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Latin Literature

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This is, indeed, an outstanding work of scholarship. I note that the first volume was reviewed under the heading of Religion; twelve years later, the second volume has been assigned to Greek Literature. But, for a reason that will be apparent from the publication data, I did not feel moved to protest.

There has, in fact, been no dedicated Religion review since 2009 – a symptom, no doubt, of the relentless advance of secularization. But a Religion review might have provided a more appropriate home for the translation of the Orphic hymns by Apostolos Athanassakis, first published in 1977 and now ‘revisited and rejuvenated’ (vii) in collaboration with Benjamin M. Wolkow.⁸ The hymns are basically ‘catalogues of religious epithets’ (xviii). That format might well have been cumulatively powerful in liturgical use (as the translators argue in their introduction). But, as literature, these texts leave me cold. To take a random example, the tenth hymn elicits grudging admiration for the dexterity with which it reaches line 28 (of 30) without the aid of any verb; read off the page, however, a stream of epithets and adjectival phrases does not grip the attention. The translation sacrifices the dexterity of the original, supplying enough verbs to make tolerable sense in English: but the result is no more gripping. It is curious, too, that line 29 is translated twice, both times without the syntactically necessary *τῶδε*, while line 30 is not translated at all. The accompanying notes are informative, though often under-referenced (for example, ‘one obscure writer calls Pan “celestial”’, 95).

At first glance, Robin Hard’s translation of Epictetus⁹ gave a worryingly stilted impression. But that was merely a faithful reflection of the stiltedness of Arrian’s prefatory letter. As soon as I turned over the page, I found Epictetus addressing me with bracing immediacy. Hard’s crisp, clear, and lively rendering is a joy to read. Christopher Gill, who provides an introduction and excellent notes, describes Epictetus’ style as ‘forceful, direct, and challenging’ (vii): those characteristics come across amazingly well in this translation. Epictetus is clever and subtle, too: you will need to keep your wits about you when you read this book.

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Latin Literature

Anyone who has ever taught or studied the *Aeneid* will be familiar with student gripes that the protagonist, Aeneas, does not meet their expectations of a hero: stolid, boring, wooden, uninspiring, lacking in emotional range. Likewise, students of Lucan’s *Civil War* often find it hard to get a handle on the figure of Cato, and his hard-line heroics

⁸ *The Orphic Hymns*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Apostolos N. Athanassakis and Benjamin M. Wolkow. Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. xxiv + 255. Hardback £21, ISBN: 978-1-4214-0881-1; paperback £12, ISBN: 978-1-4214-0882-8.

⁹ *Epictetus. Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*. Translated by Robin Hard, with an introduction and notes by Christopher Gill. Oxford World’s Classics. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xxxvi + 355. Paperback £9.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-959518-1.

are usually met with a combination of disbelieving horror and ridicule. The important and deceptively simple suggestion of J. Mira Seo's new monograph¹ is that such apparently two-dimensional and unsatisfactory 'problem characters' in Latin literature (19) are the result not of the failure of the ancient poets to depict their protagonists successfully, but rather of the different expectations that Romans held about literary characterization. Her book sets out to explore the possibility that Roman writers were not attempting to present characters who are psychologically 'rounded' in the way that we moderns expect, with our Cartesian approach and our high regard for radical individuality and subjectivity. Rather, she argues, Roman characterization was based on a distinctively Roman approach to self as 'aemulatory, referential, and circumscribed by traditional expectations of society' (15). For Seo, characterization is a literary technique (4) rather than mimetic of real people (5) and, like genre, characters in literature are established through reference to earlier material. Indeed, characterization is a form of allusion, and characters in literature are 'nodes of intertextuality' (4) created out of generic expectation and familiar schemata, and the significant and creative modification of these. This technique is often evident in ancient literature (the intertextuality of Virgil's depiction of Dido is well known); however Seo pursues its implications through close readings of five case studies: Virgil's Aeneas, created through the conflicting voices of *fama*, with effeminate Paris as his ghostly doppelganger; Cato as Lucan's lethal exemplum; Seneca's Oedipus, becoming 'himself' under the pressure of decorum and the literary tradition; and two of Statius' most stereotypical and over-determined characters, the archetypal 'doomed beautiful youth', exquisitely intensified in the figure of Parthenopaus, and the doomed prophet Ampharius. In her series of illuminating and insightful readings, Seo shows how such characters are built up through schematization, through articulation from a variety of perspectives in the texts, and through the evocation and skilful modification of familiar literary motifs. Although I am not sure she has entirely cracked the problem of Roman characterization, her book opens up a stimulating new approach to Roman poetry and characterization, which I hope will inspire others to take up the call for more research in this area.

In Seo's analysis, an important intertext for Seneca's Oedipus is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with Seneca creating his own 'Oedipus' from the literary patterns of Ovidian Thebes and from the Oedipus-shaped hole in Ovid's epic poem; the importance of Ovid's influence on Seneca's tragic oeuvre is a starting point for Dan Curley's new monograph, *Tragedy in Ovid*, which is devoted to exploring Ovid's role in the history of tragedy, and his contribution to the genre as the (almost) missing link between Greek tragedy and Senecan tragedy.² Ovid only wrote one tragedy, the lost *Medea*, and the nature of this – and especially its influence on Ovid's career – is the subject of Curley's second chapter. Subsequent chapters explore how Ovid interlaces the motifs and moods of tragedy into his other poetic works: the explicitly textual letters of the *Heroides*, and the *Metamorphoses*. Like Seo, Curley is attentive to the multiple strands of intertextuality that are used to shape the characters in Ovid's poetry, and

¹ *Exemplary Traits. Reading Characterization in Roman Poetry*. By J. Mira Seo. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 220. Hardback £47.99, ISBN 978-0-19-973428-3.

² *Tragedy in Ovid. Theater, Metatheater, and the Transformation of a Genre*. By Dan Curley. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 275. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-107-00953-0.

his Chapter 6 on tragic intratextuality and the depiction of Medea by Ovid is an especially interesting read in the light of Seo's case studies.

Another productive interlocutor for Curley's work on Ovid's career as a tragedian is Francesca K. A. Martelli's monograph *Ovid's Revisions*, which also takes a broad perspective on the poet's career through a close reading of his poetry, in this case by exploring Ovid's role (and self-portrayal) as editor of his poetry.³ Martelli argues that by regularly drawing attention to his status as editor of his own works, Ovid invites his readers to reflect upon the implications of such revision: what has been cut out or altered, and why? What remains on the page? What has been added and how does this change the shape of the whole? How visible is the process by which this text we read has come into being? Such a poetic strategy of overt revision (and Martelli does indeed read Ovid's indication of his editorial interventions as a poetic technique) serves to problematize assumptions about the intentions of the author, the unity and completeness of the text, and the single moment of transmission, by revealing the extent to which composition and publication are fluid and ongoing processes. Like keyhole surgery, Martelli's skilful work uses this tiny, almost invisible point of entry into a study of Ovid's poetry to tackle some difficult problems with far-reaching implications: the question of how the figure of the 'author' and his authority is created by his oeuvre, the relationship between 'life' and 'work', the evolution of a literary career and of authorial identity. Martelli's subtle and finely wrought argument is informed by and engages closely with complicated critical debates beyond Classics, which are outlined in an introductory chapter, including those surrounding the ideas of collaborative revision and social editing. She takes individual works of Ovid in turn, each of which displays its own form of authorial revision. Chapter 2, on the *Amores*, explores the complex dynamics that are set in play by Ovid's opening assertion that he has edited a five-book collection down to three books. The text in hand has to be read as (at least) two editions from different points in time, superimposed upon one another, and this temporal disruption provides a sceptical commentary upon the *Amores'* own elegiac stance, and also undermines the status of the *Amores* as a secure point of departure for Ovid's career as a poet. Chapter 3 examines the multiple endings of the *Ars Amatoria*, as both Book 3 (addressed to a new audience of women) and the *Remedia Amoris* (on how to reverse the process of falling in love) in different ways extend the poem beyond the narrative unit of Books 1 and 2's amatory advice to men; here Martelli argues that these post-scripts reflect interplay between narrative desire and the narrative of sexual desire. Chapter 4 discusses the *Fasti* as a 'foreshortened' (31) work which seems to end before it should, halfway through the calendar year that has inspired and structured the poem, and through its arbitrary ending and layers of interpretation critiques the actual Roman calendar that has been thoroughly revised and restructured by Augustus himself. In Chapter 5, *Tristia* is seen to provide a deliberate reflection on Ovid's authorial identity, built up in his previous poetry, and also to explore the tension between poetry as textual monument and as the travelling book roll that is finding its way back to Ovid's addressees in Rome. In Chapter 6 it is the tensions between the public, published text and the private and personal letter that are explored, through the act of collating into a single

³ *Ovid's Revisions. The Editor as Author*. By Francesca K. A. Martelli. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 260. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-1-107-03771-7.

work the apparently disparate letters that make up the *Ex Ponto*. Martelli's work, with its elegant prose, is a masterful treatment of the complexity of Ovid's poetry and of his career, and of the broader theoretical issues that are thrown up by them, and her book generates a rich poetics of revision.

As his subtitle 'Creating the Past' suggests, the key argument of Aaron M. Seider's book is that memory is represented in Virgil's *Aeneid* as an active process, which involves creatively shaping the past; his further suggestion is that this form of memory enables both the characters and the poem's narrator partially to come to terms with a traumatic past by integrating it into their movement towards a positive future.⁴ Such progress is achieved not by abandoning and forgetting that past trauma, but by adapting it, remembering it differently, and incorporating new versions of it within the narrative of their lives. Chapter 1 takes as its point of departure the intriguing 'table-eating' crux in Book 8, which occurs at a critical point in the Trojans' quest to found Rome. Here, in response to an off-the-cuff joke by his son Ascanius that the Trojans are so hungry they are reduced to eating the tables, Aeneas leaps enthusiastically into action, claiming this as a sign that a prophecy uttered long ago by his father, Anchises, has finally come to pass (*Aen.* 7.120–9, discussed on 28–31 and 41–6). As Seider points out, the problem here is that Aeneas' version of the prophecy and his interpretation of it do not match up with the narrator's version that the reader has encountered in Book 3 (3.255–7). There it was the harpy Celaeno who uttered a curse on the Trojans that, before they managed to build the walls of their new city, they would be driven by dreadful hunger to consume their own tables; far from claiming this as a prophecy, Anchises asks only that they should be spared this fate. Rather than assume that this inconsistency stems from Virgil's failure to revise his text, or some other slip, Seider reads it as deliberate and considers what is achieved by it; Aeneas is depicted as deliberately misremembering and presenting 'an edited version of the past' (30), recast and radically reinterpreted to serve the needs of the present. This kind of selective remembering is found throughout the poem, and it is through this, Seider argues, that Aeneas builds the Roman future, and not, as scholars have tended to suggest, by a wholesale turning away from and forgetting of his Trojan past. Seider's analysis demonstrates well how fluid memory is in the *Aeneid*: throughout the poem the past changes as it is remembered differently by different people and for different ends. (He thus explicitly challenges interpretations that have seen the ancient art of memory at work in the poem, whereby characters accurately recall a fixed past.) He concludes, too, that memory plays a role in negotiating transitions and identity shifts, that it is associated with great emotion, and that it is hard to control either the meaning of memory or its impact. All this analysis of memory within the *Aeneid* is, of course, highly relevant to the cultural context in which the poem was created, when the Augustan world was striving to make sense of the recent traumatic events of the civil war and to mould a new sense of identity and purpose for Roman society. Seider outlines this connection as part of his introduction, which is so clear and helpful overall that it might serve as a useful primer for undergraduates new to the poem and its scholarship. It also includes a brief outline of the crucial methodological concepts that inform his analysis (from memory studies

⁴ *Memory in Virgil's Aeneid. Creating the Past*. By Aaron M. Seider. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 229. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-1-107-03180-7.

and narratology, as well as classical philology), a concise survey of Virgil's use of terminology relating to memory, and some straightforward scene-setting about the upheaval of civil war and Augustan strategies of commemoration. In all, this book offers a nicely argued and accessible overarching reading of the *Aeneid*, to which I would not hesitate to direct my students, and includes new ways of appreciating well-trodden episodes such as Aeneas' slaying of Turnus and the affair between Dido and Aeneas.

Each of the four excellent monographs reviewed above stems from a project that began life as doctoral research, has undergone significant revision, and is its author's first book. Clearly the study of Latin poetry is in a very healthy state and has an exciting future. But now from new voices in scholarship to old hands: S. J. Harrison's *Framing the Ass* is a collection of sixteen previously published articles on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, written over the course of a long and sustained engagement with the novel.⁵ The papers are organized into two sections, 'Apuleian Context' (with discussion of various important features of the novel) and 'Novel and Epic' (which focuses specifically on the novel's engagement with the epic tradition). It is, of course, handy to have all these important contributions accessible together in this form; however, in addition Harrison's introduction makes its own quietly fascinating contribution to the volume. Ten pages in total, on the face of it it is little more than a brief introduction to each chapter, placing them in the wider context of scholarship on the ancient novel. Yet, understated, modest, and collegial in tone, it eventually offers much more: the gradual accumulation of detail about the intellectual pathways of a successful scholar's career – indications about where an idea germinated, how a thought was developed through discussion with others, or of where, in turn, his own arguments have (or have not) had an influence in the work of others – all reveals the workings of academic life in general, and specifically the patient and dedicated building of a career over the years; it should be a gentle inspiration to scholars setting out on this journey.

Likewise the fruit of long years of scholarship, the second edition of Elaine Fantham's much read and terrifically useful *Roman Literary Culture*, first published almost twenty years ago, takes on a new subtitle: 'From Plautus to Macrobius'. She has taken this opportunity of reissue to extend the book chronologically in both directions (the original 1996 subtitle was 'From Cicero to Apuleius'), with an eye, not least, to the expansion of scholarship on early Latin and early Christian literature in recent decades.⁶ Thus, a new Chapter 1, 'Starting from Scratch', takes the story back to the more mysterious world of early Latin literature, drawing particularly on Peter Wiseman's recent arguments for the existence of a rich pre-textual cultural life in an unwritten Rome, and unfolds through Terence and Plautus, Naevius, Ennius, Cato, and Lucilius to the work of Lucretius and Catullus and the Ciceronian age where the next chapter begins. At the other end of the book, a new Chapter 9, 'The Impact of Christianity', provides a concise introduction to the context in which men such as Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Ausonius, Symmachus, Prudentius, Claudian, Jerome, and Augustine were writing, finally reaching, with Macrobius, the 'twilight of

⁵ *Framing the Ass. Literary Texture in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. By S. J. Harrison. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 293. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-960268-1.

⁶ *Roman Literary Culture. From Plautus to Macrobius*. By Elaine Fantham. Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Pp. xx + 368. 1 b/w illustration. Hardback £36.50, ISBN: 978-1-4214-0835-4; paperback £15.50, ISBN: 978-1-4214-0836-1.

Classical antiquity' (287). Fantham's narrative of the changing culture in which Latin literature was produced is a conservative one; it aims to provide a clear and informative historical framework within which Latin literature can be situated and thus better appreciated (rather than critical analysis of the literature itself). Such a framework is both indispensable for the student and far from easy to produce; scholars and students alike will continue to be grateful for her achievement.

Fantham is a woman on a mission, and her new commentary on Cicero's speech *pro Murena* also sets out to find the most effective means of bringing Latin literature to new generations.⁷ Cicero's speech defending L. Murena from charges of electoral corruption was delivered in one of the busiest and most exciting periods of the orator's life, during his consulship in 63 BCE, and is a model of rhetorical brilliance, quoted liberally by Quintilian in a later generation. Fantham's commentary takes as its starting point the idea that today's undergraduates are politically savvy and well versed in matters of political corruption, election strategy, and spin, but are, on the other hand, lacking the advanced skills in reading Latin that would have been expected from someone of her own generation. As she suggests, a new kind of commentary is needed that takes these new strengths and weaknesses into account; a twenty-first-century commentary must capitalize on students' political sophistication to ignite their interest in the extraordinary tangles of Ciceronian oratory, and offer the right balance of support in terms of linguistic assistance and historical background, so that the excitement of the text is not bludgeoned to death by the need to look up every other Latin word. Fantham's commentary aims to allow Latin students to grasp the significance of the speech and to keep their interest alive as they read, motivating them to dig into the language themselves. Her introduction, however, lacks her usual light touch, and plunges students into a very dense thicket of Roman political history, from which I fear some young novices might not emerge without the patient guidance of an excellent teacher; there is no explanation of the potentially confusing Roman naming conventions, nor of who Quintus Cicero is, nor what Asconius' commentary is, nor what 'rather Isocratean' (25) means as a description of Cicero's style. On page 26 the word 'antonomasia' is explained only with an untranslated Latin quotation from Quintilian; in fact, the introduction contains copious untranslated Latin passages liable to make the Latin-light reader either panic or glaze over. But I think that this may be a deliberate 'tough love' approach: there is no point in pretending that *really* getting to grips with Latin texts in the original is easy, and only the most stalwart need apply. Fantham's approach demands effort from a student, just as it should, and this effort will be repaid. Once we reach the commentary itself, where Fantham really shines, the path is clearer: lively, accessible, and learned, it is full of helpful interpretative prompts, colourful information, and telling modern comparisons. With its helpful appendices of related texts (in both Latin and English translation), this little book adds up to a brilliant starter pack for the study of Ciceronian politics and oratory, which demands hard work from the students and will take them far.

⁷ *Cicero's Pro L. Murena Oratio*. Introduction and commentary by Elaine Fantham. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. vii + 224. 1 map. Hardback £64, ISBN: 978-0-19-997452-8; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-997453-5.

In her wonderful new anthology of Roman letters, Noelle K. Zeiner-Carmichael approaches our perennial challenge of renewing Classics for the changing world from a completely different direction from Fantham;⁸ she dispenses with the Latin entirely, presenting the ancient texts only in translation, but far more explicitly than Fantham lays the emphasis in her introductory chapter on modern idiom and thought-provoking questions to inspire a sophisticated and nuanced critical approach to the ancient literature. She starts by quoting Emily Post's lament about the imminent demise of letter-writing in the new age of mass media; written in 1922, it is a salutary reminder that our modern concerns are not always as new as we might assume, and a neat way of jolting us into a fresh perspective on Roman letters too. She shows us how reflection on communication and self-fashioning in our own digital age is an effective path into considering literary critical issues: does the instant click of the email facilitate interpersonal relations or keep them at electronic arm's length (2)? She helpfully suggests that readers might 'take a moment to think about Facebook' (16) and the deliberate self-presentation on display there, moulded to specific audiences, as a means to break down assumptions about a clear distinction between the real and the fictional. From Cicero's earliest surviving letter to Atticus in November 68 BCE to a third-century CE mother writing to her son Ptolemaeus about his study of *Iliad* 6, the 216 letters or extracts are then organized chronologically in three subsequent chapters: 'The Roman Republic' (70–27 BCE), 'The Augustan Age' (27 BCE–14 CE), and 'The Roman Empire' (14 CE–third century CE), with a brief coda on 'Epistolary Theorists'. As one might expect, a large proportion of the letters are Ciceronian or Plinian (forty-nine from Cicero's correspondence, fifty-nine from Pliny's), but Zeiner-Carmichael's selection goes far beyond this to reflect the vast range of this 'expansive genre' (2), up and down the social scale from slaves and soldiers to scholars and emperors. It includes the Greek inscription of an official letter from the emperor Tiberius, letters from the New Testament by Paul and Jude, Vindolanda tablets, and letters written on papyrus by ordinary folk, as well as letters embedded in texts written by Sallust and Suetonius, and literary letters by poets such as Catullus, Horace, Propertius, Ovid, Martial, and Statius. The translations throughout are accessible and engaging, although sometimes they veer too far into modern slang for my taste: Cicero's writes to Atticus 'So maybe it seems a tad tacky to tell you how busy I am' (30); worse, Pliny starts a letter to Valerius Paulinus 'I'm pissed at you' (130), which seems unnecessarily crude for the Latin *irascor*. A great strength of this volume is Zeiner-Carmichael's emphasis on the need to read these letters as literature, and her judicious selection promotes intertextual comparison and encourages the reader to pick out illuminating thematic connections between letters (such as the recurrent ones of friendship, travel, illness, and death). The up-to-date bibliography and valuable pointers for further reading reflect the informed critical approach, and the introduction provides among other things a succinct outline of theoretical approaches to ancient letters.

Although it is designed for students at school and university, Efrossini Spentzou's beautifully written and absorbing introduction to Roman love elegy is certainly no

⁸ *Roman Letters. An Anthology*. Edited and translated by Noelle K. Zeiner-Carmichael. John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, and Chichester, 2014. Pp. xx + 197. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-4443-3950-5; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-4443-3951-2.

dull textbook, and there is also something adult about the complexity of emotion that it evokes and addresses in its discussion of the long-dead poets.⁹ Well versed in critical theory, Spentzou does not read the poems as straight autobiographical accounts of real love affairs, and she brings to her study a full awareness of the literary games the poets are playing. However, she also finds a strong voice with which to evoke the urgency and poignancy of this poetry, reading through the verses to a real world of political turmoil and social alienation, where the Roman poets are a (long) generation of lost boys, searching for a place to belong. A slim hundred pages, this is a book that can be read with pleasure at a single sitting. In keeping with its educational aims, it is packed with information about the poets, their poetry, and their historical and cultural context, and it offers a useful guide to further reading at the back. However, the book itself reads more like a reflective essay, full of poetic sensibility, that takes the rich oeuvre of the Roman poets only as a starting point for a compelling meditation on life and love, concluding on a note of sweet melancholy with Ovid's wandering 'love without home' (97).

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Greek History

Two important recent books re-examine long-standing orthodoxies which have come under fire in recent decades. Julia Kindt challenges the orthodox model of Greek religion which has put the *polis* as its central organizing principle, as manifested in the work of Christianne Sourvinou-Inwood and the Paris school.¹ The book combines methodological and theoretical discussion with a series of case studies ranging from the Archaic period to the Second Sophistic. Kindt does not deny the value of the *polis*-centred model for major aspects of Greek religious life; rather, her main disagreement is that it creates simplistic polarities and leaves aside or treats as exceptions many important aspects of Greek religion. While the *polis* model sees religion as embedded in the structures of the *polis*, Kindt argues persuasively for the need to conceptualize Greek religion as a series of interrelated but distinct layers. She rightly stresses the autonomy of religion as a symbolic and figural system; and she emphasizes the significance of personal experience and agency and the ways in which practices such as magic illustrate the multiple links between personal experience and agency and the religious community of the *polis*. Finally, of particular significance is her challenge to the standard polarity of local versus Panhellenic and the need to adopt a wider spectrum of layers and identities.

⁹ *The Roman Poetry of Love. Elegy and Politics in a Time of Revolution*. By Efrossini Spentzou. Classical World series. London, Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. xiv + 107. Paperback £12.99, ISBN: 978-1-7809-3204-0.

¹ *Rethinking Greek Religion*. By Julia Kindt. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xiii + 235. 8 figures. Hardback £52, ISBN: 978-0-521-11092-1; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-12773-8.