SUBJECT REVIEWS

Greek Literature

Richmond Lattimore's translation of the *Iliad* was first published in 1951, to great acclaim: 'The feat is so decisive that it is reasonable to foresee a century or so in which nobody will try again to put the *Iliad* in English verse.'[1] That testimonial is reproduced on the back cover of the latest reprint, even though Robert Fitzgerald falsified his own prophecy less than a quarter of a century later.[2] Richard Martin's introduction ends by comparing Lattimore's rendering of 9.319–27 with three older and three more recent verse translations. Lattimore's superiority to Fitzgerald, Fagles, and Lombardo emerges clearly – but that's in a short excerpt. I've always felt a stiffness, and a lack of variety and narrative drive, in Lattimore's version that makes it intolerable for reading at length. In a long epic, that's a serious failing.

William Allan[3] recommends the translations by Martin Hammond, in prose, and Anthony Verity, which looks like verse but 'does not claim to be poetry',[4] in a new short introduction to the *Iliad* intended for late school and early undergraduate use. Writing with admirable clarity and economy, Allan covers a surprising amount of ground in his 30,000 words, and says things that are worth saying, for example about the meeting between Hector and Andromache (63–6). Like so many introductions to Homer, this one has little to say about the poet's extraordinary skill as a storyteller: that, by implication, is not 'one of the core topics most regularly covered in courses on the poem' – deeply deplorable, if true. I wonder also whether it is wise, even for readers at an early stage of their acquaintance with the poem, to adopt such a confident tone, and give so little sense that what is said is subject to doubt or debate.

After all, doubt and debate are not in short supply, when a major scholar can 'doubt whether Aeschylus knew the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* at all' (398). That is from the culminating synthesis of Minna Skafte Jensen's many years of interesting and provocative work on Homer.[5] Her speculative account of the dictation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in

[1] R. Fitzgerald, 'Heroic Poems in English', review of *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richard Lattimore, *Kenyon Review* (1952), 698–706.

[2] *The Iliad of Homer*. Translated by Richmond Lattimore, with an introduction and notes by Richard Martin. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2011. Pp. 599. 2 b/w illustrations. Paperback £9.50, ISBN: 978-0-226-47049-8.

[3] *Homer. The Iliad*. By William Allan. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2012. Pp. 78. Paperback £12.99, ISBN: 978-1-8496-6889-7.

[4] *G&R* 59 (2012), 247.

[5] *Writing Homer. A Study Based on Results from Modern Fieldwork*. By Minna Skafte Jensen. Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2011. Pp. 440. Paperback DKK 375, ISBN: 978-8-7730-4361-5.

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522 BC (295–312) might be dismissed as a work of imaginative historical fiction, but is better seen as attempt to make concrete a hypothesis painstakingly developed in the light of scholarship both on comparative epic (Jensen makes good use of her knowledge of modern fieldwork) and on Homer. Since it is impossible to do justice to the book's range and richness here, I must limit comment to a couple of points. First, singers in Jensen's model have a 'mental text' (287), a 'variable template existing in the singer's mind, to be abbreviated or expanded according to circumstances' (110); 'even though the mental text remains basically stable, it is also the object of lifelong remodelling' (138). The rhapsodes could therefore draw on a lifetime's experience of such 'mental editing' in achieving the exceptional expansion of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. I concur. Yet in Jensen's account this expansion is apparently a response to the unique event of the recording of these poems (256–7, 298). I find it more likely that the expansion developed gradually over the course of the poets' careers: achieving such success in dictation would be inexplicable without prior experience in the production of large-scale complex narrative (complex in the sense that the expansion is not merely additive). Secondly, in Jensen's account the Panathenaic rule applied not to the (as yet non-existent) *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but to a canonical order of episodes in the Trojan War story. In 522 BC, Cynaethus was invited to record his prize-winning performance at greater length to a scribe. The subject of the *Iliad* is therefore an accidental consequence of the pre-competition allocation of episodes to competitors. This makes Hipparchus' motivation in sponsoring the dictation, of which Jensen fails to give a clear explanation, even more opaque: how would 'the power and glory of Athens and its ruling house' (296) be furthered by possession of a written version of one performance of one, arbitrarily chosen, slice of the 'comprehensive epic performance tradition of mythic hexameter poetry' (394)? A written version that, on Jensen's account, remained unknown to Aeschylus cannot have had much impact. Finally, I have one nagging question. The caption to figure 5 (365) refers to 'three scribes'; the picture shows two. Is this a sophisticated literate allusion to the puzzling duals of *Iliad* 9, or, like them, a 'vestige of dictation' (317)?

About the same time that Jensen's Cynaethus was dictating the *Iliad*, the Cynaethus of Gregory Nagy's *Homer the Preclassic*[6] was performing his *Hymn to Apollo* at the Delia (72). Martin, in his introduction to Lattimore, objects to the '"big bang" theory of Homeric textualization' on the grounds that 'the motive and opportunity for such an event are still difficult to imagine' (Lattimore, 42); that is one of my own worries about Jensen. But when Martin identifies Nagy's approach as 'the most plausible' alternative, we part company. Jensen's critique of Nagy (Jensen, 214–47) makes telling points – in particular, that the range of variation in Homeric papyri and manuscripts is more limited than, and not of the same kind as, that typical of oral transmission. I confess, though, that if there is a plausible core to Nagy's model, I am unlikely ever to penetrate the dark forest of broken arguments and arbitrary assertions that surround it. Ion, at the start of Plato's *Ion*, has just won a victory in Epidaurus. I cannot say with certainty that this fact disconfirms Nagy's claim that 'the identity of Ion as rhapsode was defined by the Panathenaic Homer, that is, by Homer as performed at the

[6] *Homer the Preclassic*. By Gregory Nagy. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2010. Pp. xiv + 414. Hardback £41.95, ISBN: 978-0-520-25692-7.

Panathenaia' (12), since I have no idea what that means; but I am certain that it should not have been passed over in silence. The use of the word κοινῇ is 'decisive' in showing that Thucydides 'uses the language of the Athenian empire' in talking about the Trojan war (377); that Thucydides refers to 'the appropriation of Homer by Athens' is 'evident' from his use of the word χάρις (379). Something is apparently amiss with my conception of evidence, or with Nagy's.

Richard Rutherford's hefty monograph on tragic style[7] is, by contrast, unfailingly lucid and reasonable. It covers the genre's form, structure, and mode; words, themes, and names; imagery; spoken verse and lyric; character; irony; and the articulation of wisdom. The conclusion draws these diverse threads together remarkably well, but in doing so confirms that the book's value can only be extracted by diving back into the detail. Yet the downside of the volume's enormous scope is that, even at this length, coverage of any topic is inevitably selective. I find myself in the paradoxical position of admiring the skill with which the synthesis has been achieved, and the scholarship and sound judgement that informs it, without being at all sure what use I will be able to make of it. I do have one tangential complaint. 'Aristotle', Rutherford remarks, 'used two terms…, *ethos* and *dianoia*, the former referring to the moral disposition of the agent, the latter to the argumentative or "rhetorical" thought. Neither might seem to give much space to the emotional life' (288). Considering how closely character in Aristotle's ethics is associated with an individual's emotional dispositions, that judgement strikes me as odd.

But it's nowhere near as odd as Simon Goldhill's assertion that 'Aristotle's major intellectual interest is in the educational benefit of tragedy for the citizen through the staged display of practical reasoning' (155).[8] No explanation is offered for Aristotle's complete failure to mention the education of citizens in his discussions of tragedy, or tragedy in his discussions of the education of citizens. Nor, if you consult Edmund Morshead's 1895 commentary on *Electra*, will you find any evidence of the peculiar obsession with schoolboys and plucky English lads that Goldhill ascribes to it (204). Does this matter? The book's portmanteau title refers both to Sophoclean language (topics include irony, stichomythia, and lyric) and 'the language by which we approach, describe, understand tragedy' (5), with a particular focus on the relation between nineteenth-century and contemporary conceptions of tragedy. 'To what degree', Goldhill asks, 'should we embark on the laboriously self-reflective process of attempting to locate our historically determined position as critics or readers? To what degree are critics capable of escaping from their historical locatedness?' (9). If historical locatedness means being historically located, then escape is impossible: entities that exist in history are always historically located. If it refers only to one's current historical location, then Goldhill's vocabulary fails to capture the dynamic nature of historical existence: our locations are constantly changing, in part as a result of our own actions. Significantly, his answer to the question 'why bother to stress the historicity of reading?' (257) makes no mention of the possibility of such change. You could therefore describe this book as 'profoundly conservative' (3). Goldhill, always careful to position himself

[7] *Greek Tragic Style. Form, Language and Interpretation*. By R. B. Rutherford. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xx + 471. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-521-84890-9.

[8] *Sophocles and the Language of Tragedy*. By Simon Goldhill. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. 296. Hardback £22.50, ISBN: 978-0-19-979627-4.

in relation to 'the cutting edge of contemporary criticism' (3), himself acknowledges 'the potential for smugness, blindness, and conceit that any act of self presentation brings' (257). With this choice of words he is not, perhaps, to his own self kind or charitable. But openness to change is unlikely to flourish when one's current location is treated as normative, whether in self-authorization ('I want to keep both trajectories. . .in play, not least because I think it represents most accurately the state of contemporary criticism', 261) or in dismissive assessment of others ('can now seem only a very strangely "out of date" view', 226). Nor is there any possibility of a productive or transformative dialogue with predecessors if they are treated with snide condescension (Morshead) or casual inattention (Aristotle). Saddling self-reflection with such a loaded label as 'suspicion' ('such self-scrutiny – such suspicion of the self', 257) also seems strange: shouldn't we be *celebrating* the capacity for self-critical learning that follows from the contingency and openness of human intellectual endeavour? The failure to achieve a coherent view of historical contingency is apparent in Goldhill's confession that 'even though I know that I am a historically contingent reader, I take pleasure in Sophocles' plays – I find value in Sophocles' plays – *as if* I were not historically contingent' (259, emphasis in original): what could it mean to read 'as if' one were not historically contingent, if not being historically contingent is inconceivable? One final niggle: my worry in *G&R* 57 (2010), 123, was not that 'the phrase "theory of the audience" implies' that '*an* audience is to be thought of as a single, undifferentiated body' (38 n. 1) but that '*the* audience' tends to efface differences between audiences of different kinds and in different contexts.

Having a long-standing interest in emotion in Greek tragedy, I extend a particularly warm welcome to Dana Munteanu's *Tragic Pathos*.[9] After surveying modern interdisciplinary work on emotions, and giving a brief comparative perspective, Munteanu devotes the first part of the book to ancient philosophers: the discussion of Gorgias is thoughtful, and there is a stimulating attempt to understand Aristotle's views on tragic emotion in a larger philosophical context. The second part focuses on the portrayal of emotions *within* tragedies, through analysis of *Persians*, *Prometheus*, *Ajax*, and *Orestes*. Munteanu is careful not to conflate the perspectives of internal and external audiences, but demonstrates with some subtlety how internal responses cue and direct a distinct external response (in part by modelling a range of conflicting evaluations of the action). The external response reconstructed in these chapters also provides a critical commentary on the philosophical models examined earlier. The approach is innovative, and opens up potentially rich lines of further research.

Fresh from Ian Ruffell's book on comedy,[10] I was not surprised that his companion to *Prometheus Bound*[11] has a decidedly political slant: Ruffell emphasizes the play's ideology (politically progressive, theologically sceptical, philosophically materialist) and its 'explicit political engagement' (8). Yet, despite 'blatant political interventions', the play is not local and particular: it 'blatantly puts political ideas on the grand,

[9] *Tragic Pathos. Pity and Fear in Greek Philosophy and Tragedy*. By Dana LaCourse Munteanu. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 278. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-76510-7.

[10] See *G&R* 59 (2012), 251–2.

[11] *Aeschylus. Prometheus Bound*. By Ian Ruffell. Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2012. Pp. 176. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-0-7156-3476-9.

universalising stage' (ibid.). The book itself is a political intervention (as the closing paragraphs reveal, should anyone have missed the signs), and its sustained engagement with the radical tradition has the merit of ensuring that the chapter on reception does not feel like an awkward and perfunctory add-on, as so often happens. Ruffell dexterously juggles a noncommittal stance on authorship and date with a concern to read the play in its intellectual context; but he seems to be juggling on shifting sands, since his account of the late fifth-century ferment of ideas shows how rapidly contexts changed. His handling of the trilogy also seems evasive. 'Even without considering the possible outcomes of the trilogy, it is tempting…' (78): the temptation should be resisted, since we cannot know how far the unseen sequel recontextualized and revalued the part of the trilogy that we can see. Ruffell has written another enjoyably thought-provoking book.

Matthew Wright's *The Comedian as Critic*[12] is thought-provoking, too. He is willing to think about the limits of what we know, and in the light of those limits to consider the possibility that things may have been unlike what we have come to assume. These commendable qualities were compromised in *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies* by defective argumentation and poor judgement;[13] deployed here with greater care and maturity, Wright's talent for original thinking becomes a genuine delight. Not that I was always convinced: but even when I wasn't, I usually thought that Wright deserved the tribute that he pays to another scholar: 'This suggestion is implausible (though it is made in exactly the right sort of spirit)' (197 n. 96). Exceptions often involved Aristotle: one of the supporting references for the claim that tragedy was regarded 'as a vehicle for conveying "lessons" or "messages" of some sort' (17) is 'Aristotle, *Poetics* (*passim*)' – if you can't find something anywhere, assume it must be everywhere? Aristotle aside, I found a lot that was plausible. If you are open to the possibility that comic dramatists were more literary, more elitist, and less exercised by competition results than is generally supposed, and that they were also writing for readers, you will find food for thought in this book.

Wright has some sharp comments on the notion of 'performance culture' ('a phrase which recurs with monotonous frequency in recent publications', 142), which have some bearing on the argument of *Platonic Drama and its Ancient Reception*.[14] To be fair, Nikos Charalabopoulos shows restraint in invoking this construct. He aims 'to establish the meaning of [Plato's] writings against the background of contemporary production of texts' (18–19), and his basic thesis is that 'Plato's contemporaries would have responded to his writings…as pieces of dramatic fiction' (20). His argument that the dialogues were performance texts rests primarily on internal evidence and evidence from later sources. The problems in the evidence are frankly acknowledged, but do not lead to tame capitulation: possibilities are thoroughly explored. Yet the evidence remains too elusive to establish the strong claim that the dialogues were designed *primarily* for oral performance. On the other hand, denying that the

[12] *The Comedian as Critic. Greek Old Comedy and Poetics*. By Matthew Wright. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012. Pp. xi + 238. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-1-7809-3029-9.

[13] See *G&R* 53 (2006), 111.

[14] *Platonic Drama and its Ancient Reception*. By Nikos G. Charalabopoulos. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xxii + 331. 4 b/w illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-87174-7.

dialogues were written 'exclusively' for reading (104) is too weak a claim to be interesting: we know that a written dialogue *could* be communicated orally from the introduction to *Theaetetus*. That introduction also reminds us that the basic paradigm for the philosophical dialogue was the oral conduct of philosophical discussion. That obvious point makes this book's emphasis on the less intimate relationship to theatrical drama seem inadequately motivated. Charalabopoulos sees Plato's new type of theatre as part of an attempt 'to establish himself as an alternative voice of authority in the polis' (256), on the assumption that theatre was the 'dominant mode of public discourse' in classical Athens (58). That combines an exaggerated assessment of drama's place in Athenian society with an implausibly Athenocentric view of Plato's activity. And how could Plato realistically have hoped to achieve this goal? Does he ever show such optimism about the possibility of winning acceptance from a mass audience without conforming to their wishes? The presentation and discussion of the evidence, much of it neglected, is always interesting, but fails to make good the book's larger interpretative claims. To be fair (once more), the conclusion acknowledges that these claims exceed the book's narrower aims (257). I look forward to reading a sequel.

The Texas series of Greek orators now includes translations of Demosthenes 1–17, by Jeremy Trevett,[15] and 39–49, by Adele C. Scafuro.[16] Both provide a good introduction and notes, successfully elucidating the backgrounds to their speeches. Scafuro merits special praise for a translation that reads naturally as English while faithfully representing the sense of the Greek. Trevett's translation, though perfectly serviceable, is both less idiomatic and more distant from the Greek. Changing the flow of information by transposing clauses can obscure Demosthenes' emphases (twice, for example, in 16.1 alone); his variation in sentence length can be obscured if sentence structures are gratuitously re-engineered (as when the connective γάρ is replaced with a subordinating 'since' in 16.2); and flatness sometimes results from the bleaching out of vividness of expression (in 16.2 εἴ τις. . .ἀφέλοι τὸ γιγνώσκεσθαι becomes 'if I did not know'). There are also low-level imprecisions: in 1.2, for example, ὑμῖν. . .αὐτοῖς is more than 'you', and ψηφίσασθαι μὲν ἤδη τὴν βοήθειαν is not 'vote for an immediate relief force', but 'vote here and now for a relief force'.

Regrettably, Christos Kremmydas' translation of *Against Leptines* has more serious failings.[17] In 143, for example, 'ignores' is twice used where 'is ignorant of' was needed; 'if one determines great penalties for certain offences, he himself should not appear to be ready to commit an offence himself' reads like a prescriptive statement, though we are in the apodosis of a future less vivid conditional; and συγχωρήσεται γὰρ ὑμῖν λῦσαι cannot mean 'you will forgive him for rescinding'. On this last point, too, Edward Harris's Texas translation stumbles ('he will agree with you and rectify') – not an

[15] *Demosthenes. Speeches 1–17*. Translated by Jeremy Trevett. Oratory of Classical Greece. Austin, TX, Texas University Press, 2011. Pp. xxxii +318. 2 maps. Hardback 41, ISBN: 978-0-292-72677-2; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-292-72909-4.

[16] *Demosthenes. Speeches 39–49*. Translated by Adele C. Scafuro. Oratory of Classical Greece. Austin, TX, Texas University Press, 2011. Pp. xxxii +400. 2 charts. Hardback £41, ISBN: 978-0-292-72556-0; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-292-72641-3.

[17] *Commentary on Demosthenes Against Leptines*. With introduction, text, and translation by Christos Kremmydas. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 489. Hardback £99, ISBN: 978-0-19-957813-9.

isolated error.[18] J. H. Vince's Loeb gets it right ('allowing you to repeal'), and in general stands up well to both these recent competitors. In his introduction, text, and commentary, however, Kremmydas puts in a much stronger performance – and does so in the face of the formidable challenge that confronts any commentator who deals with material so complex and befogged by uncertainty. But I did sometimes wish that he had explained himself a little more fully. Why, for example, would having an unassailable legal case put one's *ethos* in a negative light (423)?

In 1981, Mary Lefkowitz's *Lives of the Greek Poets*[19] supplied an antidote to credulous acceptance of the purported information transmitted in ancient biographies of poets. Though many details were faulted, the overall argument has been generally accepted. The second edition,[20] about 40 per cent more extensive than the original, has been thoroughly revised and updated. Some new errors have crept in. Aristotle, for example, says nothing about 'a trial in which Euripides was charged with impiety' (94): the anecdote in *Rh.* 3.15, 1416a28–35 concerns an *antidosis*. It is a little naughty to argue that Aeschylus' fatal tortoise is 'certainly' a posthumous invention on the grounds that 'if Aristophanes had known of it, he would not have been able to resist using it in the *Frogs*' (75), since its appearance in *Frogs* would have led to the story being dismissed as a comic invention. More generally, the distinction between evidence-based and conjectural explanations of the origin of biographical 'facts' could have been more clearly drawn. Even so, this new, improved antidote to credulity deserves to be warmly welcomed and widely disseminated.

Given how much I had to learn, it might be mistaken for faint praise if I say that Robert Shorrock's *Myth of Paganism*[21] taught me a lot about Nonnus (and others). But I am sure that ignorance was not the only thing that made this exploration of late antique literary culture in terms of a complex interaction, rather than a binary opposition, between classical and Christian ideas so rewarding. If I have a complaint, it is that, though there are extensive quotations of Latin poetry in Latin, only one complete line of Nonnus is quoted in Greek; so all that I learned about Nonnus' poetry *as poetry* was that it does not come across well in English prose.

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Latin Literature

Gareth Williams' engaging new study of Seneca's *Natural Questions* is called *The Cosmic Viewpoint*, a pleasing title that evokes his central thesis: Seneca's study of meteorological phenomena is a work where science and ethics are combined, designed to raise the

[18] See *G&R* 56 (2009), 251.
[19] See *G&R* 30 (1983), 88–9.
[20] *Lives of the Greek Poets*. By M. R. Lefkowitz. Second edition. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2012. Pp. xvi + 220. Paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-1-7809-3089-3.
[21] *The Myth of Paganism. Nonnus, Dionysus and the World of Late Antiquity*. By Robert Shorrock. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2011. Pp. x + 181. Paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-7156-3668-8.