Helius Eobanus Hessus. *Poetic Works 1: Student Years at Erfurt, 1504-1509*. Ed., trans., and annot. Harry Vredeveld. "Medieval and Renaissance texts and studies" 215, Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004. Pp. xvii, 616.

When Eobanus Hessus was a young man, he was fond of swimming in a particular lake some three miles across, and boasted to his friends that he could swim all the way to the other side. He was successful, but then realized that he would have to walk naked for several miles through the lakeside villages to get back to his clothes—so he returned by water, swimming six miles rather than three. The story shows his self-confidence, even arrogance: that of a famous drinker, the self-styled king of his circle of friends, the man whose older face is caught in Dürer's portrait, nose jutting, beard billowing, eye bright and angry. It also shows what Joachim Camerarius, who told the story after Eobanus' death, called *ingens verecundia*, "prodigious modesty." But the modesty is not humble or abject but *prodigious*, and it leads to a more prodigious physical feat than anyone had expected. The Neo-Latin poems of Eobanus' student days likewise show Eobanus restraining an exuberant invention and a high self-esteem within the constraints of classical metre and diction, and making that restraint into the means by which he excels.

The contents of five exceedingly rare printed volumes are edited here, with introductions, facing-page translations, and commentary; they are prefaced by Camerarius' fascinating biographical account, edited to the same standards (Vredeveld's own account is available in a *Dictionary of Literary Biography* volume). The eighteen-year-old Eobanus' debut, *De recessu studentum ex Erphordia tempore pestilencie* (1506), recounts the escape of the student body from plague-stricken Erfurt to temporary accommodation in Frankenberg in 230 lines of hexameter, the word *furor* echoing in it again and again: the plague is full of Stygian *furor*, it rages (*furit*), it is a bloody *furor*, it is *furibunda*, more ferocious in its *furia* than the Eumenides, and so on. Soon after the students' return from Frankenberg, a number of them took part in a street fight against a *furiosa cohors* of the townsmen of Erfurt; Eobanus joined in, and commemorated the bloody victory of Gown over Town in just over a hundred lines of triumphant verse, *De pugna studentum Erphordiensium* (1506).

Soon afterwards he produced a panegyric on the University of Erfurt, *De laudibus gymnasii apud Erphordiam*, running to nearly six hundred lines, and this was published in the following year. A year later, bored and oppressed by a spell of schoolmastering, he cheered himself up by writing a prosimetric narrative called *De amantium infoelicitate* but dealing not with the haplessness of lovers in general but with that of one particular figure, a friend of the narrator who has become infatuated with a courtesan and has been rejected by her after the money he has lavished on her has run out. The narrator urges him to turn to the chaste love of the Muses, and to Apollo, i.e. Christ; but the closing line, apparently given to the narrator, admits that love is not so easy to shake, that it's still a smoky presence in the heart even if its fires are no longer blazing. *De amantium infoelicitate*, Eobanus suggests in a liminary epistle, is the first Neo-Latin work by a German to mix verse and prose in

a single narrative. Last and most elaborately, a *Bucolicon* of 1509 presents eleven eclogues written at Erfurt, opening with the claims that this is the first collection of Neo-Latin eclogues by a German and that it puts its author firmly in the tradition of Theocritus, Vergil, and Mantuan. The last eclogue invokes the Blessed Virgin Mary, and closes with the suggestion that now the author has grown out of the making of *carmina juvenilia*, and is ready for something more challenging. Eobanus was by this time twenty-one.

This edition has been long in the making. Vredeveld records in his introduction that its genealogy goes back to his graduate student work in the late 1960s, and explains the breakdown of his previous editorial project, which resulted in a single volume of poems from the period 1528-37, with a translation into German, published in 1990. Indeed, the editing of Eobanus is not to be taken lightly: the next two projected volumes will take his output to 1526, but there will evidently be more than a couple more after that to cover the next fourteen years of his original verse and not only his metrical translations from Homer and others but also his verse paraphrases of the Psalms and Ecclesiastes.

This formidable project is being achieved to a very high standard indeed. Vredeveld's translations do not aspire to literary beauty, and occasionally they are a little loose, but a translation which faces the text is meant to be read as a guide to it. Translating *Hos non mollis amor, non hos segura voluptas movit* as "Now those were real men! No tender love, no safe pleasures could hold them back" may lead one to ask whether the repetition of the masculine pronoun *hos* is quite equivalent to "Now those were real men!" or whether *movit* is exactly "could hold them back"—but once one is asking those questions, the translation has done its job. Footnotes provide basic explanatory material for the Latinless reader, while a dense and magisterial commentary stretching over more than 150 pages gives access to some of the web of allusion to classical and post-classical sources, some of them decidedly *recherché*, from which Eobanus wove his verses.

It is always possible to ask for more: when the villainess of *De amantium infoelicitate* dismisses her lover with the words *Abi hinc in malam rem, cunnilinge*, we are given four instances of *abi hinc in malam rem* "go to hell" from Plautus and Terence, but we are not told where Eobanus would have found *cunnilinge* (Martial, presumably), and the possible irony of the word as used in this context is left for readers of the edition to discuss. And so, thanks to Vredeveld's work, they can. This first volume of his superb, inspiring edition allows a new level of discussion of the wit and energy of Eobanus' engagement with the long heritage of Latin; all future work on this important poet will be indebted to it.

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