Canons

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The Canonised Classics

On the surface, canons appear to be an almost inescapable function of institutionalised knowledge – a hierarchy of authors, texts and methodologies that structure both our curricula and the profession in decisions on appointments and promotions, conferences and grants. As John Guillory writes: 'the canonicity of works is . . . another name for their institutional mode of reception and reproduction'.[1] Canons, so the argument goes, are *practical* tools for creating and maintaining learning communities and for negotiating belonging to groups (academic, social, professional, etc.). While acknowledging the need to change the boundaries of the canon to include under-represented texts or readers, proponents of the pragmatic approach to canonical formations emphasise what they see as the sheer *inevitability* of the canon. As the argument goes, a canon, however negotiated, is indispensable for teaching and research: how else but through the negotiations of canonical formations in syllabi, reading lists, conferences and funding bodies is one to carry out the paedagogical and professional missions with which we are entrusted as scholars and teachers?

It is important to emphasise from the start that this pragmatic argument betrays defensiveness. Whether explicitly or not, such pragmatic arguments are often made in response to critiques from marginalised groups: students and scholars who are critiquing the exclusion of racial, ethnic and religious minorities from academia and are seeking to create canons, reading lists and institutions that are representative of the diversity of society. The rhetorical context in which these 'canons of practicality' are often evoked should give pause for thought even to the most committed of pragmatists.[2] What critics of the canon object to is not just the content of canonical formations – canons that are all too often too male, too white

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[1] Guillory 2013: 269.   [2] I thank the editors for suggesting the phrase 'canons of practicality'.

and too western-centric – but also the ways in which the supposed aesthetic superiority of Homer, Virgil, etc., which is repeatedly invoked to justify the inclusion of these works into the canon and the exclusion of others, erases the process through which canonical texts have been used to defend and rationalise violence against racial, religious and other minorities and against women.[3] Such a history of reception, canon critics argue, is one that should be represented in paedagogy, and may even warrant exclusion from the canon or at the very least a redefinition of a given text's role within it. Thus canon critics do not simply want to redesign the canon out of a self-promoting agenda as charged by opponents, who often implicitly present themselves as promoters of the practical or objective defenders of great literature. Rather, they are inviting much-needed reflection on the mechanisms underpinning canonical formations, beginning with the nexus of aesthetics, ideology and power through which the canon carries out its 'practical' mission.[4]

An analysis of the canon must thus begin by reckoning with the work that canons have traditionally performed in literary studies and the role that Graeco-Roman antiquity has played in the formation of the broader discourse of canon. Even the most ardent proponents of the canons of practicality might concede that it would be reductive to see the relationship of canon and the classics of Graeco-Roman antiquity merely as the result of the mechanics of academia.[5] For one, there is practically an *equation* between classical antiquity and the canon: by its very name, Classics has traditionally legitimised itself as a field through its access to objects that claim to have intrinsic trans-historical value. Friedrich August Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer* is hailed as the beginning of the disciplinary field of Classics to the exclusion of, for example, Christian texts, Greek Judaism and the languages of imperial peripheries.[6] If Classics is in effect co-extensive with Homer, the author who most embodies the canon, it is inevitable that it should be considered a 'highly canonised' field.[7]

More to the point, as we have seen above, definitions of the classical have been traditionally invested in claims of the universal superiority of the

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[3] Bond 2018.

[4] See Morrison 1989 on the study of African American literature as examination of 'the unspeakable things unspoken' of the American canon. On the tensions inherent in the project of creating a black canon see Gates Jr 1992: 17–42.

[5] On efforts to disentangle the idea of canonical masterpieces (works that can but need not be 'ancient') from that of the classic (a work belonging to the Graeco-Roman past) see Kermode 1983 and the introduction in Damrosch 2006: 15; Mukherjee 2013: 30–1. Still, given how definitions of the canon are deeply rooted in Graeco-Roman antiquity (see in this chapter), this distinction seems at best artificial.

[6] See Grafton, Most and Zetzel 1985: 35.   [7] Porter 2002; Formisano 2018: 5–6.

Graeco-Roman tradition and therefore implicitly of western culture. In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the classical is 'a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other present' (Gadamer 2004: 299). Here Classics is deeply complicit in the formation of Euro-centrism, western-centrism and other elitist ideologies, which use the Graeco-Roman past as the underpinning for claims of trans-cultural and trans-historical superiority. It has been repeatedly observed that the notion of the classic is inextricably connected to that of empire, as for example in T. S. Eliot's terse formulation from a lecture delivered to the Virgil Society at the height of World War II in October 1944: the *Aeneid* is the classic *par excellence* because 'Aeneas is the symbol of Rome; and, as Aeneas is to Rome, so is ancient Rome to Europe. Thus Virgil acquires the centrality of the unique classic; he is at the centre of European civilization, in a position which no other poet can share or usurp' (Eliot 1974: 28–9).

The co-extensiveness of the classical with timeless trans-cultural values can take several forms: a 'quasi-Darwinian' claim that the value of the classics is tied to and evidenced by their continual survival. In this reading, 'the canon is . . . a gauge of vitality' (Bloom 1995: 39), 'the classic . . . defines itself by surviving' (Coetzee 2011: 20) or, to put it differently, it is demo-cratically defined by the 'pleasure' it gives to successive reading communities.[8] Exceptionalist claims can also be found lurking in argu-ments about the value of the classical for understanding European culture or for placing western civilisations in dialogue with non-western ones.[9] The pitfalls of these paradigms are not hard to spot. On the one hand, there is a danger of constructing the canon as a *universal* mode and thus imposing culturally alien categories on non-western traditions.[10] On the other, as Emily Apter has reminded us, the methodology behind 'global literature' conjures practices of 'collectivism' and 'curatorial salvage' and other markedly colonial modes through which literature is cast as 'prop-erty', worth collecting, preserving and assessing in its 'value'.[11] Apter puts her finger on the ways in which the classical can play a role in institutional forms of knowledge that are deeply entwined with western notions of

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[8] For the role of pleasure in the canon see Kermode 2006: 15–31. In Kermode's reading, the changes to the canon – the fall and ascent of individual authors and texts – affirm the democratic character of canonical formations.

[9] See DuBois 2010: 18 for an example of an egalitarian approach that frames Graeco-Roman antiquity as one among many civilisations: 'I see no compelling reason that our students should privilege the Greeks and Romans above all others. We should accept that the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations are part of *global* history, that they have had great influence on the development of western civilization and on its sometimes imperial ambitions elsewhere.'

[10] Trivedi 2007.   [11] Apter 2013: 326–9. On the question of collecting see also Appiah 2009.

personhood and a neoliberal emphasis on the transference of goods and market value. Finally, critics have attacked from different disciplinary angles the very narrative of a cohesive western canon as inherently fallacious and blind to the porousness of east–west categories.[12] We could recall Amitav Ghosh's attack on the myth of a cogent European Novel in the essay on his grandfather's library, which is in itself a deep critique of the discourse of the canon. Ghosh denounces the Novel as a genre both deeply rooted in a local and parochial European identity and yet intrinsically dependent from the start on imperial dislocation for its existence.[13]

Other critics such as Pierre Bourdieu and Barbara Herrnstein Smith have focused our attention on the pervasiveness of the language of value in literary analysis and the meaning of this productive intersection of economics and literature, investigating the kind of 'cultural capital' that the canon represents and how it functions in a system of exchanges within academia.[14] Central to this approach to the canon as an institutional mechanism is the critique of the contingent nature of literary judgements: the value of the text is not a property residing in the object of study but rather a positive effect arising from readers' engagement with it. In turn, those engagements are pre-shaped and pre-determined by the institutional context in which they take place.

> All value is radically contingent, being neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of things but, rather, an effect of multiple, continuously changing, and continuously interacting variables or, to put this another way, the product of the dynamics of a system, specifically an *economic* system. (Smith 1988: 30)

For whom, with whom and where we are judging and reading becomes key to understanding the very functioning of the as a tool for hegemonic control.[15] Indeed, work by Ankhi Mukherjee on the role of the canon in post-colonial writing has unearthed the ways in which 'the question and concept of the classic is . . . always that of the outsider'.[16] Commenting on

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[12] Guillory 2013: 33 calls western culture the 'umbrella term under which all these different texts take shelter from the labor of critique, the labor of reading'; and see also Kermode 1983: 22–8; for a critique of the continuity between Greece, Rome and Europe see Amin 2011 esp. 165–88.

[13] Ghosh 1998: 18: 'when we read *Middlemarch* or *Madame Bovary* we have not the faintest inkling that the lives depicted in them are made possible by global empires . . . '. See also Said 1993: 80–97.

[14] See Smith 1988; Spivak 1987: 212–42; Bourdieu 1993.

[15] Keith 2000: 8–35 on the role of epic in Roman education as a tool for maintaining the male-dominated social hierarchy.

[16] Mukherjee 2013: 49.

the essays by the same title – 'What is a Classic?' – by T. S. Eliot and J. M. Coetzee, respectively written in war-torn London in 1944 and delivered in 1991, a year after the end of the Apartheid regime, Mukherjee delves deep into the ways in which both writers use the classics to explore and tackle their own peripheral status in relation to Europe (in the case of Eliot, as an American living in the UK) and the global literary stage (in the case of South-African Coetzee). Recent work on constructions of the classical in Graeco-Roman antiquity has placed a similar emphasis, for example, on the ways in which visions of the Greek classical past are shaped by the geographical and temporal liminality of imperial Greek writers of the Second Sophistic and also on how this ancient construction of Hellenism in writers such as Plutarch and Aelius Aristides has been privileged in the service of a romanticised and anachronistic attachment to a pure version of Hellenism in nineteenth-century scholarship.[17] A comparable critique of the scholarly investment in the construction of the classical past has come from the field of late antiquity.[18] Here in putting forward a vision of late antiquity as a period of extreme dynamism and vitality, even while retaining a label that explicitly relegates the period to a liminal space relative to classical antiquity, scholars have pointed to the heuristic value of the Gibbonian construct of decline and fall not for late antiquity but rather for Enlightenment history.[19]

It takes not only imagination and risk-taking to question the inevitability of the canon as an enshrined institutional and professional practice but also an intimate knowledge of the history of higher education, a high bar to clear for most classicists, including this author. The classics, including Homer and Virgil and other Graeco-Roman texts, have been the bedrock of the modern liberal arts curriculum from its earliest inception. One of the most significant documents in the history of American Higher Education, the Yale Report of 1828, contains one of the first arguments for a liberal education, as opposed to a professional one, defined as 'such a course of discipline in the arts and sciences, as is best calculated, at the same time, both to strengthen and enlarge the faculties of the mind, and to familiarise it with the leading principles of the great objects of human investigation and knowledge' (p. 30).[20] The best course of study is one which brings into exercise all the important mental faculties and is therefore both

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[17] Porter 2006; Swain 2010; Whitmarsh 2013: 3 'the Second Sophistic has been – and remains in much current scholarship – a modern fantasy projected back on to the ancient world, an *objet petit a*, an impossible idealization of a pure, untainted aristocratic Greek tradition'.
[18] Brown 1993; Formisano 2007 and Formisano 2014.   [19] Momigliano 1980; Pocock 1977.
[20] On this document and its impact see Herbst 2004 and Adler 2020.

propaedeutic to further specialised study in the professional school and conducive to engaged participation in society by all members to whom such education might be accessible. It is important to note, however, that the case for this liberal arts curriculum inclusive of science, mathematics and what we may now term 'Humanities' is advanced in the context of the question as to whether Greek and Latin should be retained as part of the college instruction or instead eliminated because irrelevant to most professions. In some ways, though 200 years old, the report is strikingly applicable. The slippage between practicality and desirability is already at work in this early document: according to the authors since 'the literature of every country in Europe is founded more or less on classical literature . . . if scholars are prepared to act in the literary world as it in fact exists, classical literature, *from considerations purely practical* [emphasis added], should form an important part of their early discipline' (p. 34). The authors make a limited claim as to the value of Greek and Latin for those going into law, medicine and theology. While Greek is especially valuable to access scripture in its 'original simplicity and purity', Latin is framed as essential for those studying modern European languages. Yet on closer inspection, the practicality of the liberal arts canon is but one part of a larger and more serious claim about the ability of the Greek and Roman writers to 'form the taste, and to discipline the mind, both in thought and diction, to the relish of what is elevated, chaste, and simple' (p. 35).

The political nature of this discourse, both in its original context and in its subsequent instantiations, cannot be understated:[21] for as scholars have demonstrated, this rhetoric went hand in hand with an appropriation of the classical past to justify modern structures of colonialism and slavery.[22] To give one contemporary example, John Calhoun, the American slavery advocate, statesman, vice-president of the United States and Yale graduate, is rumoured to have asserted that philological competence in Greek was an indicator of humanity, and one in which black people were incapable of partaking.[23] For sure these constructs were contested already in the nineteenth century:[24] African American scholars, educators and intellectuals not only actively combated these appropriations by using classical texts to challenge racist ideologies but also co-opted Graeco-Roman civilisation in the development of their nascent programme for African American culture.[25] Nevertheless, even as the authors of the Yale Report

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[21] Rankine 2020.   [22] Barnard 2017; Richard 1994.   [23] Ronnick 2005: 44, 342–3.
[24] See responses in Crummell 1897; Cooper 1898: 260–1.   [25] Hairston 2013.

wrestle with subtlety with transatlantic differences in the teaching of Greek and Latin at University, there is no question that the goal for which this curriculum is designed is the formation of a white male who claims European heritage as his own.

Thus, though the reconfiguration and supplementation of the curriculum in today's Anglo-American classrooms may on some level satisfy the present demand for greater inclusivity, it is important to acknowledge that the place of classical works in the liberal arts canon rests on a mixed legacy. To give one other example, in the US, debates about opening up the canon have clustered around the redefinition of the curricula for 'Great Books' courses in the context of liberal arts education in places such as Reed College, Columbia, Chicago and Yale. Demands for Great Books programmes, such as Columbia's Core Curriculum as well as similar programmes at Chicago, Berkeley, University of Virginia and later at Yale, arose in the aftermath of World War I in an effort to strengthen democracy and to avoid the mistakes that led to near annihilation in the first world conflict.[26] Originally developed as war issues training and accompanied soon by an Honours course on Great Books taught by John Erskine, 'An introduction to contemporary civilization' was designed to teach students among other things 'how to produce cheap goods without sacrificing human nature; how to achieve political and legal forms that are at once flexible and stable; how to eliminate human and material waste of any kind; how to preserve national integrity and still enjoy the benefits of international organization'.[27]

On the one hand, the founders of these programmes, men like John Erskine at Columbia, Charles W. Eliot at Harvard and Mortimer Adler at Chicago, were driven by the idea of democratising both access to the classics and their interpretation – the innovation of Great Books programmes resting as much on their curricula as on the Socratic method employed in the classroom.[28] This attempt to 'democratise' the classics was partly felt to be an answer to the development of electives in university curricula and the increased 'professionalisation' of higher education.[29] It is in response to these changes in higher education that a common curriculum, based on a set of texts once considered the bastions of social elites, was developed to educate this student body made increasingly of middle-class men from first- or second-generation European immigrant families. Here the classical past, specifically inflected as Greek, provides a *trait d'union* in

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[26] The Great Books idea in turn has its root in late nineteenth-century Victorian culture: Lacy 2008.
[27] Coss 1919: 344.   [28] See Chaddock 2002.   [29] Bell 2011: 12–15.

the melting pot of the nascent American democracy. As Erskine writes in his essay 'The moral obligation to be intelligent':

> Our land assimilates all races; with every ship in the harbor our old English ways of thought must crowd a little closer to make room for a new tradition . . . the social conditions from which these new citizens have escaped have taught them the power of the mind. They differ from each other, but against the Anglo-Saxon they are confederated in a Greek love of knowledge, in a Greek assurance that sin and misery are the fruit of ignorance, and that to know is to achieve virtue. (Erskine 1921: 22–3)

On the other hand, the emphasis on the classics' role in catalysing social and ethnic assimilation of recent immigrants and inculcating a new democratic moral order is not just built on a skewed and idealised image of the classical past but, as James Turner has argued, also can be seen to mask a Christian, and specifically Protestant, agenda by endowing the teaching of literature with 'the promise of moral formation once shouldered by Protestantism'.[30] Still, perusing Erskine's manifesto on reading Great Books one is struck by the vibrant modernity of many of his claims: in carving a space for the non-scholar to read Great Books, Erskine argues that the historical method of reading the classics does not deserve the credit it gets:

> [M]any a conscientious student has completed an elaborate study of language in the hope that in the end he would know something about literature, only to find that he knew a great deal about language. The approach to literature is always through life, and if a book no longer reflects our life, it will cease to be generally read, no matter what its importance for antiquarian purposes. (Erskine 1935: 16)

This call to examine Virgil as a book for the present has its roots in a radically modern concept of reading as a dynamic process, through which change is exerted on the past:

> [W]henever we read a book we love, we change it, to some extent. We read into it our own interpretations, and the meanings which the words have taken on in our own time. (Erskine 1935: 21)

At least two competing models of canonicity are seemingly at work. In one, the Graeco-Roman past is presented as embodying timeless values accessible through historical study. As in the case of the Yale Report of 1828, the classical canon thus conceived is a *practical* tool through which to read the

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[30] Turner 2000: 270 and see his discussion *passim*.

present and shape the future. The other, represented in John Erkine's Great Books school, approaches the classics and the canon to which they belong more consciously as a *displacement* of the self, 'a magic surface, in which [the audience] can see themselves more clearly than elsewhere' (Erskine 1935: 23). The canon is here envisaged as a currency, a tool to make out who we are in the present moment, as opposed to a vehicle for the transmission of quantum values. It is and should be changeable not just in scope but also in definition, with works being swapped in and out as well as being radically redefined through reading. In many ways, however, both of these versions of the classical canon activate, self-consciously or not, a deep sense of intimacy with the classical past, whether through the promise of repetition or through the distorting effect of the mirror.

Thus the creation of a liberal arts canon, spanning the Graeco-Roman classics and European literature and thought all the way to the nineteenth century, implies a politically charged claim of continuity between the present and the classical past. Such a claim is deeply connected with nineteenth-century discourses of nationalism in all their sinister ramifications (e.g. anti-Semitism, Euro-centrism, Orientalism).[31] To give just one example of this complex legacy, American Great Books activists, including John Erskine himself, were deeply influenced by the programme for liberal education founded on the classics developed by Matthew Arnold, the Victorian poet and critic.[32] Arnold argued that culture was not one based on 'a smattering of Greek and Latin' or 'scientific passion' but rather that it was to be defined as 'the study of perfection':

> But there is of culture another view, in which not solely the scientific passion, the sheer desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intelligent being, appears as the ground of it. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for stopping human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing the sum of human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it, – motives eminently such as are called social, – come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part. (Arnold 1869: 7)

In 'The function of criticism at the present time', an essay published in 1865 after Arnold delivered his famous lectures 'On translating Homer', the critic asks 'There is so much inviting us! What are we to take? What will

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[31] See Winterer 2002: 136–7 in reference to nineteenth-century America; see also Stephens and Vasunia 2010 for discussion of Classics and the rise of nationalism.
[32] Lacy 2008: 403–17. See Erskine's reference to Arnold's agenda in Erskine 1921: 19.

nourish us in growth towards perfection?'[33] The answer lies in selecting 'the best that is known and thought *in the world*' [emphasis added].[34] While Arnold invites every critic to possess 'one great literature, at least, besides his own' (p. 82), his model of great literature is in practice centred on the revival of a cogent European culture founded on distinct national identities but sharing a common heritage in antiquity:

> But after all, the criticism I am really concerned with, – the criticism which alone can much help us for the future, the criticism which, throughout Europe, is at present day meant . . ., – is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation . . . and whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman and eastern antiquity, and of one another. (Arnold 1895: 39)

Moreover, as Miriam Leonard has shown, Arnold's socially liberal programme of education through 'great literature' is in itself highly fraught: Arnold's famous call, also advanced in his 1869 *Culture and Anarchy*, to strike a balance between Hebraism and Hellenism, which Arnold viewed as the two idealised cultural forces animating world history, is both a corrective to contemporary discourses of philhellenism by French Semitics scholar Ernest Renan, among others, and an extension of it, being in no way exempt from the odious anti-Semitic rhetoric which animates it.[35]

In highlighting the complex and at times deeply troubled history of the instructional contexts in which the study of Greek and Roman Great Books is embedded the point should not be to seek out alternative 'bias-free' textual canons but rather to emphasise the political nature of these paedagogical projects and the claims to greatness therein advanced.[36] Furthermore, as we construct a history of the Latin canon, we must reckon with the role of the Graeco-Roman past in the construction of modern nostalgic canonical formations. Canons may well be practical tools but they are ideological nonetheless.

'Opening Up the Latin Canon'

> . . . it is a truism that a full undoing of the canon-apocrypha opposition, like the undoing of any opposition, is impossible . . . When we feminist Marxists are ourselves moved by a desire for alternative canon-formations, we work with varieties of and variations upon the old standards. (Spivak 1987: 213)

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[33] Arnold and Pater 1895: 84.   [34] Ibid. 78.   [35] Leonard 2012: 105–38.
[36] See further North 2017.

When canonicity and the canon are framed as the 'price of doing business', the focus shifts instead to the process of negotiating and 'opening' up the canon to the under-represented or marginal. When we consider the canon first and foremost as a function of institutional practice – a hierarchical list of authors, texts and methodologies deemed for one reason or another worthier of being taught, studied and preserved – there is no question that in the past three decades, the core of Latin literature has significantly widened with a boom in areas such as post-Virgilian epic, technical literature and miscellaneous collections (e.g. Columella, Pliny the Elder, Vitruvius, Frontinus, Valerius Maximus, Aulus Gellius), pseud-epigrapha (e.g. *Appendix Vergiliana*) and late antique literature to name a few. New theoretical models and emerging methodologies have aided this expansion: some of the recent shifts that have fuelled – and in turn have been fuelled by – the expansion of the canonical core of Latin texts include, for example, the erosion of traditional boundaries between literature and history and between text and material culture, and the booming field of reception studies which has significantly expanded the historical and geographical scope of the classical scholar. The rise of a mass market for translations and textbooks, stimulated by the need to teach Greek and Latin texts in courses taught in translation to a broader set of undergraduate audiences, has further shaped the curriculum to allow for the inclusion of corpora, such as papyri, graffiti and inscriptions, previously difficult to access.[37] The extent to which the digital age will affect the curricular canon is still in question: on the one hand, the internet has made more material more easily available through searchable databases and yet the price of digital subscriptions and the practicalities of the classroom may in the end push more readers towards older translations out of copyright and therefore freely available on the web.[38] In turn, the older the material, the more likely it is to be alienating in its deployment of racist and sexist vocabulary and in its blatant misappropriation of the classical past.[39]

Most recent discussions of the canon have focused on drawing and re-drawing the boundaries of Latin and Greek literature to include the writings and perspectives of under-represented or marginalised social,

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[37] Kennedy 2001; Hardwick 2000 and for earlier efforts to 'open up' the classics through translation see Sheets 2005 with reference to the Loeb project. For the ways in which non-literary and non-canonical corpora have been made available through translation see, for example, Lefkowitz and Fant 2016; Kennedy, Roy and Goldman 2013.

[38] Hall 2008b.

[39] Haley 2009. This is not to say, however, that current teaching tools are immune from this problem: see, for example, McCoskey 2019 with reference to the treatment of slavery in nineteenth-century Latin textbooks in contrast to current trends.

racial and gender groups, a re-kindling of the canon wars of the 1980s and
1990s.[40] It is important to consider both the politics of this 'opening up' of
the canon and how such a gesture plays out with respect to the specific field
of Roman literary studies and more generally of Classics. In this section, we
will explore the obvious paradox at play whenever we critique the canon by
calling for a change in its internal composition without calling into
question its validity as a construct. As Spivak notes in the quote which
opens the section, these 'alternative canon-formations' are nothing but
'variations upon an old standard'. If, as John Guillory writes, 'the point is
not to make judgment disappear but to reform the conditions of its
practice', what are the limits of this logic of 'substitutability' not just for
the study of the marginal but also for the discipline?[41]

   Work that seeks to recover the experiences of marginalised groups and
the gender and race ideologies promoted by Graeco-Roman texts has laid
important ground for framing traditionally peripheral constituencies as
part and parcel of dominant texts and ideologies.[42] This body of research
has emphasised that Graeco-Roman antiquity is in many ways in
a relationship of deep alterity from modern democratic ideals of inclusivity,
fairness and democracy and such an acknowledgement is surely a salutary
corrective to the traditional view of Greece and Rome as the cradle of all
that is good about western culture. Furthermore, the emphasis on the
linguistic, racial, religious and cultural plurality of the ancient world not
only provides a richer and more faithful picture of Graeco-Roman
antiquity but defuses the selective appropriation of Rome and Athens as
founding sites of white European culture.[43] Still, there are obvious limits to
this approach to 'opening up' the canon in the field of antiquity, in which
women, slaves and other minorities had restricted access to literacy.
Despite the exciting volume of new work on categories and voices trad-
itionally neglected or altogether excluded from scholarly discourse, as
scholars of antiquity we must be careful to guard against what David
Damrosch has called the 'insistent presentism' of postmodernity, resisting
the ways in which the impetus to 'modernise' the canon excludes periods
and genres in which the voices that seek representation are less present or
less clearly visible.[44]

   Relatedly, the incorporation of post-classical reception in the classical
curriculum is another major engine of democratisation of the canon.[45]

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[40] On the canon wars see Graff 1992.   [41] Guillory 2013: 340.
[42] Recent overviews in Lively 2006; Milnor 2008: 16–46; Zajko 2008; Richlin 2014: 1–35; Joshel and
      Murnaghan 2005.
[43] DuBois 2010; Seo 2019.   [44] Damrosch 2006: 17.   [45] Rankine 2019.

Through the study of classical reception in its global dimension across time and space, the relevance of the Graeco-Roman world to different and mutually connected cultural traditions is explored in all its complexity. This emphasis on the plurality of voices that have a stake in the classical tradition is intellectually enriching as well as reparative at a time when issues of access, relevance and racism are increasingly being raised in the field.[46] While this expanded and more open-ended vision of the classical canon has met with resistance in some quarters with a growing sense of discomfort both at what is being perceived as a 'de-skilling' and loss of disciplinary competence and at the erosion of the exemplarity of the classical, other work has focused on nimble, capacious and pragmatic paradigms for constructing canons that accommodate antiquity and its reception.[47]

These expanded, revised, opened or upended canons raise fundamental questions about the mechanics of artistic *representation* and the role of communities in hermeneutical dynamics. First, the notion that, for example, a male-authored text is bound to transmit a male-centred world-view rigidly restricts the meaning of texts to the intentions of their author, obscuring the ways in which communities do not 'find' or 'stumble upon' meaning but actively *construct* it in the process of reception. Moreover, if recent work on identity has taught us anything, it is that identities are far from monolithic self-evident entities: they are rather intersectional (Crenshaw), performed (Butler) or even 'idealised imaginings' (Pratt).[48] When Stanley Fish poignantly asks whether there is 'a text in this class', we would be well advised to consider this as a question not just about the unity and comprehensibility of literary texts but also about the possibility of arriving at a definition of stable and homogenous identities based on 'shared values' of any one community.[49]

Thus the idea of opening up the canon raises critical questions about the construction of identity, community and readership. When texts are viewed not as static conveyers of meaning but instead as objects that come into being *only* in the process of interpretation, the question of whose identity, history and values are represented by or through the object will necessarily involve a complex consideration of the identities not just of makers, creators and authors but also of contemporary readers and

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[46] Including two special issues of the *American Journal of Philology* (Greenwood 2022), where readers will find a more updated bibliography than I was able to include here after the final submission of the manuscript in 2019.
[47] Greenwood 2016; Güthenke and Holmes 2018; Martindale 2013.
[48] See the critique of communities in Guillory 2013: 276–9.   [49] Fish 1982.

audiences, as they collaborate to shape its culturally and historically situ-
ated interpretation. In this perspective, the diversifying of the canon has to
be understood as a *dialogic* project involving both the identities of readers,
students and scholars and the subject matter of their study.[50] Opening up
the canon is a dynamic and self-reinforcing process and one which involves
both readers that embody difference (social, racial, gender, etc.) accessing
and studying an expanded and evolving canon and texts (peripheral, post-
classical, marginal, etc.) that embody difference being 'read into' the canon
by an increasingly diverse readership. As Lorna Hardwick shrewdly points
out with reference to the question of whether Classics has undergone
a 'democratic turn', participation is a key measure of democratisation in
ensuring that Classics is not an exclusive practice and one historically co-
opted to justify conservative, reactionary or hateful programmes.[51] Yet, as
Hardwick argues, access is measured not just quantitatively but also
qualitatively as the process of 're-vision' (Rich 1972), identifying paths
not taken and thus revealing 'hitherto unrecognised possibilities' (Wolf
1988: 270–1) that are activated whenever the subjectivity of new readers
comes into play with the work's crevices and inconsistencies.[52] Opening up
the canon begins by taking seriously the inherent fragmentation of texts
and by acting out our desire to cure the loss through a reading that is
transformative for both the subject and the object.[53]

If approached from this angle, the process of opening up the canon
involves a deep methodological shift rather than a process of substitution,
an upending of priorities or, worse still, a widening that feels unmanage-
able. But how does this methodological shift affect approaches to specific
texts and genres, especially as they pertain to Latin literature? First, the
strong traction of the concept of canonicity within the field of Classics
determines not just a hierarchy of texts and methodologies worthier of
being taught and researched but also informs the very approach to so-called
marginal texts. As a scholar of 'minor' Roman poetry, in my own research
on Latin pseudepigrapha, I have had to overcome an intellectual impasse.
Scholarship on Roman fakes has generally consisted of studies of individual
texts aimed at proving or disproving the conventional attribution and

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[50] Jauss' notion of 'dialogical understanding' in Jauss 1985: 9–17; and Greenwood 2010: 37 on the
'dialogism' of Caribbean receptions of the classics.
[51] Hardwick 2013. See also Hall 2008a and Dozier 2018; Krebs 2012.
[52] Rich 1972: 18 defines re-vision as 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old
text from a new critical direction'. Different models of readership can pave the way for a re-
imagining of encounters with Graeco-Roman antiquity. See, for example, Casali 2004; Felson
2016; Hauser 2018.
[53] Najman 2017: 529 for a model of reading as 'reciprocal transformation of text and self'.

dating: are any or all the poems of the *Catalepton* by Virgil? Is the *Laus Pisonis* Neronian or Flavian? And is the writer the young Lucan? Is the writer of the *Consolatio ad Liviam* also the author of the *Elegiae in Maecenatem*? Scholarly engagement with these texts traditionally stops at whatever provisional answer one has reached on these endless and endlessly unanswerable questions, and little or no thought is given to the dynamics that gave rise to these texts.[54] The anonymity of these works is one of the factors that have positively discouraged any form of literary analysis, tied as this has traditionally been to the process of constructing and reconstructing authorial identity.[55] Yet, no less influential a factor in discouraging any interest in the cultural roots of anonymous and spurious works is the self-proclaimed role of the philologist as a defender of the canon. Here the canon cultivates a 'policing mentality' in which a select group of works considered valuable has to be kept free from unwanted impostors, while little or no interest is given to the literary dynamics of the works rejected as spurious. One is reminded of Antony Grafton's compelling image of antiquity as a train 'in which Greeks and Latins, spurious and genuine authorities sit side by side until they reach a stop marked "Renaissance". Then grim-faced humanists climb aboard, check tickets, and expel fakes in hordes through doors and windows alike.'[56] Filling the cultural vacuum which Roman pseudepigrapha has been made to inhabit means stepping out of the train-conductor role and treating these texts not as crime scenes but as creative responses to the literary past. Studying spurious Roman poetry as a literary tradition – not as an inextricable bundle of problems of authorial identities and dating – implies a fundamental repositioning of one's scholarly stance towards marginal texts but also canonical authors, a willingness to drop the role of policeman of the canon and assume instead the mask of cultural observer.

Secondly, it is important to take stock not just of how approaches to the canon shape our approach to the margins, but of how the project of the canon is shaped by a given approach to the margins. The canonical locus of study for non-canonical texts has typically been the textual edition and the commentary and to this day pseudepigrapha and other 'minor' texts are mostly studied in the context of these most traditional philological genres.[57] It is worth asking *why* this should be so and to what extent the scholarly medium, if at all, is shaping the message. From Scaliger's edition

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[54] Peirano 2012a: 242 on the tendency to proclaim guilt without exploring motive. For a critical exploration of these issues as they interlace with gender, see Skoie 2002; Gurd 2005.
[55] Peirano 2012b.   [56] Grafton 1990: 102.   [57] Hunter 2002.

of the *Appendix Vergiliana* (1572), to Baehrens' *Poetae Latini minores* (1879–86), to Riese's (1869–70) and Shackleton Bailey's (1982) *Anthologia Latina*, to Housman's and Goold's editions of Manilius, engagement with minor Roman poetry has been surprisingly central in the tradition of textual criticism with genealogies of critics displaying their prowess and belonging to a scholarly tradition through successive and layered engagement with the inert bodies of marginal texts.[58] As Lowell Edmunds argues, 'minor literature', which these texts are seen to embody, is understood squarely in aesthetic terms.[59] Housman expressed this paradox lapidarily in a paper on the text of the *Culex*: 'Just as it is hard to tell, in Statius or Valerius Flaccus, whether this or that absurd expression is due to miscopying or to the divine afflatus of the bard, so in the *Culex* and *Ciris* and *Aetna* it is for ever to be borne in mind that they are the work of poetasters. Many a time it is impossible to say for certain where the badness of the author ends and the badness of the scribe begins' (Housman 1902: 339). Here the textual work of the critic, often framed in clinical terms as a rescue operation or restorative surgery, constitutes an affirmation and sublimation of the method of philology, as the 'aesthetic pleasure that comes from the sheer technical work'.[60]

It is also true, however, that the very method of traditional philology, which is being affirmed as the message, derives its prestige from the authority and value of the canon. The basic principle, common to both ancient and modern criticism, according to which the critic is able to judge on issues of authenticity because of his command of an author's style (*diuinatio*), rests on the loving identification with the author.[61] The critic's most important weapon is his acquaintance with each writer's most salient characteristics and his ability to use his judgement and knowledge to spot the intruder. Modern authenticity criticism has made the stylistic variable arguably more 'quantifiable' by closely studying metrics and diction and compiling lists of features which are characteristic of a given author, and distinguishing between the early and late phases of their production. Yet, to ask whether a textual variant is authentic is to judge whether it reflects what are assumed to be the standards and style of the author, that is in

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[58] Bowersock 2011 reviews the 'scholarly line' of Manilian criticism stretching from Bentley, Scaliger and Goold, noting that 'the praise that Shackleton Bailey lavished on Goold's Loeb edition of Manilius was a kind of secular blessing from a high priest of textual criticism'.

[59] Edmunds 2010.

[60] Bowersock 2011. Edmunds 2010: 61–2 cites Shackleton Bailey's definition of the textual critic as 'a physician' who 'does not go too anxiously into the merit of what he heals; he gives his aid where it is most needed and most effectual'.

[61] For the ways in which secondary literature disrupts these categories see Sluiter 2000.

effect to think *like* the author. Some conclusions follow: the authority of the critic is intimately dependent on the value of the reconstructed text. Unsurprisingly, minor texts pose challenges precisely in that they threaten to disrupt the critic's desire to be one with the author. On the one hand, the minor text is an inert body, a kind of dummy on which the critic practises their surgical skill; on the other, as an inferior text, it must be resisted by the critic as an object of desire and identification.

However, there is one further corollary that we may be less eager to grapple with: namely that the project of the canon ultimately needs the presence of a non-canonical margin to justify itself. Taking a metaphor from the history of the book, we might think of the rejected readings in the apparatus at the bottom of a page as the paratext of philology. In Gérard Genette's formulation, paratexts such as titles, dedications, prefaces, etc. represent the outer edge of the text and, though physically liminal, hermeneutically they are in fact central to helping configure and thus deliver the text.[62] This paradox of textual criticism has been well studied by critics of philology such as Jerome McGann and David Greetham. As the latter writes, in relation to the role of the apparatus, 'the authentication of the "primary" text above is wholly dependent on the description and evaluation of the "rejected" readings below. The editors must successfully demonstrate the inadequacies of the lower text in order to convince the reader that the upper text is authentic.'[63] In other words, the presence of the text above is guaranteed by, and therefore draws its authority from, the demonstrated inferiority of the lower text. The more inadequate the lower text, the higher the authority of the upper text. We can extend this metaphor beyond the sphere of textual criticism if we see this rhetoric of inadequacy and inferiority as fundamental to the self-definition of the canon. We may choose to preserve the status quo by seeking the admission of marginal texts into the canon (thereby implicitly marginalising other texts). Or we may choose to disrupt, if not the canon as a list, at least its claim to primacy and alterity versus the margin.

The Antiquity of the Canon

However much we may reposition ourselves in relation to both new and traditional canon formations, we must at some point grapple with the fact that the canon and the hierarchy of texts and genres on which it is built are to some extent inventions of Graeco-Roman antiquity. What does it mean

[62] Genette 1997.   [63] Greetham 1991: 22.

to work with canon formations in the study of Latin literature given how the Romans themselves set out to construct a national literature as a translation of the canon of another?[64] To what degree is the critical discourse of the Latin canon rooted in the very sense of belatedness and marginality built into the Roman literary tradition? To what extent does it feed upon and complement the classicism of the Second Sophistic under which the turn to the Greek classical past functioned both as a site of cultural resistance by the Greeks and as a tool of imperial control by the Roman elites?[65] And to what extent does it depart from it?

There is a unique and intimate connection between Roman literature, which starts with a translation of a Greek 'classic', Livius Andronicus' *Odyssia*, and the canon.[66] This structuring of a Latin vernacular literature as a translation and continuation of Greek literature is predicated upon the existence of a more or less fixed canon of great works. In Denis Feeney's words, 'a strongly classicizing and canonizing urge is evident from the beginning of the translation project'.[67] According to the standard narrative, the Romans of the second century BCE inherited such a 'canonising urge' from their near contemporaries, the Hellenistic scholars and poets, who were the first to systematise the study of the Greek literary past. This narrative of translation and adaptation should be revised to account for the ways in which the Hellenistic systematising of the Greek literary past was interpreted through and made to map onto Roman modes of political and social ordering.[68] Thus the Roman sources that discuss the work of Hellenistic grammarians can be read not just as storehouses of information about the third and second century BCE but also about contemporary concerns with the appropriation of Greek heritage and the globalising aspirations of the Romans. In this way, the construction of the Greek classical past can be seen as an invention of the Romans as much as of Hellenistic Greeks, and one which created an enduring legacy in modern accounts of the literary canon.

The effort to frame Roman literature as a translation of the Greek canon is evident from the earliest beginning. Ennius was supposedly referred to as

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[64] Feeney 2016; Goldberg 2011.   [65] Connolly 2007; Porter 2005; Woolf 1994.
[66] For a critique of this paradigm see Barchiesi 2002: 'one could argue that Latin studies have been focusing on translation and transference, not on appropriation and reuse, because the discipline was trying to (re)establish itself (through many an inferiority complex) as the missing link between German Hellenophilia and European national identities'.
[67] Feeney 2016: 119.
[68] This is akin to what Joy Connolly has called the 'payoff' of Hellenism to the Romans: Connolly 2007: 31: 'Universal, globally appealing Hellenism mapped itself as the intellectual and ideological system for universal and globalizing (if not globally appealing) Roman empire.'

the *alter Homerus* already by Lucilius.[69] The early Roman dramatists focused not on contemporary theatre but on the fifth-century 'classics'.[70] Cicero expresses this 'canonising urge' in a well-known passage of the *Academica* in which he is attempting to sell the project of writing philosophy in Latin:

> Quid enim causae est cur poetas Latinos Graecis litteris eruditi legant, philosophos non legant? An quia delectat Ennius Pacuuius Accius multi alii, qui non uerba sed uim Graecorum expresserunt poetarum – quanto magis philosophi delectabunt, si ut illi Aeschylum Sophoclem Euripidem sic hi Platonem imitentur Aristotelem Theophrastum. (Cic. *Acad.* 1.3)

> For what is the reason why those knowledgeable of Greek letters read Latin poets and do not read Latin philosophers? Is it because Ennius entertains them, Pacuvius, Accius and many others, who have reproduced not the words but the meaning of the Greek poets? How much more will philosophers please them, if in the same way as those imitated Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, they should imitate Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus?

Ennius, Pacuvius and Accius correspond to the tragic Greek triad of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, as already proto-canonised in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In turn, Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus are presented as the philosophical canon.[71]

The creation of a vernacular literature seems to have been accompanied by philological work that attempted to frame the developing body of texts as a match to and replica of the existing Greek classics.[72] Gellius, for example, transmits a fragment in iambic senarii from the *De poetis* of Volcacius Sedigitus, probably composed around 100 BCE.

> multos incertos certare hanc rem uidimus,
> palmam poetae comico cui deferant.
> eum meo iudicio errorem dissoluam tibi,
> ut, contra si quis sentiat, nihil sentiat.
> Caecilio palmam Statio do comico.
> Plautus secundus facile exuperat ceteros.
> dein Naeuius, qui feruet, pretio in tertiost.
> si erit, quod quarto detur, dabitur Licinio.
> post insequi Licinium facio Atilium.
> in sexto consequetur hos Terentius,

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[69] Lucil. 1189 Morel; Varro, *Sat. Men.* 398; Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.50.
[70] Nervegna 2007; Gildenhard 2010; Manuwald 2011: 20–2.
[71] Cf. Cic. *De or.* 3.26 where other triads drawn from art history are brought to bear.
[72] Horsfall 1993.

> Turpilius septimum, Trabea octauum optinet,
> nono loco esse facile facio Luscium.
> antiquitatis causa decimum addo Ennium.   (Gell. 15.24)

> We see that many are undecided on the decision as to which comic poet they
> would award the palm of victory. By my judgment I shall resolve this
> wavering, so that if anyone thinks differently from me, they have no sense
> at all. To Caecilius Statius, I give the palm of victory as a comic. Plautus
> easily surpasses the rest in second place; then Naevius comes third with his
> passion. If there is a fourth place, it will belong to Licinius. I make Atilius
> follow next after Licinius. Let Terentius follow after these, sixth in rank.
> Turpilius holds seventh place, Trabea eighth. Ninth place I easily make
> Luscius occupy, Ennius I add as tenth on account of his antiquity.[73]

As Citroni notes, Caecilius, Plautus and Naevius constitute the initial
triad, while the other six are added as an unwilling appendix (v. 12 *Si erit
quod quarto detur*) to form a canon of nine.[74] Ennius is amusingly pre-
sented as a tenth extra. Volcacius compares the critical process to an
athletic competition: critics are fighting (v. 1 *certare*) and uncertain to
whom they should award victory (v. 2 *palmam deferant*). This is not just
yet another application of the ubiquitous metaphor of criticism as a form of
contest. Rather, the competition with the conferral of the palm of victory is
here emphatically seen as belonging to the Greek world, as Livy reminds us
when discussing the introduction of the *palma* at the *Ludi Romani*.[75]
Varro's own comic list was structured in triads depending on different
areas of expertise with Caecilius being the best in plots, Terence in
character and Plautus in dialogue (*Sat. Men.* 399 *In quibus partibus in
argumentis Caecilius poscit palmam, | in ethesin Terentius, in sermonibus
Plautus*).[76] This canonising practice was later to be mocked by Horace in
the *Epistle to Augustus* (Hor. *Epist.* 2.1.51 *ut critici dicunt*): as the critics say,
Horace writes, Ennius is the Latin Homer, Afranius the Roman Menander,
Plautus the Roman Epicharmus, while Caecilius is superior in seriousness
(*grauitas*) and Terence in art (*ars*).[77] Horace ironically mocks the rigidity of
these expert judgements, while at the same time criticising the in-built bias
against more recent writers. Paradoxically, however, Augustan literature

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[73] Courtney 1993: 94–6.   [74] Citroni 2005.

[75] Livy 10.47.3 *Eodem anno coronati primum ob res bello bene gestas ludos Romanos spectarunt palmaeque
tum primum translato e Graeco more uictoribus datae.* Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.1.5–6 *palmaque nobilis |
terrarum dominos euehit ad deos* with Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 6 ad loc.

[76] Cf. Varro fr. 40 Funaioli 1907 Ἦθη . . . *nullis aliis seruare conuenit, quam Titinio Terentio Attae;*
πάθη *uero Trabea Atilius Caecilius facile mouerunt*; Vell. Pat. 1.17.1.

[77] And see *Epist.* 2.2.99–100 *Discedo Alcaeus puncto illius; ille meo quis? | Quis nisi Callimachus?*

can be read as an attempt not to do away with the archaic canon enshrined by Varro but to 'reboot' it, revamping with it the 'canonising urge' with which Roman literature had begun. When Horace at the end of *Carm.* 1.1 asks Maecenas to include him among the lyric poets (*Quodsi me lyricis uatibus inseres*), we are told that 'Horace's *inseres* represents the Greek ἐγκρίνειν, to "include in the canon" (οἱ ἐγκριθέντες, the *classici*)'.[78] Here the Romans are seen to transfer pre-existing Greek cultural media that predated the advent of Rome – be they a list of canonical works, scholarly or poetic genres or institutional contexts for the preservation of poetry and learning. It is typically argued that this list of the nine lyric poets was an early example of canonical formation, created by the Alexandrian grammarians to identify the foremost writers in each genre.[79] Yet, while an anonymous epigram from the *Palatine Anthology* seems to treat the canon of nine as closed (9.184 'beginning and end limit of all lyric'), another one plays with the conceit that Sappho is not the ninth lyric poet but instead the tenth muse (9.571).[80] Neither is datable for sure to the Hellenistic period.[81] The first attestation of the canon of ten Attic orators is in the second-century treatise *On Literary Styles* by Hermogenes (2.401, 403) and forms the basis for pseudo-Plutarch *Lives of the Ten Orators*.[82] Most scholars agree that this list of orators (not works), just as the list of top tragic and comic writers, remained relatively fluid well into the late Republic when Cicero seems unaware of it (see, for example, *Brut.* 285–91).[83]

It is hard to date these Hellenistic lists, let alone ascertain their function and specifically whether they functioned as 'proto-canons':[84] were

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[78] Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 15 ad loc. Ἐγκρίνειν is attested in late texts: for example Phot. *Bibl.* 61 20b25 'Aeschines, the son of Lysanias, called Socraticus, is reckoned by Phrynichus and others one of the greatest orators (εἰς τοὺς ἀρίστους ἐγκρίνει), and his speeches as models of Attic style, only second to those of its best representatives.' However, Emily Greenwood points out to me that it is used of the approved stories allowed in the ideal city at Plato, *Resp.* 377b–c 'We must oversee then, as it seems, the storymakers, and what they do well we must admit (ἐγκριτέον), and what they do not do well, we must reject. And we will convince nurses and mothers to tell their children the stories listed as acceptable (ἐγκριθέντας).' The verb ἐκκρίνειν is used of exclusion from the list of Seven Sages by Diodorus Siculus in the first century BCE 9 fr. 7.1: 'He was included among the Seven Sages after they excluded from the list (ἐκκρίναντες) Periander of Corinth because he had turned into a harsh tyrant.'

[79] Pfeiffer 1968: 206–7; Citroni 2005; Easterling 2012. [80] See Barbantani 1993: 5–97.

[81] See Page 1981: 341 on anonymous 36a, b.

[82] Quintilian, however, speaks of ten orators being the product of one age in *Inst.* 10.1.74 *Sequitur oratorum ingens manus, ut cum decem simul Athenis aetas una tulerit.* And cf. Vell. Pat. 1.16.

[83] Worthington 1994: 259 attributes the rise of the canon to the Atticist movement and Caecilius of Calacte, the author of a treatise on the subject according to the *Suda*.

[84] For an argument for the invention of the Greek canon predating the Hellenistic age see Netz 2020.

Callimachus' *Pinakes* ('Tables') a catalogue of books available in the library or a list of best in the 'pragmatic sense of . . . most useful or most famous authors in the different genres' (Easterling 2012: 286)?[85] If the latter, it is unclear to what extent the Alexandrian *enkrithentes* are singled out as the best for the purpose of imitation, as their later counterparts discussed in Quintilian are, or simply as the most accomplished. The Latin word *index*, which translates *Pinax*, is used both of a catalogue of books from the library (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.57 *Nec sane quisquam est tam procul a cognitione eorum remotus ut non indicem certe ex bibliotheca sumptum transferre in libros suos possit*) as well as a list of top surviving writers in a given genre or plays by a given author (Cic. *Hort.* fr. 48 *indicem tragicorum*; Sen. *Ep.* 39.2 *indicem philosophorum*; Gell. 3.3.1 the *indices* of Plautine plays by Volcacius Sedigitus). Either way, their circulation in written editions and commentaries of surviving Greek classical authors built towards and solidified their eventual canonical status.[86]

Above all, it is worth noting the extent to which this picture of the Greek canon as a pre-ordered hierarchical field is filtered through the Roman imperial imagination. To start with, not only is the list a quintessentially Roman cultural medium;[87] Romans were also fond of displaying such lists of victories of comic or tragic poets in their homes as suggested by disparate findings of Athenian victory lists in Roman contexts.[88] Regardless of when the lists of best writers such as those attributed to Volcacius Sedigitus and Varro were ultimately created, it is important to note the extent to which the account of the scholarly work of the Alexandrians is thoroughly mediated by *Roman* sources. Indeed, besides Horace, Quintilian is the most important source for the existence of these lists. According to the Roman rhetor:

> Quo quidem ita seuere sunt usi ueteres grammatici ut non uersus modo censoria quadam uirgula notare et libros qui falso uiderentur inscripti tamquam subditos summouere familia permiserint sibi, sed auctores alios in ordinem redegerint, alios omnino exemerint numero. (*Inst.* 1.4.3)
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> The old *grammatici* indeed were so severe in their judgments that they not only allowed themselves to mark lines with a sign of disapproval and remove

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[85] Radermacher 1919; Witty 1958; Blum 1991: 150–1, 182–3.
[86] Most 1990: 55–6 on the creation of scholarly editions and commentaries in Alexandria and the influence they indirectly exerted on later processes of canonisation.
[87] Gildenhard 2003; Riggsby 2019.
[88] For example the fragments from the library of Tauromenion from the second century BCE, on which see Battistoni 2006; *IGUR* 216, 215 and 218, pertaining to victories in the 440s BCE on which see Olson and Millis 2012.

from the family as if they were supposititious children any books which seemed wrongly attributed, but also listed some authors in a recognised canon, and excluded others altogether. (trans. Russell 2001)

Later in the reading list, Quintilian claims that 'Apollonius does not appear in the grammarians' list, because Aristarchus and Aristophanes, who evaluated the poets, included none of their own contemporaries' (*Apollonius in ordinem a grammaticis datum non uenit, quia Aristarchus atque Aristophanes, poetarum iudices, neminem sui temporis in numerum redegerunt*, Inst. 10.1.54). It is worth stressing that these accounts of Alexandrian practice are deeply imbued with a typically Roman sensitivity to structure and social order.[89] When, in the second century CE, Aulus Gellius (19.8.15) recalls Fronto's way of calling the old cohort of orators or poets the *classici*, that is, men of the first class, he was creating a new coinage which was destined to have a long history, while all the same capitalising on a metaphorical interplay between literature and politics. As Farrell has remarked in relation to the patterning of poets' careers onto the *cursus honorum* of Roman politicians, Hellenistic genre theory entered into a deeply productive dialogue with the political and social structures of the Roman upper class.[90] Similarly, the Romans can be seen to have easily translated Hellenistic concerns with intellectual ordering into political hierarchies. It is no coincidence that in Quintilian's description of the role of the Alexandrian grammarians the marking of inauthentic passages should be characterised as *censoria uirgula notare* (*Inst.* 1.4.3 'marking lines with a sign of disapproval'). This phrase is meant to bring to mind the *nota* of the censors, the mark that was put in the *census* next to the name of disgraced people to exclude them from the list of citizens qualified to vote and stand for office.[91] Donald Russell, whose translation I gave, renders the Latin *ordo* as 'canon' but the inclusion and exclusion of books from the list can be seen to mobilise the meaning of *ordo* as social class.[92] In Quintilian's formulation, books are included or excluded from lists as citizens are included or excluded from classes (senatorial, equestrian, etc.) by grammarians who operate as Roman censors. Far from functioning as an inert metaphor, this intersection of the political and the canonical in the Roman literary imagination makes the canon an engine which both shapes and is shaped by Roman imperial ideology.

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[89] On the relation between empire and intellectual order see König and Whitmarsh 2007; Moatti 2015.
[90] Farrell 2002.   [91] Sen. *Controv.* 2.1.*praef.*24–5.
[92] See Livy 26.35.3; Val. Max. 2.2.1 *ignarus nondum a censoribus in ordinem senatorium allectum, quo uno modo etiam iis, qui iam honores gesserant, aditus in curiam dabatur.*

Another way in which the concept of the canon was already operative in Roman literature is in the clearly defined *hierarchy* of genres, adapted from the Greeks, according to which epic was seen as superior to all other genres.[93] Consequently, several genres defined themselves as 'minor', 'secondary' or even para-literary. Epigram, for example, is at the bottom of the hierarchy.[94] Prose is ranked lower than poetry with some exceptions.[95] It is useful then to explore genre, canonicity and epigonality as mutually reinforcing cultural mechanisms within a carefully structured pecking order. Just as Martial's defence of the low status of his epigrams (e.g. 1.*praef.* 7 *iocorum nostrorum simplicitate*; 11.20.10 *Romana simplicitate*) is well understood as a rhetorical strategy, not as a truthful characterisation of his style, so the epigonality of minor poets is being more and more understood as a self-conscious artistic effect.[96] The anonymous author of the *Laus Pisonis*, addressing his would-be-patron, exclaims:

> Felix et longa iuuenis dignissime uita
> eximiumque tuae gentis decus, accipe nostri
> certus et hoc ueri complectere pignus amoris.
> Quod si digna tua minus est mea pagina laude,
> at uoluisse sat est: animum, non carmina iacto.
> Tu modo laetus ades: forsan meliora canemus
> et uiris dabit ipse fauor, dabit ipsa feracem
> spes animum.   (*Laus Pis*. 211–18)

> Lucky young man, most worthy of a long life, distinguished glory of your people, confidently accept and embrace this token of my true affection. But if my page is less than worthy of your praise, my will is enough: my disposition is my boast, not my poetry. Only I ask that you lend your blissful presence: perhaps we will sing better and your very favour will give me strength, the very hope will make my soul productive.

We can choose to take these statements at face value and let the author's apologetic stance exercise its gravitational pull and claim, as one commentator does, that 'the poet *was* only eighteen and whoever he was evidently had his way to make'.[97] Or we can read these statements as part of a 'generic pose': either as a strategic rhetorical move designed to ingratiate

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[93] Farrell 2003.
[94] Mart. 12.94.9 *Quid minus esse potest? Epigrammata fingere coepi*; Tac. *Dial.* 10.4 *Ego uero omnem eloquentiam omnisque eius partis sacras et uenerabilis puto, nec solum cothurnum uestrum aut heroici carminis sonum, sed lyricorum quoque iucunditatem et elegorum lasciuias et iamborum amaritudinem [et] epigrammatum lusus et quamcumque aliam speciem eloquentia habeat, anteponendam ceteris aliarum artium studiis credo* with Edmunds 2010: 37–8.
[95] Hutchinson 2009; Whitmarsh 2013: 186–208.   [96] Fowler 1995; Roman 2001.
[97] Kenney 2006: 121.

the addressee or as a result of a conscious artistic persona not dissimilar from the 'bumbling incompetence' that Zetzel has seen as the hallmark of Horace's poetic persona in the *Satires*.[98] Lowell Edmunds' invitation to isolate minor Roman texts not on the basis of aesthetic criteria but of shared literary effects such as parody and realism is very helpful. Could the minor and the marginal be approached as *textual* stratagems comparable to Roland Barthes' 'reality effect'?[99] Conversely, following Mario Telò in his study of Aristophanic comedy, we may also choose to analyse the discourse of the canon in Graeco-Roman poets with a critical eye, not always assuming that it is ultimately dependent on an idealised list (e.g. a Hellenistic grammatical list). As Telò argues in relation to Aristophanes' *Peace*, the canon of comedy is 'an imagined, self-constructed ideal . . . deceptively offered as generic orthodoxy' to undercut his rivals' claims to poetic success.[100]

Latin literature offers a prime site from which to analyse the functioning of canons: for one thing, the Romans themselves saw their own literary corpus as a translation of the Greek canon. Though they inherited, translated and adapted the terminology of Hellenistic scholarship, they also uniquely shaped its intellectual tools: the modern discourse of the canon is not only rooted in the canonising project of Roman authors but also deeply connected from its inception with the ideological and political project of imperial conquest of the Romans.

The Boundaries of the Latin Canon

According to Cicero, Latin literature 'began' in 240 BCE, when Livius Andronicus staged the first play at Rome (Cic. *Brut.* 71–3), but when and where does it end? The answer to this question involves analysing the complex relationship between the Early Church Fathers and classical antiquity against the rise of the discourse of secularism in modern academia and its impact on disciplinary fault lines. Accordingly, this section will problematise the structural distinction between classical and Christian Latin canon and emphasise instead the crucial role played by Christian sources, typically excluded from the study of Latin literature, in the shaping of the disciplinary tools, texts and reading practices of the average Latinist.

Since the birth of *Altertumswissenschaft* ('the science of antiquity') in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the study of classical

[98] Zetzel 1980.   [99] Barthes 1989: 141–6.   [100] Telò 2016: 6.

antiquity has defined itself in opposition to the study of coeval and co-extensive civilisations, chief above all the Egyptian and the Jewish.[101] While up to the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars moved with freedom between Graeco-Roman antiquity, early Christianity, New Testament and Hebrew Bible, these are today distinct disciplinary entities with their own autonomous canons.

These disciplinary distinctions inform current narratives of the rise of the canon. It has often been observed that while the word 'canon' is derived from the Greek *kanōn*, its modern usage with reference to a selective list of authors is a post-classical coinage based on a late Christian development, not unlike the ways in which the word 'classic' is, in Mario Citroni's formulation, a 'learned reuse, in the humanistic context, of a specific metaphorical expression used by an ancient author'.[102] In classical Greek, *kanōn* refers to a 'rule' or 'standard', and hence the term is used of authors who are presented as models for imitation. For example, we know from Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and Galen that the Greek sculptor Polykleitos assigned the name *kanōn* to a statue of perfect proportions and to a treatise on the subject of the ideal bodily ratio.[103] In Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Lysias is said to be 'the standard and model of excellence in this genre [i.e. narration]'[104] while Thucydides is a 'model historian and the standard of excellence in deliberative oratory'.[105] Just as a canonical writer in the modern sense of the word is perceived to be superior, a *kanōn* is a model of recognisable value. Yet, in so far as they are held up above the rest, the *kanones* are models for the practical purposes of imitation. It is in the context of which works should be read and imitated by would-be-orators that the practice of listing model authors first begins to emerge.[106] The pragmatic context of emulation creates what at first seems to be a critical difference between the ancient and the modern construct of a list of authors. Whereas, as we have seen, the canon in the modern sense of a group of preferred works hints at the trans-historical superiority of the

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[101] Marchand and Grafton 1997.

[102] Citroni 2005: 209. The ancient text referenced by Citroni is Gellius 19.8.15, discussed p. 65. Pfeiffer 1968: 207 mentions David Ruhnken's 1768 *Historia critica oratorum Graecorum* as the first example of the use of the word canon to mean a selective list; see also Oppel 1937; Nicolai 1992: 251–65; Metzger 1997: 289–93; Rutherford 1999: 3; Hägg 2010.

[103] See Plin. *HN* 34.19.55 *Fecit et quem canona artifices uocant liniamenta artis ex eo petentes ueluti a lege quadam, solusque hominum artem ipsam fecisse artis opere iudicatur*; Stewart 1978.

[104] Dion. Hal. *Lys*. 18.4 ὅρον τε καὶ κανόνα τῆς ἰδέας ταύτης αὐτὸν ἀποφαίνομαι.

[105] Dion. Hal. *Thuc*. 2.22 οἳ κανόνα τῆς ἱστορικῆς πραγματείας ἐκεῖνον ὑποτίθενται τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τῆς περὶ τοὺς πολιτικοὺς λόγους δεινότητος ὅρον.

[106] See Rutherford 1999. Proto-examples of 'canons' include Dion. Hal. *De imit*. 2, Hermog. *Id*. 2, Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.

selected works of literature, the ancient list is designed to point out the
virtues of each model for the purpose of imitation in the context of the
training of orators (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.45 *Sed nunc genera ipsa lectionum,
quae praecipue conuenire intendentibus ut oratores fiant existimem, perse-
quor*). Such models are not, however, to be viewed a-critically; rather,
the student is invited to improve upon the model, careful to reproduce
its virtues but not its faults.[107] In addition to accommodating a certain
amount of fluctuation, these lists of proto-*kanones* are not list of works
but of writers.

The word *kanōn* begins to be used of a closed list of texts by the
early Christians in discussions of the authenticity of specific books.
Thus in the early fourth century CE, Eusebius of Caesarea writes of
Origen that 'in his first book on Matthew's Gospel, maintaining the
Canon of the Church (τὸν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν φυλάττων κανόνα), he
testifies that he knows only four Gospels [Matthew, Mark, Luke,
John], writing as follows … ' (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.3).[108] In
Eusebius, although there is continuity in the deployment of *kanōn*
to isolate texts deemed to be endowed with specific virtues, the
emphasis has clearly shifted from stylistic and ethical emulation to
the process of sanctioning and listing works deemed morally and
theologically superior. This meaning is well defined by the fourth
century when Augustine and Jerome use *canonicus, -a, -um* of books
belonging to a sanctioned body of work, in other words a canon.
Augustine explains the origin of the canon thus understood as the
Word of God in *The City of God*:

> Hic prius per prophetas, deinde per se ipsum, postea per apostolos, quan-
> tum satis esse iudicauit, locutus etiam scripturam condidit, quae canonica
> nominatur, eminentissimae auctoritatis, cui fidem habemus de his rebus,
> quas ignorare non expedit nec per nos ipsos nosse idonei sumus. (August. *De
> civ. D.* 11.3)

> God having spoken first through the prophets, then through himself and
> finally through the apostles as much as he saw fit, founded scripture of the
> highest authority which is called 'canonical' through which we believe in
> these matters which it is not fit to ignore and which we are incapable of
> knowing by ourselves.[109]

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[107] Russell 1979.
[108] Metzger 1997: 18.3, in which *The Shepherd* of Hermas is described as not being part of the canon (μὴ
ὂν ἐκ τοῦ κανόνος), as the first known instance of this use. Contra Pfeiffer 1968: 207 n. 4.
[109] For Augustine's delineation of the content of the Christian canon see *De doctrina christiana* 2.8.13
which gives the list of the canon (*totus canon scripturarum*).

It is standard to draw a fault line between this Christian usage of the canon as a body of authoritative works and classical lists of *kanones* as well as the later post-humanistic repurposing of the term canon to secular writings.[110] However, it is important to note that these seemingly different canonical formations stand on a well-identifiable continuum: albeit rooted in a different kind of claim about the intrinsic superiority of the work, the modern usage of the word canon retains an emphasis on emulative practices through its appeal to the place of the canonical texts in the ethical formation of readers.[111] Conversely, because of the close connection between style and character (*qualis homo talis oratio*: Cic. *Tusc.* 5.47.9; Sen. *Ep.* 114), the classical *kanones* have an unspoken potential to be used as ethical models from the very beginning.[112] Thus despite the fact that it is often claimed that Christianity has superimposed its own canon-forming gaze onto antiquity, aesthetics and ethics are deeply interwoven in formations of canons from the very beginning.

This complex entanglement of church and text raises a related point about the disciplinary divide at the heart of this narrative. To glance back at the history of what we now call 'classical scholarship', Isaac Casaubon, the renowned sixteenth-century scholar, became famous for disproving the authenticity of the *Corpus hermeticum*, which on the basis of linguistic borrowings from the Septuagint, Plato and the New Testament, he proved to be not the product of its purported date of composition but of the first centuries of the common era.[113] To jump to the nineteenth century, the rise of textual criticism is deeply connected to parallel developments in the study of 'sacred' texts: indeed Karl Lachmann, from whom, rightly or wrongly, the stemmatic method takes its name, edited both the New Testament and 'classical' texts such as Lucretius, as did Richard Bentley before him.[114]

How far back should we trace this disciplinary divide between classical and Christian Latin? The split between pagan and Judaeo-Christian literatures is arguably already encapsulated in Jerome's often-cited dream, where God appears to him and accuses him of being 'a Ciceronian, not a Christian' (*Ciceronianus es, non Christianus*, Jer. *Ep.* 22.30).[115] Echoing Tertullian's memorable question – 'what does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?' (*quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?*, *De praescr.*

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[110] Kennedy 2001; Citroni 2005.
[111] This point appears under a different guise in recent defences of the values of the humanities, for example, in Allen 2016: 43–9 and Nussbaum 2016. And see p. 50 on the Protestant roots of the secular Great Books courses.
[112] Möller 2004.   [113] Grafton and Weinberg 2011.   [114] Timpanaro 2005.   [115] See Mohr 2007.

haeret. 7.1) – Jerome prefaces his narrative of his own renunciation of classics by positing a radical split between classical literature (Horace, Virgil and Cicero) and Christian writings:

> Quid facit cum psalterio Horatius? Cum euangeliis Maro? Cum apostolo Cicero? Nonne scandalizatur frater si te uiderit in idolio recumbentem? Et licet 'omnia munda mundis et nihil reiciendum sit, quod cum gratiarum actione percipitur', tamen simul bibere non debemus calicem Christi et calicem daemoniorum. (Jer. *Ep.* 22.29)

> What has Horace to do with the Psalter, Virgil with the Gospels and Cicero with Paul? Surely a brother is tempted to evil if he sees you reclining at a table in an idol's temple? Although 'unto the pure all things are pure and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with an act of gratitude', still we ought not to drink from the vessel of Christ and the vessel of the devils at the same time.

Of course this uncompromising stance in Jerome's letter, written in 384, is not only belied by his literary practice, in which quotations of and allusions to classical literature abound, but also by later pronouncements. For example his letter 77, written in 398, in response to criticism from the orator Magnus who had accused Jerome of defiling the purity of the church with the filth of the pagans by his frequent quotations of secular literature (*Ep.* 77.2 *cur in opusculis nostris saecularium litterarum interdum ponamus exempla, et candorem Ecclesiae, Ethnicorum sordibus polluamus*), Jerome compares secular wisdom (*sapientia saecularis*) to the beautiful captive woman of *Deuteronomy* 21.35 for whom the law prescribes a ritual of cleansing and mourning before she becomes the wife of her captor. Jerome's desire for the captive secular wisdom is justifiable in that it proliferates the faith and does so by cutting or shaving off whatever pleasure, error and idolatry is hiding in the classical texts.[116]

Almost at the same time, Augustine lays out his programme for Christian learning in *De doctrina Christiana*, written in 396 to address the issue of the teaching of Christianity. In this important manifesto, Augustine operates under a strict dichotomy between 'Roman' and sacred authors: the latter are called canonical authors (*canonici auctores*) and encompass both sacred texts and church fathers. Much of the aim of book 4, devoted to the issue of Christian eloquence, is to show that facility

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[116] See also *Ep.* 21.13 where the husks being consumed by the prodigal son of Luke 15:11–32 is interpreted allegorically as the consumption of the 'songs of the poets, secular wisdom and the pomp of the words of the rhetors'.

in speech can be acquired by reading and studying the Christian canon (*ecclesiasticae litterae*):

> Nec desunt ecclesiasticae litterae, etiam praeter canonem in auctoritatis arce salubriter collocatum, quas legendo homo capax, etsi id non agat sed tantummodo rebus quae ibi dicuntur intentus sit, etiam eloquio quo dicuntur, dum in his uersatur, imbuitur, accedente uel maxime exercitatione siue scribendi siue dictandi, postremo etiam dicendi, quae secundum pietatis ac fidei regulam sentit. (August. *De doctrina Christiana* 4.9)

> There is no shortage of Christian literature, even outside the canon which has been raised to its position of authority for our benefit; and by reading this an able person, even one not seeking to become eloquent but just concentrating on the matters being discussed, can become steeped in their eloquence, especially if this is combined with the practice of writing or dictating, and eventually speaking, what is felt to be in conformity with the rule of holiness and faith. (trans. Green 1995)

While making a case for the stylistic value of Christian literature, Augustine happily quotes and follows Cicero's theory of the three styles and his admonition that the orator be made to master all styles. After giving numerous positive examples of the different styles from both scripture and church fathers, Augustine concludes by calling for an acknowledgement of the eloquence of 'our canonical authors and teachers'.[117] This radical distinction between secular and ecclesiastical was codified in the sixth century in Cassiodorus' *Institutiones diuinarum et saecularium litterarum*, a treatise on Christian education in two books, the first on scripture and the works of Christian fathers and the second one on the secular liberal arts. Originally designed for use in the Vivarium, a monastic community he founded in his own family estate in Calabria, the book, variously excerpted and copied, was to be foundational in the Middle Ages.[118]

The church fathers' radical and self-conscious split between secular antiquity and Christian writing anticipates the disciplinary divide between Classics and theology but only to an extent. The modern secularisation of education and the loss of biblical knowledge have catalysed a contraction of the canon of Latin works taught and researched in Classics departments to works of the pagan era which, though more distant in time, are paradoxically more 'legible' to the modern secular reader, in so far as they are not

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[117] 4.60 *canonicos nostros auctores doctoresque*. That said, Augustine's relationship with the classics is no less rich and complex than Jerome's: see Shanzer 2012 and MacCormack 1998.
[118] See the *Dialogus super auctores sacros et prophanos* of the twelfth-century monk Conrad of Hirsau for a mediaeval version of this genre in which sacred and profane authors are studied side by side.

imbued in a religious ideology that many do not consider relevant. To the extent that late antique literature has a place in the classicist canon, it tends to be approached in relation to its translation and adaptation of pagan antiquity. Despite its importance, this work privileges Christian learned poets like Prudentius, Ausonius and Claudian, while Patristics scholars focus on the study of the contemporary writings by the Early Church Fathers.[119] To some extent, this disciplinary divide inscribes a modern distinction between secular and religious onto antiquity, by relegating the study of the supposedly secular pursuit of 'literature' to the late antique scholars trained in the classical tradition, while reserving the early Christian theology for the theologians.[120] There are obvious pitfalls to this *modus operandi*: on the one hand, for some time now, scholars have focused our attention on the pivotal role played by secular fields such as, for example, grammar, in the development of Christian textuality.[121] In turn, as we shall see in a moment, this work is a reminder that the creation of the classical past is unthinkable outside of the mediation of 'Christian' sources. In short, in approaching late antiquity we should be wary of modes of interpretation which, in Debora Shuger's words from her study of the Renaissance bible, frame religion as a 'separable "layer" atop the surface of [secular] culture'; rather it is best to approach all forms of knowledge in this period as the result of complex syntheses of religious and secular discourses.[122]

Moreover, the modern marginalisation of the late antique Latin corpus affects not just Christian texts that do not fit the definition of secular literature but also contemporary works written by pagan authors or by authors whose religious stance is difficult to ascertain, as for example is the case for Martianus Capella and Macrobius. Such a dichotomy either inhibits the study of tralaticious corpora (e.g. commentaries) or else generates scholarship aimed at disentangling historical kernels rather than situating the work as a whole.[123] An interesting and complex example of this phenomenon is the *Anthologia Latina*, a compilation of Latin poems (elegies, epigrams, inscriptions, centos and other genres) assembled starting in the Renaissance with Scaliger on the basis of early mediaeval anthologies – principally the *Codex Salmasianus* (Paris lat. 10318,

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[119] See Elsner 2004 for a discussion of the problems involved in the parallel split between 'pagan' and Christian art in late antiquity.
[120] See Pelttari 2014 for a revisionary approach to Christianity and classical antiquity in late antique poetry.
[121] Chin 2008.   [122] Shuger 1994: 193.
[123] See the helpful remarks in relation to the early scholia to Persius in Zetzel 2005.

eighth–ninth century) and the *Codex Thuaneus* (Paris lat. 8071, ninth century).[124] The collection in the *Codex Salmasianus*, which furnishes the bulk of the modern *Anthologia Latina* edited by Riese and others, originated in Vandal North Africa of the sixth century but it contains earlier material, as, for example, three epigrams attributed to the younger Seneca. The *Salmasianus* and the *Thuaneus* preserve three epigrams under the name of Seneca (*Anth. Lat.* 224, 228, 229 Shackleton Bailey), two of which are also found without any ascription in the *Codex Vossianus*, where they are followed by another sixty-nine poems. No name is attached to these epigrams, but on account of the similarity in style and content, editors have created a collection of (pseudo-) Senecan exile poetry.[125] Yet the *Codex Salmasianus* can also be approached in its own right as a witness to Virgil's reception in the scholastic environment of late antique Vandal Carthage in which earlier specimens of Virgilian pastiches such as the *Medea* of Hosidius Geta (end of the second/early third century CE) or the *Pervigilium Veneris* (of disputed date) co-exist with more recent ones.[126]

It may therefore be argued that the disciplinary divide between Classics and theology leaves much to be desired in terms of our ability to comprehend both the intellectual milieu from which the literary works of late antiquity – be their authors pagan or Christian – originated, and by extension the very corpus of texts which we comfortably group under the umbrella of the 'classical tradition'. To give one example, the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius is now thought of as the product, not of the late fourth century, as previously assumed, but of the early fifth – Cameron identified the author of this work with Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, praetorian prefect in 431 CE.[127] In Cameron's dating of the *Saturnalia* to 431, after the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire and twenty or so years after the sack of Rome in 410, it is almost impossible to maintain that Macrobius was *not* a Christian. Yet, in so far as the work makes no mention of Christianity and is set some fifty years prior to its date of composition during the Saturnalian feast of 382 or 383, on the eve of Gratian's abolishment of pagan cults in 382, it has been standard to approach the dialogue as a source for Virgilian scholarship of the earlier first and second century. Whose hermeneutics does the discussion of Virgilian

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[124] Tarrant 1983.   [125] Holzberg 2004.
[126] Tandoi 1984: 199–201 and Kay 2013: 7–13. On Hosidius' *Medea* see Rondholz 2012; for the *Pervigilium Veneris* see Barton 2018. An analogous case study is represented by the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*, a collection compiled in the end of the fourth or early fifth century CE but which some believe include earlier materials, as for example poems by the Augustan Domitius Marsus (39, 40 = Courtney 1993: #8, 9) and the *Fabella Sulpiciae* (37), supposedly written by the Domitianic Sulpicia mentioned by Martial (10.38). On the anthology in Latin literature see Vardi 2000.
[127] Cameron 2011: 231–72.

poetry, which occupies books 3 to 6, reflect? That of the pagan elites of the characters in the dialogue, such as Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, one of the dialogue's main characters, a successful orator, statesman and leader of the unsuccessful protest against Gratian's removal of the Altar of Victory? Or that of the early imperial sources? Or of Macrobius' own Christian readers? Take, for example, Macrobius' much contested approach to Virgil as a sacred shrine, in which Praetextatus lays the ground for the exegetical discussion of the poet that follows:[128]

> Sed nos, quos crassa Minerua dedecet, non patiamur abstrusa esse adyta sacri poematis, sed archanorum sensuum investigato aditu doctorum cultu celebranda praebeamus reclusa penetralia. (Macrob. *Sat.* 1.24.13)

> But we, for whom a crass Minerva is unseemly, should not allow the inner places of this sacred poem to be concealed, but having examined the approaches to its hidden meanings, let us throw open its inmost shrine to be filled by the worship of the learned.

The image of commentary here deployed is spatial: interpretation is compared to an entrance into the inner space of a sanctuary (*adyta*) and hermeneutics to opening up a sacred shrine. It may be that in Cameron's words we should resist the notion that Macrobius 'saw Vergil as a sacred text, from which he planned to extract arcane religious truths'.[129] One could easily trace this language earlier on, to, for example, Tacitus' portrayal of the inner shrines of *eloquentia*.[130] A similar question arises about Virgil's divine status. The earlier attestation of the title *diuinus* for Virgil is in *Catalepton* 15, a book of pseudo-Virgilian *iuuenilia* generally dated to the first century CE. In presenting the preceding collection, the poem acts like a *sphragis* of sorts, stating that 'these too are the first beginnings of that divine poet' (*Catal.* 15.3 *illius haec quoque sunt diuini elementa poetae*). Yet when this title is repurposed in the Servian commentaries, how are we to interpret the statement that 'the divine poet always touches on the truth, even when he is engaged in some other matter' (*unde apparet diuinum poetam aliud agentem uerum semper attingere*, Serv. Dan. 3.349)? Is the commentary's approach to Virgil as 'all full of knowledge' (*totus quidem Vergilius scientia plenus est*, Serv. *ad Aen.* 6 *praef.*) harkening back to classical antiquity or forward to Christian allegoresis?[131] Servius, whose

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[128] Pelttari 2014: 32–43.   [129] Cameron 2011: 589.

[130] For Macrob. *Sat.* 1.24.13 compare for example Tac. *Dial.* 12.2 *sed secedit animus in loca pura atque innocentia fruiturque sedibus sacris. haec eloquentiae primordia, haec penetralia.*

[131] The problem is compounded by the fact that the notice about the divinity of Virgil is found not in Servius, but in DS or Servius auctus ('expanded Servius'), the name traditionally given to the

commentary on Virgil probably predates the sack of Rome of 410, and who is also a character in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, makes liberal use of allegory, a tool developed in classical antiquity but also associated with religious exegesis, both Christian and Jewish.[132] Yet it is surely confining to read 'sacred' as reflecting exclusively a supposedly hidden Christian religious agenda.[133] Rather, the question to ask is how Macrobius' or Servius' repurposing of the earlier language of the sacrality of poetry might resonate with his readership, Christian and otherwise – how in effect the religious experience of reading communities both leverages earlier representation of Virgilian and Homeric omniscience and reshapes them.

Finally, the chief disciplinary tools we use in our fields and those without which the classical tradition is materially unthinkable – the commentary, the textual edition and translation – were developed in the context of the exegesis of scripture, which was in itself read in dialogue with classical texts.[134] Many of our Graeco-Roman sources are known exclusively or almost exclusively through indirect tradition and transmitted in much later sources which have their own ethics of quotation.[135] The Latin canon presents distinctive challenges in this respect: whereas papyri, mostly from Egypt, have yielded a vast quantity of fragments from Greek literature, the vast majority of fragments of Latin literature survive as quotations.[136] Thus late antique grammatical and exegetical sources played a pivotal role in the transmission of republican literature.[137] In other cases, the mediation of Christian writers was instrumental in the survival and inseparable from the transmission of a given work: in the case of Cicero's *Topica*, for example, the text survives largely accompanied by a commentary on the text by Boethius written around 500 CE. The Boethian commentary rivalled in popularity the Ciceronian original, the

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seventh- or eighth-century compilation of the Servian commentary. This version has long been thought to incorporate materials from an earlier commentary, probably by Servius' teacher Aelius Donatus. See Stok 2012.

[132] On Servius and allegory see Jones 1961. For a later Christian allegorical reading of the *Aeneid* see, for example, Fulgentius' development of allegorical readings of Virgil in the *Expositio Vergilianae continentiae* dated to the fifth century. Here the poet Virgil himself explains to Fulgentius that 'in each book of the poem, he introduced material of an allegorical nature, so as to display the entire course of human life in the twelve individual books' (*Exp. Verg.* 86–7).

[133] See the subtle arguments developed in relation to Macrobius in Conybeare 2020.

[134] Lössl and Watt 2011; Niehoff 2012.   [135] See, for example, O'Donnell 1980.

[136] Notable exceptions are the Gallus papyrus from Qasr Ibrim and fragment of the *Carmen de bello Actiaco* from Herculaneum (*PHerc*. 817).

[137] For example Nonius Marcellus, *De compendiosa doctrina*, to whom we owe the preservation of most of the fragments of republican literature, the commentaries on Horace by Acro and Porphyrio and those on Virgil by Aelius Donatus and Servius.

tradition of which it contaminated throughout the Middle Ages.[138] In a sense, therefore, the distinctions between scriptural and profane, classical and late, though in principle correct, threaten to foreclose a deeper conversation about the shaping of texts in the context of tradition, reading and interpretation.

The Latin Canon: a Brief History

The canon of Latin literature is far from a straightforward entity. As we are about to see, its two constitutive elements – Latin and literature – are both subject to negotiation. On the most straightforward interpretation, a Latin canon would include only texts written in the Latin language. Yet, 'Latin' is a highly problematic term and susceptible to a variety of readings, depending upon which highly different canonical formations might be construed or imagined. The traditional and most conservative version of the canon of Latin literature begins with Livius Andronicus, Naevius and Ennius and ends with Tacitus and Juvenal and the authors of the 'High Empire', namely Apuleius, Aulus Gellius, Fronto and the *poetae nouelli* of the Antonine Age.[139] This structure is already present in Friedrich Leo's pioneering *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*, published in Berlin in 1913, and by many considered the founding text of Roman literary studies.[140] Although Leo died after the publication of the first instalment ('Die archaische Literatur') and the project was never completed, one can get a glimpse of its ambition from the treatment of Latin literature in Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur und Sprache*, published in Hinneberg's *Kultur der Gegenwart*, a massive multi-volume history of world culture which came out between 1905 and 1926. There 'Die lateinische Literatur und Sprache' ('Latin literature and language') is divided into three sections: one, written by Franz Skutsch, on the history of the Latin language; one, authored by Leo, on Latin literature of antiquity; and one, written by Eduard Norden, on Latin literature in the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages. Norden's treatment of the transitional period, which partially overlaps with Leo's, examines

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[138] Reinhardt 2003: 73–96.
[139] Such is the chronological scope of, for example, Harrison 2005: 2 'the beginning of Christian literature about AD 200 with Tertullian and Minucius Felix is a major watershed . . . as a result the volume reflects the range of Latin literature commonly taught in universities'. Fantham 1996 has the same chronological limits with a deeper interest in literary culture as opposed to high literary genres in verse. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* controversially made 200 CE its cut-off point, though with exceptions: Goodyear 1983.
[140] Gianotti 2003; Barchiesi 2002.

the development of literature from the mid-fourth century, the time of *ecclesia triumphans*, to the reconstitution of the Roman empire under Charlemagne but is careful to acknowledge that this history is partial and does not address church history (p. 484). Leo's treatment of Latin literature is chronologically arranged in three main periods: republican, Augustan and imperial, though the first section is almost equal in length to the sum of the last two. The rationale for this choice is made explicit in the beginning of the section on imperial literature: after Augustus, the Romans did not produce any literature of equal value; among the post-Augustan poets, there are some great names, also some with considerable talent but no great poets ('sind große Namen, auch beträchtliche Talente, aber keine großen Dichter', p. 454). While this history of Latin literature follows the seemingly self-evident contours of chronology, Leo's emphasis on Rome as the spiritual link ('das geistige Band der alten und neuen Weltkultur', Leo 1913: 1) between the old (Greece) and the new (Christian Europe) tailors a specific approach to Latin canon, one that privileges acts of transference and adaptations (hence Leo's intense focus on the earlier phases of Roman literature). The decadence of Roman literature is explained as the by-product of the rise of rhetoric and the metamorphosis of poetry into rhetorical art ('rhetorische Kunst'). Seneca, Juvenal, Martial and Tacitus are the highlights of this age, while Lucan and Statius are among the considerably talented but their work is dismissed within a few words. In regards to Statius, the *Thebaid* is praised as lacking 'neither power nor impetus' (p. 459) but neither the *Siluae* nor the *Achilleid* find any mention. The literature of the later empire includes the archaising movement of the Hadrianic era which with its backward-looking glance is said to have led to the collapse of Roman literature and the rise of the provinces and the lower classes, with Africa being singled out as the cradle of the novel (Apuleius) and of the first translations of the Bible (Tertullian, Augustine, etc.). There is a brief mention of Christian poetry and the section on antiquity ends paradigmatically with a treatment of Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*, a prison dialogue replete with classical learning and written as its author, born shortly after the deposition of the last Roman emperor, awaited execution by the Ostrogothic king Theoderic. Later to become one of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, in Leo's survey of Latin literature the *De consolatione philosophiae* comes to epitomise the end as well as the enduring legacy of Roman antiquity.

In order to understand Leo's selective focus and chronological limiting of Roman literature to the fall of the Roman empire, it is helpful to glance at earlier stages in the development of the study of antiquity. Leo's approach to the question of the originality of Latin letters was in many ways a response to German philhellenism which, starting with Winckelmann in the late eighteenth century, had elevated the Greeks and disparaged the Romans as mere imitators. And yet philhellenism in its complex relation to nationalism is in many ways responsible for the birth of Latin literary history. For it was Friedrich August Wolf, the father of *Altertumswissenschaft*, who authored the first history of Roman literature in parallel with the founding of the *seminarium philologicum* in Halle in 1787.[141] Wolf's 'History of Roman literature' is arranged in two parts. The first is a survey of known authors arranged under the names of rulers and emperors. The second is a history of the genres of Roman literature: poetry (dramatic, epic and lyric) and prose (historiography, eloquence, erudition), which surveys relevant authors in chronological order.[142] This dazzling work, which still repays reading, begins with a theoretical discussion of literary history defined as 'the coherent narrative of the fortunes of the scientific and learned enlightenment of a people' ('eine zusammenhängende Erzählung von den Schicksalen der wissenschaftlichen und gelehrten Aufklärung einer Nation', Wolf 1834: 3). This literary history is not a collection of facts but a narrative with a story to tell about the rise and fall of a nation. The canon therein constructed is thus subservient both to this narrative as a whole and to the operative concept of people: hence, for Wolf the chronological limit of Roman literary history is the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476 (p. 94), though some of the authors mentioned in the second part are later (e.g. Isidore and Beda). Authors writing between the demise of Latin knowledge in the sixth and its renaissance in the fifteenth century are listed in a separate appendix. Secondly, a clear connection is made between political and literary decline: the period that goes from Hadrian to the sack of Rome witnesses at once the crumbling of state institutions and the demise of literature.[143]

In order to appreciate the ideological thrust of Wolf's narrative, it is useful to compare it to that of his model (see p. 8), the *Bibliotheca Latina* of the seventeenth-century polymath Johann Fabricius published in

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[141] Wolf 1787, more easily found as Wolf 1834.
[142] This tension between biography and genres is already at work in antiquity: besides Callimachus' *Pinakes* discussed p. 64, see Accius, *Didascalica* fr. 13 Morel; Varro and Suetonius, *De poetis*.
[143] Wolf 1834: 94 'So wie der römische Staat kränkelte, so geht es auch mit der Litteratur, Vortrag und Sprache.'

Hamburg in 1697, the most comprehensive bibliographical work of its generation which lists all known authors of the classical period as well as editions and translations, and gives a critical discussion of each work. This original edition of the *Bibliotheca* begins with Plautus and Cato the Elder, includes late antique writers like Macrobius, Claudian and Symmachus, and ends with Boethius and his younger contemporary and successor Cassiodorus. An appendix follows containing a list of fragmentary poets (beginning with Ennius), a list of Christian poets and one of ecclesiastical writers – his principal stated aim being that of providing an overview in chronological order of the totality of Latin authors, the ancient ones but not the ecclesiastics (*latinos autores veteres non ecclesiasticos, quorum scripta aetatem tulerunt, recenserem universos ordine chronologico*, Fabricius 1697: 3). The rationale given is primarily pragmatic rather than ideological – there are many editions of ecclesiastic writers available to those who are interested in this area of study such as for example Cardinal Bellarmino, *De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis* (1613).[144]

Even if we chronologically restrict the focus of study, the canon of Roman literature includes on most definitions at least some works not written in Latin: the earliest Roman historians, the annalists Fabius Pictor and Cincius Alimentus in the second century BCE, wrote in Greek. Historians of Rome also contend with the fact that Roman history written by provincial Roman elite continues to be written in Greek: to name just two notable examples, in the early second century CE, Plutarch of Chaeronea, a Roman citizen, wrote in Greek the *Parallel Lives*, a comparison of Greek and Roman history, as did Cassius Dio, a Roman senator from Bithynia who wrote a work of Roman history in Greek in the early third century CE.[145] The slippage here is due to the fact that 'Roman' denotes a political identity, shared by speakers and writers of several languages including, but not limited to, Greek and Latin (see Goldhill, Chapter 16 in this volume).[146] Latin, however, need not imply Roman: in fact, Ennius, a speaker of Greek, Latin and Oscan, only received Roman

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[144] Fabricius 1697: 53–4: *ecclesiasticos scriptores huic bibliothecae inserere non est nostri instituti. Versantur in minibus omnium quae in illo genere utiliter literis consignantur.* Indeed, Fabricius published a separate *Bibliotheca ecclesiastica*, which begins from Jerome, in 1718. The most famous and widely circulated edition of Fabricius' *Bibliotheca Latina* was published by Johann August Ernesti (Lipsiae, 1773–4). This three-volume work reconfigured Fabricius' work to exclude the whole of *Latinitas Christiana* to a separate volume (hence the work lacks the appendix on Christian poets and excludes Boethius and other Christian writers originally included in the first edition).

[145] On Plutarch's Roman identity see Preston 2001.

[146] Josephus, who received Roman citizenship from Vespasian, wrote both in Greek and in Aramaic: Cotton and Eck 2005.

citizenship through Marcus Fulvius Nobilior in 184 BCE; Terence, whose cognomen was *Afer* ('the African'), was allegedly born in Carthage (Suet. *Vita Ter.* 1), enslaved and brought to Rome to the home of the senator Terentius Lucanus in the 160s BCE. Thus one might question to what extent other literature written in Greek from later periods might or should also have a place in a history of Roman literature: a notable case study in this category might be the epigrams written by Greek poets for Roman patrons, like Antipater of Thessalonica's poems for and about Lucius Calpurnius Piso, which would have been collected in the *Garland of Philip*, an anthology of first-century-BCE epigrams compiled some time before the death of Nero and now transmitted in the *Greek Anthology*, and other writings in Greek by literati belonging to the same circle (e.g. the works of Philodemus, the remains of which were found in a villa in Herculaneum which supposedly belonged to Lucius Calpurnius Piso's father, the consul of 58 BCE, and Parthenius of Nicaea, whose *Erotika pathemata* is dedicated to Cornelius Gallus and may have been influential with the neoterics and elegists).[147] Other influential works in the study of Roman literature and history, such as the *Res gestae*, exist in multiple parallel versions (Greek and Latin) recovered from the edges of the empire (Ancyra, Antioch and Apollonia).

As scholars become more interested in and aware of the hybridity of literary traditions in the imperial period, this sub-canon of Greek/Roman/ Latin works is bound to increase in size and challenge long-standing assumptions about literary interactions in the period.[148] To push the issue further, if one were to renounce, or at least resist, the notion of 'Greek' and 'Roman' as self-contained concepts, one might construct far different canons, ones based, for example, on genres or provincial and local identities. Hence studies of the novel have already created hybrid canons, consisting of works in Latin such as Petronius' *Satyricon* or Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which presents itself as derived from a Greek original (1.1 *fabulam Graecanicam*), in Greek (Chariton, Achilles Tatius, Longus and Heliodorus) as well as texts that appear in multiple redactions (e.g. the *Alexander Romance*, which survives in Greek and Latin, as well as Syriac and Arabic) or Latin texts that purport to be translations of Greek originals (e.g. *Ephemeris belli Troiani* of Dictys of Crete or the *Historia Apollonii*

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[147] Whitmarsh 2013: 137–50 and Gow and Page 1968.
[148] See the arguments about whether the later Greek epic writers such as Quintus of Smyrna or Nonnus of Panopolis knew and read Virgil or Ovid, or whether Pliny and Tacitus knew Plutarch: König, Langlands and Uden 2020 on the second century CE.

regis).[149] Local identity, whether that is understood to refer to authors or readers, might also be deployed as an organising principle to generate alternative canonical formations.[150] Scholars have long remarked upon the Spanish school of the Senecas, Lucan, Martial and Quintilian or that of North Africa exemplified by Apuleius, Fronto and the Christian apologetics of the second to third centuries like Tertullian, Cyprian and Minucius Felix, as well as Claudian and most notably Augustine[151] – though less obvious might be the ways in which the local affiliations of authors might interplay with displaced audiences of provincial readers in the various peripheries of the empire.[152]

Moreover, one's definition of 'literature' inevitably yields a different picture of the canon. The canon of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary history is structurally centred on the high genres of poetry, the apex of which marks the high period of Roman literature. By contrast a history of Latin literature centred on a canon of Latin legal writings would begin with the law of the Twelve Tables and the fragmentary remains of its early commentators, such as Sextus Aelius in the second century BCE, and extend all the way through the high classical period of Roman law in the second century CE with the works of Salvius Iulianus, commissioned in 131 CE by the emperor Hadrian to edit the Praetor's edict, Ulpian, Gaius, the author of the *Institutiones*, and Sextus Pomponius, stretching all the way into the sixth century and culminating with the *Corpus iuris ciuilis*, a magnificent compilatory work of known Roman law commissioned by the emperor Justinian in 527 CE and a source for many earlier legal sources. Conversely, a canon of Latin grammatical writings would yield a different picture altogether, beginning as Zetzel's guide does, in the second century BCE with exegetical work on Ennius and Plautus by Lampadio, Aelius Stilo, Volcacius Sedigitus and others, moving to Varro in the mid-first century BCE and to the archaist movement, and culminating with the 'classical era of Roman philology' – the centuries between the fourth and the sixth bookended by the commentaries and grammatical works of Marius Victorinus, Aelius Donatus and Servius (end of fourth–early fifth century CE) to Priscian, Boethius, Cassiodorus in the sixth century and

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[149] That is not to say that these texts, which, with the exception of the *Satyricon*, are set for the most part not in Rome but in exotic peripheries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Babylonia, etc.), cannot tell a story about imperial Roman culture: see Connors 2008.

[150] Barchiesi 2005.

[151] Whether one can create a case for a coherent 'Latin Africanism', the appreciation of the African context may extend to analysis of non-Latin literary background, reception and audience: see the essays in Lee, Finkelpearl and Graverini 2014.

[152] Woolf 2003 with discussion of Martial 12.1; Citroni 1995.

Isidore in the early seventh century, whose massive *Etymologiae* is both a compendium of earlier pagan grammatical work and often considered a watershed between late antique and mediaeval grammar.[153] As social and cultural history become accepted components of literary study, not only the boundaries of the canon are likely to shift but also the narratives of its development. As we have just observed in the cases of the legal and grammatical corpora, historical moments considered to mark peaks and declines in the narrative of the high literary canon – the classicism of the age of Augustus, the silver age of the Neronian and Flavian age, etc. – do not appear to constitute significant shifts in these other canonical formations. Additionally, one must also guard against the tendency to construct chronological narratives of literary development loosely based on the succession of genres. Thus few would agree today with the view of post-Ovidian literature as the 'age of rhetoric' or with late antiquity as the 'age of technical knowledge', labels that prioritise poetry and some genres of prose (historiography, Ciceronian oratory, etc.), while all the while eliding from view both the long history of rhetoric in Rome beginning in the second century BCE and the development of poetic genres in late antiquity (to name just two phenomena).[154]

It is important to note that while the ancient hierarchy of genres certainly informs the discourse of canon, it is not coincidental with it. Thus authors whose works occupy a low place in the hierarchy of genres have at times occupied an important place in the canon. Statius and Lucan were immensely popular in the Middle Ages with hundreds of surviving copies but were marginal at best throughout the twentieth century, a fact memorably acknowledged by Statius' Oxford editor when he stated that 'there is such an abundance of manuscripts of the *Thebaid* that one rightly suspects that Statius had more copyists during the Middle Ages than readers in our time'.[155] The hazards of survival are sometimes responsible for changes to the canon: Catullus was lost in the Middle Ages and only came to light around 1300 in Verona. Lucretius was largely unknown until Poggio Bracciolini's discovery of a manuscript in 1417 during the Council

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[153] See the remarks in Zetzel 2018: 201 and Copeland and Sluiter 2009: 62–71.
[154] Kenney and Clausen 1982: 1 but also Curtius 1953: 145–66.
[155] Garrod 1906: v. For a comparable shift in fortunes compare, for example, Martial's popularity during Humanism (Sullivan 2005: 262–300). Within the corpus of even the most canonical author, different works may at times be less canonical than others: see Kennedy 2002 on the circulation and reception of Cicero's letters (*Ad familiares*) and rhetorical works (*De oratore*) in relation to his speeches.

of Constance, from which point it arguably shaped not just the
Renaissance's reception of antiquity but the very concept of modernity.
A re-dating of an author can also engineer a turn in the fortune of their
text: rediscovered by Petrarch in 1360, the *Eclogues* of Calpurnius Siculus
were considered contemporary to the poems of Nemesianus, whose work
is transmitted in the same manuscript and who was then identified with
the third-century-CE author of the *Cynegetica*. Since 1854, when Moritz
Haupt redated the Calpurnian eclogues to the Neronian period,
Calpurnius has frequently appeared in literary surveys of the Neronian
age, despite the challenges mounted to Haupt's arguments by Champlin
and others.[156] In turn, while in contemporary discourse, the canon refers to
the list of works studied and perhaps researched in schools and universities,
at a time when Latin was widely spoken and read, the school canon was not
necessarily coincidental with that comprised of works privately read, let
alone translated.[157] Some texts barely known to specialists today were
immensely popular and have complex manuscript traditions that defy
neat divisions between antiquity and the Middle Ages: these include
epitomators of the Roman historians such as Justinus, the epitomator of
Pompeius Trogus, 'a household name' through the Middle Ages, and
Eutropius, whose *Breviarium* was reworked by Paulus Diaconus in the
eighth century and by Landolfus Sagax in the tenth.[158] In this class also
belong the *Distichs of Cato*, a moralising work from late antiquity attrib-
uted to Cato the Elder, which was a wildly popular school text and
translated already into Old English as early as the twelfth century.
Finally, one must not forget that literature is in itself a relatively recent
invention. To give just one example, in Oxford from its establishment in
1800 to 1972, the course of study known as Literae Humaniores – the
ancestor of today's Classics degrees – was largely dominated by history and
philosophy with Latin and Greek being tested through prose composition
and unprepared translation.[159] If anecdotes are at all effective at conveying
the lived reality of the canon, when glancing at nineteenth-century auto-
biographies one is struck by the frequent mentions of history and anti-
quarianism at the expense of what we may today identify as canonical
authors. Henry Fynes Clinton, a member of Parliament and a classical
scholar who studied in Oxford between 1799 and 1806, left a rich auto-
biography. In it he writes that when he was in school, he read 'Virgil,

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[156] See Henderson 2013; Karakasis 2016. Against the Neronian dating see Champlin 1978 and Horsfall
1997.
[157] Hall 2008b.   [158] Reynolds 1983a: 197.   [159] Stray 2018: 31–52.

except the Georgics; almost the whole of Horace, the Gallic War of Caesar; Sallust, and the Catilinarian orations of Cicero'.[160] By the time he left Oxford, 'except the orations, read at Southwell [school], I had not studied any parts of the works of Cicero. I was ignorant of Quintilian, and Tacitus, and Pliny. I had twice perused Livy with attention.'[161]

Conclusion

Moving between a focus on the *physical* limits of the canon across time and a review of the canon's impact as a critical mechanism, we have discussed the ways in which the very discourse of the canon has traditionally influenced scholarly approaches in the field of Latin literature and Classics broadly understood. Emphasis has been placed on the ways in which the canonised nature of the classics determines not just a hierarchy of texts and methodologies worthier of being taught and researched but also informs the very approach to non-canonical or 'para-canonical' texts. The canon in other words is not just about *what* we study, it is also about *how* we study it. Interrogating the canon of Latin texts implies a fundamental repositioning of one's scholarly stance not just towards non-canonical texts but also towards canonical authors, whose primacy should be scrutinised.

No one will dispute that the Latin canon, both in its internal structure and as a mechanism for organising knowledge, has come under intense scrutiny. But what kind of philology can we imagine outside of the discourse of the canon? And how, if at all, will the study and theoretical framing of so-called 'marginal texts' change the discipline?[162] It is critical that we modify not only our academic cores and scholarly foci to include a wider complement of texts, ancient and post-classical, but also that we change the frame of reference within which marginal texts are typically considered. This shift will involve in the first instance an awareness that the marginal status of such texts cannot be elided from any story we tell about them. We cannot apprehend marginal texts in spite of themselves and outside of the rhetoric both ancient and modern that has constituted them and at times relegated them to the periphery. Protestations of poetic incompetence, inferiority and epigonality are a trope in 'minor' texts but one that we would be well advised to resist. Statius' famous wish expressed at the end of the *Thebaid* that his poem 'not challenge (*ne tempta*) the divine *Aeneid* but rather follow it from a distance (*longe sequere*) and ever worship its footsteps' (*Theb.* 12.816–17) embodies both the canonical hold

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[160] Clinton 1854: 5.   [161] Clinton 1854: 22.   [162] Questions raised in Formisano 2018.

of the Virgilian epic and the self-proclaimed inferiority of his successors.[163] Yet, as Philip Hardie notes, it also 'sanctifies' the canon into which the poet seeks admission in the near future: 'even if Statius advises his poem for the present to follow at a distance, the future holds *honores* that might well be those of a god'.[164] Moreover, scholars of post-Virgilian epic have pointed to the ways in which the self-conscious epigonality of texts and authors functions alternatively as a cover for critiques of their predecessor (Ganiban 2007) or as a productive mechanism for exploring a new balance between periphery and centre in the changed political environment of the Flavian era (Augoustakis 2010).

We may choose to study this discourse of canon and margin diachronically and effectively historicise the canon, not simply tracking items that have dropped in and out of it, but above all examining its changing function in history, its connection to forms of institutionalised knowledge (the Hellenistic library, the German university, etc.) and how canonical formations develop side by side with other social and intellectual structures. Or perhaps marginal texts will lead to a renewal of the discipline if we can frame marginality not as a list of physical objects (minor texts) or as a physical 'no go space' that needs to be rescued into the centre but as a *modus operandi*. In proposing marginality as a 'way of doing business', I have been inspired by the possibility of looking at the margin (or marginalisation) as a process rather than as object. One of the most acute contemporary readers of the western margin, the subaltern and the other, feminist and cultural critic Gayatri Spivak, once wrote that instead of pointing the accusing finger at the centre, we would do better to use ourselves 'as a shuttle between the centre (inside) and the margin (outside) and thus narrate a displacement' (Spivak 1987: 146). A new ethics of the periphery, as one might call it, would leverage the liminality of non-canonical texts to interrogate the ideological pressures that shape practices of reading in and out of the canon and to engage with and document processes that led to the marginalisation or exclusion of different texts at different moments by different readers. It is this ability to conceive of bold 'narratives of displacement' between canon and margin rather than reproduce new descriptions of the margins according to old narrative patterns that will ultimately open up a new way to imagine the literary space of antiquity.

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[163] Cf. Silius' worshipping of the tombs of Virgil and Cicero as narrated in Plin. *Ep.* 3.7.
[164] Hardie 1993: 111.

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