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**Marcelo Epstein and Ruth Spivak, eds., *The Latin of Science*.  
Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy- Carducci Publishers, Inc., 2019. Pp. xxxii  
+ 395. Paper (ISBN 978-0-86516-860-2) \$29.00.**

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Flechner is well aware of the limitations his work entails: he says that his “alternative narrative cannot, admittedly, be corroborated, and it is clear that there is more to the story than we have been able to recover” (58).

The few misprints cause little difficulty for the reader. To avoid confusion, note that Ammianus wrote in the fourth, not fifth century (79); read “Britain” for “Ireland” (107). The bibliographical section is well put together and comprehensive and will be very helpful to readers, especially those unfamiliar with Late Roman Britain, early Ireland, and Insular Latin literature.

I do not wish to end on a negative note. This is a novel and exciting new perspective on Patrick’s career. Flechner’s argument, which he does not over-sell, is not only intriguing but more compelling the more I think about it. If we regard this work as the spur to future research it is enormously valuable.

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Marcelo Epstein and Ruth Spivak, eds., *The Latin of Science*. Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 2019. Pp. xxxii + 395. Paper (ISBN 978-0-86516-860-2) \$29.00.

With *The Latin of Science*, Marcelo Epstein and Ruth Spivak have attempted to fill a surprising “anthological vacuum” (xii): they have produced a student-friendly reader of scientific Latin. The twenty-two readings represent twenty authors, from Vitruvius and Pliny to Isaac Newton and Luigi Galvani. Almost every text is presented in two ways: facsimiles of early printed editions are followed by “a modern transliteration” (xiii) of the precise passages to be read. A brief introduction precedes each selection, and explanatory notes follow; the notes strike a balance between grammatical, historical, and scientific issues. Other significant features include a historical survey of Latin scientific writing (10 pages); appendices on Latin pronunciation, Latin grammar (77 pages), and the “quirks” (327) of early printed books; and a comprehensive glossary. By simply suggesting that scientific texts belong in the undergraduate Latin classroom, and by demonstrating how teachers might incorporate such texts into their curricula, Epstein and Spivak have performed a valuable service, and I have no doubt that students will enjoy and be energized by the readings. At the same time, certain features of *The Latin of Science* may make Latin teachers reluctant to include it on their syllabi.

The book, organized by discipline, is at its best in the Astronomy and Rational Mechanics chapter. Anyone interested in the history of science will be thrilled to read the original words of Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton. The editors’ introductory essays connect the passages, and the texts themselves display a range of registers and

methodological approaches that showcase both the richness and the powerful concision of the Latin language.

Below, I address the book's major weaknesses under three headings. It should be noted in advance, however, that a companion volume and website are in the works and that these resources may well address some of the issues raised here.

1. The editors encourage users to read the Latin passages directly from the facsimiles. While this may be a valuable and even enjoyable exercise, it takes considerable time. Realizing that students (and teachers) will want texts that are easier to decipher, the editors have produced transliterations that expand abbreviations and replace symbols with words but that retain the punctuation of the early printed editions. This procedure is peculiar. From a practical perspective, the punctuation can be disorienting. Intermediate-level students have enough trouble determining the boundaries of clauses and grasping the natural articulation of Latin sentences without having to contend with Renaissance and early modern punctuation.

The very decision to privilege an early edition of an old text poses a deeper problem. For the ancient authors, at least, standard critical editions exist, and these editions represent the cumulative work of generations of scholars. Epstein and Spivak ignore this scholarly history. What is the benefit of reading Seneca's *Natural Questions* from facsimiles of a random seventeenth-century edition? The rationale seems to be that it is like "playing period music on the corresponding period instruments" (xiii). But Seneca did not write in seventeenth-century Venice. Do the images get us closer to Seneca's meaning? The text differs in a number of places from the excellent edition of H. Hine (Stuttgart, 1996), and not in ways that improve sense or readability. It is perhaps justifiable to reproduce the text of an edition that appeared during the author's lifetime or with which the author was directly involved. That being said, the organizing principle of *The Latin of Science* tacitly encourages the reader see no difference between a first edition of Newton's *Principia* and a sixteenth-century edition of Vitruvius' *De architectura*; the false equivalence misrepresents the nature of both documents.

2. A key element of what makes a student edition valuable is the assistance it gives with the language. While *The Latin of Science* contains many accurate and helpful grammatical notes, some are confusing or even misleading. I cite a few examples: *ut* clauses with the subjunctive dependent on *oportet* are "subjunctive conditions" (44); when a complicated sentence is compressed to *colligemus et transferemus in hoc opus nostrum quae tradita fuisse et quae observata esse a maioribus* (62), it is implied that relative clauses do not need finite verbs; the future passive infinitive *reperitum iri* is "used... in an accusative" (91) in indirect statement without further explanation or discussion; in *nunquam tamen potui efficere quin...*, "The particle *quin* is a negative version of *qui*" (200); in a concessive clause introduced by *licet* and containing the preposition *cum*, "We

can... ignore *licet*” and treat *cum* as the concessive conjunction, even if the resulting translation “is a bit forced” (219).

Nor is the book’s compendium of Latin grammar free from confusing statements and the occasional error. In the first chapter, we are told that the influence of Latin on English makes reading some Latin sentences easy; for example, *Philosophus esse difficile est* (250). The same page contains a discussion of Latin word order in which the elements of this sentence are repositioned in two different ways, and in both cases *philosophus* remains in the nominative.

Taken together, the grammatical notes and compendium seem unlikely to help students improve their fundamental understanding of Latin. One gets the impression that the editors are trying to demystify the language, to make it appear straightforward, a goal that is not itself objectionable but that, in the present case, comes at the expense of grammatical rigor and precision. A commentary and grammatical compendium that, as far as I can tell, do not mention the sequence of tenses will appeal to some, and certainly not to others.

3. There is no bibliography, and there are few references to recent scholarship. This is a missed opportunity. *The Latin of Science* might very well excite users, but where are they to go for cutting edge discussion and more primary texts? The conspicuous absence of suggestions for further reading is felt acutely in the historical survey. The essay is teleological, subtly implying the self-evident and inherent value of (early) modern authors, especially by comparison with their classical predecessors. But while Pliny’s *Natural History* “can hardly be considered a purely scientific work” (xxiii), the editors do not take the time to interrogate the definition or history of the idea of science itself. In an anthology whose title includes the word science and whose readings represent a wide variety of intellectual traditions and methodologies, this is a striking omission. A brief discussion about what it means, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to practice the history of science (or the philosophy of science, or the sociology of science, or science studies in general, etc.) would have been beneficial and likely to engage students.

To sum up, the basic idea behind *The Latin of Science*—a student-oriented reader of scientific Latin—is most welcome, and readers of every level will find new and exciting texts to study and enjoy. As a tool for the Latin classroom, however, there is room for improvement.

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