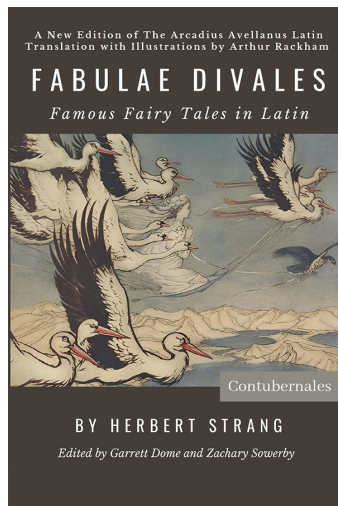CAMBRIDGE
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Book Review

Herbert Strang: *Fabulae Divales*. Famous Fairy Tales in Latin

Dome (G), Sowerby (Z) (edd.), Pp. vi + 151, Ills, Conturbernales Publishing, 2022. Paper US$19.99, £14.76. ISBN: 9798365822665.

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Garret Dome and Zachery Sowerby have edited a new edition in the Contubernales series to very good effect. It is a collection of well-known fairy tales written by Herbert Strang and translated into Latin by Arcadius Avellanus – himself a Hungarian immigrant to the USA in the 19th century. The stories are illustrated with excellent pen and ink sketches by Arthur Rackham and the text is large, both of which add to the appeal of the stories.

There are seven stories in all: Ciniscula (Cinderella); Lucerna Aladdini (Aladdin's Lamp) Aqua Vitae (The Elixir of Life); Pulchritudo Consopita (Sleeping Beauty) Feri Olores (The Wild Swans); Cerasula (The Cherry Tree); Pulchritudo atque Bestia (Beauty and the Beast); annotations by Avellanus himself, and a page of sources.

Avellanus was a notorious defender of Latin as a living language and waged a continuous battle against those who criticised him for his personal straying and unaccustomed use of vocabulary, suggesting that those students who had studied the classical language of Cicero would struggle with his text. This criticism is justified to an extent: he does make unusual choices of vocabulary such as: *Matrina Dia* (Fairy Godmother) in the Cinderella story and again uses *ballista* for a dance, which is more often used to describe a military engine for hurling missiles.

Avellanus does explain his more unusual choices of vocabulary. The editors have chosen to put these explanations on pages 139–149 at the end of the book. This is an error, for originally Avellanus had placed these on the facing pages of the stories for easy reference. The editors have numbered the annotations on pages 139–149 which correspond to the page numbers in the stories. The explanations are all in Latin, but several alternatives are given to the main word which does help to unravel the meaning. Avellanus was convinced that explanations should be in Latin only, so that the student could not rely on his native language, hence developing their facility in Latin.

The stories are best read in the order they appear in the book. The first and second stories, Cinderella and Aladdin's Lamp, are perhaps the most well-known to students through the Disney films. In addition, the vocabulary is less testing and the sentence structures tend to be straightforward. Starting with these stories also allows students to become familiar with vocabulary that is repeated frequently in the later stories, and so when the sentence structures become more complex in these stories the student can concentrate on them and not have to worry about the vocabulary.

Although Avellanus does stray from what would be called the 'pure' Latin authors to whom he was compared, notably Cicero, once it is understood that 'pure' Latin is a literary construct which can't be matched with Latin vernacular, then Avellanus' words and constructions show a departure from the artificial form. Avellanus was a great advocate of Latin as a living language – one that is alive and evolves and is not 'dead' and unchanging and everlasting – something he criticised the Ciceronians for.

This is not a text book, but would be a welcome edition to any school/college library. It is certainly not for beginners, but intermediate or advanced students may enjoy it as a reader in addition to the main coursebooks. It should stir and encourage students to improve their capabilities in Latin.