memorization and epitomization and later Platonist practice, it would be very difficult to show any direct Epicurean influence ('L'epitome di Epicuro e la trasmissione del sapere nel Medioplatonismo').

The richer and more interesting pieces in this collection attempt to place what we know about practising Epicureans in this period into the general context of the times, and move away from the 'single author'-centred approach. Tiziano Dorandi's essay, 'Plotina, Adriano, e gli Epicurei di Atene', carefully pieces together mainly epigraphic evidence to shed light on the dealings between the Imperial family and the Athenian Garden. Similarly, Diskin Clay makes use of some newly uncovered fragments of Diogenes to look at the religious life of second-century Lycia, and place the Epicurean inscription within a cultural and religious debate ('Diogenes and his Gods'; for a related approach, see P. Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia* [Ann Arbor, 1996]). These new fragments (especially NF 126 and 127) are also discussed by M. F. Smith in his contribution, 'Digging up Diogenes'. Unfortunately, however, Smith does not include the texts in question, and the reader will therefore need to have at hand his article in *AS* 48 to make much of this companion piece. For those interested in philosophy more narrowly defined, Franco Ferrari offers a reading of Boethus the Epicurean's view reported in Plut. *Pyth. Orac.* 10, which illuminates the Epicurean stance on the truth values of future-tensed propositions. He not only makes clear the relevance of this stance for their attitude to divination and logical determinism, but also gives some explanation of the otherwise perplexing Epicurean doctrine that the disjunction 'X will Φ or will not Φ' is true, but neither of the disjuncts, 'X will Φ' and 'X will not Φ', is true (pp. 154–61).

Dieter Timpe offers perhaps the most ambitious contribution, 'Der Epikureismus in der römischen Gesellschaft der Kaiserzeit', which takes a broad sweeping approach to the general question of the reception of Epicureanism in Roman culture from the Republic until the reign of Julian. In contrast to the other essays, Timpe deliberately moves away from the author-centred view (p. 42), and tries to offer a more sociological approach to the diffusion and reception of Epicureanism in the Roman world at large, not just in particular authors. Timpe is appropriately aware of the methodological problems involved in any such attempt to write a social history of philosophy, but rather than shy away from the project makes these difficulties themselves an important area of discussion. Such work is necessarily speculative to an extent, but this essay is a refreshing and provocative addition to the volume as a whole.

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PLAUTINE SLAVES

K. McCarthy: *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy.* Pp. xi + 231. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000. Cased, £28.50. ISBN: 0-691-04888-6.

In what is sure to be an influential study, M. examines the social impact of Plautine comedy by analyzing the plays as a kind of dialectic between naturalism and farce that is played out in (esp.) master–slave relations. M.'s goal is to provide 'a way of grappling with the question of elite investment in popular literature by finding a middle path between augmenting the ideological power of the elite . . . and giving way to a romantic impulse to see subversion where none existed' (p. 6). In a theoretical first chapter M. argues that Plautine farce offered audience members a limited

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fantasy: 'the potentially subversive element of farce was leavened by the more conservative element of naturalistic comedy' (p. 26). As these citations suggest, this is an ambitious study, one that musters the methodologies of Bakhtin and the Italian structuralists to present new answers to old questions. M. accounts for Plautine comedy's popularity among the various registers of Roman society by identifying the pleasures it contained for the slave-owners who probably comprised the majority of the audience. In this regard M. concludes that traditional, more 'monologic' approaches, including the widely accepted 'safety-valve' theory of Plautine comedy, are deficient.

M. assumes that, because the comedies were in effect publicly sanctioned, they were intended to please the social élite. Since free Romans were socially ranked according to a system of relations whereby they stood above some citizens and below others, they readily identified with both the masters and slaves of Roman comedy. The clever slave's rebelliousness could provide release from the burdens associated with a complex vertical system: '. . . the doubleness of the comic slave himself, his ability to be seen as both "different" and "same", allows this figure to allay each audience member's anxieties about his/her relations downward in hierarchical scales (distancing oneself from the clever slave as different, as a charming but ultimately infantile trickster) and upward (identifying with the clever slave as same, as a smart subordinate who sees through the pretensions of those who claim superiority)' (p. 20). M. also analyzes the 'good slave' (without, however, noting that this figure is usually represented ironically: R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome* [Cambridge, 1985], pp. 145–7), who is opposed to the clever slave and 'embodies the view that masters would like slaves to have of slavery' (p. 27). The good slave thus is the champion of naturalistic values, the clever slave of the farcical mode, so that for M. the relationship between the two is emblematic of Plautine comedy itself: '[the] art of authority in Plautine comedy is the skill that allows a hero to negotiate a tightrope between dominating and being dominated, between the degradation of slavery and the wearying labor of mastery' (p. 29).

The bulk of M.'s book consists of close analysis (which can only be glimpsed here) of four plays, chosen for the diverse manners in which the farce–naturalism dialectic is enacted in them, and because they 'offer insight into the ways that characters other than slaves try to lay claim to the subversive energy of rebellion' (p. 30). M.'s discussion of *Men*. focuses on the brothers' contrasting means of controlling their subordinates; in *Cas.* M. examines how the *senex* and his wife alternately appropriate the attributes of the clever slave in a struggle that ultimately reaffirms the status quo; the chapter on *Per*. argues that the slave/lover Toxilus serves (surprisingly) as a defender of civic values, and that the play shows 'how the dramatic devices of farce and metatheater can become containers of naturalistic values' (p. 166); M. interprets the challenging *Capt.* as an attack on the farcical mode itself. Even if readers do not find all the main lines of M.'s arguments convincing, each chapter is full of provocative, new insights.

A regrettably brief conclusion follows (pp. 211–13) in which M. draws some comparisons between Plautine comedy and American blackface minstrel shows. While some of the general parallels M. adduces are valid, plantation slave and *servus callidus* are awkwardly merged ('The picking, grinning, scheming, charming, deceptive fictive slave', p. 213) at the book's conclusion. Here and throughout, M. characterizes the Plautine clever slave as 'childlike' or 'infantilized', which seems to jar with the depiction of this figure as comically heroic, i.e. a playwright in his own right (e.g. *Ps*. 401–5).

The virtues of M.'s study are many, though a few points merit further consideration. It remains to be shown that the dialectic between naturalism and farce, as M. conceives

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of it, is central to all the plays, and that the latter mode is necessarily 'leavened' by the former. M. seems too dogmatic in denying (e.g. pp. 17–18 n. 27) any liberating potential to the plays so far as the slaves in the audience are concerned, and does not deeply engage with critical literature (e.g. Bristol's study of carnival in Renaissance drama) which suggests that theater inherently bears significant challenges to authority. And if Plautine comedy was as comforting to the élite as M. would have it, why did the ruling class at Rome regard the theater as a locus of immorality (e.g. Tac. *Ann*. 14.20)? Given her critical affinities, M. is not concerned with the historical Plautus, but the reader is left wondering who (what?) Plautus was (e.g. why would a person of [probably] humble status devote his comic genius to palliating the anxiety of the socially dominant?). Questions such as these perhaps might have been addressed in a fuller conclusion. M. merits praise for remaining sensitive to performance in a study of this kind, and only occasionally burdens the reader with excessive abstraction. This book should invigorate what has become something of a critical stalemate, and supply Plautinists with hermeneutic tools for years to come.

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LUCRETIUS' MESSAGE

W. R. JOHNSON: *Lucretius and the Modern World* (Classical Inter/faces). Pp. x + 163. London: Duckworth, 2000. Paper, £9.99. ISBN: 0-7156-2882-8.

I would like to put this book into the hands of anyone who thinks that Lucretian scholarship is dull and irrelevant in the 'modern world'. The brief of the new series (Classical Inter/faces), of which this is a volume, is 'to show how Classical ideas have helped to shape the modern world'. J.'s book is inspired with a deep sense of concern about the state of the world and yet this concern is voiced with a sense of humour and a readability which makes it one of the most entertaining and interesting books about the ancient world that I have read.

J. says very little about the physics of the *DRN* and devotes most of his discussion of the poem to the ethical side: the fear of death, attitudes to love, and the growth of society. There is a brief discussion of the prelude and the epilogue, but by and large J. wisely concentrates on the ideas of best relevance to his theme of human values.

The first section is devoted to a study of the poet and his poem: the tabloid version of his biography found in Jerome is discussed, and will recur when its use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to discredit the poet is discussed. Memmius ('on the make and on the take') is brought in and used to give some good Roman background. The need to remove our fears of the gods and death is rightly stressed as the ethical basis for the atomic theory. J. devotes a good deal of time to the Epicurean thinking on love, contrasting it with that of Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 4) on the one hand ('think of other things—just say no') and of Catullus on the other ('think of none but the beloved'), thus showing what Lucretius' diatribe against romantic love is all about and also setting it into its first-century B.C.E. context. In doing so he is perhaps less than fair to poor Catullus, who was a poet and not a guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show, and whose texts are not necessarily autobiographical. But the point is well made and the poetry of Catullus is well used to typify an attitude which Lucretius is certainly firing at in the finale to Book 4. Above all, J. brilliantly shows that the real finale of the book is not the fireworks of 1058–1191 but 1192–1287, where the poet

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