

## RESEARCH REPORTS

### BALSDON FELLOWSHIPS

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#### *Roman drama in fragments: Atellane comedy and the sententiae attributed to Publilius*

The primary aim of my project was to edit and contextualize the fragments (about 115 titles and 320 lines) of the entertaining and indecent Latin plays known as ‘Atellane comedies’ (first century BC) and the collection of (about 730) apophthegms — some of them extracts from (now lost) mime-plays — associated with the Syrian actor and author Publilius, Julius Caesar’s contemporary.

The two categories of popular Italian comedy with which my project deals, ‘Atellane comedy’ and mime, presumably were improvised spectacles during their early stages as types of theatrical entertainment, but acquired literary form (that is became verse scripts with literary qualities) by the first century BC in the hands of innovative dramatists (such as Novius and Pomponius, who composed ‘Atellane comedies’, and Decimus Laberius, who wrote mime-plays) and actors (such as Publilius, who both composed mime-plays and acted in them). The literary scripts of the Atellane playwrights have not been transmitted to us directly, but survive in short fragments cited by grammarians, lexicographers and encyclopaedists such as Varro, Festus, Gellius, Charisius, Nonius, Priscian and Macrobius. Despite the importance of literary Atellane comedy for our appreciation of non-standard Latin language, Roman society, Italian culture and other forms of Roman literature, there has never been a comprehensive discussion of its fragments in English (and the extant corpus of Atellane farce has never even been translated into English). Likewise, despite the fame of Publilius amongst pagans and Christians alike, the extant corpus of his works comprises only three fragments from mime-plays and two titles. But we also have a collection of moral maxims, which had perhaps been formed already by the late first century AD, and was associated with Publilius’s plays. This anthology of pithy sayings was subsequently broken into five different collections that circulated in the Middle Ages in France, Germany and Italy. The name of Publilius appears in only one of the five collections; the other four are associated with the philosopher and playwright Seneca the Younger. Currently 156 manuscripts are known to contain the collection of alphabetically ordered *sententiae*, and the large number testifies to the importance of the moral maxims throughout the centuries. The last time the corpus of the *sententiae* was edited critically was in 1880, although, since then, early and important manuscripts containing the *sententiae* have been discovered.

To establish reliable critical editions of the above texts I needed to look afresh at the manuscripts containing the moral maxims and the works of the authors who cite extracts from the Atellane playwrights. It would be a mistake to rely on earlier editions, some of which (for instance, Lindsay’s Nonius (1903), or Lindsay’s Festus (1913), or Hertz’s Priscian (1855) or Meyer’s Publilius (1880)) are a century (or more) old. The Balsdon Fellowship enabled me to combine use of the excellent library facilities at the British School at Rome, accessible 24 hours a day, with regular visits to the Vatican

Library to collate manuscripts. During my three-month stay in Rome I was able to collate 41 manuscripts containing the text of the *sententiae* (I have thus seen so far about 90 of the extant 156 manuscripts of the anthology of *sententiae*) as well as a good number of manuscripts containing the text of authors citing fragments of Atellane comedy: four of Festus, fifteen of Nonius Marcellus, five of Macrobius, five of Gellius and 32 of Priscian. This means that I am now able to provide a newly-edited text for the corpus of the *sententiae* and for the fragments of the Atellane playwrights, and to correct inaccurate statements in published monographs and misreported readings in the *apparatus critici* of previous editions of these authors. More importantly, I have been able to place in its correct family a Vatican manuscript that so far has gone almost unnoticed by Publilian scholars.

I achieved my target because the working atmosphere at the BSR is so congenial, the library resources so conveniently available, and the people (core staff and academic project staff, visiting lecturers and temporary residents) so helpful in supporting research that my work profited greatly from weeks of uninterrupted reading and interdisciplinary discussions with (senior and junior) colleagues, students, archaeologists, architects and artists. Hard work was relaxing and relaxation motivated me to work harder. I wish I could have stayed longer.

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### *Representing and performing stigmata in medieval and Renaissance Italy*

My research focused upon the arguments used by Dominican and Franciscan authors about the legitimacy of the representation of stigmata. These arguments were first set out in a well-known work by Tommaso Caffarini in the early fifteenth century, but the debate continued through to the early seventeenth century and the later contributions have received little scholarly attention. I therefore expanded the parameters of my research beyond the originally envisaged mid-sixteenth-century cut-off point. Vincenzo Giustiniani, writing in the second half of the sixteenth century, and Gregorio Lombardelli, writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, both Dominicans, put forward arguments in favour of a wide interpretation of stigmata and supported the representation of saints with stigmata. This is in spite of the fact that the most famous Dominican stigmatic, Catherine of Siena (ob. 1380), had invisible stigmata. Both authors, therefore, dealt with the issue of depicting the invisible in visual art. Antonio Daza, a Franciscan writing in the early seventeenth century, argued for a restricted definition of stigmata, allowing only Saint Francis as a true stigmatic and, therefore, the only saint who legitimately could be represented as such. Further, Daza discussed the definition of Francis's stigmata as miraculous, thus involving him in a consideration of contemporary understanding of wound pathology.

That this rich strand of debate between Dominican and Franciscan authors, which centred on the definition of stigmata and the representation of the miracle in the visual arts, was ongoing until the early seventeenth century is well known and has been