VIRGIL AND THE MONUMENTS

by

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I

Commemoration is a universal human preoccupation. Men and women wish themselves to live on in their descendants, in what they have done, or written, or otherwise wrought. Some, more generously, wish rather that those whom they admire should so continue to live. A physical monument, public or private, will be an aid to perpetuity. If the monument perish, or its purpose be forgotten, so too may memory. So philosophers, condemning the pursuit of fame, put their names on the title-pages of the very books in which they enshrine their condemnations. Books abide their fates. So, too, do monuments of bronze or stone: 'data sunt ipsis quoque fata sepulcris', as Juvenal (X.146) reminds us.

The monuments of my title are not the ancient stones, incised, sculpted, or piled into structures which might illustrate the writings of Virgil. Nor are they works of art that have been made under Virgilian influence, direct influence at any rate. Nor can they truly be said to be the metaphorical monuments of the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, the *Æneid*. My monuments are the so-called tomb of Virgil at Posilipo and other commemorative monuments erected either at Naples, where the poet lived for so many years and where, according to tradition, he was buried, or at Mantua, near to which, in the hamlet anciently called Andes and now called Pietole, he was born.

In addition to moving from south to north in Italy, my story moves in time from the Renaissance back to Antiquity, forward to the Middle Ages and finally, via the Renaissance and the era of the Grand Tour, to Napoleonic and so to modern times.

II

Accounts of the discovery of ancient tombs are a staple of Renaissance archaeology, both in its romantic and its soberer manifestations. Many such accounts are modelled on Cicero's narrative (*Tusculan Disputations*, V.64ff.) of how he found the tomb of Archimedes:

> When I was quaestor in Sicily, I managed to track down the grave of Archimedes. The Syracusans knew nothing of it, and even denied that any such thing existed. But there it was, entirely surrounded and hidden under bushes of brambles and thorns. I remembered that I had heard of some simple lines of verse that had been inscribed on Archimedes's tomb, referring to a sphere and a cylinder sculpted in stone on top of the grave. I looked carefully at all the many tombs that stood beside the Agrigentine Gate. At last, I spied a little column just visible above the scrub. It was surmounted by a sphere and a cylinder. Some of the leading citizens of Syracuse were with me at the time and I said to them that I believed that this was the very object we were looking for. Men were sent in with

sickles to clear the site and when they had opened a path to the monument we walked up to it. The verses could still be seen, though approximately the second half of each line had been worn away.

So one of the most famous cities in the Greek world, formerly a great centre of learning, would have remained in total ignorance of the tomb of the most brilliant citizen it had ever produced, if the man from Arpinum had not come along and found it.

III

To Cicero's narrative are indebted Renaissance accounts of finding the tombs of Ovid - one of these is a sort of carbon copy - of Livy and of others. In a remoter degree, Cicero is the ancestor, too, of the discoverers of the Roman monument beside the Grotta Vecchia or Grotta Virgiliana at Posilipo above the Bay of Naples, known for centuries as 'Virgil's tomb'.

Though there are extant today a great many tombs, grand or humble, of greater and lesser authors from the post-classical era, there is no longer *in situ* a single authentic monument erected even soon after the death of any of the great writers of Antiquity. We have to make do with such agreeably pathetic tokens as the tombstone of little Quintus Sulpitius Maximus, the Master Betty of his day, who died at the age of eleven, from too much study - but not before he had received honourable mention for his verses at the Capitoline Games of 94 A.D. Cicero's labours with the tomb of Archimedes were in vain: the monument is now lost. Nor are we better off with Ovid who, from exile, had proposed his own epitaph:

> Hic ego qui iaceo, tenerorum lusor amorum
> Ingenio perii Naso poeta meo.
> At tibi qui transis, ne sit grave, quisquis amasti
> Dicere, Nasonis molliter ossa cubent. (*Tristia*, III.iii.73-6)

No tomb bearing these lines has yet been found, either at Constanţa, on the Black Sea, where Ovid breathed his last, or in any of the other places where the learned imagination of the Renaissance located his sepulchre. Tales of the tomb had circulated in the Middle Ages, some of them accompanied by epitaphs. A pair of epitaphs, taken from elswhere in the *Tristia* and the *Amores*, is to be found in the earliest printed collection of such verses in 1472. Stories of a splendid tomb outside the gates of Tomis (Constanţa), and of others in Poland and Hungary, with yet another epitaph, confected this time and not taken from Ovid's works, circulated widely. In 1674, on the Via Flaminia in the suburbs of Rome - where Ovid himself says that he wished to be buried - an ancient tomb-chamber, with wall-paintings and an antique inscription, was laid bare. It was the family sepulchre of the Nasonii but was at once enthusiastically identified as Ovid's. It is still there, though its inscription has been removed, and the wall-paintings - except those which found their way to the British Museum - are all but illegible. Yet other tombs for Ovid have been imagined, but in a spirit of still purer fantasy, such as that in Richard de St Non's *Voyage pittoresque de Naples et de Sicile* of 1781-6.

Historians, too, have been the object of 'discovery' of this kind. Livy's tomb was thought to have been found in Padua not once only, but three times: in 1340, in 1413 and in 1537.

This sort of thing is an index of reverence for the vestiges of Antiquity and of its authors. Virgil's tomb would be a particular prize for such seekers, who had, indeed, some clues to its whereabouts to help them. Ancient biographies gave indications of where he was buried and of his epitaph; ancient writers, too, spoke of the veneration given to the spot. None of them, alas, say what the tomb looked like, and the first extant representation of it, made in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is a fancy picture: it is the woodcut that first appears in the famous Virgil of Sebastian Brant, printed in Strasbourg in 1502. This woodcut was several times re-used and copied in France and Italy, in books and manuscripts. Half a century was to elapse before a specific monument, near Naples, would be identified as the tomb of Virgil, and illustrated as such. Still extant, it is a genuine vestige of antiquity, a Roman tomb of the type known as *columbarium*, dovecot. The story of how this monument came for at least three centuries to be identified as Virgil's tomb and visited by every traveller will occupy the next few pages.

IV

According to the most widely diffused life of Virgil, written by the grammarian Donatus in the fourth century A.D., the poet died at Brindisi on his way back from Greece and was buried, in pursuance of his wish, in the vicinity of Naples. Donatus, it seems, was getting his information from, was reworking, even cribbing, the biography of Virgil by Suetonius, of a couple of centuries earlier. The death occurred on or about 20 September, 19 B.C.; Virgil's remains, if we believe Suetonius-Donatus, were transported to Naples and interred in a tomb on the road from Naples to Pozzuoli, before the second milestone. On the tomb was said to have been carved the epitaph Virgil was said to have written for himself:

> Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc
> Parthenope; cecini pascua, rura, duces.

Other antique biographies of Virgil say much the same. Later, perhaps in the ninth century, sets of epitaphs, purportedly written by Virgil's purported pupils, make their appearance. None ever supplants the version that Donatus and others ascribe to Virgil himself. Nor does any of the many more modern variants - except (as we shall see) for one.

Donatus - I use him to stand for all the ancient lives - seemed to offer something precise about where the tomb was - provided only that you knew where the road to Pozzuoli had run in Virgil's day. By the time of Donatus, and indeed even in Suetonius's time, there were three roads to Pozzuoli. The oldest and longest was the Via Antiniana, which crossed the low range of hills running from the Vomero to the point of Posilipo, Sans Souci, which lies to the west of the city of Naples. During the Civil War and early Augustan times another road, the Via Puteolana, was constructed. It ran along the coast as it then was, approximately corresponding to the present Riviera di Chiaia and Mergellina, through the hill of Posilipo from near what is now Piazza Santa Maria di Piedigrotta, and out after some seven hundred metres at Fuorigrotta. The third Roman road, which ran through another, slightly longer tunnel, was to the south of this one. The *crypta Neapolitana*, the shorter and more famous of the two tunnels, was already notorious in Roman times for its dust and darkness, and remained so for as long as it was in use, that is to say until about 1885, when it was superseded by the Grotta Nuova, the Galleria Quattro Giornate. The *crypta Neapolitana*, or Grotta Vecchia, or *Grotta*

Virgiliana, as it was known, was the tunnel which, according to legend, had been cut by the magic of Virgil the sorcerer. For English readers, it is most famously described in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, where Mephistophilis takes Faustus on that most expensive of all package tours:

> Then up to Naples, rich Campania
> Whose buildings, fair and gorgeous to the eye,
> The streets straight forth, and paved with finest brick,
> Quarter the town in four equivalents:
> There saw we learned Maro's golden tomb,
> The way he cut, an English mile in length,
> Thorough a rock of stone in one night's space....
> (ll.824-30)

The legends of Virgil the sorcerer are a strange transmutation of the reverence for the poet which we know to have prevailed in Rome a century or so after his death. Martial tells us that the Ides of October, Virgil's birthday, became sacred to the poet; and Pliny that Silius Italicus kept the day more ceremoniously than his own anniversary. Silius, says Martial, bought the tomb of Virgil from its impoverished owner and kept it as a shrine. He is shown doing so in paintings of the 1770s by Joseph Wright of Derby, the only artist, as far as I know, to depict this scene. Statius pictures himself seeking inspiration there and - much later - the bishop, poet and letter-writer Sidonius Apollinaris gave out that he too had visited Virgil's tomb. An even more famous visit, by St. Paul the Apostle, is - alas - apocryphal. The verses that record his presence have never been securely dated. They were known to Petrarch in the fourteenth century and may well have been written at about that time:

> Ad Maronis mausoleum
> Ductus, fudit super eum
> Piae rorem lacrimae.
> Quem te, inquit, reddidissem,
> Si te vivum inuenissem,
> Poetarum maxime!

Silius, it may be supposed, lived soon enough after Virgil to have been sure of his place of burial, if the tomb that Wright painted was apocryphal. We, on the other hand, have only Donatus to go on, and assuming that Donatus was correct about the distance the tomb stood, on the Via Puteolana, from Neapolis, we can only say that it must have been well short of the hill of Posilipo - somewhere, perhaps, about the spot where there are now the gardens of the Villa Comunale, with their rectangular Ionic temple and its huge bust of Virgil erected in 1819. It would thus have been as close to Castel dell'Ovo, which also had medieval associations with Virgil the magician, as to the mount of Sans Souci. In 1624 the great German geographer Cluverius put the spot on the road to Vesuvius, in the opposite direction, at S. Giovanni a Teduccio. Though some followed Cluverius, including Joseph Addison in 1705, we shall do well not to.

In the Middle Ages many legends gathered round Virgil. He was thought to have become prey to the wiles of women, and been suspended in a basket while ascending to the bedroom of one of them, variously described as a courtesan and

as the King of Rome's daughter. He was held to have devised the *Bocca della verità*; and to have made a great bronze horse the very sight of which could cure the ailments of any living horse. The colossal ancient bronze horse's head now in the Museo Nazionale at Naples, given in 1471 by Lorenzo il Magnifico to Diomede Carafa, was once falsely believed to have been the head of Virgil's bronze horse. Among these achievements of Virgil the sorcerer, however, the *Grotta Virgiliana* was always, perhaps, the most famous and the largest. It seems to be the tunnel mentioned in the third quarter of the twelfth century by the Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela, who said it was fifteen miles long. About 1350, Fazio degli Uberti says that he had stood in it and more than a century later Charles VIII seems to have thought it worth a small detour. Petrarch - it is agreeable to report of such a great Virgilian - was sceptical about the grotto's Virgilian connection. Early in 1341, discussing it with his protector King Robert, also a Virgilian, he dismissed it as a work of necromancy, blandly professing himself unaware that Virgil was a sorcerer. The king agreed that the marks they could see on the stone were more likely to have been made by iron tools.

Petrarch was, indeed, one of the greatest of Virgilians, his own poems full of Virgilian cadence, phrase and image. A splendid witness of his love is his cherished manuscript of Virgil, now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. Into this he transcribed the verses on St. Paul just mentioned, besides the most important memoranda of his moral, amorous and intellectual life. More, about 1338, he commissioned a frontispiece for the volume from the Sienese painter Simone Martini. Servius, the great ancient commentator, drawing aside for us the veil which shrouds Virgil's meaning, points out the poet where he reclines, clearly an inspired writer by his wreath of bay, his pen and tablets and his heaven-seeking glance, under the beech-tree of Tityrus. Directly below Virgil, a shepherd is milking (the *Eclogues*), on the left, at the same level, is a slasher of brambles (the *Georgics*) and above him the Roman hero himself, with shield and lance (the *Æneid*). It is a visual translation of the epitaph: *pascua, rura, duces.*

This epitaph was certainly known to Petrarch. On one or other of his visits to Naples, in 1341 and 1343, he must surely also have attempted to find the poet's tomb. He speaks in a verse letter of both the Grotta and his wish to visit it and of the remains of the poet. Later, in the *Itinerarium Syriacum* of 1357 or 1358, he gives his Milanese friend Giovannolo da Mandello quite definite instructions about the tomb, 'a work of great antiquity'. Boccaccio, too, visited the spot many times, and even indited some of his letters 'from Virgil's tomb'.

The work of great antiquity that Petrarch speaks of still perches high above the Grotta. It is certainly Roman, a brick-built *columbarium* or family tomb of the Augustan period, one of a number - it seems - that once dotted the vicinity. A twenty-one-foot-sided square, with walls three feet thick, it is surmounted by a cylindrical dome some sixteen feet across, and entered by a single doorway. There are three windows and ten niches for the ashes of the dead. The floor is now clear, but in the last century there stood within the tomb a stele erected in 1840, in Virgil's honour, by the Greek scholar and French royal librarian, F.G. Eichhoff. There was also then a stone with the epitaph 'Mantua me genuit...'.

A Roman tomb, then, of the right period, and on the Via Puteolana, if not exactly where it should be. Not even Petrarch, nor Boccaccio, still less the Neapolitans, could resist the identification with Virgil. It mattered little that Flavio Biondo, a century after Petrarch, made a search for the tomb of Virgil in the vicinity of the Grotta, and recorded scrupulously that he had failed to find it, or its epitaph. Local patriotism and wishful thinking were too strong. It is ironical that the new phase of systematic archaeology initiated by Biondo should lead not only

to vastly increased and more precise knowledge, but also to a fatal looseness in its application. In about 1540 Benedetto di Falco put Virgil's tomb at Fuorigrotta, by the imaginary church of Santa Maria dell'Idria. By 1543, our *columbarium* was already being shown to tourists.The great Leandro Alberti in 1550 is doubtful, though he finally gives credence to the *columbarium* above Piedigrotta. Another outsider, Paolo Giovio - he and Alberti both died in 1552 - thought the true tomb must have been destroyed by the Goths; but the only Neapolitan sceptic of the time was one Giovanni Francesco Lombardi - at least as far as I can discover.

About Alberti's time the Lateran Canons who had had possession for a century of the church and convent of Santa Maria di Piedigrotta took steps to enhance a valuable tourist attraction. In 1554 they set up an inscription at the entrance to the tomb. This is still there, as 'Mantua me genuit...' is not. A tourist, one Stanislaus Cencovius, has inscribed his name on it, with the date 1589. It runs:

> Qui cineres? Tumuli haec vestigia. Conditur olim
> Ille hoc qui cecinit pascua, rura, duces.

The first printed book to record this new epitaph for Virgil is by Scipione Mazzella, and it was published in 1591. Two more epitaphs were added by Giulio Cesare Capaccio in 1607.

It would be logical, given a *columbarium* with niches, for those niches to have contained urns. If the *columbarium* could be identified by association with the Grotta as Virgil's tomb, it would also follow that one of those urns must have contained Virgil. That is the implication of a passage interpolated in the *Cronaca di Partenope* and of another in Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, about the end of the fifteenth century. In 1550 one Pietro di Stefano goes further: he has seen in the tomb, he says, a marble urn with an inscription. In 1591, Mazzella reports that he and his friends had seen in the tomb, a few years before, a white marble urn containing Virgil's remains. It was supported on a beautiful pedestal and four marble columns. Before 1607, according to Capaccio, the supporting columns had increased to nine, through the intervention of a certain Bishop 'Alfonsus Heredia'. The patron of the Lateran Canons, the Cardinal of Mantua, having carried off the lot, however, had died a deserved death in Genoa, and all trace of urn and columns had been lost.

What truth there is in all this, who dare say? Perhaps the Canons had so embellished their property. All that can be said is that any inscribed urn that had been put into the tomb was no longer there in 1607.

Mazzella is also the first, as far as I am aware, to speak of a large bay-tree growing from the tomb's cupola. He has a crude woodcut to show it. According to report, Petrarch had planted this tree, to replace an earlier one that had expired in sympathy with Dante, in the year of that poet's death. Mazzella's friends made verses to the tree, which later suffered from souvenir hunters, who were encouraged by the legend that the wrenched or cut off boughs would at once renew themselves - a clear extrapolation from the story of the Golden Bough in the sixth book of the *Æneid*: 'Uno avulso non deficit alter'. Memento takers were already active in 1632; exactly a hundred years later, Joseph Spence took a leaf for Christopher Pitt, the Virgil translator; later yet, Frederick the Great of Prussia was sent a sprig by his sister, and Voltaire celebrated the occasion. Count Chernichev, the vice-Grand-Admiral of Russia, took another to Voltaire himself. In 1760, the Abbé Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non says that the tree was hardly visible, but he had excavated its root and been able to preserve the tender shoot that was the only indication that it was not totally extinct, as well as to secure a piece of the

dead wood for himself. Early nineteenth-century custodians blamed, impartially, the French and the English; a replacement tree, planted by Casimir Delavigne in 1825, was still growing there, it is said, in 1897. The tomb has now been thoroughly tidied of such things.

By no means everyone believed that the *columbarium* was Virgil's tomb. J.-J. Bouchard in 1632, while censuring the Canons' neglect of their property, did not accept the identification. Later authors, whether they believe or not, are usually critical of the state it had been allowed to fall into, and of the liberties tourists had been allowed, or had taken. Sir Thomas Hoby and, a century and a half after him, in 1685, Bishop Burnet, called it Virgil's house and were dubious of its authenticity. In 1739 the Président de Brosses complained both of its condition and of the old witch he found inside it. Edward Wright in the 1720s did not admire its 'wretched distich' and Kotzebue in the first years of the nineteenth century spoke scornfully of 'an insignificant inscription which has often been copied' - as well as of the signatures which he found there, including those of Gustavus III of Sweden, Sir William Hamilton, Admiral Sir Sidney Smith, Himmel, the organist ('the Russian Orpheus') and 'many ladies who have forgotten that they should engrave their names in hearts and not in stones'. The Duchess of Devonshire put up an epitaph by the tomb for her lap-dog - and made handsome amends with the sumptuous edition of Annibale Caro's *Æneid* which she caused to be published at Rome in 1819. The Rev. J.C. Eustace in 1802 and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1828 merely loved it.

For the state of the tomb after 1643, the Lateran Canons are not to blame. In that year they ceded it to one Giuseppe Vitale, from whom it seems to have passed to the Dukes of Pesciolanciano, who had yet another new inscription put up. Later it was in various private hands until finally, in 1930, the Comune took over, restored the tomb and planted a little park round it with Virgilian plants in honour of the bimillennium of Virgil's birth. In 1939, a century after the death of Giacomo Leopardi, the putative remains of that poet were moved there, with his monument, from the church of S. Vitale at Fuorigrotta. The little park, closed for many years, was refurbished and re-opened in 1981.

In 1668 a further inscription, and a monumental one at that, was erected below the Piedigrotta entrance to the Grotta, to commemorate the restoration - at the instigation of the Viceroy, Pedro Antonio d'Aragona - of various thermal baths in the vicinity. Don Pedro's *aedicula* has often been misidentified as Virgilian.

As to the earliest picturings of the tomb of Virgil, the fancy woodcut of 1502 can have no claim to authenticity. At the time of writing, there is much uncertainty about whether the drawing of the Piedigrotta *columbarium* in the three sketchbooks by J.J. Boissard in Stockholm and in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris (Fig.1) can claim primacy over the engraving first published by Tobias Fendt at Wroclaw in 1574.[1]

There is clearly a close relationship between Boissard's drawings and Fendt's engraving. One, I believe, was copied from the other. Fendt is not the most reliable of witnesses. Among other things, he provides a fake epitaph for Ovid and a Latin one for Euripides. Nevertheless, I believe that, in this instance, Boissard may have been copying from Fendt, on whose engraving are based some seventeenth-century guide-book engravings as well as - in all probability - the much more scientific-seeming engraving by Pietro Sante Bartoli late in that century, as well as its replica in Montfaucon's *Antiquité expliquée* of 1719. On either Bartoli or Montfaucon depends the reconstruction of the tomb in Park Wilhelmshöhe, of the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Bartoli held the field until 1768, when Paolo Antonio Paoli, much copied later by others, including Joseph Wright of Derby, issued a

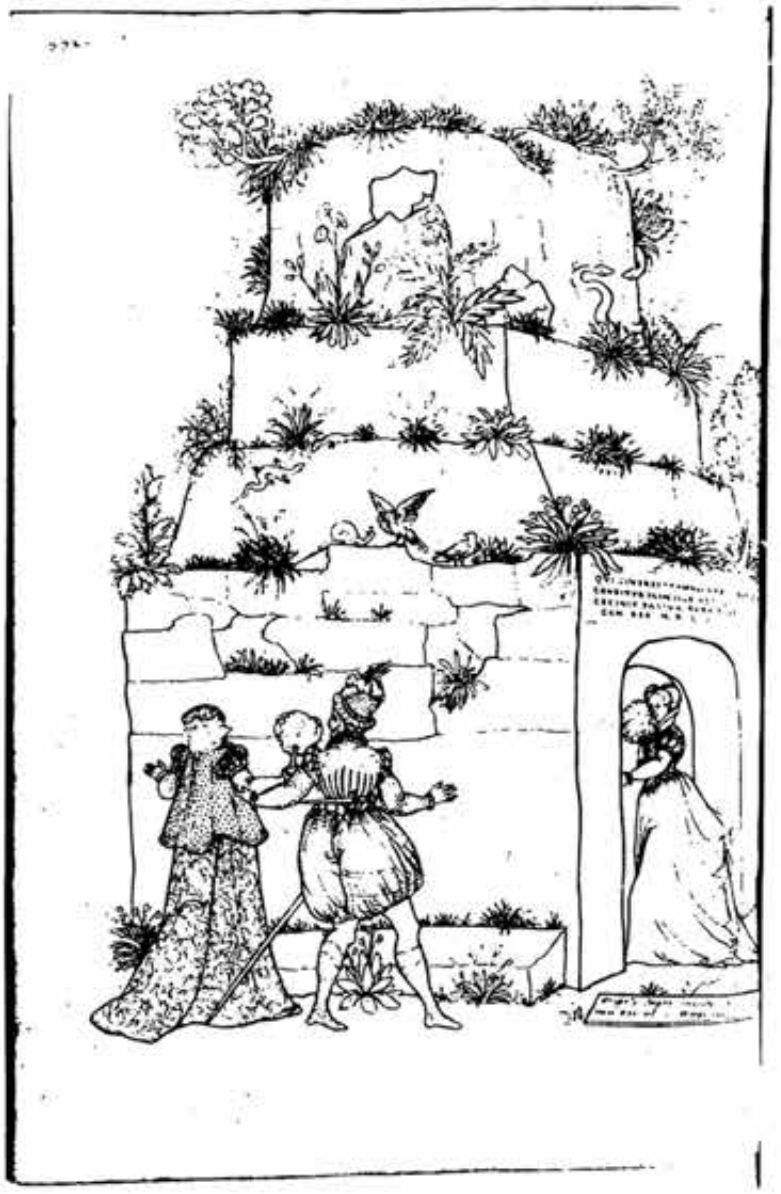

Fig.1. J.J. Boissard, 'Virgil's Tomb', c.1597.

stately album with interior and exterior views and a ground plan. Sir William Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei* (1776), being concerned more with geology than antiquities, omits the tomb almost entirely. There are also, during the later seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many independent sketches, finished drawings and engravings (Fig.2).

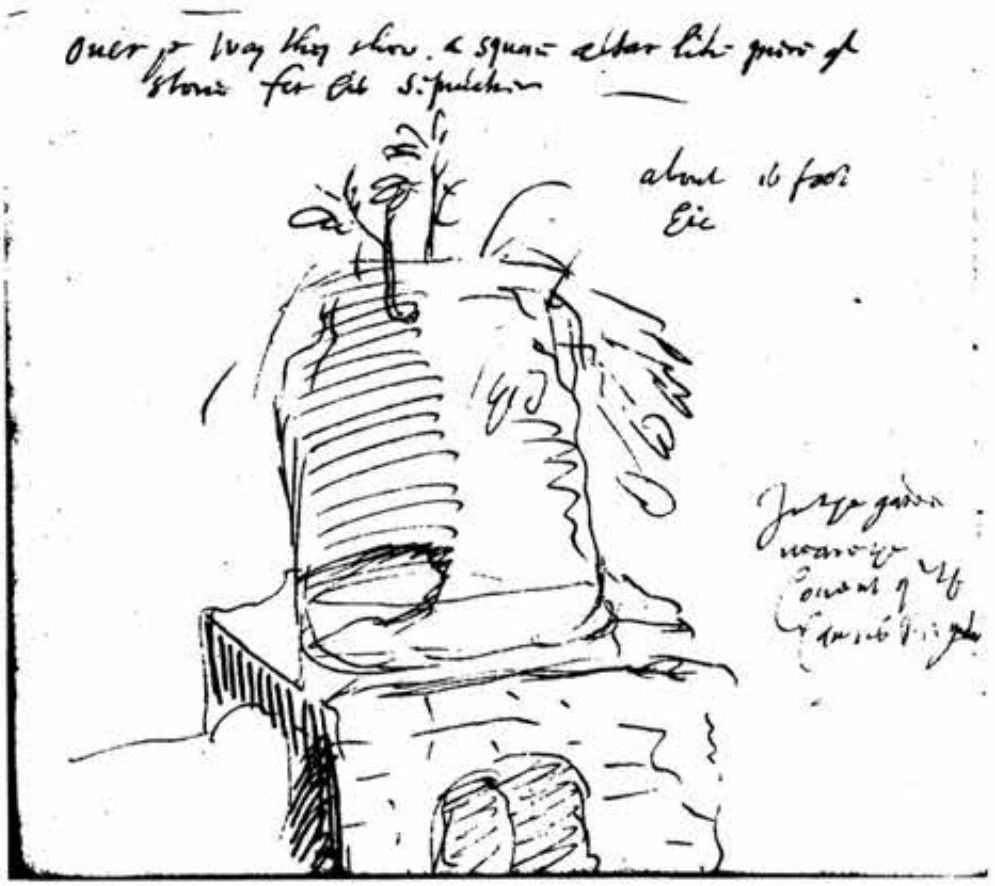

Fig.2. Richard Symonds, 'Virgil's Tomb', 1651.

V

This brings me almost to an end concerning commemoration of Virgil at his place of burial. Before we move north to Mantua, one further act of reverence at Naples requires attention. It has parallels in Lombardy.

On 25 February 1799, the Revolutionary general, Championnet, issued a decree in the newly founded Parthenopean Republic. The first duty of a state, he proclaimed, is to honour genius and thereby incite the citizens to emulation by placing ever before their eyes the glory that attaches, even in the grave, to the great men of all centuries. To this end, he proposed to erect a marble monument to Virgil on the site of his tomb at the mouth of the Grotta di Pozzuoli. Twenty days were allotted for a competition for the design of the memorial, and a three-man jury was to be set up. The winner would erect a monument to his own design.

I do not yet know what came of this. The whole procedure was, however, entirely in accord with French Revolutionary theory and practices regarding such manifestations. Rousseau had advocated monuments and festivals celebrating the heroes of culture so as to awaken a sense of human and national possibilities, and the Revolution took up his precepts with fervour. The most famous occasion of the kind was the posthumous Triumph of Voltaire in 1791, when the ashes of the champion of reason were transferred to the Panthéon. Such ceremonies are, of course, a turning to the purposes of liberty and equality of earlier occasions of monarchical propaganda: here the great ones of the intellect take the place of kings and conquerors.

VI

My scene now shifts to Mantua and its neighbourhood where, not unnaturally, the monumental-political purpose seems always to have been stronger and more developed than anywhere else in Italy.[2] We shall find ourselves involved with, among other things, the search for an authentic likeness of Virgil.[3] In this there is not much to go on except - once again - Donatus, who tells us that the poet was tall, firm-set, dark, rustic-seeming, suffering from indifferent health. A challenge, that, to the imagination.

The most famous and for later ages the most influential antique representations of Virgil are two. Neither is earlier than the fifth century A.D., and neither has the slightest claim to authenticity. In the first, an African mosaic, the so-called Bardo likeness, the poet sits toga'd between the muse of tragedy and the muse of epic poetry. In the second, in the manuscript known as 'Virgilius Romanus' (MS. Vaticanus latinus 3867), he is again toga'd and seated, with lectern and portable library at his side. In each, he is holding a book. I cannot here deal with the mosaic at Trier or the problems of the double herms and the portrait of Menander, but neither mosaic nor herms can in their turn claim to be true portraits.

We are in no better case with the two famous medieval representations, both of them in Mantua.[4] Both are of a type clearly derived from a late antique author portrait. One, 'Virgil to the waist', was - it seems - placed on Palazzo Broletto in 1227, and labelled 'Virgilius Mantuanus poeta clarissimus', as well as being given our epitaph: 'Mantua me genuit...'. The other, now in Palazzo Ducale, may belong to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Both are early witnesses to Boccaccio's statement about Mantuan reverence for Virgil and Virgilian localities; and to Pontano's note that the Mantuans were so proud of their Maro that they put his head on their seals, on their buildings and on their public monuments. We know that from about 1256 Mantuan coins bore an image of Virgil, sometimes modelled on the Broletto statue; sometimes having a curiously potted Virgil. Both the Broletto representation and that in Palazzo Ducale have suffered nasal damage, and we know also that this was repaired, for one of them at least - but which? - in 1468. The damage may be one reason why Ippolito Donesmondi in 1612 wrote that the Broletto statue had originally been part of a Virgil monument in Piazza delle Erbe thrown down by Carlo Malatesta in 1397.

As far as I know, however, the Virgil figure from this putative monument is not actually described until 1617. Then Antonio Possevino says it was life-size, held a book in the left hand, and was making a gesture of allocution with the right, wore the senatorial toga and stood on a pedestal with eight steps and an iron railing; the familiar epitaph was there too. None of the early fifteenth-century sources, not Pope Pius II, nor Pier Paolo Vergerio, nor Coluccio Salutati - all three enemies of

the Malatesta - tells us what the monument looked like. Pius, who visited Pietole, the poet's birthplace, in 1446, reports Vergerio as attributing Malatesta's crime to uncultured ignorance or feigned piety and a pretence that the statue of a pagan poet might beget idolatry. Malatesta did not know, Pius goes on, that poets were the guardians of fame, and that his infamy would be as lasting as his who burned the temple of Diana. Later, others joined the chorus.

During the 1450s Platina, the papal librarian, proposed a replacement, but nothing came of it. In 1499, however, Isabella d'Este took a hand. At her request Pontano and other gentlemen at Naples gave their opinion that Andrea Mantegna was the man to make an image of Virgil and that it should stand on a base bearing few words, the nature of which Pontano was to decide. The monument had the specific purpose of repairing Malatesta's outrage. In May 1499 Isabella accepted Pontano's ideas. The statue might be, she said, of marble or of bronze, though marble was later agreed on. A drawing survives.[5] If not - as we have it - by the hand of Mantegna, it almost certainly records an idea of his for Isabella's monument.

A little later still, one Giovanni Battista Fiera, a Mantuan physician and man of letters, was reported to have discovered an authentic likeness of Virgil. The head and shoulders of Mantegna's drawing are quite close to those of Virgil in the terracotta bust made to Fiera's order in 1514 and placed by him upon an arch outside his house, though Fiera's terracotta carries no book. On 25 June 1514 Fiera secured a decree forbidding harm to his arch and its busts - Francesco IV Gonzaga and Battista Spagnuoli, the Carmelite, the Christian Virgil, known to the Renaissance as Mantuan, were also represented. The portrait type of the terracotta of Virgil is also related to that used by Justus of Ghent and Luca Signorelli - and perhaps also to Pontano's description of the poet's appearance.[6] Out of the post-Mantegna circle, incidentally, probably from the hand of Leonbruno, comes the curious painted allegory of Mantua, with Virgil's head peeping out of a large vase - as on some Mantuan coins - perhaps an allusion to the belief that the poet's father was a potter.[7]

Can Fiera's bust bear any relation to another, a genuinely antique marble this time, which was - it seems - in Mantua about this period? Certainly this bust was later, much later, and again erroneously, thought to be a portrait of Virgil.[8] That it was in Mantua in the 1490s is probable, since it looks as if Mantegna used it in his Madonna della Vittoria in 1496. To the question of whether he used it for the head of one of his saints merely out of reverence for the antique, or additionally out of reverence for Virgil, I am sorry to say I have no answer. Nor can I say where this bust was between the 1490s and its rediscovery in 1775, after which - as we shall see - it played a considerable role. For much if not all of the interval it may have been in Gonzaga possession - as it was when it turned up again. There are various possibilities which there is not time to explore here.

Yet another commemoration of Virgil in Renaissance Mantua was made by Mario Equicola, the city's historian - a column with a bust set up in a *tempietto* at his house. At some indeterminate time, bust and column were parted - probably in 1708, when the house was pulled down - and the bust is no longer identifiable. The column now stands in the Cortile dei Cani of Palazzo Ducale, alongside, but separate from, yet another bust. Its coat of arms symbolizes - yet again - *pascua, rura, duces*.

Now to return to that bust used by Mantegna, whether or not for his Virgil. In 1775, Gian Girolamo Carli, Secretary General of the newly founded Mantuan Academy, and the architect Paolo Pozzo, were arranging the removal of the Gonzaga collections at Sabbioneta to Mantua. Coming on to the bust in question,

which had been crowned with poetical ivy, Carli was convinced that he had found the bust of Virgil from the monument destroyed by Malatesta, which he was also convinced had been classical. Luigi 'Rodomonte' Gonzaga must, he said, have fished it out of the Mincio, where Malatesta had flung it, and Vespasiano had treasured it up at Sabbioneta. He published a dissertation on the subject, which was later refuted by two eminent authorities. The authorities were right, and Carli was wrong. The Academy, however, clung to it as the likeness of their eponymous hero, both on their façade and in the catalogue of their antiquities.

Except among spoilsport scholars, this bust then held the field for more than a century. The Napoleonic occupiers of Italy - we shall see - made much of it and carried it off to Paris, though they had to give it back in 1816. It was the model for Virgil on the monument in Giardino Cavriani at Mantua, put up in 1835; for the bronze bust in the Mantuan *mascherata* of 1838; it passed in schoolbooks for a portrait of Virgil until recently, and on the Albert Memorial, as well as - I much regret to say - both on Neapolitan posters advertising their Virgilian year in 1981 and on the back cover of the British Library's little book, T.S. Pattie and R.D. Williams's *Virgil: His Poetry through the Ages*, issued for our Virgilian year of 1982.

VII

The most important appearances of Carli's bust, however, were stage-managed by the army of Napoleon.[9] On 18 July 1796, the conqueror himself paid a moonlight visit to Pietole, the village close to Mantua where the poet had been born - during which, he assured her by letter, he never ceased to think of Joséphine - and next year he exempted the village from all levies. It was, however, his general at Mantua, Sextius-Alexandre-François Miollis, veteran of Yorktown, who gave Carli's bust a new lease of life. He also acted as protector of the Academy, adding Virgiliana to its title. Miollis was something of an expert in honouring dead poets *à la française*: a little later he was to do something of the same kind for Ariosto and for the *improvvisatrice* Corilla Olimpica. In 1797, Miollis conceived a scheme for a Revolutionary fête in honour of Virgil's birthday and his birthplace, in one: a pyramid and a bust to be erected on 15 October at Pietole. Pozzo, however, enlarged the project to include both an opening academic gathering and a popular festival, with a dowry from public funds for fifty young affianced ladies (only twenty-three presented themselves in the event) and a light luncheon on the birthday itself, to conclude in the evening with a ball. The citizens were invited to display representations of Virgil and on 14 October, in the evening, there were verse readings in the Academy's Teatro Scientifico. The local newspaper made fun of some of the verses, at which the Academy complained to its protector.

Pozzo's project for a Virgilian park provided that it should be the perpetual property of the Academy. It was to have a marble entrance gate, surmounted by a figure of fame in the act of crowning a bust of Virgil. In a wood composed of Virgilian trees was to stand a pyramid or obelisk, topped by a swan and surrounded by a chain uniting three great marble vases, borne by three satyrs. On a crimson cushion, at the pyramid's foot, was to be placed the copy of Bodoni's Virgil which the printer had sent for the occasion. On each anniversary of Virgil's birth and death the pyramid was to be adorned with flowers and foliage; meantime, there was to be a free issue of bread and wine for anyone who placed a wreath there. The pyramid was soon famous (Fig.3).

Fig. 3. Obelisk in the Virgilian Park, Mantua, c. 1799 (after E.L. Posselt, *Taschenbuch für 1796*, Nuremberg 1799)

In the park were also to be *tempietti*, and the statues of the poets and the muses, interspersed with flower-beds. Broad avenues were to give a vista of Mantua and its lakes, of the ruins of Troy, the cave of the Cumean Sibyl, the temples of Apollo and Janus, the grave of Ocnus, founder of Mantua, and a group of rural huts. Between the temples of Apollo and Janus was to be a stretch of water with Charon's bark upon it and nearby, on the bank, the figure of a suppliant, guarded by Cerberus. On the other bank were to be the Elysian Fields. The statues of great men were to dotted about them: thirty-three Greek and Roman philosophers and poets and seventy-one modern exponents of the arts and sciences - Pomponazzi, Galileo, Rousseau, Descartes, Voltaire, Newton, Muratori, Mazzucchelli, Buffon, Benjamin Franklin, Columbus and Captain Cook. Pozzo proposed that, since all

these images could not be got ready in time, the figures of the saints and the blessed from the churches should be re-used.

It had been, the contemporary account assures us, a rather grey autumn but on 15 October the sun shone and the local dignitaries, accompanied by the *sposati* and *sposate* and their parents, went by water to Pietole. There had already been a foot-race, with prizes, from Mantua to Pietole, and now there were more races on horseback and on the water. Finally, there were fireworks, and a portrait of Virgil ringed with lights.

Two years later, Mantua fell again to the Austrians, who destroyed what there was of the Virgilian park. On his return, Miollis announced, in February 1801, that there was not enough money to rebuild it. Instead, he invited the citizens to erect a bust of Virgil in Mantua itself. Pozzo was again on the committee. A piazza was re-named for Virgil and it was proposed to transform a suitable church into a Mantuan Panthéon. High festival was appointed for 20 and 21 March, when there were to be verses and music at the Academy, as before. A gesso bust was modelled on Carli's marble and on 21 March it was taken in procession on a triumphal car drawn by four white horses and surrounded, inevitably, by nine young Mantuan ladies costumed as the Muses. Apollo also rode on the chariot, along with the geniuses of the arts, the sciences and immortality. All very splendid - and four years later the costumier was still trying to get his money. Their journey ended in the Piazza, where now stood a triumphal arch and column, with dedicatory inscriptions to the 'Bravi di Marengo e del Mincio' from Mantua, to the 'Nipoti di Maro' from the French Republic, to Virgil, to Miollis, to Liberty and to 'Oltraggio riparato'. The car and costumes, incidentally, were used again in the *mascherata* of 1838. Later a bronze was cast to replace the gesso bust. There was a further ceremony on Virgil's birthday, 15 October 1801, followed by yet another on the same date in 1802. Miollis had decreed three-yearly commemorations.

The Rev. John Chetwode Eustace was a witness to one of these ceremonies:

> The French no sooner became masters of Mantua, than they began ... with cruel mockery, [to] celebrate civic feasts in honor of the poet, and erected *plaster* busts in place of his marble statues.... In the middle of the great square was erected an ill-proportioned pillar, about ten feet high. On it was placed a plaster bust of Vergil. Four lesser pillars supporting four other plaster busts, joined by garlands, formed a sort of square enclosure. Virgil's bust was crowned with laurel, and from it hung garlands, extending to the other four. These garlands or festoons, instead of hanging loose, and waving gracefully in the air, were drawn tight, and were consequently as motionless as ropes. Around this ridiculous pageant, the French troops drew up, and paraded. The inhabitants seemed purposely to keep aloof.[10]

Nor was Kotzebue more impressed by

> ...the monument recently erected with great pomp to Virgil, who was born at Mantua. Heavens, what an ironical compliment to that great poet! His bust is placed so high that it is impossible to distinguish the features. Four swans of iron, covered with plaster of paris, support a column; the plaster has already fallen off in several places, and the swans look as if they had been plucked. On a large quadrangular pedestal are four inscriptions.... The whole is not so

> much a monument of Virgil as of French vanity, which unfortunately is not always contented with iron swans covered with plaster of Paris....[11]

VIII

Now forward to 1877 when a group of Mantuan citizens, realizing that the nineteen-hundredth anniversary of Virgil was approaching, decided to celebrate the event and to erect a monument, as well as to set in train a worthy edition of the works. Subscription lists were opened and dragged their slow length along until 1930, when the bimillenary of the birth was commemorated by the inauguration of the present monument. Its figure of Virgil, like the figure on the Cavriani monument, stands in the attitude described by Possevino as the attitude of the statue on the monument destroyed by Malatesta. The medal struck for the occasion derives its portrait from the Bardo mosaic.

It was necessary to know which day to celebrate, and the Virgilian Academy debated the claims of 22 September 1881 and the same date in 1882. The learned, individuals and bodies, were appealed to. Half a dozen Italian scholars responded, but the University of Oxford made no reply. Victor Duruy, whose *Histoire des Romains* was then at the height of its fame, found for 1881 but suggested that the day be 21 September - the date (so he thought) of Garibaldi's entry into Rome, a date that Virgil would have been proud to celebrate. Vincenzo Giacometti, appointed adjudicator, settled for 1881, but the ceremonies did not take place until 1882 - so both sides won. Scholars and men of letters were invited to take part. Tennyson sent his majestic ode.[12] Victor Hugo's secretary regretted that the master's contractual obligations would not allow him to express his love of the Roman poet in verse; Theodor Mommsen wrote that he was too busy with the proofs of the *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* to be present.

Pietole, in turn, got its monument in 1884. This was a mediocre cast-iron object by Agamemnone Paganini, on a column, inaugurated with a solemn oration from Giosué Carducci. Mantua's monument, when it finally came into being in 1930, was the work of the architect and amateur Luca Beltrami and the sculptor Emilio Quadrelli. Perhaps some revolution of taste will make it seem admirable to someone. Whether we should have been better off if the project of one Tertulliano Gandolfi had been realized is a moot point. Gandolfi wanted a female figure, a hundred feet tall, holding in her arms Augustus Caesar, Virgil and Manto the Theban. Finally, the Mantuan tally is completed by an ivy-twined and bay-flanked herm from the Bosco del Virgilio, an area of reafforestation laid out near Mantua in the 1920s. The face is modelled on the face of Quadrelli's figure.

IX

These are the monuments of which my title spoke. It is easy work to mock them a little, as easy as to mock the attempts to locate the tombs of Ovid or of Livy, those great men of a past which many have ceased to think of as exemplary. Mockery is not my object. Men honour their forbears as best they can: the important thing is that they care. On the day that the world ceases to cherish the memory of Ovid, Livy, Virgil and the rest, we shall know that civilization as we have known it, perhaps even Europe itself, are dead.

APPENDIX: SOME FURTHER PICTURES OF 'VIRGIL'S TOMB'

1. Jean-Jacques Boissard; drawings
   a. After 1583. Stockholm, Royal Library, MS. S 68, fol. 125^{v}.
   b. c. 1597. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS. lat.12,509, p.336(572).
   c. c. 1605. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. des imprimés J.468 bis, fol.16^{r}.
2. Richard Symonds; pen drawing, 1651. Italian notebook, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawlinson D 121, p.62.
3. Joan Raye; coloured drawing, after engraving by H. Robert, 1771. *Reisbeschrijvingen over ... Italie ... 1768-9*, The Hague, Royal Library, MS. 133.M.59-62.
4. Antonio Dominici (1730-before 1800); painting. Naples, Museo nazionale della Certosa di S. Martino.
5. Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros (1748-1810); watercolour, c. 1795. Lausanne, Musée cantonal des beaux-arts.
6. Anon., French, XVIII century; sepia watercolours of exterior (2) and interior (1). London, Sir John Soane's Museum, A.L.30, nos. 16,19,21 (pointed out to me by Arnold Nesselrath).
7. Anon., early XIX century; gouache. Naples, Pensa Collection.
8. Giacinto Gigante, 1806-76; watercolour. Naples, Museo nazionale di Capodimonte, Astarita Collection.

FOOTNOTES

Parts of this lecture have appeared in *The Poet and the Monumental Impulse* (Society for Renaissance Studies, Occasional Paper VI), London 1980. Parts have also been published in more extended, illustrated form as 'Ovid's Tomb. The Growth of a Legend from Eusebius to Laurence Sterne, Chateaubriand and George Richmond', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXVI, 1973, pp. 35-76; and 'The Grave of Vergil', *ibid.*, XLVII, 1984, pp. 1-31. The present text is a revised and up-dated version of what was delivered on 17 January 1981, incorporating some new material and correcting some errors. Since full references will be found in the three publications mentioned, I have limited footnotes here to the documentation of new and/or corrected passages.

1. On these sketchbooks, see the tentative conclusions of C. Callmer, 'Un manuscrit de Jean-Jacques Boissard à la Bibliothèque royale de Stockholm', *Acta Instituti Romani Regni Sueciae*, Series in 4°, XXII (*Opuscula Romana*, IV), 1962, pp. 47-59, and E. Mandowsky and C. Mitchell, *Pirro Ligorio's Roman Antiquities*, London 1963, pp. 27-28.
2. See now R. Signorini, *Ritorno a Virgilio*, Verona 1981; the catalogue of the exhibition *Misurare la terra. Centurazione e coloni nel mondo romano. Il caso mantovano*, Mantua 1984, esp. the contributions of Adele Bellù and Gianluigi

Arcari; and the admirable exhibition catalogue of the Mantuan Archivio di Stato compiled by Dott.ssa Bellù: *La memoria di Virgilio nella documentazione archivistica mantovana*, Mantua 1981.

3. U. Tocchetti, 'Iconografia virgiliana', in *Misurare la terra...*, pp. 195-99; M.G. Fiorini Galassi and others, *Virgilio: Alla ricerca del volto*, Suzzara 1981.
4. Wolfgang Liebenwein, '*Princeps poetarum*. Die mittelalterlichen Vergil-Bilder in Mantua', *2,000 Jahre Vergil. Ein Symposium*, ed. V. Pöschl (*Wolfenbütteler Forschungen*, XXIV), Wiesbaden 1983, pp. 109-51.
5. There is a convenient summary in D.S. Chambers and Jane T. Martineau, *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1981-2, no. 92.
6. *Ibid.*, nos. 98-100.
7. W. Kemp, 'Eine mantegneske Allegorie für Mantua', *Pantheon*, XXVII, 1969, pp. 12-18.
8. For the antique type, see the useful bibliography in W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*; 4th ed., by Hermine Speier, II, Tübingen 1966, no. 1240, pp. 93-94.
9. See now, especially, the works of Adele Bellù cited in n. 2 above.
10. J.C. Eustace, *A Tour through Italy*, 1802; 3rd ed., London 1815, I, pp. 228-9.
11. A.F.F. von Kotzebue, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise...*, Cologne 1801; English trans., London 1806, IV, pp. 258-9.
12. 'Mantua's Tennyson Manuscript', *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 September 1981, p. 1081.