



VIRGIL CO-OPTED AS PROPAGANDA

10. [VIRGIL]. FESTA CELEBRATA IN MANTOVA il dì anniversario della nascita di Virgilio. 24. Vendemmiaire anno 6. Repub. Francese. 15. Ottobre 1797. v.s. In Mantova [sic], presso la Societa' tipografica all'Apollo, [1797]. £250

FIRST EDITION. 8vo, pp. 8; printed in double columns in French and Italian; clean and fresh throughout; unbound as issued.

Very rare bilingual account of the celebrations to mark the

anniversary of Virgil's birth held in French occupied Mantua in 1797.

Coinciding with the establishment of the Piazza Virgiliana, which remains the principal public park of Mantua, by the French general Sextius de Miollis, the festival marking Virgil's birthday was an elaborate affair. Everyone, we are told, was there, while Virgil's effigy was on all the gates, his bust in every square, and public and private buildings alike were decorated with emblems evoking scenes from his writings. This was not, however, purely a celebration of Virgil: 'la verdure partout mêlée des couleurs nationales et de divers emblèmes offrait sur tous les points des perspectives ravissantes aux amis de la liberté et des muses'. Boats, decorated in three colours (unspecified, but one can guess) ferried newlyweds and their parents, while fireworks, representing Virgil surrounded by glory, concluded the festivities.

This was not enough for some enthusiasts: 'les amis plus particuliers de Virgile n'on pu borner leur hommage à ce jour, et ont prolongé la fête au 25' (another ten days).

The only other copy recorded appears to feature an engraving of Virgil; there is nothing to suggest that this was ever present in this copy.

*Not in OCLC; SBN records one copy, at Casa Carducci in Bologna, with an engraving of Virgil, not present here.*