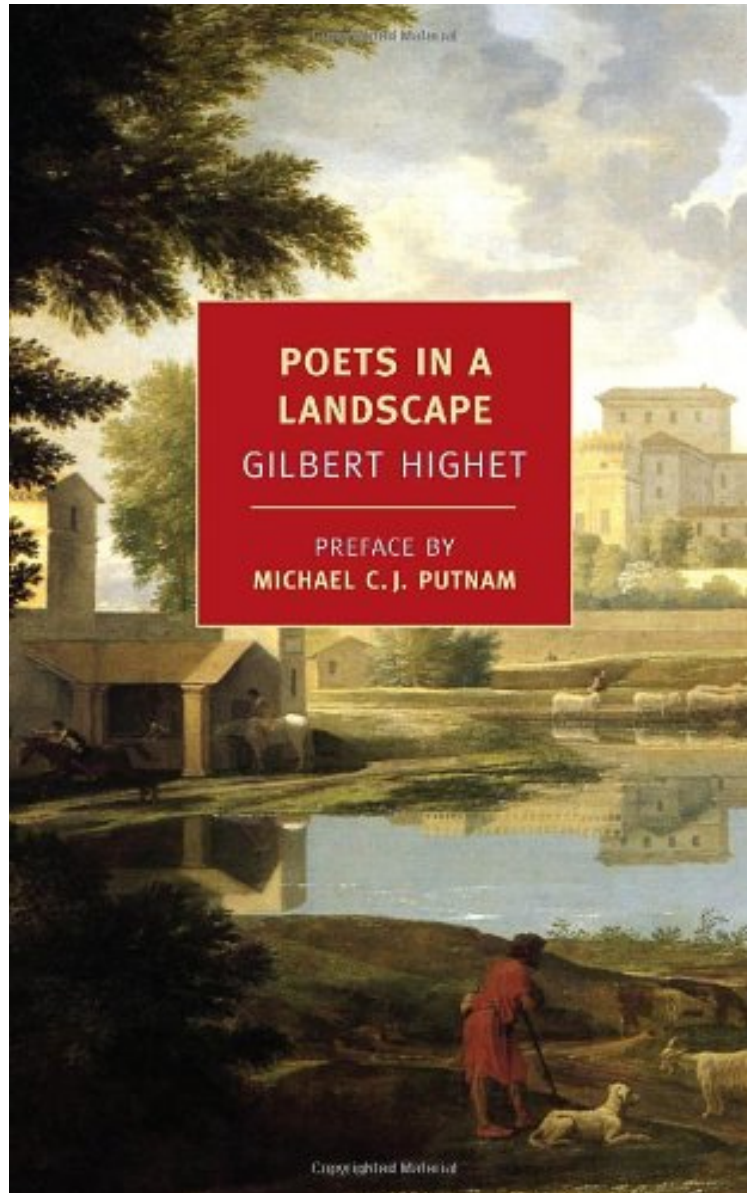


[Library ebook] Poets in a Landscape (New York Review Books Classics)

Poets in a Landscape (New York Review Books Classics)

Gilbert Highet

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#1087549 in Books NYRB Classics 2010-03-16 2010-03-16 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.97 x .75 x 5.141, .64 #File Name: 1590173384296 pages | File size: 77.Mb

Gilbert Highet : Poets in a Landscape (New York Review Books Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Poets in a Landscape (New York Review Books Classics):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A passion for a place does not diminish with time:By T. M. Teale
The word landscape in the title attracted me to this book, as well as some regret that in high school and college, I had passed up the opportunity to study Latin and the Classics. People today, whether in the American West or not, are

concerned about the environmental survival of the land, but also how individuals perceive the landscape with themselves in it. In college one can't study the Romantic era of poetry without hearing about Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, and particularly Juvenal--whose work has entered the modern consciousness. But, the delightful surprise for me was the chapter on Propertius and particularly the section The springs of Clitumnus near Assisi, Italy. The author, Gilbert Highet, creates a sense of wonder as he quotes from Propertius, then Highet makes a claim statement, All water in motion is wonderful, then with sensory delights takes us directly to the springs where Cool, copious fresh water rises out of dry earth under a hot sun. Then Highet puts us in the scene: Gazing into the larger pools, we see wells. The bottom sinks away, here and there, into a conical recess about five feet broad . . . filled with equally clear, though darker, water (101). In other words, not only does the reader gaze into the landscape, it gazes into him. Not only are you in the landscape, it is in you. That is the writer's art. While reading the chapter on Catullus, I was immediately struck by the poet's obsession with sexuality and the game of cat and mouse--shall we say. I was reminded once again that well-to-do women and men were limited by ancient Rome's class and caste system. There were no business professions, no middle-class mobility for men or women, no honorable work ethic (not to mention slavery was legal). Thus, the poetry on chasing after sex seems, at times, not to have a place in our contemporary society. As a result, the most interesting poets are the two or three with low-class or slave origins. The most enduring writer might be Juvenal who contrasted city life--the debauched hypocritical Rome--with honest, quiet country life. This conflict between town and country still endures and is largely valid, and yet poets, like other people, often find country life tedious. The most haunting chapter of the book is the final one titled Rome, in which Highet meditates on the city ruins and the permanent changes in the landscape. Not only do walls of cities crumble, but beloved places shift and are forgotten. Writers and poets--in an imperfect world of slavery and injustice--try to immortalize the quiet places. The Rome chapter is not about the political fall of empire; it's about the slow natural processes--plants, shifting ground, earthquakes that overtake buildings and monuments. There is much here for the contemporary reader to meditate upon. What worries me, now, is how quickly a bulldozer and real estate development can destroy beloved countryside; and how thoroughly tourist advertising can commercialize and cheapen a place. Not so with Rome.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Totally Delightful Experience By Frank Kenesson All of these reviews point up important charms of Highet's undertaking, but I would note that they are more than the sum of their parts. Taken together, this excursion into social and cultural history, ancient and modern geography, sociology, linguistics, poetics, architecture and psychology is what intellection is all about. It is a "wow" and an accessible one for non-specialists. I am a professor of ancient history and will promote this to my students, not to increase their knowledge of history, but to increase their pleasure in history and introduce them to why some of us love and value it for PRESENT understandings and insights.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Word Lives By Eric D Lehman The opening to chapter 1 on Catullus is one of the best prose paragraphs in literature - fiction or nonfiction. "The woman was unworthy. The poet died. The word lives." Wow.

Gilbert Highet was a legendary teacher at Columbia University, admired both for his scholarship and his charisma as a lecturer. *Poets in a Landscape* is his delightful exploration of Latin literature and the Italian landscape. As Highet writes in his introduction, I have endeavored to recall some of the greatest Roman poets by describing the places where they lived, recreating their characters and evoking the essence of their work. The poets are Catullus, Vergil, Propertius, Horace, Tibullus, Ovid, and Juvenal. Highet brings them life, setting them in their historical context and locating them in the physical world, while also offering crisp modern translations of the poet's finest work. The result is an entirely sui generis amalgam of travel writing, biography, criticism, and pure poetry--altogether an unexcelled introduction to the world of the classics.

A guidebook to present-day Italian scenes and an introduction to seven of the great Latin poets, whom we meet on their own grounds--the places and people we meet on this very special trip make this extremely attractive for all who love the beauties of nature and at the same time like to remind themselves of the great works of men and the glories of past civilizations. Paul Jordan Smith, *Los Angeles Times* A walk back in time to a Roman Italy of 2,000 and the lives of seven Latin poets. Jacob Deschin, *The New York Times*...this book has established itself as a minor classic, or quite simply as a classic. The writing is sensitive and notably intelligent, backed up by Highet's competent verse renderings from the Latin, and to cap it all he gives a pen-picture of Rome itself at its imperial apex. Here is scholarship in the old sense, humane, unpedantic, open-minded and totally free of academic jargon. Brian Fallon, *The Irish Times* A delightful, infectious book. Highet writes racily about the Latin poets he admires, putting each in situ with the airy dash now frowned upon in today's dourer academy. He knows much. And enthuses even more. This is a labor of love that is never labored. Highet's attention to prosodic details gets us within earshot of his authors. *The Herald (Glasgow)* Highet has written what is surely one of the most unusual travel books ever published. It is in one sense an account of a journey to Italy, complete with pictures taken by the author's faithful Rollei reflex. In another sense it is the journal of a trip into the Italy of the past translated by the author with loving care and capturing as faithfully as possible the meter and structure of the original work. Robert Kirsch, *Los Angeles Times* This attractive and pleasantly educational

work...includes some lucid and enlightening critical interpretation In tracing the birthplaces and homes of his seven poets Mr. Highet has written sketches of many places in Italy outside the orbit of most tourists Poets in a Landscape is a strikingly handsome example of bookmaking. Orville Prescott, The New York Times With great love and scholarship he brings his poets and their troubles fully alive. Stevie Smith Highet is that rarest of finds, the scholarly homme complet, full-blooded, cultured, completely human in his learning. The Times Literary Supplement (London) Unlike many scholars he succeeds in getting into the skin of his poets, finding the man in the style there he can detect a writer's true self. Cyril Connolly About the Author Gilbert Highet (1906-1978) was born in Glasgow, Scotland, to a middle-class family. He showed an early facility with Latin and Greek, reading Homer, Virgil, and Aeschylus for pleasure by the time he was sixteen. He attended Glasgow University, and later Oxford's Balliol College, sweeping up most of the available prizes and scholarships along the way. In 1937 Highet joined the faculty of Columbia University, becoming a full professor at thirty-one. He taught at Columbia until 1972 (with the exception of a period during WWII, when he was stationed as an officer in Washington, D.C. and later assisted in the return of looted goods in Europe), becoming a legend for his animated and inspiring lectures. A very public intellectual, Highet served on the boards of Horizon magazine (1958-77) and the Book-of-the-Month Club (1954-78), was chief literary critic for Harpers (1952-54), and hosted a cultural affairs radio program, People, Places, and Books (1952-59), that was broadcast on more than three hundred stations in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Highet wrote, translated, or edited some twenty books, of which The Classical Tradition (1949) and The Art of Teaching (1950) remain the best known. He was married to Helen MacInnes, a successful writer of espionage novels, from 1932 until his death from cancer in 1978. Michael C.J. Putnam is MacMillan professor emeritus of classics and comparative literature, Brown University. Among his recent books are Poetic Interplay: Catullus and Horace and Jacopo Sannazaro: The Latin Poetry. In May 2009 he was awarded the Centennial Medal by the American Academy in Rome. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society.