extremely focused volume, yet the contributors give us these and other glimpses of resonant linguistic practices. This can help us connect the dots between Ancient Greek Comedy and its more familiar successors, adding to our appreciation of the genre – even if we don't always get the joke.

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Latin literature

When thinking about the current state of the study of Latin literature and about where the field might be heading next, the obvious place to start for this review is Roy Gibson and Christopher Whitton's *Cambridge Critical Guide to Latin Literature*.[1] At more than 900 pages, it is a very substantial and exciting read. In fifteen chapters, plus an introduction by the editors and an envoi by Mary Beard, the contributors – all well-known and established experts in their areas of research – discuss the canons (Peirano) and periodizations (Kelly) of Latin literature, some of its key questions and methodological tools ('author and identity', Sharrock; intertextuality, O'Rourke/ Pelttari), as well as its relationship with adjacent fields: medieval Latin (Stover), Neo-Latin (Haskell), reception (Uden), linguistics (Clackson), material culture (Squire/ Elsner), philosophy (Volk), political thought (Lowrie), Roman history (Lavan), Greek (Goldhill), as well as the national traditions that shape the discipline (Fuhrer) and, one of its key tasks, the editing of Latin texts (Huskey/Kaster). As the editors themselves admit in their introduction, the topics covered in the volume are by necessity selective and could very well have included others that are now only touched upon in individual chapters, such as questions of gender, rhetoric, religion, education, science, or law.

One of the volume's key calls to action is that, going forward, Latinists should open up more in their work with Latin texts – towards historical, linguistic, and philosophical approaches, to new perspectives offered by 'distant reading', to a 'global Classics' approach, opening the canon of texts they discuss to include marginal and 'minor' texts in a new 'ethics of the periphery' (86), looking beyond the sphere of the elite, as well as studying Latin literature well beyond the second century AD, taking more of a *longue durée* approach to Latin literature, which in fact spans more than two millennia, including medieval and neo-Latin texts. The individual contributions are all very intriguing. To give but a few examples: Michael Squire and Jás Elsner offer an exciting exploration of the dynamics between texts and material objects, reminding us that texts too, first and foremost, come to us as material objects, e.g. in manuscripts or on stones, just like there is an 'inherent textuality' to the Roman visual environment (618); and the papers by Michèle Lowrie and Myles Lavan work very well together as explorations of the political and power dynamics that can be traced within

texts, and to which Latinists should equally be alert. The contributions contain many very fine case studies. To limit myself to just two examples: I very much enjoyed James Clackson's nuanced exploration of what linguistics can and cannot do for literary critics; or Michèle Lowrie's wonderful reading of the death of Turnus in the *Aeneid* and what this scene and its language entail for the political dynamics that can be seen at work here and throughout Vergil's epic (795–805).

Other future directions for the field that are discussed from different angles in several of the contributions are the challenges and opportunities that come with the rise of digital media and that have an impact, e.g., on how we communicate our research to a broader audience, but also for the editing of Latin texts and presenting intertexts and commentaries in digital form. Another question that runs through the volume – and that is given a nice historical grounding in Therese Fuhrer's paper on the different national traditions of scholarship on Latin literature – is that of the kind of expertise and the linguistic training required to study Latin texts. As Yasmin Haskell nicely shows in her exploration of Neo-Latin literature, if we want the field to open up more beyond a fairly narrow canon of texts, and if we want to do justice to Neo-Latin texts that have been written around the world, we not only need an excellent command of Latin, but also of the modern languages that provide the context in which these texts were written. While some of the contributions do an excellent job at offering such a broadened perspective – by discussing both literary and epigraphic texts and their interaction, or by showing how certain themes and interactions continue into the early Christian period (e.g. Volk and Goldhill) – I was a bit concerned to see that several contributions, exclusively or almost exclusively, rely on secondary literature written in just one language, in English. While Therese Fuhrer is certainly right to claim that English is increasingly becoming a lingua franca of classical research (448), classicists who are, rightly, keen to go beyond the current limits that we too often observe in our discipline should also be eager to explore and discuss the very rich scholarship in languages other than English. I very much hope that we will be able, in schools and universities, to provide students with the linguistic knowledge required to take the study of Latin in the exciting directions sketched out in this thought-provoking volume.

Staying with books that are relevant to the field of Latin literature as a whole, we come next to an elegant, wide-ranging and intriguing volume by Emily Gowers: on 'the lives and afterlives' of Maecenas.[2] Gowers starts by acknowledging that we have secure knowledge of very few facts about Maecenas and his life, while, at the same time, a very rich literary and biographical tradition has been created around him. After giving a quick overview of the little that we do know about Maecenas, Gowers analyzes in detail what the figure of Maecenas stands for in the poetry of Horace, Vergil in the *Georgics*, and Propertius, while also very interestingly tracing the way this portrait is rooted in earlier Greco-Roman literature and archaic 'praise economy'. In the following chapters, it is fascinating to see the connecting threads with the poets' representation of Maecenas, but also how quickly 'Rome's patron' is recast after his death: e.g. in the writings of Seneca, where he becomes a forerunner to the type

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of the libertine or decadent, in Petronius, Martial, and Tacitus, but also the pseudo-Vergilian *Elegiae in Maecenatem* ('Elegies on Maecenas'). Some of Gowers' points here might seem a bit speculative, e.g. when she traces Maecenas' presence in the fourth book of Propertius' elegies, where he is not even mentioned by name (221–5). Overall, however, she is very successful in showing how productive it is to look for the 'idea' of Maecenas in these texts, rather than for actual biographical information, and how he is present in them in a much more profound sense than is often assumed.

Gowers also intriguingly considers Maecenas' relationship with gems, jewels, and seal rings that both the man and his style have been associated with. In the final two chapters, she discusses the tradition of Maecenas' – real or imagined – gardens, the tower, and the auditorium of Maecenas and traces threads of his very rich afterlife from the Middle Ages, Renaissance Italy, seventeenth-century France, eighteenth-century dedications to Maecenas, to nineteenth- and twentieth-century America in novels such as Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, showing how his name, and the concept of patronage associated with it, keep being adapted to ever new political and cultural contexts. She also teases out some of the associations evoked by the name in modern merchandise, such as Montblanc's limited-edition 'Gaius Maecenas' pen in their 'Patrons of Art' series, with which she very effectively and memorably starts and ends her book. The 'idea' of Maecenas that emerges from Gowers' multi-faceted discussion is an intriguing one, and her book is an eloquent, highly stimulating read for anyone interested in Latin literature and 'Rome's patron'.

I felt reminded of James Clackson's nuanced exploration, in the above-mentioned volume by Gibson and Whitton, of what linguistic research can and cannot do for Latinists when reading the detailed study of word order in Latin elegy by A. M. Devine and Laurence D. Stephens.[3] The authors start from the assertion – very common, yet not entirely correct, as they proceed to show – that word order was completely free in Latin, which, they argue, might be true from a grammatical, but not from a pragmatic point of view. Instead, as they demonstrate for Latin elegiac verse, its syntactical structures are generated by a coherent system of rules that are being systematically applied. The authors also emphasize that the constraints of metre are not responsible for these phenomena, but rather act as filters on the structures generated by syntactical rules: 'metre may account for why some structure is chosen, but syntax accounts for why it is available in the first place' (9).

The examination, which is based on the theoretical framework of generative syntax, is thorough and systematic (with chapters dedicated to the rules regarding nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjuncts, relative clauses, and appositions) and takes into account 'unmarked' word order in Latin prose with its less restrictive rules as well as a wide range of other languages, related and unrelated to Latin. It is certainly a book for readers well-versed in linguistics though – to speak from my own experience as a non-specialist in the field, it would have been very helpful indeed to have received a bit more guidance from the authors, such as regular summaries of the key findings of

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[3] *Latin Elegiac Verse. A Theory of Very Free Word Order. Trends in Classics – Greek and Latin Linguistics 3.* By A. M. Devine and Laurence D. Stephens. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2024. Pp. xii + 320. Hardback £117.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-1-38591-4.

each chapter. Reading this book also made me hope for closer collaborations in the future between linguists and classicists – I would be very intrigued to learn more about how Devine and Stephens' findings chime with the broader interpretive issues of Latin elegiac poetry and the way information is conveyed in the poetry of the different authors, and perhaps also with the linguistic and stylistic differences between elegiac and hexameter poetry.

Iris Brecke greatly adds to our understanding of the interplay of elegy and comedy with her monograph on the role of Terence in Ovidian elegy, which won de Gruyter's Trends in Classics Book Prize in 2023.[4] In her short, yet well-structured monograph, Brecke successfully builds on previous research to show that the influence of comedy, and in particular Terence's comedy, on Ovidian elegy is even more pervasive than is usually assumed. In a careful and thorough study of textual parallels with a keen eye both for the details and their wider context, Brecke argues that Ovid's one explicit reference to Terence in *Tristia* 2 points to a broader dialogue between the two authors, which also includes Horace's epistle 2.1 and which adds a double meaning to Ovid's apparent apology to Augustus. She then goes on to examine the role played by marriage in Terence and Ovid, as well as the issue of rape, followed by chapters in which she discusses the Terentian roots of the themes of a cure against love (*remedia amoris*), of the slavery of love (*servitium amoris*), and love and war (*militia amoris*).

Throughout, Brecke builds on close verbal and situational parallels that, if taken on their own, might not always convince everyone but that, taken together, build a very convincing case that key themes of Latin love elegy are grounded in comedy, especially Terentian comedy, with the *Eunuchus* ('Eunuch') featuring particularly prominently in this discussion. At the same time, Brecke is also open to the important differences between these genres, such as the fact that, in Terentian comedy, marriage usually functions as 'the ultimate cure for love' (78), whereas in Ovid, there never seems to be an effective remedy for the lover's misery. It would have been good to hear a little bit more from Brecke about the broader context of the exciting interplay between these two authors that she outlines so well, and to see a bit more dialogue with the substantial work that has been done on 'Ovid and the stage' in recent years. Brecke correctly states (xviii) that we can, of course, no longer determine whether Ovid actually saw Terentian plays on stage, but it could be interesting to think, on this occasion, a bit more about these different modes of reception and what they might entail. Does the presence of this interplay with Terence add something 'stage-y' or dramatic to Ovidian elegy? And is there then perhaps even more humour in Ovidian elegy than is often assumed, and humour of a different kind? Brecke's work, then, nicely paves the way for further research along these and similar lines, while also being exemplary for a nuanced and attentive study of an important intertextual relationship.

We stay with Ovid, for a bit, switching from elegy to epic and from scholarly monograph to translation. C. Luke Soucy has produced one of the three translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* written, by an interesting coincidence, at roughly the same time, among them Stephanie McCarter's highly acclaimed translation of Ovid's epic

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[4] *Ovid's Terence. Tradition and Allusion in the Love Elegies and Beyond. Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes 156.* By Iris Brecke. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2024. Pp. xxiii + 158. Hardback £97.50, ISBN: 978-3-11-130703-9.

of transformations.[5] Like McCarter's, Soucy's translation is in blank verse, i.e. in unrhymed iambic pentameter, and unlike other translators, Soucy prides himself on keeping exactly the same number of lines as Ovid's original. The result is a translation that conveys very well the pace and the witty, lively character of the Ovidian text and that is a pleasure to read. At times, however, it seemed to me that the aim for brevity – which Ovid himself was a master of as well, of course – means that Soucy has to sacrifice too many small details, ones that are often foreboding and add to the pathos and multi-layered nature of Ovid's text. To give but one very small example, in the encounter between Apollo and Cupid in Book 1, Apollo tells Cupid, in Soucy's translation, to 'content yourself with stirring small desires', while McCarter's 'whatever loves you kindle with your torch, just stick to those' is closer to the original (*tu face nescio quos esto contentus amores / inritare tua*, 1.461–2) and conveys the irony that the god Apollo himself is actually the next victim to fall in love – not exactly a small one.

Like McCarter, Soucy emphasizes in his introduction that what is particularly important to him are the rape stories of the *Metamorphoses*, which his translation aims to clearly represent as such, avoiding the language that, he claims, tends to obscure or downplay sexual assault in other translations. While this is certainly a praiseworthy aim, and while Soucy certainly meets this goal, I wondered whether this interest was not sometimes taken a bit too far in the accompanying commentary. For instance, the explanatory note on pederasty and homosexuality comprises a bit more than two pages and is far longer than any other entry (480–2), and I have difficulty agreeing with Soucy's interpretation that the tale of Syrinx which Mercury tells and which puts Argus to sleep – he is subsequently killed (1.668–721) – is really supposed to convey the moral that 'death awaits those who close their eyes to rape' (413). Otherwise, Soucy's commentary is exemplary in giving readers, who might have no prior knowledge, access to Ovid's text and in allowing them to dive into the text and translation as deeply as they like. The commentary very nicely explains the myths and realia behind the text, but also the style, structure, and key interpretive concerns of the epic, hinting at key moments of its reception, and the appendix on the text and translator's choices allows those readers who are interested and who have some Latin to dig deeper into the text, its transmission, and the rationale behind some of Soucy's choices. All in all, Ovid's prophecy, at the end of the epic, that he will be read (*ore legar populi*, 15.878), has become true yet again in a wonderful way, in yet another exciting 'transformation' from Latin into English.

Moving on from the Augustan to the Neronian age, we come to the monograph by Konstantinos Arampapaslis, who tackles the topic of magic in Neronian literature.[6] He starts from the observation that, compared with previous periods of the history of Latin literature, magic becomes a much more pervasive topic in the literature of the Neronian age, with detailed depictions being dedicated to magic rituals in the works of Seneca,

Lucan, and Petronius. In an effort to examine the description of magic in this age in more detail, he dedicates one chapter each to magic in Seneca's *Medea*, Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, and Petronius' *Satyricon*. Throughout, he keeps an eye on the question of how realistic these depictions are and compares them with the evidence afforded by Greek magic papyri, while also making it clear where these authors leave the realm of 'real' magic rituals in favour of literary topoi and motifs. There is no further discussion, though, of the potential distance between the world of the Greek magic papyri and an audience in Neronian Rome, and of what magic might or might not have looked like in their everyday lives. While Arampapaslis' discussions are all still insightful, overall I found that they remain rather close to the surface of the texts, offering little that would amount to a deeper analysis of the literary phenomena in question and their multifaceted effects. Somewhat concerningly, from a methodological point of view, Arampapaslis presupposes without further discussion that, through these magic scenes, we get a sense of the author's own 'worldview' and their 'criticism' of magic, which led them to depict magic as evil, evoking disgust, indignation, and fear, or satirizing it, in the case of Petronius, in order to deter the audience from themselves succumbing to superstition and magic. This means that the book misses the opportunity to really further our understanding of the specific aesthetic, the horror, and the fascination of these scenes, while it still serves as a healthy reminder of the 'real-world' magical practices that stand behind them.

From Neronian literature, it is just a small step to the Flavian age and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, to which Jessica Blum-Sorensen dedicates a new monograph, focusing on the 'politics of emulation' in this work.[7] Starting from a solid discussion of the role that exemplarity played in Roman society, Blum-Sorensen argues that, throughout the *Argonautica*, we can observe how the epic figures, and the Argonauts in particular, keep acting according to *exempla* of the past and previous heroic figures, most notably Hercules. However, in the world of this epic, they are again and again confronted with a situation where following these examples does not lead to the expected outcome, but where the Argonauts are dragged into civil conflicts instead and bestowed with a compromised form of heroic fame, as the tragedy of Medea increasingly overshadows the Argonauts' achievements and their commemoration. Connected with that, in Blum-Sorensen's interpretation, is the question of genre: while the Argonauts keep acting according to what they think of as the heroic-epic code, the epic is in danger of going off the rails in terms of genre and becoming a different kind of text altogether. Ultimately, Blum-Sorensen convincingly draws a connection between these observations and the Flavian political context in which she sees a similar 'crisis' of exemplarity at work, where following the *exempla* of the past could also lead the emperors of the new dynasty either to success or to disaster.

While some of the starting points of Blum-Sorensen's discussion, such as the generic discourse and the question of which genre the *Argonautica* is going to follow, are by no means new in the scholarship on the poem, as she admits, she is still the first to systematically apply this focus to the *Argonautica* as a whole. Her discussion

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[7] *Epic Ambition. Hercules and the Politics of Emulation in Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica*. By Jessica Blum-Sorensen. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2023. Pp. x + 327. Hardback £77.38, ISBN: 978-0-29-9-34460-3.

is interesting overall and worthwhile, and nicely brings out the ambiguities of Valerius' poetic project and its political implications in a balanced way. I had just a few reservations, however. For instance, Blum-Sorensen claims that, because Valerius makes the Argo itself the subject of the relative clause in the proem, thus '[e]voking Eratosthenes' description of the Argo as παράδειγμα σαφέστατον' ('the clearest of models'), 'this emphasis articulates Valerius' epic subject through the lens of Roman exemplarity' (21). However, I was not convinced that the mere fact that the Argo was the subject of the relative clause actually did all that work, and that we are indeed invited to read the entire epic through an exemplary lens just because of it. In a similar vein, while it certainly makes sense to read Hercules as *exemplum* for the Argonauts, Blum-Sorensen actually reads all different kinds of epic figures and events in an exemplary light, which made me wonder whether the concept was thus not watered down a bit too much. Finally, it might have been interesting to think about this reading more in terms of, for instance, Livy, who had already made his contemporary and later readers much more aware of the complexities and pitfalls of exemplarity than Blum-Sorensen seems to allow. Despite these quibbles, however, Blum-Sorensen's book is certainly a valuable addition to the scholarship on the *Argonautica* and the new path for epic song that Valerius finds.

We remain in the Flavian age for just a little longer: Ilaria Marchesi offers a new angle on the presentation of women in Martial, from the point of view of semiotics.[8] She reads the women of Martial's epigrams, caught up in a complex relationship between the real world to which they belong and the world of the text in which they function, as signs that Martial, in his role as 'guardian' or censor of both language and society shapes and controls. While her approach is firmly grounded in semiotic theory, Marchesi, in fascinating interpretations of individual epigrams, pays very close attention to Martial's language and the meaning of individual words. While Marchesi's text itself is a dense and demanding – yet enjoyable – read, she does a very good job at guiding the reader through her argument. Marchesi first sketches out the context of her discussion of Martial, by examining the way in which women are used as particularly sensitive semiotic objects in authors such as Quintilian, Pliny, Tacitus, and Martial, in their role as the representation of their father and as responsible for the reproduction of their husband; this first chapter also contains some nice observations on how these shared issues bridge the gap between poetry and prose texts. Based on a few epigrams of Martial's Book 11, the second chapter traces the way women's bodies function as signs and the cultural mechanism by which they gain value and meaning. Next, Marchesi discusses apparently positive representations of women, which still invite an unsettling counter-reading, before moving on to different categories of the negative representation of women. In the second part of the book, Marchesi discusses in more detail the way such women in Martial transgress the semiotic structures of Roman society by acting as resisting, shifting, and dominating or self-determined signifiers. In the conclusion, Marchesi

applies some of her findings to Pliny's panegyric of the Emperor Trajan, before pointing to further areas of social signification in Martial that could be examined along the lines of her argument, such as patronage, the notion of Saturnalian freedom, or dining, to name but a few.

I very much enjoyed both Marchesi's overall approach and the detailed work of her individual case studies. There is a lot to be learned about not only the semiotic impact of Martial's women but also topics connected with them, e.g. sex, wealth, clothing, or the effects of time such as ageing, or even crying or coughing. My only minor quibble concerns the fact that Marchesi could have discussed in a bit more depth the role of women as readers of Martial's poetry. While she acknowledges the fact that women occasionally appear as readers in Martial (82), overall she seems to assume a mostly male readership for the epigrams (183), without discussing, for instance, the importance of the festival of the Matronalia, for which Martial might have produced at least one of his books, as argued by Coleman, which might therefore have been given as a present to matrons and young women by their husbands or lovers.[9] It might have been interesting for Marchesi to explore a bit more the case – not unlikely, apparently – of women in the real world reading the 'signs' of other women in the text. Overall, however, she has produced a very rich and thought-provoking book that will be of importance not only for the areas of future research that she singles out. Occasionally, she even includes exciting reflections on the representation of women nowadays, in comparison with ancient Rome – for instance, I enjoyed her intriguing remarks on how Martial employed the language of grammar for assessing and censoring a woman's body, a place that, nowadays, has been taken by medical discourse as a leading social discourse of our day, while the basic mechanism of the social control of women's bodies remains surprisingly stable (75). Marchesi's concluding reflection on how Martial's time was also a time of cultural as well as semiotic tension or crisis will certainly repay further study as well. So, Marchesi's timely and thoughtful book paves a way for future research in several directions, including, but ultimately going well beyond women and well beyond Martial.

The productivity of Marchesi's approach is also on full display in her contribution to the volume on 'Intertextuality in Pliny's *Epistles*', edited by Margot Neger and Spyridon Tzounakas.[10] In the final paper of the volume, Marchesi goes back to some of the ground covered in her book and shows how, in Pliny's letters, similar dynamics in and cultural anxieties around the role of women in reproducing their fathers and passing on the heritage of their husbands are activated and how these can also be traced in intertextual interactions with Martial's epigrams, in an intriguing interplay of (inter-)textual dynamics and broader cultural concerns. Marchesi's paper also offers a nice conclusion to the volume as a whole, whose aim it is to go further along the path opened up by recent monographs on intertextuality in Pliny[11] and to explore in

[9] K. M. Coleman, 'Martial, Book 6: A Gift for the Matronalia?', *Acta Classica* 48 (2005), 23–35.

[10] *Intertextuality in Pliny's Epistles*. Edited by Margot Neger and Spyridon Tzounakas. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xiii + 342. Hardback £ 85.00, ISBN: 978-1-00-9-29476-8.

[11] I. Marchesi, *The Art of Pliny's Letters: A Poetics of Allusion in the Private Correspondence* (Cambridge, 2008); K. Schwerdtner, *Plinius und seine Klassiker: Studien zur literarischen Zitation*

particular the wide variety of texts and genres that Pliny alludes to in his letters, turning them into a kind of 'super-genre' with a high degree of literary flexibility (12). The volume very nicely shows the variety and productivity of intertextuality in the letters, with authors as diverse as Lucretius, Cicero, Valerius Maximus, and Tacitus (Whitton), Quintilian and Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus* ('Dialogue on Orators') in Book 6 (Gibson), technical intertexts, such as Frontinus' *De Aquis* ('On the Water Supply of Rome'), in Book 10 (König), Cicero's speeches (Mordue), the Elder Pliny (Rocchi; Hindermann), Seneca's *Letters* and *Dialogues* (Hanaghan; Tzounakas), Horatian lyric (Canobbio), and Statius' *Silvae* (Chinn). In the final section, papers exploring Pliny's interplay with satire and the sceptic tradition ('Pliny turns nasty', with contributions by Tamás, Pigoń, and Neger) are in a particularly close and productive dialogue with each other.

Some of the papers do an especially good job at throwing new light not only on the intricacies of Plinian intertextuality, but on intertextual dynamics as a whole: for instance, Chris Whitton very nicely studies some of the modes and norms of Plinian *imitatio* and the 'breadth of ambition' (29) in Pliny's generic self-positioning, as well as, interestingly, its connection with the role of exemplarity in the epistles and Roman culture more broadly. I also very much enjoyed Ábel Tamás's discussion of the intertextual relationship between Pliny's letter 1.9 and Horace's *Satire* 1.9, which explores some of the paradoxes surrounding a time of *otium* ('leisure'), spent in the city of Rome, and how this intertextual connection 'satirizes' both Pliny's letter and the letter-writer himself. Tamás intriguingly raises the question as to what extent intertextuality can be as annoying as Horace's interlocutor, and whether it is ever possible to shut out the unwanted noises of other texts, at least in a satiric context. Both this paper and the volume as a whole are thus a warmly recommended read, for the insights it offers into Pliny's literature and its context as well as the dynamics of Latin intertextuality more broadly.

Finally, Linda Jones Hall offers a full translation and commentary of the poems by or ascribed to Optatian, a contemporary of the Emperor Constantine and author of sophisticated poems with interwoven verses that, if highlighted, create a design and a visual message, but also poems in a certain shape as well as metrical games and other experimental compositions, such as a 'proteus poem' whose individual words can be re-arranged in ever new ways to create new poems.[12] In her introduction, Hall situates Optatian and his poetry very well in the context of his times as well as in the literary context of wordplay and other playful elements in Greco-Roman writing. For her commentary, Hall uses the text established by Giovanni Polara (though relegating the critical apparatus, alongside her own commentary, to the endnotes of the volume, which makes it easy to get a rough idea of the poems, but harder to think about them in more depth). She starts by giving a useful overview of the key issues discussed in the scholarship on each letter and poem, also drawing intriguing connections between the designs and shapes at play in the poems and contemporary

representations, e.g., on coins. Hall also provides an English translation that remains very faithful to the Latin text, as well as helpful illustrations of the designs woven into the poems or their shapes (such as pan pipes, an altar, or a water organ). In the notes on each poem, Hall lists a wide range of literary models and parallels. More could certainly have been made of these parallels and their impact on the poems, and some of the literature that Hall quotes for authors other than Optatian is very much outdated (the only reference given for the performance of Horace's *Secular Song*, for instance, dates back to 1921). Overall, however, Hall's work serves as a valuable resource and good starting point for anyone who wants to get to know or delve deeper into this fascinating and puzzling chapter in the history of Latin literature, as well as the relationship of texts and visual culture.

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Greek history
I will start this review with a major development for the study of ancient Greek history: the publication of the first volume of the Oxford History of the Archaic Greek World (OHAGW), edited by Paul Cartledge and Paul Christesen. The range of the available evidence can no longer keep pace with the theoretical frameworks and the syntheses of individual scholars. A huge part of the evidence remains known to a few specialists, while wider interpretative frameworks rarely make the effort to incorporate the diversity and complexity of the evidence. Big data digital projects are certainly one way forward; the editors of OHAGW have chosen an alternative path: to offer a collection of syntheses on the archaic history of thirty Greek communities for which the available evidence makes this possible. The adoption of a common format for all local syntheses will make possible the focused comparison between individual cases; alongside the serious effort to systematically combine archaeology and history, which OHAGW editors call 'archaeohistory', this project has the potential to revolutionise Greek history.

The first published volume is Robin Osborne's history of archaic Athens.[1] It is impossible to read this book without feeling envy that no equivalent work exists for classical Athens. Given the format of the series, this work will mostly be read in sections, although there are numerable cross-section references. Osborne's overview of Athenian material culture is, in my view, the most important achievement of the volume: he offers exemplary syntheses on Athenian settlement history, funerary customs and grave monuments, vase-making, religious architecture, and dedicatory

[1] *The Oxford History of the Archaic Greek World. Vol. II: Athens and Attica*. By Robin Osborne. Oxford History of the Archaic Greek world series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xlviii+405. 49 figures, 21 maps, 2 tables. Hardback £71.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-764442-3.