
This is the second volume of The Imperial Muse; the first was To Juvenal through Ovid (1988). Thirteen essays are added to the ten of the first volume, six on the Flavian epic poets, two on Tacitus' Annals and one on Apuleius' Metamorphoses from second century prose, and from the fourth century one each on Ausonius, Ammianus, Prudentius, and Claudian. Most of the essays treat particular questions in single works, or characteristics of single writers; the two collections are not a literary history (To Juvenal through Ovid, 3).

But literary history in one sense or another of that phrase is one of the perspectives of a number of the essays. Philip Hardie describes the Flavian epic poets' technique of 'combinatorial allusion' to Virgil, in which the later poet combined allusions to two or more passages in Virgil's poetry in such a way as to suggest a relation between them, that is to say, as a reading of Virgil. D. E. Hill analyses the relation of Thebaid 1 to the Aeneid. Arthur J. Pomeroy in the course of an essay on Silius makes too briefly the interesting suggestion that Silius was influenced by criticism of Virgil (127ff.). In the fourth century both S. Georgia Nugent on Ausonius and Martha Malamud on Prudentius emphasise those poets' self-conscious belatedness.

The other principal perspective in the collection is that of political, religious, and social history. Bronwyn Williams on the Tiberian Annals and John Henderson on the Neronian describe the historian's more or less overt procedures, as they determine the historian's, or the text's, authority; but both also describe this writing of history as an interpretation of events and as a response to them. R. F. Newbold analyses both Ammianus' subject - emperors, generals, people - and the historian himself, both member and observer of society, in terms of the social psychology of authoritarianism. Martha Malamud analyses in particular Prudentius' poetry of the new Christian celibacy. The contemporary moral and political significance of mythological
subjects looms large in the essays on the Flavian epics. Donald T. McGuire, jr. discusses suicides. Martha A. Davis examines Valerius Flaccus’ treatment of the Argonauts as the first seafarers against the background of earlier treatments. William J. Dominik traces and interprets Statius’ interest in monarchic power with reference to the first century emperors and especially to Domitian.

Two more essays make up the collection. J. L. Penwill takes a narratological approach to the authority of stories in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and to the question of the thematic design of the work; C. E. Gruzelier describes the interests and the manner of Claudian as a court poet.

There is much of interest in the collection: for this reader, Hardie, for new sophistication in an old area, Davis and Dominik, provocative if not entirely persuasive, Henderson in his engagement with Tacitus’ text (and with Syme), Nugent and Malamud, instructive for one who does not often read so late. Latin when quoted is also translated; but some of the translations are not as accurate as they should be for the readers for whom they are included. The book is well produced, if not without errors in the printing.

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