nationalism and scarcely appropriate to the ancient—or, for that matter, the modern—world. The fact that I speak the same language as the Queen hardly makes me a participant in English culture. And, vice versa, a figure like the Spanish language poet Bello, who wrote Horatian-style odes honoring Simon Bolivar and recited a Spanish translation of the *Aeneid* just prior to initiation of the war to unite the Americas against Spain, is a fuller participant in a transhistorical Roman culture (if there is such a thing) than many a medieval Christian denouncing Caesar in Latin. Perhaps if F. had focused on the process of teaching and learning Latin, with its long-standing emphasis on discipline, hazing, and grammatical mystification, he would have come closer to identifying something like a shared Latinate culture, consisting of common practices across space and time. But as it stands, we are left with a vague and potentially dangerous notion of a spirit that permeates texts and their producers and consumers. Indeed, at one point F. goes so far as to suggest that the lack of a 'true Latin counterpart [to Sappho] attests the degree to which Latin language and Latin culture cleave to the masculine gender'(p. 55). I would have thought Roman men bear some of the blame.

Equally problematic is F.'s critique of periodization. No doubt many readers will agree that the evaluative implications of periodization (gold over silver, classical over medieval) can safely be dispensed with. But why throw out the baby with the bath water? Attention to the distinctive characteristics of different periods is crucial to the understanding of language and literature in their historical contexts; indeed, it is necessary if we are to respect the cultural differences expressed and enacted by different authors at different points in the trimillennial history of the Latin language. Paradoxically, the value of culturally and historically grounded readings of texts is brought to the fore by F.'s own superb analyses of specific passages ranging from Lucretius' treatment of Anaxagoras to Tallis's sixteenth-century musical setting of a portion of the Vulgate. As with his deconstruction of metaphors of Latinity, so with the attack on periodization, F. seems to have a different target in mind from the one that he articulates. Is it really periodization *per se* that plagues our profession? Or is it rather the limitation of many scholars and students to just one period? (Like the limitation of many scholars and students to just one approach, or just one definition of culture, etc.) My own sense is that a variety of forces (economic, social, even psychological) have conspired to maintain an obsession with specification at the expense of broad and deep cultivation and reflection, and to foster a premature professionalization among younger scholars who should be encouraged to explore far beyond the area demarcated by a marketable dissertation. It is to F.'s credit that he seems not to have fallen victim to such forces. But that is not the same as saying that he has provided either an acute diagnosis of their operation or a reliable antidote to the damage they have done to the study of Latin literature, Roman culture, and related topics.

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SIGNING OFF?

F. WAQUET (J. Howe, trans.): *Latin or the Empire of a Sign. From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries.* Pp. vi + 346. London and New York: Verso, 2001 (first published as *Le latin ou l'empire d'un signe*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1998). Cased, £20. ISBN: 1-85984-615-7.

This work has deservedly attracted attention outside the professional pale of learned

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journals. Antony Grafton and Lisa Jardine discussed it on BBC Radio 3's 'Nightwaves' on 22 June 2001 (unconvinced), and it was reviewed in the *Daily Telegraph* (23 June 2001) by Nigel Spivey (convinced) and in *The Times* (11 July 2001) by Felipe Fernández-Armesto (unconvinced). Waquet traces the steady retreat of Latin from its place as the international language of learning, scholarship, and religion to its present marginal status. Latin, as W. argues, may be now well and truly dead, but there is considerable interest in the corpse. (But for Latin as the language of the undead, see the last chapter of Joseph Farrell's *Latin Language and Latin Culture from Ancient to Modern Times* [Cambridge, 2001].)

Part I looks at the former empire of Latin in school, church, and scholarship. The range of reference and example is impressive, and flashes of humour enliven the presentation. One might suggest that a bit more analysis would have been welcome. For instance, in sixteenth-century schools what language ought a child to have studied if not Latin? Were any of the vernaculars so developed or stable, had they such impressive literatures, were they so widely used as not to seem mere dialects that they deserved to be taught, or even could be taught? This query applies to the second chapter equally well. W. notes that many of those who objected to the use of vernaculars for translation of the Bible pointed to the stability of Latin (pp. 49, 56) and the fluidity of the vernaculars. I refer my readers to the appropriate chapters in S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 3: the West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1963), for detailed discussions of the formal obstacles to translations, chiefly the rapid growth and maturing of the languages of Europe. R. A. Sayce, for instance, claims that French never achieved a classic translation (unlike German and English) because of the rapidity of its change (p. 114). Chapter III is devoted to the use of Latin in scholarship. Chapter IV concerns the comfortable accommodation of Latin, albeit misunderstood, within the life of school and church.

Part II focuses on competence, and reaches the conclusion which Roger Ascham had already arrived at in the sixteenth century, that schooling in Latin was for most an appalling waste of time. (Ascham's is one of the names—de Thou's another—that does not appear in the index, though they are mentioned in the text; this is not the right way to produce a book as scholarly as this one.) But here again W. offers a little less than might have been expected in the way of analysis. In the Renaissance period, what other subjects would have served better than Latin as the core of the educational system? Alchemy? Or, to put it another way, isn't an educational system faulty in having a core in the first place? Suppose we now made mathematics the foundation of education: would it not too buckle under the intolerable weight of students' indifference or incapacity? A few would benefit, but the mass would surely come away (as did I) with simple arithmetic and little else (what was all that stuff about sine and cosine . . .?).

Part III describes efforts to legitimate the knowledge of Latin and keep Humanism from turning into the Humanities (Chapter VII: it forms character and imparts mental discipline, is part of one's heritage and a force for civilization, that sort of thing). The rôle the language played in defining social class (Chapter VIII) and its guarantee of intellectual superiority, often bogus (Chapter IX), are then charted. I can add as a footnote one case of the use of Latin to protect from the disagreeable in modern times: A. E. Housman's article on obscenities entitled 'Praefanda' was written in Latin, but even at that the *Classical Quarterly* lost its nerve, and this important piece appeared in *Hermes* 66 for 1931. The final chapter rehearses the repeated, but failed, attempts to revive Latin as a universal language.

I enjoyed this book immensely, and learned something from virtually every page, chiefly because of the European perspective on issues that Christopher Stray has ably

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charted from a British angle. The tale of overall and persistent failure to instil a general knowledge and love of Latin is depressing, and I suppose it would not have suited W.'s argument to point to the occasional success, e.g. Berlioz, whose love of Virgil took shape in his opera *Les Troyens.* John Howe's translation is agreeable (except for the use of 'inflected' on p. 62), but some unanglicized proper names (Eutrope, Lipse) could have been altered if a classical reader had been found at an early stage (such a reader would also have queried the notion that Latin poetry rhymed, found on p. 28, or that Matthew Arnold wrote a long-lived Latin composition text [p. 142]).

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