

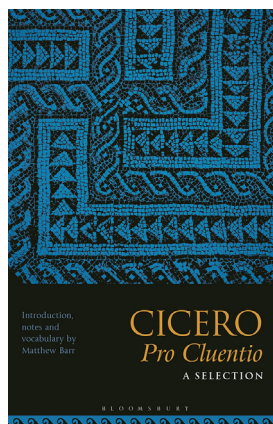
Book Reviews

Cicero, *Pro Cluentio*. A Selection

Barr (M.) (ed) Pp. viii + 158. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Paper, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-350-06034-0.

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Barr's volume of Cicero's *Pro Cluentio* covers the selections for 2023–2024 of the OCR A Level Latin Group 1 and 2 prose texts; further extracted by OCR from the Humfrey Grose-Hodge edition: *Murder at Larinum* published in 1931 and reprinted in 1992. This history is unremarkable but for the fact that this leads to considerable confusion with the numbering of sections between different editions of the text and a genuine challenge in locating the correct (Group 2) English section.

Certainly, Barr's edition is more modern than the reprinted Grose-Hodge edition, updating the somewhat alarming 1932 preface that states the text will 'improve boy's style of prose composition, but it can be used with great profit even by girls and those not aiming to compose in Latin.' Instead, Barr states that the volume is 'designed to guide any student who has mastered Latin up to GCSE level and wishes to read Cicero's text of *Pro Cluentio* in the original.'

The book's introduction is divided up, much like other volumes in this series, with a clear introduction to the life of Cicero, the nature of the trial in which the *Pro Cluentio* was given, and some background to the trial along with Oppianicus' crimes. Given the truly astonishing obfuscation with which Cicero chooses to bewilder his jury, Barr elegantly and clearly sets out these elements, providing, in an additional section-by-section summary, a helpful aide memoire to teachers and students alike.

A didactic summary of Cicero's literary style follows, providing helpful hints in answering questions on style as well as a useful glossary of literary terms, and a handful of suggestions for further reading.

The text that follows is set out in the OCR/Bloomsbury house style. This means that the small print text is spaced so there is little room to annotate, but the corners of the pages indicate which sections relate to AS level and which to A level. It is certainly, as a teacher, always intensely reassuring to have to hand the text that you know will be the same as that used in the examination.

The commentary that follows is extremely helpful in clarifying less obvious grammatical quirks and I have rarely found myself without support when pondering over a meaning. The commentary also picks out relevant rhetorical techniques and gives relevant explanations for ideas, terms and events.

As is normal in these volumes, the vocabulary is set out with words in the OCR AS Defined Vocabulary List usefully marked with an asterisk.

The key disadvantage to these Bloomsbury/ OCR volumes is how short-lived they are. As an investment for a school this is expensive; particularly given that a student will usually need both a workbook where comments and additional vocabulary may be written, as well as vocabulary for each section. Further, the volumes do not include a translation of the sections that need to be studied in English for the A Level (Group 2) prescription. Because of the bitty nature of the exam board's selection, and the fact that the English sections are not provided, buying a class set would not make sense for subsequent years after the exam prescription has changed. This is, however, a very helpful book and I, and those of my students who have bought a copy, have been grateful for it.

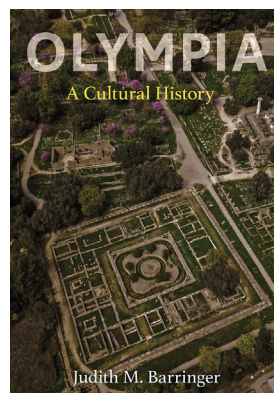
doi: 10.1017/S2058631023000041

Olympia: A Cultural History

Barringer (J.), Pp. xviii + 281, ills, maps, colour pls. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021. Cased. £28. US\$35. ISBN: 978-0-691-21047-6.

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Professor Barringer has attempted the seemingly impossible – a massive overview of our entire assembled knowledge regarding multiple facets of the site of Olympia from its earliest known use as a Hellenic sanctuary, interwoven with a profound understanding of the relevant ancient sources and then into the most contemporary of academic micro-debates. And much of this multifaceted approach is conducted simultaneously and with considerable textual elegance and clarity. Supplemented by numerous black and white and colour panels and illustrations of cultic sites as well as maps, Barringer's cultural history not only achieves its improbable objective but is – in my opinion – nothing less than an instant classic.

Despite writing as something of an outsider - the genre having been traditionally dominated by German archaeological experts, who have been excavating Olympia since 1875 - Barringer has given us a first-in-its-field, English-language analysis that is little short of magisterial. Stating her intent to be one wherein she provides her readership with a 'holistic interpretive' (introduction – page 5) study that moves through material, social, historical, political and religious synchronic considerations (i.e. a cultural context or anthropological approach), *Olympia: A Cultural History* ultimately rewards us with a cumulative diachronic sweep across more than 1200 years of stratified complexity. This is a task she acknowledges 'has rarely been done for any archaeological site in ancient Greece' (introduction – p. 5) and given the singular prestige of Olympia to the ancient Greco-Roman world and the vast amounts of knowledge Barringer had to digest to produce this text it might be well be considered self-evident as to why.

To guide her readership through this interpretation of the immense amounts of evidence she has processed, the scholar has imposed a chronological order to her chapters that is prefaced by a simple chronology (page xvii). While the first four of these central chapters cover the earliest known Greek use of the site through to the end of the Hellenistic period, the final two chapters are just as intriguing: respectively entitled 'Roman Olympia' and 'The Last Olympiad', both chapters richly reappraise the new layers of meaning imposed upon the ancient site with the invasion of a foreign enemy and then their Christian descendants. While nearby Sparta may have become something of a 'theme park' for the martially-obsessed Roman visitor to the Peloponnese, Olympia retained its lustre as the premier sporting location for the conquerors of Greece. As she points out on page 296: 'Earlier scholarly claims of decline in Roman Olympia are unfounded... Roman preferences for artistic display and commemoration required changes, and the shift in power westward to Rome meant that Olympia's substantial renown was now harnessed and exploited by a new population.' In the final of her six central chapters, Barringer also argues that the prohibition of non-Christian worship by Theodosius in 393 C.E. did not – contrary to many a generalisation – necessarily bring about an abrupt or instantaneous end to the pagan games held in honour of Zeus: 'There is no clear evidence of a last Olympiad, a final festival, nor is there, unsurprisingly, a single instant when the site stops being pagan and becomes exclusively Christian' (p. 237).

In actuality, as encouraged as Barringer is to attempt new interpretations of the evidence through her cultural approach, she is also just as forthright with acknowledging the many 'known unknowns' that still litter the interpretative fields clustering around this extraordinarily significant location. From the still-misunderstood intersections of the Pelops myth and the founding of the first Games (or should they be attributed to Heracles?) to the ongoing ambiguities hedging around so many aspects of the Altis, to the precise day or even decade when the ancient Olympics were crushed under the weight of a Christian singularity – before they would be so famously revived under Baron Pierre de Coubertin in our modern era – Barringer's openness to posing the right questions is as satisfying as the wealth of answers she provides. She actually ends chapter six with a weighty passage filled with such acknowledged but unanswered mysteries, and then hopes 'that the holistic, diachronic and synchronous methodology and scope of this study will provide a model for exploration of other Greek sanctuaries and sites' (p. 244).

As a frequent visitor to the extraordinary site of Olympia (and having now had published a historical fiction novel on the birth of

the ancient Greek Games), I eagerly awaited this review dispatch of Barringer's hardcover work. It did not disappoint. In fact, it greatly exceeded my expectations, despite having read a few minor quibbles raised by other reviewers. It was also rarely so dense that it would leave a lay reader confused, while maintaining its scholarly rigour and merits throughout. While Zanes may have been erected at Olympia to permanently shame those caught out cheating at the premier ancient Greek *agones*, Barringer's work is both a monument to those who once achieved the extraordinary Olympic honour of being allowed to erect semi-godlike imagery of themselves within the Altis and may well be worthy of such *kleos* itself.

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The Facility and Other Texts – Re-imagining Antigone

Bleiman (B.), McCallum (A.), Webster (L.) (edd.)
Pp. 160. ill. London: English & Media Centre,
2022. Paper, £20. ISBN: 978-1-9061017-0-1

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Classical reception studies having blossomed in this century, it is no surprise that a book of modern, literary, responses to Sophocles' *Antigone* has been produced. That four of the five authors are women comes as no surprise either, since *Antigone's* stance has usually been considered as much a feminist as an ethical protest.

This collection consists of poetry, one dramaturgical response to the original play and two fine and thought-provoking short stories. To be frank, the poetry, by Valerie Bloom, Inua Ellams and Barbara Bleiman, is of varying quality, although Bleiman's concept of an epistolary response from *Antigone* to later teenage female protesters ('dear girls of the future') is a striking and successful one, I think.

The play, *The Facility*, by Sarah Hehir, transfers the Greek story to a modern prison and, while it takes some liberties with original characters, harbours a powerful, visceral originality; relatively simple language is underlaid by a constant rhythmic force and unobtrusive rhyming. The book as a whole sets out to provoke response in its readers, especially those encountering the *Antigone* story or Greek drama for the first time; to that end, this play will be very successful.