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**The Virgilian Tradition (J.M.) Ziolkowski, (M.C.J.) Putnam (edd.) *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*. Pp. xl + 1082, ills, colour pls. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008. Cased, £60, US\$100 (US\$80 through <http://www.virgiliantradition.org>). ISBN: 978-0-300-10822-4.**

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The Classical Review / Volume 62 / Issue 01 / April 2012, pp 147 - 149  
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X11003295, Published online: 09 March 2012

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0009840X11003295](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X11003295)

**How to cite this article:**

Fiachra mac Góráin (2012). The Classical Review,62, pp 147-149 doi:10.1017/S0009840X11003295

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## THE VIRGILIAN TRADITION

ZIOLKOWSKI (J.M.), PUTNAM (M.C.J.) (edd.) *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*. Pp. xl + 1082, ills, colour pls. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008. Cased, £60, US\$100 (US\$80 through <http://www.virgiliantradition.org>). ISBN: 978-0-300-10822-4.

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The author of the fifteenth-century *Vita Monacensis II* observed that Virgil's 'sayings can be explained grammatically, rhetorically, historically or literally, allegorically, morally, and anagogically. For so filled with meaning are his sayings, that they lie open to every interpretation, because everything was included in them'. This assertion is richly validated by Putnam and Ziolkowski's variegated anthology of the Virgilian tradition, 'a warehouse-sized toyshop for students and their teachers' (p. xxii), which offers 'a series of starting points, or angles of vision, for the study of Rome's greatest poet and of the heritage he conveyed, from his contemporary world until the fifteenth century of the common era' (p. xxxiii).

The material is divided into five sections. The first, 'Virgil the Poet', gives a chronological survey of reactions by writers from his own time until the Italian Renaissance. Many of the names here will be familiar to classical Virgilians: Propertius, Horace, Ovid, Augustine, Isidore, Dante and Petrarch; but how many know that Virgil was a ready source of exempla for Aldhelm of Malmesbury; that the courtier Ermoldus Nigellus invoked Virgil as well as Ovid in his plea to be readmitted to the society of Louis the Pious; that the monk Ermenrich of Ellwangen defended the reading of Virgil as dung to fertilise the soil of Christianity; or that Alan of Lille began a sermon on the avoidance of sin with the Cumaean Sibyl's 'facilis descensus Averni' [sic]? After testimonies to the performance and recitation of Virgil's poems the section concludes with Ziolkowski's fascinating discussion

and catalogue of manuscripts of Virgil with musical notation (pp. 167–78). The abundance and diversity of texts presented here and in other sections will allow readers to work outwards from their own area of knowledge and interest, be it classical, medieval or early Renaissance.

Section 2, ‘Biography’, valuably assembles for the first time all 39 known ‘lives’ of Virgil together with English translations. Concise introductions identify what is known about the origin, genetic relations and dissemination of these texts. Many of the ‘lives’ include biographical and intentionalist literary criticism which was to prove influential. Since they all derive from the Suetonian life there are many tralatician strands, but it is fascinating to trace how later lives absorb Christian explanations and legends which arose about Virgil’s magical powers. D. Joyner’s virtuosic chapter (pp. 427–63) on Virgilian images rounds off this section: pictures or statues of the poet himself or of scenes from his work in diverse contexts and media ranging from thirteenth-century Mantuan coinage to mosaics, cathedral paintings, altarware, cassone panels, engravings and illuminated manuscripts. A fuller and more analytic index would have helped to unlock the treasures of this and other varied chapters. The website <http://www.virgiliantradition.org> supplements the print form with additions and corrections, and is an exciting and welcome development. It provides *inter alia* an index of folklore motifs, and may yet offer further indexes (perhaps of media and provenance).

Section 3, ‘Virgil’s Texts and Their Uses’, begins with the cento: Ausonius’ *Cento nuptialis* is piquantly juxtaposed with Proba’s *Cento Vergilianus de laudibus Christi*. The line-end *pedibus per mutua nexis*, which describes the swarming bees’ intertwined feet at *Aen.* 7.66, is redeployed by Ausonius of legs entangled during sexual intercourse, and by Proba of Christ’s feet being nailed to the cross (p. 479). There follow selections on Virgilian parody, the fourth *Eclogue*, Orpheus, Dido, the underworld, the golden bough and florilegia, and finally substantial extracts from vernacular translations or adaptations of the *Aeneid* or Trojan saga more broadly: the French *Roman d’Énéas*, the middle-Irish *Imtheachta Aeniassa* (‘The Wanderings of Aeneas’), Heinrich von Veldeke’s *Eneit* and Icelandic heroic tales. These versions contain their own interpretative twists: before Aeneas’ speech to Dido at the Carthaginian banquet in the *Roman d’Énéas* we read (p. 558) that his ‘narrative was arranged a bit to avoid the shame of having it said that he fled out of cowardice’. The prose retellings are resolutely domesticating: the Icelandic tale substitutes Thor for Jupiter, and the abandoned Dido’s ‘Ochón och!’ preserved in Barbara Hillers’ translation (p. 665) is a reminder that this anthology gives us vernacular texts in English translation only.

Section 4, ‘Commentary Tradition’, takes us from Quintus Caecilius Epirota, who lectured on Virgil during the poet’s lifetime, to the Renaissance Florentine Neoplatonist Cristoforo Landino, who gave his own inaugural oration in praise of Virgil. In between, a generous amount of space is devoted to different ‘allegorical’ traditions of interpretation, from their beginnings in Servius through Fulgentius to (pseudo-)Bernardus Silvestris and John of Garland. More pedestrian kinds of exegesis are also represented: lexical, grammatical, historical, rhetorical, metrical, source-critical and occasionally literary; so too a variety of forms: marginal or interlinear glosses, *accessus* or introductions, lemmatised commentaries in the Servian manner, or extended discussions such as Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* or Landino’s *Camaldolese Disputations*. Interpretation of Virgil invariably purported to recover the author’s intended meaning, however abstruse or bizarre, even after Christian interests had come to dominate the critical tradition. The introductory essays in this

section are especially enlightening: due to Virgil's centrality in education, they are about much more than Virgilian commentary, elucidating what the commentaries excerpted here have to tell us about classical learning in the communities that produced them. In this regard D. Daintree's pages on the Bern Scholia (pp. 674–6) are notable for their inclusiveness and lucidity.

The book was conceived (p. xxi) as a venture to extend Domenico Comparetti's *Virgil in the Middle Ages* (orig. Italian 1872), and Section 5, 'Virgilian Legends', reprises and augments material familiar from Comparetti's second volume. 'However peculiar it may seem today, it is likely that by the thirteenth century more people would have known of Virgil the necromancer than of Virgil the poet' (p. 829). Here we read of a Virgil who 'constructed wondrous buildings, gardens, and baths', and who 'had a distinctive aptitude for constructing bronze figures and automata that granted protection or special advantages to the cities and regions he favored' (p. 828). These included a bronze fly which, as long as it remained undisturbed, kept all other flies away from Naples. Equally remarkable were his magical stratagems to reduce winds, preserve meat, control the eruptions of Vesuvius, warn of sedition in far-flung regions of the Roman Empire, cure diseases, test the veracity of women and banish all snakes from Naples. By the time you reach page 896, you will have nothing but sympathy for the monk Gozzo, cured by Poppo of 'a particularly Virgilian form of possession' ... 'He cried out suddenly that a troop of demons was assuming the appearance of Aeneas, Turnus, and other characters from Virgil, and that he was being assailed, to his very soul, by those who in learning had been of the most value to him'.

If the volume does not attempt a systematic treatment of the high literary Virgilian tradition, or of the allusive reinterpretation of his writings by later pastoral, didactic and epic poets (many of whom are indeed mentioned along with bibliographical pointers on their relationship with Virgil), the Editors are to be congratulated for bringing into the mainstream in such an informative and accessible style so much unfamiliar material which lies above and below the artistic tradition, representing regions of the world from Iceland to Georgia, and from Limburg to North Africa, and every rung of the social ladder from kings and heroes to the peasants of popular song.

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