

Speaking of Kings and Battle: Virgil as Prose Panegyrist in Late Antiquity

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Virgil's influence on late antique encomiastic poetry is well known: less so is the nature of his influence on prose encomia. Focusing on the 4th-century corpus of the *Panegyrici Latini*,¹ this article will explore the role assigned to Virgil in imperial prose panegyric of late antiquity. The orators of late antiquity acknowledge Virgil as *magnus poeta* and cite him directly, particularly to evoke battle scenes, while also drawing on his work generally for poetic language and epic phrasing. As *poeta Romanus*, Virgil was the greatest authority on all matters relating to *imperium*, and as the writer of the canonic Roman epic, Virgil was viewed as a master-panegyrist. Certain passages were particularly relevant to praise of the emperors' numinous power, so that lines from the prophecy of Anchises, or the description of Jupiter's lofty abode, were revisited and reworked by successive panegyrists. The encomiastic impact of such passages is further reinforced by supplementary references to Virgil, as well as intratextual allusion within the corpus, and citations from encomiastic passages by other authors. As a result, a type of Virgilian "micro-allusion" may be observed, in which a short phrase or even a word or two is enough, within the encomiastic context, to suggest a Virgilian reference. This paper will summarise the relationship between epic and panegyric as it was understood in late antiquity, and examine the use of Virgilian allusion in the *Panegyrici Latini*, showing in particular how the panegyrists' approach to Virgil is consistent with that of contemporary scholars and literary critics. As an illustration of the orators' techniques, the paper will take as a case study the orators' treatment of the golden age, a theme which was developed in the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, and which, as a staple of imperial ideology and panegyric, appears in various guises throughout the *Panegyrici Latini*.

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¹ The *Panegyrici Latini* text is that of R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1964), and I follow his system of numbering. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Virgil, epic and panegyric

Imperial encomium inspired much of Virgil's work. The first *Eclogue* cast Octavian as the *deus* of the dispossessed countrymen (6–10),² while the *Georgics* promised a “temple” in honour of Caesar, his family and his triumphs (3.13–36), a promise which the *Aeneid* fulfilled. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil defined the nature of Roman *imperium* and, in the character of Aeneas, the moral and personal qualities expected from a Roman ruler. He applied the language of contemporary politics and philosophical debate to a mythical narrative, creating in his foundation epic an empire *sine fine*, and making Roman *imperium* universal and relevant for all time.³ Without being an allegory, the poem had allegorical elements.⁴ Aeneas, addressed as *Romane* (6.851) when receiving instructions on how a Roman should rule, represented Augustus and every subsequent Roman emperor. Following Virgil, Lucan included an encomium to Nero in his epic, Statius praised Domitian, Silius invoked Vespasian, and, at the end of the 4th century, Claudian gave Theodosius legitimacy by comparing him to the Virgilian Augustus and Aeneas.

Roman poets had always acknowledged the close relationship between epic and panegyric. In his *Ars poetica*, Horace defined Homeric epic as describing the deeds and grim wars of kings and generals (*res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella*, 73), but the language he chose was that of contemporary laudatory epic: *tristia bella* alludes to Virgil's refusal to celebrate the military exploits of Varus (*Ecl.* 6.6–7).⁵ Literary critics gave increasing weight to the encomiastic aspect of epic, to the extent that Hermogenes of Tarsus, writing in the late 2nd century AD, declared poetry to be panegyric in metre and Homer to be the best poet, orator and speech-writer.⁶ This may have been an extreme view, but it is evident that the generic terminology used to describe the high style of epic could also refer to panegyric. Virgil had described the Iliadic half of the *Aeneid* as his *maior opus*

² For encomium in the *Eclogues*, see Nauta (2006). In particular, the recreation of the golden age in the fourth *Eclogue* became a staple of imperial propaganda, and the influence of Virgilian pastoral on imperial praise is apparent in the anonymous Einsiedeln *Eclogues*, the *Eclogues* of Calpurnius Siculus and the *Silvae* of Statius: see Tarrant (1997) 64. As Karakasis (2016) 10 observes, “the notion of politics and of political panegyric is fully integrated into Calpurnius’ political eclogues”; cf. Statius, who compares the golden age of Jupiter, *antiqui Iovis aureumque tempus*, unfavourably with that of Domitian (*Silv.* 1.6.40). The preface of Sidonius Apollinaris’ panegyric to Maiorian shows the continuing association of bucolic and encomium.

³ Richardson (2008) 63–92 discusses the evolution of *imperium* in the late Republican period and particularly in the writings of Cicero. For a comprehensive analysis of Virgil's use of Lucretius to create a cosmic setting for his epic, see Hardie (1986).

⁴ For Servius’ allegorisation of the *Aeneid*, see Jones (1961); of the *Eclogues*, Starr (1995) 129–34.

⁵ *namque super tibi erunt qui dicere laudes, / Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella* (“for there will be more than enough of those who wish to sing your praises, Varus, and to celebrate grim wars”).

⁶ *Types of Style* 2.10.389. For the increasing importance of epideictic oratory in late antique and medieval poetry, see Curtius (1953) 154–66. Walker (2000) 277 sums up the standard view of late antique poetry as being “for the most part a minor and often second-rate form of epideictic”.

(*Aen.* 7.44), words which Proba in the 4th century took to introduce the praise of Christ and the New Testament (*Cento* 334).⁷ Both Eutropius and Ammianus concluded their histories with the plea that to write more would be to write in the greater style, *maior stilus*, a phrase which here too denotes panegyric.⁸ In particular, Claudian's popular verse panegyrics demonstrate the overlap between epic and panegyric in late antique culture: for Claudian to be honoured with a statue describing him as having the inspiration of Homer and the mind of Virgil would have seemed unremarkable to an audience who read the *Aeneid* primarily as an encomium.⁹

In late antiquity, therefore, *laudatio* was seen as a defining feature of epic, and commentators were ready to assign the role of panegyrist to Virgil. Symmachus, writing in honour of Gratian, wished that he could elevate his style so that he could rewrite Virgil for the new era (*Or.* 3.9). In the preface to his commentary on Virgil, Aelius Donatus, echoing Suetonius, argued that the *Eclogues* had been composed to praise Varus, Pollio and Gallus for enabling Virgil to keep his lands after the civil war, and that the *Georgics* had been written to praise Maecenas for helping Virgil against a violent veteran (Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 19–20; Suet. *Vit. Verg.* 19–20). Servius' definition of Virgil's aim in writing the *Aeneid*, to praise Augustus through his ancestors (*Augustum laudare a parentibus, praef. ad Aen.*) was developed by Tiberius Claudius Donatus, who asserted that the *Aeneid* belonged to the *genus laudativum*, the rhetorical classification of encomium (*Int. Virg.* 1.2.7–9). Aeneas, he claimed, as founder of the Julian race, must be shown to be a man without fault, whose praise had to be published widely, *vacuum omni culpa et magno praeconio praeferendum debuit demonstrare* (1.2.19–25).¹⁰ These texts were intended for the classroom. Aelius Donatus and Servius wrote their commentaries to aid in the teaching of Virgil,¹¹ while Tiberius Claudius Donatus presented his *Interpretationes Virgilianae* as a supplement to the education being given to his son (1.2.7–9). By late antiquity, therefore, Romans grew up with the knowledge that Virgil's poetry was encomiastic in intention.

⁷ Clark & Hatch (1981) 191; for the combination of epic and panegyric in Proba's *Cento*, see Sandnes (2011) 153–54. Proba had earlier taken *nova progenies* from *Ecl.* 4.7 to refer to Christ (*Cento* 34).

⁸ Amm. 31.16.9; Eutr. 10.18.3. On panegyric and the historians see most recently Ross (2016); for the use of *extollere in maius* to denote exaggeration in panegyric, see Ware (2017) 349.

⁹ *CIL* 6, 1710; for Claudian's encomiastic epics, see Schindler (2009); Ware (2012) 18–31; Gillett (2012). Wheeler (2007) 120 argues that Claudian grafted elements from the *Aeneid* and heroic epic onto his panegyrics, and so made “panegyric the culmination of the epic tradition”. On the popularity of short encomiastic epics, see Cameron (1995) 268–71.

¹⁰ See Starr (1992) 159–64; Kallendorf (2015) 21–23. Kaster (2011) 47–56 demonstrates comprehensively how sincerely Servius made his assertion. Servius' interpretation of *Aen.* 6.612–13, for example, is based on the (unwarranted) premise that these lines must be about Augustus and that they must be favourable to him (49–50).

¹¹ Kaster (1997) 169–70.

Virgil as authority: *Virgilius poeta an orator?*

Virgilian allusion in the *Panegyrici Latini* is consistent with this perspective.¹² For the Gallic orators who were rhetoricians teaching in the great schools at Trier, Autun and Bordeaux,¹³ Virgil was the *magnus poeta* (12(9).12.2) or *poeta Romanus* (11(3).14.2) and the model for literary and grammatical excellence.¹⁴ Tacitus describes Roman orators taking Virgil as a model for poetic beauty (*poeticus decor*) and polished style, while, in listing authors who should be read, Quintilian rates Virgil as second only to Homer, praising him for his care (*cura*) and attention to detail (*diligentia*).¹⁵ Schooled in this tradition, it was natural for the Gallic orators to turn to Virgilian phrases for poetic colour and generic aggrandisement.

For incursions into the heroic epic register and battle narratives, Virgil was a vital source of language and tropes.¹⁶ The description of the battle of the Milvian Bridge in the panegyric of 313 AD overflows with epic ornamentation. The night before the battle, Constantine's opponent, the villainous Maxentius, had terrifying dreams and premonitions of disaster;¹⁷ during the battle the river Tiber rolled the corpses along,¹⁸ and Constantine's attack is described by an epic simile.¹⁹ When Constantine rushes into the thick of the fighting, *in media hostium tela* (12(9).9.4), he recalls Aeneas' exhortation to his troops, *moriatur et in media arma ruamus* ("let us die and rush into the thick of the weapons", *Aen.* 2.353). Similarly, the orator of 321 AD, who also described the Milvian Bridge, uses both Ennius and Virgil to give an epic tone to his narration, describing the golden splendour of Constantine's armour in language drawn from epic,²⁰ and employing such epic locutions as *trabalis hasta* ("beam-like spear", 4(10).29.5), a phrase coined by Ennius and repeated by Virgil, Statius and Valerius Flaccus.²¹

¹² Nixon (1983) 89 notes the influence of Virgilian commentators on the *Panegyrici Latini*.

¹³ With the exception of Pliny's *Panegyricus* of 100 AD, which fronts the collection, the *Panegyrici Latini* corpus dates from c. 289 AD to 389 AD. For the authors, dates and circumstances of the individual speeches, see Nixon & Rodgers (1994).

¹⁴ On Virgil as the canonical school text, see Chahoud (2007) 80–81; Foster (2014). On the influence of Virgil in late antiquity, see Rees (2004a).

¹⁵ Tac. *Dial.* 20, 22; Quint. 10.1.86. Cf. the advice of Menander Rhetor that orators should seek amplification from Homer (2.369). For a comprehensive review of Virgilian borrowings in the collection, see Rees (2017).

¹⁶ Menander Rhetor 2.373 advised orators to praise the emperor as Homer had praised Achilles, Hector and Ajax.
¹⁷ 12(9).14.3. This is the reversal of the epic trope of the delusory dream of victory, e.g. Luc. 7.7–24, Claud. *In Ruf.* 2.330–35, but, as Rees (2004b) 40 notes, the *Ultrices* who haunt Maxentius suggest the Furies of the *Aeneid*.

¹⁸ 12(9).17.3 (cf. also 4(10).30.1). Cf. *Aen.* 8.538–40; Luc. 2.209–19; Sil. *Pun.* 4.622–26.

¹⁹ *Similis torrenti amni quem abruptae radicitus silvae et convulsa funditus saxa sequerentur* ("like a river in torrent followed by woods, torn up from the root, and rocks lifted from the ground", 12(9).9.5). Cf. *veluti ... rapidus montano flumine torrens / sternit agros, sternit sata laeta ... praecipitesque trahit silvas* ("as ... a swift torrent from the mountain river lays low fields and abundant crops ... and drags woods headlong", *Aen.* 2.304–07).

²⁰ The *insultans equus* of Constantine, for example, recalls the *insultans sonipes* at *Aen.* 11.600; *corusca luce* suggests *Aen.* 2.470, also Sil. *Pun.* 13.640. See Laudani (2014) 338.

²¹ Ennius, *Ann.* 589 Vahl. (Serv. *ad Aen.* 12.294); *Aen.* 12.293–94; Stat. *Theb.* 4.5–7; Val. Flacc. 8.301–02. See Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 375; Laudani (2014) 338.

Much of the language is Virgilian, but the orators do not see the need to make their source explicit: it was the familiar and appropriate language of heroic conflict. In his criticism of Maxentius, *degeneris, ut dictum est, animos timor arguebat* (“fear, as it is said, indicates ignoble minds”, 12(9).14.2), the orator of 313 AD alludes to Virgil’s *degeneres animos timor arguit* (“fear indicated ignoble minds”, *Aen.* 4.13), but the impersonal terminology, *ut dictum est*, turns the Virgilian line into an aphorism, a truth acknowledged by all.

As the epic poet of Rome, Virgil could not be matched in authority. But the rhetoricians and scholars of late antiquity saw him also as a master of oratory. When the question posed in Florus’ dialogue (c. 100 AD), whether Virgil was an orator or poet (*Virgilius orator an poeta*), was raised at Macrobius’ Saturnalian gathering, the guests refused to commit themselves, but concluded by describing Virgil as the only one whose eloquence was derived from expertise in all branches of oratory.²² They spoke of Virgil as one of their own, a master of rhetoric whose works demonstrated the correct rhetorical techniques and stylistic devices.²³ Like them, he was a scholar. Eustathius, one of the guests, deplors the fact that the learned Cornutus had described the detail of the cutting of a lock of Dido’s hair by Iris as typical of a poet, *poetico more*, as the well-read Virgil had clearly taken the story from Euripides’ *Alcestis* (5.18.21–19.5). It is likewise accepted that the *Georgics* was the result of scholarship on obscure Greek texts and that Virgil, *doctus poeta* (5.18.4), had done a lot of research to reach his profound conclusions, no doubt the same type of research which the speaker had undertaken in studying the *Georgics*.²⁴ In turn, Virgilian commentaries were used by the writers of the *Panegyrici Latini* to support their arguments. The orator of *PL* 10(2), claiming that Hercules consecrated the original seat of Maximian’s divinity in Rome, rejects the suggestion that this might be an invention, *fabula de licentia poetarum* (1.2), and gives proof by the presence of an altar to Hercules on the spot, a fact which comes from Virgilian commentary.²⁵

Virgilian allusion within the text might itself attract commentary-style elucidation. *PL* 11(3), written in 291 AD, honours the birthday of Maximian, here addressed jointly with Diocletian (14.2):

Itaque illud quod de vestro cecinit poeta Romanus Iove, Iovis omnia esse <plena>, id scilicet animo contemplatus, quamquam ipse Iuppiter summum caeli verticem teneat supra nubila supraque ventos sedens in luce perpetua, numen tamen eius ac mentem toto infusam esse mundo, id nunc ego de utroque vestrum audeo praedicare: ubicumque sitis,

²² *unus omnino Virgilius invenitur qui eloquentiam ex omni genere conflaverit*, *Macr. Sat.* 5.1.5. Augustine describes Virgil as an outstanding speaker, *egregius locutor* (*De trin.* 16.25).

²³ Virgil and the *rhetores* are compared at *e.g.* 4.4.12, 6.13; the entire surviving section of bk 4 of the *Saturnalia* examines Virgil’s use of rhetorical devices.

²⁴ The speaker refers to Virgil’s hidden knowledge, *occultissima diligentia* (*Sat.* 5.18.15).

²⁵ *Serv. Auct. ad. Aen.* 8.271. See Nixon (1983) 89–90; Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 54.

in unum licet palatium concesseritis, divinitatem vestram ubique versari, omnes terras omniaque maria plena esse vestri.

(“Accordingly, as the Roman poet sang of your Jupiter, all things are full of Jupiter, doubtless having considered in his mind that although Jupiter himself possesses the very summit of the sky, sitting above the clouds and the winds in perpetual light, even so, his divine nature and mind are diffused throughout the world. And this I now dare to proclaim of both of you: wherever you are, even if you withdraw to a single palace, your divinity extends everywhere, all lands and all seas are full of you”).

The passage is both panegyric on the emperors and commentary on a line of poetry. The source is *poeta Romanus*, and the quotation, *Iovis omnia esse plena*, comes from *Ecl.* 3.60. The audience, familiar with Virgil, would have been able to complete the extract (3.60–61):

*ab Iove principium Musae: Iovis omnia plena.
Ille colit terras, illi mea carmina curae.*

(“in Jupiter is the Muse’s beginning, all things are full of Jupiter. He sustains the lands, my songs are dear to him”).

Ab Iove principium Musae is an ancient formula of dedication and specifically of encomiastic dedication.²⁶ In his address to Tiberius, Valerius Maximus was explicit about the laudatory value of the lines, making a parallel between the invocation of Jupiter by ancient orators and his own humble solicitation of imperial favour.²⁷ Servius glosses *Iovis omnia plena* with a passage from Lucan which extols both the omnipotence of Jupiter and the virtues of Cato, who was himself divinely inspired, *deo plenus* (9.564), while Ausonius uses the line to honour Gratian and prove the truth of the poets.²⁸ This orator varies the theme by playing on the language of singularity, plurality and universality (*vestro / vestrum / vestram / vestri* vs *eius*; *in unum* vs *omnes / omnia*), so that the divinity of two emperors becomes a single entity which spreads throughout the world.

The orator glosses the quotation by explaining what the poet intended (*id scilicet animo contemplatus*),²⁹ phrasing his explanation in a composite of other quotations from Virgil.

²⁶ The line dates at least to Alcman (Coleman 1977, 117) and appears in Theocritus’ panegyric to Ptolemy, Aratus and Calpurnius Siculus. For a variation on the theme, see *PL* 6(7).2.1.

²⁷ *Nam si prisci oratores ab Iove optimo maximo bene orsi sunt, si excellentissimi vates a numine aliquo principia traxerunt, mea parvitas eo iustius ad favorem tuum decucurrerit* (1, *pr*).

²⁸ Silius’ *loca plena deo* (*Pun.* 3.673), coming before praise of Jupiter, may also be indebted to this passage. Cf. also Cal. Sic. *Ecl.* 4.82. Macrobius glosses the full line at *Somn. Scip.* 1.17.14.

²⁹ Cf. for example, Tib. Donatus’ glossing of *pulchra Troianus origine Caesar* (*Aen.* 2.286) as *optima scilicet et honesta, ut non corporis, sed originis intellegatur pulchritudo* (*ad loc*).

Jupiter's seat comes from the first appearance of Jupiter in the *Aeneid*, *Iuppiter aethere summo / despiciens* ("Jupiter looking down from the topmost air", *Aen.* 1.223–24) ... *sic vertice caeli constitit* ("this is his position at the summit of the heavens", *Aen.* 1.225–26). The *aether* is the topmost part of the sky, glossed by Servius as *summus est*, and this is made clear by the orator's *supra nubila supraque ventos*.³⁰ Jupiter's ubiquity, *numen tamen eius ac mentem toto infusam esse mundo*, is from Anchises' speech in *Aen.* 6, *'totamque infusa per artus / mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet'* ("the mind, diffused throughout the limbs, motivates the whole mass and mixes itself with the great body", 726–27). The orator does not signal his allusion, but he surely did not need to: Servius uses these lines from the *Aeneid* without citation to gloss the *Eclogue* passage, and so it is reasonable to surmise that this was how it was taught in schools, even in the time of the earlier orator. Finally, having explained what *Iovis omnia plena* means for the emperors, the orator picks up the original Virgilian line and augments it by length and anaphora, *omnes terras omniaque maria plena esse vestri*, so that an elaborate compliment is paid to Maximian and Diocletian.³¹

A Virgilian quotation included in a didactic or moralising passage could be used as confirmation that an assertion was correct. Direct signalled quotations from Virgil are rare in the panegyrics, but in the oration on Constantine of 313 AD a passage from the *Georgics* is explicitly used to describe the swords of the defeated being beaten into fetters. Expounding on the irony of an implement of destruction becoming the instrument of salvation (the fettered soldiers were pardoned), the orator refers to the *magnus poeta* who had described the transformation of tools into weapons (12(9).12.3; *Geo.* 1.508):

*Magnus poeta, dum bellorum toto orbe surgentium discursum apparatusque describit,
'Et curvae' inquit 'rigidum falces <conflantur in ensem>'*

("The great poet, when he described the agitation and preparation for wars rising throughout the whole world, said: 'And curved pruning hooks are being hammered into inflexible swords'").

Describing the recent past, *triste nimium tempus illud* ("that was a very sad time"), the orator invites the listener to think of the context: a terrible civil war. It is a clever acknowledgment

³⁰ The additional detail of light, *in luce perpetua*, suggests the abode of the gods in Lucretius, who live in the cloudless *aether*, in widespread light, *diffuso lumine* (3.22).

³¹ This final augmentation is typical of commentary style: Tib. Donatus glosses this passage by listing the elements which are inspired by this spirit: *quicquid ad caelum pertinet et quicquid constat sub caelo, scilicet quicquid terra continet, quicquid mare complectitur* ("whatever pertains to the sky and whatever exists under the sky, by which is understood whatever the earth possesses, whatever the sea contains", *ad* 6.725). As Rees (2004b) 38 observes, this overt invocation of Virgil, followed by other citations of Virgil, serves to confirm the exaggerated claim of the orator and elevate the stylistic register; cf. also Walker (2000) 308.

that Constantine was following the success of Augustus, who had brought an end to that earlier war, but that he was also surpassing his model, since he was acting without bloodshed. If the orator of this panegyric had been trained to compare poetic lines in the same manner as the guests of Macrobius, he would have associated the Virgilian line with two others, both supplying a relevant intertext (*Sat.* 6.1.63). The first describes the preparations for the war in Italy, *recoquant patrios fornacibus enses* (“they reforge their fathers’ swords in furnaces”, *Aen.* 7.636), itself a forerunner of the civil war which Augustus would fight. The second line comes from Lucretius, *inde minutatim processit ferreus ensis / versaque in obscenum species est falcis aenae* (“then succeeded the iron sword and the shape of the bronze sickle was turned to something shameful”, 5.1293–94). The passage tells of man’s transition to the iron age, war and bloodshed, the intertext suggesting a potential danger now averted by Constantine’s merciful actions.³²

The orator’s further comments on this passage illustrate the particular authority of Virgil. Commentators on Virgil are careful to absolve the *magnus poeta* from the charge of poetic licence. In the *Saturnalia*, for example, a speaker observes that Virgil usually disliked the inconsistency that resulted: *solet tamen Virgilius temeritatem licentiae non amare* (6.9.13).³³ That the example from the *Georgics* may be taken as authoritative and exempt from poetic licence is made clear by a comparison with other stories of transformations, tales of men changing into streams or animals or birds: a nod to the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. Such transformations, the orator asserts, are base and ignoble and such stories cannot bring such pleasure, *quid simile ad laetitiam fabulae ferunt?* (*PL* 12(9).13.5).³⁴ Rather, the actions of Constantine have proved the truth of the Virgilian lines, clearly now no *fabula*, and in return the Virgilian context gives authority to the panegyrist’s moral: *vita enim hominum diu parta semper servanda est, si liceat* (“for the life of man takes long to create and should always be saved, if it is possible”, 13.4).

Because a learned audience knew Virgil’s works intimately, and were trained to make connections between different lines in different works, a short allusion could carry considerable weight. In the panegyric of 313 AD, a seemingly slight Virgilian reference gives justification to the orator’s condemnation of Maxentius, and allows him to convey a comprehensive attack in just a few lines (12(9).18.1):³⁵

*Sancte Thybri, quondam hospitis monitor Aeneae, mox Romuli conservator expositi, tu
nec falsum Romulum diu vivere nec parricidam Urbis passus es enatare.*

³² On Virgil’s use of Lucretius here, see Gale (2000) 34–35.

³³ For a full discussion, see Ware (2017).

³⁴ On the conflict of Virgilian and Ovidian allusions, see Ware (2017) 357–58.

³⁵ On this passage, see Roberts (2005) 551.

(“Sacred Tiber, one time adviser of your guest Aeneas, then the saviour of Romulus when he had been exposed, you did not allow that false Romulus to live long nor did you let the murderer of the City swim to safety”).

The river Tiber had appeared to Aeneas in a dream (*Aen.* 8.31–65), advising him of the location of his future settlement, *hic tibi certa domus* (“here assuredly is your home”, *Aen.* 8.39). Knowledge of this passage makes clear the link to Romulus, Aeneas’ descendant and founder of Rome. The attribution of the epithet *conservator* links the whole to Constantine.³⁶ The panegyric opened with his rescue of Rome and his preservation of Roman authority, *de recuperata Urbe imperioque Romano* (1.3), and his desire to save, *conservare*, even the unworthy is emphasised throughout.³⁷ But the similarities between Constantine, Aeneas and Romulus are merely corroborative: what is at stake is the denunciation of Maxentius as the false Romulus. Although the panegyrist gives no idea of the reign of Maxentius in Rome, presenting him only as a usurper, he had ruled in Rome since 306 and had promoted himself as the saviour of the city.³⁸ A common slogan on his coins was *conservator urbis suae*³⁹ and his ambitions were further suggested by the name of his son, Romulus.⁴⁰ For the orator of 313 to strip him of the title of Romulus and replace it with *parricida Urbis* is pointed. The adjective *falsus* reminds the audience of the claims of illegitimacy made earlier in the panegyric (4.2), so that Maxentius is Romulus neither in blood nor as founder of Rome.

The allusion to the Tiber as the adviser of Aeneas leads to another Virgilian reference. The river’s fury against Maxentius is contrasted with the aid it once gave to Horatius Cocles and Cloelia: *tu quietus armatum Coclitem revexisti, tibi se placido Cloelia virgo commisit* (“peacefully, you carried armed Cocles back, the young girl Cloelia entrusted herself to your calm waters”, 18.2). The selection of these two figures in the context of saving of the city from a tyrant suggests the expulsion of Tarquin from Rome on the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.646–51):

*Nec non Tarquinius eiectum Porsenna iubebat
accipere ingentique urbem obsidione premebat;
Aeneadae in ferrum pro libertate ruebant.
Illum indignanti similem similemque minanti*

³⁶ For the rescue of Romulus by Tiber, see Livy 1.4.4–5. On the association of the Tiber and Rome’s foundation, see Roberts (2005) 551.

³⁷ 4.5; 11.2; 13.3.

³⁸ The son of the emperor Maximian, Maxentius had as great a dynastic claim as Constantine. For a summary of the contemporary sources, see Cullhed (1994) 14–31; for Maxentius and Rome, Curran (2000) 43–69; for Constantine and Maxentius, Humphries (2008).

³⁹ See Cullhed (1994) 46–47.

⁴⁰ For Maxentius’ use of Romulean iconography, see Hekster (1999) 9–11.

*aspiceres, pontem auderet quia vellere Cocles
et fluvium vinclis innaret Cloelia ruptis.*

(“And Porsenna, oppressing the city with a heavy siege, was giving the order that Tarquin, expelled, should be readmitted; the descendants of Aeneas were seizing swords for liberty. You would have seen him portrayed as angry, as threatening, because Cocles was daring to pull down the bridge and Cloelia, breaking her bonds, was swimming the river”).

Maxentius combines the roles of Tarquin, the overthrown tyrant, and Porsenna, the besieger: several lines later, the people of Rome come to look at their liberator, *ut viderentur eum a quo obsidione liberati fuerant obsidere* (“so that they seemed to besiege the man who had freed them by means of a siege”, 19.4). Allusively, therefore, Constantine is associated with Virgil’s *Aeneadae* who fight for their own freedom and for that of their city. Through these allusions, the death of Maxentius becomes part of the sequence of Roman salvation represented on the shield of Aeneas.⁴¹

Finally, Virgilian allusion could be suggested in patterns of speech, as shown in this passage which honours Maximian and Constantine (7(6).14.1):

*Te, pater, ex ipso imperii vertice decet orbem prospicere communem caelestique nutu rebus
humanis fata decernere, auspica bellis gerendis dare, componendis pacibus leges imponere;
te, iuvenis, indefessum ire per limites qua Romanum barbaris gentibus instat imperium,
frequentes ad socerum victoriarum laureas mittere, praecepta petere, effecta rescribere*

(“It becomes you, father, to survey from your pinnacle of command the world you share, and with celestial nod decide the fate of human affairs, to announce the auspices for wars which have to be waged, and to impose the terms when peace is to be concluded; you, young man, it behoves to traverse the frontiers tirelessly where the Roman Empire presses upon barbarian peoples, to send frequent laurels of victory to your father-in-law, to seek instructions, and to report what you have accomplished”).⁴²

The structure of these lines is strongly reminiscent of the culmination of Anchises’ speech to Aeneas (*Aen.* 6.851–53):

⁴¹ Cf. Claudian’s allusion to the shield in his *De Bello Gildonico* (see Ware 2012, 153–54). For the shield and images of salvation, see Harrison (1997). Behind Virgil we may see Ennius, whose narration of Horatius’ exploit begins with the soldiers’ prayer to the Tiber, *te pater Tiberine tuo cum flumine sancto* (*Ann.* 54 Vahl), lines which are summarised in the panegyrist’s *Sancte Thybri*; see Goldschmidt (2013) 184–85.

⁴² trans. Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 209.

*‘Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento,
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacisque imponere morem,
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.’*

(“You, Roman, remember to rule the people with authority
(these will be your arts), to impose the custom of peace,
to spare the downtrodden and make war on the proud”).

Virgil’s opening *tu ... Romane* becomes *te, pater*, and the series of instructions expressed as infinitives, *regere ... imponere ... parcere ... debellare*, is echoed in *prospicere ... discernere ... dare ... imponere*, the orator’s *pacibus leges imponere* taken from *pacisque imponere morem*. There then follows a variation addressed to Constantine: *te, iuvenis*, then *mittere ... petere ... rescribere*. Both emperors take on the role of the *Romanus* addressed in the Vergilian passage, both follow the footsteps of Aeneas and Augustus. Constantine, who is to be the young and active member of the partnership, will go to barbarian lands: *qua Romanum barbaris gentibus instat imperium*, just as Augustus would extend *imperium* to the east (*super et Garamantas et Indos / proferet imperium, Aen. 6.794–95*). The Virgilian citation goes beyond the single verbal echo; the structural resonances argue for a strong Virgilian consciousness in the speech.

Virgilian panegyric, reinforcement and micro-allusion

Virgilian citation, therefore, appears in the *Panegyrici Latini* in the form of direct quotation, to make a point, to give an epic or poetic flavour to a particular passage, and also, as the passage on the defeat of Maxentius shows, to create a sustained ideological intertext. One further type of reference must be considered: Virgilian language of praise and its intertextual reuse throughout the corpus.⁴³ As will be shown, the orators layer encomiastic allusion from different Virgilian texts and from earlier speeches in the collection, to intensify praise of the emperors. The comparison between Virgil’s Jupiter and the emperors, as it appears in several of the panegyrics, is a good illustration of this technique. Consider again this passage in honour of Diocletian and Maximian (11(3).14.2):

⁴³ The earliest nuclear collection of the *Panegyrici Latini* is thought to comprise the first seven speeches, ending with that of 311 AD; studies of intertextuality show that the later orators were familiar with the earlier speeches. A comprehensive survey remains to be done, but Ware (2014) offers a case study of the complex intertextuality between two panegyrics, 6(7) and 7(6).

Itaque illud quod de vestro cecinit poeta Romanus Iove, Iovis omnia esse <plena>, id scilicet animo contemplatus, quamquam ipse Iuppiter summum caeli verticem teneat supra nubila supraque ventos sedens in luce perpetua, numen tamen eius ac mentem toto infusam esse mundo ...

As we have seen, to explain the quoted line from the *Eclogue* (*Iovis omnia plena*, 3.60), and to define the nature of Jupiter's power, the orator combines different Virgilian texts:

Aen. 1.223–24: *Iuppiter aethere summo / despiciens*

Aen. 1.225–26: *sic vertice caeli / constitit*

Aen. 6.726–27: *totamque infusa per artus / mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet*

In placing Jupiter at the summit of the sky, Virgil had deviated significantly from the model of Homer's Zeus who had looked down on the war between Trojans and Greeks from nearby mountain tops. With this alteration, Roman *imperium* was given a cosmic dimension.⁴⁴ For the panegyrist, the might of the emperor was even more far-reaching than that of Jupiter. Anchises had explained to Aeneas how a life force, *mens*, animated all creatures: this now becomes the mind, *mens*, and power, *numen*, of Maximian and Diocletian, who are everywhere, even when confined to a single palace.⁴⁵

The orator of 313 AD elaborated on this passage (12(9).26.1):

sive tute quaedam vis mensque divina es, quae toto infusa mundo omnibus miscearis elementis, et sine ullo extrinsecus accedente vigoris impulsu per te ipse movearis, sive aliqua supra caelum potestas es quae hoc opus tuum ex altiore Naturae arce despicias.

(“whether you are some kind of force and divine mind spread over the whole world and mingled with all the elements and move of your own accord without the influence of any outside force acting upon you, or whether you are some power above all heaven which look down upon this work of yours from a higher pinnacle of Nature”).⁴⁶

Supra omne caelum varies and sums up the earlier *supra nubila supraque ventos*, while *despicias* recalls the Virgilian *despiciens* (*Aen.* 1.224). Here, however, the focus is on the ambiguous *divina mens*, which is distinct from Constantine but with which the emperor has a unique

⁴⁴ See Hardie (1986) 314–15.

⁴⁵ For the *divina mens* in the collection, see 5(8).10.2; 7(6).7.1; 8(5).4.3; 9(4).6.4, 10.1; 10(2).8.2; 11(3).4.8.

⁴⁶ trans. Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 332–33.

connection (12(9)2.5).⁴⁷ Coming at the end of the panegyric and in the familiar context of Jovian praise, this particular instance of *mens divina* recalls the Stoic *anima mundi*, the spirit which animates and pervades the world. In the *Georgics*, this spirit inhabits all lands, sea and sky: *deum namque ire per omnis / terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum* (4.221–22). Servius glossed this line with the same citation from Lucan which he had used to clarify *Iovis omnia plena* in *Ecl.* 3.60; he could also have referred to the *divina mens* of Jupiter in Cicero’s *De consulatu meo*.⁴⁸ In 313 AD, after the victory at the Milvian Bridge, the orator may have been hesitant in affiliating Constantine with a particular deity, but the intertext suggests that, in terms of encomium at least, the *mens divina* belongs to Jupiter, who is the divine counterpart of the emperor.⁴⁹ Phrasing the philosophical question in Virgilian terms implicitly guarantees that whatever the nature of the divine power might be, its favourable manifestation towards the emperor will continue.

An even more layered version appears in Mamertinus’ panegyric to Julian (3(11).28.5):

Poetae ferunt altissimum illum et cuncta potestate cohibentem deum, qui ditione perpetua divina atque humana moderatur, cum despiciat in terras, habitu oris tempestatum incerta mutare, eius nutu mundum tremescere, illius hilaritate turbines abigi, nubes fugari, nitentia per orbem serena diffundi.

(“Poets say that the highest god who holds everything in his power, who in universal authority governs divine and human affairs, alters the changing weather by the expression on his face when he gazes down upon the earth; and at his nod the world shakes, when he is merry windstorms are driven away, clouds are put to flight, shining calm is spread throughout the globe”).⁵⁰

The opening, *poetae ferunt*, might suggest that the orator is disparaging the truthfulness of his sources, but the words are here a literary signpost, directing the audience to Virgil and Ennius, panegyrists *par excellence*, and also to Homer’s portrayal of Zeus. Virgil’s Jupiter looking down from heaven (*Aen.* 1.223–24), a familiar sight from earlier panegyrics, is here in *despiciat in terras*. In the following *habitu oris tempestatum incerta mutare*, García Ruiz notes the combination of a later line from the prophecy of Jupiter, *vultu quo caelum tempestatesque serenat* (“the countenance with which he calms the sky and weather”, *Aen.* 1.255) and a reference to Ennius, *Iuppiter hic risit tempestatesque serena / riserunt omnes risu Iovis omnipotentis* (“here

⁴⁷ At 16.2 the *divina mens* is the spirit of Rome which acts in support of Constantine.

⁴⁸ fr. 11 Morel; Hardie (1986) 314–15 cites this passage in his discussion of the cosmic setting of Jupiter’s prophecy.

⁴⁹ See Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 292–93; Rodgers (1986) 85–87.

⁵⁰ trans. Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 432.

Jupiter laughed and all the bright weather laughed at the laugh of all-powerful Jupiter”).⁵¹ The orator’s *eius nutu mundum tremescere* suggests the Virgilian *totum nutu tremefecit Olympum* (*Aen.* 9.106) and *tremefacta solo tellus* (*Aen.* 10.102), which latter phrase, Macrobius notes, is itself an echo of Ennius.⁵² Macrobius also comments on the fact that Virgil’s inclusion of Jupiter’s nod at *Aen.* 10.101–03 is in imitation of Homer (*Il.* 1.528–30) and is motivated by his desire to give Jupiter equal reverence to Zeus.⁵³

The orators of the *Panegyrici Latini*, from Pliny onwards, had also contributed to this encomiastic chorus. Pliny supplied *quae ille mundi parens temperat nutu, si quando oculos demisit in terras* (“which he, the father of the world, governs with his nod, whenever he casts his eyes down to the earth”, 1(1).80.4), while *verum hoc Iovis sui more nutu illo patrio, quo omnia contremescunt ... consecutus est* (“but he [Diocletian], in the manner of his Jupiter, accomplished this with that nod of his paternal head, at which all things tremble”) appears in the panegyric of 289 AD (10(2).7.5). There is a more elaborate version in Eumenius’ address, *cuius nutum promissionem confirmantis totius mundi tremor sentit* (“the whole world trembles at his nod, the confirmation of his promise”, 9(4).15.3). Again, a quotation from Virgil is good, a quotation from Virgil which is supported by other Virgilian lines and by citations from other panegyrists is better.

To conclude: the passage of Mamertinus incorporates imagery from the storm in *Aen.* 1 and in doing so combines the attributes of two separate gods in the *Aeneid*, attributes which symbolise *imperium*. The first is the power of Jupiter to rule the weather, the storms, the clouds and with his nod to make the world and sky tremble. The second, which in this passage is very similar (*illius hilaritate turbines abigi, nubes fugare, nitentia per orbem serena diffundi*) actually belongs to Neptune in *Aen.* 1 and the calming of the storm, *fugat nubes* acting as signpost to *Aen.* 1.142–43:

*Sic ait, et dicto citius tumida aequora placat
collectasque fugat nubes solemque reducit.*

(“Thus he spoke and quicker than speech, pacified the swollen waters and put to flight the massed clouds and brought back the sun”).

The storm in the *Aeneid* is a highly politicised one:⁵⁴ the winds struggle against authority, *imperio* (1.54). When Neptune regains control, he is compared to a statesman calming the

⁵¹ *Ann.* 456–57 Vahl; García Ruiz (2006) 151; Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 432. In the quiet which Jupiter brings, Goldschmidt (2013) 198 sees an echo of Ennius, *Scipio* 9–12 Vahl. Cf. also Lucretius 3.22.

⁵² *Sat.* 6.26.2.

⁵³ *Macr. Sat.* 5.13.37–38.

⁵⁴ See Lyne (1974) 65.

mob, a Roman politician and leader, *pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem / conspexere* (“if by chance they caught sight of a man weighty with righteousness and merit”, 1.151–52).⁵⁵ In the *Aeneid*, this leader, *vir*, is associated with Aeneas, the hero (*vir*, 1.1), and so with the emperor who is now endowed with the characteristics of *imperium* which belong to Jupiter and Neptune.⁵⁶ Or, to paraphrase the orator of *PL* 11(3).14.2 (*audeo praedicare ... omnes terras omniaque maria plena esse vestri*), his power stretches over all land and sea.

In this composite allusion, Mamertinus may have been inspired by an earlier speech in the corpus which employed Virgilian reference to give the emperor the powers of Jupiter, Neptune and Apollo. *PL* 7(6) is addressed to Maximian, who in 306 AD had just emerged from retirement. The orator speaks in the voice of the personified Roma, to rebuke the emperor for having abandoned his post as captain of the ship of state (11.4). In a complicated series of metaphors, Roma urges him to resume the burden of government, breathe life into the moribund empire and pick up the reins again (12.3, 7–8):

Solus hoc, ut dicitur, potuit deus ille, cuius dona sunt quod vivimus et videmus, ut habenas male creditas et currum devio rectore turbatum reciperet rursusque dirigeret ... Statim igitur ut praecipitantem [ut] rem publicam refrenasti et gubernacula fluitantia recepisti, omnibus spes salutis inluxit. Posuere venti, fugere nubes, fluctus resederunt, et sicubi adhuc in longinquiorebus terris aliqua obversatur obscuritas aut residuus undarum pulsus immurmurat necesse est tamen ad tuos nutus dilucescat et sileat.

(“They say that only that god, by whose gifts we live and see, was capable of taking up the reins which had been unwisely entrusted and steering the chariot again when it had been thrown off course by its errant driver ... Then as soon as you curbed the State in its headlong course, and took back the helm as it wavered, the hope of salvation dawned for everyone. The winds dropped, the clouds scattered, the waves subsided, and if anywhere in some distant lands some darkness hovers still or some residual dashing of waves still sounds faintly, yet at your nod light must dawn and silence reign”).⁵⁷

Allusions to the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics* are combined to suggest a multitude of deities. As previous examples have shown, Jupiter is present in *ad tuos nutus* and in the power to make the skies lighten, *dilucescat*. Neptune’s ability to calm the storm is present in *posuere venti, fugere nubes, fluctus resederunt*. The abilities of both of these gods, however, are subsumed into

⁵⁵ For Servius (*ad Aen.* 1.151), Cicero was the statesman in question.

⁵⁶ Hardie (1986) 302–03 discusses the universality of Aeneas’ sphere of action, *terris iactatus et alto / vi superum* (*Aen.* 1.3–4).

⁵⁷ trans. Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 207.

the power of a single deity, *solus ... potuit deus ille*, who, as the god by whose gifts we see and live, is Apollo or Sol Helios.⁵⁸ The reference is to the myth of Phaëthon, who tried to control the chariot of his father, the Sun, and came close to burning up the earth.⁵⁹ In panegyric, this myth became a model for good or bad government.⁶⁰ The main source, indicated by *ut dicitur*, is probably Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, but the political implications are borrowed from the final lines of *Geo.* 1. Concluding his description of the civil wars just past, Virgil ends the book as follows (511–14):

*Saevit toto Mars impius orbe,
ut cum carceribus sese effudere quadrigae,
addunt in spatia, et frustra retinacula tendens
fertur equis auriga neque audit currus habenas.*

("The whole world's at loggerheads, a blasphemous battle,
as when, right from the ready, steady, go, chariots quicken on a track
until the driver hasn't a hope of holding the reins and he's carried away
by a team that pays heed to nothing, wildly away and no control").⁶¹

Phaëthon and the ineffectual charioteer have much in common,⁶² and verbal parallels between the *Georgics* passage and the storm of *Aen.* 1 have also been observed: the winds described as horses struggling to leave the starting barrier (*Aen.* 1.54), their king Aeolus able to hold them with a tight or loose rein (1.63).⁶³ Thus, through different but interrelated Virgilian texts, Maximian moves from being captain of ship of state to the power which calms the storm threatening that ship.⁶⁴

The Golden Age

The panegyrists' treatment of the Virgilian *aurea aetas* illustrates the effective resonance of a short reference, and also the complex layering of Virgilian allusion. The notion that the idyllic golden age could be restored dominated imperial ideology for centuries and in various manifestations, just as Virgil had provided his successors with a number of possible models. The

⁵⁸ It is tempting to assume a pun in the foregrounding of *solus*.

⁵⁹ See Galletier (1949–55) vol. 2, 26; Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 207.

⁶⁰ See Ware (2012) 131–34.

⁶¹ trans. Fallon (2006) 23.

⁶² See Gale (2000) 35.

⁶³ Lyne (1974) 64–65.

⁶⁴ Virgilian allusion would also suggest a model for the combination of metaphors, since Neptune travelled in his chariot to quell the Virgilian storm: *flectit equos curruque volans dat lora secundo* (*Aen.* 1.156).

aurea aetas appeared initially as a fantastic vision in the fourth Eclogue, was given a temporal and geographical reality in the *laudes Italiae* of *Geo. 2*, and became a future inevitability under Augustus and Roman *imperium* in *Aen. 6*. The trope was so familiar that a very few details were enough to invoke the presence of the golden age, and the panegyrists could choose from the catalogue compiled by Virgil and elaborated by other writers:⁶⁵ temperate, vernal weather with the Zephyr blowing, the absence of savage animals or snakes, flocks heavy with milk and fleeces, the bounty of untilled Nature, no laws, no land boundaries, no warfare, no mining, no sailing and – the rather surreal touch which Virgil mentions only in the Eclogue – sheep with multi-coloured wool. The explicitly encomiastic opening lines of the Eclogue and the fact that the recurrence of the golden age coincided with the birth of an unnamed child defined the poem as a *laudatio*. Servius, in fact, describes it as a *genethliakon* for Pollio (*ad. Ecl. 4.1*).⁶⁶ The inspiration which this poem could provide for a verse panegyric is illustrated by Claudian's *Laus Serenae*, in which the bounty of nature is commandeered by imperial *largitio*. At Serena's birth, the river Tagus overflowed with gold, the sea cast jewels on the shore and the white sheep became purple (70–75).⁶⁷ Claudian's version of the golden age is clearly indebted to Virgil's Eclogue and the variations of Virgil's pastoral successors, but he had also drawn on the *Georgics* by specifying the location: this golden age will begin in Spain, where Serena was born.⁶⁸

For those who preferred a more realistic model, the *Georgics* was at hand. The golden age of the Eclogue had been presented in mythical rather than real time: it would come to pass when a second Troy had fallen and a second Argo had sailed (34–36). The defining words are *Saturnia regna* (6), a phrase which is not explained in the *Eclogues* but in the *Georgics*. Here the reader learns that it refers to Italy, which Virgil hails *salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus, / magna virum* ("hail, Saturnian land, great mother of the harvest and of heroes", 2.173–74).⁶⁹ Italy possesses the characteristics of the idyllic golden age, being blessed with eternal spring, free from snakes and savage animals (2.149–54), and abundant in fertile crops and cattle, but it is also rich in the wealth which is rejected in the earlier poem. The walled cities of Italy praised in the *Georgics* (2.155–57) would have been evidence of ancient error in the Eclogue (*priscae vestigia fraudis*, 31), while the wealth of gold and silver brought about by mining (*Geo. 2.166–68*) had no place in the earlier idyll. Virgil makes it very clear that his Italy is a real and not mythological landscape (*Geo. 2.140–42*):

⁶⁵ *Ecl. 4.21–45*. Cf. for example Hor. *Epod.* 16.40–65; Ov. *Met.* 1.89–112. Virgil had not invented these details (with the possible exception of the coloured sheep), but he had tied the golden age's restoration to the reign of Augustus.

⁶⁶ Menander Rhetor 2.412–13 describes the types of praise required in such a speech (Russell & Wilson, 1981, 159–60).

⁶⁷ See Ware (2012) 177–78. Cf. also Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyric to Anthemius, where the golden age brought about by the emperor's birth is marked by an upheaval in nature and roses blooming in winter (102–11).

⁶⁸ Claudian is also influenced by the praise of Spain in Pacatus' panegyric to Theodosius, *PL 2(12).4.2–5*.

⁶⁹ For hyperbole and *Saturnia regna* in the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, see Hardie (1986) 257–58.

*Haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem
invertere satis immanis dentibus hydri,
nec galeis densisque virum seges horruit hastis.*

(“Here no bulls, breathing fire from their nostrils,
ploughed the teeth of the monstrous dragon,
nor did the crop bristle with the close-packed helmets and spears of men”).

This is a variation on the rhetoricians’ trope of the *fabulae poetarum*: the absence of fantastic fire-breathing bulls and earth-born warriors adds credibility to the fertility of the land and the perfection of the climate. The *laudes Italiae* also appealed to the panegyrists of late antiquity as being a text-book panegyric. As Servius asserted (*ad. Geo.* 2.136):

*Iam incipit laus Italiae, quam exsequitur secundum praecepta rhetorica: nam dicit eam
et habere bona omnia et carere malis universis.*

(“Now begins the praise of Italy, which he executes according to the rhetorical guidelines, for he says that it both possesses all goods and is free from all evils”).

The final evolution of the golden age took place in the *Aeneid*, where the *Saturnia regna* became political, appearing first in the vision of Augustan rule (6.791–95):

*Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos
proferet imperium.’*

(“This is the man, this is he, whom you have so often heard promised,
Augustus Caesar, race of the gods, who will found again in Latium,
in fields once ruled by Saturn, golden ages,
and over the Garamantes and Indies
will extend his empire”).

Since no further explanation of *Saturnia regna* is given here, the reader has to rely on the *Georgics* and the description of this land as the mother of heroes: an appropriate birthplace for Augustus Caesar, race of the gods. Only later in the *Aeneid* is *Saturnia regna* glossed by

Evander as the golden time long ago, when Saturn had fled from Olympus and hidden in Latium, where he had given laws to the inhabitants and ruled them in peace (*aurea saecula: sic placida populos in pace regebat*, 8.324–25). In *Aen.* 6, therefore, Virgil subordinates the *aurea saecula* of Saturn, characterised by *placida pax*, to those of the *pax Augusta*, characterised by military expansion and *imperium*.⁷⁰ The centrality of the emperor to the *aurea saecula* and the incorporation of righteous domination over the world completed the encomiastic whole, providing inspiration for imperial propaganda from Augustus onwards.

The characteristics and vocabulary of the golden age were so familiar that the writers of the *Panegyrici Latini* could be selective, often focusing only on a single element. For instance, the eternal spring of the *aurea aetas* was reflected in the clemency of the weather which greeted the emperor: while the rest of the world was frozen with ice and snow, Maximian's journey was springlike: *vos solos aurae lenes vernique flatus et diductis nubibus ad itinera vestra directi solis radii sequebantur* ("gentle breezes and gusts of spring followed you alone; the clouds parted and the rays of the sun shone directly on your journey", 11(3).9.2).

The fertility of the land could be another detail evocative of the golden age. In *PL* 8(5)3.1, the joint reign of Diocletian and Maximian was described in the following terms:

*O felix beatumque ver novo partu, iam non amoenitate florum nec viriditate segetum
nec gemmis vitium nec ipsis tantum favoniis et luce reserata laetum atque venerabile,
quantum ortu Caesarum maximorum!*

("O fortunate spring, blessed with new birth, happy and honoured now not so much because of the beauty of your flowers nor the verdure of the crops nor the jewels on the vines nor the westerly breezes and the light revealed, but because of the coming of the greatest of emperors!")

There is no explicit link to a single Virgilian model, but the references to birth in *novo partu* and *ortu*, to spring and the west wind, the abundance of flowers and crops, are a Virgilian composite of the *Eclogue*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*, idyllic and yet credible, and all made possible by the reign of the Dyarchy. Familiarity with the topos could also give a golden age lustre to the sudden fertility of the earth in a particular reign. Under Diocletian and Maximian, a doubling of flocks and harvests was anticipated in accordance with the words of the poets (*binos gregum fetus et duplices arborum fructus*, 10(2).11.3).⁷¹ This motif is varied in the *genethliacon*

⁷⁰ Peace, that is, in the sense of keeping the enemies of Rome in check: *pacisque imponere morem* (*Aen.* 6.852). For the association of *pax Augusta* and the golden age, see Bardill (2012) 46.

⁷¹ For fertility associated with the emperor, see Cal. Sic. *Ecl.* 4.102–16.

to Maximian, where the lives of men are also increased (*hominum aetates et numerus augetur ... cultura duplicatur*, 11(3).15.4).

In the panegyric of 310 AD, the emperor Constantine was linked with the child of the *Eclogues* through the idyllic landscape of Britain. Constantine had been hailed as emperor by the army in York, and so Britain became the birthplace of his *imperium*. In a mini-panegyric, the land is addressed as *O fortunata et nunc omnibus beator terris Britannia* (“O Britain, fortunate and now more blessed than all lands”, 6(7).9.1). The adjectives *fortunata* and *beator* link Britain with the Fortunate Islands or the Isles of the Blest, the *arva beata* of Horace (*Epod.* 16.40), which, as Servius asserts (*ad Aen.* 6.638), were associated with the *sedes beatae* of Elysium.⁷² That Constantine was not born in Britain is glossed over: he has come from there, the panegyrist declares, because Britain is so far north that sky and sea meet and it is from regions close to the heavens that an emperor is sent by the gods, *loca vicina caelo ... a dis mittitur imperator* (9.5).⁷³ There is here a hint of the Virgilian *nova progenies caelo demittitur alto* (*Ecl.* 4.7), and the landscape is clearly that of the fourth Eclogue. The line *pecorum mitium innumerabilis multitudo lacte distenta et onusta velleribus* (“a countless multitude of gentle sheep swollen with milk and laden with fleeces”, 9.2) suggests Virgil’s *ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae / ubera* (“the goats themselves bring home udders swollen with milk”, *Ecl.* 4.21–22), with *onusta velleribus* perhaps recalling the multi-coloured ram in the Eclogue: *aries ... iam croceo mutabit vellera luto* (“now the ram will change his fleece to saffron yellow”, 43–44). The absence of snakes, described in the Eclogue as *occidet et serpens* (“the serpent also will perish”, 23) is present in the line *nemora sine immanibus bestiis, terra sine serpentibus noxiis* (“woods without wild animals, land without deadly snakes”, 9.2), which also conflates Virgil’s *immanis dentibus hydri* from *Geo.* 2.141.

This engagement with the golden age is quite different from that of an earlier panegyric in the collection, a speech written c. 298 AD in honour of Constantius I, the father of Constantine.⁷⁴ The orator of 310 was familiar with this oration,⁷⁵ but the only corresponding detail in this passage is the fertility of the land. Thereafter, the earlier orator had continued with a list of other types of prosperity (8(5).11.1):

terra tanto frugum ubere, tanto laeta numero pastionum, tot metallorum fluens rivis, tot vectigalibus quaestuosa, tot accincta portibus, tanto immensa circuitu.

⁷² See Lovejoy & Boas (1935) 290–303.

⁷³ Britain had already been described in this oration as being on the edge of the world, *intimum terrarum limen* (7.1) and associated with Ultima Thule and the Fortunate Islands (7.2), lands which are often described as golden age locations (e.g. *PL* 3(11).23). The description of the long days without night (9.3) comes from Tacitus’ *Agricola* 12.2, another encomiastic text.

⁷⁴ On the dating of this oration, see Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 105.

⁷⁵ Intertextual influence (e.g. the siege of Bononia, 6(7).5.1–3 and 8(5).6–7) shows that the orator of 310 knew this speech.

(“a land with such wealth of crops, rejoicing in such a number of pastures, overflowing with so many streams of ore, so profitable with tax revenue, surrounded by so many ports, so mighty in circumference”).

Here is quite a different Britain to that of *PL* 6(7). This is a land which has benefited from Roman civilisation and is proud of the wealth brought about by metals, taxes and trading. It is a landscape derived not from the utopia of the fourth Eclogue but from the more realistic golden age attributes of the *laudes Italiae* in the *Georgics*. Virgil’s Italy was also rich in crops, *gravidae fruges* (*Geo.* 2.143) and in mineral resources, the *tot metallorum fluens rivis* of Britain summarising the streams of silver, bronze and gold in Italy, *haec eadem argenti rivos aerisque metalla / ostendit venis atque auro plurima fluxit* (“this same land displayed streams of silver and mines of copper, and it flowed abundantly with gold”, 165–66). Virgil’s Italy owed its prosperity to military strength, and Virgil referred to war horses, triumphs and the victories of Caesar: the passage is an implicit celebration of the restoration of order after the civil war chaos at the end of the first book of the *Georgics*.⁷⁶ *PL* 8(5) ends with the liberation of Britain and the joy of the inhabitants (19.1, 4). In the allusion to the *laudes Italiae*, therefore, and the restoration of peace by Augustus, the orator anticipates the restoration of order under Constantius.

In 389 AD, Pacatus drew on the earlier panegyrist’s descriptions of Britain and the *laudes Italiae* of the *Georgics* to praise Spain, the birthplace of Theodosius, a land which was more blessed, *felicior*, than all other lands, of temperate climate (*PL* 2(12).4.2–3) and rich in wealth (4.4):

*Adde tot egregias civitates, adde culta incultaque omnia vel fructibus plena vel gregibus,
adde auriferorum opes fluminum, adde radiantium metalla gemmarum.*

(“Add so many outstanding cities, add land cultivated and fallow, abundant in either fruit or herds, add the wealth of gold-bearing rivers, add the lustre of shining jewels”).

The opening words echo Virgil’s *adde tot egregias urbes* (*Geo.* 2.155), combined with the streams of precious metals, *argenti rivos aerisque metalla* (165): Virgil and the earlier panegyrists serve to reinforce praise of Theodosius.

The need for security in the 4th century expanded the remit of the Virgilian golden age. In the oration of 298 AD, the orator praises the military reinforcements which the reign of Diocletian and Maximian had brought to the frontiers, and the fact that now trees could be

⁷⁶ See Nappa (2005) 84–85.

replanted and cities rebuilt. Trees, crops and city walls alike seem to spring up in the temperate weather which resulted from the new golden age of the emperors (9(4).18.4–5):

Qua veris autumnive clementia tot manu positae arbores convalescunt, quo calore solis tot depressae imbribus segetes resurgunt, quot ubique muri vix repertis veterum fundamentorum vestigiis excitantur! Adeo, ut res est, aurea illa saecula, quae non diu quondam Saturno rege vigerunt, nunc aeternis auspiciis Iovis et Herculis renascuntur.

(“How many trees set out by hand grow strong in the mild weather of spring or fall, how many crops, once beaten down by rain, rise up again in the heat of summer, as walls, the traces of their old foundations scarcely discernible, are being erected everywhere! Thus in actual fact that golden age which once flourished briefly when Saturn was king, is now reborn under the eternal auspices of Jupiter and Hercules”).⁷⁷

The notion of the rebirth of ages, *saecula ... renascuntur*, echoes *Ecl.* 4, *saeculorum nascitur ordo* (5), but a frontier fortified against barbarian invasion seems an unlikely attribute of the idyllic golden age. It is however intelligible as a late antique interpretation of the *aurea saecula* which Augustus was to found and which involved the extension of *imperium*. The verbal echoes of *Aen.* 6 are explicit (*aurea ... saecula, Saturno quondam*, 792, 795) and the change of tense from future to present is emphatically encomiastic. In this newly secure environment, the arts can flourish and schools can be rebuilt: the orator’s purpose in this panegyric is to plead for the restoration of schools of rhetoric at Autun.⁷⁸

Golden age imagery could also be applied to political office, as Mamertinus’ panegyric to Julian demonstrates. Following the familiar theme of abundant harvests, *multiplies fructus ... vindemia triplex ... multiplicata fecunditas* (“multiple crops ... triple vintages ... fertility multiplied”, 3(11).22.1), Mamertinus surveys the wealth of resources which Julian had brought to imperial administration and bureaucracy, and compares it favourably with the bounty of nature apparent in the Isles of the Blest (23.1–4).⁷⁹ In place of corn and grapes, power and wealth appear of their own accord, *sponte*.⁸⁰

The various adaptations of the Virgilian golden age in the prose orations of the *Panegyrici Latini* suggest that the orators were influenced above all by the ideology of *Aen.* 6. The

⁷⁷ Adapted from Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 170.

⁷⁸ See Nixon & Rodgers (1994) 146–48.

⁷⁹ *quas Fortunatorum insulas vocant, quod per eas non arato solo frumenta nascuntur, fortuitis vitibus iuga collium vestiuntur, sponte pomis arbor gravatur* (“which they call the Islands of the Blessed, because crops grow there without tillage, the slopes of the mountains are clothed with vines by chance, of their own accord the trees are heavy with fruit”, 23.1–4).

⁸⁰ *sponte*, in the context of generous nature, is a golden age marker: e.g. *Virg. Ecl.* 4.45; *Ov. Met.* 1.90.

renewal of the golden age in these panegyrics may have some unlikely characteristics, but this is a natural extension of the prophecy in the *Aeneid*, where extended *imperium* characterises the return of the *aurea saecula* under Augustus. His reign had made the *laudes Italiae* of the *Georgics* possible. For the Gallic orators of the *Panegyrici Latini*, familiar with the devastation suffered by their country during the upheavals of the 3rd century,⁸¹ the fortified prosperity of Augustan Italy represented the ideal and the real. The panegyrists omit the more fanciful details of the fourth Eclogue and instead exaggerate what is possible: unseasonal warmth accompanying the emperor in icy weather, double harvests under his auspices.

Conclusion: Virgil and the language of encomium

In the context of panegyric, therefore, it is clear that certain words and phrases from Virgil have particular encomiastic resonance. *Fugat nubes, deo plenus, eius nutu* are enough to invoke the boundless power of the emperor, Jupiter's earthly representative, while a reference to unexpectedly vernal temperatures or super-abundant crops signals the golden age. The source of a particular allusion, however, is not always clearcut. As demonstrated, the panegyrists liked to layer their allusions, so that a reference to Virgil is also a reference to several earlier imperial panegyrists or to other encomiastic passages. Because so few panegyrics have survived, we cannot assess the influence of other rhetoricians, although there is a reference to Fronto's praise of Antoninus Pius and Fronto himself is commended as the equal of Cicero.⁸² Nor can we be sure what poetic references are missing. Ennius, for example, who is the only other poet explicitly cited in the collection, must have been a significant source of encomiastic material. It is suggestive that the one direct citation of Ennius in the *Panegyrici Latini* (11(3).16.3) is from his epitaph on Scipio (*epigr.* 5.21 Vahl), and so laudatory.⁸³ The final difficulty in assessing the scale of Virgilian allusion in the panegyrics is Virgil's own practice of allusion. Macrobius' *Saturnalia* 6.1–5 gives some indication of the extent of Virgil's borrowing from Ennius and others, but the loss of the sources make certainty impossible.

Disentangling even an apparently simple allusion is not necessarily straightforward. Consider Pacatus' line, *dum ultra terminos rerum metasque Naturae regna Orientis extendis*

⁸¹ See Drinkwater (1987).

⁸² *Romanae eloquentiae non secundum sed alterum decus* ("not the second but the other glory of Roman eloquence", 8(5).14.2); for the orators of the *Panegyrici Latini*, Cicero was the *summus orator* (12(9).19.5).

⁸³ On this passage, see Ware (2017) 359. The role of Ennius, hailed by the Gallic panegyrists as *summus poeta* (9(4).7.3), is very similar to that of Virgil. Any citation from the work of *pater Ennius* brought the authority of antiquity (Rees, 2004b, 37), but the encomiastic function of his work was as well recognised as that of Virgil. Ennius was the poet whose *Annales* had brought fame to Scipio, Cato, Maximus, Marcellus and Fulvius (Hor. *Carm.* 4.8.13–22; Cic. *Arch.* 22; Dominik 1993, 50) and he was the main source of the parade of heroes in *Aen.* 6 (Goldschmidt, 2013, 166–79 discusses exemplarity and Virgil's debt to Ennius in *Aen.* 6).

(“while you extend your reign in the east beyond the boundaries of empire and the limits of Nature”, 2(12).23.1). This seems in words and theme a clear citation of *Aen.* 1.278, 86–87:

*his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono ...
Nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar
Imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris.*

(“for these, I set limits neither of place nor time ...
A Trojan Caesar will be born of this noble race
who will limit his empire with Ocean, his fame with the stars”).

A word search of the *Panegyrici Latini* shows that the juxtaposition of *imperium* and *termini* is a popular one,⁸⁴ and it would seem reasonable to assume that the orators had this Virgilian passage in mind. In one case at least, however, the model is not Virgilian but Ciceronian. *Vos, vero, qui imperium non terrae sed caeli regionibus terminatis* (“You, indeed, who limit your power not by the regions of the earth but of the sky” (10(2).10.1) comes from Cicero’s praise of Pompey and himself as the men who had protected Rome: *quorum alter finis vestri imperii non terrae, sed caeli regionibus terminaret, alter huius imperii domicilium sedisque servaret*, (“one of whom limited the bounds of your power not by the regions of the earth but of the sky, while the other protected the home and abode of that power”, *Cat.* 3.26).⁸⁵ In Cicero’s speech, Pompey is the man who extended Roman power to the boundaries of the sky, and he himself is the one, *alter*, who protected the seat of that power. This division of government and *imperium* makes the allusion a very suitable parallel for Diocletian and Maximian, who, in this panegyric, divide their spheres of influence so that Maximian, as the Herculian emperor, is victorious over the whole world (2.1), assisting the Jovian Diocletian as Hercules had supported Jupiter in the war against the Giants (4.1).⁸⁶

What, then, is the allusion hunter to do with the other combinations of *imperium* and *termini* in such phrases as *omnemque illam rabiem extra terminos huius imperii in terras hostium distulistis* (“you have pushed away all that fury beyond the bounds of this empire into the lands of the enemy”, 11(3).16.2), or *eat quin immo in immensum felicitis cursus imperii, nec humanorum terminos curent qui semper divina meditantur* (“rather, let the course of his blessed reign continue without measure, and let those who think always of divine matters not concern themselves with mortal boundaries”, 4(10).2.6)? The safe answer is to speak of

⁸⁴ 10(2).7.2, 10.1; 11(2).16.2; 8(5).3.3; 4(10).2.6; 2(12).23.1.

⁸⁵ The contextual parallels are too close for this line to be dismissed, as Klotz (1911) 533 suggests, as a rhetorical commonplace.

⁸⁶ This is in no way a denigration of Maximian, but rather a skilful way of acknowledging the power and seniority of Diocletian in a panegyric in honour of Maximian alone.

encomiastic language rather than specific allusion; equally, it could be argued that Virgil had made the Ciceronian language his own. In his writings, Cicero had expanded the meaning of *imperium* to refer to the abstract power of the Roman people rather than the specific authority of magistrates.⁸⁷ Praising Pompey, Cicero had utilised the encomiastic potential of *imperium*,⁸⁸ and this model, possessing the exaggerated qualities of panegyric, was to hand when Virgil created the prophecy of Jupiter. Virgil's imitation became more memorable than the original and so the term became "Virgilian". Or, as Praetextatus summed up in the *Saturnalia* (6.1.6):

Denique et iudicio transferendi et modo imitandi consecutus est ut quod apud illum legerimus alienum, aut illius esse malimus aut melius hic quam ubi natum est sonare miremur.

("In short, [Virgil] followed his models with such discernment in allusion and manner of imitation that when we read another's lines in Virgil, either we prefer to accept it as his or we wonder at how much better it sounds than in the original").

Virgil found similar aggrandisement in the language of philosophy. Lucretius tells of the gods as living in the cloudless *aether*, a region undisturbed by winds and rain, smiling in widely diffused light, *large diffuso lumine ridet* (3.22). In the *Aeneid*, this becomes Jupiter's abode, high above clouds and storms, from where he can view earth, sea and sky. Lucretius had given the name *divina mens* to the inspiration for Epicurean philosophy, whether referring to Epicurus or some inspirational deity (1.15),⁸⁹ and had argued that the vital spirit, *anima*, spread throughout the limbs, was governed by the nod and inclination of the *mens*, *ad numen mentis momenque movetur* (3.143–44).⁹⁰ For the Stoics, god was the *anima mundi* or *mens universi*, which was diffused throughout the universe.⁹¹ Such descriptions underpin Anchises' account of the souls waiting for rebirth. He tells Aeneas that mankind and all living creatures are animated by an unnamed god or divine spirit, which spreads throughout the limbs and motivates the whole (*Aen.* 6.724–27). Anchises' explanation prefaces the Parade of Heroes, creating a cosmic setting for Roman history.⁹² Acting on the principle that all aspects of the *Aeneid* relate to imperial praise, the Gallic orators identified the *divina mens* with Jupiter and, by extension, with the emperors. Their fondness for this passage meant that philosophical language, through the medium of Virgil, became part of imperial panegyric.

⁸⁷ See Richardson (2008) 63–92.

⁸⁸ Cf. *de vestri imperi dignitate et gloria* ("concerning the dignity and glory of your power", Cic. *Pro leg. Manil.* 11). Braund (1988) 55 describes Cicero's Caesarian speeches as "proto-panegyrics"; on the influence of Cicero on panegyric, see Manuwald (2011).

⁸⁹ See Fratantuono (2015) 164.

⁹⁰ See Bailey (1947) 1013.

⁹¹ Sen. *Nat. quaest.* 1, pr. 13; Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.39.

⁹² Hardie (1986) 66–67.

In short, Virgil may not have created the highflown language of universal dominion, but he had made it applicable to Roman *imperium* and to the universality of Rome under Augustus. If, for example, Cicero was the first to praise a statesman for *imperium* without limits, Virgil had applied this locution to imperial panegyric. The epideictic technique of reinforcing one laudatory phrase with another meant that all encomiastic discourse could be drawn into the orbit of Virgilian panegyric. As Vereeke rightly observes: “nothing resembles a panegyric more than another panegyric”.⁹³ Vereeke was concerned with rhetorical models, but his conclusion also applies to language. The same words and phrases recur and Virgil, whether as borrower or creator of imperial discourse, is the unifying factor.

What emerges from a survey of Virgil’s influence on the prose panegyrics is that Virgilian intertextuality among the Gallic orators was a highly complex technique, incorporating multiple allusions to Virgil from a variety of sources, and influenced by critical writings on the meanings of his work. While Virgil as the poet of battle is used to add poetic colour and epic style as required, his value above all was as the voice of *Romanitas* and *imperium*. Certain passages were of particular relevance in affirming the quasi-divine power of the emperor and the boundless sway of Rome. Frequently, Virgilian allusion was supported by reference to other encomiastic passages, whether another line from Virgil, a reference to an earlier work in the collection, or an encomiastic passage from Cicero or Ennius. When the *Panegyrici Latini* is read as a corpus, Virgilian allusion seems to be a communal effort, as the same themes, phrases and words are repeated throughout the speeches. In the preface to his *Saturnalia*, Macrobius had described scholars and teachers as performing the work of bees, blending different kinds of nectar to give a single flavour (*pr.* 5–6). He advised that they should gather together and make a single unity from the various sources (*ex omnibus colligamus unde unum fiat, pr.* 8), just as different voices join together to form a chorus.⁹⁴ It is a simile which perfectly describes the Gallic panegyricists’ use of Virgilian allusion.

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⁹³ Vereeke (1974) 155.

⁹⁴ On this passage, see MacCormack (1998) 81–82.

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