That Tyrant, Persuasion: How Rhetoric Shaped the Roman World by J. E. Lendon (review)

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more equitable possibilities of both by recognizing faulty assumptions and reasoning: "Our blind spot when it comes to perceiving and acknowledging alternative lifestyles also obscures the historical contributions of utopian communities" (158).

Utopian Genderscapes is a substantial addition to rhetorical scholarship and historiography. Smith's joining of material rhetorical theory with feminist historiography and her robust multilayered methodology provide readers with rich and rewarding insights to intentional communities. In addition, her synthesis of crossdisciplinary theoretical, historical, and archival research clearly substantiates her ecological analysis and demonstrations of gendered labor as it interacts with "rhetorics of teleology, exceptionalism, and choice" (143). In its rhetorical framing, *Utopian Genderscapes* reaches beyond the three case studies of women's labor and opportunities in intentional communities: it addresses the tensions faced by all antebellum women engaged in or needing employment, even when the community is willing to broaden its gaze. Penny's 1863 encyclopedia listed 500 types of employment in which women were engaged and might be engaged, thus her research could help build awareness of what work women were doing and could do. By employing a discursive-material lens almost 160 years later, Smith extends rhetorical and historical understanding on women's inequitable labor in intentional communities and extrapolates that understanding to broader and more complex representations of gender then and today.

[1] Virginia Penny, *The Employments of Women: A Cyclopaedia of Woman's Work* (Boston, MA: Walker, Wise, & Co., 1863; repr. London, GB: Forgotten Books, 2016), vii. Citations refer to the London edition. Also reprinted as *How Women Can Make Money, Married or Single, in All Branches of the Arts and Sciences, Professions, Trades, Agricultural and Mechanical Pursuits* (Springfield, MA: D. E. Fisk, 1870).

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J. E. Lendon, *That Tyrant, Persuasion: How Rhetoric Shaped the Roman World*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. 302 pp. ISBN: 978-0-691-22100-7.

John Lendon has written a provocative book about the interrelationship of formal rhetoric and the different worlds—physical no less than intellectual—that ancient Romans built for themselves. The arrows of provocation travel from Lendon's quiver in two different scholarly directions: first, at historians seeking to uncover sources, causes, or influences for some staple topics of Roman history; second, at scholars of rhetoric who have in recent decades so eagerly sought to excavate the underlying

socio-cultural backgrounds and impetuses of declamation—not just how rhetoric worked at the technical level but what kind of cultural purchase it had in making men (to use Maud Gleason's notable phrase), and in making them do things.

Caesar's assassination, and especially its aftermath, is examined first, with an eye to what the declamatory halls (or their late-Republican precursors) will have misleadingly taught the likes of Brutus and Cassius to expect after the tyrant's death. "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.2.1555–1556) might have been patriotic justification enough, certainly for anti-tyrannical Romans. So why didn't this justification prevail? In Shakespeare's famous dramatization it is Antony's superior strategy of "flooding the zone" (to use Steve Bannon's motto) that wins out. By making it hard for others to know anything you can probably get them to do anything. (Antony's "Mischief, thou art afoot. Take thou what course thou wilt!" could have just as well been the insurrectionist's chant at the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021.) Lendon, rather, lays the blame at the conspirators' own door. The assassins were so mentally fixed in the declaimers' halls that when reality came knocking they couldn't find their way to the exit: "They expected that a literary convention—the evil henchmen vanish and the city returns to normal without any further effort—would apply in the real world. And what really happened is that they got to the end of their script, tried to repeat the ending several times in hope of a better result (those speeches in the Forum), and finally fell off their script into the real world, which was inhabited by Antony and Lepidus and their soldiers" (55–56).

Lendon teases out not merely what rhetorical education may have prompted its students to create, but especially which creations were the indirect result of that education. As such the study necessarily and avowedly remains in the realm of speculation, but hopefully fruitful speculation, of the kind that illuminates certain mysteries or perplexing scenarios. In this sense he has little time for recent debates over declamation's acculturative or subversive workings ("we bid farewell to the sociological interpretations of school declamation," 22). Lendon examines the rhetorical shaping of thought and action in three distinct spheres of Roman activity: elite politics (Caesar's assassination); the built world (monumental nymphaea and city walls); the juridical-pedagogical stage (Roman law and declamation). His style is a jaunty mix of the light-hearted, the stern, and the ironic, reminiscent sometimes of Gibbon or Dickens and sometimes of Ronald Syme.

The limitations of our own knowledge are crucial to the book's working premises: "we may conjecture that students of rhetoric under the Empire knew what they knew with great force and intensity (more than we are used to, from our systems of education), but what they knew with such vigor is not what we know" (25). This claim makes it possible to explore untrodden paths: "what the members of that class were positively taught by rhetorical education will have stood first in their minds, and been likely in principle to have the greatest historical impact" (25). The book proceeds in several case studies by circling around from effect to cause and back to

effect: first consider an event or practice, then salvage from rhetoric the *mentalité* that may indirectly explain its curious existence, and then circuitously return back to reconsider the initial phenomenon with a renewed understanding of its causes. Caesar's assassins were not poor planners but good declaimers; monumental nymphaea (see below) were far more than just utilitarian bureaucracy or competitions in civic virtue signaling. You'll want to fasten your seatbelt, but the intellectual merry-go-round is surely worth the price of admission.

After Caesar's assassination the book turns to civic architecture, arguing, for example, that the prevalence of monumental nymphaea results less from the utilitarian exigencies of providing water than from the rhetorical *topoi* that made the presence and provisioning of water so central to the civic identities formed in the rhetor's habits of praise, both in real encomia and especially in the classroom where epideictic speaking played such a formative role for younger pupils. City walls might seem to offer a parallel case with a similar outcome, but countervailing forces won out the diminished importance of praising (and therefore building) city walls in panegyric is attributed to the topic's disparagement in deliberative, the main activity of advanced students.

Lendon finishes with a glance at law and declamation (a treacherous subject even for those fluent in both dialects). Focusing on various areas (e.g., rape, adultery, even Pseudo-Quintilian's "Poor Man's Bees"), Lendon shows the uneven penetration of declamatory law into Roman law, arguing that, although the jurists sometimes kept the declaimers at bay, it was probably the overweening, empire-wide presence of declamation as a quasi-legal mindset that let it slowly work its way into the legal code.

Lendon makes impeccable cases for what amount to (literally) lost causes. Even for readers unsympathetic to speculative efforts, the overviews of each subject and the copious notes and bibliography are a *tour-de-force*. The book also provides new impetus for studying the interplay of rhetoric and history, moving beyond the socio-cultural pieties and dead ends of recent decades and fending off the censoriousness of historians who sometimes fret and wonder how the ill-trained elite of the Roman empire could possibly manage their charge with little more than rudimentary declamatory tools.

The book is also a powerful reminder of how education (ancient or modern) enlightens as much as it blinds us to rhetoric's uneven and yet iron grasp on the world. Can we really blame the ancients for not knowing what we know? Lendon thinks not, and we've got our own blinkers to examine. After all, the United States still boasts a major political party whose leaders, schooled at America's elite universities in civic theories of rational choice, unrepentantly believe, despite all evidence to the contrary, that voters choose the candidate with the most sensible policy proposals. It's always been hard to get Brutus out of the declamatory schoolroom.

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