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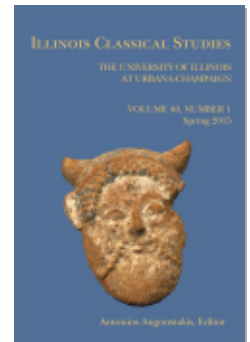
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## Introduction: Campania: Poetics, Location, and Identity

Ian Fielding, Carole E. Newlands

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## Introduction: Campania: Poetics, Location, and Identity

IAN FIELDING AND CAROLE E. NEWLANDS

The region of Campania exerted a powerful influence over the Roman cultural imagination. The volcanic landscape around the Bay of Naples was blessed with immense natural beauty and abundance but also harbored some of nature's most violent forces. In this suitably monumental setting, mythological heroes such as Heracles and Aeneas were said to have performed famous deeds. Campania was, moreover, the center of the Greek colonial presence in mainland Italy from the eighth century BCE. As such it possessed an ancient grandeur to rival that of Rome itself. After its assimilation to imperial rule during the Samnite Wars (343–275 BCE), the region came to be a focus for Roman interest in Hellenistic culture.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Campania was associated not only with artistic and intellectual pursuits, but also with the pursuit of luxury and excess. The dynamic cultural environment of Greco-Roman Campania has been explored in a number of influential studies, although there has been less emphasis on its importance in the history of classical literature.<sup>2</sup> This collection of essays highlights Campania's significance as both a center of literary activity and an imaginative fulcrum, from the time of the earliest Latin authors, throughout the Roman period, and in later traditions of antiquity.

Attention has been drawn recently to the role of the Greek-speaking areas of southern Italy in the original emergence of a literature in Latin.<sup>3</sup> The first article, by Ian Goh, shows how the beginnings of satire, that distinctively "Roman" poetic genre (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.93), were shaped by a distinctively Campanian author, Lucilius. Goh argues that Lucilius, from the Roman colony of Suessa Aurunca on the border with Latium, presents in his fragments a satiric persona that alludes to wider perceptions of Campanian characteristics in the second

1. On the history of Rome's relationship with Campania, see especially Lomas (1993). According to Tacitus' well-known description, Naples was *quasi Graecam urbem* (*Ann.* 15.33); see Leiwo (1994) who demonstrates the dominance of funerary inscriptions in Greek through the first half of the first century CE; public decrees continued to use Greek until the end of the third century CE.

2. See e.g., D'Arms (1970), Frederiksen (1984), and Lomas (1993).

3. See Feeney (1995), Rosati (2011), and Hutchinson (2013) 70–76.

century BCE. This is the period in which many of the Roman stereotypes about the arrogance and moral degeneracy of the native Campanians, who had defected *en masse* to Hannibal during the second Punic War, were established; and Antony Augoustakis' article on Silius Italicus confirms how long lasting those stereotypes would prove.<sup>4</sup> As Goh makes clear, however, Lucilius' fragments reveal another perspective, from which Campania's political subjection to Rome can almost be seen as a position of strength.

Satire is by no means the only genre of classical literature with a connection to Campania: others, including philosophical writing of various kinds (Philodemus, Cicero, Seneca) and prose fiction (Petronius), also had a very strong presence in ancient Campania.<sup>5</sup> In fact, some of the most famous works of "Roman" literature from the Republican, Augustan, and Imperial periods were composed and set in the region: Virgil's claim to have written the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* in Naples (*G.* 4.559–66) and his mythologizing of the Campanian landscape in the *Aeneid* were particularly important for subsequent Latin authors. The following articles are concerned for the most part with works of epic, elegiac, and bucolic poetry, while acknowledging the complex confluence of influences on the Campanian literary map.

The tomb of Virgil at Posilippo, west of Naples, became a destination of pilgrimage for his epic successors, such as Silius (*Mart.* 11.48–49 [50], *Plin. Ep.* 3.7.8) and Statius (*Silu.* 4.4.51–55). Still, it was not only Virgil's representation of nearby Lake Avernus as the entrance to the underworld in *Aeneid* 6 that gave rise to the notion of Campania as an epic landscape. One of the conclusions drawn by Catherine Connors in her contribution is that the rugged, effervescent terrain created by volcanic activity in areas like the Phlegraean Fields was understood in antiquity as a vestige of the primeval conflict between the gods and the giants. Thus, as Connors demonstrates, underground disturbances in the vicinity of Vesuvius were frequently interpreted as portending further outbreaks of universal instability, whenever they coincided with struggles for power between the rulers of the Roman empire. Campania, in other words, provided a backdrop against which the feats of the mightiest men could be measured, and this "epic" aspect of its identity is another key theme for Roman poets.

4. On the traditional stereotyping of ethnic Campanians, see Farney (2007) 192–95.

5. On Philodemus in Campania, see Gigante (2002). On Seneca, see Henderson (2004), Ker (2009) 342–53, and Newlands (2012) 149–53. On Petronius, see Rose (1962) 403–5, D'Arms (1981) 105–8, and Connors (2002) 502–4.

The lifestyle of the Romans on the Bay of Naples is commonly characterized as one of leisurely seclusion, but it is important to observe that Campania's association with ideas of *otium* was a corollary of the fact that it was also a place of great political and economic interest in the Roman imperial world, as well as being the site of impressive technological achievements.<sup>6</sup> In her article, Amy Leonard examines how the representation of Baiae in Propertius 1.11 and 3.18 makes reference to the alterations of the landscape that resulted from the ambitious engineering programs of Agrippa and Augustus. Leonard suggests that Propertius aligns his own achievement as a poet with those of the emperor and his family, whom he celebrates for creating an environment congenial to the composition of his elegies. During another period of intense building activity in the region under the Flavian emperors, Silius also explores this relationship between politics and poetics in the Campanian episodes of his epic *Punica*, as Augoustakis explains. Although Silius portrays *otium* as debilitating for Hannibal's army during their sojourn in Capua, he also asserts the potency of that *otium* for Campania's deep-rooted poetic culture.

There are indications of the pervasiveness of Greek and Roman poetry in Campanian life in the many echoes of classical texts in the graffiti, inscriptions, wall paintings, and other artworks preserved among the ruins of Pompeii. Drawing on this wealth of material and visual evidence, Peter Knox presents examples from the House of Octavius Quartio that demonstrate the extent to which ancient literature reached beyond the educated elite into a variety of social contexts. In this case, too, the landscape of Campania can be seen to possess a complex identity, which is depicted with reference to poetic genres: as Knox shows, the house's interior is decorated with epic scenes from the life of Heracles, who was a patron deity associated with the technological advances made in the region, whereas the paintings in the garden evoke more erotic myths derived from Ovid's alternative epic, the *Metamorphoses*. Virgil's poetry then was not the only creative spur to the artistic imagination on the Bay of Naples; Knox's article suggests the importance of Ovid in domestic decoration at a popular level. Interestingly, the paintings in the House of Octavius Quartio reflect the "tricultural" identity of this region: Greek, Roman, and native Italian.<sup>7</sup>

As we have noted above, Latin poets also reimagined Campania as a bucolic landscape, the site where Virgil wrote his *Eclogues* and, later, the *Georgics*. The

6. See Hinds (2001) 237–57. On Campania and Roman *otium*, see Connors (2000) 499–504 and Newlands (2012) 16–20, 137–59.

7. See Rosati (2011) on the "three hearts" of the poet Statius, who was born and raised in Naples.



Figure 1: Detail from Map 44, “Latium-Campania.” In R. J. A. Talbert, ed. 2000, *The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

final essay turns to the reception of classical poetry written in and about Campania in a much later era. There is still much work to be done on the afterlife of ancient literature in this region during the medieval and modern periods.<sup>8</sup> Ian Fielding offers a suggestion of the richness of this legacy in his essay on the presence of Virgil in the Latin eclogues composed by Petrarch and Boccaccio after the death of King Robert of Naples in 1343. The two contemporaries had quite different relationships with Naples, Fielding demonstrates, but the city seems to have inspired both of them to a revival of Virgilian bucolic, in which it represents their respective ideals of poetic *otium*.

Obviously there are many more authors and angles to be explored. But together, these six articles provide a broad overview of Campania’s classical literary traditions, across a range of different genres, over a period of about 1,500 years. They show how Latin authors responded to the distinctive environment

8. Stärk (1995) surveys some aspects of this afterlife in the Grand Tour literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Recent research has drawn particular attention to the modern reception of Pompeii and Herculaneum: see, e.g., the essays in Hales and Paul (2011). Though not yet published at the time of going to press, Hughes and Buongiovanni (2015) should begin to address this gap in the scholarship.

of Campania and how they reshaped that environment to reflect their own literary values. In projecting their individual personalities on to their Campanian surroundings, it is also apparent that these authors became highly influential themselves in articulating the identities of local people and landscapes. Our aim here, therefore, is to set up a new marker, which will point to Campania's place in the very heartland of ancient literature.<sup>9</sup>

University of Oxford

ian.fielding@classics.ox.ac.uk

University of Colorado, Boulder

carole.newlands@colorado.edu

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9. This collection of articles is based on the papers presented at the panel, "Campanian Cultures: Poetics, Location, and Identity," at the 144th Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in Seattle in January 2013. In addition to the anonymous readers of *ICS*, we would like to thank all of our contributors for their fascinating essays, and Antony Augoustakis in particular for his support and proficiency as the editor of the journal.

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