CAROLYN J.-B. HAMMOND, *Augustine Confessions*. Vol. I: Books 1-8., (ed., trans.). Loeb Classical Library, 26. Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press, 2014. Lxv + 413 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-99685-4.

The old Loeb of Augustine, its body picked clean by vultures over many decades, has now been given a decent burial. It comprised a 19th century text with a 17th century translation, assembled by W.H.D. Rouse. In a time when translations of ecclesiastical prose as recent as Ryan's of 1960 are almost impossible to teach to a contemporary student audience, this is a welcome book.

The translator is very kind in her remarks about my own text of 1992, on which she has drawn for her own eclectic text and which she asserts she used as the basis for her translation. The front matter has been lightly edited and presents certain perplexities. A 26-page introduction focuses almost entirely on the text and its literary and doctrinal qualities, little otherwise. So Augustine's early life and background is treated in four pages, while eight are given to "Theories of Meaning" (in which discussion of Neoplatonism slips in for just over a page). The reader coming to this text fresh will do well to supplement the introduction from other secondary literature. This volume offers limited help in that regard, offering four separate bibliographies: a list of editions (xxix-xlv), a somewhat overlapping list of abbreviations employed (xl-xlvii), a list of "References" (xlix-liii) that I infer to be a catalog of works cited in the introduction or notes (and thus some of no further interest to readers of Augustine), and a "General Bibliography" (lv-lix). Peter Brown's biography appears in "References," Serge Lancel's in "General Bibliography," my own in neither. Translations by Pine-Coffin, Chadwick, and Boulding are mentioned, with the odd omission of the current Penguin by Garry Wills. Jason BeDuhn's pathbreaking work on Augustine and Manicheism is entirely missing, a great loss for any serious reader today. A "Timeline" with *en face* listing of notable events in Augustine's life (verso) and in the "wider church and empire" (recto) offers various entries to puzzle the uninitiated. "Involved in Catholic-Donatist conference (*collatio*) at Carthage" is the verso entry for 411, while "A. intercedes for lives of Donatists convicted of murder" is the recto entry, neither separately or together giving a very useful sense of the great Africa-transforming event of that year.

The annotation is selective and similarly somewhat idiosyncratic. The annotation and the translation together raise the familiar question of the imputed audience for Loeb library volumes, perhaps with a special twist be-

cause of the distinctive audience for a classic of early Christian literature. The needs of a reader of the verso Latin are very different from the needs of a reader of the recto English. So the textual and substantive notes for this volume are clearly designed to speak to the needs of the user making sense of the Latin. The translation does not noticeably aspire to capture itself the literary excellences of the Latin but rather to make explicit and unambiguous as much of what the Latin says and implies as possible. That is common practice for Loeb and among translators of all but a thin slice of "high literary" ancient prose and verse these days. The great virtue of this style is that it has escaped the crib-like literality of the very old Bohn's Library and many of the original Loebs. It manages to tell the reader that the text is a work of literary art without emulating that artistry. The translator's helpfulness obtrudes most on philosophical points, while the translation as a whole slips now into clunkiness ("He closed his eyes as a point of access, and forbade his mind to step forth into such evils" – surely not the words of a native speaker of English today), now occasionally into wit ("the suspense was killing me" for "suspendio magis necabar").

A representative passage:

> hinc enim et mali substantiam quandam credebam esse talem et habere suam molem taetram et deformem et crassam, quam terram dicebant, sive tenuem atque subtilem, sicuti est aeris corpus, quam malignam mentem per illam terram repentem imaginantur. (5.10.20)

> Because of this I used to believe that evil too was a material substance, and had physical magnitude: foul, misshapen, and dense, which they called "earth," or thin and insubstantial, such as the body of air, which they picture as a malevolent mind stealing throughout that earth.

Nothing particular clear or helpful there, where "physical magnitude" goes rather beyond the Latin and "stealing" misses the Genesis-serpently resonance of *repentem*. There's nothing distinctly wrong there, but the reader clinging mainly to the recto English will not find the way noticeably smoothed.

It is almost pointless to evaluate Loebs, for they will all be Loebs, and this will indeed be the Loeb for the next generation and it will do the job very serviceably, better if the second volume follows the first expeditiously. This volume appears, of course, in the digital Loeb classical library. Using the latter to look up things from this volume reminded me of the infelicities of that interface that others have noted.

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