

# EDITORIAL

From the archaeology of Etruria to Constantinopolitan brickstamps and Homer to Venantius Fortunatus, this issue ranges widely over traditional classical turf and beyond. Sacred laws, sea routes, and *Star Trek* all make appearances; but we begin with some fundamental tools of the trade. Michael Reeve's new text of Vegetius' *Epitoma rei militaris* is hailed by its reviewer, Nigel Holmes, as 'greatly superior to its predecessors' (p. 555), advancing our knowledge of the manuscript tradition, and improving on the hitherto standard edition of Önnersfors in numerous places. The resurgence of interest in Nonnus is illustrated by the publication of further volumes in the Italian and French series of the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John* and the *Dionysiaca* respectively; readers of the reviews (pp. 474–7) will be left in no doubt of the depth of scholarship brought to bear on these texts by the series directors, Enrico Livrea and Francis Vian, and their co-workers. Among commentaries on texts closer to the chronological centre of classical studies, we single out as especially notable Lindsay Watson's on the *Epodes* of Horace, 600 pages in length, and compared by its reviewer, Michèle Lowrie, to Nisbet–Hubbard (and now Nisbet–Rudd) on the *Odes* (p. 525). Recent issues of *CR* have drawn attention to current debates on the commentary genre; the scale of Watson's, and of Gianfranco Agosti's on Nonnus' *Paraphrase of John 5* (nearly 300 pages, with 200 more of introduction, on 180 lines of Greek text), prompts us to observe that, in general, commentaries seem to be getting bigger, and to ask whether bigger necessarily implies more useful—the answer is probably 'yes', provided that the commentaries are of high quality, and that others on a less colossal scale continue to be produced alongside them (and not just for undergraduate use).

Epigraphers will be interested in the appearance of the second fascicle of *IG XII.6*, completing the Samian corpus, and adding inscriptions from the Corassiae islets and Ikaria. Though most of the texts are considered by the reviewer, Graham Shipley, to be inconsequential in themselves, they nonetheless 'illustrate the liveliness and persistence of the epigraphic habit in one middle-ranking island *polis*, its *chora*, and its sometime dependent territories', and make even clearer than before that 'Roman Samos merits special study' (p. 605). Particular praise is reserved for the volume's indexes, which 'surpass the expectations even of a habitual *IG* user' (p. 607): amid the complaints frequently heard these days—and occasionally echoed in the pages of this journal—concerning the quality of (some) contemporary academic book production, it is reassuring to be reminded that a very high level of service continues to be provided in some quarters, by both scholars and publishers. Papyrologists and Byzantinists, in turn, will be glad to have available the first volume of documentary texts from the carbonized rolls found at Petra, 'editorial nightmares' in the words of Nikolaos Gonis (p. 656), who expresses gratitude to the editors (a Finnish team, in this case) for undertaking so difficult a task.

Two works forming part of authoritative encyclopaedic publications in the areas of ancient history and literature are also reviewed in this number. Alison Cooley discusses Volume XI of the new *Cambridge Ancient History*, covering the Roman Empire from A.D. 70 to 192 (pp. 634–6). In her view, this volume essentially achieves its aim of 'presenting an authoritative account of a particular period that is comprehensible to the lay reader as well as taking into account recent trends in

scholarship and new discoveries', a not inconsiderable feat; at the same time, she expresses certain reservations about accessibility (plates not integrated into the volume, ancient technical terms not always glossed or other Greek and Latin phrases translated), and about consistency between one chapter and another—divergences of opinion are of course inevitable, and indeed welcome, in multi-authored works, but Cooley's suggestion that cross-references be included to alternative views presented in the same volume seems to us valuable in a variety of respects. A difficulty facing editors of new volumes in long-established and highly regarded reference series is the sheer weight of tradition which these series bear, especially in regard to format; thus Peter Brown reports a concern of Werner Suerbaum, editor of the first volume of the Herzog–Schmidt *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur*, that he was constrained to 'map his sections onto those of Schanz–Hosius', which Herzog–Schmidt is designed to replace (p. 505). Nonetheless, Brown makes clear that in practice Suerbaum found ways around this problem, and expresses admiration for the care and accuracy evident in the preparation of what he predicts will be a much-consulted resource for the study of Latin literature to the death of Sulla, rich in testimonia and bibliography. Of a quite different order is Tim Whitmarsh's 'attractively conceived and packaged survey of ancient Greek literature', reviewed by Susan Stephens on pp. 387–8. This represents a strongly contemporary style of literary history, examining the material in relation to theories of literature and key cultural issues, while maintaining a helpful (one might say essential) chronological thread; for Stephens, the 'unified vision' presented by the author is 'far more intelligible, acute, and therefore usable, than the usual handbook-by-committee approach'. This should not be taken as criticism of monumental enterprises of the Herzog–Schmidt type (Suerbaum himself was responsible for no less than two-thirds of Volume I in any case): the two kinds of survey embody different aims and direct themselves to different (though overlapping) readerships, and their juxtaposition here should remind us that there are many kinds of scholarly excellence and that we benefit from all of them.

Ancient philosophy continues to generate a wealth of studies, often in the shape of collections of papers, but also in monograph form. Plato in particular is well served in this issue, which presents reviews of several books on individual works—the *Cratylus*, *Theatetus*, *Parmenides*, and (if it is Platonic) *Clitophon*—as well as broader or more thematic studies. The question of how Platonic dialogues should be read is raised in John Cleary's critique of Christopher Bobonich's *Plato's Utopia Recast* (pp. 436–9): different experts will no doubt have different answers, but the interpretative difficulties posed by Plato's use of the dialogue form seem to us to make the question fundamental, with implications beyond the particular field of ancient philosophy. Of books concerned with ancient art, a collected volume on Greek vase-painting edited by Clemente Marconi demonstrates how scholars 'are now developing diverse methodologies that variously situate Greek vases within a much broader evidential context for cultural historical study' (Anne Mackay, p. 664), while Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones's investigation of Greek veiling is described by Sheila Dillon as 'arguably the most important study of Greek female dress in recent years' (p. 684).

Dillon's discussion of Llewellyn-Jones's book connects the subject of the veil in antiquity with contemporary issues such as the ban on headscarves in French schools, and one of the most striking features of this number is the prominence of items on themes with strong resonances in the modern world. Thus we have reviews of, for example, Rosanna Omitowaju's study of rape in classical Athens (Nick Fisher, pp. 582–4), Konstantinos Kapparis's volume on abortion in the ancient world (Ann Hanson, pp. 495–7), and Benjamin Isaac's search for 'the invention of racism in

classical antiquity' (Michael Lambert, pp. 658–62). While the appearance of such books might be said to depend generally on the increased interest in ancient social history that has emerged in recent decades, it cannot be coincidental that all three of these titles relate closely to red-hot social and political topics of the early twenty-first century. What is demonstrated here is one of the ways in which the world in which we live informs our investigations of the world of ancient Greece and Rome—with the results of at least some of those investigations in turn offering a more nuanced understanding of our own world. Thus Omitowaju's book (reviewed on p. 582), framed through its title in terms evoking modern notions of one kind of transgressive sexual behaviour, argues that

Athenian conceptions of heterosexual sexual offences involving 'respectable women' are fundamentally concerned with questions of male honour, familial social status, and the legitimacy of children, and much less concerned, if at all, with the issue that dominates current discussions and trials, of the consent of the woman, and the distinction between forced and consensual sex.

We gain from the comparison; and if some studies fail to convince through questionable assumptions or other faults of execution, as Isaac's (though 'meticulously researched and annotated', p. 658) fails to convince Lambert, there can still be merit in the attempt, as readers are brought to engage with the material and argument and develop their own conclusions, refining their ideas in the process.

The interface between the classical world and later cultures, our own above all, is even more evident in the mushrooming area of reception studies, represented in this issue by reviews of books on Pindar (pp. 406–7), the *Odyssey* and its hypertexts (pp. 686–8), and Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (pp. 688–90). The raising of popular awareness of Greco-Roman antiquity through the renaissance of the Hollywood historical epic and creative literary and filmic adaptations of central classical texts is something for which our profession must surely be grateful; at the same time books such as these not only encourage reflection on the ancient material and the societies which 'receive' it, but promote hermeneutic explorations and raise ethical questions. The editors of *Odyssean 2001*, Walter Erhart and Sigrid Nieberle, thus 'characterize their book as itself an intellectual odyssey' (Martin Winkler, p. 686; the volume derives from a Greifswald conference, and we cannot help wondering what Wilamowitz would have made of it), while in her review of Winkler's own edited collection on *Gladiator* Joanna Paul draws attention to the conflict between film-makers' demands and historical authenticity, which can generate strong feelings—in this regard many of us will agree that 'slavish worship at the shrine of historical accuracy' (p. 689) is not a virtue, but wherever history is rewritten for a popular medium there will always be an ethical dimension to be exposed and evaluated (no film is ever 'only a film').

This issue of *CR* is the current editors' last. If we have managed to sustain the quality of a journal which first appeared in the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, that is due chiefly to the work of our contributors, who represent a wide cross-section of the best international classical scholarship (experts from seventeen countries have contributed to this issue). We thank them, and look forward to a continued association with all of them beyond these pages.

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