Greece & Rome, Vol. 48, No. 2, October 2001

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

We start with a pair of Homeric commentaries that, in different ways, reflect the changing place of epic in contemporary school and university studies. Norman Postlethwaite's [B]⋆ *Homer's Iliad*,[1] the first full commentary to an English translation (Lattimore's) of the poem, is aimed squarely at the Classical Studies market, which should find it an asset, though its accessibility is likely to make it attractive to students of the *Iliad* more generally. It is a solid, balanced piece of work, which provides a safe all-round introduction to the *Iliad* (though occasionally uncritical in reproducing received opinions, as with the simplification that the Iliadic gods are 'wholly amoral'). While inevitably selective, the notes give clear, unpretentious guidance on a large range of points (aspects of characterization, similes, social values/psychology all feature prominently), using cross-references well to foreground thematic complexity. The compactness and reliability of the commentary will make it a profitable companion for anyone coming to the poem without much prior historical/literary knowledge. If Postlethwaite demonstrates the adaptability of the commentary-form to non-linguistic audiences, Simon Pulleyn's [B]⋆ *Homer, Iliad Book One*[2] shows it striving to hold on to its traditional functions. To this end, Pulleyn offers a generous array of assistance: in addition to a substantial introduction and very full commentary, he has a facing, line-for-line translation, and a vocabulary at the back (modified from a nineteenth-century school edition). This last strikes a note of historical irony. It is not that Pulleyn's work is simply old-fashioned; but there is a sense that he writes for students of a kind who are now an endangered species. Despite the translation (more stylish than Pulleyn claims) and vocabulary, Pulleyn pitches much of his work at a level likely to tax students who lack a confident linguistic grasp and ample time to savour an individual book in detail; his notes are more demanding than, say, those in Wilson's edition of Books 8–9 (see *G&R* 44 [1997], 219). He tries to counteract this tendency by square-bracketing more 'advanced' material, sometimes quite extensively (and off-puttingly, I would have thought); but this serves to highlight the partly incompatible aims he tries to satisfy. One hopes, nonetheless, that there are students out there to take advantage, as some scholars will certainly want to do, of the considerable learning, not least on matters of Homeric religion, displayed both in Pulleyn's informative introduction and in his rich commentary. This is a lean issue for tragedy – just one-and-a-half items. Shirley Darcus Sullivan's [B]*Euripides' Use of Psychological Terminology*[3] is the latest in a series of books she has produced (earlier ones on Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles) to document the usage of a familiar cluster of traditional 'psychic terms' – i.e., *phrên*, *nous*, *thumos*, etc., including *psuchê* itself – in Greek poetry. Most of the book consists of catalogues: a term-by-term listing, with a short paraphrase of every occurrence in the plays and fragments; a play-by-play register of usage; and others. The conclusions are

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superficial: Euripides' usage is predominantly 'traditional' in (supposedly) treating 'psychic entities' as distinct from the 'person', though, like Sophocles, he shows some inclination to identify person and *psuchê*. Sullivan accumulates material in a jejune, conceptually unsophisticated manner; her enterprise rests partly on a fallacy: if (e.g.) Medea addresses her *thumos* (*Medea* 1056 – a spurious passage, some think), it no more follows that the latter is 'distinct from Medea' than it does with her hand, which she also addresses (*Medea* 1244). Others may find ways to exploit Sullivan's collections of references, but this book left me gasping for a deeper, subtler sense of the relationship between language and psychology in Greek poetry. Tragedy and comedy share the limelight in Gregory Dobrov's [B]*Figures of Play*,[4] a book which deems both genres to be obsessively 'metafictional', preoccupied with their own status as 'play' and as festive performance. Dobrov offers case-studies of metafiction/-theatre that include *Ajax* and *Bacchae* (a god 'stage-manages' a human's downfall in each case), and the comic reworking of tragic myth in Aristophanes' *Peace* (Euripides' *Bellerophon*) and *Birds* (Sophocles' *Tereus*). Dobrov writes with passion, though also with a weakness for jargon; his book has an excess of provocative speculations over well-grounded arguments (one example from many being his completely unsupported assertion that Greek drama involved a 'quasi-Brechtian distancing' for both actors and spectators, 12). Moreover, metafiction/-theatricality can be overdone (cf. *G&R* 46 [1999], 81–2); self-reflexiveness as all-pervasive as Dobrov makes it degenerates into sterility: theatrical experience has to be about something larger than itself. Now, Dobrov is prepared to endorse the proposition that 'a play does not reflect life; instead, it reflects itself' (167, a fatuously uninformative claim), yet at the same time he believes Greek drama constantly confronted its audiences with serious questions and challenges. For all its critical ingenuity, Dobrov's book leaves these two sides of his project incompletely harmonized. Comedy in its own right dominates the present batch with a number of notable publications. The first constitutes the most extensive attempt yet undertaken to construct a broader perspective on the genre of Old Comedy. [B]★★*The Rivals of Aristophanes*,[5] edited by David Harvey and John Wilkins, pays homage to Kassel and Austin's magisterial edition of the comic fragments in *Poetae Comici Graeci* by bringing together twenty-eight contributions, from a high-calibre international team of scholars, on a gamut of aspects of lost Old (and, to some extent, Middle) Comedy. About half the essays discuss individual poets (Cratinus, Eupolis, and others), while the rest take thematic looks, some literary/stylistic, some social (including food, demagogues, utopianism), across the remains of the genre. Most of the contents of the book inevitably involve degrees of speculation, though some scholars live with this better than others. But there is no doubt that the collection as a whole represents a large (re)fertilization of the field of Old Comedy, and the editors are to be congratulated for organizing the venture so energetically. The book's usefulness is enhanced by the translation of most Greek quotations and the inclusion of a 'biographical appendix', glossary, and indices, although it is nonetheless a tome for specialists. Aristophanes himself muscles back into centre-stage with a book of his own, and a highly challenging one. Michael Silk's [B]*Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy*[6] achieves a remarkable feat: it manages to marry a highly particularist set of literary interests (in, e.g., the vitally sensuous language and 'discontinuous' characters of Aristophanes the 'great poet') with a sophisticated and eclectic theoretical approach (German Romanticism, Nietzsche, Brecht are some of Silk's favourite sources) to the nature of comedy. Silk thinks

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comedy, in all its manifestations, puts us in touch with the real diversity of life and is therefore, in its own way, as 'serious' as tragedy, whose significance for Aristophanes' 'definition' of his own art is another focus of this book's interests. This is unquestionably a work of major importance, one of the most distinctive contributions ever made to the interpretation of Aristophanes. It is critically original, probing and adroit, if just occasionally a little idiosyncratically mannered. Silk's arguments teem with thought-provoking ideas and observations, as well as with a stimulating range of cultural cross-reference (from, so to speak, Matthew Arnold to Woody Allen). Even if one sometimes disagrees (I happen to think Silk overrates the poet's 'greatness'), every page of this book demands to be pondered by anyone who wants to be made to rethink their view of Aristophanes in particular or of comedy in general. John Wilkins, one of the editors of *The Rivals* (above), earns a second and even more honourable mention for his own monograph, [B]*The Boastful Chef*,[7] an innovative work which uses eating (and drinking) as a key to the entire mentality of Greek comedy (including Sicilian, on which there is a substantial chapter). Wilkins strives to put food back on the menu of comedy's festive/feasting *kômos*. The comic world is one to which, he argues, cooking is central: part of the genre's earthy celebration of material things, it is also a means of reshaping the community in its own image, e.g., by allowing the pleasures of eating to 'approved' characters (especially protagonists) while denying them to various undesirables (such as Lamachus in *Acharnians*). Wilkins pursues his theme with wide-ranging erudition (though *Knights* 273 hardly refers to 'disembowelment', 192), but he does not let his expertise in culinary facts swamp his main concern with the comic 'discourse' of food as it develops from Old Comedy (where protagonists mostly cook for themselves) to New, where the figure of the *mageiros*, the professional 'chef', dominates the description/preparation of food and becomes an object of humour in his own right. This is a fascinating and original book, spiced with liberal quotations (all translated) from comic fragments alongside discussion of the plays of Aristophanes and Menander. The third, penultimate volume of Jeffrey Henderson's new Loeb of ⋆*Aristophanes*[8] appears, with commendable efficiency, only two years after the first two (see *G&R* 46 [1999], 82–3, 235). My earlier, largely positive feelings about Henderson's undertaking persist: his text is dependable (though it is surprising he does not draw attention to his divergence from the traditional line-attribution at Lys. 107–10 – still followed in his 1987 Oxford edition of the play – where he gives the sexual joke to Calonice rather than Lysistrata herself); his translation is impressively compact, punchy, and, the odd quibble aside, accurate; but his annotation is disappointingly thin (see the next item for contrast), and some contentious statements in his introductions conceal their controversial nature (e.g., the claim that *Lysistrata* contains a serious 'call for a negotiated settlement of the war' – despite what Henderson admits elsewhere to be Lysistrata's transparently bogus 'panhellenizing' appeals to political history). From one Loeb to another – what's more, to perhaps the most welcome and most important addition to the series for many years. The third and final volume of Geoffrey Arnott's [B]⋆*Menander*,[9] and the fattest of the trio, contains *Samia*, *Sikyonioi*, *Synaristosai*, and *Phasma*, as well as some lesser papyrus items (including fragments attributed to Menander with various degrees of security). The whole project (see *G&R* 44 [1997], 221–2 for vol. 2) has been executed with scholarly finesse and aplomb: expert editing, stylishly neat translations, and a generous amount of explanatory/annotatory material. The trio of Arnott's Menander undoubtedly has a long life ahead of it as the essential point of reference for many

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grateful readers of the playwright. A very occasional, and some may think suspicious, visitor to this 'Greek Literature' section is Plato. He puts in his latest appearance in the shape of Susan Levin's carefully argued book, [B]★★*The Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited*.[10] Levin discusses Plato's treatment of language in three dialogues, *Cratylus* (whose rejection of etymology she sees as targetted against the literary tradition, from Homer to tragedy), *Phaedo* (where she thinks 'eponymy', the naming of things 'after' Forms, is an adaptation of traditional literary eponymy, e.g., the naming of places after individuals), and *Republic* 5 (where she compares the reapplication/redefinition of kinship and other terms to similar phenomena in tragedy, e.g., the questioning of Clytemnestra's right to be called 'mother' in Aesch. *Cho.*). The treatment of *Cratylus* includes a useful survey of literary 'etymologizing' (13–41), and more generally the book succeeds in showing how deeply and intricately Plato's thinking engaged with literary sources. Reappraising Plato's overall relationship to poetry, Levin concludes that while he consistently denies it the status of a *technê* he does leave open for it in *Republic* 10 an educational and civic role within the ideal polis, though firmly under the control of philosophy. Whether this is enough to prevent Plato himself being permanently expelled from this section of reviews, I remain unsure. Finally a collection of essays, [B]*Matrices of Genre*,[11] edited by Depew and Obbink and dedicated to the late Don Fowler (who contributes a piece on didactic), that ranges across Graeco-Roman literature in a reexamination of how ancient genres were constituted in both practice and theory (as well as in subsequent interpretation). The overall aim is to reassess concepts of genre not only in a broad cultural context but more specifically in the light of recent critical emphases on 'performance' and 'reception'. The contributors vary in the degree to which they carry out the brief signalled by the editors. Glenn Most, for example, argues (an old claim) that 'the tragic' (as opposed to tragedy) was an invention of German Romanticism and has no ancient foundation, but he not only fails to tackle Plato's position in the story, he ignores the crucial question of whether (as Arbogast Schmitt has recently contended) Greek tragedy itself embodies a sense of the tragic. The volume as a whole, whose Greek topics include archaic poetry, Herodotus, Attic comedy, Theocritus and Lycophron, succeeds in showing that questions of genre ramify in many directions; but its very diversity leaves one with a sense that the authors' perspectives converge solely on the conviction that 'genre' is not a single, essential category. To that extent the book is paradoxically a victim of its own scholarly genre.

STEPHEN HALLIWELL

NOTES

1. *Homer's Iliad: a Commentary on the Translation of Richmond Lattimore*. By Norman Postlethwaite. University of Exeter Press, 2000. Pp. xi + 324, with 2 maps. Hardback £35.00, paperback £10.99.

2. *Homer, Iliad Book One*. Edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Simon Pulleyn. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xi + 304. Hardback £40.00, paperback £12.99.

3. *Euripides' Use of Psychological Terminology*. By Shirley Darcus Sullivan. McGill-Queen's U.P., 2000. Pp. xiii + 234, with 10 tables. £43.00.

4. *Figures of Play: Greek Drama and Metafictional Poetics*. By Gregory W. Dobrov. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. ix + 238. £42.00.

5. *The Rivals of Aristophanes: Studies in Athenian Old Comedy*. Edited by David Harvey and John

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Wilkins. Duckworth, London, 2000. Pp. xx + 556, with frontispiece, 11 figures, and 6 line-drawings. £58.00.

6. *Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy*. By M. S. Silk. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. 456. £50.00.

7. *The Boastful Chef: the Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy*. By John Wilkins. Oxford U.P., 2000. Pp. xxviii + 465. £55.00.

8. *Aristophanes*, *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*. LCL 179. Edited and translated by Jeffrey Henderson. Harvard U.P., 2000. Pp. vi + 618. £12.95.

9. *Menander*. Volume III. LCL 460. Edited and translated by W. Geoffrey Arnott. Harvard U.P., 2000. Pp. ix + 639. £12.95.

10. *The Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited*. Plato and the Greek Literary Tradition. By Susan B. Levin. Oxford U.P., 2001. Pp. xii + 212. £30.00.

11. *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society*. Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia 4. Edited by Mary Depew and Dirk Obbink. Harvard U.P., 2000. Pp. vi + 346. £34.50.

Roman Literature

Interestingly, this issue's collection of works on Roman Literature starts with four full-length books, all by women. The other four books, all by men, are editions of standard works. I mention this partly as a mere curiosity but partly because so many of these eight works touch on the ever-fascinating question of the relationship between men and women in literature and society. Readers of Plautine comedy have traditionally been very uncertain as to how to interpret the plays within the social context in which they were produced. Is the dominant factor the apparently subversive farce or the eventual reassertion of normality? If the plays are subversive, how were they allowed to enjoy so prominent a place in Roman civic tradition? It is to questions such as these that Kathleen McCarthy addresses herself in B★★*Slaves, Masters and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy*.[1] After a short Preface and an introductory chapter on general approaches, we are given four chapters on, respectively, *Menaechmi*, *Calsina*, *Persa*, and *Captivi* followed by a brief Conclusion on the role of the clever slave in sustaining the social order both in Plautine terms and in the much better documented American South. M.'s style is refreshingly direct and well rooted in Plautus' text. Her arguments are from time to time usefully illustrated by reference to parallels in modern popular culture, references for which she seems strangely obliged to apologize; some, at least, of the allusions to modern theoretical criticism, for which she does not apologize, often seem, to this reader at least, only to delay the argument. This is a very challenging and interesting work which Plautine scholars will need to absorb slowly; whether or not the conclusions stand, it is hard not to believe that the questions are and will remain pertinent. Monica Gale's B★★*Virgil on the Nature of Things*. The *Georgics*, Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition[2] is a natural development of her previous work on Lucretius. 17 pages of Introduction first briefly outline the history of modern scholarship on the character of Virgil's *Georgics* in general and its relationship to Lucretius' *de Rerum Natura* in particular: she notes a polarization of attitude between those who regard the *Georgics* as broadly pessimistic and subversive and those who see it as optimistic and supportive of the Augustan regime. Then, at greater length, she takes us through the apparently compulsory mire of theoretical stances on 'intertextuality', 'allusion', and 'authorial intention' to establish a nevertheless unassailably sensible approach to the issue of how to recognize and interpret allusion in the one to the other. Six chapters follow on topics such as 'Beginnings and endings', 'The gods, the farmer and the natural world', 'The wonders

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