

The tears in things: How the Jesuits “ripped up” Virgil

Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 20 January 2019

Virgil was the Roman poet most revered by early modern Jesuits, yet his significance for the Society of Jesus is in some ways as elusive as his presence was ubiquitous. In their *Ratio Studiorum* (‘Code of Studies’, Rome, 1599) we read the following rule for the penultimate class of the lower curriculum, “Humanities” (sometimes called “Poetry”):

“Virgil, with the exceptions of some eclogues and the fourth book of the *Aeneid* is the matter for poetry, along with Horace’s selected odes. To these may be added elegies, epigrams and other poems of recognized poets, provided they are purged of all immoral expressions”.¹

At the Roman College at the turn of the 18th century, Rainier Carsughi exhorted his “Rhetoric” (final year of high school) students, in a didactic poem on the ‘Art of Writing Well’, to “praise excellent poets but worship Virgil” if they aspired to write “divine poetry”.² It is not clear whether Carsughi means by “divine” here poetry which is devoted to sacred themes, or simply that which is serious or sublime.

The first Jesuits inherited the cult of Virgil from Italian Renaissance humanism. Marco Girolamo Vida (?1485–1566), humanist churchman and ultimately bishop of Alba, composed a delightful Georgic on silkworms as well as his more ambitious epic *Christiad*, and rounded off his three-book *De arte poetica* with a hymn to Virgil.³ But already in the

¹ A. P. Farrell (ed. and trans), *The Jesuit Ratio studiorum of 1599*, Washington DC, 80. In the previous class, “Upper Grammar”, the first semester should be dedicated to the expurgated elegies and epistles of Ovid; in the second, some “easier” books of Virgil, such as *Geo.* 4 and *Aen.* 7, and some *Eclogues*, may be introduced, along with (expurgated!) selections from Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius.

² Carsughi’s *Ars bene scribendi* (Rome, 1709) is available, with a short introduction, at <http://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/desbillons/rainer.html>.

³ R. G. Williams (ed), *The De arte Poetica of Marco Girolamo Vida*, 1976, New York. It would be otiose to produce the titles of the many Renaissance epics, including biblical ones, modelled on Virgil, but among the better-known works available to early Jesuit poets were Girolamo Fracastoro’s on Joseph, Jacopo Sannazaro’s on the Virgin Mary, and Scipione Capece’s on John the Baptist. See C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas: Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Italian Renaissance*, 1989, Hanover.

first phase of the Jesuit order (that is, in the second half of the 16th century), some neo-Augustinian scruples were being raised against the divine Maro by Jesuit book censor and bibliographer Antonio Possevino (1533–1611), in his *Bibliotheca selecta de ratione studiorum in historia, in disciplinis, in salute omnium procuranda* (Rome, 1593). Surprisingly, perhaps, more space is devoted by Possevino to cautioning us against the dangers of Virgil than even Lucretius.⁴

Possevino's reservations largely concern the *Aeneid*, yet one suspects the Jesuits probably wrote at least as much in imitation of the *Georgics*.⁵ René Rapin's four books of *Horti* (Paris, 1665) and Jacques Vanière's sixteen on agriculture, *Praedium Rusticum* (Toulouse, 1730), were international hits beyond the Society. Indeed, the Jesuits regularly used the *Georgics* as a model not only for poems about agriculture but also on the arts and sciences. The anthology *Poemata didascalica* (Paris, 1749; expanded edition, Paris, 1813) is full of shorter to mid-length didactic poems, on butterflies and birds, typography and tar-water, earthquakes and comets. At the Jesuits' Roman College in the later 18th century, longer poems were penned on even more technical scientific subjects, including electricity, optics, astronomy and aeronautics. While many of these are prima facie "Lucretian", Giuseppe Maria Mazzolari, professor of Rhetoric at the Collegio Romano, expressed mild irritation when his *Electricorum libri VI* (Rome, 1767) was compared to the *De rerum natura*, claiming that he had only ever aspired to be Virgilian. For present purposes, however, I set aside this considerable didactic-poetic production, to explore Jesuit engagement with Virgil's apex poem, the *Aeneid*. I will focus on two poems from the early and final days of the "Old" Society (that is, before its restoration in 1814): Francesco Benci's *Quinque martyres* (Venice, 1591) and Emmanuel de Azevedo's *Heroum libri iv* ("Louvain", 1789). Quite apart from their Virgilian credentials, these works offer revealing snapshots of Jesuit hopes and concerns at critical historical moments for the order.

College / Collage

More than a decade before Possevino's *Bibliotheca selecta*, and indeed eight years before the promulgation of the *Ratio studiorum*, Francesco Benci (1542–1594), professor of Rhetoric at the Roman College, published a Latin epic in six books on the five Jesuit missionaries martyred in Southern India, at Cuncolim, in 1581. As Paul Gwynne has shown in his recent edition of the *Quinque martyres* (Venice, 1591; Rome, 1592), Benci worked faster than might be assumed

⁴ See Y. Haskell, 'Practicing What They Preach? Vergil and the Jesuits', in J. Farrell & M. Putnam (eds), *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*, 2010, Malden, 203–16.

⁵ I have discussed their contributions to the didactic genre in the 17th–18th centuries in *Loyola's Bees: Ideology and Industry in Jesuit Latin Didactic Poetry*, 2003, Oxford.

from the poem’s date of publication.⁶ He was at the time of composition a busy teacher and bureaucrat, tasked with collating a vast correspondence for the young Society’s annual report (the *Litterae annuae*). Gwynne suggests that the poet had to rely on “economical” methods of composition, including cento, to patch together his epic.⁷ An edition of Benci’s poems and dramas seems not to have been entertained for Harvard’s *I Tatti Renaissance Library*, but it is worth underlining that the Jesuit was a close successor to the High Renaissance biblical epicists Vida, Sannazaro, Fracastoro, and Scipione Capece, and a contemporary and correspondent of Pier-Angeli da Barga, whose *Syrias hoc est expeditio illa celeberrima Christianorum principum, qua Hierosolyma ducta Goffredi Bulioni ... a Turcorum tyrannide liberata est* (Florence, 1591) was composed during the same period as *QM*.⁸ That said, Benci strikes out in new directions vis-à-vis these Renaissance Christian epic poets. He appears to be the first neo-Latin epicist to have set his sights on a new world beyond the Americas.⁹ His poem, moreover, is not merely epideictic in the ways Kallendorf has indicated of earlier Renaissance epic, that is, concerned with praise and blame;¹⁰ it is *protreptic*. Its readers, in the first instance Jesuit schoolboys and seminarians, are expressly called upon not just to admire its great-souled heroes, but to *emulate* them, to aspire to martyrdom and sainthood (*QM*, bk 1.20–37).¹¹ A question arises as to the work’s (and for that matter later Jesuit epics’) literary status as poetry versus propaganda. While similar questions have of course been posed of the *Aeneid*, the emotions which Jesuit epics aim to invoke are more explicitly described and indeed *prescribed* for their readers.¹²

⁶ For Benci’s poem I refer throughout to Gwynne’s edition and translation, *Francesco Benci’s Quinque Martyres: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, 2018, Leiden (hereafter *QM*).

⁷ *QM*, 48; 53–55. In fact Possevino, in his *Bibliotheca selecta*, had commended the Renaissance centonists Lelio and Giulio Capilupi as a workaround for Virgilian imitation. He also prepared an edition of Lelio’s *Centones* and dedicated it to Joachim Du Bellay (Rome, 1555). See G. H. Tucker, ‘Mantua’s “Second Virgil”: Du Bellay, Montaigne and the curious fortune of Lelio Capilupi’s *Centones ex Virgilio* [Romae, 1555]’, in G. Tournoy & D. Sacré (eds), *Ut Granum Sinapis: Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Honour of Jozef Ijsewijn*, 1997, Leiden, 264–91. On efficient production of Latin verse in the Renaissance, see P. Gwynne & B. Schirg (eds), *The Economics of Poetry. The Efficient Production of Neo-Latin Verse, 1400–1720*, Oxford, 2018.

⁸ See A. Winkler, ‘Pietro Angeli da Barga’s *Syrias* (1582–91) and Contemporary Debates over Epic Poetry’, in F. Schaffnerath & A. Winkler (eds), *Neo-Latin and the Vernaculars: Bilingual Interactions in the Early Modern Period*, 2019, Leiden, 212–318.

⁹ His star student Giulio Cesare Stella launched a series of Renaissance Columbus epics with his *Columbeidos libri priores duo* (Rome, 1585), which Benci tidied up (Rome, 1589) to bring into line with Tridentine doctrine. See H. Hofmann, ‘*Adveniat tandem Typhis qui detegat orbis*: Columbus in Neo-Latin Epic Poetry (16th–18th Centuries)’, in W. Haase & M. Reinhold (eds), *European Images of the Americas and the Classical Tradition*, 1994, Berlin, 420–656 (469). Gwynne claims Benci as the first Jesuit epic poet, but that title may belong to the missionary José d’Anchieta, whose *De Gestis Mendi de Saa* (Coimbra, 1563) was written in America. See A. Rolim de Moura, ‘“Love of War” and “Fierce Tigresses”: Statius, Lucan and Anchieta’s *De Gestis Mendi de Saa*’, *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies* 11 (2016), 1–17.

¹⁰ See Kallendorf (n.3 above).

¹¹ Cf. Gwynne, *QM*, 69–70.

¹² See further Y. Haskell and R. Garrod (eds), *Changing Hearts: Performing Jesuit Emotions between Europe, Asia and the Americas*, 2019, Leiden.

The title of my paper puns on two senses of “tears”. First, obviously, the Virgilian *lacrimae rerum*, shorthand here for that crucial affective dimension of Jesuit epic. But there is also the not-unrelated issue of how Jesuit poets, over the course of two centuries, “ripped up” the *Aeneid*, shuffling its pieces to present us with an ever-changing kaleidoscope of historical scenes and intertextual memories. But which pieces did they prefer? Gwynne points out that Benci was lecturing on Virgil at the Collegio Romano at the time he was composing *QM*.¹³ The nexus between writing and teaching is important.¹⁴ It may well be instructive, where archival sources permit, to plot the relative density of Virgilian intertexts against the set books taught by Jesuit poets – poets who were usually time-strapped teachers of the Rhetoric class. It is surely no accident, for example, that the second book of the German Jesuit Jacob Bidermann’s (1578–1639) epic on the Massacre of the Innocents, *Herodiados libri iii* (Dillingen, 1622), includes a long set-piece on gladiatorial games for Herod. *Aen.* 5 was one of the recommended texts for students of the Upper Grammar class. The demon Phorbus in Benci’s poem, modelled on Virgil’s Allecto, will have been instantly recognizable to students who had recently read *Aen.* 7. Of course, the reasons for selecting this or that section for imitation go beyond mere curricular coincidence. Narrative resonance with the chosen historical or hagiographical theme was undoubtedly more decisive. But we also find Virgilian verses and characters teleported into unfamiliar settings or in disorientating disguises. Thus if both Possevino and the *Ratio studiorum* cautioned against the reading of *Aen.* 4, Dido would go through several curious incarnations on the Jesuit epic page and college stage.¹⁵ Is it possible to discern a distinctive pattern in the Jesuit epic patchwork through so many permutations and over such a long time period; and if not, at least a characteristic *modus (re)componendi*?

Gwynne identifies three types of Virgilian imitation in Benci.¹⁶ The first, the fitting together of Virgilian *membra* (i.e. half lines or *clausulae*), with perhaps a piece here and there culled from another epic poet, approaches what we think of as cento. In the second, a line or a line and a half is lifted from Virgil and then very lightly modified, e.g. the mood of a verb. The third is where Benci imitates his model in a more sustained way, revealing a “more creative and

¹³ *QM*, 46. A copy of student notes to his lectures survives in the Vatican Library (Vat. Lat. 756).

¹⁴ See Y. Haskell, ‘*Latinitas Iesu*: Neo-Latin writing and the literary-emotional communities of the Old Society of Jesus’, in I. G. Županov (ed), *Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, 2019, Oxford, 553–74.

¹⁵ See, for example, the musical drama *Pietas in Peregrinos* by Johann Baptist Adolph and Georg Bernhard Staudt, where Dido lets Aeneas go with a good grace, to fulfil his mission (in *Dramata varia a gymnasio domus profesaee Societatis Iesu a. 1687–1704 acta cum musica Bernardi Staudt*, Vienna, Austrian National Library Cod. 9813 Han, vol. 5). Possevino’s Tridentine scruples about *Aen.* 4 did not deter Charles de la Rue, Jesuit editor of the Dauphin edition of Virgil’s *Opera omnia*, from describing this book as “the one possessing the most art and sweetness, and the most tender and violent emotions: especially in the eight speeches of Dido” (C. Ruæus, *P. Virgilii Maronis Opera ... Ad Usum Delphini*, 1675, Paris, 55). Cf. the extensive commentary on book 4 by Spanish Jesuit Juan Luis de la Cerda, *Aeneidos libri sex priores* (1628², Cologne, 370–487).

¹⁶ *QM*, 48–52.

nuanced reading of the source”. Here Gwynne gives the example of the demon Phorbus, who infiltrates the Hindu population of Cuncolim and sows resistance to the Christian missionaries: his snaky appearance recalls the fury Allecto, while his opening speech incorporates parts of Juno’s opening harangue against the Trojans.¹⁷ Gwynne concedes that “not all the echoes of classical epic illuminate the narrative”, and sometimes the “intertextual context ... adds little or nothing to [B’s] narrative. Nevertheless, in their entirety, these examples all offer insight into the poet’s method of composition. With the narrative idea fixed, we must imagine Benci sifting, physically or mentally, through the works of Virgil for an apposite verse, preferably a line end, and adapting it to his present needs”.¹⁸

It should be noted that Benci also had recourse to the full range of Roman epic, from Lucretius to Lucan, and to Christian narrative poets such as Prudentius, Sedulius, Juvenecus and Arator.¹⁹ Nor did he hesitate to borrow from *neo*-Latin poetry, especially Vida’s *Christiad*,²⁰ and even from Fracastoro’s famous didactic poem on syphilis. Moreover, Benci and his Jesuit successors do not merely imitate, but seek to improve, Virgil – if not stylistically then morally and spiritually. The French Jesuit Laurent Lebrun (1608–1663) is frank in the prologue to his twelve-book *Ignatiad*, the final poem of his *Virgilius Christianus*,²¹ when he proposes that Ignatius is not merely a more pious hero than Aeneas, he is an even better soldier; that the founding of the Society of Jesus was a more noble end for an epic than the founding of Rome, and so on.²²

Whose side are you on?

The Jesuits were, of course, far from the first centonists, and modern classicists may be less interested in how they cobbled together Virgilian verses than in how they engaged with the *Aeneid* as a whole: whether they appropriated or resisted its secular imperialism; how, and to what ends, they recast its heroes, gods and goddesses, its supporting characters; and perhaps

¹⁷ *QM*, bk 2.398–409, discussed at *QM*, 50.

¹⁸ *QM*, 58.

¹⁹ See Gwynne *QM*, 35–45.

²⁰ Gwynne (*QM*, 59) suggests that Vida’s poem is a more plausible structural model for *QM* than the first six books of the *Aeneid*.

²¹ *Virgilius Christianus: Eclogae XII. Psycurgicon sive De cultura animi Solom. Eccl. cap. XII. Ignatiados libri XII. Opuscula selecta XII*, 1661, Paris, 201–28 (= the third part of Lebrun’s propaedeutic discourse on epic).

²² The 17th-century Neapolitan Jesuit Niccolò Giannettasio styled himself “Parthenius” after his city of birth, but also to honour the Virgin and Virgil’s teacher. His unfinished epic on the wanderings of St Francis Xavier is discussed by Elisabeth Klecker, in ‘*Amor addidit alas: ein neulateinisches Epos über die Missionsreisen des H. Franz Xaver S.J.*’, in R. Haub & J. Oswald, S.J. (eds), *Franz-Xaver – Patron der Missionen: Festschrift zum 450. Todestag*, 2002, Regensburg. Giannettasio’s *Nautica*, though a didactic poem, takes its bearings from the heroic Virgil, as Claudia Schindler has demonstrated in ‘Niccolò Partenio Giannettasios *Nauticorum libri VIII: Ein neulateinisches Lehrgedicht des 17. Jahrhunderts*’, *NLJ* 3 (2001), 145–76.

especially, whether they amplified Virgil's "other" voices: the Didos, Camillas, Amatas, and Turnuses. In *The Other Virgil*, Craig Kallendorf limns the early modern backstory to that familiar struggle for the soul of the *Aeneid* in 20th-century Virgilian criticism, the debates over its "optimism" or "pessimism" about the new Augustan order.²³ In particular, Kallendorf's discussion of anti-imperialist readings of Alonso de Ercilla's vernacular epic, *La Araucana*, published in three instalments (Madrid, 1569, 1578, 1589), on the Spanish conquest of Chile, provides a useful comparator for early modern Jesuit epics of spiritual conquest. The jury is out on whether Ercilla had serious moral misgivings about the Spanish imperial enterprise, in which he himself participated, but he certainly inspires sympathy for the native Araucanans and their chief – perhaps more than Virgil did for his indigenous Italians.

It may not be surprising to learn, however, that this sort of moral ambiguity is generally absent from Jesuit Latin epic. Benci's aims and allegiances are clear from the outset. His primary goal is to recruit for the missions and inspire future martyrdoms for the greater glory of God; and indeed, as Gwynne points out, to strengthen the case for beatification and canonisation of the Cuncolim five, whose leader, Rodolfo Acquaviva, was the nephew of the Jesuit Superior General, Claudio Acquaviva.²⁴ Fundamentally, then, our poet harnesses the cultural power and prestige of the *Aeneid* to tell an edifying story of Christian triumph over heathen superstition. As such, and in its overwhelmingly negative representation of Indian religion, *QM* is a confronting text for the post-colonial reader.²⁵ We are led to understand the rejection of Christian cult not as an historical instance of misguided political resistance to the religion of a colonial oppressor, but rather as the manifestation of a diabolical and perennial revolt against the one true God.²⁶ I bypass for present purposes the interesting issue of the representation of gods, angels and demons, Christian and pagan, in Benci's and later Jesuit epic, but it may well be wondered whether there is any trace in the poem of that famous Jesuit missionary principle of "accommodation" to local beliefs and customs.²⁷

²³ *The Other Virgil: 'Pessimistic' Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture*, 2007, Oxford.

²⁴ *QM*, 2 and *passim*.

²⁵ For the historical detail of his narrative, Benci relied heavily on the official report of the Cuncolim massacre from Alessandro Valignano, Provincial of Goa, Claudio Acquaviva (reproduced in an appendix to *QM*, 690–708). Benci also drew on other sources for ethnographic and natural-historical detail. I am grateful to Paolo Aranha for bringing to my attention to Casanatense MS 1889, which contains illustrations, probably by a local artist, of some of the religious practices described by Benci. (Benci cannot however have seen this particular manuscript, as it was held in Lisbon until 1628). See 'The Codex Casanatense 1889', (special issue of) *Anais de Historia de Alem-Mar* 13 (2012).

²⁶ Cf. Jacob Masen's "Miltonian" *Sarcotis*, first published in the third part of his *Palaestra Eloquentiae Ligatae*, (Cologne, 1657).

²⁷ For a recent review of Jesuit views of "accommodation", which go back to a letter of St Ignatius in 1549 to Alfonso Salmeron and St Peter Canisius on adapting to the "wits and affections" of those with whom they had to deal in their mission to Ingolstadt, see A. I. Prieto, 'The Perils of Accommodation: Jesuit Missionary Strategies in the Early Modern World', in *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 4 (2017), 395–414.

And if not sympathy for the devil *per se*, do we catch any echoes of Virgil’s “other voices” in Benci’s representation of the Indians who passionately defend their ancestral gods against the Portuguese?

In book 1 we first meet the Italian Rodolfo Acquaviva, *primus inter pares* of the epic’s five heroes, who is impatient for martyrdom after a frustrating sojourn at the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar in Northern India, a narrative element which corresponds, structurally, to Aeneas’ detention by Dido. Akbar is, of course, no love interest for Rodolfo, even if the emperor does attempt to “seduce” the missionary with gifts, favours and intellectual delights. The Muslim Akbar (1542–1605) – a captivating historical figure, who hosted not only Jesuits, but Jains, Hindus and even atheists at his interfaith conferences in Fatehpur Sikri – receives a subtly different character portrait from the Hindus of the South and from his co-religionary, the “savage” Idal Khan, sultan of Bijapur, who wages a border war with the Christians for control of Salcete. Notwithstanding his host’s great magnanimity and learning, however, Acquaviva longs to give him the slip, frustrated by the lack of spiritual fruit the missionaries have gleaned at court: “What is the point of such love, such devotion in my heart, if they are not used and all this work is thrown aside? See! We left the Mughal territory unscathed and we have not yet suffered wounds. We stood ready for the fight, but lost no blood”.²⁸

Acquaviva’s prayers and meditations are answered by the apparition of his guardian angel, the counterpart of Mercury in *Aen.* 4, except that here, significantly, the divine intervention has been solicited *by* the hero. The future martyr is granted a dream vision, under the careful supervision of his angel, of the torture and deaths of the early Christians and English Jesuits. As Acquaviva contemplates these grim tableaux of execution, corresponding to contemporary Jesuit painting commissions in Rome,²⁹ the angel instructs him (and, by extension, us) to look, hear and *feel*, prescribing the correct – if to modern minds almost incomprehensible – responses to these “wondrous” sights (bk 1.307–512). Benci’s epideictic poetic practice draws on Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*, with its systematic exploitation of the senses and passions

²⁸ *Quo tam cupido, / Quo studium hoc animis, si cessant omnia, et omnis / Amissus labor? En Mogorum decessimus oris / Incolumes; nec dum nobis ad vulnera ventum est. / In pugna stetimus, sine sanguine* (bk 1.93–96; Gwynne’s translation with some alterations).

²⁹ At bk 1.245–52, as Gwynne points out, the poet compares the heavenly vision granted to Rodolfo with the frescoes by Niccolò Circignani at Santo Stefano Rotondo, in the Hungarian College in Rome; the English martyrs celebrated at bk 1.516–41 correspond to a series of five large copperplate engravings attributed to Giovan Battista de’ Cavalieri (c. 1525–1601), printed first in Richard Verstegan, *Descriptiones quaedam illius inhumanae et multiplicis persecutionis, quam in Anglia propter fidem sustinent Catholice Christiani* (Rome, 1584), and later included in an edition of *Ecclesiae militantis triumphus* (Rome, 1585). Cf. Jeronimo Nadal’s *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (Antwerp, 1594). See Gwynne, *QM*, 78–85. For an overview of Jesuit art in Rome at the time of the poem’s composition, see also G. A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610*, Toronto, 2003.

to lead us to predetermined spiritual ends.³⁰ While we are broadly reminded of the parade of heroes in *Aen.* 6, the angelic ekphrasis, guiding the hero's / reader's attention point by point – leaving nothing, as it were, to the wandering imagination – is in harmony with an emerging rhetorico-spiritual strategy in the Society of Jesus to channel and focus emotion through multi-media imprinting, a strategy that would find impressive expressions in Jesuit art, emblematics and school drama.³¹ The angel's instructions to Acquaviva (and elsewhere, the poet's to the reader) are, however, only one aspect of the assiduous parsing of characters' thoughts and emotions throughout the poem – a feature of Benci's and later Jesuit epics that is much more conspicuous than in the *Aeneid*.³² Few heroes of Jesuit epic, at any rate, could be accused of the taciturnity of Aeneas, even if their "speeches" are sometimes delivered in the form of private prayer.³³

Benci also influences us to come to the "right" conclusions about Christians and Indians by cross-hatching contemporary figures and events with classical, especially Virgilian, characters and episodes. Sometimes the Virgilian typology is evident from direct verbal allusions; elsewhere, as in the aforementioned parallel between Akbar and Dido, it is more situational. Faithfulness to the letter or even spirit of the Virgilian narrative is, of course, less important for Jesuit poets than the events of sacred history or hagiography. Yet the retrofitting of current or historical events to Virgilian episodes and characters undoubtedly enhances their memorability and imbues them with both ideological colour and affective power. Gwynne has observed (*QM*, 26) that the journey of the five companions to the rebellious city of Cuncolim in the third book, which had fortuitously included a ferry crossing, broadly recalls the katabasis of Aeneas in *Aen.* 6. But even before the Jesuits' arrival in Cuncolim, Benci has primed us to regard its citizens as living in a spiritual Hell on Earth. At the beginning

³⁰ Gwynne (*QM*, 28) finds allusions to the *Spiritual Exercises* in book 4, where Acquaviva retells, for the benefit of his companions, the lecture he gave to the Emperor Akbar on Christ's life and passion. On affective imprinting through *performance* of emotions, see the Introduction to Haskell & Garrod (n.12 above).

³¹ This is a large topic, but see e.g. R. Dekoninck, *Ad Imaginem. Statuts, fonctions et usages de l'image dans la littérature spirituelle jésuite du XVIIe siècle*, 2005, Geneva; J. O'Malley, S.J. (ed), *Art, Controversy and the Jesuits: The Imago primi saeculi (1640)*, 2015, Philadelphia; W. de Boer, K. A. E. Enenkel & W. Melion (eds), *Jesuit Image Theory*, 2013, Leiden; R. Dekoninck, M. Delbeke, A. Delfosse & K. Vermeir, 'Performing Emotions at the Canonization of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier in the Southern Low Countries', in Haskell & Garrod (n.12 above) 187–210.

³² Gwynne aptly observes that the poet's primary purpose is "to evoke the [martyrs'] emotions and feelings (*sensus*) experienced throughout their dangerous mission and make the action present for his Jesuit readership as a means of preparing this audience for martyrdom" (*QM*, 69). I suggest that the poem might also be understood as a demonstration of the Ignatian method for making "elections" in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Thus Vicente acts as spiritual director to Rodolfo, e.g. in bk 2.200–01: "Why do you hesitate? Do your emotions take your thoughts in different directions? Trust in God. The Lord himself commands this" (*Quid dubitas? Rapiunt animum in contraria sensus? Fide Deo, Deus ipse iubet*).

³³ D. Feeney, 'The taciturnity of Aeneas', *CQ* 33.1 (1983), 204–19. See e.g. the long passage of internal dialogue by Acquaviva at *QM*, bk 1.80–205.

of the third book he gives us a glimpse of the Virgilian Tartarus in his description of the central temple, which encloses shrines to the “monstrous gods” served by “foul-smelling priests” (*monstriferum (heu scelus indignum!) sacraria divum, / ... et passim grave olentes ... ministri* (bk 3.41–43).³⁴ In good Ignatian fashion the poet invites us to “composition of the place” and “application of the senses” – to the darkness, the smoke, the heavy perfume, swarming bodies, clapping, shrieking – to assist us to imagine ourselves, as it were, at the very gates of Hell.³⁵ As in Virgil’s limbo, we encounter boys and girls on the threshold of the Underworld, but here indiscriminately mixed with old men and married women (*Ipsius ante adyti fauces caecumque cubile / Agminis horrifici, Stygiarum lustra ferarum, / Permisti senibus pueri, nuptisque puellae*, bk 3.49–51). Their animalistic dancing and “lascivious songs” striking the “confused air” (*lascivis cantibus auras / confusas feriunt*, 57–58) are inspired by the demon Phorbus, who will foment blind rage in the Hindu population by appealing to the honour of their (imaginary) idols.

The full extent of the influence of *QM* on the Jesuit epic tradition has yet to be determined.³⁶ If, as Gwynne suggests, it became the model for later epics on the Society’s martyrs, I confess that I am aware of surprisingly few devoted to such themes.³⁷ The best-known is the *Paciecidos libri xii* (Coimbra, 1640) by Bartolomeu Pereira, professor of Scripture at the Jesuit college of Coimbra, which celebrates the life and martyrdom in Nagasaki in 1626 of the poet’s cousin, Francisco Pacheco (1592–1626). Pereira’s epic was published in the year of the Society’s first centenary, in the context of a ferment of festivities and self-congratulation,³⁸ yet after the Japanese mission had stalled. As Carlota Urbano has noted, Pereira looks forward at the end of his poem to a renewed missionary push into Japan, so that the seeds of the martyrs sown during the “Christian century” may not perish without spiritual fruit.³⁹ Like the *Aeneid*, the *Paciecid* is in twelve books and celebrates a single hero whose glorious name is commemorated

³⁴ Variation on Gwynne’s translation. The climax of the third book (589–782) is the description of a Hindu festival, culminating in grisly self-sacrifice, which can be seen as a diabolical inversion of the parade of heroes in Virgil’s Underworld. Gwynne (*QM*, 510) also draws attention to the Lucretian rites of Cybele.

³⁵ “Like that infernal place and those accursed doors that administer punishment to the guilty under a dark night, they bristle with perpetual shadows and a gloomy light” (*non secus infernae sedes, scelerataque claustra / Quae poenas sontum exercent sub nocte profunda, / Perpetuis horrent tenebris, ac lumina furvo*, bk 3.46–48). Cf. Ignatius’ meditation on Hell in the *Spiritual Exercises* (First Week, 5th Exercise).

³⁶ See Gwynne’s useful leads in his chapter on the poem’s reception, including passages culled for poetic handbooks, and its use as a quarry for centonic compositions, both within and beyond the Jesuit order (*QM*, 94–103). I have found no obvious homage to Benci in book 3 of Carolus Werpaeus’ *De raptu Manresano Sancti Ignatii de Loiola* (Antwerp, 1647), which is dedicated to the Jesuit missionaries in the East.

³⁷ Gwynne, *QM*, 101. Gwynne rightly notes *QM*’s instant success and healthy publication history, its exploitation in poetic textbooks, and its possible influence on contemporary and later vernacular epics, including Tasso’s (*QM*, 94–103).

³⁸ See e.g. O’Malley (n.31 above).

³⁹ C. Urbano, ‘The *Paciecidos* by Bartolomeu Pereira S.J. – an epic interpretation of evangelisation and martyrdom in 17th century Japan’, *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies* 10–11 (2005), 61–95.

in its title. Klecker has demonstrated that a subtle Virgilian thread winds through it, even down to the placement of half-lines.⁴⁰ Yet the poem has a larger and much more miscellaneous cast of characters and pullulates with mythical creatures, dramatic interludes, personified vices and virtues, and gods of both the East Asian and Olympian pantheons, putting us now in mind of Ovid and Prudentius, now of vernacular romance, especially Camões.⁴¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to pursue Bencian allusions in Pereira,⁴² but it is certainly worth noting, with Gwynne, that both poems conclude with the reception of their heroes into paradise – the five martyrs by the Heavenly Father and the early Jesuits; Pacheco by the recently canonized Ignatius and Francis Xavier. Whether Pereira took his cue from Benci, or whether both were independently inspired by the Renaissance supplement to the *Aeneid* by Maffeo Vegio⁴³ – in which Aeneas and Lavinia marry and are posthumously deified – is, perhaps, less important than the fact that both Jesuits eschew anything like the moral cliff-hanger of Aeneas' killing of Turnus. It is true that at the end of Jacob Bidermann's *Herodiad* the soul of the poem's eponymous antihero flees ignominiously to the Underworld, like Turnus in the closing lines of the *Aeneid*, but there is no question of Herod's fate being undeserved.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding differences in style and storyline we can begin to identify some recurring features of Jesuit Latin epic and a Jesuit way of proceeding with the *Aeneid*. We have already noted the common genesis of these poems in the environs of the Jesuit college; the didactic captioning of characters' emotions; and the attempt to draw readers – the young men of those colleges – into the spiritual-heroic enterprise.⁴⁵ Finally, Jesuit poets often subvert the Virgilian model as they emulate it, challenging its secular imperialism and the ethos of classical heroism. If Benci's martyrs are *de facto* Trojans, and Acquaviva their Aeneas, who must lead them into battle against the hot-headed Hindu Turnus, Alexindas, the Jesuits' spiritual victory over the Indians is (perversely) their temporal defeat. In both Benci's and Pereira's epics, we

⁴⁰ See E. Klecker, 'Ein Missionar in Japan auf den Spuren des Aeneas: die *Paciecis* des Bartholomaeus Pereira, S.J. (Coimbra, 1640)', in D. Briesemeister & A. Schoenberger (eds), *De litteris neolatinis in America Meridionali, Portugallia, Hispania, Italia cultis*, 2002, Frankfurt, 99–112. Klecker points out, for example, that the *Paciecis* begins not with the departure of the hero from his homeland or arrival in Japan, but with his flight by sea (101). Note, however, that the books of Pereira's poem do not map neatly onto Virgil's, and Pacheco, as Klecker shows, shares characteristics of *both* Aeneas and Dido.

⁴¹ On Camões, see Urbano (n.39 above) 80; 83.

⁴² The subject of a promised article by Gwynne.

⁴³ See Gwynne *QM*, 101–02. Klecker (n.40 above) identifies Maffeo Vegio's Renaissance supplement to the *Aeneid* (Venice, 1471) as Pereira's model (death and apotheosis of Aeneas); and for the triumph at the end of the poem, that of Scipio Africanus in Silius Italicus' *Punica* (105; 106, n.25). On Maffeo Vegio see A. Cox Brinton, *Maphaeus Vegius and His Thirteenth Book of the Aeneid: A Chapter on Virgil in the Renaissance*, 2002, London, and the translation in M. Putnam, *Short Epics* (I Tatti Renaissance Library, vol. 15), 2004, Cambridge MA.

⁴⁴ In his *Virgilianae Vindicaciones* (Rome, 1621), Tarquinio Galluzzi, Professor of Rhetoric at the Roman College, devotes some pages to the ending of the *Aeneid*, and whether the poem was finished, but does not comment on Aeneas' rage.

⁴⁵ Klecker (n.40 above) draws attention to the exemplary mode in Pereira's *Paciecis*.

are confronted with the paradox of the Christian side “winning” by suffering torture, death, and – e.g. in the case of the cow-killing Pietro Berno – posthumous defilement. The heroes’ deaths are anticipated from the opening words of *QM*: *felices sociorum obitus* (“the blessed [or happy?] deaths of those companions”).⁴⁶ The ironic tension between the worldly imperial destiny of the Trojans and the heavenly humility of the Christians is brought out even more dramatically in Bidermann’s *Herodias*, whose eponymous “hero”, Herod, is of course no *pius Aeneas*, but an evil *tragic* king, a Senecan monster prepared to murder even his own son. The poem’s true heroes are the innocent babies and defenceless mothers who are slaughtered in manifold and macabre ways in the first book – in ways designed to recall the “beautiful” deaths of the warriors of classical epic and to inflame the emotions of the target audience of schoolboys and seminarians.⁴⁷

A Society of heroes

The decentred and inverted heroism of Bidermann’s *Herodiad* finds a late echo in the *Heroum libri iv* (“Louvain”, 1789) by the Portuguese Jesuit Emmanuel de Azevedo, exiled in the Veneto during the second half of the 18th century.⁴⁸ Azevedo’s epic on the expulsion of his Ibero-American brothers from the Spanish Empire in 1767 forms the first half of a diptych of poems on the long Suppression of the Society of Jesus – the other is the Ovidian *Epistolae ad heroas* – with a dedication to Catherine the Great’s favourite, Grigory Potemkin.⁴⁹ The two halves of the volume are in fact closely related; an elegiac mood punctuates the epic and an heroic one the verse epistles, in which Azevedo exhorts his exiled Jesuit brothers to face their reduced circumstances with courage and constancy. The heroes of Azevedo’s epic are the young American Jesuits who weather not only the storms of a perilous sea voyage to Italy, but the hostility and cajolery of state officials, commoners, members of other religious orders, and even their own relatives, who try to force or persuade them to forsake their vows. They endure continuous humiliation with fortitude, and meet treacherous attempts to divide them with renewed fervour and affirmations of solidarity.

⁴⁶ As Gwynne notes (*QM*, 398), the form *felices* “is loaded with meaning”. It not only echoes the title of the printed account of the massacre by the provincial of Goa, Alessandro Valignano (see n.25 above), but is used only twice in the *Aeneid*, at 3.493–95 (Aeneas hailing Andromache and Helenus) and at 6.669, of the “blessed spirits”; in collocation with *obitus*, where it recalls and contrasts with Dido’s *difficilis obitus* at 4.694 (the only instance of the form *obitus* in the *Aeneid*).

⁴⁷ It is tempting to see a baroque pun on classical “heroism” in the very title of the poem.

⁴⁸ See Y. Haskell, ‘Suppressed Emotions: The Heroic *Tristia* of Portuguese (ex-)Jesuit, Emanuel de Azevedo’, *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3.1 (2016), 42–60. I am planning an edition and commentary of Azevedo’s poem.

⁴⁹ While the volume was only published in 1789, the *spragis* and notes to the epic’s fourth book gesture to the suppression of the Society as a future possibility rather than a foregone conclusion. The poem was substantially composed before 1773.

This friendship and unanimity of the young Jesuits is, in fact, the poem's leitmotif. Like Bidermann and Benci, Azevedo celebrates a *collective* heroism, even if he assigns principal hero status to the reluctant leader of the exiled band, Vicente à Castro, the poem's *de facto* Aeneas. The prefatory *argumentum* makes this clear:

“We begin in the first book with their deeds in Porto Sta Maria, where they gathered after they had all been stripped of their vestments. *As Vicente à Castro assumed the role of their Superior, he will be the principal hero of the Poem; but since the outstanding glory of constancy was common to the rest of them, we call them all heroes*”.⁵⁰

Azevedo reveals his Virgilian hand from line one of the poem:

*Gesta, virosque cano, per quos juvenilibus annis
Crevit honos, crevere sacrae decora alta cohortis,
Cui nuper nomen dederant, non fraudibus ullis
Decepti, qua jussa vocant caelestia, pergunt.
Injectos superant obices felicibus ausis.⁵¹
Nec potuere minae, aut series diuturna malorum
Frangere constantes animos, & nescia vinci
Pectora; multum illi & terra jactantur & alto
Vi Procerum. Tantaene animis illustribus irae?*

(“I sing of deeds and men through whom glory grew in young years, [through whom] the lofty ornaments of the sacred band –to which they had recently dedicated themselves – increased. Undeceived by any trickery they go wherever heaven commands. They overcome interposed obstacles with blessed exploits. Neither threats nor an endless series of misfortunes could break their constant

⁵⁰ My translation and emphasis. The synopsis (8) continues: “Among the many people from whom they received gifts and tokens of love we first mention D. Anna Maria Borgia, so that an opportunity for mentioning her ancestor may be introduced. In the second book, Castro narrates to this lady what has happened to himself and his companions since their prescribed exile. In the third book the young men are invited to dinner by the lady and observe the stories of their own Provinces depicted in tapestries, which we judged a good digression for the purposes of poetic ornament. As for those things which transpired among the students [*Tyrones, sc.* “scholastics”, Jesuits aspiring to the priesthood, having pronounced their first vows], we deduced probable events from the circumstances; for the rest, all are completely in conformity with true history, albeit painted with a poetic brush. The students bid farewell to Borgia and their other benefactors and board the ship. And finally in the fourth book their journey from the port of Cadiz to Italy is described”.

⁵¹ In *obices felicibus ausibus* might there even be a reminiscence of the opening words of Benci's *QM, Felices sociorum obitus?*

souls, their invincible breasts. They were tossed about by land and sea through the power of princes. Could such anger dwell in noble hearts?”)

(1–9)

*Diva mihi causas memora, quid crimine ficto
Saeva lues inimica probi tot adire labores
Insignes pietate animos, tot volvere casus
Impulerit; cur tanta Erebo concessa potestas.*

(“Goddess, tell me the reasons, why, on account of false charges, a cruel plague, the enemy of virtue, drove souls outstanding in piety to undergo so many trials, unleashed so many misfortunes on them. Why was so much power granted to [the agents of] Hell?”)

(15–18)⁵²

*Urbs antiqua fuit, Trojae tenuere coloni
Exilio expulsi, & fatis maria omnia circum
Jactati, postquam cessit constantia fraudi,
Et celsa ultrices rapuerunt maenia flammae.
Huc extra Herculeis vada circumscripta columnis,
Roscida purpurei fugiens cunabula Solis,
Advectus tuta requievit sede Menestheus.*

(“There was an ancient city, occupied by colonists exiled from Troy, tossed by the fates on all seas, after steadfastness gave way to treachery, and avenging flames overcame the lofty walls. Here Menestheus⁵³ was conveyed, fleeing the dewy cradles of the bright Sun, beyond the straits bounded by the pillars of Hercules, and found safe harbour”).

(39–45)

⁵² Azevedo prudently avoids blaming the kings of Portugal and Spain for the Jesuits’ troubles, nor does he name their state agents, the Marquis of Pombal and Count of Campomanes, implacable enemies of the Society. Instead, the poet summons up the forces of Hell – furies and personified vices – who are despatched by the *Moderator Averni* to spread suspicion and envy of the Jesuits among the fickle public, state and Church officials, and other religious orders. In a long digression on the ambiguous goddess “Freedom” he cocks a snook at the *philosophes*.

⁵³ There was a tradition that the Athenian general, Menestheus, returning from Troy, founded the city which is now El Puerto de Santa María, on the banks of the Guadalete in the province of Cádiz. Azevedo conflates him with the Trojan captain Mnestheus in *Aen.* 5 and 9.

As will be seen in the phrases in bold, Azevedo borrows heavily from the opening of the *Aeneid*.⁵⁴ While a Virgilian shopfront is not unusual in Jesuit (and for that matter other neo-Latin) epic, Azevedo works further allusions to *Aen.* 1 into his first book.⁵⁵ The poem as a whole takes its bearings from the first third of the *Aeneid*, including some passages of extended imitation.⁵⁶ The role of Dido, for example, is played by Anna Maria Borgia, a descendant of the noble family which gave the Society of Jesus one of its first saints, Francis Borgia, canonized in 1670. The absent presence of *Aen.* 2 looms over the poem, although the Suppression of the Jesuits / Fall of Troy is at least hinted at in the *sphragis*. There Azevedo reports that (the Jesuitophile) Pope Clement XIII has died, but surely God will not allow his successor to abandon the American refugees in their hour of need:

*Quaerentes lege obstringi sine lege vagari
 Permittet? Dabit in praedam nil tale merentes?
 Absit ut haec Domino fingam tribuenda benigno.
 Forsitan Omnipotens voto indulgere precantis
 Differet, & laceram ventos submergere navem
 Jactabit saeva impietas; sed amabile quamvis
 Differat auxilium, praesens in tempus omittet,
 Dum minus expectas, ut plus confidere discas
 Cum desperatis coeunt damna omnia rebus;
 Forsitan extinctam dabitur lugere Parentem
 Ob juvenes; sed vivet adhuc composta sepulchro;
 Sic quondam Deus ipse suis praedixit amicis,
 Cum teneram adjuvit signis, dextraque potenti;
 Nosque sui similes voluit, sociosque vocari,
 Et vexilla dedit, qui victa a morte resurgit
 Passus acerba prius ...*

⁵⁴ While the Virgilian allusions are more attenuated for stretches of poem, they are obvious in book openings and at other narrative nodes. Thus the second book begins, like *Aen.* 2, *Conticuere omnes*, as Castro begins to relate his story to Borgia; the third *Incluta sic Heros intentis omnibus unus / Gesta renarrabat comitum, cursusque docebat ~ Sic pater Aeneas intentis omnibus unus* (*Aen.* 3.716–18); the fourth *Panditur interea domus omnipotentis Olympi ~ Panditur interea domus omnipotentis Olympi / conciliumque vocat divum pater* (*Aen.* 10.1–15).

⁵⁵ On the broader phenomenon and recurring features of neo-Latin epic, see most recently F. Schaffnerath, 'Narrative structures in Neo-Latin epic: 16th-19th century', in C. Reitz & S. Finkmann (eds), *Structures of Epic Poetry*, vol. 3, 2020, Berlin, 301–30.

⁵⁶ This is not to suggest that the order of events / verses in the *Aeneid* is preserved by Azevedo. In 1.743, for example, we have a reminiscence of *Aen.* 4.1: *At Matriona gravi jamdudum saucia cura ...*

(“Will [Our Father] permit those seeking to be bound by law [*i.e.* by their religious vows] to wander without law? Will He give over to plunder those who have done nothing to deserve this? Let me not imagine our dear Lord capable of such things! Perhaps the Almighty will defer answering our prayers, and cruel irreligion will boast that the winds have sunk our battered raft – but even if He defers His loving aid, he shall withhold it [only] for the present, until you least expect it, so that you may learn to increase your faith, as all your misfortunes converge in desperate times, [and] it will perhaps be your lot, young men, to grieve for your dead Parent [*sc.* the Society] – yet she will continue to live when she is laid in the tomb! God Himself once foretold this to His friends, sustaining her in her youth with signs and powerful right hand. He wanted us to be like Him, and to be called companions, and He who rises again, having conquered death, having endured bitter sufferings before, gave us our standards!”)

(1018–32)

Constraints of space preclude unravelling the *other* narrative thread that is tied off in these lines, a thread that winds not only through the present poem but through several other Jesuit epics (and is conspicuous *e.g.* in the Society’s 1640 anniversary emblem book, published in Antwerp, the *Imago primi saeculi*): the parallel between the history of the Society and the life of Christ. The sufferings and inevitable (?) death of the Society of Jesus are recast by Azevedo as the passion and necessary prelude to its glorious resurrection.⁵⁷ And if the public vilification, ignominious banishment of, and stripping of the habit from Jesuit scholastics seems to be of a different order from the torture, deaths, and posthumous defilement suffered by the martyrs of Benci’s *QM*, Bidermann’s *Herodiad* or Pereira’s *Paciecid*, Azevedo pulls out all the Virgilian stops to render these young men true heroes of the faith in that long tradition of Jesuit epic.

University of Western Australia, Perth

YASMIN HASKELL
(yasmin.haskell@uwa.edu.au)

⁵⁷ Another Suppression Jesuit epic, Nikodemus Musnicki’s *De Christi ab inferis reditu* (1805, unpublished) is an allegory for the “death” of the Society which looks forward to its “resurrection”. See F. Schaffenrath, ‘Das Höllenfahrtsepos *De Christi ab inferis reditu* (1805) des Nikodemus Musnicki SJ’, in A. Steiner-Weber (ed), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Upsaliensis*, vol. 2, 2006, Leiden, 943–53; *idem*, ‘Unedierte lateinische Jesuiteneplik aus dem Fondo Gesuitico der Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma’, *NLJ* 9 (2007), 328–42.