

Reading the *Aeneid* with intermediate Latin students: the new Focus commentaries (Books 1-4 and 6) and Cambridge *Reading Virgil* (Books I and II)

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ABSTRACT

This review article examines the five Focus *Aeneid* commentaries available at the time of writing. When choosing post-beginner level teaching commentaries, my central goal is to assess whether editions help teachers and students integrate the development of broader skills in critical enquiry into their explanations of grammar, vocabulary, and style, instead of artificially separating “literary” and “historical” analytic strategies from “language” skills. After briefly explaining why the well-known Vergil editions by Pharr (revised by Boyd) and Williams do not suit these priorities, I summarize the strengths of the contributions to the new Focus series by Ganiban, Perkell, O’Hara, and Johnston, with particular emphasis on O’Hara’s edition of Book 4, and compare the series with Jones’ new textbook *Reading Virgil: Aeneid I and II*.

KEY WORDS

Aeneid, AP Latin, graduate survey, Latin poetry, pedagogy, Vergil, Latin commentary, intermediate Latin.

TEXTS REVIEWED

- Ganiban, Randall T., ed. *Vergil Aeneid 1*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-58510-225-9
- . *Vergil Aeneid 2*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-58510-226-6
- Perkell, Christine, ed. *Vergil Aeneid 3*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-58510-227-3
- O’Hara, James, ed. *Vergil Aeneid 4*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-58510-228-0
- Johnston, Patricia A., ed. *Vergil Aeneid 6*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-58510-230-3
- Jones, Peter. *Reading Virgil: Aeneid I and II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-52117-154-0

The new Vergil commentaries from Focus are an exciting resource for almost anyone reading the *Aeneid* in Latin: undergrad and graduate students, well prepared high school students, teachers at high school as well as college level, and potentially specialist as well as non-specialist readers outside the classroom. The commentaries aim to bring the *Aeneid* to college students “at the intermediate level or higher” (Ganiban 2008, vii). The editors recognize that developing core reading skills and involving students in the interpretive questions raised by the poem are not separate objectives. This recognition has resulted in commentaries that enticingly present basic information in a wider setting of observation and enquiry. They achieve this with refreshingly concise but nuanced notes and introductions, and by gesturing towards a huge range of recent scholarship with brief parenthetical citations.

Different editors in the series have inevitably taken subtly different views on what counts as “intermediate” college Latin. “Intermediate level” is an open-ended category, which in most North American colleges could encompass all undergraduate Latin courses after the beginning level. Those of us who teach such courses will be familiar with the tremendous disparities in motivation, talent, and reading experience (in Latin, English, or other languages) among the students, quite apart from the range of ways in which teachers articulate and put into practice our priorities.

So far five of the single-book editions have appeared (Books 1-4 and 6), at a price far kinder to student budgets than most textbooks (the current list price for each is \$15.95). A two-volume set of commentaries covering the whole poem will eventually bring together these individual books, with the commentaries refocused for more advanced students (O’Hara vii). Meanwhile, Cambridge has published Peter Jones’ sequel to “Reading Ovid.” Unlike his 2007 selection of stories from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* for post-beginners, “Reading Virgil” presents a continuous commentary on the first two books of the *Aeneid*. The sometimes subtle differences between the Focus and Cambridge offerings invite us to re-appraise our own habits and priorities as Latin teachers, now that we have the opportunity to choose between all these new riches.

What are we teaching?

Choosing an intermediate level edition is one way of forcing oneself to evaluate just what it is any of us hopes to teach. My central aim is to help students at a transitional stage (here at Purdue an *Aeneid* course would usually be the fourth semester in a two-year foundational Latin sequence) learn to *read*—in the fullest sense—and enjoy the poem. This is hardly an unusual objective. But that reading experience means different things to different students, and to different teachers. My own priority is to integrate completely the honing of students’ core language skills with the development of their capacity—and their eagerness—to ask questions about the text.

Since the ability to translate into English is an essential skill that involves exploring the texture of both languages, students will experience a kind of dialogic interaction between the Latin text—heard on its own terms with its own rhetorical shape—and their attempts to translate it into idiomatic English. Students become alert to the cultural, historical, and linguistic gaps that create mismatches between the webs of meaning in which a Latin word is situated and those woven around the English terms available as not-quite-equivalents to the Latin. These gaps make themselves felt most with overtly value-laden concepts such as *pietas*, *virtus*, *pudor*, *fama* etc., but extend far beyond those notoriously “untranslatable” terms.

Many of my classroom practices focus on getting students to reading and *hearing* the Latin text’s sounds and meaning together, either aloud or with their inner ear, at least in the portions of the poem they work on in detail. They begin to experience directly the impact of word order in its

shaping of meaning within each hexameter, feeling the weight of particular words and phrases, and enjoying the jolts that occur when the poetry breaks most sharply with conventional expectations. This involves developing the skills of anticipation and suspension that allow English speakers to process meaning in a Latin order. McCaffrey has given a particularly clear account of the rationale for developing these skills and summarizes some of the classroom methods for doing so. See also Harrison for a convenient bibliography, and for exercises to develop these skills at the elementary level.

When students are encouraged to prioritize responding to the text on its own terms and in its own order (rather than first mentally rearranging the Latin to make it fit expectations that are habitual for English-speakers), it often becomes clearer to them why critical enquiry into the poetry is key to increasing their confidence and precision with the language. Instead of learning stylistic terms by rote and visually analyzing rhetorical structures that may well remain abstractions to them, students begin to read aloud with comprehension. Instead of mechanically chasing examples of anaphora, chiasmus, tricolon, and other devices, or noticing enjambment without hearing the role it plays in Vergilian hexameters, students begin to grasp just *why* an established technical vocabulary exists for these poetic and rhetorical tools.

Some students, if not all, will learn to perceive the groupings of words within complex sentences in relation to the metrical shape of each line, noticing how word groupings align (or pointedly do not align) with breaks between and within lines. Attention to caesura and diaeresis becomes a tool that assists comprehension. Students start hearing the hexameter's blend of rhythmic flexibility (the almost syncopated disjunction between word accent and a notional metrical ictus) and regularity (the "dum di di dum dum" pattern where ictus and accent come together in the last two feet of most lines) in relation to the rhetorical shape of each sentence and each section of narrative.

All this takes a lot of classroom time as well as asking for a good deal of energy from students, so it becomes all the more important that the commentaries they use should give them the technical help they need, while also stirring the curiosity that will keep them going in all this hard work. Ideally, the introductions will enticingly present some of the poem's interpretive challenges as starting points to begin enquiry, rather than presenting the author's perspectives as argumentative solutions that shut down the need for further investigation. The line-by-line annotations will help students place the word-by-word sensitivity they are developing in a much larger intellectual context, and will offer models for the kind of exploration that students may choose to develop further on their own.

Why not Pharr or Williams?

Until very recently there have been slim or non-existent pickings among modern *Aeneid* commentaries well suited to teachers who take this approach to reading. Pharr (both in its original edition and in Boyd's AP-friendly version with selections from books 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 and 12) and Williams have been the most widely used.

Boyd offers a thoughtful new introduction in her revision of Pharr, but the line-by-line commentary gives little space to interpretive questions. Its priority is to overcome difficulties posed for new readers by their lack of confidence with basic grammar, syntax and vocabulary, and by their unfamiliarity with poetic word order.

More problematically, while the Pharr/Boyd edition is positively lavish in its help with vocabulary and grammar, its glosses regularly invite students to mentally rearrange the Latin word

order as a first step in their approach to the poem. All too many of the notes provide simplified prosaic re-orderings, denuding the verses of their rhetorical shape as well as their metrical form. These glosses threaten to distract students from acquiring (conscious and unconscious) strategies for reading that would help them achieve precise comprehension while hearing each word in its place in the Latin. (It should be noted, however, that Boyd's (2006) approach to glossing selections from *Aeneid* 8 and 11 is altogether different from her 2004 revision of Pharr's commentary, and is free of Pharr's distortions of the poem's word order.)

For instance, some of these effects can be seen in Pharr/Boyd's reordering of the lines describing Aeneas' exploration after making landfall following the storm in Book 1.305ff. Both Ganiban and Jones provide similar levels of help for students to analyze the relationship between the various components of this sentence, but their explanations move alongside the Latin reading order, while Pharr/Boyd preempt the poem's subtle rhetorical shaping of this section of the narrative:

*At pius Aeneas per noctem plurima volvens,
ut primum lux alma data est, exire locosque
explorare novos, quas vento accesserit oras,
qui teneant (nam inculta videt), hominesne feraene,
quaerere constituit sociisque exacta referre. (1.305-309).*

On 1.306-9, after translating *ut primum* and pointing out the series of infinitives that depend on *constituit*, Pharr/Boyd rewrite the Latin: “**Aeneas constituit exire locosque novos explorare, quaerere quas oras accesserit vento (et quaerere) qui teneant (illos locos) referreque exacta sociis (suis).**” This rearrangement risks deafening students to the emphases within the gradual unfolding of Aeneas' thoughts, perceptions, and questions. It obscures the way the narrative characteristically takes its readers through the mental processes that lead to his resolve at 1.309, as the sunlight (*lux alma* 1.306) allows Aeneas to enact his *pietas* (which at night in 1.305 has brought unspecified mental restlessness) through movement (*exire* 1.306) and through a series of observations: alongside Aeneas, we grasp the unfamiliarity of the terrain (with *novos* in a marked position after *explorare* in 1.307), the fact that the region's lack of cultivation prompts him to find out whether humans or wild animals live there (1.308), and the relevance of all this to his *sociis* (1.309).

If the reordering of these lines had been placed last in Pharr/Boyd's notes, after their more detailed comments on lines 307, 308, and 309, it would be less worrying; the rewording would then merely clarify very concisely the grammatical relationships and assist with translation into standard English; as it stands, the rewrite (like many others in the commentary) invites students to rearrange the sentence before they have approached the poetry on its own terms. Williams indulges in these reorderings less often than Pharr/Boyd, but on 1.306f he too substitutes a rewrite for any more specific grammatical help.

By contrast, at 1.306 Ganiban (Focus) and Jones (Cambridge), in addition to other detailed comments on vocabulary, simply warn students that *exire*, *explorare*, *quaerere*, and *referre* are infinitives dependent on *constituit* in 1.309, and point out that 1.307-308 contain indirect questions “after” *quaerere*. These choices, subtly different from the rewrites offered by Pharr/Boyd and Williams, seem a reasonable compromise. Once the students have gained more experience as readers, they will anticipate what sort of verbs are likely to resolve the function of such dependent infinitives and indirect questions; in the meantime, alerting post-beginners to *quaerere* and *constituit*

in 1.309 should lead them towards the skills they need to develop in suspension and anticipation. Both Ganiban's and Jones' notes maintain the Latin word order.

The great strength of Boyd's reworking of Pharr (aside from the advantage for high school groups of its being tailored to the AP curriculum) lies in the practical help given to students working on the *Aeneid* before they are secure in Latin. Its weakness lies in some of the tools the edition adopts for this assistance.

For instance, Pharr/Boyd prints *-is* 3rd declension accusative plural endings as *-es* (see Boyd 2004, vi). This strategy reaffirms the neglect of the *-is* accusative forms by so many elementary textbooks, which leaves students painfully confused when they do eventually meet those very common accusative *-is* endings.

The "visible vocabulary system" (Pharr/Boyd xxxv) in the partly italicized text reminds students in every line where they may look for help in the vocabulary notes below the text, and where they will find words in the list at the end of the volume—or in their memories. This obviously makes prioritizing easier for students who are struggling to get a grip on core vocabulary, but the format visibly replicates and reinforces common post-beginner perceptions of the text of the *Aeneid* as an enigma comprised of familiar and new words, to be decoded, rather than a poem to be read. There is a risk that this approach will fail to be a means of helpfully meeting the students halfway and leading them towards a new experience of the poetry. Instead, this thoughtful but overemphatic format may set up perceptual boundaries that impede students from moving away from puzzling and decoding, and towards reading and listening.

Williams' 1972-3 two-volume commentary raises different problems. He often writes perceptively about the poetry, but he designed his work for a generation of school and university students who needed fewer reminders about the fundamentals of grammar. Williams cheerfully explains "relatively simple questions of diction, metre, and construction" (1972, vii), but his sense of what counts as "simple" meets the needs of few intermediate students today.

Williams' frequent brief translations, which must have been intended as a kind of shorthand for discussing interpretive problems, too often become fragmentary "cribs" for students who are still struggling to read Latin with grammatical precision and accuracy. At 1.151f, for instance, in the famous storm simile, Williams translates *tum, pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem | conspexere, silent arrectisque auribus astant* with "then if it happens that they look upon someone respected for his public devotion and services, they fall silent, and stand still listening intently." Partly as a reminder that *quem* is equivalent to *aliquem* he directs readers towards 1.181, but students who are confused by this sentence are unlikely to be enlightened by that "cf."

In contrast, Pharr/Boyd has the most precise and probably the most lucid note on these two lines, answering most of the questions likely to puzzle post-beginners but without closing down interpretive possibilities. Jones' notes are sparse here, while Ganiban complicates matters unnecessarily by describing the subject of *conspexere* and *astant* in 1.152 as the "*impius plebs*, construed as a collective noun, 'the masses.'" The Pharr/Boyd gloss (after reminding students that *conspexere* is equivalent to *conspexerunt*) explains that these verbs are plurals "because of the collective idea in *vulgus* and *populo*," which conveys the same thought but keeps readers within the framework of the narrative.

Critical enquiry in the Focus Aeneid

Overall, the new Focus series brightens the outlook for Vergil teachers immeasurably. All five commentaries have the potential to transform the way undergraduates experience the poem; O'Hara's Book 4 installment is especially noteworthy, achieving a particularly happy balance of guidance and stimulation.

The introduction to the poem as a whole, provided by Randall Ganiban as series editor, sets the investigative tone of the commentaries. Ganiban handles his topics straightforwardly: "Vergil's lifetime and poetry" (a summary of the poet's career set against the civil wars, dictatorship, triumvirate, and the transformation of Octavian into Augustus the *princeps*), "Vergil and his predecessors" (on the *Aeneid's* central intertexts), and "The *Aeneid*, Rome and Augustus" (a succinct presentation of some of the issues at stake in the famous—or infamous—"optimism"/"pessimism" controversy). These essays in miniature are far from provocative, but they do exactly what is needed here: Ganiban makes large issues accessible to new readers, and leaves them open-ended. Bibliographical citations are a key part of this strategy, as in the whole Focus series; 44 footnotes for a 10-page introduction point towards the multiplicity of perspectives available in recent secondary literature, as well as telling students where to find basic resources for further information. Even students who are spurred neither by curiosity nor course requirements towards further reading will become aware of how unsettled such questions remain among specialists. Some students will probably find the extensive citation of secondary literature daunting; for others it will be empowering.

Each single-book volume reproduces Ganiban's general introduction (which has been subtly improved with small corrections and refinements as the series has progressed) while providing its own introduction to the book covered, briefly explaining where that book lies in the *Aeneid's* narrative, and presenting some of its key thematic concerns and interpretive problems. Ganiban's nutshell analyses of Books 1 and 2, Perkell's impressively succinct yet rich explanation of Book 3, and Johnston's account of Book 6 adopt a directive tone and structure. These introductions emphasize intertextual alertness above all, instructing readers (in Ganiban's words) to "consider the *Aeneid's* interaction with Homeric epic as a creative medium through which Virgil defines his characters and their struggles" (2008, 11); Johnston (14) also points to other "literary, philosophical, and religious influences" on Book 6, which she elaborates in much greater detail later in the commentary. All these brief essays are tightly focused and easy to read, though their admirable clarity and concision may perhaps work less well for student readers unacquainted with the broader range of materials under discussion.

It would be good to see more space devoted to topics likely to prick the curiosity of those students with little background in the wider canon of Greek and Roman literature. Second and third year Latin courses at some colleges are populated mostly with Latin or Classics majors, but here at Purdue (and at many other institutions) most of our second year Latin students are either pursuing an elective, or are completing language requirements for degrees in disciplines far removed from Classics. These students often enter the Latin program without any broader experience in classical literature, and simply do not have time in their schedules to pursue concurrently all of the wider reading we would like to see them undertake.

Perkell's introduction to *Aeneid* 3 is as preoccupied with Homeric and other intertexts or models as Ganiban's and Johnston's. But even while she acknowledges a special concern with the *Odyssey* that will run through the commentary, Perkell introduces students to a range of political and poetic questions about the book as "a journey from the familiar to the new" in which "taking

emotional as well as physical leave of Troy is [. . .] a cost of making Rome” (Perkell 15). This five-page introduction is a bit longer than the other introductions in the series, because Book 3 has more neglect to overcome than Books 1, 2, 4, and 6. *Aeneid* 3 has given rise to articles with titles like “The Dullest Book of the *Aeneid*” (Allen) and “In Defense of the Troughs” (Stubbs), but Perkell’s essay is far from over-defensive of a book that offers exceptional riches for exploration.

In his brief introductory analysis of Book 4, O’Hara is as emphatic as the other contributors about the *Aeneid*’s dialogue with other literary works, but he takes an even more teacherly approach: he shows students with little background in other classical literature why this intertextual dialogue matters. O’Hara points out to these new readers how *Aeneid* 4’s layering of tragic and other intertexts express the complexity of Dido and Aeneas’ roles in Vergil’s poem: Dido echoes Sophocles’ Ajax as much as or more than Euripides’ Medea, Euripides’ Alcestis, Sophocles’ Deianeira, and Catullus’ Ariadne, while Aeneas becomes a Theseus and a Jason as well as an Odysseus. Students unfamiliar with those stories are given reasons to ask further questions and extend their knowledge of other literature, as O’Hara uses these issues to provide a framework for considering the broader scope of the book’s problems and ambiguities, noting that Book 4 “follows tragedy’s practice of presenting irresolvable conflict that can be looked at from different viewpoints” (O’Hara 15). O’Hara’s close interweaving of information and enquiry in the introduction is in keeping with his line-by-line commentary, where observations are offered as points of departure for students to mull over and investigate further.

Indeed, O’Hara’s contribution as a whole (*Aeneid* 4) fulfills the dreams of (I imagine) innumerable Latin teachers, and meets all the criteria I described above. If anyone preparing an *Aeneid* course as a fourth-semester bridge towards more advanced reading skills has qualms about the obviousness of placing the story of Dido at the heart of the readings, those qualms will surely be allayed by O’Hara’s achievement. [Rogerson](#) shares my enthusiasm; see Rogerson 2012 also for links to other BMCR reviews on Ganiban (Books 1 and 2) and her review of Perkell (Book 3); all these reviews have welcomed warmly the installments presented so far by Focus.

O’Hara does not take it for granted that readers will be ready from the start to share the scholarly preoccupations and assumptions that determine what kind of information his edition presents. Instead he continually frames facts and observations by showing explicitly what further questions they raise about language, politics, literature, and culture. His glosses blend technical assistance with interpretive lures. In this way O’Hara indicates what readers have to gain from entering into the ongoing conversation with the text that the commentary invites them to join.

Even when O’Hara is helping students with the mechanics of case-usage or other practical issues—and, like most of the contributors to the series, he is as generous with that help as one would wish in a commentary designed at this level—he involves readers in the questions left unresolved by the text. For instance, he points to a small ambiguity at 4.2, glossing **venis** as “probably instrumental (‘feeds *with* her veins/blood’), but could also describe place (‘*in* her veins’), with the preposition omitted as often in poetry.” This acknowledgment of uncertainty right at the very beginning of the book will begin sensitizing students immediately to the ways that translation into English prose demands decisions that Latin poetry leaves open. Other simple but precise notes alert students to the texture of the Latin, with its mingling of metaphor and materiality (at 4.280 **horrore** is glossed as “partly metaphorical, ‘dread,’ partly literal, ‘bristling’”), and to the experiences that would color metaphors for Roman readers (on Dido’s acknowledgment of the limits fixed by Jupiter’s *fata* at 4.614, **hic terminus haeret**, readers are directed to picture this “Roman

image” through “the boundary-stones’ which everywhere marked their fields under the protection of the god Terminus”).

Among O’Hara’s more elaborate explanations, the simultaneous clarity and density of the note on **pudor** at 4.27 exemplifies his approach. Readers are not only informed of Kaster’s nuanced distillation of Roman *pudor*, but are invited into the enquiry, as O’Hara asks, “Is Dido to be judged more as a public figure, or as a (Roman) woman? What laws or restraints of *pudor* would Dido violate by pursuing Aeneas, especially if she sought to marry him?” He goes on to remind or inform readers just how little we may do to resolve these questions by appealing to Roman cultural norms of Vergil’s time, which are as complex and ambiguous as Vergil’s text. By noting Augustan-era ambivalence towards older definitions of *pudicitia*, the commentary situates the interpretive issues at stake in a wider cultural and historical perspective, but instead of using this further information to close down discussion, this perspective draws readers still further into the questions raised by the poem. O’Hara’s approach here contrasts with Pharr/Boyd, for instance, where at 4.27 the gloss on *pudor* simply notes that “although many women (and men) in Vergil’s day remarried after the death or divorce of a spouse, a woman who was **univira** (i.e. had had only one husband) was considered worthy of unusual respect.”

The other Focus commentaries are equally satisfying and precisely nuanced, with varied emphases that will appeal to different intellectual and pedagogic tastes. Ganiban does less than O’Hara to involve students in actively formulating questions about both small and large interpretive issues, but does more to alert them to the sounds and shape of the hexameters, often pointing out (for example) where enjambment places weight on a word whose place in the sentence would otherwise be unemphatic. All the commentaries give brief introductions to each segment within the book-length narrative, but Perrell, above all, extends these into rich yet pithy mini-essays, which help students see the structure of Book 3 in relation to its interpretive challenges. Perrell’s remarkable single-page essay on Buthrotum (3.294-355), for instance, approaches the episode along similar lines to the influential analyses by Quint (1993) and Bettini (1997), but eloquently communicates in just four paragraphs how rich a range of interpretive questions (including issues of characterization, ideology, narrative structures, and intertextuality) are raised by the account Aeneas gives of Helenus and Andromache’s “Little Troy.”

The formatting of Books 3, 4, and 6 is disappointing: the excellent mini-essays and summaries for each section within the book are set in tiny print in the commentary below the Latin (see, e.g., Figure 1)—which must tempt students to skip them, surely? The small print of the normal line-by-line annotations is much easier to

LIBER TERTIUS

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iungimus hospitio dextras et tecta subimus.
Templa dei saxo venerabar structa vetusto.

83. **hospitio**: ablative of manner. Contrasts with violated *hospitium* of Polymestor (15).
84–120. *Aeneas prays that Apollo may preserve the Trojans and grant them their own city. From the temple’s inner sanctum, a divine voice instructs the Trojans (“sons of Dardanus”) to seek their “ancient mother” and promises universal rule. Anchises interprets the “ancient mother” as Crete, native land of their ancestor Teucrus. He commands the Trojans to sacrifice and set sail.* In understanding the Trojans’ “ancient mother” to be Crete, Anchises misses the clue inherent in the address “sons of Dardanus.” The Penates’ subsequent appearance to Aeneas is necessary to set the Trojans again on the right path. (On the characteristic ambiguity of oracles in colonization narratives, see Dougherty (1993) 157–63.) The Penates’ revelation of the *Italian* origin of Dardanus and hence of his descendants Aeneas and the other Trojans is a key passage in the *Aeneid*, since it makes of the Trojans’ arrival in Italy a *return* to their true home.
In the *Aeneid*, as is revealed piecemeal (see also 3.94–99, 147–91; 7.205–11, 8.134–42.), Dardanus, ancestor of Aeneas, is a son of Jupiter and Electra, born in a town or region in Etruria called Corythus or Corythum. He immigrates first to Samothrace and then to the Troad, where he founds Troy, marries Batea, daughter of Teucer (or Teucrus), fathers the Trojan race, and ultimately is apotheosed. (Elaborated versions of this story are found in later commentators, such as Servius *ad* 3.104, 167.) That Dardanus comes from Etruria is a significant innovation on Vergil’s part (Horsfall (1973), R.Wilhelm (1992)), with important thematic and political implications.
Other versions of Aeneas’ heritage were current in Vergil’s time. The Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, essentially contemporary with Vergil, relying apparently on Varro (Servius), represented Dardanus, the Trojans’ ancestor, as ethnically Greek, from Arcadia, thereby implicitly claiming that Rome was a Greek city. On the other hand, if Dardanus, whom Aeneas (*Aeneas*) claims as his ancestor already in Homer, *Iliad* 20.215–43, is Italian (as Vergil tells it), then Aeneas’ voyage is a return, a homecoming, a *nostos*, and his settlement in Italy has unarguable legitimacy. As Syed argues (2005) esp.194–227, the idea of an Italian Aeneas is crucial to the Romans’ sense of their distinctive selfhood—neither Greek nor wholly Eastern (like the Phrygian Trojans). An Italian Dardanus and/or Aeneas as founder embodies an assimilation of Italian and Roman identity, thereby making a community of Romans with a shared past. See further the notes on 168, 180.
On Dardanus and the Romans’ ethnicity see Horsfall (1973, 1987), Jocelyn (1991), and Wilhelm (1992).
84. **templa...venerabar**: “regard reverently,” cf.79 n. saxo...vetusto: the temple, built from stone ancient even to Aeneas, would pre-exist (and therefore have primacy over) Apollo’s temple in Delphi (Paschalis (1986) 60).

Figure 1 – Focus *Vergil Aeneid* 3, showing section summary in footnotes (white space removed for clarity).

34-222: Juno's shipwreck of the Trojans

In 12-33, we learned the causes of Juno's hatred of Aeneas; we now see that hatred in action. She persuades Aeolus (king of the winds) to send a terrible storm against Aeneas. Though Neptune ultimately quells it, the storm shipwrecks the Trojans at Carthage. Juno here acts as a figure of *furor*, who opposes Aeneas, the epic's figure of *pietas*, and thus dramatizes one of the recurring motifs of the epic. Throughout the *Aeneid*, we will see figures of *pietas* attempting to control *furor*, both their own and that of other characters. This particular manifestation of the theme has important divine and cosmic implications. By resisting fate (39) and by persuading Aeolus to create a storm in violation of his duty to Jupiter (see 50-64 n.), Juno poses a significant threat to the stability of the cosmos and Jupiter's control of it.

The opposition between *furor* and *pietas* is central to the epic. In optimistic or Augustan interpretations, *pietas* prevails (e.g. Pöschl (1962) and Otis (1964); cf. Introduction). The opposition, however, becomes increasingly complex as the poem proceeds, since characters of *pietas* also act with *furor*. Most famously, Aeneas is *furiis accensus* (12.946), when he slays Turnus (see especially the discussions in Putnam (1965, 1995)).

This passage is closely modeled on *Odyssey* 5.282-493, where the god Poseidon (= Neptune) sees his enemy Odysseus sailing home peacefully from Calypso's island and is angered. He sends a storm that will ultimately be stopped by Athena but will leave Odysseus shipwrecked at Phaeacia. The contrasts between the two heroes are especially important because they establish a basic distinction that will run throughout the *Aeneid*. Odysseus is most concerned with his personal glory, while Aeneas will come to reject this heroic outlook and instead base his actions in the overall good of his community. Moreover, the contrasting actions of the sea god in these epics also signal the changed world of Vergil's poem: while Poseidon/Neptune had been the god of wrath who sends a storm in the *Odyssey*, in the *Aeneid*'s corresponding scene he functions as a force of calm and order.

For a general interpretation of the scene, see Pöschl (1962) 13-24, Otis (1964) 227-34, R. D. Williams (1965-66), Anderson (2005) 24-6, McKay (1989), Perkell (1999) 33-42, and R. A. Smith (2005) 12-20. On Juno and the gods, see Feeney (1991) 129-37. On Aeolus, see Phillips (1980). On the literary background, see Knauer (1964a); Hardie (1986) 90-7, 103-10, 180-3, and 237-40; Nelis (2001) 67-73.

Figure 2 – Focus *Vergil Aeneid 1*, showing section summary on its own page.

read, because each lemma is printed in bold. In Books 1 and 2 Ganiban inserts every précis of the subsequent section of narrative in a full size font that breaks up the Latin (Figure 2); it is not obvious why the later contributions have not used the same clear format. At the start of Book 4 the summary of lines 1-172 (p. 19) takes up most of the page, with the result that only one line of Latin is printed: this breaks the flow of the narrative far more severely than inserting into the main text these section-by-section overviews would. The same problem occurs with Book 6, where the summary of 1-263 displaces all but the first line of Latin.

Each volume adapts Ganiban's appendix on Stylistic Terms. These glossaries work hand in hand with the textual commentary to present lucidly and persuasively the traditional vocabulary for analyzing verbal details of rhetoric and poetics. In the line-by-line commentary, both basics (metaphor, simile, irony, rhetorical question) and terms outside the mainstream of everyday English (polysyndeton, epanalepsis, aposiopesis, etc.) are marked with an asterisk pointing towards the appendix. So students will learn this technical vocabulary both through the instance explained within the text and through abstract definitions with the Greek or Latin roots of each term.

All the commentaries have well-crafted but sparse vocabulary lists; these seem intended (reasonably enough) as a convenient supplement to a good dictionary. Ganiban's lists for Books 1 and 2 remind students to notice which verbs work transitively, which intransitively, and which are both transitive and intransitive, but unfortunately the other volumes give no guidance about what case(s) students should expect after verbs, adjectives and nouns.

Vix e conspectu Siculae telluris in altum
vela dabant laeti et spumas salis aere ruebant, 35
cum Iuno aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus
haec secum: "mene incepto desistere victam
nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regem?
quippe vector fatis. Pallasne exurere classem
Argivum atque ipsos potuit sommergere ponto 40

34-49. Juno is outraged as she sees the Trojans set sail from Sicily for Italy and chastises herself for not doing more to stop them.

34. **Vix e conspectu...** Vergil, like Homer, plunges at once "into the middle of things" (*in medias res*, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 148). The events described here pick up from the end of Book 3, where Aeneas concludes his two-book flashback. **in altum**: "into the deep," i.e. "out to sea."

35. **laeti**: "happily," as often the adjective can be translated adverbially. **spumas salis**: note the use of the *s*-sounds that perhaps evoke the sound of the sea. **aere**: the prows were covered with brass. **ruebant**: "were driving before them."

36. **aeternum...vulnus**: *vulnus* can be used of psychological "wounding" as well as of physical. For the causes of Juno's pain, cf. 19-28; for the artistic positioning of the phrase, cf. 20 n. Note the heavy metrical quality of this line.

37-8. **haec secum**: "thus to herself" (lit. "these things (she speaks) with herself"). The verb of "saying" is often omitted when the sense is clear, cf. 76, 335, 370, 559. **mene incepto**: "am I, defeated, then to desist from my purpose...?" This use of an accusative (*mene*) and infinitive (*desistere, posse*) interrogatively without a principal verb expresses strong indignation (cf. 97). The elision of *mene* and the initial vowel of *incepto* may produce a word play on the Greek word *menin* ("wrath"), the first word of the *Iliad* describing Achilles' wrath (Levitan (1993)). **Italia**: ablative of separation. **Teucrorum**: the Trojans were called *Teucri* after Teucer, their first king.

39. **quippe vector fatis**: *quippe* gives a reason with considerable emphasis, which must be judged from the context. Here it expresses indignant scorn—"Because—a fine reason indeed!—I am forbidden by the fates." Cf. 59 and 661. Juno's subsequent actions will show that, while fate might mandate a certain outcome, she has the ability to influence the path to it, an idea echoed in her words at 7.310-16, as she decides to incite the war that will occupy the second half of the epic. **Pallasne...**: emphatically placed, suggesting Juno's rivalry with her. **exurere...submergere** (40): notice how skillfully the double horror of destruction by fire and water is suggested.

40. **Argivum**: for this genitive plural, cf. 4 n. **ipsos**: "(the Argives) themselves," i.e. men in contrast to their fleet.

The commentaries encourage students to use Allen and Greenough as a reference grammar, which Focus also publishes (in Anne Mahoney’s 2002 edition). It makes perfect sense to steer students towards a grammar text, instead of attempting an all-in-one package of text, commentary and grammar like Pharr, but I would have preferred to see students directed to Morwood’s *Latin Grammar* for reviewing forms and core constructions. Morwood’s is not a full reference grammar, so one would need to make an extensive reference work available for students pursuing more subtle questions of usage. But Morwood’s grammar gives more precise, succinct, and clear information than Allen and Greenough on most of the constructions that typically cause most trouble for second and third year students (the section on gerunds and gerundives, for instance, is particularly strong). It is small, portable, affordably priced, and provides simple exercises to consolidate students’ understanding of each topic. These exercises make it very easy to organize systematic grammar review as part of a second or third year reading course.

Comparison with Peter Jones’ Reading Virgil

Peter Jones’ *Reading Virgil: Aeneid I and II* does make Morwood its main reference point for grammar and syntax (Jones also cites Wheelock and *Reading Latin* for review of common constructions). Jones’ commentary is aimed at a wider readership than the Focus series. It is designed for anyone who has completed a beginning Latin course, and it is clearly meant to work well for students in continuing education, for high school pupils, and for readers studying Latin on their own.

The tone and content of Jones’ commentary is less conventionally academic and more personal and idiosyncratic (though in some ways more conservative) than the Focus editions (as Canetta’s enthusiastic [BMCR review](#) notes, “informality and humour . . . permeate the tone of the discussion”). Most of its attention goes to helping readers hear the poetry and follow the story—an important priority for students who are only just getting used to reading an extended narrative in Latin, and who find it difficult to keep track of the story while thinking analytically about the language. Jones divides his comments into three layers on each page: one stripe gives grammar and vocabulary help (Figure 3A); another layer gives suggestions for secondary reading (Figure 3B); in the third Jones leads us through his take on the passage (Figure 3C). His comments on 1.102-7 made me feel as seasick (mostly in a good way)

82 Section 1.102-7: Storm at sea

1.102-7: *Aeneas’ ship is badly damaged, others thrown about on the waves*

tālia iactantī, stridēns[^] Aquilōne [^]procella
uēlūm [^]aduersa ferit, flūctūsque ad sidera tollit.
franguntur rēmi; tum prōra auertit, et undis
dat latus; insequitur cumulo praeruptus[^] aquae [^]mōns.
hī summō in flūctū pendit; hīs unda dehiscēns
terrām inter flūctūs aperit; furit aestus harēnis.

105

Learning vocabulary

Aeneās (Aeneān acc., Aeneāe gen.) Aeneas
contingit (impersonal) 3 *contigi* it comes to pass for
X (dat.) (with the idea of a happy chance)
**dextr-a* ae 1f. right hand
effundō 3 *effudi effusum* I pour out
Hector m. Hector, greatest Trojan fighter, killed by
Achilles
Iliac-us a um of Ilium
os *or-is* 3n. face, mouth, speech
palm-a ae 1f. palm (of hands)
quater four times
referō referre rettuli relātum I bring/carry back,
return; recall, recount
soluō 3 *solui solūtum* I loosen, dissolve, release; pay,
perform
tel-um i 2n. spear
ter three times

**auert-ō* 3 I turn round (intrans. here, but usually trans.), divert
105 *cumul-us* i 2m. mass, pile, heap (here abl. of manner, ‘in a mass’)
praerupt-us a um sheer, giddy
aquae mōns: the single syllable at the end of the line (rare in V.) creates the effect of ‘the heavy fall of the mass of sea-water’ (Page). In this line, there is no coincidence between ictus and accent (pp. 48-50 above)?
106 *hī . . . hīs*: ‘these [men]’
**pendō* 3 *pependi pēnsum* I hang
hīs: ‘for these . . .’
**und-a* ae 1f. wave
dehiscō 3 I gape, yawn, split
107 **aperiō* 4 I open (up), reveal
**aest-us* *ūs* 4m. seething (water), swell, tide; heat
**harēn-a* ae 1f. sand

Learning vocabulary

aest-us *ūs* 4m. seething, swell, tide; heat
aperiō 4 I open (up), reveal
auertō 3 *auerti auersum* I turn round (trans. and intrans.), divert
feriō 4 I strike, hit
frangō 3 *frēgi frāctum* I break, smash
harēn-a ae 1f. sand
strid(e)ō (2) 3 *stridi* I howl, shriek, creak; whirr
pendō 3 *pependi pēnsum* I hang
und-a ae 1f. wave

102 *iactantī*: here used of speech. It is dat. s. part., referring to Aeneas ‘to/for him throwing out tālia’; a dat. of disadvantage? Ethic dat. (RL88.4, W38, M10)? It is almost the equivalent of an abl. abs.
**stridō* 3 *stridi* I howl, shriek; whirr
Aquilō -nis 3m. north wind
procell-a ae 1f. squall
103 **feriō* 4 I strike, hit, break, pierce
104 **frangō* 3 *frēgi frāctum* I break, smash
rēm-us i 2m. oar
prōr-a ae 1f. prow

See: Stahl (1981: 157-77) on Aeneas’ prayer; and Jenkyns (1998: 61) on the land/history/nation theme.

Crunch: 97-101

1.102-7: Almost as if the winds have heard Aeneas’ prayer, they hit his ship with the sort of sudden, ferocious blast that every sailor fears. The reaction of the ship indicates the consequences. It is travelling north from Sicily, and the north wind slams straight into it. Whatever the detailed effect of the wind slamming into a sail *aduersa*, the ship would immediately lose way, especially in the mountainous seas (103); add the smashing of the

A

B

C

Figure 3 – Page from Jones *Reading Virgil*, showing: A—notes on grammar and vocabulary; B—suggested further reading; C—Jones’ own commentary on text.

as the poem itself does at that point, and he concludes that section by thanking “Cate Trend, an experienced Atlantic-going yachtswoman, for the personal nautical observations” (Jones 83).

The similarities and contrasts between Ganiban’s and Jones’ glossing of the storm in *Aeneid* 1 reveal in miniature their different styles. They say almost the same things about the Latin, but the tone and framework are very different. At 1.101 Ganiban gives us, “**Talia iactanti**: ethical dative or dative of disadvantage; ‘to him,’ as he was ‘hurling such (despairing words),’ the following events occur. *Iacto* is often used of passionate speech (cf. 2.588, 768).” Jones presents his notes on 1.101 as questions: “*iactanti*: here used of speech. It is dat. s. part., referring to Aeneas ‘to/for him throwing out *talia*’: a dat. of disadvantage? Ethic dat. (RL88.4, W38, M10)? It is almost the equivalent of an abl. abs.” I see what Jones means about the resemblance to an ablative absolute, but that throwaway comment could easily confuse students who are just barely getting their minds round the relationship between participles in ablative absolutes and other participial uses.

Both Ganiban and Jones ask students to listen for the unusual rhythm of 1.105 (*dat latus, insequitur cumulo praeruptus aquae mons*). Again, the contrast between them is striking precisely because they are saying almost the same thing. Here is Ganiban on **aquae mons**: “the line ends with a monosyllabic word: the coincidence of verse and word accent that normally ends Vergil’s hexameter is consequently violated here; the violence of the storm may thus be suggested” (Ganiban, 2009, 31). Jones gives us: “the single syllable at the end of the line (rare in V.) creates the effect of ‘the heavy fall of the mass of sea-water’ (Page). In this line, there is *no* coincidence between ictus and accent (pp. 48-50 above)!” Ganiban’s comment on 1.102 is more likely than Jones’ to help students understand what both editors are trying to tell them about the dative *iactanti*. But at 1.105 Ganiban’s more careful comment dries out (in every sense) the language. Jones is less precise, but playfully conveys the excitement to be had from the interaction of rhythm and meaning.

Both Jones and Ganiban improve on the older texts here. Williams, as so often, gives a full translation, both of 1.102-3 and 1.105, though he also points out *iactanti* as an ethical dative “in the loosest possible grammatical relationship with the sentence” and notes how the rhythm of 105 is “deliberately dislocated by the monosyllabic ending.” Pharr/Boyd’s note, on the other hand, acknowledges less uncertainty over *iactanti*. Possible meanings are tersely glossed in the vocabulary list “toss, buffet; utter.” It is designated a dative of reference; readers are sent to the appendix to see if this categorization will help them understand what that might mean in this instance (I rather doubt that it will). No mention is made of how the participle is being used, though Pharr/Boyd do point out that that *talia* implies *dicta* and that it is the object of *iactanti*. They too attend to some stylistic concerns, making their readers aware of the hyperbole running throughout this section (noted repeatedly from 1.103 on), and pointing out “the smashing effect of the monosyllable at the end of the line” in 1.105.

Unlike the Focus series, Jones marks long vowels in the Latin text. There are doubtless good reasons for leaving the text clean of macrons in the Focus editions. But the advantages of weaning students off overdependence on those “long marks” are outweighed, I think, by the importance of teaching second and third year students to read aloud with normal syllable-stress so that they learn correct vowel quantities by absorption and repetition. The Focus volumes do give macrons in their vocabulary lists, but most students need constant reminders in the text to reinforce their pronunciation skills, at least during the first few weeks of any course.

Jones also adds marks to the text to highlight some of the intricately arranged pairings of nouns and adjectives that often confound beginners on their first encounter with Latin poetry. Jones (36) explains “Words to be taken together for translation purposes (almost always because

they agree) are linked A[^] . . . ^B.” The sequence can be extended when additional words are linked, and when there are other pairs or groups nested within or intersecting one that is already marked, Jones uses A* . . . *B instead (Figure 4). On an initial appraisal Jones’ markings seem a clear and straightforward way to ease new Latin readers into the skills of suspension and disambiguation that many find very difficult on a first encounter with poetry. But I found when using his 2007 textbook, *Reading Ovid*, that this very clarity becomes a problem when one is trying to help students unlearn old habits of jumping around in a sentence. The marks are so visually striking that they make it harder to instill new techniques of attending to the other ways that words are grouped together (metrically and syntactically). They distract students from analyzing what job each word is doing in its own position in the line, clause, or sentence. The ^ . . . ^ patterns, even when spread across a few lines, stand out on the page and are more quickly and easily perceived than all the more nuanced details that help students process meaning in word groupings within the rhetorical shape of the Latin order.

Spotting agreement (e.g. of nouns and adjectives) too fast, at the expense of the remaining context, impairs students’ ability to comprehend the Latin in order and to translate it accurately and sensitively; there is a temptation to take every adjective as attributive, for instance, because they have rushed ahead in the sequence of words, without noticing the weight within the sentence structure that so many Latin adjectives (as well as participles) carry.

At times the clarification may be worth the costs, especially when the notes help readers grasp further nuances in the arrangement, as at Priam’s futile arming in 2.509, where Jones marks “tremantibus[^] aevo” to warn readers that something else is coming—that is, “[^]umeris” in 2.510. In the notes below (citing Servius), Jones spells out his appreciation of “a superb triplet: no longer used to arms he once wielded, he trembled, not from fear, merely age.” Given the difficulties so many students have with the gaps in poetic word order between nouns and adjectives, and with delays between nouns and appositional participles, Jones’ strategy is perhaps needed; it improves upon the rewritten versions offered by Pharr/Boyd and is unproblematic for those students whose elementary training has habituated them to reading Latin in its own order.

But sometimes the cost is likely to outweigh this benefit, if students have in previous courses been asked to hunt around immediately for subject, verb, object, etc., and have been encouraged to pair nouns and adjectives in English translation as soon as they spot agreement in case, number, and gender. For instance, at 2.39 (“scinditur incertum[^] studia in contraria [^]uulgus”) students with those habits are likely to take the markings as an invitation to fish for the ingredients of an English sentence, rushing to translate the line as “the uncertain crowd is split into opposing factions,” without pausing to hear the weight on *scinditur* or the close relationship between this verb and *incertum* in the first part of the line.

For immediate post-beginners *Reading Virgil* (like Pharr/Boyd) offers a significant advantage in placing vocabulary lists on the same page as the text, so that students do not need to flick repeatedly backwards and forwards between text and vocabulary help or text and dictionary. The Focus editions save their vocabulary lists for the end of each volume, which is a disadvantage for

60 Section 1.1–7: Introduction

*litora, multum [^]ille et terris [^]iactātus et altō,
uī superum sacuae[^] memorem* [^]Iūnōnis ob *īram,
multa quoque et bellō passus, dum conderet urbem, 5
īferretque deōs Latīō, genus[^] unde [^]Latinum,
Albānīque patrēs, atque altae moenia Rōmae.

Figure 4 – Detail from Jones *Reading Virgil*, showing use of ^ and *.
White space removed for clarity.

practicing sight-reading with post-beginner students. But after students have made some headway, the Focus layout will come into its own. A same-page word list may tempt students to look up vocabulary automatically, without any pause for thought, when they would be better served by taking a moment to make informed guesses about likely meanings, if they are going to log those words in their long term memory.

All these editions (Cambridge and Focus), but especially Johnston's *Aeneid* 6, contain excellent explanations of Vergilian meter. Students are taught how to listen to the hexameter and read it aloud, as well as how to scan a line on paper. Both Johnston and Jones get readers thinking about the relationship between Latin and English meters, Johnston with dactylic hexameters and Jones with iambic pentameters (though I am probably not alone in finding Jones' analysis of ictus in English blank verse misleadingly oversimplified). Like Johnston in her reworking of Ganiban's metrical appendix for *Aeneid* 6, Jones reviews the basic rules of Latin word-accent, which the other Focus commentaries omit. The other Focus commentaries are either more confident in their readers' familiarity with those basic principles, or are less perturbed by the fear that readers will (as Jones puts it) "torture the verse to death" by ignoring the "*natural accent* of the spoken word" (Jones 2011, 49).

Jones uses the technically correct terms "heavy" and "light" (where many of us would simply say "long" and "short" in the classroom) to explain the shape of each metron; unfortunately these categories often confuse students who are just beginning to differentiate between "natural" word accent and metrical ictus, as novices expect "heavy" and "light" to refer to syllable-stress/word-accent, not syllable-quantity in versification. But the strengths of Jones' introduction to "Metre and verse in the *Aeneid*" overshadow its minor drawbacks; mostly his explanations are beautifully clear both in content and visual layout.

Beyond the college classroom

Jones' *Reading Virgil* and the Focus commentaries have their place in high school Latin programs, as well as college courses. The emphasis on secondary literature in the Focus series confirms that the editors mean just what they say about being aimed at an intermediate college-level readership, and that they do not envisage a younger age group as their main audience. But in their concision and clarity the Focus commentaries are likely to prove accessible to a well-prepared high school class. They carefully familiarize students with the stylistic terminology demanded by the AP Vergil syllabus, but the variety and quality of observations and information in the notes will also help students formulate ideas for the essay sections, for which the AP guidelines request a depth of thought that goes well beyond listing figures of speech.

The Focus commentaries have a useful role to play in graduate seminars, too, and are ideal for the kind of graduate language surveys where students read one or two books of the *Aeneid* in a week. These editions would help address the central problem in such courses, that is, how to keep students' attention simultaneously focused on building their knowledge of the language and on developing their critical responses to the texts. The generous guidance with the mechanics of the Latin, interwoven with introductory-level but highly observant analysis, will save new graduate students from being overwhelmed by the unaccustomed quantity of reading.

All in all, the Focus series balances simplicity and subtlety, reminding students at all levels that increasing technical precision and stretching one's interpretive curiosity are—fundamentally—one endeavor.

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