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### Houghton, L. B. T., and Marco Sgarbi, eds. Virgil and Renaissance Culture

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about more than Rabelais's contempt for fortune because it is also about the nature of nature and philosophy in relation to Machiavelli and Diogenes but also more generally.

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**Houghton, L. B. T., and Marco Sgarbi, eds.**

***Virgil and Renaissance Culture.***

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 510 / Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance 42. Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in collaboration with Brepols, 2018. Pp. ix, 227 + 7 ill. ISBN 978-2-503-58190-3 (hardcover) US\$75.

Virgil's enormous impact on the artistic, political, and scholarly cultures of early modern Europe is well known and has generated an enormous bibliography, to which the volume under review makes an attractive and innovative contribution. Arising from a conference on "Virgilio e la cultura del rinascimento," convened by the editors at the Accademia nazionale Virgiliana di scienze, lettere e arti in Mantua in the fall of 2012, the collection includes a rich array of studies that illuminate not only a few well-tilled fields but also some unexplored nooks and crannies of Virgilian reception. Among the former are treatments of Virgil's biographical tradition, his literary relations with Dante, and the reuse of his poetry in early modern *centos*, while among the latter are investigations of Virgilian quotation on medals and tokens, and of Virgilian imagery in Italian maiolica.

A helpful "Introduction" by L. B. T. Houghton reviews the paramount position enjoyed by Virgil and his texts in the elite culture of Renaissance Europe, and subjects to critical qualification the individual words of the volume's title while acknowledging the ensemble's utility as an indispensable shorthand for the reception of the humanist enterprise represented by the conference papers and their collection here. Peter Mack offers an interesting and succinct survey of the use of Virgilian *exempla* in Renaissance rhetorical theory, especially in the work of Agricola, Erasmus, Melancthon, and Ramus. On Mack's reading,

Agricola emerges as especially innovative in his articulation of a new theoretical understanding of how persuasion works through careful analysis of Virgil. In “Virgil in the Renaissance Court,” Fabio Stok provides a characteristically learned and compelling account of the formation of the biography of Virgil known as “Donatus Auctus,” the expanded and interpolated version of the Virgilian *Vita* composed in the fourth century by Aelius Donatus. He shows definitively that the work was the product of Guarino of Verona, working since 1429 in Ferrara, first at the court of Marquis Niccolò III d’Este and then at the *stadium*. Of particular interest is Stok’s demonstration of the projection of the concerns of the Italian scholar-courtier onto Virgil’s biography. A chapter on “Virgilian Imagery and the Maiolica of the Mantuan Court,” by Lisa Boutin Vitela examines Virgilian themes in the dinner service of the Marchesa Isabella d’Este Gonzaga at her suburban palace. Interestingly, only three Virgilian-themed pieces survive in the service, far fewer than those with “narratives from nearly every book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*” (60); this glimpse into the relative popularity of Virgil and Ovid, at least in the Marchesa’s dinner service, sheds further light on the linked reception tradition of the two poets (see S. Clément Tarantino and F. Klein, *La représentation du “couple” Virgile-Ovide dans la tradition culturelle de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, 2016). Cécile Arnould and Pierre Assenmaker provide a *catalogue raisonné* of medals and tokens with Virgilian quotations/adaptations in the low countries during the second half of the sixteenth century. The wealth of material suggests the widespread diffusion and continuing politicization of Virgilian mottoes in these media in early modern Europe.

A series of literary chapters follows. Evan A. MacCarthy traces the fortunes of “The Song of Iopas in Renaissance Italy” and suggests that the philosophical song Iopas performs at Dido’s banquet in *Aeneid* 1 served as a model for cosmogonic investigation and discussion among Italian humanists. In chapter 7, Giovanna Laterza considers a particular version of Virgilian pathetic fallacy, which she labels “counter-pathetic” and defines as the description of a negative landscape in which a happy event occurs, for which her test case is the “wedding” of Dido and Aeneas in the cave. Anne Rogerson explores the representation of Turnus in Maffeo Vegio’s *Supplement* and argues that his Turnus is a more complex and sympathetic character than contemporary scholarly consensus holds. All three chapters show a welcome sensitivity to the nuances of both Virgil and his early modern interpreters. In chapter 9, Adam

T. Foley examines the philosophical tradition of allegorical interpretation of Aeneas's journey as the soul's progress through the stages of life and ascent to wisdom in the lectures and *Disputationes Camuldulenses* of Cristoforo Landino, and sets his allegorical interpretation in dialogue with the contemporary project of his friend Marsilio Ficino to apply "a similar interpretive scheme to the corpus of Platonic dialogues" (142). The chapter is especially valuable for the evidence it amasses for Platonic readings of the *Aeneid* in Quattrocento Italy, and the continuing impact of the classical Latin epic on early modern European philosophical discussion. Helen Lovatt, in "Reading Virgil through Dante," investigates literary ancestry in Ugolino Verino's *Carlias* 6–8, and ably documents the complex interrelationship of Virgil (and Statius) and Dante, as well as the *Aeneid* and *Inferno*, in Ugolino's three-book reworking of Dante. George Hugo Tucker examines the *Virgiliocento*, the Latin verse-*cento* based on Virgil in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Tucker succeeds admirably in establishing the temporal and geographical breadth of literary interest in the form across Europe from late antiquity until well into the early modern period.

Luke Houghton rounds out the volume, in "Virgil and the Idea of a Renaissance," with a fascinating discussion of the resonances of Virgil's "Messianic" eclogue, especially its famous line announcing the birth of a new age (*magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo*, 4.5), in early modern articulations of the concept of a "Renaissance." The argument is a tour de force, and one which, as Houghton observes, "has potentially important implications for the entire historiography of the period in question" (204). By placing Virgil at the centre of both the rhetoric of Renaissance humanism and "the historical process itself" (221), Houghton brings the collection to an exciting conclusion that demands further work on the deep imbrication of classical modes of thought in European art, culture, and politics.

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