Marc Mastrangelo (ed.): Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. Abingdon / New York: Routledge 2022 (Routledge Later Latin Poetry). XIX, 161 p. £ 130.00/$ 170.00. ISBN: 978-0-367-20523-2.

The *Psychomachia* is having a moment: the past five years have seen commentaries in English and in German, as well as numerous articles in major journals in classical and medieval studies, building on a strong resurgence of interest in the poem stretching back over the past decade and a half.[1] Marc Mastrangelo's work has been instrumental in this revival of interest, especially his 2008 monograph on the *Psychomachia*, which sets the poem in its patristic and philosophical context, while also paying close attention to Prudentius' use of Virgil.[2]

Mastrangelo now provides us with a modern English translation of the *Psychomachia* in Routledge's new "Later Latin Poetry" series, edited by Joseph Pucci, to complement existing volumes in the series translating the *Peristephanon* and the *Cathemerinon* (the latter of which was also translated by Gerard O'Daly); additionally, we have a recent translation of the *Hamartigenia*.[3] We are well over halfway, then, to a complete set of modern translations of Prudentius' poems, which is welcome given that so much scholarship (by medievalists, by comparatists) that does not engage with Prudentius in the original Latin continues to rely on Henry J. Thomson's Loeb translation.[4]

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[1] Commentaries: A. Pelttari (ed.): The *Psychomachia* of Prudentius. Text, Commentary, and Glossary. Norman, OK 2019 (Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture 58); M. Frisch (ed.): Prudentius, *Psychomachia*. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar. Berlin/Boston 2020 (Texte und Kommentare 62). See also P. Franchi: La battaglia interiore. Prova di commento alla Psychomachia di Prudenzio. Diss. Trento 2013. Of recent articles note especially K. Breen: Personification and Gender Fluidity in the *Psychomachia* and Its Early Reception. In: Speculum 97, 2022, pp. 965–1011; P. Hardie: Augustan and Late Antique Intratextuality: Virgil's *Aeneid* and Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. In: S. Harrison/S. Frangoulidis/T. D. Papanghelis (eds): Intratextuality and Latin Literature. Berlin/Boston 2018 (Trends in Classics. Supplementary Volumes 69), pp. 159–170; K. Kirsch: Reconsidering the Monsters of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*. In: Journal of Late Antiquity 13, 2020, pp. 220–233; A. Pelttari: The Authorial Drama of Prudentius in the *Apotheosis*, *Amartigenia*, and *Psychomachia*. In: Lucida Intervalla 48, 2019, pp. 139–162; M. Salvador Gimeno: La aliteración como elemento rítmico de cohesión, refuerzo, resemantización y selección en la *Psychomachia* de Prudencio. In: CFC(L) 41, 2021, pp. 281–301.

[2] M. Mastrangelo: The Roman Self in Late Antiquity. Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul. Baltimore, MD 2008.

[3] L. Krisak/J. Pucci (eds.): Prudentius' Crown of Martyrs. *Liber Peristephanon*. Translated by L. Krisak. With Introduction and Notes by J. Pucci. London/New York 2020 (Routledge Later Latin Poetry); N. Richardson (ed.): Prudentius' Hymns for Hours and Seasons. *Liber Cathemerinon*. London/New York 2016 (Routledge Later Latin Poetry); G. O'Daly: Days Linked by Song. Prudentius' *Cathemerinon*. Oxford/New York 2012; M. A. Malamud (ed.): The Origin of Sin. An English Translation

Thomson's Loeb is in many ways characteristic of the mid-century output of that series in its archaising tendencies. "Thou"s and "thine"s abound; my personal favourite is the use of "pot-house" ('pot-house'!) to translate *ganearum* at line 343 of the *Psychomachia* (Mastrangelo's "dive-bar" is much more *au courant*). And yet, as one finds when trying to translate any sustained passage of Prudentius, the Loeb is surprisingly hard to improve on, particularly if the goal is not to provide a literary translation but a scholarly one: something that gives the sense of the Latin without aspiring to be a creative work in its own right. For all that it now seems highly dated, Thomson's prose is usually an accurate representation of what Prudentius actually said. Prudentius' language is challenging for the translator: he can be very compressed at times, while at other times he is highly repetitive; there is great attention to alliteration and assonance; the language is highly rhetorical in a way that does not always feel intuitive to an audience weaned on Romantic notions of individuality and originality.

It is worth beginning by considering what sort of translation is being offered here: is it a creative effort, freed from the strictures of the original? Is it a souped-up crib, with close attention to Latin syntax? Is it in verse, or prose, or prose that gives the appearance of verse? Mastrangelo in his preface (pp. VIII–IX) speaks of producing "a readable and accessible English translation" (p. VIII); the series blurb makes claim for "creative, accessible translations" (p. II); elsewhere (pp. 22–23) Mastrangelo gives a clear overview of Prudentius' language and metre, but in talking of his own translation focuses on the choice of form: rather than employing pentameter or free verse, he has aimed for "lines of verse that adhere closely to the Latin in meaning but contain discreet and flowing units of English" (p. 22). What I understand from this is that Mastrangelo's goal is to put Prudentius into idiomatic English rather than try to force the text into an unsuitable metrical mould: that

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of the *Hamartigenia*. Translated and with an Interpretive Essay. Ithaca, NY 2011 (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 61).

[4] H. J. Thomson (ed.): Prudentius. With an English Translation. 2 vols. London/Cambridge, MA 1949–1953 (Loeb Classical Library 387, 398).

seems reasonable enough, though it is not always clear to me why Mastrangelo has chosen to put line breaks where he does. Strangely, no distinction is discernible in the layout of the translation between the preface (in iambic trimeters) and the main body of the poem (in hexameters), and indeed, the very fact that the preface is not written in hexameter is only mentioned once, in passing, in the introduction (p. 22) where it may well be missed by the incautious reader.

In general, Mastrangelo's new translation is most welcome: combined with Aaron Pelttari's commentary, it makes Prudentius' most important and influential work available on a new, modern footing, especially to students with little or no Latin. This is particularly important given the centrality of the *Psychomachia* to so much of later medieval literature: it is required reading for all scholars of medieval English, for instance, and it is a relief to be able to recommend a single well-annotated translation to a non-Latinist. As I discuss below in greater detail, Mastrangelo's translation does not render Thomson's obsolete, but it is certainly worthy of becoming the new standard translation of the *Psychomachia*.

I divide my discussion below into sections addressing major points in general – text and organisation; introduction, bibliography, and notes – before engaging with specific sections of Mastrangelo's translation. Since inevitably much of what I will say below will take the form of (mostly gentle) criticism, I stress here that this is overall very strong work, and that, as someone who has not been capable of improving on Thomson's translation, I am full of admiration for Mastrangelo's work. His translation has done what all good translations ought to: it has made me rethink and revisit anew a text I thought I knew very well.

Text and organisation

Any engagement with Prudentius needs to account for the nightmare that is the transmission of his texts. In short: Prudentius' work is preserved in over three hundred manuscripts; there are signs of either authorial revision or very early interpolation even in the earliest manuscripts; and there is no single satisfactory edition: both Johannes Bergman's 1926 *CSEL* and Maurice Cunningham's 1966 *CCSL* are acceptable but flawed, even if their flaws have been overemphasised by the reviews both received.[5] Christian Gnilka has spent a lifetime researching the text of Prudentius, but has not yet produced his own edition: in practice, what this means is that scholars working on Prudentius end up picking either Bergman or Cunningham but need to pay careful attention to subsequent textual work.[6] Mastrangelo bases his translation on Cunningham's text (p. 22), with attention to "only the most consequential textual debates" in the notes (ibid.). The debates that get mentioned are indeed the key ones: the perennial problem of preface lines 41–44 and 60 (discussed on p. 62, at praef. line 60), which is summarised briefly, and a longer consideration of lines 726–729.

The layout is generally satisfactory. Mastrangelo gives us the *Psychomachia* in 779 lines (impressively compressed, compared to Prudentius' 915), and references are usually given in the notes to Mastrangelo's line number first, with the Latin numbering in square brackets (though occasionally only one reference is provided, usually to Mastrangelo's own numbering, e.g. in the notes on M. praef. 17–18 [praef. 22]; or on M. 455 [537]). In what follows, references by line number alone refer to Prudentius' Latin text (e.g. 726–729, praef. 41–44) and references with an 'M.' refer to the translation (e.g. M. 591–593). There are no more than the usual number of typos, the only really egregious ones being the mis-spelling of the names of two writers on Prudentius (Pelttari and Isidore of Seville) and an incorrect date range for the poet's life on p. 2 (which should read '348–after 405', not "358–405").

Introduction, bibliography, and notes

The introduction (pp. 1–31) sets out the key features of the poem, and is particularly strong (unsurprisingly, given Mastrangelo's previous publications) on the literary and philosophical backgrounds to the poem, as well as on specific aspects of the influence of the *Psychomachia*. The sections on allegory (pp. 4–8) and on biblical and Virgilian intertexts (pp. 12–15) are especially rewarding. Prudentius' transmission and reception is addressed in three sections – "Prudentius and the *Psychomachia* in literary history" (pp. 8–12), "Dante, Milton, and Prudentius" (pp. 15–21); and briefly in the section on "Text, translation and notes" (on pp. 21–22). Mastrangelo's basic position, stressed especially on p. 21, is that Prudentius, and the *Psychomachia*, need to be viewed as part of the mainstream of the European epic tradition. He is strong, and convincing, on the links between Dante and Milton and Prudentius, and on the need to read these later epics alongside the *Psychomachia*. Yet Mastrangelo seems to suggest that there has been an overemphasis on Prudentius' links to "allegorical medieval poets" (p. 8). If anything, I would say there has not been *enough* emphasis on Prudentius' influence on later medieval authors in literary scholarship, nor is there enough in this preface: Prudentius' transmission was indeed "robust and esteemed" (p. 40), but it goes beyond Alan of Lille (the only medieval author named in the preface), and while Mastrangelo is right to stress Prudentius' influence as an important complement to that of Virgil as a model for the early modern epic poets, it's a shame that the very many prominent medieval authors who engage extensively with Prudentius go unmentioned here (a few examples: Aldhelm, the *Waltharius* poet, Hrotsvit, Walter of Châtillon, Langland). On p. 21, Mastrangelo speaks of "several hundred manuscripts dating from the 6th to the 11th centuries as well as illuminated manuscripts through the 15th century." This is inaccurate and I suspect those two date groups should be flipped; even so, however, the manuscript tradition of Prudentius continues until the sixteenth century, while the latest illuminated manuscript I know of is Paris, BnF lat. 15158, dated 1298.[7]

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[5] J. Bergman (ed.): Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina. Vienna/Leipzig 1926 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 61) with the review of F. Klingner in Gnomon 6, 1930, pp. 39–52; M. P. Cunningham (ed.): Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina. Turnhout 1966 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 126) with the review of K. Thraede in Gnomon 40, 1968, pp. 681–691. Some perspective is provided by A. A. R. Bastiaensen: Prudentius in Recent Literary Criticism. In: J. den Boeft/ A. Hilhorst (eds): Early Christian Poetry. A Collection of Essays. Leiden/New York/Cologne 1993 (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 22), pp. 101–134.

[6] Gnilka's work has been collected in C. Gnilka: Prudentiana. 3 vols. Munich/Leipzig 2000–2003; see also C. Gnilka: Prudentius, Contra orationem Symmachi. Eine kritische Revue. Münster 2017.

Aside from what I would view as insufficient attention to Prudentius' medieval *Nachleben*, in general Mastrangelo does quite a bit in the relatively short amount of space granted within the preface. Perhaps conscious of the book's likely audience, he frequently cites, for fuller discussions, the commentary of Pelttari.[8] The bibliography (pp. 148–153) is mostly up to date: Frisch's 2020 commentary[9] likely appeared too late for consultation; though it is a shame no use was made of Paola Franchi's very thorough 2013 Trento dissertation[10] on the first 309 lines.

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[7] H. Woodruff: The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius. Cambridge, MA 1930, p. 17.

[8] Pelttari: The *Psychomachia* (note 1).

Allowing for the slim size of volumes in this series, the notes (pp. 54–147) are usually dense and thorough. Some places where Mastrangelo is particularly thoughtful are at 35 (M. 26) on the similarities between the long deaths of *Veterum Cultura Deorum* and Dido; 150 (M. 122) on how *Ira* destroys from within; 253–254 (M. 213–14) on Platonism and out-of-control horses; 310–311 (M. 261) on the theological reasons for why *Luxuria* should come from the West; on the textual nightmare of 726–729 (M. 618–620); on the tricky phrase *ad iuga uitae | deteriora trahi* (896–897, M. 763); on *bella horrida* (902, M. 768–769) and its Vergilian and Statian resonances. Throughout, Mastrangelo is particularly insightful on the philosophical background and on Prudentius' Lucretianism (even if he refrains from comment on the question of direct relationship).

Translation

Mastrangelo outlines his approach to translation on pp. 22–23. It is a real challenge to know how to put Prudentius' Latin in English in a meaningful and consistent way. Mastrangelo's translation (pp. 32–53) is fresh and welcome, and overall a more pleasant read than Thomson's Loeb (a particular high point is the account of the temple-building at 834–837 [M. 709–712]). One of the best things a new translator can do is to draw attention to an aspect of a text that may have been overlooked. Welcome, for instance, is the decision to translate *vernulae* as "slaves", rather than as "servants" (as Thomson does). This is more accurate, of course, but it also raises an interesting question: to what extent is there a problem underlying the use of language of slavery relating to Lot and Abraham's domestic slaves on the one hand, and the language of the "servile heart" and the soul as being enslaved on the other (see Mastrangelo's note on praef. 13 [M. praef. 11])? A chance is missed at line 56 of the preface, *nos esse large uernularum diuites*. Thomson translates "we are abundantly rich in servants born in the house". Mastrangelo elides the difficulty of *uernulae* here by translating "we will be super-rich in our own native capabilities" (M. praef. 40), and while there is a thoughtful note connecting the two moments on M. praef. 40, the link that exists in the Latin has been removed from the English translation, and thus may go unnoticed by the reader.

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[9] Frisch (note 1).

[10] Franchi (note 1).

In general Mastrangelo pays careful attention to Prudentius' language, and especially to alliterative moments. For example, at M. praef. 11 "until our warring spirit slaughters the monsters of our servile heart", the repeated letter 's' captures well the alliteration in the original (praef. 13–14, *quam strage multa bellicosus spiritus | portenta cordis seruientis uicerit*). Similarly, I particularly liked "though a zealous bodyguard | surrounds seductive luxury" (M. 341–342) as a way of retaining the qualities of 404–405, *malesuada | Luxuries multo stipata satellite*.

There are times when Mastrangelo makes an inspired choice to deal with an ambiguity in Prudentius' Latin. For instance, at praef. 38–39, *uirum* could be either accusative singular or genitive plural (see Pelttari *ad loc*):

> *adhuc recentem caede de tanta uirum*
> *donat sacerdos ferculis caelestibus*,

Mastrangelo deals with this by translating *uirum* twice (M. praef. 29–30), which resolves the ambiguity (though it would have been nice to have a reference to this moment in the notes):

> Fresh from the slaughter of so many **men**,
> a priest gives **the hero** heavenly food.

However, there are moments where Thomson's translation is clearer, or more accurate, and without the benefit of a facing Latin text I worry students might be sent astray from time to time. For the sake of space I provide three examples.

At 155–156 (M. 126) is a long-standing problem of interpretation.

> *quam super adsistens Patientia* "*vicimus,*" *inquit,*
> "*exultans vitium solita virtute* [...]"

Should *exultans* be taken as nominative (agreeing with *Patientia*, the subject of *vicimus*) or as accusative with *vitium*? Thomson translates: "Standing over her, Long-Suffering cries: 'We have overcome a proud Vice with our wonted virtue [...]'" Mastrangelo has: "Standing over her, Patience exclaims, 'I am ecstatic that a traditional Virtue has beaten this vice [...]'" Pelttari inclines towards taking *exultans* with *vitium*; but allows the possibility of taking it as a nominative. Franchi takes it as nominative, but puts it outside the quotation (i.e. *Patientia*, rejoicing, says [...]), citing the use of *exultare* elsewhere to describe Virtues at the moment of victory (36 of *Fides*, 604 of *Operatio*); Frisch also takes it as nominative, within the quotation (without any real justification). I would find it very hard to justify any Virtue within the poem expressing such glee, much less *Patientia*, not least since the whole point of her speech is that she has defeated *Ira* by means of her *solita uirtute* (Thomson's "with our wonted virtue" is much clearer, and closer to the Latin, than Mastrangelo's rendering "a traditional Virtue"), i.e. by wearing her down. Granted, this is a matter of interpretation rather than a right-or-wrong – but Mastrangelo's translation, and the lack of any discussion in the notes, removes the presence of a very real ambiguity for the unwary (or Latinless) reader.

At lines 26–28 of the preface, Prudentius has:

> *quin ipse ferrum stringit et plenus deo*
> *reges superbos mole praedarum graues*
> *pellit fugatos, sauciatos proterit.*

Mastrangelo tries to keep the line division (M. praef. 20–22):

> In fact,
> he himself draws his sword and, full of God, drives the arrogant kings
> to flight. Burdened with their massive loot, he tramples their wounded

The issue is partly the dangling modifier "[b]urdened" (which should refer to the arrogant kings, not Abraham, "he"), but the translation also misses the fact that both *fugatos* and *sauciatos* refer to the *reges*: Abraham puts some of them to flight, and tramples upon the ones who are too wounded to flee (Mastrangelo has an excellent note on the motif of trampling on one's opponents here). Thomson's translation is clearer if less poetic:

> He himself, too, draws the sword and, being filled with the spirit of God, drives off in flight those proud kings, weighed down with their booty, or cuts them down and tramples them under foot.

Mastrangelo's translation occasionally tends towards the colloquial: this is not in itself a problem, but it is not successfully sustained throughout the work, leading to the occasional clash of register. *Ira*'s speech to *Patientia* (118–120) is representative:

> "*en tibi Martis,*" *ait,* "*spectatrix libera nostri*,
> *excipe mortiferum securo pectore ferrum*,
> *nec doleas*, *quia turpe tibi gemuisse dolorem*."

Mastrangelo has:

> "Hey you!" Anger says, "you, the watcher who takes no part in our war,
> Take this fatal blade into your calm breast! Try not to feel pain, 'cause
> moaning is embarrassing." (M. 96–98).

For contrast, Thomson has:

> "Here's for thee," she cries, "that lookest on at our warfare and takest no side. Receive the death-stroke in thy calm breast, and betray no pain, since it is dishonour in thine eyes to utter a cry of pain."

On the one hand, Mastrangelo gives us a necessary modernisation. On the other hand, Thomson's translation maintains the same register (even if it is archaic). Either the speech is meant to sound like people actually talk ("'Hey you!' [...] moaning is embarrassing.'") or it is meant to be poetic, something that nobody would ever say out loud ("'you, the watcher who takes no part in our war [...]'"). I don't think we can have it both ways. Moreover, Mastrangelo omits the crucial *tibi* of line 120. The whole point of that line is that the personification of *Patientia* would have special reason to be ashamed of expressing any sort of pain. This is clear enough from Thomson's "in thine eyes", but Mastrangelo's translation makes the claim more universal ("moaning is embarrassing").

Conclusion

Mastrangelo has provided us an accurate twenty-first translation of the *Psychomachia*. While I have my quibbles about some stylistic choices, there is no doubt that this is a considerable improvement on the Loeb translation. The real benefit of this volume is in the notes, which distill the work of Mastrangelo's long engagement with the poem. This is the text I will be assigning when I teach the *Psychomachia* in translation from now on.

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