Hinsichtlich der im abschließenden Fazit (329-36) formulierten übergreifenden Ergebnisse der Arbeit mag man im Einzelnen geteilter Ansicht darüber sein, welche davon als wirklich originell anzusprechen sind (beispielsweise mit Blick auf die römischen Königsgestalten wird der real erreichte Erkenntnisfortschritt auch hier nicht unbedingt deutlich, was angesichts einer so viel behandelten Materie freilich nicht wirklich verwundern kann). Aber auch in der impliziten Bestätigung und Neuformulierung von Bekanntem kann ein Wert liegen, und wie schon oben angesprochen, liegt die eigentliche Stärke dieser Arbeit in zahlreichen Details und klugen narrativen Textanalysen. Summa summarum handelt es sich bei „Die Anfänge Roms erzählen" um ein erfreuliches Werk, das als solide Gesamtinterpretation unser Verständnis der ersten Pentade des Livius in vielen Einzelheiten zu schärfen vermag. Wenn man sich vor Augen hält, dass dies neben der dritten Dekade mit ihrer Schilderung des Zweiten Punischen Krieges der in der Forschung seit jeher am meisten traktierte (um nicht zu sagen: nahezu zu Tode geforschte) Teil des Geschichtswerks ist, ermisst man, dass das durchaus eine achtbare Leistung ist. Da gerade diese Bücher auch in der universitären Lehre gerne herangezogen werden, wird Zenks Studie auch in dieser Hinsicht wichtige hermeneutische Hilfestellungen zu leisten vermögen.

Clemens Schlip
Universität Freiburg (Schweiz)
clemens.schlip@unifr.ch

John Tholen, *Producing Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' in the early modern Low Countries: paratexts, publishers, editors, readers*, Library of the Written Word 95, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2021, x+336 pp., 125 €, ISBN 978-90-04-46238-0.

In his excellent new monograph, John Tholen investigates the publishing history of the *Metamorphoses* in the modern day Netherlands and Belgium from roughly 1500 to 1700. It is in the main very well researched and engagingly written. As one might expect, the study focuses on the "materiality of the text," and Appendix 1, containing a bibliographical survey of editions of the *Metamorphoses* printed in the Low Countries (1479-1700) is a gem of information and well worth the price of admission. But what makes the volume unique is its twofold emphasis on book history and classical reception. Tholen establishes his authority as a rigorous cataloguer and librarian of early editions. But he also has extremely interesting and thought provoking things to say about the paratexts that accompanied the Latin text of the *Metamorphoses*.

The book is divided into a brief introduction, in which the author sets forward his methodological principles, and five discrete chapters. In each of chapters 1-4, Tholen takes up one aspect of the printed edition, viz. the title-page, the front matter, the commentary material, and the indices. The final chapter brings these

four chapters together through two case studies: one that focuses on an edition (catalogued as O17 in appendix 1, p. 232) that combines two widely divergent reading contexts, the scholarly and the untrained, and a second that examines the vernacular edition of Joost van den Vondel to show how the material infrastructure of that edition builds on the authority of Ovid's classical work to highlight the poetic achievement of Vondel.

In the space allotted to this review, I cannot do justice to the wealth of scholarhship contained in these five chapters, and so I shall focus my remarks primarily on what Tholen deduces about the lives of Ovid and commentaries transmitted in individual editions, and how the index could be constructed so as to direct subtly and unknowingly the reader's navigation of the text.

Let us begin with the question of the commentaries appended in the various editions (chapter 3). Tholen picks up, of course, where Ann Moss left off. Moss's two studies of the Latin commentary tradition on Ovid in the Renaissance are still the best things written on the subject. But she painted with a broad brush, and she possessed a remarkable talent for encapsulating in a page or two the essence of a commentary. Tholen, to his great credit, is much more detailed and expansive, and I can recommend his discussion as a useful introduction. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the medieval commentary tradition and a nod to Regius, perhaps the most widely read humanist commentator on the *Metamorphoses*. He then investigates the commentary tradition 1500-1700 under three broad categories: the use of *Annotationes* to establish a readable text, commentaries that serve as guidance for young readers, and the variorum edition. In chapter 2, he also treats Ovidian portraits and *vitae* found in the opening material to the editions. The discussion of the *vitae* lays particular stress on the 17th-century lives (with many references to Taylor's study of French lives of Ovid in the 17th century). Surprisingly in a work which is generally so good on citing relevant bibliography, no mention is made of Ghisalberti's seminal study on medieval lives of Ovid nor of my two articles on lives of Ovid which appeared in *Mediaeval Studies* for 1987 and 1997.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing chapters in the book, at least for me, was chapter 4 on the Index. Tholen shows that middlemen appropriated the index to provide varying degrees of access to the contents they considered important. Indices served two primary functions, that of filtering and framing. The Index to Thomas Farnabius's edition of the *Metamorphoses* printed at Amsterdam in 1655, for example, indexes summarily the transformations, but concentrates on humanist school practice, with entries on rhetorical devises such as syncope and oxymoron.

To my great embarrassment, I must confess that I did not know the series at Brill in which this volume appeared (Library of the Written Word, editor-in-chief Andrew Pettigree). If Tholen's *Producing Ovid's Metamorphoses* is indicative of the high scholarly level of the series, Pettigree and his editorial board are to be warmly congratulated. Here is a work that combines rigorous scholarship and

imaginative reflection on what the material structure of the book may tell us about reading practices and expectations of readers in the Early Modern Period. The book is very easy to use and consult. All in all, I would call it a real triumph.

Frank T. Coulson
The Ohio State University
coulson.1@osu.edu

A.J. Boyle, *Seneca: Agamemnon*. Edited with introduction, translation, and commentary, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, 752 pp., $155.00, ISBN 978-0-19-881082-7.

With this magisterial *Agamemnon*, Anthony Boyle comes close to completing a full set of commentaries on Senecan tragedy (only the *Hercules Furens* remains). In the mode of his previous OUP productions, this is a sprawling work that runs to more than 700 pages and represents the better part of 40 (or more!) years spent thinking about the dark dynamics of Senecan drama, its rhetoric, its violence, and its recursive visions of the past. The treatment is nothing if not thorough, and Boyle has performed a significant service to the discipline in raising the profile of this oft-neglected play. There is much of value in this volume. But it can also be overwhelming at times, which is why, in the interests of clarity, this review follows the book's own division into three main sections: introduction; text and translation; and commentary.

The book boasts a hefty introduction that includes historical and contextual information on Seneca and Roman theatre, discussion of Seneca's dramatic style, overviews of the myth, the play, and its reception, treatment of the play's various metres and some brief remarks about the translation. Boyle is particularly adept at situating Seneca's work within the rich tradition of Roman drama, and his overview of the play is as thrilling as it is insightful. His analysis of the *Agamemnon*'s content and structure stresses Seneca's innovation by drawing productive comparisons with earlier, especially tragic, Greco-Roman literature. Coverage of the *Agamemnon*'s main themes – repetition of the past; family relationships; anger and revenge; spectacle; similarities to Seneca's *Thyestes* – is perceptive and powerful, though not always persuasive (this reviewer was not convinced by the arguments about spectacle/theatricalization in particular). After many years of engagement with Seneca, Boyle has, consciously or not, adopted some elements of the playwright's style: sentences are clipped, the rhetoric punchy. His enthusiasm for the play is apparent throughout, and this, as much as his scholarship, works to inspire the reader's respect for Seneca qua dramatist.

The downside, though, is that a lot of Boyle's introductory material is familiar from his earlier OUP commentaries. The author himself admits that seven of the introduction's ten segments "are updated, recalibrated, and sometimes partial