

BOOK REVIEW

Homeric Effects in Vergil's Narrative. By ALESSANDRO BARCHIESI. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015. Pp. xxviii + 193. Hardcover, \$35.00. ISBN 978-0-691-16181-5.

“New Latin.” That was the late Don Fowler’s coinage for the kind of thoughtful scholarship that the Pisan school spawned, indebted to but not constricted by a mélange of literary theory. *La traccia del modello*, an early product of this school, has had a profound impact upon Virgilian scholarship. More than a mere translation, *Homeric Effects in Vergil's Narrative* reminds the reader of how *La traccia* anticipated Fowler’s New Latin. A strong expansion of the original, this new book, among other things, deftly contextualizes Alessandro Barchiesi’s overall contribution to Virgilian studies.

In his enlightening foreword, Philip Hardie discusses the impact of Barchiesi’s work on *Cosmos and Imperium*, as well as on other scholarship. Hardie clarifies the contribution of the Pisan school to the aforementioned New Latin, influenced by theoretical models that the Pisan school deftly blended with traditional philology. *La traccia* was, in many ways a breakthrough book in this regard, the first in the MD monograph series. Hardie’s excellent contextualization of Barchiesi’s work is itself a must read for graduate students, as it delineates the contribution of the Pisan school that began with Pasquali and has been advanced by, among others, scholars such as Gian Biagio Conte and Alessandro Schiesaro. All this Hardie lays out concisely.

Situated next to Hardie’s update, Barchiesi’s “Introductory Note” necessarily rings archaic, for it begins with reference to the now classic contribution of Knauer’s *Die Aeneis und Homer*. Barchiesi shows in those two brief pages how connected his own work was at that time with the then-current flow of classical scholarship. Perhaps the original introduction could have been woven into Barchiesi’s enlightening and confessional afterword, which in many ways is as important a contribution to the history of classical scholarship as his new version of *La traccia* is to Virgilian studies generally. But more on that anon.

The first chapter, “The Death of Pallas,” speaks about how the reception of Homer influenced Virgil as he adapted Homeric material and mapped it onto his

fresh narrative. Barchiesi's analysis is complex and comprehensive and, as Hardie noted in the preface, ahead of its time. Barchiesi observes early on in the chapter that, even though Virgilian narrative may resume similar events from Homer, characters in the *Aeneid* who at first blush seem to correspond to those of the *Iliad* turn out to be far more complex (4). Thus, when Barchiesi launches his analysis with a discussion of *Aeneid* 10's *aristeia* of Pallas, he notes not only the obvious correspondences but also how the characters and events have been transformed, not merely adapted. Such transformation results in part from Virgil's viewing Homer through the lens of intervening scholiasts' notes and literary contributions. Virgil's description of battles as *horrida bella* is quite a different view of war than one sees in the *Iliad*. Virgil is constructing an entirely "new addressee" for "his complex synthesis of Homeric imitation" (5). As the chapter progresses, Barchiesi focuses on the way that Aeneas behaves in book 10's famous battle between Aeneas and Lausus/Mezentius. Aeneas does not comport himself in the manner of a Homeric warrior: his values are Roman.

In the second chapter, Barchiesi raises the question of how literary modeling works, focusing on the issue of the structure of the tenth book and how it adapts material from *Iliad* 16 in particular. Foreshadowing questions that are still interesting more than thirty years after the appearance of the Italian version, Barchiesi expounds upon how Aeneas shows a sense of humanity less apparent in Homer's characters. In his remarks on the book's structure, Barchiesi touches on Virgil's well-balanced tension between dueling warriors (42f.). His general observation that parallelism emphasizes the differences between the Homeric and Virgilian texts is well presented, as is his demonstration that, in his victory over Pallas, Turnus acts in a fashion more or less in keeping with the Homeric milieu. When dealing with Lausus' death, Aeneas behaves otherwise, offering a new epic standard (39–45 et passim).

In the following chapter, Barchiesi discusses book 8's description of Aeneas' skyward vision of weapons portending war (8.520–40). In his splendid analysis of the portent, Barchiesi points out that Virgil establishes his "characters' reaction ... as a model for the correct reception of the heavenly sign, inviting the reader's collaboration in tracing it to a disturbing correspondence to their own cultural memory" (61), an example of which might be seen in the bloody historical event of Perugia (62f.). One of the central features of the Virgilian account encompasses a "narrative swerve," i.e., what in Homeric narrative had been convention (invocation of divine omniscience about the epic's action) is now changed into unconventional interrogation: "Which god can explain ...?" as can be seen in

the culmination of the war (and thus the arms in the sky) in *Aeneid* 12 (12.500–504, p. 63). One pithy observation in particular deserves mention: “Aeneas the founder is also the destroyer of an ancient harmony ...” (64). Compositionally, Virgil could be said to be the same, a destroyer but also a founder. In any case, Barchiesi’s statement offers us a dictum worth repeating.

Perhaps *La traccia*’s most celebrated chapter has been the concluding one that treats the death of Turnus. In it, and perhaps even more clearly in the new version—Marchesi’s translation is here and elsewhere quite well done—Barchiesi reminds his reader that the *Aeneid* is not simply a mélange of Homeric material both *ex fonte* and as distilled through Hellenistic and philosophical filters but also “a continuation of the Homeric poems” (71). Key among his observations is the way that Virgil stymies any notion of the hero vaunting before his kill; yet neither does Virgil merely present the hero making a swift stroke. As always, Barchiesi’s analysis is thoughtful as he weighs out Turnus’ words, comparing them to Priam’s supplication of Achilles in *Iliad* 24 (87–91). The Homeric allusion is less than comfortable and certainly doesn’t leave the reader, ancient or modern, with the impression that Aeneas’ final act is tidy.

An appendix features one of Barchiesi’s best early articles, published in 1978, which dovetails well with the theme of *La traccia*. While it might have been aesthetically comelier, I think, to have reversed the position of this piece, making it a chapter in the book and placing it before chapter 4 (“The Death of Turnus”), its content is still of great value. In it, Barchiesi points out that Juturna “embodies all the contradictions of Vergil’s heroic world” (95). In her character there is a poignant *Kreuzung der Gattungen* of tragedy and epos. Thus, her speech to her brother creates a “tragic irony ... that isolates its protagonists under the weight of destiny” (103). Her final appearance ends with a mournful groan that Barchiesi cites to close this piece, adding only in a bracketed note that he intends to approach this topic on another occasion with regard to the goddess’ association with Roman history and topography (113).

Homeric Effects in Vergil's Narrative ends with an afterword that nicely complements Hardie’s intelligent introduction. This piece, as if a scholarly “*Tristia* 4.10,” fleshes out well some of the things that in hindsight he might have included in *La traccia*. Of particular interest is Barchiesi’s contextualization of his work within what was then an emerging stream of scholarship harking back to Pasqua-

li's famous article¹ and owing much to the Pisan school, as does this reviewer's own scholarly work. Further, the too often overlooked contribution of Robin Schlunk² is duly touted and explained, as is Erbse's important compendium of Homeric scholia that was published in installments from 1969 to 1988. Barchiesi also talks of the distillation of critical terminology, and in this afterword rarifies them to "reception and appropriation" (129). This chapter is seminal for students interested in the history of classical philology in the twentieth century. Would it be an overstatement to say that the Pisan school had an impact on Virgilian studies as profound as Milman Parry did upon Homeric studies? Perhaps, but I do not think it would be a gross overstatement. And Barchiesi's work on Virgil, then and now, has been one of the key factors in making that impact.

In short, *Homeric Effects in Vergil's Narrative* is not simply an important contribution to Virgilian studies or even a revelation of "how we got to this point" for a new generation of Virgilian readers. It is a work that represents a vital chapter in the history of classical scholarship, as it contextualizes more than Barchiesi's own work; rather, it contextualizes a movement that began with *l'arte allusiva* and culminated in New Latin. *Nihil novum sub sole?* Rather, *atque iterum*.

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¹ Giorgio Pasquali, "Arte Allusiva," *L'Italia che scrive* 25 (Nov-Dec. 1942) 185-187 (= *Stravaganze quarte e supreme* [Venice 1951] 11-20, also in *Pagine stravaganti* 2 (Florence, 1968) 275-83.

² Robin R. Schlunk, *The Homeric Scholia and the Aeneid: A Contribution to the Comparative Study of Homer and Vergil* (Cincinnati, 1964).