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Book review

M. GILSKI, *MARIOLOGIA CENTONÓW*,
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Marek Gilski, professor of Mariology at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, discusses the inculturation of Mariology in the book *Mariologia centonów*. He attempts to answer to what extent the ancient authors were able to present the figure of Mary in the language of Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides and Virgil. For that purpose he analyzes works from ancient times known as centos. Centos are paraphrases of the Bible, which originated as a compilation of pagan texts. From the fourth century after Christ educated Christians presented content of the Old and New Testaments by using out of context yet properly structured quotations from the Homeric poems, tragedies of Aeschylus and Euripides, as well as the works of Virgil.

The book consists of three chapters. The first chapter addresses the Homeric Mariology centos critically presented by Rocco Schembra (*Homerocentones*, Turnhout 2007). Gilski compares five different Homerocento manuscripts to ultimately present an overall picture of Mary, which emerges with appropriately structured verses from the Iliad and the Odyssey. The mother of the Lord is shown in the scenes of the Annunciation, the birth of Jesus, the adoration of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, Jesus' temptation by the devil, the miracle at Cana in Galilee, the laying of the body of Jesus in the tomb and his resurrection and ascension.

In the second chapter the subject of analysis is the drama of the Christus patiens, critically presented by André Tuilier (*Grégoire de Nazianze. La Passion du Christ. Tragédie*, Paris 1969). The tragedy presents the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, seen from the perspective of Mary. In the course of dialogues references to earlier scenes from

the life of Mary appear, not only the well-known ones from the Gospel, but also from the books of the Apocrypha. Therefore, Gilski analyzes the childhood of Mary (the stay in the temple and feeding by the angel), the annunciation, the birth of Jesus, the sacrifice in the temple, and the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. *Christus patiens* therefore contains Mariology seen from the perspective of the Passover. The image of Mary presented in the picture of the drama is much poorer than the one which is found in the Homeric centos.

The last chapter presents the image of Mary, which emerges from the works of Virgil. The Centos of Virgil critically presented by Karl Schenkl (*Probae Cento, recensuit et commentario critico instruxit C. Schenkl. Accedunt tres centones a poetis christianis compositi, in: Poetae Christiani Minores, pars 1, Vindobonae 1888, p. 511–638 [Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 16]*). The mother of the Lord is presented only in the context of the Gospel of Jesus' childhood from the Annunciation to the escape to Egypt. With quotations from the *Aeneid*, *Georgics* or *Eclogues* the author of the centos only portrayed Mary in four scenes, omitting her presence entirely in the adult life of Jesus.

The centos do not present a full picture of the biblical Mary. Stages such as the visitation of Mary to St. Elizabeth, finding the twelve-year-old Jesus at the temple and the well-known Johannine pericope about the presence of Mary under the cross of the Jesus are missing. There are, however, interesting attempts to present Christian revelation in the language of the ancient myths. Predominant factual material and theological interpretation occurs to a limited extent.

The numerous analyses of linguistic character, very clear chapter summaries, and theological conclusions are valued points of *Mariologia centonów*. Centos shed light on understanding the "grain of truth" (*semina veritatis*) and are a testament to the interaction between the Bible, theology, mythology and the Apocrypha. Gilski advocates using the method the cento writers incorporated in our times. First century Christians did not remain at the level of criticism of pagan literature. Not only are the centos an allegorical interpretation, but the texts were also considered by the pagans as the highest achievements of literature which try to communicate the Gospel message. Gilski's notable proposal is that the centos writers try to use their experience to present Christian Revelation in the language of contemporary culture.