's *Nachleben*,[15] may never be wholly possible in practice (Comparetti's comments on Fulgentius, for example, leave us in no doubt of how the former believed Virgil should *not* be read),[16] and of course any reading of the adapting text is an instance of mediated reception as much as that text's own adaptation of the source text;[17] but while future interpreters of *Eclogue* 4 may perhaps find here material congenial to their purposes, I am not concerned in the chapters that follow (at least until the final pages) to advocate any particular reading of the poem itself.

Having said that, the sheer multiplicity of interpretations applied to the fourth Eclogue can be taken, I think, to imply something about the nature of the poem itself. In 1907, W. Warde Fowler observed that '[t]here are some literary works about which the *dira cupido* of scholars will always continue to exercise itself, and this little poem is one of them';[18] and more than a century later, this latter-day prophecy shows no sign of losing its force. Again, the fourth item in Virgil's collection of bucolics is the only

[12] So (tentatively) Tarn 1932: 155, 156 n. 4, 159–60; for arguments for a proposed alteration tending in the opposite direction (removal of material specific to a particular occasion or individual), see Mattingly 1934: 164 and 1947: 17–18; della Corte 1982; Syme 2016: 226.

[13] Ladewig and Schaper 1876: 36–7, 200–1 (*orbis* for *Pollio*, 4.12; the proposal is Schaper's – see Schaper 1864: 770–1); see *contra* Conway 1907: 13 n. 1; Ramsay 1907: 60–1; Mattingly 1947: 17.

[14] Carcopino 1930.

[15] Cf. Comparetti 1895: 2; Wilson-Okamura 2010: 6, 7–8.

[16] Comparetti 1895: 107–16; Wilson-Okamura too, despite his similar claim (see previous note), is by no means averse to indicating his own preferred explanations of Virgil's texts – see e.g. Wilson-Okamura 2010: 5–6, 147.

[17] Martindale 1993; Kallendorf 1999: 205–12.

[18] Warde Fowler 1907: 50 (for *dira cupido*, 'terrible desire', see *Aen.* 6.373, 721).

one to receive a separate section in Felix Peeters' bibliography of scholarship up to 1930 – and even then it could fairly have been said, as Michael Winterbottom was to remark nearly fifty years later, that 'the doxography of the *Eclogues* is too vast to be entertaining'.[19] Nor has critical opinion proved unanimous even on the artistic quality of this fertile quarry for later literary productions: for one, 'its poetry is not of the very highest order', while another finds in it 'some of the finest verses ever written in Latin'.[20] Clearly, however, there is something about this mysterious compendium of fantastic prophecies that has made (and continues to make) it an irresistible object of attention not merely for classical scholars, but for a seemingly endless succession of creative artists in an astonishingly wide range of media. Not only that, but it appears to be a part of the character of the eclogue itself that it can both engender and accommodate such a diversity of evaluations, appropriations and imitations.

One factor in this, as we have already seen, has to do with the inscrutability of Virgil's poem, its insouciant refusal to yield any unambiguous reference to contemporary historical events; but beyond this sublime imprecision, which did much to make the eclogue an immediate point of reference for later authors seeking to lend their work a recognisably 'oracular' flavour, the tone of the poem as a whole has proved remarkably difficult to pin down. Are we to take the lofty proclamations of the 'Cumaean song' at face value, as a glowing anticipation of the glories of the coming age, a radiant fulfilment of the hopes of a people exhausted by decades of bitter internecine struggle?[21] Or is the attitude of inspired rapture undermined by the absurdity of details such as the spontaneously multicoloured sheep of *Ecl.* 4.42–5?[22] More than one commentator has detected elements of humour in the poem,[23] and R. G. M. Nisbet, whose exegeses of Latin poetry no one would lightly dismiss as flippant or salacious, has even pointed to the possibility of a sexual *double entendre*

[19] Peeters 1933: 27–9 (on the afterlife of *Ecl.* 4 see also 50, 51, 52–3, 53–4); quotation from Winterbottom 1976: 55 (cf. Norden 1924: 2, 'Aus den Schriften über das virgilische Gedicht ließe sich fast eine kleine Bibliothek zusammenstellen . . . '; Versnel 1993: 192, 'an awe-inspiring quantity of studies'). For a conspectus of more recent bibliography, see esp. Briggs 1981: 1311–25; Cucchiarelli 2012: 242–4.

[20] Warde Fowler 1907: 50 (more extreme is the verdict of W. S. Landor, quoted by Ramsay 1907: 64–5, on '[t]he worst, but most admired, of Virgil's Eclogues'); Rose 1942: 162.

[21] For a challenge to the traditional view, see Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 21 (below, p. 325).

[22] See generally Irwin 1989. Conway 1907: 20 n. 1 observes that the phenomenon of purple rams and scarlet lambs is '[f]ar less strange to an Italian eye than to ours, as every traveller knows'. My own travels in Italy suggest that this luxurious strain has been bred out since 1907.

[23] For humorous readings of the fourth Eclogue, see esp. Robson 1928; Gotoff 1967; Thummer 1983; Thornton 1988 ('satirically undercutting the Golden Age', 228); Hardie 2009: 37–40; Stroppini de Focara 2010: 214–16 ('le sourire malicieux de Virgile', 215).

in the 'hard oaks' sweating 'dewy honey' of *Ecl.* 4.30 (*et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella*).[24] That the colourful, hyperbolic imagery of the Golden Age applied here to Pollio's consulship may represent a light-hearted squib on (or perhaps an elegant compliment to) Pollio's treatment of such themes in his own poetry is suggested by the association of the consul's literary activity with symptoms of supernatural fertility in the natural world in the preceding eclogue: *qui te, Pollio, amat ueniat quo te quoque gaudet; | mella fluant illi, ferat et rubus asper amomum* ('May he who loves you, Pollio, come where he rejoices that you too have gone; may honey flow for him, and may the rough bramble bear *amomum*', *Ecl.* 3.88–9). The possibility that the burgeoning *amomum* and sweating honey at lines 25 and 30 of *Eclogue* 4 reflect imagery that appeared in the *noua carmina* ('new poems', *Ecl.* 3.86) of Pollio himself thus cannot be ruled out.[25] It has also been proposed that Pollio's Jewish interests and connections may be responsible for the well-known similarities between Virgil's messianic prophecies and those of the Hebrew bible[26] – again, if this is the case, the tone could as easily be construed as teasingly jocular as elaborately eulogistic. Perhaps the most extreme assertion of the eclogue's frivolity sees in it 'a delightful nonsense poem for a child's birthday',[27] which suggests that we are no more to look for matters of grave political or spiritual import here than we would in the works of Lewis Carroll or Edward Lear.

Whilst the overriding tone of the fourth Eclogue has overwhelmingly been read as solemn and oracular, therefore, the perennial malleability of Virgil's poem may owe at least something to the impossibility of recapturing the specific nuances it might have held for the poet, his addressee and contemporary literary circles. If it were immediately apparent that the grandiloquent predictions of a miraculous Golden Age represent a wry parody of messianic expectations, it is unlikely that the earnest apologists of early Christianity would have seen fit to adduce it as an instance of pagan revelation, or that obsequious court panegyrists would have drawn so freely on its effusions to salute their sovereign employers.

[24] Nisbet 1993: 266.

[25] See Du Quesnay 1977: 29; Berg 1974: 159–62; Erdmann 1932: 74, 133; Garrod 1905: 37 (cited by Conway 1907: 28 n. 1) and 1908: 150–1; note also the possible verbal echo 3.89 *rubus* ~ 4.29 *rubens*. On the anticipation of *Ecl.* 4 in these lines (but without any suggestion of an allusion to Pollio's own poetry), see also Clausen 1994: xxi–xxii, who sees *Ecl.* 3.84–91 as a later addition to the poem; Segal 1977: 162.

[26] See Garrod 1905 and Feldman 1953; *contra* Braund 1983: 240–1 (with response in Feldman 1985) and Rose 1942: 194.

[27] Smith 1983: 13, quoted by Collins 1997: 192 and discussed by Cervelli 2011: 229–30.

Furthermore, even the most superficial reading of the eclogue can scarcely fail to notice the contrast between the grandiose public utterances of the main body of the piece and the more intimate, family atmosphere of its closing address to the child (*Ecl.* 4.60–3), who somehow seems rather less superhuman in the final lines of the poem (at least before the renewed elevation of the final verse) than in the résumé of his prodigious career in earlier sections. This internal variety of tone extends the potential for subsequent appropriation in a range of different contexts, as well as setting up a counterweight within the structure of the composition itself.[28]

It should also be noted that the fourth Eclogue is itself a poem about reception – about repetition, recycling and renewal. In the course of its sixty-three lines it assimilates and refashions material from Catullus, Lucretius, Theocritus, Hesiod, Aratus, perhaps from the Sibylline Oracles and even the Hebrew scriptures;[29] and later engagements with themes and expressions from the Virgilian poem likewise represent a partial resuscitation of the literature of a classic age, as represented by the poetry of Virgil. The very incorporation of elements from *Eclogue* 4 can be seen as effecting, albeit in a fragmentary and mediated form, the return of a great artistic artefact from a venerated epoch of the past, even if scholars are now less inclined to refer to the late Republic and the reign of Augustus as a literary 'Golden Age' than they once were.[30] Virgil himself arguably offers a striking illustration of this principle, when in the course of the prophecy of the returning Golden Age under Augustus in the underworld in *Aeneid* 6, Anchises juxtaposes the words *genus* and *aurea* (*Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet* | *saecula*: 'Augustus Caesar, sprung from a god, will

[28] Cf. Norden 1924: 10, 'Prophetenwort und Hirtenschalmei, himmlische und irdische Töne, feierlicher Ernst und tändelndes Spiel vereinigen sich . . .'.

[29] In addition to the standard commentaries (Coleman 1977; Clausen 1994; Cucchiarelli 2012), on the presence of Catullus 64 in *Ecl.* 4, see esp. Slater 1912; Smith 1930; Rose 1942: 201–3; Williams 1968: 281–3; Berg 1974: 162–6; Schmidt 1977: 1–54, esp. 39–54; Du Quesnay 1977: 28, 29, 68–75; Johnston 1980: 16, 41–2, 44–6 with biblio. 41 n. 1; Van Sickle 1992: 7–9, 20–1, 37–64, 85–6; Arnold 1994–5: 149–51, 153–5, 159; Hubbard 1998: 78–83 with biblio. 78 n. 65; Lefèvre 2000; Marinčič 2001; Harrison 2007: 39–41; Feeney 2007: 132 ('Virgil's whole poem, in sum, depends intimately on Catullus 64 . . . '); Trimble 2013. Lucretius: Van Sickle 1992: 9–10, 19–21, 58–60, 65–90; Arnold 1994–5: 157–9; Hardie 2009: 33–40. Theocritus: Kerlin 1908; Du Quesnay 1977: 28, 29, 52–7, 65, 66–8; Schmidt 1977: 70–86; Hunter 2001: 160; Harrison 2007: 36–7, 40, 43; Bernsdorff 2011. Hesiod: Mayor 1907: 123–30; Radke 1959; Arnold 1994–5: 151–3; Hardie 2005: 289–90, 292; Apostol 2009: 122–4. Aratus (and Plato): Gee 2013: 39–48. Sibylline Oracles: Mayor 1907: 124–8; Norden 1924: 145–54; Austin 1927; Erdmann 1932: 82–97, 124–6, 137–8; Jeanmaire 1939: esp. 99–143; Kurfess 1954b; Wlosok 1975; Du Quesnay 1977: 39–40, 76–81; Nisbet 1978; Nicastri 1992; Harrison 2007: 37–43; Courtney 2010: 29–30, 33–4, 36–7.

[30] On this periodisation, see especially Vogt-Spira 2007; Hunt et al. 2017: 206.

found the Golden Age', *Aen.* 6.792–3), quite literally incorporating in *GENuS AUREA* a previous poetic manifestation of the Golden Age – the *gens aurea* of *Ecl.* 4.9 – in the wording of his prophecy of a new Age of Gold. The close proximity of *REGNAta* and *SATURNo* (cf. *Saturnia regna, Ecl.* 4.6) later in the sentence reinforces the impression that on a verbal as well as a conceptual level the new era foretold in Virgil's earlier poem has indeed returned. The point surely applies with equal force to later appropriations of the fourth Eclogue, where the recapitulation of terminology from the poet's verses is generally less sophisticated than in this intricate instance of Virgilian self-allusion.

Virgil and the Italian Renaissance

A concise but wide-ranging overview of the reception history of Virgil's fourth Eclogue, along the lines of Philip Hardie's treatment of the fortunes of the *Aeneid* in *The Last Trojan Hero*,[31] would be a welcome addition to scholarship on the poem and on the afterlife of classical literature; but much fundamental work which has already been done on the reception of Virgil's epic remains to be attempted in the case of *Eclogue* 4 (and indeed that of the other *Eclogues*, and the *Georgics*).[32] The decision to confine the present enquiry to traces of the fourth Eclogue in literature and art of the Italian Renaissance has the unfortunate consequence of excluding some of the highlights of the wider story of the transformations wrought on this perpetually adaptable model. One of these is Metellus of Tegernsee's twelfth-century *Quirinalia*, a collection of religious bucolics which reworks Virgil's pastoral poems with reference to the miracles of St Quirinus involving cattle, resulting in the immortal line *incipe, taure tener, mugitu noscere matrem* ('begin, young bull, to know your mother with mooing', 4.23; cf. *Ecl.* 4.60).[33] Also ruled out is William Percy's *Mahomet and his Heaven* (1601), the first play to depict the prophet Muhammad on the English stage, the prologue of which is uttered by the mysterious Weather-Woman, who declares *Dicite Iö Paean et Iö bis dicite Paean, | ultima Maumetti uenit iam carminis aetas* ('Say "Hail, Paean", and a second time

[31] Hardie 2014.

[32] Some areas, such as responses to the messianic eclogue in the work of the Church Fathers (see below, Chapter 7), have been more thoroughly covered than others.

[33] For the text see Jacobsen 1965: 316 (with 80–1); for discussion see e.g. Cooper 1977: 22–4. The introductory note to the poem observes *Hic Virgiliana seculi noui interpretatio ad materiem presentem transformata inseritur* ('Here the Virgilian version of the new age is included, reshaped for the material in hand').

say "Hail, Paean": the last age of Muhammad's song has now come', prologue line 22; cf. Ovid, *Ars am.* 2.1; Virg., *Ecl.* 4.4) before quoting a confection of lines from *Eclogue* 4 – a striking demonstration that adaptation of the messianic eclogue for the purposes of religious commentary need not be restricted to Christian subject matter.[34] The restriction likewise banishes such well-known appearances of the Virgilian text in the realm of English literature as the epigraphs to Dryden's *Astraea redux* and Wordsworth's ode later entitled *Intimations of Immortality*,[35] to say nothing of Alexander Pope's *Messiah* and its Latin version by the young Samuel Johnson,[36] and the final chorus of Shelley's *Hellas* ('The world's great age begins anew, | The golden years return . . . ', 1060–1).[37]

There are good reasons, however, for the choice of Renaissance Italy as the focus for an investigation of responses to the fourth Eclogue. Despite the 'revolt of the medievalists' in the first half of the twentieth century,[38] the period traditionally associated with the Renaissance in Italy (here taken as extending roughly from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century) remains by any standards an era of fundamental importance in the history of European art and literature, and a crucial chapter in the annals of classical scholarship and reception. For David Rijser, 'Virgil was *the* poet of the Renaissance', and as Ingrid Rowland has noted, 'the importance of the Fourth Eclogue to the Renaissance appreciation of Virgil must be kept in mind':[39] it is no coincidence that these centuries witnessed some of the best-known, most distinctive and subsequently most influential engagements with Virgil's ubiquitous lines. The fragmented political state of the Italian peninsula during this period, and the resulting atmosphere of interstate rivalry and competition, led to the proliferation of strident announcements of a returning Golden Age in the civic and cultural self-promotion of the humanists and their masters. In terms of the sheer quantity of material, therefore, the Italian panegyrists of the Renaissance can more than match any other proponents of Virgilianising rhetoric – even if, as we shall see, such authors did not always handle the elements they took from the ancient source in a particularly imaginative or original fashion. Even the most predictable quotation of the Virgilian *Saturnia regna*, however, or the laziest, most conventional assertion of the return of Astraea, reveals

[34] See Dimmock 2006: 63 with 196.
[35] See e.g. Davis 2004: 78 and Hammond 2006: 93–4 on Dryden; Manning 1983, Patterson 2007: 101–2 and Trott 2010: 285 on Wordsworth.
[36] For discussion see Ames 1988; Rudd 2005: 20–9.
[37] See e.g. Toynbee 1946: 251–2.
[38] For the description and idea see Ferguson 1948: 329–85; more recently, Melve 2006.
[39] Rijser 2012: xvii (original emph.); Rowland 1986: 715.

something about the literary and political culture of the time and the society which produced it, and in a number of instances we shall see that even the slightest modifications to the familiar formulae, or their redeployment word for word in a particular transformative setting, can serve to lend the classical borrowing a specific local and/or contemporary resonance.[40]

The range and variety of contexts and media in which Virgil's Cumaean song left its mark on Renaissance art and literature also make the period a particularly fertile terrain for unearthing encounters with *Eclogue* 4. Both of the predominant strands in the appropriation of the Pollio eclogue, political and religious, are amply represented in the verbal and visual productions of Renaissance Italy, together with the use of this ancient acclamation of a new era for the purposes of literary reflection and self-advertisement. Indeed, a significant part of the interest of the Italian Renaissance for the student of the reception of the fourth Eclogue lies in the fact that it presented a climate in which contemporaries turned again and again to the text of the Virgilian poem to define the character and achievements of their age, and thereby to assert their own place in history. One of the principal legacies of Virgil's prophetic pastoral, if the argument of the following chapter is accepted, is its contribution to the development and dissemination of the idea of a Renaissance, an idea which has not quite lost its grip on the conceptualisation of history even today. The great Arnaldo Momigliano once observed, somewhat acerbically, that '[w]e all know what a waste of time the word Renaissance has represented';[41] but not everyone knows the part played by Virgil's fourth Eclogue in the promulgation of that contentious concept.

The unique afterlife experienced by the messianic eclogue is not an exact microcosm of the reception of the Virgilian corpus as a whole or of classical literature more generally, but it is a crucial element in both of these wider stories. The regular combination of components from the fourth Eclogue with material from other classical texts such as the *Aeneid*, Horace's lyric poetry, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the panegyrical poetry of Claudian and the writings of Cicero means that a survey of Renaissance responses to *Eclogue* 4 can also contribute to the study of the reception of other ancient authors and works. At the same time, the juxtaposition and fusion of Virgilian themes and vocabulary with quotations, adaptations and paraphrases of

[40] Cf. Glodzik 2014: 74 n. 1, 'realms or cities – notably Rome – and the intellectuals within them could interpret Vergil to fit the discourse of their own state. There may not have been significant variation throughout Europe regarding a broad understanding of Vergil, but Vergil was read through local filters and adapted to local contexts'.

[41] Momigliano 1970: 139.

biblical texts serves to illuminate currents in religious thought and the reading of Scripture during the centuries in question. The examples presented here, in addition to illustrating particular tendencies in the interpretation and reuse of the eclogue itself, offer a representative impression of the companion texts which are most frequently enlisted to interact with and complement it in its Renaissance reincarnations.

Much of the evidence cited in this study comes from the substantial body of Latin writings produced during the period of the Renaissance in Italy. The central position held by contemporary Latin literature in the intellectual, imaginative and aesthetic spheres of the Italian Renaissance has long been recognised: Jacob Burckhardt's classic survey *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien* devotes individual sections to Renaissance Latin oratory and letter-writing, the 'general Latinisation of culture' ('allgemeine Latinisierung der Bildung') and neo-Latin poetry.[42] A more recent writer has referred to '[t]he Italian Renaissance, which makes no sense at all without close attention to its Latin writings';[43] yet this aspect of Renaissance culture has not always received the consideration it deserves, to the point where one scholar has spoken of a 'lost Italian Renaissance' in the forgotten Latin writings of the humanists.[44] The large number of Latin sources quoted in the following pages gives some indication (though scarcely a full impression) of the huge quantity of classicising material from this period which still awaits detailed study, and these specimens also exemplify the characteristic virtues and vices of neo-Latin writing as a whole: at its best, brilliantly inventive, technically and stylistically accomplished, adroit and sensitive in its handling of classical and other models – at its worst, none of those things. Not even the most committed advocate of neo-Latin literature would maintain that certain of the lesser-known texts examined here have been unjustly neglected from an aesthetic point of view; but from the perspectives of sociocultural and historical analysis, the least successful enterprise on a literary level may still be of considerable value (indeed, it may sometimes be more revealing than an artistically more proficient composition).

The choice by vernacular authors as well to incorporate material from the fourth Eclogue in their works has significant ramifications for the 'language question' (*questione della lingua*), the debate surrounding the use of Latin and different varieties of the vernacular, which came to

[42] Burckhardt 1929: 236–46, 252–8, 259–71 (originally Burckhardt 1860: 227–36, 243–50, 251–66).
[43] Sidwell 2017: 398.
[44] Celenza 2004. For recent fundamental works on neo-Latin literature and culture, see Ford et al. 2014; Knight and Tilg 2015; Moul 2017 (also IJsewijn and Sacré 1990–8).

prominence especially in sixteenth-century Italy and is associated particularly with the name of Pietro Bembo.[45] In the fifteenth century, the major concern was the parity of Latin and Italian as vehicles for literary expression. The adoption of phrasing and imagery from Virgil's poem (and other items of classical literature) appropriated for works in the Italian language something of the literary dignity of the ancient model and bolstered the claims of the developing corpus of literature in Italian to stand alongside the achievements of the classical age as a serious artistic alternative to emulation of ancient Roman writers in their own linguistic medium. Again, the combination of echoes of the messianic eclogue and the *Aeneid* with evocations of earlier vernacular authors such as Dante cast the authors of Renaissance works in their native language as inheritors of both literary strands, Latin and Italian, and as unifiers of the best in both traditions, thereby reflecting favourably on the capacities of the *volgare* to preserve the glories of the past while looking ahead to a proud and patriotic future. For those who endorsed the Tuscan literary dialect championed by Bembo, these practices might be welcomed as proclaiming the continuity between the Latin and the Florentine traditions. On the other hand, for some opponents of the supremacy of Tuscan, such as Mario Equicola, linguistic proximity to Latin could serve to make a different polemical point, countering the insistence that strict adherence to the language of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio was the only route to literary respectability.[46]

The pursuit of Virgilian threads in the cultural fabric of Renaissance Italy is assisted by the existence of earlier ventures in this area, even if the place occupied in the poet's early modern transmutations by *Eclogue* 4 in particular has received limited – or at least sporadic and narrowly focused – attention. The essential outlines of the Renaissance reception of Virgil's poetry have been traced in the pioneering studies of Vladimiro Zabughin and Craig Kallendorf,[47] and David Scott Wilson-Okamura's *Virgil in the Renaissance* offers a convenient panoramic prospect of Renaissance Virgilianism, especially in literature and as filtered through the commentary tradition.[48] Perhaps even more valuable for an exploration of uses of the messianic eclogue, however, in view of the prominence of the Virgilian model(s) in Renaissance variations on the theme of the Golden Age, is

[45] For an overview see e.g. Labande-Jeanroy 1925; Hall 1942; Vitale 1978; Mazzocco 1993.
[46] See the passage from Equicola's *Libro de natura de amore* quoted by Richardson 1999: 182.
[47] See Zabughin 1921–3; Kallendorf 1989, 1999, 2007 and 2015; also essays in Burkard et al. 2010, Usher and Fernbach 2012, and Houghton and Sgarbi 2018.
[48] Wilson-Okamura 2010.

Gustavo Costa's outstanding monograph *La leggenda dei secoli d'oro nella letteratura italiana*;[49] it is not nearly well enough known in anglophone scholarship on either Renaissance literature or the reception of Virgil, and without it the present volume could not have been written. Another superb synthesis has recently appeared in the form of Henrike Mund's *Das Goldene Zeitalter*, which concentrates on treatments of the subject in literature and art produced under the Medici and in celebrations of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French monarchy.[50] My own work on the Florentine fortunes of the fourth Eclogue had largely been completed – and a preliminary version already published – by the time Mund's study became available, but I have welcomed the opportunity to take account of it in Chapter 3. Jeffrey Glodzik's unpublished dissertation on Virgilianism in High Renaissance Rome addresses (especially in its third chapter, 'Saturnia regna renata') many issues relevant to this project;[51] while on Sibylline aspects of the fourth Eclogue and its *Kulturgeschichte*, Innocenzo Cervelli's wide-ranging and massively learned *Questioni sibilline* should not be neglected.[52]

Structure, Coverage and Approach

This study is divided into three main sections. Following the introduction, the initial manoeuvres continue with an attempt to elucidate the significance of language and symbolism taken from or suggested by the fourth Eclogue for the formulation and consolidation of the concept of a Renaissance, a recurring preoccupation of literary practitioners and cultural commentators in the years covered by this volume. The next four chapters illustrate the adoption and manipulation of the Virgilian model for the purposes of political panegyric in the states of Renaissance Italy, with individual chapters allocated to Florence, Venice and the papacy, and other venues (such as Ferrara, Milan, Mantua, Urbino and Bologna) considered together in Chapter 5. Part III focuses on Renaissance manifestations of the religious interpretation of the messianic eclogue, with Chapters 8 and 9 concentrating on the literary

[49] Costa 1972. Other treatments of the theme of the Golden Age in the Renaissance include Lipsker 1933; Grant 1957b; Gombrich 1961; Armstrong 1968; Levin 1970; Hutton 1984: 182–97; Niccoli 1989; Bietenholz 1994: 207–19; Burke 1995a; Stinger 1998: 296–9; Secchi Tarugi 2003; Minois 2009: 155–215; Gambino Longo 2016. The importance of the subject to the study of the Renaissance is also recognised by its inclusion as a category in anthologies such as Rivers 1994 (9–19).

[50] Mund 2015.

[51] Glodzik 2009; see now also Glodzik 2014. Another relevant unpublished item is Regini 2014–15.

[52] Cervelli 2011.

genres of epic and pastoral respectively and Chapter 10 advancing the enquiry in the domain of the visual arts with a survey of appearances of quotations from the text of Virgil's poem in Sibylline cycles executed primarily for ecclesiastical settings during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A short epilogue offers further reflections on the lasting impact of the fourth Eclogue on literature and art of the Italian Renaissance and beyond.

Such a division, for all its artificiality, has the advantage of accommodating the three broad contextual categories in which evocations of *Eclogue* 4 are commonly found: political, religious and (in the case of incorporation of elements from the Virgilian Golden Age in assertions of the Renaissance, and the use of the poet's words to pay homage to Virgil himself, briefly discussed below, pp. 178–9) literary/artistic. Any arrangement that attempts to segregate engagements with the classical poem along these lines is necessarily overschematic, however, since (as we shall see) the claims of politics and religion – and indeed of politics and art – were closely intertwined in the life, literature and thought of the Italian Renaissance. This is particularly true, of course, with regard to the rulers of the Papal States, who in this period and for centuries afterwards wielded a power that was both temporal and spiritual; but papal Rome was by no means the only setting in which these two currents in the appropriation of the messianic eclogue could converge. One instance of the inseparability of sacred and secular intimations in an elaboration of the theme of the renewed Golden Age can be seen in a passage from the famous letter of 1461 from Pope Pius II to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II. In this section the pope, who before his election in 1458 had enjoyed considerable renown as the humanist writer Enea Silvio Piccolomini,[53] urges his addressee to embrace the Christian faith, and thereby to put an end to the hostilities that have existed for so long between Mehmed's subjects and the peoples of Christendom (*Epistola ad Mahomatem II* 12 [Glei-Köhler]/2.17–18 [Baca]):[54]

> O quanta esset abundantia pacis, quanta Christianae plebis exultatio, quanta iubilatio in omni terra: redirent Augusti tempora et quae poetae uocant aurea saecula renouarentur! Habitaret pardus cum agno et uitulus cum leone, gladii uerterentur in falces, in uomeres ac ligones rediret omne ferrum, excolerentur agri, aspera dumis terra mitesceret, uici repararentur et urbes, resurgerent templa Deo sacrata quae ceciderunt, emergerent collapsa

[53] For more on Pius II and the Golden Age, see below, pp. 123–8.

[54] For the text (variously punctuated in different editions, leading to slight variations in the meaning of the middle part of the passage) see Baca 1990: 123–4; Glei and Köhler 2001: 146–8; D'Ascia 2001: 237–8; Sanz 2003: 58. For discussion see also Gregorovius 1909–12: 7.1.202–4.

> monasteria et plena uiris religiosis diuinis omnia laudibus personarent. O quanta esset tua gloria, qui pacem orbi reddidisses! O quanta tibi redundaret felicitas, qui ad aeterni pastoris ouile cunctas redegeris oues! O quantum te omnes amarent, obseruarent et extollerent, qui communis omnium pacis et salutis fuisses auctor!
>
> Ah, how great would be the abundance of peace, how great the elation of Christian folk, how great the rejoicing in every land: the times of Augustus would return, and what the poets call the Golden Age would be renewed! The leopard would dwell with the lamb and the calf with the lion; swords would be turned into sickles, all iron would return to ploughshares and harrows; the fields would be cultivated, the land rough with thickets would grow gentle; the hamlets and cities would be repaired, the temples consecrated to God which have fallen would rise again, the fallen monasteries would re-emerge and, packed with men of religion, they would all sound with divine praises. Ah, how great would be your glory, for having restored peace to the world! Ah, what great happiness would overflow for you, for returning all the sheep to the fold of the eternal shepherd! Ah, how greatly would all adore you, revere you and exalt you, for having been the creator of shared peace and salvation for all!

Both the overall purpose and the literary points of reference of this passage are undeniably religious: the writer is exhorting the recipient to accept Christianity, and his vision of the consequences of this conversion is expressed in terms that clearly recall the prophecies of Isaiah (for the peaceable kingdom see Isaiah 11:6–7; for swords into ploughshares see Isaiah 2:4), with which we shall often see constituents from the fourth Eclogue paired in Renaissance literature on sacred subjects. On the other hand, the rewards envisaged by Pius as accruing to his addressee as a result of the latter's religious realignment are by no means all spiritual in nature: the *felicitas* ('happiness') foreseen here might be taken to include the salvation of Mehmed's own soul, but the incentives laid before the Ottoman ruler by his papal correspondent also display a decidedly secular tint. The *gloria* predicted for Mehmed in the event of his adoption of the Christian religion is at least as much temporal and worldly as it is celestial and posthumous: the Christians who now fear the sultan's sway will no longer reject his rule (as Pius observes immediately before this extract), and his institution of earthly peace will win him universal admiration, reverence and exaltation – in this life, presumably, though a nod to the verdict of posterity is not impossible. Earlier in the letter, indeed, the pope has promised to acknowledge Mehmed as emperor of the Greeks and the

East following his baptism, making him the most powerful and most celebrated man alive (*Epistola* 9.1–2 [Glei-Köhler]; 2.13 [Baca]).

With its reference to the return of a great epoch in history (the very one, in fact, in which Virgil was writing), signposted with a literary 'footnote' in *quae poetae uocant aurea saecula* ('what the poets call the Golden Age'), this public appeal for a transfer of theological allegiance begins to look very much like some of the primarily political permutations of the Virgilian Golden Age which we shall meet in the following chapters. No doubt the author of the *Eclogues* and *Aeneid* – the latter perhaps more immediately prominent here, since it actually features the expression *aurea . . . saecula* (*Aen.* 6.792–3) in its retrospective anticipation of the times of Augustus (cf. *Augusti tempora* in the pope's letter) – is one of the *poetae* the classically named pontiff has in mind, quite probably the chief among them;[55] but is this a 'political' or 'religious' moment in the story of the Virgilian conception of temporal renewal? The answer is surely both, and to emphasise one dimension at the expense of the other cannot do full justice to the implications of this remarkable piece of humanist rhetoric. Nonetheless, any analytical exposition requires structuring principles, and so long as it is not understood reductively, the framework adopted for this study does not seem inherently inferior to any of the other possible templates which could have been used to order a survey of the Renaissance reception of the text primarily responsible for bringing the return of the Golden Age into circulation.

In addition to outlining what does appear in this volume, it is perhaps also worth indicating what the reader should not expect to find here. This is not a study in the history of scholarship or of publishing: I have not included a systematic review or listing of editions and translations of the fourth Eclogue produced or available in Renaissance Italy (this is the province of the *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, and some of the relevant material can be found in existing publications, such as the bibliographies of Venetian editions and Renaissance Italian translations of Virgil compiled by Craig Kallendorf, or the appendix to Wilson-Okamura's *Virgil in the Renaissance*).[56] These sources have been introduced into the discussion where they have a bearing on the topics in question, but scholars will find much of interest in Renaissance commentaries on and translations of the messianic eclogue which has not been touched upon below.

[55] Glei and Köhler 2001: 149 n. 1 (and 335) cite *Ecl.* 4 and passages from *Aen.* 1 and 6; Moudarres 2012: 304 maintains that Pius is 'echoing Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* and the book of Isaiah'.

[56] Kallendorf 1991 and 1994 (also Kallendorf 1999: 213–21); Wilson-Okamura 2010: 252–81.