

and effect. This book goes some way towards complicating matters and is therefore the more welcome. The prose is strong and clear, the explanations convincing: it should be recommended. He looks at various definitions of Japanese cooking for example the tea cuisine (*cha kaiseki*) or the overarching UNESCO definition of Japanese traditional food culture, *washoku*, as well as the Imperial Rule Assistance Association's wartime 'national socialist' definition of 'national people's cuisine', *kokuminshoku*, and how far these are constructs by internal or external agencies and to what extent they reflect dietary realities. Then he examines the complexities of Japanese diet, both in history and across geographies, and how many aspects of these have gone missing in the last century or two. Here he is really rewarding on the question of grains other than rice, for instance millet. Then, too, he traces the appearance of novelties in the Japanese kitchen such as foreign foods and new meals such as the boxed lunch or *bento*. All this he tries to tie together into a nuanced portrait of attempts to categorize Japan's cookery and food as it really is, and was, and the relation of all these elements to concepts of Japanese identity. Great stuff.

The Colloquia of the Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana. Edited with translation and commentary by Eleanor Dickey. Cambridge University Press.

Vol. 1: *Colloquia Monacensis-Einsidlensia, Leidense-Stephani, and Stephani*: 2012: 275 pp., hardback, £103.

Vol. 2: *Colloquium Harleianum, Colloquium Montepessulanum, Colloquium Celtis, and fragments*: 2015: 356 pp., hardback, £93.00.

It's not a catchy title. Nor is it a typical choice for a review in *PPC*, but anyone interested in ancient Roman food needs to know about these six texts. They are bilingual Latin-Greek conversation manuals and each includes at least two food scenes. They tell us some things about Roman dining that we could hardly know from any other source. This is the only accessible edition there has ever been, and who knows whether there will be another?

The obscurity of these texts explains why my review begins with a confession. When researching for *Empire of Pleasures* (2000) I came across one of these manuals, the *Montepessulanum* or Montpellier text, in its rare first edition, on a dusty shelf in a dark corner of the London Library. I saw its importance for food history, and I could tell that the editor's dating (late second century AD) was reasonable, but I couldn't immediately connect it with any similar texts or find any other edition. I simply translated the text as I saw it. By the time I completed *Food in the Ancient World from A to Z* (2003) I had found the standard edition (in the *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*) and at least knew about the other related texts, but I only wish Eleanor Dickey's edition of all of them had appeared about fifteen years earlier.

Here it is now, thank goodness. All six of the known conversation manuals from the Roman Empire are included (but not the glossaries that were

sometimes attached to them) along with fragmentary texts that belong to the same tradition. These spacious pages allow Latin, Greek and English to appear side by side, and each of the texts is followed by a full commentary. The general introduction is in volume 1 and several indexes complete volume 2.

The introduction goes at length into the dating of this group of texts and considers for what kind of students they were written. Here is a hasty summary. They began to develop in the first century AD but were expanded and transformed in later manuscripts to about the sixth century. They were used by schoolchildren whose first language was Latin and (perhaps a little later) by older learners whose first language was Greek. They were probably used all over the Roman world (one fragmentary text survives in a papyrus from Egypt). Some of the successive editors and scribes were more bilingual than others: there are vaguenesses and mistakes in both the Latin and the Greek, but, on the other hand, there is a lot of accurate and convincing detail.

There is a divide, within each of the texts, between a schoolbook section, a connected dialogue narrating a schoolboy's day, and a phrasebook section, less consecutive, dealing with a series of themes of adult life. Since schoolboys are always going home for lunch and adults are forever inviting one another to dinner, food is prominent in both sections.

Both sections, especially the phrasebook, tend to include generous lists of alternatives. These are of course unrealistic as dialogue. No fictional schoolboy would have had his choice of wine, beer, spiced wine, absinthe-flavoured wine and milk, as at vol. 2, p. 178; more likely he would have made do with cold water, as in vol. 1. Few dinners would have had a menu as long as that on vol. 2, pp. 103–105. No one is complaining. From the beginning such lists were good practice for ancient learners. They now offer rich pickings to social historians.

The rewards can be greatest when comparing the choice of terms in Latin and in Greek. This can help to pin down the time or place at which a particular item appeared in the text and to clarify what food choices were possible at that time or place. In which parts of the Empire, for example, did it make sense to include beer among alternative beverages? And if the Latin for beer is *cervesia* (Latin of Gaul, also the common Latin word used in the army) where will the Greek equivalent be *zythos* (Greek of Egypt, also in classical Attic dialect: vol. 2, p. 178)? Perhaps in Egypt, then. But where will the Greek be *sitine* (an explanatory term meaning '[fermented beverage] from grain': vol. 2, p. 180)? That might be the same place where the Latin for malted barley can be *bracis* (the technical term in Latin, though its meaning was not known to all speakers) and the Greek can be *bregma* (no equivalent Greek word existed, and this is an explanatory term meaning 'infusion': vol. 2, p. 189), in other words, a part of the Roman Empire where beer was locally unknown. Similar explorations could begin from dozens or hundreds of words waiting to be read in these hitherto inaccessible texts.

If rich, buy the two-volume set. If poor, look through it when you next visit an academic library, and if that's your plan you'll be able to skim the general introduction in advance: it's online at academia.edu.

ANDREW DALBY

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and James Kelly, eds.: *Food and Drink in Ireland*: Royal Irish Academy, 2016: 430pp., paperback, €25.00.

This giant volume, at very reasonable price, first appeared in 2015 as part of the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C* (Volume 115). It is a collection of essays by people qualified in word and deed on the consumption of meat and drink from the Mesolithic to the modern era. It should be proclaimed from the rooftops that each contribution is comprehensible and has been largely stripped of the discourse of academe, without sacrificing the footnotes. It is a model of its type. Every essay seems to produce something worth chewing on. I hesitate to mention one without unintentionally denigrating another, but I made beelines for Cherie N. Peters on the diet of early medieval Irish peasants, Susan Lyons on the archaeological evidence pertaining to fruit, vegetables and foreign foodstuffs in medieval Ireland, Fiona Beglane on game in the medieval Irish diet, Madeline Shenahan's piece about Irish manuscript recipe books as source for culinary material culture, Regina Sexton on the food culture of pre-Famine Ireland, Máirtín MacConIomaire on *haute cuisine* restaurants in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dublin and Rhona Richman Kenneally's grand discussion of the improvement of the domestic kitchen in the Irish countryside during the 'long' 1950s, from which came the brilliant answer of one housewife to an enquiry about the best kitchen improvement in that period: 'running water' (in 1961, only one rural household in eight had running water). Usually, the heart sinks with books such as these: this is the exception.

Matthew Richardson: *The Hunger War, Food, Rations & Rationing 1914–1918*: Pen & Sword Military 2015: 290pp., hardback, £25.00.

Matthew Richardson's name will be unfamiliar to those interested in the history of food, but he is one of the brightest lights in the present generation of museum-based social historians. His books concentrate on the personal experiences of the troops and ordinary people involved in warfare, a subject for which his years as a keeper of the Liddle Collection at Leeds University provided him with an invaluable body of knowledge. One of the characteristics of his work is his eagerness to let his long-deceased informants speak directly to the reader in their own words, these first-hand quotations then being analysed and set into their historical, social and geographical contexts. As a result, his immaculate, original scholarship reads with all the pace and freshness of a good novel, constantly surprising us with its informed insights into the ordinary lives of the past.