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SUBJECT REVIEWS

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

Greek Literature

Greek literature now comes under new management. It's a daunting prospect: I'm squeezed between an alarmingly high stack of books on the one hand, and my predecessor's alarmingly high standards on the other. If you notice a sudden decrease in erudition, humour and insight, please understand that I am simply being considerate to my successor. If, on the other hand, you note increased grumpiness, that's just me. Or mainly me: my Momus-like tendencies may be aggravated by the proliferation of guides, handbooks and companions. The first of Blackwell's Guides to Classical Literature is not bad of its kind; in fact, Ian Storey and Arlene Allan's *Guide to Ancient Greek Drama* has genuine merits.[1] An extensive introduction, discussing aspects of ancient drama, is followed by chapters on tragedy, satyr play, and comedy, together with a brief survey of 'approaches' (far too brief to be any use at all). Though complex and disputed issues are inevitably condensed, the treatment is usually clear and balanced. But readers are not challenged or given problems to think about. I cannot see anyone coming away from this volume with a sense that the texts are difficult and contested. Even the claim that 'one is never quite sure where one is in a play by Euripides' (151) is undermined by a self-assurance which leaves me in little doubt where the authors think they are: 'parrotting patriotic nonsense' (147); 'the final collapse of a previously heroic woman' (142); 'gods do not appear on stage in *Medea* . . . nor are they active beneath the text' (151); 'the Furies are not real' (272). The 46 pages of play synopses leave me particularly cold: do we want to encourage reliance on potted summaries and premasticated judgements ('One of the greatest of Greek dramas, and not easy to appreciate fully': can you guess which?)? Teachers might incentivize their students by offering prizes for identifying inaccuracies: is Tecmessa Ajax's 'wife'? Is Nessus Deianeira's 'suitor'? Does Theseus 'arrive to take [Heracles] to Athens'? But no prizes for spotting the all-too-glaring problems with *Agamemnon* as a two-actor tragedy (97), an actor in *Ajax* who can simply 'vanish' (118), or the pioneer of structural linguistics, 'Ferdinand Saussere' (232). I don't feel grumpy about Robert Garland's *Surviving Greek Tragedy.*[2] Don't misconstrue the title: this is not a study of characters who emerge unscathed at the end of a tragedy, but an account of the transmission of the tiny proportion of tragedies that are extant. Understanding that process is important to the intelligent study of tragedy, and this introduction deserves to be widely read. It is extremely informative, and the careful consideration given to the

[1] *A Guide to Ancient Greek Drama.* By Ian C. Storey and Arlene Allan. Blackwell, Oxford, 2004. Pp. xvi + 311. Hardback £55; Paperback £16.99.

[2] *Surviving Greek Tragedy.* By Robert Garland. London, Duckworth/BCP, 2004. Pp. xviii + 286. Paperback £16.99.

needs of non-specialists should make it readily accessible. Garland is aware of the limits of our knowledge, but tends to understate them; reservations are sometimes recorded in the end-notes, but since these are not cued in the text they may well be overlooked. A performance of Sophocles' *Electra* that antedates the Louvain *Hecabe* has escaped Garland's notice, as it once did mine: see A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London 1986), 53f. A warm welcome, too, for the paperback reissue of Barbara Goward's helpful study of tragedy as narrative and narrative in tragedy.[3] I can save myself some effort by cribbing from my predecessor's review: 'this is a thoroughly interesting book... it has a liveliness and light touch that make it suitable for a wide readership.' Or so it says on the cover. The original (*G&R* 47 [2000], 238) inserts a reservation: 'if it sometimes tries to deal with too much too rapidly.' But I'd say rather that its concision and restraint contribute directly to its capacity to stimulate. Some of that restraint would have been welcome in Joseph Wilson's *The Hero and the City*, also reissued.[4] Wilson writes with an enthusiasm that might have been engaging if it were not so verbose and self-indulgent. But the persistently erratic, sometimes eccentric, judgement is a deeper flaw (Wilson takes Linforth and Ahl as methodological models). On its first appearance, the *G&R* reviewer commented on its 'opinionated, quasi-journalistic glibness... a somewhat Kittoesque assertiveness... unconvincing scholarship' (*G&R* 45 [1998], 238); I see no reason to dissent. Wilson starts boldly: 'for Sophocles to fulfill his duty as an educator of the polis, he would have... to deliver a very strict and severe lesson' (27). But in the end the promised 'antidemocratic' punch is pulled, predictably reducing the 'lesson' to feeble banality: Sophocles 'challenges the demos to accept the opportunity for a dialogue... the need to recognize excellence' (199). The *Bacchae* of Euripides has been reissued, too—or rather, *The Bacchae of Euripides*.[5] Like a DVD with extras, Soyinka's adaptation includes bits left out of the original release: slaves, vestals, ritual flagellation, knob-gags, pratfalls, and a severed head spouting wine 'from every orifice'. It remains a luminous demonstration of Euripides' restraint and good judgement. Less luminous, perhaps, but more authentically Euripidean material can be found in the long-awaited completion of *Selected Fragmentary Plays*;[6] Collard and Cropp have been joined by John Gibert in place of the late Kevin Lee. Included here are *Philoctetes, Alexandros* (with *Palamedes* and *Sisyphus*), *Oedipus, Andromeda, Hypsipyle, Antiope*, and *Archelaus*, with addenda and corrigenda to volume 1 and a consolidated index. This volume amply lives up to its companion's achievement; and the simultaneous appearance of Kannicht's edition makes 2004 a notable year in the annals of Euripidean fragments. Easier access to the fragments of *Andromeda* is not the only reason readers of *Thesmophoriazusae* have for celebration. The commentary by Colin Austin and Douglas Olson,[7] a formidable duo, needs little comment: it is as good as one

[3] *Telling Tragedy.* Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. By Barbara Goward. London, Duckworth, 2004. Pp. vi + 214. Paperback £16.99.

[4] *The Hero and the City.* An interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus.* By Joseph P. Wilson. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003. Pp. xii + 208. Paperback £14.50.

[5] *The Bacchae of Euripides.* A communion rite. By Wole Soyinka. W. W. Norton, New York and London, 2004. Pp. 126. Paperback $12.95.

[6] *Euripides.* Selected fragmentary plays II. Edited by C. Collard, M. J. Cropp and J. Gibert. Aris & Phillips, Warminster, 2004. Pp. xvi + 384. Hardback £40; Paperback £19.50.

[7] *Aristophanes.* Thesmosphoriazusae. By Colin Austin and S. Douglas Olson. Oxford UP, 2004. Pp. cviii + 363. Hardback £75.

would expect it to be. One might feel that the introduction takes an unnecessarily convoluted route to the conclusion that the play's sexual politics are 'extremely conservative' (lxvi) and that it is 'not really intended to teach the audience . . . anything about women's behaviour' (lxvii): 'none of this ought, perhaps, to come as a surprise'—indeed, none of it did. But the commentary is dense and informative, and one should not complain if, like most commentaries on comedy, it conveys little sense of the fun (the concluding note discusses dual endings in secondary tenses and the absence of metron diairesis). We are at least alerted in the introduction to the fact that the play is 'side-splittingly funny' (xxxii). If the scanty remnants of Sophron's mimes are representative, their readers' sides were never at risk of splitting. The remnants are not representative, of course: a few papyri aside, the fragments owe their survival to grammarians and lexicographers. If rare words and unusual forms excite you, James Hordern's commentary[8] will be a delight; but do not expect any help if, like me, you are intrigued by a line like 'By Heracles, you're strangling a hedgehog' (fr. 72). Hordern says nothing; maybe there was nothing to say, but I wish I could be more confident that the questions it raises had even been noticed. Readers with very fragile sides should avoid the fragments of the fourth-century epic parodist Matro, whose pseudo-Homeric account of a dinner-party can be genuinely funny: *δεῖπνά μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολυτρόφα*. . . . Olson (again) and Alexander Sens provide a comprehensive commentary to go with their newly constituted text;[9] they even explain the jokes. The introduction includes a judicious discussion of the implications of Matro's work for the history of the Homeric text and its ancient reception. A more familiar, and also amusing, epic parody is the *Battle of Frogs and Mice*. Daryl Hine's translation of this and the Homeric Hymns has been reissued with the addition of Hesiod.[10] There is deft bathos in the *Battle*, and some passages in Hesiod and the hymns achieve a wonderful fluency; but Hine's English hexameters are not consistently successful. Regular dactyls can get very boring in English; it's hard to muster enough variation without jolts that disorient the reader's ear and distress it. Linguistic infelicities, such as Prometheus 'flaunting' Zeus's counsel (*Theogony* 506), may also cause distress. In a surprisingly crowded field, this is not a front-runner. Which brings us, circuitously, to Homer. In recent years the *Odyssey*, and Penelope in particular, have attracted a lot of good work from a variety of feminist perspectives. Barbara Clayton[11] reads Penelope, weaving, unweaving, and reweaving, as 'a figurative poet' who 'has much to tell us about the poetics of the *Odyssey*' (ix). Specifically, 'a Penelopean poetics of unweaving brings together notions of gender, language, and poetic production in a way that challenges androcentric ideology' (19). Chapter 1 exhibits gendered language in modern *Odyssey* scholarship. Samuel Butler's *Authoress of the Odyssey* is easy prey, but is it really 'astonishingly suggestive of a gendered *Odyssey*' when Kirk uses the phrase 'slightly dims the vigour' (8)? Longinus might argue that 'dimmed vigour' fits more directly with his

[8] *Sophron's Mimes*. Text, Translation, and Commentary. By James Hordern. Oxford UP, 2004. Pp. xiv + 202. Hardback £50.

[9] *Matro of Pitane and the Tradition of Epic Parody in the Fourth Century BCE*. Text, translation, and commentary. S. Douglas Olson and Alexander Sens. Oxford UP, 2003. Pp. xiv + 174. Hardback £30.50; Paperback £15.50.

[10] *Works of Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns*. Translated by Daryl Hine. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005. Pp. 220. Hardback $35.

[11] *A Penelopean Poetics*. Reweaving the feminine in Homer's *Odyssey*. By Barbara Clayton. Lexington Books, Lanham MA, 2004. Pp. xi + 141. Paperback £17.

theory that Homer wrote the *Odyssey* in old age. Clayton's inference *via* emasculation to feminization seems to be driven more by a preconceived thematic than by textual data. The same suspicion arises when Penelope is credited with 'a wonderful post-structuralist gesture' (40) and her weaving is decoded in terms of 'a female libidinal economy' (44); the footnote acknowledging an 'apparent anachronistic incongruity' will surely lag behind the reaction of most readers. 'A Penelopean poetics manages to be both feminist and feminine at the same time' (19). What is to be feminine? 'It is above all a principle of *difference*' (x): but what difference, and from what? Everything is different from something. Clayton leaves the field wide open by defining the feminine as 'constituted by a resistance to *any* ideological position that *can* be construed as masculine' (x, my emphasis). What position couldn't, with sufficiently arbitrary ingenuity? In a poem whose principal male character is *polymêtis*, the claim that *mêtis* 'may be viewed in gendered terms as feminine' (12) stretches credulity too far. Clayton is not the only recent scholar to oversimplify the relationship between *bia* and *mêtis*; nor is she the first to claim that ambush in the *Iliad* is 'a cowardly tactic and diametrically opposed to the battlefield prowess of mighty heroes like Achilles' (62): Achilles took a different view (*Il.* 1.226-8). However, attunement to modern preoccupations is an excellent qualification for reading modern texts, and Chapter 4, on mainly twentieth-century appropriations of the Penelope theme, is persuasive and illuminating, by far the best part of the book. An introduction to the poetry of Linda Pastan puts me in Clayton's debt. Homer is treated more rewardingly in Nancy Worman's ambitious *Cast of Character*.[12] The subtitle speaks of 'style in Greek literature', but this is not style in the standard literary critical sense. Worman is concerned with 'the elements that make up one's typical style'—typical, as distinct from personal: 'the physical and linguistic mannerisms that mark a speaker as a type conforming to a set of socially familiar categories' (1). Since such styles are engaged by a speaker 'at the moment of self-performance, when he most wants to convince another that he is a particular kind of person', this book is in part a study in the pre- and early history of rhetoric. Odysseus and Helen are adopted as emblematic cases, their portrayal examined from Homer through other archaic poets to tragedy and the sophists. The theoretical basis in sociology and performance theory (especially Bourdieu) is set out clearly; only when the focus shifts to literature does the theory become hazier—invoking Barthes (14) is rarely an aid to clarity or conceptual precision. Claims such as 'Odysseus signifies an authorial function' (11, cf. 73) needed to be introduced with more by way of explanation and defence than we are offered here. Worman places an emphasis on visibility which at times risks implying an equation of character with visible deportment, when what she needs to assert is their inseparability. 'In the predominantly *oral* culture of ancient Greece, the character of the individual was conceived of as a *visible* entity' (2, my emphasis): certainly, in a culture without long-range communications technology speaking is a visible action, but the content of what is spoken is not—and yet it is an essential part of what reveals character. The suggestion that 'describing the stature, deportment, dress, and/or the intimate surroundings' of a speaker is a distinguishing feature of oral as against written composition (41) is puzzling, not only because literate novelists often provide such descriptions, but also because Homer often does not (a 'frequently' drops out of

[12] *The Cast of Character.* Style in Greek Literature. By Nancy Worman. University of Texas Press, Austin, 2002. Pp. xiv + 274. Hardback £34.50.

sight as Worman's exposition proceeds down this page). At one point Worman identifies in fifth-century Athens a 'nascent' awareness that style may be 'detachable' from the individual, 'most likely the result of exposure to sophistic ideas about effective speaking' (13). Yet it is evident from the *Odyssey* (Worman herself supplies ample evidence) that the possible mismatch between self-presentation and self is already familiar to Homer and his audience. It is, in fact, hard to conceive of a human society in which experience of social interaction does not give rise to such awareness. No doubt cultures differ in the extent to which that awareness is overtly acknowledged and thematized in public discourse; and Worman sometimes talks, not of a nascent awareness, but of an awareness that is more or less fully articulated. That may be on the right lines. But further work was needed to bring out the contrast between archaic and classical in a clear and defensible form. The same goes for the contrast between classical and modern. What does it mean to call classical Athens a 'performance culture' (10)? Is that really a less extensive concept than 'culture'? Self-performance is, as Worman knows, a universal feature of human societies, not a distinctive feature of some. But do not draw the wrong conclusions from these expressions of dissent or doubt: this is a stimulating book that raises questions I had not considered before, and that made me think. It will repay a careful, if critical, reading. *Music and the Muses*[13] is a collection of essays on '*mousikê* . . . that union of song, dance, and word . . . a contender for the closest term in Greek to . . . "culture"' (1). It achieves diversity without incoherence, and would be valuable for the mass of disparate source material cited if for nothing else. In fact, the quality of the contributions is almost always high. With so many good things on offer, it may be invidious to single out a few; but I'll do it anyway. Ian Rutherford continues his investigations of *theoria*. Eva Stehle, starting from what initially seemed too schematic a framework, develops a persuasive account of the relationship between tragic choruses and ritual, and her interesting though here not fully developed view of tragedy as aischrologic ritual left me wanting to read more. Eric Csapo's account of the New Music is vigorous and informative. Andrew Ford's acute discussion of *Politics* 8 stresses (rightly) that Aristotle is concerned there with music in a narrow sense (not poetry or literature). A book that tries to cover Greek literature in 280 pages may seem an obvious provocation, given my distrust of the guidebook genre. But I was attracted by the innovative design of Tim Whitmarsh's *Ancient Greek Literature*.[14] Part I (Concepts) provides a lucid, unthreatening introduction to cultural-historical theory. Part II (Contexts) is an ambitiously wide-ranging survey of Greek literature from this perspective, ingeniously combining a fairly conventional chronological narrative with the survey of contexts that gives it social and cultural-historical anchorage. This territory is familiar in the current literature, but a synoptic introduction is worth having. Part III (Conflicts) addresses 'the central cultural-historical themes of the texts, principally cultural identity, gender, sexuality and class' (vii). The execution attracted me less. There is a certain laxity in detail. A few moments on the internet would have revealed that a flying dung-beetle is not a 'wild fantasy' (84): that's not what makes Trygaeus' pet remarkable. Alternatively, this point could have been checked in Aristotle's *History of Animals* (490a13-15), along with the real definition (488a7-11) of Aristotle's concept of 'political

[13] *Music and the Muses*. The Culture of Mousike in the Classical Athenian City. Edited by Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson. Oxford UP, 2004. Pp. xiv + 438. Hardback £68.

[14] *Ancient Greek Literature*. By Tim Whitmarsh. Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004. Pp. viii + 284. Hardback £55; Paperback £15.99.

animal' (5, 72). More fundamentally, the argumentation is often lax. '"Contamination" is, arguably, a highly judgemental term, implying an adulterous pollution of the bloodline. The theory of stemmatics invokes normative morality, as though exhorting the textual family to legitimate reproduction' (28). A responsible discussion of textual criticism would start from an understanding of how concepts such as contamination are used in text-critical practice, not from a superficial game of word-association. Whitmarsh's account of ancient textual critics likewise caricatures their language without attending to what they did. 'Texts were to be "set upright", the *obelos*, or marginally inscribed 'spit', pointing to the offending lines that were to be gouged out' (129): that is a hyperbolically lurid vision of athetesis, a procedure which left the transmitted text intact, relegating the critic's doubts to margin and commentary. There is valuable material in this book, but it does not provide a model of attention to detail or rigour in argument. It does, alas, demonstrate extensively the deployment of resonantly empty generalities: 'Athenian comedy is a socially integrative genre' (75); 'tragedies remain focussed upon the dynamic of incorporation and exclusion' (72). An exciting project succumbs in the last analysis to endemic guidebook faults. Many readers of Pindar will be reassured to learn that he really is obscure, and not by chance: 'the failure to be lucid may not be a failure at all' (5).[15] John Hamilton's own readings of Pindar render him not so much obscure as opaque, and *Soliciting Darkness* may attract more attention for its wide-ranging engagement with the history of Pindaric reception. Even here, I have doubts. In a longer review I would raise objections to the treatment of sixteenth-century commentary. The problems there leapt out at me, because I'm familiar with the material; so what am I failing to notice in the treatment of material I know little about? Hamilton (Professor of German and Comparative Literature) writes with more apparent assurance on the German literary tradition, which receives most extended attention. But consider this: 'By adhering to the materiality of Pindar's Greek, Goethe participates in a miracle of incarnation, a reverse transubstantiation, from spirit to body, whereby the discorporeal presence of the words may offer themselves as sacrifices' (243f.). Is that Goethe, or Hamilton's hopelessly over-the-top reaction to the quotation of Pindar in Greek ('he piously lets the Greek language itself shine untranslated and untransliterated')? None of the textual evidence quoted does anything to dispel my suspicions. Still, the book is packed with interesting material and raises many questions; whatever the verdict on Hamilton's exegeses, this is an interesting addition to the growing body of recent work on Pindaric reception. Thomas Rosenmeyer's *The Green Cabinet*,[16] first published in 1969, also ranges widely in the European literary tradition. Hands up everyone who could keep up an intelligent conversation on Purney, the Pléiade, Dr Johnson, Phillips, Tickell, Pope, Boileau, Ronsard, Ramsay, and Hebel all at once (names harvested from a single page). But Rosenmeyer's exhaustive familiarity of the later pastoral tradition is not used to produce an account of Theocritus' influence or reception, an approach which (it is argued) too often leaves Theocritus an undervalued antecedent of later, more fully achieved pastoral. Rather, by a method of 'simulated synchronism' (29) Theocritus is treated as 'a fellow-writer, a competitor' of later pastoralists. In this way the tradition discloses a field of possibilities, highlighting the

[15] *Soliciting Darkness*. Pindar, Obscurity, and the Classical Tradition. By John T. Hamilton. Harvard UP, Cambridge MA 2004. Pp. 348. Hardback £29.95; Paperback £17.95.

[16] *The Green Cabinet*. Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric. By Thomas G. Rosenmeyer. Duckworth, London, 2004. Pp. xii + 311. Paperback £16.99.

significance of the choices Theocritus actually made. Though the account of Theocritus is hardly now state-of-the-art, the book has attained a classic status, and the reprint is welcome. I note that on its original appearance, this journal's reviewer welcomed it as 'erudite, witty, and readable' (*G&R* 18 [1971], 104). I say 'this journal's reviewer' advisedly: from 1946 to 1971, E. R. A. Sewter contributed the subject reviews across the whole range of classical sub-disciplines. My new job looks a comparative doddle.

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Latin Literature

This collection starts with two editions of Plautine comedies, just as its immediate two predecessors did, but those were popular editions with text and facing Italian translation, whereas these are scholarly editions, one of the *Vidularia* and the fragments of lost plays,[1] the other of the *Asinaria*.[2] Both are very similarly presented. Neither has a significant introduction but both have nicely produced texts with testimonia and full apparatus criticus combining detailed reports of manuscripts, emendations, and discussion on the emendations (all in Latin). One rather strange decision made in both books was to arrange the astonishingly long lists of previous editions and commentaries in alphabetical rather than chronological order. But these editions will certainly need to be consulted by future Plautine editors. Amanda Hurley[3] is a Catullan enthusiast who has produced an attractive book in which she discusses a selection of his poems. The book starts with an introduction which treats Catullus' appeal in general terms. It is followed by chapters on Catullus' life, Catullan poetics, male friendship, Catullan self-address, 'Catullan Threshold' (an essay on 61–63), 'The Artist in a Fallen World' (an essay on 64), and the elegiacs. The author comes from a background in English Literature of which she takes advantage not as a substitute for classical scholarship but as a supplement to it. No doubt in an attempt not to intimidate Latinless readers she relies for her quotations from Catullus entirely on translations. One example will have to serve here for the unfortunate results to which this can give rise. On pages 33–4, she discusses Catullus 2.2-4, translating thus:

> Whom she always *plays with*, whom she *cuddles* in her lap,
> To whose eagerness she *offers up* her fingertips
> And *provokes* sharp bites

We are then told that the verbs are in 'my italics', as if anyone could suppose otherwise. We are then told that 'Play with; cuddle; offer up; provoke' suggest 'that the girl is playing a kind of love-game with her sparrow.' But there is nothing in Catullus' Latin to suggest 'always', Hurley's 'cuddles' is far less appropriate in the context of a bird than is Catullus' *in sinu tenere*, while the gratuitous substitution of the plural 'fingers' for Catullus' singular *digitum* makes for a subtly different picture. However, the conclusion seems sound even if the evidence and argument offered for it do not themselves persuade. This is a

[1] Titus Maccius Plautus. *Vidularia et Deperditarum Fabularum Fragmenta*. Edidit Salvator Monda. Sarsinae et Urbini, 2004. Pp. 122. Paperback €15.

[2] Titus Maccius Plautus. *Asinaria*. Edidit Rupertus Marius Danese, 2004. Pp. 97. Paperback €15.

[3] *Ancients in Action: Catullus*. By Amanda Kolson Hurley. Bristol Classical Press. 2004. Pp. 158. Paperback £10.99.