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SUBJECT REVIEWS

Greek Literature

The influence of Greek poetry on Latin poetry is well known. Why, then, is the reciprocal influence of Latin poetry on Greek not so readily discernible? What does that reveal about Greek–Latin bilingualism and biculturalism? Perhaps not very much. The evidence that Daniel Jolowicz surveys in the densely written 34-page introduction to his 400-page *Latin Poetry in the Ancient Greek Novel*[1] amply testifies to Greek engagement with Latin language and culture on a larger scale than is usually recognized. That this engagement is more readily discernible in Greek novels than in Greek poetry is no reason to dismiss the evidence that the novels provide. On the contrary, the seven main chapters provide 'readings of the Greek novels that establish Latin poetry. . .as an essential frame of reference' (2). In Chapters 1–3 Chariton engages with the love elegy of Propertius, Ovid and Tibullus, with Ovid's epistolary poetry and the poetry of exile, and with the *Aeneid*. In Chapters 4–5 Achilles Tatius engages with Latin elegy and (again) the *Aeneid*, and also with the 'destruction of bodies' (221) in Ovid, Lucan, and Seneca. In Chapter 7 Longus engages with Virgil's *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid*. The strength of the evidence requires only a brief conclusion. Jolowicz's rigorously argued and methodologically convincing monograph deserves to be read widely, and with close attention.

So far as I can recall, my only previous intervention in piscine scholarship was a chapter on the heroic consumption of fish in David Braund and John Wilkin's edited volume on *Athenaeus and His World* (Exeter, 2000). Athenaeus is always worth reading, but Oppian's fishy didactic epic has until now barely impinged on my awareness. I was wholly unaware of Julius Caesar Scaliger's assessment of Oppian ('the greatest of all Greek authors, a man who wrote divinely, and the only Greek poet worthy of comparison to Virgil', 8) until Emily Kneebone's monograph on the *Halieutica* opened my eyes to 'the elegance of Oppian's Greek and the imaginative richness of his marine world' (7).[2] Oppian, it turns out, is an astonishingly skilful and sophisticated poet, profoundly immersed in his Greek literary and philosophical heritage; the demands he makes on his readers are heavy, though (in my inevitably brief encounter) rewarding. Kneebone divides her material into four parts (18–21). The first ('Didactic Poetry') sets out the poem's didactic programme. The second ('Morality at Sea') reveals the 'moral structure of Oppian's maritime world', dominated by 'patterns of guile, greed, and lust'

[1] *Latin Poetry in the Ancient Greek Novel*. By Daniel Jolowicz. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xiv + 401. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-289482-3.

[2] *Oppian's Halieutica. Charting a Didactic Epic*. By Emily Kneebone. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 219. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-1-108-84083-5.

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(19). The third ('Humans and Animals') explores analogies between human and nonhuman animals:

the *Halieutica* at its core explores the manifold connections between fish, humans, and other animals. These associations. . .are articulated most explicitly in the poem's similes and analogies, which often play an important cognitive role in bringing invisible, or unfamiliar, phenomena into the realm of the visible, illuminating the dark and mysterious sea and revealing it to be both strange and remarkably familiar. (340)

The fourth and final section ('The World is a Sea') explores 'the juncture between real and mythical space':

Oppian's sea becomes a distorted mirror of human life that both celebrates and assesses the credibility of Roman imperial rhetoric, and the poet acts in the role of the imperial advisor who harnesses Greek traditions in order to speak truth to (Roman) power by looking at animal life. (21)

'There are signs', Kneebone optimistically suggests, 'that Oppian's fishes are finally beginning to revive' (9): Oppian deserves his fame. Regrettably, we cannot be so optimistic about contemporary reality, in which fish stocks are not only exploited unsustainably but are also increasingly stressed by the effects of climate change. We can at least admire the depth and acuity of Kneebone's analysis and appreciative enjoyment of Oppian's masterpiece.

In the last set of reviews I expressed my admiration for Peter Thonemann's concise and informative monograph on dream interpretation, and for the notes he contributed to Martin Hammond's translation of Artemidorus. Now, in surprisingly short order, Thonemann has produced another translation, introduction, and commentary on 'one of the most important surviving works of Greek literature from the Roman imperial period' – a text that is also 'one of the funniest. . .to survive from the ancient world' (v).[3] Well, there is always Aristophanes: I can't help thinking that he is a strong contender for the accolade of being funniest; and, in the wake of my recent encounter with Oppian, I might be tempted to rank Oppian's masterpiece among the most important extant Greek literary productions of the Imperial period. A crowd of other potential contenders is jostling in my mind. But there is indeed no denying that Lucian's *Alexander or the False Prophet*, an 'extraordinarily complex text' that is neither a 'straightforward historical account' nor 'a purely satirical work which floats entirely free from the realities of Greek civic religion in Lucian's own day' (v), is up there with the best. The entertainment value of Lucian's hilarious, slippery, scathingly serious, and often devastating brilliance is easy to forget until one re-reads it. Thonemann's fluent and inventive translation entertainingly captures Lucian's satire: 'fatsos', 'lingo' (39), 'so sex-mad that he lugged his hard-on all the way from Trikka to Paphlagonia' (41), 'snot-nosed morons' (45), 'cuminify the malvalolow in a holy casserooilia of piggies' (47, see 110 for the analysis), the felicitously rendered 'School

[3] *Lucian. Alexander or the False Prophet*. Translated with Introduction and Commentary by Peter Thonemann. Clarendon Ancient History Series. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xvi + 234. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-886824-8.

of Moron' (52), an obscene oracular scam (56), or the Xenophon joke (58–9, helpfully explained in the commentary at 149). In addition to the twenty-four pages of translated text, sandwiched between thirty-six pages of introduction and ninety-nine pages of commentary, Thonemann gives us a generous bonus in the form of an introduction, translation and commentary on the fragments of Oenomaus of Gadara's *Exposure of Sorcerers* (preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Preparation for the Gospel*). A second appendix helpfully lists the works attributed to Lucian in their various English/Latin/alternative/abbreviated forms. There is, finally, a nineteen-page bibliography and an index.

Lucian's *Alexander*, for all its entertainment value, is quite hard work. So I was easily drawn to Diskin Clay's translation of the *True History*, with facing text (taken from Macleod's OCT).[4] Regrettably, Clay did not live to complete the volume: the preface, introduction, reader's guide, note on the text, and commentary have been supplied by James Brusuelas. The preface contains a paragraph that begins ('Boot camp') and ends ('Fair enough') without verbs (v). Barely articulate. The introduction is rambling, disjointed, ill-focused, and full of errors. The statement that 'mimetic poetry is not simply three degrees removed from reality but truth itself' (24) is carelessly expressed (a second 'from' would have spared Plato the painful implication that mimetic poetry is truth itself); the grammar of 'πράττω from πράγιω' (31) eludes me; 'Phlegon. . .Phelgon' (37) is careless; 'Plato's Ur and Atlantis' (38) confounds a real ancient Sumerian city with a fictitious character (Er) in the *Republic*; Plato's fictitious Atlantis in the *Timaeus* and *Critias* was not 'beyond the known geographic world' (until, of course, it was overwhelmed by a fictitious cataclysm); an interlinear β floats mysteriously between lines 22 and 23 of the text (58); and in the bibliography Rodriguez is listed inexplicably between Lye and ni Mheallaigh (50). So we are left with Clay's translation: clear and easy to follow in itself, though beginners may find it hard to correlate the periodic sentence structures in the parallel Greek text with the chopped-up sentences of the translation – not, perhaps, the best way to introduce students to the flexibility of sophisticated Greek style.

Luigi Barzini's *Mystery Cults, Theatre and Athenian Politics*[5] aims to provide a comparative reading of Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Euripides' posthumously staged *Bacchae*, with reference to their 'powerful religious and civic content, unique in extant Greek theatre' (5). The focus of the political content of the plays is not, as one might expect, the city's precarious military position, but the internal political situation:

> in an atmosphere of fear and reciprocal suspicion, of extreme political and religious tension, the plays advocate collective adhesion to the ethical and civic values and rituals of the mystery cults as the way to facilitate a civic and religious reconciliation between the warring factions, in a way anticipating the Eleusinian content of the reconciliation of 403. (6)

A two-column table summarizes the differences between the uninitiated and initiates (31): but this crude juxtaposition of nasty and nice fails to consider the possibility that

[4] *Lucian. True History. Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary*. By Diskin Clay and James H. Brusuelas. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. viii + 214. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-878964-2; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-878965-9.

[5] *Mystery Cults, Theatre and Athenian Politics. A Reading of Euripides' Bacchae and Aristophanes' Frogs*. By Luigi Barzini. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Pp. xiv + 260. 1 b/w illustration. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-3501-8733-7.

some initiates might have been quite nasty, or that uninitiated philosophers were not necessarily violent, disorderly, and inclined to demagoguery and tyranny. Chapter 3, 'Initiates and Theatre Audiences in Athens', is unable to escape a depressing series of obstacles: 'no hard evidence exists' (35), 'we have no evidence' (36), 'hard contemporary evidence…does not exist' (38), 'it is thus tempting to imagine' (40), 'we have no hard evidence' (41). Consider also this instance of Barzini's logic: 'if the actors on stage pronounce an oracle untrue, the notion of divinity crumbles, not only on stage, *but in the real world*' (62, my emphasis). Or consider the rash confidence with which Aristophanes' 'well-known and often expressed aristocratic anti-war and anti-demos views' (190) are advertised, oblivious to decades of more cautious scholarship. Aeschylus' *Iphigeneia and Oedipus* (218 n. 87, *sic*) would make for an interesting drama. But 'the man [*sic*] who had died in the battle' (i.e. Arginusae) suggests a suspiciously low casualty rate (101). The first page of endnotes accumulates in excess of 100 notes, in author–date format: it is hard to imagine a less user-friendly presentation. Bloomsbury's prolific output has, I fear, exceeded its capacity to produce carefully edited and proofread books.

By contrast, and with deserved praise for Princeton University Press's high academic and production standards, it was a relief to encounter a scholar operating at a demanding level of sophistication (despite the entertaining confusion of Jocasta with Deianeira, 108). Readers will not find Joshua Billings' *The Philosophical Stage*[6] easy-going: the density and abstraction of the book's argument are challenging – I certainly find it so, and I am sure I am not alone. This review should therefore be regarded as a very provisional and unavoidably inadequate first impression. But when Billings speaks of 'the philosophical nature of drama' (10), questions arise that do not appear to have been addressed in adequate detail. Does *all* drama come supplied with a 'philosophical nature'? And who has the authority to determine what counts as *philosophy*? Should we infer from Billings' three meagre, fleeting footnote references to Isocrates that Isocratean philosophy is not really philosophical? But who has the authority to make that determination? Conversely, what counts as *drama*? Is there an exclusion zone for dramatic works that do not meet the (unspecified) requirements of the *philosophical* stage? What credentials are needed in order to establish a foothold on the (or a) philosophical *stage*? What does dialectic amount to if it is simply a 'juxtaposition of different views on a subject' (12)? Dialectic in that case does not seem to amount to very much at all. The titles of the three chapters that comprise the core of the book ('Catalog and Culture', 'Intrigue and Ontology', and 'Agon and Authority') are not entirely transparent. But authority, at least, is clearly a dominant and persisting theme: 'the primary questions for early Greek intellectual culture…concern authority: who is able to speak about major questions of human existence, and what are the sources of this ability?' (14). I note here the apparent slide between *authority* and *ability* but am unsure of its significance. Billings maintains that 'before philosophical authority was defined in disciplinary terms, its source was never a given, but always subject to negotiation and contestation. Drama confronts this issue directly by staging authority as a continual question' (19). Once philosophical authority has been defined in disciplinary terms, does it cease to be subject to negotiation and contestation? Such a cessation would seem, in its

[6] *The Philosophical Stage. Drama and Dialectic in Classical Athens*. By Joshua Billings. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2021. Pp. xiv + 269. Hardback £30, ISBN: 978-0-691-20518-2.

detachment from negotiation and contestation, to be wholly unphilosophical; and the questions that are posed, explored, and sometimes played with in drama do not seem to be obsessively concerned with establishing philosophical authority. Billings maintains that '*enactment* is essential to drama's method of investigating philosophical topics' (8, my emphasis). I would make a simpler and less restrictive claim: enactment is essential to drama, whether or not the dramatic enactment involves an investigation of philosophical topics. Tragedy, satyr-drama, and comedy are essentially enactive and performative. By contrast, Billings' 'philosophical stage' seems to withdraw into abstraction: 'I *read* dramatic texts as enacting the process of *thinking*' (12, my emphasis).

By contrast, then, let us remind ourselves of the look and sound and movement of drama in performance – taking, as an example, Rush Rehm's admirable (and impeccably edited and produced) Bloomsbury Companion to Euripides' *Electra*:[7]

> *Electra* depends on a rich mixture of language – rhetorical, poetic, imagistic, descriptive, proverbial. Like all live theatre, Greek tragedy also had an essential *material* aspect: the physical space where the performance took place. . .; the setting for each tragedy; the actors whose costumes, gestures, and movement helped bring their characters to life; and the props they used to tell the story. (79)

That is drama.

And what, finally, of satyr-drama? The fourteen extant lines of the *Sisyphus* fragment occupy six pages of Billings' attention: his interest lies entirely in the fragment's putative philosophical content. The one satyr-play that survives intact is Euripides' *Cyclops*: but Billings, seemingly indifferent to generic distinctions, places the *Cyclops* among 'tragedies of escape' (109). Fortunately, there is now a detailed, informative, and judicious edition and commentary, co-authored by Richard Hunter and Rebecca Laemmle, that I strongly recommend.[8]

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Latin Literature

The second volume of Harm Pinkster's *Oxford Latin Syntax*[1] is a stunning achievement and an admirably thorough account of the Latin 'complex sentence and discourse'. Far

[7] *Euripides. Electra*. By Rush Rehm. Bloomsbury Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Pp. vi + 189. 5 b/w illustrations. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-3500-9567-0; paperback £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-3501-9161-7.

[8] *Euripides. Cyclops*. Edited by Richard Hunter and Rebecca Laemmle. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xii + 268. 3 illustrations. Hardback £69.99, ISBN: 978-1-316-51051-3; paperback £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-39999-9.

[1] *The Oxford Latin Syntax. Volume II. The Complex Sentence and Discourse*. By Harm Pinkster. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. xxxii + 1438. Hardback £145, ISBN: 978-0-19-923056-3.