architect's duties (328), bathing activities (190), and Pliny's work ethics (145–47). Moreover, despite the abundance of high-quality images, many of them seem unconnected to the text: the famous inscription preserving Augustus's posthumous account of his accomplishments (not his will, as the caption reads, 172) is illustrated without further comment (170–71); the map known as the *Tabula Peutingeriana* is shown as proof for the extent of Rome's eastern empire (94–95); and a wall painting from the Boscoreale villa is used to illustrate a theatrical set (41). Most surprising of all is the author's own observation: "If one were to comb through ancient literature to find references to writers' book collections and libraries and collate them logically, making rational deductions from the information available, one would conclude that nearly all writers and men of letters – and others too – possessed some kind of library, large or small" (200). If this were truly the aim of this study, the results, ironically, fall far short of their mark. In the end, it might be hoped that a reader who encounters this book will become sufficiently interested in the topic to seek out other more successful (and accessible) studies.3

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Syriac is a Semitic language and belongs to a family which includes a number of ancient languages – Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician are examples – together with Arabic, Hebrew, and ancient and modern Aramaic, which survives today among a few scattered Christian communities in the Near East. Syriac, which remains a liturgical language, is sometimes called Christian Aramaic, and, in terms of grammar and syntax, Aramaic and Syriac are essentially the same, though they are not written in the same script. Syriac itself is written in three different but closely related scripts, the oldest of which is Estrangela (deriving from a Greek work meaning "rounded"), and Estrangela was well established by 411 (7). The two other forms are

West Syriac and East Syriac. West Syriac is commonly called Serto or Serta (which means literally “line”), and, in Europe, is sometimes referred to as Maronite or Jacobite, though Jacobite is considered derogatory. East Syriac is often, though inaccurately, known as Nestorian. This book is an authoritative and comprehensive catalogue of printed examples of all three types.

For the author, who is Senior Lecturer in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, it was a labour of love. “The Syriac book-hand,” he tells us, “is one of the most graceful scripts that has ever been invented” (xiii), and his first attraction to Syriac studies was aesthetic. A glance at some of the scripts in this volume testifies to the accuracy of Coakley’s observation, though I admit that for myself I must give the palm to Iranian Nasta’liq.

After an introduction which summarizes the development of the Syriac book-hand, the author presents his catalogue in three sections: West Syriac (Serto) types (27–153), Estrangela types (154–90), and East Syriac types (191–250). There follows a brief final section on mechanical typesetting (linotype and monotype) (251–65). The reason for the predominance of West Syriac types is that early European students of Syriac (beginning in the sixteenth century) generally learned the language from Syrian Christians who used West Syriac/Serto script, and Serto forms dominated Syriac printing until about 1850. The earliest printed fonts, Serto and Estrangela, both date from 1537 and were the creation of Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi. His Serto font (29–30) was more successful than his Estrangela (154–55). The earliest of the Eastern fonts dates from 1633, and was used for a Syriac translation of St. Robert Bellarmine’s *Doctrina Christiana* issued by the press of the Propaganda Fidei in Rome in that year.

The most recent fonts to be illustrated date from 1953 (Serto) and 1958 (Estrangela and East Syriac). The first I cannot call beautiful; the second is more satisfactory; the third, save for one letter, is quite lovely.

Each illustration of each script is accompanied by Coakley’s description and assessment, ranging from a few lines to a few pages, and the author sets forth clearly the advantages and deficiencies of the fonts he describes. If, for example, the 1886 type cut by Constant Aubert for the *Imprimerie nationale* in Paris is “among the most elegant and authentic renditions of Syriac ever made,” it yet has its faults: one letter is too big; some letters are too wide; and a full page can look “grey and wearisome” (181). For those interested in typography, the descriptions make rewarding reading.
One hundred and twenty-nine types are illustrated and described (excluding a few which appear in the brief section on mechanical typesetting), and there is an appendix (266–67) which presents the evidence for “types not shown.” There is also a very good bibliography (xviii–xxxiv) and a less good index (268–72). One or two citations are incorrect (“Nestorian” for example, appears on 14, not 12), and there are many more names which could usefully have been included. Opening the book at random to pages 228–29 presents the names of Zaya Varda Joseph, T. Audo, and Athelstan Riley that make no appearance in the index, and some names are mentioned on many more pages than are indicated. This is a pity, though it does not detract from the overall comprehensiveness of Coakley’s admirable catalogue.

The book, as the author himself says, is not quite complete: “Much information that ought to be here has escaped me. Archival and published sources about types are rare, and when external evidence fails, as it usually does, what can be read from the internal evidence of the print itself is limited” (xii). No fault, then, is to be ascribed to the author, and if more information is, in the course of time, adduced by other scholars, it will not, I suspect, amount to a very great deal. For those interested in oriental typography, Coakley’s study stands as a monument to meticulous, detailed, and time-consuming bibliographical research. The typographer of the volume was Coakley himself, who also owns his own private press, the Jericho Press, though its equipment is presently in storage. And we might add, finally, that the book— as befits its subject—is solidly bound in green cloth with the title, in both English and Syriac (Estrangela), printed in gold upon a red background.

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Where are all the books about the art of Jessie M. King (1875–1949)? Jessie M. King will be rediscovered as one of the innovators of book design in the twentieth century thanks in no small part to the exhaustive research by the world’s authority on King, Colin