

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

THINKING ABOUT ROME

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I

In this revised version of his doctoral dissertation, Nils Steffensen (hereafter St.) presents a wide-ranging analysis of how extant Augustan and Tiberian authors—Livy, Vergil, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Velleius Paterculus, and Valerius Maximus—conceptualised the systemic change from Republic to Principate and helped shape Rome’s evolving discourse and historical consciousness about the past and present in this formative period.

A carefully considered, four-part introduction (17–44) lays out the book’s contents, St.’s aims, the principal themes and questions with which he is concerned, his methodology, and the current state of (predominantly German) scholarship. St.’s main purpose is to replace traditional pro- and anti-imperial readings and event-based historical analysis with a broader approach that focuses on the development of political discourses and that allows for a more exact understanding of the formation of contemporary political thought and of the early Principate as a system of government. St. aims to contribute to past scholarship by reading the selected authors in conjunction and against their respective political backgrounds, and by connecting the various forms of historical thinking (historiography, doctrines/theories of cultural development, and historical overviews/summaries) employed by them.¹ In so doing, St. seeks to identify the ideological premises and lines of thought that connect the different texts and that constitute the building blocks of Augustan and Tiberian political and cultural discourse. To this end, St. follows the methods of New Political History (*neue Politikgeschichte*) and Cultural History of Politics (*Kulturgeschichte des Politischen*) to analyse the evolution of early imperial cultural-political discourse as ‘Speech Acts’ (*Sprechakte*: 28) and to read the authors as ‘political thinkers’ who engage one another and their emperor in meditating upon the shared themes, formulas, and paradigms that make up those speech

¹ Whether it is methodologically sound (a) to strictly separate these different forms of ‘master narratives’ (*Meistererzählungen*, 57) of Roman history and (b) to associate them with specific genres is questionable.

acts. As noted in other reviews, matters of style get little attention, which is unfortunate since these often are crucial for a text's interpretation.

St. consciously focuses on a single medium of memory production—literature—with the exception of the Forum of Augustus, which takes up a central place in the book as the primary expression (alongside the Secular Games of 17 BC) of the emperor's reconstruction of Rome's past, present, and future, a reconstruction that was authoritative but, as St. shows, left room for competing interpretations. In accordance with his aims, St. includes only those texts that contain overviews of Roman history or in which the latter or the City's cultural development is a sustained subject of interest. Thus, Horace does not get his own chapter. St., moreover, restricts the discussion to contemporary authors, not taking into account how the latter are received and used by later ones. While this is only logical given the book's immediate focus, an author's reception is an important index of his/her reputation, of his/her position on political issues (ancient witnesses typically are better-placed to assess such matters than we are), and of his/her actual influence on the contemporary and subsequent formation of ideas, which is one of St.'s stated interests (more on this below).

St. proceeds chronologically through the Augustan and Tiberian periods, analysing how each author and the emperor theorises Rome's historical and/or cultural development and assesses the present vis-à-vis the past. Of central importance in these reconstructions are the notion of the Golden Age and the possibility of its re-establishment (made an important subject of reflection through Augustus' self-representation), the question of whether history progresses cyclically or in linear fashion (or both), the connection between civilisation/progress and decline, and the relevance of the Republic and its traditions/values in the ever more distant and established imperial present. St. begins each chapter by laying out the author's biographical details, the nature and format of the text under discussion, the current state of scholarship, and the ways in which he will depart from/contribute to the latter. Chapters end with a summary that recapitulates the main findings. It is (with the exception of some generalised remarks here and there) primarily in these *Zusammenfassungen* and various *Zwischenbilanzen* (in which St. takes wider stock of what has been presented up to that point) that commonalities and differences amongst the different authors are outlined. There is, however, no detailed intertextual analysis of the different texts that would serve to show how exactly the authors engage one another (or not) on the same ideas and concerns. This perhaps would have been too much to include in an already exhaustive and—in terms of the ancient and modern sources used and consulted—very impressive study. Yet, if the goal is to analyse how a generation or group of authors (St. is aware of the tension between reading authors on their own merit or as part of a group: 38) understood historical change, then intertextual analysis seems a

desirable, if not inevitable, starting point.² This comment is related to the one above about reception. For one of St.'s main arguments is that each of the selected authors made a meaningful and tangible contribution to contemporary political and historical thought. Yet how can one substantiate this claim without discussing their actual influence on their fellow and later thinkers/authors, including their emperor? In the case of Livy and Vergil, whose texts were instant hits and had a palpable influence on the Roman literary tradition (moreover, the fact that Augustus called Livy 'Pompeianus' and pushed for the *Aeneid* to be published posthumously against Vergil's wishes are tangible indications of influence), this claim is reasonable, if not commonsensical. In the case of authors whose texts seem not to have been read widely by either contemporaries or subsequent generations (e.g., Velleius and Valerius Maximus) or whose influence is not (or cannot be) demonstrated through interactive/interdiscursive analysis, this claim seems to me more difficult to sustain. Did the authors under discussion wish to make an intellectual contribution? In most cases, yes. Were they successful in doing so? Perhaps.

II

The book's portions on the Augustan period (45–372) start with helpful overviews of the Augustan Principate (47–55) and the three forms of *Meistererzählungen* (56–69). These sections lay the groundwork for the rest of the discussion, which starts with the only representative of Augustan historiography: Livy's *Ab urbe condita* (70–161). St. aims to depart from prior scholarship by presenting a more nuanced analysis of Livy's vision of the mechanics of politics (grounded in the historian's anthropological view of human nature) and of the characteristics of the ideal state and its practicability in the present. In an exhaustive discussion, in which he systematically analyses the surviving decades of the *AUC*, St. shows that *concordia* is Livy's main political concern and that its preservation is best guaranteed in times when *metus hostilis* guides the State and when individuals or elite groups are limited in their exercise of power. Throughout the narrative, which St. characterises as an 'attempt at historical self-assurance' in the wake of the civil wars (159), it emerges that Livy's ideal political system is one in which the Senate enjoys unlimited power and can keep in check the *ambitio* and *avaritia* of individuals and groups and, by ruling with *moderatio/modestia* and in the public interest, keep the lower classes satisfied. Whether Livy understood Augustus' rule as real change from what had come before has to remain uncertain. St. shows that, for Livy,

² A recent example of such an approach to literary and cultural production in an age of imperial transition is A. König and C. Whitton, edd., *Roman Literature under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian: Literary Interactions, AD 96–138* (Cambridge, 2018).

monarchy, when executed with *moderatio*, can be an effective system of government, but that the human tendency to greed is a prohibitive drawback. Already here does St. reveal a tendency that persists throughout the study: a desire to explain away any potential criticism of the emperor. For, while acknowledging that Livy clearly did not feel obliged to follow imperial reconstructions faithfully everywhere (156), St. maintains that any references or allusions to Augustus' regime and policies should be seen as divergences of opinion, not criticism (156). This kept surprising me throughout the book, given St.'s stated goals. That said, St. is excellent at elucidating the various inconsistencies in the text that reflect Livy's complex and developing political vision: between the idealised picture of the past in the *Praefatio* and the rest of the narrative, between the Rise and Fall division of Rome's history and the continuities in human behaviour and political problems that cut through such divides, and between the didactic aim of providing solutions to recurrent problems and doing so through *exempla* from a past that is continually shown to be imperfect. These contradictions (which further undermine Livy's self-presentation as an escapist stuck in the past) allow St. to advance further intriguing conclusions: the continuities in human behavior that Livy points up suggest the impracticability of his political ideal (which cannot resolve recurrent problems), yet, by breaking the Rise and Fall narrative in this way, the historian also suggests that the present and future are not condemned to inevitable decline.

St. next moves to Vergil's *Aeneid* (162–200), which is the first of the texts grouped under the label 'Theory of Cultural Development' (*Kulturentwicklungstheorie*, 162–266). St. departs from traditional scholarship by focusing especially on Evander's archaeology and his description of the reign of Saturn, which, according to St., is a more significant index of Vergil's political vision than is typically assumed (166). Opening sections on how Vergil departs from other authors (viz., Varro and Horace) who deal with Evander's cultural theory, the notion of a Golden Age, and Rome's technological development lay the foundation for the rest of the chapter, in which St. shows how the poet describes a cyclical development of Rome's history: Golden Age under Saturn → Intervening History plagued by recurrent problems that would destabilise the Republic → new Golden Age under Augustus. Thus, Vergil presents history not as the background to modern failure but as a period between two Golden Ages. In idealising the Saturnian Age—during which civilisation lifted Rome out of its primitive state, vices emerged, and the latter were reined in by the establishment of *mores* and *leges*—Vergil undermines the notion of a modern return to a primitive utopia and advocates, instead, a return to an ideal based on strong morality and effective laws. For Vergil, as St. notes, greed did not emerge alongside expansion and the import of luxury goods (the traditional historiographical view) but is the natural corollary of civilised life. Given Rome's development, a return to a primordial way of life is unrealistic for

Vergil: the best Rome can do is achieve an approximation of the Saturnian Golden Age. The *Aeneid* shows that Augustus (who surpasses all early Roman kings and Republican heroes, including Saturn himself) has re-established peace and fulfilled Jupiter's prophecy of world rule. The foundation of these achievements is the emperor's Saturnian programme of *mores* and *leges*. Vergil, then, as St. notes, promotes a return *not* to some impractical primordial ideal, not even to a particular period in the past, but to a concrete set of measures that can be implemented at any time. As St. shows, however, Evander's cultural theory also suggests that the problems that abolished the Saturnian Age persist (as they inevitably must) in the present, so that the new Golden Age is and will constantly be under threat; the message of the *Aeneid*, then, which broadly aligns with that of Augustus' Secular Games of 17 BC and resolves the uncertainty that marked the *Georgics*, is simultaneously optimistic and cautious/open. While in this exhaustive chapter, too, it is at times easy to miss the forest for the trees, St. ultimately does a very nice job of showing how Vergil departs from traditional models and theories (e.g., the City–Country dichotomy common in authors like Varro and the Rise-and-Fall model common in historiography).

Unlike Livy and Vergil, Tibullus (202–34), as St. shows, transmits no clear cultural or political vision in his *Elegies*, evaluating the past and present, and Rome's civilisation and progress, differently according to his ever-changing personal circumstances. It is, therefore, questionable whether the poet should be approached as a 'political thinker' of the kind defined in St.'s introduction and be placed alongside evidently more politically orientated authors. St.'s wish to do so anyway leads to contradictions that are difficult to reconcile. So, Tibullus' poetry constitutes commentary on Augustus' self-representation (202) and is 'political literature' (203), yet later we are told that concrete political aspects and questions are not the poet's focus (229) and that he avoids contemporary politics and takes no explicit position vis-à-vis the Augustan regime (230). It is, then, perhaps more accurate to characterise the poet, who 'engages with existential conflicts between personal desires, societal conventions, and political expectations', as one writing 'poetry of the world' (202), although that label could probably be used for many authors, ancient and modern. Somewhat ironically, St. is excellent at elucidating the various contradictions that ultimately undermine Tibullus' image as a political author and his credibility (234). St.'s aim in this chapter is to analyse the ideals of the *persona* and to gauge how they reflect on the contemporary political moment and Rome's cultural-historical development. Even if no consistent political or cultural-historical vision or stance vis-à-vis Augustus' restoration programme can be gleaned from the *Elegies*, we can nonetheless, as St. shows, make up a balance of sorts: both poet and emperor idealise the countryside and the importance of religion

and religiosity, and both endorse a return to past ideals. They have incompatible views, however, about that past and which elements of it ought to be restored; the poet's attitude towards love is irreconcilable with Augustan views regarding sexual *mores* and gender roles, while his strong disavowal of war goes against both the *mos maiorum* and Augustus' wish to re-establish Rome's glorious past. Whether the current peace can hold is dependent, for the poet, on Apollo and thus remains uncertain. St. concludes that Tibullus' ideals are impracticable and that, ultimately, he merely confirms the things he criticises/complaints about. Tibullus' influence, then, mainly lies in the 'presentation of alternative ways of life and of possible corrections to political concepts' (234).

For Propertius (235–66), St. demonstrates a change 'from love elegy to an eminently political aetiological poetry' (263) that is actualised in the poet's final book and that advances a linear historical development culminating in the celebrated Augustan present. Moving sequentially through Propertius' corpus, St. is able to show a development in the poet from one who initially is critical of modern wealth and corruption, who posits that there is no solution to recurrent discord, and who predicts Rome's ruin to one who reconstructs Roman history as a more or less uncomplicated and divinely ordained success story and who celebrates modernity and Augustus' resolution of Rome's civil wars and dissensions. St. lucidly shows how this poetic and analytical innovation is anticipated in the *recusatio* poems of the second and third books, where Propertius enunciates a range of political themes and concerns that he will fully take up only in the fourth book, which opens with an overview of Roman history from the destruction of Troy to the Augustan present. As St. notes, some more anxious topics that appeared in the earlier books—viz., the civil wars and the tense relationship between foreign war and inner discord—are largely filtered out here (244). The teleological description of Rome's rise in 4.1 is mirrored and reinforced in the subsequent poems—about the god Vertumnus, Tarpeia, the Apollo Temple on the Capitol, the struggle between Hercules and Cacus and the establishment of the Ara Maxima, and the Temple of Jupiter Feretrius—which highlight Augustan achievements through the lens of architecture, urban history, religion, and cultural practices and mentalities and thus place the present in a wider and richer history (263). Propertius, as St. points out, departs from other authors by positing no decline or historical turning-points, by disregarding the notion of a Golden Age or an idealised primordial past, and by downplaying the problems that led to the civil wars and that might jeopardise future stability; for Propertius, the Republic is no longer relevant. This outlook may well reflect the influence of the Secular Games, which were held in close proximity to the production of the fourth book (264). In this chapter, too, one notes St.'s desire to explain away anything that may reflect disapproval of Augustus' rule: Propertius' early criticism of the present (239–40), his treatment of the civil wars (244), the postponement of the envisaged epic poems about the emperor (245, 264), the

move away from love poetry (265), or the implicit criticism of Augustus in Hercules' portrait in 4.9 (257–8). At times, there are unverifiable claims about the influence of the poet's work: that readers, for example, might gain 'confidence' from reading Propertius' description of Augustus in the wake of the civil wars (253).³ The approach of reading an elegiac poet as a political thinker, however, which somewhat backfired with Tibullus, works much better in the case of Propertius, whose developing political outlook St. explores in admirable detail.

In the first of several interim balances (*Zwischenbilanzen*, 267–72), St. sums up the preceding chapters, comparing and contrasting Livy, Vergil, Tibullus, and Propertius in terms of the main themes and analytical categories discussed so far. Here we get some of the initial broader implications of the study, albeit in summary form: that the four authors advance no consistent ideology, yet broadly back Augustus' self-representation; that, despite the acknowledged differences between historiography and epic and elegiac poetry, there are commonalities that cross generic divides; that each of the authors starts with or connects Rome's history with Troy; that they engage with the same set of topics and stress the same socio-political aspects (esp. greed and ambition), yet diverge in their vision of Rome's (primordial) past, its cultural and socio-political development, its present (Livy and Tibullus are more pessimistic, whereas Vergil and Propertius are more optimistic), and its future (Livy's attitude is uncertain, Vergil is cautiously optimistic, Tibullus is doubtful, while Propertius is confident).

St. now moves to Ovid's *Amores* (primarily *Am.* 3.8), *Ars amatoria*, and *Medicamina faciei feminae* (273–85), which, he shows, approach history from different perspectives and reflect a developing historical vision. In the *Amores*, the *pauper amator* condemns luxury and modern decadence (St. notes that Ovid's rejection of progress this far into the Augustan Principate is unusual and stands in diametric opposition to the views of Vergil and Horace: 277); in the *Ars*, luxury and modernity are the basis for the poet's advocacy of *voluptas* and a life of Love; in the *Medicamina*, finally, luxury becomes a necessary good. Although in the *Ars* and *Medicamina* Ovid celebrates the fruits of progress and modernity, his positions (even if he is concerned with many of the same issues as his emperor) are largely irreconcilable with, even consciously undermining of and offensive to, the Augustan restoration programme; for the poet, a return to past standards is inconceivable and an imposition on the good life (285). As St. concludes, 'the political essence of the *Ars* and the *Medicamina* lies in the defence of the elegant lifestyle against the moral injunctions and legal policies of the *princeps*' (285). Ovid's departures from the approach of earlier authors is explained by the fact that, unlike the latter, he was no longer haunted by the

³ One may equally claim that the poet's account, devoid as it is of complex socio-political analysis, inspired distrust.

memory of the civil wars and could enjoy the fruits of peace and the modern life (285).

Before continuing with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, St. includes a chapter on the Augustan Forum as 'Monumental Master Narrative' (286–304), which is followed by another interim balance (305–9) that summarises how the historical foci and messages of the Forum engage with those in Livy, Vergil, Propertius, and Tibullus (but not Ovid). In the sections on the Forum, St., focusing primarily on the statues and the inscriptions, shows how Augustus advances a simultaneously linear and cyclical historical narrative (St. notes that the *princeps*, according to Suetonius, meant for the statues to constitute a narrative, not a random collection of *exempla*: 302) that stresses continuity alongside inevitable change (304); the emperor places himself and the *gens Iulia* in the republican tradition while subtly setting himself apart as the culmination of Rome's historical development. By explicitly including examples of discord/conflict, St. notes, the Forum suggests its possible recurrence in the future, yet by mainly recording examples of its resolution (Augustus' ending of the civil wars being the preeminent one), it also shows how it can be prevented and controlled. In the emperor's reconstruction of history, then, the Republic is shown to be distinctly relevant for the present and future. In the interim balance, St. shows that the Forum engages closely with Vergil's narrative of Rome's rise and re-established Golden Age: in the seventeen years after the poet's death, Augustus has fulfilled Jupiter's prophecy and become Saturn 2.0, but he outdoes the latter as Rome's rule stretches not merely across Latium but across the world (306). The Forum, moreover, as St. notes, hides the dangerous elements in Rome's socio-political make-up (esp. *ambitio* and competition within Rome's elite) less than the *Aeneid* does and so advances a more complex vision of the City's history (306). As for Propertius and Tibullus, St. writes that the Forum broadly aligns with the former's vision, whereas the latter's outlook on Rome's past and present cannot be reconciled with imperial versions (307). In terms of the political themes on which it focuses, the historical episodes and individuals it relates, and the solutions for discord and domestic problems it envisages (particularly the necessity of integrating different sections of society), the Forum is said to have much in common with Livy's *AUC* (308).

St. now considers Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* (310–65), which are grouped under the label 'Universal History and Calendar' (*Universalgeschichte und Kalender*). As for the *Metamorphoses*, St.'s focus first is on Ovid's description of the Ages of Man and Jupiter's regeneration of the human race (313–19), then on the overview of Roman history in Books 14 and 15 (319–28). Regarding the former, St. concludes (319) that the extended parallels between Jupiter and Augustus (often read as suggesting that the emperor restored not a Golden Age but an Iron one) do not reflect Ovidian criticism of Augustus or a negation of the latter's claims to have restored a Golden Age but rather serve to complicate

the notion of the new Golden Age as being a restored utopia: Augustus responds to problems of the historical world with the means of that world (laws and weapons) (319). Analysing Books 14 and 15, St. writes that Ovid's primary focus is not on traditional topics such as late republican decadence and/or the absence of *metus hostilis* but on the legitimacy and execution of a ruler's leadership, a topical concern in the developing Principate (321, 329). The narrative is centred on founder-figures and other rulers (Aeneas, Romulus, Numa, Cipus, Caesar) and their assumption and use of power, which, in each case, serves as a foil for Augustus (329). The latter's reign, which combines monarchy and a new Golden Age, represents the final metamorphosis of the work and the culmination of Rome's history (330). As St. notes, however, the narrative of Rome's history, though linear, is not teleological: Ovid presents Augustus' rule as the temporary high-point in an ever-changing (i.e., non-teleological) world, and so the continuation of Rome's international power is not presumed (330). Although there are various episodes and accents that may be (and often are) read as constituting subversive criticism of the emperor/the Principate (e.g., Cipus' exemplary rejection of absolute power (323–6), Ovid's refusal to celebrate the alleged restoration of *libertas* (326–8), his emphasis on discord within the *Domus Augusta* (319), and the analogies between Jupiter and Augustus), St. concludes that Ovid's account is largely in tune with imperial propaganda (330). Such insistence on seeing a uniform (positive) message/attitude on the part of the poet somewhat weakens St.'s analysis, for it precludes both the complexity that otherwise marks much of his discussion and the ambiguity that we would expect to see in literature written during periods of political transition.⁴

In his discussion of the *Fasti* (331–62), St.'s aim is to reconstruct the overall image (*Gesamtbild*) of Roman history that emerges from the text's various forms of historical representation: universal and cultural history; outlines of Roman history; and separate entries on individual personalities/events/problems (335). As for the first category, St., focusing on the speech of Janus (335–8), the Lupercalia (338–40), the Feast of Fools (340–1), the Cerealia (341), and the Robigalia (341–2), is able to show that Ovid's largely positive attitude towards

⁴ It would also seem to be contradicted by one of the opening claims of the chapter, namely that Ovid, while styling the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* as praise pieces, competes with his emperor for the shaping of historical consciousness (310). An analogous claim prefaces the discussion of the *Fasti*, namely that Ovid displays finesse in expressing his potentially sensitive political views while maintaining authorial distance (334); is such an author incapable of subversive or oblique criticism? In his discussion of the *Fasti*, moreover, St. writes that there are, on the whole, three scholarly positions on the *Fasti*: one that sees the text as genuinely panegyric; one that sees it as anti-Augustan poetry; and one that sees it as polyphonic, with the real political message hidden behind superficial pretensions (334–5). It appears, then, from St.'s own summaries of scholarship on the different authors, that subversive criticism of the imperial regime is more than just a possible reading.

Rome's progress and civilisation is largely in tune with that in his earlier love poetry and that it departs from the outlook of Propertius and Tibullus and amends, in key respects, that of Vergil in the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. In terms of the other two categories, St. analyses Ovid's account of the prophecy of Carmentis (342–4), the poet's ecphrasis of the Augustan Forum and the Mars Ultor temple (344–7), the description of the holidays commemorating the bestowal of the titles *Augustus* and *pater patriae* (348–52), and separate entries that bear on specific threats to peace—the dangers of discord within the imperial house being the preeminent one (352–8). Amongst the observations that St. makes here are that Ovid, unlike in the *Metamorphoses* but like Vergil, Propertius, and Tibullus, advances a teleological narrative of Rome's history that culminates in the Augustan present; that, even more than the Augustan Forum, he effaces republican history, which for him did not retain the relevance and didactic/exemplary value that it had for Augustus; that he places all his hopes in the Principate and the imperial family, even if he emphasises that past problems continue in the present, albeit in a different form; that he departs from Roman tradition by condemning war as a means of accumulating glory; and that the topics that occupy him here serve to legitimise and glorify the imperial house and to convince Germanicus to permit his return from exile.

My one reservation continues to be St.'s explaining away of any subversive criticism of the emperor. The claim that Ovid's comparison between Augustus and Romulus (the latter often is characterised negatively and with connotations of violence and tyranny in contemporary and later sources) cannot serve as a means of oblique criticism because the emperor himself had rejected the title Romulus and distanced himself from Rome's founding figure is particularly curious (350). St. is also inconsistent. For, although he spends most of the chapter arguing that any forms of reproach (*Vorwürfe*) or warning (*Warnungen*) do not amount to subversive commentary (*Subversivität*), in the *Bilanz* that follows the chapter (362–5) he unexpectedly offers comments on the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* (texts not included in the analysis), claiming that, in these poems, Ovid takes up concerns in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* (viz., freedom of speech and the relationship between literature and politics) and engages Augustus with 'a mixture of compliance [*Nachgiebigkeit*] and obsequiousness [*Unterwürfigkeit*], cunning and craftiness [*List und Verschlagenheit*], and subversiveness [*Subversivität!*] and defiant self-assertion (*trotzige Selbstbehauptung*) that insists on his independence [*Unabhängigkeit*] and in some places even takes the form of acts of resistance [*Widerstandshandlung*]' (365; the emphasis is mine). On the same page, St. admits that Ovid, in the *Fasti*, accuses the emperor of abuse of power (*Machtmissbrauch*) and of restricting freedom of speech (*fehlende Meinungsfreiheit*) in a way that has harmed the poet's fame and talent (*Ruhm und Talent*). These reservations aside, this is an excellent chapter that succeeds in piecing together Ovid's *Gesamtbild* of Roman history and in illustrating changes in

attitude towards the past and present from what we saw in the texts produced earlier in the Augustan period. In the closing *Bilanz*, moreover, St. does a very nice job of summarising how Ovid's historical and cultural outlook developed from the earlier love poems to the *Fasti*.

A third interim balance (367–72) formally closes the discussion of the Augustan Age and summarises what has been laid out before. As in the previous *Zwischenbilanzen*, St. here offers some observations about correspondences and divergences amongst the different authors in terms of the historical and intellectual themes and terms under study. It should be noted that, in the attempt to connect the various authors and texts, St. ends up seriously contradicting himself about Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, simultaneously claiming that 'the ideal of realising a mythical Golden Age is ruled out since the new creation of humankind' (369; cf. 501) and that what unites Vergil and Ovid is that 'both believed in the realisation of some kind of Golden Age in the present' (372). Despite constituting, for the most part, repetition of what has already been discussed, it is nonetheless useful, this far into the study and before embarking on the Tiberian period, to have some of the broader implications spelled out, even if only in summary form.

III

St. now moves to the Tiberian Principate (375–488) and the two extant representatives of the literature of that age: Velleius Paterculus and Valerius Maximus. St.'s major aim here is analogous to that in his discussion of the Augustan period: to read the two authors alongside one another as a means of elucidating commonalities and divergences within Tiberian literature and, by juxtaposing them with their Augustan counterparts, to come to a better understanding of change (broadly conceived) during the early Principate (384).

After a short (and somewhat uncritical)⁵ introduction to Tiberius' reign (375–80) and surviving Tiberian literature (381–4), St. discusses Velleius' *Historia Romana* (385–440). Here, he notes a significant shift in historical thinking from the Augustan Age, with Velleius emphasising the incompatibility between the Republic and the Principate and debunking the *res publica restituta* myth as being implausible in light of current historical realities, including the decisive loss of *libertas* at the start of Tiberius' reign (437, 487). Continued problems and discords during Augustus' reign and at Tiberius' accession—problems which Velleius describes as renewed threats to the State analogous

⁵ St. mostly relies on and follows modern biographies of the emperor, not engaging with Tacitean scholarship, which has productively illustrated the complexities of ancient accounts of Tiberius' reign and of the characterisation of some of its principal historical figures, Sejanus in particular.

to the late republican civil wars (421, 423–4)—allow the historian to posit that without Tiberius the Principate would have collapsed and to present the latter, and not Augustus, as the true saviour of Rome; ‘Velleius’, as St. suggests, ‘understood Tiberius’ Principate as a new phase in Roman history, one that, however, was closely related to the failures of the republican system of government’ (439). For Velleius, one of whose aims it was to validate Tiberius’ reign and to fully incorporate it within Roman history, the Principate was a necessity, and the position of the *princeps* (even if he describes Tiberius’ *modus operandi* in republican terms) more absolute than it was for his Augustan predecessors. My only reservation about this chapter (another excellent one) is that St. insufficiently engages with Alain Gowing’s argument that what Velleius suggests is not that Rome has moved from Republic to Principate but from Republic to a better Republic.⁶ While St. presents a lucid and persuasive analysis, he does too little to challenge Gowing’s reconstruction; Cicero, central in the latter’s analysis, is hardly mentioned by St., who, moreover, cites only Wiegand⁷ when he claims that ‘Velleius is not concerned with the forced construction of continuity in Roman history and does not seek to present the Principate as Republic’ (435).

The final text under study is Valerius Maximus’ ‘*Exemplasammlung*’ (441–82), which approaches history differently than the abridged universal history of Velleius. Whereas the latter emphasises the break between the Republic and Principate, Valerius (who ignores the change initiated by Augustus: 480) sees a continuity that stands at the base of his didactic aims (480–2). Focusing on pre-146 Rome as being an ideal state, Valerius offers *exempla* whose contemplation serves to restore Roman morality and productivity and to quell the decline that had resulted from *otium* and the absence of *metus hostilis* and that had persisted under Augustus and Tiberius (in this sense, St. shows, Valerius agrees with Velleius and Tiberius himself) (442). St. carefully notes Valerius’ complex outlook on Rome’s past and present: despite acknowledging ongoing decline (most of the text’s *exempla* are *not* from the late republican or more recent past), Valerius still considered contemporary Rome the greatest city in the world, and he believed that an injection of past standards into the high culture of the day could see Roman society return to its former moral fibre (446–7). Unlike Velleius, then, whose narrative is linear, Valerius entertains a cyclical historical vision that posits that any period marked by prolonged *otium* will see decline but that external circumstances creating *negotia* for Rome can revive the City’s morality at any time (449–51). St. points out further differences between the two authors (more fully laid out in the short section

⁶ A. Gowing, *Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁷ I. Wiegand, *Neque libere neque vere: die Literatur unter Tiberius und der Diskurs der res publica continua* (Tübingen, 2013).

following the chapter: 483–8). So, while Velleius deems a return to republican standards impossible and considers the rule of the *princeps* decisive in securing Rome's future, Valerius aims at a wholesale revival of the *mos maiorum* and stresses the necessity for the emperor to collaborate with the other segments of society, the Senate in particular (480–2). St. lucidly lays out the political virtues that form the foundation of the stability that Valerius sought to effect and that largely correspond with those promoted through Tiberius' self-representation (468–77): *moderatio* (which serves to prevent destructive *ambitio*); *abstinentia* and *continentia* (which serve to prevent corruption); *verecundia* (i.e., to sacrifice personal interests for the good of the State); *humanitas* and *clementia* (which, when exercised by a ruler, increase the latter's *dignitas*, express *moderatio*, and serve the State's stability); *pietas* (which serves to stabilise private as well as public relations); *severitas* on the part of the State (which eliminates attempts at usurpation); *pudicitia* (whose loss is a major aspect of theories of decline); and *iustitia* (which serves to preserve justice without interference by personal interests). These virtues—traditional, republican ones that remained salient, for Valerius, in the imperial present (477)—served to prevent the two main issues plaguing Rome: *avaritia* and *ambitio*. Although many of Valerius' examples would seem to be rendered useless by the changed realities of power under the Principate, noxious competition amongst the Roman aristocracy remained a major threat to *tranquillitas*, and so Valerius' *Exemplasammlung* remained ever expedient (481). The text may have been particularly useful, as St. suggests, for the new senatorial aristocracy, many of whom had not lived through the crisis of the Late Republic and/or the Augustan period and who might benefit from contemplation of old duties and behaviours (482).

St. concludes his discussion of Velleius and Valerius with a succinct comparison of both authors with one another and with Seneca the Elder (483–8). Here, he lays out the changes from the Augustan to the Tiberian period as regards both the relationship between the emperor and the citizenry and the conception of the present and future. St. concludes that Velleius and Valerius, writing in a time of change, aim to provide both a 'presentification of historical knowledge' (*Aktualisierung des historischen Wissens*) and a 'reconstitution of the space of remembrance' (*Neukonstitution des Erinnerungsraumes*) (483). A further conclusion that St. advances is that both authors explain current political challenges—especially the internal conflicts that plagued Tiberius' reign and that kept pointing up the danger of renewed civil war—in practical terms (not merely in moral ones as typical in historiography) and that their analysis is in line with and endorses their emperor's historical vision and imperial policies (487–8).

IV

St. ends the book with a final summarising chapter (*Die Konstruktionen der römischen Geschichte in der Formierungsphase des Principats*, 491–512) that offers a balance of what the different authors say and how they engage with the political changes during the Augustan and Tiberian principates (491). The chapter consists of a short introduction (491), in which St. recaps Augustus' Secular Games one more time (491); an overview of the results of the study (*Übersicht der Ergebnisse*), in which St. once more summarises (in much greater detail than an overview warrants) what has repeatedly been said before (492–505); and a final *Gesamtbilanz* (506–12), in which the commonalities and divergences amongst the authors' responses to their respective presents first become clear. The evolution in historical thinking alongside the rapid institutionalisation of the Principate is reflected in the texts of the different authors but becomes nowhere clearer, as St. suggests, than with Velleius, Valerius, and Seneca, who all reveal something new: a condoning of monarchy that was unthinkable during the Republic and that was cloaked in republican veils under Augustus (510). Yet, given that the failures of the past had not been fully resolved and the danger of civil war remained, history and the future remained open for them, just as it had for their Augustan counterparts (511–12). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, as St. notes in his closing words, Caligula would return to Augustan traditions and the paradigm of the restored Republic, reflecting the cyclical nature of Roman politics (512).

V

Despite the reservations and caveats mentioned above, St. has produced an impressive study of Augustan and Tiberian authors as political thinkers. The inclusive analysis of a range of generically different texts from the formative phase of the Principate is very welcome and offers novel insights not only into the individual authors in question but into the collective historical discourse they shaped and the changing political circumstances that that discourse reflects. By restricting the interconnective analysis of the different texts (which, for this reader, is the most intriguing aspect of the study) to summaries and interim balances, however, as opposed to pursuing them in more depth within the chapters themselves, St. sells himself somewhat short. The many summaries, interim balances, and overviews, moreover, which together take up nearly one-sixth of the discussion's 512 pages, make for much repetition and redundancy that obstructs the flow of the narrative. These points, however, do not detract from the major achievement that *Nachdenken über Rom* represents. The thirty-nine-page bibliography attests to the exhaustive research that St.

has undertaken to write this book, which I enjoyed reading and from which I learned a lot indeed. The volume is well produced, although the font is rather small. I noticed no major errors aside from a few inconsistencies (e.g., the Secular Games of 17 BC are dated to 19 BC on pp. 264 and 491). A comprehensive index and *index locorum* help readers navigate the book, which constitutes a major contribution to the study of the early Principate and of Augustan and Tiberian literature.

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