

# EDITORIAL

For all that the editors of a journal such as *CR* are likely to be more familiar than the average classicist with the range of scholarly books appearing at any given time, there is even for us an element of the Christmas stocking or the lucky bag about the contents of any particular number. Books arrive; reviewers are sought; reviews are commissioned and submission dates set; but for a great variety of reasons we can never predict accurately what the next number will look like as a whole until the cut-off date for the receipt of copy. In this issue, we are struck above all by the quantity and spread of material on ancient philosophy. The Presocratics, Plato (where we note especially two collections of essays on the *Timaeus*, both very well received [pp. 316–20]), Aristotle, Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, and Neoplatonism are all amply represented among the books put under the spotlight; we publish too reviews of an ‘outstanding’ book on Avicenna (pp. 354–6) and a study of relations between Greek and Indian philosophy (pp. 420–23), both of which raise the question of where the boundaries for inclusion of a review in *CR* should be set. In general, our policy is to limit the scope of the journal to books in which Graeco-Roman antiquity is in some way central. This can be a matter of reasonably clear-cut definition; for example, books on Pharaonic Egypt or the ancient civilizations of the Near East do not fall within our remit, while books on Ptolemaic Egypt or Roman Syria plainly do. In many cases, however, decisions have to be taken on an essentially *ad hoc* basis. The results may not always please everyone, but so wide and accommodating is the field of Classics (to say nothing of its influence) that lines have to be drawn somewhere, even if our drawing of them seems less than completely consistent.

Books devoted to classical Greek and Latin texts, of course, present no such difficulties. At the more philosophical end of the Latin range we meet in this number a new commentary on Book 1 of Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, by Andrew Dyck, considered by the reviewer (Woldemar Görler) to be ‘in some respects . . . simply better’ than the great commentary of A. S. Pease, to which the author represents his work as a supplement (p. 364); and several books concerning Lucretius. One of these, a new edition of the first three books of the *DRN*, is subjected by Ted Kenney to the kind of searching scrutiny that makes the review not just a critique of the book under consideration but a four-page plunge into the whole subject of Lucretian (indeed, Latin) textual criticism, a palmary case of instruction by example (pp. 366–70); and, as so often with Kenney, the deep learning is communicated with a light touch (see, for instance, the reference to George Goold’s ‘babble from the padded cell’ on p. 369). It has become commonplace, at least among anglophone scholars, to express concern about the general decline in competence in the ancient languages even within the academy itself (so Roger Rees on p. 560 of this number); when one sees a demonstration of knowledge of Latin at this level the implications for the future become truly evident.

Such pessimism, though, should be countered by the recognition that in many other respects Classics is as strong as it has ever been. If there are those who still frown at the notion of ‘theory’, many will feel that the subject has been invigorated and enriched by the literary-critical approaches developed in recent decades. The study of Ovid has (unsurprisingly, it seems now) especially benefited under these conditions, as can be

seen from the important books of Philip Hardie and Efi Spentzou, reviewed by Ralph Hexter and Gianpiero Rosati respectively (pp. 384–8, 390–2). Hardie's *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* is described by Hexter as a 'masterful study, brilliant in overall conception and design as it is brilliant in execution and its many individual readings', while, for Rosati, Spentzou's analysis of the *Heroides*, which draws on the feminist theory of Kristeva and Cixous, 'marks a turning point in the recent boom in studies on [this text]', displaying 'a multitude of brilliant and perceptive observations'. At the same time, the more theorized and more traditional ends of the profession alike will surely welcome the appearance of Robert Maltby's commentary on both genuine books of Tibullus, 'a major work of sound and mature scholarship' (Jim McKeown, p. 382), and Roland Mayer's on the *Dialogus* of Tacitus, which provokes high praise ('The commentary [itself] . . . is superb') and some fascinating further observations about this text from Anthony Corbeill (pp. 410–12). Hellenists, not least those who in their schooldays had to look at the Greek to make any sense of A. S. Way's translation of Euripides, will take equal pleasure in the completion of David Kovacs's new Loeb, the sixth and final volume of which is reviewed by Ruth Scodel on pp. 305–6. The major contribution to Greek *Wissenschaft* made by another expert on Greek tragedy, Stefan Radt, is underlined by the publication of his *kleine Schriften*, a volume of 500 pages; casting his eye over Radt's achievement (pp. 303–5), James Diggle points both to his profound knowledge of the Greek language and to his 'superhuman care for accuracy', a virtue Diggle regards as too often unnoticed and undervalued—the joke that 'Radt kann nicht schnell', punning on the names of the editors of *TrGF*, is thus put firmly in its place.

Moving from literature to history, we find, on the Greek side, a book by John Buckler on fourth-century Aegean Greek history predicted by its reviewer, Ian Worthington, to 'become—if it has not already—the standard work on this period' (p. 468). Quite different in kind (and scale) is Peter Rhodes's provocative *Ancient Democracy and Modern Ideology*, which, according to Eric Robinson, among other things takes a disapproving look at 'recent, mostly American efforts to connect ancient democracy to modern times' (p. 461); the extent to which the study of antiquity should be explicitly tied to modern concerns is always likely to generate lively debate. Robinson's own reader/sourcebook on Greek democracy is one of several sourcebooks reviewed in this number, and as a set the reviews flag a variety of problems with this popular (and certainly useful) genre. Michael Lambert's discussion of Thomas Hubbard's comprehensive collection of material on ancient 'homosexuality' (pp. 439–41) underscores the difficulties faced by a Latinless reader seeking to understand Roman attitudes to sexuality when a word such as *cinaedus* is represented by half a dozen different English terms without explanatory comment. Lambert notes too that Hubbard brings to bear on his work 'a particular ideological perspective' which 'shapes his interpretation of same-sex relations in antiquity'. Many, perhaps most, scholars today would take it as a given that any work of scholarship (particularly in an area such as this) will have an underlying ideology; but the problem is the more pronounced when the work in question is likely to be widely used as a basic study tool, and Lambert's warning that this book—though 'an accessible and invaluable resource, which should be in every university library'—should be handled with caution is one that should be borne in mind whenever a subject is taught with the use of a sourcebook. Lynn LiDonnici's review of Daniel Ogden's 'welcome' collection of texts concerned with magic and witchcraft (pp. 441–3) expresses similar reservations, observing, in response to Ogden's apparent reluctance to 'engage the current scholarly discussion of definitions, terminology and methodology in this field of study' and his

wish that readers should ‘confront the material and “make up their own minds on it”’, that ‘the selection of texts will . . . have an enormous impact upon conclusions reached, and thus readers . . . will very likely decide on a model very like the one that the author himself holds’. LiDonnici presses for ‘a somewhat more self-conscious discussion of the author’s understanding of ancient magic’ at the beginning of the book. All this offers a great deal of material for reflection as the sourcebook industry, fuelled by a mixture of motives, continues to grow.

On Roman history, J. E. Lendon writes with characteristic panache and a broad sense of context on the British Academy volume honouring Fergus Millar (pp. 483–5); we draw attention to a single detail, his urging that the contribution by Stephen Mitchell be read ‘slowly and luxuriously’—a valuable reminder, amid the tendency to gut articles for what we think we want, that there is much to be gained from a style of reading that is less immediately purposive (not least pleasure). Three publications on a subject with which Millar is closely associated, the Jews in the Graeco-Roman world, are reviewed on pp. 506–12; these include Erich Gruen’s *Diaspora. Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, hailed by Steve Mason as ‘a *tour de force*, a synthesis that will be required reading for anyone interested in the cities of the eastern Mediterranean’ (p. 511). The cities of Roman and Byzantine Egypt are themselves the focus of attention in a book by Richard Alston, reviewed on pp. 514–16 by Colin Adams, who also discusses Walter Scheidel’s study of disease and demography in Roman Egypt, ‘a very good book, on a very interesting and important subject’ (p. 513). Late antiquity is represented by, among other items, John Matthews’ investigation of the Theodosian Code as a cultural artefact, which ‘rescues the work from becoming the preserve of primarily legal historians’ (Mark Humphries, p. 526).

Finally, a few more or less miscellaneous volumes. Karl Galinsky’s review of Indra Kagis McEwen’s ‘immensely stimulating’ book on Vitruvius (pp. 393–5) should encourage all classicists (not just architectural historians) to read an author the majority of us probably leave undisturbed. Anne Mackay applauds the first fascicule of CVA on the material in the Berlin Antikensammlung to appear since reunification of the collections formerly split between east and west (pp. 544–5). Olympic year is marked by the appearance of one of the first of Routledge’s ‘A–Z’ volumes on the ancient world, Mark Golden’s on sport (reviewed on pp. 531–34); Andrew Dalby’s matching volume on food, published in 2003, also features here (pp. 529–31), and we feel fairly confident that this issue of *CR* is the only one in the journal’s long history to point readers to two discussions of the ancient carrot (pp. 529, 561).

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