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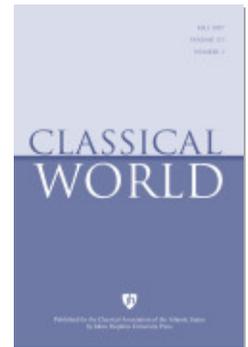
## A Voyage Around the Harvard School

Stephen J. Harrison

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richer than being one- or two-dimensional; this applies to its relation to Homer (too many Vergilian scholars still traffic in outdated Homeric stereotypes), its examination of values (unsurprisingly, the most knowledgeable discussions of *pietas* or *ultio*, for instance, are currently found in scholarship not on Vergil but on the Augustan Forum), its historical setting (the twenties were only the beginning of the Augustan reign, with uncertainties galore), the variety of philosophical orientations (good progress has been made on the connection of Vergil and Epicureanism), and the taking shape of a Mediterranean *oikoumenē*.

The fact that much of American Vergilian scholarship stayed mired too long in a pro- or con- Harvard School environment probably contributed to channeling more worthwhile attention to post-Augustan epic, with good results. The exciting prospect is that Vergilian studies now are more open than ever—*nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri*<sup>2</sup>—and many aspects of Vergil’s poetry remain to be explored in a fresh way, whether textual, intertextual, intratextual, or contextual. A helpful perspective, which I have used in teaching both undergraduates and graduates, is this: Vergil is one of the most deliberate composers ever (average some three lines a day). For every word, every phrase, every line, every episode, as well as for larger units, including the overall design, there were alternatives. If you don’t like one of above—maybe because you find it “disquieting” or “disturbing” (although more precise criteria are called for)—what would you have done? But mainly, WDVD (What Did Vergil Do) and, more importantly, why?

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, AUSTIN

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## A Voyage Around the Harvard School

STEPHEN J. HARRISON

When I arrived at Oxford as an undergraduate to study classics in 1978, it was only a few years after the Harvard School had been so baptized by Ralph Johnson in *Darkness Visible* (1976). I had the great fortune to

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<sup>2</sup> “Bound to swear allegiance to no master” (Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.14).

study at Balliol College, where the late Oliver Lyne (then in his mid-thirties) taught us the *Aeneid*, stressing in his rich and engaged tutorials the importance of verbal style, intertextuality, and potential subversive perspectives, the themes of his later *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid* (1987) and *Words and The Poet* (1989). The Oxford reading lists of the time were relatively conservative; Brooks Otis's expansive *Virgil: A Study in Civilised Poetry* (1964) and W. A. Camps's sober *An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid* (1969) were our major resources, along with the commentaries of R. G. Austin and R. D. Williams and the English translation of Viktor Pöschl's book, *The Art of Vergil* (1962). More adventurous souls might read *Darkness Visible* itself or Michael Putnam's *The Poetry of the Aeneid*, or the volume *Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays* edited by Steele Commager (1966).

It was in the pages of the last that I came across the classic articles of the Harvard School (Clausen 1964, Parry 1963, and Brooks 1953). These, alongside Michael Putnam's book, seemed to have something of a common agenda: pessimistic interpretations that stressed the sufferings of war and political duty for the victor as well as the victim, through close and nuanced reading of the relevant passages. I was much impressed, and indeed wrote at the beginning of my text of the *Aeneid* a quotation from Clausen, the famous description of the poem as "a long Pyrrhic victory of the human spirit" (146).

Between 1982 and 1986 I worked on a doctoral thesis at Oxford, a commentary on the tenth book of the *Aeneid* (published by OUP in 1991). I was supervised by Robin Nisbet, who under the influence of Syme's hard-edged political realism had little time for the subversive voices detected by some in the *Aeneid*; my introduction to the commentary shows that he had pushed me a little in his direction, and there are statements there about the politics of the *Aeneid* with which I might now disagree. After my appointment at Corpus Christi College in 1987, I began collecting the reprinted papers by other scholars that became *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (1990). This collection had two rationales: it put together the articles that I had found most useful in my doctoral research on and early teaching of the *Aeneid*, and it did not reproduce any of the pieces reprinted in Commager's 1966 anthology, thus coming across to some as anti-Harvard in its selection, which was certainly not the intention.

I tried to balance this in the introduction, which attempted to give an outline of scholarship on the *Aeneid* in the twentieth century (up to 1988). There I suggested that for an outside observer it is difficult

to separate the “Harvard” interpretation from “the characteristic concerns of U.S. (and other) intellectuals in these years,” and especially “America’s own imperialism” (5), and argued that such views related to the questioning of all institutions in the 1960s; Vietnam was certainly in my mind. Since then I have learnt that Wendell Clausen’s views were generated in the late 1940s without real political reference (see Clausen 1995); that Michael Putnam’s interpretation was wholly unconnected with American foreign policy;<sup>1</sup> and that all the major Harvard School pieces were conceived if not published before the United States’ main engagement in the Vietnam War<sup>2</sup> (though the Cold War and the Korean War might have raised similar reflections in the 1940s and 1950s).

The other two Harvard authors (Brooks and Parry) were perhaps more politicized. Brooks had served in the Army Air Forces during World War II before his period teaching at Harvard in 1946–51, and in his later career in public service went on to be Assistant Secretary of the Army during the Vietnam War (1965–69).<sup>3</sup> Parry wrote a letter of protest to the *Yale Daily News* against the 1967 visit of the then Republican Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan, whom he described as “one of the most savage proponents of American belligerence” in Vietnam,<sup>4</sup> a letter that elicited a firm riposte in a column by the Yale alumnus and conservative champion William F. Buckley, Jr.<sup>5</sup> It seems to me unlikely that neither Brooks nor Parry allowed their other experiences of or views on war to color their scholarship.

I have also learned since 1990 that much of the Harvard interpretation of the *Aeneid* has interesting parallels in nineteenth-century British reception of the poem, in authors that may have been influential on those educated in the middle of the twentieth century. The “melancholic” Vergil detected by Clausen may well have owed something to Matthew Arnold’s use of the same term in “On the Modern Element in

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail to author, May 16, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> See also Thomas 2001; 224–25.

<sup>3</sup> His papers are in the Smithsonian with an outline biography: details at [http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris\\_arc\\_217461](http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_217461) (accessed May 23, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> *Yale Daily News* 37 (Oct. 31, 1967) 2, online at <http://web.library.yale.edu/digital-collections/yale-daily-news-historical-archive> (accessed May 23, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> “On the Right,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (Nov. 18, 1967) 4, online via <https://news.google.com/newspapers> (accessed May 23, 2016).

Literature" (1857):<sup>6</sup> "Over the whole of the great poem of Virgil, over the whole *Aeneid*, there rests an ineffable melancholy; not a rigid, a moody gloom, like the melancholy of Lucretius; no, a sweet, a touching sadness, but still a sadness, a melancholy which is at once a source of charm in the poem, and a testimony to its incompleteness." This view may originate in John Keble's Oxford lectures on poetry (1831–41), certainly known to Arnold, where Keble talks of Vergil's "sorrow and sympathy for wretched and weak mortals";<sup>7</sup> its most notable expression is in Tennyson's well-known poem "To Virgil," written for the poet's 1900th death day in 1882, especially the famous lines "Thou majestic in thy sadness / at the doubtful doom of human kind."

In sum, then, over the last four decades I have learned much from the Harvard School about the complexities of the *Aeneid*, and am now much more aware of its contemporary context and intellectual history.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

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## The Conversation of Gentlemen

RICHARD JENKYNs

Rereading Adam Parry's essay (1963) on "The Two Voices," I am struck by how deliberately it presents itself as an essay in belles lettres. There are no footnotes, not even line references. The first pages are the most brilliant. Parry takes a fragment from the ordinary texture of the *Aeneid*, less than two lines in the Italian catalogue, and submits them to a close reading out of which he develops an idea of the character of the whole. This is practical criticism at its best, with a sense of both the particular and the general, showing how a fine sense of detail can enhance a larger understanding.

There is another way in which the essay is old-fashioned (a term which I mean to carry no disparagement), and that is in the plangent eloquence of its prose, matching its Tennysonian idea of a poet majestic in

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<sup>6</sup> Arnold 1970: 74.

<sup>7</sup> Keble 1912: 2.267 (later English translation; original versions in Latin).