

tell them that *The Athenian Constitution Written in the School of Aristotle*⁹ displays the same depth of expertise and is as lucid and precise in its exposition as its predecessors. The introduction and ‘more up-to-date but more modest’ (v) commentary are based on his contributions to a recent Italian edition; the Greek text is accompanied by a new and ‘more punctilious’ English translation. This journal’s re-categorization of the work from Greek history to Greek literature may seem surprising; but I, at least, see no reason to complain.

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Latin Literature

The dullest book of the *Aeneid*? Certainly not, insist Stephen Heyworth and James Morwood in their commentary on *Aeneid* 3.¹ There can’t be many students at school or university level who cut their teeth on epic Virgil with his third book, but Wadham College, Oxford, where H&M were colleagues, has been the glorious exception for a quarter of a century, and the rest of us now have good reason to follow suit. I don’t just mean the ‘thrilling traveller’s tale’ (so the dust-jacket) that carries us from Polydorus to Polyphemus by way of such episodes as the Cretan plague, the Harpy attack, and a pointed stop-off at Actium, nor the ktistic and prophetic themes that give this book such weight in Virgil’s grand narrative. There’s also the simple matter of accessibility. *Doctissimi lectores* of *Aeneid* 3 can consult Nicholas Horsfall’s densely erudite and wickedly overpriced Brill commentary, but others have had to make do with one of R. D. Williams’ more apologetic efforts.² (True, there is an efficient student edition by C. Perkell, but that seems to have made little headway in the UK, at least.)³ Now Aeneas’ odyssey takes a place among the few books of the *Aeneid* for which undergraduates and others can draw on commentaries which are at once accessible, sophisticated, and affordable.

H&M found a winning formula with Propertius 3, subject of their last palmary collaboration,⁴ and they reproduce it here with great fidelity: a substantial introduction, a glossary of critical jargon, handy maps, a newly constituted text, the commentary itself, a long ‘appendix of major intertexts’, and a select bibliography (far more is cited throughout). The volume is fifty pages down on Propertius, so no jokes from me à la

⁹ *The Athenian Constitution Written in the School of Aristotle*. Edited with an introduction, translation, and notes by P. J. Rhodes. Aris & Phillips Classical Texts. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 441. 2 b/w illustrations. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-78694-070-4; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-78694-837-3.

¹ *A Commentary on Vergil Aeneid 3*. By S. J. Heyworth and J. H. W. Morwood. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 327. 4 b/w illustrations. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-87278-11; paperback £22.95, ISBN: 978-0-19-872782-8.

² N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3. A Commentary* (Leiden, 2006); R. D. Williams, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Tertius* (Oxford, 1962).

³ C. G. Perkell, *Vergil. Aeneid. Book 3* (Newburyport, MA, 2010).

⁴ S. J. Heyworth and J. H. W. Morwood, *A Commentary on Propertius, Book 3* (Oxford, 2011).

nescioquid maius nascitur; but the density of coverage is identical, at around twenty-five Latin words per page of commentary. The introduction sparkles with well-chosen examples and neat observations. Readers' eyes are opened to the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, to Virgil's wide range of 'intertexts and influences' (a characteristically catholic choice of critical terms), his style on the large scale and the small, and scansion (both 'how to' and why it's worth trying); the eight-page synopsis of the *Aeneid* is perhaps a little *de trop*, but makes clear the authors' firm desire to provide a one-stop shop for novice Virgilians. A highlight is the section on 'contents and themes', with bite-sized but incisive gobbets on such topics as 'Fatum and Fortuna', 'hospitality and flight', and 'family'. The idea of Aeneas as a recitalist, cued to literary recitation at Rome, is also nicely introduced, and picked up regularly in the commentary with reminders of 'the listening Dido' at our side. The introduction ends traditionally on 'text and transmission', handled with impeccable lucidity.

Virgil doesn't present anything like the scope for radical intervention that Propertius does, and the text offered here varies from Mynors' Oxford text and Conte's Teubner in relatively few details. Where H&M have been more interventive is in redividing sentences, more convincingly some times (best is line 319, after Horsfall) than others. For my money, the punctuation adopted for 10 (also after Horsfall, this time silently, but none of his parallels is quite equivalent) and 252 at best flattens the rhetoric, and the traditional punctuation at 620–1 is both more stylish (with its interrupting parenthesis) and more logical: the idea that Polyphemus is hard to see and impossible to address (621) is considerably grander when connected to his heavenly stature (618–19) than to the fact that he has his mouth full of human (622); but perhaps that's a matter of taste. In any case, such interventions (all discussed in the commentary) are a useful reminder not to take punctuation for granted: commas and full stops are both consequential and (still) debatable.

The commentary is rich but genial, offering the full range from help with unfamiliar lexis to the most intricate literary analysis. The linguistic judgement is fine and the didaxis elegantly leavened: we surely won't forget Ulysses' 'eminently hissable' name (613), or forgive the remark that Virgil 'harps on' *dirus* in the Celaeno episode (211). Not a page passes without neat comment or insight; H&M are particularly good on intratexts, such as the poetic justice served to Pyrrhus (332, echoing his own killing of Priam in Book 2), or the more adventurous but nice remark on *Troia uidit / arma procul* (596–7): 'the Greek from the *Odyssey* now sets eyes on the *Aeneid* (cf. 1.1 *Arma uirumque...Troiae*)'; here and elsewhere our guides do not shrink from metaliterary interpretation. Two approaches, by contrast, are kept at arm's length. First, the 'analytical' game that has occupied so many critics of Book 3 (how unfinished, how inferior, how early?): brusquely dismissed in the preface, such questions are broached only implicitly, through persistent vindication of the book's qualities. Second, subversive reading: though often willing to leave textual and interpretative problems open, H&M rarely give quarter (or indeed voice) to all those critics who detect political anxieties in Virgil's text. Cognate with that is the striking absence (or did I blink?) of David Quint's celebrated reading of 'regressive repetition' in Book 3.⁵

⁵ D. Quint, *Epic and Empire. Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 53–6.

Critical reflections on the commentary as a form of scholarship, much in vogue these days, regularly identify ‘parallels’ as the making or breaking of a commentator. In their handling of intertexts, as of intratexts, H&M must score highly, with plenty of subtle differentiation and interpretation. Here the appendix comes into its own: texts and translations of key passages from Homer, Pindar, Euripides, Callimachus, Apollonius, Lucretius, Ovid, and other books of the *Aeneid* leave students (and others) no excuse not to explore this dimension of Virgilian art. Nice nuggets in this area, not unheard-of but often forgotten, include the prospect that *Italiam. Italiam* (523) echoes the famous *thalassa thalassa* (with aspirated t^h, we are reminded), and the cameo of Virgil’s Scylla (431–2) in the scaly creature who opens Horace’s *Ars poetica*. If a proposed echo in the Polyphemus episode of the *Tusculan Disputations* (p. 251) seems unlikely, do check the context in Cicero before casting your vote. As for Virgil’s influence on others, that huge topic is excluded from the outset (‘constraints of space’, x), but does get a look-in from time to time, and Ausonius’ naughty appropriation of *monstrum horrendum informe ingens, cui lumen ademptum* (658) duly pokes its head into the preface (x).

One quibble to muddy this panegyric concerns the running heads, which are chunked by episode (e.g. ‘lines 356–462’) rather than being specific to each page spread. I can see how the idea came about, but this will irritate ‘raiders’ (and there aren’t many who read commentaries through) time and again: dear Oxford, please don’t let the habit catch on. That said, we should thank the Press for their good sense in making this volume affordable, and the authors for making it such a good read. For the rest of us, time to experiment: give Dido a break, leave Troy and Hades in peace for a year, *et huc aduertite mentem*.

I wrote those paragraphs before learning of James Morwood’s death, far too early, in September 2017. Many will remember James with great affection as a teacher and friend; many more will be grateful for his translations and scholarship, not only on Attic tragedy; and the role that he has played in keeping Greek and Latin alive – witness all those well-thumbed copies of *Oxford Grammars* and the *Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary* – has been immense. Here is not the place to turn epitaphic, but I hope I may be allowed to add, apropos of *Aeneid* 3, that the career of this admirable Classicist is aptly sealed by so fine, so collegial, and so vivacious a volume.

A published tribute, next, to David West, whose name will be familiar to many readers of this journal, not just for his Penguin *Aeneid* or his commentaries on Horace’s *Odes*. Professor of Latin at Newcastle from 1969 to 1992, he cut a distinctive figure on the national stage; his inaugural address as President of the Classical Association in 1995 offered the firm (and contentious) advice, ‘Cast out theory’. West died in 2013, and is commemorated now with a volume of essays edited by his former colleague Tony Woodman and the current Newcastle professor Jakob Wisse. I declare an interest as editor of the series in which it appears, and will be accordingly brief in my report: a distinguished cast including another lamented and learned Newcastle Classicist, John Moles, who died suddenly in 2015, offer readings of poetry (and some prose) from Lutatius Catulus to Hildebert of Lavardin.⁶

⁶ *Word and Context in Latin Poetry. Studies in Memory of David West. Cambridge Classical Journal Supplement* 40. Edited by A. J. Woodman and J. Wisse. Cambridge, Cambridge Philological Society, 2017. Pp. xvi + 182. Hardback £45, ISBN: 978-0-9568381-5-5.

Back to Virgil commentaries, and on to Pallanteum. For all my exhortations on *Aeneid* 3, it is of course not so easy to pick and choose if you're teaching the A level syllabus. Keith Maclennan, experienced teacher and practised Virgilian commentator, had already come to the rescue on *Aeneid* 8, producing a slim volume on the selections prescribed for the OCR A level in 2018 and 2019;⁷ now he has produced an enlarged student commentary on the whole book.⁸ This too breathes good sense, clear Latinity, and fine didactic judgement; the tone is easy and inviting. Interpretative thrusts are necessarily selective, but the selection is well made and the literary-political steering (from a self-professed 'optimistic pessimist') moderate: all this will make rich pickings for school students, and a good start too for undergraduates. From the substantial introduction let me single out the refreshing pages on style, which set out to lift readers' eyes up and beyond alliteration and enjambment, and the closing section on reception, from Proba's *Cento* through Dante to neoclassical art: an enticing array of themes for a project or extended essay.

Before leaving Virgil, notice to some short but significant contributions from two of his most distinguished students. In 2016 Gian Biagio Conte followed up his Teubner editions of the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* with a slim volume of critical notes:⁹ around two dozen problems are discussed in magisterial but congenial tone, and the notorious 'Helen episode' of *Aeneid* 2 is revisited once more (Conte sees it as a still rough draft, of Virgil's own). He has subsequently allowed himself a 'relapse' into more theoretical territory, in a short essay 'on imitation in Latin poetry'.¹⁰ In the 1970s Conte penned what would become some of the most influential pages in the study of poetic intertextuality, bringing Pasquali's 'art of allusion' (*arte allusiva*) to the Anglophone masses.¹¹ His return to the subject merits attention, interest, and – once you've read it – a degree of disappointment. Besides revisiting some now very familiar intertexts, Conte uses this pamphlet primarily for apologia and to issue reactionary edicts against some recent work. His book 'had embarrassingly good fortune', he professes, but his arguments have been 'abused' by 'unwelcome followers' with 'their intolerable interpretative deviations' (35): here are some very clear opinions (and no false modesty). Stephen Hinds's *Allusion and Intertext*, the go-to book on this topic for many, includes a celebrated reading of *Itur in antiquam siluam* (*Aen.* 6.179) as self-reflexive comment on Virgil's literary encounter with Ennius.¹² Conte, anonymizing Hinds as 'a willful critic', is flatly dismissive ('I don't believe it'), on the grounds that 'the presence of a meta-linguistic hidden meaning would have disturbed the "heated" effect of the grandiose epic narrative by "chilling" the reader' (56; ancient critical ideas of 'frigidity' are

⁷ K. Maclennan, *Virgil. Aeneid 8. A Selection* (London, 2016).

⁸ *Virgil. Aeneid Book VIII*. By Keith Maclennan. London, Bloomsbury, 2017. Pp. vi + 284. Paperback £17.99, ISBN: 978-1-4725-2787-5.

⁹ *Critical Notes on Virgil. Editing the Teubner Text of the Georgics and the Aeneid*. By Gian Biagio Conte. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016. Pp. xiv + 97. Hardback £54.99, ISBN: 978-3-11-045576-2.

¹⁰ *Stealing the Club From Hercules. On Imitation in Latin Poetry*. By Gian Biagio Conte. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2017. Pp. 61. Hardback £54.99, ISBN: 978-3-11-047220-2.

¹¹ G. B. Conte, *Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario. Catullo, Virgilio, Ovidio, Lucano* (Turin, 1974; trans. in *The Rhetoric of Imitation. Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca, NY, 1986)).

¹² S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext. Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998), 11–14.

presumably in mind). But it is surely axiomatic that great poetry can operate on multiple axes simultaneously: *doctrina* and *grandeur* are complementary, not mutually cancelling, dimensions of this text. Comments like this leave Conte looking, curiously enough, quite the unreconstructed romantic. That so many typos and non-nativisms have been fitted into sixty-odd pages is a disgrace for De Gruyter, and does no favours to the authority of this philological grandee. But that is what happens when a major press abrogates any responsibility for proofreading (while pricing its wares at £90 per hundred pages): as a profession we should keep up the protests.

I have already mentioned Nicholas Horsfall, doyen of the monumental Virgil commentary, and might add a few years after the event that his latest instalment, a massive *Aeneid* 6 (Berlin, 2013), is available in paperback at a remarkably fair price. But my subject here is his aptly slim *Epic Distilled*.¹³ Over a quarter of a century ago, Horsfall published *Virgilio. L'epopea in alambicco* (Naples, 1991). This new book 'is not, is indeed NOT, a translation' of that one, the preface proclaims in unmistakably Horsfallian tones (vii); rather, it reduces some of the immense learning accumulated in his commentaries into a dense *jus* – and a powerful vindication of source criticism as a meaningful approach to Virgilian poetics. The *Aeneid* may have appealed to the widest of readerships then as now, but it is also an 'exceptionally difficult, learned, allusive epic' (44), and that is the paradox explored in these pages. Horsfall is something of a marmite scholar, and the penmanship has shades of the unapologetic, demanding manner of all his work. But here is a short and relatively easy-going taster, *multum in paruo* but digestible too. 'Long, loving and precise labour' went into Virgil's rich process of distillation, concludes Horsfall (156), and – though the banality of this turn will surely disappoint him – much the same can be said of his own slender tome.

Back to Oxford commentaries now, and a monstrous one. Seneca's late, great *Thyestes* presents an apocalyptic vision of inhumanity, as the insatiable Atreus plots and performs bloody revenge on his brother for the *n*th time in ancient theatre. It was only a matter of time before A. J. Boyle, great Senecan of our age and author of major commentaries on four other of his tragedies (plus the *Octavia*), turned his sharp attention to it.¹⁴ If *Oedipus* (2011) and *Medea* (2014) were hefty, *Thyestes* breaks all bounds: 'Let Thracian sin be done with greater number', commands the Fury (lines 56–7), and Boyle obliges, with a volume surpassing 700 pages. A monograph-length introduction establishes a full range of contexts, with particular attention to reception from Statius to Shelley and beyond. Ronald Syme, it used to be said, underwent a stylistic *Verschmelzung* with his favourite author Tacitus. You might sense a touch of the same with Boyle's prose: brusque, compelling, authoritative (but no risk of sand without lime). Interpretations, too, are forceful and uncompromising, as on Senecan style and dramaturgy (for which Boyle feels not the slightest need to apologize) and the great 'performance debate' (no doubt for *him* that Seneca wrote for a stage). The Latin text (thirty-three variants from Zwierlein's Oxford Classical Text) is accompanied as ever by a blank-verse translation which staunchly refuses to be just a crib; the product, though it

¹³ *The Epic Distilled. Studies in the Composition of the Aeneid*. By Nicholas Horsfall. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 160. Hardback £45, ISBN: 978-0-19-875887-7.

¹⁴ *Seneca. Thyestes. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. By A. J. Boyle. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. cxlv + 561. Hardback £120, ISBN: 978-0-19-874472-6.

sometimes strays beyond even paraphrase (*In patre facient quicquid in patruo doces* (310) comes out as ‘You teach them to treat father like uncle’), is a suitably muscular match for Seneca’s original. The commentary, 350 pages of it, is massive and wide-ranging; bibliography and indexes add over a hundred more.

It’s not so long since Richard Tarrant produced his incisive and highly regarded commentary on this play, whose modest price and more digestible length will keep it the option of choice for many.¹⁵ Still, this new *maximum opus* more than justifies its existence as a rival sibling. Plenty of views and points of emphasis are shared: the late date of *Thyestes*, its decidedly un-Stoic representation of human passions, the moral weakness of Thyestes himself. On the text the dialogue is more varied, as you might expect in view of the substantial text-critical work that has intervened (starting with Zwierlein’s OCT in 1986). The largest difference, however, lies in the sheer quantity and depth of analysis and comparative material that Boyle can offer on his much larger canvas, as well as in his (super)abundant treatment of reception. Metatheatre, too, a vein so richly mined in recent work on this play, features regularly, and powerfully.

Three massive commentaries in seven years: how does he do it? Agrypnia perhaps, certainly tirelessness; but judicious recycling plays its part: around a third of the introduction is lifted (advertisedly) from his *Medea* commentary, and many a paragraph, note, or part-note in the commentary has parentage there or in the *Oedipus*. Still, this is no idle *crambe repetita*: many borrowed passages have been redrafted (usually expanded), and most of the rest, it could fairly be said, ain’t broke. ‘Enough now even for me’, proclaims Atreus (889). Not so for Boyle, or so his faculty webpage says: next stop the *Agamemnon*. Work up your appetite.

As you’ve noticed by now, my *pensum* was heavy on commentaries, and here trots a last pair into view, again from the Oxford stable. Flavian epic is big business these days, and Statius no longer hogs the limelight: even the long-scorned Silius Italicus has several monographs and a *Brill’s Companion* to his name. His journey back in from the cold is now sped along by two single-book commentaries. Joy Littlewood on *Punica* 10 has the better front cover and a climactic subject:¹⁶ Silius centres his seventeen-book *opus* on the Battle of Cannae, which comes to its grisly end here. As with Book 7 (2011), Littlewood goes about the task with great energy, but again the product is regrettably marred by problems at several levels. To mention just those of production, the facing translation (in cheerful *Boys’ Own* style) soon works its way loose of the text, so that it’s a matter of luck whether any given line will in fact be translated on the same double spread, and other mistakes and misprints are legion. Still, the Freudian typo when Livy is quoted on Cannae, that peerless military catastrophe, is one to treasure (xxv, n. 86): *nulla profecto allia gens...*

Punica 2, meanwhile, gets smooth treatment from Neil Bernstein.¹⁷ This early book is one of Silius’ most varied and (many would say) best, and makes an ideal candidate

¹⁵ R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca’s Thyestes* (Atlanta, GA, 1985).

¹⁶ *A Commentary on Silius Italicus’ Punica 10*. By R. Joy Littlewood. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. lxxix + 265. 5 b/w illustrations. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-871381-4.

¹⁷ *Silius Italicus, Punica 2. Edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*. By Neil W. Bernstein. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. liv + 318. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-874786-4.

for anyone who wants to dip a toe in the water. Hannibal's siege of Saguntum is the scene: from the *aristeia* of Amazon Asbyte (Silius' answer to Virgil's Camilla) we rush via 'senatorial' debate back at Carthage and the Shield of Hannibal to Saguntine self-cremation, where Silius turns one of the most notorious mass suicides in antiquity into a nightmarish scene of Fury-goaded madness. In other words, something for everyone: combat (but not too much), including one of Rome's great female warrior scenes; lashings of epic horror; and some high-profile and high-pressure examples of what pulses through the whole *Punica*, insistent and ever-creative imitation of (*inter alia*) the *Aeneid*. To all this Bernstein is a polished guide: crisp and clear introduction, clean text (with occasional text-critical discussion in the commentary), very readable translation, detailed and subtle notes.

We end with a witch. Maxwell Teitel Paule devotes his short book, revised from an Ohio State doctoral dissertation, to the Canidia who stalks the pages of Horace's *Epodes* and *Satires*.¹⁸ What sort of creature is this unwholesome woman, and does she add up to a whole? 'No' is Paule's answer to the second question; he accordingly offers a suite of largely unconnected readings, addressing in turn her three principal cameos. As to which sort of witch, the term is of course ripe for problematizing, and Paule's pages are duly enlivened by a cheerful cast of *sagae*, *striges*, *ueneficae*, Lamias, Empusas, and the rest – along with the more savoury intertextual company of Callimachus, Theocritus, and Virgil. Those intertexts vary in plausibility; most stimulating is a political reading of the child-killing *Epodes* 5 as cutting response to *Eclogues* 4 and its wonderboy (if you buy the chronology). The suggestion is left relatively undeveloped, as are others. Still, the prose is limpid and the manner amiable; undergraduates should find stimulus here.

A postscript, finally, on letters. Epistolography is still in the ascendant after long decades of patronizing neglect; now Cristiana Sogno, Bradley Storin, and Edward Watts have curated a heavy and handsome 'reference guide' to twenty-four late antique letter collections.¹⁹ Travelling from Julian to Cassiodorus (plus a bonus chapter on papal letters) via such giants of the genre as Jerome, Augustine, and Sidonius Apollinaris, the volume offers a short essay on each writer, summarizing life, works, and the state of the scholarship. The level is well pitched, at once accessible and (thanks to some heavyweight contributors) to be taken seriously: the curious generalist can find unexpected enlightenment on the likes of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Aeneas Gaza, while specialists will be glad to have such a solid handbook on the shelf. But the *tabellarius* is waiting: reader, farewell.

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¹⁸ *Canidia, Rome's First Witch*. By Maxwell Teitel Paule. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Pp. x + 218. 4 b/w illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-3500-0388-0.

¹⁹ *Late Antique Letter Collections. A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide*. Edited by Cristiana Sogno, Bradley K. Storin, and Edward J. Watts. Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2017. Pp. x + 473. Hardback £124.95, ISBN: 978-0-520-28144-8.