

BOOK REVIEW

Uncovering Anna Perenna: A Focused Study of Roman Myth and Culture. Edited by GWYNAETH MCINTYRE AND SARAH MCCALLUM. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. 242. Hardback \$120.00; Paperback \$39.95. ISBN: 978-1-350-04843-0.

Consisting of nine chapters and an introduction by T.P. Wiseman who himself needs no introduction, McIntyre and McCallum's collected volume offers a wide variety of interdisciplinary approaches and insights in its consideration of the once-obscure Roman goddess Anna Perenna.

A useful survey of primary sources, "Anna and the Plebs: A Synthesis of Primary Evidence," tackles a fundamental challenge: "What makes 'interdisciplinary approaches' hard to achieve is the sheer volume of scholarship accumulated by the separate intellectual traditions ... The problem can be avoided by concentrating our attention on the primary evidence - the texts and artefacts that happen to have survived to our own time - on which all the traditions, in their different ways, ultimately depend" (1). Wiseman's overview ranges from the only surviving Roman Republican calendar, the *fasti Antiaties minores*, to literary fragments of Naeuius and Varro to Macrobius, Servius and various antiquarian works, culminating with the excavations of the cult site at Piazza Euclide in Rome. Of the many aspects of Anna Perenna that Wiseman illuminates, the most intriguing may be the idea of a divine hierarchy that encompasses patrician and plebeian gods (9-10).

The first paper, Sarah McCallum's "Rivalry and Revelation: Ovid's Elegiac Revision of Virgilian Allusion," takes a fresh look at the oft-discussed topic of Ovid's engagement with Virgil: "For Ovid, the impulse to compete with the monolithic achievement of his epic predecessor engendered a fiercely ingenious artistic rivalry" (19). Whereas Virgil dealt with preceding Varronian traditions about Anna and Aeneas by largely suppressing them except for subtle allusive nods in *Aeneid* 4, Ovid highlighted those alternate tales in *Fasti* 3. In short, "By revealing what Virgil had concealed Ovid lays bare the artistic process of his predecessor and his own poetic aims" (19) and indeed "Ovid's rivalrous and revisionary

reinterpretation of the mytho-legendary Carthaginian Anna results in an echo chamber of multilayered allusions, reflecting back to Virgil's *Aeneid* and beyond" (36).

In the second paper, "Calendar Girl: Anna Perenna Between the *Fasti* and the *Punica*," James McIntyre compares Ovid's Anna Perenna of the *Fasti* with Silius Italicus' of the *Punica*. He argues that "[t]hrough an intertextual engagement with the *Fasti*, Silius casts doubt on Rome's ascent to world power, suggesting uncertainty, misinformation, faulty memory, misunderstanding and distrust" (38). Furthermore, McIntyre reads Anna as "an unreliable narrator of an incomplete history that is fully understood only with reference to the *Aeneid* as well as the Ovidian sequels in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*" (47). Silius Italicus's efforts to turn Ovid's Romanized goddess back into a Carthaginian partisan are indeed worth examining, but at the risk of sounding self-serving, I must wonder why this paper has no acknowledgment of an article that I had written on the topic in 2011 ("*Generata e Sanguine*: The Motivations of Anna Perenna in Silius Italicus, *Punica* 8." *New England Classical Journal* 38.1 (2011): 3-23).

Gwynnaeth McIntyre's "Not Just Another Fertility Goddess: Searching for Anna Perenna in Art" focuses on two ideas: first, the identification of Anna with nymphs and then the representation of such figures in two pieces of art, the Telus panel of the Ara Pacis and a relief from Carthage created during the Augustan period. Given the difficulty of secure identification of Anna, perhaps the most useful observation may be a general one: "Images of fertility link to the past but also look forward to the future. The monument seems to imply that participation in sacrifice can ensure the continuation of this prosperity. It once again leads us to think of sacrifices made to Anna Perenna to ensure prosperity and fertility for the coming year ..." (63). The search for explicit identification may be inconclusive, but the association of goddess, art and intellectual context is sound.

David J. Wright in Chapter 4, "Anna, Water, and Her Imminent Deification in *Aeneid* 4," argues that Virgil was aware of the association between Anna the sister of Dido and Anna Perenna the river goddess. To make his case, Wright takes up the Carthaginian Anna's association with the words *lympa* and *nympha* (73) and parallels Anna with another sisterly water nymph in the *Aeneid*, Juturna. A grab-bag of other arguments that includes a possible acrostic are perhaps less convincing if nonetheless interesting.

In "How to Become a Hero: Gendering the Apotheosis of Ovid's Anna Perenna," A. Everett Beek compares Anna with Dido and Aeneas, contending a bit tendentiously that "the sexual aspect of Anna's identity is downplayed within

Ovid's quasi-epic narrative, which casts her as a less feminine, more masculine character, in substantial contrast to other women in the *Fasti*" (84). Furthermore, Beek suggests that Anna's apotheosis is less like deifications of other women in the poem and more like that of Julius Caesar: deified not as recompense for suffering sexual violence but as escape from imminent murder (89). Rather puzzlingly, Beeks asserts, "[I]n effect, Anna's apotheosis takes on sexualized, typically feminine language, while still remaining essentially unsexualized" (91). One may take issue with aspects of Beeks' argument, but not with his enthusiasm for the topic.

Anna Blennow examines the Piazza Euclide site's three votive inscriptions and several *tabellae defixionum* (curse tablets) in Chapter 6, "Instability and Permanence in Ceremonial Epigraphy: The Example of Anna Perenna." Taking up the inscriptions of the Arval Brethren for comparison, Blennow also argues that "epigraphy in fact tells us not primarily about stability, but about change" and how to remember that change (94).

In "Ovid's Anna Perenna and the Coin of Gaius Annius," Teresa Ramsby looks at a set of coins minted by the plebeian consular Gaius Annius in 82 BC. The figure on the obverse, an unlabeled woman wearing a diadem and often appearing with scales and a caduceus, has long been of disputed identity, and Ramsby proposes that "a strong case can be made for identifying the figure on the coin as the goddess of the Ides of March" (113). Her argument rests largely and ingeniously on the late Roman Republican habit of paronomasia, punning, that linked family names to divinities or legendary figures: "The absence of a legend that directly names the goddess on the coin of Annius is neatly explained by the name of Annius himself, with ANNI or ANNIUS prominently displayed on all the variants of the coin on the right side of the obverse" (117).

Chapter 8, Carole Newlands' "Infiltrating Julian History: Anna Perenna at Lavinium and Bovillae (Ovid, *Fast.* 3.523-710)," focuses on the Ovidian Anna's complex resonance with Augustan politics. To wit: "By making the goddess Anna Perenna originally a mortal, either Dido's sister from Virgil's *Aeneid* or an old woman from Bovillae, the poet provocatively connects Anna Perenna with one of the major discourses of early imperial rule, deification" (126). By both associating Anna with Divus Iulius and contrasting her with him, Ovid complicates the still new and controversial imperial ideology of deification, even daringly implying that Anna's godhead is won by her personal merit and Caesar's by family

connections and favoritism. Politics and poetry coalesce as “Ovid boldly mounts a challenge to both temporal and literary authority” (145).

The ninth and final chapter dives into reception as Justin Hudak considers James Joyce in “Riverrun: Channeling Anna Perenna in *Finnegans Wake*.” Declaring that “the *Fasti* enjoys a particularly persistent and pervasive resurgence in the *Wake*,” Hudak concentrates on the character of Anna Livia Plurabelle (150). In arguing that Ovid’s Anna Perenna is a fundamental source for her, Hudak observes that “for more than three-quarters of a century her presence in the *Wake* appears to have escaped the notice of all but [Robert] Graves and a few stray voices in the blogosphere” (153). This is a stimulating idea, but while Hudak cites Graves, he does not cite those stray (but apparently perceptive) internet readers. Hudak offers an occasionally diffuse argument that “one could say that Virgil’s Anna gives rise to Ovid’s Anna Perenna, who gives rise, in turn, to Joyce’s Anna Livia Plurabelle” (158) and that indeed “ALP is a more concentrated form of Anna Perenna” (160).

Overall, this volume offers a wide variety of current approaches in its examination of Anna Perenna, and though perhaps at times it may meander, it provides a flood of new information and insights. Though its interdisciplinary nature can occasionally seem to ripple too broadly, a river goddess runs through it and provides the ultimate point of confluence. *Uncovering Anna Perenna: A Focused Study of Roman Myth and Culture* has much to offer to everyone from literary critics to historians to students of ancient religion and more.

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