

she seeks to be with Acontius only to regain her health and ‘get even’. A great deal turns on how one interprets the word *contingere* in the relevant passage, but Thorsen’s reading is both fascinating and compelling.

In the final chapter I.M. Konstantakos examines pathological love in the ‘open’ or ‘fringe’ novels. It is telling that Konstantakos devotes several pages to explaining why these novels are characterised by some as ‘fringe’, but it is also regrettable that he does not simply abandon the artificial concept of the literary ‘fringe’ once and for all. What is fascinating about these important texts is their distinct lack of interest in romantic love: *erôs* is peripheral to the main story and, if it does feature, it is represented as an alternative form of eroticism featuring ‘deviant passions, forbidden liaisons or sexual aberrations’. After examining several episodes in the *Alexander Romance*, the *Life of the Philosopher Secundus*, the *History of Apollonius* and the *Life of Aesop*, Konstantakos posits that this approach was deliberate, to demarcate the ‘open’ novels from the other ‘ancient novels’ and clearly delineate the ‘peculiar identity’ of each form. It seems that what some have designated as ‘fringe’ should simply be understood as ‘unique and distinct’.

This is a rigorous, thought-provoking and thoroughly enjoyable scholarly volume: it is a beginning, not an end, and, perhaps appropriately, it offers no concluding chapter. Will this book satisfy a general reader’s curiosity about *erôs* in the ancient world? Probably not. As it confesses from the outset, it is primarily aimed at an academic readership, it necessarily adopts a narrow focus, and it raises questions and issues that are bound to be pursued further. In this sense, it delivers exactly what it promises, and it fulfils its aim. For the scholar, this book is fascinating and delightful. In keeping with the theme of the desirous gaze, it is a suitably handsome book to own, look at, admire, consult and read closely. It features several alluring colour illustrations from classical and modern art; immaculate quotations from Greek and Latin presented alongside English translations; a helpful anthology of ancient sources; an extensive bibliography; and an excellent *index locorum* and general index. What more could the scholar of *erôs* ask for?

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THE EXPERIENCE OF READING HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN POETRY

GRAMPS (A.) *The Fiction of Occasion in Hellenistic and Roman Poetry*. (*Trends in Classics* Supplementary Volume 118.) Pp. xviii + 209. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Cased, £100, €109.95, US\$126.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-073699-1.

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The Fiction of Occasion is an intriguing title, and its innovative content promises important results for the methodology and critical approach of modern literary theories to Greek and Roman poetic texts. The present book, G.’s doctoral thesis, addresses the problem of presence in Hellenistic and Roman poetry. The ‘problem of presence’ designates the problem of the availability or accessibility to the reader of the imaginary worlds revealed

by the poetry. The problem of presence can be solved through the experience of reading Hellenistic and Roman poetry, when we moderns try to make those voices heard again, which speak to us from poetry books, and to reconstitute them in a form of presence in which we can experience them for ourselves.

G. posits 'the fiction of occasion' as a new conceptual tool, averring that it is possible to tackle the problem of presence in a more intuitive way than by using methods and structures already in use in 'narrativity'. The problem of presence has previously been addressed through the critical approaches focused on the 'performance' of Hellenistic and Roman poetry and the given relationship between oral and written language. G. avoids drawing a clear distinction between literary theory and the experience of reading, but rather involves both perspectives by conceiving the 'fiction of occasion' as a way of solving the problem of presence, through an 'empirically-supported cognitive poetics'. The 'reader' to which G. refers includes the category of modern and ancient readers, without a distinction between them, which is possible, it is held, thanks to philology. Philological analysis tries to read ancient texts through the eyes of the ancients, while maintaining its recursive nature: G. quotes the words of H. Gumbrecht to define the impulse of philology as 'the desire to make the past present again by embodying it' (p. xvii).

The book is divided into six chapters connected by a serial sequence of arguments. The introductory discussion opens with the astutely chosen example of Catullus 4 to illustrate the problem of presence and absence, *deixis* and *enargeia*, the role of readers, fiction and fictionality, and the definition of occasion. An extensive analysis of the poem, however, might have merited a single chapter in itself, allowing G. to provide a full survey of the current theoretical questions at stake in a more extensive, dedicated introduction. In G.'s argument the fictional speech of the yacht (*phaselus*) in Catullus' poem in an indeterminate context takes precedence over the narrative and acts as a device for making absent things present. Although the *phaselus* cannot 'really' speak, the speech act performed by the boat exists only for and within the poem. Therefore, as readers, in the experience of reading the poem, we imagine ourselves as participants in this localised event, together with the *hospites*, the fictional addressees. Moreover, this event includes within itself the act of language, which is the poem, namely 'the speech' of the boat. This event, the boat telling its story through its spokesperson before the *hospites* is what G. calls the poem's occasion. Thus, G. follows a different path from the traditional definition by M. Citroni, *Poeti e lettori in Roma antica* (1995), in which 'occasion' means the interpersonal or sociopolitical situations prompting the composition of a given poem.

Chapter 1 is an unacknowledged extension of G.'s chapter in G.C. Wakker, M.A. Harder and R.F. Regtuit (edd.), *Drama and Performance in Hellenistic Poetry* (2018). This examination of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo* rejects the label of 'mimetic poetry' (coined by R. Reizenstein in 1906) for this and similarly classified poems, by opposing the application of the dichotomy of oral (performance) vs written (text). The poem is instead viewed as an epiphanic experience of Apollo in the present: this hymn draws an experiential field around the space of its own enunciation that is also a 'space of inclusion', which favours the illusion of participation in the aural experience, which is also participation in the visual experience of an epiphany.

Chapter 2, 'Figuring Occasion in Propertius 4.6 and Bion's *Lament for Adonis*', is closely linked to the previous one, as the two texts show features similar to Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*. G. takes up the idea that fiction of occasion makes spatial or spatialised experience possible, which goes far beyond the fixed schemes of 'mimetic poetry'. The 'megametaphors', like the path of song in Propertius 4.6, are experiential anchors for the fiction of occasion: therefore, space and occasion can be constructed

and configured through metaphors. The space of the poem is the 'epiphanic space', imaginatively reconfigured by epiphanic experience. In analysing Bion's *Lament for Adonis* G. explores the use of verbal gestures, the refrain-like repetitions and lamenting apostrophes to persuade readers to a sympathetic communion with the mourning Aphrodite at the moment of Adonis' death. Thus, poetic occasions take their shape from poetic figures and from effects of rhythm and metre, avoiding the dichotomy of text and performance space. The most interesting part of G.'s suggestive analysis concerns the discussion of the first-person speaking voice as a fictional persona who 'mediates' the fiction of the poem. In Chapters 1 and 2 he persuasively proposes that the 'speaker' should be identified with the poet rather than with some other fictional person.

The problem of the 'lyric I', the 'first-person voice' of non-narrative poetry, could certainly have occupied a chapter of its own. G. believes that what he offers in this book regarding this complex but crucial literary theme is such that it can be read as a guide to a new way of dealing with this thorny issue of literary criticism, but the absence of such a chapter appears to be a missed opportunity.

The last two chapters deal with Horace's *Odes* 1 and 4. Chapter 3 expands the conclusions of the previous one and focuses on the critique of the fictional character. In Chapters 3 and 4 G. focuses on the concept of 'voice of the poet' or 'voice in the first person'. The main idea of Chapter 3, on the basis of the analysis of *Odes* 1.9, 1.12 and 1.20, is that Horace finds a way to articulate dialectically the problem of presence, the metaphysical and the material presence, where the latter wins over the former, and the *Odes* are an experience addressed to the senses, capable of engaging the reader's virtual body (see M. Caracciolo, *Storyworlds* 3 [2011]).

The fourth book of Horace's *Odes*, the topic of the last chapter of the book, must not be read in terms of opposition between the individual and the state: according to G., in the odes examined (4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.15), and in particular in their 'choral moments', Horace conceives the choral community as an imagined place of presence and as a privileged mode for the realisation of the lyric occasion.

The future challenges and trajectories of research suggested in the concluding chapters (fiction and fictionality, orality and literacy, the experience of reading, cognitive poetics, rhythm) offer suggestive food for thought, while they should find more answers in G.'s future works, undoubtedly more exhaustive and accurate.

Parts of this work are pioneering and original, but there are some flaws. Despite a length of 200 pages and the clear objectives set by the author in the preface and the introduction, G.'s style is sometimes repetitive and pleonastic: the prolix literature surveys, especially in Chapters 1 and 3, detract from more relevant discussion of the selected passages, and it is notable that items in English are predominant in the bibliography. Nevertheless, this volume treats a complex subject and represents an interesting first step for future reflection on the nature of ancient literary representation.

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