Greece & Rome, Vol. 51, No. 1, April 2004

SUBJECT REVIEWS

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

Greek Literature

Homeric studies make their weighty impression on this round of reviews with a slab of a volume entitled (a little provocatively/prematurely) *Omero tremila anni dopo*,[1] which represents the proceedings of a conference held in Genoa in 2000. Current Homeric scholarship is more crowded but also probably more divided than ever, spanning everything from minute linguistic analysis, via increasingly theoretical arguments over compositional/narrative techniques, to grand models of the poems' relationship to the development of Greek culture. This collection gives a reasonable conspectus of the situation. It contains fifteen front-line papers (all but one in English), organized into three sections. The first is preoccupied with central debates about oral traditions behind and/or within the Homeric poems, and the ways/extent to which the epics place themselves in/against those traditions; comparative reference to modern Slavic oral poetry plays a familiar role, but controversy is not absent (Rainer Friedrich launches a typically combative assault on Parryism's 'idolatry of orality'). The second section deals with questions both of textual transmission (archaic and Hellenistic) and critical reception (as reflected in the Homeric scholia and the allegorizing readings of the Imperial period). The third covers various aspects of archaeological/historical 'context', including a piece by Manfred Korfmann that draws on his recent excavations at Troy and a heavily documented overview by Hölkeskamp of how Homer might be read as a 'source' for the early polis. In the second half of the book there are a further sixteen, miscellaneous 'short papers' (some, in fact, longer than their predecessors), half in Italian, embracing topics that stretch as far as contemporary translation of Homer into South African English. The volume, which university libraries will want to own, is unnecessarily filled out by versions of a round-table session in which there is too much paraphrase of papers in the volume and a certain amount of trumpet practice. One snag: my copy contained several blank pages. Material on tragedy in this issue is dominated by translations. As so often (and a suitable matter for cultural rumination), there is a split between U.S. verse and U.K. prose. (No secret: my predilections are for the former.) ⋆*Sophocles Theban Plays*[2] is a work of collaboration between two experienced translators, the (U.K. born) theatre producer Peter Meineck and the philosopher Paul Woodruff: Woodruff is responsible for *Antigone* (separately reviewed in *G&R* 49 [2002], 241), Meineck for *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the pair made *Oedipus Tyrannus* a joint project. The translations are deliberately lean and muscular, and conceived as

[1] *Omero tremila anni dopo*. Edited by Franco Montanari, with assistance from Paola Ascheri. Edizioni di storia e letteratura, Rome, 2002. Pp. xvii + 722. Paper €76.

[2] *Sophocles Theban Plays*. Translated, with introduction and notes, by Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff. Hackett, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2003. Pp. lxxviii + 223. Paper £5.95.

https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/51.1.108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

acting versions (both the *OT* and the *OC* have been tested in performance, the former with masks). There is an admirably consistent avoidance of the *faux* gravity that bedevils so many renderings of tragedy; dramatic essentials are tightly packed into sinewy dialogue and terse lyrics, even if some of the subtle textures of Sophoclean poetry get flattened out in the process. With its full introductions and decent annotation, this robustly made paperback (bearing a photograph of JFK on the cover) is a bargain, ideal for many undergraduate courses. The sixth and final volume of David Kovacs' Loeb of ⋆*Euripides*,[3] containing *Bacchae*, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and (the, for Kovacs, spurious) *Rhesus*, appears only eight years after the first, a remarkable rate of productivity. Students and others now have easy access to a reliable edition that combines (a touch anomalously) incisive, even bold, textual judgement, especially conspicuous in the problematic *IA*, with a translation that mostly sacrifices stylistic finesse to plain fidelity. This set of Loebs is destined for a long life. The last few years have seen rival prose translations of Euripides appearing in Penguin Classics and World's Classics. The latest instalments are both entitled *Heracles and Other Plays*, the ⋆Penguin[4] (third of what will be a complete four-volume set) by John Davie, the ⋆World's Classics[5] by Robin Waterfield (continuing the three previous volumes by James Morwood [see *G&R* 49 (2002), 112–13], who provides the notes on this occasion). In addition to *Heracles* itself, the Penguin fits in one more play (with *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, *Ion*, *Helen*, and *Cyclops*) than its Oxford competitor (with *Alcestis*, *Children of Heracles*, and *Cyclops*); both are supplied with good introductions, the Penguin by Richard Rutherford, the World's Classics by Edith Hall. Euripides is tonally the hardest of all the tragedians for modern translators to grapple with; the intermittent closeness of his spoken verse to ordinary language seems to invite a kind of informality, but it is woven together with poetic registers in ways that have no counterpart in contemporary drama. Translations are so much easier to fault than to produce; it would be churlish not to laud both Davie and Waterfield for valiantly trying to capture something of Euripides' hard-edged but also emotionally taut depiction of his characters. On the whole the two versions succeed about equally; I find Davie somewhat terser and more urgent, as well as a little more convincing in rendering strong emotion, but either of these volumes could safely be used by students or general readers whose priority is prosaic lucidity. If Euripides remains a severe challenge to translators, he is no less so to critics. Judith Mossman, in the introduction to her *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides*,[6] is inclined to think, as many have done, that Euripides self-consciously strove to be unsettlingly innovative, though it remains unclear how far this impression of 'difference' is a function of the number and range of his plays to have survived (not to mention the dazzlingly misleading Aristophanic caricature in *Frogs* and its later adaptation by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*). Be that as it may, it is hard to deny that there has been less convergence in Euripidean criticism than in writing on

[3] *Euripides Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus*. Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass., 2002. Pp. 455. Loeb Classical Library, 495. Hardback £14.50.

[4] *Euripides Heracles and Other Plays*. Translated by John Davie, with an introduction and notes by Richard Rutherford. Penguin Books, London, 2002. Pp. li + 307. Paper £8.99.

[5] *Euripides Heracles and Other Plays*. Translated by Robin Waterfield, with an introduction by Edith Hall, and notes by James Morwood. Oxford UP, 2003. Pp. lv + 161. Paper £7.99.

[6] *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Euripides*. Edited by Judith Mossman. Oxford UP, 2003. Pp. viii + 411. Hardback £60, paper £20.99.

https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/51.1.108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Aeschylus and Sophocles. No bad thing in itself, but it does make Mossman's task as editor of a casebook exceptionally hard. She has put together seventeen chapters (ranging in date from 1960–90: very recent work is excluded on grounds of availability), almost the same number as the extant plays; but seven of the pieces are on overarching thematic concerns (intellectualism, irrationalism, rhetoric, and religious ideas) that have bulked so large in the field, leaving nine on individual plays (and one on three different plays). Alongside the work of an older generation of scholars (Reinhardt, Winnington-Ingram) and of recognized specialists like Collard and Mastronarde, it is notable that seven contributions are by female scholars (including De Jong, Easterling, Foley, Lefkowitz, and Zeitlin) who have been in the forefront of criticism on Greek tragedy in recent decades. This is a solid addition to the widely consulted series of *Oxford Readings* (whose inexplicable aversion to indices, however, I continue to bemoan). Among the plays *not* given their own essays in the Mossman collection are, unsurprisingly, *Heraclidae* and *Supplices*. But compensation for these still relatively marginalized works is forthcoming in Daniel Mendelsohn's *Gender and the City*,[7] a book which engages extensively with, but also modifies, existing feminist approaches to Greek tragedy. Mendelsohn aims to rehabilitate his pair of plays by reading them as powerful explorations of the intricate intersecting of gender and politics. Repudiating old complaints of disjointedness, he maintains that Euripides' challenging manipulation of myth and dramaturgy allows symbolic stereotypes of gender to be tested and 'renegotiated'; even theatrical space (with its representation of sanctuaries, homes, altars, etc.) turns out, on his view, to mediate complex relations between male and female. Mendelsohn argues that characters such as Heracles' self-sacrificing daughter in *Heraclidae* and Theseus' mother Aethra in *Supplices* redefine themselves as partly 'masculine', serving in the process to transform (sometimes galvanizing, sometimes even 'feminizing') their menfolk and ultimately pointing towards the possibility of something other than an irreconcilable polarity of male and female. The women of these plays move 'from containment to explosion': they are much more than victims of a patriarchal system. Mendelsohn's thoughtful, if slightly over-luxuriant, writing manages to integrate close reading with sustained interpretation of the disturbing dynamic between male and female roles in the violent world of these plays. The final item on tragedy is short but highly technical. *La tradizione metrica della tragedia greca*,[8] co-authored by three young Italian scholars, analyses the metrical structure (colometry) of three tragic odes (the first half of the second stasimon of *Trachiniae*, and the first and second stasima of *Iphigenia at Aulis*) as implied by their layout in the medieval manuscripts and, for the Euripidean odes, in papyrus fragments. In the course of detailed metrical scrutiny and appraisal, consideration is given to differences not only between manuscripts and papyri but also between their colometries and those adopted by modern scholars: arguments are presented, where possible, for preserving the ancient metrical traditions against the allegedly over-rigorous interventions of more recent editors. This is a painstaking exercise in historical metrics that merits the attention of specialists in the lyric poetry of Greek tragedy, though a more synoptic account of the larger issues at stake would have been welcome. And now for something

[7] *Gender and the City in Euripides' Political Plays*. By Daniel Mendelsohn. Oxford UP, 2002. Pp. xviii + 257. Hardback £45.

[8] *La tradizione metrica della tragedia greca*. By Carmela Concilio, Massimiliano d'Aiuto, and Sara Polizio. Università degli studi di Salerno, Naples, 2002. Pp. 74. Paper €7.5.

https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/51.1.108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

completely different. Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, for all the obvious reasons, has attracted numerous modern translations. What makes Sarah Ruden's version[9] different from some is its determination to highlight the comedy's appeal to a contemporary sensibility; the ethos is epitomized by the description of Lysistrata herself, in the introduction, as 'a Joan of Arc you can go to a bar with'. Ruden keeps vestiges of most of the play's historical and cultural references, though sometimes simplifying them and adding explanations in the footnotes. But she is always ready to jazz up and expand Aristophanes' humour for him: characteristic is the rendering of Lampito's straight question at 96 as 'What all-important burr is up your butt?' (British readers need to be warned that Ruden's vernacular is intensively U.S.) Since the overriding aim is vivacious accessibility, some may be surprised to learn that Ruden, a classically trained 'poet and essayist', uses fairly regular five- and six-beat lines for trimeters and tetrameters in the original, and even exploits rhyme in some of the lyrics, though she nowhere discusses these technical choices. The overall result, complemented by a set of lively essays on democracy, warfare, women, and comedy, is indubitably spirited, if much more slangy than the Greek. It can be recommended as a tangily bawdy version that practices what it preaches in playing for modern laughs, but without altogether blocking historical perspective. If bawdy is one pole of the Aristophanic universe, scurrilous mockery and abuse must constitute the other. The latter (unlike the former) is, one might have thought, a subject classical scholars should understand intuitively; but the history of Aristophanic scholarship suggests otherwise. *Spoudaiogeloion*,[10] a collection of seventeen papers (three Italian, one Spanish, the rest in German) deriving from a Freiburg conference in 2001, offers fresh investigation of the comic techniques and functions of Aristophanic mockery: topics treated include linguistic features of personal satire (including satire *of* linguistic features), the inescapable Aristophanes-Cleon confrontation, Old Comedy's relationship to Athenian laws restricting freedom of speech, stereotypes of generals and politicians, satirical exploitation of targets' names, sexual imagery, ridicule of women, and much besides. As regards the *raison d'être* of mockery, contributors spread themselves along a spectrum of views (reflecting long established contention over Aristophanic 'seriousness'): at one end, those favouring a predominantly *sui generis* model of licensed, 'carnivalesque' abuse, at the other those believing in genuine comic impingement, even if only subliminal, on the political consciousness of Athenian audiences; plus various nuances in between (including compromises within individual chapters). It seems plausible that the nature of these disagreements is due not just to historical distance but, as Anton Bierl argues, to something intrinsically ambivalent in the workings of uninhibited insults against socially prominent figures. In what is something of a boom period in continental writing on Aristophanes, the present collection, teaming up some leading older scholars with some talented younger ones, adds a work of stimulating value that will help to fertilize debate for years to come. It isn't often one gets a chance to review an index, but Alan Sommerstein's ⋆*Indexes*,[11] the twelfth and final volume of his bilingual Aristophanes edition, gives one a welcome chance to do just that. Welcome, not only because it is

[9] *Aristophanes Lysistrata*. Translated, with notes and topical commentaries, by Sarah Ruden. Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett, 2003. Pp. x + 126. Paper £4.45.

[10] *Spoudaiogeloion*. Form und Funktion der Verspottung in der aristophanischen Komödie. Edited by A. Ercolani. Stuttgart, Metzler, 2002. Pp. 414. Paper €29.9.

[11] *Indexes*. Compiled by Alan H. Sommerstein. The Comedies of Aristophanes, vol. 12. Aris & Phillips, Warminster, 2002. Pp. 203. Paper £16.50.

https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/51.1.108 Published online by Cambridge University Press

worth celebrating the completion of this whole enterprise, which offers a decent text, a vigorous translation, and the only modern English commentary on all the plays; but also because the indexes are themselves so extensive as to add a whole extra dimension to the edition. Sommerstein has industriously put together a very full index locorum of ancient literature (excluding the eleven comedies themselves), an index of 'persons' (real, fictitious, or mythological), and a general index that incorporates useful compound entries on topics as diverse as Attic demes, fish, and music; there is, however, no index of Greek as such. One or two elaborate conventions need a bit of getting used to, and occasionally the impetus to subdivide entries falters (a list of some three hundred undifferentiated references to 'costumes and properties' is not terribly constructive). But those are quibbles. Sommerstein has crammed in so much information that the book can be employed not just to find one's way round the commentaries (including, NB, the important addenda in the previous volume: see *G&R* 49 [2002], 241–2), but, even more so, as a practical aid to the study of the plays themselves in all their multiplicity. In a different zone of the kingdom of comedy, Harvard has issued what is technically the third edition of **Theophrastus Characters*,[12] though this time round Cercidas and the choliambic poets have been dropped, to be replaced by selected fragments of Sophron and sixteen (mostly) papyrus fragments of other mimes, dating from the second century BC to the fifth AD. Jeffrey Rusten and Ian Cunningham have respectively revised their helpful and well presented editions of the *Characters* and Herodas; checks show that most but not all misprints in the second edition have been eliminated. This is a volume replete with intelligently edited material: it is certainly the most convenient place for students to read Theophrastus's serio-comic vignettes of social behaviour, Herodas' ironically sophisticated pastiches of low life, or tantalizing scraps of the most long-lasting form of sub-literary drama in antiquity.

STEPHEN HALLIWELL

[12] *Theophrastus Characters, Herodas Mimes, Sophron and Other Mime Fragments*. Edited and translated by Jeffrey Rusten, I. C. Cunningham. Loeb Classical Library, 225. Harvard UP, Cambridge Mass., 2002. Pp. 421. Hardback £14.50.

Latin Literature

In this issue, all the works to be reviewed are devoted to Latin verse. Alessandro Perutulli's *Frustula Poetarum*[1] is a detailed scholarly study of a number of Latin verse fragments attributed to Caecilius Statius, Q. Lutatius Catulus, Laevius, and Sueius, followed by a discussion on the correct ordering of Varro's *Menippean Satires* and how that affects our understanding of the *Bimarcus*. Some notes on the fragments of C. Licinius Calvus and on the ancient scholarship on C. Helvius Cinna, a reconsideration of Rufus Varius' *de Morte* and a very thorough re-examination of the fragments of Lucan's *Orpheus* bring this work to an end, apart from the normal indexes. Paola Pinotti's *L'Elegia Latina*[2] claims to be accessible to the non-specialist public and, indeed, starts with the simplest possible account of the metrical shape of an elegiac couplet. This

[1] *Frustula Poetarum*. Contributi ai Poeti Latini in Frammenti. By Alessandro Perutelli. Pàtrone Editore, Bologna, 2002. Pp. 187. €17.

[2] *L'Elegia Latina*. Storia di una forma poetica. By Paola Pinotti. Carocci, Rome, 2002. Pp. 256. €18.

https://doi.org/10.1093/gr/51.1.108 Published online by Cambridge University Press