Latin literature

We begin from the beginning, or rather from the Romans' interest in origins: Raphael Schwitter offers a monumental synthesis of Roman antiquarianism from the second century BC to the third century AD.[1] Rightly identifying such a study as a gap in the scholarship, Schwitter approaches the subject in a comprehensive fashion, starting with a substantial section of introductory material, including an intriguing case study of the way the Romans explained the origins of the use of coins, and some methodological thoughts on what it means to deal with fragmentary texts, followed by an overview of antiquarian writing in Greece, before moving on to the main part of his study: a systematic overview of the contents, literary formats, and scholarly methods of antiquarian writing in the second and early first centuries BC, the first century BC, and the imperial age. As Schwitter himself admits, many of his conclusions necessarily have to remain in the realm of speculation, due to the extremely fragmentary nature of the evidence, but he still achieves his aim: i.e. to show that antiquarianism is a pervasive phenomenon, rather than the mere symptom of a crisis, and that is does not stem from scholarly curiosity *per se* or the aim to entertain, but to gain orientation in the present by elucidating its connection with the past. Throughout, his focus is on antiquarian monographs, i.e. works more or less exclusively dedicated to antiquarian questions, comprising aetiology, genealogy, and etymology, but also their interaction with poetic texts, for instance. Schwitter's study shows impressively that antiquarian writing was a pervasive facet of Latin literature, with a first, still somewhat experimental, phase focused on specialized disciplines such as grammar and law, a surge in interest and a growing specialization and differentiation in the first century BC, and a growing trend towards compilation and new contextualization in the imperial age.

Schwitter combines overviews of the works that must or might have existed in any given period with more detailed studies of antiquarian authors whose works have been transmitted more fully, such as Varro, in order to bring to light what was characteristic of their approach to the antiquarian material. By necessity, in such a vast undertaking, these passages have to remain somewhat on the surface, but they provide a nice counterbalance to the overview of antiquarian works. Schwitter also spends some pages discussing aetiology in what is maybe its most well-known form, Augustan poetry, and Vergil's *Aeneid* and Propertius' Book 4 in particular. Again, space forbids Schwitter to go into too much depth, and so his conclusion that e.g. Vergil's aetion of the cult at the Ara Maxima (*Aen.* 8.102–305) lacks 'semantic ambivalence', in the interest of an affirmation of the Augustan present (406), remains somewhat unsatisfactory in the light of the considerable amount of research that has brought to light the ambivalences of this Vergilian passage.[2] I was also not sure why, in Propertius' Book 4, it is one of the less antiquarian poems, the speech of the dead matron Cornelia (4.11), that Schwitter discusses in more detail. Overall, however, Schwitter's immensely learned book does provide a very good sense of what

[1] *Antiquarianismus in Rom*, 2. Jhd. v. Chr. – 3. Jhd. n. Chr. By Raphael Schwitter. Mnemosyne, Supplements 484. Leiden: Brill, 2024. Pp. xii + 576. Hardback £133.71, ISBN: 978-9-00-4-70587-6.

[2] E.g. D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic. Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford 1991), 158–9.

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antiquarian literature in Rome might have looked like, of which we have lost so much, and helps us appreciate anew the works that we do have.

Francesca Martelli sheds exciting new light on Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares* ('Letters to Friends') by approaching them from the perspective of the editor, or rather editors who have brought the collection into the form of the sixteen books that have been transmitted to us.[3] While Martelli makes it clear that we cannot know when exactly the collection received its current shape (at some point between Cicero's death and the fifth century CE), she suggests that we read the letters through the lens of the later process of editing them into a collection, as a text that can tell us as much about the imperial (and possibly even late antique) reception of Cicero as about the republican era at the end of which the letters themselves were written. The changes in context between the letter writers and their later editor(s), Martelli argues, make themselves felt, for instance, in the changed role played by Roman freedmen, in changes of provincial government, the social and political role of games, or the role of the domestic household (*familia*). In the process of editing, the transition from republic to monarchy played a crucial part, probably alongside the transition in textual media from book roll to codex. Martelli makes very productive and thought-provoking use of modern theories, such as Derrida's insights into the archive, or theories of new media using Raymond Williams' ideas of residual cultural phenomena – i.e. material from the past that retains a currency under new circumstances – which allow Martelli to discuss, for instance, the reason why the letters were later preserved and edited, as witnesses of a past that kept haunting the present.

Singling out individual books or groups of books that are particularly instructive for her argument, Martelli studies the way an editor of the collection is constructed in Book 16, in the letters to or about Tiro; the way Books 1 and 15 frame each other, raising questions about provincial governance and social belonging; the way Book 8 evokes, for imperial readers, the image of the amphitheatre, as a metaphor for the spectacle afforded by the letters assembled in this book; the interaction of history and 'counter-historical' voices in Books 10–12; and the meaning of *hospitium* ('hospitality') and *familiaritas* ('friendship') that emerges from Book 13 and that will have taken on a new meaning for later, imperial readers of these letters. Not everyone might be convinced by all of Martelli's arguments, but even for those who are more sceptical, she still offers thought-provoking readings of individual books of the collection. I very much enjoyed, for instance, her observations on how Book 16 contains a number of reversals between Tiro and Cicero, as Cicero, the authorial subject, becomes the edited collection's object, while the narrative of Tiro's manumission sees him turn from an object into a subject; the connection between geographical distance from Rome and social integration and alienation in Books 1 and 15; or the interplay between backward-looking old age and forward-looking youth in Book 8. Martelli presents a thought-provoking study that makes Cicero's letters and the crisis of the republic and early empire that they reflect resonate even more with us today and our own 'seemingly permanent state of political crisis' (31).

[3] *Souvenirs of Cicero. Shaping Memory in the* Epistulae ad Familiares. By Francesca K. A. Martelli. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. x + 248. Hardback £59.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-7-76196-0.

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While the reception of Lucretius in poetry has received considerable scholarly attention, his reception in prose still warrants more investigation, as George Kazantzidis states in the introduction to the volume he has edited on 'Lucretian Receptions in Prose'.[4] To fill that gap, he has assembled contributions on Lucretius' reception in Cicero (Hardie), Celsus (Kazantzidis), Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* ('Moral Letters', Berno), Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones* ('Natural Questions', Garani), Quintilian (Markovich), Pliny the Younger (Weiner), Plutarch's *Gryllus* (Zinn), and Lactantius (Campbell). The individual contributions are all insightful and, together, create an intriguing picture of a Lucretius who has been read and received as a forerunner of Cicero in the idea of the divinity attained by the Roman ruler or statesman; as an author interested in disease and steeped in medical language; as an interlocutor of Seneca in questions of suicide and the acceptance and necessity of death, as well as an important model in discussing disaster in a philosophical way; as a didactic model and an example of rhetorical sublimity for Quintilian; as a model for the Younger Pliny's Vesuvius letters; as an advocate for a kind and just treatment of animals; and, for Lactantius, as an author who can even be used in support of Christian arguments. While these insights are all thought provoking, the volume as a whole struggles a bit to be more than the sum of its parts: the introduction, after drawing attention to the above-mentioned gap in the scholarship, proceeds right away to a summary of the individual contributions, without offering more reflection on or a broader framework of the topic, while it might have been helpful to include further discussion, here or in an epilogue, on what we might make of this multi-faceted picture of Lucretius and his tradition that emerges from the individual discussions.

Similarly, in some of the contributions, I thought that the conclusions drawn from the evidence could still have been taken further, in terms of a broader discussion of what the observed interaction with Lucretius might mean for the wider interpretive aims of the works in question. Also, only few contributors ask what, in turn, this reception of Lucretius might mean for our interpretation of the *De rerum natura* – did those early readers see something in the work that might shed new light on it? However, I very much enjoyed the fact that many contributions traced complex intertextual relationships, whereby later authors bring Lucretius into dialogue with other authors. In other cases, an intertextual dialogue went back and forth between authors – as, for example, Philip Hardie suggests for Lucretius reacting to Cicero's verse *Aratea*, to which Cicero in turn reacts in his *De re publica*. Gordon Campbell discusses the complex interaction of Lactantius with both Lucretius and Vergil, who himself had already critically engaged with Lucretius, thus importing the 'virus of Lucretio-Virgilianism' (209) and unwelcome associations into his text, which at times makes it hard for Lactantius to control his own argument. It is in such case studies that intertextuality becomes particularly interesting, and the volume as a whole certainly helps give Lucretius his rightful place in such an intriguing intertextual tradition.

Moving on from Cicero and Lucretius, we come to Augustan literature: Monica Gale and Anna Chahoud have edited a stimulating volume on the poetics of space in

[4] *Lucretian Receptions in Prose*. Edited by George Kazantzidis. Trends in Classics. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2024. Pp. 220, 1 table. Hardback £91.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-44366-9.

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Augustan texts,[5] in the wake of the 'spatial turn' in Classical studies and with the aim of exploring the multiple ways in which, as Gale puts it in the introduction, Augustan poets engage with the 'real-world' space of their time (22). The authors covered range from Horace to Vergil to Propertius and Ovid, including Suetonius's biography of Augustus discussed by Schwindt. Overall, the volume lacks a coherent theoretical approach to analysing the construction of space, and some of the contributions are more explicitly focused on questions of space than others, but still, a nice dialogue unfolds between the papers. For instance, I especially enjoyed the juxtaposition of Gianpiero Rosati's intriguing chapter on the idea of Rome as a celestial city, the seat of the gods on earth, and Siobhan Chomse's equally thought-provoking discussion of the sublimity of Vergil's Carthage, which reflects both Troy and Rome and the sublime rise and collapse of cities. Jürgen-Paul Schwindt raises some interesting questions on whether there is an Augustan conception of space and how we could characterize it (although I am still not yet completely convinced that the idea of the theatrical stage is really the 'master trope' of Augustan conceptions of space, as Schwindt, albeit cautiously, suggests), which makes the volume feel coherent after all.

Among the many papers I enjoyed are, to name but a few, Sandra Citroni Marchetti's piece on the space-time of Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* and the changing philosophical and political implications of houses, other places in the city, like the Forum, and the countryside; Monica Gale's exploration of the spatial coordinates of centre and periphery, of Rome and the empire, in Propertius' Books 1–3; and Stephen Heyworth' discussion of space and Roman topography in the *Fasti* – the cases where, as he says, Ovid is in 'guidebook' rather than in calendar mode (140). The implications of several chapters go far beyond the Augustan era in thought-provoking ways. Marco Fucecchi ends his fascinating exploration of Ovid's 'peripheral' exilic literature with some thoughts about its connection with later imperial poetry of praise (202), and Gianpiero Rosati traces the afterlife of the idea of 'celestial' Rome in Christian literature, where, in Augustine, the earthly and the celestial city are again divided from each other and made antagonistic alternatives. The role of boundaries, the metapoetic dimension of space and Rome's topography, the interplay of architectural and poetic 'monuments' of time and space, the interaction of Roman or Latin space with Greek and Alexandrian myth, culture, and literature or other local traditions, as well as its philosophical, religious, and gendered implications are other recurring themes throughout. In the end, the volume, naturally, cannot give a comprehensive answer to what the poetic conception of space in the Augustan age might be (and maybe, a next step in this endeavour could be to team up with archaeologists to gain a more holistic perspective on these complex questions, including the interplay of literary and 'real-world' space?), but, to stick with spatial metaphors, the volume offers some intriguing forays into complex, yet fascinating territory.

Quite a few new books have appeared in the field of Neronian and Flavian literature. Spyridon Tzounakas tackles the way Greek words are used in the literary programme of

[5] *The Augustan Space. The Poetics of Geography, Topography and Monumentality*. Edited by Monica R. Gale and Anna Chahoud. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xiii + 263. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-00-9-17607-1.

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Persius' satires.[6] As he shows in a detailed study of the Greek words, they figure prominently in the prologue, the first, and the first part of the fifth satire, in which Persius talks about his own poetic programme and the way he distinguishes himself from other satirical authors and the literary trends of his time. However, there is by no means a simple dichotomy between Latin and Greek, as Tzounakas nicely shows. Persius turns against what, for him, is the 'wrong' use of Greek literature by authors who are derivative and lack innovative spirit, merely echoing, like parrots, what others have said already, authors whom he classes as 'effeminate' and far removed from the realities of daily Roman life – a move targeting neoteric poetry, but also the genre of elegy. At the same time, Persius styles himself as a representative of the 'right' kind of Callimacheanism, one that upholds true literary novelty, and as an adherent of Stoic philosophy and scholar of Old Comedy. Throughout, Tzounakas pays close attention to the etymological implications of the Greek words used by Persius and their background, as well as to the complex question of whether Persius might have in mind the cultural and poetic life at the court of Nero. In Persius' other elegies, Greek terms play a less pronounced role and are not negatively charged, as they occur for instance as words for food items, plants, objects of daily use, but also with reference to music, medicine or philosophy. Tzounakas focuses on the way these words were used, to what extent they were already 'at home' in the Latin language, and what they might denote in the context of the satires. Persius thus turns out to be a highly sophisticated user of Greek words, and his work becomes a testimony to the complex relationship between Greece and Rome, always one of both admiration and rivalry.

Pierre-Alain Caltot offers a thorough study of the voice of the *vates* ('poet; prophet') and the 'poetics of prophecy' in Lucan.[7] Although much ground-breaking work has already been done on the voice of the poet in this epic, always 'at war' with itself, as John Henderson and Jamie Masters argue,[8] Caltot focuses our attention on the prophet figures of the *De bello civili* ('On the Civil War') and traces features of prophetic speech in the voice of the poet. In the first section of the book, Caltot systematically analyses the poet figures of the epic, with close attention to the style, metre, and narrative technique of the relevant passages. He concludes that, as the gods seem to have left the world of the *De bello civili*, we can speak of a 'humanisation' of prophetic knowledge, one of whose key sources is now also the underworld, which underscores the liminal nature of Lucanian prophecies, between present and future, but also between life and death. In a second step, Caltot subjects the utterances by the epic narrator to a similar analysis. As he rightly shows, the 'oracular voice' of the narrator adds a tragic dimension and a teleological perspective to the epic narrative. In the final section, he discusses the convergence between the prophetic speech of the narrator and the prophet figures, to the point where the prophets of the epic appear not so much as representatives of the gods, but of the poet-narrator himself. Discussing the metapoetic meaning of this prophetic speech, Caltot focuses on the way the language, the metre, and the entire poetic world of

[6] *The Greek Words in Persius' Literary Programme*. By Spyridon Tzounakas. Trends in Classics. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2024. Pp. vi + 262. Hardback £100.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-50133-8.

[7] Vox Vatis: *Poétique de la prophétie dans la* Pharsale *de Lucain*. By Pierre-Alain Caltot. Paris, Sorbonne Université Press, 2024. Pp. 481. Paperback £32.04, ISBN: 979-1-02-3-10772-2.

[8] J. G. W. Henderson, 'Lucan/The Word at War', *Ramus* 16 (1987), 122–64; J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's 'Bellum Civile'*(Cambridge 1992).

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the *De bello civili* are ruptured by the unspeakable horror of civil war – a rupture that concerns both the microscopic level of bodies and the macroscopic level of the cosmos.

While not all of Caltot's conclusions are equally innovative, and while I noticed a couple of bibliographical omissions,[9] Caltot's book is still insightful and provokes further questions. For instance, at the end Caltot remarks on the fact that the most effective prophet figures in the *De bello civili* are female (401), which would raise further questions about the gendered dimensions of the epic and the voice of its narrator. The close attention Caltot pays to the unique character of Lucan's hexameter and the interaction of metrics and the content of the work could potentially yield fruitful results also for, say, the Flavian epicists and their interaction with Lucan. All in all, while the prophets of the *De bello civili* overall say fairly little, beyond the inevitability of death and the disastrous nature of the civil war, Caltot shows that there is still a lot to learn from them, and about them.

Martina Russo offers a new examination of an intriguing – and timely – question: the role of flattery in the work of Seneca the Younger.[10] Scholars have been grappling with the contradiction between what Seneca says and what he does, as he criticizes flattery in some parts of his oeuvre, but practices it quite obviously in others. Russo, however, shows that we should approach this question by looking at the philosophical and political aspects of flattery in Seneca's work as intertwined rather than contradictory, as he was both politician and philosopher and thus had intimate insights into the functioning of flattery from both perspectives: as a political necessity and a philosophical vice. In close analyses of Seneca's text, his relationship with authors such as Cicero, Ovid, Tacitus, and Suetonius, as well as his use of *exempla* ('examples'), and based on the research done by Shadi Bartsch and others on the 'doublespeak' of flattery as conflating opposing categories such as praise and blame, Russo devotes her first three chapters to Seneca's *Consolatio ad Polybium* ('To Polybius, On Consolation'). She discusses the way in which praise of Polybius is interwoven with flattery towards the Emperor Claudius; the theme of literature in the *ad Polybium* and how it is used both to flatter Polybius and to cast a negative shadow on the category of freedmen, to which he belongs; as well as the use of historical *exempla* in the *ad Polybium*. Still focusing on the topic of *exempla*, Russo then moves on to Seneca's *De ira* ('On Anger') and the use of historical examples of flattery that reflect the disparity in power between ruler and subject, before homing in on the example of Iulius Canus in *De tranquillitate animi* ('On Tranquillity of Mind'), which raises important questions on the role of openness or simplicity (*simplicitas*) in an environment where emperors would expect to be flattered.

Next, Russo comes to Seneca's *De clementia* ('On Clemency') and the rhetorical strategies he employs in connecting praise and admonition in this address to the young emperor Nero. From the 'practice' of flattery, she then moves on to the theory of flattery that she identifies in some of Seneca's letters. The different threads of the discussion – the interplay of Seneca's roles as philosopher and as politician and the different roles of flattery in both spheres, the role of dissimulation, as well as the relationship of flattery and power, to name but the most prominent – very nicely come together in the final

[9] Most strikingly, given the topic, F. Santangelo, 'Testing Boundaries: Divination and Prophecy in Lucan', *G&R* 62 (2015), 177–88.

[10] *Flattery in Seneca the Younger. Theory and Practice*. By Martina Russo. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xi + 274. Hardback £76.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-2-85811-5.

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chapter, where the theory of flattery exposed in the preface of Book 4a of Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones* is analysed. In conclusion, Russo reflects on the connections between the flatterer and the Stoic wise man (*sapiens*) and the extent to which both, in Seneca, exhibit traits of an *artifex* (artist). She has convincingly brought to light some of the complexities of Seneca's engagement with flattery. After reading her insightful discussion, we can no longer simply condemn Senecan hypocrisy, but Russo helps us see the sophisticated literary, political, and power dynamics that are at play.

Statius' *Thebaid* and his engagement with Ovid is the subject of a monograph by Tommaso Spinelli (*Statius and Ovid. Poetics, Politics, and Intermediality in the Thebaid*).[11] Somewhat surprisingly, no monograph has yet been dedicated to this important topic, a gap well spotted and filled by Spinelli's work. However, he can draw on important articles that have elucidated aspects such as the Ovidian influence on Statius' depiction of landscape, on Ovidian characters and Ovid's influence on characterization in the *Thebaid*, and the relationship of Ovid's 'Theban' Books (*Met.* 3–4) to Statius' Theban epic. Spinelli takes this work further by examining Statius' construction of landscape and journeys in the *Thebaid*, the epic treatment of heroism, and the depiction of the gods and their power as well as celestial geographies. He is keen to go beyond the literary aspects of this intertextual relationship, using them as a springboard in order to assess the broader political implications of the *Thebaid*. To that end, he also studies the epic's interplay not only with second-century literature on the Flavian age (such as Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, Juvenal, and Cassius Dio), but also other works of literature, such as Martial or Statius' own *Silvae* and Flavian artworks, coinage and architecture (hence the reference to 'intermediality' in the book's title). Spinelli is well aware of the complexities especially of the second-century biographical and historiographical sources, and some readers might take issue with the potentially problematic approach of finding sources that somehow 'fit' what we read in a literary work such as the *Thebaid*, but Spinelli draws thought-provoking conclusions from them nevertheless.

Overall, he aims to move beyond the classification of the *Thebaid* as 'pro-Domitian' or 'anti-Domitian', arguing for a more balanced approach. According to him, Statius reads Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a critical rewriting of the *Aeneid*'s Augustan vision and takes this critical reading further, applying it to Flavian Rome and the new dynasty's attempts to forge a new foundation myth, ultimately highlighting the need for new, post-Julio-Claudian ideological models for Flavian Rome. While Spinelli's repeated hints at the novelty of his own undertaking might overstate the facts a bit, he still successfully draws attention to the literary and political complexities of the *Thebaid*. I particularly enjoyed his observation (176) that the *Thebaid*'s discourse on *iusta ira* ('just wrath') and *clementia* ('clemency') owes something to the way Ovid, in his exile, refers to the emperor. Against Spinelli's mildly positive interpretation of this fact, though, one could object that Ovid was not recalled to Rome in the end. His exile poetry can thus be read as a monument to a failure of *clementia*, which might leave the *Thebaid* in an even gloomier light than Spinelli admits. Also, it might have been interesting to hear from Spinelli a bit more about the broader impact of the phenomenon of metamorphosis for the *Thebaid* – is there, in Ovid, a redemptive quality inherent in the constant process of

[11] *Statius and Ovid. Poetics, Politics, and Intermediality in the Thebaid*. By Tommaso Spinelli. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. x + 293. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-00-9-28221-5.

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transformation, one that is painfully absent from the *Thebaid*? Overall, however, it is a great achievement that scholars can now draw on Spinelli's monograph for this important and fascinating topic.

Scott J. DiGiulio takes on Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* ('Attic Nights'), arguing that, in this miscellaneous work, we can in fact identify a set of diverse reading strategies that pervade the work, providing a form of artistic unity over the twenty books in which Gellius collects *c.* 400 articles (*commentarii*), ostensibly for the education of his children, presented in a chance ordering.[12] In a sense, DiGiulio's book dovetails nicely with that by Francesca Martelli discussed above (*supra*, as Gellius would have it, a term nicely discussed by DiGiulio), as both share an interest in the reading strategies brought to collected works that influence our reading of them today, whether they were introduced by the author himself or some later editor(s). DiGiulio shows that, in the *Noctes Atticae*, a number of reading strategies are in place that pervade the work and help the reader navigate it: ways of reading created through Gellius' engagement with the prose literature of the late first and early second centuries AD, such as Tacitus, the Elder and the Younger Pliny, and Quintilian; the paratextual framing devices, i.e. the title, the table of contents, and the introduction, which, together with the actual articles, demand a reading of the whole work as well as an active and critical readerly approach; the variety (*varietas*) within the work; and the way Gellius situates his work in the tradition of (miscellanist) poetry collections such as those by Catullus and especially Horace. DiGiulio then applies these reading strategies to Book 3 of the *Noctes Atticae* before tracing their influence on other works, from late antiquity – where he sees in Gellius' work a precursor to many facets of what Michael Roberts famously, yet not uncontroversially, labelled the 'jeweled style'[13] – to the work of Jorge Luis Borges. At times, I wondered whether, with this approach, the literary character was not overemphasized a bit, downplaying the technical nature that this work undoubtedly has as well. But, on the whole, DiGiulio is certainly right to claim that his literary techniques help Gellius refine the genre of the miscellany, and his emphasis on the literary merits of the *Noctes Atticae* makes the book a stimulating addition to the bibliography on this work.

Finally, we come to Neo-Latin poetry and an anthology of poetry by classical scholars, edited by William M. Barton, Stephen Harrison, Gesine Manuwald, and Bobby Xinyue.[14] The volume covers a broad span of time, from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century, and offers selections of poetry written by scholars of Classics from Spain, France, the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Poland, including poems written to celebrate the work of one female scholar. Each entry offers an introduction to the scholar in question, their scholarly and poetic output and influence, followed by a selection of their poetry in Latin with facing English translation – all of them both faithful to the Latin and pleasant to read – and a commentary that covers the work's cultural and political context, its links with current educational

[12] *Reading Miscellany in the Roman Empire. Aulus Gellius and the Imperial Prose Collection*. By Scott J. DiGiulio. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2025. Pp. 344. Hardback £78.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-7-68826-7.

[13] M. J. Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca 1989).

[14] *An Anthology of Neo-Latin Poetry by Classical Scholars*. Edited by William M. Barton, Stephen Harrison, Gesine Manuwald and Bobby Xinyue. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Pp. x + 333, 1 black and white illustration. Hardback £85.50, ISBN: 978-1-35-0-37944-2.

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practice, linguistic, metric, and literary phenomena, parallels in both Classical and later literature, but also the way an author's scholarly work is reflected in their poetry.

My only minor point of criticism is that, in the introduction and in some chapters at least, the authors could have made it clearer why a specific author or a specific poem or set of poems have been selected for inclusion, thus situating the volume a bit more firmly in the context of what was 'out there' in terms of the Latin poetry produced by classical scholars. Some chapters, however, do address this question quite nicely, and, overall, the volume is a fun and thought-provoking read. As Stephen Harrison rightly says in the introduction, composing Latin poetry is still being practised at least by some working classical scholars, and reading the volume is enlightening not only in terms of the relationship of criticism and active poetic production, but also of the development of scholars' and authors' relationship with the culture and politics of their own times. The anthology could nicely be used for teaching and is an interesting read for anyone interested in Latin poetry and scholarship, and works well as a gift – in the words of one of the authors discussed: *in strenae vicem oblatus vinariae* ('offered instead of a New Year present of wine').

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Greek history

The city-state (*polis*) is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental aspects of Greek history. John Ma's book is a monumental study of the history of the Greek *polis* in the very long term.[1] It starts from the collapse of the Bronze Age palaces around 1200 BCE and takes the story to the end of ancient *poleis* around 600 CE; alongside the immense temporal extent, Ma impressively covers the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean. In my view, this is unquestionably the most significant contribution to the study of Greek history over the last two decades. It is the first attempt to focus the history of the *polis* not on the archaic and classical periods, but on the Hellenistic and early imperial *poleis*. The reason for this, and the most significant contribution of the book, is Ma's concept of the 'great convergence': the spread across the eastern Mediterranean between 400–200 BCE of a democratic model of the *polis* based on citizen equality, assemblies, the provision of public goods, and the disappearance of older models based on oligarchy and characterized by disenfranchised citizens, subject communities, and serf populations. At the same time, the dominance of large-scale geopolitical actors such as the Hellenistic kingdoms and later Rome put an end to the 'Hundred Years War' between 450–350

[1] *Polis: A New History of the Ancient Greek City-State from the Early Iron Age to the End of Antiquity*. By John Ma. Princeton NJ and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2024. Pp. xx+713. 86 illustrations. Hardback $49.95, ISBN: 978-0-691-15538-8.

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