

## BOOK REVIEW

*Virgil and His Translators*. Edited by SUSANNA BRAUND and ZARA MARTIROSOVA TORLONE. Classical Presences. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. 544. Hardback, \$124.95. ISBN: 978-0-198-81081-0.

The Oxford University Press “Classical Presences” series has distinguished itself with the production of a number of valuable volumes in the area of reception studies. Susanna Braund and Zara Torlone continue the important work of this initiative with the present collection. Over two dozen papers present provide an astonishingly comprehensive survey of the vast tradition of Virgilian translations (the majority of the contributions deal with verse, not prose renditions). From Asia to South America, from the Middle French Renaissance (an area of particularly admirable coverage in this work) to contemporary Anglophone translations, the papers wander far (and in depth) across the many attempts (both exemplary and mediocre) of artists and scholars to convey something of Virgil’s vision in native idioms. The genesis of the project was a triad of workshops in 2012 and 2014. Virgilians and indeed all lovers of poetry can be grateful for the fine work produced there that has been distilled into this lovely tome. The collection is as much a study of Virgilian political reception as of language and poetic style; the co-editors are not interested only in the inherently fascinating story of the translation and adaptation of Virgil’s language, but in nothing less than the fundamental question of what Virgil means to a given people in a given time.

Beyond this political and philosophical omnibus interest in Virgilian reception, what is perhaps most noteworthy about this collection is not the interconnectedness of the individual papers, or the breadth of geographical and temporal coverage on display. It is, rather, how the editors have succeeded in providing the reader with a veritable *précis* of the current state (and much of the history) of Virgilian scholarship (a herculean task that this volume makes seem tantalizingly elementary). If there is any fatigue in the classics community on account of the popular proliferation of edited volumes, this collection stands as a healthy reminder of the best that subgenre has to offer.

This is a book of interest, then, to a wide audience, and not only to those interested in the subject of its title. This is a collection that serves as a finely crafted, richly textured reminder of why Virgil remains so relevant for a contemporary audience, and why students and scholars from a diverse range of disciplines should be interested in accessing Virgil, either in Latin or in a modern language (not least Esperanto). This is a book that can rekindle an old love for the poet, or introduce a new audience to the treasures of the Mantuan's golden store.

There are many gems of scholarly acumen and delightful insight to be found herein. Braund's engrossing piece on "Virgil after Vietnam" can be singled out here; so also Richard Thomas' masterful work "Domesticating Aesthetic Effects: Virgilian Case Studies" (itself an admirable treatment of Virgilian "ludic" and other effects). The volume's co-editors refer to the introduction rather modestly as the "elevator version" of a speech, as it were, on Virgilian translation. In truth, what one finds is on a scale comparable to the histories of scholarship found at the start of the "Oxford Readings" volumes. The introductory essay is complemented nicely by Craig Kallendorf's magisterial first chapter on Virgilian translations prior to 1850. Ulrich Eigler's paper on German translations of the *Aeneid* accomplishes very much in a relatively short span of pages, not least in examining the tradition of classical reception in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gordon Braden's paper on English versions of *Aeneid* 4 to 1700 is reminiscent of the best features of the old Basil Blackwell edition by Irvine of Sir Richard Fanshawe's Dido and Aeneas. One of the co-editors has done impressive work on the Russian reception of Virgil, the fruits of which, not surprisingly, are on full display here; Michael Paschalis for his part expertly examines two millennia of translations of Virgil into Greek. The story of Virgil's reception in Turkey is especially intriguing, while Mathilde Skoie offers a survey of the history of Virgilian translations in Scandinavia that is both educative and provocative.

The labor on display in the end materials of this collection is immense, and the results much to be commended. The bibliography is a marvel of useful scope and purposeful range. The index locorum and general index provide impressive and exceedingly helpful guides to the vast amount of material on display here. The notes on the contributors are not the usual brief account of the authors, but veritable miniature biographies that provide helpful information on the authors' previous work and intellectual paths.

Braund and Torlone have produced an international tribute to Virgil, a polyglot paean for the considerable effort expended through the ages on the transmission of the poet's limpid hexameters into a dizzying array of vernaculars. A

testament to the success of the arduous endeavor is the urge the individual chapters engender both to search out familiar chestnuts of Virgilian translation for reexamination, and to explore unknown versions (and indeed unfamiliar languages). If Virgil is the premiere Roman poet, this book ably illustrates the widespread influence and enduring power and charm of his works.

This is one of the most valuable Virgilian titles of its year. It deserves to be on the shelves of all libraries that service a classics curriculum, and in the personal collections of Virgilians and devotees of classical verse. We eagerly await Braund's announced *Virgil Translated* volume.

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