

RECENZIJE, PRIKAZI, OSVRTI

MARKO MARULIĆ, *THE DAVIDIAD*, edited and translated by Edward Mulholland, LYSA, Gent, 2024.

In March 2024 LYSA Publishers, a scholarly publishing house based in Gent and dedicated to early modern literature and intellectual history, brought out, as the fourth title in its LYNX series of Neo-Latin texts, the eighth edition of Marulić's *Davidiad* with the first complete translation of the epic into English.¹ The edition and the translation have been prepared by Edward Mulholland.² The handsome, beautifully designed and laid out book is an important contribution to Marulić studies. It will appeal to the global audience of Neo-Latin and early modern scholars and students; its edition of Marulić's Latin text is reliable, up-to-date, and intended for the widest possible circle of readers of Latin, but at the same time it fosters new insights into Marulić's writing; most of all, Mulholland's English translation in Miltonic blank verse, facing the Latin text and accompanied by friendly explanations of Biblical and ancient Greek and Roman *realia*, presents an inspired literary achievement in its own right.

The introduction is impressive for its succinctness, clarity, and scope. Mulholland is well acquainted with scholarship on Marulić and the *Davidiad*, surveying the publications in Croatian too. He provides an overview of Marulić's life and work; presents the models, structure, moral and poetic purposes of the *Davidiad*, pointing out that Marulić was the very first author to write a Neo-Latin biblical epic poem with a theme from the Old Testament. Mulholland indicates that the enigmatic, often overlooked, 'Tropological Commentary' after the poem itself brings an additional layer of allegorical interpretation to it (although the poem reveals its story as allegory in several passages in the main text, cf. *David*. 8.420–442, 13.173–233). There is a sketch of the transmission of the text from

¹ A sample is freely available at the publisher's internet page for the book.

² The author of this review is cited several times in the book, and receives thanks for helpful suggestions that have improved key verses of the translation, but the suggestions were limited to a sample of verses quoted in Edward Mulholland, '»Has omnes difficultates... amor perucit«: The Trials and Triumphs of the First English Translation of the *Davidias*', CM XXXIII (2024), 5–11.

Marulić's autograph, kept in the Turin National and University library since at least 1749–1800, to the many modern editions – the rushed first one by Badalić in 1954, several contending editions by Marcovich and Gortan during the years 1957–2006, the almost diplomatic return to the autograph by Glavičić 2007 and the most recent Glavičić & Lučin 2019 (which is actually Lučin's edition using Glavičić 2007 as the base text).³ Mulholland then states his own editorial and translational principles, on which more below.

The Latin text is reliable. Unfortunately, following the poor example of all previous editions, Mulholland omits Marulić's hexameter Latin translation of Canto I from Dante's *Inferno* at the end of the autograph codex, although Marulić obviously intended to close the work with this poem (just as he did with his own *Carmen de doctrina* in the *Institution* and with the elegiac rendering of Petrarch's *Vergine bella* in the *Evangelistary*). In line with the LYNX series' guidelines, the spelling of the Latin has been streamlined and classicised, preferring standardization to Marulić's own spelling habits and inconsistencies (those have been faithfully reproduced in the more authorly-oriented Glavičić & Lučin 2019 and previous scholarly editions). Mulholland accepts Lučin's rejection of *Dauid*. 10.72, the verse added to the autograph by another hand, but in Mulholland's edition the verse is still kept in the main text (in square brackets). In this way the traditional line numbering is preserved too, and the total number of verses remains the traditional 6765 (and not 6764 as in Glavičić and Lučin 2019).

The Latin text is accompanied by three sets of textual notes. The first one reproduces Marulić's marginal remarks, but only the textual ones (their spelling is normalized as well, so GOLIAS at *Dauid*. 1.325 is printed as *Golias*, and the monogram N is spelled out fully as *nota* at, for example, *Dauid*. 6.120; strangely enough, these marginal notes are not included in the English translation). For the graphical notes, the maniculae and curly vertical lines (tendrils), the reader will be best served by Glavičić and Lučin 2019, the edition of the *Davidiad* that captures to the fullest the layout in the autograph. Mulholland's second set of notes reports on divergences from the autograph, as well as from the editions Marcovich 2006 and Glavičić & Lučin 2019 (as they are the most reliable and advanced, Mulholland chooses these two to provide his base text). Since the text in the autograph codex has undergone at least two rounds of handwritten corrections – one by Marulić himself, the other one by the already mentioned unknown hand – this set of notes

³ See the list of editions in Bratislav Lučin, 'Bibliografija. Izdanja djela Marka Marulića (Izbor)', Marko Marulić, *Hrvatski stihovi i proza*, priredio i transkribirao Bratislav Lučin, *Stoljeća hrvatske književnosti*, vol. 137, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2018, 79–86. Marcovich 2006 is: Miroslav Marcovich, *M. Maruli Delmatae Davidias*. Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2006; Glavičić & Lučin 2019 is: Marko Marulić, *Davidijada*, priredio latinski tekst, komentirao i dodao kazala Branimir Glavičić, priredio Bratislav Lučin, *Stoljeća hrvatske književnosti*, vol. 141, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 2019.

reports also on original readings before the corrections. Mulholland correctly, and following Glavičić & Lučin 2019, distinguishes between the corrections made by Marulić himself, and those by the unknown hand (the interventions of the second hand, although recognized by Gortan and Marcovich, were not clearly recorded until Lučin's contribution to the text established by Glavičić). Mulholland introduces a siglum for Marulić's original text and another for the corrections by another hand (a minor complaint: the Introduction explains the siglum T^{ac}, used for Marulić's text *ante correctionem*, but on p. 44 we find the unexplained siglum T^{pc} – *pc*, of course, indicating *post correctionem*). Finally, Mulholland enriches the edition by an *Apparatus locorum* which identifies echoes of other texts throughout the *Davidiad*. It is in itself a significant contribution to our understanding of Marulić's poem; at almost 700 locations in the text it reports on parallels with more than forty Latin authors (all the *loci* are listed once again in the *Index locorum* at the end of the book). For this apparatus Mulholland has used material provided by Jeroen De Keyser. The echoes are not only classical and patristic (among these, Vergil and Ovid are by far most represented of classical authors; there are frequent echoes of Cicero's prose too; the patristic authors include Avitus, Dracontius, Juvenius, Faltonia Proba); there are also Neo-Latin verbal parallels (including some from works by Erasmus and Maffeo Vegio). The most surprising Neo-Latin parallels – and the central theme of De Keyser's research (which will, we hope, be published soon) – are the numerous echoes from Petrarch's *Africa* (at some 35 locations in the *Davidiad*), from Filelfo's unfinished *Sphortias* (at about 70 locations; the epic, written 1450–1466, must have circulated in manuscript in Marulić's time) and from poems by Battista Spagnoli Mantovano (at about 95 locations, of which 29 are from *Adolescentia*, 65 from *Parthenice*); Mantovano's works were recorded in the catalogue of Marulić's library as *Carmina fratris Baptiste Carmelitani*. The apparatus lists about forty to fifty echoes for each book of the *Davidiad*; Book 11 stands out, with only 24 parallels given; there are also longer passages without any parallels (*David*. 11.88–159, 165–221; 14.352–389). Unfortunately, Mulholland does not give any criteria for recognizing a parallel or including it in the apparatus. Some of the echoes (especially phrases encountered in several works) could be instances of common poetic and epic diction, while others are obviously strong and deliberate allusions. An example of the latter group is *rotat ensem* of Verg. *Aen.* 9.441, echoing in *David*. 6.86. Mulholland's note (to the translation) takes it as an allusion to the Nisus and Euryalus episode: 'Marulić surely wants this quoted phrase to make the reader associate the friendship of Jonathan and David with the great friends of Vergil's epic'. But without the insight into criteria for inclusion or exclusion I cannot say, for example, why Mulholland's apparatus omits parallels with Paulinus of Périgeux (Paulinus Petricordiae) which Novaković

in 2000 considered meaningful at *Dauid*. 1.134, 2.278, 4.249, 12.284,⁴ or why the ending *uiuida uirtus* (*Dauid*. 1.198) is not annotated as parallel to Verg. *Aen.* 5.754, 11.386, Proba *Cento* 664, Corippus *Iohannis* 4.547. Nevertheless, Mulholland's running list of parallels, the richest in all editions of the *Davidiad* to date, invites further research into the poem's intertextuality and into Marulić's attitude towards the books he must have read closely and digested thoroughly.

The English translation is the other central segment of the book and its main accomplishment. It is the first full translation of the *Davidiad* into English, and the second into any target language; the only complete translation we had until now was Branimir Glavičić's Croatian one, first published in 1974. In the Introduction, Mulholland states that he chose to translate the poem into English blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) as an equivalent for Marulić's Latin hexameter.⁵ The translator's aim was to suggest to the modern reader the epic feel of the original. I consider the choice demanding, but wise. In this way a translation relies on the ample and influential English literary tradition of blank verse as verse both of original epic (especially of Milton's *Paradise Lost*) and of epic in translation (for example, the *Aeneid* was translated in iambic pentameter by both Gavin Douglas in 1512–1513 and Robert Fitzgerald in 1983; Petrarch's *Africa* was translated in blank verse by Thomas G. Bergin and Alice S. Wilson in 1977). Mulholland additionally raised the bar by deciding to keep as close to Marulić as possible and to produce a line-by-line translation.

Here I must warn the readers that I am not fully competent to judge Mulholland's translation. As a Latinist and a Marulić scholar, I can assess its correctness; but, as a non-native speaker of English, I do not have the associations of the heart, the feeling for nuances of emotion, tone and color that arises only from a lifetime of language immersion. My audacity is, however, justified by two circumstances. First, English is today an international language, just as Latin was in Marulić's time; readers of Mulholland's version will not always and necessarily be the native speakers. Second, Mulholland himself aims to achieve the poetic effect of defamiliarizing, to make all readers, regardless of their native language, to an extent strangers in the world of the *Davidiad*, in the same way that they are strangers in the poetic worlds of Milton and Shakespeare.

The task of translation is challenging, but has been successfully pulled off. The English *Davidiad* balances between being strange and being readable. The blank verse, free and fixed at the same time, is well suited to storytelling and to what Robert Shaw calls prodigious flows of utterance – the essence of epic. A willing reader shall soon adapt to Miltonic, unnatural word order and to omissions of

⁴ Darko Novaković, 'La Davidiade di Marulić e gli epici protomedievali latini', CM IX (2000), 205–217, 211, note 31.

⁵ For an introduction to English blank verse see Robert Burns Shaw, *Blank Verse: A Guide to Its History and Use*, Ohio University Press, Athens (Ohio), 2007.

sentence elements (which must be understood from the context); the word choices are refined, but not Miltonic. After the first shock is overcome, the reading becomes enjoyable. The narrative sections flow swiftly, the epic diversions alter the mood and the pace in a pleasant way, the surprises of rhythm shifts and metrical substitutions provide for variation and expressive power. A longer, typical passage (*David*. 5.1–24) demonstrates the craft of Mulholland's *Davidiad* – its momentum, its versatility, and its difficulties:

The golden sun had scaled up half earth's sky,
 Pyroïs snorted out impetuous fire,
 As did swift Phlegon, Eous, lush with light,
 And Aethon full of ardour all his own,
 When to Nabal's house came his tireless wife
 She saw a feast was raging, banquets broad,
 and flowing wines brought forth in flagons full,
 With tables set as well in lengthy ranks.
 The halls all hummed, the staff now bringing this
 Now that to those demanding; all the throng
 Reclining, frittered time with sundry talk.
 Guffaws and songs and mouths' repeated mutters
 Stir; raised voices crack the raftered roof.
 As in great barnyard herds oftentimes the brays
 And moos resound entwined with bleats from sheep
 And grunts from swine, then blurry noise with tunes
 All muddled thunders round our human ears,
 So, too, such clamour ran through every couch,
 And filled the room with motley murmurs wide.
 Among the guests by chance she spies Nabal
 Her husband, who with both hands clasps a bowl
 And holds it to his lips, with willing mouth,
 And guzzles down the wine until it's drained.

Marulić begins by an Ovidian rhetorical amplification of the time of day, where the image of the four horses of the Sun God Helios and the Greek names of the horses (explained by Mulholland in the commentary) provide for the main poetic effect. A change of focus, moving to Abigail in line 4, is signalled by a change in rhythm: the line deviates from the strict iambic norm by a trochee 'when to' and a spondee 'house came'. The alliterations are prominent: 'lush with light', 'banquets broad', 'flagons full', 'halls all hummed' (note the unusual word order). The translation is at places even more epigrammatic and moralizing than the original: 'a feast was raging' stands for Marulić's *dapibus convivia largis fervere*, and 'frittered time with sundry talk' for *vario tempus sermone trahebat*. At

places it is refreshingly idiomatic ('in lengthy ranks'). Another divergence of the metrical pattern in 12–13 – line 12 has a feminine ending, but its eleven syllables form a run-on unit with line 13, which starts with an accent followed by a strong pause – marks the end of the actual description and the beginning of an epic simile (signalled also by a Marulić marginal note *Comparatio*). In the simile, the strange syntax and archaic word choices slow down the reading. I find myself construing the words just like a student of Latin, trying to find out what the subject is and what the verb (to correctly parse the verses about barnyard herds and the brays I ended up seeking help from a native speaker). 'Clamour ran through every couch' from line 18 is the least successful expression in the whole passage (*through couch?*). It is partly compensated by the next, more ornate verse ('with motley murmurs wide'). The character sketch of the foolish Nabal ('with willing mouth' is Marulić's *ore cupido*, 'guzzles down' is *consumpsit*) is effective and natural in its word order – thus differing from the simile 14–19.

The book closes with the rich bibliography chapter, followed by the already mentioned *Index locorum* and the *Index nominum* (both indices cover not only the main text of the *Davidiad*, but the dedication letter and the 'Tropological Commentary' as well; this may look completely normal, but some previous editions of the poem omitted the paratexts from the indices).

In the *Davidiad* Marulić chose to retell a known story from the Bible, doing it, in fact, three times: once in the *Argumenta*, the summaries with which he prefaced each book, the second time in the main text, and the third time in the 'Tropological Commentary'. He did so not because his intended public would be unfamiliar with King David, but because he wanted to stimulate more Christian readings and more Christian meditations; he also wanted the public to enjoy the poetic honey with which he had amply smeared the biblical cup. By laying out the Latin original in parallel with its English translation, Mulholland does the same: he invites us to compare the translation with the original, not for one to serve as a crib to another, but for us to better understand and appreciate the poetry, to be energized by the power of the verse.

I have noticed a small number of typos and errors. P. 34, *Procliuianus* should be corrected to *Proculianus* (that is Antonio Proculian, chancellor of the Split commune in 1567); p. 50, words from the marginal note *Samuel propheta* remain attached to the ends of lines *Dauid*. 1.26–27; p. 99, *Dauid*. 2.305 a full stop is missing at the end of the English line (it is present in the Latin text); p. 339, note 97 *isconsidered* should be divided; p. 351, 10.253 *po'wrs* should be corrected to *pow'rs*; p. 460, 14.129 *assyriumque* should be corrected to *Assyriumque*. – At a number of lines I disagree with Mulholland's translations. P. 117, *Dauid*. 3.32–35 *violenta quiescunt / flamina tranquillumque salum caelumque serenum, / mutata rerum facie pulsoque pavore, / erectas hominum mulcent dulcedine mentes* 'its violence wanes, / Its gusts soothe sea serene and tranquil sky, / And with the earth's face changed and fear repulsed, / The upraised minds of men with sweetness too'

– I take *violenta quiescunt flamina* as the first clause, and *salum caelumque mulcent* as the second; we could consider gusts of wind soothing the already serene sea and sky as prolepsis, but the *-que* conjunctions in Latin join words with what has already been said, not to what will come next (*senatus populusque*, not *senatusque populus*); here I suspect the ambiguous interpunction in the Latin text had a confusing effect – I would put in a comma after *flamina*, and omit the commas after *serenum* and *pavore*. P. 119, *David*. 3.69–71: *iam carmina condit / laudis et ipse Deo reiecto nudus amictu / ac velut insanus* ‘then he crafts / Himself a song of praise for God, in vesture nude / Like one insane’ – ‘in vesture nude’ sounds like an oxymoron, and *reiecto*, which states explicitly that Saul has thrown away his clothes, has not been taken into account. P. 233, *David*. 6.391–392 *Deterso fletu David sublata parumper / ora hominem versus flexit* ‘When David dried his tears he briefly raised / His mouth, turned toward the man’ – ‘raised mouth’ is an unintelligible image; I would pass over the standard epic metonymy and say ‘he raised his face’. P. 353, *David*. 10.328–329 *licet ipse decore / corporis ante alios iret* ‘although / To others he, with graceful frame, might go’ – I would take *ante iret* (that is, *anteiret*) to mean ‘surpass’ here. P. 353, *David*. 10.336 *a genitore duos declinans luxerat annos* ‘He’d shone for two years shunning father’s gaze’ – the context indicates that *luxerat* is from *lugeo*, *luxi*, *luctus* 2 ‘to mourn’, not from *luceo*, *luxi*, 2 ‘to shine’. P. 473, *David*. 14.339–341: *Quum sit culpabile cunctis / accepti ex aliis memorem non esse favoris, / tum dominis id turpe magis foedumque putatur* ‘Since it is wrong for anyone to be / Unmindful of the favours he receives / It’s thought more shameful, ugly for a king’ – ‘although’ instead of ‘since’ would bring out more clearly the concessive coordination *quum... tum...*

Neven Jovanović

