

venatum Aeneas unaque miserrima Dido  
To the hunt Aeneas, and with him poor Dido (117)

One is hunter, one quarry. There is no need to elaborate upon the symbolism in the actual episode of the hunt; it is clear. But Virgil handles the theme interestingly in the rest of the book. In Dido's great outburst against Aeneas he has become a tiger (367), a wild animal, but himself a predator. The two aspects blend as she dreams of herself as hunted by Aeneas, who is still himself a wild beast (ferus 466). The sub-theme makes its last appearance when she regrets that she could not live in innocent ignorance of marriage like a wild animal (more ferae 551); she is hunted down like an animal without an animal's conscienceless freedom.

When Aeneas sees Dido in the Underworld the wound is still fresh (recens a volnere 6,450) and the theme of the sword is introduced (ferro 6,477). And even in her own darkness (per umbras obscuram 6,451-2; noctemque profundam 6,462) the fire inside her is still blazing (ardentem 6,407). But there is one difference. In an image which we did not examine she made Aeneas a child of some crag in the Caucasus (366-7), and this was reinforced in the simile of the tree gripping rock with its roots (445). Now it is Dido who is hard as flint and stable as a crag in Paros (6,471); Virgil's comparisons are sometimes a shade overdone, and Paros is chosen because the marble represents her pallor. Before, Aeneas was unmoved; now, Dido. The true marriage-bond is restored, and Sychaeus matches (aequat 6,474) her love. Aeneas is shaken by the inequitable way things fall out (casu concussus iniquo 6,475). For her, who has just found equity in love--or for himself?

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VIRGIL'S PASTORAL ART : STUDIES IN THE ECLOGUES by Michael C.J. Putnam. Princeton University Press, 1970. xi + 398 pp. £6.50.

VERGIL'S ITALY by Alexander G. McKay. Adams and Dart, 1970. 356 pp. £3.50.

ELYSION : ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN BELIEFS CONCERNING LIFE AFTER DEATH by W.F. Jackson Knight. Rider and Co., 1970. £2.50 (cased), £1.25 (paper).

The Eclogues are largely about writing poetry. Most critics seem now to be agreed upon this. Professor Putnam, who gave us his "The Poetry of the Aeneid" a few years ago, considers them as an exploration of the form and content of pastoral poetry, examining the structure and vocabulary of each piece and estimating it both as an artistic entity in itself and as part of the series and of the whole Virgilian canon. In this area of criticism the subjective element is naturally strong and there must be differences of opinion and emphasis. To the literary interpretation Putnam adds one that is social or ethical in its purview. His thesis is summed up on p. 393: "It (i.e. the vision presented in the Eclogues) is the fantasy of a world of poetry which, if we interpret literally the perfection of bucolic leisure, on the surface seems a stranger to the human condition. .... Though we seem to be dealing with an idealistic world aloof, its idealism is, in fact, much a part of life, the life of Rome, while being at the same time an emblem for the creative mind. This emblem in turn demands freedom, especially from the restraints with which human progress in space and time can narrow the boundaries of the spirit." This may be somewhat delphic in formulation, but it is Mr. Putnam's suggestion that the poet has as a major purpose the stressing of the necessity of spiritual freedom for the creative artist and individuals at large; he sees the Eclogues as the first example of pastoral poetry employed to convey social criticism and comment. This is an important work, but its importance

lies rather in its literary discussions which are sensitive and perceptive. The references to Robert Frost who has much in common with Virgil as a poet of nature are helpful and illuminating. The more 'metaphysical' aspects of the book leave me wondering; we have got used to the idea that Virgil's poetry is always really about something else; for a long time to come the fun of the game will continue to reside in argument about what that something else is.

In his excellently illustrated book Professor McKay traverses the peninsula of Italy, interweaving the story of Aeneas with details of the poet's biography and many quotations from the works. A book to be heartily commended to both the general reader and the serious student.

Among the late Jackson Knight's papers was the incomplete MS which with the help of Professor Wilson Knight and various friends (notably Mr. Hugh Stubbs and Dr. R.J. Clark) has grown into this book - a useful survey of the beliefs of the ancients about human survival after physical death.

H. MacL. Currie.

A COMMENTARY ON HORACE : ODES BOOK 1, by R.G.M. Nisbet and Margaret Hubbard, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970. £4.20.

Nisbet and Hubbard have produced a most impressive volume, with 48 pages of introduction and 427 of commentary. There is, however, no text of Odes I: they admit to some misgivings but believe (with little justification, one feels) that many people will be content with the omission.

The introduction is in five sections. The first and longest is a discussion of the Odes as a whole and their literary form. There we read of Horace's literary pedigree, the categories into which the Odes fall and his themes and, more briefly, of his style, structure, numerical arrangement and general tone and method. The authors stress the influence of his predecessors and warn against the biographical approach to his works, which has been much discredited in recent years: their frank appraisals of his importance to the Augustan regime and his relationship with Maecenas, always a shrewd operator, are particularly refreshing. In the other sections they cover, predictably but thoroughly: the chronological setting of Odes I - III, with notes on Horace's life, the trouble spots of the period and the date of publication; the metres of the Odes; the ancient commentators; and details of modern works cited, including at times somewhat arch comments on their value.

The examination of each Ode is preceded by a useful list of relevant books and articles, a short summary of the subject matter, a discussion of the background and an opinion on the poem's quality. Nisbet and Hubbard rightly feel that 'Horace has suffered from indiscriminating praise even more than other ancient writers' and offer some clearly expressed views. Thus I.5, the Ode to Pyrrha, 'is not sentimental, heart-felt, or particularly pretty', but 'may be admired for rarer virtues, which have eluded the myriad translators, wit, urbanity, and astringent charm'. The significant Ode to the Ship of State (I.14), to which Quintilian refers (Inst.8.6.44), is not so

fortunate: 'though elegant as always', it is 'less than a masterpiece' and shows 'a perverse determination to write allegory'. The subject of Ode 18 (Nullam, Vare, sacra ...) 'veers disconcertingly, though not untypically of its author'; but 'though the ode lacks that reference to life which must be demanded from the greatest poetry, one should not underestimate its ingenuity'. The Archytas Ode (I.28), taken as a monologue by the corpse of a drowned man, 'is undeniably bizarre in conception, but it is original and imaginative as few other Latin writings. The long rambling sentences catch the variety and impetuosity of the living voice better than the congested involutions of Horace's maturity'. Ode 35 (O diva, gratum quae regis Antium ...), however, 'though ambitious, is inferior to his general level' and its sixth stanza is 'scandalously confused', while in the following poem (Et ture et fidibus iuvat ...) 'Horace shows less than his usual skill in handling his theme' and 'the metre is somewhat jejune'. Such candour may shock the conservative and disappoint those who expect a more scholarly attitude towards literary criticism, but its appearance in an edition is certainly to be welcomed.

The commentary proper contains an ample supply of traditional information, but its main interest lies in the many parallel passages, Greek and Latin, which are cited, on topics varying from the belief that kingship is a divine appointment (12.50) to lovers' bites (13.11) and the significance of nails and bolts as 'emblems of fixity' (35.18). References to modern works are similarly generous, on occasions extending far beyond the range of classics, as when students of St. Elmo's fire, the lucida sidera of 3.2, are directed to, among other things, three highly technical scientific discussions: whether there is need to quote The Times as evidence of the excellent climate enjoyed by Rhodes (7.1 - claram Rhodon) seems more questionable. Personal observation, too, has a fascinating part to play. The view that the resonant rocks Usticae cubantis (17.11) may be found in the area of Licenza is justified with this note: 'today, when workmen near 'Horace's villa' want their lunch, they simply shout to their womenfolk in Licenza, half a mile to the north'. Nisbet and Hubbard have done no original work on the manuscripts, as they point out in their preface, but they provide adequate expositions of variant readings: for instance, in Ode 32 (whose first word is read as poscimus) over two pages are devoted to their reasons for preferring medicumque in line 15.

The book is undoubtedly one of the most important to have appeared in the post-Fraenkel era of Horatian literature. It lacks the originality of N.E. Collingè's The Structure of Horace's Odes or Steele Commager's The Odes of Horace - A Critical Study, but it presents its material in an honest, straightforward manner and offers a storehouse of references which will be of service in many fields of classical scholarship. For a work of such bulk the price is not unreasonable, and it is only to be hoped that sales will not be discouraged by the absence of a Latin text.

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