possible. The core of the argument is ch. 4, which surveys the most important satiric elements, such as mocking non-Epicurean views or caricaturing 'ridiculous' human behaviour, and interprets them as parts of a coherent system held together by Lucretius' satirising language and style, the sophisticated construction of a divided audience, and various satiric allusions. I would not be satisfied, however, if the volume were not crowned with the magnificent chapter 5 which, finally, sheds light on intersections (rather than 'tensions' as its title suggests) between satiric mode and Epicurean didactic, both trying to show a way out of the 'misguided, flawed, and intellectually and morally abject' (183) world we all live in. Satire, as G.-G. rightly states, is thus part of the Lucretian 'philosophical initiation' (178). In my view, this is the culmination of G.-G.'s argument, justifying his satiric reading of the *DRN*. Less essential is chapter 6 which discusses 'civic satire' in Lucretius without finding any scene in *DRN* that contains even a minimal trace of the typically satiric representation of city life. Doubtlessly, Lucretius could have composed a funny scene mocking the hustle and bustle of Roman streets. Sadly, he did not. (Rather, he used this satirico-urban imagery — probably with an Ennian echo — to reinforce his representation of the atomic motion, cf. 56. One could add the 'atomic motion' of the busybody and the poet in Hor. *Sat.* 1.9.)

All in all, G.-G.'s *Laughing Atoms* is just the book on Lucretius and satire we needed. I have one bibliographical quibble: H. Blumenberg's *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (1979) could significantly have enriched the interpretation of the 'birth scene' of the Lucretian satirico-didactic persona — *suaue mari magno* — so important for the present study.

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HUNTER H. GARDNER, *PESTILENCE AND THE BODY POLITIC IN LATIN LITERATURE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. x + 303, illus. ISBN 9780198796428. £73.00.

Hunter Gardner's excellent monograph examines the symbolic capacities of pestilence in Latin literature between the Late Republic and Early Empire. She argues that Roman writers used plague narratives to come to terms with the civil wars of the first century B.C.E. and the new governing system that arose in their aftermath. She identifies four tropes structuring this tradition: the regression of a sick society to an apocalyptic Golden Age, the collapse of social hierarchies and the discord they foster, the liquefaction of individual bodies and the body politic and the resistance of individuals to the levelling and erasure of their identities. After using Livy to establish the interpretive framework guiding her analysis, she contrasts Lucretius', Vergil's and Ovid's approaches to pestilential disintegration and reintegration. She then traces the reception of their imagery in the imperial era and beyond. Attuned to questions of literary, political and cultural significance, she makes an important contribution to the study of classical antiquity and the growing field of medical humanities.

Underpinning G.'s analysis is the basic analogy between the body of the individual and the body of the state. Section I puts this comparison in dialogue with the knowledge of ancient medical writers, who explained diseases as the by-products of foul air, toxic locales, bad habits and bodily humours. Although they lacked an understanding of germ theory, they intuitively understood that illness could be spread through physical proximity. This idea implicated social relationships in the spread of contagions, enabling the metaphoric potential of plague to be fully realised in Latin literature. Informing G.'s approach to the representational capacities of disease are the studies of Antonin Artaud, Michel Foucault, Susan Sontag and René Girard, all of which facilitate her reading of plague narratives as experiments in civic collapse and re-foundation.

G. structures the rest of Section I around a close reading of Livy that clarifies the conceptual stakes of the chronologically ordered chapters that follow. In Livy's narration of the plagues of 463, 399 and 364 B.C.E., the transformative effects of illness on the individual body are reflected in ideological shifts in the body politic. By levelling differences between the patricians and plebeians, contagion creates a blank slate in which new laws and customs can arise. Temporarily relieving

discord, these innovations point to the paradoxically generative and destructive nature of pestilence in the Roman imagination.

Section II begins with the Athenian plague in *De rerum natura* 6, the symbolic resonance of which emerges in dialogue with Thucydides and in response to the crisis of the Late Republic. Lucretius stages its spread to indict the competitive culture of the Roman elite and the strife to which it gives rise. Leaving the reader with 'a lingering vision of a deteriorating civic body', he suggests that Rome's ills have progressed beyond the point of remedy (85). Vergil takes up this theme in his depiction of the Noric cattle plague in *Georgics* 3. While he shares Lucretius' fascination with dissolution and liquefaction, he also asks how a civic community might reconstitute itself in the aftermath of calamity. A tentative answer appears in Book 4, where the uniform beehive born from Aristaeus' bougonia hints at the creation of something new 'from the homogenized rot of disease' (116). Ovid joins Vergil in using the insect realm to think about the reconstitutive capacities of pestilence in *Metamorphoses* 7, where the descent of a contagion on Aegina leads to the creation of the 'strikingly industrious and uniform Myrmidons' (180). Though free from civil strife, the Myrmidons ultimately exist to support the king who oversees their creation. In G.'s view, they indicate Ovid's ambivalence towards the social and political controls implemented under Augustus.

Section III considers the reception of these narratives in Lucan, Seneca and Silius, all of whom remain deeply interested in disease imagery, despite their distance from the civic crisis that catalysed its initial proliferation. Lucan uses the social pathologies of pestilence to undermine closure in the *Bellum Civile*, portraying strife as an innate element of the civic body. Seneca's *Oedipus* connects the sickness circulating in Thebes to the vulnerability of a community whose health is intertwined with that of its king. Silius offers a more optimistic perspective in *Punica* 14, where the exemplary leadership of Marcellus allows the Roman army to reconstitute itself in the aftermath of a plague. In the place of his predecessors' ambivalence towards the Principate is renewed faith in the vitality of the imperial body politic.

G. concludes her persuasive study by considering the transmission of Latin plague narratives from the early Christian period through the present. Rather than make the case for specific acts of reception, she frames pestilence as a perennially renewable resource for negotiating the relationship between the individual and community. Although she hesitates to posit the universality of this tradition, she leaves little doubt that our bodies and their ailments have long served as a lens through which we view the wider world.

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REBECCA ARMSTRONG, *VERGIL'S GREEN THOUGHTS: PLANTS, HUMANS, AND THE DIVINE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. ix + 330. ISBN 9780199236688. £83.00.

This book examines the relationships between plants and people (both gods and mortals) in Vergil's works. The goal is to determine 'what plants mean' in Vergil. There are two main aspects to the book. The first is a kind of catalogue of plants in the poems. In this respect Armstrong's book is a sophisticated update of Sargeaunt's *Trees and Shrub Plants of Virgil* (1920). The book's second aspect is its analysis and foregrounding of the ambiguities of Vergil's plants. Ambiguities include plants that are both literal and symbolic, and plants that are both good and bad for people. Armstrong intertwines these two aspects of the book to present multiple sections in which a thematic argument is followed by a plant catalogue. For example, in the discussion of flowers (240–52) we get a list of species followed by two subsections on what the flowers signify (Iron Age toil and Golden Age ease in relation to bees; the interchange of flower metaphors of desire and death). The book is organised into two main sections (*numen* and *homo*), each containing two chapters, preceded by an introduction and followed by a brief conclusion.