

the bird-headed Cloud Horse who rescued two hundred and fifty men who believed his warning that the women of the island where they were shipwrecked were demons, and flew them safely home; and Buddha the wise pariah dog who saved his fellow pariahs from the King's edict that they must be slaughtered. This last has an almost Uncle Remus flavour.

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ART AND LITERATURE IN FOURTH-CENTURY ATHENS. By T. B. L. Webster. (University of London, The Athlone Press; 25s.)

I once had occasion to ask a scholar who had behind him a working life-time spent on classical authors what he thought of a lecture he had recently heard on an aspect of early Greek culture. His reply was withering: 'It was all about *pots!*' Such diehard conservatism is, I suspect, comparatively rare now amongst students of Greek and Roman civilization, and has been replaced by a readiness to see the value of synoptic inquiries over and above the specialist disciplines. It is a study of this kind that Professor Webster has undertaken here. His aim is to trace 'the inter-relations of thinkers, writers and artists' at a most important stage in their history, the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic Age. In this period Athens was the intellectual capital of the Greek world; here, in a community whose very smallness and compactness (by modern standards) intensified their influence upon one another, were gathered men of outstanding creative ability, native and foreign, each in his own way an integral part of the complex pattern of changing ideas; from here the new forms of expression spread abroad to all parts. It is therefore obvious that the theme of the book is both interesting and valuable; equally obvious, however, that, if it is to receive the treatment it deserves, the writer must bring to it a thorough understanding of a wide range of subjects. This—as indeed one would have expected—Professor Webster clearly does; the rhetorical technique of Lysias, the literary criticism of Plato, the biology of Aristotle, the character-drawing of Theophrastus, the style of presentation employed by the New Comedy, the vases of the Meidias painter, the sculpture of Lysippus—these are merely a few typical examples of the many different topics which are in turn analysed surely and clearly to provide the basis for the general conclusions. Indeed, these analyses often have their own special interest apart from their place in the overall picture; the discussion of the characteristics of fourth-century tragedy and their relation to the *Poetics* seems to me outstanding in this respect.

As a result of these analyses, Professor Webster distinguishes three phases, which correspond roughly to the periods in which Plato, Aristotle and Theophrastus respectively dominated Athenian philosophy, and in each he finds what he describes as a characteristic attitude,

though he warns us that hard-and-fast divisions cannot be expected. The first attitude he calls 'seeing things in contrast', the second 'seeing the structure', the third 'seeing the appearance'. To the first correspond, e.g., Isocrates's antithetical prose style, the hypostatized Forms of Plato, the detachment of Praxiteles's deities from mortal things; to the second, the close-knit periods of Demosthenes, the stress laid by Aristotle on organic structure, the careful composition of the original painting from which the famous Alexander and Darius mosaic is copied; and to the third, Theophrastus's meticulous concern with the individual, the careful characterizations of Menander, and the emphasis on 'the particularity of the moment and the subject' in contemporary portraiture.

It is perhaps inevitable that a study of this kind, if it is to be more than superficial, will cause the reader some difficulty in retaining a grasp of general trends whilst following individual arguments, no matter how lucidly these are presented; the more so because, as Professor Webster himself gives warning, the cross-currents are subtle and not easily defined. (This difficulty is perhaps greatest in the section on Plato's Athens, probably because of the greater complexity of the subject-matter.) However, the fact that each stage of the argument is consolidated by a concise summing-up does much to help the reader and to pave the way for the general review with which the book closes. Of the three sections it is I think the one on Aristotle which is most readily grasped as a whole; and if this is so, it is not surprising; for from this analysis, Aristotle emerges as very much the dominant figure of the period, whose wide interests reach out to all spheres of creative activity, and make him the very centre of the great revolution of thought; indeed, the closing part of this section consists almost entirely of Professor Webster's tribute to what he calls 'the overwhelming greatness of Aristotle'.

To pass a final judgment on the conclusions reached would require a breadth of scholarship equal to Professor Webster's own, and indeed would perhaps in the last resort be impossible, for there must always remain a certain subjective element in appreciations of this kind; but it is clear that the book does help greatly to an understanding of the intellectual climate of the period, and those whose interests are more specialized will be grateful to Professor Webster for enabling them to see their own particular subjects set in place against this wider background. Not, I think, a book for the general reader, in that it inevitably presupposes some acquaintance at least with such a wide range of topics, nor perhaps one which will yield all its fruits at a first reading; but certainly one which, for those who are prepared to read closely and reflect upon it, has much to offer.

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