

Bryn Mawr Classical Review

[BMCR 2018.08.21](#) on the BMCR blog

Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2018.08.21

Keith Maclennan, *Virgil. Aeneid Book VIII. Bloomsbury Latin texts*. London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Pp. 284. ISBN 9781472527875. \$24.95 (pb).

Reviewed by Sergio Casali, University of Rome “Tor Vergata” (casali@uniroma2.it)

Preview

Keith Maclennan, former Head of Classics at Rugby School, UK, is already well known for his school commentaries on *Aeneid* 1 (2010, reviewed [BMCR 2011.06.62](#)), 4 (2007, [BMCR 2008.07.53](#)), and 6 (2003, [BMCR 2004.06.38](#)), also published by Bristol Classical Press, taken over by Bloomsbury. He edited a selection of passages of *Aeneid* 8 in 2016;¹ now follows the edition of the whole book. On Book 8 there are three commentaries from the 1970s (Gransden, Eden, Fordyce), and more recently those by James O’Hara and by Lee Fratantuono and Alden Smith have been added.² Given the very different scope of Fratantuono and Smith, Maclennan’s commentary invites comparison especially with O’Hara’s Focus commentary: while one can say that both are equally good as far as the explication of the text is concerned, O’Hara gives fuller bibliographical references and is more interested in wider interpretive issues, especially concerning issues of intertextuality, ambiguity, and ideological significance. Both commentaries describe themselves as editions for students, and it is clear that the intended audience of both of them is secondary school but also college. In both cases, the beginning student is well assisted with grammatical and lexical help.

The Introduction, after the usual sections on Virgil and the *Aeneid* in general, offers a useful nineteen-page survey of the main themes, models, and sources of Book 8. Three brief sections on style, meter, and reception follow. The two-page section entitled ‘Some further reading’ signals the commentaries Maclennan has made most use of, and mentions otherwise only some famous monographs and collections of essays. As before, Maclennan prints the text of Mynors, with the only exception of line 588, where he keeps *in* instead of Markland’s *it*. Variant readings are discussed in the notes at 75, 108, 205, 211, 223 and 512.

In order to give a sense of the quality of the commentary I offer the following comments on individual points and interpretations, sometimes comparing Maclennan’s treatment with that of O’Hara:

2: MacLennan should have compared Lucr. 2.619 *raucisono minantur cornua cantu*, and *Aen.* 7.615 rather than 6.165; O'Hara does.

37: *reuehis* alludes to the Italian origin of Dardanus (cf. O'Hara).

42-9: On the pre-Virgilian tradition of the prodigy of the sow (p. 104), an explanation of the abbreviations used for the Fabius Pictor and Cato references would be useful, and Cato is better quoted through reference to *Fragments of the Roman Historians*, ed. T. Cornell (Oxford 2013). MacLennan's summary of "this version" of the sow prodigy could have been a little more detailed; in particular, he could have noticed that Fabius, apparently, at least, locates the piglets' birth at the future site of Alba, and not at the site of Lavinium, as Cato and Dionysius do (see *FRHist* iii, p. 15).

47: It would have been useful to give a reference to Jupiter's prophecy at 1.267-71 (cf. O'Hara). *redeuntibus annis* = Lucr. 1.311.

51-6: Tiberinus says that Aeneas must seek help from Evander: the student should be reminded that this fulfills the prophecy of the Sibyl at 6.96-7.

64: *caeruleus Thybris* is surprising, since, as MacLennan rightly notes, the Tiber is *multa flauus harena* at 7.31 and often elsewhere. To MacLennan's explanations add that this is how the Tiber, a "Callimachean" talking river, sees *himself*; Book 8 closes with a stichometric allusion to Callimachus' famously muddy Euphrates (726, six lines from the end as in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* and *Georg.* 4.561).³

65: Good exegetical note with discussion of Gransden's wrong interpretation of the line.

72: MacLennan quotes Ennius' *Annals* according to Vahlen's edition instead of Skutsch's modern standard. Almost certainly in *Ann.* 26 Sk. it is not Ilia who prays to Tiber, but Aeneas, before his negotiations with the king of Alba. So here the prayer to Tiber precedes Aeneas' meeting with Evander, a passage itself echoing Aeneas' meeting with the king of Alba in Ennius: see Skutsch ad loc.

83 *procubuit*: MacLennan interestingly sees in this word, usually neglected by commentators, a reference to "the oracle in DH i.55.4, where the Trojans were told to 'follow a four-footed creature until it became exhausted'" (p. 111).

91-3: It would have been worth noticing the Argonautic resonances of the marveling of the waves and woods at the Trojan ships (cf. O'Hara).

129 *extimui*: while MacLennan's attention to this verb here is meritorious, since no previous commentator has anything to say about it, I am not sure I fully understand his argument about the possible "hint of irony" in Aeneas' use of *extimesco* here.

134-42: Nice observation about the dark side of Aeneas' "kinship diplomacy." MacLennan also appropriately notes that Dardanus was not, strictly speaking, the founder of Ilium/Troy, which was founded by his descendant Ilus (in fact his great-great-grandson, not his "great-grandson," as MacLennan says), but there is no need to refer to Ps.-Apollodorus for this, since this is already the Homeric version in the genealogy of *Il.* 20 (and *ut Grai perhibent* is also an "Alexandrian footnote")

referring to *Il.* 20.215; cf. O'Hara).

135-41: MacLennan gives an understandably very simplified but also effective account of the legends about Dardanus. He could have noticed that by saying that Dardanus *aduehitur Teucros* Aeneas seems to contradict the construction of the legend as elaborated in Book 3, where it is implied that an Italian Dardanus came to the Troad *before* Teucer.

150: It should be noticed that Ennius' *accipe daque fidem* (32 Sk.) surely comes from the context of Aeneas' meeting with king Latinus of Alba Longa.

205: Good discussion of the variants *furis/furiis*.

291: "With what emotions does Aeneas hear the reference to the sacking of Troy?," a good question.

323 *latuisset*: the relationship with Ennius, *Euhemerus*, *uar.* F5 (87-97) Vahlen should have been briefly discussed.

324: MacLennan discusses Virgil's different treatments of the Golden Age also in the Introduction, pp. 37-8; here he should have said something on the uneasy relationship of this passage with the narrator's words at 7.47 and with the presentation that King Latinus makes of his own rule as a kind of contemporary Golden Age at 7.202-4.

330: The treatment of King Thybris is imprecise: MacLennan refers only to DH 1.71.2, where the king who gives the river its name is the Alban king Tiberinus, and says that "Virgil has evidently transferred him to an earlier date": in fact, however, the pre-Virgilian tradition about this individual is divided between an identification with the Alban king Tiberinus (or Tiberius Silvius; not only in DH, but also elsewhere, e.g. Varro, *LL* 5.30), one with an Etruscan king of uncertain chronology (e.g. a king of Veii: Varro, *ibid.*), and one with a king of the Aborigines (Serv. *Aen.* 8.72).

357-8: MacLennan, following Eden and Fordyce, is overhasty in attributing to Varro the story of Janus welcoming Saturn recorded in Aug. *De Ciu. Dei* 7.4; see Horsfall on 7.180. That story *might* go back to Hemina, but is surely attested only since Hyg. *FRHist* 63 F10 and his source Protarchus of Tralles, of uncertain date, ap. Macr. *Sat.* 1.7.19-21. In any case, it is important to notice that that story clearly contradicts Evander's earlier account of the history of primitive Latium at 319-25.

382-3: Servius and others were notoriously disturbed by the fact that Venus asked her husband Vulcan to help *susceptum de adulterio filium* (DServ. ad loc.); hence the different punctuation of line 383. See also Macr. *Sat.* 1.24.6-8. MacLennan could have hinted at this interesting issue (cf. O'Hara).

387-90: "How can it be that Vulcan is 'slow to respond' (*cunctantem*) ...?": MacLennan suggests some answers, but the most important reason is surely that Vulcan needs some time to process Venus' impudent request – that he should make weapons for the son she had had with Anchises. It is not her speech that convinces him, but her caresses. It should also be noted the double entendre in *solitam flammam* and *notus ... | ... calor*: "his customary response to his wife, or the fire

with which the smith god works daily?” (O’Hara).

394: MacLennan misses the irony of *pater* in reference to Vulcan in this context, and especially in a line modelled, as MacLennan notes, on Lucretius 1.34 – Mars and Venus (cf. O’Hara).

405-6: MacLennan well notes the sexual meaning of *coniugis infusus gremio*; it could have been interesting, however, to record (as O’Hara does) the embarrassments of ancient exegetes when faced with the erotic innuendo of this phrase (see Servius and DServ. ad loc., Gellius NA 9.10).

416-53: MacLennan does not mention the main model of this passage, namely the journey of the young Artemis to Lipari to ask the Cyclopes to make bow and arrows for her at Callimachus, *Hymn* 3.46-86.[4](#)

520-53: About the apparition of the weapons in the sky and Aeneas’ reaction to the prodigy, MacLennan registers no elements of ambiguity (such as references to Pallas’ fate, etc.: contrast O’Hara’s excellent notes ad loc.). Good, instead, is MacLennan’s observation on *promissa* (531): no promise on Venus’ part has been mentioned in the text so far, but the reader must remember that a promise was made by Thetis to Achilles in *Il.* 18.134-5: Homeric intertextuality “integrates” the narrative of the *Aeneid*, and what Aeneas “recognizes” (cf. *agnouit ... promissa*), together with the reader, is a detail from the *Iliad*.

542-4: A full discussion of the problems of these lines, which is not to be found in O’Hara’s notes.

555: Good discussion of the variants *limina/litora*, an issue not treated by O’Hara.

573: MacLennan tries to give an explanation of why Evander mentions his Arcadian origin in appealing to Jupiter, but is apparently unaware of S. J. Harrison, *CQ* 34 (1984) 487-8 (cited by O’Hara).

581: Only MacLennan mentions and briefly discusses the alternative reading *sera et sola*.

589-91: See O’Hara on the Pallas-Lucifer simile (the Varronian story of the Venus’ star guiding Aeneas in his voyage to Italy is hardly relevant here).

635: MacLennan says nothing about the intertexts of *tereti ceruice reflexa (m)*; contrast O’Hara. The importance of Ennius for Virgil’s description of the Shield is not emphasized enough (only a hint in the Introduction, p. 45).

657: MacLennan observes that *tenebant* (= “they were on the point of grasping”) “makes an odd pair with *tenebat* in 653, which means ‘holding and guarding,’” but fails to notice that this is an allusion to “the alternative version of the story, in which the Gauls actually captured the Capitol, which was probably in Ennius” (O’Hara), as once suggested by O. Skutsch, *JRS* 43 (1953) 77-8, at 77 n. 6 (“a slight suspicion that Virgil may have combined two contradictory versions”).

668-70: The discussion of the Catiline passage is supplemented by a brief Appendix (pp. 247-8), in which MacLennan highlights the ambiguity of Augustus’ attitude

towards the figure of Caesar, proposes as a possible influence the “conspiracy” of Egnatius Rufus in 19 BCE, and suggests that Virgil’s apparent approval of Catiline’s execution may work as a prefiguration of the killing of Turnus by Aeneas.

Notes:

1. K. Maclennan (ed.), *Virgil Aeneid VIII: A Selection*, (London 2016).
2. J. J. O’Hara (ed.), *Vergil: Aeneid Book 8*, (Indianapolis; Cambridge 2018) ; L. Fratantuono and R. A. Smith (eds.), *Virgil, Aeneid 8*, (Leiden; Boston 2018). A new “green-and-yellow,” meant to replace that of Gransden, is under preparation by Anne Rogerson.
3. Maclennan ad loc. does not notice this stichometric allusion, for which see R. S. Scodel and R. F. Thomas, *AJP* 105 (1984) 339.
4. There is no mention either of the complex and interesting intertextuality of the passage about Vulcan’s unfinished thunderbolt and other objects at 426-38 (cf. my observations in *G & R* 53 (2006) 185-204, at 198-203; and S. McCarter, *TAPA* 142 (2012) 355-81). A reference here to Hardie’s *Cosmos and Imperium*, 185-7, should also be mandatory. On literary issues such as these O’Hara’s notes are better.

[Read comments on this review or add a comment](#) on the BMCR blog

Home	Read Latest	Archives	BMCR Blog	About BMCR	Review for BMCR	Commentaries	Support BMCR
----------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------------

BMCR, Bryn Mawr College, 101 N. Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010