

comprendre d'emblée la réussite de l'École. L'EFR a, malgré ou à cause du poids de la tradition, été le vivier de bataillons entraînés, parfois exécutants, mais souvent initiateurs ardents, toujours compétents, dans une entreprise qui marquera sa propre destinée et celle de l'archéologie. D'ailleurs, si l'ampleur du sujet a empêché que soient creusées des destinées individuelles, on aurait aimé en savoir plus sur ces figures qui semblent décalées par rapport au profil commun : Goyau qui passe de l'antique au médiéval, Pachtère qui s'intéresse à Paris gallo-romain à un moment où le sujet semble baroque ; même ceux qui se sont coulés dans le moule – Carcopino, Piganiol, Seston, Marrou... –, nous les découvrons enfin avec soulagement et sympathie comme des historiens insérés dans leur époque, comme des hommes enthousiastes, partiaux, de mauvaise foi, capables d'échanger des insultes à propos de Cicéron ou de lancer des anathèmes contre ceux qu'ils jugent responsables de la chute de l'empire romain, 15 siècles auparavant. Loin d'y voir les marques d'une faiblesse de l'École qui aurait échoué dans sa mission de former des individus impartiaux et froids (jugement vers lequel ce livre semble parfois incliner), on découvre des hommes engagés, passionnés pour des causes désintéressées, des hommes qui irriguent la vie intellectuelle, qui se trompent, qui sont abusés, mais toujours avec la ferveur qui avait marqué leur découverte du monde antique à leur arrivée à Rome.

Monique DONDIN-PAYRE

Anthony OSSA-RICHARDSON, *The Devil's Tabernacle. The Pagan Oracles in Early Modern Thought*. Princeton, University Press, 2013. 1 vol. 16 x 24 cm, vi-342 p., 3 pl. Prix : 24.95 £. ISBN 978-0-691-15711-5.

This densely argued book traces the intellectual debates about the nature of ancient oracles in the modern period. Anthony Ossa-Richardson focuses on the type of pronouncements typified by the Delphic oracles (excluding texts such as the Sibylline oracles) and on the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, with a brief outlook onto nineteenth century views. The debates surrounding oracles serve as a focal point for two wider arguments. First, up to the eighteenth century attitudes towards paganism were directly related to one's own identity as a Christian. Discussions about oracles were thus not of a merely antiquarian nature. Second, intellectual historians should avoid identifying seemingly heterodox positions as precursors and anticipations of later Enlightenment and atheist views. Read within their historical context, they tend to share much more with contemporary, traditional views. The first part (chapters 1 & 2) sets out the standard early modern view, on which broad agreement across confessional lines existed. Two key facts were known about oracles: they were ambiguous and deceitful, and they had stopped at some point in time, related to incarnation of Christ and/or the spread of Christianity. These ideas can be traced directly to ancient and patristic sources. Indeed, for patristic authors oracles were a crucial element in their anti-pagan polemic, for the assignment of true prediction to biblical prophets vouchsafed the truth of their own religion. The polemic expressed the deep conviction that Christianity offered a better way of explaining the world. Patristic sources also provided the template for the explanation of oracles as performed by demons, who had a much more acute sense-perception than ordinary

man and hence could, from a human perspective, seem to predict the future. Contemporary ideas about possession, as described in early ethnographic works, helped to sustain this idea. By the end of the sixteenth century, then, the Pythia had become the antithesis of the biblical prophets and could thus be used in interconfessional polemics of, for example, protestants against catholics whose Church was supposed to be perverted by the devil. For a patristic scholar, it is striking how much of this actually derives from or resonates with arguments known from the patristic authors. The second part (chapter 3 & 4) discusses two alternative theories that challenged the demonic paradigm. The argument is that scholars have been too keen to read in such arguments statements and anticipations of anticlerical or atheist ideas. In fact, Ossa-Richardson argues, oracles have the same function in what have been called “erudite libertines” and orthodox theologians: they are the antithesis of a proper acquisition of knowledge. One way of questioning the consensus was by seeing oracles as explained by nature and the regularity of the heavens, an argument proposed by Pomponazzi (1462-1525) with reference to the authority of Aristotle. For him, demonology was a subterfuge that betrayed a failure to produce a coherent account of nature. Crucially, Pomponazzi seemed to treat pagan and christian forms of divination as equal. Besides numerous other issues, this raised the issue of the authority of the ancient and patristic sources, as many of them explicitly ascribed oracles to demonic activity. A further challenge to ancient authority came in the form of the imposture thesis, set it out in its most influential form by the Dutch Mennonite Van Dale (1638-1708). For him oracles were the result of priestly fraud and imposture, an idea that was relatively uncontroversial until “its corollary, the diminution of patristic authority, was pushed to the fore” (p. 172). Van Dale was driven by a desire to purify Christianity and his thesis, so Ossa-Richardson, led to historical thinking: he started to pay close attention to the context within which each ancient statement was made. Indeed, for the imposture thesis to work, it had to be shown that each individual testimony about ancient oracles was unreliable. The third part pursues the connection between Van Dale and early enlightenment thought. Chapter 5 dissects the debate between Fontenelle (1657-1757), whose *histoire des oracles* (1686) reformulated the imposture thesis, and Baltus (1667-1743), who argued at length against it. Ossa-Richardson shows how traditional readings of Fontenelle as representing the enlightenment view and of Baltus as a relic of the past are inadequate: the debate hinges on the general issue of what the value of testimony (that is, knowledge not based on one’s own experience) is. Fontenelle takes a sceptical view, but Baltus is right in arguing that his theory cannot explain why the imposture thesis came into being in the first place. We touch here on fundamental issues for any attempt at writing of history. After Fontenelle, there was little innovation until the 19th century: Fontenelle and Van Dale had succeeded in putting the imposture thesis of the same footing as the one previously enjoyed by demon thesis. The last chapter shows how the crucial connection between views on pagan oracles and on Christian identity was ruptured in the nineteenth century. Under the influence of historicism, the Delphic oracle came to be interpreted as a political institution within the Greek world. The shift away from a religious to a political interpretation signalled how the oracles were seen as performing a specific function within another society, fundamentally different from our own. This trend was strengthened by the impact contemporary anthropology has had on the study of

ancient religion, leading to the exclusion of religious questions (about theology and belief) from our inquiries. To an extent this change of perspective has been salutary, for it allows us to study the ancient world without having to stumble over the question that was central to early modern intellectuals: how did the oracles really function? Yet it would be mistaken for us, classicists, to to read Ossa-Richardson's fine book as a history of reception and of debates that we have overcome. In fact, it unearths a different type of response to oracles than the ones we are today able to contemplate. These responses rely on questions that we may have to learn to ask again: what did oracles mean for those visiting them? How can an oracle work as a religious institution? What constitutes a religious response to an oracle? And, ultimately, what does an acceptance of oracles mean for one's understanding of reality? In this way, Ossa-Richardson does not only chart early modern debates but also alerts us to some of the blind spots in modern scholarship.

Peter VAN NUFFELEN

Maria WYKE, *Caesar in the USA*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2012. 1 vol. 16 x 23 cm, XII-306 p., 36 ill. (THE JOAN PALEVSKY IMPRINT IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE). Prix : 39.95 \$. ISBN 978-0-520-27391-7.

A 2004 biography of John Wilkes Booth, the actor—and scion of a family of actors specializing in Shakespearean roles—who assassinated President Lincoln in 1865, is provocatively entitled *American Brutus*. In a nation ostensibly founded in the defense of liberty against a tyrannous king, Booth's justification of his deed with the tag (falsely attributed to Brutus) "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" resonates uniquely, and perhaps more loudly than in any other nation touched by the classical tradition. As part of a multi-year and multi-pronged approach to the *Nachleben* of Julius Caesar, even into contemporary contexts, Maria Wyke has undertaken to evaluate the dictator's legacy in the culture, both high and low, of the United States—though only in the 20th and 21st centuries. The results of this bold and original conceit are uneven, for a host of reasons, and very much more could have been done to fulfill the promise of this survey. Although it is composed of seven chapters—split into two parts labeled "Education" and "Political Culture"—*Caesar in the USA* gives the distinct appearance of a series of individual studies strung together with very little connective tissue animating the whole. In these chapters' footnotes, Wyke oftentimes acknowledges that several pages are "indebted" to the recently published work of other scholars or to someone else's suggested line of enquiry. Such an approach might have provided a sweeping panoramic vision of Caesar's image in American life, but the highest peaks of this landscape have been ignored in favor of certain low-lying areas that even Caesar would have difficulty traversing. The book even wanders far, at certain points, from the territory staked out in its title. "Caesar" is nominally taken to mean "*Julius Caesar*", though, particularly in the examples offered of "Empire" in the past few decades, it is clearly not this specific Caesar that is being referenced. I doubt that many of my compatriots could, nowadays, identify the precise achievements or failings of Julius Caesar—but then I also live in a country in which members of a political movement regularly label our elected President a "socialist" or "fascist" (or, for the more orthographically-challenged, a "facist"), in the absence of the remotest