

discussions of the chapters on Democritus and Menander. Halliwell delivers what he promises: a cultural history of ancient Greek laughter, *gelos*, including its negative counterparts, agelastie and antigelastie conduct. Time and again Halliwell derives from his material statements of unremitting clarity even though he resists any universalising theory of laughter (Conybeare, *BMCR* 2009.09.69). He shows irrefutably how laughter was a recurrent object of evaluative reflection in Greek culture.

*Stephen Evans*

REBECCA LANGLANDS: *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-85943-1 (hb), 978-0-521-10900-0 (pb). VIII, 399 pp. GBP 62, USD 116 (hb), GBP 26.99, USD 50 (pb).

Rebecca Langlands argues that Roman morality has been a neglected topic since studies of ancient ethics have mainly focused on Greek philosophers and Christian thinkers. But as we know, Roman historiography and poetry were often highly moralizing narratives and thus literary sources offer ample evidence of Roman moral thinking. In her study, Langlands examines *pudicitia*, a Roman ethical concept that covered sexual morality in particular and regulated behaviour specifically associated with sex. It was also related to other (female) virtues and virtuous acts, from women's control over their bodies to stories about noble female suicides. Sexuality is thus approached from a slightly different angle than has been the case in the bulk of recent research, in which attention has been given, for example, to homosexuality or to male (and also increasingly to female) desire. However, Langlands has also several important predecessors, such as Catharine Edwards' book on the politics of immorality in ancient Rome, R. A. Kaster's research on the sense of shame and other emotions and virtues similar to *pudicitia* (*pudor*, *verecundia*), and Maria Wyke's discussions of Roman mistresses. Sourcebooks of ancient social customs have earlier collected evidence of Roman moralities. Langlands' decision to concentrate on one single concept allows her to dig deeper into Roman customs.

The rights and wrongs of sexual behaviour formed a prominent theme of several literary genres. Langlands covers a wide spectrum of well-known Roman literature which reflected the issue: Livy's (didactic) historiography (Ch. 2), Valerius Maximus' anecdotes (Ch. 3), Propertius' elegies, new comedy and Ovid (Ch. 4), declamations (Ch. 5) and Roman oratory (Ch. 6), among others. In oratory, *pudicitia* figured as an attribute of a male citizen as well. It was used in invectives to level charges about sexual misconduct and cupidity, and Roman historiography also employed accusations of *impudicitia* when portraying the degeneration of morals. Sexuality thus emerges as a significant factor in political discourse as well. Langlands' analysis proceeds by collecting and citing examples of Roman attitudes and reactions to moral and immoral sexual conduct, and of the public display of *pudicitia*. Langlands shows us, for example, how appearance, dress and various behaviours were read for important signs about female (im)morality. Some of the exemplary stories, such as the rape of Lucretia, are expected and widely referenced; nevertheless, Langlands quotes these passages in full, thus making her research luxuriously accessible also to readers who may not be familiar with these stories or with Valerius Maximus, for instance.

To put it briefly, I found the book pleasant and delightful reading, partly for personal reasons, because Langlands deals with many of my Roman favourites, but also because the book gives a lively and nuanced treatment of its topic. It brings together a large amount of known and less known exemplary stories and does not neglect texts that humorously challenged moral traditions and conventions. The book can be recommended to anyone interested in the interconnections between Roman customs and morals. It illuminates how customs, social relations and public restraint shaped individuals' sexual agency and how sexuality permeated several aspects of Roman society.

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TERESA MORGAN: *Popular Morality in the Early Roman Empire*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-87553-0 (hb). XIV, 380 pp. GBP 58, USD 112.

Ethical issues have never been restricted to philosophy. Several ancient literary genres dealt with complex ethical questions, such as guilt (Greek tragedy) or national morality (Roman historiography). Satires presented warning examples of vices and the wrong actions of human beings. Some of these genres, such as tragedies, were accessible to mass audiences. In her present work, Teresa Morgan has decided to concentrate on miscellaneous wisdom literature – fables, proverbs, gnoma and exemplary stories – that explicitly dealt with moral issues. The concept "popular" here refers to literary wisdom, which may have been written by members of the social elite, but which had a wide popularity among the Roman people in general, travelling "widely both up and down the social scale, and across place and time" (p. 160). Popular thinking also had its impact on philosophers and other intellectuals. Instead of speculating about the role of morality in the lives of ordinary Romans, Morgan mainly concentrates on exploring the moral themes of her sources. She is aware that some of the sources, such as Valerius Maximus on whose learned anecdotes Morgan largely bases her discussion of exemplary stories, cannot be considered popular in the same sense as fables or proverbs, which may often also have been of lowly social origin.

The first part (Chapters 2–5) is devoted to describing the ethical themes – in Morgan's words, the ethical landscape – of the above-mentioned four genres. Quotations are given in English only in order to avoid extending the book beyond readable limits. Morgan shows us that all the four genres addressed several fundamental questions about morality, including the authority of gods or of nature, social relations such as friendship, the virtues of good behaviour, and wealth. Sexual ethics is not discussed in this book; this visible absence might have deserved a brief comment.

Morgan's research raises several important questions about the themes and the uses of popular wisdom collections, and she has covered an admirably wide variety of primary sources. She approaches morality from different angles, dealing with the language of morality (Ch. 7), moral authorities (Ch. 8), time and morality (Ch. 9) and the structuring of the wisdom collections (Ch. 10). The large quantity of source texts also has the slight disadvantage that sometimes Morgan's analysis is somewhat hasty and rushes through large themes in a few