

## SUBJECT REVIEWS

(\* denotes that a book is specially recommended for school libraries.)

### *Greek Literature*

Two years and 61 books into my stint as subject reviewer, I'm doubtless acquiring a chorus of disgruntled authors convinced of my incompetence. The 62nd book prompts me to acknowledge pre-emptively the limits of my competence. A. P. David's *Dance of the Muses*<sup>1</sup> proposes a new theory of Greek accentuation (building on the work of W. S. Allen), and a new theory of the structure of the hexameter and its origins (in a round dance, with retrogression between caesura and bucolic diaeresis); a final chapter takes first steps in applying the theory to lyric. The accentual and prosodic analysis raises technical issues that I do not feel qualified to judge. But the fifty-odd pages that precede the book's technical core are not encouraging: they present a rambling collection of unsubstantiated assertions and promises, prematurely claiming the spoils of victories not yet won; connected argument is hard to find. The book can be sloppy in detail (Aristotle is reported as saying that Aeschylus 'pulled out a second dancer', this being 'an innovation in the dithyramb, a crucial step on its way to becoming a tragedy': 24) and extravagant in larger claims (the retrogression in the round dance is the key to the structure of Plato's *Republic*: 126). Most fundamentally: when inspecting charts of agreements and disagreements between accent and ictus, how do I know that what they reveal is a 'once hidden order' (118)? How much regularity is needed to make a tendency significant? No theory will predict absolute regularity (121); but a theory that allows for 'infinite variety' (123) is empty. That may not be what was meant; loose writing persistently displaces careful analysis. The significance that David intuits in the patterns he identifies usually eluded me (except where a rhythmic effect was obvious even without the new theory), and comments such as 'an unearthly richness in the texture here yields to a translucent clarity of expression' (129) were no help at all. It was startling to find Parry accused of a 'typical Socratic deception' (7 f.); a conjectural emendation (confirmed by the parallel passage on p. 12) removed the superficial, but not the underlying, problem with this claim.

Michael Lloyd takes on the role of 'impresario' (vi) for the Aeschylean volume of *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies*.<sup>2</sup> The selection (designed not to overlap with Segal's readings in Greek tragedy) includes Gantz on tetralogies; Saïd and Griffith on *Persians*; von Fritz on *Seven*; Rösler and Burian on *Suppliants* and the Danaid trilogy; Peradotto on the *ethos* of Agamemnon; Fowler and Lebeck on imagery in *Choephoroi*; Dodds, Macleod, and Bowie on (in varying permutations) ethics, politics, and religion in the *Oresteia*; and West on the Prometheus trilogy. The introduction is modest in its ambitions: there is no general assessment of Aeschylus or the state of Aeschylean scholarship, but the individual contributions are concisely presented, with some pointers to subsequent work (Rösler and West supply postscripts of their own). Lloyd has translated three of the contributions into English,

<sup>1</sup> *The Dance of the Muses. Choral Theory and Ancient Greek Poetics*. By A. P. David. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. xii + 284. Hardback £45.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies. Aeschylus*. Edited by Michael Lloyd. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 418. Hardback £80; paperback £29.99.

excerpted two from larger contexts, and intervened to make some of the others more user-friendly. I am happy to record that the series has recovered from the 'inexplicable aversion to indexes', which my predecessor bemoaned in this volume's Euripidean antecedent (*G&R* 51 (2004), 110). David Rosenbloom's Duckworth companion to *Persians*<sup>3</sup> departs from the usual format of the series: there is an introduction and a concluding survey of reception, but the intervening chapters provide a serial reading of the play, rather than a thematically organised overview. This approach has substantial merits, but also risks: the tracking of the text sometimes degenerates into mere paraphrase. The exposition can be uncomfortably dense; readers most in need of an introduction may often find the connection of thought between successive sentences elusive. But those who persist will find a lot of material, carefully worked through by a scholar who has thought hard about this text. Rosenbloom rejects a forced choice between a tragedy capable of arousing pity and fear and a celebration of Greek superiority (11). He sees the play's depiction of Persian defeat as indeed 'a spectacle to delight the victors', but also 'a negative example for the nascent Athenian empire' (38) – not, however, in equal measure: the play is 'more a tragedy of defeat than a celebration of victory' (7, my emphasis). But making the defeat in question a future Athenian one renders the argument problematic. It is not true that 'Persia's excessive numerical superiority was self-defeating' (67): as the same page concedes, the Persian numerical advantage had to be *turned into* a liability by the trick which lured Xerxes into accepting an engagement at the wrong time and place. So there was no 'catastrophic numerical superiority' (74) to serve a warning to Athens; in any case, Athenian naval supremacy did not depend on bringing overwhelming numbers to bear at the point of engagement (remember Phormio). Aggressive imperialism is indeed likely to overextend itself; but overextension is not necessarily terminal. If Aeschylus really believed that Xerxes' defeat marked the 'fall of the Persian empire' (97), the situation awaiting his return to Athens after the end of the *Frogs* must have come as a nasty surprise. Such a misconception of the significance of Salamis for Persia is flimsy grounds for crediting Aeschylus with profound foresight about the future of the Athenian empire. But if we credit him with a more realistic assessment of current affairs, what exactly was he warning Athens about? That they, too, were vulnerable to disaster? That has never been a monopoly of aggressive imperialists (remember the Melians). Rosenbloom's notes attest the continuing importance of Edith Hall's *Inventing the Barbarian*; it is interesting, therefore, to read Hall's own retrospective reflections on that book, taking account of more recent scholarship and changed ideological sensitivities. This is one of five new pieces gathered together with six previously published papers, some revised in varying degrees, in *The Theatrical Cast of Athens*.<sup>4</sup> The overarching theme is the relationship between drama and social reality in classical Athens. The subtitle's 'interactions' signals the basic thesis: the relationship is one of reciprocal influence (4). Hall provides a number of case studies, very disparate in content, and (in the conviction that no single model is adequate) deliberately eclectic in approach, methodologically and theoretically. All this makes for either very weak cohesion, or an illuminating diversity of perspectives, depending

<sup>3</sup> *Aeschylus. Persians*. By David Rosenbloom. London, Duckworth, 2006. Pp. 224. Paperback £11.99.

<sup>4</sup> *The Theatrical Cast of Athens. Interactions Between Ancient Greek Drama and Society*. By Edith Hall. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. xii + 481. Hardback £65.

on one's point of view. Strengths include a predictably wide-ranging knowledge of theatre history, and an engaging enthusiasm for the proliferation of detail across an astonishing variety of topics. If this enthusiasm sometimes run out of control (did the elucidation of Timotheus' drowning Persian need all of the 7 pages on Greek attitudes to swimming? or any of the preceding 6 pages, which take the story down to Hitler and Saddam Hussein?), that is venial: readers are free to browse or skip as their fancy takes them. In other respects the book would certainly have benefited from greater care and concentration in its preparation. Anecdotal material is deployed uncritically: I do not mean that Hall assumes the truth of anecdotes; but she is casual about the evidential value of anecdotes that may be false. Thus, for example, the story of Phryne's trial confirms 'that such spectacular and titillating tactics were not beyond the imagination of the ancient court-goer' (362). Certainly – and so? The ancient theatre-goer possessed an imagination which could stretch from the utterly mundane (stubbing his toe on leaving the theatre) to the utterly bizarre (an Athenian expatriate becoming leader of a newly founded avian city). We need to place Phryne's trial a little more carefully within that range before we draw any conclusions from it. The treatment of the history of ideas is also sometimes cavalier. People who believe that the origins of archetypal roles 'lie deep in our species' collective unconscious' are unlikely to be 'cognitive psychologists' (17) in any recognized sense of that term. *Homo Ludens* (a book that is not reticent about its lack of interest in biology) does not contain the speculations about human genetics which Hall attributes to Huizinga (25). And the claim to the intellectual patronage of Marx and Engels is unconvincing. When *The German Ideology* speaks of the 'phantoms [*Nebelbildungen*] of the human mind' as a 'sublimate', the point is not the relationship between 'the realm of the imagination' and the everyday experience of life (4–5, 393), but the relationship between that ideologically conditioned experience and the real relations of production that underlie it. Describing interactions between components of a society's ideological superstructure is a valuable scholarly endeavour; it is not materialist social theory.

But we live in an age in which it can be asserted that 'language itself is the material condition par excellence'. Charles Platter's *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres* attributes that view to Bakhtin, and endorses it (195).<sup>5</sup> If the attribution is correct, it may explain why I have always failed to find in Bakhtin's work the stimulus which others have found there (including some whose thought has stimulated me). Platter starts from the assumption that the characteristics of Aristophanic comedy (obscenity, personal abuse, criticism of public officials, and so forth) are 'curious' features that need to be explained; I don't. I find the presuppositions underlying the question 'how such a comedy could legitimately [!] have been popular' (2) far more curious. Instinctive sympathy for Aristophanes is no substitute, I concede, for historical understanding. But a transhistorical abstraction such as 'carnival' hardly fares better. Platter, acknowledging an ambivalence in Bakhtin's concept, resolves it by declaring that 'carnivalization' arises from 'the conditions of language itself', and 'is not merely [!] the result of specific sociological conditions' (8 ff.). Can this position avoid surrendering the 'intensely historicized aspect of Bakhtinian reading', advertised only a few pages earlier (4)? Platter, who pairs me with de Ste Croix (196: I am utterly bewildered), may be surprised to learn that I am not fundamentally out

<sup>5</sup> *Aristophanes and the Carnival of Genres*. By Charles Platter. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. Pp. 272. Hardback £36.50.

of sympathy with his view of Aristophanes. I, too, find in the plays a multiplicity of mutually destabilizing perspectives. But I don't need Bakhtin's help to get there; and, once there, I see no reason to back off. Platter holds that audiences are forced to choose between the different perspectives (31), and assumes that everything must be integrated 'at a higher interpretive level' (43); I'm happy to take a more thoroughly centrifugal view. Bakhtin and Aristophanes look like an obvious pairing in principle; if I have again failed to find it fruitful in practice, I'm not sure where the problem lies. Bakhtin? Platter? Me? James Morwood has added *Suppliants* to the Aris & Phillips Euripides.<sup>6</sup> There is one departure from Diggle in the Greek text; some other changes are recommended in the commentary. The translation rightly lays no claim to 'elegance or performability', but is sometimes misleading. When a loquacious herald who has already sounded off at length is ordered to stick to the message he was sent to convey, 'I would (like to) have my say now' surely misrepresents the tone of his assenting λέγοιμ' ἂν ἤδη (465). The commentary pays more attention to language than do many volumes in the series, but is otherwise disappointing. There are lengthy synopses, devoid of interpretative enhancement, and little direct engagement with major interpretative issues. Morwood's preference when such issues arise is to review opinions, and give an unargued expression of personal preference. Thus a sentence beginning 'My own feeling is that . . .', after detouring through a concessive clause containing a quotation from Mastronarde, simply endorses a lengthy quotation from Diggle ('Diggle hits the nail on the head when he writes that . . .'), without further comment (195). The first volume of Giuseppe Mastromarco's edition of Aristophanes was published in 1983; the second volume, appearing many years later, is the fruit of a collaboration with Piero Totaro.<sup>7</sup> The introduction and translation, and the notes to *Lysistrata*, are credited to Mastromarco; Totaro provides the notes to *Birds*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Frogs*. The text is based on existing editions (Dunbar, Henderson, Prato, and Dover); 36 pages of prefatory textual notes explain departures from the base text. These, together with the explanatory footnotes, add up to a surprisingly extensive and valuable commentary. Except for Alan Sommerstein's appreciative review (*CR* 34 [1984], 177–8), the first volume went unnoticed in anglophone journals; its successor reinforces the project's claim on our attention. We will not, I hope, have to wait quite so long for the final volume, which will include (presumably) selected fragments as well as completing the set of extant plays. Space allows only a brief mention of Elena Esposito's edition of the *fragmentum Grenfellianum*,<sup>8</sup> which provides (at bargain price) a newly constituted text, together with an introduction covering its papyrological, formal, generic, and sociological aspects, and a detailed commentary. As is often the case with such volumes, the Festschrift for J.F. Kindstrand<sup>9</sup> may command more respect for its honorific intention (which the honorand certainly merits) than for the quality of the final product taken as a whole; a collection of extremely disparate pieces, some of

<sup>6</sup> *Euripides. Suppliant Women*. Edited by James Morwood. Oxford, Aris & Phillips, 2007. Pp. x + 260. Paperback £18.

<sup>7</sup> *Commedie di Aristofane. Volume secondo*. Edited by Giuseppe Mastromarco and Piero Totaro. Turin, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2006. Pp. 703. Hardback €85.

<sup>8</sup> *Il Fragmentum Grenfellianum (P.Dryton 50)*. Edited by Elena Esposito. Bologna, Pàtron Editore, 2005. Pp. 198. Paperback €16.

<sup>9</sup> *Συγγράμματα. Studies in Honour of Jan Fredrik Kindstrand*. Edited by Sten Eklund. Uppsala, Uppsala Universitet, 2006. Pp. vii + 221. Paperback.

them less than weighty, is never entirely satisfying. Yet there is good work here: for example, Doreen Innes provides an illuminating analysis of Gorgias' *Helen* 13; Tomas Hägg presents Gregory of Nazianzus as a representative of the 'Second Sophistic'; and Staffan Fogelmark's investigation of the analytical bibliography of the 1515 Kallierges Pindar was, to my surprise, utterly fascinating. And in one respect this publication is a model worthy of the highest praise: the full text is freely accessible to all in the Academic Archive On-line (Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet). Over the two years that I have been provoking authors in this journal, it has published 23 articles, none of which have (at the time of writing) been made openly accessible on-line. That is not the publisher's fault: the terms of CUP's transfer of copyright explicitly permit authors to post on personal, departmental, or institutional web sites. Why bother to do that? There are people without access to well-stocked university libraries who are interested in the classical world, and want to read what we write. Self-interest, as well as public spirit, should persuade us not to tolerate our research being less accessible than it need be.

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MALCOLM HEATH

#### *Latin Literature*

Admirers of Plautus and admirers of John Henderson will reap a rich harvest in his text, translation and commentary of the *Asinaria*<sup>1</sup>. Henderson's unique style is probably better suited to a study in Roman comedy than to almost any other plausible subject. As always, he displays great learning and a boundless enthusiasm for his chosen author but readers less sophisticated than he is will not find it easy to detect where Plautus ends and Henderson begins. But perhaps that is the point. Very different is Daniel M. Hooley's *Roman Satire*.<sup>2</sup> This is a study of the contribution made to Roman satire by Ennius, Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal with a last section on the Menippeans. 'This book is meant to be introductory' is taken from the first sentence of the book and it is certainly true that the beginner will find it very useful. But there is also much to make the scholar think. Its style is very different indeed from Henderson's but, happily, the curse of *odium philologicum* is not the force it once was when it was necessary for the young scholar to join a particular school of thought and for the senior scholar to attempt to establish his style as the dominant one. These thoughts are prompted by the generous remarks by Henderson to be found on the back cover of Hooley's study. Asconius is, of course, an extremely important source for historians of the Ciceronian age, but, more and more, students of ancient history are not proficient in Greek and Latin and must rely on translations and commentaries. Marshall (Columbia 1985) and Squires (Bristol, 1990) have served well but the posthumous publication of R. G. Lewis's text, translation, and commentary<sup>3</sup> is far more ambitious. A full Introduction on other ancient

<sup>1</sup> *Asinaria. The One about the Asses*. Plautus. Translated and with Commentary by John Henderson. Wisconsin Studies in Classics. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. Pp. xiv + 252. Hardback US\$50; Paperback US\$19.95.

<sup>2</sup> *Roman Satire*. By Daniel M. Hooley. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xii + 189. Hardback £50; paperback £17.99.

<sup>3</sup> *Asconius Commentaries on Speeches of Cicero*. Translated with Commentary by R. G. Lewis. Clarendon Ancient History Series.) Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. xxiv + 358. Hardback £25.