BOOK REVIEW

Virgil's Schoolboys: The Poetics of Pedagogy in Renaissance England. By Andrew WALLACE. Classical Presences Series. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xvi + 264. Hardcover, £66.00 / $110.00. ISBN 978-0-19-959124-4.

Virgil in the Renaissance. By David Scott WILSON-OKAMURA. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 299. Hardcover, £58.00 / $100.00. ISBN 978-0-521-19812-7.

It is a curious, but often commented upon, fact that there is no Renaissance equivalent to Domenico Comparetti's *Virgilio nel medio evo*. Vladimiro Zabughin's two-volume *Vergilio nel Rinascimento italiano da Dante a Torquato Tasso* comes the closest, but it is restricted to Italian material and, like Comparetti, is now badly outdated. The problem, of course, is the sheer mass of relevant material, which rises from daunting in the Middle Ages to staggering in the Renaissance. The two books under review here attempt to fill this gap in scholarship, and they do so with considerable success.

The more ambitious volume is *Virgil in the Renaissance*, which sets out "to identify what seems normal, central, common … the chitchat about Virgil that could be exchanged over cocktails without fear of contradiction, because educated people had all learned more or less the same things in the course of their schooling, and could be expected to hold compatible views" (pp. 9, 48). Wilson-Okamura begins where he should, with a preliminary survey of the early printed editions based on the resources available at the time he was writing. His survey suggests that Virgil was printed hundreds of times between 1469 and 1599, but that the Renaissance reception of Virgil was shaped primarily by a handful of commentaries that were published most often in this period: Servius and Donatus from antiquity, accompanied by Filippo Beroaldo, Josse Bade, Philipp Melanchthon, Paolo Manuzio, Cristoforo Landino, and Giovanni Pierio Valeriano. It was this last commentator, Valeriano, who was chiefly responsible for fixing the incorrect spelling (Virgil rather than Vergil) in modern scholarship in spite of Poliziano's compelling arguments to the contrary.

The next section, entitled "Reputation," contains one chapter for each of Virgil's major works, focused around a theme that arises from ancient criticism and structures the Renaissance reception of those works. For Renaissance commentators, the plot of the *Eclogues* was Virgil's quest for patronage. This led naturally and normally to the belief that Virgil was praising Augustus, although the idea that Virgil was also criticizing his patron in *Eclogues* 1 and 9 was present in Servius and occasionally appears in the Renaissance commentaries as well. Other subjects discussed in the commentaries are imitation of Theocritus, love among the shepherds, Christian prophecy, Virgil's Epicureanism, and the low style. The most popular commentaries on the *Georgics* (those of Servius and Probus among the ancients, Mancinelli and Bade among the moderns) do not stress the *labor omnia vincit* (*Geo*. 1.145) theme that dominates modern criticism, but focus rather on variety, on the wide range of subjects discussed in the poem and Virgil's versatility in treating them. Praise for Virgil's style, in other words, regularly shades into praise of his erudition. Wilson-Okamura's window into the *Aeneid* is likewise a word that has meaning on the levels of both style and content: purity. On the personal level, Virgil was widely known as "Parthenias" because of his sexual purity, although his predilection for adolescent boys was also discussed, to be denied in the commentaries and accepted, hesitantly, in poetry. On the stylistic level, Virgil's poetry was pure because it was polished carefully, licked into shape as a she-bear licks her cubs. This provided the grounds for elevating Virgil over Homer, although it also cost Virgil his place as the prince of poets when the natural came to be preferred over the refined.

The last section, "Interpretation," gives us two chapters on the *Aeneid*, one on its Odyssean half, the other on the Iliadic one. In the first half, the most popular episodes were the fall of Troy, the encounter with Dido, and the underworld; scholarship on the Renaissance Virgil has slighted the last of these, so this is where Wilson-Okamura focuses most of his attention. What is most interesting here is the "otherness" of early modern commentary, the ideas that were commonplace then but are not now, e.g., the various ways in which one might "descend to the underworld"—the soul enters the body, the person contemplates vice, etc. Ideas that challenged commonplace thinking, like the transmigration of souls, were sanitized, so that reincarnation was revisioned as the first step toward resurrection. Early modern commentary on the Iliadic half of the poem also differs in key ways from its modern successors. The death of Turnus, for example, received discussion in terms that seem familiar today, but it was not seen as the defining moment of the poem; accordingly there was some criticism of Aeneas's

actions, but the focus was on the killing of Turnus as an act of self-mastery. Discussion of the second half of the *Aeneid* tended to embrace many different sections, tied together through various classroom techniques, the concept of Aeneas as an ideal man, and a new determination to give the last six books the same prominence that the first had received in the Middle Ages and therefore to see the poem whole. The whole could be tied together through a focus on the theme of love, but again, this went in a different direction from modern scholarship, for in the Renaissance the *Aeneid* became the model for romances like Ariosto's that rest on an attitude toward love that strikes most modern critics as the polar opposite of the renunciation they see Virgil advocating.

As is often the case, the weaknesses of this book, which are relatively few, are inextricably connected to its strengths. Wilson-Okamura sees two themes, continuity and change, running paradoxically through the Renaissance reception of Virgil—that is, "the idea of Virgil that was current in the sixteenth century is largely the same one as was current in the fourth and fourteenth centuries," but at the same time "some things at least seemed new. There were new manuscripts, new technologies, and in poetry, a new ethos" (p. 8). This is a good thesis, one that is supple enough to adapt to the complex responses that generations of careful readers brought to some of the most suggestive poetry ever written. But in the effort to do what has not been done before and provide the "big picture," Wilson-Okamura occasionally gives in to the temptation to overgeneralize. For example, it is perfectly reasonable to note that Protestant commentaries were sometimes printed and often sold in Catholic countries, and vice versa, but it will not do to offer statements like "… the Reformation did not change which commentaries got published in which countries" (p. 177). The notes of Philipp Melanchthon, for example were initially published in his name by the Lyonnaise printer Sébastien Gryphius but were quickly disseminated anonymously and absorbed into other material in France for religious rather than scholarly reasons, and the *Georgics* commentary of the Protestant Josse Willich was first published, then obliterated in response to censorship, then removed from a succession of sixteenth-century Venetian editions.

A larger problem revolves around Wilson's publication statistics for Renaissance editions of Virgil and the two appendices derived from them, "Virgil commentaries in Latin editions, 1469–1599" and "Virgil commentaries ranked by number of printings." At the time when he was working, the resources simply did not exist to generate reliable statistics: the principal reference work, Giuliano Mambelli's *Gli annali delle edizioni virgiliane*, is notoriously inaccurate and unreli-

able; online sources like WorldCat/OCLC are also difficult to use, listing the same book multiple times and repeating the errors of those who did the initial cataloguing; and survival rates are often low, making it impossible to limit research to a reasonable number of libraries with large repositories of early printed books. Fixing this would be a different project, and it would be unfair to criticize Wilson-Okamura for not undertaking it, but his results have to be treated with caution. It so happens that updating Mambelli is my project, as Wilson-Okamura generously notes, which gives us some idea of what is at stake here. A random sampling of his figures suggests that his totals are about 20% too low on average, but the percentage is not the same for all commentators (Christoph Hegendorf is undercounted by more than half) and there are a couple of troubling instances (e.g., Domizio Calderini) in which Wilson-Okamura's totals are up to 20% higher than mine, which rest on detailed study of a far higher number of sources. While broad conclusions about the relative popularity and importance of Servius, for example, will not change, some things like Table 1, "*Aeneid* commentaries that appeared in thirty or more editions, 1470–1599," will have to remain subject to modification (the adjusted figure for Hegendorf's work, for example, moves it past all of Wilson-Okamura's figures for sixteenth-century commentaries).

Wallace's aim, to discuss Virgil's poetry as a school text, appears initially to be more modest, but as his argument unfolds, we come to see that *Virgil's Schoolboys* moves toward a broader explanation of Virgil's central place in Renaissance culture than its title suggests. Wallace begins by showing that Virgil was "an adventurous theorist of instruction" (p. v) whose poetry marks, among other things, an extended meditation on teaching and learning. It would stand to reason that if this observation is correct, Virgil's readers should have noticed this aspect of the text, and this is in fact what happened, with grammarians, commentators, editors, schoolmasters, and translators responding to what Virgil has to say on the nature and process of instruction as they tried to make the poems teachable. Since Renaissance writers were products of the schools, we would expect their work to offer another set of responses to Virgil's meditations on instruction; they do, as Wallace shows in his discussion of writers like Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, Edmund Spenser, Francis Bacon, and John Milton.

The argument begins by noting that from antiquity onward, Virgil occupied a dominant place in grammar instruction, supplying an abundance of examples for the initial environment in which Virgil was encountered in the schools. As it was generally taught in Renaissance England, this Virgilianized grammar stressed its own pedagogical nature, with the popular grammar attributed to William Lily

using *magister* as the model noun for the study of the cases and the verbs *amare*, *docere*, *legere*, and *audire* as models for conjugation. The verb that might initially not seem to fit in a pedagogical context is *amare*, but Wallace saves his argument by claiming that this word is actually at the center of Renaissance educational practice. Successful teaching requires an affective relationship between master and student, and Wallace shows that the observations of Paolo Manuzio, which formed the base of most pre-1600 Virgil commentaries published in England, respond regularly to appearances of *amor* in the text. As any teacher knows, school texts have a distressing habit of remaining mute in the hands of students, but commentaries can stand in for the loving master as a way to make a book comprehensible. This line of reasoning replaces the prevailing image of the commentary as agonistic, a text that struggles against the words it explains for dominance on the page, with one of cooperation and help, driven by love, not war.

After these general observations, Wallace devotes a long chapter to each of Virgil's poems. The language of pedagogy, for example, provides one of the principal organizing rhythms of the *Eclogues*, beginning with *tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas* of *Ecl.* 1.4-5 and rising to a powerful crescendo in *Eclogue* 6, where the song of Silenus doubles as a school lesson that must be learned even by the responsive bay leaves (*Eurotas iussitque ediscere lauros*, l. 83). The homoerotic theme of *Ecolgue* 2 presented problems, but as Erasmus showed, commentary could guide the loving master and his students down the safe and appropriate path. This concern with a Virgilian language of pedagogy, in turn, reappears in the pastoral elegy of John Milton. Reading the "Georgickes of the mind concerning the husbandry and tillage therof" (p. 132), as Sir Francis Bacon put it, makes sense for a didactic poem, but Wallace's interpretation of the Aristaeus epyllion and Cyrene's skill as a teacher goes well beyond what a casual meditation on this point might generate, moving through Charles Hoole's educational program, the illustrations of François Chauveau and Franz Cleyn, and John Ogilby's 1654 English translation. With the *Aeneid* Wallace begins by associating memory and forgetting, which is obviously a key theme in the poem, with the need for pupils to remember their lessons and their masters' fears that they will not. The relationship is a complicated one, in that Aeneas needs to forget his past in order to embrace his future while future success for a student depends on the capacity to remember what has been learned. This chapter ends with one of the most insightful discussions in the entire book, in which Wallace identifies the Palmer who accompanies Guyon in Canto 2 of *The Faerie Queene* as a schoolmas-

ter, then uses this identification to develop a reading of the destruction of the Bower of Bliss and the end of the canto as a wrath-driven disaster that parallels Aeneas' failure in *Aeneid* 12.

Virgil's Schoolboys is a more challenging book than *Virgil in the Renaissance*. A careful reader should have no trouble following the train of thought, but the argument is by no means as clear and direct as my summary suggests. Wallace moves freely through a wide variety of primary sources; the movement from one to another is clearly signaled, but the effect is sometimes a bit vertiginous. There is also a tendency to make associations that occasionally strike me as arbitrary. Within one seven-page stretch, for example, Wallace claims that Aeneas's story "will sound, almost inevitably, like the delivery of the substance of a school lesson" (p. 181), then that Surrey's Aeneas occupies a position in the educational hierarchy called the "repeater" (p. 183), and then that the Harpies "can adopt the tones of chastising schoolmasters" (p. 186). Wallace has certainly convinced me that the pedagogical imperative is important both for Virgil and his Renaissance readers, but at times it seems as if he hears schoolmasters everywhere.

But I do not want to end on a negative note. Both of these books are thoughtful and well informed, and together they do much to help us understand Virgil's central place in Renaissance culture. For this, both authors deserve our thanks.

CRAIG KALLENDORF

Texas A&M University, kalendrf@tamu.edu