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SUBJECT REVIEWS

Greek Literature

If you're feeling glum, think a happy thought. For example: Classicists are not in charge of police investigations. This cheering reflection came to me, alas, as I was reading Richard Janko's latest instalment of Philodemus.[1] His edition of *On Poems* Book 1 left me unimpressed by Philodemus, but awed by the editorial achievement. Admittedly, the Greek text was often peculiar, the translations often ones that I'd have struggled to get out of the Greek. But if we knew Aristotle or Plotinus only from Herculaneum papyri, our reconstruction would be wrong if they weren't linguistically challenging. Longinus, a philosophically educated native speaker, on receiving accurate copies of works by his contemporary Plotinus, complained that they were full of copyists' errors (Porph. *Plot.* 19.21–3, 20.5–9). Aristotle, as it happens, is represented in the present volume, which includes some of Philodemus' attempts to criticise him; Janko therefore adds an edition, with a substantial introduction and commentary, of the fragments of Aristotle's *On Poets*. I should say: alleged fragments. Quantities of innocent Themistius have been rounded up on the flimsiest of suspicions; snippets of Byzantine scholarship are interned simply for having being seen in the company of an Aristotelian fragment. The text of some witnesses' statements is emended in an Aristotelian direction; the translations are sometimes surprising; the commentary is marred by confusions and lapses in logic. These, I know, are serious complaints: since there is not space to substantiate them in a brief review, I hope to be able to publish detailed corroboration elsewhere. But I say this with deep regret, since I would love to have learned new things about Aristotle. Therein, I fear, lies the problem: Janko's desire to learn new things has been too strong for his caution and critical judgement. Meanwhile, I cannot claim to have found serious faults in the edition of Philodemus. But there is a nagging doubt: if faults are there to be found, would I have found them? I know my way round Aristotle, but don't have the expertise to assess an edition of Philodemus for myself. How confident can I be that what I cannot check is not as compromised as what I can by wishful thinking and methodological mishap? If I were a Philodemophile, I'd be worried. Aristotle receives much better treatment in Andrew Ford's *Aristotle as Poet*.[2] Modestly described as 'notes towards a biography of a song' (xv), this innovative study starts from the text and a preliminary reading of Aristotle's song for Hermias, and proceeds to reread it in a succession of different contexts: the historical sources for Hermias' career and death; Aristotle's epigram on Hermias, and commemorative epigram more generally; the sources for Aristotle's authorship, and the song's personal

[1] *Philodemus. On Poems Books Three and Four. With the Fragments of Aristotle On Poets*. Edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by Richard Janko. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xx + 629. 20 illustrations, 2 line drawings. Hardback £95, ISBN: 978-0-19-957207-6.

[2] *Aristotle as Poet. The Song for Hermias and its Contexts*. By Andrew Ford. New York, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xx + 243. Hardback £30, ISBN: 978-0-19-973329-3.

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repercussions; genre, with an emphasis on its flexibility; the projection of character in song; the song's figurative language; and its afterlife. The treatment is subtle, elegant, and cumulatively enriching to our understanding of the text. It furnishes an admirable methodological model. I took up Joseph Day's *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication*[3] with no sense of eagerness: the topic did not seem inviting. How wrong I was! Questions are posed clearly: 'What social or religious acts would those reading an epigram aloud accomplish? How might those hearing the readers respond as they viewed the dedication, and what were the effects of their responses?' (5). They are promptly answered:

From the perspective of effects and reception…a dedication inscribed with an epigram could memorialize the act of dedicating by generating its perpetual reperformance. As in poetic performance or religious ritual, that which was (re)presented was (re)enacted. Epigram preserves a fossil of part of this repeatable 'performance', not its main part, which was the viewing of an impressive object, but a self-referential verbal frame as useful as frames in poems for reconstructing performance (6).

The rest of the book elaborates that answer in a way that is impressively concrete and grounded, while still engaging with large questions – the semantics of *agalma* and *charis*, the structure of cult acts, the relationship of dedicatory epigram to other poetic traditions (with an especially good treatment of epinician). This is an exceptionally clear-headed and carefully crafted piece of research, which held my interest throughout. One niggle: sticking 'TLG' on the end of a reference is not an appropriate substitute for specifying an edition in accordance with standard scholarly conventions. Still on the subject of epigram, Alexander Sens's edition of Asclepiades of Samos[4] offers 100 pages of introduction, followed by text and apparatus, translation, and commentary. It is a work of thorough scholarship, providing judicious guidance on textual and interpretative problems, with a clear sense of the limits of confidence. It will satisfy readers excited by lists of parallels ('For the *sedes* cf…'); other readers will rejoice at how often it opens their eyes to subtleties in the epigrams that they had not discerned. What more could one ask for? Leslie Kurke's *Aesopic Conversations*[5] is a complex and ambitious investigation of the Aesopic tradition and ancient popular culture. The first part is concerned mainly with popular critiques, parodies, and alternatives to elite culture and high wisdom; the second seeks to establish the presence of Aesopic influences at the beginnings of Greek historical and philosophical prose. The book contains some brilliantly illuminating interpretations, and novel juxtapositions will give food for much thought; as a starting point for exploring new questions, it will be a rich source of stimulus. But it also contains many deeply

[3] *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication. Representation and Reperformance*. By Joseph W. Day. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xxii + 321. 19 b/w illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-89630-6.

[4] *Asclepiades of Samos. Epigrams and Fragments*. Edited with translation and commentary by Alexander Sens. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. cxvi + 353. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-925319-7.

[5] *Aesopic Conversations. Popular Fiction, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose*. By Leslie Kurke. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011. Pp. xxi + 495. 7 colour illustrations. Hardback £52, ISBN: 978-0-691-14457-3; paperback £20.95, ISBN: 978-0-691-14458-0.

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unsatisfying contentions, based on tenuous evidence. When discussing ἐπίλογος in Herodotus 1.27, for example, Kurke does not justify the judgement that 'LSJ quite unsatisfactorily translate this word as "reasoning, inference" in this passage' (130); her counter-claim that 'ἐπίλογος would be the appropriate word for the fable's punch-line' is irrelevant, since the passage is not a fable; she overlooks the Herodotean expression ἐπιλέγειν τὸν λόγον τόνδε, in the sense of 'adding this explanation' (2.156, 7.147, 8.49), and the parallel in the Hippocratic *Nature of Man*. Interpreting an Aristotelian 'they say' (*Eth. Nic.* 6.7.1141b3–8) as 'conjuring a common (we might almost say "choral") Greek voice to underwrite an oddly skewed and partial representation of Thales' (119), rather than as a distancing device, is preposterous: 'their' dismissive view of theoretical wisdom is one that Aristotle utterly rejects (see, for example, *Eth. Nic.* 10.7.1177b30–4). When Plato is recruited into a supposed 'battle over prose', a common but potentially misleading shorthand about Plato's 'banishment of poetry' (245) becomes a culpable error: Plato's question about *which kinds* of poetry are acceptable (not all are banished: *Resp.* 10.607a) has nothing to do with any competition between poetry and prose. Most frustrating, however, was the absence of any adequate elucidation of the keyword 'sociopolitical'. We are told repeatedly of a 'necessary interimplication of form and sociopolitics in the ancient hierarchy of genres' (369; see also 261, 270 n. 21, 323 n. 46). This sociopolitics is (predictably) 'complex' (251) and 'problematic' (47, 48, 244), but also (excitingly) 'potent and risky' (369). But in what sense, exactly, is a hierarchy of prestige among genres a 'sociopolitical hierarchy' (242)? Kurke denies that it correlates with the sociological status of authors and readers (7, 10, 21 n. 62) – wisely, since tragedy and satyr-play had the same authors and the same audience. If it just means that high-prestige genres tend to focus on high-status characters, how does this relate to the sociopolitics of real life? To show that there are 'real-world sociopolitical stakes' (382), or 'real-world stakes and sociopolitics' (395), Kurke turns to Plutarch's polemic against Herodotus. But do the real-world politics of that work depend on a generic hierarchy? Would Plutarch have found Herodotus unobjectionable if written without fabular elements? Was the reference to Aesop in his consolation to his wife (609f) indecorous? Sociopolitically problematic? Risky? The evasive formula that the hierarchy is 'at least notionally' sociopolitical (2, 242, 383) reminded me more and more of the emperor's spin-doctor: 'his majesty is, at least notionally, fully clothed'.

Vivienne Gray's services to Xenophon continue with a book on his theory of leadership and its literary representation in his writings.[6] After a general introduction to key elements in Xenophon's leadership theory, drawing mainly on the Socratic works, Gray studies explicit evaluations of leaders in his historical works; adaptations of earlier literature, and the ways in which they illuminate his own leadership values; and the use of 'patterned narratives' to guide readers' understanding. The conclusions that she has reached about Xenophon's literary techniques then become the foundation for a reading of the *Cyropaedia*. Two further chapters examine Xenophon's views on friendship, his use of irony, and his theory of humour. This is all so interesting that one regrets how much of her effort is diverted into refutation of 'darker' readings inspired by Strauss; but the necessity of such a dismal exercise is not something for

[6] *Xenophon's Mirror of the Princes. Reading the Reflections*. By Vivienne J. Gray. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. viii + 406. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-956381-4.

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which Gray bears any blame. As for the book's positive agenda, the case for Xenophon as a sophisticated author, and an intelligent and original thinker, is compelling. The core of Jenny Strauss Clay's *Homer's Trojan Theater*[7] is an analysis of the battle narrative in *Iliad* 12–17, which argues that it presents a coherent sequence of events unfolding in a consistently imagined space. Though a final verdict will need a more detailed reading alongside the Homeric text than I have yet had time for, Clay's account seems plausible, if sometimes too rushed. The crucial premise that 'left' and 'right' are always seen from the Greek perspective needed more than an emphatic assertion when first introduced (45); the assignment of Hector's contingent to the centre, with three Trojan contingents on the left flank and one on the right (61), was surprising enough to merit explanation. I came to understand these two points eventually, but remain perplexed by the argument that Idomeneus and Meriones decide to reinforce the left flank because 'Achilles holds the right and has withdrawn from the fighting' (73). The introductory and concluding methodological sections, which interpret the coherence and consistency of Homer's narrative in terms of visualization, with references to ancient mnemonics and modern cognitive psychology, were less convincing. To a visually unobservant reader with weak visual imagery and poor visual memory, the assumption that the poet's ability to imagine spatial, relational, and functional facts is intrinsically linked to visualization seemed gratuitous. Could Clay's reading of the battle narrative prove that Homer was not congenitally blind? I doubt it. Perhaps visualization has a similar status to the admirable online visualization associated with the book:[8] a useful, but dispensable, adjunct to cognitive processes tied to no particular sensory modality. Clay's survey of Homer's visual techniques includes the high proportion of direct speech (17), which suggests too easy a slide from narrative vividness to visualization. Vividness, in turn, can apparently be achieved by moving both from 'the present moment of the performance…to the here and now of the characters' (17) and 'from the distant past to the immediate present of our own experiences' (65). But is the effect achieved by alternating these techniques vividness, or variety? This is a stimulating book, but its methodological framework needed deeper thought. One might feel regret that a new translation of Pindar[9] by as distinguished an expert as Anne Burnett will not be marketed for the richness of its supporting material: there is an insubstantial introduction; each poem has a brief hypothesis and sparse *scholia minora* in the margin; there is a short bibliography and a 'register of mythic names'. The blurb instead promotes 'a fresh and exuberant translation'. It might be unreasonable to look for exuberance if we take *Pythian* 8.92–100 as a sample:

> Yet such mortal joy,
> swift in its growth, as swiftly falls to the
> ground, shaken by harsh premonition.

[7] *Homer's Trojan Theater. Space, Vision, and Memory in the* Iliad. By Jenny Strauss Clay. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 136. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-521-76277-9; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-14948-8.

[8] <http://www.homerstrojantheater.org/>, accessed 2 November 2011.

[9] *Pindar. Odes for Victorious Athletes*. Translated with an introduction by Anne Pippin Burnett. Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pp. viii + 191. Hardback £23.50, ISBN: 978-0-8018-9574-6; paperback £10.50, ISBN: 978-0-8018-9575-3.

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> We live for a day. Someone, no one – what are they?
> Man is the dream of a shade but when god-given
> splendor descends, light rests upon all and a
> sweet life-span.

But I find its measured dignity attractive. If you were thinking to yourself that we are pitifully short of introductions to Greek tragedy, I have some good news: there's another one.[10] Ruth Scodel's contribution to the genre (four background chapters, then *Persians*, *Oresteia*, *Antigone*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *OT*, *Helen,* and *Orestes*) is probably the best of the recent crop. If I hesitate, that is in part because the text is marred by proofreading errors and occasional grammatical oddities, and in part because the use of Aristotle as a punch-bag was annoying. Scodel writes, for example, that 'the Aristotelian formula easily leads readers to trivialize the tragedy by providing an easy moral' (9). If combining an Aristotelian formula with a quest for easy morals in tragedy is unsatisfactory, isn't the quest for easy morals the prime candidate for dumping? That 'there is no single pattern for the tragic action' (12) is a presupposition of Aristotle's question about the best pattern, not a rebuttal of his answer ('best' does not mean 'only'). And so on. Yet Scodel writes accessibly and has much to say that is worth saying; so, on balance, she gets my vote. On the subject of voting, however, it could not possibly be true that the system proposed by Marshall and Willigenberg 'ensured' that the winner was not the production that received the most votes 'roughly eighteen percent of the time' (46): it predicts a roughly 18% probability on the assumption that votes were randomly distributed. The probability reduces quite sharply if (as is likely) judges tended to converge in their rankings, but we have no way to assess the strength of any such tendency. *The Birth of Comedy*,[11] the work of an impressive team of comedy scholars under the leadership of Jeffrey Rusten, compiles translated testimonia and fragments from Kassel-Austin, together with other texts and visual evidence for the history of Greek comedy from its origins to the beginnings of its Roman appropriation, and for the context and manner of its performances. The result is a unique and valuable resource, and deserves high praise despite some, probably insoluble, methodological conundrums. One of the team's declared principles is 'letting the texts speak for themselves' (3). How credible is that? The texts are presented with little or no guidance on the cultural and intellectual contexts that gave rise to them, though these will in many cases be unfamiliar to a large proportion of the volume's likely users. How many will have a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of ancient literary scholarship to deploy the requisite degree of scepticism? (The compilers inadvertently illustrate the dangers of trusting indirect tradition when they report that the Artists of Dionysus are 'mentioned with scorn' by Aristotle [37], on the basis of a passage that merely *reports* a scornful parody

[10] *An Introduction to Greek Tragedy*. By Ruth Scodel. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. viii + 216. 2 tables. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-521-87974-3; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-70560-8.

[11] *The Birth of Comedy. Texts, Documents, and Art from Athenian Comic Competitions, 486–280*. Edited by Jeffrey Rusten. Translated by Jeffrey Henderson, David Konstan, Ralph Rosen, Jeffrey Rusten, and Niall W. Slater. Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011. Pp. xxii + 794. 42 photographs, 1 line drawing. Hardback £57, ISBN: 978-0-8018-9448-0.

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of their name.) The introduction defines testimonia as texts that 'give information about an author, play, or aspect of performance' (4). Will readers be familiar enough with rhetorical pedagogy in later antiquity to recognize the very attenuated sense in which a declamation theme is a source of information about Eupolis' *Autolycus* (224)? Moreover, texts that have not been reduced to fragments by accidents of transmission have been turned into fragments by editorial excerption – a process that is liable to give a false impression of the nature of the sources: ceasing to be visible as connected narratives, theoretical expositions, or arguments, they appear to be assemblages of (purported) facts. I confess that I have no realistic alternative to propose. Still, as I worked through this volume, the paradoxical contrast between our frustration at the fragmentary state of so many ancient texts and our eagerness to fragment the integral sources we do have made me feel uncomfortable. In 1994 John Wilkins and Shaun Hill reassembled, so far as possible, the *disiecta membra* of Archestratus (reviewed in *G&R* 42 [1995], 111); their commented translation is now reissued with an update to the introduction.[12] They claim to 'have quoted the *Context* of each citation', because 'the attitude of Athenaeus himself is an interesting one' (20). The promise is not consistently kept. For example, F61 (Athenaeus 4e) is followed by a correction, with a reference to Plato, which is not quoted (and is misreported in the commentary), though the learned one-upmanship of one of Athenaeus' banqueters is a significant part of the framing of the fragment. Not least, it reminds us that Athenaeus wrote dialogue between diversely opinionated and quarrelsome scholars, which may make the 'the attitude of Athenaeus himself' elusive (*ad hoc* conjectures about which seemingly neutral or complimentary ways of introducing a quotation from Archestratus are sarcastic or ironical do not solve the problem). This is a case, I fear, of the interest in fragments making an integral source drop out of focus. I'm also worried about the threat to our livelihood posed by a slender, affordable, attractively illustrated book on food that contains such sentences as 'the *lebias* is an otherwise unknown name for the liver fish, itself unidentified and linked with another unidentified fish' (64). I love it! But if the general public find out we're having that much fun, won't they try to stop it? The obvious antidote is to let them join in the fun. A slender, affordable, well-written, witty and engaging introduction to Herodotus should do the trick; if the author is as good a storyteller as Jennifer Roberts, it would be pretty much ideal.[13] Mild irritation at scraps of conjectural psychobiography (6) was assuaged by the (unwitting?) commentary implied in subsequent remarks on how 'the compelling human impulse to get at the beginning of things' can 'wind up with a ridiculously simplistic model' (20 f.). If I doubt that invasions have bulkheads (64), that's just because I'm a pedant. If I worry that the avoidance of scholarly apparatus, to the point of there being no referencing of the Herodotean text, may frustrate readers who want to read for themselves the many fascinating passages that Roberts mentions, that

[12] *Archestratus. Fragments from the Life of Luxury*. Translated with an introduction and commentary by John Wilkins and Shaun Hill. Revised edition. Totnes, Prospect Books, 2011. Pp. 104. Paperback £12, ISBN: 978-1-9030-1862-0.

[13] *Herodotus. A Very Short Introduction*. By Jennifer T. Roberts. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xvi + 123. 15 b/w photographs. Paperback £7.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-957599-2.

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probably just shows that, being a professional Classicist, I can't help seeing an integral text as a collection of potential fragments.

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Latin Literature

The leitmotifs of this review are the varied pleasures and frustrations of reading and the difficulties of making judgements about literary works, whether aesthetic or intellectual. Both concern the practice of writing a review, but they are also the concern of many of the books under review here; translators and scholars aspire above all to share with the wider world their own pleasure in reading Latin texts, through translating antiquity into the more accessible idiom of the modern world, or by offering routes to the Latin language or the Romanness of the originals, or by enthusiastically excavating their textual delights in scholarship. Those familiar with Peter Jones' *Reading Ovid* will be glad to hear of the publication of a new commentary *Reading Virgil*, a similarly valuable guide to reading and, more importantly, *enjoying* – this is Jones' emphasis – Books 1 and 2 of the *Aeneid* for post-beginners in Latin who have studied the language for about a year.[14] The volume tackles chunks of the poem at a time, and presents an array of different kinds of information and support on every page, each one in its own font: the introductory summary of the passage, the text, the line-by-line commentary highlighting grammatical structure, the list of learning vocabulary at the end, and then, underneath all this, the pacey running commentary in conversational style, moving the story along and bringing it to life with easy skill. On line 1.338, for instance, he comments, '*Punica regna* sends no shivers down Aeneas' spine – why should it?' (123), drawing our attention in swift passing to the dramatic ironies of Aeneas' presence in Carthage. I'll admit that I was initially put off by his introductory claim to be exploring only 'surface meaning' (whatever that is) and gruff dismissal of 'modern literary theory' (xi), but Jones's commentary turns out to be far from a closed-minded insistence on particular interpretations of a complex work. On the contrary, the commentary continually asks the reader to consider the kinds of questions that scholars explore and alludes to scholarly debates with great lightness of touch, pointing out the way to further paths of investigation. This will be a wonderful introduction for students, immediately enabling them to have a sophisticated engagement with Virgil's epic and to fall in love with its Latin even when their linguistic skills may falter. There are also some excellent new translations of both the masterpieces and the lesser lights of Latin literature, which aim to convey different kinds of pleasures of ancient texts to their readers. As Anne and Peter Wiseman mention in the introduction to their new translation, the pleasures of Ovid's *Fasti* have been dreadfully obscured for most of the twentieth century by the whimsical Loeb translation of *The Golden Bough*'s Sir

[14] *Reading Virgil. Aeneid I and II*. By Peter Jones. Cambridge Intermediate Latin Readers. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. xiii + 320. 5 b/w illustrations. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-76866-5; Paperback £17.99, ISBN: 078-0-521-17154-0.

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