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# GENERAL EDITORIAL: THE LAST *RAMUS*

*A.J. Boyle and Helen Morales*

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.
Tennyson, 'Ulysses'

This issue on Vitruvius is the final issue of *Ramus*. The journal has thrived for fifty-two years. Born in Melbourne, Australia, from the creative energies of the 1960s, and finally edited from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, California, in the midst of a crisis in American democracy, it has seen turbulent times from the ending of the conflict in Vietnam to the wars currently afflicting the peoples of Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel. The journal's primary focus has not been political. But the intellectual politics of academia have greatly affected it. It was born at a time of a dearth of venues for literary critical essays on Greek and Roman literature, when journals tended to value narrowly philological studies over literary analyses. *Arion*, the flagship classical literary journal of the 1960s, emanating from the revolutionary department of Classics at the University of Texas, had come to a halt and was about to be resurrected in Boston as a different kind of literary journal. There was, of course, the excellent, wide-ranging, new journal *Arethusa*, and the radical journal *Helios* would soon begin, leaping like *Ramus* to fill the need for journals in ancient Greek and Roman literary studies.

All this has long since changed. One of the consequences of the publication of *Ramus* and its sister literary journals was precisely to foster the production of critical essays on ancient literature of high intellectual quality with attention to the particularities of language and form constituting the literary works, and this in turn pressured more conservative journals to start to accept such essays on (eventually) a regular basis. Some journals even radically changed from publishing philological articles to providing a venue for highly theoretical analyses as well as literary critical studies. Certainly, it is now the case that there are many journals to which critical essays on classical literature may be submitted.

But it is not only Classics journals which have changed. So, too, have the increasing corporatization of journal publishers and the nature of the production of literary articles. The shift towards reading individual articles online, rather than reading issues of journals from cover to cover and prizing physical copies, together with the requirements of presses to liaise with authors and readers through depersonalized online portals, has led to a diminution of allegiance to specific journals. The surge of so-called 'Companions', 'Handbooks', and the like has proved parasitic on the intellectual life of the academy, drawing from



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many of its senior members work which often fails to advance the discipline. Most of the articles submitted by individual scholars to *Ramus* in recent years were not from senior practitioners in the field, even though senior practitioners in the field (including Charles Segal, John Sullivan, Froma Zeitlin, Michael Putnam, Kenneth Quinn, Eleanor Leach, Peter Connor, Kenneth Reckford, Dorothea Wender, Charles Beye, Aya Betensky, Peter Davis, Frances Muecke, John Henderson, Sara Mack, Steven Scully, David Konstan, Gilbert Lawall, Elaine Fantham, Marcus Wilson, Bessie Walker, and William Calder III) featured (sometimes several times) in the journal's first dozen years; they came from young, if sometimes brilliant, scholars writing essentially for tenure. To make up for this lack of senior submissions, *Ramus* has increasingly devoted its pages to special issues, focusing on special topics aimed at increasing and reshaping our understanding of the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Generally the special issues were successful, some extremely so; they have joined the many articles in the regular issues in bringing into prominence hitherto neglected or underestimated authors and works and in contributing persuasively to the overall expansion of the concept of the 'literary' by breaking the institutional barriers between the literary, the historical, the philosophical, the visual, and the linguistic.

The changes in the academic publishing world and in academic practice itself have made it clear to the editors that it is time to bring *Ramus* to an end. It began with two editors, A.J. Boyle and G.J. Fitzgerald, and for over thirty years it was edited by Boyle with J.L. Penwill (who died in 2018) as Associate Editor and Business Manager. Then some eighteen years ago Helen Morales joined the editorial team. Having a team of three, with a dedicated and wide network of readers, was a bold move; we resisted pressure to have a flashy editorial board, and to make other changes that would have made *Ramus* more mainstream and appealing to those who seek to draw up journal rankings (an essentially elitist practice). It enabled the editors to make the changes they wanted; to embrace work on the reception of ancient texts, and to become increasingly inclusive. *Ramus* had from its inception been an outlier in promoting the work of women scholars, and in its latter years at least has been proactive in including work by emerging as well as senior voices, and by scholars from underrepresented minorities. The first issue in this final volume, *Wayne Shorter and esperanza spalding's …*(Iphigenia)*: Interdisciplinary Approaches* edited by Helen Morales and Mario Telò, is a good example. *Ramus* was started in order to make a difference to the whole area of classical literary studies, and in the judgment of the editors it has done so. There are certainly now sufficient active venues for literary critical articles to absorb the journal's annual accepted submissions, and there are several university presses publishing the kind of material which we featured in our special issues.

The editors would like to thank (and thank profoundly) all the administrative staff of the various universities where the editors have practised, who have helped with the production of *Ramus*, and all the friends and colleagues who have



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assisted over the course of the last half century by acting as reviewers of submissions, or by submitting articles to the journal, or by editing or co-editing one of our special issues. We are also deeply grateful to Cambridge University Press, who have provided a home for the journal during its final ten years, and most especially to CUP's Jamie McIntyre, who has nurtured the journal with exceptional professionalism and care. We have made many undying friendships on our long intellectual journey, which is what we anticipated when the journal's first issue was published, proclaiming the moral richness of the field and the humanity of its literary project. The issue of humanity has always been at the core of *Ramus*, and the human importance of the journal's subject matter has been the prime criterion for admission to its pages. We hope that this prime criterion may find increasing favour among classical journals at large and among teachers of this complex and evolving discipline.

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