



T. Antoniadis examines the slippery characterisation of Hercules in Silius Italicus' *Punica*. Rather than focusing solely on his autocratic aspirations deriving from the *Hercules Furens*, Antoniadis shows how Hercules' emotional instability enacts the character's marginalisation, a 'preeminent outsider'. There is always a discordant note, Antoniadis shows well, when Hercules' exemplarity is put on view. The discussion of his portrayal in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is too brief (but readers can turn to G. Manuwald's "'Herculean Tragedy" in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*', in: S. Papaioannou and A. Marinis [edd.], *Elements of Tragedy in Flavian Epic* [2021], pp. 91–106). The historicising links made in the conclusion between Hercules, Nero and Domitian are revealing. In the discussion of the Saguntine massacre and Hercules' role as a spectator of the horror, I wondered whether Jupiter's role is more marked and that of Hercules more tragic. The hero's attitude is that of a god recently admitted among the Olympians, who must prove his mettle as the worthy heir of his father. And such a one he arguably is, as he weeps (*inlacrimat*) in a similar manner to the Homeric Zeus, who had 'felt pity' for Sarpedon's predetermined death and had made the sky weep tears of blood on his behalf (*Il.* 16): Zeus and Hercules are both spectators who cannot directly intervene to change the fates unfolding. The heightened emotions of a *lacrimans* Hercules match those of the Saguntines committing kin-killing (*et facto sceleris inlacrimant*).

Roumpou's piece, fittingly closing the book, expertly and lucidly explores the side-lining that Silius Italicus enacts by banning Hannibal to the margins of the action, which can be read in poetological terms as a closural device. The non-killing of Hannibal and the emphasis on renewal and continuation resist closure. The idea that the displacement of Hannibal to a pastoral world reflects a wider poetic technique by Silius of putting on view generic tension as a way of exploring essential themes is an argument that I hope will be further probed.

In sum, the volume does not quite achieve cohesion, but common threads emerge successfully, and the book is just the beginning, as acknowledged (p. 8). Further potential interpretative avenues might examine topographies of isolation/marginality, the relationship between marginality and liminality, or the *agents* of these marginalising processes (whether these may be historical or literary or even us as readers/critics). This collection is to be commended for shining a light on several underrepresented texts and characters with a variety of methodologies, 'old and new', from spatial and ecological, to sensory and intertextual. All readers will surely find something of interest in this edited book.

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NIGHT-TIME FIGHTING IN STATIUS

AMEIS (K.) *Heimliche Nachtaktionen in der Thebais des Statius*. (Orbis Antiquus 57.) Pp. x + 408. Münster: Aschendorff, 2022. Paper, €56. ISBN: 978-3-402-14469-5.

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As A. observes in the opening of this book, night in epic conventionally signals a break from activity, and night-time ambushes such as the Doloneia of *Iliad* 10 and the

Aeneid's sack of Troy and Nisus and Euryalus episode are consistently marked as departures from the open daytime warfare and pitched battles most characteristic of martial epic. Nevertheless, A. makes a compelling case for understanding clandestine nocturnal activity – primarily, but not only, ambushes – as a foundational building-block of epic. A.'s study of the elaboration of this epic narrative structure in the *Thebaid* shows how the exceptional or even deviant qualities that characterise clandestine nocturnal activities become central to the plot and poetics of Statius' boundary-transgressing epic and how Statius transforms nocturnal exploits into a venue for defining his own participation and place in the epic tradition.

In an efficient introduction (Chapter 1) A. argues for the value of a dedicated, systematic study of clandestine nocturnal activities in the *Thebaid*. A. identifies six episodes in the *Thebaid* that, through shared features, motifs and structures, participate in a literary tradition originating with the Doloneia and the Nisus and Euryalus episode (p. 17). He divides these into ambushes (the Theban ambush of Tydeus, the Lemnian massacre and Thiodamas' massacre of sleeping Thebans) and acts of *pietas* (Hypsipyle's rescue of her father, Hopleus' and Dymas' mission to recover Tydeus' and Parthenopaeus' bodies, and Argia's burial of Polynices).

In Chapter 2 A. surveys the Doloneia and the Nisus and Euryalus episode and suggests that, in these models, the kind of fighting required in an ambush (*λόχος*) is always understood in relation to and as a counterpart to the open warfare standard in epic (*πόλεμος*): either a legitimate complementary tactic or a degraded opposite. But, while interested parties complain about or advocate for the tactic in specific instances of ambush, neither epic offers unequivocal guidance on how to view *λόχος* as a category. A. then turns to the *Thebaid*'s evaluation of *λόχος* in a compelling, comprehensive survey of the epic's three ambushes. In contrast to the agnosticism of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* about *λόχος* and the relative separability of such actions from the epics' plots, A. charts a trajectory over the course of the *Thebaid*'s ambushes of escalating and increasingly uncontainable *nefas* that acts as an immediate catalyst for war and culminates in the contamination of *πόλεμος* with the debased tactics and values of *λόχος*, rendering *πόλεμος* indistinguishable from *λόχος*. As sites of *nefas* and ground zero for the transgressions rampant in the *Thebaid*, these *λόχοι* do not just reflect but drive Statius' civil war poetics, where all distinctions break down and any kind of war is inevitably *nefas*.

The next two chapters each focus on a particular way in which clandestine night-time activities facilitate the dissolution of the boundaries ordering the cosmos. Chapter 3 examines monstrous transgressions of the boundaries between human and animal and between genders, while Chapter 4 identifies elements of *katabasis* in clandestine night activities, which contribute to the 'infernalization' of the *Thebaid*'s world. A.'s readings of individual passages in these chapters continue to be insightful, and they illustrate well how the cover of night enables otherwise unthinkable hypermasculine, bestial or monstrous behaviour, or creates a literary and literal 'hell on earth'. A. argues that these transgressions are especially pronounced and widespread in such 'extreme situations' as nocturnal undertakings, but acknowledges that they are not unique to these episodes, but endemic to the *Thebaid*. The focus on the category of clandestine nocturnal activities is thus less readily apparent in these chapters, and so too the most novel and exciting element of A.'s intervention: reading clandestine nocturnal activities as a narrative structure uniquely revelatory of the *Thebaid* and its poetics. As a result, A.'s discussion of, for example, the monstrous potential inherent in Tydeus' heroism, while capably executed, feels rather general.

The final chapter, in contrast, brings the focus back to clandestine nocturnal activities, and demonstrates the value of A.'s careful reading of Statius' adaptation of this narrative structure from his models. Here, A. digs into the metapoetic stakes of Statius' treatment of

λόχος. The conditions, objectives and values of night-time ambushes in the *Thebaid* – limited visibility, secrecy, vastly unequal terms of combat – put λόχος in tension with, if not outright contradiction to, the values and fame-conferring function of martial-heroic epic. Ambushes challenge the epic narrator’s authority: as the only ones left to tell the tale, survivors or victors of ambushes can assume the role of internal narrators and craft their own, tendentious narrative of events, thus perpetuating the conflict at the heart of Statius’ epic. Ambushes also confront the epic narrator with the dilemma of having to narrate *nefas*. It is thus all the more important for the narrator to ensure *fama* for participants who by death or defeat have been denied their due, affirming their *pietas* for his readers even if it goes unrecognised within the epic, as in the apostrophe to Hopleus and Dymas. With such explicitly self-referential gestures Statius makes clandestine night-time actions in the *Thebaid* a site of metapoetic encounter, much like epic underworlds, where Statius defines his relationship to his predecessors. In A.’s reading Statius’ ambushes express the strain that civil war as subject matter puts on the martial epic genre, but A. balks at accepting that, for Statius, as successor to Lucan, epic may have already buckled under that strain, becoming something else entirely (J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War* [1992]; T. Joseph, *Thunder and Lament* [2022]). A. thus does not find as much use as other readers of Statius have for the concept of a Lucanian divided poetic voice or a Senecan tragic poetics that celebrates *nefas* (e.g. M. Malamud, *Ramus* 24 [1995]; R. Ganiban, *Statius and Virgil* [2007]). For A., Statius’ narrator speaks with one voice; *nefas* is *nefas*, and *pietas* remains *pietas*.

If there is one point on which A.’s readers may have reservations, it is his account of *pietas* in Statius’ epic, which seems less developed in comparison with his robust discussion of λόχοι. A. asserts from the outset a clear-cut distinction between *nefas*-motivated and *pietas*-motivated nocturnal exploits (pp. 4–6), which guides his examination throughout. But it is not self-evident (to me, at least) that there can be such a distinction, and the assumption seems at odds with A.’s demonstration of how thoroughly boundaries are transgressed and categories thrown into confusion in the *Thebaid*. A.’s suggestion of neat closure facilitated on a personal level by Argia’s act of *pietas* and on a political level by Theseus (pp. 279–80) is unlikely to satisfy readers who find dissonance even in Statius’ narrator’s most apparently glowing apostrophes or the seeds of further conflict in the deeds said to exemplify *pietas* most.

The scope of this volume – a narrowly-defined intertextual study limited to the *Thebaid*’s six night-time exploits, the Doloneia, and the Nisus and Euryalus episode – occasionally feels restrictive. But A. widens his scope when appropriate, illuminating his readings of Statius’ Lemnian massacre with contrasts to Valerius Flaccus’, for instance. The Homero-Virgilian tradition also looks quite unitary. This simplification is perhaps necessary to establish the tradition in and against which Statius works, but I would welcome further distinction between the Homeric and the Virgilian traditions and their respective significance to the *Thebaid*. While A. does not engage with the historical, political or cultural contexts against which Flavian epic has been read productively in recent years (L.D. Ginsberg and D. Krasne [edd.], *After 69 CE* [2018]; S. Rebeggiani, *The Fragility of Power* [2018]; C. Newlands, *Statius: Poet between Rome and Naples* [2012]; A. Augoustakis, *Motherhood and the Other* [2010], to cite just a few), A.’s meticulous and perceptive readings will provide graduate students and scholars with valuable, thought-provoking material and ample potential for connections to such ‘bigger picture’ contexts. Ultimately, the study’s limited scope is a worthwhile sacrifice for the rich detail that emerges.

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