

vulnerable virgin, now residing safely in written texts while the real, extratextual forum of spoken eloquence remains unsafe (262–3). Some concluding remarks to ch. 8 (265–8) link the two chapters by making the case that both Ciceronian dialogues and Catullan poems engage in rhetorical *conformatio*, or personification. Thus the Society of Patrons becomes a Society of Books, in which texts endure to ‘speak to each other’ after their creators’ deaths. An epilogue examines the afterlife of the book’s concerns, identifying potential points of continuity across the break between Republican isonomic textual exchange and the hierarchical patronage of the Principate and Empire.

The prosopographical Appendix is thought-provoking: Furius and Aurelius appear alongside Atticus and Brutus in S.’s list of likely members of the ‘Society of Patrons’. This book about texts that enact the moment of crossing over from the ‘purely literary’ into the real, social world is otherwise very carefully positioned between the ‘literary’ and the ‘historical’, but this Appendix with its dates and attestations suggests a final leaning towards social history which will have implications for how S.’s work will be read and used by its potential scholarly audiences. (After her own personal dedication, S. never mentions for whom she is writing.)

The number of typographical errors is surprising for CUP.

Trinity College, Oxford
gail.trimble@trinity.ox.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S0075435812000676

G. C. TRIMBLE

P. THIBODEAU, *PLAYING THE FARMER: REPRESENTATIONS OF RURAL LIFE IN VERGIL'S GEORGICS*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011. Pp. 326. ISBN 9780520268326. £41.95.

Is the *Georgics* really about farming, and, if not, what is it trying to teach its readers? Critics have proposed a broad spectrum of answers, ranging from those which treat farming purely as a symbolic framework for underlying philosophical issues, to those which interpret the work as a versified farming manual. Most readings, however, fall somewhere in between these two poles, and Thibodeau’s book is no exception. For T., farming is the true topic of the poem, but Virgil is not interested in reflecting ‘real’ farming so much as creating a fantasy version, in which nobles farm the land themselves and earn glory in the process.

T.’s book successfully highlights how the *Georgics* manipulates agricultural reality and departs from other farming manuals and notions of agricultural life current in first-century B.C. Rome. At times, T. risks *over*-contextualizing the work and losing some of the timeless, philosophical questions raised by the farmer’s fight to control the natural world. In addition, on T.’s reading, the famed polyphony of the *Georgics* is reduced to a unitary message about the dignity and delight of the farming life. While many have found this interpretation compelling over the centuries, some will miss a more open-ended reading of the tensions raised by the conflicting voices and portraits of farming within the *Georgics*.

Ch. 1 (*‘Agricolae’*) contains an interesting analysis of how the term *agricola* (*‘farmer’*) was used in Virgil’s Rome and nicely demonstrates that the *Georgics* constantly shifts between addressing elite *agricolae* and peasant farmers. Ch. 2 (*‘Playing the Farmer’*) focuses on the *‘economic fantasies’* (39) of the text, namely that the addressee performs the manual labour himself without a bailiff (*vilicus*) and without money. T. emphasizes that it is the bailiff who is omitted from the text and not, as commonly thought, slaves themselves (45). I find less convincing T.’s assertion that Roman sources prior to Virgil never praise farming labour as virtuous but only the poverty (*paupertas*) that makes it necessary (49–54). What about Cato’s praise of farming in Cicero’s *De Senectute* (51–60) and Varro’s in the *De Re Rustica* (3.1.4)? In addition, T.’s application of this theory to Virgil’s much-debated discussion of *labor ... improbus* (1.145–6) strikes me as an oversimplification: ‘So this passage does not express a universal truth about the human condition ... Instead, it presents manual labor in an artificial context that makes it appear to be a necessary, right, and decorous thing’ (56). Similarly, T. interprets Virgil’s controversial language of ‘mastery and domination’ over the natural world as ‘lending decorum’ to manual labour (61). Ch. 3 (*‘Nobility in Rustication’*) argues that the *Georgics* was intended to console politically dispossessed Romans who had to retreat to their country villas by showing that country life is actually superior to city life. T. further argues that ‘Virgil’s unqualified insistence on the worthiness of country life was not a traditional stance, but would for his contemporaries have represented something new’

(77). While T. gives a useful survey of the negative qualities attached to country life in some of Virgil's contemporaries (78–85), I find unconvincing T.'s claim that Virgil's thoroughly positive spin on rural life was novel; parallels in writers like Varro seem to put Virgil's glorification of country life into dialogue with other similar voices during this period. The chapter culminates in an analysis of the *Laudes Ruris* ('Praise of Country Life'), which T. believes is not as idealized as some think, but rather accurately portrays the farming life of a 'typical prosperous landowner' (107–8) and succeeds as an 'immensely attractive vision of a country gentleman as lord of his estate' (114). T. omits discussion of the central section of the Praise, in which Virgil offers 'various reflections on science and poetry', because T. wants to 'keep the focus on social themes' (110). However, the *Georgics* constantly interweaves social themes with reflections on science and poetry, and it is this constant interweaving that makes it so difficult to reduce the meaning of the poem to an advertisement for the life of a country gentleman.

Chs 4 ('A Protreptic on Agronomy') and 5 ('To Enchant Readers') further distinguish Virgil's work from a technical manual by emphasizing its comparative lack of useful instructions and its focus on the prestige of agriculture, as well as on creating feelings of enchantment and emotional catharsis. As in previous chapters, T. simplifies many of the work's most controversial moments by limiting their overall goal to creating a positive emotional or aesthetic response in the reader (e.g., his discussion of grafting (144–50) or the angry ploughman (178–9)). Elsewhere, in his discussion of the Aristaeus epyllion, T. does qualify his persistent focus on its 'emotional coloring' by questioning 'whether the narrative is also overlaid with a particular political message, and whether that message was sanguine or skeptical about the prospects of Octavian's regime' (200). He calls these 'separate questions, not admitting easy answers' (200). Yet, one cannot help but feel that T.'s decision to separate the thorny political and philosophical issues raised by the text from his interpretation of the poem as a protreptic to agriculture is too easy a solution. Ch. 6 ('The Reception of the *Georgics* in Early Imperial Rome') shows that Virgil's earliest readers were drawn to the aspects of the poem that valorised rustic life for Rome's élite. T. demonstrates how poets like Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid were inspired by the *Georgics* to 'play the farmer' in their poetry, though he singles out Horace as a more complicated case: 'Despite Horace's penchant for rural themes, he seems largely to have eschewed the Vergilian fantasy of the figure playing the farmer' (215). T. reads Horace's *Epode* 2 as a satire which skewers the idealizing tendency in the *Georgics*. Yet, how do we know that Virgil himself was not skewering that idealizing tendency (in passages like the *Laudes Ruris*) by creating such conflicting visions of farming in the *Georgics*?

T.'s book is clearly written, with few typos, and contributes much of value by taking a fresh look at the *Georgics* in the context of contemporary writings about agriculture. However, some readers will find his discussion of 'how' Virgil's text differed from other agronomical texts more illuminating than his explanation of 'why.'

Rutgers University
kronenb@rci.rutgers.edu
doi:10.1017/S0075435812000688

LEAH KRONENBERG

J. MILLER, *APOLLO, AUGUSTUS AND THE POETS*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xi + 408, 10 illus. ISBN 9780521516839. £65.00/US\$110.00.

This is a book about the relationship between imperial ideology and poetic discourse in the age of Augustus; it uses Apollo, the special patron of both poets and the *princeps*, as a test case. All too often, discussions of this general topic seem to be the product of fixed notions of how great poetry must respond to absolute power and so end up forcing an improbable unanimity of opinion, whether pro or con, upon a group of poets who were remarkably diverse in most other ways. It is the chief merit of Miller's book that he has no such axe to grind. He is willing to ascribe a range of different views to different poets, to different poems by the same poet, and even to different parts of the same poem. This makes it a difficult book to summarize, for there is no overarching thesis to which its many different themes are subordinated. The compensating benefit is that a series of very well-known and often bitterly contentious passages are discussed with a degree of sensitivity, humility and good sense that the intervention of politics often banishes. No reader will agree with all of M.'s readings, but his even-handed treatment will probably annoy extremists of every stripe in equal measure. These sophisticated and satisfying discussions never stoop to making a straw man of rejected arguments and M. does admirable justice to acknowledging the