

the volume's main aims), M. offers a fascinating and very important contribution to the debate on Orphic literature. Readers will therefore hopefully gain a better understanding of such a complex topic, although M. does not provide a clear definition of 'Orphism' or 'Orphic literature'. What he offers instead is a thorough overview of the most relevant features of Orphic theogonies as well as the main tools to interpret them, and one can hope that this will prompt further discussion on the issue.

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CRITIAS AS WRITER AND POLITICIAN

YVONNEAU (J.) (ed.) *La Muse au long couteau. Critias, de la création littéraire au terrorisme d'État. Actes du colloque international de Bordeaux, les 23 et 24 octobre 2009.* (Scripta Antiqua 107.) Pp. 216, ill. Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2018. Paper, €25. ISBN: 978-2-35613202-4. doi:10.1017/S0009840X19000210

This volume comprises the proceedings of a symposium held in 2009 at the University of Bordeaux. It includes eight studies devoted to Critias (his life and work). Athenian aristocrat, leading member of the 'Thirty Tyrants', criminal and poet, sophist (though unlikely) and author of a varied oeuvre, which as well as *Constitutions (politeiai)* seems to have included tragedies, collections of aphorisms and treatises on human passions. Of those works attributed to Critias, barely 100 fragments have survived. This does not give us much to go on in terms of understanding their author's intentions; and much less those of the Critias whom his relative Plato turned into one of his most prominent and recurring characters in the field of human affairs.

The authors focus on different aspects of Critias' work. His poetical work is covered by the studies of G. Burzacchini, on the elegiac work of Critias, and that of A. Boschi, on his dramatic work; both strive to extract what little information is available from the too rare fragments and a rather meagre indirect tradition. The readers of this vanished work and few testimonies (for the most part Xenophon, then Lysias and Plato) have no option but to hypothesise.

The political context is perhaps easier to explore, when trying to understand the Tyrant on whom we are better informed than on the poet. This is what the joint study by P. Brulé and J. Wilgaux suggests on the ideological and political context in which Critias led his political life. For his part, A. Powell is interested in the ambiguities of Critias' relationship with Sparta. On reading these, one is left with the sense that they add little to the previous syntheses (most notably the study that E. Lévy devoted to 'Critias ou l'intellectuel au pouvoir', *Cahiers Philosophiques de Strasbourg* 12 [2001], 231–51, which is only cited by E. Caire).

Bibliographies and uses of the ancient sources are not always homogeneous. The most recent French translation of Critias gets little mention (in 2009, L. Brisson introduced, translated and annotated the fragments of Critias in J.-F. Pradeau [ed.], *Les Sophistes*, Volume I [2009], pp. 391–442). In English, J. Dillon and T. Gergel published their own anthology in 2003 (*The Greek Sophists*). Some of the contributions in the volume are

aware of the existence of these commented translations, which they discuss and dispute, but on the whole they are largely ignored. These lacunae underline the absence of a harmonised overall bibliography: each contribution is followed by its own bibliography, with sometimes jarring forms of quotation. The studies also generally lack coherence in terms of accuracy. The rather lengthy introduction by the editor, Yvonneau, reviews most of the contemporary judgements (nineteenth and twentieth centuries) concerning Critias, and thus recalls the numerous and distinct opinions Critias' life and works have elicited. The ancient judgements on Critias, his person and the meaning of his writings showed the same hesitations and contradictions. The final study of S. Gotteland, devoted to Critias' place in the second sophistic, demonstrates this well.

The eight studies, while put together thematically (the poet, the politician, posterity etc.) do not have anything like the same level of accuracy, nor for that matter do they give equal treatment to the fragments. It is also difficult to see how these studies advance long-standing debates. For instance, F.-G. Herrmann's study, 'Plato and Critias', consists of long citations of ancient texts, essentially to propose a few observations on Plato's phrase *to ta heautou prattein*, used to define *sophrosyne* in the *Charmides*, suggesting that Plato borrowed it from his relative Critias in order to transform it. This is a well-worn debate, and Herrmann's contribution does nothing much to advance it.

Quite different, though, is Caire's treatment of the same subject on the relationship between Plato and Critias in relation to 'excellence' according to Critias: 'Du Superlatif au comparatif: l'excellence selon Critias'. Her accurate knowledge of Critias' fragments allows her to establish with precision the link between what has been conserved of his writings and what we can reconstruct of his political actions.

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THE AUDIENCE OF GREEK MEDICAL LITERATURE

BOURAS-VALLIANATOS (P.), XENOPHONTOS (S.) (edd.) *Greek Medical Literature and its Readers. From Hippocrates to Islam and Byzantium*. Pp. xii + 239, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. Cased, £115, US\$144.95. ISBN: 978-1-4724-8791-9.

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The volume explores the intended readership of a variety of medical texts, spanning from Greek antiquity to the Islamic and Byzantine worlds, and examines how the reception of a medical treatise across a diverse audience of physicians, students and (educated) laymen conditions the very generation of 'scientific' discourse. The term 'scientific' requires some qualification in this context; for it would be a mistake to think of ancient medical literature as building on some kind of self-enclosed, technical idiom that was only accessible to a select audience of specialised physicians. The evidence that we have yields a radically different picture according to which medical discourse in the pre-modern world takes its shape and form by investing on its discursive openness, sliding across varying modes of operation and levels of difficulty with a view to a readership that in part consists of people with no knowledge of medicine whatsoever. Some of the Hippocratic treatises were