concentrazione sull'essenziale e del deliberato occultamento» (p. 256), per molti aspetti sono le *Metamorfosi* l'opera più complessa e più ricca, sia dal punto di vista tematico sia da quello strutturale: per l'incrocio dei generi e l'intertestualità; per la capacità, stante il tema amoroso, di catalogare e illustrare un'enorme quantità di diverse forme del fenomeno in oggetto; per quella di assumere il punto di vista femminile e di considerare la donna come una compagna dell'uomo con pari diritti – «Wenn es ein Werk der lateinischen Literatur gibt, das der *Aeneis* das Wasser reichen kann und sie vielleicht sogar übertrifft», conclude l'Autore, «dann sind das die *Metamorphosen*, und sie allein» (p. 258).

Si potrebbe continuare a lungo, ma spero che questi pochi cenni abbiano già dato un'idea di massima della chiave di lettura del poema ovidiano offerta dal libro di Hösle, senza dubbio uno dei più importanti e stimolanti che siano stati scritti negli ultimi vent'anni sulle *Metamorfosi*: lettura evidentemente obbligatoria per chiunque si occupi di poesia augustea, meriterebbe forse anche una traduzione inglese per poter raggiungere un pubblico più ampio.

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Mariapia Pietropaolo, *The Grotesque in Roman Love Elegy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, xiv+228 pp., £ 22.99, ISBN 978-1-108-73864-4.

Latin love elegy has long been defined by its idealized portraits of a beloved *puella*, object of her poet-lover's (or *amator*'s) insistent affection. While approaches to the genre over the past few decades have revealed inconsistencies in those portrayals and hints that ideals must yield to realities, even within a carefully scripted romance, Mariapia Pietropaolo's [hereafter "P."] monograph places a new and welcome emphasis on the degradation, deterioration, and outright ugliness that are essential components of this particular idiom of a lover's discourse. Her goal is to demonstrate how repugnance and admiration operate in tandem and explain why such operations are critical to the genre's aesthetics.

To meet that goal, P. initially explores the grotesque from an ancient theoretical perspective, citing, e.g., Plato and Aristotle on how deformity in a work of art is experienced by viewers, up through early modern and modern understandings of the grotesque, a term inspired by the cave-live ("grottesche") rooms adorned with elaborate, overwrought paintings found in Nero's *Domus Aurea* (12). The author's survey of theories of the grotesque ranges from Ruskin's art historical, and heavily vision-based approach to the more social and psychological approaches of Bakhtin and Kristeva, but remains firmly grounded in a notion that echoes throughout the book: "the darkness of the grotesque is a de-formation of the artistic luminosity of

the sublime. In such an expression of the grotesque, the presence of the sublime ideals of beauty and love are undermined by contiguity with the grotesque in the reader's consciousness" (13). Yet just as proximity to the grotesque undermines idealized beauty, it also—crucially for elegiac discourse—allows us to better see that beauty.

For P. special attention must be paid to the reader's response to grotesque imagery: how does elegy effect a "satisfying engagement of the mind" (30) through its juxtaposition of repugnant and beautiful images? In the chapter following the introduction, the author leans heavily on Lucretius' theorization of *simulacra* ("likenesses, images") and the gap between reality and our impressions of reality when *simulacra* mislead us. That gap, the undeniable distance between what is (often imperfect or deformed) and what is perceived (often beautiful) proves crucial for the way that elegiac poetry emerging in the decades following Lucretius pivots constantly between articulating the *puella*'s perfection and hinting at the grotesque aspects of her persona.

P. does not confine her discussion to the *puella*, but explores other characters populating the elegiac stage, especially the categorically boorish rival, who is subjected to abuse through grotesque imagery in Catullus (chapter two, and a figure she returns to in chapter seven). Erotic rivals such as Rufus are relentlessly degraded through associations with disease (*pestis*) both literal and metaphorical, degradation that inevitably destabilizes the poet-lover's view of love, and reduces it to "coarse, physical carnality" (58). Still, it is grotesque facets of the *puella*'s portrayal, along with her decrepit future made incarnate by the *lena*, that dominate the study. In chapter three, P. launches her exploration of Augustan elegy with a sharp reading of Cynthia's charred and crackling *umbra* ("shade, semblance") in Propertius 4.7. For the author, the elegy, a relatively late entry to the corpus, allows the poet to reflect on the *puella*'s inherent ambivalence, as the vision of Cynthia is defined by imagery both grotesque and uncanny. P. offers an astute reading of the sounds and sights that emanate from Cynthia, who allows the reader/auditor an experience of the "acoustical grotesque" (67, Mary Russo's term [1994])[1]. While P.'s insistence on the jarring impact such an experience makes on a reader accustomed to a hitherto perfected form overlooks moments in the Propertian corpus that have already revealed a flawed and deteriorating beloved (e.g., 3.24-5), her careful attention to the sounds of Cynthia—not only her diction, prosody, and creaking, brittle bones, but the *amator*'s uncanny ventriloquism of her voice—mark a highlight of the monograph.

The *puella* also remains central to discussion of Ovid's *Amores* in the following chapter (four), which foregrounds the poet's fetishizing of Elegia's limp in *Am*. 3.1, a *vitium* ("fault, defect") that signals Ovid's pervasive tendency to expose elegy's grotesque aesthetic. This tendency is articulated by P. in terms that extend

[1] M. Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity*, New York 1994.

G.B. Conte's discussion of an elegiac code (1994)[2], an argument that used the *Remedia* to demonstrate how Ovid encourages the intrusion of elements previously excluded from the genre's idealized and cloistered world. For P. the intrusion is evident throughout Ovidian elegy and especially well illustrated through *Amores* 1.14, in which the poet-lover derides Corinna for overprocessing and ruining her formerly luxurious locks, and through his infamous abortion poems (*Am*. 2.13-14). In addition to offering a fresh approach to understanding how the two latter poems function as part of Ovid's grotesque aesthetic, the author's review of ancient attitudes towards abortion inevitably, but productively collides with 21st century views: what aspects of the grotesque are indeed universal or transhistorical and how does our (overdetermined political) understanding of abortion determine our aesthetic response to the language of scraping and entrails that pervade the poem? This question is neither asked nor answered overtly in the chapter but remains a sizeable elephant in the post-Roe vs. Wade room of U.S. readers.

The following two chapters (five and six) turn to the *lena*, or "procuress" who has long been viewed by scholars as an embodiment of the *puella*'s future. As an aging, venal, and (in the case of Acanthis) consumptive character, this figure is a more obvious candidate for promotion of the elegist's grotesque aesthetic. P.'s discussion of Propertius' Acanthis, Tibullus' *lena-cum-saga* figure of 1.5, and Ovid's Dipsas adds to our understanding of the figure by exploring the emotional script, one born from anger and resentment, that guides the *amator*'s vitriolic portraits. P. is also keenly aware of the intertextual dialogues emerging between elegy and contemporary verse, especially Tibullus' engagement with Horace's depiction of the witch Canidia in the *Satires* and *Epodes*, constituting a highly allusive poetics that guide the reader's appreciation of the speaker's grotesque aesthetics.

After revisiting the figure of the rival in all three Augustan elegists, in a way that illustrates the punitive role that grotesque imagery plays in the genre, P. concludes with two chapters focusing on Ovid's erotodidactic *Ars Amatoria* (chapter eight) and *Remedia* (chapter nine). The Pasiphae exemplum of the *Ars Amatoria* offers a meta-poetic commentary on the role of the grotesque in elegy, provocatively using the refined language of elegiac passion to convey base, animal lust and appropriately resulting in the hybrid monstrosity of the Minotaur. The final chapter, arguing for the *Remedia* as an attenuation of the genre's grotesque aesthetic, allows brief closing commentary on the preceding tradition of elegy from Catullus up through the *Remedia* itself, as P. reflects on the *praeceptor*'s warnings to the lovesick against erotic verse (*Rem*. 759-66). In so doing, P. offers a concise, but apt conclusion to a theoretically sophisticated study, one that summons a wide spectrum of thought on how literature effects an aesthetic experience in the reader—within the span of a few pages P. invokes Barthes, Eco,

[2] G.B. Conte, *Genres and Readers: Lucretius, Love Elegy, and Pliny's Encyclopedia*, Glen Most (trans.), Baltimore 1994.

and Kant with equal confidence. At the same time, her argument about elegy's reliance on grotesque imagery to undermine and accentuate its idealized portraits emerges organically from within a careful hermeneutics, one as attentive to the blemishes that mark the genre as it is to the elegant surfaces they adorn.

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Fabio Tutrone, *Healing grief: a commentary on Seneca's* Consolatio ad Marciam, Cicero: studies on Roman thought and its reception 6, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022, x+365 pp., 89,95€, ISBN 978-3-11-100742-7.

Tutrone's commentary on Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* comes at a time in which scholars are increasingly interested in Seneca's consolations and connections between ancient Stoicism and modern therapeutic strategies (such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy). T. is sensitive to the value of consolation (both ancient and modern) as well as Stoic practices of self-formation, and he highlights throughout the commentary the concrete ways that Seneca aims to help Marcia conquer her grief. In doing so, however, Seneca also creates a literary and philosophical masterpiece for a more general readership, which transforms "his consolation…into a more complex lesson on the mortal nature of Marcia's own self, the moral vocation of humans, and the physical structure of the world" (16). T.'s monograph consists of a short introduction, the Latin text, and an exhaustive commentary (over 240 pages!). The commentary is less concerned with matters of syntax and grammar than one might expect, but instead concentrates on close explication of the social, philosophical, literary, and rhetorical nuances of the text. In these lemmata, T. displays his characteristic insight, holistic understanding of Seneca's *corpus,* and mastery of the primary and secondary literature; the reader will benefit from his guidance on matters as diverse as the heterodox consolatory tradition to the niceties of Roman funerary law.

The introductory material is competent and concise. T. agrees with most Senecan scholars on an early date for this work (c. 40 AD), before Seneca was exiled and during the reign of Caligula. T. sketches both the historical context and Seneca's own political career up the rungs of the *cursus honorum*. In turning to the *Consolatio ad Marciam* itself, T. comments on the argumentative nature of this text and the manner in which Seneca revs up his rhetoric to try to convince Marcia to master her grief and triumph over her trauma. In doing so, Seneca preserves the primary tenets of Stoic thought, but marshals Stoic themes in a novel manner which "thus transforms the traditional practice of παραμυθία/*consolatio* into a much deeper process of moral growth and psychological renewal" (14). Indeed, the commentary reiterates time and again that Seneca is an orthodox Stoic and not