enable them to gain a sense of the classical education of, in this case, the eighteenth-century political elite.

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General

Nine years are allowed to authors for writing, for me, not even a span of hours is allowed. As soon as I have begun, the writing is harried by outcries and driven by excessive haste, no undertaking is carried out with care. One man taxes me with the frequency of his petty interruptions, another fetters me with the load of his miseries, others circle round with the raving contention of their disputes. Amid all this, why do you demand the eloquence of formal composition, where I am hardly able to hold a full conversation?

When I set out to read the new complete English translation of Cassiodorus' letters[1] (the quotation is from the preface to Book 1, paragraphs 4–5), I certainly did not expect to be transported to the picket lines of the currently ongoing industrial action of the British University and College Union, and yet the overwhelming administrative workload and the avalanche of tasks that Cassiodorus describes have much in common with the academic pressures many are facing today. Nevertheless, Cassiodorus persevered and published many works, including a collection of no fewer than twelve books of letters, the latter in the middle of the eighteen-year Gothic War (536–54). He did not have to worry about his pension, though, as he was a scion of long line of wealthy and prominent property owners and aristocrats from Calabria and was himself a highly placed magistrate at the court of the Ostrogothic Kingdom of Italy. Cassiodorus was responsible for official state correspondence, and his letters are either written in the name of the Amal kings Theoderic, Amalasuntha, and Athalaric, or are appointments to public office, honorary titles, and legal and administrative decisions. They span thirty years of his career in administration and are a prime source for the political and social history of Italy in the sixth century AD.

The first full translation of Cassiodorus' letters into English will be an indispensable resource to all interested in this turbulent period of European history. The letters are documentary, but they are also elaborate works of literature and very different from the hasty email format we use for the purposes of administration nowadays: they start with a general, often abstract introduction, move on to the practical issue or problem

[1] *Cassiodorus, The Variae: The Complete Translation*. By M. Shane Bjornlie. Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2019. Pp. 530. 3 maps. Hardback £103, ISBN: 978-0-520-29736-4.

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at hand, state the royal decision, and end with a moralizing example elaborating on the decision. Note, for instance, the beginning and the end of a short letter which tasks two senators with a mundane job of auditing workshops in charge of maintenance of Rome's public buildings:

For each person, his own native city is more precious, since, beyond anything else, he seeks safety, where he had lingered from the time of the very cradle ... The very birds roaming the sky love their own nests, the wandering beasts hasten to the thorny den, delightful fish crossing watery fields follow along practiced trails to their own fastness, and every kind of animal knows to take itself back where they have been wont to settle for generations. What ought we to say now concerning Rome, which it is even more appropriate for her own children to love? (1.21.1, 3)

The translator notes that this practice generally conformed to the administrative style of Cassiodorus' day. The practice of bookending a request with abstract and highly stylized exhortations seems infinitely more civilized than the terse, soulless, and often acronym-heavy admin style of the present day, but even such emails preserve the beginning and the ending formalities, which are a challenge to my students, who struggle to break away from the informal text-message style when composing an email. When I tell them that I remember handwritten letters and the time before internet, they look at me as if I materialized straight from the court of Theoderic. No other statement creates such a vertiginous abyss between us, although 'I still have my Hotmail account' contends for the close second place – the latter works miracles with benevolent IT people who are puzzled by my reservations about installing yet another new operating system.

I am also not an early adopter of any technology and saw no reason to obtain an iPhone – until that memorable day when I first glimpsed LSJ as an app. I was sold there and then. With the magical 'Ancient Greek' on my phone, an app that combines LSJ with a sizeable library of Ancient Greek literature in original and translation, I am virtually never bored. But I also cannot remember the last time I chatted to someone in the supermarket queue or at an airport. I remember the days when I would enter classrooms to a lively chatter or see students engrossed in conversations while waiting for a classroom to empty. Now it is mostly deep silence, with students captivated by whatever is flashing on their devices, eyes lowered, fingers ticking away. Long story short: our undergraduates grew up with technology some of us still consider miraculous, so how do we teach them on their own terms? A new edited volume proposes to address this question and offers nineteen enthusiastic responses from educators from secondary-level schools and universities in both the UK and the USA.[2] In the foreword, Kenneth Kitchell (fairly and accurately) characterizes the book as 'a rallying cry for adaptive activism' (xi). The editors provide a succinct overview of the shifts in teaching practice in the past twenty years towards active learning methods which emphasize critical thinking and collaboration and the rise of the use of technology in the classroom. The main contribution of the volume is its rootedness in practice; instead of manifestos, theory, and prophetic mantras, individual chapters represent reports from the trenches,

[2] *Teaching Classics with Technology*. Edited by Bartolo Natoli and Steven Hunt. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. xiv + 246. 30 b/w illustrations. Hardback £67.50, IBSN: 078-1-3500-8625-8; paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-3501-1093-9.

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as it were: real-life experiments with a range of technologies with real students in physical and virtual classrooms. Each chapter is a warts-and-all report about learning innovations that worked (and aspects of them that did not work), including honest and admirable accounts of just how much sheer hard work went into some of the dazzling projects that individuals have accomplished and, in most cases, have made readily accessible for teachers and students across the globe. Behind each innovative animation, voice-recording, shared Google Doc, and role-playing game are days, weeks, sometimes months of research and preparation (not to mention the sourcing of funding required for some of the most ambitious projects).

The first section of the book addresses blended and distance-learning models. Kate Gilliver reports on her experiences with the flipped classroom teaching, where lectures are recorded and viewed by students outside the classroom, while classroom time is used for discussion and group work. Justin M. Schwamm Jr writes about his students' irritation with the boring Latin textbook, to which he responded by inviting them to creating their own. Together, they came up with a story focusing on three families in the first century AD, which became the core of a textbook he published online and to which other teachers and students added further material.[3] Verity Walden provides an account of teaching distance-learning courses by video conference. Mair E. Lloyd and James Robson write about their and their students' experience with the interactive Latin learning resources at the Open University. Elizabeth Lewis describes the advantages of using Microsoft OneDrive, where documents can be edited by multiple users, for soliciting students' comments on an A-Level Latin class text in order to enhance collaboration and student participation. Alan Chadwick describes his online Latin course, CyberCaesar, which teaches Latin to GCSE standard by using standard tools, such as narratives, lessons, wordlists, and flashcards, but also incorporates a vast range of exercises and tests which are graded immediately – anyone who has ever taught beginners' and intermediate Latin and Greek classes will immediately understand the attraction of this model – and some aspects of gamification. Chadwick describes CyberCaesar as the only course for learning Latin hosted entirely online.[4] Stephen T. Slota and Kevin Ballestrini present Operation LAPIS, a multi-year, text-based, alternate reality/role-playing game for Latin cultural and language education.[5]

The second part of the book is about teaching and outreach activities of aspects of classical civilization without language teaching. Emma Searle discusses the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs), specifically Oxford University's online Latin

[3] See *The Tres Columnae Project*, <http://trescolumnae.com/gamma/>, accessed 15 November 2019. Some aspects of the website are open-access; others can be accessed by subscribing. 'The Tres Columnae Project is all about stories! As a *visitor*, you can read our publicly available Fabellae (little stories) and Fabulae Longae (longer stories), which will introduce you to several Roman families. As a *subscriber*, you…can create your own stories about these families…and you can even create your own families (or other characters), develop stories about them, bring in the "core" or "existing" characters, and publish your stories right here on the Tres Columnae Project site.'

[4] *CyberCaesar*, <https://cybercaesar.info/>, accessed 2 December 2019. The annual subscription to this course currently costs £12.

[5] *Operation LAPIS*, <https://www.practomime.com/lapis/lapis.php>, accessed 2 December 2019.

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Teaching Scheme and its application for outreach. In a delightful chapter, Ray Laurence takes us through the steps he took in creating his two animated films which became YouTube sensations (no exaggeration: *A Glimpse of Teenage Life in Ancient Rome* had 9,441,065 viewings and *Four Sisters in Ancient Rome* had 7,236,869 viewings at the time of writing this review[6]). Similarly fascinating is Sonya Nevin's chapter about the Panoply Vase Animation Project, which literally brings the scenes on ancient vases to life.[7] The aim of the project is to enable primary-aged children to understand ancient Greek vase-paintings and learn about the aspects of Ancient Greek culture, but I can attest that these animations are delightful to adults, too (I do not feel comfortable confessing the precise amount of time I spent playing with this website). Matthew Nicholls, the author of the Rome digital modelling project,[8] writes about the benefits of teaching students to make their own three-dimensional digital reconstructions using SketchUp. Caron Downes provides an account of the way in which her students used the app Explain Everything, which enables users to employ text, audio, and photographs alongside slides or a video for group projects on anything from Greek tragedy to Roman sacrifice, Roman food, and bathhouses. Helen Lovatt provides a disarmingly honest account of the benefits and drawbacks of employing electronic response systems such as TurningPoint, which allows the audience to answer questions in class by anonymous voting. Scott Lawin Arcenas explains the benefits of teaching geography of the ancient world with ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, which allows the users to calculate the distances in the Roman Empire by using criteria that mattered to the ancients, namely time and cost of travel, rather than (often deceptively simple) spatial distances.[9] An example: calculated in cost and time of travel, Rome was closer to Alexandria in September than in March, and Rome was closer to Alexandria than Alexandria was to Rome. 'Mind blown', as my students would say.

The third part of the book is about technology and language learning. Jessie Craft (@MagisterCraft) provides an account of his use of language-teaching methods such as CI (comprehensible input) and TPRS (teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling) for teaching Latin through the medium of Minecraft. For those of you who, like me, have been living under a rock, Minecraft is the single best-selling video game of all time,[10] and, according to Craft, a beloved staple with which all his students are familiar. Craft has used the version of the game built specifically for teachers, MinecraftEdu, to create a compelling and fun way to learn Latin through short films set in the Minecraft version of Rome.[11] Craft's YouTube channel is free and contains a series of delightful videos narrated in Latin. You do not have to be a fan of (or even

[6] *A Glimpse of Teenage Life in Ancient Rome*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juWYhMoDTN0>; *Four Sisters in Ancient Rome*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQMgLxVxsrw>, both accessed 2 December 2019.

[7] *Panoply Vase Animation Project*, <http://www.panoply.org.uk/>, accessed 2 December 2019.

[8] *Virtual Rome*, <https://research.reading.ac.uk/virtualrome/>, accessed 2 December 2019.

[9] *ORBIS. The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*, <http://orbis.stanford.edu/>, accessed 2 December 2019.

[10] See 'Minecraft', *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minecraft>, accessed 2 December 2019.

[11] See 'Divus Magister Craft', *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTtKmPD0_Qo9Uy932ZGKFhA>, accessed 2 December 2019.

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know about) Minecraft to appreciate the creativity, wit, and love that went into the making of these videos. Steven Hunt describes the combined use of digital whiteboards and digital resources for the Cambridge Latin Course in order to enable a classroom dialogue. Roger Travis provides yet another account of the use of a document which can be edited by multiple users, this time Google Docs, in order to facilitate student collaboration. Bartolo Natoli writes about implementing the pedagogic principles of project-based learning (PBL) in an undergraduate course on Roman epistolography where students were expected to provide a text edition, translation, and commentary of the less studied letters of Fronto as their final project. In the final chapter, Lisa Hay surveys the use of a range of tools, from Memrise and Kahoot! to Google Classroom (multi-editor documents again), as a multi-modal approach to teaching and learning.[12]

This is an inspiring and useful book and even the most obstinate Hotmail user will find it invigorating. My only qualm is the total absence of contributions on Ancient Greek language. Perhaps it is time for Minecraft Athens? Watch this space…

The first of the four planned volumes of Albert Henrichs' collected papers, dedicated to his work on Greek myth and religion, is out now.[13] This is in fact volume II (volume I, on Greek literature, drama, and textual studies, and volume III, on Dionysus, are planned for 2021, volume IV, on the history of classical scholarship will be published in 2020). This is unusual, but nothing about Albert Henrichs' work and career was typical or usual. He was twenty-six years old when he deciphered the Cologne Mani Codex, a spectacular fifth-century AD document in Greek about the life and teaching of the prophet Mani, the third-century AD founder of Manicheism. Henrichs' papers about this religious movement form the fourth section of the volume. The first section is about sacrifice and ritual, the central topics of the study of ancient Greek religion in the twentieth century. However, it is his work on the individual gods and epiphanies, which forms the second and the third sections of the volume, that was particularly influential and path-breaking. In the period when the study of Greek religion was decisively ritual-oriented, Henrichs insisted on the study of the gods: their specific natures, their common characteristics, their powers, and their epiphanic moments. His insights on the way in which ancient Greeks conceptualized and encountered the gods are a must-read for anyone interested in the study of Greek religion.

As a towering figure in three fields – papyrology, Greek literature, and Religious studies – Henrichs' range of expertise spanned the entire chronology of ancient Greek civilization. He was the rarest of scholars, equally well versed in micro-philology and big-picture questions – as the mere titles of his articles in this volume testify: 'What Is a Greek Priest?', 'What Is a Greek God?', 'Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion', 'The Epiphanic Moment: Sight and Insight in Ancient Greek Encounters with the Divine'; 'Dionysus as Epiphanic God' (in German). Henrichs was also unique in his ability to wear his formidable learning lightly, writing in clear, crisp, and accessible prose. He manages to dissect a research question by amassing a formidable array of evidence and also to convey the sheer excitement of scholarship, whether trying to capture the

[12] *Memrise*, <https://www.memrise.com/>; *Kahoot*, <https://kahoot.com/>; *Google Classroom*, <https://edu.google.com/products/classroom/>, all accessed 2 December 2019.

[13] *Albert Henrichs. Greek Myth and Religion, Collected Papers II*. Edited by Harvey Yunis. Pp. xxvi + 606. 13 illustrations. Berlin and Boston, MA, Walter de Gruyter, 2019. Hardback £118, ISBN: 978-3-11-044665-4.

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essence of the epiphanic experience or allowing his reader to feel the giddy excitement of what it was like to read the minute script of a manuscript which 'looks like a layer cake nibbled at by a battalion of starving mice'. Certainly, many of the twenty-seven articles published in this volume are for experts, but those addressing 'big picture questions', while illuminating for historians of religion, are written in such a way as to easily serve as ideal introductory readings for undergraduates. In addition to his superb command of the stupendous range of evidence for ancient Greek religion, from literature to inscriptions, documentary papyri, and material culture, Henrichs had a remarkable overview of the history of scholarship which in this discipline, more than any other in Classics, impacts the way we interpret the evidence. This volume of collected papers alone would be the crowning achievement of a stellar career, but, considering the fact that the crème de la crème of Henrichs' published work amounts to four such volumes, one can only conclude that his death at the age of seventy-four in 2017 robbed the field of a true giant. We shall never see his like again.

Before HBO's *Game of Thrones*, there was *Rome*, and before that there was the ultimate game of thrones, Robert Graves's two books on Claudius, followed by the blockbuster BBC series *I, Claudius*. Like Graves, the Dutch author Willemijn van Dijk relies on Suetonius and Tacitus to reconstruct the life of Tiberius in the form of a novel for a general audience.[14] Van Dijk's *The Successor* is fast-paced and zooms back and forth in time, which renders it interesting for those already well acquainted with the life and times of 'the most gloomy of men', but this narrative technique, combined with the sheer volume of names and places, might render this novel too difficult for those as yet uninitiated in the scandalous schemes and complicated lives of the original Lannisters.

Continuing the thread of my last review, wonder and the miraculous is the topic of yet another collected volume published by the 'Trends in Classics' series.[15] The aim of the volume is to study the intersection of medicine and paradoxography. The editor, George Kazantzidis, provides a substantial introduction which charts the way in which medical writers utilized the tension between wonder and rational explanation and explored the body as the seat of the marvellous – in particular the female body, which was conceptualized as inherently different from the male, and was thus classified as weird, abnormal, even deformed (according to Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 775a14–17). Kazantzidis also provides the context for and clarifies the links between nine papers which respectively look into the cases in Herodotus' *Histories* where the human body is regarded as marvellous, paradoxography in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*, the wondrous in Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*, the motif of wondrous healing in Greek epigram, Phlegon of Tralles' medical curiosities and his paradoxical physiology, Galen's (generous) use of *thauma*, Aelius Aristides' excursions into paradoxography, and pseudo-Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Medical Puzzles and Natural Problems*. The volume fulfils its aim, which is to provide a first systematic examination of the

[14] *The Successor. Tiberius and the Triumph of the Roman Empire.* By Willemijn van Dijk. Translated by Kathleen Brandt-Carey. Waco, TX, Baylor University Press, 2019. Pp. 221. Hardback $29.95, ISBN: 978-1-4813-1046-8.

[15] *Medicine and Paradoxography in the Ancient World.* Edited by George Kazantzidis. Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 8. Berlin and Boston, MA, Walter de Gruyter, 2019. Pp. viii + 225. Hardback £91, ISBN: 978-3-11-066037-1.

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'marvellous' in ancient medical thought, and it will be a useful starting point for the further exploration of this fascinating topic.

Moving on to a different topic, the tragic figure of Cassandra, the Trojan princess who was given a gift of prophecy but was doomed to never be trusted until it was too late, is the subject of a new monograph which charts her representation in Greek and Latin poetry: Aeschylus' and Seneca's *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, Virgil's *Aeneid* (where the Sibyl of Cumae takes on some elements of Cassandra's character), and Lycophron's *Alexandra*.[16] The paradox of a divine *hermeneus* (interpreter) who is herself misunderstood is explored through the lens of translation studies, and the book focuses on the dynamics of (mis)communication which Cassandra's character as the very embodiment of translation sets in motion. The second aim of the volume is to trace the way in which Cassandra as a character evolves in each of her appearances. Pillinger sees her as a matchlessly subversive metaphor for literary influence, since confusion, anticipation, and dramatic delay generated by Cassandra undermine concepts such as monumentality, memory, and genealogy which privilege the role of the poet. This rich and clearly written study greatly contributes to the understanding of how different authors explored the multifaceted marginality of Cassandra's character, while illuminating her additional, fascinating role as a metaphor for literary influence.

Finally, a crowning achievement of Angelika Neuwirth's distinguished career, her magisterial and prize-winning volume on the Qur'an and late antiquity, first published in German in 2010, is now accessible in English translation.[17] Neuwirth's groundbreaking work aims to bridge the exegetical polarity between East and West and argues for a new approach to the Qur'an as a product of late antiquity:

> Because the Qur'an emerged out of an engagement with Late Antique discourses and inscribed itself in those already extant Christian and Jewish traditions commonly held to be a European heritage, it too is itself a part of the historical legacy of Late Antiquity to Europe. To read the Qur'an anew can and should open European readers who are grounded in the Western-Christian tradition to a new view of their own theological and spiritual history and empower them to grasp the Qur'an as a vital part of the reception history of their own familiar texts. It is hoped that this book will make Western readers aware of the Qur'an's close connection to an epoch that has been reclaimed for European identity. (3)

Neuwirth proceeds clearly and systematically, starting with the impact of Western misconceptions about the Qur'an's status as epigonal to the Bible. She insists on viewing the text in its original context, as a document which engages with Judaism and Christianity, never loosing sight of the fact that the Qur'an's proclamation simultaneously documents the emergence of and forms a new religious community.

[16] *Cassandra and the Poetics of Prophecy in Greek and Latin Literature*. By Emily Pillinger. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. x + 268. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-108-47393-4.

[17] *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity. A Shared Heritage*. By Angelika Neuwirth. Translated by Samuel Wilder. Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi + 534. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-19-992895-8.

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In the three introductory chapters, Neuwirth presents the history of European and Arabic research of the Qur'an's status as a text and its context, and then moves to the detailed examination of the history of the text and its redaction, including the chronology and intratextual relationship of individual suras. She traces specific discourses within the Qur'an and elicits key questions and thematic complexes for particular phases of inner-communal debate, which she calls 'stations of community formation'. The third part of the book explores the relationship of the Qur'an and the Bible, the Qur'an and ancient Arabic poetry, and the specific rhetorical quality of the Qur'an. This hefty and complex tome is a powerful plaidoyer for (re)integrating early Islam into late antiquity.

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In October last year, Ivana and I attended a very interesting conference on curses and magic organized at the University of Chicago, and on that occasion, I learned a great deal about some recent remarkable finds and current trends in the study of Greek magic. Among the most fascinating pieces of evidence that have surfaced is, for instance, the cache of five lead tablets of the fourth century BC, unearthed just outside the Athenian Long Walls, and reflecting the early oral tradition of binding curses in hexameter – a tradition that relied to a certain extent on the language and formulae of Homeric epics.[1] At the conference itself, we learned more about this cache, but also about another intriguing find, this time from the Athenian *agora*, and consisting of a sealed pot, pierced with a large nail, containing a cut-up carcass of a chicken, and sporting dozens of names of the accursed.

Ancient Greek magical practices are utterly fascinating: all those weird, grim, and aggressive spells, targeting all sorts of competitions in life, love, and business; 'voodoo' dolls buried in tiny coffins or pierced with needles in all the most sensitive spots of the human anatomy; other-worldly drawings; and the hocus-pocusy soundbites of the magical utterances have often lured my Durham and Virginia undergraduates into developing a love of Greek religion and other things classical. Evidence of ancient magical practices provides poignant documents of human despair, selfishness, and occasional wantonness, insights into the workings of a troubled soul, and recent years have seen a significant surge of interest in Greek magic. Accordingly, and as a reflection of this surge, books on Greek magic have been piling up on my desk, so in this issue I start by introducing the readers to three new books on this topic.

What we are accustomed to call 'magic' is but a shorthand for practices that in antiquity had many faces, many names, many contexts, and many actors. At times, the challenge of teaching courses on magic lies precisely in the richness of rituals, the abundance of various kinds of evidence, and the sheer longevity of magical beliefs and practices. In a book that sprang from a course on Graeco-Roman magic, Radcliffe

[1] As discussed in J. Lamont, 'A New Commercial Curse Tablet from Classical Athens', *ZPE* 196 (2015), 159–74.

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G. Edmonds III, a seasoned veteran in the field, does a terrific job of covering a vast amount of ground, adducing a phenomenal amount of evidence, and providing a synoptic but detailed overview of the most significant magical phenomena.[2]

Following the preliminaries, the Introduction, being the first of eleven chapters, lays out the scope of the book, and tackles issues of definition and methodology. Here, in a clear and elegant way, Edmonds provides his criteria for magic, which he conceptualizes as an extraordinary procedure, 'marked with regard to its efficacy, its aims, the social location of the performer, or the style of the performance itself' (32–3). In this regard, what matters to the author is whether, on the basis of the outlined criteria, a rite or a practice would have been regarded as belonging to the discourse of magic by the ancients themselves. The following chapter details the chronological scope of the book (fifth century BC–fifth century AD) and the geographical scope (Mediterranean), introduces the reader to types of evidence and the nature of rituals, and effectively justifies the use of the standard analytical questions around which each chapter is organized (what, who, when and where, how and why). In the third chapter we turn to magic proper, and here Edmonds chose cursing as an excellent starting point to demonstrate the ways in which one and the same ritual can belong both to the sphere of religion and to the sphere of magic. By doing so, he vividly brings across one of the central points of the book, namely that the socio-cultural markers of the ritual context play a highly significant role in formulations of normative and ordinary versus non-normative and extraordinary ritual action.

It is impossible to summarize here the richness of this book, so by way of an overview I only point out some of the major themes covered: two chapters deal with erotic and prophylactic magic (including medical curses); the next three chapters focus on the relationship with and the role of the divinities by tackling issues of prayer, divination, and astrology. After these, the reader tours the awesome worlds of alchemy and theurgy (my favourite chapters in this volume). The final chapter provides the best synthesis known to me of the label of magic in antiquity. A full and excellent bibliography, and well-organized indices *locorum* and *rerum* close the volume.

Edmonds furthers our understanding of magical practices on all fronts, and often this holds true in particular when it comes to matters of methodology. Where scholars tended to rely, for the better part of the twentieth century, on J. G. Frazer's conceptualization of magical modes of operation as sprawling from the laws of contagion and sympathy, laws in which the principle of *similia similibus* ('like by like') was put to work in the hope of affecting the reality of the practitioner and the target, Edmonds uncovers potent methodological alternatives and often breaks new paths. In this sense, for instance, he does away with the Frazerian outlook on magic as a mode of primitive religion, and places at the very core of his conceptualization of magic the 'non-normative and extraordinary' nature of magical procedures. Here, taking his cue from Richard Gordon's work, Edmonds mobilizes in particular Weberian criteria for legitimate religious activity to pin down criteria for non-normative ritual action. In other places, he also draws on Mauss, Bourdieu, and Jakobson, among others,

[2] *Drawing Down the Moon. Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World.* By Radcliffe G. Edmonds III. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2019. Pp. xv + 496. 21 illustrations (8 plates in colour). Hardback £38, ISBN: 978-0-691-15693-4.

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deploying concepts of estrangement and metaphor (in due measure, and where and as appropriate).

This book represents one of the most important contributions to the study of magic published since Fritz Graf's 1997 *Magic in the Ancient World* and Matthew Dickie's 2001 *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World.* It should, from now on, be the first port of call for anyone who wants to be introduced to the field. Simultaneously, the book will be greatly appreciated by the specialists for its erudition, sophistication, nuance, and originality.

Quite similar to Edmonds' study in terms of the aims and objectives of the project, but quintessentially unlike it in most other respects, is Lindsay C. Watson's introductory volume on Greek and Roman magic.[3] It's an interesting read, and several chapters provide profound insights into less-studied aspects of magical practices – the chapter on magic and herbs is one such instance, as is that on the role of animals (authored by Watson's collaborator, Patricia Watson).

That said, the extent to which this book engages in repeated methodological polemics aimed against treatments of magic in what are described on the back cover as 'abstract, highly theoretical terms' will inevitably warrant criticism. Watson, quoting first one of the more combative passages penned by Daniel Ogden, justifies his protests against 'excess of abstraction' and the 'thicket of theory' by pointing out an indisputable fact that performers of magical practices did not develop theoretical concepts for their actions: that is, they 'had no need to meditate on the metaphysics of magic' (2–3). This is surely correct, even if it isn't terribly exciting – to this reader, at least. But Watson makes a more questionable claim, namely that reliance on theoretical frameworks can obscure the fact that magic is highly pragmatic in nature. I must confess that I am unaware of theoretically bolstered attempts to sideline or obfuscate the result-oriented character of magical practices. What I found perplexing in this regard is Watson's intimation that the speech-act theory in particular, which, as he correctly avers, has exercised a great influence in the study of Greek magic, can cause one to lose sight of the pragmatic nature of the rites. If speech-act theory has ever been particularly successful in the study of any aspect of Greek religion, then it is precisely in revealing the pragmatics of ritual performance.

I found such a strong aversion to theory, paired with Watson's programmatic refusal to address definitional issues or provide answers to the perfectly ordinary set of questions on magic (all of which are explicitly addressed by Edmonds), something of a cop-out. All the more so, given that Watson actually does put theory to work in various places, invoking, among others, Malinowski and Mauss, and he does so clearly and effectively.

In the introduction which sets up the tone as described above, Watson provides an account of the history of Greek magical papyri and raises nominalist issues (we're encouraged to use the term 'Greco-Egyptian' magical papyri instead of 'Greek'). The following two chapters discuss love magic ('sex-magic' is his preferred term, and the intent to hurt the target of the curse is real) and *defixiones* (a fairly traditional but

[3] *Magic in Ancient Greece and Rome*. By Lindsey C. Watson. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Pp. x + 248. 13 figures. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-1-7883-1297-4; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-7883-1298-1.

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up-to-date and insightful account in which the author privileges the role of the *similia similibus* principle). The next two chapters – the discussions of the role of animals and herbs in magical practices – are the highlight of the volume and the most original part of the book. The penultimate chapter, a cursory overview of the literary representations of witches, is a mixed bag – largely because of glaring bibliographical omissions in the centrepiece of the chapter, the discussion of Theocritus' second *Idyll* and the magical background of Simaetha's practices. The final chapter, a light-touch analysis of human sacrifice in ancient magic, argues that some of the evidence intimates that there may indeed have been such a thing, but the chapter suffers from similar issues to the preceding one. A selective bibliography and a concise index close the volume.

While I do have various quibbles with this book on account of the methodology employed, and the project's bibliographical and structural patchiness, it also contains solid discussions and thought-provoking suggestions. One of the aspects I certainly did appreciate is that it attempts time and again to highlight the significance and influence of the wider Mediterranean context of what we call Graeco-Roman or Greco-Egyptian magic.

In this regard, Brill's *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* provides a much-needed orientation for those interested in surveying traditions beyond the narrow realm of Classics, but it also unapologetically proposes a new starting point for all study of ancient 'magic'.[4] The scare quotes are in order here, given that David Frankfurter, the editor of the volume, envisages the *Guide* as a new foundation for future investigations, which ought to be, first, largely emic, and secondly, when etic, then *consciously* etic, and thus help shake off entirely the heavy burden of uncomfortable connotations associated with the English term 'magic'.

The volume, which includes many luminaries as its authors, is not lacking in ambition and is, in many ways, intended as an intervention in the field. The first of the four parts comprises two chapters authored by the editor, and lays down the methodology and the goals of the project. The proclaimed aim is to 'standardize presuppositions in such a way that future work in this area will begin from the same place' (21). The search for the new common ground demands first and foremost that we, minimally, develop a deepened sensitivity for our critical language, and, concomitantly, revise and redefine our descriptive categories. In this sense, we are instructed that the Greek and Latin terms *mageia/magia* have a markedly different scope from English 'magic', and that 'the so-called Greek Magical Papyri' were composed by Egyptian priests who 'nowhere identify themselves as *magoi* nor their writings as *mageia*' (8). The inference is that these corpora 'are not documents of *mageia*' (9). I don't intend to rehearse here that timeworn quip about the absence of evidence not being the evidence of absence, but how can we be certain of this? More to the point, I tripped here, since the priests perhaps are not identifying themselves as *magoi*, and the writings are not labelled as *mageia*, but the performer of *PGM* i.125–31 is labelled explicitly as a 'blessed initiate of the sacred *mageia*' (on which, see the discussion in Edmonds above, 378–9) and we do have such descriptors elsewhere in the corpus of Greek magical

[4] *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Edited by David Frankfurter. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 189. Leiden, Brill, 2019. Pp. xix + 797. 45 illustrations. Hardback €249, ISBN: 978-90-04-17157-2.

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papyri (cf. ἐν τῇ μαγικῇ ἐμπει[ρίᾳ], 'in the magical knowledge', *PGM* i.331, and see also *PGM* iv.210, 243). This does not take away from Frankfurter's general point regarding the need to rethink our categories and our terminology (a point I do endorse), but it is indicative, perhaps, of the limits of taxonomic splitting.

The second important methodological stimulus of the volume is drafted from approaches adopted in recent studies of the materiality of religion: that is, in the investigations of the 'substances that mediate powers and agency in the world' (17). Here, the editor encourages future investigations to consider issues of 'the *agency* of images and crafts, the *efficacy* of objects, the active *presence* in images, [and] the *vitality* of repurposed things' (17, emphasis in original). In this regard, the stress is on the cognitive and social construction of the materials: are they thought of as subversive or not, exotic or not, antithetical to religion or civic society or not (24)?

The second part of the volume focuses on the emic perspectives on what should not be called magical practices, but 'cultural constructions of ambiguous, unsanctioned or illegitimate ritual' (27) in different periods and places. In this section, the ban on the term 'magic' is absolute, and individual chapters on Mesopotamia, Iran, Egypt, Greece, ancient Israel and early Judaism, Rome and the Roman Empire, early Christianity, and Roman and Byzantine Egypt do an excellent job of introducing emic perspectives on such rituals, and clarifying terminological issues. Part 3, 'The Materials of Ancient Magic', adhering to the methodological stimuli broached above, looks at the evidence for magic, and more specifically at the textual and archaeological materials and their agencies: do materials tell us anything about the cultural assumptions about illegitimate or unsanctioned rituals? The eight chapters survey Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri, Christian spells from Egypt, binding spells on tablets and papyri, Jewish amulets, magic bowls and amulets in Aramaic and Hebrew, gems, figurines, textual amulets, and important architectural elements associated with illegitimate ritual practices. The final part, 'Dimensions of a Category Magic', explores magic as a heuristic term, as a quality, rather than as a class of social and material dynamics and communication. The seven intriguing essays in this section are consciously and intentionally experimental, even if they do cover a somewhat random collection of topics (the two outstanding chapters deal with speech-acts and theurgy respectively). A set of very good indices closes the volume.

This is a tremendously helpful guide, innovative in many respects, and thought-provoking throughout. By the time I reached the end of the volume, I was abuzz with questions. If we are to use this guide as a touchstone, then how does one re-set the discourse and realign the avenues of research on this material most effectively? Once we have grappled with nominalism and successfully managed to standardize our presuppositions, should the materiality of religion still represent the dominant methodological path? What viable alternatives are there? Should we talk about them now, or reach a consensus first?

All chapters are insightful and informative, and the book's arrival is timely and most welcome, even though it comes with a rather steep price tag. The editor should be thanked for the care he has taken in the work's production, and for his commitment to the project: Frankfurter is the author of six of the volume's twenty-eight essays, and he has also written a separate introduction for each of the parts. All those interested in Mediterranean religions will want to read it.

Issues of methodology raised above are at the core of yet another refreshing and inspiring edited volume on conceptualizations of religion: what is religion, and how

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do we need to talk about it? Frankfurter and his authors have shaken the foundations of what we call magic, while Nickolas P. Roubekas and his colleagues put religion, no less, between scare quotes and question the applicability of the term itself.[5]

Roubekas opens the collection by pointing out the fact that the study of Greek and Roman religion is far too often limited to the fields (and the departments) of Classics and Ancient History, whereas collaborations with colleagues from Religious Studies and other adjacent disciplines and fields remain underdeveloped. In consequence, the study of ancient religions is at times either limited in scope or inadequately informed by theoretical developments and methodological approaches outside Classics. This observation did strike a chord with me. But there is an additional complication: it seems to me that, in some cases, when investigations of ancient religions do mobilize theory in their analysis, there is a certain hue of hobbyhorse riding that approaches methodological fundamentalism: as if any single methodological approach could ever be the only game in town.

Rather than ousting or privileging any single method apodictically, Roubekas' open-minded volume provides a potpourri of methodologies, and issues an invitation to start an honest and broad cross-disciplinary conversation about what we mean when we talk about ancient religions. The cast is made up of both early career and well-established scholars from the fields of Ancient History, Asian-American Studies, Classics, Egyptology, Jewish Studies, Philosophy, and Religious Studies, providing a vast, and vastly contradictory, variety of perspectives.

The authors were commissioned to write the papers and there has been no conference or an occasion on which they would have been able to discuss their individual viewpoints. The result is highly intriguing: the papers, taken together, clash on nearly all fundamental issues: what is belief, what is ritual, what is magic, what is religious identity, and, of course, what is religion, or 'religion'. And this is the very purpose and the greatest boon of this volume – to sketch and lay bare the sheer immensity of the 'disciplinary chasm' (xi) and force the reader to listen to polyphony and atonality while suppressing the urge to iron out the book's numerous and constantly shifting viewpoints or to detect any kind of harmony. Reading this volume is an experience akin to listening to Schoenberg's concertos: the atonality is intentional, and the editor purposefully did not impose his authority to modify his authors' viewpoints.

Consider, for instance, Emese Mogyoródi's opening gambit: 'Greek religion was predominantly a matter of orthopraxy, compliance with cult and rituals prescribed by custom, rather than orthodoxy, beliefs, or convictions about matters divine' (103). Not only does this sentence look like something that would have taken pride of place in Appendix IV of Henk Versnel's *Coping with the Gods*, but it is also in direct opposition to Roubekas' own viewpoint on the role of belief – as articulated both in his contribution to this very volume and also elsewhere. Furthermore, fairly traditional modes of religious historiography focusing on doxographies and well-trodden paths of inquiry are placed next to discussions of the cognitive science of religion (CSR), theory of mind, Whitehouse's modes of religiosity, and an excellent discussion of conceptual metaphor.

[5] *Theorizing 'Religion' in Antiquity*. Edited by Nickolas P. Roubekas. Studies in Ancient Religion and Culture. Sheffield, Equinox, 2018. Pp. xiv + 458. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-1-78179-357-2; paperback £35, ISBN: 978-1-78179-674-0.

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For all these reasons, this work is challenging to summarize, so I provide a brief overview of the content. The volume consists of five parts containing eighteen essays, and it is bookended by an Introduction and an Epilogue. Part 1, 'From Language to Method', comprises three pieces highlighting the importance of the emic understanding of religious language (Steve Mason), a sustained critique of the term 'belief' based on CSR (Jason P. Davies), and a nuanced defence of the term 'religion' (Kevin Schilbrack). Part 2, 'The Greek World', contains essays on the Presocratics and the scientific study of religion (Donald Wiebe), fifth-century BC theories of *asebeia* (Mogyoródi), and Herodotus and the origins of the Greek gods (Roubekas). Part 3 continues the geographic orientation, 'From Mesopotamia to Rome', and introduces articles on the Mesopotamian lack of concepts of theory and religion (Alan Lenzi), magic and religion in ancient Egypt (Rita Lucarelli), the representation of Egyptian religion by Diodorus of Sicily (Panayotis Pachis), and conceptual metaphor and Roman religious discourse (Spencer E. Cole). In Part 4 we move on 'From Judaism to Christianity', and learn in two pieces about Philo and the issue of Jewish identity (Michael L. Satlow and Sarah Imhoff respectively), and about Tertullian and Christian identity (Roubekas), and we deconstruct the notion of 'early Christian communities' (Sarah E. Rollens). Part 5 focuses on 'Topics in the Study of (Ancient) Religion', and provides papers on broad matters, such as CSR and ancient religions (Leonardo Ambasciano), followed by a somewhat self-effacing but enthusiastic and interesting piece on Mircea Eliade and cultural geographies, authored by a geographer (Justin K. H. Tse), the biblical text and its fixity (James Crossley), and a broad-brush evocation of gender as a religious category (Irene Salvo). Brent Nongbri's Introduction, 'The Present and Future of Ancient Religion', aptly announces major themes of the volume, draws attention to emerging contradictions, and points out the difference between papers written by scholars of ancient religion, and scholars of religion who mobilize ancient evidence in their work. The Epilogue by Luther H. Martin provides a spirited and entertaining critical summary of the main themes and approaches in the volume.

Many papers in this book are excellent, and all of them provide much fodder for thought. Since, as Nongbri points out, we find ourselves at this odd juncture in the study of ancient religions where there is growing discomfort with the idea that there existed a discreet sphere of 'religion' in ancient societies, do we need to toss out the baby with the bathwater? This volume raises a great many important and substantial questions regarding the nature of our evidence for 'religion', the character of our critical language, and the scope of divides in humanistic disciplines dedicated to the study of ancient religions. It is clear that we need to talk more to each other. We might as well start by listening carefully to what this insightful, irritating, intelligent and genuinely path-breaking and bridge-building volume has to say.

Speaking of the nature of our evidence: a new fascicle of *Inscriptiones Graecae*, namely IG II/III^3, 4, 3, has been published. It contains around 140 inscriptions of religious character from Attica, including sacred regulations, hymns, oracles, and inscriptions found on border stones (*horoi*), as well as inscriptions from the theatre of Dionysus.[6]

[6] *Inscriptiones Graecae Vol. II/III. Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno posteriors [Editio tertia]. Pars IV. Dedicationes et tituli sacri. Fasciculus III. Tituli sacri. Tituli theatri Bacchi*. Edited by Jaime Curbera. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019. Pp. v + 232. 248 illustrations. Hardback £272, ISBN: 978-3-11-065656-5.

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The final book I chose to review in this issue deals with madness, or, more precisely, with divine *mania*.[7] In this study Yulia Ustinova focuses on the source material from the late archaic to the late classical period, in order to explore ancient Greek phenomena involving the alteration of consciousness, their mechanisms, and the historical background against which we ought to place them (17–20). To do so, she relies on traditional historical methods in combination with insights from neuroscience, cognitive science, and psychology: in other words, what is known otherwise as neurotheology and neurophenomenology, and was first championed in the field of Classics by the late Walter Burkert in his *Creation of the Sacred*.

In the Introduction, Ustinova sets the scene by reminding us of that most charming of passages from Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates discusses the dualism of *mania*, one stemming from human disease, the other from divine release, and then she lays down clearly the scope, limits and limitations, aims and doxography of the work on *mania*. We then turn to a chapter on prophetic *mania*, which surveys inspired divination in Greece and compares it with Near Eastern traditions. In the following chapter, Ustinova looks at the role of *mania* in initiations, as well as at the techniques employed for alterations of consciousness in such contexts. Bacchic frenzy is the topic of the fourth chapter, which discusses mythological and artistic portrayals of *mania* and the historicity of ritual Bakcheia, and provides a cross-cultural comparison by looking at the example of possession during dancing as part of St Vitus day rites in Germany in the sixteenth century. We encounter Lyssa and Phobos in the chapter on battlefield *mania*, and possession by nymphs in the following one. The next two chapters deal with poetic and erotic *mania* respectively, before we come back to philosophers and their perspectives on the phenomenon.

Everywhere in this excellent book Ustinova shows judiciousness, erudition, and attention to detail. She successfully and elegantly tackles complex issues of what constitutes *mania*, how it is induced, the means of induction, when it plays a role, and when it is out of place. To do so, she marshals an immense amount of evidence and information, builds clear and persuasive arguments, provides attractive and meaningful cross-cultural parallels, and showcases methodological sophistication throughout. I recommend this book wholeheartedly to anyone with an interest in Greek religion, history, or medicine, or in Greek culture more broadly.

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[7] *Divine Mania. Alteration of Consciousness in Ancient Greece*. By Yulia Ustinova. Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2018. Pp. xvi + 395. Hardback £96, ISBN: 978-1-1382-9811-8.

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