

M. TERENTI VARRONIS *De lingua Latina* IX. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e commento a cura di Antonella DUSO, OLMS, Zürich-New York 2017, 284 pp., ISBN 978-3-487-15631-6, 48 €.

Varro devoted six books of his treatise “On the Latin language” to what we now call morphology, and especially focused on the general tendency of paradigms to be regular (i.e. analogy, *analogia*). While the description of the features and application of analogy could be found in books XI-XIII (now largely lost to us), we possess (albeit with some severe lacunas) the first three books (VIII-X) of this morphological hexade. In this section, the author discussed a preliminary problem, in the form of a staged debate between opposing opinions about the ontological status of analogy itself. Book VIII contains arguments against the existence and validity of analogy; book IX, those in favour of its existence and overall prevalence over irregularity (i.e. anomaly, *anomalía*) in Latin morphology; in book X, Varro himself illustrates the principles of analogy and outlines the first draft of a theory of morphology in Latin. While the majority of studies on this triad of books have mainly focused on disentangling the many problems posed by book VIII (the “polemic”, attacking part of the discussion), or on analysing the theory established in book X, book IX has traditionally been somewhat neglected by scholarship on Varro. However, this book constitutes an essential pillar in the theoretical architecture of the books on morphology, and a study that offers clearer insight into it is long overdue.

Antonella Duso (henceforth A.D.) has finally filled this void by producing the first commentary on book IX.

The text and commentary are preceded by a detailed introduction divided into four chapters: (I) a survey of the author’s life and works (*Marco Terenzio Varrone*, pp. 9-30); (II) a contextualization of the treatise (*Il De lingua Latina nella storia della linguistica antica*, pp. 31-43); (III) a preliminary treatment of the concept of analogy and its controversial status (*Il problema dell’analogia e il IX libro del De lingua Latina*, pp. 45-66); and (IV) a presentation of the text and its transmission (*Il testo*, pp. 67-80). Then follow the text and facing Italian translation.

In the first section of the introduction, when discussing the many works attributed to Varro (I.2), A.D. does not do so chronologically, but rather thematically: a well-advised choice which provides the reader with a finely crafted portrait of Varro the erudite scholar in all his versa-

tility. The introduction to the treatise *De lingua Latina* (I.3) proceeds in an orderly fashion that makes it easily accessible and achieves the merit of completeness while avoiding redundancy; the treatment of the books on etymology (pp. 19-21) is particularly successful, with a concise but comprehensive review of Varro's etymological method and its limits. Finally, the paragraph on Varro's style (I.4) contains an interesting expansion on Varro's potential commitment to Asianism (pp. 24-26), showing in some sections of the treatise: an often-neglected factor which provides a new perspective on Varro's notoriously rough, uneven prose and his frequent resort to *inaudita verba*. Despite this, A.D. correctly insists (pp. 28-29) on the fact that, in Varro, «qualunque intento artistico è subordinato ad un fine didascalico».

In chapter II, A.D. endeavours to sketch a panorama of linguistics in antiquity: a most challenging task due to the variety of disciplines which engaged in this subject, each approaching it from a different angle. The author provides concise, but informative outlines of the various traditions contributing to the discussion on language (II.1) and rightly emphasizes the role of Aristophanes of Byzantium, Aristarchus of Samothrace, Crates of Mallus, and Dionysius Thrax as «pionieri dell'*ars grammatica* che la sistemazione varroniana nel *De lingua Latina*, dimostra di presupporre come fonti principali» (p. 32). The reader is thus able to appreciate the place that Varro's work occupies within this broader context; however, I am not convinced that the author is justified in talking about a «duplice tradizione dell'*ars grammatica* romana: da una parte quella della "grammatica tecnica" [...] e dall'altra quella della "lingua corretta" che doveva corrispondere al genere greco di trattazione *περὶ Ἑλληνισμοῦ*» (pp. 33-34). While the treatises on correct speech do constitute a distinct tradition (originally a Greek one, then taken on by the Romans), the contributions to «la definizione di grammatica, gli *officia* della stessa, le *litterae*, le *syllabae* e infine le *partes orationis*» do not constitute one organic tradition: on the contrary, the fragmentary, scattered character of these discussions is what makes it so problematic to identify a unitary *ars grammatica* in the real sense of the phrase in late Republican Rome. Furthermore, the claim that the trend of treatises *περὶ Ἑλληνισμοῦ* (or *de Latinitate*) was «dedicata alla trattazione della *Flexionslehre* in base ai quattro canoni (*natura, analogia, consuetudo, auctoritas*) creati per stabilire una norma sicura della morfologia» is reductive at best, and misguided at worst. Grammatical correctness (which, to begin, rests on

more than morphological rules) was only one of the aspects which the ideal goal of *Latinitas* relied on; in addition, it should have been clarified that the four canons for *Latinitas* mentioned here by A.D. are taken from the list attributed to Varro (fr. 115 Götz-Schöll = *GL* 1, 439, 15-17 = *GRF* fr. 268), but other authors listed different criteria (for one, *natura* does not figure in any other catalogue).

Next, in an exhaustive and lucidly exposed paragraph (II.2), A.D. retraces the evolution of the concept and definition of *ars grammatica* from Eratosthenes of Cyrene to Varro, drawing attention to the interesting and significant fact that Varro's definition of grammar (fr. 107 Götz-Schöll = *GL* 4, 4, 4-7) – the earliest one formulated in the Latin world – translates that of Dionysius Thrax (*GG* 1, 1, 5, 1-2) almost *verbatim*, except for the description of *scientia*, which is more reminiscent of Asclepiades' τέχνη (ap. *S.E. M.* 1, 74) than Dionysius' ἐμπειρία. Finally, a concluding paragraph (II.3) places Varro's studies on language within a historical context which proves of vital importance to understand how his linguistic doctrine was shaped: much credit is due to A.D. for stressing the crucial role played by the island of Rhodes as a melting pot of cultures and traditions, where «convivevano la tradizione alessandrina con l'insegnamento grammaticale di Dionisio Trace, la filosofia stoica di Posidonio, la retorica di Apollonio Molone» (p. 38).

Chapter III addresses the concept of analogy, the very pivotal point of books VIII-X of *de lingua Latina*. The reader is first introduced to this notion by an opening paragraph (III.1) where A.D. retraces its origin and evolution in antiquity, a task she had already achieved admirably in a previous contribution¹. The author deserves particular praise for having included – both in the previous paper (pp. 9-10) and in the present work (p. 45 n. 1) – a brief history of the concept of analogy in modern times as well, from Franz Bopp to Ferdinand de Saussure. This digression has usually been absent from literature on ancient analogy; however, the elements highlighted by A.D., and the profound differences between the ancient concept and the modern one, suggest that it should receive more emphasis in forthcoming contributions to the topic.

The following paragraph (III.2) is the part of A.D.'s study where my views differ from hers the most, because I cannot endorse her treatment of the alleged “analogy vs. anomaly” controversy – although it must be

¹ A. Duso, *L'analogia in Varrone*, in R. Oniga, L. Zennaro (edd.), *Atti della Giornata di Linguistica Latina*, Venezia, 7 maggio 2004, Venezia 2006, pp. 9-20.

said that she is by no means alone in maintaining the position that she does. The idea that «ad Alessandria si prediligesse il criterio dell'analogia e nella rivale Pergamo si propugnasse invece la validità del principio dell'anomalia nella lingua» (p. 52), reiterated time and time again in scholarship on ancient linguistics, is the outcome of long-lasting speculation which, over time, has formed an intricate theoretical framework, which has often served as the foundation of further hypotheses. However, an analysis of the original sources reveals that such a superstructure is not actually grounded in solid data. Indeed, we have evidence that the school of Pergamum was informed by Stoicism; but although the word ἀνωμαλία was used by Stoic philosophers², it never appears in the fragments on grammar attributed to Crates and to the other philologists affiliated with his school. Therefore, we have no evidence that it was ever used by the Pergamenians with a grammatical meaning. Nor are there grounds to maintain that «in contrapposizione all'analogia, Cratete proponeva il criterio dell'osservazione dell'uso linguistico» (παρατήρησις τῆς συνηθείας), as Mette first surmised³ and A.D. echoes (p. 53). As it happens, complying with συνήθεια, *per se*, is not at odds with analogy (quite the opposite: Varro himself asserts several times⁴ that analogy is rooted in, and has no place without, usage), but merely limits its application. In fact, there is no real evidence that the school of Pergamum objected *tout court* to the resort to analogy as a guiding principle for textual criticism: only that they disagreed with the school of Alexandria on the limits of such practice. And even this disagreement, according to Varro (*ling.* 9, 1), was due to a misunderstanding of Aristarchus' stance by Crates; for, Aristarchus did not defend the application of analogy to the detriment of linguistic usage, either. Even the testament of Staberius Eros (*GL* 2, 385, 1-3 = *GRF* fr. 1) is far from being "decisive" on this issue (although A.D. deserves credit for drawing attention to it, pp. 54-55), because, while it proves that there were detractors

² Scholars diverge significantly on how to interpret Chrysippus' concept of "anomaly", i.e. the fact that *similes res dissimilibus verbis et dissimiles similibus esse vocabulis notatas* (*ling.* 9, 1): A.D. (p. 52) duly accounts for the main contributions on the topic. But whatever the correct interpretation, the various positions agree on the fact that the Stoic concept of anomaly defined a sporadic phenomenon of disturbance and disorder, not the complete absence of order or a structure in language of any kind: such a stance would have been utterly incompatible with the Stoic view of the cosmos, anyway.

³ H. J. Mette, *Parateresis. Untersuchungen zur Sprachtheorie des Krates von Pergamon*, Halle 1952.

⁴ *Ling.* 9, 62; 63; 70.

of analogy, it does not prove that these were the Stoicizing Pergameni-ans.

In light of these considerations, it seems inaccurate to discuss a conflict between a “pro-anomaly” and a “pro-analogy” faction as having really taken place, when in all likelihood it was fictitiously staged by Varro for rhetorical purposes. Although at the close of book IX the anti-analogists are, indeed, charged with the aim *ut in lingua Latina esset anomalia* (§ 113), in point of fact, in book VIII they never recommend replacing analogy with anomaly as the prevailing rational principle in language; rather, they deny that predictable, productive and recursive rules can apply to language at all. Therefore, to translate the allusions to the detractors of analogy of book VIII⁵ as «gli anomalisti», as A.D. regularly does, does not seem entirely justified. One could argue that such a choice does justice to Varro’s own way of presenting the controversy: that may well be, but it still requires clarifying that Varro’s representation is notably divergent from the historical and philosophical picture that primary sources allow us to reconstruct.

Moving on to paragraph III.3, devoted to Caesar’s grammatical work *De analogia* (of which only fragments have been transmitted to us), A.D. makes excellent use of the most recent scholarship on the topic and provides a good outline of Caesar’s contribution to the subject of analogy, which was certainly precious to the scholars engaged in the linguistic debate in the I century BC, including, of course, Varro himself. The chapter concludes with a detailed summary of book IX in the form of a narrative (III.4).

Finally, the fourth chapter of the introduction offers a thorough analysis of the text: its transmission, the most important manuscripts and their characteristics (IV.1), and a history of its editions (IV.2). The whole section is covered impeccably. A.D.’s description of the fundamental manuscript (*F*) is balanced in content and elegantly expressed, as is her survey of the previous editions; I also strongly agree with the author’s remark that the edition of Pietro Canal (Venice 1874) has not always been awarded the appreciation it deserves (p. 74). On the other hand, it is slightly disconcerting that this paragraph concludes with Götz and Schöll’s edition (Leipzig 1910) without touching on the ones that followed. The most recent edition of the whole surviving treatise was

⁵ These, in book IX, are always referred to in an anonymous fashion: (*iei/ipsi*) *dicunt, aiunt, negant, rogant*.

Kent's (London-Cambridge 1938)⁶, but some of the books have since been edited individually: book VIII by Dahmann (Berlin-Zürich-Dublin 1940) and Mette (Halle/Saale 1952), and book X by Taylor (Amsterdam-Philadelphia 1996), just to mention the morphological books. Yet none of these are included in A.D.'s introduction.

Likewise, when it comes to book IX itself, the text established by A.D.'s essentially depends on Götz and Schöll's (with few divergences reported on pp. 78-80) and sometimes accounts for alternative reconstructions by previous editors; the later editions are occasionally mentioned in the commentary, but only with reference to their translations or explanatory notes rather than their texts. Whether this disproportion reveals the author's opinion on the value of the editions subsequent to Götz and Schöll's or is merely contingent, it is nonetheless worth mentioning.

The text faces an excellent Italian translation, which closely adheres to the Latin original (the only exception being the allusions to the anti-analogists, as I have argued above) and, at the same time, is very lucid and fluent.

The following commentary is highly worthy of praise. It leads the reader through Varro's text efficiently and manages to achieve a delicate balance: it is very diverse in content, but not chaotic or inconsistent; it is detailed, but never pedantic; it relies on the study covered in the introduction, but it is not repetitive.

The ninth book of *De lingua Latina* is not quite as affected by textual corruptions and lacunas as is the eighth, but nevertheless, it does have some hiccups here and there; the author deals successfully with all the impediments in the textual reconstruction, clearly pinning down the problems, evaluating the editors' various proposals, and stating opinions. She also demonstrates full awareness that the challenge of this text lies not only in its strained transmission, but also in Varro's choice of words for linguistic concepts that had not been part of the Latin tradition before him. Accordingly, A.D. devotes considerable attention to the history, semantic implication, and previous uses (if any) of single words: those denoting grammatical notions – such as *inaequabilitas* (§ 1), *res/figura/vox/materia* (1; 37; 40), *casus* (43) – and the scientific vocabulary in §§ 24-27 (*aequinocetium, solstitium, circulus, aestus maritimi*).

⁶ However, two complete editions are soon to appear: by Giorgio Piras, for Teubner (mentioned by A.D., p. 76 n. 31), and Wolfgang de Melo, for Oxford University Press.

The author retraces parallels for some of Varro's most notable arguments – e.g. the comparison between *ars dicendi* and painting (§ 12) or military praxis (13). In this regard, I would single out what strikes me as one of the shrewdest insights and most valuable contributions in this commentary: while Dahlmann⁷ had already noted, in passing, that *ling.* IX 23-30 may be compared to certain passages from Cicero's *De natura deorum* II (in that the two texts would share the purpose of a non-didactic excursus), A.D. now demonstrates that the similarities go much further than that, taking the form of precise «consonanze formali e contenutistiche» (p. 165). This intuition (which the author bolsters with precise intertextual references) opens the way to further speculation on the mutual relationship and influence between Varro and Cicero as writers; it also provides a new perspective on some of Varro's choices in the present book – especially when one considers that two parallel lines of debate (both controversial, it must be said) have suggested the Stoic philosopher Posidonius as a potential source both for this section of *De lingua Latina* and *De natura deorum* II.

Another commendable aspect of A.D.'s commentary is her ability to meticulously identify the linguistic matters raised by Varro and her effort to refer them to the way they are treated in modern linguistics. This way, even the readers who are not versed in ancient theories of language, but have some knowledge of general linguistics, are enabled to overcome Varro's sometimes confusing way of expressing himself, and find themselves at home with concepts like morphological blocking (pp. 181-182); *caso morfologico* vs. *caso astratto* (p. 193)⁸; countable and uncountable nouns (p. 202); derivative suffixes expressing an idea of affection (pp. 205-206); defective paradigms (p. 206); homonymy and synonymy (p. 215); citation forms (p. 205); and others. Concerning Varro's treatment of morphology and the oddities he discusses, A.D. opts for an approach which highlights aspects of synchronic, rather than diachronic, linguistics; a well-advised choice, in my opinion, that is appropriate to the character and purposes of Varro's own discussion of analogy.

The bibliography is extensive and rich, covering all the essential literature on *De lingua Latina* as well as a good number of up-to-date contributions; it also has the merit of including a notable amount of Italian scholarship (so often regrettably overlooked), especially in the field of

⁷ H. Dahlmann, *Varro und die hellenistische Sprachtheorie*, Berlin 1932, p. 62.

⁸ As defined by R. Oniga, *Latin: a Linguistic Introduction*, Oxford 2014, pp. 59-60.

general linguistics. If anything, the book could have benefited from a stronger support from philosophical literature: for example, contributions by Blank and others which undermine the theory that identifies the “anomalists” with Crates and his pupils are listed in the bibliography, but their arguments are scarcely (if at all) discussed in either the introduction or the commentary.

Overall, this disproportion between the attention devoted to the linguistic doctrine and the philosophical background is probably at the root of the majority of setbacks in A.D.’s work. The author is at her best when unravelling the linguistic doctrine in Varro’s text, where she shows perfect competence on the topic. She does an excellent job of pinpointing the elements of linguistic discussion in the book; contextualizing them within the coordinates of Varro’s past sources, his contemporaries, and his later reception; and relating them to present-day linguistic analysis, with copious and up-to-date bibliographic references. By contrast, she is less steady on philosophical ground; and while it is certainly true that every commentary has its own angle of preference, I would argue that the latter aspect ought not to be sacrificed when dealing with ancient linguistics, where grammatical theorization is often inseparable from philosophy, and perhaps especially when dealing with *De lingua Latina*.

That being said, the edition itself, the translation, and the commentary remain an outstanding piece of work, skilfully composed, comprehensive, and at the same time, accessible. A.D. has filled an important lacuna in the scholarship on *De lingua Latina* and her edition of book IX is a contribution that I will, and every scholar of Varro should, hold as an indispensable point of reference from now on.

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Beatrice GIROTTI, [*Assolutismo e dialettica del potere nella corte tardoantica. La corte di Ammiano Marcellino \(parte 1\)*](#), Led, Milano 2017, pp. 190, ISBN 978-88-7916-837-3.

Gli studi su Ammiano Marcellino sono quanto mai floridi, come dimostrano tra l’altro le pubblicazioni, tra fine 2017 e inizio 2018, dei commenti *Brill* ai libri 20 e 31 rispettivamente. Scopo dello studio della