FULGENTIUS
THE MYTHOGRAPHER
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Translated from the Latin, with Introductions, by

LESLIE GEORGE WHITBREAD

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For Marjorie
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None of the five Latin works ascribed to Fulgentius the mythographer has, to my knowledge, been previously published in English, or any other modern language. They are, indeed, frequently described as either untranslatable or not worth translating. At worst, the Latin is appalling— decadent, involved, littered with wasteful connectives and rhetorical extravagances, pompous, inflated, pretentious, prolix, infested with Asianic exaggeration. The colors of rhetoric turn psychedelic; enormous sentences confront lucidity like barbed-wire entanglements. And as the style is without grace, so are the purposes and methods muddleheaded and dubious, and the displays of learning secondhand and suspect. Yet, for all the drawbacks, which belong as much to his age as to Fulgentius himself, these are works which through the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance were highly popular, much admired, and widely imitated. It is one of the curiosities of literature how—in the consideration of such broad themes as the development of allegory, the survival of classical mythology, the history of literary criticism, and the medieval interpretations of Virgil—Fulgentius earned his small niche, and not only for his central theses, which (despite their notoriety for modern students) had considerable influence, but also for the peripheral concepts and commonplaces he scatters around them.

The present version has necessarily something of a pioneering character. I have followed the only modern edition, by Rudolf Helm in the Bibliotheca Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1898), which provides an adequate text and apparatus but little or nothing in the way of critical or explanatory comment; hence, the fairly copious annotation. I have not aimed at more than a reproduction of Fulgentius’s involved style; and I have, therefore, mostly kept to the punctuation adopted by Helm, cumbersome though it may appear in places. In places where ambiguity and obscurity lie thickest, my choice has been to paraphrase rather than perpetuate the darkness; but I am very conscious of having groped my way, and I have sometimes noted the original in the hope that others may find more light.

My first interest in Fulgentius I owe to Professor Robert G. Cook of New-
comb College, Tulane University. The stimulus which led directly to the present version owes most to Dr. O. B. Hardison, Jr., formerly professor of English at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and now director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., who generously placed at my disposal both his wide learning and his own unpublished translation of Fulgentius's *Content of Virgil*. Of what follows, the best is his. My more intimate debts the dedication expresses.

L.G.W.

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