

BILL GLADHILL and MICAH Y. MYERS (EDS), *WALKING THROUGH ELYSIUM: VERGIL'S UNDERWORLD AND THE POETICS OF TRADITION*. Phoenix supplementary volume 59. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2020. Pp. vi + 302. ISBN 9781487505776. £56.99.

The aftermath of a 2013 symposium at the Villa Vergiliana in Cumae, this volume maps the contours of the Vergilian underworld and its afterlife. For many readers Vergil is quintessentially a poet of the hereafter, from the Daphnises and Orpheuses of his earliest works to the *umbrae* that close his final poem. Aeneas' underworld journey in *Aeneid* 6 is the epic's great gravitational well: a dreamlike place of revelation, of new beginnings and final farewells, where the personal, historical, poetic and eschatological flicker in and out of view. This volume draws together thirteen contributions, ingeniously arranged to track Aeneas' movement through Cumae, Avernus, Tartarus, Elysium and out again. Its editors have some difficulty defining its scope: some chapters probe the internal logic of the Vergilian underworld itself; some concern themselves with receptions of *Aeneid* 6; some address the challenges this episode poses for different systems of metaphysics or religion. Not all are equally ambitious in their approach and methods, and the range of topics sees only a few additions to a cast of old favourites. But even if the whole resists summary, the genuine high quality of most of its parts makes it rewarding to read, and the editors' clear encouragement of dialogue between the chapters pays off: it comes across as the print continuation of a lively and productive conversation.

Three chapters explore the Vergilian underworld itself, sharing a focus on the topographical and the temporal. In a nicely conversational opening chapter, Alessandro Barchiesi stands at the threshold of the Cumaean cave and takes his turn as sibyl, guiding us through the dense thickets and branching meanings of the *silvae* of *Aeneid* 6. The woods and wildness of Vergil's landscape are unprecedented in earlier underworld narratives, both above and below ground. B. makes hay of their newfound prominence in a wide-ranging untangling of this episode's proto-colonial overtones, finding that they respond directly to contemporary domestication of the Italian landscape. In poetic terms, too, Vergil's woods are significant. Besides working as emblems of intertextuality, B. argues, they mediate *Aeneid* 6's shifts between the real and the metaphorical: the shadowy woods of Avernus melt into the shadowy woods of the underworld (6.268–72), as Aeneas walks into hell and the 'stable boundary between narrated action and simile' dissolves (24).

Aeneas' journeying again comes under the spotlight in chapter 5, as Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui builds on recent scholarship on cultic ritual and cultural *habitus* to probe the significance of walking throughout *Aeneid* 6. Meanwhile, Emily Gowers (my former doctoral supervisor) poses a simple question with far-reaching ramifications (ch. 11): why isn't Homer in Vergil's underworld? Clues scattered throughout the poem nudge the reader to notice this glaring absence: the dead poets' society missing its star member, Anchises the 'meta-chronicler' (213) showing up Vergil's own historical evasiveness. G. argues that Vergil (like Ennius before him) weaves together ancient calculations of disputed dates – Troy's fall, Rome's foundation, Aeneas' wanderings – to construct a metempsychotic fail-safe: 'Homer's contested birthdate gives him the potential to be reincarnated, a thousand years after his death, whenever that was, *either as Ennius or as Vergil*' (216).

The 'poetics of tradition' of the book's subtitle emerge most clearly in six chapters on the literary reception of *Aeneid* 6. Maggie Kilgour (ch. 3) takes up Mary Shelley's post-apocalyptic novel *The Last Man*, which poses as its author's transcript of prophetic documents recovered from the Sibyl's cave – albeit with a palpable sense of disappointment that Shelley squandered this set-up's potential and denied K. the pleasure of analysing a better novel. K. nonetheless finds Shelley responding to a long line of literary manipulations of Vergil's temporal paradoxes in *Aeneid* 6 – hindsight as foresight, grand teleologies, endless renewal, cataclysmic rupture – to produce an idea of intertextuality itself as predetermination. Back among ancient sources, Micah Young Myers (ch. 6) examines points of contact between Vergil's and the Augustan elegists' underworlds, while Alison Keith (ch. 7) surveys Ovid's chthonic manoeuvres across his works and his canonisation of Vergil's underworld – sometimes as a shortcut to sublimity, more often for parodic undermining. Both chapters offer elegant readings but stop short of mounting sustained arguments, and I wonder if more room could have been found for the influence of Vergil's other proto-elegiac underworld elements: Orpheus' descent in the *Georgics*, or the many forms of *amor* which lead Aeneas to and through Avernus. Completing this trio of Augustan receptions, Lauren Curtis (ch. 10) traces choric interactions back and forth between Vergil's Elysium and Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*. Horace's hymn, she argues, reappropriates *Aeneid* 6's paeanic scenes of civic foundation and political harmony from epic back into lyric. It rounds off the unsettling edges of Vergilian *choreia* too, expiating the traces of violent disintegration and chthonic stasis that cling to the Elysian choruses after their associations with Troy's fall.

Almost worth the price of the volume in itself, Emily Pillinger's brilliant contribution (ch. 2) discusses two-way travel up and down Statius' *Via Domitiana* (*Silu.* 4.3) – both

geographically, between Rome and Cumae, and poetically, between Vergilian source and Statian reception. Statius replaces Aeneas' meandering, halting steps with purposeful linear trajectory, suited to new imperial aesthetics of hustle, bustle, haste and noise; the sibylline poet and colonised landscape speak unsettling panegyric; and time itself is distorted in a dizzying technological modernity, as 'prophet, *princeps* and pathway all prove capable of transcending straightforward processes of temporal precedence' (52). Crammed with micro- and macroscopic insights on every page, this chapter deserves rereading. Bill Gladhill's chapter likewise highlights imperial manipulations of the *Aeneid's* subterranean topographies (ch. 8), as Seneca transforms Vergilian hellscapes into his tragedies' structuring principles: 'an active and miasmatic underworld seethes underneath the stage' (159), and Seneca repeatedly overwrites Vergil's expansive, forwards-looking underworld with his claustrophobic, blood-stained imperial houses.

Four chapters unfold spiritual and spiritualist readings. Both Fabio Stok's Servius (ch. 9) and Jacob L. Mackey's Augustine (ch. 12) locate in *Aeneid* 6 a vision of the afterlife compatible with contemporary Christianity. Even as Servius extends his Lucretian reading to cover Vergil's whole underworld beyond the Tartarean sinners drawn from *DRN*, S. argues, he carefully sidesteps the dangerously atheistic elements of Lucretius' own chthonic allegories. For M., Augustine's use of the *Aeneid* is already overtly katabatic throughout the *Confessions*; triangulating these texts with Plotinus' neoplatonic interpretation of Vergil, Augustine rewrites Anchises' narration of the parade of heroes as Augustine's and his mother's contemplation of the saints, and so reorientates Vergilian descent as Christian ascent. Matteo Soranzo's discussion of the mendicant friars Baptista Mantuanus and Giles of Viterbo and their use of Vergil's Golden Bough (ch. 4) illuminates early Renaissance reconciliations of Christian hermeneutics with pagan philosophy. Finally, in an ambitious alternative history of the discipline (ch. 13), Grant Parker uses W. F. Jackson Knight and T. J. Haarhoff's scholarship on *Aeneid* 6 as a springboard for outlining a 'spiritualist philology' (242), which developed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in tandem with approaches more familiar to modern-day classicists. This chapter misses opportunities to engage with recent work on this topic (e.g. N. Lowe (2019) on Dodds, or chapters by E. Richardson, M. Payne and D. Susannetti in S. Butler's *Deep Classics* (2017)). I would also have loved more on psychoanalytical criticism, which (like spiritualist philology) is rooted in Vergilian katabasis, concerns itself with deep paradigmatic structures of the unconscious, and has historically been something of an embarrassment for 'respectable' Classics. But P's

fascinating discussion of spiritualism's 'non-suspicious hermeneutics' (244) and its afterlife haunting our own scholarship brings this rich volume to a fittingly self-reflexive close.

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