Freud’s Rome

This book is a meditation on the role of psychoanalysis within Latin literary studies. Neither a skeptic nor a true believer, Oliensis adopts a pragmatic approach to her subject, emphasizing what psychoanalytic theory has to contribute to interpretation. Drawing especially on Freud’s work on dreams and slips, she spotlights textual phenomena that cannot be securely anchored in any intention or psyche but that nevertheless, or for that very reason, seem fraught with meaning; the “textual unconscious” is her name for the indefinite place from which these phenomena erupt, or which they retroactively constitute, as a kind of “unconsciousness-effect.” The discussion is organized around three key topics in psychoanalysis – mourning, motherhood, and the origins of sexual difference – and takes the poetry of Catullus, Virgil, and Ovid as its point of reference. A brief afterword considers Freud’s own witting and unwitting engagement with the idea of Rome.

Ellen Oliensis is Professor of Classics at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority* (1998) as well as assorted essays on Latin literature.
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AND ITS CONTEXTS

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This series promotes approaches to Roman literature which are open to dialogue with current work in other areas of the classics, and in the humanities at large. The pursuit of contacts with cognate fields such as social history, anthropology, history of thought, linguistics and literary theory is in the best traditions of classical scholarship: the study of Roman literature, no less than Greek, has much to gain from engaging with these other contexts and intellectual traditions. The series offers a forum in which readers of Latin texts can sharpen their readings by placing them in broader and better-defined contexts, and in which other classicists and humanists can explore the general or particular implications of their work for readers of Latin texts. The books all constitute original and innovative research and are envisaged as suggestive essays whose aim is to stimulate debate.

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Freud’s Rome
Psychoanalysis and Latin Poetry

Ellen Oliensis

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I never meant to write this book; I’m not sure exactly what happened. I was diverted from another project (my “official” project) by the need to produce a different sort of paper for a conference on “The Vergilian Century,” held at the University of Pennsylvania in fall 2000. So I owe a special debt to Joe Farrell for designing the conference and including me in it, and to the other participants for their generous reception of my inchoate Freudian meditations; these subsequently appeared in *Vergilius* 47 (2001) and are reworked here in chapter 2. I developed the reading of Ovid’s Scylla in chapter 3 in honor of Don Fowler, for a Memorial Lecture presented under the auspices of Jesus College Oxford in 2003; my thanks to Armand D’Angour for his exemplary hospitality on that occasion. I am grateful to have had the chance to try out various parts of the argument on audiences at Princeton University, Rice University, Stanford University, the University of Georgia, the USC/UCLA Latin seminar, and the UC Berkeley Townsend Center. As I neared the end, Norbert Lain talked me through some textual problems in Catullus, Seth Schein provided thoughtful comments on chapter 2, and Leslie Kurke read through and commented on the whole. The book’s journey through the production process was eased by the ministrations of my research assistants, Chris Churchill and Jared Hudson, and, on the other side of the Atlantic, by the capable team at the Press. I could never have completed the project without the support of my department and university, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, and the Townsend Center at UC Berkeley.

Finally, I need to thank all those who variously fostered this project during the long years when it was slowly slowly creeping toward the light.
of day, especially Alessandro Barchiesi, Joe Farrell, Nancy Felson, Mark Griffith, Tom Habinek, Leslie Kurke, Tony Long, Rebecca Shoptaw, and Liz Young. Special thanks to Janet Adelman, my mentor at the Townsend Center, for helping me understand what I was trying to accomplish; to John Shoptaw, for keeping me company through countless drafts; and to Stephen Hinds and Denis Feeney, for their patience, support, and invaluable editorial feedback.

I don’t usually bother with the “all errors remaining” clause, but in this case I think I really ought to invoke it; so please consider it invoked.

Unless otherwise noted, I follow R. A. B. Mynors’ Oxford text for Catullus and Virgil, and R. J. Tarrant’s for Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.