

European and American study of the ancient world, and the production of a number of scholarly, or supposedly scholarly, works dealing with the Library, it is a striking fact that we still lack a good independent study, based solidly in the sources, of the institution, of its contents and administration, and of its wider meaning and influence. The best treatments available are still those in larger works on broader themes, like those of Pfeiffer and Fraser. This work in no way changes the situation.

David J. Wasserstein

Tel Aviv University

Armin Eich, *Politische Literatur in der römischen Gesellschaft: Studien zum Verhältnis von politischer und literarischer Öffentlichkeit in der späten Republik und frühen Kaiserzeit* [Passauer Historische Forschungen 11]. Böhlau, Köln/Weimar/Wien, 2000. VIII + 413 pp. ISBN 3 412 14999 3.

This book, a revision of a Passau dissertation of 1998, argues that in the Rome of the late Republic and early Empire our modern concept that certain kinds of literature can be intended to influence a reading public towards or against particular political ideas is simply inapplicable, for two main reasons: the lack in effect of a wide reading public, and the lack of literary promotion of identifiable political policies and ideas (as opposed to literary support for this or that individual or group). This is supported by further arguments which claim that for similar reasons neither propaganda nor censorship in the modern sense has much validity for Roman society of this period. The methodological groundwork for this argument is laid in the first half of the book, where terms and parameters are defined. Here it is hard to disagree that the idea of a mass political audience and the persuasive address of it are anachronistic for ancient Rome; but the larger depoliticisation of Roman literature which Eich in effect argues for deserves further discussion.

Eich rightly argues that Ciceronian speeches performed a particular political or forensic function at a particular time, and that though they could be recalled as evidence for what Cicero had said at the time on a particular question, they were not explicitly received as expressing general and enduring political policies. While this seems to be convincing overall as an exposure of the ideological paucity of Roman politics, almost always based on personal loyalty rather than ideas, the view that previous speeches could not be manipulated for overtly political purposes in a later context seems at least questionable. To take a famous example discussed by Eich (196-8), the collection of Cicero's consular speeches in 60 BC, which he himself claimed would make him appear more statesmanlike, surely had a clear political purpose in attempting to justify his actions in 63 against the (ultimately successful) attacks of Clodius. This is not of course the consistent advocacy of a particular policy over time, but it does seem to show that speeches when published could have a further political influence outside their original context of delivery.

Another Ciceronian context where some ideological content would appear to be at stake is the Cato controversy of 46/5 (cf. 284-5), in which various Roman literati, including Cicero and Caesar, wrote competing pamphlets in praise or vituperation of Cato after his suicide at Thapsus. Though this too fits in some sense into Eich's pattern of non-policy writing, centered as it is on encomium or invective of an individual, it is difficult to divorce these pamphlets from some association with the rigid republicanism of their subject: the very multiplicity of the works spurred by Cato's death strongly suggests that they were more than favourable or hostile obituaries and that they reflected on the polity of Rome in general, though in the absence of their texts it is of course difficult to be sure. Likewise, it is difficult to hold that the Ciceronian political treatises *De Legibus* and *De Republica* have nothing to say about the ideas and policies which their author saw as fundamental in Roman politics, both in their particular contexts of composition and more generally.

The treatment of Augustan poetry argues that we are not dealing with modern propaganda in the sense of works intended to arouse particular sorts of political conviction. This has a general plausibility for the overall assessment of works like the *Aeneid*, where moral complexity plays a major role, but again it is difficult to deny the label 'propagandistic' to e.g. the description of the Shield of Aeneas, with its canonising of the distorted Augustan view of the battle of Actium. Here as elsewhere Eich might have engaged more with Syme's famous chapter on 'The Organisation of Opinion' in *The Roman Revolution*, the most prominent presentation of the position he is in some sense attacking, and one would also like to have seen more argument about how patronage affected the politicisation of literature (e.g. more on Maecenas' mysterious role and the work of Peter White) and how ideological elements can be seen in art which match those of literature (here a consideration of the work of Paul Zanker would have been helpful).

The denial of suppressive censorship in the modern sense again has a general plausibility; particularly acute is the point that ancient attempts at censorship could not guarantee the disappearance of offending works and indeed gave them the publicity which some had hitherto lacked. But once again there are significant counter-examples: the evident banning of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* from the libraries of Rome surely makes the same point as modern ideological book-banning, though it was of course unsuccessful in suppressing the work (not least because the ban was imposed perhaps a decade after original publication).

Overall, then, this book does good service in demonstrating the otherness of Roman political culture in its relation to literature, and in showing the limits of the political importance of literature in a society where the political public electorate was largely illiterate (though the lack of importance of the electorate in the imperial period is an important development). It is perhaps too ready to create straw men (no one is going to argue that modern mass media and concerns with the communication of policy are very like the political life at Rome), but also perhaps too schematic in its desire to sever ancient and modern practice: modern politics is more like Roman politics than we think, and the manipulation and promotion of political aims in literature is not just a modern phenomenon. Though explicit testimony of the ideological reception of literature at Rome is commonly lacking, it is hard to believe it did not happen; the work (e.g.) of Shadi Bartsch in *Actors in the Audience* suggests that it may have been in the context of dramatic (re)performance that such elements were most prominently brought to the fore, with audiences more than keen to detect political subtexts.

S.J. Harrison

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary*, Mnemosyne Supplementum 198, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000. xliii + 567 pp. ISBN 90 04 10842 4.

Unlike the first half of the *Aeneid*, the 'Iliadic' books have not until recently been the object of good modern commentaries in English, the few available being either outdated or too short and partial. S. Harrison's commentary on book ten (1991) and P. Hardie's on book nine (1994) seem to have announced a turning point, and this gap in scholarly coverage continues to decrease with this extensive commentary on book seven by Horsfall and another one by the same author, so rumour has it, promised for book eleven. Few scholars can be better equipped to assume the task of producing this much needed commentary on book seven than H., who studied it in his 1971 D.Phil. thesis, and now returns to re-examine it after some thirty years of extensive and invaluable contribution to the study of Roman literature and myth, and of Vergil in particular. Not many more possess the skill and knowledge required to present this commentary with the thorough review it deserves, and the present reviewer, who has occasionally taught the book, and more often just read it for pleasure, cannot count himself among them. This review will therefore concentrate