may suggest that even F., though more cautious than many, makes unnecessarily heavy weather of Aristotle's biological analogies: p. 265.) One complication is that, since actual audiences may be less than ideal, their responses cannot in Aristotle's eyes provide a straightforwardly reliable guide to what is appropriate; F.'s. discussion of this point (pp. 286–92), though I would slant the conclusions differently, is one of the many admirable things in his treatment of the *Poetics*.

Also admirable is F.'s comment on 1460b13–15, that 'the limited autonomy being claimed here is not for poetry but for discoursing about poetry' (p. 270). But this needs one correction: the autonomy is claimed for one of many ways of discoursing about poetry. Poetry can be handled under many different enquiries (just as human beings can be discussed, and must be discussed differently, in the context of enquiries into biology, psychology, politics and so on). Separating the analysis of poetic forms from the investigation of how, in fact, poetry with a given form impacts on society (the latter being entrusted to ethics and politics) is therefore methodologically defensible. Moreover, such a separation might have seemed imperative after Plato, whose critique of poetry meant that it was not longer possible to assume that the ethical and social consequences of the incorporation of ethical and social values into poetic forms were correctly represented in the culture's self-understanding, or that those consequences were benign. Is it coincidence that Aristotle comments specifically on the harmlessness, not the positive helpfulness, of comedy and *katharsis* (*Pol*. 1336b20–3, 1342a15–16)?

'Plato has given no reason for texts to be to be structured like animals. And, indeed, there is no binding reason' (p. 242). But the analogy illustrates a principle—that a text should have appropriate parts in an appropriate order—that it would be hard to controvert: it seems to follow from the meaning of 'appropriate'. Plato's principle is obvious and easy (which is not to diminish Plato's achievement: making the obvious explicit often requires great insight); the difficult thing is working out what exactly is appropriate for this or that kind of text. The primary aim of my *Unity in Greek Poetics* was not so much to highlight 'the many non-unifying . . . canons of good writing that pervade much ancient criticism' (in F.'s approving formulation: p. 242 n. 27), as to emphasize that what constitutes a unifying canon is culturally and generically variable. Hence the canons which pervade ancient criticism may be non-unifying by our standards, but were not so by theirs.

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EARLY GREEK POETICS

G. M. LEDBETTER: *Poetics before Plato. Interpretation and Authority in Early Greek Theories of Poetry*. Pp. xiv + 128. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003. Cased, £19.95. ISBN: 0-691-09609-0.

The title of this book is potentially misleading: Ledbetter draws a line within the Platonic corpus, distinguishing the 'Platonic' critique of poetry in the *Republic* and the treatment of poetry in *Apology*, *Ion*, and *Protagoras*, which is seen as distinctively 'Socratic'. Although many readers will view this distinction with caution, it is a valid and valuable exercise to retrieve these works from the *Republic*'s shadow and examine their treatment of poetry separately: Plato did not always say the same thing about the same thing.

L. places the Socratic approach in dialogue with the various theories of the poet's knowledge and authority found in the archaic poets. She sees a 'shift', not just a

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difference, between Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar; Pindar, for example, is described as 'innovative' and 'radical'—though also (paradoxically?) as more traditional in some respects than Hesiod. But the argument would work equally well if the poets were read as representatives of concurrent generic traditions rather than serial innovators (p. 62 n. 2 shows that L. is aware of the issues here); and this reading might fit more comfortably with L's recognition that in each case the poet's 'theory' is in fact a stance adopted for rhetorical purposes. Since this is the case, the theoretical robustness of the theories attributed to the poets is in a sense beside the point. It does not matter, for example, that the poetics found in Homer is questionably coherent and (as L. notes) certainly not applicable to the Homeric poems themselves.

According to this 'Homeric' theory, poetry imparts knowledge, not of general truths but of particulars of the narrated world, directly to the audience without need of interpretation. Hesiod's approach is more sceptical with regard to knowledge; but truth is not essential to a poetics founded on psychotherapy mediated by pleasure. In the Pindaric theory divine knowledge is interpreted to the audience by an authoritative poet. All these theories work in different ways to exempt the poet's authority from challenge. By contrast, though Socratic poetics retains the idea that poetry harbours wisdom of divine origin, it denies that this wisdom is possessed by the poet (or rhapsode). Hence interpretation by the audience becomes crucial; access to poetry's wisdom is 'democratized' (a point where the attribution of the theory to Socrates rather than Plato does perhaps have to carry some weight). The anti-Socratic features of Socrates' interpretation of Simonides in *Protagoras* point us, L. suggests, to a model of genuinely Socratic interpretation, exemplified in his interpretation of the oracle.

The position L. identifies as Socratic does not seem stable. To explain why poems composed by poets who are not wise are nevertheless full of wisdom, divine inspiration must be treated as a theory with genuine explanatory force; without that, why bother trying to interpret poems in the quest for wisdom; would it not be more sensible just to discuss the substantive issues among ourselves? That seems, in fact, to be the conclusion reached in *Protagoras*. At a crucial point in her argument L. (p. 109) quotes 347d3–348a2, emphasizing that Socrates sets aside as worthless discussion of poets, not poems; but she does not quote 347b9–c5, where it is precisely songs, poems, and poetry that are set aside. Plato's text does not make the sharp distinction between poems and poets that is essential to L.'s argument.

Although I was not in the end persuaded by her thesis, I enjoyed the fresh, and often acute and subtle, eye which L. casts over familiar questions in early Greek poetics. Moreover, she writes with a clarity and economy rare in contemporary scholarship: there is more to think about in this book that its modest size might suggest.

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THE HISTORY OF *MIMESIS*

S. HALLIWELL: *The Aesthetics of Mimesis. Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*. Pp. xv + 424. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. Paper, £17.95 (Cased, £45). ISBN: 0-691-09258-3 (0-691-04882-7 hbk).

'To think about mimesis,' claims Stephen Halliwell, '. . . is to come up against hard, foundational, and permanently worthwhile questions about artistic meaning' (p. 371).

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