story, a sort of road or voyage tale about criminal delinquency and shamelessness recollected by one narrator is the central *fabula*. The narrator who impersonates all the characters weaves the tales told to him by others into this *fabula* in a virtuoso performance involving extensive impersonation.

The Bibliography (305–17) ranges back in time and wide in subject matter. J. demurs regarding the lack of material after 1996 since this book is a reworking of his dissertation. This does not mar the text substantially though as J. says both he and others — S. J. Harrison is named — were working unknown to each other on Milesian fiction. The Bibliography might have been improved by having editions of Petronius' *Satyrica* cited separately.

This book provides an interesting history of Classical scholarship on Petronius, challenges our assumptions, and puts forward interesting ideas on the genre of the *Satyrica* and Latin fiction.

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D. DOX, *THE IDEA OF THE THEATER IN LATIN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT: AUGUSTINE TO THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004. Pp. viii + 196. ISBN 0-472-11423-9. US$65.00.

M. ERASMO, *ROMAN TRAGEDY: THEATRE TO THEATRICALITY*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2004. Pp. xii + 211. ISBN 0-292-70242-6. US$45.00.

The afterlife of the dramatic legacy of fifth-century Athens has always been an area of particular interest to Classicists, even before the recent boom in reception studies. There is the tendency, however, to let the story begin around 1600, when the practice of re-performing classical scripts on the modern stage first set in. The disregard for the intervening period (almost two millennia of fascinating cultural history) is in part due to a familiar set of preconceptions about the 'rocky horror picture shows' of the Romans, the 'secondary' cultures of late antiquity, or the 'dark' ages of dominant Christianity. They are by now largely discredited, and things are changing fast. Pat Easterling, in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, has identified the reverberation of Greek tragedy in later antiquity as 'one of the most interesting challenges for contemporary critics'. Scholarship on Roman tragedy (including the fragments of republican playwrights) is surging and has already yielded a satisfyingly sophisticated Seneca (Boyle, Tarrant, Schiesaro). And the Oxford Archive for Performances of Greek and Roman Drama has started to broaden its remit to encompass study of performance cultures throughout antiquity, including sub-literary genres such as mime and pantomime. The two books under review here are thus catching (and contributing to) a wave of scholarship on the ancient theatre and its reception that is sweeping away the limiting assumptions of earlier work.

Dox's object of analysis is how the pagan theatre figured in the medieval Christian imagination. She distinguishes her approach from the study of ritual and/as performance in this period (as laid out, for instance, in O. B. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages* (1965)) as well as the habit of turning the medieval evidence into one marginal chapter in the grand history of Western theatre. Instead, she examines discursive reactions of a string of Christian writers to an increasingly remote institution of the pagan past, from Augustine and Isidore (ch. 1) to the reception and interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the early fourteenth century (ch. 4). The two chapters in between cover the early Middle Ages, with a focus on Rabanus Maurus (*c.* 780–856), Remigius of Auxerre (*c.* 841–908), and Amalarius of Metz (775/80–850); and a series of writers from the twelfth century, notably Honorius of Autun, Hugh of St Victor, and John of Salisbury. A lucid introduction and a three-page afterword (ch. 5), which briefly outlines differences in medieval and Renaissance thought on pagan drama and Aristotle's *Poetics*, round out the argument.

Under the heading 'The Idea of the Theatre' D. includes such diverse items as physical location (often perceived as a site for the enactment of illicit pleasures, dramatic and otherwise), a corpus of scripts populated by pagan deities, or theories of representation and the attending issues of (theological) truth and (histrionic) falsehood, reality and make-belief. It is easily apparent why the ancient theatre was frequently considered a deeply problematic institution by Christian writers and could become a virtual metonymy for the larger culture of Greco-Roman antiquity that Christianity tried to supersede, not without protracted ideological tussles and a complex dialectic of condemnation and appropriation. D. well brings out the different rhetorical postures that her chosen authors assumed *vis-à-vis* the theatrical heritage of pagan antiquity, from moral

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outrage to allegorical exploitation, and the diverse purposes such constructions were intended to serve in Christian discourse. Overall, she succeeds in showing the permutations in meaning that the ancient theatre underwent in the course of the Middle Ages, from initial rejection and hostility to its gradual integration into a Christian view of the world.

D.'s research agenda, then, is original and arresting and yields many fine observations. But the book also has a significant number of shortcomings. Given the vast scope of the study, it is understandable that not all sections are equally well researched, but matters can quickly get superficial or woolly when one zooms in on details. For instance, D. seems unaware of mainstream classical scholarship on Augustine's use of Cicero and Varro (21–3), and I was unable to figure out what Aristotle's tenet that beauty depends in part on the size of the object (*Poetics* 7, quoted in the form of an incoherent sound-bite from William of Moerbeke's Latin translation) has to do with Christ becoming a tragic hero in Honorius of Autun's description of the Mass in *De tragoediis* (96). The book also features a distracting number of outright errors, especially concerning the Latin. Some amuse (such as a female Aristotle in the list of abbreviations), others startle: 'Spectacles, it is supposed, are generally given the name not because they themselves defile pleasure, but by those things themselves being done there' (36). This passes neither as English nor as a translation of the Latin: 'Spectacula, ut opinor, generaliter nominantur voluptates quae non per semetipsa inquinant, sed per ea quae illic geruntur' (Isidore, *Etymologiae* 18.16). How this sort of thing could survive the review and production process of a major university press is anybody's guess. The instance is not isolated, and at the point when 'Christum pro nobis in agonia positum exprimit' becomes 'he expresses for us Christ in the position of agony' (75) or 'ideo poete non pertinet loqui nisi in rebus que . . .' 'Indeed, a poet speaks only what pertains to things that . . .' (173 n. 77 — oddly, the same sentence is also cited on p. 104 and correctly translated in the attending note), one is forced to conclude that D. is not always in full control of her primary material.

The overarching thesis of Erasmo's *Roman Tragedy* is pithily summed up by its subtitle: *Theatre to Theatricality*. E. imagines the history of tragedy at Rome as a five-stage plot, with a quasi-Aristotelian teleology. According to him, the genre evolved from creation (Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius) to theatricalization (Pacuvius, Accius) and dramatizing of history (*fabulae praetextae*, with some fast forwards to the imperial *Octavia*) to the first hints of metatragedy in the re-performances of scripts in the late Republic to, finally, the full-blown metatragedy of Seneca. Not all links in this chain are equally persuasive. The claim that the use of rhetoric in drama creates metatheatre, for instance, needs much more argumentative support than it receives.

The book is at its best when E. recounts specific instances in the performance history of the Roman theatre, such as the tragic spectacles that inaugurated the theatre of Pompey — though Cicero does not say that he was 'bored' by the displays (86). In contrast, he has generally little to say about the actual texts or fragments, many of which are quoted at length with minimalist commentary. For instance, to illustrate metatheatrical narrative in Seneca and its precedents, E. follows up almost two pages of quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Seneca's *Phaedra* on the death of Hippolytus with a line and a half of exegesis (133). It is clearly the overarching thesis that drives the argument, and the sources, it seems, are often cited merely *pro forma*, as self-explanatory evidence of a specific stage in the historical process. This approach at times reduces the exposition to a self-sustaining *Glasperlenspiel*, in which the pearls bear labels such as 'theatrical reality', 'theatricalized reality', 'the metatheatricality of Senecan metatragedy', or 'a theatre undermined by its very theatricality'. This is not to say that these concepts are devoid of heuristic value or that the phenomena they are meant to pinpoint did not exist. But in E. the insights they yield are somehow less compelling than in the pioneering works by Bartsch and Boyle. As in the case of D., the production of the book does not impress. A lack of rigour and precision is noticeable throughout; errors and misprints abound.

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