

SCOTT MCGILL: *Plagiarism in Latin Literature*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2012. ISBN 978-1-107-01937-9. XIV, 241 pp. USD 103.

The subject of plagiarism and its discussion in ancient literature is complicated by several issues, both legal and aesthetic. For one thing, copyright law was unknown in antiquity, as were royalties for published works. Furthermore, classical literature is, and was even in antiquity acknowledged to be, based on imitation of earlier texts: the concept of the romantic genius who creates his works out of nothingness did not exist – although, as the author of this volume points out (pp. 57–60), something of the sort is anticipated in Manilius' *Astronomica* (2,57–59). It would be tempting to suppose that, under such circumstances, there could have been no consensus as to what constitutes plagiarism, but, as Scott McGill convincingly argues in this extremely interesting and well-researched book, the phenomenon was well known and universally condemned: despite the absence of copyright (and, accordingly, copyright litigation), an author was thought to have the inalienable moral right to be recognised as the writer of his own works. It is telling that the terms with which the various authors discussed by McGill refer to plagiarism are almost invariably of legal origin, most notably *furtum* ('theft') and *alieni usurpatio* ('wrongful seizure of property'). Even our own term 'plagiarism' (from *plagiarius*, 'kidnaper, slave-handler, human-trafficker') owes its existence to Martial's *Epigram* 1,52, where the author portrays his verses as his "slaves" whom he has recently manumitted by publishing them but whose liberty is now threatened by a *plagiarius*. One could pursue this train of thought further and assume that, as his freedmen, the newly liberated poems are still entitled to Martial's patronage. McGill barely hints at this interpretation (pp. 85–93) which would, however, support his point: although a published work was no longer an author's property, he still had the right of "symbolic ownership" (pp. 16, 199) and was entitled to acknowledgement.

McGill argues that plagiarism in antiquity was recognised as a phenomenon that was distinguishable from legitimate *imitatio*, and the cases which he presents revolve around this fine distinction. Apart from the blatant copying of entire texts, plagiarism might be suspected when the imitation of an earlier author was too slavish or unoriginal or when the author had tried to conceal his sources. As McGill points out, ancient views on intertextuality were somewhat different from ours: textual parallels were usually interpreted as the conscious imitation of one author by another, rather than as reflections of an "abstract cultural discourse" (p. 19). Although plagiarism was thought to go beyond bad imitation and shoddy research, the fact that an author had improved on his sources was often thought to acquit him of literary theft. Conversely, being the victim of alleged plagiarism could enhance an author's standing: it implied that he was someone worth stealing from. This aesthetic reasoning played a central role in the Roman plagiarism debates, which McGill discusses in detail, covering a number of literary genres and time periods from Terence to the sixth-century Priscian. The bulk of this volume is divided into two parts: the first (Chapters 2–4) deals with charges and the second (Chapters 5–6) with denials of plagiarism, which, inevitably, are two sides of the same coin in the Roman authors' ceaseless pursuit of literary acclaim.

Martial is the only author represented in the first part of the study to actually cast himself as the victim of plagiarism (although Priscian feared – or professed to fear – he would become one; see *gramm.* II,2,16–20). Nevertheless, charges of plagiarism made by the other authors in McGill's book are not free of self-advertisement: as pioneers of technical and scientific literature (Chapter 2), Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder tried to set themselves apart from their

predecessors by emphasising that an author should both improve on his sources (an essential feature of *imitatio*, although not necessarily typical of technical authors) and either name them (Pliny) or, at the very least, not obscure them (Vitruvius). Pliny speaks beautifully of an author's duty to "repay his loans with interest" (*praef. nat.* 23) by both adding to the knowledge he has acquired from his predecessors and acknowledging their work. His unprecedentedly extensive list of sources (*nat.* 1) is without parallel in ancient literature: it not only serves to exhibit his integrity and candour but also to advertise the huge amount of scholarship and hard work he had invested in his *Natural History* – in this respect, Pliny can be seen to anticipate the inflated bibliographies of modern academia.

Of the purported plagiarists, the only one whose voice we are allowed to hear is Terence, who refuted the accusations of his senior colleague Luscius Lanuvinus in several of the prologues to his plays (Chapter 4). As McGill notes, the Roman definition of plagiarism seems to have been flexible and oddly genre-specific: Terence could safely boast that he had translated the opening scene of *Adelphoe* from the Greek Diphilus *verbum de verbo* (*Ter. ad.* 11), while he had to assure his audience that he had borrowed nothing at all from his Latin predecessors. A tradition of hurling accusations of plagiarism seems to be something the Romans inherited as part and parcel of Greek comedy (see pp. 6–7), and the genuineness of the feud between Terence and Luscius has been questioned: the audience loved a juicy scandal, and Terence, at the very least, made the most of it in marketing his plays. Although McGill cites the Terence scandal as the only Roman plagiarism case where actual financial interest was involved, this is surely an exaggeration: most authors stood to benefit financially from a good literary reputation, together with the various forms of patronage which it made possible. Charges of plagiarism were clearly an effective tool of self-promotion in the competitive literary circles.

Obviously, less self-interested motives were at work as well: as the examples of Terence and Martial demonstrate, plagiarism had entertainment value as material for humour and satire, whereas Seneca the Elder used his contemporary audience's inability to recognise literary loans in speeches as a moralising illustration of general intellectual laxity (pp. 66–9; chapter 5). As the examples of Vergil's biographers and Macrobius demonstrate, Vergil's exculpation from charges of plagiarism – and even the manufacture of anecdotes where he himself was plagiarised – played no small role in his literary canonisation (Chapter 6; conclusion). All of McGill's varied illustrations demonstrate that plagiarism as a phenomenon, and a condemned one at that, was recognised widely enough to enable its use for various purposes in widely divergent forms of literary expression and literary criticism.

As McGill himself acknowledges (p. 6), his title echoes Stemplinger's *Das Plagiat in der griechischen Literatur* (Leipzig 1912), and, correspondingly, he suggests that a Greek tradition of plagiarism literature may have served as a model for many of the accusations and defences discussed in his book. Although McGill does not elaborate on this, at least some of his examples suggest that discussions of plagiarism were themselves subject to *imitatio*: one could assume that Martial, with characteristic hyperbole, sought to outdo Horace's "borrowed feathers" (*Hor. epist.* 1,3,15–20) as a metaphor for plagiarism with his wigs, cosmetics, false teeth and even transplanted body parts (*Mart.* 1,72; 10,100). The topos that a plagiarist should "buy silence", on the other hand, appears both in Martial (*Mart.* 1,66,14) and Symmachus' ironic letter to Ausonius (*Symm. epist.* 1,31,3), reflecting on the distinction of plagiarism and ghost-writing, both of which seem to have been well-known in antiquity.

All in all, this is a thoroughly researched, insightful and thought-inspiring presentation of a little-studied topic. McGill's modern parallels are generally illuminating rather than gratuitous and serve to illustrate that the notion of authorial rights does not necessarily hinge on financial interest or the modern concept of copyright. McGill's book is much more than a specialist work: as it also reflects generally on *imitatio* and its essential idea that an author should seek to surpass his sources, it should prove to be of great interest to all scholars of classical literature.

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*The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the 'Abbāsids*. Edited by ARIETTA PAPACONSTANTINO. Ashgate, Farnham – Burlington 2010. ISBN 978-0-7546-6536-6. X, 240 pp. GBP 60.

The interest in multilingualism, its implications and attestations in Antiquity has recently grown and this collection of nine articles and a thought-provoking and informative introduction by Papaconstantinou is on the crest of the wave. One of its merits lies in the wide time range it covers. It goes beyond the Arab conquest of Egypt in 641 BCE, where many other studies of the Greco-Roman world stop. Yet the same languages were still used for some time after the conquest, together with the newcomer to Egypt, Arabic.

In her introduction, Papaconstantinou gives a clear account of why and how to study multilingualism, emphasizing the problems of the written material we have to rely on, and how the papyrological evidence is unique in giving us the possibility to perform socio-linguistic and socio-historical research.

The first chapter, "Linguistic Identity in Graeco-Roman Egypt", is also introductory in nature. Sofía Torallas Tovar sets the linguistic stage of Egypt covering the wide time range in which several different languages in different stages and scripts were used. She discusses on what premises we can study linguistic identity, a slippery term, and often combined with another equally slippery term, ethnic identity. Her definitions for these are broad, as they need to be, given the nature of our sources.

The next three chapters form Part I of the book "Evidence for a Multilingual Society: Documents and Archives", and are divided chronologically. Willy Clarysse's "Bilingual Papyrological Archives" gives a clear account of the concept of "archive" and the usefulness of archives in providing context information for individual texts. Clarysse also discusses the issue that obviously still needs to be highlighted, namely the black and grey market of antiquities that has spurred clandestine excavations. This, together with the ways in which excavations have been made in the old days (without decent methods and inclusive documentation), often deprives researchers of essential context information, partly because we do not know which texts were kept together as an archive in antiquity. Then Clarysse moves on to groups of bilingual Greek-Demotic archives from the Ptolemaic period presenting different kinds of bilingual documentation and discussing also the possible reasons for the use of two languages (e.g., in the archives of Egyptian priests, documents in Greek have been translated because of a legal dispute).