

and inability to drive Hannibal out of Italy depict the Roman general as no more than a beacon of light in Rome's darkest hours. Ch. 4 focuses on the battle of Cannae, starting with its Ovidian prelude in the retelling of the metamorphosis of Dido's sister, Anna, into an Italic nymph who plays an ambiguous role as Juno's messenger to Hannibal, and its Lucanian vignette of civil war in Solimus' accidental parricide on the eve of the battle, foreshadowing the dissension between Terentius Varro and Aemilius Paulus, the two Roman consul-generals at Cannae. B. then analyses these two figures in detail, but progressively reverses the traditional readings. Varro's flight to Rome proved decisive in allowing Rome to experience a military awakening and reorganise its army decisively in the aftermath of Cannae. Paulus' *devotio*, however, proved ineffective, almost fatal to Rome, as Scipio laments to the ghost of Paulus in the nekya (*Pun.* 13.712–13). Marcellus, in ch. 5, for all his *virtus*, *fides* and *pietas*, is paradoxically driven more by a desire for personal glory than collective interest. For B., the ultimate moral *exemplum* is found in Scipio Africanus, who strikes the perfect balance between *virtus*, *fides* and *pietas* and whose moral ascendancy is unambiguously linked to his military victory at Zama, signing off the end of the second Punic war. Ch. 7 rounds up the study by looking at the aftermath of the second and third Punic wars and how Silius hints at the end of the *metus hostilis* as the root cause of Rome's subsequent moral decline and civil wars.

Though some of the readings are less convincing than others (e.g. B. on Hannibal is rather binary), the study has the overall merit of showing how the *Punica* creatively engages both with the historiographical (especially Livy) and epic traditions. Allusions to Stoicism could have benefited from fuller referencing. To a large degree, the book's focus is on historiographical reception in epic, and as such it makes a brilliant contribution to the increasing body of critical discussions on the permeability between the historical and literary cultures in ancient Rome.

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JAMES McNAMARA and VICTORIA E. PAGÁN (EDS), *TACITUS' WONDERS: EMPIRE AND PARADOX IN ANCIENT ROME* (Bloomsbury classical studies monographs). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. viii + 281. ISBN 9781350241725. £65.00.

The present volume, which collects some of the papers from a conference held at Victoria University of Wellington (2018), offers a wide range of perspectives on the use of paradoxography in Tacitus' works. Since Tacitus is an unexpected venue for the use of wonders, the contributors' main goal is not only to describe the unusual event that Tacitus records, but also explain its meaning, both within the Tacitean context and in relation to the historiographical tradition (and related genres). The volume, which is divided into three parts, for a total of ten papers, offers some valuable discussions and thought-provoking interpretations, even though there is considerable overlap among the papers, some of which could have benefitted from a more condensed analysis.

Kelly Shannon-Henderson's contribution examines some instances of Tacitean *miracula*, which, she argues, have implications as regards questions of truth and falsehood relating to Tacitus' historiographical methodology. Whereas some of the marvellous material that Tacitus includes is 'purely' paradoxographical, that is, similar to what one would find in, say, Phlegon of Tralles, Tacitus, unlike traditional paradoxographers, often provides a causal explanation of the phenomenon to underline its truthfulness or to correct false reports by adducing further proofs (e.g. eyewitnesses' accounts). In a few cases, Tacitus refuses to explain the marvel without denying its truthfulness, thus leaving his readers to draw their own conclusions. Rik Peters focuses on the danger that seeking wonder can cause to a historian since the wondrous was felt to be in opposition to the truth. Hellenistic historians dealt with this tension in different ways: Tacitus, who is an heir to the same tradition, goes a step further by applying a didactic element to his use of wonders. Arthur Pomeroy considers the *Dialogus*, particularly Aper's second speech and its relationship to Cicero's *Brutus*. Focusing on terms of admiration and wonder (*admiror*, *miror*), Pomeroy sees Aper's use of them in reference to the orators of the past as a warning 'that one can

marvel at the past, but hardly take it as a model for present behaviour'. Brandon Jones focuses on the *Dialogus* and the *Agricola*, whose main characters are read as examples of what Jones calls the 'paradox of the socially marvellous'. In the case of the *Dialogus*, the paradox is produced by the figure of the orator, whose marvellous social standing (defined by his *fama, gloria, laus*) contrasts with the assumption that eloquence has disappeared. As for the *Agricola*, its main character's remarkability, which causes wonder among contemporaries and future generations, is the indirect result of his not pursuing *fama*. In both cases, be it the socially marvellous orator or general, Tacitus implies that, in the imperial system, being socially marvellous was dangerous.

George Baroud underlines the political and metahistorical valences of significant wonders in *Annals* 5–6. One such episode is the appearance of the false Drusus (5.10), whose claims, Baroud stresses, are uncritically believed by the Greek commoners, while the Roman general Sabinus, who is in charge of inquiring about the impostor, carefully scrutinises the veracity of this man's assertions. Tacitus tells us that, despite the notoriety of this event, he was unable to discover how it ended. If, on the one hand, the possibility of a living member of the imperial family had political consequences for the current emperor, Tacitus, who is unable to verify the story, points to the limits of historiography, which, despite its critical engagement with the episode, cannot resolve its truthfulness. With the famous episode of the phoenix (6.28), readers are faced with a similar problem, since Tacitus devotes a lengthy discussion to an event which we are not even sure he believed to have occurred. Callum Aldiss takes under consideration signs and omens in the *Histories*. He challenges Syme's assumption that Tacitus did not believe in them, and argues instead that what matters is the religious authority of the interpreter: those who interpret prodigies in accordance with Roman religious principles are *religiosi*; the others are *superstitiosi*. Such a dichotomy is especially important when the interpreter is the emperor himself. Aldiss analyses first the prodigies that appeared before Otho set out from Rome (1.86), and which he failed to investigate with appropriate religious scruple; second, the bad omens that emphasise Vitellius' incompetence as general (3.56.1–2); last, Titus' visit to Paphian Venus (2.2–4), where the omens are interpreted, in line with the other omens that predicted Vespasian's rise, with the hindsight of the Flavians' future success. In this case, the reality of power supersedes traditional religious interpretation. James McNamara turns to the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, two works where wonders abound, but with the crucial difference that, whereas in the *Agricola* the main character imposes his rational knowledge on the sources of disbelief, in the *Germania* such wonders have, so to speak, free rein. It is also interesting to note how Tacitus seems to downplay some of the natural wonders of Germany, perhaps as a response to Domitian's triumph over the Chatti, which coincided with news of *Agricola's* victory at Mons Graupius.

Panayiotis Christoforou returns to the *Annals*, and particularly to Tiberius' 'retirement' to Capri, when the emperor, physically secluded from the active politics of the city, became a *monstrum* himself. Tiberius was, from the start, a very ambiguous character. Once he withdrew to Capri, the distance that kept him away from Rome only contributed to increasing rumour and suspicion, giving rise to many of the stories that have survived in the ancient sources, even though it is often impossible to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Once Tiberius retired to Capri, an ambiguous and wondrous place in itself, it became impossible to distinguish between the true and deceptive *princeps*. Holly Haynes analyses Tacitus' account of Vespasian's miracles at *Histories* 4.81–83, which she reads as 'tragedy in a new idiom'. For Haynes, tragedy provides Tacitus with a theory of politics: the tragic elements of Tacitus' narrative lose their poetic character and become real in Roman history. From the moment of Vespasian's miracles, Tacitus suggests that the imperial system has become a tyranny (intriguing is Haynes' reading that Tacitus omits recalling that Serapis would become Jupiter Dis as a response to the ideology of post-Domitianic Rome, which repudiated Domitian's *aegyptiaca*). Victoria Pagán's final chapter functions as a proper conclusion to the volume, reflecting on the nature of the wondrous in Tacitus, its relationship to the ordinary, and the implications that may be drawn from Tacitus' choice of inserting this type of information in his 'serious' histories. Focusing on well-known passages (the phoenix in the *Annals*, Vespasian's miracles in the *Histories*, the last sentence of the *Germania* and the cannibalism of the Usipi in the *Agricola*), Pagán argues that, whereas these stories became 'garden-variety wonders', in Tacitus' narrative routine politics became the true, more frightful wonder. Through a detailed analysis of the occurrences of *solere/solitus* in Tacitus' oeuvre, Pagán argues that expressions of the ordinary, often in the comparative ('more than usual'), illuminate the extraordinary, as for example when Thræsea Paetus' defiance, in reaction to his fellow senators' sycophancy, is characterised as exceptional in comparison to his previous acceptance of ordinary flattery (14.12.1).

As is often the case with conference proceedings, there is some qualitative variety among its contributions, but its overall value is high. Although there is some repetitiveness, there is also cohesiveness of argument. In the end, the main question, whether Tacitus believed in the wonders he recorded, remains unanswered. What becomes clear, however, is that the portents Tacitus records are rarely there for their own sake, i.e. for pure 'entertainment', but respond to a certain historiographic methodology, which requires careful inquiry.

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EVELYN ADKINS, *DISCOURSE, KNOWLEDGE, AND POWER IN APULEIUS' METAMORPHOSES*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. Pp. xii + 277. ISBN 9780472133055. \$80.00.

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* tell the story of the young aristocrat Lucius, who is by mistake transformed into an ass and who regains his human shape after a long and amusing series of mishaps, erotic adventures and initiation into the cult of Isis. But the novel brims with other stories too, ranging from simple entertainment to highly sophisticated narratives, such as the tale of Cupid and Psyche, and there are storytellers everywhere and from every walk of life. To cut a long story short: speech plays an enormously important role in the novel. Yet, despite its prominence, a full study of Apuleius' use of language as a tool of characterisation remains a desideratum. With her book, Evelyn Adkins has filled this gap and produced the first comprehensive study of the novel characters' speech in which she demonstrates that written, oral and non-verbal communication are used to negotiate social status and power.

A. explores six different types of discourse: non-elite and elite (chs 1 and 2), private (ch. 3), gendered (ch. 4 as well as ch. 1), silence (ch. 5) and the novel itself (ch. 6). The first chapter argues that the bandits in book 3 and the priests of the Syrian goddess in book 8 appropriate typically male and, respectively, female language to forge their group identity, presenting themselves as heroic, masculine soldiers and, respectively, trans women. However, their language experiments ultimately fail: the priests' feminine gender identity is interpreted as effeminacy while the gap between the bandits' masculine discourse and their incompetence draws mockery. In the second chapter, A. explores successful and failed elite discourse in public rhetorical performances. Thelyphron's tale of his mutilation in book 2 and Lucius' self-defence during the Festival of Laughter in book 3 are examples of failed speech as both characters lack authority and knowledge and are ridiculed and laughed at by their audiences. The wise physician in book 10, on the other hand, represents successful self-fashioning through speech. The third chapter turns to private conversations between Lucius and other characters in the novel, in particular his host Milo, in which he is keen to establish his status and identity as an elite intellectual but repeatedly undermines his own efforts. When he is still a man, Lucius is dominated by Milo in their interactions; when he is an ass, Lucius loses his ability to speak and his status, mirrored in his unsuccessful attempts at asinine communication and in his growing dependence on his various masters. Ch. 4 analyses Lucius' encounters with four female characters in the novel: his aunt Byrrhaena, his lover Photis, the Corinthian matron in book 10 and the goddess Isis. A. argues that Lucius' interaction with Isis restores his control over his body and his speech, whereas the other women dominate him and accelerate his loss of self-control. The fifth chapter explores how Lucius' loss of his voice allows him to gain knowledge, first by eavesdropping on others and indulging his curiosity, later through mystical silence as he begins his initiation into the cult of Isis. In the last chapter, A. turns to the novel as a form of discourse in which the narrator interacts with the reader of the *Metamorphoses* and vies for control over the narrative. Book 11, however, reveals that it is the author Apuleius who has the power over the narrative.

A.'s insightful book makes a welcome contribution to Apuleian studies and fills an important gap by exploring how language, knowledge and power are interconnected in the novel. It is thorough, well written and carefully edited, and contains an extensive bibliography. A. is particularly strong when she turns to the novel's lesser-known characters and episodes which have received relatively little attention from scholarship. Her analysis of minor male characters such as Lucius' host Milo