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Review of Vergil and S. J. Harrison (Trans.), *Aeneid 10*; Virgil and K. W. Gransden (Ed), *Aeneid, Book XI*

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Vergil. *Aeneid* 10 with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by S. J. Harrison. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Pp. xl + 303. ISBN 0-19-814919-0. \$75.00.

Virgil. *Aeneid*, Book XI. Edited by K. W. Gransden. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge 1991. Pp. vii + 152. ISBN 0-521-26040-X (hb, \$49.95) / -27816-3 (pb, \$17.95).

Reviewed by Joseph Farrell, University of Pennsylvania.

Many of us came of age as Latinists reading the series of commentaries by R. G. Austin and R. D. Williams on individual books of the *Aeneid* published by Oxford between 1955 and 1977. Like Palinurus, Misenus, and Caieta, the series advanced no farther than the coast of Italy. C. J. Fordyce's posthumous volume covered books 7-8, and the latter book was addressed by P. T. Eden and K. W. Gransden as well. It has taken this long before anyone has dared roam the *avia loca* of books 9-12.

In some ways the delay has been beneficial. A Vergil commentary produced in the late sixties or early seventies might have been virtually unusable. Passions ran high among optimists and pessimists alike, and the temptation to take sides could easily have made inaccessible the sense of balance that informs the best commentaries. Recent developments have perhaps restored some of the perspective that these crucial, mettlesome final books require. On the other hand, it is late in the day, and it may be that commentaries on these books have begun to appear just in time. Of the commentaries on 1-6, only the traditional set-books (1, 2, 4, and 6) -- all of them explicated by the arch-traditionalist Austin -- remain in print. Two-thousand-year-old habits die hard, but one would like to think that the minimum lesson taught everyone by the pessimistic sixties and seventies was not to stop at book 6!

Harrison's contribution appears in a series not of Vergil commentaries, but of Oxford doctoral theses. It shares the same basic format as Dewar's (reviewed elsewhere in this issue): introduction (20 pp.), text (Mynors' repunctuated with 27 different readings and a larger app. crit.) and facing prose translation (52 pp.), and a detailed, learned commentary (228 pp.). Harrison also provides an appendix on "Some Aspects of Vergilian Style" (7 pp.), and indices *nominum*, *rerum*, and *verborum*.

The commentary is of course the meat of the volume, and it is an excellent piece of work that will prove to be a valuable resource. Harrison is a fine guide to the philological aspects of the *Aeneid*, and to the ways in which Vergil appropriated traditional material and reshaped it to his own purposes. In book 10, this means chiefly how Vergil recast Homer, and what he made of the wealth of lore available to him about early Italy. For the former inquiry, Harrison is perhaps the first commentator to make full use of the indispensable Knauer (and has even adduced some convincing parallels that Knauer apparently overlooked) as well as the more recent work of, especially, Gransden and Barchiesi. For matters pertaining to archaic Italy, Harrison has benefitted from the researches of Nicholas Horsfall. Those interested in such matters will find particularly full information on the catalogue of the Etruscan forces (lines 163-214).

Where the commentary deals with matters of literary rather than philological interpretation, I find it less satisfactory. It is inevitable that a commentator's literary biases will color his work; but I have always felt strongly that a commentator's duty is to provide the user with whatever information may be needed to construe the text properly and to understand it in the context of its genre, its time, and so forth. This duty stops short of offering directions on how to interpret matters that must be left to each individual reader. What I am saying is particularly true of a commentary on the *Aeneid*, a poem that has a rich and proliferating tradition of interpretation to which the reader needs, above all, access, not expressions of approval or disapproval. Harrison is well up on the secondary literature, and is pretty even-handed about citing views not in line with his own. But there is also a tendency explicitly to dismiss or undervalue such views. One example of many: After discussing the prevailing dichotomy in *Aeneid* criticism between "optimistic" and "pessimistic" readings, Harrison sums up by saying "Diversity of views is natural in considering a great and complex poet. Vergil is neither a simple panegyrist of Roma nor a subverter of the Roman tradition of military imperialism." This sounds judicious and balanced. But a few lines later we hear that "The founding of Rome involved great cost, but there can be no suggestion that it was not worthwhile or glorious" (xxiii). *There can be no suggestion?* If this is the case, we might as well sweep all those "pessimistic" readings into the sewer, because that is just the suggestion a lot of them do make. It may be the final judgment only of extremists, but if we are not allowed to consider the idea, what remains except panegyric? This is where the belatedness of commentaries on the latter books really is beneficial. One suspects that Harrison would have liked simply to ignore the darker side of the poem altogether. Fortunately, that is an option that is no longer available.

It is also true that to adopt a partisan stance on questions that involve material outside the part of the poem on which one is commenting can be extremely misleading. For instance, on lines 161-62 (Aeneas and Pallas sailing down the Tiber to the Trojan camp), Harrison takes the opportunity to mention Michael Putnam's paper on homoerotic elements in the relationship between the hero and his protege -- only to assert that "There seems little hint here of any erotic attraction between Aeneas and Pallas." Well, perhaps not. Certainly the idea is controversial; perhaps Harrison deserves credit simply for mentioning a position with which he disagrees. I happen to think there are erotic overtones in the relationship, though I do not regard eros as its primary basis, and am not at all sure how important it is in relation to other factors. But my point, and Putnam's, of course, is that the erotic element is not stated baldly in any one passage, but developed with great tact out of many, including important episodes from other books; the obviously erotic language used by Evander when he recalls meeting Anchises years before ought to put us on our guard; the lovers Nisus and Euryalus are praised in unparalleled terms and identified with all that is best in the spirit of Roman militarism. Now, Putnam may be wrong, and Harrison right, but it is wrong to dismiss the issue simply because one sees no obvious homoeroticism in one particular passage in this book.

In short, this commentary does well what a commentary should do, and does a few additional things rather less well. In spite of these shortcomings, I expect it to become a useful addition to the Vergilian's panoply.

Gransden's more unassuming commentary addresses itself to students in the upper forms and undergraduates -- no mention of the more advanced readers hoped for by some authors in this series -- and manages to guide its readers through book 11 in just under 70 pp. Like Harrison, Gransden reprints Mynors' OCT text with only a very few changes (p. 35; the apparatus appears to be the same). An introduction (35 pp.) deals with "Virgil's *Iliad*" (the title of a well-known book that Gransden decided to write after

he began work on this commentary), "The Closing Books", "Book XI" (with subsections on structure; the funeral of Pallas; the council of war; the cavalry engagement; and Camilla), and "The Poetry" (with subsections of the Virgilian hexameter; alliteration, assonance, symmetry, and repetition; enjambement; and narrative technique). Thus in a short space it acquaints the student making his or her first approach to the poem with the basic information needed to understand and enjoy this particular book.

As for the commentary, those who have used Gransden's earlier work on book 8 will know what to expect. Notes are brief but informative, focusing on the kinds of questions students are likely to have about the language, but paying sufficient attention to matters of literary interpretation without being tendentious. There is, as one would have guessed, an increased emphasis as compared with book 8 on Vergil's reworking of Homer, which is welcome. All in all, a useful teaching edition of a book that deserves to be more widely read by beginners.
