

# Review

J. N. ADAMS, ANNA CHAHOUD and GIUSEPPE PEZZINI (Eds), with the assistance of CHARLIE KERRIGAN, *EARLY LATIN: CONSTRUCTS, DIVERSITY, RECEPTION*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xxi + 656; illus., maps. ISBN 9781108476584 (hbk), £130.00; 9781108671132, 9781108755122 (eBook).

‘What is Early Latin?’ ask the editors of this rich and rewarding volume, based on a 2018 conference. The complexities and difficulties of this question are dealt with in intensive detail in this major edited collection; all its contributors are at pains to stress that there is no definitive date range or set of stylistic markers which make a text ‘Early Latin’. This book also challenges any preconceptions about what ‘archaic’ means. Throughout the volume, the authors show that ‘archaic’ or ‘early’ forms may be high register, colloquial, humorous, legalistic, prayer-like, and many other things besides. They may be even, counter-intuitively, be innovative. To give just one example, the future form *scibo* was an innovation from the point of view of Plautus and his audience, but an archaism from the point of view of later Latin speakers, because it was the older form *sciam* which ultimately survived (de Melo, ch.6). In a discussion of oratory in ch.16, Grey also neatly demonstrates that the desire for rhetorical effectiveness could result in both neologisms and archaisms in the same speech, with much the same motivation. Archaism, then, is not just about sounding old-fashioned.

In twenty-nine chapters, the volume covers material from the earliest inscriptions to the beginning of Cicero’s career, with a greater emphasis on literature than inscriptions. It lies somewhere between an edited volume and a handbook in its organisation and scope. On the one hand, the editors have clearly aimed for a reasonably complete coverage of the topic, with some chapters giving overviews of the language of inscriptions, comedy, epic, law and the views of grammarians. On the other, the majority of the chapters are deep dives into specific questions of syntax, morphology or lexicon, often with a highly specialist audience in mind.

Part 1, on inscriptions, is by far the shortest. Chs 2 and 3 between them aim for a broad coverage from the earliest Latin down to the second century. Ch. 4 is the only chapter on a specific topic in this section, and discusses the linguistic detail of the Egadi rams, found in 2004 and dated to the First Punic War. The title of Part 2, ‘Drama’, rather disguises the breadth of topics covered in these chapters. The authors cover a range of metrical, syntactic, morphological and lexical issues in Early Latin — Plautus and Terence are the main, but not only, sources for most of the chapters, and the issues discussed are relevant far beyond the dramatic authors. Ch. 5 on metre does not confine itself to drama; ch. 7 compares Plautus and Terence to a wide range of genres from early Latin to the *Historia Augusta* and the *Vulgate*; and chs 8 and 9 use a range of early authors in their evidence, including Ennius, Cato and Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Part 3 covers ‘other genres’, especially those which are fragmentary, including Atellan farce, historiography, legal texts, prayers, oratory and satire, while also revisiting the evidence of drama. Part 4, ‘Reception’, is the longest — an unusual choice in a volume on Early Latin. However, the meaning of ‘reception’ is very capacious here: these chapters deal with Roman authors (including Lucretius, Cicero, Livy and Pliny) and their interactions with earlier texts, alongside the works of later grammarians and the antiquarianism of Neo-Latin.

There are overlaps and common themes within and between the four parts. Register and style come up repeatedly. Many of the authors spend time in careful analysis of why a particular passage, and therefore an ‘early’ word or form within that passage, could be considered ‘colloquial’ or ‘high register’. When this is done with careful consideration, it often leads to interesting results. For example, Taylor (ch. 21) shows, using the example of the sigmatic subjunctive *ausim*, that Lucretius’ tendency to archaism is not exclusively a feature of his high register passages, but can be a way of signalling more colloquial, conversational language as well. Ch. 14, by Adams and Nikitina, uses a systematic analysis of asyndeton and coordination to show convincingly that texts that we instinctively feel to be stylistically similar — in this case, prayers and laws — may in fact have their own distinctive features. However, for a book which explicitly wants to break stereotypes on Early Latin, some authors do end up falling back on those same stereotypes. For example, Terence is variously described as ‘sober and polished’ (Bodelot, ch. 8), ‘more refined’ and ‘fussy’ (Barrios-Lech, ch. 9) compared to Plautus.

Contact with Greek is another persistent theme. There are two chapters (18 by O’Sullivan and 19 by Clackson) focused on this issue, but it appears throughout the volume in different ways. The varying treatment across chapters shows how subjective the identification of borrowings can be. There is a mismatch, for example, between Pezzini’s list of ‘transparent Grecisms’ (in ch. 11 on the lexicon of Plautus and Terence), which he deems to be borrowed from Greek without or almost without modification, and Clackson’s list of Greek words in early Latin in ch. 19. Pezzini lists *dulice* (Greek *doulikós* ‘slave-like’ turned into a Latin adverb with the ending *-e*) and *basilice* (Greek *basilikós* ‘king-like’ likewise turned into a Latin adverb). This comes down to what one considers ‘minimal’ Latinisation — Pezzini deems these Greek words, but arguably the derivational endings show that the word had been incorporated into the Latin language. Some examples are more complicated. For example, Pezzini lists *antelogium* (Latin *ante* + *logium* from Greek, used in Plaut., *Men.* instead of the Greek *prólogos* ‘prologue’), which is a humorous mash-up of Greek and Latin elements. *Migdilix* is also not transparently a Greek word, though its etymology is not known (see de Melo’s 2012 commentary on *Poenulus* for discussion of the etymology; perhaps Greek *mígda* ‘in a mixed way’ + Latin *lix* ‘tongue’). Likewise, Pezzini lists *moechisso* ‘to commit adultery with (someone)’ — not an attested Greek word but apparently made of the Greek elements *moikhós* and *-izo*. All of this raises very interesting questions about at what point we can consider a Greek word fully integrated into Latin, and therefore consider it a true part of the ‘Early Latin’ lexicon, and how we categorise nonce formations and hapaxes.

Some chapters give much more help to the reader than others, particularly as regards translations of Latin and Greek. While several of the authors conscientiously provide translations, particularly where their argument relies on a particular reading, others present lengthy untranslated passages. The use of abbreviations and technical vocabulary is also not consistent across the chapters, with even neighbouring chapters taking quite different approaches. I note a very small number of misprints (a misspelling of ‘Paelignian’ as ‘Peligneian’ on 51; the text of Egadi 11 is incomplete on 67, as Q.P. (= *quaestores probaverunt*) has been printed as P), but the overall presentation is excellent.

In sum, the breadth and depth of the coverage in this volume is impressive. There is a rich range of evidence which will interest any scholar of Latin, not only those interested in the very earliest texts. If anything, this volume focuses just as much on how the Romans looked back at Early Latin, and the many ways in which they defined the language of their predecessors, as it does on the early texts themselves.

University of Durham  
[katherine.mcdonald@durham.ac.uk](mailto:katherine.mcdonald@durham.ac.uk)  
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KATHERINE McDONALD

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