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SUBJECT REVIEWS

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

Greek Literature

Why not assemble two dozen papers on unrelated topics into an eye-wateringly expensive book? Several good reasons spring to mind, but they cannot withstand the combination of a distinguished scholar, a significant birthday, and a punning title. Martin West's distinction is unsurpassed, and his name is a gift to editorial punning.[1] But his exceptional range exacerbates the risk of hodge-podgery endemic to the genre (so far as I know, there is still no *Festschrift* named *Sparagmata*, the mordantly apposite title once suggested by W. J. Slater). *Hesperos* contains some excellent work (I especially admired Pelling's treatment of Plutarch on Sophocles on his own development). But an assemblage of useful papers is not necessarily a useful *volume*. Wouldn't distinguished scholars be more fittingly honoured by the dedication of things that have some independent rationale? *Hesperos* reprints West's acceptance speech for the Balzan Prize, which has elegant and wise observations on (among other things) the difference between boldness in speculation and mere speculation (xxvi). The theme of *Wandering Poets*[2] invites mere speculation, since evidence is sparse. The temptation is not irresistible: Giovan Battista d'Alessio's study of the role of itinerant and foreign poets in constructing local identity is scholarly, restrained, and careful. Contributors working with epigraphic evidence also show restraint. But Mary Bachvarova unwittingly reveals the danger. Writing on Hittite poets, she is understandably impatient of classicists' tendency 'to complain about how little we actually know' about the real lives of Greek poets (33). But the paragraph that purports to show how much is known uses 'we can imagine' three times. Imagination is a fine heuristic but a wretched criterion of truth, and classicists have too often let their imaginations run riot in elaborating dubious biographical 'evidence'. Even Ewen Bowie falters: 'I suggest that first performance in a Boeotian symposium ought to be treated as a strong possibility' (119). A possibility, certainly: but in what way stronger than others? That is, is it in any degree *improbable* that a poem that alludes to *Works and Days* should have had its first performance somewhere other than Boeotia? This is the kind of muddled thinking that leads from a policeman's hunch ('Bloggs could have done it!') to a wrongful conviction. Peter Wilson's critical judgement is at times completely swept away by the allure of his conjectures concerning legendary Greek poets. Appeal is made to hypothetical evidence (53: 'It would not surprise us to learn one day…') and the appearances of possibilities (52: 'It thus *looks* as though Theognis *may* be…'). Modalities blur. The hypothetical status of a suggestion may be acknowledged and discounted: 'if however we admit the possibility…the story…takes on a very different character' (55). But admitting a possibility means not excluding it as

[1] *Hesperos. Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry Presented to M.L. West on his Seventieth Birthday*. Edited by P. J. Finglass, C. Collard, and N. J. Richardson. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. lvi + 406. Hardback £85, ISBN: 9780199285686.

[2] *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture*. Edited by Richard Hunter and Ian Rutherford. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 313. Hardback £55, ISBN: 9780521898782.

impossible; that leaves all other possibilities in play. No possibility determines the character of the story just by being possible: we need reason to suppose that one possibility is distinctly more probable that any alternative. Over-confident assertions (56: 'there can be no doubt…': really? Sometimes I've disbelieved as many as six possible things before breakfast) rub shoulders with rebukes, arising from flawless hindsight, of speculations whose 'slender foundations' (59) have now been discredited by (actual!) evidence. We were told long ago that building on sand is unwise; we have recently rediscovered the folly of extending credit unsecured by adequate collateral. The editors advise us against giving a certain conception 'too much unthinking credence' (5): what is the right amount of unthinking credence? Martin Steinrück[3] shows some learning and ingenuity in arguing the thesis that 'not only iambus and together with it its audience are poking fun on the *Odyssey* and its audience, but inversely, the *Odyssey* represents the very specific iambic audience by the young men who call themselves the Suitors' (3). In this case, readers should certainly think twice before giving credence: are not the suitors in the *Odyssey* represented as avid consumers of *epic*? The assumption that generic differences are diagnostic of different audiences is questionable: consider the Athenian Dionysia. An interpretation of the *Iliad* as 'a masterpiece of propaganda for the death of young men', and reference to a 'steady Odyssean self-justification for killing young men' (21), may make readers wince. I could make no sense of Steinrück's interpretation of the 'scholiae' [*sic*] on *Od*. 23.296: 'Aristarchus, thus, could have said that the narrative unit *Odyssey* they know does not end where they think, i.e. after the Phaeacians, but here' (49). *Entering the Agon*[4] requires a declaration of interest: Elton Barker is a former pupil. But he's recovered well. Here he traces contrasting perspectives on debate and its institutional framing through epic, historiography, and tragedy. Contrasts are identified both between and within genres. In the *Iliad,* debate is essential to collective endeavour and dissent is institutionalized; the perspective of an authoritative figure in the *Odyssey* marginalizes debate. Herodotus' exposure of the limitations of debate is an Odyssean self-authorizing strategy; Thucydides, like Achilles, enters the debate as a dissenting voice. *Ajax* engages the audience in the assessment of an Achillean hero's dissent from authority; in *Hecabe,* debate proves unable to accommodate extreme differences of opinion. It is easy to imagine how this framework could have been applied rigidly, forcing the texts into artificially dichotomized moulds. But, applied with intelligent flexibility, it becomes a powerful tool for opening up challenging new angles on the texts (would you have expected Herodotus and Thucydides to come out that way round?), and the detailed interpretations are impressively nuanced – so much so that the occasional recourse to utopian straw targets (163: 'no *simple and glorious* message'; 172: 'supposed to *guarantee* such ideals') or hyperbole (198: 'Reading debate can be a political act of defiance to rank alongside the defence of Greece') comes as a surprise. Naturally, there are things I want to question. Is it true that 'the Achaean assembly does not appear to start off as an institution that can easily accommodate dissent' (51)? Surely it is *this* dissent that

[3] *The Suitors in the Odyssey. The Clash between Homer and Archilochus*. By Martin Steinrück. Hermeneutic Commentaries 2. New York, Peter Lang, 2008. Pp. viii + 153. Hardback £29.90, ISBN: 9781433104756.

[4] *Entering the Agon. Dissent and Authority in Homer, Historiography, and Tragedy*. By Elton T. E. Barker. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv + 433. Hardback £70, ISBN: 9780199542710.

cannot easily be accommodated. *Iliad* 1 tells us nothing about the assembly's capacity to deal with dissent in general: that is simply not the issue. What makes mediation between Agamemnon and Achilles difficult is not 'the absence of formalised political institutions' (47) but the problematic nature of the relationship between those two individuals, abnormal and fraught with objective structural tensions. Thematically focussed interpretation, in its eagerness to reach the target abstraction, always risks neglecting a narrative's concrete particularity. And is there really anything distinctive or significant in the fact that 'politics in Herodotus is not straightforwardly carried out in formal public institutions' (157)? Already, in *Iliad* 9, the assembly gives way to a closed meeting of elders, orchestrated by Nestor (cf. 154: 'Herodotus draws attention away from the institutional framework to the action of individuals within it'), who sets up the interview with Achilles (a bad idea, as Diomedes notes with hindsight); Book 10 opens with Agamemnon preparing for a private consultation with Nestor (whose hare-brained scheme for once comes off better than one might have predicted). Do the Trojan elders really lack 'political clout' and have 'no power to influence the situation' (70)? That's not the way Hector saw it (15.719–23). But this is undoubtedly a rich and stimulating book, of the kind that does not yield its full reward to a first reading, and which (appropriately enough) will continue to illuminate in part by inviting dissent.

Andrew Faulkner's commentary on the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*[5] provides a well-executed example of the kind of scholarship that emphasizes language, text, and the identification of parallels – in this case, in Near Eastern as well as later Greek literature. But larger interpretative issues are not neglected: the introduction supports the hypothesis that the poem honours a family of Aeneiadai in the Troad, and is cautiously sceptical of claims that the poem furnishes an aetiology for a fundamental change in divine–human relationships. Faulkner's work will be indispensable for the hymn's future readers.

Patrick Finglass's commentary on Pindar *Pythian* 11[6] is philologically heavyweight, as one would expect from someone making a second appearance in Cambridge orange (see *G&R* 56 [2009], 102). The introduction considers the nature and date of Thrasydaeus' victory, its performance context (justly sceptical of a connection with the Daphnephoria), and the myth. A critique of nineteenth-century interpretations of the myth might have seemed superfluous, if Finglass had not so clearly documented the recurrence of their underlying ideas. He cogently criticizes recent interpretations of the myth as a 'negative exemplum', but is stronger at showing the weaknesses of others' positions than demonstrating the strength of his own. Pindar 'powerfully conveys the greatness of Orestes…and in doing so lends a reflected glory' to Thrasydaeus (47). But why, specifically, Orestes? Thrasydaeus has emulated his *father's* (and grandfather's) athletic success (v. 13 f.); Orestes, whose *father* was murdered (v. 17), killed his *mother* (v. 37: the last line of the myth). How is that a 'remarkably effective mythological parallel' (44)? And is it really true that 'Orestes' subsequent vengeance has no…negative tones' (43)? Finglass has a habit of insisting that what is not mentioned in the text cannot be interpretatively significant: but poets

[5] *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*. Introduction, Text, and Commentary. By Andrew Faulkner. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. xvi + 342. Hardback £65, ISBN: 9780199238040.

[6] *Pindar. Pythian Eleven*. Edited by P. J. Finglass. Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. x+158. Hardback £50, ISBN: 9780521884815.

(and others) do not always state the obvious, or spell out what an audience would be able and primed to supply for itself. Kiichiro Itsumi's metrical study of Pindar's eighteen major non-dactylo-epitrite odes[7] distinguishes three classes: those composed mainly in aeolic; those composed mainly in a freer form dactylo-epitrite; and those that thoroughly amalgamate aeolic and freer dactylo-epitrite. *Pythian* 11 falls into the third class, so that (for example) where Finglass discerns *ia reiz*, Itsumi proposes ×*e*×*d*—. This will, I confess, make little difference to my reading of the poem, and I am conscious that I lack the expertise to assess the significance of Itsumi's thesis or its substantive merits. But I can at least pay tribute to the meticulous care and lucidity with which he leads even an inexpert reader like myself through a complex and extremely technical discussion. *Euripides Talks*[8] celebrates fifteen years of performances of Greek tragedies (or adaptations of them) by the Artists of Dionysus (a.k.a. **aod**) by assembling a selection of short pre-performance talks on *Bacchae*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Electra*, and *Trojan Women*. Eleven different scholars make an appearance (Jasper Griffin twice), with an extremely diverse range of approaches. All the contributions, if slender, are interesting; those called upon to give such talks might find it instructive to contemplate the variety of models afforded. And now for a shameful confession: I've never really seen the point of Menander (the comic one, that is). But Ariana Traill's study of Menandrian women[9] has been something of an eye-opener. Traill carefully examines intra-dramatic misunderstandings of status and character, and the ways in which audiences are informed about them and steered towards a dramatically apposite view of them. The upshot is a fine demonstration of the psychological sophistication of Menander's dramatic strategies:

> The real dramatic interest of these plots is not in the formulaic elements…but in the unique course each error takes in a character's mind…. These plays should be appreciated as studies in human psychology which explore the relationship between perception and knowledge and the role of the emotions in shaping how people see and judge one another. (75)

Her concluding characterization of these plots of mistaken identity is characteristically precise and well expressed: 'a style of comedy liberal enough to acknowledge the attractiveness of the forbidden, and even to permit it, but too conservative to offer any real challenge to the rules that forbade it in the first place' (268). Even readers with less to learn about Menander than me will surely come away from this book with a greatly enriched appreciation of his dramatic art. I've never been a great fan of Apollonius, either. Unfortunately, Anatole Mori's *Politics of Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica* left my indifference more or less unscathed.[10] The poem, it is argued, 'engages the external world: the religious, socio-political, and ethical dynamics of Apollonius' day'; the focus is on 'the political resonance of religious activity in the epic' and its relation to 'the ideological construction of Ptolemaic kingship and Hellenic identity in Egypt' (4). To me, at least, reading the *Argonautica* as 'among

[7] *Pindaric Metre. The 'Other Half'*. By Kiichiro Itsumi. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xx + 464. Hardback £80, ISBN: 9780199229611.

[8] *Euripides Talks*. Edited by Alan Beale. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2008. Pp. x + 139. Paperback £12.99, ISBN: 9781853997129.

[9] *Women and the Comic Plot in Menander*. By Ariana Traill. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. x + 301. Hardback £55, ISBN: 9780521882262.

[10] *The Politics of Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica*. By Anatole Mori. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. x + 261. Hardback £55, ISBN: 9780521882255.

other things, an epic redaction of Greco-Macedonian colonial expansion' (151) would not make it more interesting. And that reading requires us to make some flimsy connections. Arguing for a parallel between the marriages of Ptolemy Philadelphus to Arsinoe and of Jason to Medea, Mori assures us that 'the particulars of these two unions are naturally very different, but what is significant is the fact that both are problematic' (94). Though slender, this connection is not perhaps incredible. I'm not sure I would be so charitable to the claim that Aeetes' failure to reward a hero who does not slay a dragon 'certainly contrasts' with Philadelphus' generosity towards hunters who capture an enormous snake alive: 'That Jason does not slay the dragon…may be less a comment on his lack of valor than a nod to Philadelphus' interest in elephants and other unusual creatures' (114). It is disappointing, too, that Mori's interpretation of Apollonius plays off a crude conception of Homer: 'In contrast to the Homeric heroes, then, the Argonauts' behaviour shows that they are generally aware of the dangers posed by strife and are successful, by and large, at avoiding or alleviating conflict' (59) – as if Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon represents heroic normality, not an abnormal crisis. The Texas Greek Orators Series now embraces the speeches against Leptines, Meidias, and Androtion, under the care of Edward M. Harris.[11] The introduction and notes are helpful. The translation tends to lapse into that special stiltedness that is so hard to avoid when translating Greek oratory: 'Certainly such is the case with me also: if Meidias had committed one of these offenses against me on some other days, it was appropriate for him to pay a private penalty' (*Against Meidias,* 33). Compare MacDowell: 'So in my case too, if Meidias had committed any of these offences against me as a private individual on any other days, it would be proper for him to be punished by private prosecution.'[12] MacDowell writes clearer and more natural English, and correctly expresses the grammatical force of *προσῆκεν*. He also translates two words (*ἰδιώτην ὄντα*), central to Demosthenes' argument, that Harris unaccountably omits. A little later, *ὑβρίζειν* (37) is translated as 'being the victim of outrage'; and 'this man must also be punished for these crimes' does not convey the point of *τοῦτον καὶ δι' ἐκεῖνα κολαστέον* (MacDowell: 'their offences are an additional reason for punishing Medias'). My sample did not suggest that the translation is systematically unreliable; but these observations made me wary. M. D. Macleod[13] pairs Xenophon's *Apology* with *Memorabilia* Book 1, the two works having the shared theme of vindicating Socrates. Signs of haste abound. The writing is sometimes over-compressed, sometimes sprawling; punctuation can be slapdash. Some notes appear out of order (*Ap.* 30 f.). Statements made without any explanation of their evidential basis create a dogmatic tone and set a poor example to students, factual errors (131: Polycrates composed his accusation of Socrates after the publication of Isocrates' *Busiris*) a worse one. Schmoll's analysis of the manuscript tradition of the *Apology* concluded that Vat. 1950 derives from Vat. 1335 via a lost intermediary, copied after the corrector of Vat. 1335 had done his work. Macleod reports him as saying, nonsensically, that Vat. 1950 derives from Vat. 1335 via a lost intermediary written by the corrector of Vat. 1335, who added corrections to Vat. 1950. The source of the muddle

[11] *Demosthenes. Speeches 20–22*. Translated by Edward M. Harris. Austin, TX, Texas University Press, 2008. Pp. xxxiv + 221. Paperback £13.99, ISBN: 9780292717848.

[12] D. M. MacDowell, *Against Meidias* (Bristol, 2002).

[13] *Xenophon. Apology and Memorabilia I*. Edited by M. D. Macleod. Oxford, Aris & Phillips. Pp. viii + 161. Hardback £18, ISBN: 9780856687129.

is not hard to guess: Schmoll applies A and B to the manuscripts that Macleod (following Marchant and Ollier) designates B and A. Those familiar with Macleod's widely praised selection from Lucian in the same series will be deeply disappointed. Meanwhile, a new Lucian anthology has appeared from Cambridge.[14] With the (perhaps inevitable) exception of the *Dream*, Neil Hopkinson's selection does not overlap at all with Macleod's and is designed to provide 'a sample of more and less well-known texts which illustrate Lucian's attitude to writing, his place in contemporary culture, and his relationship with earlier literature' (vii). I applaud the inclusion of Sigma's entertaining prosecution of the thieving Tau; also included are *Literary Prometheus*, *Ignorant Book-Collector*, *Praise of the Fly*, *Timon*, and *Dialogues of the Sea Gods*. The introduction is spare, but efficient; the commentary is generous and informative. The volume deserves the highest praise. Susan Mattern's book on Galen[15] is founded on a catalogue of 358 case histories, which provide the working material for the main text. It is needless to say of any title including the words 'the rhetoric of' that 'rhetoric' is used in line with current cliché, not in any ancient sense. The book, then, is about 'how the act of healing is represented' (x). Because Galen represented his medical practice the way he did, 'for specific reasons grounded in his social situation' (47), his narratives 'should not be pressed too hard for facts. Galen's stories are best used as evidence of how Galen perceived the world around him' (2). Or should that be: how he *wished* it to appear that he perceived the world? Either way, the coyness about facts is unnecessary: facts about Galen's perceptions (or wishes) are still facts. Some of the facts that Mattern sees in the 'mirror of [Galen's] complex interactions with the world' (47: the metaphor seems oddly out of keeping with the constructivist implications of 'the rhetoric of…') are unsurprising: 'The patient's friends advocate for the patient's good care' (85). Sometimes she leaves us dangling: 'In theory, a patient's environment was important for diagnosis or therapy…. But in the narratives Galen rarely describes the patient's physical environment or mentions place-names' (49). Why, then, does he not mention these things? Does that tell us something about his judgement of what is clinically important? What exactly does 'in theory' mean here? (That it was not important in practice?) I did not find clear answers. Since architecture was surely not important for diagnosis or therapy, even in theory, the remark that 'despite the esteem that Galen professes for architecture, he rarely refers to the architectural features of houses' (57) seems puzzlingly inconsequential. But it would be churlish to complain that a pioneering book is less than definitive. Mattern offers us a new perspective on a large, rich, and under-exploited corpus; her text raises all sorts of interesting questions and offers many persuasive interpretations; and in the catalogue of case histories she provides readers with resources to use in developing her project further. That amounts to a major contribution.

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[14] *Lucian. A Selection*. Edited by Neil Hopkinson. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. x + 238. Hardback £50, ISBN: 9780521842006; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 9780521603041.

[15] *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*. By Susan P. Mattern. Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 279. Hardback £36.50, ISBN: 9780801888359.