

BOOK REVIEWS

The Council of the Virgil Society has decided to include in the Proceedings reviews of selected works relating to Virgil in the belief that this policy will be welcomed by readers.

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P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber secundus with a commentary by R.G. Austin  
Professor of Latin in the University of Liverpool, Oxford, at the Clarendon  
Press, 1964, pages xxiii + 312, Cloth, Small 8, with three plates, 25/-.

The keenly awaited edition of the Second Aeneid by the distinguished editor of Quintilian, whose edition of the Fourth Aeneid seems to be praised as much for its sensitivity as for its learning and judgement, has already won much admiration. I understand that this notice of it is to begin the practice of publishing reviews in The Proceedings of the Virgil Society. If so, it is a fit volume with which to start - in principiiis omen -, all the more because this is said to be the first detailed separate edition of the Second Aeneid to be published in English.

Professor Austin writes first as a Latinist and then as a Virgilian - or that may be the wrong way round; I am not quite sure. His intimate knowledge of Old Latin and Roman literary criticism make him a good guide. His parallels and not-quite parallels to Virgil's usages are fascinating. A few examples, as on *pervius usus ..... postesque relictis.....*, 453-454, may seem to go rather far and rather deep for young readers, but a good Upper Sixth should like them, especially if they know enough Greek to follow the Greek quotations. We are often greatly helped to understand what kind of Latin Virgil wrote. *lamentabilis*, 3, is not found in poetry before Virgil, and *intemeratus*, 143, is not found at all, nor is *violabilis*, 154, nor *inclementia*, 602. *Puella*, 238, is not found in epic before Virgil. Of course some usages may have been in lost works: it is not safe always to call them "inventions" of Virgil. On *scelus expendisse*, 229, Servius Auctus says, *quis ante hunc expendisse pro luisse?* *Pone*, 725, is according to Quintilian an archaism. There is a very good note on the origin and use of *illicit*, 424, and another on *somnus*, singular and plural, 9. *Mirabile dictu*, 174, belongs to ritual. *Sed quid ego haec ....?*, is not only conversational, but could actually be scanned as the beginning of a comic *senarius*. There are over forty of these valuable notes on unconventional uses.

Professor Austin sometimes comments on these strange occurrences by saying that Virgil is experimenting, on 229, 722 and elsewhere. This is a delicate question, and I am not saying that Professor Austin is himself deceived. In a sense Virgil was experimenting all the time. Poets try over phrases again and again for sound and for economical sense. But surely what we have in the Second Aeneid are the finished results of long experimentation rather than experiments without achievement. Virgil's purpose was to compress and condense his words, to say much in little, *ut verba in compendium cogeret*, a quotation from Servius which would have been worth including. If we talk of experimenting, we may make it seem as if this or that expression, because it appears odd to us, would also have seemed odd to Virgil, and not only odd, but also too odd to be happily accepted. I may

seem to make too much of this, but it is important. Virgil was not trying to emulate his predecessors in a search for ordinariness. It is really impossible to say very often that this or that expression would have been altered by Virgil. Professor Austin himself expresses the right view of such matters on 577 ff: "The fact that it has no precedent is no proof at all that the passage is unauthentic. No 'sciolus' (the favourite term among the condemnatory critics) would have had the inventiveness to break the 'rules' so brilliantly." Perhaps, in this context, it might have been well to include a sharper warning for younger readers that there is a hard distinction between pre-Virgilian Latin and post-Virgilian Latin, which, since Virgil may always have affected it, is not evidence for "normal" Latin. Here Livy is a puzzle. He seems to be cited three times, the last time with the statement that he was writing his History when Virgil was writing the Aeneid. Rostagni argues that at first Livy learnt from Virgil and later Virgil learnt from Livy. But this could hardly be discussed fully in a commentary. In any case, Professor Austin is extremely instructive on language. The reader has a sense of a strong, clear, new light shed, and is confident.

The text adopted is Hirtzel's in The Oxford Classical Texts, with divergences at 69, 392, 445, 584 ff, and 616. The fifth of these is important. Professor Austin here gives the results of his powerful article in *C.Q.* XI 1961, pp. 185-198, on the Helen Scene. He wisely accepts it as Virgil's, whatever may have been Virgil's own reasons for deleting it, but at the end of Aeneas' soliloquy he finds the problems of the text too difficult, and proposes a lacuna. I am not myself convinced: and I still think *animusque explese iuvabit altricis flammae translatabile*, perhaps in two equally valid ways, and magnificent as a culmination to these lines of intensest passion. But Professor Austin's treatment of this great passage will no doubt be prized as one of the finest things in his Edition.

There was so much to say, especially for so learned an editor, and care and ingenuity were needed to decide what to leave out. Even temptations to write about metre had to be resisted except at important places. Here the comments, though of course some might be called subjective, are often most revealing, not least in the effect of elisions - for example showing confused haste or indicating a catch in the breath. Professor Austin has always been specially good at indicating these effects. He can equally indicate effects of rhythm, alliteration, and, in general, patterns of sound. On 693 he writes: "One of the loveliest of Virgil's descriptions of light .... the l-sounds are especially marked, with u, s, and c also notable: the speed and brilliance of the star as it falls are repeatedly made plain, a thing of wonder in all the physical and spiritual darkness of that hour." Virgil has been understood. The proposals are in general bold, and also sparing; but they are precious.

Professor Austin has less to say on the famous Virgilian ambiguities, the double meanings, the penumbra behind a phrase. He considers whether apex, 683, is a sacred cap or just the flame itself on Ascanius' head, and firmly decided for the flame. Surely it is both. The flame is given a word which brilliantly hints at this other, the priestly, significance. Also late in the book occurs the line *nec tamen amissum respexi animumve reflexi*, 741. Professor Austin recognizes *respexi* as "a Virgilian compression" - I think he does not use this word elsewhere - "combining literal and transferred meanings"; we wonder if

perhaps *animus reflexi* might also be so explained and indeed other phrases and clauses in the book. However, there is a very good note on *clarior*, 705: "perhaps the brightness of the flames as well as the noise is meant."

Important sources are well, sometimes even lovingly, quoted, as Ennius' bewitching lines, *Eurydica prognata* . . . . It is seen that Virgil is normally better than his source. On 678 the note is "The little scene is beautifully done; Conington observes that it is briefly and hastily sketched in imitation of *Il. vi*, 399 ff., but Virgil owes little if anything to Homer here; it is all so natural, the stubborn old man with his curt refusal to do what his son tells him, the angry, unhappy son, the anxious and frightened wife, the puzzled child." This, indeed, is the way to edit Virgil. It seems almost impious to ask if Homer's inspiration at the beginning of a process should not have more credit. Mysteriously, sources are not mere sources. If Arctinus says that Priam was killed at the altar and Lesches that he was dragged from the altar, it is largely because of them that Virgil says that Priam was dragged to the altar to be killed. We are told of the sources. But we might be also advised how to understand their force in Virgil's mind. On 649 the note is "For the moment, myth is merged in human experience". We might suggest that this should happen always in good poetry, not only for a moment. Understood organically, sources can help greatly with *ducente deo*, *culpatusve Paris* and even the "ancient mound of Ceres", profoundly explained by the late R.W. Cruttwell, as I am always, and unashamedly, recalling, since I think his method, though often unsuccessful, is nevertheless indispensable to a modern exegesis. But of course Professor Austin can make good use of what sources tell, for example when he admires Virgil for setting the blaze of burning Troy not, as in the sources, at a time after Aeneas has left, but as an awe-inspiring background to the last scenes of the fight and Aeneas' departure.

Professor Austin is not dangerously caught up in "patterns". He uses the word "pattern" two or three times towards the end of his commentary, always for a pattern of sound within a verse, and also in the Introduction, page xi, for the parts of the Second Aeneid and their "inner structural pattern". He quotes Hamlet, "an excellent play, well digested in the scenes" in which "he chiefly loved one speech, Aeneas' tale to Dido": "Hamlet might well have been speaking of this very Book, in which all is so admirably digested". But Professor Austin does not go into detail, in the modern fashion. In general, like a number of German scholars, he accepts Heinze as a basis for new advance; one German writer says that only in the last ten years has progress from the point reached by Heinze been made. Perhaps few editors have been so careful to avoid the irrelevant. Various references might have been expected but are not found, for example, on language, to M.J. Marouzeau, Professor L.R. Palmer, and Professor E.C. Woodcock; but Professor E. Wistrand's work on Virgil's architecture is used, and so is Professor L.J.D. Richardson's superb article on *facilis iactura sepulchri*.

A great merit in Professor Austin's Edition lies in his archaeological notes. When, for example, Polygnotus' painting in the Lesche at Delphi, or some vase-painting, can help, he takes characteristic care to consult the best authorities, verbally if necessary, and to make his information accurate and up to date. He is valuably informative on the new dating for the Laocoon Group. I was surprised, however, to read that no bay-tree is shown in plastic art near the altar at Priam's death; I had thought that one or more vase-paintings

showed a bay-tree there. The plates are admirable, especially the relief, apparently showing the Wooden Horse, found in India and dated to, perhaps, the second century A.D.: on this animal he had already collected much information in J.R.S.(49), 1959, pp. 16-25, and could present valuable excerpts in the Edition. Another particularly useful account is the careful presentation of evidence concerning plastic versions of Aeneas with his family escaping from Troy. The care given to Virgil himself, his language, and his poetry, with at least one really useful comment, so far as I have noticed, on every single line, does not lead to neglect of other matters. It is a peculiarly well-balanced Edition. And it is highly original at the end, where are printed the poem of Jacopo Sadoletto on the then newly-discovered Laocoon Group, and three other, lighter, poems relevant to Virgil's Troy.

But most important of all is the active human feeling and poetic receptivity which pervade the Edition. Troy, 609, is like a modern city after an air-raid. When the Greeks are found to have departed, it is just like our modern experience when we visit, in peace, the scene of recent fighting. The poignant words, *fatone erepta Creusa* .... 738-739, with the older and more homely word *lassa*, not *fessa*, need no explanation. "The whole is brilliantly natural, and very moving." *Curva valle*, 748, again the Editor does not explain, for he tells us each to think of a valley which we remember: "Mine", he says, "is Sheepscombe in Gloucestershire". On apparent *dirae facies* ..... 622, he says "Mark the contrast between *Venus* ..... and these fiendish shapes of gods who have become near-devils ..... This is Virgil at his greatest". On *nusquam abero* ....., 620, the note is "A simple, beautiful line of extraordinary comfort and blessing: yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil..." " On *vos agitate fugam* .... 640, the comment is, "I doubt if Virgil used the words in any doctrinaire sense: they spring from his poet's insight and his poet's pity for the old and unhappy." Virgil's handling of Sinon, 163 etc., is "a masterly performance". Having accepted Sinon, the Trojans 194, are all the less suspicious and doubtful because "they are proud to be so honest and kind" - a brilliant stroke of comprehension, matching up to Virgil's own art.

Even in these matters of sensitivity disagreement is possible. There is no need for surprise if the gods demolish Troy and yet Jupiter favours Aeneas. It is simply that Troy has sinned and offended some gods, but Aeneas himself is blameless. Aeneas, certainly, is not a fully mature hero and leader in the Second Aeneid. But it is surely unsafe to go further and say that he is the same in the Fourth Aeneid. There he has progressed and begins to progress more; Dido, certainly, sees him as a great and strong man, though of course he still has some weakness. But, proportionately, any objections that there may be count for little.

Can we say that Virgil has found the Editor whom he himself deserves?

W.F. Jackson Knight.

VIRGIL AND  $\frac{1}{2} (\sqrt{5+1})$ .

GEORGE E. DUCKWORTH: Structural Patterns and Proportions in Vergil's Aeneid. A Study in Mathematical Composition. Pp.x+268. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962. Cloth, \$ 7.50.

"Geometric structure" has been detected in Homer and "symbolic numerical progressions" discovered in Milton; it was high time that Virgil too should be put on a firm mathematical footing.

Duckworth's thesis is that "Vergil composed the Aeneid on the basis of mathematical proportion; each book reveals, in small units as well as in the main divisions, the famous numerical ratio known variously as the Golden Section, the Divine Proportion, or the Golden Mean ratio". As proportions are only significant between units which bear some interrelationship other than that of being proportionate, Duckworth devotes his first two chapters to a useful schematized résumé of views already propounded by other scholars (and by himself in various articles) on the types of pattern-structure in the Aeneid: an "alternating rhythm" produces greater tension and power in even-numbered books; there is a parallelism of incident and episode between corresponding books in each half of the Aeneid; and the whole poem may be regarded as a trilogy, the Tragedy of Dido and the Tragedy of Turnus enclosing the Destiny of Rome, each comprising four books. Of the material content within each book, any given section may be followed by a contrasting section, or by a different topic with a return to the first (the "framework or recessed panel pattern" of the type a-(b)-(c)-(d)-(c)-(b)-a), or by two other sections, neither necessarily related to the first in thematic content ("tripartite structure"). Every book of the Aeneid (with good-will even Book V) can be seen to fall naturally into three main sections, but these sections are not of equal length. At this point Le Grelle's argument for the importance of the Golden Mean ratio in Georgics I (Les Études Classiques 17 (1949) pp.139-235) (concerning which Duckworth admits to an "original skepticism") is examined with reference to the Eclogues and other books of the Georgics, reaffirmed and applied to the Aeneid.

The Golden Mean ratio (to three decimal places) is  $0.618 \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}(\sqrt{5+1})} :: 1$  or  $1 :: 1.618 \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}(\sqrt{5+1})}$ , and this proportion is reached sooner or later by consecutive numbers in any series of which each number is the sum of the two preceding numbers; the simplest series of this type (the Fibonacci series), 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55 reaches it with 21, 34. Put in another way, the Golden Mean ratio is found whenever a smaller unit bears the same proportion to a larger unit as the larger to the sum of both ( $m/M = M/(m+M)$ ). Duckworth has discovered no less than 1,048 such ratios, perfect or approximate (with a generous allowance for approximation) in the Aeneid: in short passages with any of the structure-patterns listed above (bipartite, tripartite non-framework, tripartite framework), in short passages with a four- or five-part interlocking structure (such as a-b-c-d-e, where a, c, e and b, d are related in content and b+d produces the desired ratio to a+c+e), in the main divisions of each book, and in the Aeneid as a whole.

By this time scepticism has given way to astonishment; convinced of Virgil's deliberate and calculating use of the Golden Mean ratio Duckworth

uses it as a criterion for resolving textual problems: all but fourteen of the "half-lines" are intentional (for if counted according to length as an approximate decimal fraction of a line most of them fit with Golden Mean ratios as accurately as required); the fourteen which are recalcitrant would have been replaced by complete lines in the final revision. The same criterion condemns as interpolations lines omitted by the best MSS, refutes editors who have indulged in transpositions, authenticates inter alia the much-debated Helen episode (II, 567-588), and is of course widely applicable to questions of paragraphing. Last but not least, it rescues much of the Appendix Virgiliana, especially the Culex, from exaggerated suspicions of falseness.

Nobody would credit the author of the Culex with any measure of poetic maturity or sensibility, and the discovery of Golden Mean ratios in it proves only that they can be found in bad poetry too. And when Duckworth goes on to detect them in Catullus' Epyllion, Lucretius, Horace's Ars Poetica and Sermones (!), and the fragments of Ennius, the question arises whether they are not a feature of all poetry (good and bad), an accidental or inevitable aspect of literary composition rather than the concealed secret of Virgil's art.

The main assumptions of Duckworth's thesis cannot be taken as proven. In spite of his repeated reminder that according to the Donatus-Suetonius Vita (15) Virgil gave special attention to mathematical studies, there is no evidence that the arithmetic series which aspire to the Golden Mean ratio were known to Greek mathematics, and the probability that they were is not increased by the fact that the discovery of the simplest type of such a series is attributed to Leonardo of Pisa (alias Fibonacci), the mathematical genius of his age, after his intensive study of Arabic mathematics. Equally there is no evidence that the other Roman poets examined were especial students of mathematics, or that their indispensable equipment was an outsize abacus. It might seem less improbable that from an intuitive sense of harmonious proportion Virgil and other poets preferred a ratio approximating to the Golden Section, to be found in Greek architecture and aesthetically most satisfying (as shown by psychological tests) to the European mind; but could a visual concept acquire significant status in a poetry which was transmitted from voice to ear rather than from page to eye?

Beyond this, a non-mathematician must speak with caution. But could it be that any poem, composed for any reason in units which are not equal in length or multiples of each other, must fall more often than not into sections whose numbers of lines occur on one of the numerous series leading to the Golden Mean ratio?

Duckworth suggests the post-Virgilian epic poets as a "fruitful area for future investigation". I predict that the Golden Mean ratio can be found in Statius and Claudian; I fear it will.

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