

premise in the introduction that ‘much of the basic scaffolding of contemporary cosmology, physics, and history . . . was initially put forward by Lucretius’ (p. 19).

It seems evident that N. finds it challenging to place *DRN* in a historical-philosophical perspective; on the contrary, he cannot help looking at Lucretius through the lenses of modernity and attaches his preconceptions to *DRN*, remodelling the text according to his philosophical view.

What draws the attention of any (classical) scholar is the abundance of typos and inaccuracies, especially when N. quotes ancient texts: see, for instance, on p. 50, *declinare solerant* instead of *solerent*; on p. 64, *similus* instead of *similis*. Then, on p. 129, N. refers to line 5.1176, where Lucretius explains that humans get visions of gods while sleeping. The verb *subpediatabatur* is wrongly transcribed as *subpeditatur* and, most importantly, incorrectly translated as ‘get under our feet’, while the word means ‘to be available, fully supplied’. Lucretius is saying that images of the gods were continually reinforced in our minds, so we ended up attributing immortality to the gods. The wrong translation of this term leads N. to misread the passage entirely. He says that the images of the gods may ‘get under our feet’ – just as *religio* in the first book of *DRN* – and trip us up. This is not the sole instance in which the wrong reading of the Latin text leads to a misleading interpretation.

N. notes (p. vi) that he follows W. Englert’s 2003 translation, but he modifies it when it does not suit his interpretation; for instance, on p. 61, he writes: ‘Only indeterminate matter will not perish. This is not because it is not a self-identical thing but an “indivisible material” [*solida cum corpore*] process or flow (5.552)’. The correct line is 352, and the right word is *solido* (not *solida*). But, apart from these minutiae, Lucretius explains that natural calamities, like floods, prove the earth’s mortality; what is everlasting must have a solid body. The word ‘solid’, however, would inevitably lead to atoms; thus, even though Englert uses the term ‘solid’, N. changes the translation to accommodate his reading.

Finally, the lack of a comprehensive bibliography makes it challenging for readers to follow up on some of the themes and to verify N.’s sources, some of which (but not all) are only mentioned in the endnotes of each chapter. In many cases page numbers are not included. A general index (*nominum et rerum*) completes the volume, while an *index locorum* is missing, and references to ancient texts, except Lucretius’, are inaccurate. The book also features many illustrations that make the reading more pleasant, but do not make the thesis more convincing.

Even though the book contains a few thought-provoking ideas, the primary and most controversial claim that Lucretius was not an atomist but rather a philosopher of flux and movement remains unconvincing.

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AUGUSTAN POETS AND DIVINISATION

XINYUE (B.) *Politics and Divinization in Augustan Poetry*. Pp. xii + 239. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £65, US\$85 ISBN: 978-0-19-285597-8.

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This book is a nuanced exploration of how Augustan poets reflect larger societal trends, in particular Romans grappling with Octavian’s anomalous position and the political changes

at the end of the Republic. It engages with contemporary scholarship about the Augustan period and its ideology and is clearly situated within the recent re-evaluation of the degree of 'resistance' present in Augustan poetry and the move to see poetic engagement with Augustus as more complex than support vs defiance.

X.'s main argument is that Augustan poets were not 'for' or 'against' Augustus or his rule, but were instead trying to make sense of the world as it had been reconstituted by Augustus, and to push against the constraints imposed by the Augustan framing of his place in the Roman world. The book's key claim is that 'the poetic discourse on the divinity of Augustus conveys the experience of trying to learn more about a new political order and of having to come to terms with it' (pp. 21–2) and that 'considering Augustus as a god becomes a means for the poets to reflect on the frictions and complicities between literature and ideology in a rapidly changing political system' (p. 6).

It follows a generally chronological progression from the triumviral period and civil war between Antony and Octavian, through the 're-foundation' of the republic, to the solidification of Augustus' primacy. Each chapter focuses on a few poems that demonstrate poetic responses to the changing circumstances and political developments. The poets under discussion are Virgil, Horace and Propertius; the anomalous position of Tibullus is covered briefly, and Ovid is excluded by the book's focus on 'first-generation' Augustan poets, even though his exilic poetry might be considered to be the most prominent example of the divinisation trope in Augustan poetry. X.'s argument is that the period of transition from Republic to Principate is the most fruitful for consideration of this trope, but one imagines that the sheer prolificness of Ovid's oeuvre was also a consideration. X. is interested primarily in the divinisation of Augustus, leaving aside most other uses of the divinisation trope, such as Tibullus' recourse to divinising language with reference to Messalla in 1.7.

The book's introduction attempts to counter the idea that references to divinisation in Augustan poets, and the idea of his divinity, are merely a 'generic pose' and the 'charismatic language of court literature' (p. 6), contending that it is instead a reflection of reality and of the role of divinisation in political negotiations in contemporary Rome. However, the distinction seems somewhat arbitrary at times, as when X. refers to the stance of 'elegiac opposition' as a literary feature of the genre (p. 21) without demonstrating how it is any less 'real' than the divinisation trope. It would have been good to have a more precise delineation of the two categories at the beginning of the book, so that readers could more clearly understand the scope of the argument. X. argues for the historical implications of the poets' grappling with the divinity of Augustus, but gives little evidence of the effect of this poetic debate outside of its literary context. Granted that finding evidence of such influence is unlikely, what then distinguishes a 'literary motif' from a 'historical element' if the effect of both is limited to poetry? This is not to say that it is not interesting and important work to trace the poets' engagement with historical events and real-life contexts, but sometimes it feels like this book is arguing for more than it can prove.

Chapter 1, 'Libertas, Peace, and Divine Dependence', focuses on Virgil's first *Eclogue*, the *sphragis* of his *Georgics* and Propertius 3.4. It argues that these works show the poets trying to understand how the parameters of *libertas* are changing as Octavian/Augustus becomes more powerful and the new regime takes shape. The depiction of Augustus as 'a divine guarantor of peace' (p. 30) reflects the new limitations being placed on Roman *libertas* as the political class accepts a more authoritarian political structure in return for civic security.

In Chapter 2, 'Divinization and the Transformation of Rome from Republic to Principate', X. mostly concentrates on poetry produced around the time of the battle of Actium, specifically Horace's *Epode* 9 and *Satire* 2.1, Virgil's *Georgics*, and Propertius 2.7 and 4.11. These works, X. argues, reflect the poets' growing realisation of the scope of the new political order and Rome's 'unstoppable drift towards autocracy' (p. 31). The depiction of Augustus as having legal authority equivalent to, or perhaps arising from, divinity, is an attempt to negotiate the relationships between the poets and the new ruler, and the role that poetry and literature may have in a world in which personal speech and action are increasingly under state control.

Chapter 3, 'Conquest and Immortality in Horace's *Odes*', focuses on the first three books of the *Odes* and Horace's 'lyrically inflected discussions of Augustus' divinization' (p. 31). This chapter elucidates the ways in which Horace's poems draw attention to the Augustan self-mythologising discourse and its connection to the *princeps*' power. X. argues that the poet presents the motif of Augustus' divinisation as putting a strain on the genre of lyric itself and that even his most panegyric poems hint at a desire to maintain his poetic autonomy even as he demonstrates his political allegiance to Augustus.

In Chapter 4, 'Divinization and the Inevitability of Augustan Rome', the focus is mainly on Virgil's *Aeneid*, with discussion also of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* and Propertius 4.6. This discussion of Virgil's prophecies of Augustus' divinisation is particularly compelling, drawing attention to the poet's interest in the way in which the representation of history is crucial to its perception. X. argues that Virgil displays an acute awareness that the 'inevitability' of Augustus and the teleological narrative of Rome's rise and culmination in the Principate are a result of deliberate shaping of historical retelling, and that his own epic is engaged in this work. This reading of the divinisation motif in the *Aeneid* is an important contribution to the ongoing scholarly conversation about the place of Augustus in the epic.

The epilogue, 'To Divinity and Beyond', points to some possible further extensions of the book's core arguments, looking at passages in Horace's *Odes* 4 and showing that Horace was uncomfortably aware that positioning Augustus as the central figure of his age, upon whom the peace and security of Rome depended, raised the inevitable problem of what would happen when he was gone. X. argues that Horace's final book of *Odes* encapsulates the tension between the timelessness of the 'golden age' of Augustus and the reality of the *princeps*' ageing and eventual death, and that the motif of divinisation is a vehicle for the poet to raise this issue diplomatically.

This book contains careful readings of a selection of poems, readings that deepen and sometimes challenge traditional or recent interpretations of those poems. While the poems are connected by their use or treatment of the 'divinising motif', the discussion can feel a bit fragmented as it moves from poet to poet. But X. does well to argue for the unity of historical context as providing a larger thematic unity to the selected poems. Overall, the book draws attention to overlooked aspects of these poems, fulfilling X.'s promise to 'reopen debate on questions which some consider to be settled' (p. 6), and is persuasive in arguing that divinisation is much more than an empty trope or a reflection of Hellenistic sources. It should be useful to scholars working on these authors as well as students of Roman social history.

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