

BOOK REVIEW

Grattius: Hunting an Augustan Poet. Edited by STEVEN J. GREEN. Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. x + 286. Hardback, \$85.00 / £63.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-878901-7.

The Austrian National Library preserves a Codex once owned by the humanist Johannes Sambucus (1531-1584).¹ It preserves a collection of Latin works: *Scholia* to Juvenal, the *Philosophia Pauperum* based on Albertus Magnus, some lines of the late antique poet Eucheria, Ovid's *Halieuticon* (twice), an epigram attributed to Sidonius Apollinaris, the *Cynegetica* by Grattius, some epigrams by Martial and the beginning of the *Itinerarium (De reditu suo)* by Rutilius Namatianus. The *folia* preserving Grat(t)ius were written around AD 800 and are now *fol.* 58v to 70v. The text is introduced as "*Item incipit Grattii Cynegeticon*" with "*LIBI*" added above the line² (which can be understood as "*Liber I*"), and ends with a mutilated *folium*,³ making scholars wonder how much has been lost beyond the 541 lines as preserved in the *Codex Vindobonensis*.

The Vienna Codex is the only independent witness for the text,⁴ which is mentioned by Ovid in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* (4,16,34: *aptaque venanti Grattius arma daret*), but which has not been studied extensively despite a clever call by John Henderson (aka "Hounderson") in 2001.⁵ If at all, the poem is perhaps familiar thanks to its inclusion in the Loeb collection of *Minor Latin Poets*,⁶ while a new edition envisaged by David Mankin was not completed when he died, aged only 61, in 2019.⁷

¹*Codex Vindobonensis* 277, cf. <http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/1000E684>.

²Cf. http://digital.onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_5473242_scan_122).

³Cf. *ibid.* scan 146.

⁴*Codex Parisinus lat.* 8071 is a copy of the *Vindobonensis*.

⁵J. Henderson, "Going to the Dogs. Grattius <&> the Augustan Subject." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 47, 2001, 1-22.

⁶J.W. Duff / A. M. Duff, *Minor Latin Poets*, Vol.I (Loeb Classical Library 284), London and Cambridge Mass. 1934, 141-205.

⁷Cf. <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2019/04/david-mankin-who-inspired-students-love-classics-dies-61>.

In 2015, a conference at UCL was held to “put Grattius firmly and exclusively in the spotlight,”⁸ and the present book, based on this meeting, pursues this goal further. It presents Grattius’ didactic poem as a richly allusive text engaging with other poets. After a helpful introduction by Steven J. Green, who discusses the name and reputation of the poet, scope, date and subject matter of the poem, and presents a summary of the volume’s papers, and after a plain text (without apparatus criticus and oddly without referring to the suggestions made by David Roy Shackleton Bailey in 1978)⁹ as well as a fine new translation, the ten contributions are grouped into four main sections: (1) Roman Didactic and Epic Interactions; (2) Hunting and the World; (3) Mythical Hunters; (4) Grattius in the Early Modern Period.

Giulia Fanti assesses aspects of Grattius’ didactic technique and analyzes the poetic persona and frequent addresses to the audience to demonstrate a breadth of appeal comparable to that of Lucretius. Monica Gale treats hunting as a metaphor for the development of culture and the search for knowledge and relates the opening lines of Grattius to Lucretius’ *DRN* 5.1452-7. Boris Kayachev uses close readings to explore interactions of Grattius and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and Christina Tsaknaki connects the “weapons of hunting” in Grattius with Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* and situates the poem with the “aesthetics of Callimachean art.” The second part starts with Gregory Hutchinson on Grattius’ use of the language of motion (138), while Steven J. Green discusses the potential for political comment in the poem which is gesturing towards the contemporary political world of Augustan Rome. The contributions to the third part explore the potential of the myths referred to in a “digression” of the poem: Lisa Whitlach examines the treatment of Hagnon and its connections to Theocritus in order to consider hunting as part of a pious lifestyle, while Donncha O’Rourke considers the *praeceptor* of Virgil’s *Georgica* and Grattius’ *Cynegetica* as identifiable with mythological characters. The fourth and final part explores the reception of Grattius in the early modern period. Victoria Moul studies Grattius’ influence on neo-Latin poetry and Mike Waters sets the first English translation by Christopher Wase (1654) into its contemporary socio-political context.

Hunting is often regarded as “tedious or abhorrent” now (“I would go for ‘abhorrent’ myself”, states one contributor, 138), and the volume does not address the realities of hunting which are, after all, the didactic poem’s subject

⁸Cf. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/classics/events/grattius-contexts-hunting-augustan-poet>.

⁹D. R. Shackleton Bailey, “Notes on Minor Latin Poetry.” *Phoenix* 32, 1978, 305-325.

and which were familiar enough to ancient (and indeed more recent) audiences. For instance, the first translation into German, by Friedrich Christoph Gottlieb Perlet (1826; not mentioned in this volume),¹⁰ tried, where possible, to use “Weidmannssprache” (hunters’ language) as this was widely familiar to the translator’s contemporaries. Specifically, the volume’s contributions do not discuss what kind of animals Grattius’ chase is about. Only the illustration chosen for the book cover (which is not explained but can be shown to be a part of the “Small Hunt Mosaic” from the late antique Villa Romana del Casale near Piazza Armerina) appears to suggest wild boar, but the Grattius’ *Caudini saxa Taburni / Garganumver truecem aut Ligurinas desuper Alpes* (ll. 509-510) might also refer to the home of stags. The strengths of the volume, however, are clearly its detailed explorations of intertextuality and the positioning of Grattius’ work firmly within Augustan poetry.

The volume does not claim to give definitive answers on the topics it explores but wants to encourage further study. This it certainly does successfully: *dona cano divom, laetas venantibus artis* (l. 1).

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