

EGYPT AND THE CLASSICAL WORLD

J. GWYNN GRIFFITHS: *Atlantis and Egypt, with Other Selected Essays*. Pp. xiv + 329. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991. £39.95.

J. Gwyn Griffiths has been an eminent mediator between Egypt and the classics for a long time; we all respectfully use his commentaries on Plutarch, *De Iside*, and Apuleius XI. The collection of his minor essays, arranged by himself, will be welcome from the start. There may be some slight disappointment none the less: what might be expected to be an impassioned account of the meeting of two major civilizations that coexisted for so many centuries turns out to be mostly an exercise in *rivulos consecretari*, scholarly and competent, no doubt, but often *marginalia*, incidental contributions to congresses and *Festschriften* determined by their respective topics. The title essay makes a notably weak case for Egyptian elements in Plato's Atlantis, hardly redeemed by Brandenstein's suggestion that Atlas might be a Berber word, 'and the Berber languages were at least related to Egyptian' (24). In the overdetermined SATOR square, does it help to insist on the assonance of AREPO to Harpocrates (41–3)? We learn about Egyptian religious symbols in the legendary death of Cleopatra (47–54), but one should equally notice the parallel Greek imagery, the Dionysiac snake crawling from the *kiste* – Antony and Cleopatra had been playing Dionysiac games all the time. There is a short essay on 'Early Egyptian Syncretism' (159–71), but some major issues such as Osiris–Dionysus, Sarapis, Hermetism, Magical texts do not come to the fore in this volume. One might have wished to find the article 'The Flight of the Gods before Typhon' which concerns Pindar fr. 91, reprinted from *Hermes* 88 (1960), 374–6. It is still amusing to know how the river Isis got to Oxford (291–5).

There are remarkable contributions on the Jewish and Christian tradition, such as 'The Rise of the Synagogue' (99–113) or 'Egyptian Influences on Athanasius' (143–56). Outstanding is the essay on βασιλεύς βασιλέων (252–65), the rare example of a formula which can be translated into quite different languages and has become productive as a rhetorical figure in most of them, down to *vanitas vanitatum*. G. traces the title back to Amenophis II and thinks it more at home in Egypt than in Mesopotamia. Another essay of basic importance is 'Allegory in Greece and Egypt' (295–324): G. gives various examples of allegorical tales and allegorical explanations from Egypt, presents what is called 'ritual allegory' in the Ramesseum text, and identifies the explicit concept of allegory, literally 'another saying', in the Book of the Dead (312f.). G. can thus claim that allegory 'originated in Egypt' (317), without excluding 'coincidence' as to the Greek development (ib.). He still ignores the oldest document of explicit Greek allegory, the Derveni Papyrus.

Personal experience gives value to G.'s study on 'Bilingualism among the Mahass' (229–33). Finally, the thrill of a detective story goes with the unpromising title 'Some Claims of Xenoglossy in the Ancient Languages' (266–90): this is not only on W. F. Jackson Knight to whom Virgil spoke, but especially on the case of 'Rosemary', the medium who was fluent in ancient Egyptian, claiming an earlier incarnation in the reign of Amenophis III. G. recalls a personal encounter with Rosemary's mentor in 1944, and he analyses the registrations of the medium's utterances which seem to have

become better and better Egyptian in vocabulary and grammar as her mentor made progress in his own Egyptian studies (285).

There is selective updating in some pieces, and a laudable index.

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A NEW LEGACY OF ROME

RICHARD JENKYNs (ed.): *The Legacy of Rome: a New Appraisal*. Pp. xi + 479; 32 pls. Oxford University Press, 1992. £25.

The first *Legacy of Rome* (1923) has had a good run for its money, and a replacement was overdue. Its successor differs from and excels it in one essential respect. The editor of *Legacy*¹ (Cyril Bailey) noted that some of his contributors 'have described the contribution of Rome to civilization, and have left it to the reader to infer the extent of the legacy' – an evasion to which he also resorted himself. The contributors to *Legacy*² all make a serious attempt to relate the Roman achievement to the contemporary world. It is in respect of literature that the contrast between the two books is most marked. The single chapter by Mackail in *Legacy*¹ mentions a mere handful of English writers. In *Legacy*² we have separate chapters on Virgil (Jasper Griffin), Pastoral (Jenkyns), Horace, Ovid and others (Charles Martindale), Satire (J. P. Sullivan), and Drama (Gordon Braden), all of which conscientiously and often arrestingly document and analyse what these authors and genres have meant for our own literature. In addition Jenkyns's introductory chapter, 'The legacy of Rome', itself includes some excellent pages on language and (especially prose) literature. Of the topics that have been axed the most surprising, at first sight, is that of 'Building and engineering' (Gustavo Giovannoni in *Legacy*¹). This leads to a neat editorial leg-pull. The reader who has been beguiled into expecting something on the subject by Jenkyns's opening remark that the Romans 'are generally allowed to have excelled at engineering, jurisprudence, and main drainage' (2) must wait until nearly the end of the book to be disabused by Nicholas Purcell's brusque pronouncement that 'The Romans' taste for and skill at engineering, which sounds so nineteenth-century, is indeed an invention of the Roman engineers of that period' (448).

Not all contributors have sufficiently studied their – presumably non-specialist – readership. Some chapters, notably those on Literature (see below, however, on Braden), Art (Geoffrey Waywell), Architecture (David Watkin), and the Renaissance (A. T. Grafton) are both authoritative and readable. Those on the Transmission of the texts (R. H. Rouse) and Rhetoric (George A. Kennedy) are, though dry, clear and competent. Of all the topics handled in the book Law is not the least recalcitrant to presentation to a lay audience, and it is no disparagement of Robert Feenstra's chapter to say that he probably makes a puzzling (his own word, 399) story as plain as the material allows. Some contributions, however, are harder going than, I believe, they need have been. The title of Charles Davis's chapter, 'The Middle Ages', belies it; it is really about the relationship between the papacy and temporal sovereigns with special reference to the City of Rome itself. I do not presume to criticize Davis's argument, but somebody ought to have pointed out to him that most of those at whom the book is, I take it, aimed will not be much enlightened by unexplained allusions to 'the Thessalonican massacre of Theodosius' (68) or 'the eight counties of the Pentapolis' (84) and the like. (Even the use of cross-headings would have done