

which spiritualist scholars indulge the interpretive tyranny of the author, who is elevated in death to the position of ‘ultimate arbiter of meaning’ (p. 252).

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SOLITARINESS AND POETRY IN LATIN LITERATURE

KACHUCK (A. J.) *The Solitary Sphere in the Age of Virgil*. Pp. xiv + 316. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Cased, £64, US\$99. ISBN: 978-0-19-757904-6.

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In K.’s ‘ternary’ model for Roman culture, *solitudo* joins the engrained opposition between *negotium* and *otium* to offer a dynamic account of the individual in the ‘age of Virgil’. This tripartite relation between public, private and solitary ‘spheres’ derives not only from a careful reading of the life-works of Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Propertius – treated in five central chapters (Virgil, fittingly, gets two) – but also from typologies ranging from the spatialisation of the Roman home (*patria, domus, cubiculum*; p. 20) or the inclusion of sacrifices ‘for individuals’ (*pro singulis*) within *privata* and *publica sacra* (p. 12), to the tri-functionality of G. Dumézil’s theory of Indo-European culture and J.-P. Vernant’s threefold qualities of the *soi* (pp. 13, 3). The widespread applicability and clarity of this model enriches K.’s literary readings and gives me hope that this study may galvanise a broader critical turn towards the complex reflexivity that characterises so much of Roman culture, yet which is all too often lost amid preoccupations with public personae and private ‘self-fashioning’ – without a robust sense for *solitudo*.

K.’s purpose is thus as much about restoring a solitude that has ‘been mostly denied to the Romans’ (p. 246) as it is about reading the tradition of Roman poetry around and inside the solitary sphere itself. These two halves of the main argument meet in K.’s programmatic recuperation of solitary – and silent – reading and writing as an exceptional yet ‘still highly thinkable, and practicable [Roman] reality’ (p. 21). With this claim K. rebukes the ‘modern myth of the ancient reader who can read only out loud’ that he, following E. Valette-Cagnac (*Rites et Pratiques* [1997]), attributes to the (anti-)Romantic prejudices of Nietzsche. But, more to the point, K.’s lonely Roman reader – ‘never less alone than when alone’ (Cic. *Off.* 3.1) – enables his own readings to inhabit the same solitary sphere as readers both ancient (cf. the Virgilian *vitae* as literary interpretations, pp. 146–50; or Crassicius’ ‘possessive’ commentary on Cinna’s *Smyrna*, p. 257) and modern (touchstones are Petrarch, Montaigne, Milton, Flaubert etc.). For K., then, solitude is both a theme and a method – an anthropological claim that should shake up received opinion and a hermeneutics that unites cubicular readers throughout ‘our long age of Virgil’ (p. 44).

Less periodisation and more magnetic pull, this ‘age of Virgil’ serves as the study’s endpoint even when sequence denies it. The chapters move in rough chronological order, passing through Virgil from Cicero’s ‘last’ generation into the twilight of the Augustan age with Horace and Propertius. Yet the horizon remains the Virgilian solitude that the second chapter identifies with Meliboeus, whose role as Virgil’s ‘first speaker’ is to

teach us how to meditate on (*meditaris*, Verg. *Ecl.* 1.2; p. 85), practice and echo back what A. Marvell calls the ‘being alone with the alone’ (*consortia sola*; pp. 110–11) of pastoral. There is a measured tension between this persistent Virgilian telos and the narrative of progress that moves us from chapter to chapter. Each author further builds out K.’s solitary sphere: Cicero provides the ideas, Virgil gives the form; Horace repurposes Virgilian solitude as a way of life in the here and now of the city, while Propertius (de)populates this way of life with love and death. This push-and-pull of progress and repetition, differentiation and stagnation is clearly connected to what K., echoing O. Paz, calls the ‘dialectic of solitude’ – a sense that solitude’s consistencies will always become inconsistencies as the individual is conditioned by public and private spheres. The mismatch between chronology and teleology is also of a piece with K.’s political claims. On the one hand, the individual is the inevitable final piece of the Augustan ideological revolution – the missing third to P. Hardie’s *Cosmos and Imperium* (1986). Consequently, Virgil, as *magister solitudinis*, is modelling and moulding imperial citizens. Yet, on the other hand, the solitary is the secret (*occultum*) and hidden (*secretum*) space of freedom and imagination that Paz describes as a ‘break with one world and an attempt to create another’ (cit., p. 252). These pieces of the solitary sphere cannot be disengaged, and so K. takes them together.

While methodologically grounded, therefore, K.’s choice to treat a single author and/or poem-cycle per chapter requires readers to track for themselves the manifold forms of his poetic argument. K. refers to this process as a ‘literary topology’ more than a ‘topological history’, and this is an apt description. The *topoi* in K.’s singular menagerie can be thematic, such as ‘emptiness’ in Cicero’s description of Athens (Cic. *Fin.* 5.1; p. 53), Horace’s ‘slip’ into asociality (pp. 185–91) or the many deaths of Propertius (p. 227). These *topoi* are also stylistic, as in close readings of etymological wordplay (cf. *solus*, p. 11), ring-composition (e.g. in Horace’s *Odes*, p. 183) and lexical tags like *in umbra* (e.g. pp. 97, 107). Finally, K.’s most engaging *topoi* are what we might call ‘discursive’, including figures of rereading (*relegere*, p. 121) or of soliloquy as a genre that emerges fully, if not by name, with Propertius’ *Monobiblos* (pp. 206–7) as well as intertextual type-scenes of strolling (pp. 156–60) and dreaming.

As perhaps the best known of these *topoi*, K.’s work with dreams will show briefly how his approach is distinct and revealing. Even before arriving at Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* (pp. 46–8), K. prefigures, through the opening of Ennius’ *Annales*, the Roman creative impulse as oneiric: the poet dreams that he is speaking with Homer, inspired, ‘as it were, by himself’ (p. 11). Not only Cicero’s Scipio, then, but the dream-scenes of Aeneas, Dido and Turnus that structure Virgil’s *Aeneid* return us to the circularity of self-inspiration. Departing from interpretations (e.g. N. Horsfall, ad Verg. *Aen.* 6.893–6) that emphasise the poem’s linear motion towards its ‘private and public goals’ – Rome, empire, family, *mos maiorum* –, K. suggests instead that the dreams in themselves circumscribe the goal of the solitary, in which readers and poet forget that ‘*as* and *is* are not really one’ (F. Kermodé, *Romantic Image* [1957]; cit., p. 141). As K. develops this *topos* in Propertius (p. 236) or Callimachus (p. 38) or lurking in the mythological shadows of the ‘nobody girl’ whom Horace calls ‘Ilia and Egeria’ or ‘whatever name I want’ (Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.126; p. 160), he moves intertextuality towards an individual habitus – poetic exegesis as a production of and for the solitary sphere.

This reconstruction of what others might call ‘tradition’ or ‘reception’ through the readerly practices of the solitary sphere offers, perhaps, the most rewarding feature of K.’s work. From this vantage, the challenge is to expand our sense for the tripartite and relational individual on which these practices are based. For instance, it should be clear that K. goes further than most to integrate Cicero’s *eloquentia* into the poetry of the

following generation. Yet K. relegates this influence to the realm of ‘ideas’, enabling Virgil to provide the ‘form’. I see, however, a fruitful application for the *form* of Cicero’s philosophy. Is not Cicero’s scepticism – a commitment to ‘live from day to day’ (*vivimus in diem*, Cic. *Tusc.* 5.33) that he writes into the form of his dialogues – a manifestation of the ‘dialectic of solitude’? Could we not use this connection to trace the reformation of Imperial-era philosophy as K. does with poetry? Or, taking a different tack, what possibilities does K.’s work hold for non-canonical readers and writers, as of epigrams or graffiti? Could this shift help us to read – exemplified, for instance, in the bilingual ‘alone, together-ness’ of the Pietrabbondante roof-tile (cf., e.g., J. Webster, ‘Routes to Slavery’, in: H. Eckardt [ed.], *Roman Diasporas* [2010]) – the writings of enslaved individuals within the same solitary sphere where K. locates Virgil?

At its most ambitious, K.’s study suggests a way to understand not just the solitude of the poet in Augustan Rome, but the dynamics of individuation beyond public and private assumptions of personhood across time.

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A COMMENTARY ON OVID’S *HEROIDES*

ΒΑΪΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (Β.), ΜΙΧΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (Α.Ν.), ΜΙΧΑΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ (Χ.Ν.) (trans.) *Οβίδιος: Ηρωίδες (1–15)*. Pp. 637. Athens: Gutenberg, 2021. Paper, €35. ISBN: 978-960-01-2239-8.

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Greek students of Classics may no longer deplore the scarcity of secondary literature on Latin in their native language. Even though recently published work is focused mostly on Augustan poetry, it undoubtedly represents a substantial contribution both to Greek and international scholarship. This is the case with this generous volume, which provides a translation and a full literary and textual commentary on the single epistles of Ovid’s *Heroides* (*Her.* 1–15).

The editors are justifiably considered among the most dedicated readers of this problematic collection of Ovid, which may still lack a solid critical edition, but has received growing interest over the last two decades. A. Michalopoulos has previously published an English commentary on the paired letters of Paris and Helen (*Heroides* 16–17 [2006]) and one in Greek on those of Acontius and Cydippe (*Ηρωίδες* 20–21 [2014]), whereas C. Michalopoulos’s dissertation dealt with the single letters of Phaedra and Hermione (*Heroides* 4 and 8 [2006]). Most recently, Vaiopoulos published a thorough commentary on the epistles of Leander and Hero (*Ηρωίδες* 18–19 [2021]).

Such a long-time engagement with the *Heroides* now culminates with this μέγα βιβλίον, which undoubtedly constitutes a μέγα καλόν for both Greek and international scholarship. The volume begins with a comprehensive introduction divided into two parts. In the first one there is an extensive account of Ovid’s life and his works fused with many autobiographical references from his exile poetry (pp. 19–48). One may find the amount of biographical information in this section a bit superfluous for a typical commentary. The mystery of Ovid’s exile, for instance, extends to four pages (pp. 24–7),