bibliography). A number of structural issues make the commentary difficult to navigate: entries are given by line, often breaking the syntax; section divisions are not noted in the text, and their commentary varies from digressions (e.g. on the Hercules and Cacus episode, lines 184–212) to less than two lines (e.g. on the *ara maxima*, lines 268–79). The lack of digests in section headings can make it hard to retrieve fruitful information (readers interested in the characters of Tiberinus or Pallas will find material scattered in notes rather than collected at their first appearance), and notes are sometimes postponed or misplaced (e.g. the Capitol is discussed at line 349, the Cloelia–Camilla parallel at 649). This lack of careful editing also surfaces in the frequent typos, and in repetitions within the same note.

The commentary makes little intervention in literary criticism beyond inter- and intra-textuality. There are interesting observations on the book's links with *Aeneid* 5 (the borders of the poem's second triad), or 2 (the two halves' second books), especially in view of Hercules' destruction of Troy. There is also useful material on the connections with the Aristaeus epyllion, or the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* (more could have been done with Callimachus' *Hymns*). The editors intend to shun a simplistic 'good' *vs*. 'bad' dynamic in reading Hercules and Cacus, and their different attitudes towards Virgil's allegiances (with F. as more pessimistic) can surface in their choices (e.g. Hercules' *animis* at 256 is 'pride' for S.; 'rage'/'fury' for F.), but the book's introduction makes little attempt at ditching the usual dichotomy beyond a vague blurring of the lines of what remains a twofold conception of morality. There are missed opportunities to discuss relevant themes, such as power and imperialism (in the Cyclopes scene, the commentary focuses on the bees' and Venus' *amor habendi*, with no hint at the uncanny easiness with which bees turn into Cyclopes when discussing the labour of empire) or the dynamics of desire (in the Venus scene, it is unclear why 405 *optatos* should only refer to her desire to trick Vulcan).

Finally, while some recent bibliographical items are overlooked (e.g. M. Stöckinger's *Vergils Gaben* (2016) on gift-giving; S. Rebeggiani, *CPh* 108 (2013), 53–69, on Augustus' *geminae flammae*; N. B. Pandey, *TAPA* 143 (2013), 405–49, on Caesar's comet) and the use of previous scholarship fluctuates between *verbatim* quotations and mere mentions, the material included in these 800 pages is massive. While a commentary on Book 8 aimed at an undergraduate audience remains a *desideratum*, there is no doubt that scholars must be grateful to F. and S. for offering us another vital resource for the study of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

University of Warwick ELENA GIUSTI
E.Giusti@Warwick.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S0075435820000283

BOBBY XINYUE and NICHOLAS FREER (EDS), *REFLECTIONS AND NEW PERSPECTIVES ON VIRGIL'S* GEORGICS. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. xii + 286. ISBN 9781350070516. £85.00.

These are fruitful years for the *Georgics*. Scholarship on Virgil's middle poem has flourished in the last few decades, as critics have re-examined it through poetic, political, philosophical and pedagogical lenses. This volume springs from a conference held at UCL in 2014; it is a welcome addition to the field, reaping a rich harvest from existing scholarship while sowing the seeds of fresh approaches.

The editors group the volume's thirteen contributions into five sections: poetics and narrative, religion and philosophy, history and socio-politics, ancient responses, and (early) modern receptions. They themselves deftly survey the lie of the critical land and advertise their wares in a succinct yet detailed introduction. While the chapters certainly deliver the interpretative variety promised by the title's plurals, they are united by scrupulous attention to the nature of Virgil's *didaxis*, an interest in planting the *Georgics* firmly in the literary, philosophical and socio-political context of the early principate and a commitment to untangling the poem's complex self-reflexivity across its authorial voice and narration. They share, too, a post-Batstonian understanding of the *Georgics* not so much as a lesson in the impossibility of stable meaning, but as a poem openly wrestling with the looming threat of poetic inefficacy or didactic failure. Most chapters are short: admirable brevity, perhaps, but many of the chapters, particularly in the rewarding middle sections of the book, seem to cut off prematurely before finding room to blossom fully. Weaker chapters tend towards undifferentiated

catalogues and low-stakes pay-offs; the most compelling contributions, by contrast, begin from relatively small subjects — the embroidered barbarians on Virgil's stage curtains, a seven-stanza fragment of translation by Shelley — and let broader considerations emerge organically.

Carefully grafting modern narratological theory to Virgilian *didaxis*, Robert Cowan homes in on the gulf between Virgil's assumed or ideal 'you' and the actual reader of the *Georgics*: a site of friction which increasingly accentuates the poem's preoccupation with problems of contingency, autonomy and determinism, narrative as much as historical. Stephen Heyworth offers two learned notes disambiguating the technical meaning of *G.* 1.108–9 (fields irrigated at the merest quirk of the boss's eyebrow) and 47–9 (cycles of ploughing, harvesting and fallow seasons), with metapoetic significance for Virgil's georgic project. Richard Thomas, who like Seneca declares aesthetic pleasure the highest aim of the *Georgics* (*uoluit … legentes delectare*, *Ep.* 86.15), essays a defence of New Criticism's interest in 'Aesthetics, Form and Meaning'; he illustrates this with an anthology of poetic features including archaism, verbal arrangement, rhyme, acrostics and numerology, most well known already to Virgilian scholarship. Virgil's luxuriant language undeniably rewards close attention, but Thomas' sparse catalogue of poetic effects, pruned of context, stops short of producing sustained readings, even on the New Critical model.

Two chapters on the *Georgics*' flirtation with Orphism (Tom Mackenzie) and Epicureanism (Nicholas Freer) follow, tracing admirably clear paths through these mysterious and (in the case of Orphic cult) deliberately murky philosophical-religious systems. Both chapters handle their fragmentary materials with precision, drawing on recent textual discoveries in each field to reveal the *Georgics*' deep-rooted engagement with them. Mackenzie suggests that Virgil's poem not only exhibits Orphic tropes (patterns of expiation, katabasis, theogony) but functions as a sort of cultic initiation, including in its didactic instructions the secrets of how to conquer death itself, and offering Octavian, the *Georgics*' privileged reader, the possibility of Orphic renewal. Freer likewise moves quickly through established Epicurean undercurrents to argue that Virgil rejects Lucretian compromise between the poetic medium and Epicurus' teachings, instead promoting Epicurus' idea of poetry as seductive Siren-song, fundamentally unsuited to didactic instruction. Dionysian rhapsody and poetic ecstasy increasingly undermine Virgil's ideals of order and control, leaving Octavian to fulfil the poet's philosophical trajectory and take up Epicurus' role of apotheosised culture-hero. These chapters raise interesting further questions, not least what might be implied by the co-presence within the *Georgics* of Orphism and Epicureanism, two incompatible philosophies yoked together to plough the same furrows of poetic hesitation and imperial protreptic.

Bobby Xinyue's chapter foregrounds the political dimensions of imperial divinisation, tracking the *Georgics*' changing depictions of the relationship between poet and *princeps*. While Virgil begins the poem confident in his power to confer provisional godhood to his tutelary deity Octavian, as the poem progresses the emperor's divinisation becomes increasingly inevitable, with or without Virgil's help, and the poet's options narrow: either accept subordination as a panegyricist, or relinquish himself to an idealised past while Caesar forges a brave new future (*G.* 4.563–6). At the middle of the volume (ch. 7, a real highlight), Elena Giusti looks to the *Georgics*' proem-in-the-middle, unravelling the poetic and political implications of Virgil's Britons who paradoxically seem to raise the very curtain into which they are woven (*intexti tollant aulaea Britanni*, 3.25). Giusti locates these Britons at a transitional moment between mid-republican theatrical propaganda and the empire's triumphal expansionism, as Virgil lays the groundwork for the *Aeneid*'s theatrical barbarians and double-edged stories of foreign conquest. The figures' openly artificial nature, the curtain's *trompe l'œil* effect, both recalls republican mockery of 'self-painting Britons' (110) and indexes the factitious nature of Octavian's post-civil war representations of foreign enemies (114). Martin Stöckinger's chapter, meanwhile, delves into the socio-politics of trade. Virgil occludes economic realia in the *Georgics*, and his farmers are curiously solitary creatures, but gift giving and exchange permeate the poem on all levels, from poetic patronage to the give-and-take between nature, gods and men. As both Virgil and Octavian understood, reciprocity could help smooth the path of social cohesion — even among the new hierarchies of the principate.

Onwards to reception. Sara Myers guides us on a meandering tour of Columella's luxury garden, finding in his assignment of flowery ornament to verse (*Rust.* 10) and real instruction to prose (*Rust.* 11) a tendentious resolution of the *Georgics*' didactic tensions. Ailsa Hunt probes Servius' mediation of the *Georgics* for both his contemporary schoolboy audience and modern scholars; she unearths a salutary lesson of caution, revealing the distortions introduced into our image of Roman religion by over-reliance on Servian interpretations of Virgil's poetry. Leaping ahead to the

newly colonised Nova Scotia of the seventeenth century, William Barton pursues a thorough investigation of Marc Lescarbot's vernacular georgic in *A-dieu à la Nouvelle-France*, which transplants Virgil's didactic preoccupations to a new landscape and another post-civil war society in need of national renewal. Susanna Braund finds Janet Lembke's *Georgics* translation moderate, 'unpretentious' (186, 190), green-fingered and sympathetic. Vita Sackville-West's ambitious *The Land* fits Braund's category of a supposedly feminine 'middle style' less well, despite seeming equally personal in its hands-on horticulture, exilic nostalgia and occasionally bogus local dialect (Braund gathers some delicious Kentishisms: 'yeavy', 'shrammed', 'haysel', 'reasty', 'droil'). Finally, in an expansive and sharply perceptive analysis (ch. 12), Katharine Earnshaw rescues Shelley's translation of Aristaeus' journey to his mother (*G.* 4.360–73) from obscurity, setting it against his philosophies of mind, language and poetry to draw out its richly allusive texture. In Shelley's hands, Aristaeus becomes a brooding Romantic poet-hero and his watery descent a quasi-katabasis, helped along by the knowingly Dantesque *terza rima*. Shelley's newly eschatological landscape amplifies Virgil's own 'infernal hints' (177); its shadowy ambiguity evokes the more famous Orpheus episode, too, collapsing poetic past and future in a single frozen moment of sublime present.

St John's College, University of Cambridge TALITHA KEAREY
tezk2@cam.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S007543582000091X

LAUREN CURTIS, *IMAGINING THE CHORUS IN AUGUSTAN POETRY*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Pp. xv + 268. ISBN 9781107188785. £78.99.

In this tightly argued and nuanced study of Augustan poetry, Lauren Curtis has made a valuable contribution to the study of choral poetics. Bringing close readings of both Greek and Roman poetry (predominantly the latter) into dialogue with one another, C. demonstrates how a particular attention to choral imagery, that is, references to the chorus as 'both cultural and literary phenomenon' (2), both explicit and allusive, enriches our understanding of Augustan literary culture.

Poets of every age can rely on the image of a chorus to explore themes pertinent to the individual and their place in a community, to divine worship and mortal ritual, to identity, authority and performance. The poetry of the twenties and teens B.C.E., too, is shown to engage amply with these choral associations. More interestingly, even as poets seek to incorporate that Hellenic cultural landscape into their often competitive poetics, C. identifies a particular resistance to and reshaping of Hellenic models of chorality during this time 'of transition and definition, poetic innovation and dense textual allusions' (21). Due attention is also given to the ways that *choreia* is shaped by the Augustan poets' self-consciously literary and lettered, rather than performed, choral creations, a shift in focus that C. highlights in her brief survey of some choral imagery in Alexandrian poetry in ch. 1.

In the subsequent five substantial chapters, we are shown how individual poets take various approaches in their different works to imagining the chorus. For Propertius in his elegies (the focus of ch. 2), the chorus allows associations of the erotic female bacchant to combine with his private vision of Cynthia, unlocking new ways to understand both his admiration and his jealousy. In ch. 3, Horace, specifically in his *Odes*, uses choral imagery to emulate and vie with lyric poetry as a whole, while attempting to reinvent the genre for new Roman audiences. Ch. 4 brings out more acutely how this imagery can be read as a means for poets, and Horace most of all, to place themselves in dialogue with their civic, Augustan community and with 'poetic tradition' simultaneously. In the two final chapters, both focusing on the choral poetics of the *Aeneid*, we are led through the Hellenic and Roman ritual and poetic landscapes summoned by choral and chorus-like movement. Here choral imagery is cast as culturally formative as well as illustrative of subterranean tensions in Virgil's vision of Rome's (re)-foundation under Augustus.

The reader is led in an intricate dance around C.'s vision of the Augustan literary imagination, and her elucidation of all these approaches goes far beyond this rather blunt summary in both richness and variety. It will be wise to leave literary Latinists to assess the implications for the field of Latin poetry. From the perspective of choral studies, however, C. has set out an accomplished exposition of the multiple ways in which attention to choral imagery can reward readers. C.'s analysis of the