

a different *ars sermocinalis*, rhetoric (338). The reliance on Varro (335), reasserted in the Introduction, is further detailed and properly scaled down in the notes on the basis of the contribution by R. Schievenin, *BollstLat* 28 (1998), 478–93, which had to be at least mentioned ad loc. (p. 77). The bibliography is too concise and misses important sources such as the rich dissertation by H.W. Pauli, *Studien zur Dialektik Martianus Capellas* (Bonn, 1989; available on microfiche).

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LUCERI (A.) (ed., trans.) *Gli epitalami di Blossio Emilio Draconzio* (Rom. 6 e 7). (Biblioteca di Cultura Romanobarbarica 10.) Pp. xiv + 297. Rome: Herder Editrice e Libreria, 2007. Paper, €60. ISBN: 978-88-89670-30-9.

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Dracontius' poetry has received much attention in recent years. This edition with translation of and commentary on Dracontius' *Epithalamia* (Romulea 6 and 7) by L. is a very welcome contribution to the current interest in the poet and his poetry. The epithalamia are a particularly attractive choice of text since in addition to their relevance to the form of the genre in Roman late antiquity they also contain statements on Dracontius' imprisonment and later release. L.'s book considers both these topics, and much more.

The Introduction summarises some findings of the commentary and puts them into the context of Dracontius' life and of the Latin poetic tradition. L.'s historical reconstruction of Rom. 7 (pp. 27–33) is particularly convincing as it proposes both spouses to belong to the *gens Fabia* and the references to Sardinia to imply an administrative or military post to be taken up by the bridegroom immediately after the wedding. The author's positive assessment of Dracontius' knowledge of Greek, on the other hand, is less well founded, not least because, after identifying one paradigmatic passage, Rom. 6.92–5, and arguing for it to be based on Sappho (p. 48), he discusses the intertextual relation between the two passages more ambiguously in his commentary (pp. 165–7). In general, though, the Introduction is a reliable guide to the poems and their context.

The edition of the text shows L.'s thoughtfulness and diligence. It corrects some mistakes in the editions of J.M. Diaz de Bustamante (Santiago de Compostela, 1978) and É. Wolff (Paris, 1996), for example the manuscript reading *daphnem* in Rom. 7.19, and differs from the latter in a handful of places while presenting three new conjectures: *serat* for *ferat* in Rom. 6.14, the addition of *nunc* in the metrically deficient Rom. 6.103, and *adulta* for *adultae* in Rom. 7.64. The text is accompanied by a close but fluent Italian translation. It is unfortunate that the three points marking corruptions in N are not recorded in the critical apparatus (though mentioned in the commentary) and that the criteria according to which the readings and decisions of previous editors and textual critics have been included are never explicitly defined.

The commentary discusses aspects of the two epithalamia in lemmata of groups of words, occasionally introduced by a paragraph on a group of lines, and goes into a fair amount of detail, in particular on questions of poetic usage and tradition. This kind of commentary is very useful for someone desiring a comprehensive understanding of a particular line or group of lines, but is less than ideal for someone who would like to investigate a particular point while going through the epithalamia, not least because the information is not given in a hierarchy according to its importance. In contrast, the introductory lemmata (e.g. Rom. 6.73–4; 7.80–95), which incidentally seem to be more frequent in the second half of the commentary, give welcome orientation to readers not intimately familiar with Dracontius' epithalamia and discuss broader issues such as features of the genre of epithalamia, myths and historical facts. The book concludes with an *index nominum*.

This book will prove very useful for students of Dracontius, of the epithalamium genre, of poetry in Roman late antiquity and of Vandal Africa. The Introduction is to be commended for

its discussion of the historical context, the edition for its reliability, and the commentary for its consideration of the poetic tradition.

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MCKEOWN (N.) *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* Pp. 174. London: Duckworth, 2007. Paper, £12.99. ISBN: 978-0-7156-3185-0.
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Slavery can be a very divisive topic, and not only among academics. In order to understand the 'peculiar institution' scholars have assumed a number of political, moral and academic standpoints and methods to aid them in constructing their narratives. In his book, McK. thought-provokingly considers some of the more influential methods used in the study of ancient slavery in order to explain how ancient history is written, and how it ends up being, in many cases, so different.

The major worth of the book is in reminding its readers, undergraduates and established scholars alike, that any view of history is unavoidably informed by the views of the person creating it. McK.'s contention that 'when we explore [the past], we tend to find what we are looking for' (p. 29) is a valuable one, especially in the context of slavery studies. With this in mind, and using his endless ability to anticipate different interpretations of evidence based on the 'unexamined assumptions' (p. 31) of any scholar, he engages with a variety of scholars and approaches.

Chapters 1 to 6 focus on Roman slavery; the seventh alone deals with Greek slavery. The first chapter engages with early twentieth-century racist views of freedman integration into Roman society. As an introduction to the ideas of the book, this chapter admirably refuses to judge the scholars who maintained these views (T. Frank, 'Race Mixture in the Roman Empire', *American Historical Review* 21.4 [1916], 689–708 to name one), and McK. argues that modern interpretations about successful integration of freedmen into Roman society reflect as much on the political era in which they were written as they do on the older racist views.

This sets the tone for much of the book. In Chapter 2, McK. shows that the same evidence can be used to argue for widespread punishment and fear of slaves, or for a strong affection between slaves and masters; his opinion would appear to be that either is possible, but that the non-existence of either is not plausible. The third chapter again offers a challenge to how evidence is interpreted, this time questioning the assumptions on which the interpretation of Marxist scholarship is based (in this case E.M. Shterman & M.K. Trofimova, *La schiavitù nell'Italia imperiale: I–III secolo* [Rome, 1975]), while Chapter 4 shows that the way in which Keith Bradley used evidence for his books was informed by his chosen emphasis for his work, and that his methodology in comparative work was similarly influenced.

McK. extends this thesis in Chapter 5 to literary readings of slavery, arguing persuasively that the same problems of 'unexamined assumptions' are present even in supposedly 'post-modern' authors. The sixth chapter examines statistical approaches to ancient slavery. This chapter, having contained like the other chapters incisive comments about how 'soft' (p. 138) some of the evidence employed is, ends by confirming that while the statistical approach can provide greater certainties in some areas, it is none the less governed by 'unconscious starting assumptions' (p. 140). In the final chapter McK. sets out to assess the scholars of Greek slave history, an area where he feels 'exciting new opportunities' (p. 142) may be found. He argues that Greek scholars potentially point up a new way of working on slavery, in spite of the fact that their work is affected in the same way as that of the Roman scholars discussed in the rest of the book.

While not offering any explicitly new scholarship, the comments in the book are consistently insightful, and the clear English makes it a joy to read. It reminds readers to be aware of the preconceptions in their historical arguments.

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