# THE COMPLETE (ROMAN) ANGLER

Y. PEURIÈRE: *La pêche et les poissons dans la littérature latine. I. Des origines à la fin de la période augustéenne*. (Collection Latomus 278.) Pp. 268. Brussels: Éditions Latomus, 2003. Paper, €37. ISBN: 2-87031-219-9.

This book, the first in an envisioned series to cover all the Latin literature of the ancient period, examines the mentions of fish in Latin literature until the Augustan period. It does so by examining each of the important authors in this period individually, starting with early literature such as Livius Andronicus, Naevius, and Plautus and concluding with the works of Ovid, to whom a fragmentary work on salt-water fishing, the *Halieutica*, has been attributed. The analysis within this volume has two goals: the first is to provide an overview of the way in which knowledge about fish and fishing is utilized by each of the authors under examination to give a sense of their different literary habits. The second aim is the synthesis from this literary material of a catalogue of the fish species that were known in the Roman world and, where possible, of their capture and consumption. The chronological order of the authors that are considered is intended to allow a sense of the way in which this capture and consumption varied over time.

To take the example of Ovid, Peurière divides Ovid's works into those which are mythological in nature, such as the *Metamorphoses*, in which fish or fishing are often mentioned as an indicator of a blessed and simple life, those works which are erotic or otherwise literary in nature, in which fish are mentioned most often in similes or other illustrative passages of a moralizing or mock-moralizing nature, and those which are didactic in nature, in which fish may be the primary object of the technical discourse. When considering the mythological works of Ovid, P.'s analysis has the least to offer. While he does give a sense of the religious and moral context in which fish and fishing are mentioned and draws the reader's attention to the most obvious models from earlier literature, given the overall scope of his work the reader comes away with the impression that this is only a survey example of what is to be found in a work of the scope of the *Metamorphoses*, *inter alia*. He fares much better with the works of an erotic nature. The observations on the link between a lover seeking a potential partner and a fisherman are well observed, and give a strong and, in places, novel insight into this motif. The links to other genres such as Roman Comedy are also well explored. It is, however, perhaps unfortunate that the contextual links to the mentions of fish in Greek Comedy, such as those explored by Arnott in his edition of the fragments of Alexis,[1] have not been considered in the analysis of this work.

Of the various works of Ovid that are considered, it is the study of the *Halieutica* that has the most to offer the reader. P. carefully examines the nature of this fragmentary poem and its literary forebears before proceeding to a systematic study of the fish that are mentioned by the poet, detailing what knowledge we have of their use and their taxonomy. In the latter instance, P. draws on a number of identifications from Greek literature, particularly those from Aristotle's *Historia Animalium*, which, given the fact that it is unlikely that Ovid had any close personal knowledge of the various fish species he mentions, would have been the most likely source for this work. It is unfortunate that there is not some thorough discussion of the influence of Greek literature on all of these authors in the introduction to the work, given the wealth of

[1]W. Geoffrey Arnott, *Alexis: The Fragments* (Cambridge, 1996).

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references which P. cites. Another surprising omission is a more systematic consideration of the identifications of species of fish. It would be a thankless task to attempt to complete revamp the material available in the works of D'Arcy Thompson[2] and E. de St Denis.[3] As much of the identification of species mentioned by Greek authors in use by researchers draws on these works, it seems unfortunate that P. has not availed himself of the opportunity in what is, apparently, the early stage of a larger research project to examine the ways in which both authors have discussed the species which are covered in his research in a systematic way.

P. has, then, provided us with an interesting and useful resource which handles the mentions of fish in Latin literature and what this can tell us about the use of fish in the ancient world from a variety of angles. The systematic approach taken to the source material and the range of approaches that are taken to it ensures that it will be a useful and interesting resource for those working with the poets of the Republican and early Augustan period. The limitations in his work arise, for the most part, from trying to embrace a wide range of topics, any one of which would have made a worthwhile target for attention in themselves in a series of comparatively brief volumes.

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## FROM PALACE TO POLIS

C. G. Thomas, C. Conant: *Citadel to City-State. The Transformation of Greece, 1200–700 B.C.E.* Pp. xxxiv + 199, maps, ills. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999. Paper, £15.95. ISBN: 0-253-21602-8 (0-253-33496-9 hbk).

This is a welcome study of one of the most complex periods of ancient Greece. The period starts with the fall of the Mycenaean palace system at the end of the thirteenth century, and ends with the rise of the city-states at the end of the eighth. In six chapters, six sites are examined. According to the authors these sites played an important rôle during different stages of the period.

Mycenae is explored first, since it offers the opportunity to discuss the Mycenaean palace system and how it operated. It also invites a general discussion of the theories of the causes of the destruction of the palace system. Nichoria in Messenia is examined as a typical site which perhaps had a semi-autonomous status and served as a miniature redistribution centre under the palatial system. After the collapse, however, it offers 'a good validation of the Homeric picture' (p. 57) and can be also better comprehended by the application of models from social anthropology. The eleventh century there is regarded as a possible seat of a 'Big Man', while it is argued that the construction of structures in the mid-tenth century reveals a more complex society which is compared with that reflected in Homer. Athens is seen as the site which attracted refugees in the eleventh century; this is based mostly on later traditions and little on the archaeology. Lefkandi and its building played an important rôle in the tenth century, and especially for opening up communication with the East. Corinth's growth in the eight century led eventually to its early political

[2]D'Arcy Thompson's *Book of Greek Fish* (London, 1947).
[3]E. de St Denis, *Le vocabulaire des animaux marins en Latin classique* (Paris, 1947).

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