towards in the Introduction (pp. 13-14). Chapter Four gives an account of the relevant source material, noting reliability, background, and availability. Chapters Five to Nine consider various aspects of Hypatia’s life and work, and are, on the whole, well-researched and informative. Deakin, ultimately, defers judgement with regard to the legendary circumstances that surround Hypatia’s death.

With Chapter Nine, a compromise is made on the detailed examination of Hypatia’s mathematics: having set out the main issues, Deakin refers the more ambitious reader to the existing scholarly debates. The appendices provide a useful introduction to Greek mathematical notation, and translations of the main sources are helpfully provided.

The difficulty with Deakin’s text is that, at times, it displays attitudes that are outdated – two points stand out in particular.

Firstly, Deakin continually follows the line that the commentary is a derivative genre primarily for the purpose of preservation (for example at pp. 28, 54, 65, 88, 97, 101), whereas recent scholarship has highlighted the re-presentation, transformation, and manipulation of the source within ancient mathematical commentaries (e.g., see Revue d'histoire des mathématiques, for the discussion between Netz (4, 1998, 261-88), Chemla (5, 1999, 127-48), and Bernard (9, 2003, 131-73)).

The commentary is contrasted with the “more important original works of others” (p. 29), however this view has now been questioned, for example, by Vallance (in Most, Commentaries-Kommentare, 1999, 223-244), who illustrates incidences of the secondary prefiguring of source works in commentaries.

Today, the commentary is considered to do much more than simply preserve. In producing commentary, the scholar makes choices regarding whether additions, further examples, or modifications are needed, or if a major change of focus and/or emphasis will constitute improvement; all of these things tell the historian much, even when concerned with the simplest of subject matter. Theon himself, in his Commentary on the Almagest (I.ii, 334.1-15), can be seen to use Ptolemy’s brief discussion of the movement of the celestial bodies in I.ii to set out a new agenda of mathematical exercises that, by the process of elimination, are focussed towards proving that the shape of the heavens must be spherical.

Secondly, Deakin’s perspective upon ancient science and mathematics is sometimes evaluative, and lacking in historical sensitivity. Theon and Hypatia are described as “a team working against the odds to preserve valid mathematics in a climate where the genuine article was becoming a rarity and pseudomathematics was flourishing in its place” (p. 65). Deakin contrasts “scholarly” and “reputable” mathematics with “dabbling” in the other side and practice(ing) astrology” (p. 64), and comments, “the science of... [On Dreams] requires no further notice: by today’s standards it can hardly merit the name” (90). Yet, the historian’s task is not to judge ancient works using modern criteria (cf. 110).

Overall, there is nothing startlingly new in this book, and yet, Deakin has collated previous discussion and source material in a manner that will considerably aid the scholar to familiarise himself with the territory, and as such stands as a valuable resource.

The tendency is towards chronicling rather than debating, but this is not necessarily a bad thing, especially where the material in question is, generally speaking, of a specialist nature, and thus rather unfamiliar to many historians. As the first monograph since Dzielska’s Hypatia of Alexandria (1995), this text stands as a further resource for a fascinating topic.

Denise Sumpter


Since the appearance of his masterpiece, the De rerum natura, Lucretius has become
a controversial author, both because of the problematic relation of the poem with the philosophy of Epicurus and, in more recent times, because of some specific contents of the poem which appeared to many interpreters to be a striking anticipation of a number of relevant theses of early modern and contemporary science.

The editors of this companion have adopted a conservative approach: whereas they do not deny that the *De rerum natura* played "no small part in the history of modern science" (p. 8), and appreciate the importance of its Epicurean and philosophical background, they have privileged a contextual interpretation of the poem. Thus, in the first essay of the volume by James Warren, Lucretius is portrayed, adhering to the image put forth by David Sedley, as a fundamentalist of the philosophy of Epicurus with little new to offer in philosophy but his extraordinary dialectical and poetical talent. Following the premises outlined in the introduction, Lucretius' literary virtuosity and its cultural context are further analysed from a literary perspective in the essays by Monica Gale, Joseph Farrell, E.J. Kenney and Philip Hardie.

The first part of the volume includes an informative survey by Dirk Obink on the presence of Lucretius in the Herculaneum library with the publication of some photographic reproductions, unfortunately of rather poor quality, of the extant fragments of the *De rerum natura*. The longest essay of the section is by Alessandro Schiesaro who proposes a fascinating reassessment of Benjamin Farrington's now forgotten thesis on the relation between science, politics and history of civilization in the *De rerum natura*. The projection of legal terminology (such as *foedera naturai* and *concilia*) onto his anti-theological vision of the cosmos, makes Lucretius an original contributor of the Epicurean doctrine; using many interesting arguments, Schiesaro reveals the efforts made by the Roman poet to propose a new philosophy of nature as a key to solve the political crisis affecting the end Republic.

The second part of the book is devoted to more specific themes, of which the first by Monthe Johnson and Catherine Wilson, is devoted to *Lucretius and the History of Science* and offers a brief survey of the influence exerted by the *De rerum natura* on natural sciences from the Carolingian era to contemporary quantum mechanics. Apart from being too ambitious, this essay is not up to its title and contains relevant flaws, of which the main ones are: 1. making Descartes a follower of Lucretius (p. 136); 2. ignoring the classical scholia of Newton's *Principia* (explicitly devoted to Lucretius!). Since the treatment of Bruno and more generally of Renaissance Italian philosophers and scientists is superficial, one would expect to find more information in the essay by Valentina Prosperi devoted to *Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance*. However, while she admits that medical doctors read the *De rerum natura* as a scientific book, she pays most attention to the literary works and to the visual arts. At last the reader will find the information she/he was looking for in the essay by Yasmin Haskell which, albeit not explicitly devoted to the reception of Lucretius among Italian scientists, offers a perceptive contextualisation of the reasons that inspired naturalists to appropriate the *De rerum natura*. The second part includes an essay by Reid Barbour on *The Political and Moral Reading of Lucretius from Virgil to Voltaire*, the arguments of which often overlap with the essay by Hardie and Johnson and Wilson. The essay by James I. Porter is devoted to the concept of the sublime in Lucretius, and the contents of the *De rerum natura* are often sacrificed to the attempt to make them fit into a framework in which the analysis of the poetical forms is the relevant ingredient of the poem. Thus, in examining the role of void, Porter claims that it is "poetically and philosophically active" (p. 170) in the areas of death, psychology and cosmology, but he forgets that the main reason for the presence of void in Lucretius' atomism is his theory of the movement (and therefore creation) of bodies.

The third and last part of the companion is devoted to the reception of the *De rerum natura*. In addition to the essays by Michael