

REVIEW

A COMMENTATOR'S COMMENTARY?
HORSFALL ON *AENEID* VI

Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, 'Aeneid' 6. A Commentary*, 2 vols. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2013. Pp. xl + 708. Hardback, €179.95/\$252.00/£134.99. ISBN 978-3-11-022990-5.

For the fifth time Horsfall delivers a *tour de force* commentary on a book on the *Aeneid*, and VI must have been one of the most difficult to master. The book of the dead presents the commentator with a problem vaguely similar to that posed by Dante's *Commedia*: the text deserves constant interpretation, but some isolated problems tend to monopolize attention and resources, with an impressive dossier of scholarly controversy—the temple of Daedalus at Cumae, the resistance of the Golden Bough, the Gates of Ivory, Dido's chilling epiphany, *quisque suos patimur Manes, tu Marcellus eris* ... Horsfall gives space to all those gigantic old chestnuts, but also keeps an eye on other aspects of the text. He is often capricious and personal in his quotations of secondary literature (both the living and the dead), but he has a fundamental advantage over a number of contemporary scholars: he has no language bias and regularly takes account of non-English-speaking contributions. His constant quotation and evaluation of *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* has often been described as a quaint, eccentric habit, but it is also true that publications of that kind are constantly in danger of being forgotten.

As the dust-jacket says, the author confirms himself as a 'commentator's commentator', and the two volumes will repay continuous reading or consultation from all readers interested in Virgil. As was easy to predict, there is a wealth of promising new detail and updates on issues such as the topography at Cumae, but also the topography of Hell, and eschatological sources ranging from philosophy to mystery cults. In other cases, Horsfall is less helpful and generous, because he has a tendency, and almost a mission, to curb enthusiasm about the possibility of reconstructing the influence of fragmentary authors, such as Empedocles, Ennius, Posidonius, and Varro. Skepticism is useful, but sometimes he does not offer enough information on speculation and debate about Virgil's fragmentary models. For example, when Discordia appears as a Fury in Hell, complete with vipers, at 6.280–1, the readers need some discussion about how this passage interacts with the shocking appearance of a Fury on Earth in book VII, and it is not right (cf. p. 242) to simply cross-refer to Horsfall's own treatment of book VII. Readers should be kept in touch with

the numerous speculations based on the evidence for a daemonic *Discordia* in Ennius' *Annales*, and, even if the commentator has doubts and resists any attempt to establish an internal coherence about *Discordia* in the poem, there is a need for orientation.

Just as in his previous work, Horsfall offers a unique mix of positivistic scholarship and personal voice. Perhaps reasonably, some of the interpersonal aspects are relegated to the Appendices, where a number of issues with famous Classicists of the past are being revived. The volume is strikingly rich in typos, but, on the other hand, the book production and *mise en page* (by De Gruyter, for the first time, not Brill) are simply beautiful.

University of Siena

ALESSANDRO BARCHIESI
alessandro.barchiesi@unisi.it