

(and, of course Theophrastus before him). But the abolition of representative or normative sacrifice after AD 70 meant that prayer became the major mode of communication with God in Judaism and ritual was forced to take on new shapes, which Stroumsa summarizes in the formula 'le rite s'est transformé en récit du rite, en quelque sorte en mythe' (121). One can follow the same transformation in the various forms of Christianity, including 'gnosis'. There is very much more in this short but highly suggestive book, which draws upon a dazzling array of recent, mainly Continental, work. It is full of brilliant aperçus that reward reflection (though, especially in the early pages, one shake one's head at the thought of the evidence that might be needed to sustain them). The last chapter, an appendix, reflects on the transformation of the relation between the pagan philosopher and his pupils into the 'magical emptiness' of the desert fathers. Stroumsa has the gift of making ideas exciting; whether he is right about the place of the Jewish experience is of course another question. But Momigliano's triangle, Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem, has acquired bold new significance.

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RICHARD GORDON

General

It is a commonplace that Greek and Roman literature is the near exclusive domain of men: written and consumed by a ruling male elite. Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore have given voice to a normally silent section of the Classical world, whose words have endured not because of their inclusion in any literary canon, but because of the simple happenstance of their survival in the sands of Egypt.¹ *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt* comprises translations of over three hundred texts written in both Greek and Egyptian from the fourth century BC to the eighth century AD, divided both into different archival groups and also into different themes from health to literacy to religion. Each translation is helpfully accompanied by concise notes on the scribal hand and on features of style. A useful introduction in the form of ten brief chapters helps to locate the letters within their social, cultural, and specifically epistolary contexts. Though it is Bagnall and Cribiore's explicit intention to allow the women whose letters they reproduce 'to speak to the present without the burden of faulty generalizations', they are wise enough to acknowledge the problems inherent in this position. As they say, there is 'no such thing as an entirely innocent way of presenting these materials'. However, though we are told by the blurb on the inside cover that 'only in their private letters can we discover unmediated expression of their authentic experiences', one wonders about the position in this process of male scribes, to whom many of the women seem to have dictated their letters. Women's voices are again brought to the fore in Isobel Hurst's *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics*,² which examines the role of classical literature in the writings of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hurst challenges our preconceptions about the exclusively male context of classical education, by demonstrating the importance of classical learning for women at this time. Furthermore, she argues that

¹ *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300BC–AD 800*. By Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore. Ann Arbor, MI, The University of Michigan Press, 2006. Pp. xiv + 421. Hardback £41.

² *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics. The Feminine of Homer*. By Isobel Hurst. Pp. viii + 253. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. Hardback £45.

this learning acted as a bond of encouragement and inspiration between women writers and their predecessors. Hurst's primary, though by no means exclusive, focus is on writers such as Eliot, Barrett Browning, and Gaskell, and the novel, which Hurst sees as peculiarly adaptable to contemporary concerns and readings. The first two chapters of the book outline respectively the nineteenth-century context of classical learning, both formal (schools, university) and informal (translations, literature, etc.); and the beginnings of women's classical education. The following chapters explore different aspects of the role that classical learning played for women writers – such as the fictive treatment of classical learning in literature (the literary topos of the negative representation of the selfish scholarly heroine juxtaposed with the compliant girl for whom culture is mediated by her father); or the role of ancient heroines in the writings of women (such as Medea, Aspasia, and Alcestis, where such characters are used to comment on the suffering of women excluded from the circles of high culture). Alongside the strictly 'Victorian' writers, the early twentieth-century writings of Brittain and Woolf are incorporated in the second part of the book. Hurst draws our attention to many interesting parallels, and her readings of individual texts offer insight; however, the overall aim of the book is obscured, and the importance of the work is lost in the intertextual references that are so cleverly drawn.

Two recent books on the practice and practicalities of teaching Classical languages and literature had their genesis in the *American Philological Association* and are both, unsurprisingly perhaps, geared explicitly towards the American market. This will inevitably limit their appeal, yet they should not be dismissed out of hand simply for this reason, since the opportunity to reflect on one's own strategies for teaching is always useful. *When Dead Tongues Speak. Teaching Beginning Greek and Latin*, edited by John Gruber-Miller,³ 'introduces classicists to the research that linguists, psychologists, and language teachers have conducted over the past thirty years'. The topics covered range from gendered approaches in language teaching to cognitive reading strategies, peer teaching, and an exploration of the advantages of introducing Greek as a spoken language, by the 'direct' method. Individual sections on teaching methodology are reinforced by examples and even transcripts of classroom practice.

A Concise Guide to Teaching in Latin Literature, edited by Ronnie Ancona,⁴ offers busy teachers the opportunity to keep up with recent developments in Latin scholarship through a series of short critical overviews of 'key' Latin authors written by established scholars in the field, from William Fitzgerald on Catullus to Richard F. Thomas on Dido in translation. The individual contributions are engaging but brief, and tend therefore to fall short of the expressed aim of the volume to use specific passages of text in order to highlight recent theoretical developments. As a result one is left feeling that this book is an interesting sampler but not a robust pedagogic tool in its own right, and one hopes that further volumes might focus on specific authors and texts.

The paperback edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World* by the late John Roberts⁵ (reviewed in hardback at *G & R* 53 (2006) 139) brings within the grasp of

³ *When Dead Tongues Speak. Teaching Beginning Greek and Latin*. American Philological Association, Classical Resources Series. Edited by John Gruber-Miller. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 238. Paperback £14.99.

⁴ *A Concise Guide to Teaching in Latin Literature*. Volume 32 Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture. Edited by Ronnie Ancona. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. Pp. xv + 112. Paperback \$16.95.

⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*. By John Roberts. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xix + 858. Paperback £8.99.

those even on the most modest of budgets a compact version of the definitive *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. As in the *OCD*, entries range from historical characters to more general themes such as ‘women’ or ‘sin’. Unlike the *OCD*, which ranges into the sixth century AD, Roberts’ dictionary ends in AD 180 with the death of Marcus Aurelius. The need to create a compact set of entries (containing just over one third of the content of the *OCD*) makes this chronological cut-off point understandable, yet it is a shame, at a time when the boundaries of the Classical world have been expanding so rapidly (into the worlds of the Second Sophistic and late antiquity, for example), that this volume should perpetuate such a narrowly defined idea of what constitutes the classical world. Interestingly, the chronological frame is not as tight as the cover blurb suggests – later Christians such as Constantine and St Augustine manage to sneak in, though later ‘pagan’ writers such as Claudian fail to make it. One excellent innovation in the dictionary is a specially commissioned appendix on ‘Money and its value in the Classical World’ – for which all teachers who have ever been asked ‘how much was a denarius really worth?’ or ‘what could you buy for a drachma?’ will be very grateful.

Dictionaries and encyclopaedic reference works on the Classical world continue to flow out of academic presses in a seemingly inexhaustible stream. **Classical Mythology* by Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon is now in its eighth edition.⁶ This compilation of translated sources supported by an impressive web-site and illustrated with images both ancient and more modern, is focused on the gods and goddesses of the Greek and Roman worlds. Its stated aim to ‘bring to life the myths and legends of Greece and Rome in a lucid and engaging style’ will not suit every reader – the scene in Euripides’ *Medea* where Medea announces to Jason that she has killed their children is quoted and immediately followed by the comment ‘Poor Jason!’, moreover, it is easy to feel frustrated by a lack of references and by the fact that what references there are lie buried at the end of chapters. Yet there is still much here to appeal to the inquisitive student of mythology, from family trees of the dynasties of Thebes to plans of the Erechtheum – and there is a particularly useful section on the later reception of the Classical myths, not only in literature and art but also as represented through the media of music, dance and film.

It is a sure sign of the ignorance of the reviewers that when *The Birthday Book by Censorinus*⁷ arrived for review our initial reaction was to wonder whether this were not some elaborate scholarly hoax – here, or so it was announced, was the first English translation of a brief essay on life, the universe, and everything (including thoughts on embryology, sundials, astrology, the teachings of Pythagoras, and the History of the World) written in the third century AD as a birthday present and translated by an American professor who lists among his publications ‘Sappho, Sulpicia, sexuality, slavery, sadism and spectacles’. As those less ignorant do not need to be reminded, Censorinus’ *Birthday Book* has long enjoyed the status of ‘minor classic’, acclaimed by Sidonius Apollinaris in the fifth century and being among the very earliest of books printed in Europe (1497). Such is Censorinus’ cult status that he has even had a crater named after him on the Moon. His brief work, now that we know it to be ‘authentic’, is a fascinating, even useful, repository of curious facts – a *Schott’s Miscellany* of its day. Anyone who might, for example, be troubled by the derivation of ‘crepuscular’ will discover that

⁶ *Classical Mythology*. By Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon. Eighth edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xx + 854. Paperback £23.99.

⁷ *The Birthday Book. Censorinus*. Translated by Holt N. Parker. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 102. Paperback £12.

'*crepusculum* or twilight' is 'possibly so called because uncertain things are called *creper*, and it is uncertain whether the time is night or day' – an uncertain definition that certainly suits such an uncertain word. Astrology, one of the topics briefly discussed by Censorinus, is itself the subject of a monograph – *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology* by Roger Beck.⁸ 'Why would one devote a book to an account of a pseudo-science, long since invalidated?' asks Beck disarmingly in his preface. In what follows, Beck gives a detailed description of how horoscopes were constructed and interpreted, covering material from the first century BC to the fourth century AD. For those without a specialist interest in the subject, the nature of the material does not make for an easy read. The shortest and most accessible part of the book, and most valuable for the general reader, considers the role of astrology within the wider contexts of the Classical world. It is the contention of James Rives that Roman religion had a unity that made it recognizable across the chronological and spatial extent of the empire.⁹ This he considers a 'normative tradition' shaped by Greek and Roman elite religion that outlined the chief modes of thought about the gods, cult practices, myth, and philosophy. Concurrent with this was a series of local customs and variations. These practices would have complemented, contradicted, or subverted the 'normative tradition'. However, the focus for Rives is the study of Religion in the Empire, not the individual religions, and he tries to examine the 'whole complex pattern of religious life'. Having established this position in the first two chapters of his book, Rives devotes subsequent chapters to examining the ways in which the 'normative tradition' was maintained or questioned. He discusses people's experience of the divine world; the role of shared cult practices and beliefs in the formation of communities of different scales (from household to city); the mechanisms that linked the different religions of the Empire; the instances of particular closeness to the divine (such as Orphic religion, the sibyls, the cult of Mithras, magic, and charismatic local leaders, etc.); and finally the role of authority in policing acceptable behaviour. The use of shaded text-boxes containing frequently used sources to aid repeated searches for them, the glossary, suggestions for further reading, and good maps make this an excellent introduction to the complex topic of Roman religion. The four volumes of *L'Africa Romana*¹⁰ have an interdisciplinary breadth similar to that of Rives' sources. This is the publication of the proceedings of the 16th conference of Roman African studies held at Rabat in December 2004. It contains over one hundred contributions in more than two and a half thousand pages. The dense and varied programme is testament to the vitality and interest of the subject, and the international list of contributors indicates the growing importance of the area within Roman studies more generally. The theme of the congress – mobility, migration, emigration, and immigration – is timely, and keys into developments in the discipline more widely (most obviously, Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea*). The theme unifies the papers that discuss a range of material (archaeological, artistic, epigraphic, historical, etc.) from all periods of Roman Africa. Several papers take Volubilis as

⁸ *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*. By Roger Beck. Oxford, Blackwell, 2007. Pp. xiii +159. Hardback £50; paperback £14.99.

⁹ *Religion in the Roman Empire*. By James B. Rives. Oxford, Blackwell, 2007. Pp. xiv +237. Hardback £55; paperback £18.99.

¹⁰ *L'Africa Romana. Mobilità delle persone e dei popoli, dinamiche migratorie, emigrazioni nelle province occidentali dell'Impero romano. Atti del XVI convegno di studio Rabat, 15–19 dicembre 2004*. Edited by Aomar Akerraz, Paola Ruggeri, Ahmed Siraj, and Cinzia Vismara. Rome, Carocci editore, 2006. 4 volumes. Pp. 2766.

their subject, casting light on urban evolution of the state in the light of recent discoveries, and the differing articulation of imperial cult at the site. The wide distribution of epigraphic data (in Britain and Gaul) shows the extent of Mauretanian networks. Similarly, black glaze pottery distribution attests commercial relations between Numidia Cesarense and Hispaniae. A further group of papers examines the role of the military in moving large groups of people to North African cities; while others discuss the movement of professional groups such as architects, doctors, scientists, and professors. Conversely, emigration of North African populations to Mediolanum (Milan), Capua, Naples, and Rome itself is demonstrated – the latter including the influential Aradii family through the analysis of the sculptural programme of their house. Iconographic material is dealt with in a number of other papers – for example, mosaics and the details of the capitals. The contributions are in a range of languages, and represent a number of schools and approaches. Individual contributions are often of excellent quality and well illustrated; however, the volumes, by necessity, do not present an overall argument, and there is no attempt at synthesis, making the work of limited use to anyone outside the field itself.

The same cannot be said for Colin Adams' account of land transport in Roman Egypt.¹¹ The book argues that land transport was more efficient than traditionally seen in accounts of the ancient economy (for instance those of Blunt or Finley), which stress water transport as the only economically viable means of transportation. It may seem surprising to set such a study in Egypt, where river transport is so particularly important. However, building on Hopkins' observation that land and sea transport were rarely used exclusively, and that, instead, they were part of a system, Adams looks at the overall system of transport in Roman Egypt. The river and roads formed parts of such a system, and the roads formed a particularly important part in the Eastern and Western deserts, and in the Oases. Using the evidence from papyri (private letters, accounts, and state-generated documentation) Adams discusses the complex interplay of economic, administrative, and social behaviours surrounding transportation, bringing to light aspects that are usually taken for granted – such as the trade in animals, patterns of their use, their capacity, and cost of initial purchase and subsequent maintenance. He shows a clear interdependence between the state and private individuals, in which the state devolved much of the responsibility for the administration and implementation of state transport. The book is clearly written and contextualized within the wider debates, while providing fascinating insights into the individual case study.

Patterson's *Landscapes and Cities* is similarly wide-ranging, both in its inspiration and in what it inspires. By focusing on landscape and urban evidence from Italy, the book explores the complex interplay of land ownership and exploitation, urban form, and social mobility in the first two centuries AD. It draws on archaeological, literary, and epigraphic sources to provide a synthetic analysis of this interplay. The book is divided into three roughly equal parts. The first, the 'survey of surveys', is a masterful analysis of the Italian survey data collected in the past fifty years or so, and provides a welcome attempt at pulling together the micro-scale results of individual projects. The resulting picture is of a high degree of variation and local specificity. The second part concentrates on the built environments of cities and towns, in particular the changing appearance of towns as a result of changing patterns

¹¹ *Land Transport in Roman Egypt. A Study of Economics and Administration in a Roman Province*. By Colin Adams. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Pp. xiv + 331. Hardback £60.

of euergetism: the fall in formal public political activities, and their replacement by more 'sociable' phenomena such as baths or theatres. As a result, Patterson documents a change in the appearance of cities and in the ideologies of urban life. The final section draws together the themes of the preceding two by focusing on social mobility. It explores the interrelatedness of changing social, economic, and political phenomena, so that, for instance, the process of the agglomeration of rural estates in complex, tightly knit, elite family groups is seen alongside changing agricultural practices, different access to social status, and increasing hierarchy in settlements, with Rome at the apex. *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons and Festivals*, edited by Simon Hornblower and Catherine Morgan,¹² had its genesis in a University of London research seminar held in 2002. Following the spirit of the seminar, the book adopts an explicitly interdisciplinary approach to Pindar and the athletic festivals that his poetry celebrated with articles ranging from a literary commentary on *Olympian* 12 by Michael Silk to an analysis of naked victor statues by R. R. R. Smith, with a concluding essay that reviews the key themes of the volume from an explicitly anthropological perspective by the late Mary Douglas. Interdisciplinarity is a concept much vaunted, but more honoured in the breach than in practice. It is all too often used as a way of categorizing diverse, yet largely unrelated, contributions on a specific theme. This is no surprise, as it is hard for scholars working in different areas to engage in any sustained and meaningful way with material and methodologies that lie outside their area of expertise – the occasional footnote to a different area of research does not constitute an interdisciplinary approach. *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons and Festivals* represents a successful example of interdisciplinarity – a carefully assembled dialogue across disciplinary boundaries that stimulates, provokes, and enriches. The concluding article by Mary Douglas is particularly important in presenting fresh and challenging perspectives from which to view not just Pindar, but the Classical world more generally. The volume opens with an anecdote from Vasari about a snowman sculpted by Michelangelo under commission from Piero de Medici. This snowman is used as a metaphor for the genre of praise poetry: 'great art, but ephemeral'. The image is itself, of course, ironically (and consciously?) Pindaric: it needs hardly be said that once the snow has melted we are left with the very thing which Pindar praised so highly in his first *Olympian*: ἀριστον μὲν ὕδωρ. . . . As if to illustrate the renescent topicality of sport in the Classical world come two more contributions to the subject. *Athletics in the Ancient World* by Zahra Newby¹³ provides a brief, but well-illustrated, basic introduction to key themes and sources relating to sport from archaic Greece into the Roman world. The interested reader may quickly wish to graduate from Newby's helpful overview to the more substantial (though less well-illustrated) account offered by Donald G. Kyle in his *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*.¹⁴ Here one will find not only impressive breadth of coverage (from 2000 BC Mesopotamia to the banning of gladiatorial combats in AD 404), but also detailed analysis based on a solid theoretical platform of ancient sport

¹² *Pindar's Poetry, Patrons, and Festivals. From Archaic Greece to the Roman Empire*. Edited by Simon Hornblower and Catherine Morgan. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Pp. xv + 473. Hardback £80.

¹³ *Athletics in the Ancient World*. Classical World Series. By Zahra Newby. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2006. Pp. 108. Paperback £10.99.

¹⁴ *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*. By Donald G. Kyle. Oxford, Blackwell, 2007. Pp. xvii + 403. Paperback £19.99.

studies. The series 'greece and rome *live*' from the Bristol Phoenix Press was introduced in 2004 with Gillian Clark's *Augustine* and Robert Garland's *Julius Caesar*, with the aim of demonstrating 'that the legacy of Greece and Rome has both relevance and resonance in our world today'. Its two most recent titles bring the number of slim volumes published to five, with another twelve forthcoming. *Hadrian's Wall and its People*, by Geraint Osborn,¹⁵ appears at first sight to present a very traditional narrative, that moves us from A to B with the minimum of fuss – like a textual version of the wall itself – with such chapters as 'Why build a wall?', 'Military life', 'Civilian life', and 'the End of Roman Britain'. It is illustrated with a familiar host of images (and ones less familiar, such as the War Memorial in Gateshead – part of an interesting chapter on 'Hadrian's Wall and the English Sense of History'), but the book does itself and its subject few favours by the inclusion of poor hand-labelled maps and off-putting line-drawings, illustrating, for example, 'A Romano-British farmer beside his roundhouse.' However, the lesson of the book is also the lesson of the wall: appearances can be deceptive. Osborn presents a clear and persuasive account of how an emphasis on military aspects of the wall has blinded us to the way that the wall was experienced as a part of civilian life – and has resulted in a bias against excavating *vici* and native farmsteads. Osborn's work, in contrast, chimes with more recent scholarship that explains the wall more in terms of ideology than defence. Gideon Nisbet injects his own distinctive style and an infectious sense of enthusiasm into his *Ancient Greece in Film and Popular Culture*.¹⁶ The thesis of the book emerges from the simple observation that, whereas Rome has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with celluloid, Greece has failed to sustain a meaningful relationship with the cinema. In answer to the question 'Why did *Troy* and *Alexander* get such a frosty reception from critics and audiences?', Nisbet refuses to accept the obvious and banal answer that they were simply bad films; instead he probes wider and more important issues about the reception of Greek culture in the modern world. As a result one is forced to consider more interesting and provocative questions: not 'Why is *Troy* a bad film?', but rather 'Why is Greece such a hard concept for the modern world – particularly Hollywood – to think with?'

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¹⁵ *Hadrian's Wall and its People*. Greece and Rome Live. By Geraint Osborn. Exeter, Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006. Pp. xiv + 132. Paperback £12.99.

¹⁶ *Ancient Greece in Film and Popular Culture*. Greece and Rome Live. By Gideon Nisbet. Exeter, Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006. Pp. xvi + 170. Paperback £12.99.