

control it' (215). This not only characterizes the tale of the Minotaur but epitomizes, I think, this compelling book.

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doi:10.1017/S0017383524000068

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Latin literature

The study of the transmission of Latin texts has received an important new addition: the second volume of Stephen Oakley's *Studies in the Transmission of Latin Texts*, dedicated to the text of Vitruvius, the agricultural treatises of Cato and Varro, Porphyrio's commentary on Horace (or, rather, the abbreviated commentary transmitted under his name in manuscript V and younger related manuscripts), and Priscian's Latin translation of Dionysius' *Periegesis*.¹ In meticulous analyses and close work with manuscripts and incunables, Oakley traces the transmission of these texts and the genealogical relationships of individual (groups of) manuscripts as well as the progress of the scholarship on their transmission. The book is nicely illustrated by fifty-one images of some of the key manuscripts, and Oakley provides information of how to access these and others online as well.

Oakley's aim is to prove the value of the genealogical and stemmatic methods for the texts in question (i.e. of assessing individual manuscripts based on their position in the 'family tree' of manuscripts and their interrelationships) and to shed new light on the transmission history of the texts in question and the value of individual manuscripts, in order to assess their value for future new editions of the texts. Oakley's book is certainly a work for the specialist, but, in addition to the insights into the textual transmissions in question, a lot can be learned from it about the story behind ancient texts: the journeys of individual manuscripts and scribes and about the broader cultural history behind them, including the mix-up of manuscript pages and the occasional borrowed manuscript that, despite promises to the contrary, was never returned. Oakley's recent volume is not only testimony to painstaking labour and immense learning, but also an important reminder that we need to train students and the next generation of scholars in the history of transmission and textual criticism, to keep alive the fascinating history behind the texts that have reached us through such a long chain of transmission.

Moving back in time to the early stages of the history of Latin literature, we come to Erik Pulz' commentary on the love poetry by Laevius.² Laevius' *Erotopaegnia*, a

¹ *Studies in the Transmission of Latin Texts. Volume II: Vitruvius, Cato, De agricultura and Varro, De re rustica, Porphyrio, and Priscian, Periegesis*. By S. P. Oakley. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiii + 418. 51 b/w illustrations. Hardback £160.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-8-84873-8.

² *Laevius – ein altlateinischer Liebesdichter. Studien, Text und Interpretationskommentar*. By Erik Pulz. Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 153. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. xiii + 315. Hardback £100.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-23643-8.

collection of poems in at least six books, in a variety of metres, and which was probably written and published between the 130s and 110s BC, has been transmitted exclusively through the testimony of other ancient writers. Laevius seems to have been the first Roman poet to write love poetry, mostly mythological love poetry, but his oeuvre also includes, for instance, a poem shaped like the wings of a phoenix. It is clear that he had some influence on later Latin literature, especially love elegy, the exact form and extent of which, however, remains hard to determine. Pulz offers a detailed introduction to the work of this less well-known Latin poet and his fragments. In the commentary itself, he presents a very thorough and lucid discussion of the complex metre, the language (including such fun Naeavian coinages as *subductisupercilicarpiores*, roughly translatable as ‘eyebrow-raising fault-finders’), the content of the fragments, of matters of textual criticism and interpretation, of the myths that are treated in the fragments – many of which Laevius first introduces into Latin poetry from his Greek sources – as well as of Laevius’ models and reception. Overall, Pulz adopts a rather cautious approach, carefully weighing linguistic and literary evidence and avoiding any hasty or speculative conclusions. I found his comments on the linguistic details of Laevius’ old Latin particularly useful. Pulz does an admirable job in shedding light on the highly fragmentary work of an early Latin poet, whose work raises – and will continue to raise – more questions than the current state of our knowledge allows us to answer.

Edoardo Galfré creates an exciting new framework for reading Ovid’s *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* (‘Letters from Pontus’).³ In both works, he identifies a double temporal dimension at play, one grounded in Ovid’s circumstances of exile – that of an urge to come to an end, to be granted a revocation and return to Rome, which would effectively end both exile and exile poetry – and repetition, connected with the urge to keep writing and communicating with the public in Rome and to remain alive and remembered. While scholars have often emphasized the ‘measurelessness’ of time in Ovid’s exile poetry, its ‘a-temporality’, Galfré offers a welcome reminder that the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* develop gradually and, much like the *Metamorphoses*, also have a *telos* (‘goal’, ‘end’) in view, in this case the poet’s return to Rome. In Ovid’s poems from exile, time keeps progressing between two poles: the traumatic moment when the sentence was passed and Ovid had to leave Rome, and the longed-for moment of his return, at some point in the future, the expectation of which provides Ovid with the key reason for writing (and, in fact, living). The time between these two poles possesses some features of Ovid’s own poem on time, the *Fasti*, in that, like the six books dedicated to each month of the Roman calendar, the fairly regular sending of books and letters to Rome creates a circular rhythm of time. Rather than time, for Ovid, dissolving itself into an ‘a-temporality’, Galfré sees some of the temporal movements of the two works Ovid wrote just prior to his exile continued in the poetry written from Pontus.

In a detailed and nuanced discussion, Galfré shows how these dynamics play out in individual books and poems of Ovid’s exilic oeuvre. His discussion is full of intriguing observations. To name but a few, I enjoyed Galfré’s remarks on the position of Ovid’s

³ *Storia di un esule. L’evoluzione della poesia dell’esilio di Ovidio dai ‘Tristia’ alle ‘Epistulae ex Ponto’*. By Edoardo Galfré. Palingenesia 135. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2023. Pp. 242. Hardback £52.06, ISBN: 978-3-51-5-13371-5.

exile poems ‘in the middle’ or in the meantime (*interea*), both in terms of time and in terms of space, as they travel from Pontus to Rome, as well as his fine discussion of the continuities between the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, as the sending of books of poems in the *Tristia* gives way to a more intense – and more economic – sending of letters in the *ex Ponto*, but also on the ‘dissolution’ that he observes in the final book of *ex Ponto*, which he takes to have been edited by Ovid himself rather than posthumously. In the epilogue, Galfré suggests that Ovid, who in his amatory poetry brought an end even to what used to be endless elegiac love, in his exile poetry makes elegiac lament and longing endless again, inexhaustible. He thus opens up an exciting perspective not only on Ovid’s exile poetry, but also on the question of endings and continuations in elegy – a topic to which his wonderful book is probably not the last, but certainly a very important, highly recommended contribution.

Endings are also the topic of a volume edited by Angeliki Nektaria Roumpou, entitled *Ritual and the Poetics of Closure in Flavian Literature*.⁴ It goes back to a series of four online workshops held in 2021, which themselves became a very nice ritual during the pandemic, and which I had the pleasure to attend (yet I was not involved in the final volume, so I have no conflicting interests in reviewing it). The contributions explore the connection between ritual and closure in Martial’s epigrams (Neger; Keith), Statius’ *Silvae* and *Thebaid* (Dell’Anno; Lovatt), Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* (Papaioannou; Knierim), and Silius Italicus’ *Punica* (Schroer; Antoniadis). Jörg Rüpke provides a thought-provoking starting point in the first paper, by developing a theory of rituals as resonant events that provide a dynamic way of creating relationships between people, times, spaces, and a transcendence created by ritual action, which invites communication between the self and the world. He persuasively applies these insights to rituals in Statius’ *Thebaid*, which, he concludes, are seen as sites of complexity and conflict rather than ones that affirm the social or cosmic order. Of the following contributions, only Helen Lovatt, however, fully engages with Rüpke’s discussion, in a very productive way. It would have been good to see a more sustained dialogue with Rüpke’s chapter throughout the volume, which could have greatly enhanced the individual analyses – which are all worthwhile in their own right, to be sure, showing how ritual, rather than providing a stable sense of an ending, more often than not complicates closure, creates disruption, and increases complexity.

One theme that is hinted at again and again throughout the collection is the connection between closure, ritual, and images of binding and release. This connection, however, is not explicitly discussed and theorized in the introduction – although it is a fascinating one – and so Marco Fucecchi’s otherwise excellent and stimulating paper on the phrase *compage soluta* (‘when the framework [of the world] is dissolved’) in Lucan and later poets (Silius, Statius, and Claudian) struck me as less closely bound to the overall theme than the other papers. The volume ends with an epilogue by Damien Nelis, in which he confronts head-on a question that has been beneath the surface throughout, i.e. how ritual and closure in Flavian literature differ from the literature of other periods. He sketches out what a hypothetical volume

⁴ *Ritual and the Poetics of Closure in Flavian Literature*. Edited by Angeliki-Nektaria Roumpou. Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volume 147. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. viii + 252. Hardback £103.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-0-77046-9.

on ‘Ritual and the Poetics of Closure in Augustan Literature’ might look like, thus giving the reader a lot to think about as the volume itself draws to a close. As Nelis rightly says, it certainly opens up broad avenues for future research, both Flavian and beyond.

While Roumpou’s is just one of the latest contributions to the ever-growing corpus of scholarship on Flavian literature, we turn next to a still neglected late antique text: the *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* (‘Deeds of Alexander of Macedon’), a Latin version of the Greek *Alexander Romance* by Iulius Valerius, probably from the first third of the fourth century AD.⁵ On this text, a new volume edited by Hartmut Wulfram sheds new light. Collectively, the papers address questions like the relationship of Iulius Valerius’ text – which, they agree, is much more than a mere Latin translation of the Greek *Alexander Romance* – with his literary models, both Greek and Latin, his style, and the wider background of tellings and retellings of a story as fascinating as that of Alexander, the rich intertextual engagement with Greek and Roman authors and the historical background to the text, as well as its afterlife. The latter topic is represented by Gabriel Siemoneit’s paper on the so-called ‘Zacher-Epitome’ from the ninth century or before and the way its author abridges and adapts Valerius’ text.

Siemoneit, interestingly, draws on an ‘Automated Readability Index’ for some of his observations and raises some intriguing questions, such as what the compressed nature of the text means for its conceptions of time and space and what the epitomator’s concept of fictionality might have been – a particularly interesting question when dealing with Valerius’ work that, as many contributors show, keeps straddling the boundary between fact and fiction, as well as between genres like historiography, novel, and epic. Another question that runs through the volume is that of the political meaning of the text. As the contributors agree, Valerius strikingly presented Alexander in a Roman and – mostly – positive light. While some see in this an endorsement of the Roman emperor Constantin, Christian Thrué Djurslev sounds a note of caution, arguing that the presentation of Alexander in this work is of such a general nature that almost any emperor would fit his portrayal. Overall, it clearly emerges that Valerius’ text and its context, literary and political, will repay further study, for which this ‘companion-like miscellany’, as Wulfram calls it (4),⁶ provides a thought-provoking guide.

Deborah Beck, in her new book paints a broad picture of the ‘story of similes’ in Greek and Roman epic, i.e. in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica*, the *Aeneid*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.⁷ She argues that, so far, work on similes in ancient epic has mostly focused on individual similes or groups of similes, or similes in just one work, rather than on the way the ‘simile world’ of one epic communicates with those of previous works. Beck very competently fills this gap. She emphasizes that similes help the audience relate to an epic narrative on an emotional, even physical, level, while laying out what is distinctive about the ‘simile world’ of each of the five epics. In insightful close readings of similes and their intratextual and intertextual connections, with some quantitative analysis in the endnotes to each chapter and available through the

⁵ *Der lateinische ›Alexanderroman‹ des Iulius Valerius. Sprache, Erzählung, Kontext.* Edited by Hartmut Wulfram. Millennium-Studien / Millennium Studies 101. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. viii + 233. Hardback £91.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-08558-6.

⁶ ‘companionartiges Miscellaneum’.

⁷ *The Stories of Similes in Greek and Roman Epic.* By Deborah Beck. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. 277. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-10-8-48179-3.

accompanying online open-access database (<<https://epic-similes-beck.la.utexas.edu/>>), Beck draws attention to the broader developments that are going on: how similes move closer both to the story world and the contemporary world of the audience over time, including more and more references to specific geographical locations, as the borders between the world of the simile and the epic story world tend to dissolve and the ‘exit clause’ of similes (a concluding ‘so’ after an introductory ‘as’) becomes less and less common.

In the similes of the *Odyssey*, Beck finds an emphasis on human relationships being kept up or disrupted, as well as on separation, loss, and homecoming; in the *Iliad* on the costs of poor leadership for both Greeks and Trojans, often shown through images of shepherds; the similes of the *Argonautica* foreground human expertise and skill, with another group of similes illustrating female isolation and sorrow. In the similes of the *Aeneid*, human beings become strikingly scarce, which underscores the loneliness and sorrow of the epic tale, but also *furor* and overwhelming passion, while Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* transforms the simile along with so much else, taking up the conventions of epic similes and creating something new and including, in his similes, ‘a kaleidoscope of creatures, artifacts, and events’ (215) rather than a more coherent simile world. I enjoyed the many perceptive readings of individual similes and their intertextual connections that Beck offers. In the case of the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, I was a bit surprised to find that an open acknowledgment of the debates around authorship only come up retrospectively in the chapter on the *Argonautica* (and there rather dismissively labelled ‘scholarly wrangling about the “Homeric question”’, 151). Taking it on board right away in the two Homeric chapters might have made the discussion of these similes (including the question of why there are no similes in the first books of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) even more stimulating. Overall, however, Beck’s monograph is a very welcome addition to the scholarship on similes that broadens our view in a rewarding way.

Maximilian Höhl presents a study of the triumph as conceptual metaphor in the literature of the late Republic and early Principate.⁸ In a very substantial introduction, which comprises more than one third of the book, Höhl discusses Lakoff and Johnson’s work on conceptual metaphors, from which his own study takes its cue and to which Höhl adds a focus on the performative function of literary texts, as well as on some broader, contemporary discourses on the Roman triumph. In the main chapters, Höhl discusses the way the metaphor of the triumph is used in Caesar’s *De bello Gallico* (‘On the Gallic War’), Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia* (‘Natural History’), Cicero’s *Brutus*, Vitruvius’ *De Architectura* (‘On Architecture’), and the *Laus Pisonis* (‘Praise of Piso’), an anonymous, panegyric text probably from the Neronian age. Taking the concepts of *imperium* and *spectaculum* (‘empire’ and ‘spectacle’) to be key elements of the triumph and its use as a metaphor, Höhl argues that Caesar’s and Pliny’s texts can be read as the literary reflection of the presentation of booty and conquest and of a *spectaculum*, a function that the text itself performs as well. By contrast, in the *Brutus*, *De Architectura*, and the *Laus Pisonis*, what prevails is the idea of literary

⁸ *Literarische Triumphe. Der römische Triumph als konzeptuelle Metapher in der Literatur der späten Republik und der frühen Kaiserzeit*. By Maximilian Höhl. Millennium-Studien 103. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. ix + 330. Hardback £100.00, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-08089-5.

achievements as a special kind of triumph, one that is even more enduring. Behind these metaphorical uses of the triumph, Höhl identifies crucial changes in the literary use of the Roman triumph, which is invoked not just in military contexts, but is more and more applied to other areas as well, including the pursuits of peaceful *otium* ('leisure').

While the presence of the triumph as a metaphor has already been suggested, at least in passing, e.g. for *De bello Gallico* and the *Naturalis Historia*, Höhl offers a detailed and nuanced discussion both of the use of the term *triumphus* as well as the broader conceptual role played by the triumph within a given work, with some fine observations. For instance, I enjoyed his discussion of the ambivalent role of *natura* ('nature') and its resources in the *Naturalis Historia* – as something that one can fight with or against – and its connection with different approaches to the triumph, its moral connotations, and its role within Roman history. One fundamental weakness in this approach, which the author himself acknowledges (e.g. 298), is the difficulty of pinning down exactly whether the metaphor evoked in a text is specifically a triumph or closely related phenomena like a *pompa funebris* ('funeral procession'), in the case of the *Brutus*, or whether the texts simply play on notions of Roman expansion and military victory in a broader sense. This inherent fuzziness in the conceptual metaphor of the triumph slightly limits the usefulness of the insights gained, but it still emerges clearly from Höhl's monograph that triumphs are good to think (or write) with for Roman authors and that they reflect a wide variety of attitudes towards Rome, Roman military expansion, and even much more leisurely pursuits.

Amy Koenig has chosen a very interesting topic for her monograph, on the silencing of voices in imperial literature.⁹ She shows that the loss of voice and the physical ability to speak does not necessarily entail complete powerlessness, since the body can find other ways to communicate, through gestures or other kinds of performance, especially pantomime. Koenig assembles an ambitious amount of material, from Galen over Ovid, the Greek novel, to the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos* ('donkey') and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, up to Prudentius' martyr poems of the *Peristephanon* ('Crowns of Martyrdom'), which she briefly discusses in the epilogue. In the first chapter, on Galen's writings and experiments with speech and the voice of both humans and animals, Koenig discusses very interestingly how Galen's writings on the speech apparatus are infused with issues of power. Her conclusion that, in Galen, vocal disability can also be imagined as an act of liberation or rebellion rather than repression, lays the ground for the following chapters and Koenig's emphasis on the powers of communication that still are or become available to those who suffer from the loss of voice or speech. In the chapter on Ovid's *Fasti*, Koenig responds in particular to Denis Feeney,¹⁰ who has drawn attention to the theme of enforced silence running through the poem by arguing that, in stories like those of Callisto, Lara, and Lucretia, the loss of voice actually entails a new form of power that these female figures

⁹ *The Fractured Voice. Silence and Power in Imperial Roman Literature*. By Amy Koenig. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2024. Pp. vii + 219. Hardback £99.00, ISBN: 978-0-29-9-34530-3.

¹⁰ D. C. Feeney, 'Si licet et fas est: Ovid's *Fasti* and the Problem of Free Speech under the Principate', in A. Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry & Propaganda in the Age of Augustus* (London, 1997), 1–25.

wield through their silence, such as the role that Lara's offspring, the Lares, will play in Roman religion.

Koenig next homes in on a motif that will be prominent throughout the rest of the monograph: that of pantomime. Discussing the stories of Philomela, Echo, and Syrinx in the *Metamorphoses*, the framework of pantomime allows her to shine a light on the way bodily communication can shift the emphasis away from the disempowerment entailed by the loss of voice. While Koenig takes her cue from recent scholarship on pantomime in the *Metamorphoses*, her discussion would certainly have benefited from engagement with Peter Wiseman's work on the performance of some of Ovid's stories on the Roman stage.¹¹ Koenig next turns to two Greek novels – *Leucippe and Clitophon* and *Daphnis and Chloe* – showing how they explore the language and ideas of theatrical performance to comment on issues of voice, body, communication, and voyeuristic desire. In her final chapter, she treats the Greek story of Lucius-turned-donkey and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* alongside each other, again focusing on how elements of performance compensate for the loss of speech. Regarding Apuleius' novel, Koenig pays particular attention to the transition between Books 1–10 and Book 11, the Isis book in which Lucius is eventually retransformed, arguing that there is a fundamental disconnect between the protagonist and narrator of Books 1–10 and the final book, and that the entrance of Isis has heralded a new voice, one that is separated from the body. Based on this reading, Koenig concludes that, in the novel, the regaining of a voice is not synonymous with the regaining of power and identity, but leads to 'a permanent destabilization of the link between voice and body' (145).

I must admit that I was not wholly convinced by this argument, which, to my mind, also failed to address the fundamental humour inherent in the novel, which is very much a powerful celebration of storytelling, in the voice of a speaker who has been a voiceless animal. Throughout, I felt that Koenig could have been a bit more nuanced in her examination of issues of sound and power; the 'liberation' observed in Galen's work, for instance, leads to a stream of air that produces no sound, as she briefly acknowledges (28); the religious silence connected with Lara's story in the *Fasti* seems categorically different from the silencing suffered by the goddess, and the syrinx that comes up in a number of stories discussed by Koenig is not only connected with bodily communication, but still emits an – albeit altered – musical 'voice', which Koenig does not comment on. In the epilogue, she very interestingly turns to the question of what happened to the motif of loss of speech in Christian literature. A short discussion of Prudentius' *Peristephanon* 10 allows her to bring together some of the key themes of this book. At the same time, the Christian author takes them to a new level, as only now, Koenig argues, does the special role of the martyr allow him to fully exploit the power that comes with the loss and regaining of speech in a Christian context. This is definitely a fascinating observation, and I would very much hope that Koenig will take up this topic in the future and explore these changes of a powerful literary theme in more depth.

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of Robert Kaster's seminal *Guardians of Language*, Adam Gitner organized a conference in 2018 and has now edited the proceedings, to

¹¹ E.g. T. P. Wiseman, *Roman Drama and Roman History* (Exeter, 1998); T. P. Wiseman, 'Ovid and the Stage', in G. Herbert-Brown (ed.), *Ovid's Fasti. Historical Readings at its Bimillennium* (Oxford, 2002), 275–99.

honour Kaster and to walk further steps on the path that he so successfully and influentially laid out with his study of the work of ancient grammarians and their sociopolitical context.¹² The cast of colleagues assembled by Gitner takes this work further by studying the attitude towards language, language change, and diversity, not only of grammarians *stricto sensu*, but also of scholars and intellectuals more broadly. After an introduction by the editor, James Zetzel opens the volume with thought-provoking reflections on the role of the *grammaticus* ('grammarian, philologist') as 'guardian' of language, in the face of the 'corrupting' influence of language change. The first part of the volume is dedicated to Varro: to the question of whether he really was as conservative as is often assumed (Volk), to the use of the Sabine language in his *De lingua Latina* ('On the Latin language'; de Melo), as well as the complex – and often incompatible – uses to which Varro puts the metaphor of the word tree in his oeuvre (Zanker). Part two contains papers on individual grammarians, with a focus on the use of Greek in Diomedes' late antique Latin textbook, the *Ars grammatica* (Rochette), on the late antique grammarian Consentius (fourth/fifth century AD) and his attitude towards language change, variation, language contact, and borrowing (Mari) as well as the attitude towards the ancient linguistic tradition in Pompeius' *Commentum* (fifth or sixth century AD; Zago). Tim Denecker contributes an intriguing piece on the attempts by ancient grammarians to identify a nominal or verbal dual in Latin and how this discourse ran into the middle ages, and Alessandro Garcea and Maria Chiara Scappaticcio offer insights into the linguistic and exegetical work reflected in an annotated, sixth-century Juvenal codex from Egypt.

Part three opens with a fascinating paper by Adam Gitner, on the use of the metaphor of lexical citizenship for what we would term lexical borrowing (a metaphor that, as Gitner states, is almost completely alien to antiquity). Classifying loanwords as, e.g., words of 'Latin right' or 'full citizens' allows the grammarians, especially in the century or so between Seneca and Gellius, to express subtle degradations in a word's 'foreignness', in a grammatical discourse that is deeply embedded in an understanding of language as consensual or contractual rather than natural. Gellius' nuanced position on linguistic and social change is the focus of Leofranc Holford-Strevens' paper, and Rolando Ferri contributes a stimulating discussion of the linguistic and grammatical language used by ancient jurists in discussing texts, as well as the influence of ancient grammatical scholars on them. The volume closes with Robert Kaster's own reflections on the origins of his groundbreaking work – a humble and highly encouraging read that brings out very clearly the role played by chance and luck, as well as supportive colleagues, even in a career as stellar as Kaster's. The final piece in the volume is a bibliographic supplement to the prosopography of late antique grammarians in *Guardians of Language*. The volume raises intriguing questions on attitudes to language change and the contact between different languages, as well as to the gap between the grammatical systematization of language and its much more unruly usage (*consuetudo*), as it traces the way the reflection on language is anchored in the civic, legal, and social realities of its time, both then and now. Kaster, who, as Gitner mentions, did not wish to have a *Festschrift*, could not have hoped for a more thought-provoking and lasting tribute.

¹² *Roman Perspectives on Linguistic Diversity. Guardians of a Changing Language*. Edited by Adam Gitner. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiv + 274. 16 b/w illustrations. Hardback £54.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-7-61197-5.

I would like to end with a book that is a passionate plea for Latin, which, Charlie Kerrigan argues, has been and still is very much alive.¹³ Based on his blog named *Confabulations*, which was part of the ‘Living Latin’ project at Trinity College Dublin, Kerrigan makes a compelling case against the oft-repeated view that Latin, nowadays, is elitist, irrelevant, or dead. Instead, he sets out to show the side of Latin and Latin literature ‘that is popular and plural, messy and creative, functioning through the ages as a kind of grab-bag for readers and artists and writers of many different stripes’ (42–3). In the first chapter, he shows that, despite the way Latin and Latin literature are often taught, Latin has by no means been the sole preserve of the elite and of a Vergil or a Cicero. He gives a voice to those ordinary, working speakers of Latin who express themselves on tiles, tombstones, or in travel diaries, like that of Egeria, or in graffiti, encouraging us to imagine the wide range of social and regional variation of spoken Latin that is now lost to us – the Latin of unfree women, artisans, or shopkeepers. In the second chapter, he presents ‘pop Classics’, that is, some famous Latin texts and their reception in popular culture and relevance to modern times, such as Petronius’ *Satyricon*, the poetry of Sulpicia, Vergil’s *Aeneid*, or Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Finally, Kerrigan sketches out the transition from Latin to the Romance languages, tracing the ‘high’ and ‘low’ branches of Latin and their development and reminding us of the fluid boundaries and sometimes artificial and political distinction between the two, as well as of the fact that Latin is still very much alive in the latter.

He keeps an eye on the reception of Latin throughout, especially in Ireland but also beyond, and ends with a plea that every citizen should have access to ‘meaningful and creative arts education’ (99), including Latin, in order, in the words of Antonio Gramsci, ‘to be themselves and to know themselves consciously’.¹⁴ Far from just rehearsing well-known arguments in favour of Latin, Kerrigan paints an exciting and engaging picture of Latin and its rich history and vivid presence in our world and makes an excellent case for the importance of access to the teaching of Latin – a highly recommended read not only for Latinists, for an enjoyable reminder of the ‘bigger picture’, but especially for students and anyone with an interest in Latin, as well as, hopefully, for those in charge of education in schools and universities.

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doi:10.1017/S001738352400007X

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¹³ *Living Latin. Everyday Language and Popular Culture*. By Charlie Kerrigan. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. Pp. ix + 121. Paperback £15.29, ISBN: 978-1-35-0-37703-5.

¹⁴ Quoted in Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (eds.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York, 1971), 182.