

N. HORSFALL, *THE EPIC DISTILLED: STUDIES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE AENEID*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xvi + 160. ISBN 9780198758877. £49.99.

Nicholas Horsfall died on 1st January 2019, just as I had finished reading his last book in preparation for this review. The death, at 72, and with so much learning lost, is a sad one for Latin studies. The book is appropriately valedictory, typically idiosyncratic and judgemental about friends and enemies; it is full of polemic, trenchantly expressed opinions, obscure bibliography, personal history, disorder, loose ends. As his 1991 book *L'Epopea in alambicco* tried to map the theoretical ground on which he would construct his five 'ponderous' commentaries on *Aeneid* 7, 11, 3, 2, 6, so this book reviews the same ground in the light of his experience, and shows with compelling insight how he was right (explicitly on 66, 88, 125), save on the few occasions where he has changed his mind, decisively (e.g. 68 n.40, on *FRHist* 5F8; 70 n.50, on Corythus; 71 n.54, on 6.601–2). Despite the title, attention is sometimes paid to the *Eclogues* and often to the *Georgics*.

The book is not a long one, and it is an entertaining, if sometimes inconsequential read: research students beginning work on Virgil should certainly be encouraged to read it (preferably with access to the commentaries, which frequently provide the answers to puzzles left unsolved here, e.g. 35, on 7.741), and experienced Virgilians may enjoy the scholarship and the personality – but it is hard to see who else will benefit from the book as published. Though it contains many pointers towards valuable, and often recherché, scholarship, the gathered bibliography, which could immediately have made this a worthwhile purchase, is simply absent. There is no *Index locorum* either – a mind-boggling gap. Even the index is inadequate: no place here for 'allegory' (40–1), or '*Eclogues*' (not even '*Buc.*'), or 'facts, historical' (despite the pointer on 98); and to find the fascinating count of graffiti (31–2), one must look not under 'graffiti', 'Pompeii', 'inscriptions', but 'public of V.' Perhaps OUP might consider issuing a second edition, *in memoriam*, with these deficiencies made good.

'Sources and the study of sources are wonderfully out of fashion in work on the *Aeneid*' (2): H. does not regard Apollonius or Ennius as a source – he rather has in mind prose treatises, authorities on myth, geography, religion, natural history. The neglect of poetry damages the consideration of Virgil's early reception: on 32, *Tristia* 2.519 *mea sunt populo saltata poemata saepe* belongs with the later prose evidence for Augustan pantomime; and in the next paragraph there is nothing on the responses visible in Horace, Propertius, or Ovid, even when H. accepts the notion of 'furious argument, over dinner, ...

about Virgil's account of the death of Turnus' (cf. *Carm. Saec.* 51–2, Prop. 3.22.19–22, *Metamorphoses* 14.569–73). There are other strange blind-spots: Camillus is omitted from the note on Camilla's name (57); the old name Eurydice was not available for Aeneas' wife in the *Aeneid* because Virgil 'had already' used it in the *Georgics* (65–6) – as if there were no overlap in composition between the two works; despite 67 n.29, Aeneas is an exile (*finibus extorris*, 4.616) – from Troy, and he too will prove to be a new Achilles for Latium, despite 68 ('*alius ... Achilles* points plainly enough to Turnus'). Concentrating on Apollodorus (82–3), H. misses the presence of Diomedes as leader of those from Argos in the Catalogue of Ships (*Iliad* 2.559–68): it should be no surprise then to read *Argiuaque castra* at *Aen.* 11.243 (the phrase also recalls *Dorica castra*, 6.88, though the main reference there is to the Trojan camp, equivalent to the Greek camp of the *Iliad*). Since the book was submitted, Simon Hornblower's edition of Lycophron (2015) has given good reason to accept the Roman material in *Alexandra* as authentic (*contra* 125); and new evidence has emerged about Palagruža (cf. 37): when narrating the transformation of Diomedes' followers, Lycophron, Ovid (*Met.* 14.497–509), and Pliny the Elder (10.127) describe with some precision (not swans or coots, but similar) what are apparently gannets, a bird little known in the Mediterranean, whose bones have been found on the island (*The Holocene* 27 (2017), 1540–9). As it had a sanctuary of Diomedes (see H.'s 2003 commentary on 11.225–42, and Hornblower on Lyc. 599) and was occupied in Roman times, this should now become the preferred solution.

The book offers a fascinating chapter on libraries (17–30), not just as sources of texts, but also social centres for intellectuals, nicely adducing modern evidence (the bar at the Vatican Library, the tea room in the Cambridge UL) as well as Cicero. Here (21), as elsewhere (43–4), unanswered questions make a provocative (if at times frustrating) contribution: H. wants to destabilize the minds of his readers (64). The chapter on *doctrina* (31–44) has sets of notes on double allusion, geography, mythology, history, Roman practices, puzzles, *insolubilia*, the last revisited on 76–7, after two chapters that explore how Virgil uses his erudition as the basis for invention. As we move on, the focus turns to signposting (chs 7–8: the supposed pointers are not always clear), inconsistencies (ch. 6) and anachronisms (ch. 9): H.'s Virgil is rather like himself, stuffed with erudition, but happy to remain indifferent about some details.

A repeated concern is with the metaphors used to describe Virgil's compositional techniques: peeling an artichoke (ch. 1), embroidery (53), the thieving jackdaw (135), scissors and paste (136), voices (150–1), distillation (156, returning to the title).

Thoughtfulness about critical language deserves commendation; sadly, I cannot say I found any of these examples especially illuminating. But there is charm, and an enriching connexion to real life, in notes on e.g. cornelian cherries ('we are waiting for ours to fruit', 55 n.41). Illumination can be found in the self-aware humour of page 147, on metapoetic references: 'Slowly I am beginning to see some such ... Those discovered by other readers tend to seem less convincing'. The personal voice, inimitable and not perhaps to be imitated, persists to the end (156): 'No, no, I do not mean that strong drink is an essential to the student of Virgil, though it has sometimes helped ...'

S. J. HEYWORTH

Wadham College, Oxford

stephen.heyworth@wadham.ox.ac.uk