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SUBJECT REVIEWS

Greek Literature

'It is not suggested that cheese-graters were peculiar to ninth-century Euboea.' How I wish I'd written that sentence! The author is (need I say?) Martin West,[1] the first volume of whose *kleine Schriften* sums up his distinguished contribution to scholarship in Greek epic with a selection of twenty-six articles and notes (including 'Grated cheese fit for heroes'), plus three reviews, and a reply to reviewers. Two pieces are previously unpublished: 'Echoes of Hesiod and Elegy in the *Iliad*' and 'Magnes of Smyrna: A Greek Poet at the Court of Gyges'. The latter starts as a modest but learned attempt to rescue the credibility of Nicolaus of Damascus' report of Magnes, and ends with a bold hypothesis about the 'unusually direct line of communication' that West has previously postulated as linking the *Iliad* to early seventh-century Assyrian court literature: quintessential West. Another kind of summation is found in West's 'disquisition and analytical commentary' on the *Iliad*.[2] A condensation of his considered views on miscellaneous Iliadic issues is followed by a collection of detailed notes setting out analytical opinions on the text. He anticipates dismay at his 'regression to an antiquated style of analysis' (431). I'm undismayed in principle. I agree that the poem must have been developed, expanded, and revised by the poet over a prolonged career (3); I agree, more or less, with West's assessment of the extent of the original core (51–2); and I'm glad to see that 'P' (an appellation that West adopts, with cheerful indifference to consistent application of criteria, on the grounds that the poet was not called Homer) is never accused of dribbling, unlike Hesiod in West's earlier work.[3] But the repertoire of resources available for interpreting the text remains impoverished. Take Agamemnon's speech to the army in Book 2. Worried about the consequences of a breach with a key ally, he receives unexpected intelligence from an impeccable source: decisive victory is imminent. Elated, he does not order his troops into battle, but tries to incite their fighting spirit obliquely by pretending to abandon the campaign. Though never the clearest thinker when in the grip of his characteristic mood swings, even Agamemnon is not daft enough to give his audience compelling reasons for acting against his concealed wishes; so he sabotages his ostensible case. West confidently infers ('it is evident') that an originally positive speech has been rewritten to be pessimistic (103–4). Antiquated rhetoric has more insight into what is going on here than new-fangled analysis.[4] Nor will rhetoric be hoodwinked by such tendentious devices as a refusal to brand sceptical readers as 'thoughtless or prejudiced' (431). But West is right in this, at least: informed judgement of his conclusions requires personal engagement with the text of the *Iliad*,

[1] *Hellenica. Selected Papers on Greek Literature and Thought. Volume I: Epic*. By M. L. West. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 451. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-0-19-960501-9.

[2] *The Making of the Iliad. Disquisition and Analytical Commentary*. By M. L. West. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 441. 2 maps. Hardback £89, ISBN: 978-0-19-959007-0.

[3] See M. Heath, 'Hesiod's Didactic Poetry', *CQ* 35 (1985), 250 n. 14.

[4] M. Heath, 'Pseudo-Dionysius *Art of Rhetoric* 8–11: Figured Speech, Declamation, and Criticism', *AJPh* 124 (2003), 85–6.

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and careful consideration of the issues he raises. Be warned, however: the Ur-text of the analytical commentator (W) has been obscured by a comparativist *Bearbeiter* (C), who is fascinated by Indo-European and Near Eastern parallels. Since these do not throw any light on P's making of the *Iliad*, it is evident that they are interpolations. C makes another fleeting appearance ('there appear in his poetry tropes and imagery which find their best parallels in the Rigveda', 50) in the convincing portrait of Pindar as a literate intellectual, indeed a *poeta doctus* (66), that is West's contribution to the *Festschrift* for Peter Parsons.[5] Given the honorand and the theme, this collection is inevitably even more diverse in content than most examples of the genre, and even more impossible to review in brief. I can only acknowledge that it contains a number of worthy contributions on a variety of topics; repeat my doubts about the rationale of such disparate collections; and complain once more that when conference proceedings take five years to reach publication the format has become an impediment to scholarly communication. Contrast, in point of usefulness, *Relative Chronology in Early Greek Epic Poetry*.[6] West is (of course) one of the thirteen contributors, with a compendium of his views on the chronology of early Greek hexameter poetry. Others approach the subject from a variety of perspectives, including linguistic chronology, compositional stratification, and intertextuality. The profound differences – methodological and substantive – exhibited here tend to confirm Richard Janko's description of this as 'a field where chaos and confusion reign' (20). But Janko's exasperated riposte to critics ('one might as well say that ignorance is better than knowledge', 37) invites the reflection that a cautious confession of ignorance is better than over-confident error. The volume's exceptionally skilful editing ensures that every *prima facie* plausible method or model canvassed by one contributor comes under effective sceptical interrogation from another. Despite the uninviting title, these papers taken together provide an absorbing insight into the complex and subtle issues that confront anyone brave enough to join in the debate. Another impressive collective volume, edited by Andrew Faulkner, tackles the *Homeric Hymns*.[7] This collection supplies a timely and effective survey of current developments in scholarship on the hymns, which has flourished in recent decades. The editor begins by introducing key issues in modern scholarship; Part I comprises seven papers on the longer hymns (West tackles the first hymn to Dionysus); in Part II, six papers discuss the formation of the collection (Faulkner, again, in a chapter that exceeds its stated aim: it also provides a good general account of knowledge and use of the hymns in antiquity), as well as its genre, context, and function. Of the variety of methodologies represented here, I will say only that some seemed to me inviting targets for sceptical interrogation. Returning to the *Iliad*, Book 6 receives a Cambridge Green and Yellow commentary at the

[5] *Culture in Pieces. Essays on Ancient Texts in Honour of Peter Parsons*. Edited by Dirk Obbink and Richard Rutherford. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xviii + 342. 16 b/w illustrations, 24 colour plates. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-929201-1.

[6] *Relative Chronology in Early Greek Epic Poetry*. Edited by Øivind Andersen and Dag T. T. Haug. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 277. 6 b/w illustrations, 15 tables. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-19497-6.

[7] *The Homeric Hymns. Interpretative Essays*. Edited by Andrew Faulkner. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. vi + 420. 2 b/w illustrations. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-958903-6.

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capable hands of Barbara Graziosi and Johannes Haubold.[8] It is detailed, scholarly, and rich in bibliographical advice. Indeed, some of the nominal target audience ('undergraduates at all levels, and students in the upper forms of schools') may find it intimidating; readers in the early stages of acquaintance with Homer's language will need more assistance. But the commentary is very rewarding. I append a couple of random thoughts. Hector's mission is doubly pointless: it fails to achieve its goal; but it didn't need to, since a truce is agreed early in the next book, anyway. What does that say about Book 6's place in the larger narrative? And why does Hector tell his troops that he will consult counsellors while in the city (6.114: Helenus had not suggested this) but not fulfil the promise? The omission should not pass unremarked. Cautious elders have been imposing a defensive strategy, which Hector resents (15.719–23); the crisis now facing the Trojans shows that they were right. So Andromache's advice should be treated with more respect. If she is urging Hector to leave the fighting to others, that would indeed be 'problematic' (45), even 'reprehensible' (206); but in recommending a defensive deployment she is right, and the reasons that Hector gives for rejecting her advice are those of someone not thinking clearly about his responsibility as a tactical commander – one of Hector's habitual failings. Graziosi also deserves praise for her brief, but deft and illuminating, introduction and notes to Anthony Verity's *Iliad*.[9] The translation 'respects as far as possible the line numeration of Homer's Greek' (xxix); but the layout creates an expectation of rhythmical fluency that is persistently disappointed, and I found it worked better on the page than when read aloud. While, to be fair, this version 'does not claim to be poetry', a translation that looks like poetry and reads like prose risks putting off every class of reader. Yet it is accurate, clear, and not dull: that combination puts it ahead of many versions that do have poetic pretensions. Turning from (in deference to West's nomenclature) P to P^{Od}, I warmly recommend Suzanne Saïd's advanced introduction to the *Odyssey*, in a fluent translation by Ruth Webb.[10] Readers already familiar with the text may find their interest flagging in the chapters that work through the poem with selective comment. But the preliminary chapters (on 'Homer' and Homeric scholarship, 'The Art of Homer', history and Homer, and Homeric narrative) and the final thematic chapters (the human world, women, gods, and ideology) are for the most part very good indeed. The over-compressed account of formulae in Chapter 2 is not likely to make the issues intelligible to non-initiates (type-scenes are handled better), but the survey of Homeric scholarship in Chapter 1 is excellent. In Chapter 9, the combination of literature review and textual analysis that guides readers through the interpretative problems surrounding Penelope's role in the later books is outstanding. In the chapter on the poem's ideology, Saïd identifies some 'less rosy' aspects: servants are rewarded for results, not effort, and the master is free to have sexual relations with

[8] *Homer. Iliad 6*. Edited by Barbara Graziosi and Johannes Haubold. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. x + 278. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-521-87884-5; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-70372-7.

[9] *Homer. The Iliad*. Translated by Anthony Verity, with an introduction and notes by Barbara Graziosi. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xxxiv + 470. 2 maps. Hardback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-923548-3; paperback £8.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-964521-3.

[10] *Homer and the Odyssey*. By Suzanne Saïd. Translated by Ruth Webb. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. vi + 420. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-954284-0; paperback £35, ISBN: 978-0-19-954285-7.

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female servants (357). But Odysseus' endorsement of unprovoked aggression as a way of replenishing his depleted livestock (*Od*. 23.357, quoted 308) goes unquestioned. Bruce Louden's *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East*[11] is well written, packed with material, and always interesting. He argues that the *Odyssey* 'combines several different genres of myth', which are 'also extant in Near Eastern mythic traditions' (2), including the Old Testament, and that this implies 'extensive interaction with non-Indo-European Near Eastern cultures' (6). So Near Eastern narrative 'offers a more germane context for interpreting the *Odyssey*' than does the *Iliad* (6–7). The thesis of interaction with the Near East is perfectly plausible, and (if true) of obvious importance for understanding ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultural history. But Louden's leap from typological parallels to genealogical connections is perhaps too impetuous. He is willing to say, for example, that 'the constituent elements of theoxeny remain remarkably stable' (106), and that 'romance remains a remarkably conservative or stable narrative organization over the millennia' (60). Why 'remarkably'? How unlikely is it that humans will converge independently on similar narrative patterns, or that the patterns they converge on will display homeostasis? Only to the extent that the patterns in question are arbitrary. But Louden makes no attempt to show that they are. If in this respect his approach underestimates the potential for spontaneous homogeneity between human cultures, it tends in another to underplay diversity. Since an element or pattern of elements that in one sense remains stable between different cultures may have disparate contextual meanings, it is not self-evident that 'an instance of a given motif in Euripides, Shakespeare, or other author, can help us understand how the same motif works in the *Odyssey* and Genesis' (60). Despite my admiration for this book, then, I'm cautious about its methodology. That is not to deny that Louden says many good things about the *Odyssey*. But in one of his best discussions, the demonstration of Homer's virtuoso variation of recognition (72–92), the interpretative gains seemed to me to come from careful observation of what happens in the *Odyssey* itself, not from the use of comparative material. The Green and Yellow commentary on Plutarch's *How to Study Poetry,* by Richard Hunter and Donald Russell,[12] prompted related reflections. Of course, one must welcome a detailed, erudite, and up-to-date commentary on this important text, especially when it is so informative about Plutarch's language and style. Yet it often seems to be a commentary, not on Plutarch's text, so much as on ancient traditions of critical, grammatical, and philosophical writing on poetry. A tendency to fixate on parallels and sources will make this book a useful research tool, but does not necessarily contribute to elucidating the substance of Plutarch's essay. 'P.'s language here…has (as often) affinities to more than one intellectual tradition' (135): predictably so, given Plutarch's intellectual background, but how does that advance our understanding of his argument? 'P.'s source here is…likely to be Stoic' (205): that is a conjecture about how the thought in question came to Plutarch's attention (a vague one: what kind of relationship does 'source' imply?), but it says nothing about why it seemed to him a

[11] *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East*. By Bruce Louden. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. viii + 356. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-76820-7.

[12] *Plutarch. How to Study Poetry*. Edited by Richard Hunter and Donald Russell. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 222. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-107-00204-3. Paperback £22.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-17360-5.

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good thought, nor about the point of his deploying it where he did. By contrast, the explanation of Plutarch's allusion to Plato's Cave (206) really does succeed in elucidating what *Plutarch* is doing *in this passage*, and *why*. The contrast is one that only heightens a sense of missed opportunities. The focus of the similarly coloured commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*[13] is 'an encounter with the dialogue itself', in which Harvey Yunis has 'attempted to loosen up a bit the constraints of received wisdom and to take a fresh look at what Plato says in this dialogue…and how he chooses to say it' (ix). That's just what we need – and the attempt is strikingly successful, with good things to say, for example, about the plot-based unity of the dialogue, Plato's overall strategy, and the varied character of Platonic style. Highly recommended. David Raeburn and Oliver Thomas have designed their commentary on *Agamemnon*[14] for 'students who are approaching the play for the first time', though with some prior acquaintance with Sophocles or Euripides in Greek. It should work well. Linguistic guidance is generous, well judged, and clear; readers are not sheltered from textual problems, but nor are these discouragingly laboured (Page's text and apparatus are reproduced). Interpretative issues are given due attention in the introduction and commentary. I cannot give unqualified approval to (yet another) book that blurs Aristotle's distinction between *peripeteia* and change of fortune (xxviii), and in metrical analyses I never warm to impressionistic characterizations – 'rolling dactyls' (78), 'solemn trochees' (84), 'the effect is beguiling first time through, sinister in the antistrophe' (251). But such blemishes are negligible compared to the volume's merits. Patrick Finglass has produced a second heavyweight Sophoclean commentary (cf. *G&R* 56 [2009], 102) with amazing rapidity, but without diminution of scholarly excellence.[15] The introduction to *Ajax* is less perfunctory than that to *Electra*, and not only because it explains why the apparatus is leaner. There are many incisive analyses in the commentary – though, inevitably, some comments merit dissent. I am, for example, more inclined to side with Athene, who indicates that no-one is προνούστερος ('more forethoughtful') than Ajax (119), than with Finglass, who invalidly infers 'contempt for mere deliberation' (380, on 815–18) from a context in which Ajax is putting into effect a decision made earlier after careful deliberation. The authors of a recent speculation that *Ajax* was the first play of a trilogy[16] are rightly rebuked for their over-confident assumption about which Sophocles is referred to in *TrGF* I Did. B5.8. But the argument that *Ajax* 1008–21 anticipates *Teucer* in such detail that an audience 'is unlikely to have taken kindly to being presented with the same material twice in one sitting' (36) is lame. If F579a Radt is from Sophocles' *Teucer* (Finglass objects that Aristotle cites it 'without specifying an author': if Aristotle cites a play twice without thinking it

[13] *Plato. Phaedrus*. Edited by Harvey Yunis. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 270. 2 maps. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-84776-6; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-61259-3.

[14] *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus. A Commentary for Students*. By David Raeburn and Oliver Thomas. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. lxxiv + 289. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-959560-0; paperback £29.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-959561-7.

[15] *Sophocles. Ajax*. Edited by P. J. Finglass. Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 48. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 290. 3 tables. Hardback £110, ISBN: 978-1-107-00307-1.

[16] M. Heath and E. OKell, 'Sophocles' *Ajax*: Expect the Unexpected', *CQ* 57 (2007), 363–80.

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needed explicit attribution, which attested author of a *Teucer* is a likelier candidate?), then the play included a hostile intervention by Odysseus that would retrospectively transform the closing scenes of *Ajax*. Does Finglass really believe that finding a gripping way to exploit that scenario was beyond the powers of a dramatist of Sophocles' stature? The author of *Rhesus* was far from being Sophocles' dramaturgical equal. In his commentary, Vayos Liapis[17] resists any temptation to exaggerate the dramatist's merits or cover up his shortcomings so resolutely that I began to think him uncharitable. Might the chorus' change of tone between 23 ff. and 76–7 be, not a blatant and inexplicable self-contradiction (xli), but a rational response to their having just learned that the seers have advised restraint and having observed worrying symptoms of Hector's rash impatience reasserting itself? Hector's over-confidence is familiar from the *Iliad*; so, as Polydamas could testify, is his 'gratuitous harshness' (xlvii) towards inferiors. Since domineering individuals tend not to welcome competition from domineering rivals, Hector's cool response to Rhesus (474–84) is realistic, not an example of 'the author's incompetence' (xlviii). Liapis can see 'no point' (291) in a debate in which Hector mounts only a weak self-defence against an accusation of complicity in Rhesus' death that we know, in any case, is false: the point lies precisely in the image of an accused unable to defend himself against a charge of which he is wholly innocent. I'm only surprised that cliché addicts have not been climbing over each other to celebrate this 'problematization' of forensic persuasion. Perhaps, then, there is more to be said in defence of this dramatist's competence than Liapis acknowledges. Nevertheless, this fine work of scholarship fills a long-standing gap, and fills it admirably. Judith Fletcher's *Performing Oaths in Classical Greek Drama*[18] begins with an encouragingly brisk and concrete analysis of the standard elements of oaths (3–11), but soon pays a disheartening visit to the tattoo parlour of cutting-edge jargon: 'oaths are in some sense inscribed upon the bodies of men and women in Greek drama'(11). What sense? We are not told. Nor, though the book contains more than seventy-five occurrences of 'performative' and 'performativity', is this key concept ever explained. A declared affiliation to Austin is insufficient, since the category of performative utterance evolves, and ultimately dissolves, in the course of *How to Do Things with Words*. It occasionally dissolves in Fletcher's hands, too: when 'performative utterance' is glossed as 'speech act' (36; cf. 35), 'performative' has ceased to mark a distinction among utterances. So what useful work is it doing? Is saying that, in *Iliad* 1, 'performative language is linked…with each speech act creating a perlocutionary effect that leads to further speech acts' (21) more than a needlessly elaborate, and needlessly circumscribed, statement of the obvious – acts have consequences, some of which are other acts? Conjecture about whether the Erinyes, had they presented themselves to an Athenian court in the 460s, would have been barred from speaking (as females) or permitted (as gods) is probably futile. What is certain is that, in a mythological court established by a female presiding officer specifically to give the Erinyes an opportunity to present their case, it makes no sense to say that 'as females

[17] *A Commentary on the Rhesus Attributed to Euripides*. By Vayos Liapis. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. lxxviii + 364. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-959168-8.

[18] *Performing Oaths in Classical Greek Drama*. By Judith Fletcher. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xii + 277. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-76273-1.

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representing a female, the Erinyes are not…"the appropriate persons" for the procedure' (58). Nor is it true that an oath of silence 'secures Hippolytus' predetermined doom' (190). The prospect of his denouncing her that impels Phaedra's pre-emptive action would have been as much a threat to her if he were not under oath. Or is Fletcher's point that the threatened oath-breaking is tantamount to perjury? She suggests that 'even a whiff of perjury is enough to offend the oath god' (191), citing Herodotus 6.86. Yet Hippolytus' impulsive threat is very different from the premeditated attempt to implicate Apollo in perjury described in Herodotus' story. Moreover, Fletcher overlooks the response that the story evokes from the Athenians who are its internal audience in Herodotus: they are wholly unimpressed. At one point in *Politics and Anti-realism in Athenian Old Comedy,*[19] Ian Ruffell equates 'not…a vehicle of serious intent' with 'outside of meaningful discourse' (59), from which it seems to follow that the book must be a humourless conceptual muddle. Far from it! The extensive and well-informed reflections on 'this thing called literary theory' (viii) are lucid, thoughtful, and independently minded; detailed analysis of Aristophanic passages, the graveyard of so many scholarly senses of humour, is accomplished with penetrating insight. Ruffell is also impressively skilful in developing a complex argument over the course of such a lengthy book. An index of his skill is the frequency with which I formulated a 'yes, I agree with that: but what about…?', only to find that my reservation had been anticipated and was to be addressed in the following chapter. Would I run out of reservations? I could deride the attempt to evade authorial intention by personifying texts – a self-confessed 'inelegant fudge' (39), which seems even odder when one comes across, not only barely disguised attributions of intention (e.g. 'Aristophanes is making a strong point', 206), but even speculations about authorial consciousness (77). I could maintain that the 'doctor's wife' joke (87) becomes, not 'more' (95), but (even) less satisfying if one closes down the indeterminacy of the scenario. If desperate, I could even quibble about the solecistic application of 'analogue' to a biological homology (27). Yet Ruffell seemed confident that we differ at some more fundamental level (286). So what, ultimately, is it that I disagree with? Certainly not the final, anodyne conclusion: 'By itself, comedy may not be able to change the world, but it can certainly shape our perception of it and with that comes the potential for change' (429). Who would maintain that comedy *cannot* do that? But when Ruffell speaks of 'hard-headed examination and analysis of the state of the city and the nature of politics' (209), his earlier awareness of the problems of transworld identification seems to have deserted him. Would Aristophanes' audience have conflated caricature with reality so readily? The question is crucial, since 'comedy as an act of communication…cannot be understood without forming hypotheses about how the audience will process the fiction, narrative, and humour' (18). Ruffell looks for the 'model audience' that Aristophanes and other representatives of Old Comedy construct in their texts, on the premise that 'the text/performance strives to create conditions for its interpretation' (264). Personifying fudge aside, I agree. So our disagreement is probably rooted in different answers to this question – a subtle and

[19] *Politics and Anti-realism in Athenian Old Comedy. The Art of the Impossible*. By Ian Ruffell. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 499. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-0-19-958721-6.

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difficult judgement. Yet a certain elusiveness in Ruffell's position left me still in doubt as to how far apart we really are. He sometimes characterizes what comedy does in terms too vague to argue over, such as 'exploration' (171, 206, 422) or 'engagement' (156). As he acknowledges, 'political engagement is not at issue. What is contested is the manner and effect (and intent) of that engagement' (263). But when he uses the more robust-seeming language of 'political intervention' (157, 422), which is the kind of thing that Brecht does (220), or of 'political project' (410, 421), I miss a comparably robust specification of the project. Whether or not you agree with what you take Ruffell to be saying, he has written a wonderful book: reading it will leave you able to think more intelligently about the issues that it discusses.

Comedies were performed in a competitive context. That obvious fact provides Zachary Biles[20] with a fresh angle of approach to interpreting them: 'I argue that festival agonistics provide an underlying logic for the overall thematic design of individual plays, and that by analysis of them we can recover an important strand of the plays' meaning for the poets and their audiences' (2). This thesis is developed through readings of *Acharnians*, *Knights*, *Clouds*, *Wasps* as a response to Cratinus' *Pytine*, and *Frogs*. Though readers will need to work hard to winnow well-founded probabilities from attractive possibilities, the abundance of the latter makes the book an unusually fertile source of stimulus. For example, Biles gives an illuminating analysis of the role of the Rural Dionysia in *Acharnians* (6–70). The suggestion that Aristophanes' decision to direct *Knights* himself was a response to 'the parabatic accusations of rival poets, who took the liberty of interpreting his reliance on directors as a sign of inexperience or…incompetence' (102, cf. 39–40) is attractive, and prompts a further reflection: since failure would have catastrophically sabotaged his response to criticism, Aristophanes must have been *very* confident that with *Knights* he had a sure-fire winner.

David Kawalko Roselli's *Theater of the People*[21] attempts a demographic analysis of the theatre audience. The fundamental thesis that the audience was diverse, and not a uniform collective, is obviously right, and I am therefore sympathetic to the claim that 'our models of the theater in ancient Athens need to be revised to include the multiple perspectives derived from quite differently constituted groups of people' (18). Unfortunately, the existence of a need does not guarantee the availability of the evidence that would enable us to meet it. What evidence we do have requires a more disciplined approach than it receives here: anecdotes of dubious historicity are cited uncritically; primary sources are not always correctly reported; sometimes they are not reported at all; there is a heavy reliance on such qualifiers as 'may', 'perhaps', 'likely', and (never earned) 'doubtless'; contentious claims (e.g. 'comedy did embody the values of the urban poor', 54) are made without supporting argument. Yet, though Roselli does not, in my view, succeed in his main project, the book is well worth reading for its informative discussions of recent developments in thinking about the physical history of the theatre complex and aspects of festival organization such as the *theōrika*.

The Greeks and the

[20] *Aristophanes and the Poetics of Competition*. By Zachary P. Biles. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 290. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-521-76407-0.

[21] *Theater of the People. Spectators and Society in Ancient Athens*. By David Kawalko Roselli. Austin, TX, University of Texas Press, 2011. Pp. xiv + 288. 11 b/w illustrations. Hardback £37, ISBN: 978-0-292-72394-8.

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New[22] is recent, up-to-date, and original – in other words, it is itself new in a variety of different ways. Armand d'Angour's exemplary awareness of the lexical and conceptual diversity of 'the new', together with his strikingly wide range of reference, makes it hard to say exactly what he has succeeded in doing. The negative project of refuting the view that the Greeks were 'in the grip of the past' seems too easy for success to count as a major achievement: but could the positive task of illuminating attitudes to such a polymorphic phenomenon as novelty possibly succeed? No matter: if exploring a large topic with subtlety and elegance without confining it in a narrow prison of reductive formulae is failure, we would profit from more such failures. On the subject of reductive formulae, the freight of unexamined clichés and oversimplifications carried by 'the Second Sophistic' always brings me out in pimples. This allergy may have contributed to my disappointment with Lawrence Kim's widely praised examination of the treatment of Homer's factual reliability in Strabo, Dio's *Trojan Oration*, Lucian's *True Stories,* and Philostratus' *Heroicus*.[23] However, denying that Eratosthenes and Strabo were engaged in 'a debate over poetry and its objectives in general' (60) a page before quoting Strabo's rejection of Eratosthenes' claim that '*every* poet aims at entertainment, not instruction' (61) is an objective inconsistency; and it surely takes excessive credulity to think of these works of Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus as 'constantly hovering on the borders of credibility' (219). These are local blemishes. A more general problem is glimpsed in this chapter opening: 'Only two generations or so separate Strabo from Dio of Prusa… It is therefore striking to encounter Dio demolishing Homer's authority and historical credentials as vigorously as Strabo had tried to establish them' (85). Why is that 'striking'? It is not especially noteworthy even when two authors in the *same* generation take opposite lines – as Kim is aware: the contrarian character of his authors' relationship to a changing ideological context is the very thing that he holds constant. Strabo's insistence on Homer's historical accuracy is a product of anxiety 'about the place of being Greek in a changing world' (84); in contrast, after a cultural revival 'centred on a renewed appreciation of ancient tradition and the distant past' (84), Dio 'targets the unthinking reverence with which the Greeks under the Empire…took solace in their glorious past' (218); he, Lucian, and Philostratus all 'problematize the ideological motivations that have placed Homer at the heart of Imperial Greek culture' (219). I find that narrative construct artificial, especially when the data points on which it is based are so few, and so very different in genre and intent. Lucian, you may recall, was given a guided tour of the Islands of the Impious (*Ver. Hist.* 2.31), where he learned that the worst punishments are reserved for untruthful historians, and where he saw Ctesias being tormented (along with Herodotus and others). If you think that Lucian's report hovers on the borders of credibility, and would like to know what Ctesias did to deserve his fate, I

[22] *The Greeks and the New. Novelty in Ancient Greek Imagination and Experience*. By Armand d'Angour. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. x + 264. 1 table. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-85097-1; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-61648-5.

[23] *Homer Between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature*. By Lawrence Kim. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 246. Hardback £58, ISBN: 978-0-521-19449-5.

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recommend Andrew Nichols' new translation and commentary on the fragments of the *Indica*.[24]

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Latin Literature

'Reading Ovid is a joy': it is hard for a seasoned Classicist to think back to a life Before Ovid, but Katharina's Volk's new introduction (published in Blackwell's Introduction to the Classical World series)[25] – where this claim rings out (ix) – is designed to draw into the circle those who have not yet experienced the pleasures of initiation. Aimed at the general reading public and at newcomers to Ovid, her book is also a delight for experienced Ovidian scholars, providing an engaging, attractive, and thoughtful overview of the poet and his works that shows why his oeuvre remains intellectually valuable as well as an enjoyable read. Fluent and accessible, the volume covers a great deal of ground with lightness of foot. Volk takes a thematic approach that cuts across individual works in productive ways, but the simple titles of the chapters – 'Work', 'Life', 'Elegy', 'Myth', 'Art', 'Women', 'Rome', 'Reception' – do not adequately convey a sense of the treasures that lie within their pages. Chapter 5 on 'Art', for instance, tackles issues of rhetoric, the relationship between art and reality and art and artifice, truth and lies, deception, and 'desirable lies' in a mere fifteen pages, in a way that genuinely engages one critically and philosophically. Throughout, big ideas are artfully clarified with brief pointed discussions of moments in the poems. The volume is very light on scholarly endnotes (ten in total), yet richly informed by up-to-date scholarship – a section on Further Reading points the reader in all the right directions. For a student, Volk's introduction provides a wealth of starting points for further study. For those reading Ovid for pleasure, it will give a wonderful context for enhanced appreciation of Ovid's poetry. Volk's enthusiastic and nuanced engagement with the poetry is communicated on every page. Ovid dominates the landscape of recent publications: besides Volk's introduction, my latest box of books includes two monographs on the *Metamorphoses*, as well as commentaries on books of the *Tristia* and the *Amores*. One highlight is an accomplished debut monograph by Marie Louise von Glinski that looks at the *Metamorphoses* from a new angle, by skilfully exploring not merely the many roles of similes in the poem (which would in itself have made for a valuable, if perhaps less sophisticated, study) but also the idea of metamorphosis *as* simile and the relation of this to the central theme of identity.[26] A core idea, articulated in full in Chapter 1, is that the figure of the simile – where closure is resisted because both comparanda retain their individual identities – resonates with the openness and lack of resolution in the metamorphoses that Ovid

[24] *Ctesias. On India*. Translated with an introduction and commentary by Andrew Nichols. London, Bristol Classical Press, 2011. Pp. 189. Paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-1-853-99742-6.

[25] *Ovid*. By Katharina Volk. Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World. Chichester and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Pp. x + 147. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-405-13642-6.

[26] *Simile and Identity in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. By Marie Louise von Glinski. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. vi + 173. Hardback £55, ISBN 978-0-521-76096-6.

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