

BOOK REVIEW

They Said It First: The Wisdom of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. By KENNETH F. KITCHELL, JR. Mundelein, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishing, 2019. Pp. xxi + 326. Paperback, \$19.00. ISBN 978-0-86516-864-0.

As Kitchell admits in his introduction, "*They Said It First* stands at the end of a long line of books collecting quotes of the ancient Greeks and Romans" that range back to Classical antiquity itself (xviii). So if Terence is right and *Nullum est iam dictum quod non dictum sit prius* ("There is nothing that's been said now that hasn't been said before"; v), then why take this project on in the first place? And what makes this volume so special?

The first wise design decision was to group quotations by general topic (ranging from "Death" to "Hypocrisy"; from "Forgiveness" to "Taxes"); this allows the reader to ponder a shared sense of humanity across millennia and several different tongues (admittedly, mostly Latin, Greek and English, but with a sprinkling of Spanish and German as well). By keeping each quotation and its citation to a bare minimum, much blank space is left on most pages - an invitation to the reader to make her own additions and continue Kitchell's project as an active participant.

Citations are incredibly specific, such that anyone interested can hunt down the larger original context without very much trouble at all, but also succinct enough so as not to get in the way of those who want to breeze over them. And while the general reader may not be able to identify a given author or work right off the bat, Appendix B: "Ancient Authors and People Cited," provides concise biographical information on every Latin and Greek author cited. Perhaps because they're bound to be rather more familiar, more bare-bones bios are provided in the general "Index of Authors" for modern personages whose quotations are included.

Given the wide variety of topics, it should come as no surprise that quotations are excerpted from every possible genre. Even so, it is nevertheless somehow perversely pleasing to see such names as Isaac Asimov, Menander, Anne Frank, Ennius, Dr. Seuss, Anaxagoras, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Tacitus and John Lennon (just to name a few) all gathered together in the same place. The diversity of

thought marshaled achieves Kitchell's goal of getting his readers "to think about such social values in her or his own country and time and, perhaps, come to a more balanced and valid appreciation of where the ancients shone and where they still had work to do-as do we all" (xviii).

This compilation will be pleasing in different ways to different audiences. To anyone without knowledge of Latin and/or Greek, it will be a fast read, but nevertheless an entertaining and thought-provoking one. To those whose grasp of those languages is tenuous (or rusty), *They Said It First* serves up a smorgasbord with which to hone their skills, all without any long-term commitment because each quotation is a self-contained phrase. Whether one wants to read a small bit of Latin and/or Greek a day, or to test their mettle against a wide variety of authors one after the other, there's an option for everyone. Even the career Classicist will enjoy the volume, both for the exposure to authors they may not teach very often, and as a repository of gems to be used in teaching the languages. I myself plan on going back through it to comb for examples of specific constructions to supplement the relevant chapters in the introductory textbooks I use.

For all its strengths, though, don't expect this volume to be remotely comprehensive; such would, after all, be virtually impossible. Each and every reader with any deep familiarity with Greek and Roman literature will no doubt find the omission of X or Y quotation puzzling, until they consider that each person's X and Y is going to be different. As Plautus says, *non omnia eadem aeque omnibus, ere, suavia esse scito* ("Master, keep in mind that the same things are not equally agreeable to all people"; 186). And while there are some typos sprinkled throughout the book - mostly Greek, but some Latin and even English also - with the right attitude and disposition, just about anyone should be able to enjoy this *libellus* immensely.

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