

BOOK REVIEW

Reading Poetry, Writing Genre. English Poetry and Literary Criticism in Dialogue with Classical Scholarship. Edited by SILVIO BAR AND EMILY HAUSER. Oxford, UK: Bloomsbury 2019. Pp. 256. Hardcover, £ 24,97. ISBN: 978-1-3500-3932-2.

The purpose of this thought-provoking volume is, according to the editors in the detailed introduction (1), “to map the history and development of English poetry and the literary history and criticism connected to it as a story of genre discourse in dialogue with classical scholarship.”

The book consists of ten stimulating contributions from different areas of classical and modern scholarship. All of them are grounded with extensive engagement with the Greek or Latin text and meticulous bibliography. A. J. Gerber (“Fragmenting Genres in Medieval England”) offers an exhaustive analysis of a huge variety of piecemeal forms of Graeco-Roman literature as an integral part of the pedagogic mechanism throughout the Middle Ages, a strategy that served to their reconstitution afterwards. E. Buckley’s essay (“Poetry is a Speaking Picture’. Framing a Poetics of Virtue in Late Elizabethan England”) focuses on the study of classical texts during the late-Elizabethan period in the frame of contemporary English literary history. Using as her case-study a neo-Latin tragicomedy (*Ulysses Redux*), Buckley highlights the way this drama incorporates “vernacular taste” (49) in a completely new presentation of tragicomic “Odysseus,” according to the ethical “horizons of expectation” (50) of that time period. The next chapter of A. Schwarz (“A Revolutionary Vergil. James Harrington, Poetry, and Political Performance”) penetrates into the reception of the Vergilian translations and their relationship in post-revolutionary England. Furthermore, she scrutinizes J. Harrington’s poetic translation of Vergil and its function as a vehicle in order to express his political thought. C. Stark (“The Devouring Maw: Complexities of Classical Genre in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*”) deals with Milton’s dialogue with the Latin heroic poetry. In a poem with a definite generic ambiguity, Milton (unlike his contemporary writers) combined traces from epic and tragedy and revealed that way an admirably creative adaptation of Vergil in an unrhymed Christian

epic.

J. Addison's prefatory essay on the *Georgics*' edition of Dryden (1697), "the crucial exception" (79) that exists from 17th and 18th centuries concerning literary criticism on the *Georgic* is the subject of the following contribution of J. C. Pellicer ("Georgic as Genre. The Scholarly Reception of Vergil in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain"). He points out that Vergil's irreplaceable stylistic and scientific values build a complex network of influence not only over the Vergilian scholarship of that period but also over the contemporary English poetry generally. L. G. Canavaro ("Rhyme and Reason. The Homeric Translations of Dryden, Pope, and Morris") enriches the volume by discussing morphological matters of the poetic translations of Homer by Dryden, Pope and Morris, which help us to conceive deeper the rendition of the heroic couplet in the frame of the Homeric aesthetics. Using as her case study Tennyson's works (*Ulysses*, *The Lotos-Eaters* and *Oenone*), I. Hurst ("From Epic to Monologue. Tennyson and Homer") exemplifies how these dramatic monologues of the 19th century receive the epic model and innovatively adapt it in non-dramatic narrations. S. Bär ("The Elizabethan Epyllion. From Constructed Classical Genre to Twentieth-Century Genre Propre") sets a crucial question of terminological validity regarding the term "epyllion." He provides an extended overview of its use in English literary history of the 19th and 20th centuries and emphasizes the complex relationship between the ancient epyllion and the epyllion of the Elizabethan period as a poem with mythological narration. E. Hauser ("Homer Undone.' Homeric Scholarship and the Invention of Female Epic") focuses on the female epicists of the 19th century in England and the responses of their art to Homeric scholarship. She offers her argument on the "generic flexibility" (151) of the work of women writers as a result of their sincere engagement with the Homeric text, its criticism and tradition. The final essay of the volume belongs to F. Cox ("Generic 'Transgressions' and the Personal Voice"), who examines the case of the contemporary poet and translator Josephine Balmer and her response to the classical texts of grief and lament. Cox recognizes the value of the "personal voice" theory in classical scholarship and declares that Balmer in her modern elegies criticizes her poetry and writing through a successful reception of the source texts in order to present and to explore her personal stories.

To sum up: this study is definitely a welcome addition to the field of classical

reception. It fills a gap in the reception studies installing a new critical perspective on the ways classical scholarship and English literary history and literary criticism interact. Therefore, I strongly recommend it.

MARGARITA SOTIRIOU

University of Peloponnese, maso@uop.gr