

## BOOK REVIEW

*Politics & Philosophy at Rome. Collected Papers.* By MIRIAM T. GRIFFIN and Edited by CATALINA BALMACEDA. Oxford, UK and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xvi + 775. Hardback, \$155.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-879312-0

This is a big book. Literally. Each of its almost 800 pages is 6.75" x 9.75" (rather than the somewhat more usual 5.75" x 8.75" sized page of an academic hardcover book), with words in a small font and short margins all-around. It would appear that the publisher used a number of production tricks to squeeze in as many words as possible, which is understandable because *Politics & Philosophy at Rome* contains the collected papers (mostly published, but several unpublished) of Miriam T. Griffin, one of the biggest and most important Anglophone scholars of Roman philosophy, who passed away shortly before the book was completed in 2018. Students of Cicero, Tacitus and Seneca are especially in debt to her for the rigorous and richly contextualized studies she has produced of their ethical, historical and political works. And all students of ancient Rome are in debt for the republication of fifty of her papers, which range over three areas (and are organized into three subsections in the book). The first part of the book includes ten papers on Roman history (in both the republican and imperial periods). The second part of the book includes seven published papers, five unpublished lectures and three "occasional pieces" on Roman historiography (especially in the case of Tacitus). A third and final section of the book includes 25 papers on Roman politics and philosophy (which includes almost 400 pages of material). Each part of the book begins with a paper that provides a more general overview to the topic area. Thus Griffin's "Cicero and Rome" (originally published in the 1986 *Oxford History of the Classical World*) begins the section on republican Roman history, "Tacitus as a Historian" (originally published in the 2009 *Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*) begins the section on Roman historiography and her "Philosophy, Politics, and Politicians at Rome" (originally published in the 1989 *Philosophia Togata I*) begins the section on philosophy and politics.

In an author's prologue (apparently Griffin's last published text), she writes that "It will be obvious that the overlap between philosophy and politics has been

the principle focus of academic interest throughout my career. This is not to say that I do not credit Roman philosophers writing in Latin with any intellectual originality, but that I write as an historian, interested in how their thinking relates to their historical circumstances and to their actions. Long study of the subject has convinced me that philosophical doctrines did not dictate those actions, but rather provided the vocabulary and argumentative skill to make and justify the decisions that gave rise to them" (viii). Yet even if Griffin self-identifies as a historian rather than as a philosopher, many of her writings on philosophical topics evince a philosopher's sensitivity to the nuance and interpretative difficulties of complex argumentation. Thus, Griffin's important papers, such as her "From Aristotle to Atticus: Cicero and Matius on Friendship" (1997) or her "The Composition of the *Academica*: Motives and Versions" (1997), show a complete mastery of the range and terminology of Cicero's different philosophical treatises, such as *De amicitia* (a philosophical dialogue on the nature of friendship) or the *Academica/Academici Libri* (a dialogue on epistemological skepticism which Cicero revised and republished, not all of which has survived). But both papers also draw upon sources such as Cicero's correspondence or the political context of Cicero's own life to show how the lives and lived experiences of Roman philosophers influence their moral and epistemological views.

As noted at the outset of my review, clearly this volume strains to include all of Griffin's papers and it is quite understandable that it excludes her shorter or less scholarly works, such as the dozens of entries she wrote for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* or the numerous reviews she authored for more popular publication journals, such as the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Review of Books*. Less understandable, though, is why the book lacks a comprehensive list of all of Griffin's publications that includes her books, edited volumes, translations, scholarly papers, encyclopedia entries, book reviews etc. The book includes a bibliography that identifies all the works cited in the published papers, but it fails to include even all of Griffin's edited and authored books (such as her magisterial *Seneca on Society: A Guide to De Beneficiis* [2013]). It is a pity that this carefully edited and well-produced volume (albeit with an eye-challenging font size) fails to include a complete bibliography of all of Griffin's writings, even if such a bibliography might bump the page count over the 800-page mark.

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