

# VERGILIUS

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Review

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## REVIEWS

Nicholas Horsfall (ed.), *Virgil, Aeneid 6. A Commentary*. 2 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013. ISBN 978-3-11-022990-5 (hardcover). Pp. xxxvi + 706.

Nicholas Horsfall (= H.) has given the Virgilian scholars another magnificent commentary after those published for Brill since 2000: *Aen.* 7 (2000); 11 (2003); 3 (2006); 2 (2008). For this commentary on *Aeneid* 6 H. has changed his publisher, now de Gruyter, but the scale and the layout of his work are always the same. The main novelty is that the work is divided in two volumes: a slender one with preface, introduction, bibliography, *Praemonenda*, and text and translation, and a big one with commentary, three appendices, and indices. H.'s long-time readers will also notice that this time the longest bibliographies inserted in the commentary are printed in smaller type size. But that is all: for the rest, we have a commentary that is perfectly homogeneous with the previous ones. So, all of the readers of *Vergilius* will perfectly know what to expect: a work of extraordinary erudition and acumen, at the same time in constant dialogue with all the exegetical tradition and refreshingly novel in its approach, attentive to all the aspects of Virgil's work: literary, antiquarian, linguistic, stylistic. The idiosyncrasies of H.'s method have already been highlighted by many previous reviewers: the density of expression; the peculiar way of distributing the bibliography between the initial bibliography, the introductory sections, and the single notes; the frequent use of abbreviations. By now, Virgil's scholars should be accustomed to these peculiarities of H.'s style, and not be bothered by them anymore.

The introduction is brief as usual (16 pages). It comprises: (1) a sensitive aesthetic appreciation of the book; (2) some remarks on chronology, "not altogether easy to establish" (here the reference to "(854), (3)" should be to "(4)"); (3) structure, with a reference to Otis as to the book's main divisions; (4) *Aeneid* 6 and its neighbours; (5) language, grammar, syntax, style, with a list of the debts of language and manner to earlier authors; (6) sources: two summaries: one by scene and one by type (Homer, Plato, Orphics, Stoics, Cicero, Jewish texts). The problem of Virgil's philosophical sources will be discussed in a detailed way in the course of the commentary: as to Orphism, see pp. 142–43 on influence of the Orphic *Katabasis*. The cry of

the Sibyl in 258 (*procul, o procul este...*), alluding to the beginning of the oldest Orphic theogony, is seen as a “signal’ to the reader, to be specifically alert, in this case, for Orphic content in what follows” (p. 227). Not certainly Orphic, instead, are the words *sit mihi fas audita loqui* in 266 (pp. 232–33). Aeneas may recall for some aspects the figure of the Orphic initiate, but he is not to be identified with one of them (on 563). H. is rather sceptical about the presence of Tisiphone and the Hydra in the Orphic *Katabasis* (on 570, 576). For Orphic elements in Elysium, see p. 437 n. 1. The influence of Hellenistic Jewish apocalyptic is considered with scepticism; cf. esp. on 320 *hae ... illae* (cf. further in *Vergilius* 58 [2012] 68–70). (7) Inconsistencies; (8) Eschatology: very brief: “the book is a magnificent construct, a masterpiece of eschatological *bricolage*, just what one should expect from study of the poet’s methods elsewhere” (pp. xxv–xxvi). There is a table illustrating the different “eschatological ‘statements’” the book gives regarding the present state of the deceased, for how long they will remain in this state, and their ultimate destination; (9) an evaluation of the commentaries on *Aen.* 6 (on Norden there is a specific appendix, pp. 645–54); 10) Text, explaining his usual method of printing the bold letters **O**, **P**, and **T** in the margin of the text to refer to notes on orthography, punctuation, and text in the commentary.

Since H. does not list the discrepancies between his text and those of Mynors and Conte, it might be useful to review them briefly. At 122 H. (with Conte) punctuates after *magnum*, thus giving *quid Thesea magnum, | quid memorem Alciden?*, whereas Mynors punctuates after *Thesea*, but H. thinks that probably *magnum* applies to both names (and so the translation). H. differs from Conte in 161 *exanimus* **PR** (-em **M**, Conte): “a recurrent issue”; H. follows the weight of the evidence, not believing that considerations of euphony (Norden) might be decisive in the choice. 433 *consiliumque* **P** (*conciliumque* **MR**, Conte): H. undecided, but eventually convinced in favor of *consilium* because of the appropriate procedural flavor of the word. 438 *tristisque ... undae* (H.) pro *tristi ... unda* (Conte): H. prefers the genitive against, e.g., Timpanaro, *Virgilianisti antichi e tradizione indiretta*, 123–24. Conte (with Norden): *concussus* in 475 pro *percussus*: H. prefers the *lectio difficilior*. 495 *uidet et* N. Heinsius, Mynors, H.: *uidit* Conte. Here H. prints *uidet et*, but in the commentary lemmatizes *uidit* and affirms that “Asyndeton here is much preferable, as Au. argues.” 533: for the second *an* Conte accepts *aut* of Reeve (ap. Goold): “most attractively,” but without further argument. (The **T** at line 535 is difficult to understand: should be located instead at line 533?) 600: Conte follows Ribbeck in positing a lacuna after 600, in which there should have been a reference to Tantalus. At 601–7 H. in the commentary declares that he is “strongly attracted” by J. C. Jahn’s solution of the problem, and his translation does indeed follow this suggestion (“Why

should I mention the Lapiths, Ixion and Pirithous? Why those over whom the black rock, about to fall at any moment, looms as though in descent?”). Accordingly, a question mark should have been printed after 602 *adsimilis*, while instead the printed text is that of, e.g., Mynors. Here H. rejects his previous (*Alambicco*, 48) suggestion that “V. might have been playing with unfixed canons” (p. 419). 647 *eadem ... pulsat*: “Conte surprisingly approves Markland’s banal *fidem* for **eadem**.” This might suggest that Conte actually prints *fidem*, while he only mentions it in the apparatus with a *fortasse recte*; it is Goold who prints *fidem*. At 658 H. prefers (with Mynors, Geymonat, Austin) the variant *lauris* (**G**) pro *lauri*; cf. his note, *SCI* 12 (1993) 157. 664: H. prefers *alios* (**F**<sup>2</sup>) pro *aliquos* (**FMPR**), against both Mynors and Conte (Norden also preferred *aliquos*, p. 37 n. 2). The choice is difficult; H. finds “a far more preferable *sense*” in *alios*, but one wonders if *aliquos* is not the *lectio difficilior* here (and much better attested). 746: H. prints *relinquit* **F**<sup>2</sup>**PR** pro *relinquit* **FM**, preferred both by Mynors and by Conte. 806: H. follows Henry in printing *uirtute extendere uires* **PR** (with Conington, Ribbeck, Sabbadini and Geymonat); *uirtutem extendere factis* **M** is printed by Mynors and Conte, “To extend our might by means of our courage.” The strongest argument in favor of *uirtute ... uires* is that, given 10.468 *famam extendere factis*, it is difficult to imagine the origin of the corruption. 869: H. prints *nec* (**MR**) pro *neque* (**FP**) printed by Conte, but in the commentary lemmatizes and sustains *neque*. 900: H. prints *limite* of the *recc.* pro *litore* with Mynors; Conte prefers to seclude 901 (= 3.277), with Bentley and Ribbeck. H. leaves 901 in the text, “but with no solid conviction that this is necessarily the right choice.”

The translation is, as always, extremely accurate and extremely useful. (There are just a few minor imperfections, omissions, and discrepancies between translation and commentary.)

The commentary displays the familiar virtues of all of H.’s commentaries: amazing command of Virgilian scholarship, thoughtful attention to the peculiarities of Virgil’s language and style, sensitive alertness to issues of narrative structure and compositional technique. I offer here just a brief and arbitrary survey of some of the most interesting points in H.’s commentary.

H.’s approach to Cumae and the Sibyl is anticipated in the relevant section of his comm. on *Aen.* 3 (441–60), and also in appendix 1 to the same commentary (“Virgil’s sources for the Cumaean Sibyl; the evidence of bk. 6”). See especially the note on 3.446 *in antro seclusa* for the vagueness of the relationship between Virgil’s description of the cave and the remains visible in Cumae; real topography is not useful for our understanding of the text; “far more interesting are the literary associations of oracular caves (not necessarily Sibylline [...]) for V.” Here there is a long and typically dense

section on “Sibyl(s) and cave(s)” (abbreviated SC, pp. 70–84), detailing the literary/conventional nature of the Sibyl’s description and of the landscape associated with her, and sceptically reviewing the evidence provided by the text of *Aen.* 6 on topographical matters. Even if one may agree that “a precise understanding of the details is quite unnecessary for our understanding and enjoyment of the narrative,” one misses a discussion of the problem of the physical relationship of the Sibyl’s cave to Apollo’s temple (p. 75): maybe a rapid history of the question might have been useful for the curious reader. H. is cautiously sceptical regarding the identification of the Sibyl’s cave with the gallery discovered in 1932 by Maiuri (the reference to *Enc. Biogr. Ital.* should be to *Diz. Biogr. Ital.*): “It seems to me that we can say no more than that Maiuri’s gallery *may*, perhaps, have influenced V’s picture.” Scepticism is also displayed about the relationship between the *Aen.*’s account, Ps. Just. *Cohort. Gent.* 37 and Maiuri’s gallery (pp. 78–79), even if H. admits that ps. Just. describes Maiuri’s gallery as the Sibyl’s (p. 79)—but probably not the same site as the Byzantines. Even more complex is the situation near the crater (p. 79). The texts pertaining to the Cimmerian Sibyl and the Oracle of the Dead at Avernus are usefully and clearly collected at pp. 80–81. H. is predictably sceptical about the attribution to L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi of the account of a consultation of the Cimmerian Sibyl by Aeneas attested, perhaps, by *OGR* 10.1 (cf. Piso fr. 41 P. = F2 *FRHist*); notice now that also Pobjoy in *FRHist* includes the consultation of the Cimmerian Sibyl as Piso F3; cf. Bispham and Northwood on Acilius F8 *FRHist*.

There is an ample discussion of the doors of Apollo’s temple (pp. 85ff.). H. makes here some fine points: the *Aeneid* as a “consolation” for Daedalus (his art survives through Virgil); H. (tacitly changing his mind from *Companion*, 150) sees no connection between the Labyrinth and the Underworld, but offers a list of “associations”, with comments on the credibility of each proposal (pp. 88–89). On 28, the reference of *reginae* is without any doubt to Ariadne, not to Pasiphae: hardly “a problem.” Here the implausible suggestion that the *magnus amor* of 28 might be the love of mother for son (Pasiphae for the Minotaur) is rather far-fetchedly paired with the one (more probable, in my view) that points to an allusion to the love of Dido and Aeneas; both views (apparently) are rejected by H., even if on 28 *miseratus* he contrasts Daedalus’ display of pity to the suppression of *Aeneas*’ emotive reactions to Dido. On 26 *Veneris monumenta* (H. prints *monimenta* but in the commentary lemmatizes, and approves, *monimenta nefandae* H. records the possible echo of 4.497–98 *abolere nefandi | cuncta uiri monumenta iuuat*, and subtly notices that “*Aen.*’s relations with Dido are relevant and should be borne in mind.”

The “problem” of the apparent duplication of prophetic roles between Anchises and the Sibyl (see notes on 94 *externique ... thalami*, 890 *bella ... memorat*) is not to be thought of as one of those inconsistencies destined to be “cleared up” in Virgil’s final revision of the *Aeneid*. At 890–92 Virgil reworks 3.458–60, where Helenus prophesies that the Sibyl will give information on the peoples of Italy and the future wars; now these indications are given to Aeneas by Anchises. H. says that he gives no personal view on the problem, but clearly sympathizes with the readers “happy to recognise simply that the problems exist in the surviving text,” even if he records his conviction that Book 3 is earlier than Book 6 (cf. comm. on 3, xx–xl): “either the poet had forgotten, or he did not care, or perhaps he ‘was going to sort it out’ during the ‘final revision’” (p. 611).

On 97 *Graia ... ab urbe*, H. gives “a sceptical summary” about the story that Rome was settled by the Arcadian Evander: no proof that the mention of Pallanteum in Stesichorus’ *Geryoneis* was connected to Evander; doubts about the mention of Evander as son of the Italic Sibyl in “Eratosthenes” ap. Schol. Vet. *ad Plat. Phaedr.* 244B; “it is easier to suspect than to prove the antiquity of the story of the Arcadian settlement at Rome” (p. 130). At pp. 142–44 a clear and concise summary of the elements in common with the *Katabaseis*, the *Katabasis* of Orpheus and that of Heracles.

The notorious inconsistency regarding the fate of Theseus (he returns to the upper world, 122; he stays forever in the underworld, 617–18), which worried Hyginus, is explained, as already in *Alambicco* 49 (cf. Norden), with the influence of a double tradition: in 617–18 Virgil follows the older tradition, in 122 the more recent one.

H’s 1991 *Virgilio: lepoepa in alambicco* began with an analysis of the Golden Bough. Here we find again no reliance at all on Servius’ note (*ad* 136) about what the *publica opinio* thought regarding a connection of the GB (H.’s abbreviation) with the Arician cult. Similarly, no esoteric meaning is to be attached to the mistletoe simile: H. confirms his enthusiastic approval of D. A. West, “The Bough and the Gate,” in *Oxford Readings* 224–38, calling, for example, “immortal” the scornful expression “Balderdash” used by West (*Oxford Readings*, 228) to refer to the application of northern folklore to the mistletoe simile. Among the various golden boughs one can find in antiquity, special attention is given, as already in *Alambicco*, 23–24, to the “golden bough” of the poet-philosopher Plato in Meleager (*AP* 4.1.47–48); and to the branches (not golden) carried by the initiands in the Eleusinian rites, and possibly carried by Hercules in his *Katabasis*: Virgil’s GB might be an allusion to this. From a botanical point of view, the mistletoe of the simile of 205–7, since it has yellow berries, cannot be the *viscum album*, but must be the *loranthus europaeus*, which, however, is not evergreen, *pace* 206

*fronde uirere noua*: “one way or another, Virgil is wrong on the botanical detail” (p. 154; observation not repeated on 206, where it is said that “the mistletoe is evergreen”). H. notes a “botanical fallacy” in Nelis’ theory about the equation of GB and Apollonius’ Golden Fleece: Virgil’s *ilex* is not the same as Apollonius’ *dru*”: autopsy is invoked (“both are visible from the window of my study...”). Importance is also given (again: cf. *Alambicco*, 21–22) to the parallelism between the pair of doves that lead Aeneas to the GB and the animals that lead colonizers in the foundation-stories; H. is sceptical regarding Nelis’ reference to the Argonauts led through the Symplegades by a dove.

*Cunctantem* is still interpreted as a realistic detail. The reader is referred to *Alambicco*, 26–27, for the notion of resistance as a “well-established motif of mythol. narrative” (p. 156; cf. J. Bremmer in Bremmer-Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* 105–11, at 110–11): but there, in fact, H. expressed a lot of scepticism about this notion (*Companion*, 150, also quoted by H., does not seem relevant here); cf. also pp. 159–60. The resistance of the GB is more fully discussed in the note on 137 *et lento uimine*. Whatever we may think of *cunctantem*, H. is undoubtedly right in emphasizing that “the Sibyl’s warning, 147f. *si te fata uocant; aliter non uiribus ullis...* does not in practice apply to Aeneas’ attempt, for the GB *does* come away and serves successfully as a talisman in Aeneas’ quest for his father” (p. 159); cf. also on 143 *primo auulso*.

Typical of H. is the criticism of Servius’ references to technical terms of augury. In the passage where the doves lead Aeneas to the GB, there are no such technical terms: e.g. on 197 *uestigia pressit*, 198 *quae signa ferant*, 248 *supponunt cultros* (“Elsewhere too I have suggested that Serv., with many students of V. in his train, is rather too eager to identify words as belonging to technical ritual language (see 203, 244), when a more sceptical reader notes only use of (often) standard Latin in a ritual context”).

The description of the *columbae* is not a portent: cf. also on 202 *lapsae*, 203 *sedibus optatis*. 193 *maternas ... aues* are strictly interpreted as focalized through Aeneas: “Aen. thinks the birds were sent by Venus: do we? were they?” At 262 *antro ... aperto* argues that the reference is to “a cave standing permanently open”: “It matters very little that no such cave exists upon the map, for at this point V.’s map is drawn by Lucr. (237), not the Istituto Geografico Militare.”

On the conclusion of the burial of Misenus, H. respectfully takes issue with Norden’s view that this is a fundamental scene for Italo-Greek burials and sacrificial rites. (Here H. starts with “(i)” a list of problems of method regarding this question, but does not proceed after the first point.) As H. has repeatedly demonstrated elsewhere, V. is not accustomed to describe with

accuracy Roman religious procedures. Similarly for the sacrificial rites of 243–54. H. senses an overlooked problem in 244 *sacerdos*: this figure might be not the Sibyl, as is generally understood, but an anonymous Trojan priest. (Question marks in the translation.)

The elm of the dreams “gives the appearance of a piece of Virgilian bricolage, of a typical learned construct” (283 *ulmus*). Characteristically, the problematic dimensions of Charon’s barque may be due to use of different sources (p. 266), and similarly for the relationships between the various infernal rivers: “an insoluble muddle, transmitted by V’s sources (Homer, Plato) to a beneficiary uncaring of order and system in such matters” (p. 267).

At pp. 274–76 there is a lucid exposition of the inconsistencies between the Palinurus-narrative in book 5 and that in book 6. In this case, and only in this case, H. concludes that the only certainty is that “the versions would never have coexisted after a final revision” (p. 276). See also on 338 *Libyco cursu*, “apparently one of the thornier problems of Virgilian studies.” Here H. misses J. Farrell, “La ricompensa di Palinuro,” *SIFC* 101 (2008) 5–18, who interprets *tristi gaudet cognomine terra*, with *tristi* with *cognomine* and not *corde* (as La Cerda did), and with *terra* nominative (as Henry did).

H. insists much in viewing similarities between the heroines of the catalog 445–49 and Dido; some of the connections he proposes seem oversubtle. In particular, the suggestion that 446 *crudelis nati ... uulnera* alludes to “the wound inflicted by Venus’ cruel son Cupid upon Dido” is ingenious but unconvincing.

On 541–42 *dextera quae Ditis magni sub moenia tendit, | hac iter Elysium nobis*: H. interprets that the Sibyl “first explains to Aen. that their path to Elysium will pass initially below the very walls of Tartarus,” with *sub moenia* “along the foot of.” But are these *moenia* really the walls of Tartarus? Should they not be the walls of the palace of Dis and Proserpina (also mentioned in 630–31) as distinct from that of fortress of Tartarus (549 *moenia lata uidet triplici circumdata muro*)?

At 621–22 it is not clear what H. thinks about the subject of *uendidit, imposuit, fixit ... atque refixit*, and especially about the identity of *dominum ... potentem*; the subdivision of the argument in three different notes does not help the clarity; the suggestion of Cleopatra for the *dom. pot.* is not convincing, as H. himself knows. As to the subject of the verbs, H. seems to favor Antony, but then says that *dom. pot.* cannot be Caesar, in spite of the good parallel quoted on 622 *imposuit* (Cic. *Phil.* 13.17 *nam si ipse seruire poterat, nobis dominum cur imponebat?*, Antony offering the diadem to Caesar (who, however, refused the offer), compared by J. B. Hofmann, *TLL* 7.1.656.5f.—who by the way suggests that the *dom. pot.* himself is Antony,

which is of course impossible), since V. could not have been “so vehemently critical of Caesar.” (As for 623, H. rightly follows D. H. Berry, *CQ* 42 (1992) 419–20 in seeing there a reference to Catiline.)

In 718 *quo magis Italia mecum laetere reperta* Servius (on 1.267) detects an allusion to the version discarded by Virgil in which Anchises reached Italy alive, by taking “irrationally” *mecum* with *reperta* instead of with *laetere*. Interesting for the history of Virgilian exegesis, but otherwise rather implausible. H. seems to believe that the allusion is really there, but also O’Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic* 85, which he cites in the note *ad loc.*, is very sceptical (“the subtle allusion does not really break into the text”).

The problematic lines 743–44 remain obscure even after H.’s careful discussion.

The problems of the Parade of the Heroes (PH for H.) are admirably discussed. On 761 *proxima sorte ... lucis loca*, convincingly H. (following Henry and Butler) takes *lucis* with *sorte*, translating “occupies the next position by the lots that assign the light.” The explanation of 764–65 is clear: “Aen. Silvius is clearly a son of Aen.’s, conceived when Aen. was old (**longaeuo** [...]), but actually born when Aen. was already dead (**postuma proles**).” 813: it seems difficult not to sense “a negative flavour” in *otia ... patriae* here: cf. 813–14 *resides, desueta triumphis*. H. prints *prementur* (827), but in the comm. lemmatizes and seems to favor *premuntur*. H. apparently refers both 836 *ille* and 838 *ille* to Mummius: “**836 ille** and **838 ille** could refer to different individuals (and are usually so taken), but the absence of names makes that distinction unnecessarily difficult”; he speaks of a “fusion” between Mummius and Aemilius Paullus (838 *Agamemnoniasque Mycenae*); but in this case H.’s compression of thought makes his reasoning difficult to understand.

On the Gates of Dreams H. has no new solution to offer, but gives a neat summary of the principal views proposed (pp. 612–18).

Appendix 1 is dedicated to the words *plena deo* attributed to Virgil by Seneca the Elder. Appendix 2 (“Fifty years at the Sibyl’s heels”) traces a sort of intellectual autobiography of H. himself in the light of *Aen.* 6. Appendix 3 discusses Norden’s commentary.

All readers of *Vergilius* will be grateful to H. for the enormous work done to produce this monumental commentary.

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