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Marginalia in a Rare Edition of Virgil

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ABSTRACT: This essay examines the Latin and Catalan marginalia found in a copy of an edition of Virgil's works published in Barcelona in 1525 (Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 1-II-28). The paratextual material examined here is indicative of the different knowledge and Latin proficiency of the two readers who penned annotations in this copy of Virgil's poems.

KEYWORDS: Virgil; Crown of Aragon; printing; marginalia; sixteenth century.

The poems of Virgil earned considerable exposure in Renaissance Europe. Spare or thick with commentary, volumes featuring Virgil's poetry assumed a bewildering variety of forms and were in constant supply from printers across the continent (Kallendorf 2015, 81–120). From the beginning of the sixteenth century the Virgilian corpus also circulated widely through the printing press in the major urban centers of the Crown of Aragon. Gabriel Pou published the *Aeneid* in Barcelona around 1505.¹ Eight years later the Zaragoza-based printer Jorge Coci issued an edition of Virgil's complete works supplemented with the com-

¹ I have examined the copy at Biblioteca de Catalunya, Inc. 97-8°. The colophon reads 1405 but Martín Abad dates the edition to the year 1505 (Martín Abad 2001, no. 1534).

mentaries of the Alcañiz teacher Juan Sobrarias (ca. 1460–1528), which was reprinted by Coci in 1516. In Sobrarias’s edition the texts—including the collection of short poems of very doubtful authenticity traditionally ascribed to Virgil as well as Maffeo Vegio’s Book XIII of the *Aeneid*, known also as the *Supplementum*—are preceded by a life of Virgil from the pen of the Florentine humanist Pietro Crinito (1465–1507), which is extracted from his own *De poetis latinis libri quinque* of 1505.² Crinito’s biography of Virgil was also appended to an edition of the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid* that was printed by Johann Rosembach in Barcelona in 1525 (Lamarca 2015, no. 189). Only three copies of this edition are known to have survived: Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, I-II-28; Huesca, Biblioteca Pública del Estado, B-78-11706; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Vet. G1 f.15. Even though the copies have not gone unnoticed and feature in the catalogues of the above-mentioned libraries, they have at times been inaccurately described by bibliographers. For example, in Wilkinson’s vast repertoire these volumes are not included among the editions of Virgil’s works, but are rather entered as a separate item under the title *Vita Virgilio* (Wilkinson 2010, no. 19352). The first purpose of this note is, therefore, to draw scholars’ attention to Rosembach’s rare edition.

The collection published in 1525 is a good indication of the interest in Virgil’s canonical works shown by early sixteenth-century printers operating in the Crown of Aragon. Except for an introduction to Virgil as well as *argumenta* to each eclogue and to every book of the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, Rosembach’s volume does not feature any other paratextual material, and only presents Virgil’s poems. Perhaps persuaded by members of the teaching community, Rosembach issued an edition that displays all the marks of a schoolbook: a user-friendly octavo format, intelinear double spacing to accommodate notes, and wide margins where annotations could also be inserted—as loudly advertised by the words *Textus Virgilio noviter impressi cum acomodatissima dispositione glossandi*

² *Continentur in hoc volumine Publii Virgilio Maronis poetarum principis omnia opera summa cura et diligentia novissime immaculata per Ioannem Sobrarium Alcagnitiensem* (Caesaraugustae: apud Georgium Coci, 1513 and 1516). On these editions see Navarro López 1993.

on the internal title-page just before the beginning of the *Aeneid* (all copies of this edition lack fol. ai). All three extant copies of the edition contain readers' markings. Those contained in the volume held at the Biblioteca de Catalunya, including interlinear glosses and marginal notes both in Latin and Catalan, provide further proof of how the corpus of Virgil may have enjoyed exposure at the time. To the best of my knowledge those annotations seem to have been written by two hands. One of the hands is tiny and very densely fills the margins and interlinear spaces of Virgil's text with notes in Latin, which occur with different frequency throughout the first eight *Ecloques*, the first three books of the *Georgics* (up to III, 122) as well as the first nine books of the *Aeneid* (up to IX, 675) with the exception of Book VI. The other hand is round and larger and annotates the last book of Virgil's epics in Catalan. It is worth noting that a third hand scribbled a note in Catalan, dated January 10, 1535 and related to a certain "Madò Margarida," a widow in whose possession the volume may have been at some point.

Lady Margarida may not have possessed the copy under consideration, but we know that the book was in Catalan ownership as attested by the annotations in Catalan that are spread across Book XII of the *Aeneid* (ff. CCXLiv–CCLXViv).³ These annotations are copious in places, although they are progressively less frequent towards the end of the poem and lines 632–802 remain practically unannotated. As with many Renaissance books, in the volume held at Barcelona the annotator draws neat *maniculae*, with gently arching index fingers leaning towards the text. This symbol is often used to mark the different episodes within the book (for example, the final single combat between Aeneas and Turnus, which is thoroughly annotated) or to call attention to the beginning and the end of a speech. Almost all annotations are interlinear and simply provide vernacular equivalents for certain nouns (*Aen.* XII, 137 *urbem* "la ciutat," 630 *O soror* "O ma germana," 731 *ensis* "la spada," 740 *glacies* "lo glas," 835 *morem ritusque* "lo costum y serimonias"), adjectives and adverbs (103 *veluti*

³ This seems to be confirmed by a note on the flyleaf referring to a "Madò Fransina," dated August 18, 1537.

“aixi com,” 250 *Itali* “los de Italia,” 723 *haud aliter* “no de altra manera,” 731 *perfidus* “cruel,” 734 *ignotus* “no conegut”) or verbs (374 *Dum trahitur* “Dementres es portat de una part y altra,” 553 *vasto certamine certunt* “batallan,” 799 *reddi* “fer tornada”). In some cases—above all in the initial passages—the annotator provides translations for entire sentences: 71 *paucisque affatur Amatam* “ab pocas paraulas parla a la amada.”⁴ In addition, a handful of interlinear annotations supply very basic grammatical information. By way of illustration, the annotator writes the word “O” above the terms *Turne* and *coniux* (l. 62 and 793) to signify the vocative form, he clarifies an ambiguous demonstrative pronoun (54 *illi* “Aneas”) or supplements an omitted verb (885 *tantum effata* “est,” 895 *di me terrent et Iuppiter hostis* “terret”). Interlinear annotations are also employed to unravel the identity of a character referred to with a general term (55 *ardentem generum* “Turnus,” 90 *ignipotens deus* “Vulcano”), or to supply implicit *verba dicendi* at the beginning of a parliament: 631 *Turnus ad haec* (“respondit”) and 894 *Ille caput quassans* (“inquit”). The very few marginal glosses are reserved for the explanation of nuances of meaning between two similar verbs (718 *mussant* “musso, as, avi, atum, dir entre los dents. mutio, tis, ire, dir de bax en bax”) or for the elucidation of the meaning of a phrase: 645 *terga dabo* “terga dare alicui, girar la cara ad algu.” As a rule, the annotator—to whom the version may have been dictated—indicates the function of a specific word: the genitive (636 *fratris miseri letum* “de vostre germa desgrasiat la mort”), dative (90 *Dauno...ipse parenti* “per lo para Dauno”), instrumental ablative (50 *dextra* “ab la ma dreta”), locative ablative (76 *caelo* “al cel”), and accusative expressing motion (735 *prima in proelia* “en las primeras batallas”) are always marked in the translation. Moreover, the annotator appears to be rendering the text almost word for word, which leads to occasional mistakes. At lines 72–74 the annotator pens the words “vos prec ab tantas llagrimas amb un tant gran presagi / non presegiuau cruels la batalla dels Martis anant / o mara,” a solution that does not seem to reflect the meaning of the Latin (*Ne,*

⁴ Even though—as shown by the gloss to 54 *At regina nova pugnae conterrita sorte* “Amata”—the annotator is aware of the identity of Amata, he mistakenly translates her name as “the beloved.” It is Turnus who is speaking here.

quaeo, ne me lacrimis neue omine tanto / prosequere in duri certamina Martis euntem / o mater...). It is fair to say that this is partly because the text printed by Rosembach reads *induri*, thus preventing the annotator from fully understanding the syntax of the term *certamina*. Last but not least, some annotations seem to have been reworked. At 727 (*quem damnet labor et quo vergat pondere letum*) the annotator has first scribbled the words “la de[s]gracia” and “la mort” above, respectively, *labor* and *letum*. Darker ink seems to have been used at a second stage to write “ab quin pes” above *ab quo ponderere* (sic) and “saturmentia” (“es turmentava”—was tormented) above *vergat*, thus mistaking the Latin verb *vergo* for *veror* (Figure 1).

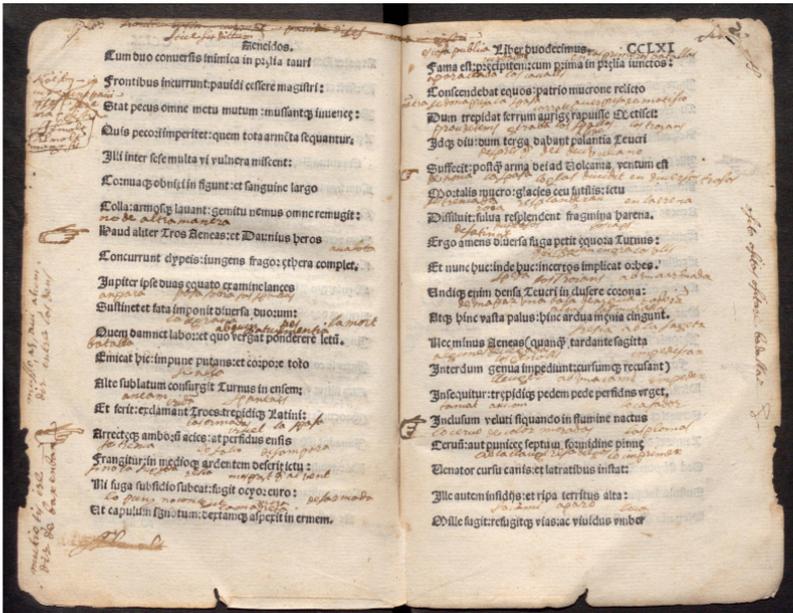


Fig. 1: Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 1-II-28, fol. CCLXv–CCLXIr. Image in the public domain.

Let us now turn to the annotations in Latin. None are corrected or incomplete and there are very few erasures. It seems safe to assume that the notes were written after some amount of reflection. Significantly, the annotator never provides word-order marks—one characteristic feature

of poetry school editions—and only occasionally does he touch on grammatical points: exceptionally, he explains the relationship between relative pronouns and their antecedents (*Georg.* II, 304 *qui* “ignis”) and clarifies potentially deceptive cases (*Aen.* I, 65 *deum* “pro deorum”) and verbal forms (*Aen.* I, 232 *Quid Troes potuere?* “Quid potuerunt Trojani?”). In at least one instance the annotator emends the text by crossing out a letter in the incorrect term: *Ecl.* II, 27 *pateris* “poteris.” The bulk of interlinear annotations—usually prefaced by “i” (“id est”)—amount to synonyms which are simpler than the terms employed by Virgil, or to very basic explanations about the identity of mythological figures (*Ecl.* VIII, 50 *crudelis mater* “i. Medea”; *Aen.*, I, 690 *Ascanio* “filio Aeneae”). By contrast, even though some of them still include helpful comments on morphology (*Aen.* II, 15 *instar montis* “Instar nomen indeclinabile est”), annotations in the margins of the text display a higher degree of elaboration. On a preliminary level the annotator marks misleading words for scansion (*Georg.* I, 482 *flūviōrum rex Eridanus* “iste est pes anapestus”). A large number of marginal annotations are devoted to the indication of rhetorical figures. The first group of figures consists of tropes. To name but a few, attention is given here to metaphor (*Georg.* I, 465 *saepe monet fraudemque et operta tumescere bella* “metaphora desumta ab igne”), synecdoche (*Ecl.* VI, 67 *ut Linus haec illi divino carmine pastor* “synecdoche figura”), litotes (*Georg.* I, 229 *haud obscura cadens* “Liptote”), comparison (*Aen.* IV, 68–69 *uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur / urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta* “est comparatio optima”), and metonymy (*Georg.* I, 297 *at rubicunda Ceres medio succiditur aestu* “Metonymia figura”). In addition to hysteron proteron (*Aen.* II, 353 *Moriamur et in media arma ruamus*), the following figures of words merit annotation: *Ecl.* II, 14–15 *Nonne fuit satius...nonne Menalcan* “anaphora est,” *Ecl.* III, 25 *Cantando tu illum?* “elipsis,” and *Georg.* I, 215 *tum te quoque, medica, putres* “apostrophe figura.”

The paratextual material examined in this note is indicative of the different levels of knowledge (and Latin proficiency) of the two readers who penned annotations in Latin or Catalan to Virgil’s poems in the copy of Rosembach’s edition held at Barcelona. In this respect, one might conclude that whereas the Latin annotations extend the reader’s range of

lexical knowledge, the Catalan notes make the meaning of difficult words (and even entire lines) accessible. Clearly, the Latin annotator seems to be more sophisticated than his Catalan counterpart, whose chief interest lies in understanding the text. The vernacular reader pays, for example, no attention to rhetorical features. Nor is the latter concerned either with unravelling mythological allusions. Conversely, the reader responsible for the annotations in Latin seems to be more alert to questions of style. We can therefore reasonably conjecture that the Latin glosses are related to classroom practice or were written as preparation for an academic commentary, and that the annotations in the vernacular may be the result of private reading practice, perhaps by one of the ladies referred to throughout the volume.⁵ It is not unreasonable to think that both sets of annotations could be somehow interrelated. Irrespective of whether the annotations may be placed in an educational context, they constitute indisputable proof of how the Rosembach edition of Virgil's works attracted the attention of local readers shortly after it came off the press in 1525.

⁵ The important role played by Amata and Juturna in Book XII may have made it appealing to a female readership; see Starry West 1979.

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