going on and on without any obvious limit, in contrast to a finite world; space as unlimited, indefinite, lacking positive characteristics, hence somehow unreal, even non-existent; as the medium in which bodies are located and as a necessary condition for the local movement of bodies, without having any obvious power of causing movement. Unlike modern science, ancient thinkers, mathematicians and astronomers as well as philosophers, tried to accommodate these intuitions; most of their differences arose from the weightings they gave to them. A more complete examination of all available sources might have established that there was a coherent historical development of Greek concepts of space, even if none of them attained the systematic coherence demanded of a scientific theory to-day.

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The announcement of a general study by a distinguished scholar tends to make expectations run dangerously high. Fortunately, most readers of this new book by Elaine Fantham will not be disappointed. Her *Roman Literary Culture* is a most welcome contribution to the study of Latin literature.

The book fills part of the gap between handbooks, encyclopaedias, and specialized literary monographs on the one hand, and social and anthropological studies on the other. It contains a survey of Latin literature until the rise of Christianity, but it does not consider the works and authors as isolated phenomena, nor does it focus on factual information. Instead it studies the literary activities and products in their mutual relations and within their general cultural context. Thus F. attempts to come towards “a social history of Latin literature.” Consequently, we get a lot of information about authors and works, but also about things often only touched upon in our handbooks: e.g. the way literature was spread and ‘published’, the general development of Roman theatre, the effects of literary patronage, the school system that produced writers and readers, the role of libraries, public performances, and criticism. F. is at her best when dealing with authors she clearly likes, such as Vergil, Livy, Statius, and Pliny, or whom she seems to find intriguing, such as Fronto or Gellius. Particularly good and helpful are the sections dealing with
periods of transition and change in the cultural climate, such as the last years of Augustus and the reign of Tiberius, the period between Nero and Domitian, or the era of Hadrian\textsuperscript{1}).

Some of F.’s recurring themes deserve special mention here. Unlike many others, she firmly draws our attention to the lasting importance of Greek language and culture, which clearly is a full-blown undercurrent in Roman culture. On closer scrutiny even such thoroughly ‘Roman’ authors like Cicero, Pliny, and Apuleius, appear to adopt Greek for private and public purposes. F. also rightly points to the profound influence Greek philosophers and orators exerted upon Rome during the empire. Paradoxically, the Greek element forms an integral part of Roman literary culture. So F. is right even to include Greek authors, like the Second Sophists, and she offers some useful observations about them.

Throughout the book there is a great emphasis on literature in its social function, as a means of expression and even pastime of the Roman elite. F. appears particularly interested in phenomena like public readings (\textit{recitationes}), literary self-portraits, and social obligations of successful poets, and she discusses common ideas and shared values concerning literary genres and fashions. Inevitably, this approach leads to a certain lack of proportion: Tacitus’ \textit{Dialogus} is given more attention than his \textit{Annals}, Augustan poets are preferred to Lucretius, and the letters of Pliny the Younger and Fronto receive much more consideration than Seneca’s moral epistles. Writers of technical works, like Celsus and Frontinus, are barely mentioned, whereas Ovid is more kindly dealt with. Naturally, not all works are equally well-suited to figure in a socio-literary study such as this. And in itself, such a lack of proportion is not a bad thing. Few will quarrel with F. over her choice to leave Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus much for what they are, and to hasten to a rather detailed account of Statius. F.’s mostly tolerant, unbiased, and mild personal views contribute to the stimulating and attractive force of the book.

One might, however, contend with F. about her treatment of some of the major figures in Latin literature. Do Ennius and Cato the Elder, the important innovators and exponents of the ambiguous attitude of Romans towards Greek culture, really deserve no more than a brief sketch of a page?\textsuperscript{2}) Why are Caesar’s \textit{commentarii} only mentioned in passing? And is it really fair to devote just a few paragraphs to the ‘Caesarean’ Sallust, for the greater part devoted to harsh criticism\textsuperscript{3}), while dwelling at some length on Livy? There is a second disadvantage to F.’s approach, which seems less inevitable. Her close interest in the higher social classes seems to have led her