to his score. In sum, a brief *aristeia* of Turnus is placed within an overall alternating list, indicating a generally balanced state of the battle.

The book ends with some interesting observations and several indexes, including one of proper names. M. himself is less interested in the individuals than in poetic composition and narrative skill. He writes extended line-by-line commentaries on each selected passage with clarity and conviction, often pleasingly superior and ironical about the assertions of others. He quotes parallels from Ennius' *Annals* freely, although it is surprising that he does so from Vahlen (1903) rather than Skutsch (1985). He knows the *Iliad* well, but his printed Greek is shaky, and passing comments on the greater work betray a strangely old-fashioned analytical viewpoint. Misprints are by no means rare.

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PSYCHOANALYSING PROPERTIUS

M. JANAN: *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV*. Pp. xi + 244. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2001. Cased, £30 (Paper, £12.50). ISBN: 0-520-22318-7 (0-520-22321-7 pbk).

Let us grant for the moment that there are eternal truths and that they are knowable. What is to be gained by reading literature in their light? For Janan, the explanatory value of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory lies in providing a framework for making sense out of apparent contradiction. This is a huge gain for understanding Propertius, as for Catullus, the subject of her first book, because these authors are fraught with inconsistencies (and textual problems) that test the limits of reason. J. persuasively shows how we need not choose between interpretive dichotomies, but that such alternatives structure some larger question, whether about gender or a particularity of the poetry. Her expansion, via Slavoj Zizek, of the range of discussion from eroticism to national identity shows that psychoanalysis is useful for more than sexuality and love poetry, but I have reservations. J.'s Propertius does not differ substantially from her Catullus because she is using the same critical moves. Would Lacan be as good for the *Eclogues*, say, or the *Aeneid*, as it is for erotic poetry? I in fact think he would, provided that the text were to test the theory as much as vice versa.

The difficulty of J.'s position is that in unmasking the partial and contingent aspects of masculinist universalism, she espouses a feminist perspective that turns out to be equally, if paradoxically, universalizing. The redefinition offers an advance in helping take account of the inevitable contradictions of those who would characterize the complex world, but in the end adopts a similar position of knowing superiority—hence the common criticism that Lacanians are dogmatic and that Lacan himself was patriarchal. The primary difference from blind masculinist self-assurance lies, I would think, in the self-consciousness of the interpreter: the Lacanian knows that attempts to create sense belong to the realm of the Symbolic, that the Real will inevitably slip through the cracks of the sense-making, and the attempt will necessarily falter. My question for the Lacanian literary critic, then, is: what escapes the interpretive system itself, since it perforce belongs to the Symbolic? What in Propertius does not fit the system? Lacan's own writings through their very difficulty embody a struggle between

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the drive toward sense and its resistance, in alignment with his theory. J., to her credit, makes Lacan as well as Propertius remarkably clear, but thereby writes counter to her theoretical stance. Since the system accounts for contradiction, this may not be a flaw, but the impression of totalization remains, and feels constricting. J., unlike the Lacanian Jacqueline Rose, does not come to terms as a feminist with the patriarchal nature of the analyst's position.

Those who object to or merely feel uneasy with Lacan should still read this book, if they have any interest in *Romanitas*, since J. opens up questions of national and gender identity and their interrelation which have importance beyond the scope of Lacan and Propertius. The juxtaposition of Propertius' avowal and disavowal of a new, more nationalistic poetic task in 4.1 (a and b) establishes a crux usually understood in poetic terms as the relation of aetiological to erotic elegies. J. argues more broadly that the search for a unifying national identity parallels that for a sexual identity, and is similarly doomed to Lacan's prognosis: 'there is no sexual relation'. Since the categories within each domain (Man/Woman, Roman/Non-Roman) depend on their discursive opposition rather than external reality, the desire to be one or another of the categories, or to define others thereby, never finds more than transient and partial fulfilment. The wholeness society offers, whether to be Roman or Man, depends on a lie disrupted not from without, but from within. Propertius delights in exposing such disruptions: Hercules, that paradigm of masculinity, cross-dresses (4.8.45–50); Quirinus emerges as Trojan and therefore just as Eastern as the foreign enemy, who is anyway internal (4.6.21). Since *Romanitas* is defined in relation to the Other, the Eastern effeminate belongs to the definition and cannot be excluded as external. Giorgio Agamben (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen [Stanford, 1998], pp. 17–22) calls this an inclusive exclusion.

J. privileges Woman as a disruptive force—who therefore stands closer to the Real than Man—and hence focuses on 'the motley of female speakers with disturbing things to say about Rome' (p. 9). I am left wondering (a question for both Propertius and Lacan) whether Man can disrupt Woman as much as the other way around, and for that reason regret that J. forgoes an extended discussion of 4.6, the Actium elegy, a poem she views as 'masculinism's purest representative within Book IV' (p. 198 n. 13). She dismantles this poem's nationalist assumptions through exploiting its juxtaposition with 4.7, where structural parallels link Cynthia's return from the dead to Apollo's epiphany, but surely the poem comes apart from within. Quirinus' Eastern quality, noted elsewhere (p. 136), demonstrates that instances of masculinity do not match the purity of the concept. Furthermore, if Cynthia puts pressure on Apollo, does he do the same to her? What can disrupt disruption if not reason itself? And if so, where would it be located?

J. argues that the discrepancies in Propertius are not simply a manifestation of the world, but a 'consistent duplicity' (p. 103), a strategy to 'dramatize in a principled fashion fundamental aporiae in the early principate's cultural symbolization systems' (pp. 9–10, 166–7). Propertius occupies the position of analyst. Her reading of Augustus' Forum—a real gem (pp. 4–6)—makes me wonder how we can differentiate analyst from analysand. The Forum shows as many fissures in logic as Propertius' poetry. Who is to say whether the disparities result simply from a cultural attempt to make sense out of a necessarily conflicted national identity or offer a strategic revelation of the cracks in all such attempts? This question targets the relation between poets and their culture, and asks how Augustanism works. It may not be answerable, but J.'s readings contribute productively and provocatively to the debate. She speaks

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both to specialists in elegy and to a broader audience interested in cultural definition and the possibility of a self-conscious subjectivity.

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CONTINUITY IN THE *METAMORPHOSES*

S. M. WHEELER: *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's* Metamorphoses. Pp. vii + 174. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000. Paper, DM 78. ISBN: 3-8233-4879-5.

In teaching Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, sometimes from a translation that perversely breaks the poem into distinct narrative episodes, I often find myself hard pressed to convince my undergraduate students that the poem is, in fact, a 'carmen perpetuum', that it must be taken seriously as a continuous poem. The first three chapters of this book make the argument for me with clarity, simplicity, and, at times, ingenuity by addressing the question, 'How does the poem continue?' Wheeler distinguishes his approach from a tradition of scholarship that looks for the poem's continuity (or, better, its unity) in overarching structures or thematic ties visible only from a distance. W. works instead from the poetic fiction that presents the *Metamorphoses* as a continuous performance and considers the narrative dynamics that allow the poem to keep going.

In Chapter I, 'Repetition', W. argues that the repetitiveness of the *Metamorphoses*' narrative patterns both unifies and gradually advances the poem. Using the first two books as a case study, he illustrates the repetitiveness of the cosmogonic and catastrophic stories of the creation, the flood, and Phaethon's wild ride. He offers interpretations of the repetitions as he works through the books and concludes with an overarching interpretation which, though a bit pat, is unobjectionable: the repetition demonstrates that natural history is cyclical; it subsumes multiple traditions concerning the origin and nature of humanity; and it establishes chaos as a central theme of the epic.

The second chapter ('Narrative Continuity') is more interesting, arguing that Ovid complements the dynamic of repetition by linking together different kinds of episodes in sequences that are narratively continuous, even though not always contiguous. W. moves again through the second half of Book 1 and the beginning of Book 2, focusing this time on the construction and interweaving of extended narrative sequences. This approach argues against the assumption that Ovid's often tenuous transitions between episodes are nothing but ingenious grafting. Thus, for example, W. takes the transition between the story of Daphne and that of Io (other rivers go to visit Daphne's father, Peneus, to console or congratulate him on his daughter's transformation; only the river Inachus is absent, since he is mourning the loss of his own daughter, Io [1.568– 87]) as a serious indication that these stories are to be read together as a continuing drama of father, daughter, and lover. He does much from there, and quite convincingly argues that the whole first book and a half of the poem is similarly narratively continuous.

W. posits in his third chapter a grand narrative, extending through the entire epic, based on tales of Jupiter and Juno. This chapter builds on both of the previous ones in that both repetition and narrative continuity play a rôle in allowing the reader to recognize the gradual shifts in focus in the repeated narrative pattern of Jupiter's erotic transgression, Juno's vengeance, and the beloved's rescue through transformation. In the latter part of the poem, this pattern finds some narrative resolution as Juno's anger

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