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## INTRODUCTION

N. Coffee, C. Forstall, L. Galli Milić and D.P. Nelis

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# INTRODUCTION

N. Coffee, C. Forstall, L. Galli Milić and D.P. Nelis

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- 1 All the papers in this edition of *Dictynna* are devoted to the study of intertextuality in Flavian epic poetry. The initial idea for a special thematic collection arose from work on this topic being carried out as part of a research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and involving the University of Geneva and the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. In an attempt to bring together a series of contributions likely to offer a sample of both current trends and future directions in the study of Flavian intertextuality, it was decided to invite a group of younger scholars in the field to offer papers. The six papers collected here represent the result of this enterprise. The original proposition was accepted with encouraging alacrity and enthusiasm by Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and her team in Lille, and we are extremely grateful both for that initial positive response and for all the subsequent effort that has gone into putting together this collection of essays.
- 2 There must surely no longer be any need to justify at length a project of this kind. The study of Flavian epic poetry is flourishing as never before. And research on Valerius Flaccus, Silius Italicus and Statius has always been fundamentally intertextual in approach, as a quick glance at Schanz-Hosius, volume 2, pp. 523, 529 and 536 on their numerous ‘Vorbilder’ confirms, even if many of those who have done much of the essential work either could not know or would perhaps refuse to use that term. Every reader of these papers will have her or his own favourite examples of inspiring scholarship, pieces of work that have opened up new ways of thinking about fascinating texts that were long despised and neglected. As classicists, of course, we owe a great deal to those willing to devote themselves to the art of writing commentaries, which are usually where we go to find out about intertexts, echoes, parallels, influences, allusions, and so on. Most of those who read this volume will have consulted with due gratitude R. Parkes, H. Smolenaars, M. Dewar, P. Venini and K. Pollmann on *Thebaid* 4, 7, 9, 11 and 12 respectively, F. Spaltenstein on all of Silius and Valerius, and numerous others too many to mention here. Many will think too of the literary studies by D. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford 1991), P. Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (Cambridge 1993) and C. McNelis, *Statius' Thebaid and the Poetics of Civil War* (Cambridge 2007), all sources of richly intertextual readings that have influenced more

recent volumes, such as those by T. Stover, *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome: a New Reading of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica* (Oxford 2012) and A. Walter, *Erzählen und Gesang im flavischen Epos* (Berlin 2014), and those edited by G. Manuwald and A. Voigt, *Flavian Epic Interactions* (Berlin 2013) and by A. Augoustakis, *Ritual and Religion in Flavian Epic* (Oxford 2013) and *Flavian Poetry and its Greek Past* (Leiden 2014). Such a short list of references to a small selection of recent work can only draw attention both to the many names omitted and to the fact that all those who are still interested today in trying to understand the imitative techniques that formed the very foundations of the composition of the *Argonautica*, the *Thebaid*, the *Achilleid* and the *Punica* (on the texts of the Flavian age that have not survived see H. Bardon, *La littérature latine inconnue*, vol. 2 (Paris 1956) 177–241 and M. Dewar, 'Lost Literature' in *A Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome*, ed. A. Zissos, (Malden, MA forthcoming) 469–483) are indebted to the efforts of many generations of scholars. V. Berlincourt's *Commenter la Thébaïde (16<sup>e</sup>-19<sup>e</sup> s.): Caspar von Barth et la tradition exégétique de Stace* (Leiden 2013) has recently drawn our attention to the importance of studying early modern commentators too long ignored. In doing so, he demonstrates that despite all that has been achieved, a great deal of work still remains to be done. By their very nature, traditional classical commentaries are selective in their approach. Given the complexity of the texts they attempt to elucidate, every single feature cannot be considered in detail. And yet, when it comes to the study of intertextuality, it seems obvious that systematic approaches work best. Learning the lessons of G.N. Knauer's *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen 1964, 1979<sup>2</sup>), H. Juhnke produced an indispensable study entitled *Homerisches in römischer Epik flavischer Zeit* (München 1972). By taking up such wider perspectives, combining Greek and Latin, and putting to good use the results of the theoretical debates that raged in the final decades of the twentieth century, more recent work has begun to reveal the need to move beyond reading Flavian epic purely in the light of Vergil's *Aeneid*. There are encouraging signs that we can look forward to new work tracing in original ways the Flavian reception of Hellenistic poetry, of Latin prose, and of Lucretius, Ovid and Lucan, as we see ever more refined awareness of the brilliant complexity of the intertextual techniques of the Flavian poets and growing recognition of the need for the use of interpretive approaches capable of handling the simultaneous presence of multiple models in any given text. And one further development merits special mention here, particularly in an on-line journal: the development of digital techniques for the study of intertextuality. For many years now scholars have been using web-based versions of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, the *Classical Latin Texts* of the Packard Humanities Institute and the Brepolis *Library of Latin Texts*. But a newer generation of tools may hold even greater promise. Sites such as *Tesserae* (<http://tesserae.caset.buffalo.edu/>) and *Musisque Deoque* (<http://www.mqdq.it/public/>) permit rapid comparative searches across vast corpora of texts and have the potential to revolutionize the study of intertextuality and literary history (see N. Coffee, J.-P. Koenig, S. Poornima, R. Ossewaarde, C. Forstall and S. Jacobson, 'Intertextuality in the Digital Age', *TAPhA* 142 (2012) 318–419). One of the major scholarly desiderata for the years ahead must be increasing collaboration between scholars well versed in the methods of traditional philology and those capable of developing the algorithms that enable the advance of the digital revolution.

- 3 But for the moment, with a renewed expression of our sincere thanks to Jacqueline Fabre-Serris, Florence Klein and Olivier Rafidison for offering us the opportunity to take up this twelfth volume of *Dictynna*, we hope that the papers gathered here will

provide readers with a reminder of what has been achieved so far, a taste of what kinds of work today's specialists are doing, and a glimpse of some of paths the study of intertextuality in Flavian epic is likely to follow in the years ahead.

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## AUTHORS

**N. COFFEE**

Buffalo

**C. FORSTALL**

Geneva

**L. GALLI MILIĆ**

Geneva

**D.P. NELIS**

Geneva