

## BOOK REVIEW

*Walking through Elysium: Vergil's Underworld and the Poetics of Tradition*. Edited by BILL GLADHILL AND MICAH YOUNG MYERS. Toronto-Buffalo-London: The University of Toronto Press, 2020. Pp. 320. Hardback, \$83.00. ISBN: 9781487532659.

The sixth book of the *Aeneid* probably has engendered the largest number of individual volumes in the vast Virgilian bibliography. Treatments of the Gates of Sleep, of the *Heldenschau*, and of the structure of Virgil's underworld exist alongside a healthy number of commentaries, from student editions to the vast compendiums of Norden and Horsfall. To this bookcase of resources, the present collection of essays adds a baker's dozen of papers and a worthwhile introduction, the offspring of a 2013 conference. The early 21<sup>st</sup>-first century has been a rich period for Virgil studies and this "Phoenix Supplementary Volume" adds to the wealth.

Certainly anyone interested in Virgil's mysterious book of Daedalian artwork and Didonian mourning will derive profit from surveying the articles arrayed herein. Emily Gowers offers a particularly fine contribution on the composition of the Virgilian underworld, with focus on its inhabitants and (more importantly) its omissions. Fabio Stok provides a welcome window into the Servian commentary tradition and its annotation of the punishment of Virgil's malefactors. Lauren Curtis neatly connects Virgil's work with the important if sometimes underappreciated intertext of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, in a paper that displays critical acumen and mastery of difficult material. There is a robust consideration of Virgilian reception, which receives significantly more attention throughout than the poet's sources. Refreshingly, the bibliography is more than adequate, in part no doubt the product of the disparate nature of the contributions. Conference proceedings sometimes exhibit an unfortunate freezing in time, where bibliographies have cursory if any updating before publication. This volume happily reflects the appreciable amount of work done on *Aeneid* 6 in the six plus years since its inception.

Quibbles that one could raise are in part of the sort common for essay collections. It is not always clear which text of Virgil is being cited; one would have welcomed consistent use of Conte or of Geymonat. On rare occasion flight of interpretive fancy (Icarian or otherwise) might have profited from rigorous philological restraint. The possible influence of Virgil on Greek imperial poetry is a difficult subject on which much has been written in recent years; some consideration of this area would have complemented the thorough treatment of reception in Latin verse. That said, the impressive range of the papers in this volume is commendable, and while comprehensiveness is impossible, the editors have more than adequately surveyed the spectrum.

Some Virgilian titles have aged better than others. One suspects that the present collection will endure as an important assemblage of work reflective of a challenging moment in the criticism of *Aeneid* 6, not least because of the monumental commentary of Horsfall. The conference that led to this volume came in the same period as not only Horsfall's two-volume set, but also the splendid Budé edition of Servius' commentary on the book. In short, it was a timely Cumaean conference and the proceedings are something of a synthesis of a signal moment in scholarship.

It is a testament to the power of Virgilian enigma that one finishes this volume (or revisits it) with more questions than answers. The essays in this volume do not always offer solutions to perennial interpretive problems, but they do provoke, and they do provide thoughtful analyses of some of the less trodden byways of Virgil's *katabasis*. Not every one of the numerous Virgilian bimillenary volumes from the early 1980s is much remembered today. Time may prove kinder to this fine anthology, in no small part because the editors have ensured that the contributions evince a certain cohesion and sense of accord that is no easy feat to achieve. Essay collections can be chimaeras absent good editorial oversight; Gladhill and Myers have succeeded in crafting a unified volume, even as it allows for a welcome range of diverse critical views and methodologies.

On an aesthetic note, the press is to be commended for beautiful production values and care to binding, alongside jacket illustration. These are increasingly neglected arts, and the present volume offers a reminder that there is value in matching interior treasures with exterior loveliness.

The Virgilian bibliography is daunting, and it is easy both to miss titles and to neglect important works. *Walking through Elysium* deserves the attention of anyone interested in the splendor of Virgil's achievement in what some consider to be his finest product. Readers will be rewarded by a multifaceted examination of

the challenges posed by Virgil's infernal regions, and likely they will be inspired to delve deeper into the rich, inexhaustible pleasures afforded by the closing book of the poet's *Odyssey*. The editors and their colleagues have succeeded in continuing the endless and enthralling walk of explicating *Aeneid* 6 with admirable vigor and welcome lucidity.

LEE FRATANTUONO

*Maynooth University*, lee.fratantuono@mu.ie

Table of Contents:

Introduction: Bill Gladhill, McGill University, and Micah Myers, Kenyon College

1. Into the Woods

Alessandro Barchiesi, New York University

2. Statius' Walking in Vergil's Footsteps

Emily Pillinger, King's College London

3. The Sibyl's Cave and Visions of the Future

Maggie Kilgour, McGill University

4. Exploring the Forests of Antiquity: The Golden Bough in Early Modern Literature

Matteo Soranzo, McGill University

5. Aeneas' Steps

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

6. Vergil's Underworld and the Afterlife of Love Poets

Micah Y. Myers, Kenyon College

7. Vergilian Underworlds in Ovid

Alison Keith, University of Toronto

8. *Mortem aliquid ultra est: Vergil's Underworld in Senecan Tragedy*  
Bill Gladhill, McGill University

9. *Servius on Sinners and Punishments in Vergil's Underworld*  
Fabio Stok, University of Rome Tor Vergata

10. *Paradise and Performance in Vergil's Underworld and Horace's Carmen Saeculare*  
Lauren Curtis, Bard College

11. *Why isn't Homer in Virgil's Underworld? – and Other Notable Absences*  
Emily Gowers, University of Cambridge

12. *The Silence of Aeneid 6 in Augustine's Confessions*  
Jacob L. Mackey, Occidental College

13. *Spiritualism as Textual Practice*  
Grant Parker, Stanford University