

Phillip John Usher and Isabelle Fernbach, eds. *Virgilian Identities in the French Renaissance*.

Gallica 27. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012. xvi + 260 pp. \$95. ISBN: 978-1-84384-317-7.

A rich field has grown up in recent years around Virgil in the Renaissance, thanks in large part to the pioneering, Herculean labors of Craig Kallendorf. The last seven years alone have seen an astonishing burst of publications on the subject, ranging from Kallendorf's *Virgilian Tradition and Other Virgil* to David Scott Wilson-Okamura's *Virgil in the Renaissance* and relevant chapters of collaborative volumes like Joseph Farrell and Michael Putnam's *Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*. While Italy and England have been well served by this recent work, France has fared less well. Not since Alice Hulubei's long article "Virgile en France au XVI^e siècle," published in 1931, has the topic been approached in a systematic way.

The present volume makes no claims to rectifying this injustice but does take a few modest steps in the right direction. Of the eleven rather heterogeneous essays presented here two deserve particular mention. Philip Ford, who has done for Homer much of the kind of thing we now need for Virgil, offers a brief but useful account of French attitudes toward Virgil as compared with Homer, revealing, among other things, the strong influence of Italian champions like Poliziano, Vida, and Scaliger. Valerie Worth-Stylianou offers a no-less-useful account of the seven complete and partial translations of the *Aeneid* into French between 1483 and 1582, evaluating not only the quality and character of the translations but the material aspects of the books in which they appeared (illustrations, presence or absence of the Latin text, etc.) and their apparent purpose (pedagogical, political, poetic).

Of the remaining essays a few are decidedly more invested in identities than in anything specifically or textually Virgilian. The essays that deal more directly with the text are to my mind more enlightening. Two especially fine contributions are

devoted to literary temples by Jean Lemaire de Belges and later writers. In a fascinating piece on the *Temple d'Honneur et de Vertus*, Michael Randall focuses on Lemaire's highly unusual adaptation of the "spirantia signa" in Virgil's temple to Caesar (*Georgics* 3.34), and makes an excellent case for understanding Lemaire's work as a coherent fusion of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*. Stéphanie Lecompte views similar temples through an epic lens, placing the quest of Lemaire's *Concorde des deux langages* in the tradition of allegorical readings of the *Aeneid*, particularly Landino's.

Several very good essays are devoted (a little too predictably) to the poets of the Pléiade. Katherine Maynard discusses Ronsard's practice of removing all specificity from geographical descriptions borrowed from Virgil. She points out that for Virgil's readers specific sites were immediately recognizable as markers of the Augustan empire, and that such associations could only interfere with claims to a dynastic empire located in France. Virgil's "lieux de mémoire," she astutely observes, thus become "lieux d'amnésie" in the *Franciade*, with the result that Ronsard's poem is less a poetic demonstration of imperial inevitability than an "epic fantasy." Du Bellay's Virgil translations are taken up in two complementary pieces. Corinne Noirot-Maguire offers a subtle reading of Du Bellay's translation of *Aeneid* 5.779–871 ("La mort de Palinure") in which she argues that the poet sought to present himself as a kind of Palinurus — a superior "second" — in relation both to Henri II (as moderately anti-imperial counselor) and to Ronsard (as a poet more experienced in the sobering disasters of life). Todd Reeser offers an even more subtle reading of Du Bellay's translation of *Aeneid* 4, arguing that this particular translation destabilizes the imperial design of the *Aeneid* and undercuts French pretensions to both empire and epic.

The editing of this volume is uneven. Some contributions are impeccably edited while others (most notably Reeser's and especially Harp's) are marred by serious errors of quotation and translation in both Latin and French. This unevenness, together with the randomness of topics and approaches represented here, suggests a rather passive role on the part of the two editors. The volume nevertheless contains a few gems that justify the whole project and do indeed point to promising areas of future research.

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