Basinio da Parma's *Hesperis*. A Homeric–Vergilian Fusion in Text and Paratext

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Basinio da Parma's Neo-Latin epic Hesperis *combines two main intertexts: Vergil's* Aeneid *and the Homeric epics. This article argues that Basinio highlighted the tensions arising from this combination of models through the poem's paratextual features. The article focuses on the title's implications, on the considerable rewriting of the proem in Basinio's autograph version, and, finally, on the author's marginal annotations in the same manuscript. The conclusion is that rather than merely promoting his knowledge of Greek, as previous scholars have argued, Basinio's paratexts highlight on a meta-poetical level the difficulties of combining two closely related, but conflicting literary models.*

1. Introduction

"Basinio's manuscript with the Greek moulds in the margin," to quote Ezra Pound, is the focus of this article.[1] I will offer an analysis of Basinio da Parma's (1425-1457) engagement with Homer and Vergil in his Neo-Latin epic *Hesperis*.[2] First, I point out some structural similarities and deviations from these models. The main part of my argumentation, however, focuses on three liminal features: the title, the proem, and the marginal annotations by Basinio himself. I demonstrate that these three attributes of the poem throw light on the tensions arising from Basinio's creative combination of two closely related, but ultimately distinct intertextualities: the two Homeric epics and Vergil's *Aeneid*.[3] The result is a better understanding of Basinio's literary creativity in particular, and the hermeneutic value of authorial marginalia in general.

In many respects, *Hesperis* is an avant-garde work. It is the first large-scale epic of the Renaissance that was completed before its author's death

[1] E. Pound, *The Cantos* (London, 1975), 524.

[2] S. Smets (ed., tr.), Basinio da Parma, *Hesperis* (Leiden, forthcoming); C. Peters (ed., tr.), Basinio da Parma, *Hesperis* (Heidelberg, 2021). Peters' text and German translation are based on the 18th–century edition of L. Drudi (ed.), Basinio da Parma, "Hesperis", in *Opera praestantiora*, vol. 1 (Rimini, 1794), 1-288.

[3] G. Bottari, "Ulisse da Omero a Pascal Quignard", in A.M. Babbi, F. Zardini (ed.), *L'Ulisse di casa Malatesta. A proposito dell'Hesperis di Basinio Basini* (Verona, 2000), 253-273 (at 259).

– Petrarch having failed to finish *Africa*, his bid to eternity. Moreover, it builds on a familiarity with Homer that was exceptional for its time, thus bringing a new dimension to the epic genre. Thirteen books long, it daringly abandons the traditional division of epic poems into twelve or 24 books;[4] at the same time, it engages with contemporary experiments like Maffeo Vegio's recent work *Aeneidos Liber XIII* (*Book 13 of the Aeneid*, 1428).[5] Throughout the poem, the reader is confronted with Statian, Lucanian and Petrarchan influences as well. The Latin style Basinio adopted reminds more of authors from the Silver Age than of Vergil. As regards the content, *Hesperis* gives an account of the contemporary military endeavours by Basinio's patron Sigismondo Malatesta against the Spanish king Alfonso V of Aragon and his heir Ferrante in the so-called Tuscan Wars. War in a historical Italian setting makes one think of Lucan, and Petrarch's *Africa*, which recounts the war between Rome and Carthage, is likely to have resonated too with Basinio when he presented the war between Alfonso and Sigismondo as a restaging of the Punic Wars. The military narrative is interrupted from Books seven to nine, and partly Book 10, in which the hero Sigismondo travels to the Isles of the Blessed. There, he meets figures from classical antiquity, his deceased father, as well as an allegorisation of his future wife Isotta degli Atti.[6] This remarkable fictitious interlude will be a continuous point of reference in the present article.

Malatesta had made fame and fortune by successfully leading military campaigns in service of the papacy. As a reward, he had been given lordship over the city of Rimini, where he strove and managed to develop

[4] On book division in Neo-Latin epics, C. Peters, "Narrative Structures in Neo-Latin Epic from 1440 to 1500", in C. Reitz, S. Finkmann (ed.) *Structures of Epic Poetry*, vol. 3 (Berlin – Boston, 2019), 257-300 (at 266-67).

[5] M.C.J. Putnam (ed, tr.), M. Vegio, *Short Epics* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). Basinio wrote *Hesperis* during his Riminese years, that is between 1453 and 1457, but probably finished it already in 1455. He and Veggio were on friendly terms with each other.

[6] For a detailed summary, see C. Peters, *Mythologie und Politik: Die panegyrische Funktionalisierung der paganen Götter im lateinischen Epos des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Münster, 2016), 175-91. On p. 83, he argues why Lucan was not a preferred model for humanist epic, but the topic of Statian and Lucanian influence in Basinio deserves closer consideration. For a shorter overview, see K. Lippincott, "The Neo-Latin Historical Epics of the North Italian Courts: An Examination of 'Courtly Culture' in the Fifteenth Century", *Renaissance Studies* 3 (1989), 415-428, at 419-420.

a rich court culture.[7] To this end, he gathered several humanists and artists including the architect Leon Battista Alberti, the artist Matteo de' Pasti, and the poet Porcellio Pandoni. The hallmark of the literary and philosophical activity that took place under his patronage, was the importance of Ancient Greek. The centrality of Greek in the Malatestian court culture is manifest from a famous quarrel between Basinio, who advocated the study of Greek in addition to Latin, and the duo Porcellio and Tommaso Seneca, who defended the predominance of Latin over Greek.[8] Basinio was indeed well-versed in the Greek language. Although, in a poetic *recusatio*, he declined an offer from Pope Nicholas V to translate Homer into Latin, he drew extensively on the Greek epic for composing his *Hesperis*.[9] The structural influence of the Homeric epics on the *Hesperis* has been recognised as early as 1912 in Georg Finsler's *Homer in der Neuzeit*, and several similia have been identified more recently by Christian Peters, Anthony D'Elia, and Donatella Coppini.[10] Some passages, short and long, are faithful translations of scenes from the *Iliad* and, to a lesser extent, the *Odyssey*. I will provide and discuss examples in my last section, where I analyse the Greek marginal annotations and their relation to the main text.

[7] A. Falcioni, "Malatesta, Sigismondo Pandolfo", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (2007). Studies on Riminese court culture include F. Muccioli, F. Cenerini, A. Giovanardi (ed), *Gli antichi alla corte dei Malatesta* (Milan, 2018); A. Turchini, *I Malatesta* (Cesena, 2013); for better or worse, A. D'Elia, *Pagan Virtue in a Christian World: Sigismondo Malatesta and the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).

[8] This episode is recounted and illustrated with quotations from both parties' invectives in D'Elia 2016 (as in n. 7), 75-78; F. Ferri, *Una contesa di tre umanisti: Basinio, Porcellio e Seneca. Contributo alla storia degli studi greci nel quattrocento in Italia* (Pavia, 1920).

[9] A.T. Foley, "Saying No to the Pope: Basinio's Refusal to Translate Homer", *Mediterranean Chronicle: A Journal on Culture/s in the Mediterranean World* 7 (2017), 125-38. For the verse epistle containing the *recusatio*, see F. Ferri, *La giovinezza di un poeta: Basinii Parmensis Carmina* (Rimini, 1914), 48-57.

[10] G. Finsler, *Homer in der Neuzeit von Dante bis Goethe: Italien, Frankreich, England, Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1912), 30-33; cf. V. Zabughin, *Vergilio nel Rinascimento Italiano da Dante a Torquato Tasso* (Bologna, 1921); Peters 2016 (as in n. 6), e.g. 199-200; D'Elia 2016 (as in n. 7), 80-82; D. Coppini, "L'epica al servizio di Sigismondo", in F. Muccioli, F. Cenerini et al. (ed.), *Gli Antichi alla corte dei Malatesta. Echi, modelli e fortuna della tradizione classica nella Romagna del Quattrocento* (Milano, 2018), 311-331 (at 324-327). For Homeric traces in other Basinian works, see Ferri 1920 (as in n. 8); Lippincott 1989 (as in n. 6); D. Coppini, "Un epillio umanistico fra Omero e Virgilio: il Diosymposeos liber di Basinio da Parma", in D. Coppini (ed.), *Confini dell'Umanesimo letterario. Studi in onore di Francesco Tateo*, vol. 1 (Rome, 2003), 301-36.

2. Structure and Scenes

Before looking at the details of *Hesperis* in its autograph form, we must consider the macrostructural composition of the work. First, I will briefly call back to memory the structure of the *Aeneid*, its relationship with Homer, and how its first line prefigures the narrative structure in marked opposition to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Then, I examine how Basinio has followed or diverted from the Vergilian model. This will be the first step in discussing the intertextual ambiguity of *Hesperis*, which can be observed from its paratexts as well.

In a nutshell, the *Aeneid* can be divided into an Odyssean and an Iliadic part, corresponding to Books 1 to 6 and Books 7 to 12 respectively. Vergil has thereby emulated Homer by mixing up the order of war and travel narratives. The narrative of Odysseus' sea journey in the *Odyssey* chronologically follows the Trojan war as recounted in the *Iliad*. In contrast, the *Aeneid* presents the eponymous hero's trials on the ocean *before* his military exploits in Italy. Interestingly, the *Aeneid*'s very first words, "arma virumque" ("the weapons and the man"), do not correspond to this inversion. They first raise Iliadic warfare, and secondly mention "the man", which is part of the *Aeneid*'s Odyssean intertextuality, where the main character Odysseus stands in the focus of attention. In fact, the *Odyssey*'s first word is ἄνδρα (andra, a man), and *virum* was the first word in Livius Andronicus' Latin translation of the *Odyssey* too. I would like to bring up one last aspect of the *Aeneid*'s opening line, before moving on to *Hesperis*. "Arma virumque" contains an acoustic reference to the beginning of the *Odyssey*, with the sound of *arma* reminding us of the Greek ἄνδρα.[11] This moves "the man" again to the foreground of the poem, and implicitly brings Vergil's Odyssean intertext to bear upon his engagement with the *Iliad*.[12]

Hesperis incorporates epic motifs from Vergil and Homer, but follows neither for its overall narrative scheme. Sigismondo's descent into the Underworld in Books 7 to 9 illustrates this well. When laying the narrative of the *Hesperis* onto Sigismondo's biography, the imaginary journey to the Isles of the Blessed corresponds to four unsuccessful years in Sigismondo's career between leaving Florence after his triumphal welcome there in 1448, and the battle of Foiano della Chiana in 1452 which

[11] Cf. F. Mac Góráin, "Untitled/Arma Virumque", *Classical Philology* 113 (2018), 423-448.

[12] Cf. Chapter 3 of E. Dekel, *Virgil's Homeric Lens* (New York, 2012).

take place in Books 6 and 10 respectively.[13] Like Aeneas, Sigismondo is advised by his father to visit the realms of the dead.[14] In Book 7, the late Pandolfo appears to his son in a dream and tells him:

> Est procul Oceano in magno, quam nomine duri
> fortunatam homines, superi dixere beatam,
> insula, qua Zephyri proles Psycheia regnat
> …
> Post ubi purpureos inviseris ordine lucos,
> qui tibi perpetuo lucescent sole, ubi campi
> Elysii memorantur, adis contraria montis
> transgressus latera intrepidus; sed eo ire memento![15]
> (vv. 7.16-28)

As in Aeneas' case, Sigismondo's goal is to learn and to meet his father. One of the most gripping scenes is, in fact, the final encounter between Sigismondo and Pandolfo. Despite the former's urgent wish to hold his father's hand and to speak with him face to face, the laws of the Underworld make a true reunion impossible.

> "O decus, o generis certissima gloria nostri
> note pater nato tandem; si tangere fas est
> te mihi, sancte, sine amplexus petere ante paternos,
> corpore discedas quam viso; cetera demum
> ingenti peragas studio; da iungere dextrae
> dextram, oro, coramque loqui." Sic fatus, abortis
> pendebat lachrimis, duplicesque ad laeta ferebat
> ora manus magni genitoris, at ille precantem

[13] Peters 2016 (as in n. 6), 203.

[14] Verg. *Aen.* 5.731-735.

[15] "Far away on the great ocean, there is an island which the coarse humans have named 'of Fortune' and the gods 'Blessed'. There reigns Psycheia, the daughter of Zephyrus. ... After you will have visited in due course the splendid woods that beam on you with eternal sunlight, you cross what they call the Elysian Fields, and proceed without fear to the opposing mountainsides. In any case, remember to go to that place!"

deserit aversus, spatioque ita fatur iniquo:
"Nate, nefas vivis animas tractare sepultas[16]
…"
(vv. 9. 204-213)

The passage is modelled on the corresponding scene in *Aeneid* 6.697-702. In contrast, the run-up to Sigismondo's trip to the Underworld differs from its classical models. Unlike Aeneas and Odysseus he has a hard time reaching the Isles of the Blessed.[17] In accordance with Olympus' wish, Neptune wrecks Sigismondo's boat and tries to drown the leader and his men. The protection of Minerva, who finds it just that men acquire knowledge about the world beyond, saves him from seemingly inevitable death. At last, Sigismondo washes on the shore and falls asleep. When he wakes up, he sees one of Zephyrus' nymphs and is unsure about how to approach her.

Quam simul ac solam videt ore pudore reflexo,
quamquam tegmen habet ramum frondentis olivae,
ter stetit in dubio quid agat, maneatne, petatne,
an roget unde domo, quae sit genitrixque, paterque,
an sit adhuc virgo, cupidique ignara mariti,
anne sui miserescat, an hospitioque, domoque
accipere orantem iubeat; quae cuncta volutans
talibus alloquitur placido Zephyreida vultu.
"Nympha decus nemorum, pelagi quae litora servas,
nympha animo certe iam nunc gratissima nostro,
seu dea, sis an homo, nostrae spes maxima vitae;

[16] "Then, his son said to him: 'Honour and most certain glory of our family! Father, finally recognised by your son! If it is allowed for me to touch you, saintly man, allow me to seek a fatherly embrace, before you abandon your physical appearance. The rest, you must complete afterwards with immense zeal. Allow us to shake hands, I pray, and to speak face to face.' Having said that, he burst into tears, stood still, and moved both his hands to the happy face of his great father. However, the latter turns himself away from the petition, and from an awkward distance, he says the following: 'Son, it is not allowed for living men to touch the buried souls.'"

[17] While Sigismondo's troubles are modelled on Odysseus' experiences after the Trojan War, the latter were not related to the hero's wish to meet the dead souls of Tiresias and other Greeks. About his journey there, we read in Hom. *Od*. 11.11: "Τῆς δὲ πανημερίης τέταθ' ἱστία ποντοπορούσης" ("All day long, the sails were fully strethced as she crossed the sea"). For Aeneas' case, see Verg. *Aen.* 5.862: "Currit iter tutum non setius aequore classis" ("The fleet swiftly follows its course over the sea").

visa quidem nobis certe dea: talis ubique
nec mortalis adhuc mulier mihi visa, nec usquam
mortales talem viderunt omnibus omnes
ullam annis. Virgo, nostri miserere, precamur,
et quaecumque fuas, tantos mihi deme labores.[18]
(vv. 8.5-20)

The encounter between him and the nymph, whom we later understand to be an allegorisation of Sigismondo's future wife Isotta, is painted in Homeric colours. Surprisingly, the intertext has nothing to do with Odysseus' nekyia, but with his arrival on the land of the Phaeacians. Sigismondo's shame at his marred and naked body, his attempt at covering himself up with a leafy branch, and his shyness restage Odysseus' first meeting with the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa.[19] The fluster after regaining consciousness in an unknown land in front of a semi-divine woman is miles removed from Circe's clear instructions which Odysseus duly follows, or from the feverish Sybil in the *Aeneid*. Moreover, the actions before and after Sigismondo's katabasis differ from those framing Aeneas' descent or Odysseus' nekyia in their respective stories. Odysseus' encounter with the dead is framed by his difficulties at sea, his time with the Phaeacians, and his attempt to win back home and wife in Ithaca. In the case of Aeneas, the journey to the underworld separates his sea errands and the battles in Italy. This thematic transition is announced in the words of the Sybil, who prophesies in *Aeneid* 6.86-87: "bella, horrida bella, et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine". In contrast, Sigismondo's visit to Zephyrus' abodes and the Elysian fields follows the narration of the First Tuscan war and a speech by Apollo recounting Sigismondo's previous military accomplishments. It is followed by his return to the battlefield after Psycheia's last words have urged him to go take up fight-

[18] "As soon as he sees her alone, he turns away his head out of shame, although he has a leafy olive twig to cover himself. Three times, he stopped, unsure what to do. Should he stay, or leave? Should he ask where her home is; who her mother and father are; whether she is still a maiden, unfamiliar with a husband's desire; whether she would take pity on him, and order to accommodate him in her lodgings and house, when he asks for it. While he is pondering over all of this, he addresses Zephyr's daughter with a friendly face in the following way: 'Nymph, glory of the woods, who guard the shores of the sea! Nymph, especially now most welcome to our heart! Whether a goddess or human, you are the greatest hope of our life. You surely seem a goddess to us. So far, I have nowhere seen such a mortal woman, and neither has any mortal ever seen such one at any time. Maiden, take pity on me, we beg you. Whoever you are, deliver me from these sorrows!"

[19] Cf. Bottari 2000 (as in n. 3), 268-70.

ing again, in the Second Tuscan War of Books 10 to 12. Thus, Basinio has emulated the *Odyssey*, where navigation follows and precedes the encounter with the dead, as well as the *Aeneid*, where the katabasis coincides with the change from an Odyssean to an Iliadic storyline. His own epic combines elements from both: It offers bloodshed before and after a narrative movement that merges a sea journey with an other-worldly intermezzo. Because the mythological narrative is reduced to only three books, the result is a compression of various key events from the Odyssean hypotext into one episode of *Hesperis*. This explains why the Nausicaa episode blends into the *nekyia*, both of which are additionally linked to a sea storm and the wrath of the gods.

3. Proem and Epitext

Proem

I now turn to the proem of *Hesperis* and its connection with the poem's macro-narrative. The opening lines allude to Basinio's Homeric and Vergilian models by further developing Vergil's variation of the *Odyssey*'s first verses as discussed above. The autograph manuscript of *Hesperis*, preserved in Rimini, shows that Basinio put much thought into composing the overture to his work, and rewrote it considerably.[20] Initially, he intended to start his work like this:

> Martis anhela feri fida confecta iuventa,
> Calliope, dic bella viri virtute potentis
> praestantisque animi, Thuscis qui solus ab oris
> dispulit invectos Tyrrhenum ad littus Iberos[21]
> (vv. 1.1-4, erased)

First, the choice for *dic* is influenced by ἔννεπε from *Odyssey* 1.1, and harks back to Horace's translation of it in *Ars Poetica* 141. Secondly, *viri* echoes ἄνδρα and *virum* from respectively the *Odyssey* (again through Horace's translation of it in the same verse of the *Ars Poetica*) and the

[20] Rimini, Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga, Sc-Ms 34, f. 2v-3r.

[21] "Speak, Calliope, about fierce Mars' panting wars, waged in his firm youth, of that man strong with virtue and of outstanding courage. He alone drove away from the Tuscan lands the Iberians who had marched up to the Tyrrhenian shores."

Aeneid.[22] At a later stage, Basinio crossed out these verses and replaced them with:

> Martis et arma feri et partum virtute triumphum
> magnanimi dic, musa, viri, qui fortibus ausis
> dispulit invectos Tyrrhenum ad littus Iberos[23]
> (vv. 1.1-3)

While *viri* and *dic* are preserved, the invocation of a more generic *musa* replaces the muse Calliope's name. This is a more faithful imitation of the ancient models, since Vergil asks for inspiration from a *musa* in *Aeneid* 1.8, and so does Homer in *Odyssey* 1.1. Secondly, the introduction of a relative clause reminds the reader of a similar construction in *Aeneid* 1.1 ("... qui primus ab oris"), and *Odyssey* 1.1 ("... ὃς μάλα πολλὰ"). At the same time, Basinio leaves out a much clearer reference from the first version of the third verse, which originally ended "Thuscis qui solus ab oris".[24] Instead comes a reference to Basinio's success in chasing the Iberians away from the Italian shores.

For our present purposes the changes in the first verse are most interesting. Three notable things have happened in the process of rewriting. First, the object of the imperative *dic* has been transferred from the second to the first verse. This creates syntactic clarity, and helps the reader to grasp immediately what the content of the work will be. Second, he changes the object *bella* into *arma*. By using the first word of the *Aeneid*, Basinio at once underlines his indebtedness to and artistic competition with Vergil – I will come back to this shortly. At the same time, he doubles the object from only *bella* (wars) to *arma* and *triumphum* (weapons and triumph). The result is a new syntactical complication, as the first enumerative *et* ends up awkwardly between *Martis* and *arma*. The anaphoric construction is first of all meant to link *arma* and *triumphum*. From its position in the text, however, it suggests a connection between *martis* and *arma*. I propose that this is done intentionally, and not under metrical pressure or on account of other stylistic obligations.

[22] Cf. C. Pieper, "In Search of the Marginal Author. The Working Copy of Basinio of Parma's Hesperis", in M. van der Poel (ed.), *Neo-Latin Philology. Old Tradition, New Approaches* (Leuven, 2014), 49-70, at 55-56; Coppini 2018 (as in n. 10), 330.

[23] "Speak, Muse, of the arms of fierce Mars and of the victory won by the bravery of a magnanimous man. Fearless and with courageous deeds, he drove away the Iberians who had marched up to the Tyrrhenian shores."

[24] Cf. again Coppini 2018 (as in n. 10), 330.

The reason for the cumulative conjunction lies in the first line of the *Aeneid*, where *arma* and *virum* are joined. The lexical difference between *et* and *-que*, and the natural construction of "arma virumque" as opposed to the rather forced combination of "Martis et arma" do not invalidate my argument. There are other examples of morphological differences in intertextual allusions. Most relevant here is the clause "arma virumque cano", which arguably hints at the evocation of Achilles' song in *Iliad* 9.189: "ἄειδε δ' ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν" ("he then sang about the glorious deeds of men"). In this case, the accusative "virum" smoothly echoes the genitive "ἀνδρῶν".[25]

The two main questions are why Basinio wants his reader to have "arma virumque" in mind, and where he got the idea of opening *Hesperis* with *Martis*. The second question brings us to a less obvious element of the Vergilian hypotext. Less obvious, because it does not normally have a prominent position in our reading of it. I mean the four introductory verses to the *Aeneid*, which Suetonius and Servius mention in their respective biography and commentary of Vergil. These lines sketch the poet's career by mentioning his bucolic and georgic poetry and finally move to his last work:

> Ille ego qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
> Carmen et egressus silvis vicina coegi,
> Ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono,
> Gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis
> [Arma virumque cano …][26]

The possessive genitive *Martis* at the end of the fourth and last verse qualifies the canonical first word of the *Aeneid*, *arma*. Comparison with the opening lines of *Hesperis* suggests that Basinio included *Martis* from the ancient pre-proem of the *Aeneid* into the proem of his own *Hesperis*. This constitutes a fundamental change with regard to the *Aeneid*'s "arma virumque" and its engagement with Homer. *Martis* in the first position does not allow a link with the *Odyssey* like *arma* made in the *Aeneid*: it does not bear an acoustic resemblance to ἄνδρα, nor does it even denote a man, but instead a belligerent deity. If *Martis* has any sound similarity,

[25] Mac Góráin 2018 (as in n. 11), 431-32.

[26] "I am the one who once played a song on the slender flute, and, leaving the woods, forced the neighbouring fields to obey the greedy countryman - a work appreciated by farmers. Now, however, I sing about Mars' horrid weapons and the man …"

then with the first word of the *Iliad*, μῆνιν (wrath), through their shared initial, same final vowel and an equal number of syllables. Moreover, *arma* in *Hesperis* takes the place which *virum* occupies in the *Aeneid*. Before the second half of the second verse, one could even suppose that there is no man: Until we read *viri*, Mars holds the triumph as well as the weapons. The conjunction of *Martis* and *arma* draws our attention to this shift away from the *Aeneid*'s twofold outlook. "Martis et arma" excludes every non-military matter in favour of announcing the predominant war narrative. Ending the line with *triumphum* accentuates this even more. It emulates both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, where the respective wars are not brought to a good end. The following paragraph will go deeper into the prominence of Mars, and how Basinio puts himself and his poetry under the patronage of the war god.

The role of Mars

Basinio does not speak in the first person in his proem unlike his Latin epic predecessors including Vergil, Statius, Lucan and Petrarch. One reason for this could be to incorporate a characteristic of Homer's proems, which avoid first-person statements as well.[27] A more satisfying explanation can be found within the macrotext of Basinio's collected works. I have already mentioned his verse epistle to Pope Nicholas V, where Basinio refuses to translate Homer. We have seen that, instead of translating the Greek verses and only imitating them in Latin, Basinio chose to emulate the ancient epic tradition and make his own contribution to it.[28] Indeed, Basinio does not seem to have suffered from a lack of self-confidence; "he dared to enter in competition with even the biggest names in the history of Latin epic", and I would add Greek and vernacular epic

[27] F. Schaffenrath, "Some Considerations on the Poetological Aspects of Basinio da Parma's Hesperis", *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 66 (2017), 1-21, at 8.

[28] Cf. Foley 2017 (as in n. 9), 127-28. I do not follow Foley's suggestion that Basinio's *recusatio* builds on the (even ingenuine) argument that Homer's poetry is unrefined. Instead, it makes much more sense to interpret the verse in question as a statement about a possible translation by Basinio, which would do injustice to the original – we are looking at a modesty topos. D'Elia's odd interpretations have a forerunner in A.L. Rubinstein, "Imitation and Style in Angelo Poliziano's *Iliad* Translation", *Renaissance Quarterly* 36. 1 (1983), 48-70. The more fortunate reading is supported by S. D'Amico, "Lire les classiques à la Renaissance entre l'Italie et la France : quelques notes sur Homère", in S. d'Amico (ed.), *Homère en Europe à la Renaissance. Traductions et réécritures*, 2015, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/eve.1248.

to that.[29] In light of this, the *recusatio* can be seen as an advance notice of the more ambitious epic plan he had in mind. Another, later verse epistle also appears to herald *Hesperis*, and to reveal his self-fashioning poetology.[30] Written around 1452, the poem recalls a dream wherein the god Mars visits Basinio, and tells him to take up arms again in defence of Italy.[31] The following quotations gives a good impression of its style and content.

> [...] mihi se madido delapsus ab aere Mavors
> obtulit ante oculos neque me sopor ullus inertem
> presserat, haud vanos agitantem pectore somnos.[32]
> (vv. 4-6)
>
> [...]
>
> Post ubi me pavido languentem pectore vidit,
> "Heus," ait "an vigilas musarum maxime cultor[33]
> (vv. 48-49)
>
> [...] Ergo eat, et totas compellat in agmina gentes
> protinus, et magnum divinae laudis honorem
> speret, et antiquis sese experiatur in armis
> non ego nec frustra tantum tolerare laborem
> immeritum iubeo iuvenem per nigra paludis
> flumina, sub terras stygio labentis averno.
> Arma haec arma (vides quae nunc fulgentia totis

[29] Pieper 2014 (as in n. 22), 51; cf. Id., "Nostrae spes plurima famae – Stilisierung und Autostilisierung im Liber Isottaeus des Basinio von Parma", in R.F. Glei, R. Seidel (ed.), >*Parodia*< *und Parodie* (Tübingen, 2012), 91-110 (at 105-9).

[30] Basinio da Parma, "Liquerat Oceanum", in C. Preudhomme (ed.) *Trium poetarum elegantissimorum, Porcelii, Basinii, et Trebani opuscula* (Paris, 1539 [USTC 182362]), 87v-91v.

[31] C. Peters, "Verbis phucare tyrannos? Selbstanspruch und Leistungsspektren von zeithistorischer Epik als panegyrischem Medium im 15. Jahrhundert", in P. Baker, R. Kaiser et al. (ed.), *Portraying the Prince in the Renaissance: The Humanist Depiction of Rulers in Historiographical and Biographical Texts* (Berlin – Boston, 2016), 415-442 (at 431-32).

[32] "Mars had descended from the humid heaven, and put himself in front of me. Sleep was not occupying me while I was doing nothing, nor did I have any deceptive dreams on my mind."

[33] "After he saw me paralysed and frightened at heart, he said: 'Oh, are you awake, greatest worshipper of the Muses?"

et dibus) ipse dabo; mendacem nulla vocabunt
fata retro, iuratus ego quae foedera iunxi."[34]
(vv. 88-96)

The message, tone and wordings of the poem inevitably recall those from *Hesperis*. In fact, some of the verses in this dream narrative are found barely changed in *Hesperis*. For example, Mars' question whether Basinio is asleep ("'Heus,' ait 'an vigilas musarum maxime cultor?'") reappears only slightly adapted in *Hesperis* 1.66: "'Heus,' ait, 'an vigilas Italorum maxime ductor?'" The person addressed has changed from Basinio, the worshipper of the Muses, to Sigismondo, leader of the Italians. Also the phrase "et totas compellat in agmina gentes" echoes in *Hesperis* 1.51, "ut totas compellat in agmina gentes Italiae". This is a well-known technique of Basinio's poetic production line. Peters has described within the context of a Neo-Latin 'economics of poetry' how *Hesperis* cannibalises Basinio's verse epistles, as well as other works including the epyllion *Meleagris*. In the case of the verse epistle, however, there is more to its reuse in *Hesperis* than mere energy-saving; "when citing all his earlier panegyric epistles to Sigismondo, Basinio insists that he has made good his announcement to make his recipient the hero of a greater epic poem."[35]

The relevance of this less-known composition for a better understanding of the *Hesperis*' proem is clear. In this verse epistle that heralds a greater poetic venture, which was at that time still under construction, Basinio's poetic duties and achievements are bestowed upon him and are favoured by Mars, the god of war. Accordingly, *Hesperis* puts the war god in a prominent position at the very beginning. Moreover, his unique importance in the epic poem is marked by a juxtaposition of his main attribute, weapons. The prime importance of Mars in the proem of *Hesperis* and the annunciatory verse epistle corresponds to the previously mentioned macrostructure of the poem, where war events come before

[34] "So he should go, and force all of the peoples into battle formations. He should hope for the great honour of divine praise, and exercise himself in ancient battle. I do not order the young men to make such a great effort without reward – by the dark streams of the swamp which flows underneath the earth into Stygian Avernus. I myself will provide weapons – these weapons which you now see shining on all of the gods. The Fates, by whom I swear as I make this promise, will later not call me a liar!"

[35] C. Peters, "Bella novabo: Basinio da Parma's Instant Epics", in P. Gwynne, B. Schirg (ed.), *The Economics of Poetry. The Efficient Production of Neo-Latin Verse, 1400-1720* (Oxford – Bern – Berlin – Bruxelles – New York – Wien, 2018), 101-130 (at 126).

and after Sigismondo's relatively short mythical journey to the Isles of the Blessed. The reason for this martial preponderance can probably be found in Sigismondo's biography. Although Basinio gives him an aura of cultural and proto-nationalistic idealism, the driving force behind every aspect of his patron's life was really war for war's sake. Sigismondo's wealth, prestige, fame and therefore also his financial support of the arts were all dependent on his appointments as a soldier of fortune. His downfall was not accidentally induced by the peace treaty of Lodi.[36] Indeed, the trope that wars are fought for the benefit of culture rings eerily true for this condottiere in particular. It is therefore no surprise that the hostilities in *Hesperis* have no real cause, such as the abduction of a popular princess, or the divine task to found an heir city for Troy in a faraway region. Indeed, the *Hesperis*' own aetiology gives (ancient) war as the cause of (new) war:

> Prisca fides, veterumque memor Discordia rerum,
> quod mare, quod terras romana potentia quondam
> imperiis elata suis Garamantes et Afros,
> Auroram et Zephyrum, nec non Boreamque Notumque
> subdiderat pedibus, domitumque subegerat orbem.
> …
> Romanosque duces vani indignantur Iberi
> extremas populasse plagas …[37]
> (vv. 1.11-20)

4. The Meaning of the Title

The above analysis of Sigismondo's journey to the Underworld and the proem's intertextual richness highlight the discrepancy between the *Odyssey*'s clear importance for key scenes in *Hesperis* and the conspicuous absence of Odyssean clues in the programmatic first lines of our Neo-Latin text. It would be rash to assume that Basinio considered Books 7 to 9 and their intertexts so trivial within the whole of his heroic poem as to

[36] P.J. Jones, *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State: A Political History* (Cambridge, 1974), 210-14.

[37] "Age-old loyalty and strife that keeps alive the memory of the ancient past. So much sea and land had Roman rule, raised through her power, once put under her feet: the land of the Garamantes and the Africans, the East and West, the North and South, and she had subjugated the conquered earth. The unreliable Iberians reproach the Roman rulers for having plundered faraway regions."

not acknowledge them on the – metaphorically speaking – book cover. After all, he decided to include a mythological digression in a historical epic, something which most of his contemporaries did not try their hand at.[38] The following section will therefore look at whether the title of the work provides a paratextual marker for the Odyssean intertext. Basinio himself has given this title to his work: In the autograph manuscript, each book starts or ends with BASINII PARMENSIS HESPERIDOS LIBRI [book number] PRINCIPIUM or FINIS. To quote Jean Giono through Gérard Genette, "A title is needed because the title is the sort of banner one makes one's way toward; the goal one must achieve is to explain the title."[39] However, the label *Hesperis* displays a startling abstruseness, which forces the reader to reflect on its meaning and its relationship with the poem. I give three possible interpretations, and propose that the most likely option is closely related to Books 7 to 9 in particular. Meanwhile, it will become clear that *Hesperis* is an early indication of the complexities coming with a fusion of the Greek and Latin epic traditions.

Ancient as well as Neo-Latin epics (not to mention the vernacular examples) usually take their title from either the central character, or the location where the central battles in the story take place. The titles of the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, Matteo Zuppardo's *Alfonseis*, Tito Strozzi's *Borsias*, and both Francesco Filelfo's *Sfortias* and *Cosmias* have to do with the eponymous heroes Odysseus, Aeneas, Alfonso of Aragon, Borso d'Este, Francesco Sforza, and Cosimo de' Medici. On the other hand, the *Iliad*, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Statius' *Thebaid*, Petrarch's *Africa*, and Pierre de Blarus' *Nanceis* refer to the places Ilion, Pharsalus, Thebes, Africa, and Nancy where the respective conflicts allegedly took place. In comparison with these examples, Basinio's choice of the title *Hesperis* is remarkable. It belongs to the second group of geographical titles, but distinguishes itself from the examples mentioned. At first sight, *Hesperis* seems to relate to Italy, where the narrative of the poem takes place – apart from Books 7 to 9 that is. The vision of Italy that emerges, is not of a hotchpotch of regional interests and conflicts, but of the shared cultural area championed by humanists on the basis of (Latin) language and

[38] Peters 2019 (as in n. 4), 293.
[39] G. Genette, *Paratexts : Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1997), 67.

cultures.[40] Consequently, scholars have suggested *Italiade* as a good translation of *Hesperis*.[41]

There are two further arguments for this translation, one inherent in the epic, the other drawn from the Latin literary tradition. First, the translation of *Hesperis* as *Italiade* is based on the 'nationalist' undertone of the poem to use an anachronistic term. Although Sigismondo's Riminese background is mentioned at various points in the narrative, the prevalent image of him is that of a pan-Italian leader. The catalogue of troops in Book 2 lists several cities and regions including Florence, Pisa, Volterra, Siena, and Umbria, and the previously mentioned phrase "ut totas compellat in agmina gentes Italiae" gives the same impression.[42] In several instances, Sigismondo's troops, his deceased brother and the Pope call him Italy's defender, saviour and last hope.[43] The Italians in *Hesperis* gather willingly, and in defence of their fatherland; nowhere does Basinio mention the mercenary contracts and diplomatic manoeuvres at the mercy of which Sigismondo operated. At some point, the cultural and political unity of Italy is even pitted against the hopelessly divided Spaniards:

> Nam neque mos, neque lingua eadem fuit omnibus, orbis
> diversis quoniam venerunt partibus illi.[44]
> (vv. 12.54-55)

Passages like this provided historians of the nineteenth century, such as Francesco Gaetano Battaglini and Luigi Passerini, with arguments to use Basinio to nationalist ends. Second, *Italiade* is based on the concept of Hesperia in ancient Latin poetry.[45] In the *Aeneid*, for example, Hesperia stays for Italy and this use continues in later poets like Lucan and Silius Italicus.[46] The name is etymologically linked to *vesper*, meaning 'evening.' When Aeneas sailed from Troy to Italy, he made his way towards the *Abendland*, the region where the sun sets in the evening. Because of

[40] See M. Pade, "Humanist Latin and Italian Identity: sum vero Italus natione et Romanus civis esse glorior", *Renæssanceforum* 8 (2012), 1-22.

[41] For example A. Campana, "Basinio da Parma", *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 7 (1965), 89-98.

[42] *Hesp*. 2.312-325.

[43] *Hesp*. 2.262, 4.532, 8.303-304, 369.

[44] "For they did not all have the same habits nor language, since they came from various parts of the world."

[45] S. Epperlein, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte von „Europa", „Hesperia" und „Occidentalis" in der Antike und im frühen Mittelalter", *Philologus* 115, 1-4 (1971), 81-92.

[46] Verg. *Aen.* 1.530, Lucan. *Phars*. 1.224, Sil. *Pun.* 1.4 and elsewhere in the same poets.

its etymology, the name *Hesperis* keeps its implicit connection with the foundational myth of Rome. Thus, the title *Hesperis* links Sigismondo's Italian battles to ancient glory, and presents the Italian assembly under his leadership as the natural successor of Italy's unity under the Roman Empire. The opening of Book 3 also suggests that Sigismondo is the heir of Aeneas, Caesar and Augustus.

> Romanique duces, et longi maximus auctor
> Iulius imperii, nec non Augustus, et omnes
> Italiae proceres, totum defluxit in orbem
> nobilium unde genus, nec non Pandulphius heros
> Hectoreus ductor, patriis Sismundus in armis[47]
> (vv. 3.11-24)

The "myth-laden topography" of Hesperia as Italy is inextricably connected with the eastern city of Troy.[48] Basinio's use of it leads to an inevitable conflict of perspectives from the two related, but ultimately different epic traditions that he combines. On the one hand, the *Iliad* serves as a common story for the Greek world in which their unity is pitted against the culture of Asian Troy. The Greeks are victorious in this narrative, and Basinio would naturally want to identify them with Sigismondo's men. He clearly does so when talking about the war against the Turks, which are called Teucri (Trojans) for obvious reasons of geography.[49] On the other hand, the *Aeneid* tells the foundation myth of Rome and roots it in the ruin of Troy, from where Aeneas flees westwards to Italy. Here, the Trojans finally get compensated for the loss of their fatherland and start the history of Roman Italy in which Basinio inscribes his patron's military ventures. When Basinio's story casts Sigismondo in the role of the winner and a champion of Italian independence from the Spanish crown, he has to choose whether to depict him as a Homeric Greek, or as a Vergilian Trojan/Roman. The title *Hesperis* points in the latter direction,

[47] "The Roman leaders, Julius , loftiest builder of a long-lasting empire, as well as Augustus and all the rulers of Italy. A descent of noble men flowed forth therefrom into the entire world, including Pandolfo's heroic son, a commander like Hector: Sigismondo in his forefathers' armour."

[48] C. Peters, "Claiming and Contesting Trojan Ancestry on Both Sides of the Bosporus – Epic Answers to an Ethnographic Dispute in Quattrocento Humanist Poetry", in K.A.E. Enenkel, K.A. Ottenheym (ed.), *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture* (Leiden – Boston, 2019), 15-46 (at 34-35).

[49] *Hesp*. 11.146-148, 169; cf. Peters 2019 (as in n. 48), 25-26.

as a reference to 'the West' only makes sense in the context of the *Aeneid*, since there is no (westward) travelling in the *Iliad*. Furthermore, Basinio's framing of Sigismondo as an exponent of the early Roman empire and its mythological ancestry partly depends on the Vergilian association of Hesperia with Italy.

When one looks closer at Basinio's usage of *Hesperia*, however, the translated title should rather be *Hispaniade*, as he employs the word more systematically to talk about Spain and not Italy.[50] He thereby follows Servius' clue, who writes the following in his commentary on *Aeneid* 1.530:

> Hesperiae duae sunt, una quae Hispania dicitur, altera quae est in Italia. quae hac ratione discernuntur: aut enim Hesperiam solam dicis et significas Italiam, aut addis 'ultimam' et significas Hispaniam, quae in occidentis est fine, ut Horatius qui nunc Hesperia sospes ab ultima. et haec est vera Hesperia, ab Hespero dicta, id est stella occidentali. ceterum Italia Hesperia dicitur a fratre Atlantis, qui pulsus a germano Italiam tenuit eique nomen pristinae regionis inposuit, ut Hyginus docet.

Servius' identification of Hesperia with Spain, based on his reading of Horace's *Ode* 1.36.5, fits perfectly with the geographical context of *Hesperis*. Its triumphant hero is an Italian ruler, who never left the peninsula. His main competitor Alfonso was king of Spain, and Basinio repeatedly points out the difference between Spanish and Italian peoples. All this suggests that *Hesperis* can be translated with *Italiade*, but equally well with *Hispaniade*. This latter option has a precedent in the *Iliad*, which derives its name from the losing antagonist Troy and not from the Greek armies with whom its readers would ultimately identify. However, all the battles in *Hesperis* are set in northern Italy and this raises new questions. What has *Hesperis* got to do with Spain? The only time we get there is in the previously described journey to the Isles of the Blessed. First, Sigismondo tells his soldiers that they are travelling to Cyprus on the occasion of a family visit (*Hesp*. 7.140-141). From 1442 to 1458, the biographical period to which Sigismondo's journey corresponds, the Queen of Cyprus was a relative of his. Helena Palaiologina was the daughter of Theodore II Palaeologus and Cleopha Malatesta, for whom

[50] See *Hesp*. 1.355, 382, 442, 580, 610, 2.139, 3.92, 4.373, 564, 326.

Guillaume Dufay composed an isorhythmic motet whose first stanza goes as follows:[51]

> Vasilissa, ergo gaude,
> quia es digna omni laude,
> Cleophe, clara gestis
> a tuis de Malatestis,
> in Italia principibus
> magnis et nobilibus.[52]

To be clear, the Italian princes mentioned are not the same family branch to which Sigismondo belonged. Cleofa was the daughter of Malatesta IV Malatesta, lord of Pesaro, and the sister of Galeazzo Malatesta, who unsuccessfully fought against his kinsman Sigismondo for dominion over Rimini.[53] On his way to visit Helena, who is only referred to as "Cleophaea nata" to stress the prestigious connection with the imperial family, Basinio makes a stopover in Spain. There he enquires about the political situation in Spain, and spies on Alfonso (*Hesp*. 7.251-341). This is a short passage in the narrative of *Hesperis*, and could hardly be a sufficient reason for giving the work its specific title.

Since the first two explanations of the title *Hesperis* are both inadequate, I propose that we should not understand 'the west' as a historical pointer, but as a mythological one. There are several arguments for this: First, the short interruption in Spain of his journey to the Isles of the Blessed indicates that the latter lies in the west too. Secondly, the regions where Sigismondo meets his forebears and heroes from antiquity are ruled over by Zephyrus, the personification of the west wind. At some point, moreover, we see through Sigismondo's eyes where the golden apples of the Hesperides grow:

> … inde nitent oneroso vertice mali
> diversae, pruni, nec non felicia mala

[51] The interested reader will find a recording of it by the Huelgas Ensemble under the direction of Paul Van Nevel.

[52] "Queen, rejoice! For you are worthy of all praise, Cleopha! You are famous from the deeds of your fellow Malatesta's, who are great and noble rulers in Italy."

[53] E. Trapp (ed.), "Κλεόπα, Παλαιολογίνα", in *Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit* (Wien, 1989), 21385.

> aurea, quae memorant vigili servata draconi,
> Hesperidumque choro sublimi Atlante satarum[54]
> (vv. 8.102-105)

The Hesperides were traditionally located in the extreme west, and their abodes acquired paradisal traits.[55] The epithet *Hesperides* for Zephyrus and the introduction of Atlas' daughters as *Hesperides* establish a clear connection between Sigismondo's Odyssean quest and the title. In contrast to the two previous explanations, this hypothesis has nothing that speaks against it. The only objection that could be raised is that Books 7 to 9 constitute less than a quarter of the entire poem. The following two paragraphs will therefore argue that the journey to the underworld is, in fact, of such great importance – if not "il vero centro di gravità del poema" – to warrant the most perfect compatibility with the title.[56]

I here build on Peters' observation that the journey to the beyond in Renaissance epic "is a journey not of action, but learning, reflecting, and gaining insight into plans of history."[57] The humanist interest in Aeneas' katabasis as an opportunity to gain a better ethical understanding is well attested in, for example, Coluccio Salutati and Cristoforo Landino.[58] Likewise, there is no need to describe the spiritual and encyclopaedic value that was attributed to Dante's exploration of the hereafter in his *Comedia*, which stood model for the central books of *Hesperis*. It is therefore no surprise that Sigismondo does not embark on this adventure to bring up Cerberus, Proserpina or Eurydice like other mythological heroes had done. After Psycheia asks him whether he is interested to learn about the "limina vitae humanae" (*Hesp*. 8.86-87), Sigismondo gives free rein to his curiosity about the afterlife and asks:

> Quive viri tanto complent nemora inclyta cantu
> quos video? Manesne choro laetantur inani?
> …

[54] "Hence, various apples and plums gleam on the heavy treetop, as well as the noble golden apples, which, they say, are kept under the protection of a dragon and the lofty choir of the Hesperides, daughters of Atlas."

[55] A. Ambühl, "Hesperides", in H. Cancik (ed.), *Brill's New Pauly* (Leiden – Boston, 2006), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e512320.

[56] Zabughin 1921 (as in n. 10), 289.

[57] Peters 2019 (as in n. 4), 293.

[58] C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas : Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Italian Renaissance* (Hanover – London, 1989), 95-97, 140-42.

> Dic, age, quos Graii memorant heroas ademptis
> corporibus superesse …[59]
> (vv. 8. 24-143)

When Sigismondo's deceased brother Galeotto visits him in his sleep, he talks about the heavenly bliss he enjoys in return for his saintly life on earth. He goes on to assure Sigismondo that his victory over the Celts will allow him to have a part in this happiness too. After describing the separation of soul and body after death, he foretells the resurrection of the body on God's authority. He concludes by saying:

> intrepidi ad mortem, proceres, quae noctis imago,
> atque quiescendi facies pulsanda reducto
> sole, nihil metuenda viris, quae temporis instar
> exigui est …[60]
> (vv. 8.352-355)

In Book 9, Sigismondo's investigation shifts from the metaphysical to the cultural-historical plane in what appears to be a reversal of the thematic structure in Dante's *Comedia*. He sees Cicero and Demosthenes, and learns about those that fell prey to immoderate love including Helena, Thisbe, Dido, Calypso and Circe, Phaedra, and Medea. He discerns Theban commanders, famous troops of Trojans and Greeks, as well as Marcellus, Caesar, and Cato, but also Aeneas and Lavinia (*Hesp*. 9.80-240). A catalogue of mythical figures follows in the darker regions of the Underworld, where Catilina, Tantalus, the Titans and other sinners are punished for their wrongdoing.

The account of Sigismondo's impressions between his welcoming by Psycheia and his going back to Italy confirms the previously quoted words of Peters about the inquisitive nature of katabases. The journey to the Isles of the Blessed is undoubtedly an opportunity for Basinio to showcase his learning, and his creative mixing of Homer, Vergil, and Dante. At the same time, however, it is a moment to put Sigismondo in a different light. No longer bound to what is expected from him as a *con-*

[59] "Which men do I see filling the illustrious woods with this melody? Do the shades perhaps rejoice in intangible choirs? … Come on, tell me about the heroes who, as the Greeks say, live on without a body."

[60] "… without fear to death, noble men; it is like the night, similar to sleep that is about to be ended by the return of the sun. It lasts only a small period of time, and is, therefore, nothing to be feared by men."

dottiere, he reveals himself as a pursuer of wisdom. Basinio cannot have been indifferent to this, being a gifted poet with state-of-the-art knowledge of ancient literature, trained by some of the most famous teachers of his age, and surrounded by fine humanists and artists during much of his life. Perhaps Sigismondo's imagined adventures in the world of knowledge were equally, if not more, important, than the drawn-out battle descriptions. They would enhance the significance of Basinio's poem, a feeling that is conveyed through the internal proems too. These inserted textual spaces stress the extraordinary heights which *Hesperis* attains by explicating such arcane matters as the ones contained in Books 7 to 9.[61] At the same time, wisdom-seeking was a potent ingredient for Sigismondo's self-fashioning, and complements his military fame. The scene of the ivory and horn doors in *Hesperis* corroborates this argument. The ivory door shows "the Iberians defeated on the Italian shores", in other words, historical reality, while the horn door shows Sigismondo on the way to the Underworld (*Hesp*. 8.205-225). Unlike Aeneas, Sigismondo does not have to choose which entry he takes, since the doorsteps in *Hesperis* are two sides of the same gate; learning does not have to stand in the way of military prowess or vice versa.[62] Basinio emulates Vergil's gates — in the *Aeneid*, they are not described in detail — and in doing so continues the ancient poet's employment of ekphrases. Indeed, it has been argued that they serve as "metaphors for the larger text which they embellish and that, individually and as a group, they have much to teach the reader about the poem as a whole."[63]

5. Marginal notes

The three main points discussed so far – the macrostructure, the conflict between Homeric and Vergilian perspectives, and the importance of Sigismondo's quest for insight in Books 7 to 9 – will be linked to the last liminal feature under scrutiny: the marginal annotations in Basinio's

[61] *Hesp*. 8.240-255 and 9.24-45.

[62] Peters 2016 (as in n. 6), 206-211 offers a particularly insightful analysis of this passage in *Hesperis*.

[63] M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs: Ekphrasis in the Aeneid* (New Haven, 1998), 2.

hand.[64] BCG Sc-Ms 34, the previously mentioned autograph manuscript and Basinio's very working copy for *Hesperis*, contains alterations to the poem on almost every page. In a clear and methodical way, words are crossed out and replaced, verses are transposed, and new passages are inserted.[65] The most conspicuous trace of our author, however, are the Greek words and verses that feature on several pages. Christoph Pieper has discussed several of these marginal notes from a New Historicist point of view. His article sheds light on the author Basinio by examining the dialogue with readers that the humanist initiates through his marginal notes. Pieper does not consider the marginal additions for their own interest. Instead, he uses them to demonstrate how Basinio continually tries his best to bolster and preserve his reputation as an accomplished humanist with a mastery of Greek.[66] The present section aims, in contrast, to consider the semantic value of these quotations for our understanding of the *Hesperis*. Instead of only looking at a deliberate selection, I will consider all of the authorial reader's marks and marginal quotations. The citations refer to only a handful of ancient authors: Homer, Macrobius and Hesiod (possibly through Plato, who quotes the same verse in the *Cratylus*), which allows for coherent analysis. The other marks too are placed next to a specific type of passage, underlining their homogeneity. As the marginal notes are few in number, their interest is not their wealth of new information or complex intertextuality, but their signposting function which draws our attention to a relatively small group of passages in the poem.

I will start with the fifteen nota-monograms that appear here and there next to the main text of Books 4 to 8, and finally turn to the fourteen Greek marginalia in Books 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 to 13. The nota-monograms are striking because of their relatively elaborate design and size. Being nearly two times larger than a normal letter, they consist of six strokes: Three of them form the capital N; on top of the left vertical stroke rests a curled horizontal line, making it into a T; the lower end of the same

[64] A case of fourteenth-century humanist self-commentary is discussed by J. De Keyser, "Elucidation and Self-Explanation in Filelfo's Marginalia", in F. Venturi (ed.), *Self-Commentary in Early Modern European Literature, 1400-1700* (Leiden, 2019), 50-70. However, its classification cannot be productively applied to Basinio, since the notes in the Riminese autograph are less systematic than Filelfo's.

[65] See D. Frioli, "Alla corte di Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta: per la tradizione manoscritta di Basino da Parma", *Filologia mediolatina* 13 (2006), 241-303; Ead., "Ancora su Basinio da Parma e i suoi 'autographa'", *Filologia mediolatina* 17 (2010), 297-323.

[66] Pieper 2014 (as in n. 22), 53.

line is split into an A; finally, a small round O crowns the right vertical stroke of the N. Such signs are not uncommon in medieval manuscripts, but we are, indeed, looking at one of their most careful and noticeable variants. Moreover, there is a clear leading thread connecting the passages which they mark. In the following table, I give the autograph folios where a nota-monogram appears, the book and nearest verse number, and a brief summary of the verse next to which we find the monogram.

40r	4.40	Apollo talks about Sigismondo's military feats.
41r	4.77	Megaera is angry about Sigismondo's success.
66v	6.163	Sigismondo's fame is compared to an omnipresent god.
84v	7.567	Pallas saves a frightened Sigismondo after the shipwreck.
87v	8.87	Psycheia asks Sigismondo if he wants to learn about the "limits of human life."
91v	8.244	Basinio sets unknowing people apart from elevated poets.
92r	8.266	Sigismondo learns about the ages of men.
92v	8.312	Galeotto says that multiple ways lead to heaven.
93r	8.333	Galeotto says his honour consists in singing God's praise with the angels.
93v	8.347	Galeotto confirms the resurrection of the body.
94r	8.377	Psycheia promises Sigismondo that he too will ascend to heaven.
94r	8.391	Psycheia describes how Envy eats its heart out in Hell.
95v	9.34	Psycheia guarantees Sigismondo that the netherworld need not be feared.
105v	10.45	Alfonso foretells victory under his leadership and with the support of the gods.
110r	10.264	Psycheia assures Sigismondo that his good intentions will lead him to success.

A few observations can be made based on these data. First, it appears that the nota-monograms stress the macrostructure of *Hesperis* as discussed above. Twelve out of fifteen fall within the scope of Sigismondo's visit to

the Isles of the Blessed. Secondly, eight out of these twelve mark passages dealing with life after death. These range from a general point on the "limina vitae humanae" ("the limits of human life") to Galeotto's state of divine bliss, to a prophecy about Sigismondo's future. The three nota-monograms outside of Sigismondo's otherworldly adventures are also connected to instances that transcend human existence. The first one accompanies a speech held by Apollo to Alfonso which explicates Sigismondo's seeming invincibility. At the beginning of Book 4, earth-borne Envy roams around spreading famine and revolt out of spite for Sigismondo's excellence, and this is highlighted by the second monogram. The third monogram marks a passage where fame is compared to a deity. These findings relate to the first sections in a significant way. We have seen that the title balances out the absence of the Odyssean intertext in the proem of *Hesperis*. The nota-monograms also turn out to put especially these Odyssean passages into relief. The importance of these passages lies in their depiction of Sigismondo as a truth-finding hero, and the majority of the monograms accentuate exactly this aspect. The same pattern stands out in the written marginalia, as will become clear in the next paragraphs.

Before turning to the Greek marginalia, it is worth pointing out one other reason for approaching Basinio's self-commentary in a hermeneutical way and not merely as "meant to prove Basinio's competence in Greek ... to his fellow humanists who are not familiar enough with Homer to see the intertextual link without help."[67] The fact is that the latter explanation of the Greek quotes falls short of explaining why exactly these passages are put into relief and not others. Indeed, one can find several other faithful but silent translations from Homer, as this paragraph will show. This is, admittedly, an *argumentum ex negativo*, but corroborates the hypothesis that the passages where Basinio added something in the margin deserve our special attention. I will give three examples where Basinio includes translated verses from the Iliad and the Odyssey. They could have been replaced with several other passages, but perfectly illustrate my point that translations from Greek are not so few in number as the Greek notes in the margins, and that the two features should therefore not be considered only in relation to each other. In Book 7 of *Hesperis*, we read:

[67] Pieper 2014 (as in n. 22), 67.

> [...] At hunc Cadmi proles a fluctibus Ino
> Leucothea adspexit pelagi nunc diva, sed olim
> mortalis mulier, quae tum miserata natantem
> prona virum [...][68]
> (vv. 7.530-533)

This is a translation of the following verses from Homer's *Odyssey*, which preserves even some of the stylistic features such as the enjambment between Ino/Ἰνώ and Leucothea/Λευκοθέη.

> τὸν δὲ ἴδεν Κάδμου θυγάτηρ, καλλίσφυρος Ἰνώ
> Λευκοθέη, ἣ πρὶν μὲν ἔην βροτὸς αὐδήεσσα,
> νῦν δ᾽ ἁλὸς ἐν πελάγεσσι θεῶν ἔξ ἔμμορε τιμῆς.
> ἥ ῥ᾽ Ὀδυσῆ᾽ ἐλέησεν ἀλώμενον [...][69]
> (vv. 5.333-336)

The following passage is borrowed from the *Odyssey* as well, and hints at its source in the last two verses by referencing even Odysseus' inability to go past the Planctae.

> Has autem cautes planctas dixere beati
> caelicolae, quas praeter aves plaudentibus alis
> non veniunt, non inde Iovi venere columbae
> ambrosiam Summo referunt quum forte; [nec ullis
> classibus hac iter est tutum, qui durus Ulysses
> non sine parte sui potuit transire relicti.][70]
> (vv. 10.39-44)

[68] "Ino, the offspring of Cadmus, that is, Leucothea, looked at him from the water. She is now a sea goddess, but was once a mortal woman. Feeling pity for the man as he swam about, the goddess bent over …"

[69] "But the daughter of Cadmus, Ino of the beautiful ankles, saw him, that is, Leucothea, who formerly was a mortal of human speech, but now in the depths of the sea has won a share of honour from the gods. She was touched with pity for Odysseus, as he wandered beset with troubles." (The translation of longer Greek passages is taken from the respective Loeb editions.)

[70] "The blessed gods have called those pointed rocks Planctae. Birds do not go beyond them on their flapping wings, and doves have not come from this place when sometime they brought ambrosia to highest Jove. This route is not safe for any ship and tough Odysseus could not cross it without leaving part of his men behind."

A combination of lexical and metrical necessity has forced Basinio to make four verses out of three, but the translation is otherwise accurate – yet not announced by any marginal annotation.

> Πλαγκτὰς δή τοι τάς γε θεοὶ μάκαρες καλέουσι.
> τῇ μέν τ᾽ οὐδὲ ποτητὰ παρέρχεται οὐδὲ πέλειαι
> τρήρωνες, ταί τ᾽ ἀμβροσίην Διὶ πατρὶ φέρουσιν[71]
> (vv. 12.61-64)

Also verses from the *Iliad* are translated in *Hesperis*, such as those describing the Trojan people that resettled in Italy. Basinio alternates their Homeric geography with their new homes around the Po:

> Quique Cytoron habent, et Sesamon uda tenebant
> [Arva; Padum qui nunc, atque Itala flumina potant,]
> Cromnanque, Aegialumque diu, celsosque Erythinos
> [In patria coluere sua, nunc molle Timavi,
> Et latus Eridani placidas laetissima ripas][72]
> (vv. 4.252-256)

Comparison with the Greek original shows clearly how Basinio neatly interlaced his intertext with references to the Tuscan landscape:

> οἵ ῥα Κύτωρον ἔχον καὶ Σήσαμον ἀμφενέμοντο
> [ἀμφί τε Παρθένιον ποταμὸν κλυτὰ δώματα ναῖον]
> Κρῶμνάν τ᾽ Αἰγιαλόν τε καὶ ὑψηλοὺς Ἐρυθίνους[73]
> (vv. 2.853-855)

None of these translations is accompanied by a note in the margin. This being said, it is time to take a closer look at the Greek quotes in the margin. The following table lists, in the first column, the folio number where a respective note features; the second column first gives the verse number in *Hesperis* where it can be found; secondly, it gives the verse or

[71] "The Planctae the blessed gods call these. By that way, not even winged creatures pass, not even the timorous doves that bear ambrosia to father Zeus."

[72] "They lived in Cytorus and kept the wet fields of Sesame; now, they drink from the Po and Italian streams. For a long time they inhabited Cromna, Aegialus and the high Erythines in their fatherland; now, the ancient people most happily inhabit the mild side of the Timavo and the calm banks of the Eridanus."

[73] "These held Cytorus and dwelt around Sesamus, and had their famed dwellings around the river Parthenius and Cromna and Aegialus and lofty Erythini."

line number of the note's source text; the third column first reproduces the *Hesperis* verse to which the note refers, and, secondly, a diplomatic rendition of the note itself, both with translation. The text between square brackets features in the source text, but not in the note itself. The final column summarises the context of the *Hesperis* verse as well as that of the marginal note in its source context. Homer's *Iliad* is abbreviated as *Il*., his *Odyssey* as *Od*., Hesiod's *Works and Days* as *W&D*, and Macrobius' *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* as CiSS.

9v	1.305	Debilibusque serit morbos mortalibus atros (and spreads dark diseases among feeble mortals)	Sigismondo in battle
	Il. 22.31	Κάι τε φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι (and brings much fever to the miserable mortals)	Achilles kills Hector
12v	1.500	Hos Mars armipotens, illos agitarat Enyo (Powerful Mars had upset these, and Enyo those)	general battle scene
	Il. 5.592	[ἦρχε δ' ἄρα σφιν Ἄρης καὶ πότνι'] ενυὼ ([Ares and revered] Enyo [led them])	general battle scene
28v	3.14	Mortali dea mixta viro [...] (the goddess had intercourse with a mortal man)	Aeneas' parentage
	Il. 2.821	[...] θεὰ βροτῷ εὐνηθεῖσα (the goddess had intercourse with a mortal man)	Aeneas' parentage
57r	5.232	Ad pugnam vocat ille, choros non ducit ad ullos. (He calls to fight, not to dance.)	Sforza about Sigismondo
	Il. 15.508	ὀυ μὰν ἔς γε χορὸν κέλετὲλθέ-μεν, αλλὰ μάχεσθαι (He does not call to dance, but to fight.)	Ajax about Hector

78r	7.256	[...] incultaque procul tellure vagari (she dwelled on a distance from the barren land)	Isles of the Blessed
	Il. / *Od.*	ἀλὸσ ἀτρυγέτοιο (the barren sea)	*passim*
92r	8.282	custodes hominum, pellentes damna, malumque (protectors of men, who ward off harm and evil)	about the Golden Age
	W&D 123	ἐσθλοὶ, ἀλέξικακοι, φύλακ^{εσ} θνητῶν ἆνών ὀσίοδοσ (noble, warding off evil, protectors of mortal men)	about the Golden Age
92v	8.302	ad fratrem in somnis venit Galaotus [...] *(Galeotto approached his brother in his sleep)	before Galeotto's speech
	CiSS 1.3.2	χρηματισμὸς hoc est [quod] oraculum [nuncupatur] (this is a 'χρηματισμὸς', [which is called] an oracle)	definition of χρηματισμὸς
105r	10.25	morte luit poenas scelerum Pandulphius heros (Pandolfo's heroic son paid his misdeeds with death)	Alfonso's speech
	———	ἡ ὑβρισισ (the hubris)	———
120r	11.108	Pandarea misso dextra, cornuque sonanti (shot from Pandarus' right hand and sounding bow)	the Spanish as Trojans
	Il. 15.443	τόξον ἔχων ἐν χειρὶ παλίντονον ἠδὲ φαρέτρην (holding the strung bow and the quiver in his hand)	Teucer shoots at Trojans
121v	11.168-9	Ille inimicus enim mihi plus quam tartaro et ipsi	Biaon's hatred towards Sigismondo

		pectore qui celet, numquam quod et ore revelet. (For I hate him more than hell who hides in his heart what he would never speak out.)	
	Il. 9.312-13	ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς ἀΐδαο πύλῃσιν, ὃς χἕτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπῃ[74] (For as much as Hades' gates do I hate him who hides one thing in his mind, but says another.)	Achilles' opinion on sycophancy
127r	11.419-20	aethera complevit nova lux, omnisque repente arrisit tellus circum [...] (A new light filled the sky, and at once, the entire earth smiled from every side.)	gleaming weapons
	Il. 19.362	αἴγλη δ'ὀυρανὸν ἠκε, γέλασε δὲ πᾶσα περι χθὼν (their gleam raised to the sky, and the entire earth smiled from every side)	gleaming weapons
128v	11.495	Mars communis [...] (Mars is with everyone)	chances change in war
	Il. 18.309	ξυνὸς ἐνυάλιος [...] (the War-god is with everyone)	chances change in war
138r	12.446-47	sed clypeas clypeo, galeae galea alta recumbit, diripit arma viro vir cominus [...] (Instead, shield pushes against shield and high helmet	general battle scene

[74] The Greek quotataion is accompanied by its Latin translation from Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* 10.5: "aliud in ore aliud in pectore clausum habere." Cf. Pieper 2014 (as in n. 22), 66.

		against helmet. Men take each other's weapons from close by)	
	Il. 13.131 & 16.215	ἀσπὶς ἄρ ἀσπιδ' ἔρειδε κόρϋς κόρϋν, ἀνέρα δ' ἄνὴρ (shield pushes against shield, helmet against helmet, and man against man)	Ajaxes against Hector and general battle
147v	13.285	[...] laeto stat pectore pastor (the shepherd stands by with a happy heart)	bright moon simile
	Il. 8.559	[...] γέγηθε δέ τε φρένα πομὴν (the shepherd is happy in his heart)	bright moon simile

I argue that there is a clear correlation between the poem's macrostructure and the marginal notes. We can observe that different sources for the quotes distinguish Books 1 to 6 and 11 to 13 from Books 7 to 10. Whereas the former ones are all taken from the *Iliad* and mainly stem from battle scenes, the latter ones are taken from the *Odyssey*, Hesiod, and Macrobius. Moreover, the content of the quotes in Books 7 to 10 is not only an indication of parallel places for this or that verse. Instead, they have a moral or philosophical undertone, explaining passages with technical terms like *chrēmatismós* and *hybris*, as well as describing the tutelary spirits that are the deceased generations of the Golden Age. For example, the *hybris* gloss tells us how to understand either Alfonso's self-confidence, or else the specific criticism in Alfonso's speech about Sigismondo's unprecedented plan to go to the Isles of the Blessed. If the notes would be limited to the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, one could explain them away as mere source-display. The inclusion of other sources, however, reveals a strong hermeneutic desire. A similar self-commentary, signifying the way a given verse should be interpreted, has already been discovered in another poem by Basinio. The metrical letter to Pope Nicholas in which Basinio refuses to translate the *Iliad*, has in the margin a note by the author. This note is a quotation from Horace's *Ars poetica* on which Basinio modelled his epistolary poem. By adding the phrase "a Virgilio ubique decorum servatum" ("Vergil preserved *decorum* everywhere"), Basinio adds an intertextual question mark next to his ability to translate the poetry of Homer and at the same time preserve the *decorum*

that Vergil's *Aeneid* made into an essential requirement and hallmark of good epic poetry.[75]

The second observation in the marginalia is that Basinio does not consistently choose between a Homeric or Vergilian frame of reference. And here we are confronted again with the ambiguity that we encountered in the proem and the title. While there are no quotes from Vergil in the margins, Basinio makes use of an interesting 'reverse intertextuality', where he uses a Greek verse from Homer to allude to the Latin Vergilian tradition that builds on it. This tension is most keenly felt in the marginal annotation on folio 28v, where Aeneas is mentioned as the founder of Roman leadership, culminating in Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus (*Hesp*. 3.14). Following tradition, he is described as the offspring of a goddess, Venus, who slept with a man, Anchises ("mortali dea mixta viro"). The mixed offspring of Aeneas is remarkably glossed with a Greek quotation taken from the *Iliad*. Remarkable, because in Homer, Aeneas is but a marginal figure, one of the many heroes that fight in the epic battles, but not of the calibre of an Achilles, a Hector or even an Ajax. The reason for this clever device has already been pointed out in my analysis of *Hesperis*' title. Basinio needs to make his patron's troops the victors of the Trojan war from an Iliadic point of view. At the same time, however, he wants to identify them with the Trojans, from whom the Latin people are told to descend. The same need manifests itself in a changing identification of Greeks and Trojans with Italians and Spaniards. In v. 1.305, Sigismondo is implicitly equalled to the Greek hero Achilles killing his Trojan opponent Hector. However, four books further in v. 5.232, the same Sigismondo is now described with the same words as Ajax speaks about Hector in the *Iliad*. In Book 11, Sigismondo tells his men that the impious should expect no help from the gods. Because the Spaniard Biaon has broken the treaty with the Italians by shooting an arrow at Sigismondo, as the Trojan Teucer had done against the Greek army, the Spanish will be defeated just like the Trojans. This stands in stark contrast with those passages where Basinio unequivocally calls the Italian peoples "born from Trojan blood", and compares the possibility of being cast out of Italy by the Spanish troops to the fate that befell the mythological ancestors of the Italians (*Hesp*. 11.253-254). The last quote from the *Iliad* is an interesting one in this respect. It stands next to a pastoral simile, in which a moonlit night with big bright stars is compared

[75] Foley 2017 (as in n. 9), 129.

to the fires of a burning city, the last stronghold of the Spanish army. It is the moment of long-awaited triumph, and, in v. 13.277, "flammas laeti mirantur Ethrusci" ("the Etruscans marvel at the flames with great joy"). The Greek verse comes from a comparable context, this time before the walls of Troy. The flames are not yet those of the conquered city itself, but of the fires by means of which the Trojan soldiers show their self-confidence to the Greeks, who are impressed and frightened. However, in the *Iliad*, there is a dark undertone in this scene, "for [the gods] utterly hated sacred Ilios, and Priam, and the men of Priam, who is armed with a good ashen spear."[76] Perhaps Basinio also wanted to prefigure Sigismondo's imminent downfall, at a moment in the *Hesperis* where his success seems to know no limits. The two-voice theory which hears a critical undertone in seemingly panegyric epic has been argued for in the case of Renaissance authors as well.[77] In any case, Basinio continuously thematises the tension he has to resolve in writing a Homeric–Vergilian epic through the dynamics between the margin and the main text.

6. Conclusion

What I originally intended as an article about the marginalia in the autograph of *Hesperis* snowballed into an exploration of Basinio's two-track intertextuality. One conclusion we could draw from this is that the marginalia are strongly implicated in the literary work itself. This raises questions about the readership, of course. Pieper has pointed out that the humanists at Sigismondo's court were the intended audience for these marginalia, and that Basinio bequeathed his copy of the poem to his friend and fellow humanist Roberto Valturio. Vergil reportedly said that it is more difficult to steal a line from Homer than Hercules' club, and Basinio undoubtedly took pride in achieving this. However, I don't think that the marginalia were intended to boastingly highlight borrowed passages for those without knowledge of Greek. Instead, I do believe that they served to help readers notice a much more complex and exciting characteristic of the work: the acrobatic fusion of Homer and Vergil in a historical epic. Basinio was the first to finish a long epic which is inspired by a direct and in-depth familiarity with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. At the same

[76] *Il.* 8.551-2: "Μάλα γάρ σφιν ἀπήχθετο Ἴλιος ἱρή, / καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς ἐυμμελίω Πριάμοιο."

[77] See C. Kallendorf, *The Other Virgil: "pessimistic" Readings of the Aeneid in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford, 2007).

time, he could not swap the canonical poet Vergil for the Greek author altogether. Basinio's greatest achievement is therefore not so much his linguistic and stylistic skill, but his literary creativity of allowing two intertexts to equally work out in a single poem. Especially in the case of such similar and at the same time disparate intertexts as the most important Greek and Roman epics. Whereas the main text of the poem is concerned with the narrative level, the meta-poetic level, from which we have seen Basinio did not shy away, is developed in the title, proem and margins.

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