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**THE ECLOGUES. A. Cucchiarelli (ed.), A. Traina (trans.) *Publio Virgilio Marone: Le Bucoliche* . Pp. 533. Rome: Carocci Editore, 2012. Paper, €48. ISBN: 978-88-430-5530-2.**

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THE *ECLOGUES*

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C.'s elegant commentary on the *Eclogues* has become my first port of call on these difficult poems. Almost two decades in preparation, it is profoundly erudite and yet very readable, and its intimate familiarity with the poems elucidates them from an admirably broad range of angles. Introduction and notes teem with relevant knowledge and original observations on such matters as history and politics, religion and philosophy, genre and form, sources and literary history, language and register, versecraft and metre, sonic effects and etymology, tone and characterisation, textual readings and grammar, and ancient reception both scholarly and artistic. While most of these categories may be traditional in the criticism of Classical poetry, it is their synthesis, combined with C.'s literary sensibility, that is illuminating. Most importantly, C. interprets, and the poems come to life under his knowing caresses. He unpacks especially well the dynamics of exchange between respondents in *Eclogues* 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9. The collection yields up many stories about pastoral origins and Roman identity, political manoeuvres and tensions of the triumviral era, and what Virgil learned from and what he made of other poets and their interpreters.

C.'s *Eclogues* are a tightly-woven collection, and the commentary builds on recent advances in the study of Hellenistic and Roman book poetics. The introduction flags 'syntagmatic' links between adjacent poems as well as the book's better known symmetrical architecture (pp. 30–1), but the collection and commentary are in fact animated by an accumulation of echoes between poems, triggered by names, recurring motifs and verbal repetition, such that Arcadia and Epicureanism become as relevant to Roman politics as they are to the poetics of *amor* and *otium*. By the time we reach *Eclogue* 9, links may be drawn with 8 (the city), 1 (land confiscations and book frame, the mention of Tityrus), 5 (poetic exchange, the *sidus Julium* and the figure of Menalcas, also in 3), 6 (Varus), 2 (Theocritus' *Cyclops*) and with other poems via allusion to Theocritus' *Thalysia*.

This web of connections is a good example of the integration of historical and formal or aesthetic criticism in C.'s interpretation, itself partly fertilised by the political turn of much recent work on Hellenistic poetry. C. focuses on the political circumstances of composition, positing a revision for publication in 38/7 after early compositions in the late 40s. But while full attention is given to historical events and the possibilities of biographical interpretation, ultimately the poems' literary stylisation, indebted to the 'sacro-idyllic' landscapes of Roman visual art as well as to Theocritean bucolic, entails that they stand back from allegory, hovering above the specificity of historical events. This said, the poems still allude to historical possibilities and political ideas, and for C. they are central to the invention of the Augustan age: the gap between the composition of the fourth *Eclogue* with a view to Pollio's consulship and the polishing of the collection several years later saw the lapse of hope after the treaty of Brundisium; but within the economy of the collection this change in circumstance puts the spotlight on the charismatic Octavian as a salvific figure (p. 241). The seventh *Eclogue* alludes to the thrust and counter-thrust of triumviral propaganda, and it is Corydon's more adept handling of divine models that gives him the edge over Thyrsis ('egli [Corydon] sa contemperare modelli divini potenzialmente contrastanti', p. 375); but this strategy also finds precedent in the use of the laurel and the olive as divine symbols for aesthetic styles in Callimachus' *Iambi* (p. 401).

For C. as for many other readers of Latin poetry today, literary allusion is something to be interpreted as well as noted. Tityrus' invitation to Meliboeus to rest the night with him at 1.79 evokes Theocr. *Id.* 11.44–5. 'La memoria del Ciclope, che (inutilmente) aveva invitato la ninfa marina Galatea, ben si adatta alla situazione: anche i due pastori, ormai, appartengono a due mondi diversi' (p. 169). C. works fruitfully with the discoveries of allusion to Hellenistic poetry and literary polemics made by Clausen and others. C.'s coverage of Theocritean modelling is ample, including also the Theocritean scholia. Allusions are often quoted in Italian translation, with the most important words, or sometimes the whole passage, given in Greek. Characteristic of the Pisa school, particular attention is given to immanent theorising of the relationship between the two poets, from the idea of pastoral as originating with lovers' complaints or shepherds' wranglings to the reworkings of other 'originary' passages in Theocritus from the goatherd's cup in *Id.* 1 through the bucolic exchange of the *Thalysia* to the more explicitly political *Id.* 16 and 17. *Eclogue* 3 gives us cups with cosmological designs and Orpheus that look forward to Virgil's *Georgics* even as they look back to Theocritus, while Palaemon's refusal or inability to adjudicate between Damoetas and Menalcas may imply something about the literary confrontation of Virgil and Theocritus.

Dryden remarked in his essay on satire that 'Virgil could have written sharper satires than either Horace or Juvenal if he would have employed his talent that way', on the basis of *Ecl.* 3.26–7, directed 'against a bad poet, whose ill verses he describes'. Virgil 'has given almost as many lashes as he has written syllables'. C. ad loc. takes pains to identify the 'fonosimbolismo' which piqued Dryden, and cites the Theocritean scholia to the effect that rustic improvisation was considered the origin of bucolic song. Elsewhere C. generously cites parallels from satire and comedy for Virgil's colloquial style. Indeed while C. casts his net very widely in search of comparative material, the relevance of what he cites is always clear. A case in point is the delicate 'transversa tumentibus hircis' at 3.8 on which C. cites *Priap.* 73.1, Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.76 and *AP* 9.317.3–4 for the sideways glance; Hor. *Epod.* 10.23 for caprine lasciviousness; and several Greek and Latin epic parallels for the internal accusative, before remarking 'la sua connotazione epica lo rende qui umoristicamente straniato'.

If bibliography weighs heavily on the Virgilian scholar, C. has reduced bibliographical references in his notes to a minimum (a minimum which still makes room for many citations of the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*). Instead he gives us in the introduction to each poem an analytic bibliographical digest in two parts, general treatments followed by particular questions, each arranged chronologically rather than by theme. Familiarity with these rich digests is presupposed before approaching the commentary proper (p. 9). They make for relatively uncluttered notes and a diplomatic avoidance of scholarly polemic (sometimes anonymous interpretations are rejected or discussed), but the division also makes it harder to trace the archaeology of ideas without further work. Pages 133–515 are devoted to the commentary (including poem introductions), which means that each page covers an average of just over two lines of Virgil.

T.'s translation is clear and helpful, and C.'s occasional interpretative divergences from it are flagged and discussed in the notes. Three indexes (of proper names, Latin words and noteworthy things) make this book a user-friendly research tool, as well as pointing to the breadth of reference in the notes (cf., e.g., the use made of Latin prose authors).

This book should be translated into other languages for the convenience of readers who do not read Italian. As it is, it furnishes an excellent reason to learn Italian.