Europatria

Francisco de Oliveira
Coordinator

Biography
Francisco de Oliveira is Full Professor of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of Coimbra, Portugal; member of the Center of Classical and Humanistic Studies of the University of Coimbra and Director of the Latin Studies; former Dean of the Faculty of Letters (1996-2002); former President of the Euroclassica and of the Portuguese Association for Classical Studies; former Director of the Institute of Classical Studies and of Teacher Training Programmes including in-service training. Conferences presented in many countries and publications in Portuguese, French, Spanish, English and German.

Main research subject: theatre in general and especially sociology of theatre and the tragedy of Seneca; political theory in antiquity, actually Cicero and Pliny the Younger; currents of thought in the High Roman Empire; classical education in Portugal.

Summary
The present anthology of texts in Latin, drawn from classical antiquity to the present, containing seventeen chapters dedicated to different countries of the European Union and the candidate countries, intends to fulfil the following aims: 1) to consolidate the European heritage through collective, national and transnational reflection on its past; 2) to present an image of Europe in its unity and diversity, as envisioned by a group of classical language teachers from each of the member countries and from those who are candidates for inclusion; 3) to reflect upon what the European Union has been, what it is and what it will be, using as a basis our cultural inheritance as it is written in the Latin language.

Francisco de Oliveira
Coordinator
Introduction

The writing of literary history is an activity that goes beyond setting texts in a historical context. Interpretative theories like intertextuality or reception studies have significantly contributed in recent years in order to establish a new definition of literary history of texts. Intertextuality starts a dialogue between the texts of different historical periods and cultural backgrounds in order to trace chains of significance and measure the difference between them. The dialogue between texts presupposes different voices of various origins preserved in the memory of the poets. Reception studies examine any work of literature that stood the test of time and has been appreciated by many later receivers as well as the original public. In order to be able to reconstruct the expectations of the audience for which the texts were composed, we have to be able to identify different functions and meanings between this ancient audience and our expectations and we need to take into consideration the different cultural horizons in which the texts have been received.

The Greek literary tradition resides in authors like Ennius, Plautus or Vergil and it generated the production of Rome literature based upon textual and cultural translation. Roman poets produced national poetry with innovative character but always based on the sophisticated
culture of Hellenism. In order to do that they have used the cultural exchange of linguistic codes, the emphasis on cultural differences and the commitment to innovate. The Augustans establish polemics with the ancients of the Roman tradition who are seen sometimes as lacking the intellectual depth in order to receive and appropriate the ancient Greek heritage. The ambition of originality becomes a genealogical search and indeed many of the texts of Roman literature focus on genealogy and the search for literary and cultural roots. For example, the Augustan poets want to achieve immortality through their works and at the same time to find their origins in the Greek literary tradition.

During the 500 years of creativity and originality in the Greek world (750-250 BC.), there was no literature in the Roman world. The Romans were trying to develop a sense of national identity working out a powerful social and military system. Some of the reasons for the Latin literature not having developed earlier include the easy access for the Romans to Greek performances and the fact that Greek literature must have seemed inimitable to Roman eyes. The expansion of Roman power after 200 BC. and the Roman conquests of northern Italy, southern Spain, mainland Greece and central and north Africa are extraordinary. The early authors learnt Greek and soon they are eager to work on Greek dramatic works and appropriate them into Latin. The comedies of Plautus and Terence are the first complete works of Latin literature to survive. In the same era, Ennius composed the first national epic of Rome in the style and metre of Homer. The creation of such works presupposes the existence of a public. Further territorial expansions into the Greek world in Asia Minor and the Near East have increased the cultural aspirations of the Roman aristocracy. A large number of Greek intellectuals especially philosophers and poets visited Rome and they were eager to share the cultural and intellectual achievements of Greece.

In this article I intend to explore the idea of ‘Greece’ as a national entity in the work of a few Roman authors and the ways in which the Greek literature has significantly influenced Roman