

## REVIEW\*

## PAPERS OF THE LANGFORD LATIN SEMINAR 14

Francis Cairns and Miriam Griffin, edd., *Health and Sickness in Ancient Rome; Greek and Roman Poetry and Historiography. Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar*, 14; ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, 50. Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2010. Pp. vi + 393. Hardcover, £60.00/\$120.00. ISBN 978-0-90520-553-3.

*Note:* The Table of Contents for this volume appears at the end of the review.

The *PLLS* series, which began as *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar*, with Liverpool superseded by Leeds and now Langford (based at Florida State University, an anchor also of *Histos*), has long provided a forum for more than the discussion of Latin literature per se. The present volume is no exception. Divided into two separate sections, ‘Health and Sickness in Ancient Rome’ (comprising about 100 pages) and the much broader ‘Greek and Roman Poetry and Historiography’, the volume covers material ranging from poems of Semonides and Statius to the histories of Tacitus. There is much of value in this collection.

## I

The first section consists of five papers, most of which originated in a conference on the topic of Health and Sickness in Ancient Rome at FSU in 2008. The first paper, by Vivian Nutton, whose scholarship has done much to advance and accelerate the study of Galen in recent years, discusses the intellectual and cultural contexts in which the polymath operated. Anyone unfamiliar with the importance of Galen for understanding Greek and Roman culture in the second century and for the study of medicine well beyond antiquity will benefit from this engaging paper. Nutton also poses the intriguing question, what can we know about medicine of Galen’s time by reading beyond, and even between the lines of, Galen’s own prolific output? Nutton assembles a great deal of data, both textual and material, that demonstrates the varieties of medicine and its practitioners and the dangers

\* *Editors’ Note:* The Editors apologise to the author of this review for the lateness of its appearance, which was due largely to circumstances beyond our control.

of giving too much weight to Galen's perspective alone. Along the way, Nutton calls attention to recent rediscoveries, including texts of Galen and his predecessor, Rufus of Ephesus, that expand greatly our understanding of ancient medical practice. Nutton's article pairs well with recent discussions of Galen and his intellectual milieu by William Johnson in *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire* and by various contributors, including Nutton himself, to the collection *Galen and the World of Knowledge*.

In the second paper, Rebecca Flemming begins with the arresting statement that 'empires spread diseases' and shows how Pliny's description of diseases new to Rome in Book 26 of the *Natural History*, specifically four diseases that affect the face, reflects his views of the dangers and weaknesses to Rome of its imperial enterprise. Pliny begins with the face, which is significantly 'the somatic site most influential for social interaction', as Flemming puts it, to invite comparison between the health of the *caput* and that of the *caput mundi*. One can trace the journey of these diseases into Rome along routes of imperial power, routes marked with examples of failed judgement both moral and medical. But Pliny's message is also salutary: health can be restored when the ruling classes reacquaint themselves with knowledge about the natural world.

That medical metaphors are abundant in Greek and Roman historiography is far from startling; but precisely how prevalent and how well perceived this metaphorical language was open to argument. A. J. Woodman's contribution starts with close analysis of two passages in Tacitus that employ medical language (*Ann.* 2.27–32; 1.12) and demonstrates how pervasive and sustained this imagery is. He then traces the use of medical metaphor in earlier Latin historians, including Coelius Antipater, Claudius Quadrigarius, and Sisenna as well as Sallust and Livy. Woodman's paper is especially compelling when he analyses nuances of specific vocabulary within medical texts (e.g., *pervenire ad* in Celsus can mean something like 'turn into') and what these meanings impart to the same vocabulary used within historical narratives.

The portrayal of Apollo and, to a lesser extent, his son Aesculapius in Roman poetry has attracted much attention, evidenced by John Miller's recent book, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets*. Gareth Williams reconsiders the roles of these two healing deities in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, especially the multiple failures of Apollo to heal (as well as to woo and foresee) in the early Books of the poem, in contrast to the success of his son in banishing plague at the end of the epic. In a particularly delightful section, Williams, himself a clever wordsmith, shows how Apollo as god of prophecy betrays a 'spectacular lack of intertextual clairvoyance' (69), unable to register events known from passages in earlier poets. Williams suggests ultimately that Ovid's denigration of Apollo in favour of Aesculapius may have been a not-so-subtle

slight to Augustus and his patron deity. The final section, ‘Sickness and Health in the Body of the *Metamorphoses*’, demonstrates how prominent a role medicine itself plays in the *Metamorphoses* and how many contradictions inhere in this role, a fruitful field for further exploration.

Svetla Slaveva-Griffin rounds out the first section with analysis of the impact of medical theory on the writings of the philosopher Plotinus. Focusing on the *Enneads*, Slaveva-Griffin shows how Plotinus views the health of the body as capable of affecting the lower soul in particular, and that this in turn can impede the ability of the upper soul to contemplate (the goal of contemplation being separation of soul from body). Slaveva-Griffin turns next to narratives of Plotinus’ illness and death in Porphyry (*VP*) and Firmicus (*Math.*) to demonstrate how these accounts reinforce Plotinus’ own views of body and soul. Although details differ, both narratives emphasise how weak Porphyry’s body became but not his soul, which survived and, in Porphyry’s account, slipped away like a snake with his last breath (*VP* 2.29).

All five of these contributions are excellent at illustrating the reach of medicine into many aspects of Greco-Roman culture, from philosophy to poetry, especially among elites. Galen believed that anyone who aspired to be an intellectual had to have training not only in literature, philosophy, music, and mathematics but also, if not especially, in medicine (discussed in detail by Johnson in *Readers and Reading Culture*, mentioned above), and one realises from these contributions that individuals like Pliny, Tacitus, Ovid, and Plotinus had more than a passing acquaintance with medical thinking and/or practice, even if they were not trained to the extent recommended by Galen.

## II

The second section of *PLLS* 14 opens with Frederick Williams’ close analysis of the monkey-woman passage in fr. 7 of Semonides. Williams argues that details of the passage, such as description of the woman as all leg and having no behind (line 76), point to the monkey-woman as a displeasing partner for intercourse involving penetration from behind; consequently, the phrase *κινεῖται μόγῃς* (line 75) must mean something like ‘she is fucked with difficulty’ (my translation) rather than ‘she moves awkwardly’ as she makes her way around town. Williams’ discussion is witty and learned but frustratingly modest; I had to reread parts of it to understand what Williams was suggesting. If we’re going to talk sex, perhaps it is time to stop beating around the bush.

The next paper, by Damien Nelis on *Georgics* 1.489–92, is the shortest of the collection (three pages) and makes a fine point about poetic wordplay.

When referring to gory battles at Philippi, Vergil includes two place names, Mount Haemus and Emathia, that are not especially close to Philippi but rather recall the Greek word for blood, αἷμα (Emathia being an anagram for αἷματι).

Nelis' short paper is followed by the two longest contributions, both on Horace. The first, by J. G. F. Powell, argues that references to Scythia throughout Horace's *Odes* point to Rome's involvement with the Parthians, who were believed to be Scythian by origin. Powell goes on to argue that the *Odes* present Augustus' dealings with the Parthians in a wholly positive light, a light that emphasises the very real danger Parthia posed to Rome; Rome's desire to avenge past failures against the Parthians; disavowal of greed as a primary motive for interest in Parthia; and linkage between Rome's imperial mission, divinely mandated, and establishment of peace. Powell also considers Horace's relationship to Augustus and concludes that we find 'a poet whose imagination resonated in tune with the régime, on foreign affairs as on other matters, and who gave precise (granted, sometimes hyperbolic) expression to its hopes and fears at any given juncture' (187). The next paper on Horace, by Alex Hardie, is the second part of a discussion of *Odes* 3.4 begun by Hardie in *PLLS* 13. Here Hardie engages in a detailed discussion of the second ten stanzas of the poem and argues that it functions much like a hymn to Jupiter. This hymn celebrates the foundation of Jupiter's power and the principles—moral and physical—by which it operates, and how other gods participate in his rule. Much of Hardie's discussion focuses on the Gigantomachy ('the only fully worked Gigantomachy to survive from the Augustan period', 244). Hardie also examines influences of Alcman's Louvre Partheneion on the ode, from aspects of performance to structure and themes. Finally, Hardie reconsiders the date and occasion for the composition of *Odes* 3.6 and, building on arguments of Ian DuQuesnay, finds it plausible that the Roman *Odes* were written for Augustus on his return from Spain in 24 BCE.

Robert Maltby revisits the Tibullan corpus to argue, *contra* Niklas Holzberg, that the poems of Book 3 are not by a single author impersonating a young Tibullus; instead, various groups of poems within the Book were composed by different authors at different times and were edited together later in a careful arrangement. On the basis of metre and style, Maltby argues for the following compositional sequence: 3.13–18 (Sulpicia), early first century BCE; 3.8–12 (the so-called Sulpicia Cycle), early first century CE; 3.19 ('Tibullus') and 3.20 have points of contact with the late poetry of Ovid but post-date Tibullus; and 3.1–6 (Lygdamus) and 3.7 (Messalla Panegyric), Flavian but by different authors, with 3.1–6 representing 'the attempt to move the genre of elegy on into the new field of

love (and marriage) between social equals' (322). In the end, Maltby is careful to reiterate that certainty about many of these points is impossible.

In the penultimate contribution, Robin Seager examines the portrayal of Domitian in Statius' *Silvae* and argues that the portrayal is consistent in three respects: attention to the emperor as 1) part of a continuum that runs from the earliest history of Rome into the future, 2) as a key figure in Rome's imperial mission to instil peace (albeit through warfare), and 3) as an individual well favoured by the gods who can control other gods and create new ones. However, Statius is inconsistent about the divine status he confers on the emperor: at times the emperor is a human who will be deified eventually and at others he is already a god who descends to earth from the heavens and will ascend again later. Seager asserts that this inconsistency is an unsurprising result of individuals trying to determine what Domitian himself wanted.

Cynthia Damon closes out the volume by examining the use of history as intertext by ancient historians. Pointing to passages in Tacitus' *Historiae* about the civil war of 69 CE, Damon considers whether these events and individuals recall specific texts (e.g., Caesar's descriptions of civil war), or specific events apart from known texts about those events (e.g., Caesar's assassination), or both. Damon argues that events themselves appear to play a strong role as intertext—that is, history as opposed to *History*—and warns that any arguments about allusion to a particular text must take into account the loss of much of Latin literature; specificity of textual reference may be illusory.

Damon's contribution is clever, concise, and insightful—a relief at the end of a long collection that does meander at times. All of the contributions are learned and well written, and the text has been thoroughly copy edited. But I would have appreciated more editorial intervention. Indeed to review the collection is a lot like reviewing a journal volume in which the papers do not speak to one another; nor are potential connections among them brought out in an introductory chapter. The papers are uneven in length, ranging from 3 to 120 pages (the latter could have been published as a stand-alone monograph, especially given that it continues an article begun elsewhere). The papers vary widely in topic, and the heading of the second section, 'Greek and Roman Poetry and Historiography', suggests that the contributions are about relationships between poetry and historiography, which sometimes they are but not always. Moreover, the first paper of the second section appears with no marker (such as a page-insert) that the reader has exited the first. There is an *index locorum* but no general index.

The lack of apparent design and any attempt to draw out common themes within the individual sections is unfortunate, especially with respect to the first, which examines a distinct topic and arose from a single

conference. But even in the second section, there is a frustrating disconnect among the contributions. For instance, when discussing the role of the Titanomachy in *Odes* 3.4, Powell's paper does not refer to Hardie's lengthy analysis of the same theme in the chapter that immediately follows. (And in the very same paragraph, Powell discusses the image of Augustus as Jupiter's vicegerent in Horace, *Odes* 1.12, a theme that Seager touches on later. Such examples occur across the volume.)

Perhaps the editors preferred to resist the arrogance of Galen, who, as Nutton observes, imposed neat patterns on somewhat chaotic material (12). Yet when I reached Damon's article, which begins with reference to Priam's corpse lying decapitated on the shore (Verg. *Aen.* 2.557–8), I was reminded of the medical focus of the opening papers of the volume and regretted the opportunity missed of stitching these individually compelling *membra disiecta* into an organic whole.

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