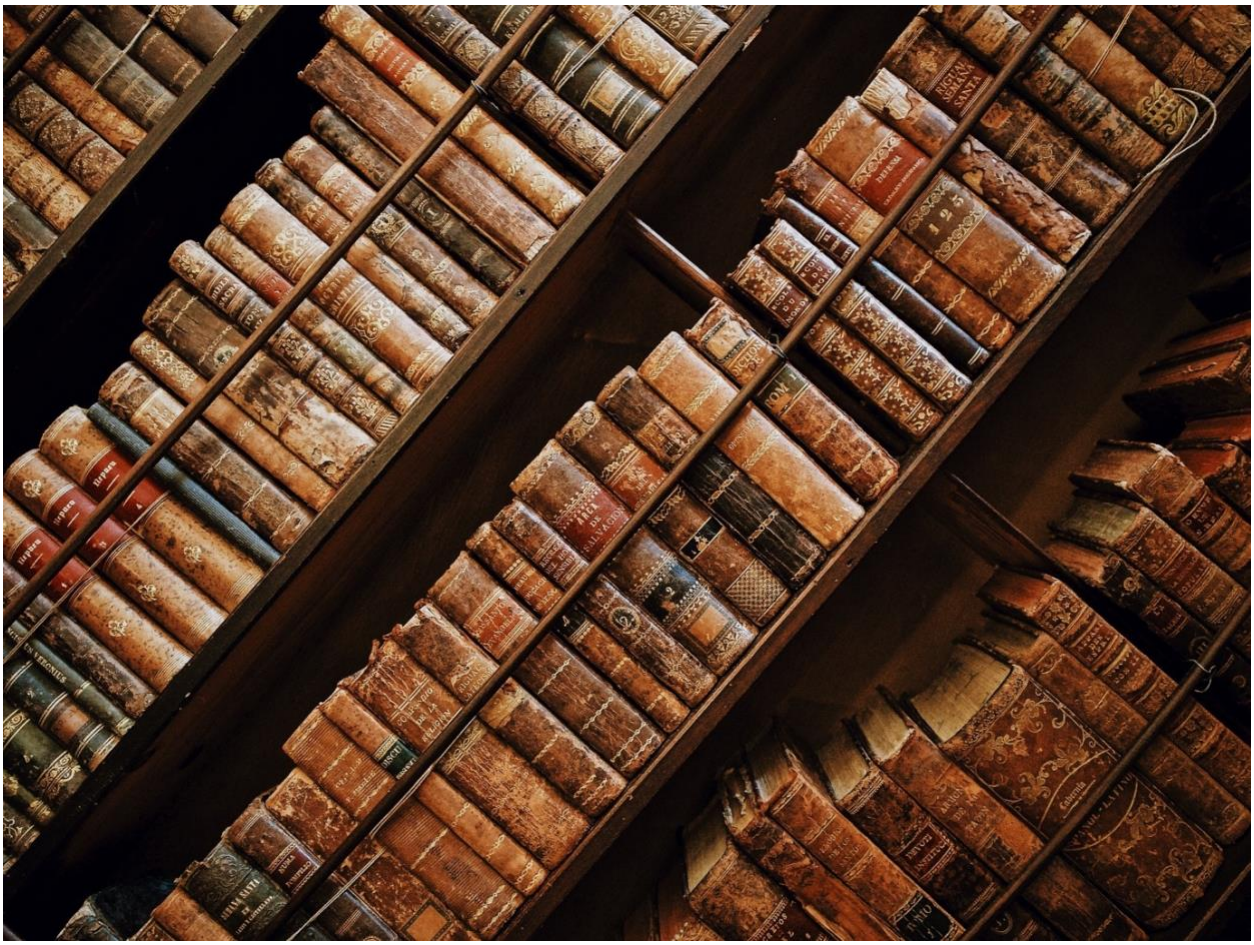

Victoria Moul. *A Literary History of Latin and English Poetry: Bilingual Verse Culture in Early Modern England.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. xiv + 586pp. ISBN 9781107192713. $140.00 hardback.**

Victoria Moul's *A Literary History of Latin and English Poetry: Bilingual Verse Culture in Early Modern England* examines the relationship between the Latin and vernacular poetry that was written in England between 1550 and 1700, with occasional glances either side of these period boundaries. Moul's primary aims in the book are to draw attention to a substantial body of largely unknown post-classical Latin poems, argue that this poetic corpus contains works of considerable literary and aesthetic interest, and outline the significant influence Latin verse had on (as well as the pleasure it generated among) early modern English writers and readers of poetry. *Bilingual Verse Culture* undeniably makes it clear that to overlook the Latin texts of early modern England is to ensure that our understanding of its literary culture remains deeply partial to the point of distortion.

Moul moves not only between languages, but also between manuscript and printed texts, in order to provide a more fully representative account of how Latin and English poetry was "in constant conversation" (3) during this period, and to give a broader sense of the cultural and literary traditions in which this poetry operated. The scale of the research required to document the contours of this conversation to this extent starts to become apparent in an early footnote; we learn that the material on manuscript Latin verse is based on a consultation, by Moul and a small number of researchers on a Leverhulme-funded project, of "28,080 probably or certainly post-medieval items of Latin verse" with an English provenance "in 1,237 manuscripts held in 40 archives and collections" (1). Much of this material remains almost entirely untranslated and, for the most part, has not attracted any prior critical attention. No equivalent figure is given for the number of printed Latin texts that Moul has consulted, nor for the vernacular poems that have been accessed in both print and manuscript, but from the discussion it is evident the coverage is similarly diligent. At just under six hundred pages *Bilingual Verse Culture* is unusually long for a monograph. It transpires, however, that a book of such length on such a topic actually represents an advanced exercise in concision.

There is a notably careful and considered structure to *Bilingual Verse Culture* as a whole. After an introduction, the book is organized into two sections. The first opens with a chapter on the popularity (and longevity) of what Moul terms the "moralizing lyric" tradition in English and Latin poetry. Subsequent chapters are dedicated to metrical variety in sixteenth-century lyric verse; Latin and English renderings of the psalms; panegyric; pindarics and related forms of "free" early modern verse; epigrams; satire. The second section is dedicated to longer verse forms and contains individual chapters on panegyric, epyllia, and epic. A guide to the most common meters that were used in early modern Latin poetry features as an appendix, and is particularly helpful when read in conjunction with the book's second chapter. Since such a range of material is covered, it would have been easy for Moul's account to have become somewhat piecemeal, but each chapter is integrated successfully into the overall argument; the transitional points at the beginning and end of chapters, and the ordering of the chapters themselves, are notably well-judged.

Bilingual Literary Culture proceeds from the recognition that the canon of classical authors and genres was very different in early modernity than it is today. Moul

grants special attention to the works of the panegyrist Claudian (c. 370-c. 404 AD), since, although now they are little read or studied even by classicists, they provide key, even central, contexts and intertexts for the tone, content, and focus of much early modern poetry. Some of *Bilingual Verse Culture*'s most revisionary work consequently comes in identifying a hitherto-unacknowledged Claudianic presence to many of the best-known longer poems of the period, including Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, Andrew Marvell's "First Anniversary," and the Restoration panegyrics of John Dryden.

For Moul, this engagement with Claudian speaks to a broader truth for early modern English literary culture: what often seems distinctive, innovative or hard to characterize in terms of the conventions, tropes, and aesthetics of much early modern English poetry, both in Latin and the vernacular, often has its origins in Latin literature. To take just one additional (non-Claudianic) example, Abraham Cowley's claims to formal innovation in his "irregular" Pindaric odes of 1656 were anticipated by over half a century by poets writing in Latin (including in a Latin translation of Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar*). Moul, however, finds a self-consciously ludic, "decodable," quality to Cowley's claim, rather than a genuine attempt to pass himself off as an innovator; it is only later critics, less cognizant of the long-established tradition of experimenting with freer verse forms in Latin, that have taken Cowley at his own word.

As the antecedents to Cowley's Pindarics indicate, central to Moul's approach in *Bilingual Literary Culture* is the recognition that early modern readers did not engage with the texts of classical antiquity in a direct and unmediated manner, but within an ecosystem of classical, late antique, and early modern Latin texts by European writers. Although its focus is on texts in English and Latin by writers whose work was printed in England and is available in English manuscript holdings, a key tenet of *Bilingual Verse Culture* is this international dimension of early modern literary culture. The Latin pastorals of the Italian Carmelite Mantuan (Johannes Baptista Spagnolo) (1448-1516), the scriptural paraphrases of the French theologian Théodore de Bèze (1519-1605), the lyrics of Kazimierz Sarbiewski, "the Polish Horace" (1595-1640), and the epic poem *Zodiacus Vitae* by the Neapolitan Palingenius (Pier Angelo Manzolli) (c. 1500-c. 1551), were far more widely-known in England than they are now, not least because of the central role so many of these texts played in the early modern school curriculum. Children would have read many of these works prior to their engagement with classical texts as

part of their formal studies, and Moul outlines several instances from the writings of William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and others, where a reminiscence of a classical text comes via early modern Latin writers. In addition, Moul finds compelling parallels and connections between these texts and poems at the heart of the early modern English canon, including the Sidney Psalter, George Herbert's *The Temple* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Identifying both specific allusions and indebtedness to more abstract qualities such as tone and attitude requires a highly detailed knowledge on Moul's part, with regard to both Latin and English poetry, and indicates an impressively retentive memory.

Moul's studies of these Latin texts draw attention to "the disjunction between the early modern literature we write about" in the present day "and what was actually read" (27), valued, circulated, and given prominence in the early modern period itself. Perhaps the sharpest of these disjunctions from our perspective is the centrality of religious over secular material. Both in English and Latin "early modern poets and readers alike prioritized scripture over the classics" (448), as seen in the enormous popularity of scriptural paraphrase. A distinctive aspect of these scriptural paraphrases is how they frequently bridge traditional confessional divides as well as national borders. Just as Moul is keen to stress the two-way traffic between Latin and English literary texts, so too does she demonstrate the extent to which Protestant writers in England drew on European Catholic verse traditions for their own compositions, often, but not exclusively, while attempting to lay claim to certain Catholic writers, such as Palingenius, as honorary or proto-Protestants due to their professed anti-clericalism. Moul shows that an interest in such material influenced which parts of a classical Latin poet's canon were read and valued: Horace's moralizing and didactic poems were, in the reverse of the current situation, read and studied far more widely than his satires and lyrics, to the extent that he was seen as akin to a psalmist and a Roman David.

Bilingual Verse Culture does not treat early modern literary culture as static. Instead, it is alert to the ebb and flow of literary trends in both English and Latin, such as when a young George Herbert, already well-known in Cambridge as a Latin poet, poked fun at the Anglo-Latin grandee Andrew Melville for his adherence to a meter that for a later generation seemed outdated or old-fashioned. Moul is also able to consider how representative literary fashions and vogues are shared between languages, and which

were confined to either Latin or vernacular compositions; the sonnet is the most striking case of the latter, since "where sonnets were translated into Latin, as they quite frequently were, the metres and forms chosen are various" (322) rather than uniform. Furthermore, Moul is alert to wider, pan-European, literary trends, and the social, cultural, and political factors that inform verse composition specifically in England. Moul identifies a "marked preference for odes composed in sapphic stanzas" (144) during the Elizabethan period, and suggests that "the metrical convenience of 'Elizabetha'," which fits "the closing aural tag of each Sapphic stanza, perhaps in part explains the intense and apparently distinctively English fashion for this metrical form" (157). Another, highly intriguing, Elizabethan-era trend Moul identifies is the withering of the epithalamion, both in English and Latin, relative to other contemporary European literary verse cultures. Moul plausibly attributes this situation to the unique conditions of England in the 1590s. As the country found itself ruled by an aging, unmarried queen, poetic celebrations of marriage had the potential to reflect awkwardly, if only inadvertently, on Elizabeth's own unmarried status and subsequent lack of a biological heir: Spenser's epithalamium is thus shown to be exceptional, not just in its focus on the poet's own marriage as opposed to one between two members of the social elite, but also that it exists at all. Moul subsequently attributes the vogue for epyllia that emerged in England in this decade as a direct consequence of the lack of English poets' ability to write epithalamia, since, she argues, the two genres share a common (mostly Claudianic) poetic ancestry, energy, concerns, and aesthetic. Readers of this journal will find Moul's discussion of the "Garden of Venus" trope in the context of epyllia and epithalamia (including *The Faerie Queene*) especially illuminating.

As well as helping us see familiar texts afresh by drawing attention to their engagement with Latin poetry written by classical and early modern Europeans, Moul introduces a number of Latin texts written by English and British poets that demand our attention. Few readers will read the description of David Kinloch's 1596 poem *De hominis procreatione, anatome, ac morbis internis* (*On Human Procreation, Anatomy and Internal Diseases*) as "an eye-wateringly explicit, and unforgettable, explication of the processes of and obstacles to human reproduction" (442) without wanting to know more. Moul's enthusiasm for the work of Payne Fisher, whose poetic (and other) expressions of royalism in the 1640s did not prevent him from becoming "the Latin poet laureate of the

Cromwellian Protectorate" (355), comes through particularly strongly. In an evocative afterword, Moul reflects on her experience of reading Fisher for the first time, and finding his work to be extensively, even radically, unclassical. It is this feature of Fisher, and indeed much early modern Latin poetry, that leads Moul to depart from comparable recent studies of post-classical Latin literature by largely avoiding the term "Neo-Latin."[1] For Moul, it suggests a too "statically classical" (71) aesthetic that implies a straightforward continuity between the Latin verse of antiquity and of later periods. Calling it "Neo-Latin," then, would flatten its distinctiveness, although there is, perhaps, an argument for retaining the term specifically to refer to texts which do attempt to stress such aesthetic continuities.

Much editorial and translation work clearly needs to be done to make the material discussed here more fully available to readers beyond those with advanced knowledge of early modern Latin (that is, almost all readers). While Moul provides a translation for all the Latin material quoted, there are obvious and unavoidable limitations on space and it is, inevitably, harder to gain a sense of the overall literary impact and effect of the longer poems. Moul refers to her own intention to produce a critical edition of Fisher's *Marston-Moor*, which began in the 1640s as a work of royalist lament but which Fisher reworked in the following decade as a panegyric to Cromwell. In terms of the other texts that receive analysis, a critical edition and translation of Cowley's six-book epic on the lives of plants, *Sex Libri Plantarum* (1668), would be particularly welcome. The Latin epigrammatist John Owen (c. 1564-1622), now obscure to most readers, but once hailed as the "British Martial," was "almost certainly the most widely read British author in the whole of Protestant Europe" (285). Yet the extent of Owen's influence remains largely unknown on account of the lack of any modern English translation of Owen's work. All this is to say nothing of the Latin material which remains unconsulted. Moul estimates that at the time of the book's publication she (and her researchers on the Leverhulme project) have "recorded 50-70 per cent of relevant material" (138) for a project which restricted itself to

[1] See *Neo-Latin Poetry in the British Isles*, eds L. B. T. Houghton and Gesine Manuwald (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012); Philip Ford, *The Judgment of Palaemon: The Contest Between Neo-Latin and Vernacular Poetry in Renaissance France* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); *Dynamics of Neo-Latin and the Vernacular Language and Poetics, Translation and Transfer*, ed. Tom B. Deneire (Leiden: Brill, 2014); *Latin and Vernacular Cultures - Examples of Bilingualism and Multilingualism c. 1300-1800*, ed. Jan Bloemendal (Leiden: Brill, 2015); *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, eds. Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); *Neo-Latin and the Vernaculars: Bilingual Interactions in the Early Modern Period*, eds Florian Schaffenrath and Alexander Winkler (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

holdings solely in England. Equivalent holdings elsewhere in the British Isles, and beyond, remain almost entirely unmapped.

For Moul, "perhaps the single most characteristic activity of early modern Latin literary culture" is paraphrase, in the sense of "the recasting of an authoritative text – whether classical, biblical, doctrinal or canonical in another way – into a new form" (13). Unlike modern definitions of paraphrase, its use as a descriptor in early modernity does not "necessarily imply [...] that the original text is shortened or simplified" (13). In this definition, through its own recasting, expansion, and augmentation of the poetic canon, *Bilingual Literary Culture* provides its own innovative and engaging paraphrase of the poetry that was written in early modern England.

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