

# BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Alan Beale, Peter Jones  
and Colin Leach

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## CLASSICAL CIVILISATION

**EUREKA! EVERYTHING YOU  
EVER WANTED TO KNOW  
ABOUT THE ANCIENT GREEKS  
(BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK),**  
by Peter Jones  
Atlantic Books (2014) h/b 384pp  
£19.99 (ISBN 9781782 395140)

This accessible and entertaining book covering the whole of Greek history in clearly defined temporal segments is a great read. He begins with the Trojan War (and therefore discusses Knossos and Hisarlik), and ends with the rise of the Roman Empire. Along the way he introduces the key players of the age, including Homer, Socrates, Alexander the Great and Archimedes; he outlines the role of the gods, provides fascinating insights into everyday life in ancient times, and shows us the very foundations of Western culture. All of this is described in J.'s usual clear and concise language and sprinkled with his trademark wit.

A useful introduction gives tips on pronunciation, as well as a series of maps. The chapters appear chronologically, each beginning with a handy timeline, and they go on to be divided up into regular sub-headings, meaning that the book is accessible to all. While chapters are organised in a logical manner that would allow you to dip in and out of the book for reference using the contents or index as appropriate, the book has a clear sense of continuity. It does, therefore, read well as a whole.

Did you know that our word 'copper' derives from the Greek *Kypros*, 'Cyprus',

which was well known for its copper mines? Likewise, how many holiday makers would be aware that a visit to Santorini was actually one to Santa Irene ('Holy Peace') – the name of a local church given to the island in the thirteenth century AD? Such enchanting nuggets of information are a feature of the book, alongside slightly more obscure ones. The importance of pigs was one fine example: in order to preserve the meat of this particular livestock, the 'cheap, less tempting bits were salted and made into sausages. The Greeks did not have a single word for 'sausage': they had eleven.' Fascinating stuff.

As well as illuminating revelations, the book does of course deal with the expected topics such as the rise of democracy, the building of the Parthenon, and the Peloponnesian war, and information is frequently accompanied by quotations taken from writers such as Plato or Sophocles. But J. has not set out to form an argument or produce a scholarly debate. Rather he presents the facts and, having laid them all out, he draws logical conclusions as and when required.

For me as a teacher of Classical Civilisation, some of the book was prior knowledge, but it acted as a handy reminder of all those facts that students often ask and you might have forgotten. At the same time there were plenty of areas where my knowledge was limited, and J. ensured I was informed of the essential details. Without a doubt it reignited my passion for the subject and I cannot wait to return to many of the places mentioned, or hunt out artefacts, frescoes or corners of sites and cities that J. refers to. However, the book would also be a superb gift for anyone with an interest in the period. It is the sort of book that would appeal to novices and experts alike. It was a sheer delight to read from beginning to end.

*Chloe Lewis: St Margaret's School, Bushey*

## GREEK AND ROMAN CONSOLATIONS:

**Eight studies of a tradition and its  
aftermath, ed. by Han Baltussen**  
Classical Press of Wales (2013) h/b  
200pp £47.17 (ISBN 9781905125562)

This book, like so many, had its origins in a colloquium, held at the ICS in London

in 2007, though 'some papers were subsequently commissioned for the collection': hence, one assumes, the lengthy gestation. Certainly, seekers after knowledge on the subject are more likely than not to find what they want, though the reviewer was somewhat disappointed not to see any discussion of that well-known poem attributed to pseudo-Ovid, the *Consolatio ad Liviam*. B.'s *Introduction* admirably covers the book's contents, and is followed by a wealth of footnotes and a lengthy bibliography (as, indeed, are the individual essays). B. also offers an essay on Cicero's 'curious'—and fragmentary—*Consolatio ad se*. Worthy of note are JHKO Chong-Gossard's *Mourning and Consolation in Greek Tragedy: the rejection of comfort*, and D Konstan's *The Grieving Self: Reflections on Lucian's 'On Mourning' and the consolatory tradition*. (Why have titles become so elongated?). C-G's essay concentrates on the refusal to be consoled: good examples come from Euripidean fragments (notably *Dictys* and *Hyppis*), his *Alekestis*, and from Sophocles' *Electra*. 'That (i.e. refusal of attempted consolation) is the vicious nature of a genre based on extraordinary characters from mythology'. Well, yes, but this is, after all, Greek *tragedy*, in which *kakon kakois kakon pherei*.

Konstan has a perhaps more agreeable task in looking at Lucian's unsurprisingly satirical critique of mourning practices and consolatory literature (typically, he points out that the lamentations of the living are no use to the dead, any more than are garlands on tombstones and the like, while implying that it is a hypocritical charade when, say, parents are coaxed to eat at the funeral feast): has the time come for more critical attention to be paid to this prolific, but rather under-studied author? Incidentally, guidance about where best to locate this work, e.g. in the Loeb Library edition of Lucian, would have been helpful.

JHD Scourfield finds the 'genre' of 'consolation' abnormally fluid and hard to define: since, not without justice, he even wonders how far it is a meaningful category at all; his conclusion that consolation is ubiquitous and universal need occasion no surprise, for him or us. (His 138 footnotes, though, provide plenty of meat.) Marcus Wilson offers a new reading of Seneca's consolatory writings (was Seneca's aim not to sympathise but to shock?) and Josef Loessl writes about Augustine of Hippo,

arguing that his work should be interpreted as ‘both a continuity and a transformation of ancient consolation’. Peter Adamson shows the close link between Arabic ethical treatises and Greek philosophical consolation; G Boys-Stones uses the example of the pseudo-Plutarchan *Consolatio ad Apollonium* to take a ‘clean run’ at considering how a philosopher might view or use consolation in general.

Your reviewer was left with the reflection that the mountains have indeed laboured greatly, but that the end-product will be of necessarily specialist interest, far removed from the schoolroom or college lecture hall. Sensibly, passages in Greek and Latin are translated. The book production is of a notably high standard.

*Colin Leach*

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**A COMPANION TO THE ANCIENT NOVEL** ed. by Edmund P. Cueva and Shannon N. Byrne  
Wiley Blackwell (2014) h/b 612pp  
£120.00 (ISBN 9781444336023)

This excellent series, *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*, now contains nearly fifty titles, and it seems to me to have been consistent in achieving its stated aims of providing sophisticated and authoritative overviews of periods of ancient history, genres of classical literature, and the most important themes in ancient culture. This volume comprises approximately thirty-seven concise essays written in a clear, provocative, and lively manner, ‘designed for an international audience of scholars, students, and general readers’. This area of study has recently seemed to be breaking out from its specialist confines in doctoral theses and expensive monographs: for example, *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (CUP 2008, ed. Tim Whitmarsh), the nineteen chapters of which appear frequently in the reference sections here. For many of us, I suspect, if it had not been for Balme’s *The Millionaire’s Dinner Party* and Balme and Morwood’s *Cupid and Psyche*, we might not have read any of the texts covered in this volume at all. Speaking for myself, that is a significant loss, to be rectified now by reading the collected translations in B.P. Reardon’s anthology (4<sup>th</sup> revised edition, 2008).

There are four parts to this volume: Novels and Authors (divided into Greek and Roman); Genre and Approaches; Influences and Intertextuality; Themes and Topics. There were very few chapters in any part which I did not find engaging. The opening eleven chapters would be an excellent place to direct any reader approaching the texts or genre for the first time. The five major Greek novels and two major Latin ones lead the way, by (in order of presentation) Chariton, Longus, Xenophon, Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus, Petronius and Apuleius. Lesser or fragmentary texts are also dealt with succinctly. There is a pleasing lack of conformity in the approaches taken by the contributors, some offering a summary of the text discussed and others not; all, however, tackle important issues of authorship (whether biographical and dating controversies or contested attributions), recurring themes and generic conventions. There is little theoretical obfuscation to be found anywhere in the chapters: it seems to me that the ‘general reader’ of the series’ mission statement has been kept in mind by nearly all of the contributors.

My own personal interests may dictate which chapters, apart from the essential introductory ones, I would recommend most: De Temmerman on Characterisation, the sequence of ten chapters on intertextual matters across the novels (e.g. Hallett and Hindermann on Roman Elegy and the Roman Novel or Zanetto on Greek Novel and Greek Archaic Literature), the chapters on gender, education and Greek love, or finally Winkler on the links between Achilles Tatius, Heliodorus and Alfred Hitchcock (with frequent recourse to Aristotle on ‘the wondrous’, ‘the irrational’, etc).

I have some criticisms: the relevance of some chapters to the subject-matter of the volume is not made clear (e.g. a survey of ‘Latin Culture in the Second Century AD’) and there is inconsistency in the handling of quotations, especially Greek which is sometimes written in transliterated form, but more often not. There are, though, far more positive things to say about this book than negative. It would make an excellent additional, third book on the library shelves (alongside Reardon and Whitmarsh), if you can afford the price. If not, the paperback edition seems to

follow the hardback after three years; and this volume will not date.

*Stephen Chambers: Balliol College Oxford*

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## GREEK LITERATURE

**HOMER, THE ODYSSEY**  
tr. by Martin Hammond with intro.  
by Jasper Griffin Bloomsbury (2014)  
p/b 352pp £9.82 (9781472532480)

This is a reissue of Hammond’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* from 2000, which must compete with many other translations of the *Odyssey* available for teachers’ recommendation to classes. It is a prose translation, with helpful layout and useful introduction, clearly presented on the page and well bound in a sturdy cover. It has line numbers next to the text to help students navigate their way through the text and to make precise references. Proper nouns are given in the Greek style, even to the extent that familiar names like Circe become Kirke, which may make things tricky, as traditional English pronunciations will not fit the transliteration on the page; the Cyclops remains the Cyclops however. The old favourite ‘the wine-dark sea’ has gone and the sea becomes sparkling; other formulaic epithets (‘Dawn with her rosy fingers’) are repeated exactly, remaining true to Homer but sitting awkwardly with the modern prose which would not use repeated phrases in the same way.

The aim of the translation is to accurately render the Greek into modern English. The diction throughout is modern with no archaizing or elevated tone apparent, which means that poetry is almost entirely absent. It could certainly be recommended for students working closely with the Greek text for a precise idea of how a passage should be translated; students of Classical Civilisation reading for speed and the story may find it rather flat. Despite the modern idiom the speeches do not sound as though anyone would actually say them, so the text falls between a heightened narrative recitation and a prose text to be read like a novel.

Here is Hammond in the passage where Eurykleia recognises Odysseus:

‘Joy and grief together seized her heart and her eyes were filled with tears, and her strong voice was blocked.’

Compare this to E V Rieu's more natural rhythms in the Penguin Classics edition: 'Delight and anguish swept through her heart together; her eyes were filled with tears; her voice was strangled by emotion.'

Neither can get the effect of Fenton in Pope's version of the *Odyssey*:

'Smiles dew'd with tears the pleasing strife exprest/Of grief and joy, alternate in her breast.'

Overall this is a highly professional production, to be seriously considered for textbook use in the classroom.

*John Bulwer: Euroclassica*

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**SOPHOCLES ANTIGONE: A  
VERSE TRANSLATION WITH  
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,  
by David Mulroy  
Wisconsin (2013) p/b 96pp £8.95  
(ISBN 139780299290849)**

M. firmly sets out 'to do justice to the rhythmic character of the spoken passages by using a strict iambic pentameter, while conveying the musicality of the songs by using short, rhymed stanzas.' (p.ix). In other words, M.'s aim is to animate the musical and performative element of the ancient text, re-animate how it would have been performed in antiquity with rhythm and pulse, removing the mundanity of most motionless translations of ancient Greek drama. The impact of this lyrical composition is that the ancient stage is brought to the modern era and vividly transferred to modern performers, dancers and—ultimately—to the modern audience.

Suddenly the student of Greek performance is reminded that, unlike modern renditions of Sophocles or indeed the spoken words of modern plays more generally, metre influences and transforms the meaning of the performance. M., to capture the ancient stage, has brought to life the technicalities of the ancient language and through the vernacular has allowed the student an appreciation of the compositional sophistication of Sophocles' metre.

M. throughout the translated text provides informed notes about a range of topics and themes, such as: stage directions (pp. 2, 9), language (pp. 4, 20, 32), textual comparisons (p.6),

background myths (pp. 10, 33, 44, 46), information about the gods (pp. 11-12), Greek customs and laws (pp. 25, 28, 47, 49). These notes aid the reader's understanding of the cultural, religious and historical context of the play, as well as allowing the reader a glimpse at modern reception. For example, M. encourages the modern audience to appreciate the gravitas and centrality of core cultural values, such as divine laws, role of the gods, heroism, and how fundamental these values would have been to the ancient audience.

However, much of M.'s volume is not so much taken up by the translated text itself, but by the introduction and appendices. It is unclear why appendix 1 and 2 appear after the translated play, as the function of these latter sections seem to provide an extended version of the introduction. For example, in the introduction, M. offers a discussion on Oedipal myth and a synopsis of the story, followed by a discussion on ancient history from 1200-300BCE, before returning again to the mythological elements in the *Antigone* (xxvii). The introduction's finale refers to the Greek theatre, use of masks and theatrical festivals. Whilst all of this information is interesting and insightful; the presentation and ordering of the introduction could have been better arranged with the concerns of the appendices being absorbed at this point.

However, the ordering of the book is a very minor point to raise and, in fact, comes down to preference. It ought not to be overlooked that for a short volume this book packs a dramatic punch. M. offers any reader an informed, astute, insightful and lively volume. In short, this volume is excellent in its capture of antiquity and modern presentation and would be most useful as an introduction to Greek theatre to all students of Sophocles.

*Sam Newington: University of Aberdeen*

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**SOPHOCLES' PHILOCTETES,  
tr. with notes by Peter Meineck, with  
intro. by Paul Woodruff  
Hackett (2014) p/b 80pp (ISBN  
9781624661228)**

This is an excellent translation of this always intriguing play: clear, simple, up-to-

date English, accurate as a few spot checks quickly show, yet using modern expressions (e.g. 'have a heart, sir' at l. 508). It is clearly designed for stage performance as well as reading; M. is founder of the Aquila Theatre as well as a professor of Classics. The introduction has a section on how Greek plays were staged, and the text and notes include suggested stage directions. W.'s introduction draws out and discusses the issues which make this play so interesting: whether Neoptolemus really changes his mind, or is he still, at the end, trying to trick Philoctetes? - W. thinks perhaps yes; most others, including me, think no; the significance of Heracles' apparition at the end (an unusual device for Sophocles: could he have been Odysseus in disguise, yet another piece of trickery?). W. gives a good account of why the Athenian audience would have been on the edge of their seats.

This translation would be appropriate for anyone doing a Classics or drama course, with or without the language. No prior knowledge of the mythological background is assumed; everything one needs to know is explained in the introduction and notes.

*Colin McDonald*

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**EURIPIDES: HECUBA,  
by H.P. Foley Bloomsbury (2015) p/b  
146pp £16.99 (ISBN 9781472569066)**

Throughout antiquity *Hecuba* enjoyed great renown. Included among Euripides' ten canonical plays in the Hellenistic era, it became part of the 'Byzantine Triad' of Euripidean tragedies studied in schools for their rhetorical brilliance and pithy *aperçus*. It was the first Greek drama to be staged in the Renaissance and influenced later Revenge tragedies (including, perhaps, *Hamlet*), before falling out of favour in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and regaining popularity in the late 20<sup>th</sup>.

In this concise, elegant and well-written study, F. examines the context of *Hecuba*'s first performance, analyses its content and considers its reception from 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Greece to the 21<sup>st</sup> century AD. The opening chapters place *Hecuba* within the context of the first decade of the Peloponnesian War and the shift, traced by Thucydides, from an earlier morality, where 'unwritten laws'

influenced attitudes to (for example) burial and *xenia* (guest-friendship), towards the hard-nosed 'might is right' expediency exemplified in the Melian Dialogue. This transition may be mirrored in the play itself. Suggesting that Euripides may have been the first dramatist to combine the stories of Polydorus and Polyxena, and addressing the question of the play's unity, F. shows how Hecuba apparently learns to argue with increasing sophistry in order to take vengeance on Polymestor, entrapping him by flouting the very laws of *xenia* that she is punishing him for breaking.

At the heart of the book is a scene-by-scene survey of the play. For this fully to make sense, the reader would need to be familiar with the text, either in Greek or in translation. Including useful considerations of themes such as ghosts in Greek drama and Euripides' attitude towards sacrifice and self-sacrifice, the analysis concludes with a thought-provoking discussion of the trial scene, the content and rhetorical style of whose speeches reveal much about the characters delivering them. Wisely, a separate chapter is devoted to the choral odes, which, F. writes, 'can bear a tangential relation to the stage events'.

Arguing that 'it is important to examine how the play's earlier reception can help to interpret it', F. gives a brief yet intriguing overview of *Hecuba's* reception from Aristophanes to the early 20th century, before discussing recent influential (if not always successful) productions and adaptations. Eminently readable and admirably accessible, the book (aimed primarily at undergraduates?) assumes some classical knowledge. It includes helpful maps, a glossary of ancient and technical terms, a reading list, an exhaustive chronology and notes.

*David Stuttard*

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**THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF GREEK AND ROMAN COMEDY,**  
ed. by Michael Fontaine and  
Adele C. Scafuro  
OUP (2014) h/b 894pp £115  
(ISBN 9780199743544)

Within three parts (Greek, Roman, transmission/ancient reception) there are 41 entries (one a reprint, the rest new) and two appendices, forming 'the first

comprehensive introduction and reference work' to span the history of comedy 'from its beginnings in Greece to its end in Rome, as well as its Hellenistic and Roman receptions'. Reception figures prominently, but within the confines of the classical world. Post-classical reception in the theatre receives an occasional mention, but the variety of scholarly approaches since the 60s and 70s is surveyed in an introduction that starts with a general reflection on social developments (or revolutions). This forms a prelude to a summary of 'new waves of criticism' and other trends in archaeological and textual scholarship.

Aimed principally at the academic market, this fine reference work would be hard going for school use, although there is much that a teacher could profitably diffuse. Bernhard Zimmermann's 24-page overview of Aristophanes, for example, treats topics such as the 'comic hero' or comic themes and techniques in a concise but richly illustrated manner. Comic heroes in his account are multiform and deliberately inconsistent, a view which Z. then supports by contrasting Dicaeopolis and Trygaeus (sympathetic) with Strepsiades and Peisetaerus (not so attractive) or Demos and Philocleon (transformation 'gives a positive twist to the audience's initial unease'). One may question whether 'plays dominated by female characters' ('heroes' or 'heroines' are avoided) would have presented the audience with a difficulty of accepting the comic plan of the 'female protagonists' especially when the male characters 'cut a poor figure' in these plays. Then there is *Frogs* where 'identification is impossible' because Dionysus is divine and 'takes on the role of' *bomolochos* 'in the second half of the play' (a questionable statement given his manifest inability to play the role of Herakles, his appeal to his own priest, not to mention his bowel's response to fear in the first half). More interesting than this broad characterisation is the analysis of the way Aristophanes develops character and 'changing identities' and the way he presents himself as a sort of comic hero.

Well worth adding to the university library, this should be a stimulating work for the established scholar and an invaluable reference work for the graduate student.

*Alan Beale*

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**HELLENISTIC TRAGEDY: TEXTS, TRANSLATIONS AND A CRITICAL SURVEY,** by Agnieszka Kotlinska-Toma Bloomsbury (2015) h/b 322pp £70 (ISBN 9781472524218)

The sense in Aristophanes' *Frogs* of the end of an era in Greek tragedy is here argued to be unduly influential. Whilst New Comedy is increasingly known and studied, Hellenistic tragedy is neglected. Yet ancient scholarship recognised an 'Alexandrian Pleiad' of (not always the same) seven tragedians after the Big Three. S. offers a defence and rehabilitation: the genre took significant fresh directions, and theatre was important in disseminating Greek culture among new royals and ambitious elites.

From the fifth century we have texts but little visual evidence; afterwards this is reversed. High double-decker stages (as at Priene) became the norm, with attendant questions about staging, and the theatrical mask was the most popular decorative motif of the age. Travelling players, professional guilds and court patronage replaced the well-heeled sponsors and amateur choruses of classical Athens. Plays continued to be written on famous myths, but historical subjects were also favoured: Moschion dramatised the downfalls both of Themistocles and of Alexander of Pherae. Scanty evidence as well as generic convergence can make it hard to distinguish tragedies from satyr plays. Sositheus' play about Daphnis (lovers reunited in a distant land) seems to look forward to the Greek novel as well as back to Euripides.

The two most famous examples of Hellenistic tragedy receive satisfying treatment. The papyrus fragment of a play about Gyges published by Edgar Lobel in 1950 attracted various speculation (an iambic poem by Archilochus, a pre-Herodotus play), but this speech by the spied-upon wife of Candaules is now generally agreed to reflect Hellenistic interest in eastern courts and in the historian himself. Our most extensive fragments come from the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel, probably a liberal Jew in Alexandria. Moses speaks a highly Euripidean prologue. His dialogue with the Burning Bush circumvents prohibition on representing God at the cost of slight absurdity. An Egyptian

messenger gives a splendidly Aeschylean description of the parting of the Red Sea.

Unashamedly a converted thesis, this will be a useful work of reference. An interesting appendix details some 170 known Hellenistic theatres. There are occasional oddities of English, and some curious (and inconsistent) renderings of proper names. Not an obvious one for the school library, but an informative read for teachers and for university students. I felt I had learned a lot.

*John Taylor*

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## ROMAN HISTORY

### FAUSTINA I AND II: IMPERIAL WOMEN OF THE GOLDEN AGE,

by Barbara M. Levick OUP (2014)

h/b 248pp £41.99  
(ISBN 9780195379419)

Despite the difficulty of unsatisfactory sources and gender stereotypes, L. works hard to offer to her readers a scrupulous reevaluation of the lives of two imperial women of the Antonine period: Faustina I (c. 97-140 AD), wife of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius, and her daughter Faustina II (130-175 AD), wife of Marcus Aurelius. L. studies and interprets a wide range of sources and anecdotes attached to the names of the two Faustinas.

The central thesis of her book is that imperial women of the Antonine age were a vital part of the imperial family's public face and dynasty. L. seeks to explore, whenever possible, what kind of role these two women had in the power struggles between the members of the imperial family and their court. The Antonines struggled hard to portray themselves as the bastions of enlightenment and imperial *concordia* and centred their propaganda (following in the footsteps of Augustus) on the ideal of marital harmony. L. shows, with a great deal of evidence, how in less than a century imperial women gained an unprecedented power to influence both military and political agenda. The two Faustinae were prolific in providing their families with plenty of descendants (Faustina I had four children, Faustina II at least twelve!) and they were as influential as Messalina or Agrippina in leading or averting court intrigues.

However, unlike their predecessors, they were firmly placed at the core of the imperial propaganda machine: Faustina I accompanied the emperor Pius in his postings abroad as a Roman official; she was granted the honorific titles of Diva and Augusta on imperial coins and inscriptions and, before her death, she succeeded to establish an alimentary scheme for the support of girls, the 'Faustinian Girls'. Faustina II had unprecedented honours: she was given the right to coin and received the title *mater castrorum*, as protector of the army headquarters. Their success did not demise after their deaths since Faustina I was deified by the senate and a temple was built in Rome to honour Faustina II. Faustina II became also a fashion icon: her hairstyle, as it appears on numerous coins of that time, was imitated by many women of the Severi.

Despite its brevity, this book would be of great interest to readers and students of Roman society, imperial propaganda and gender studies. The book has been meticulously edited and equipped with several appendices and detailed notes.

*Roberto Chiappiniello: St Mary's School, Calne*

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### THE LAST OF THE ROMANS: BONIFATIUS-WARLORD AND COMES AFRICAE by Jeroen W.P. Wijnendale Bloomsbury (2015) h/b 182pp £50 (ISBN9781780937175)

W. frets that Bonifatius has not been properly recognised by historians ancient and modern. He sees reasons for this—he's rather a shadowy figure, and the source materials are thin, dodgy or both. But is there room for him in our historical thinking when we have *generalissimos* like Belisarius, Stilicho Constantius, Aetius and Ricimer striding the late antique stage, exerting political power way beyond their military titles? Procopius puts Bonifatius together with Aetius when he calls them 'the last of the Romans'. But what precisely did he mean by that? And why, then, does Peter Heather relegate Bonifatius to a footnote whilst endowing Aetius with more than enough text?

These *generalissimos* were extraordinary people with huge

influence on emperors eastern and western. Some were effectively regents in the case of young or weak rulers, and as often as not rewarded with death. In the case of Gallia Placidia/Valentinian, Bonifatius was true to her cause, but then became the victim of a political game when she wished to thin out those *generalissimos* seeking position in the western empire. For instance, in 422 she sends Bonifatius to Spain, presumably to help his rival Castinus deal with the Vandals. Whatever happened between them, Bonifatius returned to his home turf in Africa and Castinus got a good thrashing.

To add to the possibilities, Bonifatius and the others like him had what looks like an almost personal retinue of troops (*buccellarii*), a situation making maverick behaviour all the more possible and dangerous. When declared *hostis publicus* in 427, he sends packing the Roman army dispatched to Africa against him. Yet in 429 he invites Vandals from Spain to Africa to help him stabilise the place in return for land, and found himself in a position not unlike that of Aethelred and the Danes. Then in 432 he was recalled to Italy and given the exalted rank of *magister militum*.

His behaviour seems to veer from great Roman true to Gallia Placidia, to being one who will sell out his country's interests when it suits him. He is part product of his time, part initiator of late antique warlordism. He's certainly worth the monograph, not least for the frequent surprises; for instance, when we read Augustine's letter to him encouraging him not to become a monk on the death of his wife, but to continue doing what he did best as a warrior for Rome!

The book is beautifully produced, with text (121pp), timeline, and some excellent notes. It is £50, but CA members get 35% off the hardback, so it's not inaccessible. But at that price one would have expected proofing of a higher standard. Let me quote my favourite two typos: a sub heading *Inbictissimo*, and in a letter from Augustine, 'prostituted as I was by bodily weakness'.

W. concludes that, whether or not the last of the Romans, Bonifatius may well have been the first western imperial warlord.

*Adrian Spooner*

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**ALEXANDER BARCLAY, THE FAMOUS CRONYCLE OF THE WARRE WHICH THE ROMAYNS HAD AGAYNST IUGURTH, USURPER OF THE KYNGDOME OF NUMIDY, ed. by Greg Waite OUP (2014) h/b 361pp £65 (ISBN 9780199688197)**

One of the earliest translations of classical works in English, B's *Jugurtha* appeared in print around 1522. B. hopes that all readers 'of whatsoever condicyon and degree . . . shall fynde both profyte and pleasure: if he rede it attentyfly' but his main target audience are 'gentylmen apt to attayne to glorious fame and honour by fayt of chyvalry'. The translation is of its time: for example *ignarus belli* (96.1 on the as yet inexperienced Sulla) becomes 'ignorant of the dedes of chiuallrie'. Hardly a post-20<sup>th</sup> century version! B. also adds explanatory material, incorporating 'notes' in the text. Thus *nam is civis ex Latio erat* (69.3 an explanation of why Turpilius could be executed) is translated beginning 'if this Turpylius had ben a Romayn he shulde nat have ben put to deth' and so on for 5 lines. Published for The Early English Text Society and thus directed at English scholars, this will also be a delight for classicists with an interest in Sallust and his reception. It lives up to B.'s wish to provide 'profyte and pleasure.'

Alan Beale

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## LATIN LITERATURE

**TERENCE: PHORMIO, ed. with Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Robert Maltby Aris & Phillips (2012) p/b 224pp £19.99 (ISBN 9780856686078)**

Terence's *Phormio* was adapted from a play (*Epidikazomenos*) by Apollodorus of Carystus, of whom little is known; the *Phormio* of the title is a 'parasite'—better, 'scrounger' or 'hanger-on'—to whom, rather as in Plautus, a good-sized role is allotted. M.'s admirably full introduction (26 pages) covers Greek New Comedy, Terence's Roman Predecessors in Comedy, Terence's Life

and Works, the Cultural climate in Terence's Time, Terence's Prologues (in which he defends his theatrical practices), Theatrical Conditions in Terence's Time, the Plot and Characters of *Phormio* and its Greek Original, Metre and Musical Accompaniment (where I would like to have seen a little more about the *Lex brevis breuians*), and Terence's Text (brief, as is nowadays the custom). There is happily nothing on 'Reception'. There follows the text, with a brief *apparatus criticus*, translation, and detailed commentary, in which the action is broken up into Acts and Scenes, as of course was not the Roman practice; en route, summaries of the plot are given.

Any student faced with *Phormio* should buy this book, for it is hard to think of any need which it will not fulfil or question which it will not answer. This is one of the very best commentaries—of course, deliberately cast at a level that is not so advanced as a 'Green and Yellow'—that has come my way in recent times: would that I had had access to such a commentary as an undergraduate! M. is to be congratulated on a thoroughly satisfactory outcome to his labours, which, he tells us, occupied a long time. The wait was more than worthwhile, and the modest price is a bonus.

Colin Leach

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**LUCRETIVUS, DE RERUM NATURA BOOK 3, ed. by E.J. Kenney CUP (2014 [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]) p/b 256pp £19.99 (ISBN 9780521173896)**

The first edition appeared in 1971, since when there has been much work on Lucretius which K. summarises in a Supplementary Introduction, though with specific focus on Book 3. The introduction itself is for the most part unchanged (updates appear in three notes) but the section on the text has been completely rewritten and the *apparatus criticus* too has been revised.

The notes are now more copious and, to make room, less generously spaced. Headwords are no longer at the beginning of lines, but remain distinctive in bold (not all: 898 *praesidium* is sensibly removed as a headword, and included in the explanation of *factis*

*florentibus*). In keeping with the style of the series, there is more help with translation, references to *OLD* are included in the vocabulary help, and grammatical explanation improved, though a thorough knowledge of basic syntax is assumed. Some notes are shortened—on *torrat* (917) discussion of the conjecture based on synizesis is omitted—and others left out—on *pocula* (913) the earlier comment ('they are at the maudlin stage') has been dropped. Some of the updating is to aid clarity, with reworked phraseology and reshaped sentences, though there is often new material, as in the note on *O* (first word) where 'the sonorous interjection matches the emotional tone of the passage better than the prosaic (indeed superfluous) preposition . . .' conveys the impact of the word more forcefully than before.

The first edition in its day was accessible as an A Level text and saw sterling service, but now, if Lucretius is set at AL again, editions such as John Godwin's selections for BCP are more likely to be used. For undergraduates, this is an ideal text offering a comprehensive study of the philosophy, the rhetoric, the genre and not least the poetry along with a modicum of help with the language. Anyone teaching Book 3 definitely needs the new edition at hand: even though K. worries that his revision may have lost the 'brevity that comes close to wit' (David West), his insights are still crisp, incisive and illuminating. A 'must' for all Lucretians, Epicureans and every university library.

Alan Beale

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**TACITUS, AGRICOLA, ed by A.J. Woodman with contributions from C.S. Kraus CUP (2014) p/b 358pp £23.99 (ISBN 9780521700290)**

The commentary of Ogilvie and Richmond has been the first port of call for those navigating the *Agricola* since its publication in 1967. Now W. has produced a more detailed and up-to-date edition which should become essential reading for experienced students of Tacitus' work. It is more scholarly in emphasis than some other 'green and

yellow's' and the blurb rightly suggests it is suitable for advanced undergraduates, graduate students and scholars.

W. presents a more sophisticated understanding of the generic elements (history, geography, encomium, biography), but the major shift in emphasis, as one would expect from W., is to see the work as a literary construct rather than a factual account. The problems of using literary texts as 'sources' are highlighted in the introduction, particularly through focus on topoi, commonplaces, transferable motifs or details used by earlier writers (Sallust, Livy et al.) and even the pattern of the narrative (Caesar's *BG* in particular). W. bluntly states the conclusion (not quite a *reductio ad inopiam*) on p.29: 'we cannot tell what is literary from what is actual'. But W. is not polemical. Even the imaginative 'why not suppose' approach (p.5, that Tacitus' military service was in a British legion) is gently dismissed with 'however that may be'. The introduction has a brief section on the manuscripts and a select *apparatus criticus* accompanies the text which contains a few emendations by W. himself, discussed in the commentary.

In the commentary major sections of the narrative have separate introductions. In keeping with the series' style, much of Tacitus' difficult phraseology is elucidated by translation and explanation of the grammar. W. pays constant attention to Tacitus' style and use of language. His brief nod towards wordplay might delight some and worry others (one man's assonance is another man's paronomasia), but his analysis of stylistic and linguistic features in the introduction and throughout the commentary will prove useful and often enlightening. W. offers much more on the language of Tacitus than O&R. For example in 41 he points to the echo of *offensa virtutibus tempora* (1.4) in *offensus virtutibus princeps* (41.1) with the subtle shift to make Domitian personally responsible. He notes the use of *infensus* rather than *infestus*, discusses the use of *vir*, and one could add many more examples where W. offers so much richer a reading than O&R. Essential for university libraries, this would also be immensely useful to teachers to have access to if teaching this text.

Alan Beale

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**THE ROMAN HANNIBAL:  
Remembering the Enemy in Silius  
Italicus' *Punica*, by Claire Stocks  
Liverpool University Press (2014) h/b  
276pp £71.87 (ISBN 9781781380284)**

Much has been done in the past half-century, says S., to rehabilitate Silius, and indeed a hero called Spaltenstein has published a Commentary (in three volumes) on the entire opus—17 Books, 12,000 lines, the longest poem in Latin: even the Dindorfs must have raised a ghostly cheer. As the title implies, S.'s work, which started as a PhD thesis at Cambridge, is 'about Hannibal as he exists in Rome's literature, the foreign foe in recognisable form: this is the Hannibal that Rome built'. The eleven chapters include *Before Silius: the Creation of the Roman Hannibal* (including Polybius, Cicero, and Cornelius Nepos); *Silius' Influences* (Livy comes into his own); *Epic Models* (Ennius, dealt with necessarily in cursory fashion, Homer, and—obviously—Virgil), *Hannibal's decline after Cannae*, including 'Succumbing to luxury', *The 'Lightning Bolts' of War* (enter Scipio), and *The Man and his Myth* (including 'Choosing Hercules as a role model').

In sharp contradistinction to Lucan, Silius introduces mythical characters from Homer and Virgil, and S. points out that any reading of Hannibal as Achilles is also one of him as an Aeneas or Turnus in the guise of another Achilles; he is also likened to Hector, and even to Tydeus and Parthenopaeus: to what extent this is artificial (is Hannibal being *made* by the poet to resemble these heroes of past epics?) S. provides us with the evidence in generous measure, with ample citations, in Latin, and occasional Greek, all fully translated. The text is that of J. Delz for Teubner; S. appears to have made no use of J.D. Duff's translation for the Loeb Library.

An Index Locorum of no fewer than 25 columns for Silius alone sufficiently attests to the dedicated work which has gone into this book. S.'s intention, which has been admirably fulfilled, was to guide the reader through a systematic consideration of the Roman Hannibal—as mediated, of course, not only in the familiar prose of the historians but via the epic vision of Silius. Not everyone will feel that the mixture of mythological

figures with those of historical fact makes for satisfactory poetry, and the reputation of Silius has long been that summed up by Pliny (*scribebat carmina maiore cura quam ingenio*), but that is in no way to diminish S.'s scholarly achievement. It is a pity that the book's formidable cost will of necessity limit its market. Not one for the schoolroom.

Colin Leach

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**FRAMING THE ASS: LITERARY  
TEXTURE IN APULEIUS'  
METAMORPHOSES,  
by S. J. Harrison  
OUP (2013) h/b 293pp £60  
(ISBN 9780199602681)**

This book is a collection of essays on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* published by H. over the past 20 years. Individually, they (together with other publications by H.) have already made a major contribution to the studies on this novel. Together, they offer a multiplicity of views on the novel and show the emergence, in the course of time, of one clear point of view in H.'s mind: the aim of the *Metamorphoses* is literary entertainment, 'achieved not only through salacious and amusing content and clever narrative structure but also through subtle intertextual interactions with a range of literary and sub-literary traditions in both Latin and Greek, suitably adapted for a low-life and sensationalist novelistic context' (p. 242).

No summary of contents can be clearer than the one given by the author in the introduction, where he contextualises every essay in terms of ideas that generated it, scholarship he was drawing on, and success enjoyed in the scholarly community. The hindsight allows the author a lucid opinion on his own material and its influence. The first part of the book deals with some general features. The introduction and chapter 1 are most useful tools to orientate oneself in the history of scholarship. Some chapters are self-standing and look at the language (ch. 2), at the influence of Milesian Tales in terms of narrative framework and not just of contents (ch. 3), and at the prologue, with the ingenious identification of the book itself as the speaker (ch. 4). The other chapters (5, 6, 7) form a coherent picture of the role of religion in the novel

as satirical. The second part of the book is occupied by sound textual analysis, where H. x-rays many passages and traces their models (mainly epic ones), demonstrating Apuleius' learned imitation of illustrious predecessors and their adaptation in a lower context for the sake of entertainment. The *Aeneid* stands out as a major intertext, together with Homer, the *Odyssey* in particular. The narrative of Cupid and Psyche is given special consideration (chapters 10, 12, 15). H.'s arguments are no-nonsense and presented clearly throughout.

Specialists will already know of H.'s contributions, but will benefit from looking at them diachronically as moments of the development of bigger lines of thought. Students of Classics will find in this book many useful examples of the sophistication of the *Metamorphoses* and obtain a good understanding of the history of its scholarship.

*Nicolò D'Alconzo: Swansea University*

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## PHILOSOPHY

**ARISTOTLE ON PERCEIVING OBJECTS**, by Anna Marmodoro  
 OUP (2014) h/b 291pp £47.99  
 (ISBN 9780199326006)

The question this book addresses is a simple one. Aristotle's account of perception describes five senses, each of which is receptive of a different range of perceptible qualities. Sight perceives colours, hearing perceives sounds and so on. But when we perceive, we are not limited in this way. We typically think of ourselves as perceiving *objects*: we see the sun set, we hear the train arrive, and we smell the turkey cooking. We are aware of the sweetness and the whiteness of the milk as we drink it. How then did Aristotle account for all this?

The short answer is the common sense, which is not a sixth sense but a unity that emerges when the five senses are operative. M. develops this answer over the course of the book relying as much on lesser studied texts in the *Parva Naturalia* as on the more familiar texts of the *De Anima*. She presents Aristotle as a pioneer: his extension of his theory of substance to provide a model for the unity of perceptual experience is itself a milestone

in the history of the philosophy of mind; yet he goes even further in his treatise *On Sleep* and makes explicit the way in which this perceptual unity involves more than the special senses operating together. By recognising the problem of how we perceive the sweetness and the whiteness of the milk (so-called cross-modal binding) as well as then offering an innovative solution, Aristotle emerges as a philosopher of the first rank.

The book also offers a useful survey of recent scholarship. The doctrine of the common sense is fiercely debated by Aristotelian scholars, and M. surveys various alternative interpretations and explains with precision how and why she disagrees with them. But M. is also interested in what we can learn from the study of Aristotle to help us deal with today's concerns. She writes as a philosopher rather than as a philologist, and her attempt to resolve the question takes us into the heart of contemporary metaphysics. For readers like myself not well versed in these debates, this is certainly a challenge but she writes with admirable clarity, unlike Aristotle. In the process she offers at almost every turn bold claims and radical reinterpretations. This is a book that can be recommended to Classics departments unreservedly.

*Alan Tovey: Holmewold House School*

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## MYTH

**DICTIONARY OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY**, by Jenny March  
 Oxbow (2014) p/b 528pp £29.95  
 (ISBN 9781782976356)

The first edition of this dictionary appeared in 1998 as *The Cassell Dictionary of Greek Mythology* and was very well received (e.g. Goldhill in *TLS* '... is exemplary, indeed the best I have consulted ... clearly and engagingly written ... it not only gives reliable answers but also encourages reading on.'). I imagine that most Classics departments and school libraries have a copy, but I suspect that in its chunky paperback form (2001) it may be showing signs of wear and tear as the strain of holding over 800 pages together proves too much. If that is the case, or if you are just looking for a brighter, bolder book for the shelves, then

relief is at hand: this new edition is a worthy replacement.

Many of the entries have been revised and expanded; 172 illustrations, many in the form of line-drawings of vase paintings by M.'s son-in-law, Neil Barrett, enliven the text throughout. The merits of the first edition are not lost: it remains concise and readable, and can usefully be consulted by experts and learners, by teachers and pupils. The stories are authoritatively and, in places, brilliantly retold; cross-referencing is easily handled; many entries have additional bibliographies in which relevant classical sources are given. These sources are sometimes discussed in the entries themselves so, for instance, in 'Oedipus' Homer, Sophocles and Seneca are mentioned, as well as Corneille, Stravinsky, Cocteau, Freud and Pasolini in a last paragraph on 'reception'. Also included in some of the longer entries are translations from the sources, especially Homer and the tragedians. There are additional appendices, four of which were in the first edition: maps, genealogical tables, a list of classical authors and a select bibliography (latest entry—2013); the index of place names has gone, perhaps regrettably, but the two new additions are a list of the illustrations and a very useful 'List of Recurrent Motifs'—so for *Paricide* you may go to Deiphontes, Haemon, Jason, Jocasta, Laius, Medea, Oedipus, Pelias, Phoenix (3), Sphinx and Temenus (2).

Oxbow Books are to be congratulated on bringing this book back into print, as are M. and her son-in-law for breathing new life into it. I can heartily recommend it and predict that it will have a long and fruitful life.

*Stephen Chambers: Balliol College, Oxford*

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**EARLY GREEK MYTHOGRAPHY—VOLUME 2: COMMENTARY**,  
 by Robert L. Fowler  
 OUP (2013) h/b 825pp £160.00  
 (ISBN 9780198147411)

**RATIONALIZING MYTH IN ANTIQUITY**, by Greta Hawes  
 OUP (2014) h/b 279pp £60.00  
 (ISBN 9780199672776)

These two books cover a lot of authors who are unfamiliar to most members of



CA, I suspect; their purchase would be a special indulgence for a department or library unless some very scholarly work is being conducted by teachers or pupils. I think that the general reader would indeed find some interesting material in both books, but there would be a lot of technical and esoteric sections to be worked through as well.

The first volume (Text and Introduction) of F.'s monumental study of the early Greek mythographers appeared in 2000. I was able to borrow a copy from a friend and am grateful that I did, because it helped me, through cross-referencing, to appreciate the merits of Volume 2. It would appear from the many citations in H.'s book that it has now become the standard reference work in the field. The first volume collects the *Testimonia* and *Fragmenta* of 29 authors in alphabetical order, from Acusilas Argeus to Xenomedes Ceus. The second volume has two distinct parts, one 600 pages long, the other 130. There is firstly a Mythological Commentary, in which the twenty sections starting with 'Theogony' and ending with 'The Migrations' and 'Other Fragments', deal with the different versions of (mostly) familiar stories; there are references both to the fragmentary authors of Volume 1 and to major authors of the classical canon. It is a treasure trove of information, and a serious student of the Greek myths will find much scattered knowledge gathered helpfully in one place. If you are confronted by a student's insistent interrogation—'But where does this story come from?' or 'Why are there two versions of X or Y's birth/death/labours?'—there is now a place to go to find an answer. I enjoyed many of the discussions and learned a lot about, for instance, the Local Histories (§ 17).

The second part contains a Philological Commentary on the same 29 authors, though this time they run from Aethlios to Xenomedes, the Latin spellings having been Hellenised; I have to say that personal interest meant that this section appealed to me less, but this is where you will find information about the writers themselves, such as exists. If it does not seem likely that the budget will stretch to buying this, look out for the annotated edition of a translated selection of the fragments, which F. promises in his Preface.

F. touches on the subject of H.'s book in his Introduction (p xv): the rationalization of the myths by people like Hekataios and Pherekydes. The mythic rationalisation or rationalistic interpretation of the Greek myths was the subject of H.'s Bristol PhD thesis, which has evolved into this book. Her book is not a comprehensive study of Greek myth in its entirety, but the questioning approach to it by writers from the fourth century BC onwards—looking for truthfulness in the stories and challenging or explaining perceived untruths. After a really useful Introduction in which the origins and limits of rationalistic interpretation are explored, H. examines the works of six authors, only two of whom to my shame had I previously read: Plutarch (his *Life of Theseus*) and Pausanias' *Perigesis*. Three of the remaining authors' work are called *Peri Apiston* ('On Incredible Tales')—one anonymous, the others Palaephatus and Heraclitus (not **that** Heraclitus, but an otherwise unknown early Imperial writer); the last text covered, known from epitomes in Photius, is Conon's *Diegesis*.

Familiar stories appear in discussions of unfamiliar texts: e.g. the Minotaur in Palaephatus' and Anonymous' *Peri Apiston*, as well as Plutarch. The different ways in which the incredible aspects of the story are explained makes for interesting reading, for instance using Aristotelian principles to disprove the possible existence of hybrid creatures and the repeated version of the story which has Pasiphae having an affair with a local sculptor while he was working on 'a very beautiful statue of a cow' (translation of the Anonymous *Peri Apiston* in Appendix 1). For my part, I liked the chapters on the authors already familiar to me: the one on Plutarch covers a lot of ground, including material on the parallel life of Romulus and the historiographical difficulties of handling material from the furthest past. In the Pausanias chapter (a further addition to the growing bibliography on this author) H. takes on Veigne (*Did the Greeks believe their myths?*) and explains how she sees the flaws in his arguments (too narrow an emphasis on isolated passages, insufficient account taken of the larger context, etc).

Both these books contain really useful and interesting material, and in the case of F. it is hard to see another author

in our lifetime taking on the subject in such a comprehensive and entertaining way, but they are not cheap and they do not cover areas familiar from UK syllabuses. These would help support an ambitious extended essay, dissertation or thesis, but not regular classroom work.

*Stephen Chambers: Balliol College, Oxford*

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## CLASSICAL TRADITION

**ANTIGONE ON THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD STAGE**, ed. by Erin B. Mee and Helene P. Foley  
OUP (2011) h/b 469pp £93  
(ISBN 9780199586196)

This edited volume propels the trans-historical and political nature of the Sophoclean text and antiquity to the modern era of politicised concern. M. and F. have drawn together the best of modern reception studies such as Hall, Treu, Hardwick, van Steen, Ziter *et al.*, offering a primary stage for theorising and confirming reception studies as a genuine discipline within the study of Classics. The latter is successfully achieved by analysing the representation and themes of the ancient text and noting its relevance not only to any given era, but fundamentally to any given global community and cultural framework (USA, Japan, India, Indonesia, Poland, Turkey, Ireland and Argentina—to cite a few). What else this book offers, through the lens of Antigone as both a text and character, is the collective consciousness and the visual need through performance to advocate human concerns, ranging across human rights, political disquiet or—indeed—revolution. In short, the book lands a lot of hard-hitting punches which will induce a reflective response from its reader.

The book is divided into eight principal chapter headers: i) Antigone in antiquity, ii) an ancient Greek play, iii) cultural and political freedom, iv) Antigone and human rights, v) individual versus collective, vi) Antigone as dissident, vii) cultural memory, and viii) Sophocles versus Anouilh. Within these thematic headers is the disproportionate sharing of 22 articles e.g. only one from

Edith Hall and more from Mee, Fradinger, Chang and Gillitt.

The intended audience for this book is difficult to determine. Initial response would be university undergraduates, students of reception and scholars alike. But perhaps this is taking the wrong approach, as this book would appeal to the dramatists looking for directional approach, anthropologists and ethnographers, and mutually to those investigating global insights.

To say that this book would be no value at school level would be to deprive a whole sector of the richness and academic rigour that this book has to offer. It would be for the teacher to filter and distil some of the complexities of the book, and this can be readily achieved by the visual aids that the book has to offer.

*Sam Newington: University of Aberdeen*

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## NOVELS

**RYDON HALL**, by Alexander Games  
Heddon Publishing (2014) p/b 282pp  
£8.99; Kindle £3.08  
(ISBN 9781500537357)

Florian Bavington, Year 8 pupil and monster, has refined the art of low-level

disruption into a sarcastic, manipulative mastery of the classroom. Some foil for the inexperienced and somewhat feckless Charles Goldforbes, the new Latin teacher at Rydon Hall, and hero (if such a word can be applied to him) of G's first novel! The cast of supporting characters are endearingly batty, blessed with comic foibles or endowed with less comfortable quirks—promiscuity, Tourette's, or a malodorous skin condition for example. The school setting is handled with a professional insider's knowledge and should bring a frequent smile, laugh or grimace to any teacher's face when confronted with the inept management or the idiosyncratic ethos of the school and especially its shameless attempt to exploit media attention that leads to the tragicomic denouement. The sexual humour generated by Charles' infatuation with Florian's mother is both farcical, especially where Aristophanes is put to good use, and rather sad in that it is firstly acutely embarrassing but ultimately demeaning. Much of the book has a similar dark element to the humour since the characters display an array of inadequacies.

One of Charles' weaknesses is his prejudice against Classical Civilisation which he treats with dismissive arrogance until ... well, let us not reveal too much.

For G. has created a wildly improbable plot which is held together with impeccable comic logic even though it takes the protagonists from S.W. London into the heart of darkest Africa where the Arab Spring is beginning and western hostages are an attractive source of revenue for the rebels in Smilia (*sic*). The book 'sets out to make people laugh' as G. declares in his Apologia for using this barely disguised name, and in this he certainly succeeds through character, plot and a wicked use of both Latin and Classical Civilisation. Do read it, but be careful it doesn't fall into the wrong Y8 hands—they might get ideas!

*Alan Beale*