The Italian title, *La storia spezzata* (the 'broken' or 'interrupted' history), suggests a perspective like that of Weber, who recognized the 'failure' of antiquity but interpreted it in terms of the frustration of 'natural' tendencies towards capitalism and development. S. regards early Imperial Rome as already doomed, capable only of stagnating or declining, but identifies the possibility of an alternative history back in the first century B.C. If the crisis of the late Republic had resulted not in autocracy and the consolidation of slavery but a Ciceronian political settlement and more free labour, perhaps Rome would have followed a different path. 'Counterfactual' approaches highlight assumptions about causality, forcing us to consider in what circumstances things might have been different; it is frustrating, however, that S. sees the alternatives as either Western-style development or stagnation, rather than considering the possibility that a pre-modern society might have had its own particular dynamic.

S. concludes with Marx's characterization of antiquity as 'childlike', circumscribed, and self-referential, in contrast to modernity's sense of infinite possibility and quest to abolish all limits. He does not seem to empathize with Marx's sense of the possible attractions of such limits, nor with his project of developing a critique of modernity's inhumanity and injustice through the contrast with antiquity. Here, rather, the contrast of ancient and modern tends to confirm the self-satisfaction of modernity, in its undeniable power and its claim to offer infinite possibilities to all. Nevertheless, by raising such questions, S. compels us to consider how far the study of the past both reflects and influences our attitude to the present; one more reason why this book is eminently worth reading.

University of Bristol NEVILLE MORLEY

THE CONTINUITY OF LATIN

J. FARRELL: *Latin Language and Latin Culture from Ancient to Modern Times*. Pp. xiv + 148. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Paper, £12.95. ISBN: 0-521-77663-5.

Farrell's book is the latest entry in the series 'Roman Literature and its Contexts'. Like its companion volumes it is written as an extended essay, and develops its points through implication and example rather than through exhaustive consideration of evidence and alternatives. Farrell's theme is the damage done to the study of Latin language and literature by periodization (i.e. classical, late antique, medieval, and Renaissance; but also 'golden' and 'silver' within the classical period), and by persistent use of metaphors that represent Latin language and culture as male, dead, and impoverished in comparison with the lexical and grammatical richness of Greek. In place of such divisive and enfeebling strategies F. proposes a reconfigured study of Latin that would emphasize continuity across time and space while paying special attention to the range of voices (male, female, high and low status, Christian, pagan, etc.) contained within it.

The book is provocative in the best sense, for it invites the reader to reflect on assumptions that shape the practice of scholars, teachers, students, and publishers yet too often go unexamined. As a provocation—and a genial, lucid, and well-written one, at that—I can recommend the book warmly; but only as a provocation, for I find myself in serious disagreement with the overall thrust of F.'s argument, as well as with the unexamined assumptions of his own approach. F. writes as though language and culture are coextensive: but surely such a belief is only a residue of Romantic

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.1.147 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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.

University of Southern California THOMAS HABINEK

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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