Religion

Greek Religion

First, two books whose explicit aim is to redress a balance. In most accounts of Greek and Roman religion, the main focus is tacitly upon the State and upon male citizen agents; the current emphasis on viewing ancient religion primarily as cult has helped to expose the bias of these choices – here, as so often, 'evidence' is as much a function of the questions one asks as of the accidents of survival. Much the better of the two is Jennifer Larson's nuanced and suggestive [B]*Greek Nymphs*,[1] which moves adroitly between literature, myth, archaeology, art-history, ethnography and folklore-studies to present an able synthetic account of a topic at first sight almost over-familiar – and yet curiously neglected: Walter Burkert, for example, barely refers to nymphs, and then only as examples of divine collectivities. The book is securely based on archaeological research, which enables Larson to convey shifts of emphasis in popular cult (it is noticeable how many of them dwindle in the later Hellenistic period, but seem to revive in the third century AD) – but, as with her earlier book, *Greek Heroine Cults* (1995), its primary concern is the intersection of divine and human worlds in myth and literature. Although she is open to structuralist readings, the main focus is not upon the location of nymphs between the human world and the Olympians, but pragmatic, upon nymphs as mediators, both genealogical and topographic, between particular landscapes and their inhabitants, as kourotrophic deities in the widest sense, and as assisting deities for quotidian needs. The logographers' preoccupation with nymphs as ancestors and guarantors of territorial claims is contrasted with the upsurge in cave-cults for the Nymphs as assisting deities all over the Greek world after the introduction of the cult of Pan at Athens following Marathon. Happening to read the book after a visit to a sun-lit gorge above ancient Troezen, I appreciated Larson's evocation of the literary accounts of nymphs in a landscape, and the ways in which these combine the tame and the wild, the mythic past with pastoral idyll, sexual licence with the economy of the mountain. But I was most impressed by two sections specifically inspired by gender-theory. In the first, she uses R. and E. Blum's study of the modern Greek folklore of the *neraïdes* creatively to explore the ambiguities of the insistent motif of the sexual encounter between mortal male and divine nymph ('The sexual double-standard is turned on its head'). In the second, aligning the nymphs with other life-stage goddesses, such as Artemis, Hera and Eileithyia, she explores the ambiguities of the Greek word *nymphê*, between 'bride' and 'nymph', and the Nymphs' specific value in the negotiation of women's passage from maidenhood to motherhood. Not everything of course is equally good – the first chapter is initially rather heavy going, the writing is sometimes too dense, the text on occasions degenerates, perhaps unavoidably given the nature of the evidence, into a catalogue, but on the whole this is a rewarding account of an important interface between Greek myth, cult and social codes. Nymphs do occur in some of the same contexts in Matthew Dillon's weighty [B]★★*Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion*,[2] though his gaze is mainly fixed upon the evidence for real women and girls as religious actors, and thus upon the extensive archaeological and epigraphic sources listed in 67 pages of end-

[1] *Greek Nymphs*. Myth, Cult, Lore. By Jennifer Larson. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. xii + 380, with 49 illustrations. Hardback £48.40.

[2] *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion*. By Matthew Dillon. Routledge, London, 2002 (actually published 29 Nov. 2001). Pp. x + 436, with 46 illustrations. £60.00.

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notes. This mass of documentation is organized into three main sections: roles occupied in connection with core cults in the *polis*, roles within marginal cults, and a rag-bag section (*parthenos* to *mêtêr*; sacrificial roles and impurity; defunctive roles). Dillon has assembled an impressive collection of primary material; despite his deprecations, few are likely to want or need more. The bibliography is adequate and the index excellent – which is just as well, since almost no one will be able to read the book through. Its manner reminds one of nothing so much as Paul Stengel's *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer*: this is a Stengel for women as religious actors, with the two important reservations that the book contains not a single word in Greek, and therefore no detailed discussion of texts; and that it is extremely badly organized, the contents of chapters frequently bearing little relation to the ostensible topic. The imagined reader is simultaneously astonishingly ignorant (the word 'menstruation' is defined) and yet prepared to be remorselessly buttonholed about every women's cult of a long-dead civilization. Three points need to be made. First: is it defensible now to write a purely descriptive book on 'women in Greek religion'? It certainly was so in the 1970s, at a time when feminists aimed to recover 'lost' worlds. Is it still a desideratum when other fields have long since passed beyond, not merely on to the Foucauldian issue of the construction of gender, but to its materiality and performativity (it is instructive that, though Dillon does occasionally use the word 'gender' in the text, it is absent from his index and the concept nowhere discussed or thematized), and when there is a growing number of theoretically-aware treatments of the topic, if not on this scale? Second, he claims that he is going to deal only with facts: 'Too many articles and books deal with topics about Greek women with the barest of facts and substitute semantic flourishes and imaginative conclusions for solid facts and discussion about the women themselves.' His animus is directed particularly against Marcel Detienne. But what lies behind such posturing? Two things: a) by thrusting 'the material evidence' into the reader's face, the author is relieved of the obligation to set up argumentative and imaginatively persuasive contexts through which that material might acquire meaning; Dillon's contexts, such as they are, are relegated to skimpy epilogues at the end of each chapter – one continually reads into the void; b) it sets up a vulgar dichotomy between 'facts', directly accessible thanks to a gracious Providence, and 'interpretation', suspect and ideological. But is such conceptual neanderthalism any longer credible? Thirdly, though his subject is religion, Dillon has no discernible interest in exploring symbolic action. His explanations, produced with all the flourish of dull complacency, are blankly unintellectual, of the order of: Demeter festivals 'encouraged women's sexual desires and hence fertility'; the *Thesmophoria*: a 'night out with the girls' with 'home and husband beckoning at the end of the day'; women 'celebrated the Adonia because the festival existed'. To be fair, the level does improve a little from about half-way through, and odd remarks are by no means without insight; but the book is really only useful as a source of information. On learning that Emma Stafford's [B] *Worshipping Virtues*[3] is about classical Greek personifications, one may perhaps recall Dr. Johnson's comment on Envy in Abraham Cowley's interminable *Davideis*, 'Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical Being'. But such a thought would be unfair. Though there has been no synthesis since

[3] *Worshipping Virtues*. Personification and the divine in Ancient Greece. By Emma Stafford. Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, London and Swansea, 2000. Pp. xiv + 274, with 28 figs. in text.

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Hamdorf's *Griechische Kultpersonifikationen* (1964), the topic has attracted a good deal of attention lately, particularly from classical archaeologists (H. A. Shapiro; Amy Smith), and it is of considerable theoretical interest, since it challenges our ability to conceptualize Greek pantheons. Stafford starts from the position that such personifications cannot be critically determined, but only located roughly upon a continuum between 'fully individualized divinity' and 'figure of speech' or allegory. There can therefore in principle be no single account of them, and she allows some force to all three main views, Ludwig Deubner's epithet theory, Walter Burkert's suggestion of a progression from epic to cult, and the Stoic view that powerful notions are inherently or 'naturally' divine. Though she claims to offer a synthetic account, she in fact ducks the challenge by offering six 'case-studies' from the Classical period – Themis, Nemesis, Peitho, Hygieia, Eirene and Eleos (Compassion), each of which is argued to exemplify a different aspect of the wider problem. But this tack, though it has the advantage of enabling her to discuss the literary and iconographic material in some detail, inevitably leads to the banal conclusions that a) each case is different and b) we need still more such studies. But cases are always different, as Alfred Gell observed years ago about magic: what we need is not more empirical studies but more powerful general ideas, such as Gaétan Thériault's suggestion that personifications belong to the class of *daimones*, exceptional in that they can be named and their sphere delineated. There is much to approve in Stafford's book, she argues well, she commands a wide range of evidence, she is consistently admirable; but on this evidence she still lacks something – creative imagination? intellectual urgency? that would make her a really good historian of religion. One needs just to compare her chapter on Themis with Jean Rudhardt's *Thémis et les Horai* (1999), aparently unknown to her, to see what is lacking.

Some years ago, Brill of Leyden offered all the volumes of Felix Jacoby's *Fragmenta der griechischen Historiker* (1923–58) to private customers at half price. But most people still have to consult its many volumes laboriously in a library. That must be one reason why, as Robert Fowler observes in the first volume of ****Early Greek Mythography**,[4] standard works on early mythology often ignore the *logopoioi* ('prose mythographers' to us), and quote the source instead of the author ('scholiast A to *Iliad* V 126' instead of 'Pherekydes of Athens, *FGrH* 3 F97'). Another reason why the early prose mythographers are not familiar as a group is that, although Jacoby arranged some of them, Hekataios, Akusilaos, Hellanikos, Pherekydes, for example, together in Part 1A, he counted many others as local historians, with numbers up in the 400–500s – Menekrates of Xanthos is actually no.769 in IIIC, the commentary on which he was unable to complete. Fowler's aim is to present the specifically mythological fragments of 29 early prose-writers, all but one of them in Jacoby, as a distinct corpus. Since mythography only established itself as a genre in the early Hellenistic period, there is legitimate debate over whom to include, but the cut-off point chosen is the mid-fourth century BC. The primary intention is to enable anyone working on early myth to find out what versions of a given story were current among the early prose-writers, so we get not a complete new Jacoby of these writers (though where possible his numbers are retained) but only their specifically mythological fragments. The focus is also exclusively upon Greek myth, so that Xanthos of Lydia, for example, is not included. A spot check reveals many silent

[4] *Early Greek Mythography, 1: Text and introduction*. By Robert L. Fowler. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xlvii + 459. £60.00.

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corrections of slips by Jacoby, dozens of up-dated references to latest editions, some new texts mainly from papyrus-fragments, and thousands of minor deviations from Jacoby's edition based upon the work of subsequent editors, Fowler's own collations and his editorial decisions (in the case of pseudo-Epimenides, *FGrH* 457, for example, Diod. Sic. 5.64–80, printed as *FGrH* 468 F1 by Jacoby and assigned hesitantly by him to Laosthenidas, has become fragment 4 of ps.-Epimenides). The cruces are invariably treated with good sense, and there are useful indices, most notably of *ipsissima verba*, and names of mythological characters. In other words, the work is emphatically much more than a reprinting of the relevant bits of Jacoby. It is a little disappointing that vol. 2, the commentary, could not appear at the same time – both a mythographic and a textual commentary are planned, a task of truly heroic scope – but this first volume of texts gives us every reason to think that the whole will be an outstanding work of scholarship. Let me express the hope that volume 2 will contain translations; Furley and Bremer's edition of the *Greek Hymns* (2001) is an excellent example of what is to be gained by such a decision.

Rome

It might well be thought that a topic such as Roman religion is unsuited to the dictionary format, since it is only too easy to fall heavily between several stools. This danger is not entirely avoided by Lesley and Roy Adkins' [B]**Dictionary of Roman Religion*,[5] which has been re-published in paperback by OUP in the USA. The brief Introduction exudes self-confidence, but neither informs the user of the guiding principles employed nor suggests a potential readership. It does not even offer an indication of what the authors mean by the notion 'Roman religion'. It is also very unfortunate that the book should have been reissued without revision, so that not even *OCD*[3] or Beard-North-Price, let alone the later volumes of Steinby's *Lexicon Topographicum*, have been taken into account. Moreover, the user is implicitly discouraged from finding out for him- or herself, because all specific references to ancient texts and documents have been rigorously excluded. Thus all we learn of 'Lactans' is 'A Roman god who promoted the growth of young corn'; of the crucial fragment of Varro, in Funaioli's *Fragmenta Grammaticorum* 164, not a word. That decision suggests an intended school readership, but this inference is contradicted by the obscurity of so many of the entries, especially to Celtic, British and Germanic deities (e.g. Lahus Paraliomegus; Rudiobus; Vacallinehae). But even in this field some entries are dud: the information on 'Lamiae Tres', for example, does not seem to have progressed from J. B. Keune's view in *Pauly-Wissowa* from 1924. Nevertheless, my impression is that on the core topic of Republican Roman religion the Adkinses are fairly reliable and informative; over-informative on deities of the North-Western Empire; and often slightly inaccurate on Greek or 'Eastern' matters. A rather Beta-minus performance but not without value for schools and junior undergraduates; and their enthusiasm is heartening. Since it is written in German, I confine myself to a preliminary note about Jörg Rüpke's excellent introduction to mainly Republican Roman religion, [B]*Die Religion der Römer*,[6] for which the English-language

[5] *Dictionary of Roman Religion*. By Lesley and Roy Adkins. Oxford U.P., New York, 2000 (h/b first published in 1996 by Facts on File, New York). Pp. viii + 288, with 120 line drawings and photographs in text.

[6] *Die Religion der Römer*. Eine Einführung. By Jörg Rüpke. Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich, 2001. Pp. 264, with 23 illustrations in text. DM 19,90.

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translation rights have already been acquired by Polity Press. Unlike Beard-North-Price, Rüpke has decided in favour of a strictly thematic organization of his material against a primarily historical or developmental account, though there is a 15 page historical sketch and a brief but suggestive coda on the Empire. The matter is organized into three main sections, structures, religious action, and the interface between religion and the social order. The book is pitched at a higher level than John Scheid's equally thematic *La religion des Romains*, though it lacks his numerous and imaginative pedagogic devices. In the matter of illustrations, it makes no attempt to compete with Beard-North-Price; they are few though not ill-chosen – but sadly of the rather muddy kind one associates with this publisher. I found the book interestingly written, with a wide range of examples, and, as one would expect of the author, clearly-stated and perceptive accounts of all the key institutions and concepts. When the translation appears, it will justifiably become one of the handful of preferred introductory texts for teaching Roman religion in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Graeco-Roman religion and Late Antiquity

The market in ideas being free, there will always be a place in it for the rehearsal of familiar ones. Antonía Tripolitis' B*Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*[7] takes an unabashedly traditional view of the role of new cults in the economy of Graeco-Roman religion. This was an age of anxiety and insecurity, fostered by wars and rumours of wars; though she cites Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians*, her ordinary men and women have lost faith in the ancient gods; and the rootless individual is on the look-out for personal reassurance and salvation. But there are some changes to the detailed picture. The usual roster of mystery cults, Eleusis, Dionysos, Isis, Cybele, here serve simply as a backcloth to a grand competition between four 'systems of religious thought': Mithraism, Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism. She lays stress on Jewish apocalypticism and the rise of the synagogue – interpreted as a locus for individual salvation; and this latter is also the salient feature of the accounts of both Christianity and Gnosticism. As one would expect of an Origen scholar, this is a markedly intellectualist account: there are extended discussions of the views of Philo, Celsus and Origen (Christian Platonism), as well as of the major Gnostic systems (no comment is made on Michael Williams' challenge to the very concept of Gnosticism, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism'* [1996/1999]). Within the familiar paradigm, therefore, Tripolitis has charted her own course; and though her account lacks a compelling overall idea, it is, in general, reliable and readable, and I can see it being attractive as, say, an introductory text in the more liberal Catholic seminaries. Jan Bremmer has for years delighted and impressed us with his wide knowledge of ancient myth and religion, and his brief but stimulating lectures on B*The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*[8] bring him back to an old enthusiasm, the Greek concept of the soul. But this book bears almost no resemblance to his doctoral thesis, and is the fruit rather of his recent engagement with Judaism and the pseudo-Gospels. His aim is to explore, as a classicist and historian of religion, the origins of the Christian view of the soul, death and resurrection. But he offers much more, a brief account of the rise of Purgatory, a comparison between ancient necromancy and

[7] *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*. By Antonía Tripolitis. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK, 2002. Pp. x + 165. Paperback £11.99.

[8] *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*. Read-Tuckwell Lectures, University of Bristol, 1995. By Jan N. Bremmer. Routledge, London, 2002. Pp. xi + 238. £50.00.

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Spiritualism, and a coda on near-death experiences. Bremmer's astonishing command of the bibliography of unfamiliar topics is everywhere in evidence: one will learn something of the current debate over the date of the Buddha (now late fifth/fourth rather than sixth/fifth century), and those, like me, who were persuaded by Jacques Le Goff's *La naissance du Purgatoire*, will find references to numerous critical discussions of that admirable but evidently wayward book. For the classicist, however, chapters 2 to 4 will be the most useful: a rapid survey of the 'rise of the soul' in Greece, largely endorsing Sourvinou-Inwood, with a useful summary of the current state of play on the Baccho-Orphic texts; a justified restatement of the argument against taking Pythagoras et al. as in any sense shamans, directed against Peter Kingsley and others; and a convincing rejection of claims that Christian belief in the resurrection was derived from Iran, the Essenes or the Qumran sect. As for the Graeco-Roman mysteries, it seems more likely that they borrowed from Christianity; whatever the truth in the immediate case, he rightly urges that we need to be open in principle to the possibility of such mutual influences. Bremmer has no positive candidate of his own, however, apart from the (plausible) thought that we should look within other Jewish sects, possibly Pharisaism. Though one sometimes wishes for less breadth and more discussion (I found the section on necromancy and Spiritualism the least satisfactory), this is a deft, lively book full of fascinating learning, lightly worn.

Whereas Bremmer has broadened his horizon from Greek to Judaeo-Christian death, Naomi Janowitz' [B]*Magic in the Roman World*[9] offers a crisp introduction to ancient magic from the perspective of a Rabbinic specialist. 'Magic', though, is not a category she is at all happy with: like a number of other youngish US-American scholars, she finds the term so entangled in a web of ethnocentric misprisions that it can be used, if at all, only in inverted commas. Her message is twofold: we need to rethink radically what a book on 'ancient magic' might be about; and we need to be open to a much broader notion of the 'religion of others'. The book therefore could not be more different from Routledge's other book on magic for 2001, Matthew Dickie's *Magic and Magicians*. Whereas Dickie reads ancient accounts of magical rituals omnivorously as 'sources', Janowitz sees them as negative representations of the Other, as functions of particular argumentative contexts or as the expression of structural social tensions. She is well aware of current work in anthropology, gender studies and the history of religions, and throws out many interesting ideas – on menstrual blood, the nature of ritual, the functioning of amulets . . . All that is excellent. I do have some reservations however: from the point of view of most readers of *G&R* the book is too heavily pitched towards topics that are pretty exclusively Judaeo-Christian (exorcism, angelology), or, where not, too much of the illustrative matter is Jewish. The chapter on love magic for example contains almost none of the obvious classical material, nor is there much discussion of how to read it in (psycho-)social terms. And her grasp of the Graeco-Roman – and Christian – material is noticeably less sure-footed than of the Jewish: a person called Nigidius Filigus takes a bow, for example; the book in no sense replaces Fritz Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World* as an introduction. But I am now keen to read her longer work on rabbinic magic, *Icons of Power* (2001); and students, duly forewarned, will appreciate both her insights and her punchy style.

The success of Christianity is an issue raised explicitly or implicitly in all three of these books;

[9] *Magic in the Graeco-Roman World*. Pagans, Jews and Christians. By Naomi Janowitz. Routledge, London, 2001. Pp. xiii + 145. £45.00.

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in David Frankfurter's B★★*Religion in Roman Egypt*,[10] now issued in paperback (2000), it forms the central problematic. But unlike Wilfrid Griggs' *Early Egyptian Christianity* (itself re-issued in the same year), its subject is not Christianity 'itself' but an account of the changes in temple-based religion which enabled Egyptian villagers to assimilate the new faith. Though it has aroused a certain amount of detailed criticism from Egyptologists, the book is the best-written and most challenging of all those reviewed here; whether it can serve as a model for other studies of the low-level reception of Christianity remains to be seen. Frankfurter views Egyptian religion as a matter of different spheres of practice, authority, and identity, notionally arranged in a descending hierarchy of scope, from the pan-Mediterranean to the individual household, each level operating its own exclusions and asserting its own lower-order or micro-meanings. The notion of a unified 'paganism' thus rightly comes in for sharp criticism. In this scenario, the temple-structure retained its vitality as the key mediator between divine power and the mass of villagers until at least the end of the second century. As the authority of the temple-tradition waned, its clergy sought new roles, calqued upon the old, within the village context, a context which even in the Late Period (525–332 BC) operated its own complex and differentiated version of the 'great' temple tradition. Oracles, the modes of practical religious action – to obtain agricultural fertility, healing, protection from daemonic attack, procreation ('magic') – and pilgrimage were all refashioned by such literate ritual specialists, brokers between temple and village. With the coming of Christianity, it was these figures who adapted their schemes to Christian modes: Coptic 'magic' operates in precisely the same modes as non-Christian, and Christian shrines fulfil the same needs for oracular divination and and healing as their Egyptian predecessors. In place of the 'top-down' version of Christianity offered by Griggs, with its emphasis upon doctrine and heresy, Frankfurter offers a scenario of functional continuity within the 'little' tradition of Egyptian religion between the Late Period, Hellenism and Coptic Christianity. The book's power derives chiefly however from its skilful contextualization of masses of primary, often very obscure, data of all kinds, literary, papyrological, epigraphic, and archaeological, within a dense network of reflective theorization. Some of the book's arguments may be in need of refinement, some may even be significantly mistaken; but it should be looked into even by those with little direct interest in its matter.

Though Jan-Willem Drijvers and John Watt try hard in their introduction to ★★*Portraits of Spiritual Authority*[11] to synthesize the various contributions to a workshop at Cardiff, part of a larger joint project on the transition between antique and mediaeval culture shared between Cardiff, Swansea and the COMERS Institute in Groningen, the overall impression remains rather disparate, mainly because the topics are spread over too wide a time-span, between Valentinus at one end, and Philaretos the Merciful and Stephen the Younger in 8th century Byzantium at the other. Nevertheless, the general theme, to explore the variety of claims to spiritual authority in Late Antiquity within the context of a growing awareness of the need to attend to narrrators' own agendas, was well-chosen. Several contributions

[10] *Religion in Roman Egypt*. Assimilation and resistance. By David Frankfurter. Princeton U.P., 1998 (first p/b ed. 2000). Pp. xvi + 314.

[11] *Portraits of Spiritual Authority*. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient. J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (eds.). Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 137. Brill, Leyden, 1999. Pp. xiii + 227.

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are particularly worth noting. Logan adapts Rodney Stark's sociology of cult movements to suggest how early Gnostic teachers acquired authority; J. W. Drijvers applies Simon Price's transactionalism to explore Cyril of Jerusalem's use of the True Cross to promote the influence of his see; Hatlie suggests that Byzantine holy men were marginalized not because of Iconoclasm but because by the eighth century 'the holy' had become thoroughly routinized. None of these are much bothered about narrators' agendas, but Stephen Mitchell shows how Gregory Thaumaturgus' career as a miracle-worker was created in the 380s by his biographer Gregory of Nyssa: by including non-healing miracle-stories for the first time in a saint's life, Gregory created a new type of hagiography, in response to folk demand for a properly Christian mythology; the stories themselves are taken from the same milieu, however skilfully they may have been adapted to the narrator's rhetorical aims. And John Watt reads the anonymous Syriac *Narrative* of the life of John bar Aphthonia, the founder of the monastery of Qenneshre on the Euphrates, as an exploration of the tensions in the fifth/sixth centuries between the asceticism prescribed in the monastery and the rhetorical culture still mediated by the schools in the Hellenized cities of the East. The persistence of Classical culture is the theme of the final book in my list. Pseudo-Nonnus' commentaries on four of Gregory of Nazianzus' sermons, entitled by the publisher B★★*A Christian's Guide to Greek Culture*,[12] have been translated by Jennifer Nimmo Smith in the admirable University of Liverpool Press series *Translated Texts for Historians*. So far as I know, this is the first time these texts have been turned into a modern language; Nimmo Smith herself established the Greek text – at least 160 manuscripts exist, to say nothing of the Syriac, Armenian and Georgian translations – for the *Corpus Nazianzenum* in 1992; the useful notes are expanded from the Latin notes of that edition. The original sermons (the two invectives against Julian, no. 35 on the epiphany, and no. 43 on the death of Basil of Caesarea) form a loose group in that they contain Gregory's most extended engagement with classical learning, an engagement mediated through his conventional rhetorical education. The commentary, written in the sixth century, is clearly indebted to the mode of teaching in 'secondary' schools, and probably implies that the sermons were then already being used for school-work. As a source for classical mythology and religion 'Nonnus' is, of course, very defective, though he does offer one or two interesting details – for example, that the ecstatic 'corybantic' cult of Cybele was still celebrated in the mountains of Caria in the sixth century (comm. in serm. 39.2, p. 95). As Nimmo Smith rightly observes, he is mainly valuable as a witness to the type of niche within which distinctively pagan learning managed to survive in an increasingly Christianized world, and to the pressures which led to distortion, truncation and sheer obliviousness of that legacy. Though I am not convinced by her case for thinking that the version we possess is an abbreviation of a more learned scholar's notes or commentary, this is a plain but eminently serviceable version of a minor, though not insignificant, late-antique text.

RICHARD GORDON

[12] *A Christian's Guide to Greek Culture*. The Pseudo-Nonnus Commentaries on Sermons 4, 5, 39 and 43 by Gregory of Nazianzus. Tr. by Jennifer Nimmo Smith. Translated texts for Historians 37. Liverpool U.P., 2001. Pp. xiii + 156, with 3 maps.

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