

AULUS GELLIUS AND ROMAN READING CULTURE

Long a source for quotations, fragments, and factoids, the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius offers hundreds of brief but vivid glimpses of Roman intellectual life. In this book Joseph Howley demonstrates how the work may be read as a literary text in its own right, and discusses the rich evidence it provides for the ancient history of reading, thought, and intellectual culture. He argues that Gellius is in close conversation with predecessors both Greek and Latin, such as Plutarch and Pliny the Elder, and also offers new ways of making sense of the text's "miscellaneous" qualities, like its disorder and its Table of Contents. Dealing with topics ranging from the framing of literary quotations to the treatment of contemporary celebrities who appear in its pages, this book offers a new way to learn from the *Noctes* about the world of Roman reading and thought.

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*Text, Presence, and Imperial Knowledge
in the Noctes Atticae*

JOSEPH A. HOWLEY

Columbia University, New York



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None of this would have been possible without the support of my parents John and Nora, my sister Malka, and my wife, Skylar Neil. For years I spent too much of the Thanksgiving holiday working on thesis and book both, in the house Loren and Bill Howley built, on the land they cultivated, on Redbud Road; I am grateful to Loren for having me out to visit for one last bout of revisions.

*This book is given:
d. m.
Louise P. Lerdau
Enrique Lerdau
William J. Howley, Jr.*

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Preface

This book offers a reading of the *Noctes Atticae* (*NA*) of Aulus Gellius as literature of the Roman imperial period. It argues that Gellius' literary representations of intellectual activity show the text to be more conceptually sophisticated than previously understood, and more deserving of a prominent position in the history of Roman – and Western – intellectual culture.

It began life as a doctoral thesis, but in its present form is considerably revised, expanded, and improved. It is intended for several kinds of academic reader with any level of familiarity with the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius: the Classicist; the scholar of Western humanism and tradition; and the student of intellectual history, miscellany, and reading more generally. All effort has been made to facilitate access to Greek and Latin passages, and to contextualize important issues in the text of Gellius. You don't need to have read Gellius to read this book, but I hope that by the end I will have persuaded you to give it a try.

The reader seeking entrée to the *NA* (and to this book's arguments) and the reader disinclined to read the whole book, are both directed besides the brief Introduction, to Chapter 1: "How to Read the *Noctes Atticae*."

The aforementioned thesis, and its adaptation into a book, would have been impossible without the generous and masterful supervision of Jason König and Jill Harries. Whatever this book has accomplished is to their credit; its failings are my own. The project originated in a conversation with Professor Harries and Christopher Smith, and benefited further from conversation and study with Greg Woolf. It was shaped by the influence and interventions of the entire Classics faculty of St Andrews, 2006–2011, and subsequently the Classicists of Columbia University, 2011–2016, especially Marcus Folch and Jim Zetzel for reading drafts. I was capably prepared for this study as an undergraduate by the Ancient Studies faculty of the University of Maryland Baltimore County, including Jay Freyman and Walt Sherwin, and by the Classics faculty at the University of Glasgow,

including Catherine Steel. I could not have asked for more intelligent and generous fellow graduate students, including Gwynnaeth McIntyre, James McIntyre, Adam Bunni, Daniel Mintz, Matthijs Wibier, Georg Gerleigner, Johanna Hanink, and Emily Kneebone. Many individuals were generous with their time and insights in the course of writing the dissertation and subsequent revision, including Scott DiGiulio, Stephen Hinds, Joy Connolly, Aude Doody, Leofranc Holford-Strevens, Rebecca Langlands, Pauline LeVen, Karen ní Mheallaigh, Katerina Oikonomopoulou, Steven Smith, and Philip van der Eijk. I am immensely grateful to Scott DiGiulio for sharing his thesis, in progress and in completion. During my time at Columbia, there has been no more valuable resource than the MACTe regional workshop of pretenure Classicists. I finally want to thank Michael Sharp and all the editorial and production staff at the press for helping this book to appear, and Michael Hendry for his masterful assistance with the index.

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Chloe, West Virginia