

James Gasser (editor)

A Boole Anthology.

Recent and Classical Studies in the Logic of George Boole

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REVIEW

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James Gasser's *A Boole Anthology* is a collection of seven classical and ten recent studies on George Boole's work, its background, and its intellectual frame of reference. Two of the classical articles were published during the 1860s, with the rest appearing during the latter half of the 20th century. The recent ones are based on lectures given at Lausanne on the occasion of the conference entitled "Boole 1997: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Mathematical Analysis of Logic". Gasser's anthology is a valuable contribution to the renaissance experienced by Boole studies since the publication of Desmond MacHale's biography of Boole in 1985. In addition to MacHale's book, three recent new editions of Boole's ground-breaking *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic* [6, 7, 8], an important selection of his manuscripts on logic and its philosophy [10], and the present volume are telling examples of the current lively interest in the life and thought of George Boole. Indeed, in the editor's words, "the present anthology constitutes an attempt to capture some of the 'buzz about Boole'" (p. vii).

Gasser's anthology begins with a brief Preface by the editor (pp. vii-viii). Given the topic and the nature of the work it is surprising to read in the very first line of Gasser's opening remarks that "centuries of stagnation in the study of logic were followed by an explosion of progress in the late nineteenth century" (p. vii). This statement carries an unfortunate echo of the misguided standard evaluation of the time between Leibniz and Frege as a period of stagnation or even of decline in the history of logic. Even though it is true that the currently fashionable way of understanding logic merely as the doctrine of the laws of correct inference would not have appealed even to most 19th