



GEOFFREY DE STE. CROIX

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Geoffrey Ernest Maurice de Ste. Croix

1910–2000

GEOFFREY DE STE. CROIX, the great radical historian of the classical world, received what he was to call ‘a thoroughly right-wing upbringing’.¹ His paternal forebears were Huguenots who fled from the France of Louis XIV to Jersey, but his more immediate connections on both sides were with China. He was born in Macao on 8 February, 1910, and baptised in Hong Kong cathedral. According to his mother, who was over forty when she bore him, it was only thanks to the prayers of an ‘old Chinese bible woman’ that he had been conceived. As an ardent atheist, he consoled himself in later life with a family tradition that ‘something disgraceful had marred the ritual [of baptism], probably the same incident that led to the emperor Constantine V receiving the name “Copronymus”: fouling the baptismal font’.² Both his parents were themselves born in China, his mother as daughter of John MacGowan, a ‘rabid Protestant’ from Belfast who worked as a missionary there from c.1860 to 1910, and entitled an account of the Protestant mission *How England [sic] saved China*. MacGowan wrote several other books, including a *History of China* which his grandson eventually chased up in the

¹ ‘Class in Marx’s conception of history, ancient and modern’ (Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, 28 Nov. 1983), in *New Left Review*, 146 (July–Aug. 1984), 94–111, at 96.

² This and other unattributed quotations in this Memoir derive from letters or from ‘Biographical Particulars’ drafted by Ste. Croix in 1985. The biographical sketch in P. Cartledge and F. D. Harvey (eds.), *Crux: Essays presented to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday (History of Political Thought VI 1/2, 1985, published simultaneously by Duckworth, London),* xiii–xviii was written mostly by Paul Cartledge, on the basis of these ‘Biographical Particulars’.

Bodleian, and found to be ‘surprisingly scholarly’. Ste. Croix’s father was an official in the Chinese Customs, which had been put under foreign control in the aftermath of the Boxer uprising. An aunt’s husband ultimately became head of the same service, and also reputedly designed the notoriously ineffective defences of Singapore; as he was a ‘frightfully upright upper class twit’ his nephew was disposed to believe the tradition, which he no doubt took as an emblem of Empire.

Any influence these expatriate origins may have had on Ste. Croix, however, can have come to him only indirectly, through family memories; for in 1914, as he often recalled, his mother found herself in Shanghai with her husband dying of tuberculosis in one room and her son dying of dysentery in another, and when son but not husband survived she brought him home to England. Ste. Croix was thus the only child of a widow. He constantly spoke of his mother in later years, with affection and amazement. In an unpublished lecture on ‘Sex and St. Paul’ dating to the late eighties, he claimed an especial familiarity with fundamentalist ways of thought because of his upbringing:

My widowed mother (my father died when I was four) belonged to the sect of the British Israelites, one of those groups on what I hope I may be allowed to call ‘the lunatic fringe’ of Christianity.³ My mother accepted the Bible, every word of it, as in every respect the inspired Word of God, and for many years I was never allowed to come into contact with any other view. (As a matter of fact, I always felt that, to my mother, the English Authorised Version—the ‘King James Version’, as Americans call it—was the preordained text, of which the original Hebrew and Greek might be regarded as imperfect precursors.) This in some ways darkened my childhood and early adolescence, until I broke away soon after I left school, at the age of fifteen, to go into the Law; but it did have just one happy result: I learnt a large part of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, almost by heart; and I am glad to say that the magnificent narratives, from *Genesis* to *Second Kings*, were among my mother’s special favourites. In her innocent way she revelled in their many horrific and morally revolting stories, such as that in *I Samuel* 15, of the Prophet Samuel ‘hewing Agag the king of the Amalekites in pieces before Yahweh in Gilgal’. The only stories which were not actually read to me by the hour were those with fairly explicit sexual significance, such as the delightful one (which few people seem to know nowadays) about Reuben, Leah, Rachel and the mandrakes in *Genesis* 30; but as I was encouraged to ‘search the Scriptures’ for myself, I soon discovered most of these, although I prudently refrained from asking my mother what they were supposed to mean.

He was particularly struck by the fervour with which his mother, gentlest of women, dwelt on the punishments awaiting Israel’s enemies. Here is the

³ British Israelites identified the British as the lost twelfth tribe of Israel.

origin of that loathing of Yahweh as a savage god which so dominated his later years.⁴ But the stories stayed with him—woe betide the college chaplain who competed with him in scripture knowledge!—and constituted the kind of imaginative point of reference provided for so many by novels (of novels I never heard him speak, though he had read the English classics as a young man and quotes *War and Peace* in *The Class Struggle*⁵). And there was one decisive virtue that he always accorded to the Jewish tradition, as opposed to that of Greece and Rome: that of ‘speaking out forcefully and emotionally against oppression by great men of the poor and the defenceless’.⁶

Religion was omnipresent in the Ste. Croix household. Before going on a train journey, mother and son would kneel to invoke divine protection. At school he was forbidden to box, much to his relief, on the grounds that ‘the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost’. His mother believed that the date of Armageddon could be calculated from the measurements of the Great Pyramid, and I believe he once told me of sitting all night with her awaiting the end of the world and of her disappointment at having to resume normal life in the morning.⁷ When studying the psychology of the voluntary martyrs of the early church, he always thought of her. Her imagination presented last things to her in precise and concrete terms: when reading *I Thess.* 4. 17, ‘then we that are alive that are left shall together with him be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air’, she would gesture towards the window with her hand. Her son, by contrast, insisted that he was never able, even as a small boy, to form a mental image of the being to whom he was required to pray.

Mrs de Ste. Croix had a modest income from an earlier marriage, fortunately tied up in a way that prevented her from donating it for religious purposes. She was therefore able in due course to send her son to Clifton College in Bristol; she secured his exemption from religious education, having heard that Clifton was infected with what she sarcastically called ‘the higher criticism’. At Clifton, he received, up to the age of fifteen, a traditional classical education. In his Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, delivered in 1983, he was sharply critical of the way the subject had been

⁴ See e.g. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (1981; corrected paperback impression, 1983), 332, where the story of Samuel and Agag is cited. On Bible reading with his mother note too ‘A worm’s-eye view of the Greeks and the Romans and how they spoke: martyr-acts, fables, parables and other texts’, in *Latin Teaching*, 37. 4 (July 1984), 16–30, at p. 26.

⁵ p. 425.

⁶ ‘A worm’s-eye view’, 26–7.

⁷ But Mrs de Ste. Croix’s date for Armageddon was 1928, whereas my memory implies a Ste. Croix younger than 18.

approached and in particular of the extraordinary value attached to the practice of composition;⁸ but he privately acknowledged the teaching he received to have been, on its own terms, very good, much better than in 'modern' areas of the syllabus. Pupils always suspected that there was exaggeration in Ste. Croix's oft-repeated claim to know much less Greek and Latin than they did. At an important point in an early article he correctly explains the syntax of a complex sentence in Isaeus which was misrendered in both the Loeb and Budé translations.⁹ What is true is that his relation with Greek and Latin remained mainly functional. Though a lover of much English poetry, he confessed to having little feel for that of the ancients.

Doubtless it was financial strain that forced him to leave Clifton at the age of fifteen and take articles in a solicitor's office in Worthing. This was to be his profession for the next fifteen years, first in Worthing and later at Marylebone in London. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1932. He abhorred the work: the mindless and largely pointless rituals of conveyancing, interspersed with action for landlords against tenants, or debt collection. But the solicitor in humdrum practice in Worthing was not useless to the historian of *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*. A mastery of legal texts and an easy familiarity with legal argument provide much of the underpinning of that work, as of many of his earlier studies in Greek society. The very cast of his thought, precise, analytic, discriminating, is profoundly legal.¹⁰

Clifton had imbued him with a love for all racquet games, at which he excelled. He won the under-16 tennis championship of the South of England, and competed at Wimbledon (being excused the qualifying rounds) in both singles and doubles in 1930, 1931, and 1932; in the first two years he got through to the second round in the doubles. He was indignant that, after the publication of *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, a short profile in the *Evening Standard* was chiefly devoted to his youthful achievement of defeating Fred Perry in a minor tournament. These were the days when tennis was primarily an amateur pursuit, and a move to a less sympathetic employer left him unable to afford to compete after 1932. But the tennis-player and, according to family tradition,

⁸ 'Class in Marx's conception of history', 97. Similar remarks in the interview between Ste. Croix and D. Kyrtatas, A. Matthaïou, and G. Pikoulas (henceforth 'Horos Interview') published in *Horos*, 6 (1988), 123–33.

⁹ 'Demosthenes' *timema* and the Athenian *eisphora* in the fourth century BC' in *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 14 (1953), at 43–4. Cf. e.g. *The Class Struggle*, 566 n. 26 for similar linguistic alertness.

¹⁰ So Perry Anderson, *History Workshop Journal*, 16 (1983), 59.

the master of the overhead smash, lived on not just in the long-serving Senior Member of the Oxford University tennis club, but also in the scholar. Few scholarly writings equal his for energy, for competitiveness, for determination to hit every opposing argument back over the net. He was often to be seen bustling through the quadrangles of New College, wearing a rucksack full of books and xeroxes for the evening's researches, his large and in later years rather plump frame bent a little forward in his eager haste. Pupils looking on could not fail to recognise in their tutor a person of formidable drive.

His partner when he won the West of England Lawn Tennis Doubles in about 1927 was a war-hero who later became a Conservative MP and junior minister, Brigadier-General Sir John Smyth, VC. By his own account, Ste. Croix was at this time, hard though it is to credit, politically apathetic. His chief intellectual preoccupation was apparently the case against Christianity. There survives an essay entitled 'The Fallacy of Moral Responsibility' written c.1934–5 in which he argues that, though we may well possess free will, we cannot possess it in any sense which would justify a god who is the author of our being in condemning us for our imperfections. He worked on revised versions of this argument throughout his life; there was always a strong theoretical streak in his temperament, a concern with ideas, unsympathetic though he was to most modern academic philosophy. The original essay implies quite extensive reading in the classics of philosophy and even in Thomism; in a related letter, sole survivor from his correspondence at that time, he writes that 'I am very familiar with the five arguments for the existence of God, and I can hold forth on the destructive effect of Galileo's First Law of Motion on the Prime Mover argument.'

In later life, he always described himself as an 'atheist, politely militant'. Militancy entailed obdurate refusal to observe the forms of established religion, to say Grace for instance in New College Hall. After a long struggle during war service, he eventually secured exemption from Sunday morning church, a special command being invented for him: 'Jews and others, fall out'. No amount of remaking of Christian doctrine by liberal theologians (or simple decline in the influence of the Church) ever removed, in his eyes, the need for militancy. The division between believers and non-believers remained fundamental. 'I rather think X is a *believer*', he would say, the last word receiving on the second syllable a heavy emphasis of shock and distaste. But, as a 'politely' militant atheist, he was always anxious to avoid giving unnecessary offence to believers.

It was the rise of Fascism and Nazism and what he saw as the inert response of the British political establishment that caused him, in or near 1935, to start reading about politics and to become a socialist. 'I would have become a Communist if the [British] Communists hadn't been so awful', he used to say, instancing a failed attempt by a local group to deploy the votes of 'dead souls' (in a Labour Party election?) to show how they were both crooked and ineffectual. He became instead an activist of the Labour Party in the St Marylebone ward. He served as secretary simultaneously of his constituency Labour Party, a local Peace Council and a Tenants' Defence League, and was actually Labour Agent in a Borough Council election in 1937 or thereabouts. He visited Russia with Intourist in 1935 or 1936 for six weeks and travelled widely, finishing in the Caucasus. The signs of progress and of democratic decision-making at grassroots level impressed him greatly, and he judged life for workers and peasants to be much better than under the Tsars. But he noticed the evasions and silences of his informants about what went on at higher levels, and drew his own conclusions. Stalinist friends in England he had, but he broke with them in 1938 or 1939.¹¹ From active politics too he withdrew on moving from St Marylebone to South Kensington in 1939; overwork had harmed his health, and he was 'dispirited about Labour politics'.

When the war came, he experienced the early part of the blitz in London. Late in 1940 he was called up into the RAF. Even constituency work for the Labour Party had not prepared him for the close contact with the British working class which life as a conscript entailed, and it was a shock to the son of Mrs de Ste. Croix to be awoken each morning in barracks by a cry of 'Out of your wank-pits, you wankers!'. But rough manners (much rougher then than now, by his account) did not alter his sympathies. When he was eventually commissioned, and soon afterwards dispatched to North Africa on a commandeered P & O liner, he was disgusted by the contrast between the luxury that he and other officers enjoyed in the midst of war, and the squalid conditions to which other ranks were condemned. This was an encapsulation of the British class system at its worst.

He served mostly in the Middle East, at Ismailia, Alexandria, and Cyrene. He often spoke of the bout of typhoid that nearly killed him in 1942 in Alexandria; 'the smell of stale piss' in the military hospital was an abiding memory. He was a 'filter officer', whose job it was to draw infer-

¹¹ Cartledge and Harvey (in an account based on close contact with Ste. Croix) date the definitive break with Stalinism to the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939: *Cruce*, xiv. But in a letter of 1982 Ste. Croix speaks (without mentioning circumstances) of 1938, and Dimitris Kyrtatas believes that he heard that date (and a reference to the Moscow trials?) from him.

ences from confused radar signals about the location and destination of enemy aircraft and pass them on to the 'Ops' room. Off duty, he had leisure to read, and to think about his future; in 1943/4 in Cyrenaica, amid the recently excavated Greek remains, he formed the resolve to abandon the law and take a university degree, with a view to finding a job in adult education. His training at school made classics the obvious subject; besides, he had been inspired by discovering in George Thomson and others a view of the ancient world quite unlike that of the schoolmasters of Clifton College.¹² He succeeded in procuring various classical texts; and he had the great benefit of a refresher course in ancient languages from another officer serving in Alexandria, the Virgilian R. D. Williams. Leave during the war also allowed him to visit Jerusalem and many of the great archaeological sites of Egypt.

The post-war Attlee government was often praised by him as the only Labour administration to have achieved anything worthwhile.¹³ One of its achievements was to promise a university education to any veteran who desired one; and Ste. Croix took up the offer. He recalled that 'Not liking what little I knew about Oxbridge, especially Greats, I decided to go to a London college. . . . After an interview with Scullard at King's, I decided to take a chance on a new professor at University College, London.' The principal recommendation of London was that it offered a full course in Ancient History (not Classics).¹⁴ University College may have been especially attractive by virtue of being, in a well-known phrase, 'that godless institution in Gower Street'. One of its founding fathers, George Grote—radical reformer, author of a *History of Greece* that Ste. Croix still strongly commended to pupils a century and a quarter after its appearance, and defender of Athenian democracy and of the sophists—was very likely already one of his heroes.¹⁵

The 'new professor' on whom he decided to take a chance was A. H. M. Jones, just six years his senior. Both arrived at UCL in the same year. There followed a remarkable period in the life of that department. Jones's first class consisted of Ste. Croix and the Roman numismatist John Kent. The following year brought the Roman historian John Mann and Geoffrey Evans, a Welsh socialist who later learnt cuneiform and challenged the theory of near eastern 'democratic tyrannies' in an article

¹² 'Horos Interview', 127.

¹³ So e.g. 'Horos Interview', 127.

¹⁴ For this and other reasons for not choosing Oxford see 'Horos Interview', 127.

¹⁵ Cf. his review, in *English Historical Review*, 79 (1964) 621–2, of M. L. Clarke, *George Grote. A Biography* (1962).

cited by Ste. Croix with warm approval.¹⁶ Wolfgang Liebeschuetz arrived in 1948, and gratefully remembers being allowed to use Ste. Croix's 'extraordinarily full and systematically organized notes, which he kept in files of his own devising', more capacious and less liable to distortion than lever-arch files. (In this area of life alone was he a handyman.) The Anatolian archaeologist James Mellaart also overlapped with the ancient historians in some courses.

These privileged few enjoyed what was in effect tutorial teaching for seven or eight hours a week from the scholar whom Ste. Croix later judged to have made 'the greatest contribution to ancient history of anyone writing in English since Gibbon'.¹⁷ Jones was not a good lecturer, but he listened to his students and engaged with their ideas, and the effect of continuous debate was extraordinarily stimulating. Wolfgang Liebeschuetz suggests that Jones's mastery of primary evidence and disinterested passion for getting things right influenced Ste. Croix decisively. 'The critical discipline that he inherited from Jones tempered the ideology and it was that interplay of Marxist ideology and Jonesian critical conscience that made Geoffrey a great historian.' A Ste. Croix indifferent to primary sources and unconcerned to get things right is not easy to imagine, and perhaps the 'interplay' was rather between two sides of his own nature. What is undoubtedly the case is that Jones's extraordinary familiarity with a huge range of material from both pagan and Christian antiquity created Ste. Croix's world as an ancient historian. He took 'History Branch 1A', and he never tired of contrasting the narrow Oxford syllabus that he was required to teach with the one he studied at University College under Jones, which extended from 'Early Dynasties' to 'The Death of Heraclius', that is from c.3000 BC to AD 641. *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* has as its sub-title 'From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests'; one might substitute the title of three of Jones's books to give '*The Greek City from Athenian Democracy to The Later Roman Empire*'. But the range and precision of Jones would have mattered comparatively little to Ste. Croix had they not been accompanied by an attitude to the subject matter that was profoundly congenial. The thirty-nine indexed references to Jones in *The Class Struggle* (there follows a pious 'and passim') point up the extent to which, for Ste. Croix, Jones engaged with the socio-economic (and legal) issues that really

¹⁶ 'Ancient Mesopotamian Assemblies', *JAOS*, 78 (1958) 1–11, 114–15: cited in *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (1972), 348 n. 4.

¹⁷ 'Class in Marx's conception of history', 97. For the hours involved see 'Horos Interview', 128.

mattered. And he constantly said about them the right things, as for instance that the chief economic effect of the Roman Empire 'was to promote an ever-increasing concentration of land in the hands of its governing aristocracy at the expense of the population at large' (cited on p. 328) or that 'There was one law for the rich and one for the poor' (cited two pages later). Jones was for Ste. Croix (as was P. A. Brunt later) a kind of *anima naturaliter Marxiana*. Ste. Croix later spoke of 1946 as the *annus mirabilis* in which he first met both Jones and his second wife.

If pupil was hugely impressed by master, master too must have been amazed by pupil. The central idea of Ste. Croix's most famous article on Greek history, 'The character of the Athenian empire', is already found in an essay dated 13 December 1946; it is ringingly declared, in this piece written in the new student's first term, that the picture of the empire's unpopularity drawn in Thuc. ii. 8. 4-5 is 'totally false'. Many other familiar Croixian themes appear in his ever eloquent and detailed undergraduate essays. Already Christianity's effect upon the slave is to tighten his bonds; already the Spartans are the embodiments of almost all evil. The lure of 'le mirage spartiate' for Nazi and Fascist thinkers is noted, in an association which may help to explain the origins of Ste. Croix's vehement hatred of the Spartan system.

In Finals in 1949 he predictably achieved an outstanding First. He went on to do research on the Athenian Empire, initially presumably under Jones and then under Jones's successor at UCL, Arnaldo Momigliano.¹⁸ His relationship with Momigliano was later an uneasy one, though Momigliano had high regard for the talents of his pupil, which he regarded as being largely wasted in Oxford; when *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* eventually appeared, Momigliano described it to E. J. Hobsbawm as the most important work of its century on Greek history, or something similarly extravagant. Second after Jones, the ancient historian whom Ste. Croix admired most among those he encountered in London was undoubtedly N. H. Baynes, who still gave classes though deep in retirement. Not only Baynes's writings on early Christianity but also his contemptuous essay on Isocrates (and in a different register his scholarly edition of the speeches of Hitler) he greatly esteemed. He also contributed to the *Festschrift* for Victor Ehrenberg, one of whose classes at Bedford College he attended and appreciated in undergraduate days.

¹⁸ 'Horos Interview', 128, mentions only Momigliano, who is wrongly said to have succeeded Jones at UCL in 1949 (the correct date is 1951). My source for Ste. Croix's research topic is Wolfgang Liebeschuetz.

Through the influence of Jones, he was elected in 1950 to a new post as Assistant Lecturer in Ancient Economic History (theme of Jones's own London inaugural of 1948) at the London School of Economics. He was also a part-time lecturer in Ancient History at Birkbeck, and occasionally stood in for Jones at UCL, during his LSE years. A colleague at LSE was Karl Popper, whose hostility to Plato he shared unreservedly. In his Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture of 1983, which was delivered at LSE, he speaks amusingly of the embarrassments of his life there as a lecturer in a subject which no one was required or wished to study. Eventually he was invited by the Professor of Accounting, Will Baxter, to give lectures in his department on 'accounting by the Greeks and Romans, and in particular if they had "double entry": things like that'.¹⁹ These were attended by 'the professor and his staff, and some ancient historians from other colleges, though not, as far as I could discover, by any undergraduates of the School itself'. This welcome change seems to have occurred only in his third year at the School in 1953, when three lectures on 'the climax and decline of Roman citizenship, and the nature and growth of the distinction between *honestiores* and *humiliores*', were followed by two on 'accounting methods and business and financial practices in Greek and Roman times'. Earlier courses were presumably attended only by 'ancient historians from other colleges'. One must hope that they found some fit auditors; for those lectures that survive (as full typed texts) are very fine, polished, rich in matter, unfailingly lucid however complex the subject, full of life and character. His verve as a lecturer emerges from two published semi-popular lectures from much later years, one on Herodotus and, still better, one on 'A Worm's-eye view of the Greeks and the Romans and how they spoke: martyr-acts, fables, parables and other texts'.²⁰

Biographically the most interesting of the LSE courses is perhaps the first, six lectures on 'The Reasons for the Decline of Graeco-Roman Civilisation'. The first (the only one to survive) treats the later Roman Empire, and deploys much vivid material familiar to readers of the later Ste. Croix to establish the conclusion that 'the Roman political system facilitated a most intense and ultimately destructive economic exploitation of the great mass of the people, whether slave or free, and it made radical reform impossible'. Later lectures were to re-wind the tape and

¹⁹ 'Class in Marx's conception of history', 95. Similarly 'Horos Interview', 128: 'I had no teaching at all there. I went round various departments asking "Are there any lectures I could give your pupils?"'

²⁰ 'Herodotus', *Greece and Rome*, 24 (1977), 130–48. 'Worm's eye-view': n. 4 above.

begin the account of 'How the Roman Empire came to be what it was' in the fifth century BC. The following year's course too, on 'Ancient Economic History', ended with a review of systems of land tenure throughout antiquity.²¹ Marx is absent; nonetheless, the teleology in reverse that shapes *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* is unmistakably already visible. 'Intense and ultimately destructive economic exploitation' prefigures *The Class Struggle's* most famous image, the comparison of the activities of the propertied classes of the later Roman Empire to those of a vampire bat.

His first publications were products of these years. Robert Browning was to write of *The Class Struggle*, 'The neatness with which highly technical evidence is marshalled and assessed provides the kind of satisfaction one gets from watching a skilled craftsman at work'.²² The master craftsman is already at work in the early articles, busy with a whole range of topics demanding different types of technical expertise. 'Greek and Roman accounting'²³ was written as a direct response to Professor Baxter's request for lectures on the subject. It is a path-breaking monograph on a subject doubly daunting, difficult in itself and documented in difficult papyrological sources. Ste. Croix surveys the material with superb clarity, and concludes that 'double entry accounting', seemingly so fundamental to economic rationality in the Weberian sense, was unknown in antiquity. According to a leading historian of accounting, that conclusion still stands, though it can perhaps be evaluated a little differently; he notes that Ste. Croix's essay 'remains the classic treatment'.²⁴ Another standard study, that on 'Greek and Roman maritime loans', is in essence also a product of these years, though not published till much later.²⁵

'Demosthenes' *timema* and the Athenian *eisphora* in the fourth-century BC'²⁶ discusses persuasively²⁷ a knotted cluster of problems which no serious treatment of Athenian finances and taxation in that century

²¹ Other surviving lectures from that course are 1–2, 'Sources' (which contains a characteristic section in praise of the Elder Pliny); 5, 'Industry and Labour in the Greek World'; 6–7, 'Athenian State Finance'.

²² *Past and Present*, 100 (Aug. 1983), 148.

²³ 'Greek and Roman accounting', in *Studies in the History of Accounting*, ed. A. C. Littleton and B. S. Yamey (1956), 14–74.

²⁴ R. Macve, 'Notes on de Ste. Croix's "Greek and Roman Accounting"' in Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, 233–64.

²⁵ 'Ancient Greek and Roman maritime loans', in *Debits, Credits, Finance and Profits. Essays in Honour of W. T. Baxter*, ed. H. Edey and B. S. Yamey, (1974), 41–59.

²⁶ See n. 9 above.

²⁷ See J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford, 1971), 130.

can evade. The sting of the article is in the tail: he takes up Gladstone's dictum that 'Athens perished because of its poor public finance' and endorses it, though in a paradoxical sense; the article has shown how modest were the totals raised by taxation in the fourth century, and he concludes that, despite the loud complaints of the property-owning classes, Athens erred by bleeding the rich all too little.

'Aspects of the "Great" Persecution'²⁸ is another masterpiece of clear exposition and analysis. Relevant distinctions are constantly emphasised: between the various edicts involved; between developments within the two halves of the empire and in different provinces; between martyr-acts of quite unequal reliability; between those who embraced martyrdom openly, and those who were willing to compromise their principles in different degrees to avoid it. Once these distinctions have been properly evaluated, it emerges that 'the so-called Great Persecution has been exaggerated in Christian tradition to an extent which even Gibbon did not fully appreciate'. But in the final paragraph the argument takes two twists. Numbers are not everything: the threat of persecution is itself a form of persecution. And it left psychological scars. For some of the worst features in the mentality of fourth-century and later churchmen, 'above all the readiness to persecute and the hysterical denunciation of theological opponents, . . . the atmosphere of constant menace in which Christianity had matured was in some degree responsible'.

'*Suffragium*: from Vote to Patronage'²⁹ is an illustration of the decay of participatory political institutions under the late Roman Empire, elegantly illustrated from the history of the Latin word for 'vote' or 'voting' itself. *Suffragium* came in time commonly to indicate not a vote but the support or protection extended to a client by a powerful patron, and finally 'the actual sum of money or other bribe given him in return for exercising it'. Ever interested in religion, Ste. Croix does not fail to note in passing the application of the term *patrocinium* to the activity of the apostles and martyrs on behalf of the faithful, and the importance of their *suffragium* or 'intercession' with the Almighty.

'The Character of the Athenian Empire'³⁰ is perhaps the most discussed and most attacked of all Ste. Croix's articles, but one that used to be acclaimed by W. G. Forrest in his undergraduate lectures as the most exciting contribution to Greek History published since the war. Thucydides'

²⁸ *Harvard Theological Review*, 47 (1954), 75–113.

²⁹ *British Journal of Sociology*, 5 (1954), 33–48.

³⁰ *Historia*, 3 (1954/5), 1–41.

assumption that the Athenian empire was universally unpopular can be refuted, Ste. Croix argues, from his own narrative: not only do speakers once or twice claim explicitly that the common people in the allied states looked on Athens with favour, but the narrative itself repeatedly shows the propertied classes in the empire instigating revolts which the *demos* fails to support. The chief fissure is not that between imperial city and subject allies, but that between 'the powerful' and the *demos* in every state. Various objections have been raised: is it affection for Athens that holds back the common people in the allied states from revolt, or rather fear? Can one be sure that 'the *demos*' is genuinely broadly-based in every case, and not a pro-Athenian clique? On one point Ste. Croix's eventual position converged with that of his critics.³¹ He was not claiming (in later formulations) that the popularity that the Athenian empire enjoyed with the *demos* in the allied states was absolute, but merely relative: rule by Athens was preferable to rule by their own oligarchs. Where he differed from critics was in continuing to see therein an important corrective to the unqualified and unanimous resentment of the empire implied by Thucydides.

These five articles, tackling each such different and important themes with such lasting effect, were a most powerful debut. In 1953, a post became available as Tutor in Ancient History at New College, Oxford; a university lecturership went with it. Ste. Croix had never set foot in Oxford, but he was approached, responded and was unexpectedly (not being an Oxonian) appointed, on the strength according to folk tradition of an irresistible recommendation from Jones, a New College man himself and by now Professor in Cambridge. Despite his success, Ste. Croix thought very little of what he saw as the backdoor ways in which Oxford appointments in all subjects were often made at this time. Though there were at least rival candidates in his case, there was no advertisement and no formal interview. But he was taken informally to meet H. T. Wade-Gery, whose influence was so powerful on the study of Greek history in Oxford. That lover of Greek literature terrified him by speaking of 'the world view of Sophocles' *Ajax*', and Ste. Croix was obliged quickly to change the subject.

He stayed at New College in the same post until his retirement in 1977. The impact that he had in those twenty-four years was far greater than

³¹ The most recent critic is G. L. Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War* (1997), 92–106. Eventual position: *Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 37; for a reaction to his critics see too *The Class Struggle*, 603 n. 26.

most scholars achieve in a lifetime of teaching. The two courses of lectures that he repeated most often both became famous in Oxford.³² The sixteen lectures on ‘The Economic Background of Athenian Politics’ (given in most years from 1957 to 1971) stood out no doubt for the concentrated attention that they applied to economic history, but what auditors most often recall is their professionalism; huge quantities of evidence were cited, and these were all listed, along with modern bibliography, on stencilled handouts, the like of which (or so the story goes) Oxford had never seen, long before the introduction of photocopiers made the preparation of such things easy. The course on ‘The Persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire’ (c.1964–76) was no less professional, but what was famous here was the zest with which St. Croix continued the persecution. It is true that his often-quoted apophthegm, that the Romans had done ‘too little, too late’ (variant: ‘With the Christians you either have to do the job properly or let them go’), did not have quite the meaning that oral tradition has gleefully ascribed to it; his point was simply that, in their own terms, the Romans had done a bad job and exacerbated the problem they sought to cure. But the persecution of Christians by other Christians that occurred after the conversion of the empire was certainly much dwelt on. He was also proud to have given classes for about a decade on Greek science (a subject before and, alas, after that little attended to in Oxford).³³ This was a rare example in his life of an academic interest that grew, rather late, from a seed not planted by Jones, though one it was natural enough for a committed materialist to develop. (The seed was in fact planted by a Marxist from whom he in general had regretfully to dissent, George Thomson.) His approach to the subject can be seen in a published commentary on a paper delivered by L. Edelstein at a Symposium on the History of Science held in Oxford in 1961.³⁴ The *ιστορίη* of Herodotus and Thucydides was for him an important branch of Greek science.

The subjects of his great lecture courses were topics close to his heart, but not close to the centre of the undergraduate syllabus. But the tutorial rather than the lecture has always been the fulcrum of the Oxford system;

³² He also lectured in the 1950s on ‘The Athenian Empire,’ ‘The 400 and the 5000’, and ‘The Origins of the Peloponnesian War’, and in the 1970s on ‘Thucydides’.

³³ They were directed to a now defunct ‘Diploma in the History and Philosophy of Science’ inspired by A. C. Crombie. St. Croix collaborated at different times in the teaching of the ‘Greek Science’ paper with G. Toomer, G. E. L. Owen, and E. L. Hussey; he was happier teaching Greek medicine, biology, and to some degree astronomy than maths and physics.

³⁴ Commentary on paper by L. Edelstein (on Greek science), in *Scientific Change* (Symposium on the History of Science, Oxford, 9–11 July 1961), ed. A. C. Crombie (1963), 79–87.

and as a College Tutor, he had to guide his pupils through that syllabus (or at least the Greek sections of it—by a long-standing arrangement with C. E. Stevens of Magdalen, Magdalen men came to Ste. Croix for Greek and New College went to Stevens for Roman). He once in a review spoke of ‘the least important and interesting aspects of Greek history—the wars and alliances and diplomatic exchanges’.³⁵ But such things were on the syllabus, and he was much too conscientious a tutor not to prepare his pupils in every detail for the exams they had to face. So the topics studied in New College were essentially the same as those studied everywhere else, and the massive bibliographies from which they were studied (headed by a thick wodge of primary sources) were the marvel of all. They were reinforced by numerous supplementary handouts containing explications of obscure topics and refutations of dangerous views. He could study nothing except with passion, and he brought passion even to the study of ‘wars and alliances and diplomatic exchanges’.

In chapter four of her novel *Providence*, Anita Brookner provides a striking illustration of a certain ideal of the tutorial, whereby a few deft suggestions by the tutor enable the pupils to make, for themselves, discoveries that amaze them. Such was not Ste. Croix’s way. Tutorials lasted two hours (two or three pupils attended each), and a crude summary would be that for the first hour one was told what the previous week’s essay should have said, and for the second what the next week’s essay ought to say. Interruptions to the flow of words were accepted, indeed encouraged, but somehow never made much headway. Other Oxford tutors sometimes spoke of ‘brainwashing’. W. G. Forrest claims that he once asked a Ste. Croix pupil at a *viva* ‘Supposing that Thucydides himself were to assure you that the view Mr de Ste. Croix credits him with was *not* his view, how would the matter then stand?’ and was told ‘I would explain to him that he was wrong.’ But all that the ‘brainwashing’ amounted to was a clear and committed presentation of persuasive views. One was not supposed to accept these views uncritically. The sharpest rebuke that David Harvey, a graduate pupil, ever received from his tutor was for surrendering an opinion of his own too readily when it was strongly countered by Ste. Croix.

His loquaciousness was extraordinary. He talked openly about almost everything; Peter Garnsey was once delighted to be taken for several turns

³⁵ *English Historical Review*, 76 (1961), 309. He goes on (in an unexpectedly mandarin style quite unlike his mature manner): ‘it is above all the intellectual and spiritual achievements of the Greeks and the unprecedented development of their political institutions which command our deepest interest today’.

round New College garden after a tutorial, a mark he thought of increased intimacy, until he received the explanation that ‘walking helps my bowels to move’. But mostly he talked of his academic concerns. Extraordinary quantities of detailed information on a great variety of topics were always at the forefront of his mind, ready to burst forth. His intimates had to develop evasive strategies. His son Julian recalls that he liked to tell Bible stories at meals. “‘Did I ever tell you the one about . . .?’” was perhaps his most common opening gambit—one very quickly learnt to jump in with an affirmative. He got wise to this, and one had to be careful to change the subject or he would ask, “Oh, and could you just remind me how the story goes?” Ste. Croix once told me that ‘Margaret [his wife] is the one person who is even more hostile to religion than I am. Every time I mention Yahweh she gets up and leaves the room.’ At one period late in his life, he talked so much about the *Book of Job* that Margaret tried to ration him: at any meeting with a friend he was not to mention Job until shortly before the encounter was due to end. He tried touchingly hard to observe the restriction, but with imperfect success.

A small minority of pupils found the river in spate overwhelming. The majority were inspired, however relieved they might be when the two hours came to an end. The enthusiasm for the subject, the intellectual commitment and mastery, the gusto and vivacity and good humour, the cheerful pugnacity against the ‘crap’ written by various ‘dreadful men’ (ancient and modern), the political engagement, the forthright and opinionated attitude on every possible subject, the extraordinary learning: all this amounted to a unique and fascinating phenomenon, however exhausting. His great talkativeness and friendliness made him unintimidating despite his scholarship, and he was quite free from pomposity and airs, manifestly a sympathiser with the cause of the young. He often said that the academic life was the best of all lives, and seeing him one felt it to be true. Pupils followed him into it in droves.³⁶ They went their own ways intellectually, but he remained a warm-hearted friend to many.

However few words pupils managed to utter during actual tutorials, their opinions were not disregarded. In violation of Oxford tradition essays had to be handed in in advance, and Ste. Croix sat up late at night commenting on them. Points were numbered alphabetically, and when the alphabet had been exhausted it began again in doubled form; thus the twenty-seventh *corrigendum* was ‘aa’. To get deep into this doubled

³⁶ ‘Something like sixty’, he claims in ‘*Horos Interview*’, 129. Pride in his pupils is expressed also in the preface to *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*.

sequence was not unusual, and when R. Lane Fox wrote an essay, in a week when pupils were free to choose their own subject, on 'The Lessons we can learn from Sparta', his tutor had reached 'xx' and midnight, but not the end of the essay, when he stopped, perhaps suspecting that he was being set up. Graduates benefited from the same scrupulous attention. P. J. Rhodes was supervised by him for two terms while David Lewis was in America, and writes that 'As you know, he had as much conscience as a dozen ordinary people; though I had no complaints, he decided at the end of two terms that he hadn't done enough for me, and refused to take a supervision fee.'³⁷ Pupils who remained in academic life also received constant help and encouragement, whether or not their interests at all resembled his own.

Despite his great success as a lecturer and tutor, he always felt himself to be an outsider in Oxford. The encounter with Wade-Gery and the world-view of the *Ajax* must in retrospect have appeared as a *primum omen* of his entry into what he continued to perceive as an alien world. In many ways it is hard to see why he felt this. His talents were generally recognised, and he lived on excellent terms with many colleagues—Andrewes, Meiggs, Forrest, Stevens, and above all Brunt, as well as many of a younger generation and from other faculties. But Oxford is an inbred society, and Ste. Croix and L. H. Jeffery could not be unconscious that they were the only tutors in Ancient History in Oxford who had not themselves undergone the singularities of the 'Greats' course which they now taught. Ste. Croix suffered the added frustration of having no opportunity to teach a subject of such absorbing interest to him as the Later Roman Empire. There was also the problem of the institution itself. 'Sheer Oxonian conservatism' was not in his view a failing confined to the study of Ancient History;³⁸ and in a comic letter to a friend he once represented his wife Margaret (most implausibly) as taxing him with 'spending your useless life pandering to the exotic tastes of rich men's sons, crammed full of Latin and Greek and heaven knows what other nonsense at the most expensive private schools, before being turned by you into proper little Oxonians'. (But he was much too polite a man to let his pupils sense this attitude.) It was partly by choice that he remained, as he used to say, a metic in Oxford.

One cannot speak of Ste. Croix's relations with colleagues without

³⁷ For appreciative comments by another graduate see D. Harvey in Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, xvi.

³⁸ For the phrase see Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, 377.

touching on his famous letters. Friends and acquaintances who gave lectures or published on topics of interest to him would regularly receive very extensive unsolicited critiques of their position, very frankly expressed. ‘Dear George, With the main thesis of your paper, “Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*” in *The Phoenix* 17 (1963), 1–12 I disagree entirely, and so nearly all your individual points seem to me wrong’, begins a characteristic specimen, addressed to W. G. Forrest; there follow six single-spaced typed pages, and in conclusion ‘May I now invite (to conclude this peevish tirade) a *Retractatio*? (I’d much prefer this to doing a *Refutatio* myself.) . . . With grovelling apologies for the length and rudeness of this, Yours ever . . .’ The rationale is clear: one must speak out for what one believes to be true, but to do so in the private form of a letter avoids public conflict and public imputation of error. (My memory of him as an auditor at seminars is that he was unwontedly silent, and never intervened to attack or criticise; a lack of confidence in his skill as an impromptu debater may, unexpectedly, also have played a part.) Forrest, unconverted but unoffended, used to joke about this letter, and many other recipients reacted similarly. Having known of such letters for years, I was delighted to receive one myself at last, after my inaugural lecture in 1997: an accident to his hearing-aid just before the lecture meant that he had heard rather little, but what he had heard, though not wrong, was not important; perhaps the inaudible portions had addressed more pressing issues. . . . I did not doubt for a moment that the expression of warmest best wishes with which the letter concluded was sincere. But occasionally such letters slipped beyond the limits of reasonable candour and caused understandable offence.

It was not just the syllabus or the approach to Ancient History that he found unfamiliar on arrival in Oxford. When he had commenced studies at UCL the main building was burnt out; the Arts Faculty and the remains of the library were housed in a converted warehouse called Foster Court, the Students’ Union in the basement of the ruined main building. The architectural splendours and the collegiate life of Oxford were quite new to him. The former he relished unreservedly. In New College, his singularity was recognised and, for the most part, appreciated. He served in due course as a Senior Tutor of celebrated energy and punctiliousness. But the contribution to College and University life for which he wished to be remembered was the campaign for the admission of women to the all-male colleges. It was in New College that this possibility was first seriously discussed, and, though the initial proposal did not come from Ste. Croix, he chaired the committee that was then estab-

lished and worked enormously hard sounding opinion and consulting the women's colleges. He presented the case for change in an article published in the *Oxford Magazine* (15 October, 1964, 4–6); he carefully distinguishes two central arguments—the case in equity for admitting more women to Oxford, and the desirability for both sexes of a fully mixed education—from the prudential consideration that the quality of admissions would be likely to benefit from the change. A majority of the Fellows of New College finally voted for the reform, but one vote was missing from the two thirds majority required to secure a change of Statutes. In a speech to old members of the College at a Gaudy, Ste. Croix declared that there still lived on the spirit of J. W. Burgon, who once told the women in his congregation, in a University Sermon preached in New College Chapel in the year in which women were first admitted to examinations in the university, 'Inferior to us God made you, and our inferiors to the end of time you will remain.' He told me of this with pride, but also with a certain shamefacedness at the rudeness to some members of the conservative camp that it displayed; though the effect of Christianity and of conservatism on human well-being was in his view disastrous, he always held many individual believers and conservatives in esteem and affection. In a long perspective his campaign was successful, since in the seventies and eighties all the men's colleges at Oxford changed their Statutes to allow the admission of women. He was proud to find his influence acknowledged in the twentieth-century volume of *The History of the University of Oxford*.³⁹

P. A. Brunt once wittily adapted Goldsmith's lines on Burke to Ste. Croix, to say that

born for the universe, he narrow'd his mind
and to pupils gave up, what was meant for mankind.⁴⁰

He had in mind the period of almost twenty years which followed Ste. Croix's election to the New College Fellowship, during which, if one removes hangovers from the London period, he published unexpectedly little. 'The Constitution of the Five Thousand'⁴¹ of 1956 is perhaps such a hangover; it argues brilliantly the ultimately unconvincing case that Athenians outside the 5000 were not in fact disenfranchised in 411.⁴² Thereafter he published nothing except reviews (some of these very

³⁹ Vol. viii, ed. B. Harrison (Oxford, 1994), 584.

⁴⁰ In Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, xx.

⁴¹ *Historia*, 5 (1956), 1–23.

⁴² For his continued adherence to this view see *The Class Struggle*, 605–6 nn. 29–31.

valuable) until 'Notes on Jurisdiction in the Athenian Empire' in 1961, an important extension of his apologia for the Athenian empire.⁴³ A short study in 1963 denied that the Athenian democracy could engage in secret diplomacy.⁴⁴ A major article of the same year was 'Why were the early Christians persecuted?'.⁴⁵ This argued that the ground of the persecutions was not *flagitia* nor yet *contumacia* but simply the *nomen Christianum*; the *nomen* was offensive because of the religious exclusivity that went with it, and the impious disrespect for the gods of Rome that this implied. Ste. Croix is generally held to have got the better of a subsequent interchange with A. N. Sherwin-White (who re-stated the case for *contumacia*), and his view has been generally accepted. The following six years again brought quantitatively rather little, though 'Some Observations on the Property Rights of Athenian Women'⁴⁶ had an importance far beyond its length; it opened up a subject later explored in full by David Schaps in *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece*.⁴⁷ It was also the first indication of Ste. Croix's interest in gender-related issues.

These were the years during which the large book that appeared in 1972 was being brought to completion. But he was also at work on another large-scale project, a collection of *Essays on Greek History*.⁴⁸ They were sufficiently advanced in 1966 to be described by an incautious colleague as 'to be published shortly', and active work on them continued until about 1970. The typescripts (with footnotes) then laid aside and never taken up again could for the most part have been published as they stood. These essays are Ste. Croix's response to the challenge of teaching archaic Greek history as *Origins of the Peloponnesian War* was to the fifth century. Many treat the history of the Athenian constitution (a very long

⁴³ 'Notes on jurisdiction in the Athenian empire, I and II', in *Classical Quarterly*, 55 = n.s. 11 (1961), 94–112 and 268–80.

⁴⁴ 'The alleged secret pact between Athens and Philip II concerning Amphipolis and Pydna', in *Classical Quarterly*, 57 = n.s. 13 (1963), 110–19. Reprinted in *Philip and Athens*, ed. S. Perlman (Cambridge/New York, 1973), 36–45.

⁴⁵ *Past and Present*, 26 (Nov. 1963), 6–38. Reprinted in *Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. M. I. Finley (London/Boston, 1974), 210–49; 'Why were the early Christians persecuted? A rejoinder', in *Past and Present*, 27 (April 1964), 23–33. Also reprinted in *Studies in Ancient Society*, 256–62.

⁴⁶ *Classical Review*, 84 = n.s. 20 (1970), 273–8, which arose out of his review, *ibid.* 387–90, of A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens [I]: The Family and Property* (Oxford, 1968). Note too two excellent essays for a wider audience: 'Christianity's encounter with the Roman imperial government', in *The Crucible of Christianity*, ed. A. Toynbee (1969), 345–51, 357, and 'The religion of the Roman world', *Didaskalos*, 4 (1972), 61–74.

⁴⁷ Edinburgh, 1979.

⁴⁸ For a list of their contents, as envisaged by Ste. Croix in 1985, see Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, xii, item 51. Incautious colleague: W. G. Forrest, *The Emergence of Greek Democracy* (1966), 245.

essay discusses the sources of our main source for that history, Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians*). The approach is in the spirit of Grote: the Athenians were an intelligent and realistic people, and it is on this basis that we must interpret their institutions, even those that at first sight amaze, such as ostracism. (One essay applies similar principles of charity even to a Spartan king, Cleomenes.) A particularly valuable study denies that the Solonian 'census-classes' have anything to do with tax or census. Two essays (one on colonisation and one on Aegina) show the admirer and critic of Johannes Hasebroek's theories of archaic trade at work. It is hoped that a substantial number of these essays can now at last be published, dated though they must inevitably appear.

Another time-consuming project of the late 1960s failed to achieve a satisfactory outcome, though not in this case through perfectionism. His favourite Roman historian was Ammianus Marcellinus; and as a contribution to a paperback series 'The Great Histories' edited by Hugh Trevor-Roper (Washington Square Press, New York) he revised, and equipped with notes and a detailed introduction, a somewhat abbreviated version of J. C. Rolfe's translation of the surviving eighteen books of Ammianus' massive work, which treat the period from 353 to 378 AD. All was ready (work finished in 1969) when it emerged that the Rolfe translation was still in copyright and could not be used. The introduction portrays Ammianus' world, and enquires into his values, with typical vivacity. A central difference between Ammianus' thought-world and our own, Ste. Croix notes, is that men of the fourth century simply could not imagine the possibility of fundamental change in social arrangements, whereas among us 'there are many whose hopes are increasingly fixed on it'.

Although he published relatively little during these years, Ste. Croix's standing was recognised by his election to the British Academy in 1972, an honour that delighted and amazed him. And in that year *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, the grand climax of his *apologia* for Athens, at last appeared. He had first given lectures so entitled in 1956. The courses he offered on the subject in the next few years sometimes spoke rather of 'Causes'; but 'Origins' better catches the long backward perspective in which he insists that the war needs to be seen. The ultimate origin lies indeed, in his view, in the Spartan decision in perhaps the eighth century to reduce the inhabitants of Messenia to slavery, a decision that compelled them ever after to live in terror of helot revolt and distorted all their policies, domestic and foreign. The main text concludes ringingly (though there are still forty-seven appendices to follow) 'The Helot

danger was the curse Sparta had brought upon herself, an admirable illustration of the maxim that a people which oppresses another cannot itself be free.’

Ste. Croix’s articles had always been characterised by intense concentration on a sharply defined problem. This large and much sub-divided book on the origins of a single war may seem by contrast a baggy monster. But within individual sections the concentration is no less intense than before. And the book moves to as clear a conclusion as one could wish. It is just that the numerous subsidiary and preliminary issues have each to be investigated from top to bottom *en route*. As a result the book contains extended discussions of, *inter alia*, the attitudes and methods of Thucydides;⁴⁹ the nature of the Peloponnesian League; the political outlook of Aeschylus, and of Aristophanes; policy-making at Sparta;⁵⁰ causes of war in the Greek world. Subsequent debate in all these areas has been largely influenced by it. Its most distinctive thesis, about the character of the ‘Megarian decrees’ often held responsible for precipitating the war, has had an uneven reception tending to rejection.⁵¹ More have been convinced by the broader claim that Thucydides’ account of the war’s origins, read aright, assigns little responsibility to Athens. Many still wish to blame Athens; but in order to do so, it often now seems necessary to question the reliability of Thucydides’ account, and the recent tendency to read Thucydides suspiciously, to treat him as it were as a press secretary for Pericles, is a dialectic response to the force of Ste. Croix’s argument.⁵² Forceful it is, carried forward through all the book’s byways with confidence and passion. In scope, energy and power *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* is one of the indispensable contributions to Greek political history of its half-century.

In the year after its publication, Ste. Croix delivered the three J. H. Gray lectures in Cambridge, out of which eventually emerged *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*. Strong left-wing sympathies had always been visible in his writings, but here for the first time a distinctively Marxist note was sounded explicitly and loudly. He was not politically active in Oxford (though he supported CND), never having resumed such

⁴⁹ ‘His sombre account of the Thucydidean thought-world . . . is a superb piece of writing, of unforgettable power’: Anderson, *History Workshop Journal*, 16 (1983), 59.

⁵⁰ S. Hodkinson and A. Powell (eds.), *Sparta: New Perspectives* (1999) was dedicated to him in recognition of his contribution to Spartan studies.

⁵¹ The most effective critique is by P. Gauthier, *Historia*, 24 (1975), 498–503; see too in brief D. M. Lewis, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, V², ‘The Fifth Century BC’ (1992), 376–7.

⁵² On this debate see most recently T. C. B. Rood, *Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation* (Oxford, 1998), part iv, and C. Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (2000), 82–111.

activity after the war. Paul Cartledge believes that he was, not perhaps radicalised anew (for his radicalism had never lapsed), but encouraged to speak out, by events of the late sixties. Within Oxford, he was a strong supporter of the agitation by students for formal recognition of their place within the university which led eventually to the Hart Committee's *Report on Relations with Junior Members* (1969). A long letter to the *Oxford Magazine*⁵³ from three undergraduates entitled 'From a socialist point of view' had benefited in advance from his detailed criticism, and he made a long submission to the Hart Committee. In the world at large, he was deeply disgusted by the war in Vietnam, and much impressed by the Cultural Revolution, the achievements of which he commended to a startled group of undergraduates in the summer of 1967. He long remained an admirer of Mao, whom he saw as a genuine believer in grassroots decision-making. In a letter of 1982, he quoted from 'The Sixteen Points of 8 August 1966' to prove this, but added characteristically 'I only wish the Chinese would begin to make their Top People *hupeuthunoi* [accountable] in the manner of Greek democracies: it is the lack of institutions to secure this in the Communist countries that I most deplore.'

There was also a development in Ste. Croix's own understanding of Marx, the importance of which he stressed in his Isaac Deutscher memorial lecture. Despite the fascination of Marx's thought, he had always been uncomfortably conscious that actual working classes tend to lack class consciousness and the will to engage in class struggle. What use then an analysis that makes 'class struggle' fundamental? It was only through study of Marx's references to the ancient world that he realised that the Marxist notion of class can be disassociated from class consciousness and explicit class struggle; were this not so, Marx and Engels could never have spoken of slaves as a 'class', as they repeatedly did. The class struggle for Marx is simply a relationship of exploitation, perceived as such or not. 'This theoretical position, which I arrived at in the 1970s,⁵⁴ solves all the problems I mentioned earlier.' Readers of *The Class Struggle* know that chapter two of that work is an extended exegesis of Marx's

⁵³ 14 Mar. 1969, 243–5.

⁵⁴ 'Class in Marx's conception of history', 101. There is a chronological uncertainty here. The title which he offered (in 1971?) for the J. H. Gray lectures of 1972/3, 'The Class Struggle (*singular*) in the Ancient Greek World' may seem already to imply the new understanding. On the other hand, the formulations of *Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, 90 (published in 1972), are still pre-conversion, as is noted in *The Class Struggle*, 65 n. 17. Perhaps the new conception only emerged during preparation or revision of the lectures (no text of which is available to me).

texts, formidable both in scholarship and analytical power,⁵⁵ designed to show that the Marxist notion of class is the one just outlined. It was the acquisition of this insight that made possible *The Class Struggle* in the form in which we know it. Conscious class struggle in antiquity was discontinuous, but exploitation was always there. Reviewers pointed out that the book made paradoxically little use of such evidence as there is for explicit class struggle.⁵⁶

The intellectual position in which he now found himself was a singular and isolated one. Ancient historians who lacked a theoretical and comparative perspective were henceforth liable to be stigmatised by him as mere antiquarians.⁵⁷ But better an antiquarian than a sociologising ignoramus!⁵⁸ Facts remain for him not just real things, but holy ones.⁵⁹ There is evident sympathy for ‘the reader who fears that his stomach may be turned by the horrible jargon that is characteristic of so much sociological theorizing and by the repellent welter of vague generalisation that infects even a powerful intellect like Weber’s’ in certain circumstances.⁶⁰ Among theoretically inclined ancient historians, many in his eyes had been led astray by Moses Finley with his Weberian spectrum of statuses,⁶¹ powerless to explain anything. But Ste. Croix’s new understanding of class struggle had isolated him no less from the many contemporary Marxists, ancient historians among them, who took class consciousness and participation in a conscious class struggle as fundamentals of Marxist analysis.⁶² Many further topics important in the Marxist tradition—‘base and superstructure’ or ‘modes of production’ or ‘dialectic’, say—he chose to leave aside. In a letter he confessed to being ‘totally uninfluenced by Lukacs, Althusser and co., of whom I have read little or nothing’.⁶³ Robert Browning in his review of *The Class Struggle*⁶⁴ noted that Ste.

⁵⁵ Whence Perry Anderson’s praise of the book as ‘one of the most strenuously theoretical works of history ever to have been produced in this country’ and his correct reference to ‘the energy of a natural theoretical temperament’: *History Workshop Journal*, 16 (1983), 58 and 60.

⁵⁶ So e.g. F. Millar in an important review, *London Review of Books*, 17–20 June 1982, 17–18.

⁵⁷ See e.g. *The Class Struggle*, 81–2, 539 n. 5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 34.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 31, with citation of A. D. Nock.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 87.

⁶¹ Economic primitivism, and a shared distaste for traditional approaches to ancient history, had long drawn Finley and Ste. Croix together; but the Weberianism of Finley’s *The Ancient Economy* (1973) divided them. A controversial D.Phil. examination where they proved unable to submit an agreed report also marred their personal relations.

⁶² *The Class Struggle*, 62–6.

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.* 20–1.

⁶⁴ *Past and Present*, 100 (Aug. 1983), 147–56, at 149.

Croix's polemics were 'based more on close interpretation of events than on privileged access to general truths' and went on 'The kind of sectarian infighting in which some Marxists indulge is not to his taste. In fact this is a very English and pragmatic book, which may well infuriate some Marxist readers.' According to another reviewer, it was a case of Ste. Croixism, not Marxism.⁶⁵ Browning was right, we may note in passing, about Ste. Croix's attitude to 'sectarian infighting'; as one of his letters reveals, he saw a parallel with that in the early Church, and the lively if irrelevant description of the latter in *The Class Struggle* (447–52) was in part intended as an expression of his 'own distress at the very sad strife between Marxist (and pseudo-Marxist, deuterio-Marxist, neo-Marxist and *soi-disant* Marxist) sects'.

Despite a confident statement in 1974 that it was to appear 'early in 1976',⁶⁶ the book of the lectures was postponed until 1981; in the interim, P. A. Brunt formed the habit of alluding to it as 'your posthumous book'. In 1975 he contributed to the *Festschrift* for his old colleague C. E. Stevens a study of 'Aristotle on History and Poetry'⁶⁷ which stressed that the philosopher engaged actively in historical research, despite the famous disparaging remark about 'What Alcibiades did and suffered' in the *Poetics*. This was important to Ste. Croix, for whom Aristotle, alongside Thucydides, was the greatest of the Greeks.⁶⁸ This and one or two other occasional pieces aside, all his efforts in these years went on *The Class Struggle* or on articles later subsumed within it. Given what emerged, the wonder is that *The Class Struggle* was completed so quickly. On the theoretical side alone, Ste. Croix had to acquire a thorough knowledge of the entire *oeuvre* of Marx and Engels, as well as (for purposes of polemic) a good grasp of that of Weber. As its subtitle 'From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests' reveals, the book covers a huge span of time; and readers soon discover that it has much more to say about what conventionally counts as Roman than as Greek history. It is true that the chronological and geographical sweep of the book had been the armature for his thought ever since his studies under Jones; true too, as we noted, that much of the 'master narrative' (that pompous expression has some

⁶⁵ W. Eder, *Classical Philology*, 79 (1984), 341–9. But Y. Garlan, in the preface to *Les esclaves en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1982), could speak of 'son approche quelque peu scripturale des textes de Marx' (there is a slightly fuller response to the book in the Engl. tr., *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, tr. J. Lloyd, Ithaca 1988, 11–12). Paradoxically, both points are true in their way.

⁶⁶ 'Karl Marx and the History of Classical Antiquity', *Arethusa*, 8 (1975), 7–41, at 11.

⁶⁷ In *The Ancient Historian and His Materials* (ed. B. Levick), 45–58, reprinted in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton, 1992), 23–32.

⁶⁸ 'Horos Interview', 132.

justification here) had already been envisioned by him in 1951. But to bring to completion a book of over 650 trenchant and eloquent pages, that enter into so much detail, with so much mastery, on such a variety of topics, was a colossal task. Until retirement he was still engaged in full-time teaching. In a letter he spoke of ‘working 8–14 hours a day, 7 days a week, for about 10 years’.

He was much concerned—as an evangelist, not from conceit—that the book should have an impact outside the circles of professional ancient historians. At the suggestion of his publisher, Colin Haycraft, he engaged in a vastly time-consuming campaign of letter-writing designed to identify suitable journals and reviewers and to bring the latter and the book together. Still staying up many nights into the small hours, he must have typed hundreds of pages in single space. (Most intellectual of materialists, he wrote to a Polish colleague who was oppressed by the sheer difficulties of daily living ‘it may seem absurd to say so, but I really think reading my book might help to raise your spirits’.) The campaign was far more successful than author or publisher could have dreamt. Reviews appeared in unprecedented numbers in a huge variety of publications. And (apart from a small number of coarse attempts to wield the hatchet) the general response in the English-speaking world was that this was a majestic work. Even a violent two-page onslaught in the *TLS* quite unexpectedly declared it ‘a monumental masterpiece’ in the penultimate sentence.⁶⁹ About many of its merits there was almost consensus. The astonishing learning (‘like that of the great *érudits* of the seventeenth century’—R. Browning)⁷⁰ was everywhere recognised. The success of the style in engaging the reader was generally acknowledged, if variously described; the unabashedly personal manner (very different from that of the early articles) is indeed hard to catch in a phrase, informal without colloquialism, polemical but not sloganising, unstuffy but not ineloquent, full of engagement and indignation and endlessly judgemental but often dry and wry too, constantly enlivened with vivid illustration or quotation. Professional ancient historians saluted the originality and value of many particular analyses. Marxists (west of Calais) acclaimed the revisionist interpretation of Marx. Above all, readers even of quite different political persuasion responded (only occasionally with disgust) to the work’s unfeigned moral passion, its intense concern to give a voice to ‘the voiceless toilers, the great majority—let us not forget it—of the population of

⁶⁹ 11 Feb. 1983, 125–6 (P. Green).

⁷⁰ *Past and Present*, 100 (1983), 147.

the Greek and Roman world, upon whom was built a great civilization which despised them and did all it could to forget them'.⁷¹ Scholars from countries with much stronger traditions of academic Marxism saluted this passion, however odd and insular they might find the author's theoretical stance.⁷²

One objection was almost universal: nobody accepted Ste. Croix's proposal to treat women as a 'class'. He did not mind that very much; he acknowledged in private that he did not insist on the theoretical claim, since the essential point had been to have an opportunity of getting at St Paul. (Still more than *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War*, this house contains many mansions. What holds the book together is not so much content as author's attitude: *facit indignatio versum*.) He would have been less happy with the tendency to acclaim the book in general and (through commendation of particular discussions) in specific terms and then to deny explanatory power, both specific and general, to the distinctively Marxist theses. The points at issue cannot be rehearsed here. But such has perhaps been the dominant response to the book among ancient historians, and to this extent Ste. Croix's pessimistic anticipation of the book's reception within the profession was justified. E. Badian's review in the *New York Review of Books*⁷³ is an excellent account of the book from this admiring dissident's perspective. He emphasises an important originality when he characterises the book as 'the only work in a western language that has ever attempted to tell the story of the greater part of the ancient world with the interests of the lower classes as its central theme'. That observation in itself does not a little to weaken the force of the 'did we need Marx to teach us this?' trope.

Badian concluded with the prediction that 'the writing of ancient

⁷¹ *The Class Struggle*, 210.

⁷² E. Narducci, *Belfagor*, 37 (1982), 738–42; W. Schuller, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 236 (1983), 403–13. Another appreciative German review was that by W. Eder (n. 65 above). The reaction in West German classical periodicals tended otherwise toward the hostile. French critics, too, objected to the neglect of continental Marxism.

⁷³ 29. 19, 2 Dec. 1982, 47–51. Other admiring dissidents include K. R. Bradley, *AJP*, 103 (1982), 347–50; T. D. Barnes, *Phoenix*, 36 (1982), 363–6; and very influentially, P. A. Brunt, *JRS*, 72 (1982), 158–63. F. Millar (n. 56) criticises not the Marxism but the brand of Marxism. Ancient historians more sympathetic to the theoretical position include R. Browning, *Past and Present*, 100 (Aug. 1983), 147–56; P. A. Cartledge, *EHR*, 99 (July 1984), 566–9; M. Golden, *Labour/Le Travail*, 14 (Fall 1984), 209–14; D. Konstan, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 28 (1986), 754–66; C. R. Phillips III, *Helios*, n.s. 11 (1984), 48–82; D. Kyrtatas, *Ο Πολιτης δεκαπενθήμερος*, 51 (1998), 31–7 (a review of the Greek translation). For reviews by non-classicists see Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, xi; note especially those by P. Anderson (n. 55) and C. Slaughter, *Sociology Review* (November 1982), 719–27.

history, at least in English, will never be quite the same again as a result of this work'. Other reviewers spoke similarly. Those prophecies have not proved true, largely because of external circumstances. But the developments that have caused *quondam* teachers of Marxist-Leninism in small Siberian towns to seek work as shamans left Ste. Croix completely unmoved intellectually. His response to the events of 1989 was to start work on a statement for circulation to his friends entitled 'Why I am still a thoroughgoing Marxist'. In a short preface to the Greek translation of *The Class Struggle*, dated 1993, he commended the work of Branko Horvat, *The Political Economy of Socialism: a Marxist Social Theory* (1982), and expressed a continuing hope that a classless society would one day be created, quite unlike the fallen pseudo-Marxist tyrannies of the Soviet world.

The Class Struggle (which received the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize for 1982) earned him world-wide fame, and with it honours and invitations. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of New College (1985) and a Fellow of University College London (1987), and lectured widely at home and abroad: he remained in his eighth decade a compelling performer. The whole huge book was eventually translated into both Spanish and Greek.⁷⁴ A Festschrift, *CruX*, was dedicated to him on his seventy-fifth birthday. But much academic business remained unfinished. To his delight, the novelist Beryl Bainbridge had chosen *The Class Struggle* as her best book of 1981, for being pro-women and anti-Christian. Such themes had been interlopers in *The Class Struggle*, however enlivening; they were now to be treated in their own right. The joy of sex in particular was to be vindicated: the lecture on 'Sex and St. Paul' cited earlier deployed the Wife of Bath and John Donne against an array of Christian Fathers, and left vivid memories. He proposed to write two further books, one at different times called *Essays in Early Christian History* and *Heresy, Schism and Persecution in the Later Roman Empire*, the other *Early Christian Attitudes to Women, Sex and Marriage*. On this latter subject he delivered three Gregynog Lectures at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, in 1986, and seven Townsend Lectures at Cornell in 1988.

His appetite for primary evidence was undiminished. He discovered in the six volumes of Schwartz's edition of the *Acts* of the Council of Chalcedon wonderful illumination of the historical context of a great

⁷⁴ Dimitris Kyrtatas of the University of Rethymnon spoke at the Memorial Event for Ste. Croix of the inspiring effect the Greek translation (1998) has had on a new generation of Hellenists in Greece. Kyrtatas is overseeing a translation of some of Ste. Croix's Christian papers into Greek.

persecuting council; the attitude to sex displayed in Augustine's huge commentary on the first verses of *Genesis (de Genesi ad litteram)* fascinated him no less. As always, he was concerned to take a long view: Christian attitudes in all these areas were to be contrasted with the antecedent Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions. As a preparation, he attended classes on the Ancient Novel given by scholars who were many decades his juniors. His attention also turned back to Plato, who, though an old enemy, had escaped lightly in *The Class Struggle*;⁷⁵ but, all too much an *anima naturaliter Christiana*, the philosopher turned out relevant to both proposed books, and in 1990 Ste. Croix gave new lectures on 'Plato and Early Christianity, Some Topics: Sex, Hell and Religious Persecution', 'Plato and Religious Persecution' and 'Plato: Misogynist and (ultimately) Homophobe'.

All Ste. Croix's friends had long been familiar with his 'three greatest enemies of the human race', Plato, St Augustine, and St Paul; their order varied, though St Paul was usually judged too undistinguished intellectually to occupy first place. It is a paradox that, for this great historian, all time was in a sense time present,⁷⁶ and these ancient thinkers still posed a vivid threat to human wellbeing. In late years he often expressed a resolve 'really to speak out' about members of this trio, about whom he strangely supposed himself to have minced his words hitherto. But eventually the target who most needed to be denounced came to be Yahweh (he had constantly to remind himself that the object of his outrage was in fact non-existent). He discovered an ally in an unexpected place; he had long been disgusted by Yahweh's maltreatment of Job, undertaken merely as part of a trial of strength with Satan, and he came to believe that such a reaction of disgust was the effect intended by the final editor of the *Book of Job*.

He moved from target to target, always discovering new ones; he was temperamentally compelled to investigate every topic he turned to in depth, and he had always been a perfectionist, endlessly drafting and re-drafting. In his last decade, though he recovered completely from an operation for bowel cancer in 1985, age and numerous infirmities impaired even his legendary capacity for hard work. As a result, nothing was quite brought to the point of publication. Near the end he was planning a selection of essays from all that he had been working on, to be

⁷⁵ Apart from a passing (if specially indexed) reference to him on p. 284 as 'one of the most determined and dangerous enemies that freedom has ever had'.

⁷⁶ I owe this point to Fergus Millar.

entitled *Radical Conclusions*; it is hoped that this or something similar will go ahead. His passion and intellectual energy and general buoyancy were quite unimpaired. At one of our last meetings he told me that he had begun to look into the issues underlying the Monophysite Controversy, and was discovering the roots of the Monophysite position to go much deeper than he had realised. . . . He also spoke with great fury of the bombing of Belgrade. For the last year or so of his life, he was in effect confined to his house in Charlbury. So theological were his interests at that stage that, if one visited him there, one found him absolutely surrounded by Bibles and biblical concordances and commentaries; he urged me once to bring a Bible with me, to make discussion easier. He died after a short period in hospital, three days before his ninetieth birthday. At the party to be held in his honour he had been planning to give a talk about a favourite author, Pliny the Elder; the question of how best to translate a much-loved phrase from Pliny, *deus est mortali iuvare mortalem*, was characteristically exercising him.

The Class Struggle is dedicated to his wife, Margaret, by way of an unidentified musical motto. It is in fact the setting by Hugo Wolf, a favourite composer, of 'Wie viele Zeit verlor' ich, dich zu lieben' (a translation by Heyse of an Italian folk song); W. G. Forrest, who alone among Oxford friends recognised it, replied 'Wie viele Zeit verlor' ich, dich zu lesen'. Music and Margaret (and his two sons by her, both musically very gifted) were indeed the joy of his private life (while health allowed he had also been a great walker). He had earlier (from 1932 to 1959) been married to Lucille, by whom he had a daughter Carolyn; his son Julian said at the memorial event held for him that Ste. Croix 'didn't talk of his first marriage very much, largely I'm sure because he blamed its unhappiness for Carolyn's suicide many years later'.

The second marriage was exceptionally happy. He was a home-loving person, though not one who had ever found it necessary to acquire domestic skills. His musical tastes were very wide; Handel was his favourite composer, but he was also a Wagnerian, and he knew the instrumental repertoire very thoroughly too. Perhaps nobody else in the world could have combined aesthetic and scholarly comment quite as unself-consciously as did Ste. Croix when discussing the *St Matthew Passion*, which always moved him to tears. Especially fine musically, he might observe, was the phrase leading up to the declaration of the centurion 'and others' that 'This man is the Son of God'; but 'and others' was a pointless addition in Matthew, and as for the declaration, Luke's 'This man is just' was alone conceivable as the utterance of a Roman centurion.

The dominant tone of Ste. Croix's writings is one of great self-confidence; and one does not, in the main, read them for the jokes. But he combined a huge certainty about his opinions with a genuine modesty about his achievements and capacities. And his letters to his friends were often full of wild comic invention. The spoof review of *The Class Struggle* printed in his *Festschrift* is by him; and a long letter to Colin Haycraft dated Christmas Day 1984 outlines a plan—serious, though it came to nothing—for yet another book, 'a sort of Thousand and One Israelitish Nights, with David telling Abishag the truth about all sorts of things of which there are garbled versions in the Good Book. . . . Abishag is to be my heroine. She's really very sexy and anything but a virgin, and of course she has great expectations of David. . . .'

The good nature and good humour made his strong opinions bearable. But it is of course the passion that makes the books live. P. A. Brunt brilliantly re-applied to him Byron's account of the virtues of Mitford's *History of Greece*; 'learning, labour, research, wrath and indignation. I call these latter virtues in a writer, because they make him write in earnest'.⁷⁷ There was nobody like him; H. L. A. Hart is reputed to have described him as the most extraordinary person he had ever known. Those who share Ste. Croix's and Pliny the Elder's view of the afterlife must vividly regret that it debars them from imagining Geoffrey now engaged in persuading Marx himself to accept the whole argument of *The Class Struggle*, as he believed Marx would, 'after some argument, perhaps'.⁷⁸

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Note. I have been able to consult Ste. Croix's 'Biographical Particulars' (n. 2 above) and his papers (brought into order by David Harvey) and letters; but letters survive, with a few exceptions, only from the last twenty years or so of his life, and even then in bulk only for the letter-writing campaign of 1982. Some published sources are mentioned in the text and notes; obituaries appeared in *The Times*, 10 Feb. 2000, *The Guardian*, 10 Feb. 2000 (David Harvey), *The Independent*, 11 Feb. 2000 (Paul Cartledge), *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 Feb. 2000 (Robin Lane Fox), *The New York Times*, 12 Feb. 2000 (Paul Lewis) and *TO BHMA*, 20 Feb. 2000 (Dimitris Kyrtatas). I owe more than I have acknowledged explicitly to a transcript of the address given by Julian de Ste. Croix at the Memorial Event held in New College on 27 May, 2000; other

⁷⁷ In Cartledge and Harvey, *Cruix*, xx.

⁷⁸ *The Class Struggle*, 30.

addresses were by Paul Cartledge and Dimitris Kyratas. Among friends of Ste. Croix whom I have consulted, I must thank in particular Peter Brunt, Paul Cartledge, Edward Hussey, Robin Lane Fox, David Harvey, Wolfgang Liebeschuetz (who very kindly supplied me with notes on their time at UCL together), and Fergus Millar; Cartledge, Harvey, Kyratas, Lane Fox, and Millar all commented most helpfully on this Memoir. I am also most grateful to Julian and Margaret de Ste. Croix. There is a full bibliography to 1985 in Cartledge and Harvey, *Crux*, viii–xii.

