

Joseph Farrell, Michael C. J. Putnam, ed., *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Wiley-Blackwell. Malden, MA/Oxford/Chichester, 2010, pp. xviii + 559, 32 illustrations, 8 colour plates. £125.

‘Interpretation of the *Aeneid* is a barometer which registers changes in the thought-climate of Western civilization,’ or so remarked Anna Cox Brinton in her 1930 edition of Maphaeus Vegius’ Thirteenth Book of the *Aeneid*. Farrell and Putnam are to be gratefully applauded for assembling thirty-two essays which explore these changing interpretations in all their variety and nuance, in more or less chronological order, with each essay striking a successful balance between detail and the bigger picture. The focus within and between essays oscillates from the *Aeneid* itself to what a given reception implies about the poem and about the new context which reworks it. While ‘many would argue that the different stages of reception are ultimately inseparable from any interpretation, [the editors’] own view is that the *Aeneid*, perhaps not more than but certainly as much as any poem, has been defined by the tradition of which it is so central a part.’ (2)

Accordingly the Companion emphasizes how modern interpretations of the *Aeneid* have been shaped by the artistic and critical traditions which mediate the poem to us. This insight informs some of the contributions more explicitly than others, especially those by J. Farrell on Vergil’s detractors (which covers ancient as well as modern detractors, and some distinguished supporters too); C. Kallendorf on ‘Vergil and Printed Books, 1500-1800,’ a metacritically sophisticated examination of early introductions, dedications, marginal notes, and illustrations; and K. Haynes on the idea of Vergil as a classic in the writings of Heyne, Sainte-Beuve, and Eliot. The same hermeneutic principle works in the opposite direction in the first two essays in the Companion: D. Nelis on ‘Vergil’s Library’ is an elegant exposition

of how all intertextual threads lead back to Homer through intermediary sources (including commentaries), framed as an investigation of reading culture and book availability in antiquity; while R. Hexter discusses not only Vergil's reading of Homer through the Homeric scholia, but the importance of these critical aids also for Vergil's own readers.

The Companion's broad span comprises five sections, the last three of which dramatically extend the boundaries of mainstream Vergilian scholarship: 'The *Aeneid* in Antiquity,' 'Medieval and Renaissance Receptions,' 'The *Aeneid* in Music and the Visual Arts,' 'The American *Aeneid*,' and 'Modern Reactions to the *Aeneid*.' Among the more avant-garde pieces are W. Fitzgerald on Vergil in music, especially Liszt, Purcell, Berlioz, and polyphonic settings of Dido's words; and D. B. Brown on Vergil in Romantic art including Turner, Girodet, Ingres, and Blake. These two essays stand out for the perspicacity of their vision and for the quality of their writing, almost as if the transposition of Vergil's text to unfamiliar media called for a new and more illuminating critical idiom. Equally ground-breaking and interesting for their comments on the Christian-pagan interface in the reception of Vergil are Y. Haskell on Vergil and the Jesuits, and I. Rowland on the political and ecclesiastical dimensions of Vergilian allusion in the painting and sculpture commissioned by the Pamphili family in Piazza Navona.

Vergil could only approve of the attention given here to hitherto marginalized voices, notably C. Winterer on American women's reading of the *Aeneid* and M. V. Ronnick on Vergil in the Black American experience, even if both of these chapters are often concerned with women or African Americans using Vergil to emulate their male or white counterparts. True to another of the epic's central themes, several essays address the reception of Vergil in colonial or post-colonial contexts: A. Laird discusses the use of the *Aeneid* to communicate

native myth to the Spanish-speaking intelligentsia in colonial Mexico, for example through allusion to Vergil's Venus to characterize the Virgin of Guadalupe; while C. J. Richard reflects on the presence of Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Aeneid* in the education and political rhetoric of the Early American Republic.

Many of the essays approach familiar questions in novel ways. The most arrestingly powerful (if also demanding) example of this is M. Lowrie's republished and condensed 'Vergil and Founding Violence,' a meditation on the juridical and historical implications of Aeneas' divinely sanctioned killing of Turnus, assessed in light of W. Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence,' and incorporating responses to Benjamin's essay by Arendt and Derrida. J. Connolly picks up on many of Lowrie's political themes in 'Figuring the Founder: Vergil and the Challenge of Autocracy,' which provides compelling insights into the enigmatic and conflicted character of Aeneas, partly by detailing similarities between Aeneas and Juno. While the volume contains no direct treatment of Vergil's visual or epigraphic sensibility or of his dramatic sources, a number of essays unpack precisely these themes from a reception perspective. K. Eastin argues that 'the effectiveness of the illustrations' by Franz Cleyn and others in John Ogilby's 1654 edition of the *Aeneid* '[stemmed] from his theatrical vision' (309). G. W. Most surveys versions of Laocoon from the epic cycle through to Lessing, Winckelmann and beyond, suggesting that the famous Esquiline statue 'is quite likely the very earliest surviving artistic response to the *Aeneid*' (333). R. A. Brower on Neptune in Vergil, Rubens, Dryden and related artists, reprinted from *Daedalus* 101 (1972), 155-182, takes a broad and skillful view of the varying possibilities which different media allow.

Original in less oblique ways are the cluster of essays about the *Aeneid* in antiquity, all of which are worth reading. S. Casali on the development of the Aeneas legend in

antiquity is master of its subject, accounting for Vergil's narrative choices and pointing to his awareness of many roads not taken. V. Panoussi identifies Aeneas' ritual and religious observances as an important source of his authority as a leader, putting this in the context of Augustus' religious programme. J. D. Reed writes about the indeterminacy of Roman national identity, composed as it is of so many disparate ethnic constituents. M. C. J. Putnam posits specific intertextuality between the *Aeneid* and *Tristia* 1.3 to focus on the reciprocal dynamic between the two poems: allusion to Aeneas' flight from Troy enhances the pathos of Ovid's flight into exile, while the *Tristia* draw out exilic themes in the *Aeneid*. J. J. O'Hara reads the tradition of the unfinished *Aeneid* as exaggerated, arguing that many of the elements which appear incomplete or discordant are of the poet's design. On the question of Vergil's last will and testament there is some overlap here with F. Stok's carefully sifting source-critical discussion of the Vergilian biographical tradition, surely now the best introduction of its kind to the topic.

Many will value the Companion most for its core of literary chapters on Medieval and Renaissance receptions. Tensions between classical paganism and Christianity resurface in the essays by G. Wills on Augustine and R. Jacoff on Dante, both of which are rich, lucid and informative. P. Hardie on *The Faerie Queen* establishes Spenser's appreciation of complex patterns of allusion in and between Vergil and Ovid, with instructive attention to Elizabethan politics. H. Power on 'The *Aeneid* in the Age of Milton' serves up a delectable assortment of contemporary references with satisfying analysis. S. Spence exposes us to popular anti-Aeneas traditions represented in the prose accounts of the fall of Troy by Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete, against which the *Aeneid* may be fruitfully read. D. Looney puts forward the view that Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso constructed the *Aeneid* as a forerunner to

their own romantic epics by emphasizing these Ferrarese poets' engagement with the most marvellous episodes in Vergil.

The volume closes with two excellent contributions on topics which will be crucial to the future of the Vergilian tradition. The first is a lively and wide-ranging critique by S. M. Braund of three modern 'foreignizing' translations of the *Aeneid* in Russian, French, and English, by Briusov, Klossowski, and Ahl respectively. The last is K. Kirchwey's subtle and lyrically radiant homage to several modern poets' reimaginings of Vergil. After some discussion of why the present age might or might not be a Vergilian one, he comments on poems by Robert Lowell, Allen Tate, Eavan Boland, W. H. Auden, Rosanna Warren, Louise Glück, and Mark Strand, discussing how these poets found in Vergil 'a chance to understand their own modernity' (480).

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