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SUBJECT REVIEWS

(⋆ denotes that a book is specially recommended for school libraries; ⋆⋆ that it is suitable for advanced students only; [B] that a bibliography is included.)

Greek Literature

At the front of the parade this time round come three monographs which take different angles on the processes of Homeric narrative but agree, *au fond*, that sophisticated designs underpin the epics. At first sight, the greatest promise of novelty comes from Elizabeth Minchin's [B]*Homer and the Resources of Memory*,[1] which brings elements of modern research in cognitive psychology and linguistics to bear on the techniques of epic storytelling. Minchin's chief aim is to show how various features of Homeric poetry reflect the workings of memory. She simply takes for granted the oral status of the poems, but at least she commendably resists the functionalism of the Parry-Lord school of thought: epic language, she recognizes, is not just a 'convenient' aid to composition but a creative style or manner. In her approach, type-scenes, for example, are 'cognitive entities' that draw on (but also diverge from) an audience's general understanding of life; lists/catalogues are a sub-genre that exploits virtuoso memory but also alters the 'pace' of the surrounding narrative; descriptions of individual objects (like Agamemnon's sceptre) render their contexts, not just themselves, memorable and significant; similes involve subtle interaction between imagery and memory, enriching the narrative with ideas and associations and reminding hearers of the narrator's mediating role. There are nuggets of insight in this book, if occasionally obscured by a slightly laboured presentation and a penchant for stating the obvious (more about psychology than about Homer). There is also a persistent ambiguity that hangs around Minchin's arguments: is she explaining how an oral poet's memory operates, or clarifying how the wider workings of memory (including, by implication, the audience's) are woven into the fabric of the poems? A bit of both, it seems. On a genetic or explanatory level, Minchin's thesis seems to me incompletely successful; much of what she claims is just as compatible with written composition. Hence, for example, her somewhat uneasy position on descriptions: their Iliadic 'economy' is taken to be a symptom of orality (with the shield of Achilles treated as a special case . . .), yet the *Odyssey* (which Minchin still regards as fully oral) contains passages of a supposedly more 'literary' fullness (e.g. Calypso's cave). Despite this uncertainty, Minchin does much to refresh awareness of the subtleties of Homeric ways of storytelling, showing how they connect to ordinary modes of thought yet combine to produce structures that are cumulatively extraordinary.

There is less apparent novelty, and no ambiguity, to the central thesis of Maureen Alden's [B]*Homer Beside Himself*:[2] the secondary (or 'para-')

[1] *Homer and the Resources of Memory*. Some Applications of Cognitive Theory to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By Elizabeth Minchin. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. x + 247. £40.00.

[2] *Homer Beside Himself*. Para-Narratives in the *Iliad*. By Maureen Alden. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xiii + 384. £50.00.

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narratives of the *Iliad* are neither digressions nor distractions, but profoundly relevant to the design of the poem, carefully positioned within it by a master poet who planned his overall conception thoroughly and recorded it by dictation to an amanuensis. Alden treats all para-narratives as guides, even keys, to the interpretation of the main story; they are vehicles of 'coded significance' for a suitably attentive audience. On the shield of Achilles (whose divine maker communicates the poet's own world-view, she argues) the resolution of a conflict over compensation is an implicit criticism of Achilles' earlier rejection of the embassy, while the consequences of this rejection are also 'mirrored' in the sufferings of the besieging army on the shield. In the story of Meleager in book 9 (Alden's prime case-study, reconsidered at length), we encounter a motif – the entreaty of a hero by those who stand in increasingly personal closeness to him – that recurs not only in Achilles' own case but also in those of Agamemnon and Hector: Alden contends, with elaborate documentation, that the comparison is part of a nexus of story-patterns in which the dire consequences of entreaties/prayers rejected by an intransigent figure are followed through. This is an intricate but humane book that sheds light on some of the motivic connections and contrasts that give the *Iliad* its moral depth.

[B] *The Pity of Achilles*[3] is also concerned with a dimension of the unity of the *Iliad*. Her focus is the thematic unity constituted by the relationship between Achilles' wrath (hence pitilessness) and his pity (above all, for his enemy Priam in book 24); her method is a combination of oral poetics (close attention to formulaic expressions relating to pity, pitilessness, etc.) and 'Aristotelian' regard for the architecture of plot. Kim detects a three-movement structure in the *Iliad*: the first is framed by Achilles' pity for the Greeks during the plague and Hera's pity for Greek sufferings in the wake of Achilles' withdrawal; the second pursues Achilles' pitilessness up to the turning-point of his change of heart, with a fresh impulse of pity, in book 16; the third encompasses both facets of the hero's behaviour, but now as directed towards the Trojans and manifested in extreme forms (the treatment of Hector and Priam). The overarching drama, she maintains, is a development in Achilles' sense of his own mortality (the *Iliad*, we might say, is a battle waged in his soul): he becomes alienated from his original *philoi*, questions his relationship to them, becomes reconciled, but ultimately, in seeing Priam as like his own father, redefines all humans as his 'friends'. And this development involves a transition from a 'heroic' to a 'tragic' conception of life and death. Kim covers much familiar ground (like most works on Homer), but she has some fresh things to say about pity and its implications in the *Iliad*.

Two big books on lyric poetry bridge the gap from Homer to drama. Both are works for specialists. The first, Gregory Hutchinson's [B]★★*Greek Lyric Poetry*,[4] is a detailed commentary on eighteen pieces of lyric by nine poets – the canonical *lurikoi* – from Alcman (the two best preserved partheneia) to Pindar (*Olympian* 6) and Bacchylides (poem 3), with two tragic choruses (from *Ajax* and *Medea*) thrown in to illustrate the transmutation of earlier traditions into theatrical lyric. Hutchinson's book deals with much less material than D. Campbell's widely used *Greek Lyric Poetry*; it is also more meticulous and demanding, as well as, in certain respects, up-to-date (Hutchinson has reexamined and partially reedited the papyri on which most of his chosen texts depend, and he is *à la page* with, for example, recent archaeological

[3] *The Pity of Achilles*. Oral Style and the Unity of the *Iliad*. Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches. By Jinyo Kim. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2000. Pp. x + 203.

[4] *Greek Lyric Poetry*. A Commentary on Selected Larger Pieces. By G. O. Hutchinson. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. xviii + 532. £65.00.

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secondary literature on archaic Greece). Hutchinson's way of reading lyric is, broadly speaking, in the traditions of New Criticism: while not neglecting historical considerations, he is predominantly interested in the expressive interplay of imagery, form, and feeling within the framework of each poem; also, repeatedly, with the status of lyric personae (or 'narrators'). His close, sensitive readings yield many perceptive suggestions, but they also rely too readily on a personal 'feel' for nuances of meaning and tone. Moreover, Hutchinson tends to write archly (he is elusive, for instance, about the sexuality of Sappho's imagined world), with a taste for precious circumlocution. Yet all advanced students of archaic lyric will learn much from the abundance of material (linguistic, metrical, and comparative) assembled in Hutchinson's notes and his introductions to the individual poets. Among the many ancient books of poetry by Pindar was a collection of paeans – choral hymns to (chiefly) Apollo – of which most of our knowledge comes from a series of papyri published in the twentieth century. Ian Rutherford's B★★*Pindar's Paeans*[5] is the most concentrated investigation of these papyri yet undertaken. It is practically two books in one, a monograph on the history of the paean and an edition, with full discussion, of Pindar's 'paeanic' fragments. Rutherford sees the heart of the paean (partly misunderstood, he thinks, by Hellenistic Greek scholars) as the expression of social solidarity by a group of adult males, whether in cult, symposium, battle or elsewhere: sometimes apotropaic, sometimes celebratory, it is always a symbolic performance of collective male strength, usually in honour of Apollo as guardian and healer. Pindar's paeans reveal something of a special association with Delphi (in what Rutherford sees as an 'intersection' of the shrine's and Pindar's own panhellenic commitments), though they seem generally to represent a less intense, complex poetic manner than the epinikians. Rutherford's book uses first-rate scholarship to deal with difficult fragments in a way that allows broader conclusions (not least about the roles of lyric poetry in Greek culture) to emerge from the patient sifting of details. It is a fine achievement. The most weighty contribution on Greek tragedy in the present batch is Helene Foley's B*Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*.[6] The place of women in tragedy is an old theme that has been reinvigorated in recent years, and its cultural significance broadened, by feminist-influenced readings of the genre. Foley's book is the most sustained assault yet made on the subject. Inevitably she deals with topics (lamentation; the behaviour of women as wives, mothers, and daughters; 'female' psychology) which have become well entrenched in the literature; she also spotlights the most familiar of tragic heroines (Clytemnestra, Antigone, Medea are to the fore); and she grapples, through thick and thin, with the fundamental question of why tragedy is so preoccupied with women who show a strength and independence that seem to conflict with prevailing Athenian conceptions of female 'nature'. Foley subjects her texts to close and shrewd scrutiny (she is particularly good on the various speech registers of tragic women), while constantly allowing the argument to open out into a larger enquiry into relations (including tensions) between public and private, family and polis, in the classical Greek world. Foley does not believe that tragic women represent a voice for genuine social change, but she does regard their prominence in the genre as a medium through which contemporary attitudes and practices are exposed to critical

[5] *Pindar's Paeans*. A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre. By Ian Rutherford. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. xvi + 546. £65.00.

[6] *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Martin Classical Lectures. By Helene Foley. Princeton U.P., 2001. Pp. xi + 410. £27.95.

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debate. Tragic women often manifest a degree of ethical agency, including a capacity for *aretê*, which the culture as a whole tended to deny them; but their capacity to deliberate, choose and act can equally often lead to disastrous outcomes. The place of women in Greek tragedy seems inescapably paradoxical and ambiguous, simultaneously an exercise in imagining enlarged possibilities ('new ethical frontiers', as Foley puts it) and in reaffirming established, restrictive norms. If Foley's interpretation of the material is ultimately ambivalent, that is partly because she refuses to reach easy conclusions – one of several respects in which this notable book enriches discussion of an important subject. Two Sophoclean items have now been added to the series 'Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama' inaugurated last year and aimed at Classical Civilisation and Drama Students (see *G&R* 48 [2001], 93). Both Shomit Duma's *Sophocles, Ajax*[7] and Judith Affleck's *Sophocles, Philoctetes*[8] incorporate a reasonably stimulating range of ideas into the compact format of the series; Affleck is the meatier of the two. Both, however, fall back too mechanically on the 'how would you stage this?' variety of bullet point. There are occasional aberrations: e.g. Duma wrongly and misleadingly introduces hubris, which he equates with 'arrogance', into discussion of the messenger-speech at *Ajax* 748 ff. Stylistically the two translations are somewhat divergent: Duma laudably keeps line-by-line correspondence to the Greek (thus avoiding the double numeration of which I previously complained) and is not afraid to preserve some poetic force; Affleck's version is punchy but sometimes a little prosaic. Martin Cropp's B⋆*Iphigenia in Tauris*[9] is the twelfth play in the well established Aris & Phillips Euripides series (Cropp himself edited the *Electra* in 1988). As with some other modern commentary series targetted (in part) at students, this one has fluctuated over the years in the level at which individual editors have pitched their expectations. Cropp's edition lies rather more towards the philological end of the spectrum than some students are likely to be comfortable with; despite being keyed to the translation (which is reliable and allows itself more stage directions than most), the commentary is well supplied with linguistic details that call for reference to the Greek text; the square-bracketing of textual material mitigates the situation only slightly for students with little or no Greek. The positive benefit is that every level of readership can derive useful things from this edition, including its introduction, which covers essential themes (recognition/reversal, the interplay between fortune and divine causation, etc.) in thorough fashion, arguing that Euripides' manipulation of the myth creates a sense of order emerging from disorder and anchors this order to the audience's own world of Athenian ritual. The Oxford series of (selected) Euripides translations by James Morwood comes to completion with its third volume, containing the three great Trojan plays, B*Euripides: Hecuba, The Trojan Women, Andromache*,[10] accompanied by a full

[7] *Sophocles: Ajax*. Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama. A new translation and commentary by Shomit Duma. Cambridge U.P., 2001. Pp. vii + 112, with illustrations, figures, and map. Paper £4.95.

[8] *Sophocles: Philoctetes*. Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama. A new translation and commentary by Judith Affleck. Cambridge U.P., 2001. Pp. vi + 122, with illustrations, figures, and map. Paper £4.95.

[9] *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris*. Edited with an introduction, translation and commentary by M. J. Cropp. Aris & Phillips, Warminster, 2000. Pp. 283. £35.00.

[10] *Euripides: Hecuba, The Trojan Women, Andromache*. Translated with explanatory notes by James Morwood, with introduction by Edith Hall. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. lvii + 167, 1 map. £40.00.

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introduction from Edith Hall that combines reception history, discussion of the individual plays, and cultural/theatrical background. Morwood's versions make available, in all, eleven plays in a prose style that will appeal to readers looking for solidly dependable, dignified, and helpfully annotated renderings. In the lists of Greek poetry translated into English, the work of Callimachus, with rare exceptions, has so far occupied a low place. That situation changes somewhat with the appearance of a substantial verse rendering of [B⋆]*The Poems of Callimachus*[11] by Frank Nisetich (best known for the most successful modern verse translation of Pindar), the first to take advantage of all the papyrus finds of recent times. Nisetich believes Callimachus to be a subtly unpredictable writer, blending complex material in ways that thrive on shifting tone and a shifting persona for the poet himself. The translations of the intact poems (hymns and epigrams) are neat and well crafted; those of the more important fragments are not only careful but illuminatingly glossed, where possible, by reconstructive explanations; and the whole enterprise is rounded out with extensive notes and an annotated index of names. Nisetich has managed to do what some would have thought impossible, to make the reading of Callimachus in translation both attractive and intriguing. To end with, something prosaic and yet, in a sense, volcanic. Among the charred papyri found in Herculaneum the remains of various treatises by the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus are currently receiving renewed scholarly attention of a high-powered kind. Richard Janko's [B⋆⋆]*Philodemus: On Poems, Book One*[12] is the first product of a new series of works to be undertaken by an international team, The Philodemus Translation Project, which intends to edit Philodemus' treatises on poetry, rhetoric and music (more information at *http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/humnet/classics/Philodemus/philhome.htm*). Despite the inclusion of a translation (useful even for specialists, given the state of the papyri and the awkwardness of Philodemus' Greek), this is not a book for light reading. Janko exhibits prodigious assiduity (sometimes, however, obscuring highly speculative premises) in reconstructing the views of a series of Hellenistic literary critics summarized and challenged by Philodemus in the opening book of *On Poems*. His overriding aim is to contend that Philodemus, unlike many other critics (though I have my doubts about some of the positions ascribed to them here), had a 'unitarian' aesthetic in which both the sense and the style of poetry mattered. This is a work of impressively painstaking scholarship, even if much of Philodemus's text remains bafflingly obscure. There is, however, hope of further advances. As Janko's book went to press, a new breakthrough in the reading of otherwise illegible papyri was announced, exploiting a digital imaging technique originally developed for interplanetary exploration. Rocket science and Classics have things in common.

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[11] *The Poems of Callimachus*. Translated by Frank Nisetich. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. lvi + 350. Hardback £45.00.

[12] *Philodemus On Poems, Book One*. Philodemus: The Aesthetic Works, Volume I/1. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Richard Janko. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xvi + 591, with 2 figures and 21 plates. £75.00.

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