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# Cuatro Viajes en la Literatura del Antiguo Egipto [Review]

Rubén R. Dupertuis

Trinity University, [rdupertu@trinity.edu](mailto:rdupertu@trinity.edu)

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Beyer has provided a very important collection of texts that will be of interest to general historians, linguists, and early church historians. I am not too sure if his choice of presenting the texts in their (digitized) original script was a good one since this makes the final product less user-friendly for the non-specialists. Another option would have been to present texts in the familiar Aramaic square script with a separate section on the paleography of the east-Mesopotamian Aramaic texts. Since Beyer only sought to provide a text corpus, he did not include a comprehensive historical evaluation of the textual data—a project which should be taken up in future studies. Notwithstanding these minor critical remarks, both the author and the publisher should be congratulated for providing mainstream access to an important body of texts.

Gerald A. Klingbeil  
Universidad Peruana Unión, Naña, Lima 8, Peru



*Cuatro Viajes en la Literatura del Antiguo Egipto*, by José M. Galán. Banco de Datos Filológicos Semíticos Noroccidentales. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1998. Pp. ix + 245. N.P.

In *Cuatro Viajes en la Literatura del Antiguo Egipto* José M. Galán brings together four stories from Egyptian literature united by the motif of the journey into unknown or enemy land. The stories grouped in this volume are “The Shipwrecked Sailor,” “The Tale of Sinuhe,” “The Doomed Prince” and “Report of Wenamun.”

The book is well organized, well written, and easy to follow. A brief and helpful introduction covers several relevant aspects of writing and literature in ancient Egypt. After the introduction, the book consists of four chapters, each dedicated to one of the four stories. Using the same format in the exposition and analysis of each story, Galán briefly addresses first the manuscript history of the text, followed by the historical and literary contexts of the story, a Spanish translation, and finally, detailed and careful commentary on the story. The translation of the text is particularly clear and well done. More advanced students of Egyptian literature will find footnotes explaining some of the translation choices helpful.

Galán treats these texts broadly as literature and sets out to understand each of the stories within the context of its own literary and historical backdrop. The definition of what constitutes literature follows three criteria: the work should be fiction, it should have intertextual qualities, and the language of the story should be richer than everyday communication. Although one could debate where exactly each of these stories falls within the Egyptian literary landscape and to what degree some of these stories can be consid-

ered fiction, the amount of literary and historical context provided, primarily through the use of (sometimes rather extensive) parallels, allows the reader to see the contemporary precedent that makes the stories believable and relevant in their own context. For example, the story of "The Shipwrecked Sailor" is presented alongside evidence of contemporary expeditions.

The grouping of these four stories is helpful and insightful, although more could have been said about the reasons for this choice. As each story is presented comparisons are made to the preceding stories, giving the reader a sense of what role these stories of journeys may have played in ancient Egyptian culture. Nevertheless, more could have been done by way of a summary or conclusion regarding the similarities and differences of these stories viewed as a group.

All of the discussions of the stories are insightful and relevant, and in the case of *The Report of Wenamun*, somewhat creative. Galán compares Wenamun's expedition with a 16th century Spanish text that recounts the journey of Pedro Mártir de Anglera, an emissary of the Spanish crown, to the Sultan of Babilonia in order to provide parallels for Near Eastern court protocol in dealing with foreign emissaries. Although this comparison is, by Galán's own admission, anachronistic, it is nonetheless interesting in its own right and does prove marginally helpful in understanding Wenamun's predicament in a foreign court.

This is the third monograph in the series *Banco de Datos Filológicos Semíticos Noroccidentales*. It is an important work that will prove interesting and insightful to specialists and non-specialists alike.

Rubén R. Dupertuis  
Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA, 91711



*A Concise Coptic-English Lexicon*, by Richard Smith. 2d ed. SBL Resources for Biblical Study 35. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999. Pp. xviii + 59. Cloth \$36.

The SBL Resources for Biblical Study series and Scholars Press are to be thanked for their decision to bring back into print, in a second edition, Richard Smith's extremely useful Coptic lexicon. The 1983 edition, which began as a word list for students at Fuller Theological Seminary, was never intended to replace resources such as W. E. Crum's huge *Coptic Dictionary* or the somewhat smaller Spiegelberg-Westendorf *Koptisches Handwörterbuch*. But in English-speaking circles it did provide an affordable and handy tool for beginning students after they move beyond a grammar with its own glossary, and also for the researcher who does not always wish or need to drag all seven pounds of Crum off the shelf (or around in one's briefcase or backpack) to recall or learn the meaning of a Coptic word now and then.