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Review of The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs, and Sayings, by Jon R. Stone

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Jon R. Stone, *The Routledge Dictionary of Quotations: The Illiterati's Guide to Latin Maxims, Mottoes, Proverbs, and Sayings*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005. Pp. xvii, 394. ISBN 0-415-96908-5. \$85.00 (hb). ISBN 0-415-96909-3. \$18.95 (pb).

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Word count: 1098 words

Collections of sayings, proverbs, etc. have a long history, reaching back at least as far as the Book of Proverbs and Aristotle's *Paroimiai* (cf. Diog. Laert 5.26). Many readers of *BMCR* will have at least a passing familiarity with such collections as the *Corpus Paroemiographorum*, Menander's *Monostichi*, Publilius Syrus' *Sententiae*, and the *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* of Valerius Maximus. From the Renaissance we have the celebrated *Adagia* of Erasmus. Recent years have brought us a similar profusion of collections of phrases, sayings, proverbs, and quotations, most restricted to Latin although a few include Greek as well. ¹ Some emphasize common phrases, others proverbs, still others literary quotations; most include all three to some extent. Of course the purpose of such works has changed dramatically since the Renaissance. Ancient collections served several purposes, most notably as edifying copy for schoolboys learning to write² and as a source of moral *exempla* for orators.³ Erasmus offers four purposes for the *Adagia: ad philosophiam, ad decus orationis, ad persuadendum, et ad intellegendos auctores*.⁴ While a few public speakers of the present day (e.g., Senator Robert Byrd) continue to draw on ancient *exempla*, this is increasingly rare. Most contemporary collections seek to fulfill the fourth purpose of Erasmus: to explain Latin phrases and quotations, in our case as found in English-language works.

This is Stone's third such volume aimed at the "illiterati." His earlier efforts are similar collections. *Latin for the Illiterati* focuses on once commonly used Latin words and phrases; *More Latin for the Illiterati* largely covers Latin phrases used in law, medicine, and the Church. The collection reviewed here is devoted primarily to quotations, maxims, and proverbs, but also includes many individual words and phrases.

Stone divides this collection into three sections: proverbs and maxims, mottoes and phrases, and familiar quotations. These are somewhat artificial distinctions: many items listed in the first two sections can also be classed as quotations. He arranges each section alphabetically, thus creating three somewhat random lists with many phrases entered under such memorable words as *ab*, *de*, and *ex*. The English-Latin index perpetuates this problem by strictly alphabetizing the English translations so that we find many pages of entries under

"a," "and," "in," and "the." The Latin text follows its translation in the index, but the reader must seek attributions and other notes in the main lists. Since no page references are provided, one must then check in as many as three places to find the actual entry. English and Latin keyword indexes would have served the user much better.

In the main lists Stone provides the Latin phrase and an English translation. His translations, which are generally accurate, tend to be idiomatic rather than literal. He frequently provides an attribution, although this is a bare author name rather than a full citation, with the general exception of Biblical citations. Stone very rarely provides a note on the original context. Since those who use Latin tags generally expect their readers to know the context, full citations and more notes would have been very helpful.

Turning to some specific examples of his weaknesses, we find numerous problems with attributions and minor misquotations. Many phrases and quotations listed without attribution might have been easily identified. *Alea iacta est* (p. 135): is rightly attributed to Caesar but without reference to Suet., *Div. Iul.* 5.65: *iacta alea est*. For *de profundis* (p. 148) Stone notes neither Ps. 148, *de profundis clamavi ad te, Domine*, nor Oscar Wilde. *Mihi est propositum in taberna mori* (p. 180) should be *meum est propositum in taberna mori* (the Archpoet, readily found in Raby's *Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, 183.45). *Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas* (p. 216), one of the most famous lines in Ecclesiastes (1.2), is left without attribution (nor does Stone note the poems of this name by John Webster and Anne Bronte). He surely should note that *sursum corda* (p. 210) comes from the Latin Mass. *Divide et impera* (p. 152) was the motto of Louis XI of France. Sometimes Stone does supply the expected attribution but misses the obvious modern reference: e.g. *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* (p. 24) is correctly ascribed to Horace (*Carm.* 3.2.13) but no mention is made of Wilfrid Owen, at least as important for English readers. In other cases the attribution is presented in a misleading way. Stone ascribes *faber (est) quisque fortunae suae* (p. 31) to Sallust, Appius Claudius, and Francis Bacon; in fact Appius Claudius Caecus is quoted in the pseudo-Sallustian *Epistulae ad Caesarem Senem* (1.2): *quod in carminibus Appius ait, fabrem esse suae quemque fortunae*. The old chestnut *bis dat, qui cito dat* is ascribed to Cervantes; it occurs in Alciatus, *Emblemata*, no. 162 (Antwerp: Plantin, 1584; definitely prior to Cervantes, who published his masterpiece in two parts in 1605 and 1615), and is often assigned to Publilius Syrus, who actually has *inopi beneficium bis dat, qui dat celeriter* (p. 47).⁵ Stone also slices and dices quotations, often presenting fragments and wholes in multiple places. We find *homo sum* on p. 166 and *nihil alienum* on p. 184, but the whole of the famous line from Terence (*Heauton.* 77) on p. 40: *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*. *Nominis umbra* appears on p. 145, while the famous line from Lucan (*Pharsalia* 1.135) appears on p. 209. *Vade ad formicam* (p. 216) will confuse those ignorant of its context: *vade ad formicam, O piger, et considera vias eius et discite sapientiam* (Prov. 6.6). Then there are the occasional out-and-out mistakes: on p. 148 we find *Dei gratias*, while on p. 149 we encounter the correct and familiar form, *Deo gratias*. These examples could be multiplied many times over, however, *verbum sat sapienti*.

Stone is by far the most comprehensive such work among our moderns, listing nearly 8,000 quotations and phrases. The popular and readily available collections by Eugene Ehrlich offer fewer quotations and phrases, but better notes on their history and use (but again attribution by author only). Waldo Sweet's *Latin Proverbs* has more complete attributions, along with keyword and author indexes. The most learned and best collection that I have encountered is that of James Morwood, with full citations, excellent discussions, and a

subject index; yet, alas, this also contains far fewer phrases and quotations than Stone.

The *Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations* is fun to browse. It will remind the learned of half-forgotten phrases and occasionally help students translate a Latin phrase (if they can find it). However, it is an unsophisticated work that fails to deliver cultural literacy to those deprived of a classical education.

Notes:

[1.](#) See for example, Klaus Bartels and Ludwig Huber, *Veni, Vidi, Vici: Geflügelte Worte aus dem Griechischen und Lateinischen* (9. Aufl. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 1992); Karl Bayer, *Nota bene!: Das lateinische Zitatlexikon* (3 Aufl., Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1999); Eugene Ehrlich, *Amo, Amas, Amat and More* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) and *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995); Norbert Guterman, *The Anchor Book of Latin Quotations with English Translations* (New York: Doubleday, 1990); Hubertus Kudla, *Lexikon der lateinischen Zitate: 3500 Originale mit Übersetzungen und Belegstellen* (München: Beck, 1999); James Morwood, *Dictionary of Latin Words and Phrases* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Waldo E. Sweet, *Latin Proverbs: Wisdom from Ancient to Modern Times* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2002); and Renzo Tosi, *Dizionario delle sentenze latine e greche: 10.000 citazioni dall'antichità al rinascimento nell'originale e in traduzione con commento storico letterario e filologico* (13. ed., Milano: Rizzoli, 2000).

[2.](#) See, for example, Stanley Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 60, 172-176, and Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 120-151.

[3.](#) Val. Max. I, *praef.*: *ab illustris electa auctoribus digerere constituti, ut documenta sumere volentibus longae inquisitionis labor absit.*

[4.](#) R.R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage & Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 297-299.

[5.](#) On the history of this proverb see A. Erler, "Zur Geschichte des Spruches 'Bis dat, qui cito dat,'" *Philologus*, 130 (1986): 210-220.

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