General

The last few years have brought us handbooks, companion guides and encyclopaedias in serried ranks. In size these works have ranged from magnum (opus) through to double magnum or perhaps (in the case of the 2010 *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*) to jeroboam. The new Wiley-Blackwell *Encyclopedia of Ancient History* outdoes them all in capacity (clearly a rehoboam) and range.[1] This vast work – comprising over 5,000 entries in more than 7,000 pages – advances confidently (note the bold use of the definite article in the title: *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*) beyond the confines of the 'classical world' and 'ancient Greece and Rome' to provide nothing less than a reference work for the whole of Ancient History from the Near East to the Egypt of the Pharaohs, from the Neolithic to the eighth century CE. The refusal of this work to recognize traditional boundaries would clearly have appealed to the spirit of Alexander III, the Great (whose entry spans an impressive six pages). Alexander would no doubt also be impressed by the remarkable juxtapositions which occur within this alphabetized encyclopaedia: in volume 11 we move within five pages from an Egyptian residence and town associated with Rameses II (Piramese) to the Greek district of Elis around Olympia (Pisa) to a 'short Jewish magical text of a Late Antique Babylonian provenance' (*Pishra de-Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa*; 5337). Alexander's attempts at eastward expansion proved, in the end, too much for his men. One wonders if this work too – in the form of thirteen printed volumes – may prove to be similarly overwhelming to many an undergraduate whose starting point lies in Augustan Rome or Periclean Athens: (consider, for example the daunting thirty-five pages of maps which precede the first entry in volume 1 (not 'Aardvark', alas, but 'Abantes'). However, it is important to consider that the print version of this work is not the end of the project nor even the main point of the project at all. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* is a true child of the World Wide Web. It has clearly been conceptualized as an online resource (not simply as a printed text that can be viewed on a computer screen) that will continue to expand and evolve:

The electronic form of the EAH will continue to add new articles, indeed new areas of the ancient world; to revise existing ones; and to create spaces for correction and discussion of published articles – even, in line with our conviction of the open-endedness of history, counter-articles.... It will try to represent something of the unsettledness of our disciplines and their vitality. It will continue to evolve as historical studies do. (cxxxvi)

A world without end? Alexander III, the Great would have been in his element.

The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World is another definitive-sounding, and 'comprehensive', reference work which seeks to expand our understanding of the ancient world by looking beyond the narrow confines of Greece and Rome (though this time in a little more than 1,000 pages and in two

[1] *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, and Sabine R. Huebner. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. clxxx + 7492. 13 volumes. Hardback £1,250, ISBN: 978-1-4051-7935-5.

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volumes).[2] In this brave new ancient world it is interesting to note that the reassuringly familiar ground of 'Archaic and Classical Greek Religion' and 'Roman Religion through the Early Republic' is summed up in fewer than sixty pages (280–305 [Greek]; 336–63 [Roman]; best to ignore the terrible photograph on p. 338). As a result, the greater part of the first volume presents a much less familiar and very stimulating series of encounters with the religions of Mesopotamia and the Near East (including the Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Zoroastrians, and Syro-Canaanites), Egypt, and North Africa (including discussion of the Phoenician-Punic religion), along with Celtic religious practices in western and central Europe. The remarkable diversity represented in this volume represents a refreshing challenge to old certainties and lazy thinking about religious practices in the 'classical world'. This same spirit also underlines the approach to the second, slightly larger, volume, which takes us from the Hellenistic age to Late Antiquity. As with the first volume, coverage is regional rather than 'by religion'. This has particular advantages when discussion turns to Christianity. Instead of tackling Christianity head on, as if it were a single monolithic entity, the regional emphases allow a more sophisticated approach to a dynamic and highly transformative religious system. Chapters cover Christianity in Syria, Egypt, Roman Africa, Asia Minor, Italy, and Gaul, but importantly this material is set alongside other competing/alternative religious systems and discourses, from the Parthian and Sassanian periods in Iran to Judaism in Egypt, Asia Minor and Italy, to 'traditional' religion in Roman Egypt.

It is no doubt in part the spirit of our globalized age that has been responsible for the shifting of traditional chronological, spatial, and thematic boundaries and for the re-imagining of the worldview of Greece and Rome. *The Making of the Middle Sea. A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* by Cyprian Broodbank is another wide-ranging book which rides the same boundary-breaking wave.[3] The Mediterranean clearly encourages big books and this work (in nearly 700 pages) can be seen as the final panel in a large-scale triptych (or, to use a more appropriate analogy, the third tier of a scholarly trireme), which began with Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), to be joined more recently by Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (2000). The focus of Braudel's work was the sixteenth century, while Horden and Purcell fixed most of their attention on the period between 800 BC and AD 1300. Broodbank, co-director of the Kythera Island Project, takes the story of the Mediterranean back to 'the beginning' – 1.8 million years ago – and follows the story through until 500 BC. This is an ambitious work of scholarship, written with great verve and infectious enthusiasm (never mind the opening four pages that read like a pitch for a BBC documentary series: 'Out here, the only sound is the clink of wind-

[2] *The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World.* Edited by Michele Renee Salzman and Marvin A. Sweeney. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Volume I: *From the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Age*. Pp. xiii + 450. 26 figures, 10 maps; volume II: *From the Hellenistic Age to Late Antiquity*. Pp. xviii + 589. 33 figures, 10 maps. Hardback £185, ISBN: 978-0-521-858-31-1.

[3] *The Making of the Middle Sea. A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World*. By Cyprian Broodbank. London, Thames & Hudson, 2013. Pp. 672. 387 illustrations, 49 in colour. Hardback £34.95, ISBN: 978-0-500-05176-4.

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sculpted splinters of limestone on others half buried in the red earth' [15]). This work is a great (and enviable) example of serious academic writing that is able to speak to the specialist and the general reader at the same time.

The Gods of Olympus. A History by Barbara Graziosi is another work that is able to communicate to the general reader the excitement of the classical world – an insightful book which wears its scholarship lightly and from which one can learn much.[4] Graziosi is an excellent communicator. The topic she has chosen could have spawned a book three times as long, but she has instead chosen to present a series of chronological snapshots – which Hokusai might have called 'Six Views of Mount Olympus'. After an introduction in which we are invited to 'meet the family', thanks to their presence on the Parthenon Frieze, Graziosi takes us from Archaic Greece through to the Renaissance, via Classical Athens, Hellenistic Egypt, Rome, and encounters with Christianity and Islam. To pick out just one moment, Chapter 15, 'Sackcloth and Scimitars' (172–82), offers a concise but fascinating discussion of Arabic engagement with Greek literature, considering for example why it was that Greek philosophical texts were translated into Arabic, while Homer and his gods remain untranslated. Along the way one also learns just why it is that Jupiter appears on the campanile of the Duomo in Florence dressed as a monk and how, down to an unfortunate matter of *mis*translation, an illustration to a translation of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* has Hermes brandishing not a *caduceus* but a penis in his hand!

Now you see them, now you don't. *Invisible Romans* by Robert Knapp is most readily summarized by its flamboyant subtitle: *Prostitutes, Outlaws, Slaves, Gladiators, Ordinary Men and Women…The Romans that History Forgot*.[5] Classical scholarship can hardly be accused of neglecting this silent majority over the last few decades, but this title plays well for a wider general readership – especially now that the National Trust and 'Downton Abbey' have revived our interest in life 'below stairs'. This material looks like the stuff that publishers' dreams are made of. Knapp's engaging account is divided into nine main chapters covering 'ordinary' men and women, the poor, slaves, freedmen, soldiers, prostitutes, gladiators, and bandits and pirates. Since elite literary sources have very little to say about these social strata, Knapp focuses his attention on those valuable fragments of 'non-elite' material that have survived, especially inscriptions (such as graffiti from Pompeii) and papyri, along with what can be gleaned from fables, proverbs, Christian writings, and the like. It is easy to forget the remarkable statistics that Knapp sets out at the start of his account: the three orders of the Roman elite (senators, equestrians, and *decuriones*) 'amounted to…less than half a percent of the empire's population of 50–60 million' (3). The invisible majority therefore amounts to some 99.5 per cent of the population of the Roman Empire. In the end Knapp delivers a rather upbeat conclusion on this downbeat population: 'It was a world of limited options and limited opportunities for bettering oneself. But it was not a world of despair' (315). He goes on to say that 'in the gritty reality of dealing with what comes along, seeking solace and reward in interpersonal relationships and the supernatural,

[4] *The Gods of Olympus. A History*. By Barbara Graziosi. London, Profile Books, 2013. Pp. x + 273. 32 illustrations, 11 in colour. Hardback £18.99, ISBN: 978-1-84668-321-3.

[5] *Invisible Romans. Prostitutes, Outlaws, Slaves, Gladiators, Ordinary Men and Women…The Romans that History Forgot*. By Robert Knapp. London, Profile Books, 2013. Pp. 371. 32 figures, 30 colour illustrations. Paperback £9.99, ISBN: 978-1-84668-402-9.

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and carving out a place for themselves, they are much like other people, ancient and modern' (316). Of course, Knapp is right. But when one reads today about another boatload of refugees drowning off the coast of Sicily or a truckload of women and children dying in the Sahara through dehydration or trafficked into slavery and abuse it is hard to think that this was not also an inevitable part of the invisible world of those invisible Romans. Countless unknown Romans surely did live and die in such a world of despair, but they have left no record at all, because there is no archaeology of despair.

Confronting the Classics. Traditions, Adventures, and Innovations by Mary Beard[6] is a book not just about confrontation but about

> how we can engage with or challenge the classical tradition, and why in the twenty-first century there is so much in Classics still to argue about; in short, it's about why the subject is still 'work in progress' not 'done and dusted' (or, in the words of my sub-title, why it is an 'adventure' and an 'innovation' as well as a 'tradition'). (ix)

Initially, it was something of a disappointment to discover that this was not a 'new' book, but rather a repackaging of a series of book reviews from the *Times Literary Supplement*, *London Review of Books*, and *New York Review of Books* from 1990 to 2012. But such feelings were misplaced: the reviews work extremely well as a collection (compare Ingrid Rowland's fine 2008 *New York Review of Books* compilation *From Heaven to Arcadia. The Sacred and the Profane in the Renaissance*), ranging from archaic Greek lyric poetry to Asterix the Gaul. As both collections show, a good review can be more insightful than the book itself and is certainly much quicker to read. Sometimes, of course, reviews can grow legs of their own – or at least wandering hands – as in the case of 'What gets left out' (264–71), the review of the *Dictionary of British Classicists* edited by Robert B. Todd (Bristol, 2004), which had recorded Eduard Fraenkel's achievements as Corpus Professor of Latin at Oxford while remaining silent about his reputation as 'a serial groper' (264). 'Do Classics have a future?' asks the title of Beard's introductory chapter (a transcript of a lecture delivered in the New York Public Library in December 2011). Inevitably, the answer one gets from reading this collection is a resounding yes, but how ironic that the three adjectives used on the front cover to describe the book ('learned, trenchant and witty') should derive neither from Latin nor Greek, but Anglo-Saxon and Middle English…

A Student Handbook of Greek and English Grammar by Robert Mondi and Peter L. Corrigan tells things as they are.[7] Its title may not be very catchy and its presentation is certainly not eye-catching, but this book provides an accessible comparative introduction to English and Greek Grammar. The book is aimed at student learners and is designed to be used alongside existing language textbooks. The authors make the point that textbooks and grammars frequently assume a level of linguistic competence, based on an existing understanding of English grammar, which those beginning to learn

[6] *Confronting the Classics. Traditions, Adventures, and Innovations*. By Mary Beard. London, Profile Books, 2013. Pp. x + 310. 17 b/w figures. Hardback £25, ISBN: 978-1-78125-048-8.

[7] *A Student Handbook of Greek and English Grammar*. By Robert Mondi and Peter L. Corrigan. Indianapolis, IN, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2013. Pp. xxii + 150. Paperback £11.95, ISBN: 978-1-62466-036-8.

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Greek no longer have. This new reference book introduces all constructions first in English and then in Greek. The material is clearly set out and explanations are helpful (see, for example, the explanation of 'particles' on pp. 140–1). It should be noted, however, that this is a book written for an American audience. British readers may be confused by 'deverbatives' (56) and somewhat taken aback by the non-standard English example 'unfreakingbelievable' used to illustrate the use of the prefix, infix, and suffix.

The time-honoured technique of ring-composition brings us back to Wiley-Blackwell with *Wiley's Real Latin. Learning Latin From the Source* by Robert Maltby and Kenneth Belcher.[8] The title is presumably designed to recall *'Bradley's Arnold' Latin Prose Composition*, but this time with pictures. Michael Gove would be sure to approve (though perhaps not of the pictures). The idea is an appealing one: why nourish students on a diet of artificial language exercises when one can drink from the *fons sacer* right from the word *ite*! The course has been written by two academics with much experience of language teaching at a university level and is supplemented by online resources. It contains much that will be useful for those teaching and learning in both schools and universities – and also for independent learners. Our one reservation is that the insistence that all text must come from 'original' Latin sources is unnecessarily restrictive. In the introduction the authors themselves point to the problems of this approach, 'not the least of which is finding "simple" examples that actually reflect the grammar introduced in each chapter' (xxiii). One can understand that *Wiley's 50% Real Latin. Learning Latin From Made-up Examples and the Source* would be less appealing from a marketing point of view, but there seems to be no harm in the use of a mixed economy for language teaching – one might say that one is then able to use the best of both worlds. Similarly, although the rationale is clear for using translated sentences from Latin authors for students to then translate back into Latin, the reason for relying *exclusively* on such sentences seems unclear.

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[8] *Wiley's Real Latin. Learning Latin from the Source*. By Robert Maltby and Kenneth Belcher. London, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. xxv + 319. Hardback £60, ISBN 978-0-470-65506-1; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-470-65507-8.

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