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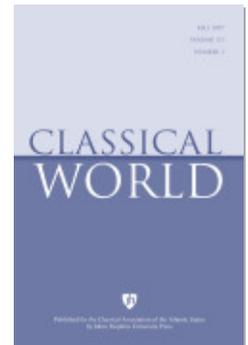
Voices in Conflict

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One can still lodge objections, of course. As David Scott Wilson-Okamura has noted in his *Virgil in the Renaissance*, it is clear that not all the writers cited so far were aware of one another's works (2010: 210–12): Decembrio's supplement was never published; Shakespeare certainly did not read Filelfo; and Cooke's commentary was, and is, genuinely obscure. This makes it difficult on one level to speak of a tradition, at least in the sense that T. S. Eliot used the term (1919). And I would certainly not suggest that these early Harvard School readings were anything other than marginal during the centuries when the optimistic interpretation prevailed. I am also happy to acknowledge that some hesitation about Aeneas' actions is part of any responsible optimistic interpretation of the *Aeneid*, so that by themselves, some of the points discussed above do not prove decisive. But examples could be multiplied in Vergilian scholarship through the twenty-first century, so that in the end, I think it is no longer possible to state categorically that the Harvard School must be wrong because there is no evidence of pessimistic readings prior to the end of the twentieth century. There is, and they are becoming more audible each day as we train ourselves to listen for them. It may well be true that the Harvard School is more congenial to our times than to the past, but that is not to say that this approach to the *Aeneid* is ahistorical, or that the commentators and creative writers of the past never saw the things we think we see in the greatest of ancient Rome's epic poems.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Voices in Conflict

DUNCAN F. KENNEDY

I first came across the Harvard School as an undergraduate at Trinity College Dublin in the early 1970s. While studying the *Aeneid*, I'd come across in the college bookshop a copy of Steele Commager's *Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1966) in Prentice Hall's *Twentieth Century Views* series. I was beginning to develop an interest in mapping literary critical approaches, and Commager's book on Horace's *Odes* had fixed

him in my mind as one of the foremost proponents of New Criticism in the study of Latin poetry. I was therefore keen to see what would be included in a volume on Virgil in an extensive series devoted to “the best in contemporary critical opinion on major authors.” Adam Parry’s “Two Voices” struck me as the most intriguing essay in the collection, in particular for the meticulous close reading of *Aen.* 7.759–760 in the opening pages, which seemed all the more poignant given awareness of the tragic circumstances of Parry’s own recent death. The memory of first reading Parry is still vivid, but I found it difficult to feel wholly satisfied by his argument, and not simply because it transpired that these were the last days of the dominance of New Criticism and its default formalism.

Growing up in Ireland in the 1970s was to become conscious of how contested history was. To hear accounts of the same event in the news bulletins of the Irish broadcaster RTE and Britain’s BBC was to hear two very different, and not easily reconciled, voices—itsself a day-by-day education in the contrasting perspectives generated by different historical narratives and traditions; the political nuances of a language and its terms seemingly shared (thus what constitutes *peace*, how is it achieved, and from whose perspective?); and divergent notions of how the world worked, usually inexplicit and perhaps unconsciously held. These considerations were relevant to my reading not only of the *Aeneid*, but of literary accounts of it as well. The dynamism at the start of Parry’s reading gave way for me to a conclusion that seemed inadequate to the tensions that he had so thoughtfully unfolded: “The *Aeneid* enforces the fine paradox that all the wonders of the most powerful institution the world has ever known are not necessarily of greater importance than the emptiness of human suffering.” I was not sufficiently equipped at the time to define what it was about the rhetoric of this closing sentence that disappointed me. I read Frank Kermode’s *The Classic* (1975) shortly afterwards, and felt that it was a profoundly important book for the way it explored the poem’s engagement not only *with* history but *in* history, and that Kermode’s perspective was addressing in some way the dissatisfaction I had felt with Parry. However, its influence on me was postponed, as I could not easily place it within the interpretative approaches my philological training had provided me. That had to wait for the well-fuelled lucubrations I enjoyed in Bristol with Charles Martindale as we discussed the challenges (methodological and metaphysical) that reception studies, with their emphasis on the historicity of contexts of reading, not least one’s own, pose to interpretative practice.

These issues continue to exercise me, as my most recent engagement with the *Aeneid* in the second chapter of my *Antiquity and the Meanings of Time* (2013) shows. I don't mention Parry there, but he memorably developed for his moment and his context, and for me, an agenda about the relationship of aesthetics and politics. Students in my classes on the *Aeneid* will recall me juxtaposing his essay with Walter Benjamin's dictum from his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" that "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism," followed by the injunction "Discuss!" This they duly did, with results for all concerned that were never less than interesting.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

Mending the Well-Wrought Urn

CHARLES MARTINDALE

One form my teenage rebellion took was to embrace a version of aestheticism (not that I knew the word then). I devoured books like Walter Pater's *Renaissance*, or the brothers Goncourt on French rococo painting, and wrote an essay on the diaphanous beauties of Giambattista Tiepolo for my somewhat bemused schoolmaster. I thought then, as I think now, that historicist approaches too often neglect the literary or aesthetic character of their objects of study, in a manner that can verge on philistinism. My favorite critical book when reading for Mods at Oxford in 1968–69 was Steele Commager's *The Odes of Horace*, published six years earlier but not recommended by my teachers (and barely mentioned in the great Oxford commentary by Nisbet and Hubbard). It's a book that, half a century later, in my experience wears remarkably well, with its sophisticated attention to the detailed verbal texture of Horatian lyric. Only later would I learn to think of this as the classicist's version of the New Criticism (another favorite was Christopher Ricks's *Milton's Grand Style*, very much the sort of book I wanted to write myself). The New Critical slogan for this is "the words on the page," and, while we know words are never just on the page, the primary job of the literary critic surely remains to address *this* particular combination of words in