

OVID, LIVY AND AUGUSTAN PROPAGANDA

PRESUTTI (M.), BONO (F.) (edd.) *Sopravvivere al Principe. Ovidio e Livio tra integrazione e contestazione*. (Problemi e Ricerche di Storia Antica 34.) Pp. 295, ills, map. Rome and Bristol, CT: 'L'ERMA' di Bretschneider, 2022. Paper, €140. ISBN: 978-88-913-2016-2.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X24000349

In the framework of the celebration of the 2000th anniversary of Ovid's death this collection of studies has its origins in an international workshop with the same title (University of Pescara, 17 and 18 October 2018). The simultaneous anniversary of Livy's death persuaded the editors to pursue the following aim: 'affrontare in una prospettiva unitaria il rapporto di questi straordinari autori col potere augusteo, anche al fine di mettere in luce il differente, ma per molti versi analogo, modo di sopravvivere ad Augusto, sia sul piano delle strategie per la libertà di azione intellettuale malgrado tutto, sia per cogliere nella lunga tradizione della grande fortuna di questi autori l'eco di questa lotta dissimulata ai dettami di un conformismo ideologico tanto forte da non ammettere alternative auspicabili' (pp. 10–11). The importance of this topic is strictly connected with the recognition and the interpretation of the ancient texts: indeed, opposition to the *princeps* was expressed between the lines and not *apertis verbis*. Regarding Ovid, it is well known that the gap between the licentiousness of the themes characterising his elegiac works and the precepts of Augustan propaganda, and perhaps complicity with the rebels Iulia maior (cf. pp. 20–1) and Iulia minor (cf. pp. 51–2 n. 52) as well, caused his *relegatio* to Tomis this is still a mysterious incident, despite the theories and the attempts by scholars to reconstruct it.

The multidisciplinary approach gives value to the volume, which comprises an introduction by Presutti and ten essays, each followed by a select bibliography; furthermore, the papers combine literary, historical and archaeological points of view, while the final article focuses on the history and exegesis of a film.

Appropriately, the opening essay comes from L. Braccesi, who wrote a volume concerning the divisive figure of Iulia maior (*Giulia, la figlia di Augusto* [2014²]). In the first part of the article Braccesi analyses the problematic relationship between Ovid and Augustan moral norms based on passages from *Ars amatoria*. The humorous but stinging refusal to follow official propaganda coexists with awareness of the gravity of the topics (cf. *Ars* 1.31–4). While Propertius' integration with the laws of the new regime was 'difficult' (A. La Penna), Ovid tried to soften or to dissimulate in a smart poetical *lusus* the anti-conformist elements of his poetry. Braccesi selects compromising passages, and his perceptive explanations lend themselves to different readings: the correspondence between Aeneas' *fama pietatis*, to which Ovid refers in *Ars* 3.39–40, and Augustus' *clementia* might seem problematic; according to Braccesi, both virtues were not deserved, considering Dido's and Cleopatra's deaths: indeed, the *pious* Aeneas gave Dido the sword with which the queen of Carthage killed herself, just as Augustus, glorified for his *clementia*, permitted Cleopatra, a defeated enemy, to commit suicide (pp. 19–20). I see here a dissociation from the claim of Virgil, who, in *Aen.* 4.393, defines Aeneas as *pious*; the allusion to Augustus' *clementia*, if it had been understood thus by the learned contemporary audience, would have represented an all too clear stab against a fundamental precept of the new regime. In the last part of the paper Braccesi enlightens Livy's missed silence, despite the *princeps*' directive, on the slaughter by the triumvirate, namely on the murder of Cicero (pp. 23–5), and on the *clades Variana* (pp. 26–8), which Livy chose to

recount – as demonstrated by Florus (2.29–31) – in contrast to the censured report in the *Res gestae* (26.2).

In his well-documented contribution U. Agnati examines the impact of Augustan paternalism on marital and moral laws, particularly the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* (18 BCE), the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (18–16 BCE) and the *Lex Papia Poppaea nuptialis* (9 CE). As demonstrated by the massive bibliography, this theme has been thoroughly debated. Amongst the reactions to the moral laws (pp. 41–2) Propertius' elegy 2.7 deserves to be mentioned, to which Agnati briefly refers on p. 62 n. 88: P. Fedeli (*Properzio, Elegie. Vol. I: Libri I–II* [2021], pp. 293–5) concludes that the enthusiastic reaction of the poet and of Cynthia (Prop. 2.7.1–3) was provoked by Augustus' abrogation of a law, promulgated by the triumvirate, which forced Roman citizens to marry. Literary sources are also a useful addition to the documented historical and legal argument regarding the potential charge of *lenocinium* against husbands who did not repudiate their wives caught in the act of adultery (pp. 49–50): Ovid alludes to this theme perhaps ironically in *Am.* 2.19(20) / 3.4.

F. Berardi's paper focuses on the link between the gesturalism outlined in some scenes of *Amores* and *Ars amatoria* and contemporary thoughts about the instrument of an orator (p. 93); Berardi juxtaposes these two juvenile collections because the *Amores* has many poems displaying a didactic tone: cf. 1.4 / 2.5; 1.8; 1.11–12; 2.19 / 3.4. The original perspective of this contribution concentrates on the theme of silence and the non-verbal code, which connects the orator and the seducer (pp. 93–4). On pp. 100ff. Berardi offers useful considerations on silence and the role it plays in elegiac relationships, but he is aware of the limitation of this correspondence (p. 98).

M. Centanni suggestively interprets the importance of Niccolò Machiavelli's fascinating reading of Livy and his turn to republican ideology. At the beginning of his *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (1.4) Machiavelli considers as positive the effects of the seditions in Republican Rome 'dalla morte de' Tarquinii alla creazione de' Tribuni' (pp. 113ff.): indeed, the laws promulgated at that time guaranteed freedom in opposition to the 'idea umanistica (anche savonaroliana) della concordia che salva dalla tate delle fazioni' (p. 117). On pp. 118ff. Centanni offers a well-documented analysis of the ideological and cultural premises of Machiavelli's militant approach to Livy and, based on D. Cantimori's study (*Retorica e politica nell'Umanesimo Italiano* [1992]), re-evaluates the role of the intellectual society meeting at the Orti Oricellari. The article stands out for its accurate historical and cultural reconstruction of the period as well as for outlining the methodological consequences of 'twisted' readings of ancient authors.

F. Raviola's piece focuses on allusions in Strabo's *Geography* that are not in accordance with Augustan propaganda. Some critical thoughts against the narrative conveyed by power, hidden 'sotto la superficie del testo' (p. 138), unite Strabo, Ovid and Livy. The paper analyses five different instances (Servilius Caepio's affair; the Social War; Roman servile trade in Delos; Greek works of art stolen by Romans in Samos; the relationship between Romans and Germans during the Augustan age) and enlightens briefly and carefully 'problematic' passages, i.e. those with anti-Roman undertones. Raviola demonstrates a deft ability to glimpse the critical tone in Strabo's narrative, but also shows appropriate caution in evaluating this phenomenon (p. 152).

The genre of the heroic epistle (see also L. Geri's articles about this form of art: 'L'epistola eroica in volgare', in: R. Gigliucci [ed.], *Miscellanea seicentesca* [2012], pp. 79–156, and 'L'epistola eroica tra l'Italia e l'Europa (1590–1717)', in: B. Alfonzetti [ed.], *Letteratura e dintorni* [2016], pp. 53–71), generated from the ancient model of Ovid's *Heroides*, was widespread in Latin and in vernacular languages in Europe during the Baroque period. One noteworthy pioneer of this literary trend in Italy was

Giambattista Marino, who did not complete his project of a heroic epistolary, of which only the *Epistola di Rodomonte a Doralice* survives. S. Puggioni, who has dedicated significant essays to the reception of ancient texts in modern literature (e.g. *Lettere di eroi e di eroine. Il codice ovidiano da Boccaccio all'Ottocento* [2017]), takes into consideration Luca Pulci's *Pistole*, which, together with Basinius Parmensis' *Liber Isottaes*, constitutes the first manifestation of this genre in Italy. Having judiciously examined the links between Pulci's collection and the hypotext (pp. 159–60) as well as the importance of this epistolary in the *Fortleben* of the *Heroides* (pp. 161–2), Puggioni concentrates on political elements of *Pistole* dedicated to Lorenzo il Magnifico, especially on the letter written by Sofonisba to Massinissa (cf. Liv. 29.23; 30.12–15; 40.3). This story was a welcome topic in Baroque epistles, because it conveys broader messages: 'la novità, o, se si vuole, il sovvertimento della tradizione, è che Pulci dà voce a Massinissa, all'eroe, ovverosia, che di fatto incarna e rappresenta le straordinarie *virtutes* di Scipione: viene così a definirsi una sorta di *mise en abyme* che adombra una triangolazione a distanza tra il condottiero del mondo antico, l'esule poetante e Lorenzo' (p. 169). During his exile in Mugello, Luca Pulci uses Massinissa / Scipio's authoritative voice to play the role of the tutor of Lorenzo (cf. vv. 49–51 and 64).

The following three essays, concerning the history of Padova and Sulmona, perfectly combine historical perspective and archaeological accuracy. The first one, by F. Veronese, deals with *Patavium* at the time of Livy and is enriched by many illustrations. After having stressed the high quantity of literary sources, as well as the nearly total lack of archaeological remains of the ancient town (pp. 182–3), Veronese provides a detailed explanation of a Livy passage (10.2) about the fate of Juno's *aedes vetus* in Padova (p. 185). A. Bencivenga gives a brief but useful outline of the treatment of resources on Roman *Sulmo*, taken not only from Ovid's works, but also from Caesar's, Pliny the Elder's, by Silius Italicus and by Boccaccio. The archaeological story of Ovid's town is investigated by R. Tuteri, who presents a comprehensive overview and a clear portrait of the ancient town in its historical development. The contribution, which takes into consideration many sources giving fascinating information, supplements the detailed historical and archaeological reconstruction with a vivid and realistic narrative of the daily life of the city, as Tuteri refers to jobs, manufacturing, business and society (pp. 233–7). Tuteri exhibits a meticulous knowledge of the urban archaeology of *Sulmo* at the time of Ovid and in modernity.

The final essay, by R. Danese, relates to a particular form of *Fortleben* of ancient texts (especially Livy), i.e. the cinematic adaptation of them. The film, *Scipione l'africano*, concerning the last period of the Second Punic War and directed by Carmine Gallone (1937), perfectly integrates Fascist propaganda: indeed, Danese looks in detail at Scipio's endeavour, drawing continuous references to the African campaigns promoted by Mussolini (pp. 279ff.).

The editors are to be commended for bringing together such an interesting and informative series of studies. The volume deals with a thorny theme from different points of view and with different methodological approaches, and it constitutes a precious resource for scholars who have literary and historical interests.

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