

made a point of giving the public what it craved: the sight of miscreants paying their dues to society. To give these executions a twist of Greek ‘culture’ was a droll gloss on Nero’s predilections. In this brisk analysis, Welch typically refrains from moralizing about what happened inside the Roman amphitheatre. Her primary concern is to explain how this institutional space, so often taken as iconic of Roman ‘civilization’ at large, evolved and developed in the late Republic and early Empire. A substantial appendix collects details of known republican amphitheatres – some well-known (Pompeii), others hitherto unpublished (Abella); and there are painstaking efforts to locate the first monumental, stone-cut structure of the type – now disappeared, the Amphitheatre of Statilius Taurus, which was ‘an integral part of Augustus’ great building program’ (110). But for those who do not already know her work, perhaps the major revelation of Welch’s study will be the section entitled ‘Reception of the Amphitheatre in the Greek World in the Early Imperial Period’. As Nero had (in the eyes of his detractors) corrupted Roman tradition by staging Greek pantomimes and tragedies in the amphitheatre, so the Roman dominance of cities such as Corinth and Athens was symbolized by the adaptation of the classical Greek theatres for the purpose of gladiatorial sports. We know that some Greeks reacted with anger and nausea at this abuse of dramatic space. The more nuanced conclusion must be that a certain taste was fostered – for seeing blood spilt in the orchestra, and eschewing the fiction of screams off-stage.

The Colosseum is merely one of the many Roman antiquities whose history has been illuminated in recent years by Filippo Coarelli – a scholar who has mellowed from *enfant terrible* to senior statesman without losing his zest for archaeological enquiry. For some years now it has been the habit of advanced tourists in Rome to rely upon Coarelli’s Laterza-published guides to the city and its *dintorni* for intelligent company. Now these guidebooks have been amalgamated into one volume and made available in English: and the result, *Rome and Environs*, must be trumpeted here.⁴ I used the soft-bound edition for a week around rainy Eastertide, and can report the following salutary features: (i) a translation made by two specialists in the field; (ii) information as up-to-date as possible, duly cautious where caution is due, yet keeping us primed with the latest theories (the entry for the Arch of Constantine is a good example of such equilibrium); (iii) clear directions, uncluttered maps and plans (including a handy diagram and glossary of Roman building techniques); and (iv) a robust cover and binding. With the gradual extension of engineering works on Rome’s Metropolitan line ‘C’, it is inevitable that revisions will one day be needed. But here is a book designed for heavy practical use – which it fully deserves.

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⁴ *Rome and Environs. An Archaeological Guide*. By Filippo Coarelli. Translated by James J. Clauss and Daniel P. Harmon. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 2008. Pp. x + 555. 159 figures. Hardback £40.95, ISBN: 978-052007960-1; paperback £14.95, ISBN: 978-052007961-8.

Religion

An unusually large number of books has been posted off to me by the editors in the past eighteen months or so, almost all of them interesting and in their various ways rewarding; to my regret, I have had to leave a number aside for future notice. Of seven books on Greek religion, the most important, and bulkiest, is

the *Blackwell Companion*.¹ It is customary to deprecate the contemporary plethora of companions and handbooks, but in my view they have much to recommend them, not just because they offer competent, up-to-date surveys of specialized topics with large current bibliographies but because, when well edited, they encourage efforts at synthesis and offer a forum for explorative writing (the Blackwell series, conceived by their Classics editor, Al Bertrand, is particularly good). Their advantage lies precisely in the range of opinions and approaches that they offer. Modestly aiming to offer a mere impression of such a vast field, and eschewing any specific intellectual agenda, Daniel Ogden has done an excellent job both in defining major topics for discussion and in commissioning a varied list of contributors, senior and junior, European and North American, classicists, archaeologists, and historians of religion. The planning of the volume can usefully be compared to that of Walter Burkert's classic of the Zurich historical approach, *Griechische Religion* (1977). Burkert opened his book with 60 pages on neolithic and Minoan-Mycenean religion, then analysed the key concepts and ritual institutions of archaic and classical religion (90 pages), ran through the major individualized gods one by one (70 pages), examined the dead, chthonic gods, heroes, and 'sort-crossers' in one chapter (30 pages), before devoting 70 pages to *polis*-religion: typologies, organization of time, social functions, the idea of 'piety'. The two final chapters concerned mysteries and intellectual religion. Ogden's upper cut-off date is '776 BC', so Minoan-Mycenean is out; but S. B. Noegel picks up another of Burkert's major themes, surveying borrowings and assimilations of myths, rites, and techniques by the Greeks from the ancient Near East. Ritual institutions are scattered across two sections, 3 and 4: S. Scullion on festivals, B. Dignas on the *Realien* of worship in the sanctuary (mainly on Asklepieia), J. Bremmer on sacrifice, P. Bonnechere on divination, A. Bendlin on pollution, W. D. Furley on prayers and hymns. In place of Burkert's survey of individual deities, we now have a section on 'The Powers: The Gods and the Dead' (section 2). K. Dowden stresses the complex means by which the pantheon was constructed, with case-studies of Apollo and Artemis; J. Larsen contributes a compressed version of her fine book on Greek nymphs. Heroes (G. Ekroth) and the dead (D. Felton) now have no separate section but are reckoned in transactional terms as powers to be negotiated with. In keeping with current emphasis on the diversity of Greek religion, reflecting the desire to avoid both Burkert's broad brush and the more insidious temptation to depend too much on Athens, section 5 takes four examples of local religious systems (S. Deacy on Athens, N. Richer on Sparta, F. Dunand on Alexandria, M. Jost on Arcadia). Aspects of the sociology of Greek *polis*-religion are discussed by C. W. Hedrick (Athens) and J. Morgan (women, again mainly Athens). The last two sections likewise diverge interestingly from Burkert: magic (M. W. Dickie) has been added to mysteries (limited to Dionysus, by J. Guettel Cole, and Eleusis, by K. Clinton; nothing on the Great Gods; the Argive Cabiri get three brief mentions); philosophical religion is narrowed down to a rather argumentative study of Plato (F.-G. Herrmann), but this topic itself is just part of a section called 'Intersections', on religion and literature (T. Harrison) and religion in art (T. H. Carpenter), which suggest something of the increase in self-consciousness about (literary) evidence and other sources since Burkert's day. L. Llewellyn-Jones provides a segue into the contemporary world with a piece on two

¹ *A Companion to Greek Religion*. Edited by Daniel Ogden. Oxford and Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xx + 497. 31 figures and plans. Hardback £85/US\$149.95, ISBN: 978-1-4051-2054-8.

lowbrow Hollywood films that he claims show a better intuitive understanding of Greek religion and myth than do art films. The presentations are clearly written and for the most part easily intelligible without being at all condescending. Without wishing to be invidious, I particularly enjoyed the pieces by Bonnechere, Bremmer, Carpenter, Cole, J. Davidson (stimulating reflections on temporalities – what a relief to get away from ‘cyclical conceptions of time’), Dowden, Ekroth, Harrison, and V. Pirenne-Delforge (good brief re-presentation of her arguments about sexuality, Aphrodite, and ‘sacred prostitution’). Despite the high overall quality of the individual contributions, I have five main criticisms. First, though Jan Bremmer, for example, does say something about recent interpretations of sacrifice, I would very much have liked to see someone attempting a sketch of the historical development of views on Greek religion since, say, Lobeck’s *Aglaophamus* (F. Graf would have been an excellent choice). Second, though the book claims to go down to 30 BC, it in fact contains only one piece (Dunand on Alexandria) that squarely tackles Hellenistic religion, and then only in relation to one city; Tyche is mentioned just briefly by Emma Stafford in her piece on personifications. Nor is there much specifically on archaic religion, although the exclusion of Minoan-Mycenaean implies tacit agreement with Vernant’s view that Greek religion in effect begins for us with the establishment of the *polis* as the normative Greek political unit. There is therefore too little sense of historical change: this is essentially a Companion to the religion of the classical Greek *polis*. I would add that there is also very little on Greek religion in Magna Graecia, Sicily, Ionia, the Euxine, and so on. Third, I miss any sustained interest in Greek religious terminology: for example, unlike ‘impiety’, neither *eusebeia* nor ‘piety’ appears in the index, despite the fact that L. Bruit Zaidmann recently published an entire book on the topic (2001); there are only a couple of sentences on the concept of *daimon*; and so on. Fourth, given the importance of ‘sacred laws’ in providing us with a concrete sense of ritual praxis, I rather missed a fuller treatment of them, despite the efforts of Beate Dignas in this direction. Finally, it was not a good idea to allow Herrmann to limit the topic of intellectual religion in the way he does; this piece belongs in a journal not in a companion. But all in all, Ogden has done an excellent job.

The death last autumn of Jean-Pierre Vernant at the age of ninety-four prompts me to notice the re-issue by MIT Press (Zone Books) of the one-volume third edition of *Myth and Thought* (1985), translated by Janet Lloyd with Jeff Fort.² This edition improved on the second edition (the two-volume Maspero edition of 1971; original edition 1965) by including a third discussion of the Hesiodic myth of the five races (a reply to Victor Goldschmidt), a second account of the specificity of the classical cult-statue, and a further note on the ‘origins of philosophy’, conceived as a tussle between Milesian physics and Eleatic paradox. One can of course never confidently predict which of the interests of such a charismatic and original Hellenist, as represented by *Myth and Thought*, will be rediscovered. At the moment it seems that Vernant’s early post-war essays on labour and ‘technological thought’, which he thought his most dense, have been quite forgotten; the essays on ‘the origins of philosophy’ now look naïve (the French ‘*pensée positive*’, which means philosophical naturalism, is translated as ‘positivist thought’, which gives a completely misleading impression); the category of historical psychology that he inherited from

² *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks*. By Jean-Pierre Vernant. Translated by Janet Lloyd. Cambridge MA and London, MIT Press (distr. by Zone Books, Brooklyn), 2006. Pp. 505. Paperback £16.95, ISBN: 978-1-890951-60-3.

Ignace Meyerson seems simultaneously overambitious and excessively dependent upon questionable lexical inferences. On the other hand the work on the psychosociology of the three-dimensional image, which he pursued into later life, and on the organization of (civic) space, remains challenging. However, he is probably condemned to be most read, at least abroad, for the essays on the Hesiodic myth of the races, because they exemplify the Lévi-Straussian phase of Paris-School structuralism, even though Vernant himself reckoned that his piece on the Hesiodic myth of sacrifice, in *La Cuisine du sacrifice* (1979), was his best in this mode. Specifically in relation to religion, the brief article on the limitations of Greek anthropomorphism (of 1960, the same year as ‘Le Mythe hésiodique des races’), oddly presented as ‘Aspects of Personal Identity’, remains insightful. The perdurability of the ideas of the School of Paris, now into the third generation, is very much in evidence in an enjoyable DEA thesis on Apollo, presented at Rennes 2 but written in Toulouse, by Philippe Monbrun.³ Its twin inspirations are the well-known *rf hydria* in the Vatican that shows the god sitting on a winged tripod and playing the lyre, bow, and quiver strapped behind his back; and Homer’s image of the lyre in the account of Odysseus stringing his great bow at *Od.* 21. 406–11. How are bow, lyre, and prophecy linked? No sign here of the familiar triple-strand prehistory that sees Apollo as a fusion of a Dorian/North-west Greek, a Cretan-Minoan, and a Syro-Hittite component; the key connections between archery and foreknowledge, between the manufacture and deployment of lyre and bow are structural (‘making the implicit explicit’). The method is historico-anthropological, as vaguely formulated by the former Centre de recherches comparées (now the Centre Louis Gernet). Monbrun appeals to the history of technology, to techniques of and ideas about North American Indian, Ottoman, Japanese, and Indian archery, and about lutenry, to suggest the organic relation between stringing, testing, and sounding the lyre and the bow; to the ancient bestiary to account for the association between dolphin, serpent, mouse, lizard, and grasshopper with Apollo as archer (they all share with the flight of the arrow a distinctive undulating movement); to the parallel between Apollo’s ‘magical’ skill – he never learns to play the lyre, just as he never learns to shoot – and his marvellous foreknowledge, which owes nothing to ‘*metis*’ but results from sheer concentration upon a point in past or future (‘*téléscience*’), just as in many traditions the perfect archer can hit the target without necessarily being able to descry it. Some of the ideas fall a little flat (e.g. the Pythia as a musical instrument), and the reader learns nothing about other important aspects of Apollo, not even about illness, healing, or the paean, and virtually no attempt is made to confront myth with the sociopolitical roles and pan-Hellenic claims of the oracle at Delphi. Structure is thus allowed too free a rein, and screened too sharply off from ‘mere’ ideology, let alone real interests; but so far as it goes this is an ingenious and original contribution. Apollo immediately evokes Delphi, which is the subject of a brief introduction in Beck’s useful *Wissens-series* (a German equivalent of ‘*Que sais-je?*’) by a classical archaeologist, Michael Maaß, formerly head of the ancient section of the Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe.⁴ Delphi is a tricky topic: one has to move adroitly between the

³ *Les Voix d’Apollon. L’Arc, la lyre et les oracles*. By Philippe Monbrun. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007. Pp. 346. 85 figures, mainly drawings. Paperback E/23, ISBN: 978-2-7535-0415-8.

⁴ *Das antike Delphi*. By Michael Maaß. Munich, C. H. Beck, 2007. Pp. 128. 25 figures. Paperback E/7.90, ISBN: 978-3-406-53631-1.

religio-political history of two sites, the archaeology, the architecture, the oracle, the museum, and the excavations. Maaß does his best to be lively, and his information is generally reliable and up to date; he also provides a list of dates, an index of names, and a glossary of terms. However, I sometimes found the presentation confusing, as we switch back and forth between the topics; there is no stress upon the communicative interaction between monuments; the absence even of rudimentary footnotes means that the book is not very suited to the most obvious target audience, undergraduates. Lack of space often compels the author to be excessively brief: for example, in discussing the nature of the Pythia's inspiration, he adduces the famous image of Themis giving an oracle to Aegeus on the Berlin kylix as proof of how the oracle actually worked, without problematizing the iconographic conventions employed (16 f.). The educated visitor to the site is better served by the archaeological *Guide* edited by J.-F. Bommelaer (1991). Rather to my surprise, Maaß offers no information about the contents of the new museum, which is one of the highlights of any visit, and well served by O. Picard's *Guide* (1991). For the sake of the extremely low price, and uniformity with the series format, Beck has chosen to forego illustrations of the required quality; for anyone who can read German fluently, Maaß' earlier book, *Das antike Delphi* (1993, with reprint), is perhaps the better bet. A scholarly thesis by Francesca Del Neri on the evidence in the fragments of Attic comedy for three foreign deities – Sabazius, Bendis, and Cotys – introduced into Athens in the late fifth century, may also be registered here.⁵ The author spent some time working with Martin Hose in Munich, and the presentation and discussion of the fragments is exemplary. The work is essentially a close commentary on the relevant passages of Aristophanes' *Lemniai*, Cratinus' *Boukoloï* and *Thracian Women*, and Eupolis' *Baptai*. In each case, the relevant literary and epigraphic evidence (the latter not complete) for the cult is given in Greek, followed by as extensive a discussion as the evidence merits. There is, however, little about the cults themselves, or about the wider religious situation; the thesis is intended as a critical aid, a prolegomenon, to the historical study of these cults. This limited purpose is admirably fulfilled (though I am surprised to find Cotys not problematized) and the book itself a pleasure to use. If Del Neri writes for other initiates, Graf and Johnston's introduction to the fourth-century and later Bacchic-Orphic gold lamellae is a successful example of writing for a(n advanced) student audience.⁶ In international graduate teaching, it proved a stimulating introduction to this complex topic: Sarah Johnston has taken especial care to set out her material and arguments in a clear and pedagogically effective manner. The thirty-seven or thirty-eight texts so far known (two unpublished groups, from Lesbos and at Pella/Dium, will one day increase this total), are set out first (rather oddly retaining the original spelling while admitting conjectures), with bibliography and a facing translation. The readings are mainly those of Bernabé; the second text from Pherae (no. 28), only published by Robert Parker and Maria Stamatopoulou in 2007, is probably not Bacchic, but suggests an extension of the

⁵ *I culti misterici stranieri nei frammenti della commedia attica antica*. By Francesca Del Neri. Eikasmos 13. Bologna, Patron Editore, 2006. Pp. 450. 33 b/w figures. Paperback E/37, ISBN: 9788855528979.

⁶ *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife. Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*. By Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston. Abingdon and New York, Routledge (Taylor & Francis), 2007. Pp. x + 246. 6 figures, 1 map. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-415-41550-7; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-0-415-41551-4; e-book £18.99, ISBN: 978-0-203-96134-6.

genre into other marginal cults; some queries about individual readings that have been adopted inevitably remain. This chapter is followed by Graf's useful account of the history of scholarship, which duly highlights the role played by Domenico Comparetti in recognizing their Orphic-Bacchic character, the rise and fall of Orphism, and the way that new finds (e.g. the 'new' Pherae text) have in the past and will continue to force rethinking of supposedly settled knowledge. Of the two central chapters of the book, by Johnston, the first demonstrates the composite nature of the Orphic myth of Dionysus, invoking a creative bricoleur to explain its family resemblance to earlier myths; and the second carefully sifts the topographic clues presented by the mnemonic texts to provide a convincing account of the eschatology. Although I do not agree with all the interpretations offered, each is an important contribution to these highly complex debates. The two final chapters follow up an earlier suggestion by Graf that these texts include elements taken from Bacchic ritual (the informative becoming performative); and argue that we can usefully distinguish between hieratic and non-hieratic texts within the same order of discourse. My only real complaints are that the striking differences within the mnemonic category between the 'topographic' and 'cathartic' type of texts are minimized instead of problematized, so that the category 'gold tablets' is unwarrantably unified instead of being further dismantled (as it could easily be); and that the odd distribution of these texts around the margins of the world of the Greek *polis* is hardly discussed: gold lamellae cannot have been cheap; the texts from the two grand tombs at Thurii suggest that there might be an elective affinity between a weakly developed *polis*-culture and the desire for a super-death. Theoretical primitivism of the A. B. Cook or Jane Harrison type once took it for granted that ritual is conservative and changeless, but ever since Stanley Tambiah's article on performativity in ritual (1979), critical re-assessment has been gaining ground. The problem then becomes how to conceptualize alternative views. The collection of essays on ritual edited for the Kernos Supplementary series by Eftychia Stavrianopoulou as part of the big Heidelberg Sonderforschungsbereich *Dynamics of Ritual* has come up with a number of suggestions (all contributions in English).⁷ In this case at any rate, the German system of renewable largescale funding for joint research on a specific programme seems to have produced worthwhile results. Major themes are the dialectical relation between ritual form and ritual semantics; the processual or performative character of ritual communication; the variety of contexts against which rituals can be studied; and the open-endedness of any one mode of analysis. The whole volume is well worth consulting; perhaps the best for teaching purposes is a wide-ranging piece by Jannis Mylonopoulos (now at Columbia) on Greek sanctuaries as communicative sites, working from architectural spaces (including a telling account of the changes in banqueting accommodation in the *temenos* of Demeter and Kore at Corinth from the early sixth to mid-second century BC), through the varied semiotics of votive offerings to that of ritual performances (e.g. dramatized myth) and processions. But the contributions on dance as a condensed sign (F. Naerebout), the emotional content of rituals (A. Chaniotis), oath rituals as contingent choices among a determinate set of options (I. Berti), the freedom enjoyed by writers to recompose and reconstruct rituals (P. Kató), and acclamations in imperial Egypt (T. Kruse), are all rewarding. Let me mention too the

⁷ *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*. Edited by Eftychia Stavrianopoulou. Kernos Supplement 16. Liège, Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 2006. Paperback £36.95, ISSN: 0776-3824.

inimitable introductory piece by W. Burkert, on anchoring ritual in reality, where we learn that, in Munich before the First World War, his mother had to keep up her practice in curtsying so as to be able properly to acknowledge the Prinzregent Luitpold as he passed in his carriage. Rather less successful, because lacking a shared theoretical impetus, is a collection of articles on great men (not only political figures) as the meeting point of divine and human interests, issuing from another extended research programme, in this case at Besançon, on exceptional men or heroes, and the different ways that they receive divine acknowledgement and sanction.⁸ Chance or destiny; myth and history; the veridicality of signs; the decline of grandeur – these are some of the themes. The most successful pieces are by J. Boëldian-Trevet, on Xenophon's construction of the great man (Cyrus) as rational, reflective, self-controlled, and provident but also as one capable of reading divine signs correctly; L. Villard on contemporary judgements on the reasons for Philip of Macedon's political success; G. Guittard, on the value of Servius, *Ad Aen.* II 649 for Etrusco-Italic divinatory practice; V. Fromentin on the roles of Tyche as a historical agent in Diodorus' *History*; and C. Van Liefferinge on the dynamic relation in theurgy between god and the accomplished practitioner, based on accurate reading of authentic but cryptic signs ('*synthemata*'). But, as so often with collections, the whole is rather less than the sum of its parts. Last year, I noted the appearance of the English translation of J. R. Jannot's introduction to Etruscan religion, *Devins, dieux et démons*; this book is now complemented by a well-illustrated collective volume by several hands, edited by Nancy de Grummond and Erika Simon, and beautifully produced by the University of Texas Press.⁹ Especially welcome is the longish contribution on the sacred architecture of Pyrgi by Giovanni Colonna, Professor of Etruscology at La Sapienza, Rome, who is inclined, a trifle overenthusiastically, to argue that this site may have been the main Etruscan sanctuary. Another central essay is that of Ingrid Krauskopf on an important but of course highly contentious topic – ideas about the afterlife: she highlights the evidence of the Tomb of the Blue Demons at Tarquinia (c.400 BC) to argue in favour of a belief in an initial journey to the underworld along a road beset by demons, followed by a sea journey, which is functionally equivalent to the half-open door; the symposium is simultaneously a defunctive banquet and a representation of the afterlife; at the same time the shedding of blood was required to fortify the soul on this last journey, and may have ensured its permanent presence with the living as an ancestor. Here the effort to reflect the complexity of the evidence has resulted in a certain breathlessness, not to say indecipherability. The shorter articles all offer competent summaries of their topics: Simon herself briefly sets out a scheme of the Etruscan pantheon; Jean Turfa provides a good account of votive religion, mainly bronzes and terracottas; also a useful appendix containing the Greek text and translation of the brontoscopic calendar copied by Nigidius Figulus and preserved by Joh. Lydus, *De Ostentis* 27–38, which is not in every library. L. Bonfante sketches the Etruscan epigraphic corpus, from the Zagreb mummy-bandages to the *tabula Cortonensis*, while de Grummond provides both a (very brief) account of the

⁸ *Signes et destins d'élection dans l'Antiquité. Colloque International de Besançon, 16–17 nov. 2000.* Edited by Michael Fatzoff, Évelyne Geny, and Élisabeth Smadja. Besançon, Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2006. Pp. 248. Paperback E/37, ISBN: 978-2-84867-126-2.

⁹ *The Religion of the Etruscans.* Edited by Nancy Thomson de Grummond and Erika Simon. Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 225. 145 b/w figures. Hardback £32.95, ISBN: 978-0-292-70687-3.

history of research since K. O. Müller's *Die Etrusker*, as expanded by W. Deecke (1877), and resumes what can be said about priestly roles. The most innovative, if necessarily speculative, piece is an attempt by I. Edlund-Berry to map ritual space and ritual boundaries in the heavens and on earth, supervised by a battery of divinities. The book concludes with a selection of Thulin's collection of relevant Greek and Latin texts. The ever-expanding number of books, specialist and popular, on the Etruscans attests to the abiding fascination of the obscure. Etruscan religion provides an object lesson in the strengths and limitations of interpretative archaeology; but this book should help students to understand the late-Republican and early imperial concern with the *Etrusca disciplina* a little better. The Roman pendant to Ogden's *Companion* is an equally large volume edited by one of the most brilliant contemporary experts on Roman religion, Jörg Rüpke.¹⁰ Since the basic model is the same, I can in this case be briefer. One difference immediately stands out: the first substantial item after the editor's introduction is a piece on the history of scholarship on Roman religion by C. R. Phillips Jr. Although I find its execution unfortunate – wayward, mannered, and slightly peevisch – the point is made: Roman religion is not just 'there', it is a construction whose dominant assumptions are historically conditioned. What we know and how we know it are central themes. Analysis of individual components, games and processions, or prayer rubs alongside synthetic accounts of archaic religion and the Jewish Diaspora at Rome. The twenty-nine other contributors comprise many well-known names, American and European. It is especially welcome to find articles by a sizeable group of younger continental scholars (admittedly translation has not always served them well), which introduce approaches and ideas that are not current in the study of Roman religion in the English-speaking world. The book is organized into six sections: history, sources, elements, agents, identities, and 'export'. The advantage of such a division is that the same issues and materials can be revisited under different rubrics, as parts of a process, as institutions, or as structures. The student is thus invited to view any given topic from more than one point of view, through more than one authority. Not all the contributions are equally successful, but there is a vast amount of modern information and analysis here, as well as up-to-date bibliographies for further reading. Not by any means a volume for beginners, but an admirably full and ambitious reference book to which more advanced students can confidently be directed. Although not designed for the purpose, Rüpke's own introduction to (mainly) republican religion fits neatly between the detailed historical treatment by Beard, North, and Price in *Religions of Rome* (1998) and John Scheid's rather didactic institutional approach (English translation as *Introduction to Roman Religion*, 2003).¹¹ As the translator of this English version, I suppose I am in as good a position to judge it as anyone else. Rüpke's advantage is that he was not trained as an ancient historian (though he has been a professor of Latin), but as a historian of religion with special interest in Rome, and he holds one of the few German chairs in *Religionswissenschaft*. His typical approach is to defamiliarize, to use strangenesses and oddities as diagnostic of another reality; he

¹⁰ *A Companion to Roman Religion*. Edited by Jörg Rüpke. Oxford and Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xxx + 542. 68 b/w figures, 2 maps. Hardback £95/US\$174.95, ISBN: 978-4051-2943-5.

¹¹ *Religion of the Romans*. By Jörg Rüpke. Translated by Richard Gordon. Pp. xv + 350. 24 b/w figures. Cambridge, Polity, 2007. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-7456-3014-4; paperback £18.99, ISBN 978-0-7456-3015-1.

sees religion as a set of communicative signs, diffused but not universal; as a convention which, like eating, may be routinized to insignificance but also highly elaborated – the first thirty pages of the book are a brilliant exemplification of this sort of approach: the facts are not unfamiliar but they assume a new significance. The reader is assumed to be interested not so much in information, which is rather taken for granted, as in interpretations. Interpretation is not arbitrary or convenient but based on explicit models whose function is to provide a consciously chosen perspective. If there is a main thesis, it is the total inverse of Wissowa's historico-nationalism: that what we know as Roman religion of the Republic is in fact simply the religion of the Roman élite, altered over time in accordance with, or to defend, its perceived, and changing, interests. After presenting a temporal scheme of four main periods stretching from the period of ethnogenesis to 42 BC, he offers three sections: structures, religion in action, and social reality. In 'Structures', he looks not at the pantheon but at statues of gods; breaks ritual down into its communicative elements: touching, display, dance, music, and so on; and emphasizes the crucial contrast between Roman relaxation about interpretation (the more the merrier) and Christian obsession with control over just that. In section two, he does the same for sacrifice, deliberately de-emphasizing paraded state occasions, but highlighting the link between eating and hierarchy; personal engagements (vows and curses); and the control of space and time (Rüpke wrote his Habilitation on the Roman calendar). In the final section, he focuses on religion at Rome, and on priesthood (the translation of his three-volume index of priests at Rome is due from Oxford this year). The first German edition of 2001 stopped there; this English version contains a final chapter, on selected developments during the Principate, highlighting the process of disengagement of religion from the sociopolitical realm; it also has quite extensive footnotes and a consolidated bibliography; references have been brought up to date and where possible adapted to an English-language public; the captions to the plates have been revised and extended. I myself enjoyed translating it, and cannot imagine anyone failing to be inspired by it – not that there are not some interpretations that on reflection appear hasty or only half-thought through. Rüpke's final chapter, on shifts in the imperial period, is the subject of James Rives' well-written introductory student text in another Blackwell series, *Ancient Religions*.¹² Rives is much more careful to provide background for the uninitiated (there are glossaries of deities and sources at the end, and six boxes with translated inscriptions and other texts, apparently for discussion with a class; indeed, the early part of the book has an air of patient didacticism). He acknowledges from the outset that – particularly at a time such as the present when traditional grand narratives are under fire – a narrative approach is impracticable; the most he will do is to try to draw the threads together in the epilogue. Otherwise the book is strictly analytical, deliberately focused not on Rome itself but, as far as practicable, on provincial evidence and materials. Thus, after a consideration of what we might mean by the religion of the Empire (he settles for the loose 'approaches to the divine', but refuses Beard–North–Price's plural religions), Chapter 2 surveys the various regions of the Empire, with Italy in final place. Attention then turns to individual experience of the divine, through specific locations and encounters, with collective or communal religious experience in three

¹² *Religion in the Roman Empire*. By James B. Rives. Oxford and Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xiv + 236. 11 figures, 4 maps. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-1-4051-0655-9; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-1-4051-0656-6.

contexts (the city, the household, and the association) discussed only in Chapter 4. The two following chapters, which are really the heart of the book, deal with a whole gamut of integrative pressures that Rives sees as working in favour of a 'religion of the Empire' (132 f.); and some private options, such as mysteries and magic, not in detail but in terms of what they offered the individual. The issue of Christianity, which is otherwise rather skirted, is approached mainly in terms of control, in a balanced final chapter on Roman religious authority, on which Rives has written a number of important articles. My main criticism of the book is that it tends to flatten the religion of the Empire into a timeless whole without making the effort to pick out distinctive trends; there is too much use of classical Greek and republican material; and far too little determination to confront the main problem, as I see it, namely the relation between the religion of Rome and the religious activity of the provincial populations. The roles of the imperial cult and of 'imperial deities' such as Iuppiter, Victoria, and Sol are thus down-played in favour of an 'invisible hand', namely convergent practice and experience. One senses here the constraints imposed by assumptions about the target audience. Nevertheless, the book is important as an attempt to create a textbook in an area normally, as in Rüpke's case, left to an appendix because the problems are all too forbidding; Rives' synthesizing approach, and belief in a religious experience roughly generalizable over the Empire serves as a significant contrast to the approach of the second half of Beard–North–Price, volume 1, which can easily be made the focus of classroom discussion. Finally, this may be the place to note the publication of the first volume in a large-scale project by the Academia Belgica in Rome to republish all the major, and many of the minor and unpublished, works of the Belgian savant Franz Cumont (1868–1947), with the support of the family (now de Cumont). This first volume, a reprint of the fourth edition of the *Oriental Religions of the Roman Empire* (1929), was intended to mark the centenary of its first appearance in 1906.¹³ The aim is not in the first instance celebratory but historiographic, to invoke Cumont (who conducted a large academic correspondence) as a representative of the intellectual cross-currents of his time; his value as a witness has grown in proportion to the dwindling of his citation value. The appearance of the fifth edition also coincides with a large-scale Franco-Belgic-Italo-German reevaluation of Cumont's entire category 'oriental religions', whose results are currently appearing in a series of conference proceedings. Cumont's text needs, in fact, to be read just as we read Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* or Grote's *History of Greece*. This task is made much easier by the highlight of this edition, the long introduction by Corinne Bonnet and Françoise Van Haepere (xi–lxxiv), which sets Cumont against the French historians of the religion of the Roman Empire of the preceding generation, against Boissier, Renan, Duruy, and Réville. They show that Cumont was simply playing a variation on wholly familiar themes (the discussion broke out in France after the defeat of 1870, but is essentially a debate about the merits of Hegel's theological history as mediated by A. A. Beugnot, and so about Christianity as a historical rather than an extra-historical phenomenon), and how difficult he found it to adjudicate between the various considerations – was the Orient baleful or beneficial? Did the oriental religions fortify Graeco-Roman paganism in the face of Christianity or cause its

¹³ *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*. By Franz Cumont. Edited with introduction by Corinne Bonnet and Françoise Van Haepere, with Bastien Toune. Fifth edition. Bibliotheca Cumontiana: Scripta Maiora 1. Turin, Nino Aragno Editore, 2006. Pp. lxxv + 403. 13 figures, 34 plates. Paperback E/25, ISBN: 78-88-8419-289-9.

decay? Were they popular because they brought a new spirituality qua mystery cults? Are magic and astrology religions? For all the surface confidence of *Les Religions orientales*, a close reading reveals numerous cracks and incoherencies, compounded by the decision in the fourth edition to include the cult of Dionysus/Bacchus because the god was essentially oriental; the rhetorical aim was, of course, to bolster the role of the category ‘mystery’ – itself subjected to no scrutiny at all. This is a fine inauguration of a worthwhile project.

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RICHARD GORDON

General

Don Fowler was an outstanding scholar and inspirational teacher. His death in 1999 at the age of just forty-six left a great sense of loss that is still felt far beyond the confines of Jesus College, Oxford, where he taught for the last nineteen years of his life. *Classical Constructions. Papers in Memory of Don Fowler. Classicist and Epicurean* is an affectionate and stimulating collection of papers by prominent Latinists.¹ The volume begins with a previously unpublished article by Fowler – ‘Laocoon’s Point of View: Walking the Roman Way’ – and the thirteen contributions that follow resonate with his intellectual spirit, humour, and informality. A comprehensive bibliography records the astonishing variety and scope of his research, from Virgilian acrostics to Deviant Focalization, but by readers of this journal he will be most fondly remembered for his six years as subject reviewer for Latin literature (1986–1993). As Stephen Harrison writes ‘Don’s contributions here became something of an institution in Latin studies, and their publication was eagerly or fearfully awaited by his friends and colleagues for their jokes, learning and avowedly personal tone, commitment to the subject, and non-avoidance of controversy’ (352). *Visualizing the Tragic. Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature* is dedicated by its editors ‘For Froma, with all our love’.² This ‘Froma-fest’, or celebration of the ‘Zeit-ling-geist’, honours the unique contribution of one of the most influential living critics of Greek drama, whose work – including such articles as ‘Travesties of Gender and Genre in Aristophanes’ and ‘Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama’ – has done so much to expand our view of the Greek world. This is no ‘mere’ celebration, however, but a serious interdisciplinary contribution by leading scholars to ‘the discourse of sight’ – the way that Greek tragedy is visualized both through verbal and artistic representations (from vase painting to the modern staging of tragedy) and the impact that this has on the wider discourses of knowledge, power, and reality. The volume ends with contributions from two giants of the French classical world – Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Jean-Pierre Vernant – who both died before the publication of the book. Their recollections of Froma form a riveting and poignant diptych – Vidal-Naquet writes ‘in friendly rivalry with Jean-Pierre Vernant’ (393); Vernant, in the full knowledge of his own mortality, revisits Zeitlin’s introduction to a collection of his essays, *Mortals and Immortals*:

¹ *Classical Constructions. Papers in Memory of Don Fowler. Classicist and Epicurean*. Edited by S. J. Heyworth. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xv + 368. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-19-921803-5.

² *Visualizing the Tragic. Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature*. Edited by Chris Kraus, Simon Goldhill, Helene P. Foley, and Jas Elsner. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xxii + 457. Hardback £74, ISBN: 978-0-19-927602-8.