

## A NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN INTERPRETATION OF THE *AENEID*

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines a loose, popularized translation of Aeneid 1 and 4 published in 1870 by a small New England newspaper. Through evaluation of the translator's preface and related material, I argue that the text was intended to be a response to the marginalization of the classics in school curricula and a useful pedagogical tool for attracting students to Vergil. I then consider the translation in relation to the long tradition of Vergilian travesty and propose that it can be read as a combinatorial parody that satirizes both the original epic and nineteenth-century American society in an attempt to increase interest in the classics.*

In 1870 the *Winsted Herald*, a small Connecticut newspaper, published a remarkable piece entitled *A Free and Independent Translation of the First and Fourth Books of the Aeneid of Virgil* (hereafter denoted as the *Free and Independent Translation*). Provocatively dubbed *The Aeneid in Modern American* on the cover, this anonymous translation purports in its preface to have been composed out of:

a vehement desire to rescue the Bard of Mantua from the oblivion to which this degenerate age seems bent upon consigning him; to restore him to that pre-eminence, and to challenge for him that homage, which from the time of imperial Augustus down to about the year of grace eighteen hundred and thirty were unreservedly accorded him throughout the realm of letters.

The text—to say the least—is a loose verse rendering of *Aeneid* 1 and 4 into informal English replete with colloquialisms and a wide range of topical references to nineteenth-century life in the United States. Its title page provides, inter alia, a sensationalized summary of the contents of the two books and comments on the pedagogical usefulness of the new work.<sup>1</sup> Its preface situates the translation in relation to contemporary attitudes toward the classics and discusses the translator's rationale for modernizing the *Aeneid*. Interspersed throughout are a series of satirical illustrations captioned with quotations of Vergil in Latin.<sup>2</sup>

Despite its highly intriguing character and the wide-ranging commentary it offers on the state of classics in late nineteenth-century America, the *Free and Independent Translation* has escaped scholarly notice. Partly, this can be attributed to the obscurity of the text. Until its recent digitalization by Google<sup>3</sup> and inclusion in Kessinger Publishing's Legacy Reprint Series,<sup>4</sup> copies were largely confined to the

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<sup>1</sup> See plates 1 and 2 (following the article) for images of the cover and title page.

<sup>2</sup> The cover image is representative of the illustrations included in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Available at the following URL: [http://books.google.com/books?id=PH1hw\\_HBZCAC&dq=free+independent+translation+aeneid&source=gb\\_s\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=PH1hw_HBZCAC&dq=free+independent+translation+aeneid&source=gb_s_navlinks_s)

<sup>4</sup> Vergil and T. Worth, *A Free and Independent Translation of the First and Fourth Books of the Aeneid of Virgil* (Whitefish, Mont., 2008). The Legacy Reprint Series is devoted to keeping obscure but “culturally important” works in print.

special collections libraries of major American research universities. Of further concern is the relative paucity of scholarship devoted to the American reception of the classics after the colonial period—Carl Richard, at the opening of his 2009 book *The Golden Age of the Classics in America*, aptly laments this “comparative neglect” of later classical reception.<sup>5</sup> Following the lead of Meyer Reinhold, who posits that the “prime concern” of American classical reception studies should be to elucidate “how Americans used, even misused and abused antiquity,”<sup>6</sup> in this article I examine the *Free and Independent Translation* as an imaginative attempt at classical outreach and as a nuanced parody of Vergil that satirizes the *Aeneid* in light of contemporary concerns. After briefly surveying the history of early American translations of Vergil, I suggest that the work directly responds to two major trends in American education of the time period—the deemphasizing of the classics in favor of technocratic and utilitarian subjects, and a new wave of pedagogy in the classics valuing literary and historical interpretation over repetitive instruction in vocabulary, grammar, and prosody. I then analyze the humorous aspects of the *Free and Independent Translation* and propose that the author achieves a combinatorial parody that satirizes both contemporary society and intellectual culture and, working in the long tradition of Vergilian travesty, the epic itself. Combining these two central observations, I argue that the author of the *Free and Independent Translation* considered amusing, contemporized versions of classical texts, of the sort he has crafted for the *Aeneid*, to be useful tools for advancing the serious pedagogical and outreach objectives delineated in the preface.

The enormous influence of the classics on American pedagogy and intellectual and political life from the colonial period through the end of the nineteenth century is unquestioned, and few authors were as important to American classical reception as Vergil.<sup>7</sup> Aside from Vergil’s central position in the American educational system, the immediate relevance of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* to American

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<sup>5</sup> C. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009) ix.

<sup>6</sup> M. Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit 1984) 19.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the openings lines of two influential articles on the American reception of Vergil: “For most of the four centuries of our history, Virgil has provided dominating images for the American consciousness” (T. Ziolkowski, “Virgil in the New World,” *Virgil and the Moderns* [Princeton 1993] 146), and “In 1881, in commemoration of the nineteenth centenary of Vergil’s death, Tennyson composed his stately eulogy ‘To Virgil.’ Across the Atlantic there was no American accolade, not even a ceremonial complement in remembrance of Rome’s greatest poet. Yet for about 250 years Vergil was a household word to numerous Americans, for study of his works was by tradition prescribed for those who pursued the academic curriculum in the grammar schools, academies, high schools, and colleges” (M. Reinhold, “Vergil in the American Experience from Colonial Times to 1882,” in J. D. Bernard, ed., *Vergil at 2000* [New York 1986] 185). In addition to these articles, excellent discussions of Vergil in early America can be found in T. M. Caldwell, *Virgil Made English: The Decline of Classical Authority* (New York 2008) 208–16, and Richard, “Vergil and the Early American Republic,” in J. Farrell and M. C. J. Putnam, eds., *A Companion to Vergil’s Aeneid and Its Tradition* (West Sussex 2010) 355–65.

agrarian life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also contributed significantly to his appeal.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, it is not surprising that most early American translations or adaptations of Vergil are not of the *Aeneid* but rather of his first two works. Before detailing the handful of Vergilian imitations penned during the colonial period, Reinhold writes that “while the *Aeneid* remained virtually untried by American translators, versions and imitations of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* were not infrequently composed—none of them, it must be said, memorable.”<sup>9</sup> Caleb Alexander, a Massachusetts preacher and member of the Yale class of 1777, did publish an unremarkable prose translation of the complete Vergilian corpus in 1796 that was intended to be distinctly American and popularly accessible.<sup>10</sup> No American verse translation of the whole of the *Aeneid*, however, was produced until the twentieth century, and consequently numerous Americans encountered Vergil through Dryden’s translation throughout the 1800s. Furthermore, as attested to by the colonial interpretations of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* referenced above, there was a well-established tradition, both in the United States and abroad, of appropriating, imitating, or translating Vergil to suit particular topical purposes.<sup>11</sup> Of particular interest to consideration of the *Free and Independent Translation*, there is at least one other recorded instance of an American newspaper publishing an edition of a classical text in the nineteenth century—in 1806 “A New Translation of Virgil’s First Pastoral” appeared in the *Kentucky Gazette*, suggesting that there was interest as early as the turn of the century in publishing Americanized Vergilian texts in popularly accessible venues similar to the *Winsted Herald*.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the humorous

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Ziolkowski (above, n.7) 146–48, J. C. Shields, *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self* (Knoxville 2001) xli and 100–105, and L. Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford 1964). On related issues in the British reception of Vergilian pastoral, see R. Jenkyns, “Pastoral,” in *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal* (Oxford 1992) 151–75, and L. Lerner, “The *Eclogues* and the Pastoral Tradition,” in C. Martindale, ed., *Virgil and His Influence* (Bristol 1984) 193–213.

<sup>9</sup> Reinhold (above, n.7) 192. See also Caldwell (above, n.7) 212–13 for a discussion of Americanized *Georgics*.

<sup>10</sup> Caldwell (above, n.7) 210 and Reinhold (above, n.7) 190 both discuss the Alexander translation and its stated objectives of accessibility and simplicity.

<sup>11</sup> The range of such loose translations and interpretations of Vergil is considerable. An overview of early modern Vergilian parody can be found in C. Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: “Pessimistic” Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford 2007) 196–201, and a thorough discussion of Vergilian parody in eighteenth-century Britain in T. M. Caldwell, “Restoration Parodies of Virgil and English Literary Values,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 (2006) 383–401. Caldwell (above, n.7) 29–30 also traces the rise of loose, popular translations of Vergil from the seventeenth-century works of John Ogilby in *Virgil Made English* (above, n.7). Pedagogical adaptations of Vergil were also not uncommon; for an interesting case study, see M. Skoic’s recent discussion (“Didactic translation: The first Scandinavian translation of the *Eclogues*: P. Jensen Roskilde, *Bucolica* (1639),” *SO* 83 [2008] 104–19) of an early Scandinavian translation of the *Eclogues* intended specifically for didactic purposes.

<sup>12</sup> See Reinhold (above, n.7) 190 for brief discussion of the 1806 interpretation. A short overview of the founding and operation of the *Winsted Herald* can be found in W. J. Pape’s voluminous history of Waterbury, Connecticut, and surrounding regions (*History of Waterbury and the Naugatuck Valley Connecticut* [Chicago 1918] 425–27).

illustrations of the *Free and Independent Translation* have at least one close counterpart—an 1862 illustrated rendering of Plutarch's *Lives* also produced by Thomas Worth.<sup>13</sup>

A peculiar feature of the *Free and Independent Translation* is that it includes attribution of the illustrator but not the translator. The title page prominently notes “with illustrations by Thomas Worth” but neither identifies a translator nor gives explicit credit for the text to Worth. In this essay I will not attempt a conjecture about the identity of the translator and whether the translation was an individual or collaborative effort.<sup>14</sup> Omission of the translator from the title page, however, does suggest that Worth's illustrations were perhaps the main commercial draw for the work. Given that Worth enjoyed a prolific career as an artist for the famed American printmaking firm Currier & Ives, this inference seems reasonable.<sup>15</sup>

The one-page preface to the *Free and Independent Translation*, the first paragraph of which is given below, details the translator's inspiration and vision for the work:

The present work had its inception in a vehement desire to rescue the Bard of Mantua from the oblivion to which this degenerate age seems bent upon consigning him; to restore him to that pre-eminence, and to challenge for him that homage, which from the time of imperial Augustus down to about the year of grace eighteen hundred and thirty were unreservedly accorded him throughout the realm of letters, and the withholding of which is one of the most alarming symptoms of the decadence of classical learning in our times. The poet-laureate of Caesar, as it were (or, possibly, as it was)—the chiefest ornament of the Golden Age—the indispensable companion of medieval students—the star

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At the time of the publication of the *Free and Independent Translation*, the paper was under the editorship of Theodore F. Vaill, “adjutant of the Second Connecticut Heavy Artillery.” Pape makes no mention of the *Free and Independent Translation* or of other publishing ventures not directly related to the core newspaper business.

<sup>13</sup> T. Worth, *Plutarch Restored: An Anachronistic Metempsychosis Illustrating the Illustrious of Greece and Rome* (New York 1862). The work contains loose, one-page summaries of twenty-four of Plutarch's *Lives* in English, each accompanied by a Greek quotation and a humorously modernized illustration. In contrast to the *Free and Independent Translation*, its title page attributes the entire work, not just the illustrations, to Thomas Worth. Unfortunately, nothing has been written about *Plutarch Restored*.

<sup>14</sup> In the materials I consulted on the *Free and Independent Translation* and the *Winsted Herald* I found little information that might shed light on the question, and its resolution is not essential to my reading of the translation. The library catalogue of the Litchfield Historical Society (*Catalogue of the Books, Papers and Manuscripts of the Litchfield Historical Society* [Litchfield, Conn., 1906] 42) does list the text under “Theodore F. Vail,” noting that he was born in the town but offering no information about his role in the work's composition.

<sup>15</sup> Currier & Ives was a successful printmaking company that operated from 1834 to 1907 and produced a large number of iconic American illustrations. For further discussion of the artwork produced by Currier & Ives, see, for example, T. W. Peters, *Currier & Ives, Printmakers to the American People* (New York 1942), and B. F. LeBeau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington 2001).

actor of the *Divina Commedia*—the thesaurus of all authors before the epoch of Tupper—the *vade mecum* of all who ever pretended to any sort of scholarship down to a generation ago,—has been supplanted in our schools by such syllabus trash as *Parlez vous* and *Book Keeping*; has been kicked out to make room for *Brewer's Familiar Science* and a whole brood of contemptible Ologies, that are no more a substitute for Virgil than burnt beans are for old Java. And even those who do set out to become acquainted with the bard are so infected with the general disposition to slight him that you shall find their Virgil thumbed and soiled for the first eighty lines of the *Aeneid*, while the remainder of the volume is as new, and forever remains as new, as when it left the bookbinder's hands.

A first point of interest is the translator's perception of the chronology of the decline of the classics in America, especially the observation that Vergil was accorded a poetic "pre-eminence . . . from the time of imperial Augustus down to about the year of grace eighteen hundred and thirty." Reinhold suggests a strikingly similar timeframe for the decline of American classicism: "In the 1830s . . . the influence of classical thought, literature, and symbols (except for the triumph of Hellenic Revival architecture) began conspicuously to wane."<sup>16</sup> One of the most common reasons given for this decline is precisely the one identified in the preface of the *Free and Independent Translation*—the rise of technocratic, utilitarian, and scientific subjects in the American curriculum that threatened to displace the classics from their traditional position in American secondary schools and colleges.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, a persistent pedagogical debate from the colonial period (Benjamin Franklin was an early and influential proponent of utilitarian education)<sup>18</sup> through the nineteenth century

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<sup>16</sup> Reinhold (above, n.7) 189. Along these lines, Reinhold envisions the colonial period as the "golden age" of American Classicism, with the antebellum period constituting a "silver age," a classification also adopted by W. Briggs ("United States," in C. Kallendorf, *A Companion to the Classical Tradition* [Malden, Mass., 2007] 279–94). Richard (above, n.5) x, argues for inverting Reinhold's paradigm and suggests that the antebellum period in fact marked a high point for the classics in the United States. At any rate, there is broad agreement that classical influence was well in decline by 1870, and the assertion of the *Free and Independent Translation* that neglect of Vergil began in earnest in the 1830s is certainly reasonable.

<sup>17</sup> C. Winterer (*The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* [Baltimore 2002] 1–2) summarizes the role of the classics in the American classroom: "From the founding of Harvard College in 1636 to the 1880s, when colleges across the nation began to drop their Greek and Latin requirements, classical learning formed the core of college education in America. While other subjects, such as mathematics, rhetoric, and moral philosophy, figured importantly in the curriculum, higher education in America through the antebellum period became synonymous with the term *classical college* . . . The study of Greek and Latin dominated the American college curriculum during this period, an example of extraordinary intellectual continuity during a time of wrenching ideological change."

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Richard (above, n.7) 358 and Briggs (above, n.16) 285.

was a struggle to balance the classics with disciplines deemed more practically useful—a struggle that, as the *Free and Independent Translation* appears keenly aware, the classicists were destined to lose.<sup>19</sup>

It is against this backdrop of the deemphasizing of the classics that the preface of the *Free and Independent Translation* laments the rise of “such syllabub trash as *Parlez vous* and *Book Keeping*” and the displacement of Vergil “to make room for *Brewer’s Familiar Science* and a whole brood of contemptible Ologies.” The translator specifically targets a handful of texts representative of the move toward technocratic education. *Brewer’s Familiar Science* was a popular 1857 chemistry textbook written in a question-and-answer format and based on the premise that “no science is more generally interesting than that which explains the common phenomena of life.”<sup>20</sup> The work’s preface boasts that it “is written in language so plain as to be understood by all.”<sup>21</sup> Similarly, *Book Keeping* refers to an 1859 textbook intended to teach rudimentary accounting principles, a subject that the authors note had already become a fixture in American schools.<sup>22</sup> *Parlez-Vous Francais?*, published in 1864, is an introductory guide to conversational French that advertises itself as “a pocket companion for beginners who wish to acquire the facility of expressing themselves fluently on every-day topics in a short, easy, and practical way.”<sup>23</sup> The translator’s economic metaphor, which labels scientific education as “no more a substitute for Virgil than burnt beans are for old Java,” further highlights his concern that Vergil has become just another commodity. It is clear that the *Free and Independent Translation* was designed to advance the cause of classical outreach and popularization in the face of these rapidly shifting attitudes towards the proper composition of an education. The translator, alarmed at contemporary attitudes toward the classics, perceives a real need for an instrument to restore Vergil to the former glories he delineates in the preface. His targets—as epitomized by *Brewer’s Familiar Science*, *Book Keeping*, and the like—are not representative of the highest levels of scientific inquiry or particularly sophisticated instructional works. Rather, materials that are written on practical subjects, that are intended for mass distribution, and that purport simplicity are explicitly criticized as inferior to Vergil and the tradition of classical pedagogy.

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<sup>19</sup> For excellent overviews of the debate, see Winterer (above, n.17) 99–110, Richard (above, n.5) 88–104, and L. T. Percy, *The Grammar of Our Civility: Classical Education in America* (Waco, Tex., 2005) 47–50. Winterer aptly titles this section of her book “The Triumph of Utility and Science.”

<sup>20</sup> R. E. Peterson, ed., *Familiar Science; or, The Scientific Explanation of Common Things* (Philadelphia 1857) 3.

<sup>21</sup> Peterson (above, n.20) 3.

<sup>22</sup> L. B. Hanaford and J. W. Payson, *Book-Keeping by Single and Double Entry for Schools and Academies* (Boston 1859). The preface comments on the expanding attention being devoted to the subject: “The importance of the study of Bookkeeping, as a branch of Common School education, is now generally admitted; and, in offering this book to the public, the only apology which the authors deem necessary is the almost universal demand for a textbook adapted to the wants of pupils in the Common School of the country.”

<sup>23</sup> *Parlez-Vous Francais? Or, Do You Speak French* (Boston 1864). No author is named.

If popularized utilitarianism is the external enemy identified by the *Free and Independent Translation*, then standard modes of classical pedagogy are the internal problem. For decades in American schools and colleges, Vergil's poems were read less as outstanding literature than as useful texts for rote instruction in the fundamentals of Latin grammar and prosody. Reinhold aptly summarizes the resentment toward Vergil that this didacticism bred for many former students:

However, from this academic exposure to Vergil as teenagers and youths most Americans harbored memories of the *Aeneid* that were unpleasant, dolorous, even repugnant. For the text of the *Aeneid* as studied in the grammar schools, academies, and later the high schools simply served as a *corpus vile* for drilling grammar, construing and parsing Latin, or scanning verses. The author of an American edition of Vergil for schools and colleges in 1842 commented candidly on the folly of this age-old method of instruction. "Virgil," he wrote, "is more generally read and less appreciated than any other classic . . . These elegant and delightful poems call up, in the minds of most persons, no more pleasant images than those of the spelling-book, the recitation room, and, perhaps, the rod."<sup>24</sup>

Richard includes the following anecdote in his discussion of the often explicit association between discipline and repetitive instruction in Vergil: "In fact, two students from South Carolina College who were caught discharging their guns in town were punished by being forced to recite fifty lines from the *Aeneid* before the faculty in 1824, thereby indicating that even the college's administration perceived a relationship between rote memorization of the classics and punishment."<sup>25</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, however, a new wave of classical pedagogy gradually came to deemphasize tedious language instruction in favor of literary appreciation of the classics, lectures on the historical and cultural contexts of the texts being read, new approaches to philology appropriated from the great German research universities, and other innovative instructional modes.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Reinhold (above, n.7) 185–86. For a full discussion of such traditional modes of classical pedagogy and language instruction, see Winterer (above, n.17) 29–43. On the poor quality of instruction that frequently plagued American students of the classics, see Briggs (above, n.16) 280–82.

<sup>25</sup> Richard (above, n.5) 17. C. Winterer ("Why Did American Women Read the *Aeneid*?" in Farrell and Putnam [above, n.7] 386) recounts the same story.

<sup>26</sup> See Richard (above, n.5) 15–17 and Winterer (above, n.17) 29–43 for discussion. Many of these innovations were pioneered by several American classicists who did their graduate work in Germany and returned to the United States strongly influenced by the German tradition of *Altertumswissenschaft*; see Percy (above, n.19) 16–17 and 76–77 for an overview. These individuals were also largely responsible for the establishment of classics as a professional discipline in American universities at the same time as Latin and Greek were being phased out as universal school and undergraduate subjects. Perhaps the most influential figure in this trend was Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, founding editor of *AJP*; for further information on Gildersleeve

The *Free and Independent Translation*, whose complaint that students too often abandoned the *Aeneid* after a mere eighty lines evokes the dull tedium of the traditional pedagogy, appears as a response to these crippling educational practices and as an off-beat complement to the new approach. A later exhortation in the preface—"may the perusal of these pages incite in many souls such a desire to renew and extensively cultivate [Vergil's] charming acquaintance"—suggests a desire for students to develop an appreciation of Augustan poetry running deeper than the superficiality of isolated grammar drills.

The second paragraph of the preface of the *Free and Independent Translation* continues this rejection of traditional modes of classical instruction. Here the translator presents his rendering of the first seven lines of *Aeneid* 1, formatted with the English and Latin directly juxtaposed as in an interlinear translation and accompanied by the following introduction:

Below will be found a few of the opening lines of the *Aeneid*, in juxtaposition with what was intended as a literal translation of the text and a close imitation of the verse. An experiment extending through the first seven lines was sufficient to induce the translator to concur in the opinion of the best critics, that the English language is ill adapted to the uses of hexameter blank verse.

The translation produced, especially given its formatting in the preface, reads like a school exercise intended to demonstrate that the pupil has sufficient grasp of the Latin to compose a stiff and formulaic hexameter rendering. This sample translation is included as the first stanza of the *Free and Independent Translation*, and it is illustrative to compare its tone with that of the second stanza:

Arms and the Man I sing, who, first from the shores  
of Troy sailing,  
Driven by Fate, came to Italy, and the Lavinian country;  
Much was he tossed over land and sea, by the Powers  
Supernal,  
Because of the mem'orable anger of cruelsome Juno.  
Much also he suffered in war, while he builded his city,  
And brought into Latium his gods: whence the race  
of the Latins,  
The famed Alban fathers, and Rome, the City Eternal.  
O Muse! Relate me the facts, if you happen to know 'em,  
Concerning the hero of this astonishing poem;  
Explain why the queen of the gods was so terribly eager  
So clever and pious a man at each step to beleaguer;—  
Why with wrath she pursued him,—with shipwreck  
and tempest and thunder:  
Do they cultivate such reprehensible morals up yonder?

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and his pedagogy, see, for instance, W. Briggs, ed., *Soldier and Scholar: Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve and the Civil War* (Charlottesville 1998).

The first stanza is both metrically precise and relatively unremarkable, a rendering devoid of the neologisms, contemporary references, and hackneyed rhymes so common throughout the remainder of the work. All this changes with the first line of the second stanza, “if you happen to know ’em” effectively signaling the tone of the remainder of the translation. With the colorful rendering of *Aeneid* 1.11 (*tantaene animis caelestibus irae*) as “Do they cultivate such reprehensible morals up yonder?” it is clear that the experiment in colloquial translation is fully underway.<sup>27</sup> As Craig Kallendorf notes in *The Other Virgil*, such an “irreverent tone” early in the adaptation is a characteristic of many travesties of Vergil; in this regard, the opening of Charles Cotton’s seventeenth-century burlesque of *Aeneid* 1 and 4, quoted by Kallendorf, bears several similarities to the second stanza of the *Free and Independent Translation*:

*I Sing the Man* (read it who list,  
A *Trojan* true as ever pist)  
Who from *Troy-Town*, by Wind and Weather,  
To *Italy* (and God knows wither)  
Was pack’d, and rack’d, and lost, and tost,  
And bounc’d from Pillar unto Post.<sup>28</sup>

“[P]ack’d,” “rack’d,” and “bounc’d” play the role “if you happen to know ’em” and “up yonder” in the *Free and Independent Translation*, signposting Cotton’s interpretation as colloquial, while the use of “pist,” like a line questioning Juno’s “reprehensible morals,” highlights the author’s playful irreverence toward the epic. In sum, the first two stanzas of the *Free and Independent Translation* frame a progression away from the sort of rendering that would naturally arise from traditional pedagogy toward a parody of Vergil.

The *Free and Independent Translation* also shows awareness of the substantial debate over the proper role of translations in classical education—namely, whether students should be allowed to consult them as an aid to or replacement for learning the ancient languages—and the proliferation of contraband “ponies” that numerous students relied on for help in completing assignments.<sup>29</sup> In regard to translation

<sup>27</sup> Citations of Vergil are from R. A. B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (Oxford 1969).

<sup>28</sup> Kallendorf (above, n.11) 197. The edition referenced here and in subsequent discussion is C. Cotton, *Scarronides: or, Virgil Travestie. A Mock-Poem on the First and Fourth Books of Virgil’s Aeneid, in English Burlesque* (Durham 1807) 59, except that “p---” has been restored to “pist.” Throughout this article I have not attempted to draw rigorous distinctions between the terms “parody,” “burlesque,” and “travesty,” as they are frequently used interchangeably and with varying connotations; see F. Teague, “Burlesque,” in A. Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton 1993) 151–52.

<sup>29</sup> See Winterer (above, n.17) 37–42 for a review of the debate. On such “ponies” she writes, “A whole student subculture dedicated to the propagation of translations flourished, testifying to the extent to which languages dominated teaching. Barred from checking out classical texts from college libraries for fear that they might use translations in their schoolwork, students trafficked in ‘ponies,’ interlined copies of textbooks that helped them weather the recitations.” Winterer includes a humorous

crutches, the *Free and Independent Translation* comes down firmly on the side of the faculty, advertising on the title page that the work is “designed for the use of families, schools, and colleges, and especially for students in Virgil, into whose hands this volume may be put without the least danger of its being used as a pony.” Interpretative, topical, and humorous translation is cast as something of a middle ground between unmotivated and out-of-context rote memorization and brazen cheating or total neglect of the study of Latin. The *Free and Independent Translation* is presented as material for enrichment, an amusing and approachable text to enlighten students about the literary dimensions of Vergil and relate his poetry to contemporary concerns without undercutting instruction in the original language. Two personal accounts published in the decades after the appearance of the *Free and Independent Translation* suggest that the work achieved these objectives. H. L. Koopman, then a librarian at Brown, wrote in a 1919 article that “those of us who learned our Latin in the seventies still recall the delight with which our classes in the *Aeneid* hailed the ‘Free and Independent Translation’ of its first and fourth books that in 1870 emanated from Winsted, Connecticut, a translation that lived up to its title-page, yet avoided indecency.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, E. P. King commented in 1890 that “when [the translation] first appeared . . . it was read through at one sitting, and it can have lost little of its fascinating power in these twenty years.”<sup>31</sup> Such comments suggest that the text, in sharp contrast to its current obscurity, enjoyed wide dissemination and earned a real role in Vergilian pedagogy at the end of the nineteenth century.

In addition to examining the *Free and Independent Translation* in relation to dominant attitudes about classical pedagogy, it is worth investigating several distinctive features of the translation that reveal a complex literary experiment in Vergilian interpretation and parody. Metrically, the text is peculiar. The title page identifies the work as being “in hexameter and pentameter,” a laconic characterization that at first glance almost suggests the invention of some hybrid line. In reality, “in hexameter and pentameter” is just shorthand for denoting that the books are in two different meters—*Aeneid* 1 is rendered into an irregular hexameter, while *Aeneid* 4 is in regular iambic pentameter. In this regard, the translation of the fourth book is fairly unremarkable, as iambic pentameter is a traditional meter for English translations of Latin and Greek dactylic hexameter poems. The hexameter of the first book, which regularly includes six feet per line but jumps erratically between iambs and

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poem that captures student attitudes toward translation aids: “And when leaving, leave behind us/*Ponies* for a lower class;/*Ponies*, which perhaps another,/*Toiling* up the College hill,/*A* forlorn, a ‘younger brother,’/*‘Riding,’* may rise higher still.”

<sup>30</sup> H. L. Koopman, “A Manuscript Travesty of the *Iliad*,” in *The American Library Institute Papers and Proceedings 1918* (Chicago 1919) 26–30.

<sup>31</sup> E. P. King, “Virgil for the Old Boys,” *The Academy: A Journal of Secondary Education* 5 (1890) 394–96.

dactyls, is more unusual. As quoted earlier, the preface notes “the opinion of the best critics, that the English language is ill adapted to the uses of hexameter blank verse.” Indeed, there is something of a conventional wisdom amongst classicists, persisting to the present day, that it is “impossible” to write acceptable dactylic hexameter in English.<sup>32</sup> That the translator has successfully rendered an entire book of the *Aeneid* into hexameter is a point of novelty, and it is thus not surprising that the choice of meter is prominently noted on the title page. Why, then, does the translator abandon the hexameter after the first book? Perhaps the task of composing decent English hexameters, in affirmation of the standard opinion, simply became too difficult, leading him to opt for something simpler in the fourth book. It is also reasonable that the change in meter was a deliberate move intended to showcase the translator’s facility for manipulating Vergil into multiple forms of English verse, or that he deemed a conventional pentameter more suited to the content of *Aeneid* 4.

Another notable feature of the translation is the occasional incorporation of Latin phrases into the flow of the English text, as in the following two passages. In the first, roughly corresponding to *Aeneid* 1.494–497, Aeneas weeps after recalling the fall of Troy as Dido approaches the *templum* (*Aen.* 1.496):

While Aeneas weeps o’er the scene, like a vinegar cruet,  
While he holds a small personal wake over *Ilium fuit*,  
Lo! Dido the Queen, with page, courtier, suitor, and  
satrap,  
Surrounding and crowding like rats besieging a rat-trap,  
Of beauty so great that it makes all beholders to hanker,  
Sails into the temple, and on a high throne comes  
to anchor.

In the second, a very loose paraphrase of *Aeneid* 4.590–629, Dido laments the departure of Aeneas from Carthage:

“Proh, Jupiter! shall this man get away?  
Spread sails! bring firebrands! ah, what do I say?  
Why did I not revenge me while he stayed?  
I might have found his flint heart with my blade,  
Deaconed his pug-nosed boy, while I was able,  
And fricasseed him for his father’s table!  
But now I writhe in impotent dismay,  
While he goes,—(*dum it*)—on his heartless way!”

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<sup>32</sup> Odd cases such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s “Evangeline” are often cited as the exception. The real exception is Frederick Ahl’s recent translation of the *Aeneid* (F. Ahl, tr., *Virgil: Aeneid* [Oxford 2007]) that successfully renders the whole poem into fairly regular hexameter. See Ahl’s translator’s note (xlvi–lii) for discussion of the perception and issues surrounding the composition of English hexameter. For an analysis of Ahl’s rendering in relation to other “foreignizing” translations of Vergil, see S. M. Braund, “Mind the Gap: On Foreignizing Translations of the *Aeneid*,” in Farrell and Putnam (above, n.7) 449–64.

The inclusion of *dum it* both translates the previous English phrase into Latin and effectively reflects Dido's distress by creating a forceful interruption in the line and sounding a bit like "damn it." By rhyming the aphorism *Ilium fuit* with "vinegar cruet," the translator intimately integrates that phrase into the text. Vergil devotes a significant part of the first book (*Aen.* 1.464–493) to Aeneas' reflections on the demise of Troy. In the *Free and Independent Translation*, these lamentations have been elided, replaced by just two lines describing his "small personal wake over *Ilium fuit*." Thus, what superficially appears as an attempt to add authenticity to the translation—the inclusion of a phrase in the original language—actually signals a significant departure from the original. The incorporation of words from the original language into a translation, without clear motivation, is unusual, and I can think of no direct parallels in conventional translations of Greek or Latin literature. Certain attempts, however, to render untranslatable Latin or Greek phrases into English have resulted in a collapse of the boundary between the original language and the language of the translation that is somewhat similar to these passages in the *Free and Independent Translation*.<sup>33</sup>

Of particular interest are passages of the *Free and Independent Translation* that (like the two discussed in the previous paragraph) deviate significantly from the original to fit the lively tone of the work or to engage various contemporary concerns. For instance, Iopas' speech on natural philosophy at the end of the first book (*Aen.* 1.740–747) is entirely deleted, perhaps primarily to keep the narrative moving.<sup>34</sup> Other alterations advance the translator's goal of creating a topically relevant version of Vergil. At the beginning of *Aeneid* 1, Juno offers Aeolus the beautiful nymph Deiopea (*pulcherrima Deiopea* at *Aen.* 1.72) in exchange for his assistance. In recounting this exchange, the *Free and Independent Translation*

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<sup>33</sup> Two examples of this phenomenon occur, respectively, in Fagles' translation of the *Odyssey* (R. Fagles, tr., *Odyssey* [New York 1996]) and Ahl's *Aeneid*. Fagles' imaginative solution to Κακοίλιον at *Odyssey* 19.260 (occurring in Penelope's speech to Odysseus disguised as a beggar) is to render it as "Destroy," thereby preserving the reference to Troy contained in the Greek adjective. Similarly, Ahl's approach to an intractable Vergilian anagram—*pulsa palus* at *Aeneid* 7.702—is to preserve the anagrammatic relationship with the English "pools" and "loops." Unlike *dum it* or *Ilium fuit* in the *Free and Independent Translation*, both of which are included for reasons that are not obvious, the innovations of Fagles and Ahl arise out of an immediate need to solve difficult translation problems. The illustration captions, consisting of relevant quotes from the *Aeneid* in Latin, also make a connection, however tenuous, to the original. In the *Free and Independent Translation*, the captions may have been intended to be pedagogically useful by helping students make associations between their school assignments and the parody, but similar devices were also common in earlier burlesques. For instance, Cotton's *Virgil Travestie* is not illustrated but contains excerpts from Vergil in the original on the bottom of each page, and Victor Alexandre Chretien Le Plat du Temple's *Virgile en France* captions its illustrations with Latin; see Kallendorf (above, n.11) 206 for an example. See H. D. Weinbrot, "Translation and Parody: Towards the Genealogy of the Augustan Imitation," *ELH* 33 (1966) 442–47, for discussion of this parallelism as a technique to heighten the effect of the parody.

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Iopas' speech (heavily satirized) is included in Cotton's burlesque (above, n.28) 59. In his version, Iopas "sung them songs, ballads, and catches, / of men's devices, women's patches" (59).

strikingly adds a Biblical allusion: "I will reward you with my fairest nymph, Deiopea; / You shall have her at once, without waiting like Jacob for Leah." It was not uncommon for opponents of classical education in early America to object to the use of Vergil and other pagan texts in schools on religious grounds.<sup>35</sup> This abrupt reference to the Old Testament, juxtaposed with the mention of a pagan deity, likely references this conflict. Perhaps the implication of this close association is to position the *Free and Independent Translation* as a work that can transcend the divide, much as it seeks to do with other divisive issues in classical pedagogy. A passage later in the first book shows a similar type of engagement with a persistent debate in Vergilian scholarship:

Then Caesar shall rise, and go bushwacking hither  
and yonder,  
The conqueror of Britain and Gaul, the planet's great  
wonder,  
The pride of the Romans, who shall so with praise  
overfeed him  
That old Doctor Brutus will have to be called in to  
bleed him.  
Then cometh Augustus, well soaped by poets coeval,  
(The poets thereby clearly proving their heads to be level  
On tactics which good Dr. Watts will consider no evil:)  
Then the Age shall grow mild; Faith and Virtue shall  
once again look up,  
And the temple of Mars shall suffer an absolute lock up.

The above lines are a loose translation of the passage beginning *nascetur pulchri Troianus originae Caesar* at *Aeneid* 1.286. Substantial discussion has been devoted to whether the *Caesar* referenced in this passage is Julius Caesar or Augustus, with modern sentiments tending to favor Augustus.<sup>36</sup> For our discussion of the *Free and Independent Translation*, the correct answer is, of course, beside the point—the translation parodies the ambiguity and resultant debate by having the passage refer to both Augustus and Julius Caesar. After acknowledging that debate, the translator then adds his own further level of interpretation, referencing Issac Watts, a popular eighteenth-century English author of hymns, to characterize Vergil's poetic approach.<sup>37</sup> Clearly, whoever wrote the *Free and Independent Translation* had read Vergil with some diligence.

As should be clear from excerpts quoted up to this point, the *Free and Independent Translation* is a highly amusing and effective parody of *Aeneid* 1 and 4, an American extension of the common practice in early modern Europe of satirizing Vergil. Although the

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Richard (above, n.7) 364.

<sup>36</sup> The bibliography on the subject is substantial. For an overview of the debate, see R. F. Dobbin, "Julius Caesar in Jupiter's Prophecy, *Aeneid*, Book 1," *Cl Ant* 14 (1995) 5–40, who surveys the relevant literature before arguing that the reference is to Julius Caesar.

<sup>37</sup> Further information on Watts can be found in R. Stevenson, "Dr. Watts' 'Flights of Fancy,'" *Harvard Theological Review* 42 (1949) 235–53.

*Free and Independent Translation* does not identify itself as a parody in its title or subtitle, unlike most of the European travesties, the text reflects a clear self-awareness of its parodic program toward Vergil.<sup>38</sup> This point is illustrated clearly by the conclusion of *Aeneid* 1:

At once all were silent, and fastened their eyes on  
the Leader,  
While he spun the preposterous yarn which, long-  
suffering reader,  
You'll find in the *Aeneid*, Libri Secundus and Tertius,  
And now we must close with a rhyme that is truly  
atrocious.

In a single stanza, the translator deftly acknowledges both his humorously irreverent attitude toward the classics (calling Aeneas' account of his travails a "preposterous yarn") and pokes fun at his own composition (the "truly atrocious" poetics that make for a "long-suffering reader").

The satire found in the *Free and Independent Translation*, however, hardly stops with Vergil. Further ridicule is directed at those who favor cheap (especially foreign) popularization, who read *Brewer's Familiar Science* and belong to the "epoch of Tupper." Martin Farquhar Tupper, a British poet and philosopher who was enormously popular in nineteenth-century America but is now widely dismissed as hackneyed and sentimental, is an apt figure to invoke.<sup>39</sup> The sort of superficial obsession with foreign culture suggested by the allusion to Tupper is satirized repeatedly throughout the translation. When quoting Dante in the preface, the translator opts for Henry F. Cary's translation, a prominent British version from 1805: "Glory and light of all the tuneful train! / May it avail me, that I long with zeal / Have sought thy volume, and with love immense / Have conned it o'er." Perhaps mocking those who turn indiscriminately to Britain for high culture, the translator passed over Longfellow's translation,

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<sup>38</sup> E.g.: Cotton's work is entitled *Scarronides: or, Virgil Travestie*; John Phillips' seventeenth-century satire is called *Maronides or Virgil Travestie: Being a New Paraphrase upon the Fifth Book of Virgils Aeneids in Burlesque Verse*; Alois Blumaeuer's German version is titled *Virgils Aeneis travestiert*; and the title of Paul Scarron's well-known French parody, which quite likely influenced Cotton's, is simply *Le Virgile travesty*. On the relationship between Cotton and Scarron, see S. E. Leavitt, "Paul Scarron and English Travesty," *Sph* 16 (1919) 108–20. The *Free and Independent Translation* has often been classified as a parody, as in W. Hamilton, ed., *Parodies of the Works of English and American Authors* (London 1889) 326: "A *Free and Independent Translation* of the First and Fourth Books of the Aeneid of Virgil. In Hexameter and Pentameter. With Illustrations by Thomas Worth. The *Winsted Herald* Office, Winsted, Conn. U.S.A. 1870. This is a burlesque in 'Modern American,' with very comical woodcuts." E. Nitchie (*Vergil and the English Poets* [New York 1919] 244) also includes the *Free and Independent Translation* in a listing of "Burlesques, Parodies and Imitations" of Vergil.

<sup>39</sup> His most famous work, which is representative of his overall style, is *Proverbial Philosophy*. It enjoyed many editions in America, including M. F. Tupper, *Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy: A Book of Thoughts and Arguments, Originally Treated* (Buffalo 1849).

the new American standard, in favor of an older British work. The description of utilitarian textbooks in the preface as “syllabub trash” reinforces this emphasis.<sup>40</sup> Unsophisticated Francophiles are viewed in a similar light, as evidenced by the inclusion of *Parlez vous* in the catalogue of works wrongly supplanting Vergil. The following lines describing Dido fainting in *Aeneid* 4 include a direct parody of those with an amateurish grasp of French: “Completely overcome with pain and passion, / She fainted in the most *distangay* fashion.” The translator has included a phonetic spelling, as if he were writing a guidebook to French pronunciation, of *distingué* (the past participle of *distinguer*, “to distinguish”).<sup>41</sup> The author is aiming for a combinatorial parody that satirizes Vergil as a creative literary and pedagogical exercise and pokes plenty of fun at those who don’t know how to appreciate the Manutan bard (or, for that matter, spell basic French). In this second regard, the *Free and Independent Translation* mirrors Le Plat, who, by setting up his poem as an elaborate allegory of the French Revolution, created (to quote Kallendorf) “a parody of the *Aeneid* that comments on the world of the parodist.”<sup>42</sup>

On top of all this satire, of course, are the pedagogical and outreach objectives of the *Free and Independent Translation* that have already been discussed in detail and that I believe are in essence sincere.<sup>43</sup> How, then, can the translator’s repeated satirization of works aimed at a popular audience be reconciled with his desire to popularize Vergil through sensationalized illustrations, newspaper publication, and related means? I suggest that the resolution of this incongruity lies in the esteem in which the author of the *Free and Independent Translation* held its subject matter (namely, Vergilian poetry and the reform of American classical education). Popularization of Vergil to mass audiences (unlike the utilitarian popularizations that are dismissed as shallow and frivolous) is acceptable because the alternative—the further erosion of the classics in American society and culture—is perceived as much worse. Furthermore, parody of

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<sup>40</sup> The denotation of syllabub, as given by the *OED*, is a “drink or dish made of milk (freq. as drawn from the cow) or cream, curdled by the admixture of wine, cider, or other acid, and often sweetened and flavoured.” It was a popular dessert in Britain throughout much of the nineteenth century. Figuratively, “syllabub” may refer to “something unsubstantial and frothy; esp. floridly vapid discourse or writing.”

<sup>41</sup> For another use of *distangay*, see M. Lemon, H. Mayhew, T. Taylor, S. Brooks, F. C. Burnard, and O. Seamen, *Punch* Vol. 78–9 (London 1880) 112: “*Vous ne serray jammay distangay.*” *Punch* also published many parodies of classical works.

<sup>42</sup> Kallendorf (above, n.11) 199.

<sup>43</sup> King (above, n.31) 396, a contemporary reader of the *Free and Independent Translation*, agrees with me in taking the stated pedagogical objectives of the piece to be sincere, writing that “the author was doubtless in earnest behind his mask when he said in his preface, ‘And may the perusal of these pages incite in many souls such a desire to renew and extensively cultivate [Vergil’s] charming acquaintance, that they shall not be satisfied until they can adopt for themselves the salutation with which Dante addressed the same old Mantuan Bard.’” At any rate, the economic success of the *Free and Independent Translation* seemingly depended on marketing the text as a legitimate and useful educational tool.

Vergil is justified because the resulting poem is seen as genuinely useful for enhancing the teaching and study of Vergil by numerous Americans. Implicit in the *Free and Independent Translation* is an intimate relationship between parody and educational outreach—the translation is never explicitly indentified as a satire because the title page is too full with material touting the piece’s pedagogical value. That the text shows a nuanced engagement with Vergil heightens the translator’s case for using a humorous, topical interpretation to further appreciation of the *Aeneid* and the classics as a whole.

In its desire to widely disseminate Vergil to the American public, the *Free and Independent Translation* might well be responding to the far-reaching movement of its time to democratize the classics. Analysis of this shift is central to Richard’s argument in *The Golden Age of the Classics in America*, where he writes that “by the Gilded Age, the very time when the classics seemed to be losing their intellectual utility, the American elite had lost their age-old monopoly on them, so that they no longer served as a reliable badge of social status.”<sup>44</sup> The *Free and Independent Translation* too sees the classics, supported by innovations in classical pedagogy, as moving from the domain of the elite to a subject with the potential to instruct and enlighten broad swaths of American society. A concluding quote from Salvatore Settis, who has done much in recent years to advance the cause of classical outreach, should illustrate that this vision of expanding influence remains alive and well in the twenty-first century:

The “classical” may have an entitlement to become once again the object of attention and study, and it would make perfect sense to reintroduce it no longer as the static and privileged jargon of the elites, but as an effective key for accessing the multiplicity of cultures in the modern world and for the help it can give us in understanding the way in which these cultures are penetrating each other.<sup>45</sup>

The *Free and Independent Translation*, with its astute characterization of the state of the classics in late nineteenth-century America and catchy take on Vergil, sought to be a vital tool toward bringing in this whole new audience for the classics.<sup>46</sup>

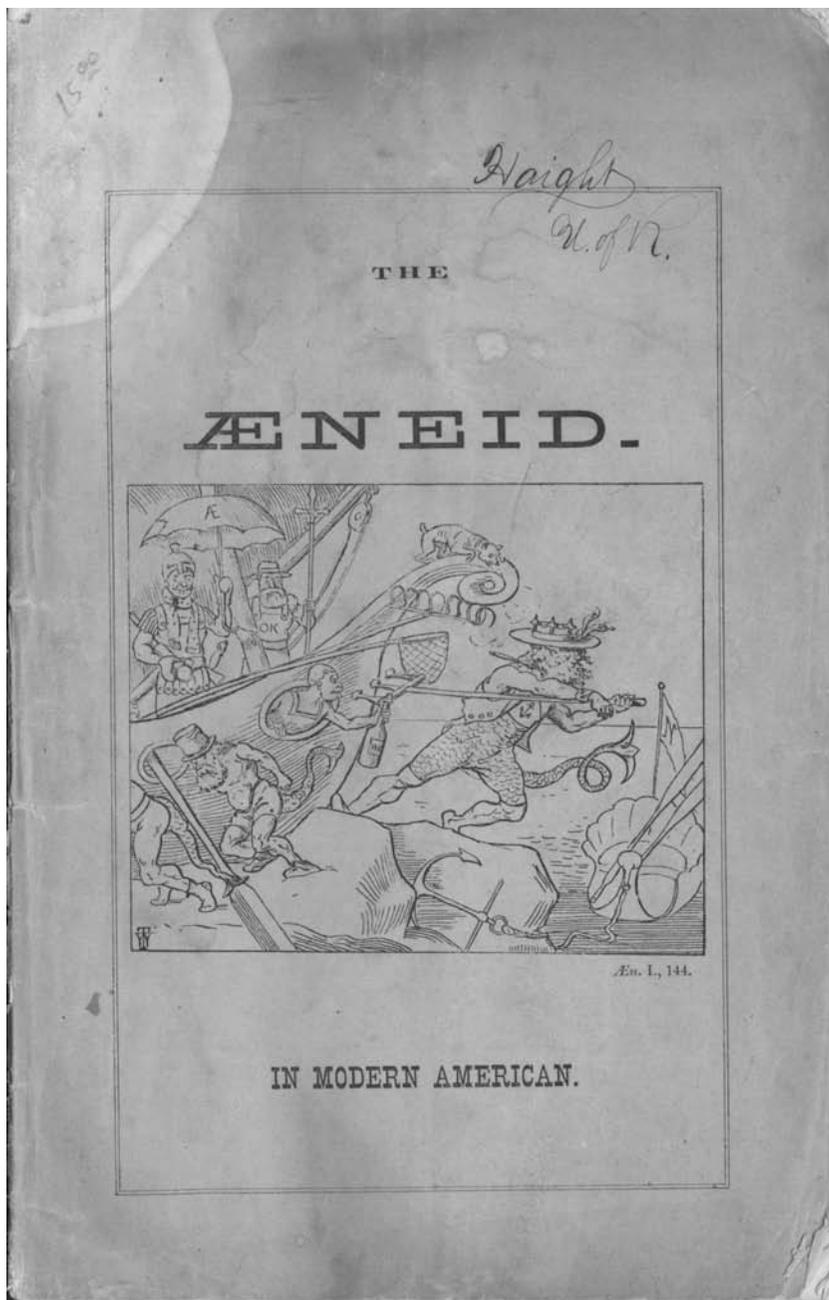
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<sup>44</sup> Richard (above, n.5) 207. See also Percy (above, n.19) 10–11.

<sup>45</sup> S. Settis, *The Future of the “Classical,”* tr. A. Cameron (Cambridge, Mass., 2006) 110. P. Meineck quotes this passage in a recent article in the “Paedagogus” section of *CW* (“‘Page and Stage’: Theater, Tradition, and Culture in America,” *CW* 103.2 [2010] 221–26).

<sup>46</sup> I thank Constanze Güthenke, Jim Tatum, Bob Kaster, Edmund Richardson, Damien Nelis, Kathleen Crown, and *CW*’s anonymous referee for reading earlier drafts and making many helpful suggestions. I especially acknowledge Primit Chaudhuri for introducing me to the *Free and Independent Translation*, and for numerous stimulating conversations about the text.



Pl. 1: Cover of the *Free and Independent Translation*.