

## BOOK REVIEW

*Virgil, Aeneid 5: Text, Translation and Commentary.* By LEE M. FRATANTUONO and R. ALDEN SMITH. Leiden and Boston: Leiden, 2015. Pp. x + 762. Hardcover, \$284.00. ISBN 978-9-004-30124-5.

**A**eneid 5 is a book of opposites: death and destruction on the one hand, but also games and celebration on the other. This commentary fills an important gap in existing (and avowedly very long) Virgilian bibliography; its authors try to explain, interpret, and solve many of the problems and mysteries of this book of Virgil's epos. Fratantuono and Smith have followed a traditional path, by dividing the commentary in expected format: an introduction is followed by text and translation, and then a line by line commentary with three *indices* (*nominum, rerum, verborum*). Of particular note in the Introduction is the discussion of the place of the book within the *Aeneid* as a turning point (*meta*), both literally, as the turning point of the trip when the Trojans almost reach their destination, and figuratively, as Virgil composes a poem bound to be a *meta* in the history of poetry of Rome.

The text for *Aeneid 5* draws on previous *apparatus critici* (Mynors, Geymonat, Conte), but, in this reviewer's opinion, it would have been best if Brill allowed for facing English translation. Having said this, the translation itself, following the Latin text, is quite readable, remaining close to the Latin but in idiomatic English.

The line by line, 620-page commentary offers a variety of analysis: explanation of philological matters, guidance through the vast bibliography and further readings, references to the reception of *Aeneid 5* by subsequent Latin authors. The traditional introductory notes to each new section of the text offer a helpful overview with specific bibliographic references (e.g. on 286–314 on the foot race and Nisus and Euryalus, on 362–386 on the boxing match, or on 545–603 on the *lusus Troiae*). The comments are often exhaustive, with an attempt to include all possible references to the use of a particular word, which can be sometimes distracting. Certain notes refer the reader to other works for further explanation (e.g. scansion), and I think this requires a further step I do not envision taken especially by student users of this work; but by no means should this detract from

the primary function of this commentary as reference work that offers a “window”—so to speak—to the existing scholarship and other commentaries.

From the vast and learned number of notes on the fascinating fifth book of the *Aeneid*, I would like to single out the comments on the *gyrus* (snake’s coils) and the significance of the number 7 in the poem (85); on the doves in the cave and the Embarkation festival of Aphrodite (213); on the fourth simile of the book regarding the wounded snake (273); on Nisus’ slip (328); on Pandarus (496); on Palinurus’ death and the last line (871).

In terms of textual matters, I believe Fratantuono and Smith offer an attractive discussion of vexing issues, such as of *nixantem* versus *nexantem* in 279. Conversely, the editors were not persuaded by Harrison’s attractive alternative in 309, *glauca* (as opposed to *flava* or *fulva* for olives), which is attested in Statius and Valerius Flaccus; nor do they follow Geymonat’s *saevos* (archaic nominative), an equally plausible reading in 739.

To be sure, a full set of modern commentaries on the *Aeneid* was a great desideratum in the late twentieth and the beginning of our century, and such a need is now being covered thanks to Nicholas Horsfall and the commentary under review. This book will serve well all readers of Virgil at various academic levels. I am personally looking forward to the next publication by Fratantuono and Smith, their forthcoming commentary on *Aeneid* 8.

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