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Review of M. C. J. Putnam and J. Ziolkowski (Eds.), *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years*

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In general the book is better as a broad account of Prudentius' exegetical strategies in the *Psychomachia* than in its detailed reading of the text. There are, too, some copy-editing errors that the reader needs to be aware of: on page 140 *religione* should be *religamine* and on page 155 *esse-nolle-velle* should be *esse-nosse-velle* and the reference to the *Confessions* should be to 13.11. The poet named as Arator Victorius on page 63 is presumably Claudius Marius Victorius; Arator is a separate sixth-century poet. Students interested in the *Psychomachia* will want to read this book and will need to consider seriously its principal thesis, but as a first port of call I would still recommend the classic study of Christian Gnllka, *Studien zur Psychomachie des Prudentius* (Wiesbaden 1963), supplemented by the suggestive pages of Reinhart Herzog, *Die allegorische Dichtkunst des Prudentius* (Munich 1966), 103–18, neither of which figures largely in Mastrangelo's book.

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Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C. J. Putnam (edd.), *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008. Pp. xxxix + 1092. Cloth (ISBN 978-0-2300-10822-4) \$100.00.

Living as we do after T. S. Eliot declared Vergil's *Aeneid* "the classic of all Europe," following Theodor Haecker's designation of the poet as "father of the West," it is impossible to use a phrase like "the Virgilian tradition" without appearing to refer to a phenomenon that seems quite definite and perhaps too familiar, but that is only imperfectly understood. To spend time with this impressive volume is to improve one's understanding of the Virgilian tradition in all its extent and variety. To be sure, the reader will find plenty of material confirming the centrality that Haecker and Eliot accord Vergil in European culture from the poet's own lifetime and throughout antiquity, across the Middle Ages, and into the Renaissance. But it has never been quite right to speak of *the* tradition; if we do, we need to remember how diverse a tradition it is and try not to lose sight of the fact that the Whig Vergil is just one tradition—in many ways a fairly recent and in fact distinctively modern one. The difficulty is that access to other traditions about Vergil has always been difficult. That has been so partly because of the sheer amount of material that exists within these traditions, partly because they have generally been studied piecemeal rather than comprehensively, and partly because interest in one or another aspect of this vast subject tends to be confined within one or another national scholarly tradition. By and large neither British nor American scholars have worked extensively in this field, certainly not in comparison with their European colleagues, and as a rule the entire subject has been left for specialists to

explore as need or inclination moved them. Most readers whose interest in such matters was casual or incipient quickly ran up against discouraging obstacles caused by unfamiliar languages or bibliographies, meaning that a few constantly quoted general pronouncements have tended to define what most people think. The result is that it is not at all uncommon to find people who know a good deal about Vergil, but very little about the Virgilian tradition, and much of that pretty superficial and naïve.

The volume under review represents an enormous step forward. In it we have for the first time a generous compendium of sources, accessibly presented in the original languages and in translation, dating across (as the book's title makes clear) the first millennium and a half of Vergil's reception and cultural reimagination. All of the materials are shrewdly chosen, succinctly introduced, translated if necessary, clearly arranged in chronological order by type, and exhaustively indexed to facilitate consultation by non-chronological criteria. The tome extends to over a thousand pages, and at a cost of just \$100 must represent one of the scholarly publishing bargains of the year.

For the editors, a classicist and a medievalist who are both eminent Vergilians, the project must have been a labor of love; and since the love of both for their author is well known, this review will concentrate on the labor. The individual entries are not numbered consecutively, but there look to be almost four hundred of them. Many of those that appear in English translation for the first time were translated by the editors or by others working under their supervision (a team of twenty-three students and colleagues are individually credited on 1025–28). Where an existing translation could be used, it has frequently been reworked and improved by one of the editors. The analytical index extends to fifty pages.

The materials are clearly presented in five main sections: I. Virgil the Poet (1–178), II. Biography: Images of Virgil (179–468), III. Virgil's Texts and their Uses (469–622), IV. Commentary Tradition (623–824), V. Virgilian Legends (825–1024). The number of subsections in each varies greatly. For instance, subsection A of the Biography rubric contains a collection of thirty-nine *vitae* covering almost the entire chronological span of the collection, from the early second century (in the form of the so-called *vita Suetonii vulgo Donatiana*, not firmly attested before the fourth century but generally thought to derive pretty directly from Suetonius' *De viris illustribus*) to a pair of versions, which take quite different positions on the question of "Vergil the magician," produced by the Italian humanist Sicco Polenton (1375/6–1447). These lives were evidently the seed of the entire project (xxi), and if only this one section had been published as a separate book, the result would have been a valuable contribution. The Virgilian *vita* tradition is more extensive than that of any other Latin author. Its influence not only on other classical *vita* traditions, but on vernacular biography as well, is pronounced. For the ancient lives, we now have the magisterial edition of G. Brugnoli and F. Stok, *Vitae Vergilianae Antiquae* (Rome 1997), in which an abundance of evidence is presented lucidly and analytically, but entirely

in Latin. A boon for scholars, it is practically inaccessible to students and other non-specialists. And in any case, few of the lives, ancient, medieval, or renaissance, had ever been translated into English.

Much the same point could be made about the Commentary section. Here of course it was necessary to be more selective, and the material is much more diverse. Nevertheless, it is an area in which even basic materials are lacking. As of this writing, for example, no translation of Servius' commentary exists, making the well-chosen excerpts and bibliographical guidance included here a much needed, very accessible introduction to an enormously valuable author. Moreover, the generous selection of additional material from other ancient and medieval commentaries will help even novice readers to understand Servius not merely (as is too often still the case, even with experienced scholars) as a somewhat wayward interpreter of Vergil but as part of a rich, diverse, and constantly developing tradition of learning about antiquity and applying ancient wisdom in new situations. In fact, the general design of the volume makes clear the direct links and more distant resonances that so often appear between, for example, apparently autobiographical notices within the poet's own works or passages addressed to or about him in the works of contemporaries, the biographies later written by others as introductions to these same works, the commentary tradition that mines the biographies for information to explain this or that passage in the work, the reapplication and development of such information in new contexts outside the scholarly milieu, and the broader engagement with this complex picture of Vergil, in which the relatively one-dimensional conception of Haecker and Eliot is only a small part.

One cannot do justice to such a useful and beautifully executed book in such a short review. (I have in fact been allotted almost exactly one word per page! A fearful symmetry, indeed.) In many ways, the work speaks for itself: two editors who complement one another perfectly in their extraordinary expertise have cooperated in choosing and in making accessible even to beginners a remarkably rich sampling of Vergilian lore spanning the first fifteen hundred years of engagement with this multifarious poet. Whoever undertakes to produce volume two on the second fifteen hundred years will have a high standard to aim for.

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