

## REDEEMING THE TEXT?

PETER SCHENK: *Studien zur poetischen Kunst des Valerius Flaccus: Beobachtungen zur Ausgestaltung des Kriegsthemas in den Argonautica*. (Zetemata 102.) Pp. 450. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999. Paper, DM 148. ISBN: 3-406-453-147.

G. MANUWALD: *Die Cyzicus-Episode und ihre Funktion in den 'Argonautica' des Valerius Flaccus* (Hypomnemata: Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben). Pp. 292. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999. Paper, DM 96. ISBN: 3-525-25224-2.

Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is not read as much as you might expect. But there is a market for books on battles. Schenk's and Manuwald's monographs, more and less obviously, use battle as a means for making Valerius more palatable.

S.'s thoughtful monograph focuses on the war theme within Valerius Flaccus' version of the *Argonautica*. Book 6, an episode missing from Apollonius' version, narrates the conflict between Aeetes and his brother Perses, in which the Argonauts self-interestedly took the side of the Colchian regent. S. aims in part to show us why this book is present in the poem. And how. S. is very concerned with the idea of unity (not a quality necessarily of high repute in the post-modern university), and chooses the theme of war because it so palpably tests the idea of thematic consistency within Valerius' version. So it is that S. examines not just Book 6, but also the conflict between the Argonauts and the Doliones, described in *Argonautica* 3. For S. war creates a unity on two levels, the conceptual and the intertextual. In the first of these he sees, not surprisingly, the war theme as providing a means by which Jupiter's world plan (1.531–60: concerning the movement of world power from Asia to Europe, leading eventually to the domination of the Mediterranean by Rome) is put in place. The second level relates to Valerius' poem as a rewriting of the *Aeneid* (and thus Jason as an Aeneas figure) and through this of Homer's *Iliad*. S. reads Book 3 of the *Argonautica* as a recapitulation of Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, and Book 6 as a recapitulation of *Aeneid* 7–12. These books, therefore, have the function, intertextually as it were, of making the *Argonautica* emulously a descendent of the *Aeneid*, and through this of the *Iliad*. The Homeric and Virgilian pedigree distinguishes Valerius' version from that of Apollonius. Furthermore, the war theme serves to place Valerius' aspirations within the genre of Roman epic, distinguishing it both from Virgil and from Lucan. War has a central and positive place within Valerius' narrative because it brings with it the unfolding of Jupiter's world plan. In the *Aeneid*, on the other hand, it hinders and retards the unfolding of the destiny of the Aeneadae and Rome-to-be. Thus war in Valerius' poem is no tragic affair. It is a positive motor for historical progress. In the *Aeneid*, however, it is often tragic. Part of Valerius' programme is also to appear as un-Lucan-like as possible. So it is, for example, that divine intervention in the battle scenes of Book 6 distinguishes his poem from Lucan's. The gods, of course, because of the influence of Homer and Virgil, serve to assert the traditional nature of this poem.

These themes, however, provide only a unifying substratum to the book. S. uses his opportunity to deal with a number of other issues in the *Argonautica*. Perhaps this is as well, for to argue for the unifying nature in the epic of Jupiter's plan comes as no surprise. What may surprise some readers is that S. does not make more of the civil war theme, and the Colchian version of civil war between Aeetes and Perses, and more of the fact that Zeus' agent, the imperial Jason, puts an end to it (but, to be fair, see his

comments concerning this matter especially on p. 272, and as well on pp. 183ff. and 275–89). Perhaps S. wishes to elide the difference between the events of Books 3 and 6, for civil war is not at issue in the former. Perhaps too his understanding of the poem and of war within it is colored by seeing the *Argonautica* as a product of the world of Vespasian and Titus, rather than that of the less endearing Domitian (contrast strikingly Debra Hershkowitz, *Valerius Flaccus' 'Argonautica': Abbreviated Voyages in Silver Latin Epic* [Oxford, 1998], p. 246). At any rate, S.'s book is divided into five sections, of which some advance his theme more than others. The first section ('Kriegsthema und Argonautenfahrt') looks at the distribution of the war theme throughout the poem. The second section ('Die beiden Kriegsepisoden') offers a very detailed analysis of the 'Dolionenschlacht' and the 'Skythenschlacht'. The third helpfully treats the invocations of the Muses beginning the two halves of the poem. (Valerius begins each half of his poem with an invocation, 1.5–7a = 5.217–224a, whilst marking the beginning of the two battle sections with introductory and dividing invocations: 3.14–18 = 6.33–41 and 3.212–19 = 6.515f.; this structural device emphasizes the parallelism of the two battle scenes.) The fourth deals with the structure of the Scythian catalogue (S. detects Lucanian influence here). The fifth treats the relations between gods and humans as depicted in the poem (these may have their best parallels in Homer and Virgil, rather than Apollonius; the intervening gods also have an element of psychological symbolism).

Manuwald looks at some of the same material as S. Her focus, however, is more narrow. Rather than war generally, M. looks at the 'Dolionenschlacht' and related events in *Argonautica* 2 and 3. Much of the study (Part A) is given over to a detailed paraphrase and interpretation of the text itself (the 'Textanalyse' of 2.627–3.461 occupies pp. 16–129; this can be heavy going for it reads more as commentary than as interpretation, and no doubt will be consulted in that way). Part B offers more synthetic material, though once again with a heavy use of paraphrase. There are sections on 'Iuppiter's "Weltenplan" und die Argofahrt', 'Götterbild', and 'Menschenbild'.

M. aims to demonstrate why Valerius' narration of the Cyzicus episode differs so in length and emphasis from that of Apollonius. Like S., M. sees the world plan of Jupiter (1.531–60) as the key to the significance of the ideas of the *Argonautica*. She argues that the events at Colchis are given their prominence because they represent the first step in the unfolding of that plan. For S. it culminates in Rome; for M. it leads to a shift in continental power and to the opening up of the seas, but not necessarily to Rome.

M. also suggests that the episode is very helpful in allowing us to understand clearly the relationship of gods and humans. Here she again provides a different emphasis to S.'s. Basing her conclusions in part on Cyzicus' sorry treatment (he perished because he inadvertently killed one of Cybele's lions), M. concludes, not unsurprisingly, that humans easily become the tragic victims of divine will and willfulness (that of Jupiter as much as of Cybele). Progress thus comes at a cost. This mode of understanding the gods, it deserves mentioning, has become almost standard fare amongst Homerists. Can it be that Valerius reverts to a Homeric model? (One could look to D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* [Oxford, 1991], pp. 314ff., for help on this matter.) Furthermore, that this way of seeing things potentially undercuts the ethical basis of Jupiter's plan and, if this can be seen as culminating in Rome and Vespasian (or, for readers like Hershkowitz, Domitian), that it may undercut their standing too, is not touched on. (M. does wonder on p. 268 how Valerius' unfavorable estimation of the divine and of its part in the opening of the seas should be related to Vespasian's expedition to Britain mentioned in 1.5–21.)

S.'s and M.'s monographs come close on the heels of Hershkowitz's more imaginative book, reviewed in *CR* 50 (2000), 54–5. Her intertextual and postmodern reading places the *Argonautica* and Jason cleverly within the troubled courtier's world that produced Lucan's poem and that, under a different emperor, produced those of Silius and Statius. For Hershkowitz, Jason practices a form of courtier's double-speak and learns to navigate in his mythological world the double bind (praise and comply without seeming to praise and comply—collusive dissimulation [p. 273] she terms it) that must have characterized intercourse with the powerful in the world of the Imperial court. For S. and M., Jason is more of a traditional Aeneas, honorable and *virtus*-driven. For them, Valerius' epic conception and vision of power, as Feeney would say, is 'ameliorative'. Hershkowitz's book, with justification, notes that Book 6 above all treats a civil war and so provides a commentary on the events dramatized by Lucan and, of course, on those that befell Rome at the end of Nero's reign (p. 226; contrast S. p. 272). S. (and M.) seems less interested in this point, perhaps because, unlike Hershkowitz, they see this poem as conditioned by the events of the reign of Vespasian. It deserves to be stressed, however, that this is no sure thing. Syme long ago argued that the whole of this poem should not be seen as Vespasianic ('The *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus', *CQ* 23 [1929], 129–37). So the doubt remains: how one judges Jason's participation in the 'Skythenschlacht' (as a good or a bad thing) may condition how one judges the efficacy of Jupiter's plan and the progress of civilization, and the establishment of empire generally (a point stressed as well by P. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* [Cambridge, 1993], p. 87). Comparable points could be made of the conflict with the Doliones.

But perhaps this is to quibble, for both authors make more sense of this poem than has been vouchsafed hitherto. We should be grateful. It is regrettable to say, however, that the central disappointments of Valerius' narrative remain to be explained away: that the *Argonautica* moves so little, that it rarely surprises, and that it diverts so much less than Statius' coeval *Thebaid*. Valerius is still not quite palatable: unifying and edifying (or even unedifying) ideologies do not necessarily make for good art.

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## MARTIAL

C. HENRIKSÉN: *Martial, Book IX: a Commentary, Vols 1 and 2*. (Studia Latina Upsaliensia, 24:1 and 2.) Pp. 223, 209. Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 1998, 1999. Paper. ISBN: 91-554-4292-7.

Book 9 is one of Martial's most interesting *libri*. Unlike Book 8, which seems to have been dedicated to Domitian and, being specifically designed for him, contains no obscene material, Book 9 definitely does. And yet, of Martial's twelve *Epigrammaton libri*, it contains the highest percentage of poetry for the emperor.

H.'s two-volume commentary pays a lot of attention to the imperial theme. His useful introduction focuses on such topics as Domitian's military campaigns and the deification of the emperor. In addition, H. offers a critical discussion of J. Garthwaite's theory (*Ramus* 22 [1993], 78–102) that the epigrams contained hidden criticism of Domitian's moral legislation (vol. I pp. 17–20; cf. *ad* 9.11; 12; 13; 16; 17; 36). Unfortunately, there is no discussion of Garthwaite's interpretation of 9.64, 65 and 101 (*Domitian and the Court Poets Martial and Statius* [Diss. Cornell University, 1978], pp. 150–67).