

AFRICA AND THE POETS

HESEKAMP (I.) *Das Bild von 'Africa' in der augusteischen Dichtung. Poetische Konstruktionen eines geographischen Raumes (Vergil, Aeneis – Horaz – Propertius)*. (Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft 11.) Pp. x + 263, b/w & colour ills. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Cased, £100, €109.95, US\$126.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-073609-0. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001129

This book is the slightly extended version of H.'s dissertation defended in 2020 at the Universität Bamberg. After an introduction and literature review (Part 1), it breaks down into four main parts: 'Der historisch-geographische Rezeptionskontext', 'Afrika – eine literarische Landschaft als Bühne in Vergils *Aeneis*', 'Afrikanische Motive in den Dichtungen des Horaz und Propertius' and 'Die Präsentation Afrikas in Epos und Lyrik – ein Vergleich', followed by 'Ergebnisse und Perspektiven' and the usual backmatter.

The study's premise is that – geographically speaking – there were two Africas from the Roman perspective: an almost unknown middle and southern part and the narrow northern strip that, through experience, became a historic space (p. 1). It also stresses the difference between a historic-geographic mode of description and the poetic one. The Augustan period was marked by heightened Roman engagement in Africa, and H.'s study charts its echo in the works of three of the most influential Augustan poets, inquiring whether there was indeed a distinct view of Africa from the Roman perspective (p. 3).

The text- and work-immanent perspective ('das text- und werkimmanente Verfahren', p. 4) adopted is strictly philological and seeks to understand the geographic, ethnographic and historical components of this poetic perception solely within the text. Drawing on studies on nature symbolism and perspective (R. Heinze, H.-G. Hölsken, V. Pöschl, G. Schönbeck, R. Jenkyns, E. Leach), the study focuses on three main aspects of space: geography, nature and landscape. Such a lens has rarely been applied to Africa.

Unsurprisingly, the study's major finding is a mostly fictional construction of Africa informed more by textual intentionality than by geographic and ethnographic reality. As dominant themes in Virgil's epic as well as in Horace's and Propertius' lyrical poetry, H. identifies the continent's general hostility, expressed in geographic tropes of mountains (the Atlas), the desert and the Syrtes, the treacherous sandbanks off the North African coast as well as dangerous fauna and a warlike nomadic indigenous population (pp. 222–3).

In the *Aeneid* this fictional construction is closely tied to a semantic charge of Africa as a space ('Semantisierung des Raumes'): the characters' subjective perception turns the spatial experience into information about their mental state. H. shows how the desert as space becomes an emotional reflection of Aeneas' and Dido's respective identity crises as part of a drama that Virgil quite literally 'stages' through his metaphorical borrowings from theatre terminology (pp. 57–67, 122; *Aen* 1.164 and 4.471). In the teleological conception of the epic with the Augustan Age as the ultimate purpose of Aeneas' quest, Africa becomes a mediated 'anti-space' while – through the proleptic interweaving of mytho-historical time and the contemporaneous reality of the poet's audience – the 'domestication' and integration of this mythical *locus horribilis* into the Augustan world order is celebrated by the poet as a significant accomplishment of the *princeps* (pp. 121–8, 224). H. shows how, in the view of the *Aeneid*, the Libyans (i.e. the indigenous population of North Africa) form one homogeneous group (one *genus*, *Aen*. 1.339), set apart as *Nomades* (*Aen*. 4.535) culturally and economically not only from the Trojans/

Proto-Romans but also from the Carthaginians. Dido, her sister Anna, but also Aeneas, perceive themselves as isolated and vulnerable immigrant strangers in a strange land (pp. 89–96, 100–2, 114–16).

In the lyrical poetry of Horace and Propertius Africa is reduced entirely to a few tropes and metaphors applied as argumentative *exempla* in the fictional communication situation of poems that, in the case of Horace, often centre on the question of the *recte vivere*. These African cues trigger pre-existing Africa perceptions, notions that become part of the poetic argument (p. 136). They fall roughly into two seemingly contradictory categories that together serve as another ‘anti-space’ in contrast to which a modest life in temperate Italy appears the better choice: Africa is on the one hand barbaric, hostile, dry, hot and full of dangerous peoples and animals as well as hard to reach due to its dangerous coastline. On the other hand, it is the land of plenty and luxury whence Rome receives the finest marbles, decadent food products and immeasurable wheat harvests (p. 225). The situation is similar in Propertius’ poetry, where only his *aitia* (Book 4) refer occasionally to Africa as a real place of mythical or historical importance, an aspect that is also captured by Horace. In *carm.* 2.1 Africa is not only the stage for Rome’s greatest triumphs (destruction of Carthage) but also for its near self-extinction in the Civil War (represented by the battle of Thapsus). Most interesting is H.’s discussion of *carm.* 2.1.25–8 (pp. 143–7), where she proposes the reading of Juno’s involuntary removal from an unavenged land (*inulta cesserat impotens | tellure*) as a sacrilege for which the Roman Civil War deaths on African soil served as an appeasing human sacrifice delivered to (the Manes of) Jugurtha (*victorum nepotes | rettulit inferias Iugurthae*). While H. acknowledges the allusion to the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE, she believes Horace left open the question of who exiled the goddess and why she could not prevent it (pp. 144–5). I suggest that Horace’s reader was sufficiently informed that Scipio the Younger removed Tanit/Juno, who would later become Juno Caelestis qua *evocatio*. Between *evocatio* and the ultimate destruction of Carthage, the Roman general devoted the population of the city to *Dis pater Veiovis Manes* (Macr. 3.9.10). In reference to this Horace passage, G. Ferri (‘Giunone celeste’, *Storia, antropologia e scienze del linguaggio* 24 [2009], 188–9) made the interesting suggestion that the goddess may have returned with the *coloni* in 123 BCE following C. Gracchus, who re-founded the city as Colonia Iunonia Karthago. In support of Ferri’s reading of Horace, I also note that *nepotes | rettulit inferias Iugurthae* does not necessarily mean that these *nepotes* were sacrificed to the *Manes* of Jugurtha. Instead, in consequent inversion of the situation of 146 BCE, Horace is suggesting that the Romans killed during the Jugurthine War could be considered a revenge sacrifice, a mirror image of Scipio’s *devotio*.

The Jugurthine War bridges thereby the Third Punic War and the Civil War not only in time but also logically. Despite these great findings and probably because of H.’s general hesitancy to interpret similar motives as intertextuality (p. 219) due to unclear chronology, H. misses the opportunity to discuss the fate and refoundation of Carthage as a theme that connects the poetry of Horace with that of Virgil. How is one not to connect the idea of Horace’s *inulta tellus* with *Aeneid* 4.622–9, where Dido calls for an ‘avenger’ (*ultor*; Hannibal?) to set off a revenge cycle in which the *nepotes* will still be fighting (*Aen.* 4.629)? Should we be justified in this intertextual reading, then it becomes clear that Horace, with the allusion to Dido’s curse in the *Aeneid*, connects foundational myth and history, where the death of the *nepotum nepotes* as a human sacrifice atones not only for the destruction of Carthage but also for the ‘original’ offence.

H. notes that all works discussed reveal a consistently negative perception of Africa’s landscape, climate and inhabitants. The study’s final section on ‘Ergebnisse und Perspektiven’ briefly raises the question of the role and meaning of these poetic

constructions of Africa within the discourse of the Augustan Age, especially that of the Nomads. What is the relationship of Augustan poetry and Augustan politics, and does it affect a poetic depiction of Africa? Is this depiction a reflection of official propaganda, and can a poetic construction become part of such propaganda? Is it a 'natural byproduct' of Augustan poetry's Italo-centrism (pp. 226–8)? The answer would need to be approached from a historical, socio-cultural and literary criticism perspective, as H. admits, and would also require a comparison with depictions of other cultures and ethnicities. Within the confines of the 'werkimmanente Perspektive', the present study provides, however, a solid analysis of the Africa-related material of these three Augustans, providing an invaluable foundation from where the methodological approach can be broadened in order to determine in what way these 'literarische[n] Entwürfe zu Wirkungsfaktoren im Diskurs der Zeit werden' (p. 222).

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ANOTHER COMMENTARY ON *AENEID* 4

FRATANTUONO (L.M.), SMITH (R.A.) (edd., trans.) *Virgil, Aeneid 4. Text, Translation, and Commentary. (Mnemosyne Supplements 462.)* Pp. xii+982. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2022. Cased, €233. ISBN: 978-90-04-52143-8.
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This is the third text, translation and commentary on a book of the *Aeneid* from Fratantuono (F.) and Smith (S.), after those on *Aeneid* 5 (2015) and 8 (2018). The authors have learned from their earlier exertions and from critical reviews they have received, and their work on *Aeneid* 4 is the best of their collaboration. Yet this is to grade on a curve: while the current book is superior to the others, it remains marred by flaws. The result is an eccentric book, full of curious and often unnecessary detail.

As in their earlier efforts, F. and S. divide their authorial tasks: S. is primarily responsible for the introduction, text and translation, and F. for the commentary. In the long introduction S. discusses in depth the themes and imagery of *Aeneid* 4 as well as its political and historical dimensions, with a focus on how Dido prefigures both the Punic Wars and Cleopatra. This is a serious effort to interpret the book along multiple threads. The problem is that those threads form a tangle. S. chooses not to organise the introduction under separate thematic headings: instead, he stuffs together varied lines of interpretation into a disjointedly continuous essay. A list of the topics on pp. 33–5 gives some sense of this: Dido as Cleopatra and Hannibal; the Punic Wars; the rage of Juno; the tripartite organisation of the *Aeneid* (which both S. and F. overemphasise) and thematic links between Dido and Turnus; Lucretian language and natural law; back to the Punic Wars; the Roman *ovatio*; and Ajax as a 'comparand' for Dido. S. is evidently under the impression that more is more; but he would have done well to cut back the essay to give it clarity and cogency. A part of this could have involved explaining more carefully why *Aeneid* 4 ends with a display of Juno's 'power and success' (p. 37), since the death of Dido and Aeneas' departure from Carthage thwart the goddess'