

cherry-picking. For example: ‘myths are stories which are retold, never merely told; they are a kind of cultural patrimony, absorbed from childhood. And yet they belong, too, to the world of intellectual achievements’ (2); ‘the imagination does not roam on its own but is housed in a living person who moves about the world’ (3); ‘there is nothing mechanical about the way [the *Periegesis*] works...Pausanias, for all his rhetorical stylings, is in the end a craftsman putting Greece into words, and the fabric of Greece is woven tight with *paideia*’ (19); ‘Heracles’ panhellenism rested on diffuse, decentralized knowledge rather than any one particular mechanism... The reader thus oscillates between a common repertoire of panhellenic facts and the new possibilities of local knowledge. But this is an over-simplification... In practice, mythical knowledge is diverse’ (55–6); ‘we can know a lot about places we have never visited... To put it another way we can have knowledge of places we have not experienced because places exist in any number of ways’ (118); ‘we can indeed take epichoric informants seriously as indications of local storytelling so long as we do not slip into making them avatars of actual local *storytellers*. Pausanias’ locals...are products of storytelling infrastructures which fuse local opportunities to trans-local ambitions, chauvinism with outward-looking self-consciousness’ (162–3); ‘I have sought to show that what Pausanias has to tell us about Greek myth is not reducible merely to those things he says about it’ (202). A rich and profoundly rewarding book.

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### *Latin Literature*

There have been very many exciting books on Latin literature in the past six months; here is at least a small selection. J. N. Adams presents an impressive volume on asyndeton in Latin literature.<sup>1</sup> Based on a thorough examination of different types of asyndeta, with a special focus on *asyndeta bimembria* (‘asyndeta with two members’), Adams discusses ‘grammatical’ and semantic types of asyndeta, as well as their characteristic structural patterns, followed by a discussion of genres and texts, from laws and prayers over asyndeta from texts of the early Republic to the Augustan period. For historiography, Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Annals* are included as well. In the course of his discussion, Adams debunks some long-held beliefs about Latin asyndeta, which, he shows, are not predominantly a feature of sacral or legal language, as has often been claimed. He also argues that asyndeton, rather than evoking speed or rapidity, may instead invite a reading that is slow and deliberate, with meaningful pauses between the individual words (that most famous Latin asyndeton, which is printed on the dust jacket and discussed on 77–8, *veni, vidi, vici* [‘I came, I saw, I conquered’], works very well as an example).

<sup>1</sup> *Asyndeton and Its Interpretation in Latin Literature. History, Patterns, Textual Criticism*. By J. N. Adams. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xxix + 751. Hardback £130, ISBN: 978-1-108-83785-9.

Along the way of Adams' discussion, one can pick up some intriguing bits of information: for instance, that asyndeton in Latin authors is often connected with disapproval, as in open-ended lists of luxury items and other signs of decadence. Cicero hardly uses *asyndeton bimembre* in his letters to Atticus, but more often in his letters *ad familiares* ('Letters to Friends'), especially those addressed to persons with whom he had a more distant relationship, as well as at high points of his major political speeches. In historiography, in general, the use of asyndeton is particularly frequent in speeches. *Asyndeton bimembre*, while it is much more frequent in oratorical, political, historiographical, legal, and philosophical prose than in classical poetry, is also used in Virgil to create pairs of adjectives with pathetic, threatening, or awe-inspiring associations; Horace in the *Odes* and *Epodes*, potentially under the influence of early Greek lyric and iambic poetry and in contrast to his *Satires*, hardly ever uses *asyndeton bimembre*.

In case readers are in danger of getting lost in the wealth of detail that Adams considers in his discussions of individual asyndeta, the conclusions to the main sections are very helpful. Another original and useful feature of the book are the discussions of how best to employ punctuation when dealing with asyndeta (475–9), as well as how to handle asyndeton in textual criticism when manuscripts have variation between asyndeton and overt coordination (496–511). Adams makes a good case for the need to collect all instances of a certain phenomenon, such as, say, coordinated pairs of place names, both syndetic and asyndetic, to see if a pattern emerges that can then guide an editor's decision. The book will be an indispensable resource for anyone commenting on or editing the text of the authors discussed here, as well as for anyone interested in the style of these authors, or in a key feature of the Latin language in general. Buy, read, enjoy.

Adrian Gramps presents a welcome new approach to the issue of presence in Hellenistic and Roman poetry in his monograph on 'the fiction of occasion'.<sup>2</sup> He understands occasion as implying 'a communicative context in which the poem presents itself as participating' (xiii) and as something that grants the poem 'eventhood, the sense of being or belonging to a happening' (xiv). He is less interested in the historical context of the poems that he discusses, but presents instead a new take on the fiction of their 'presence' that is evoked whenever an audience encounters them.<sup>3</sup> The discussion proceeds in four chapters, dedicated to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* (for which he rejects the label of 'mimetic poetry'<sup>4</sup>), to Propertius 4.6 and Bion's *Adonis*, to Horace's first book of *Odes* (1.9, 1.12, and 1.20), and to the realization of lyric occasion in the 'choral moments' of Horace's *Odes* 4, especially in *Odes* 4.1,

<sup>2</sup> *The Fiction of Occasion in Hellenistic and Roman Poetry*. By Adrian Gramps. Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 118. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021. Pp. xviii + 209. Hardback £103, ISBN: 978-3-11-073699-1.

<sup>3</sup> 'Audience', for Gramps, usually means 'reader'; he is not interested in the question whether these poems might in fact have been performed or read out, and what difference that would make to the way the 'presence' they construct would have been perceived.

<sup>4</sup> A paper with the same title previously published by Gramps ('Rethinking "Mimetic" Poetry and Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*', in M. A. Harder, G. C. Wakker, and R. F. Regtuit (eds.), *Drama and Performance in Hellenistic Poetry* (Leiden, 2018), 129–56) is not listed in the bibliography.

4.2, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.15. Taking his cue from Gumbrecht's work on the importance of 'presence' in the encounter with the aesthetic, prior to and separable from its 'meaning',<sup>5</sup> Gramps traces the way that poetic presence is produced in the texts in question (including Catullus' poem 4, which Gramps uses as his starting point in the introduction, to good effect). In his detailed discussions of the texts, he pays close attention to the dynamics of the poetic voice, sound effects, the role of repetition and refrains, and the construction of time. He makes a convincing case for the priority of the sense of presence constructed by the poetic voice, rather than what we learn about the supposedly 'actual' performance context of these poems.

In his conclusion, Gramps lays out the intriguing avenues for further research that his innovative work opens up: it invites us to rethink and broaden the spectrum of 'fiction' and 'fictionality', to move beyond the dichotomy of orality and literacy, to foreground presence as an alternative to meaning, and to privilege the experience of reading. He declares that his approach could be extended to other genres and forms of literature: it invites empirical research into the experience of reading and an 'empirically-supported cognitive poetics' (190); it could lead us towards a more material, embodied understanding of the 'poetic voice'; and it provides a new way of thinking about poetic rhythm that focuses more on the sound effects produced by rhythmic patterns without subordinating these to meaning.

I wholeheartedly agree with the call to pay more attention to the sense of presence created by poetic texts, and I enjoyed the detailed case studies and perceptive readings that Gramps offers. The combination of Hellenistic and Roman authors is very welcome indeed, in a field in which Greek and Latin are all too often treated separately – although Gramps could perhaps have placed even more emphasis on the interplay between the two, as well as its interpretive implications. Overall, however, I was struck by the fact that, for Gramps, the construction of presence and (choral) community often implies a positive view and praise of Augustus, without leaving room for the political complexities that scholars have seen in at least some of the poems under discussion. While he is certainly right to emphasize the need for a new understanding of the way in which these poems are tied to a (fictive) 'occasion' and the way they create a sense of presence, ideally such a reading should also leave room for the religious and political complexities inherent in them – which might in fact receive more urgency if the sense of presence created by these poems is taken seriously, which Gramps so wonderfully elucidates.

Moving on to Latin elegy, we come to Mariapia Pietropaolo's eye-opening book on the role of the grotesque in this genre.<sup>6</sup> Her work fills a real gap in the scholarship on Roman elegy, as it explores elegy's 'dark side': that is, the side of the ugly and disfigured, the repulsive, and the deformed. Having anchored her discussion in the history of the grotesque and its theorization, Pietropaolo intriguingly traces the phenomenon back to Lucretius and the revolting biological processes that he connects with the physical phenomenon of love. The ensuing discussion of the grotesque in

<sup>5</sup> H. U. Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology. Dynamics of Textual Scholarship* (Chicago, IL, 2003); H. U. Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence. What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, CA, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> *The Grotesque in Roman Love Elegy*. By Mariapia Pietropaolo. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xiii + 228. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-108-48869-3; paperback £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-73864-4.

individual elegiac poems by Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid is full of perceptive observations on the text and the larger elegiac aims and strategies of the three authors. I particularly liked Pietropaolo's discussion of the role of snake imagery in Propertius and Ovid, and of the different ways in which the three authors use the figures of the rival and the procuress in their elegiac poetry. At the end, Pietropaolo nicely returns to her starting point, Lucretius' depiction of love and its grotesque flipside, discussing how it is reflected in Ovid's *Remedia amoris* ('Cures for Love'). She invokes a couple of different theoretical concepts for understanding the role of the grotesque in Roman love elegy: Barthes's concept of the *punctum* ('point'), understood as a grotesque element that is both disturbing and enriching at the same time, seems to be particularly productive in this respect. At times, I wondered whether Pietropaolo might not be overstating her case just a little bit, as she keeps concluding that the grotesque was really 'at the core' of the elegiac genre, or whether, if we put it in perspective, it is not merely a small blemish in an otherwise beautiful picture. Most of the time, however, Pietropaolo comes to nuanced conclusions about the different roles of the grotesque in the three elegists under consideration. Her work should be essential reading for anyone interested in Roman love elegy, and beyond – when I finished reading, I wished there were a larger study on the role of the grotesque in different genres of Latin literature, to put Pietropaolo's observations in a larger context. She shows that there is definitely the scope and the need for more work on this topic.

David Christenson does a great service to Plautine studies with his commentary on the *Pseudolus*.<sup>7</sup> My only quibble is that the text is printed without a critical apparatus, which would have made the book even handier, especially for use in class – Christenson does, after all, include discussion of a number of issues of textual criticism. Otherwise, I found little to criticize here. The introduction equips students with everything that they need to know to understand and enjoy the text, all presented in a clear and accessible way. The commentary not only explains the language with its archaizing elements very well, but also helps its readers appreciate the fun of Plautus' text and the wider issues involved, including the text's self-referentiality, the encounter of Greek and Roman culture, and ancient slavery and its representation. In particular, Christenson's keen eye for the sound and the rhetoric of the text, but also his comments on how an actor might present a certain section, how he might use the stage and the props and even the rhythm of the words, bring the comedy to life. References to parallels of the *Pseudolus* with other Plautine comedies are all judicious and helpful. Christenson's passion for the text becomes very clear, and this commentary should hopefully convey it to students and scholars alike.

Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman have published a wonderful *Cambridge Companion to Catullus*.<sup>8</sup> Compared with Marilyn Skinner's 2007 *Companion to Catullus*,<sup>9</sup> Du Quesnay and Woodman's companion offers fewer contributions, and none on individual poems or groups of poems, but does a very good job at covering

<sup>7</sup> *Plautus. Pseudolus*. By David Christenson. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. viii + 408. Hardback £79.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-76624-1; paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-14971-6.

<sup>8</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Catullus*. Edited by Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. xi + 404. Hardback £74.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-19356-7; paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-316-64471-3.

<sup>9</sup> M. B. Skinner (ed.), *A Companion to Catullus* (Malden, MA, 2007).

all the important aspects and raising larger questions about Catullus' poems – from the literary and political background of his poetry and its intertextuality, via the themes covered in his poems, their language, style, metre, transmission, and arrangement, gender and sexuality, to editions of and commentaries on his text, and Catullus' reception in the Flavian age, the Renaissance, and English poetry since 1750. While I did not find the arrangement of the contributions entirely intuitive (for instance, I thought that Du Quesnay's chapter on *Catulli Carmina* ['The Poems of Catullus'] would have worked better towards the beginning of the volume, as it covers many of the key themes of individual groups of poems), I enjoyed the companion as a whole and am convinced that it will be used very profitably in many undergraduate and graduate classes on the poet. Clear coverage of the essentials is nicely combined with new insights into Catullus' poetry. In that latter regard, I especially liked the fresh light that K. Sara Myers sheds on gender and sexuality in the poems (70–88), Carole Newlands' perceptive observations on the Flavian poets' use of Catullus (242–62), and Dániel Kiss's thoughts on the prospects and opportunities for the future of editing Catullus' text in the digital age (314–16).

Johannes Zenk studies Livy's representation of Rome and its origins in the first pentad of the *Ab urbe condita* ('From the Founding of the City').<sup>10</sup> His aim is to analyse Livy's narrative technique, and in this his book is certainly successful. It offers a thorough analysis of Livy's narrative, with respect to narrative focus and perspective, variations in narrative speed, characterization, the use of direct or indirect speech, and rhetorical tropes and figures, with occasional reference to intertextual parallels and their functions. Zenk focuses on the role of truth and objectivity in Livy's work, on the gods and the supernatural, the idea of Rome's *fatum* ('fate'), the narrative of the city's foundation and growth, the motif of *regni cupido* ('greed for power'), the depiction of war and its functions, the idea of *pax* ('peace'), the presentation of Rome's leaders and groups of leaders as positive or negative *exempla* ('examples'), and the antagonism between patricians and plebeians.

In the course of his analysis, Zenk includes many fine observations on the text, which will certainly add to our understanding and appreciation of Livy's narrative technique. For instance, I liked his observations on the way in which religion and the gods are instrumentalized for political purposes by Rome's kings. Overall, however, the book could have profited substantially from a closer engagement with some of the secondary literature.<sup>11</sup> For instance, in his study of Livy's representation of

<sup>10</sup> *Die Anfänge Roms erzählen. Zur literarischen Technik in der ersten Pentade von Livius' 'ab urbe condita'*. By Johannes Zenk. Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft, Beihefte N.F. 12. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021. Pp. viii + 356. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-3-11-075803-0.

<sup>11</sup> Also, I found Zenk's practice of giving no exact page numbers, but referring to a longer section simply by 'ff.', rather inaccurate and not particularly helpful. In addition, I noted a couple of inaccuracies or questionable assumptions that would require more in-depth discussion: for instance, the fact that Zenk speaks of an 'arch of Janus' ('Janusbogen') rather than the temple of Janus, whose doors were closed in times of peace (1, 9, 225–30); the claim that the idea of a predestined *fatum* of Rome, as expressed in the *Aeneid*, reflected popular belief ('den römischen Volksglauben widerspiegelt', 83); or the claim that Livy criticized Roman imperialism ('Imperialismuskritik', 161–2, 179) – while Zenk plausibly shows that Livy was critical of the practice of declaring a *bellum iustum* to disguise Roman aggression, I am not entirely sure whether the term 'Imperialismuskritik' is fully appropriate here, without further discussion.

Rome's exemplary leaders, there were hardly any traces of the very sophisticated work that has been done on Roman exemplarity, in Livy and beyond. Zenk only quotes, as 'one work among many', Chaplin's monograph, without engaging with any of its findings.<sup>12</sup> A full engagement with the scholarship on the mechanisms and implications of Roman exemplarity would certainly have made Zenk's study of the text even more sophisticated and insightful.<sup>13</sup> Throughout, I also felt that much more could have been gained from the careful analysis of Livy's text. In his conclusion, Zenk himself states that it was not his aim to discuss what Livy's attitude might have been towards Augustan Rome, and how his work on Rome's beginnings relates to it – although, in the course of his discussion, he often mentions the continuities that exist between Rome's beginnings and Augustan Rome. However, in my opinion, an analysis of literary technique should not shy away from engaging with such larger questions. A thorough discussion like Zenk's could certainly contribute crucial new insights, thus underlining even more the value and larger importance of the detailed philological work that Zenk does so well.

We stay in Augustan Rome, but move on to epic. The blurb of Joseph Farrell's book on the *Aeneid* and on Juno's role within it raises rather high expectations:<sup>14</sup> it begins by stating that 'this compelling book offers an entirely new way of understanding the *Aeneid*'. While I would doubt that what Farrell offers is indeed 'an entirely new way' of reading the epic, his book is still a highly engaging, well-written, and thought-provoking take on the *Aeneid*, which will become an indispensable guide both to Virgil's text and to the long and rich tradition of scholarship on the poem. Farrell's study takes as its focal point the figure of Juno, but it is actually about much more. He shows very convincingly how the *Aeneid*, rather than simply being a novel combination of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* within one epic, is really engaged in a constant battle to determine which of the two it wants to become: an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey* – or whether it should follow a 'third way', along the lines of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, the epic cycle, a *Heracleid*, tragedy (in its interplay with comedy), historiography, or earlier Latin epic. Yet Farrell concludes that none of these paradigms, while they are present as intertexts of the *Aeneid*, offers the poem a clear way around its central Homeric dilemma. Juno in particular, as he successfully shows, challenges the epic narrator for control over the plot and tries to turn the epic into an *Iliad* rather than an *Odyssey*. This has important ramifications for a number of key aspects of the *Aeneid*: most notably, the question of what kind of hero Aeneas is aspiring to become, whether we are supposed to see in him an ideal leader, and which ethical and political dimensions this would entail.

Farrell's book is exemplary in many respects: most importantly, he presents a deep and insightful analysis of Virgil's epic and the intertextual dynamics that are at play in this work. It lies in the nature of the project that few of these observations are completely new, but Farrell is very good at acknowledging and contextualizing the

<sup>12</sup> J. D. Chaplin, *Livy's Exemplary History* (Oxford, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> To quote just two examples, R. Langlands, *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, 2018); M. B. Roller, *Models from the Past in Roman Culture. A World of Exempla* (Cambridge, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> *Juno's Aeneid. A Battle for Heroic Identity*. By Joseph Farrell. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2021. Pp. xvii + 360. Hardback £35, ISBN: 978-0-691-21116-9.

work of previous scholars and turning it in a new direction. To give but one example, I admired his perceptive comments about the temporal relationship of the voyages of Odysseus and Aeneas and about what the latter could know about the former (86–9, also 76).<sup>15</sup> That said, he still manages to spot new aspects of intertextual engagement and make them fruitful for his interpretation, for example, the similarity between the Virgilian Evander and Achilles' tutor, Phoenix, in Book 9 of the *Iliad* (163–4).

Farrell's prose is a great pleasure to read. However, I found myself missing one thing, especially in a book on that most magnificent of Latin poems: the Latin. Farrell explains that he has 'tried to make this book as accessible as possible to all readers of whatever backgrounds' (xv). He does indeed succeed at making his points based on close translations of the ancient texts and the occasional quote of some original Latin or Greek (transliterated). While accessibility should certainly be an important goal in present-day scholarly writing, I thought that it would have been better to quote the original Latin in addition to Farrell's clear and accessible translations. In its present form the book slightly veils the fact that an analysis of the highest scholarly calibre, as Farrell offers it, must come from a very deep and learned engagement with the texts in the original. Even more harmfully, not including the Latin deprives everyone – except for the seasoned scholars who know the lines in question by heart – of the opportunity of reading Virgil's words, of potentially hearing their sound and rhythm, and of being inspired to learn to read the *Aeneid* in the original.<sup>16</sup> To my mind at least, this would not have detracted from the accessibility of this highly attractive book, but it would have added to its enjoyment even more, for everyone.

I also had a very good time reading Jean-Michel Hulls's book on *The Search for the Self in Statius' 'Thebaid'*.<sup>17</sup> Hulls presents a thought-provoking account of how identity is constructed in the *Thebaid*, with respect both to key characters in the epic and to the identity of the epic poet himself, and to what this tells us about Statius' fascinating work. Identity is in fact key in this epic, which narrates the desperate struggle for the throne of Thebes between the twins Eteocles and Polynices, born from Oedipus and his mother (and wife) Iocasta, an epic written as a self-consciously belated work, coming after so many classical works in the Greek and Latin literary tradition. Hulls elucidates all these factors very nicely, starting from the premise that subjective identity did exist in the classical world (such as notions of personality, intentionality,

<sup>15</sup> In more general terms, however, I thought that Farrell's treatment of the 'critical license' according to which Juno, a mere epic character, in this interpretation rivals the epic narrator and has full awareness of the previous literary tradition could have profited from engagement with Markus Kersten's discussions of what he terms 'metapoetic realism' in epic: M. Kersten, *Blut auf Pharsalischen Feldern. Lucans 'Bellum Ciuile' und Vergils 'Georgica'* (Göttingen, 2018); M. Kersten, 'Literaturgeschichte im historischen Epos: Anachronismen, Realismus und Metapoetik', in A. Junghans, B. Kaiser, and D. Pausch (eds.), *Zeitmontagen. Formen und Funktionen gezielter Anachronismen* (Stuttgart, 2019), 143–60.

<sup>16</sup> Farrell himself makes the point in his 'note to the reader', on the subject of transliteration, that 'whenever I find myself reading an argument that quotes a language that I do not know, I find it easier to maintain my concentration if the quotations are transliterated so that I can at least pronounce them, and perhaps understand them to some extent. This may be a personal quirk, but I doubt it is unique to me' (xv).

<sup>17</sup> *The Search for the Self in Statius' 'Thebaid'*. *Identity, Intertext and the Sublime*. By Jean-Michel Hulls. Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 116. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2021. Pp. lxx + 275. Hardback £122, ISBN: 978-3-11-071778-5.

temperament, belief, etc.), but would be articulated and comprehended not in subjective terms, but through objective, social, and cultural models. Slavoj Žižek's theory of subjectivization provides Hulls with a productive theoretical framework for his discussion, allowing him to conceptualize and discuss the interplay of subjective and objective ways of framing identity, as well as to see the passage through madness, violence, and terror, posited as crucial for identity formation according to Žižek, at work in Statius' text as well.

In the first chapter, Hulls lays a strong groundwork for his thesis by examining the role of Polynices in the *Thebaid* and his 'search for the self'. He shows how Polynices is situated outside conventional identity formation, how his sense of identity is predicated upon the mirroring of his twin brother, how he never really fills out his new role as Argive husband and potential heir of the Argive throne, and how, in the end, he needs to return to Thebes to kill his brother, as the only way he can see to establish his own independent identity. In the second chapter, Hulls closely examines the identity of the tyrant and of tyranny in the *Thebaid* and the literary tradition of the figure of the tyrant in which it is anchored. He also shows how, in the topsy-turvy world of Thebes, most other characters in the poem are able to don the mask of tyranny temporarily and how Statius' tyrants, while firmly grounded in rhetorical and literary tradition, are not actually frightening, but rather appear as 'flattened' characters lacking individuation and undermining themselves by their incompetence, leaving it to other characters to commit the epic's most monstrous and 'tyrannical' deeds.

Interestingly, Hulls establishes a parallel between the image of the love-sick tyrant and the theme of enervation and the decrease of initial energy levels, as it is presented in Roman love elegy. Other questions discussed in this chapter are the role of suicide in the world of the *Thebaid* and the relationship of the epic world with Statius' contemporary Rome. Hulls concludes that the *Thebaid*, so different from Roman political realities, cannot function as an allegory for Rome. At most, Statius' own life and the way he represents it in the *Silvae* would suggest that the poet would advocate an attitude not of direct resistance in the face of tyranny, but of 'working within the system' and exploiting the opportunities it offers. Personally, I still find it a bit hard to reconcile this interpretation with the very negative portrayal of tyranny and civil conflict that Statius offers in his poem, which is radical in so many respects. But Hulls's reminders of the considerable distance between mythical Thebes, as presented by Statius, and Flavian Rome are certainly worth bearing in mind.

The third chapter, on Oedipus, Theseus, and poetic identity, contains many fine observations on the text and its intertextuality. I was particularly struck by an insightful discussion on the relationship of Oedipus and the Fury at the beginning of the *Thebaid*. Hulls shows how the Fury Tisiphone, who is depicted in a very careful ecphrasis in 'an excess of physical description' (131), invites us to meditate upon the void and lack of individual characterization in the case of Oedipus, who rejects all conventional objective categories of identity formation – even though he is so well known to the reader from a long literary tradition. In the fourth chapter, Hulls revisits much-discussed passages such as the proem of the *Thebaid*, or scenes like the Hypsipyle episode, to study the identity of the poetic voice that is speaking in this epic. He also finds metapoetic imagery and metaphoric meaning in passages referring to wood being cut down and burned, a pure stream being muddied by an army of invaders, and city walls being razed to the ground. He concludes that, for the



*Thebaid* to establish its own literary identity, it needs to divorce itself from its poet, whose own metaphorical death is staged at the end of the poem. The book is nicely rounded out with a chapter on Dante as a thorough and careful reader of Statius, who uses the identity of the poet of the *Thebaid* to meditate on his own poetic affiliations, turning belatedness ‘into a positive value rather than a source of insecurity’ (xlv).

Throughout the book, Hulls presents many perceptive readings of Statius’ text and its intertextual dimensions. In particular, he shows how the excess of intertextual models and *exempla* creates insecurity and confusion of the roles to be played by the characters, which can severely complicate their identity formation. He also makes fascinating observations on how the sublime as an objective, aesthetic category is interwoven with the creation of identity in crucial moments throughout the poem. The theme of identity and the approach taken in this book could certainly be fruitfully employed in the study of the other Flavian epics. It would be very interesting to see whether Statius strongly cultivates his own identity, or to what extent larger Flavian trends are at work here.

Moving on to another Flavian author, we come to *The Oxford Handbook to Quintilian*, edited by Marc van der Poel, Michael Edwards, and James J. Murphy.<sup>18</sup> The editors tell us that the volume was conceptualized in the context of a conference, where a number of contributors worked out a detailed plan for the volume and projected the content of the individual chapters. The result is truly impressive: the twenty-two chapters range from the biographical tradition on Quintilian and a survey of editions and translations of the *Institutio Oratoria* (‘The Orator’s Education’) and the *Declamationes* (‘declamations’), via detailed explorations of various aspects of the *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian in the context of the rhetorical tradition, but also of law, the performing arts, and visual art, to the reception of Quintilian, from late antiquity to the present. While a certain degree of overlap between the individual contributions is probably inevitable, they all provide fascinating insights into Quintilian’s work and its reception. I was especially intrigued to learn about his reception in European and American education, up to the present day, but also to read William J. Dominik’s analysis of modern assessments of Quintilian on Wikipedia (mostly in entries dating from 2013 to 2016) in an impressively wide range of languages. In fact, this section (483–7) would make salutary reading for students, as it shows how this ‘new’ medium, somewhat paradoxically, seems prone to propagating outdated scholarly views, at times not avoiding the risk of plagiarism, while also offering at least a few new insights. Overall, the handbook as a whole will undoubtedly remain a key resource for anyone interested in Quintilian for a long time to come, and a fabulous example of what scholarly collaboration can achieve.

Finally, we come to Tacitus and the volume that James McNamara and Victoria Emma Pagán have edited on *Tacitus’ Wonders. Empire and Paradox in Ancient Rome*.<sup>19</sup> The volume breaks new ground in that it sets out to take seriously the presence of paradox, the marvellous, and the admirable in Tacitus’ works, analysing their interplay with Tacitus’ narrative and historiographical aims and techniques. Kelly Shannon-Henderson’s opening

<sup>18</sup> *The Oxford Handbook of Quintilian*. Edited by Marc van der Poel, Michael Edwards, and James J. Murphy. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. vii + 570. Hardback £110, ISBN: 978-0-19-871378-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Tacitus’ Wonders. Empire and Paradox in Ancient Rome*. Edited by James McNamara and Victoria Emma Pagán. Bloomsbury Classical Studies Monographs. London, Bloomsbury, 2022. Pp. 281. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-1-3502-4172-5.

chapter gets the volume off to a very good start, situating Tacitus' wonders in the wider context of ancient paradoxography. The parallels between the two are fascinating, as is the key difference – that Tacitus, at times at least, offers a causal explanation or even proof of a marvel, which paradoxographers never do. The following chapters further situate Tacitus' accounts of supernatural phenomena within the context of a widespread anxiety about wonder in Hellenistic Greek historical writing and interpret individual wonders in the *Annals*, the *Histories*, the *Dialogus*, *Agricola*, and *Germania*. Opening Part 3, on 'The Principate as Object of Wonder', Panayiotis Christoforou reads Tacitus' presentation of Tiberius, both in his comportment at Rome and in his retirement to Capri, as the object of fear, fascination, and wonder, and Holly Haynes discusses the affinities between Vespasian's miracles in Hist. 4.81–3 and the themes and political concerns of Greek tragedy. In a thought-provoking final chapter, Victoria Emma Pagán sheds light on the interplay of wonders and the ordinary in Tacitus, and summarizes what has become clear throughout the volume: that wonders, in Tacitus, mark the 'new normal': 'in such a world, the miraculous becomes conventional; you no longer shake your head in disbelief; you tacitly accept certain things that ought to elicit some kind of reaction'(247).

At times, I felt that the notion of 'wonder' was stretched a little bit too far: I was not fully convinced by the notion of the 'socially marvellous' introduced in a chapter by Brandon Jones, which, taking its cue from the connection between the word *monstrum* ('monstrosity') and the verb *demonstrat* ('he shows') in Dial. 7.4, reads references to fame and glory as manifestations of the marvellous. That quibble aside, however, the volume is certainly successful in achieving its aims and making us appreciate Tacitus' marvels not as an aberration or embarrassment in an otherwise rational discourse, but as an integral part of his didactic and historical intentions, as they provoke his readers to meditate on questions of truth and falsehood, bias and believability in historiography, as well as the nature of historiographical knowledge itself, in addition to conveying a vivid picture of the 'new normal' of the Principate, where behaviours and expectations are redefined. There are many cross-references between the individual contributions, so that the collection, with a very carefully placed first and last chapter, reads like a wonderfully coherent exploration of a fascinating topic.

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### *Greek History*

This review commences with three very important recent works that raise an important question: how is it possible that we should have to wait until 2021 to have works devoted to these fundamental subjects? First, Athens is, for better or worse, at the very centre of what we understand and practise as Greek history; yet there are hardly any books that attempt to give an overview of Athenian political, social, economic,