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SUBJECT REVIEWS

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

Greek Literature

The 'winged words' of Homeric epic have made many flights of cultural migration, carrying their poetry all the way from the singers' voices of archaic Greece to the hypertextually active era of digital media. In *The Printed Homer*[1] Philip Young sets himself to chart those journeys through both narrative and bibliographic data. The first part of his book tells the story of (rival theories of) the poems' creation, their ancient/medieval transmission, and the evolution of their printing history. Covering so much territory in 170 pages, Young's manner is unsurprisingly second-hand and anecdotal (and his word-for-word rendering of the start of the *Iliad* exposes a shaky grasp of Greek), but he does manage to accumulate a miscellany of curious titbits, particularly in regard to the poems' translation history since the Renaissance. In the second half of the book Young employs his skills as a professional librarian to compile what purports to be a comprehensive listing of printed editions/translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (as well as the Hymns and *Batrachomyomachia*), in more than seventy languages, between 1470 and 2000. I have not been able to check the accuracy of the listings extensively, but I started to encounter misprints and inconsistencies as soon as I took some samples, so caution is in order. Even so, the catalogue is a reference resource of potential value for those concerned with the course of Homeric reception from the age of the book up to our own bright new electronic world. The abundance of available translations of Homer has induced Peter Jones to make his ⋆*Homer's Iliad*[2] a simultaneous commentary on no less than three of them, two prose (Rieu, as previously revised by Jones himself, and Hammond), one verse (Lattimore). This is an ingenious way of catering for multiple student audiences: a decidedly non-Cerberean specimen of three-headedness. Aiming, he says, at first-time readers, Jones concentrates on elucidating the plot, explaining names and other details, and giving concise thematic pointers; but the achievement is greater than those modest aims suggest: there are plenty of perceptive remarks, on (e.g.) similes, characters, and narrative technique, from which even advanced readers could draw some benefit. Jones packs in an extremely generous, wide-ranging amount of information, including a commendably punchy general introduction, an overview of each book, short running plot-summaries, and a meaty index (but 'war' is a strange omission); there are also lots of targetted bibliographical tips, though, regrettably, no reference to two previous commentaries on translations, J. Hogan's *A Guide to the* Iliad (1979), based on Fitzgerald's version, and

[1] *The Printed Homer.* A 3,000 Year Publishing and Translation History of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By Philip H. Young. McFarland, Jefferson N.C., 2003. Pp. vi + 481. Hardback £52.95.

[2] *Homer's Iliad.* A Commentary on Three Translations. By Peter Jones. Duckworth, London, 2003. Pp. 345. Paperback £12.99.

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Postlethwaite's on Lattimore (see *G&R* 48 [2001], 229). It would be wrong to quibble in this context over an occasional lack of nuance in some of Jones's typically hard-hitting opinions. What matters is that he has put together an eminently pithy, practical guide for students; it deserves to be strongly recommended to sixth-formers and undergraduates. Peter Jones makes a second appearance in this batch, this time as joint translator, with Gabriele Wright, of Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich's *Wounding and Death in the* Iliad.[3] First published in German in 1956, the book represents an unusual combination of topics, medicine and stylistics. Its basic exercise, expanded by many subordinate lines of argument, is to assess degrees of realism/fantasy in the physical details of wounds and killings, and to move from those assessments to hypotheses (in the 'Analyst' mode) about layers of authorship and composition in the poem. Although Friedrich draws attention to some striking features of, and variations between, wounding scenes, his method displays the critical arbitrariness and naivety of a dated school of thought – above all, a conviction that the analyst can see through stylistic-cum-narrative textures and intuit different versions of a story or strata of composition. A single but characteristic example: from Sarpedon's quasi-dying words at 5.684–8 Friedrich infers that the lines 'once' belonged to a description of the hero's actual death, as though a poet could not manipulate dramatic motifs for special effect. The book frequently borders on a parody of misdirected pedantry. Matters are not helped by the fact that the English translation is sometimes lumpy and handles syntax maladroitly. The most useful part of the publication is probably the appendix by K. B. Saunders, a retired doctor, who reexamines many of the passages discussed by Friedrich and offers a synthesis of what modern medical expertise can make of the Homeric wounds, often modifying Friedrich's analysis in the process. Two books on the *Odyssey* from the same U.S. publisher are aimed very much at an American student market. James Morrison's *Companion to Homer's* Odyssey[4] has three introductory chapters on the usual basics of mythology, 'values', and the poem's relation to Greek history, followed by book-by-book summaries which consistently foreground the fluctuating themes of identity, hospitality, and homecoming. There are illustrations, miscellaneous sidebars, and appendices that include pointers to the *Odyssey*'s later influence (from Dante to the movies) and give suggestions for classroom activities ('write a series of ''underworld'' interviews set in 2003 . . .'). The main virtue of Morrison's book is that he manages to present some of the concerns of recent scholarship in a form assimilable even by schoolchildren; he also picks up on ways of relating the Odyssean imagination to the modern world (the experience of Vietnam veterans and their families, for instance). To sustain his liveliness, however, he adopts a bright and breezy tone which will not be equally congenial to everyone (in book 7, 'despite not knowing this guy's name', Alcinous offers his daughter in marriage, 'with a house and Swiss bank account thrown in for good measure'). But anyone looking for ways of injecting some enthusiasm into the study/teaching of the *Odyssey* in schools will not find Morrison a dull companion. Claudia and Vernon Johnson's *Understanding the* Odyssey[5]

[3] *Wounding and Death in the* Iliad. Homeric Techniques of Description. By Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich. Translated by Peter Jones and Gabriele Wright. Duckworth, London, 2003. Pp. xviii + 167. Hardback £45.

[4] *A Companion to Homer's* Odyssey. By James Morrison. Greenwood Press, Westport Conn., 2003. Pp. xiv + 210. Hardback £29.

[5] *Understanding the* Odyssey. A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents. Greenwood Press, Westport Conn., 2003. Pp. xvii + 224. Hardback £29.

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has something in common with Morrison's contemporary slant. It is a highly eclectic anthology, intended to stimulate exploration of the *Odyssey*'s relationship not only to Greek culture but also to parallel themes in later periods. The sources are therefore a great mixture. Passages from ancient texts (Hesiod, for instance, on myth and farming, Thucydides on early Greek history, Plato on the place of poetry in education, Aristotle on slaves) sit alongside extracts from ancient history textbooks, travel writings, popular archaeology, and newspaper articles on the enduring Odyssean issues of revenge (Ulster and the Middle East figure here), athleticism (including the treatment of Jesse Owens after his victories in the 1936 Olympics), and heroism (with cases that include the firefighters of 9/11). The material is centrifugally disparate, the *Odyssey* itself in danger of getting swamped. But inventive teachers could no doubt quarry some novel ideas to experiment with.

Despite the perpetual flood of publications on Homer, it is a while since anyone produced a fresh, well-rounded introduction to the poems and their origins. That is what Barry Powell's ⋆*Homer*[6] achieves with great panache, covering lots of obligatory ground – the creation of the two epics, their relation to history, their narrative features and design – but in a manner that combines up-to-date, expert scholarship (on, for instance, the relationship of the Greek alphabet to antecedent Mesopotamian writing systems) with genuine independence of mind. Powell pushes certain views more confidently than some specialists will like: e.g., that the poems are 'oral dictated texts', that the alphabet was actually invented to notate epic, and that seventh-century visual art is directly influenced by Homer's work. But this is a price worth paying for the unfailing sparkle of the writing. Powell often cuts incisively through encrusted misconceptions found in previous work ('because [the Analysts'] premises were wrong their work to a large degree was a waste of time'; 'to say that the formulaic style limits a poet's expressiveness is . . . like saying that words limit what we can say'), and his treatment of the epics spices lucid and often shrewd summary ('when Achilles abandons his anger, . . .he has a deep moral vision . . . but no one with whom to share it') with thought-provoking heterodoxy: 'there is much humor in the *Iliad* (but almost none in the *Odyssey*)'; 'the *Doloneia* is a splendid piece of work with an eerie cut-throat mood'; and the poet best placed to make the *Odyssey* a counterpart to the *Iliad* 'was Homer himself'. This is by far the most stimulating short introduction to Homeric epic that I know; it should be high up on every school and undergraduate reading-list.

Far drier, alas, is Robert Zaborowski's *La crainte et le courage dans l'*Iliade *et l'*Odyssée.[7] Zaborowski, a Polish scholar, follows many others in interpreting Homeric conceptions of mind/soul through a close lexical analysis of psychological terminology. He is well read in the secondary literature (though Michael Clarke's *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer* [1999] must have been too recent for him: see *G&R* 48 [2001], 91–2) and his work is extensively documented. The heart of the project is a typology of the language and symptoms of different kinds of fear and courage in Homer; observations on hundreds of passages are organized into lexicographical sections dealing with twenty-two word-families for fear, ten for courage. One can say things both *pro* and *contra* this method: on one side, the benefits of a strong verbal particularity; on the other, the 'lexical bias' that regards systematic scrutiny of individual words as the best way of understanding the possibilities of a poetic language.

[6] *Homer*. By Barry B. Powell. Blackwell, Oxford, 2004. Pp. xvi + 176. Paperback £15.99.

[7] *La crainte et le courage dans l'*Iliade *et l'*Odyssée. By Robert Zaborowski. Stakroos, Warsaw, 2002. Pp. 373. No price given.

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Zaborowski (who, to be fair, is not unaware of the limitations of his approach) certainly practises the method diligently, and it is good that he attends to multiple aspects of emotion, including its causes, objects, dynamics, and physical manifestations. But the results are rarely surprising and sometimes jejune, telling one little more than dictionary entries; charts and statistics are no substitute for more sustained readings of emotions in context. This book classifies a large quantity of data in a way that will have some utility as a reference tool, though it badly needs an index locorum. Finally, on the Homeric front, a book which builds an enterprising bridge between ancient poetry and modern thought. The French philosopher and religious thinker Simone Weil wrote her essay 'L'*Iliade* ou le poème de la force', a passionate critique of the corrupting effects of violence on human character, at the start of the second World War; it was first published in French, pseudonymously, in 1940–1, and appeared in English as early as 1945. (Weil died in 1943, at the age of only thirty-four; most of her prolific writings were printed posthumously.) James Holoka has produced a bilingual edition of the essay,[8] with a new translation by himself and a thirty-five page commentary which analyses the argument and adduces relevant literature both ancient and modern. Weil's essay, coloured by a Christian-Platonist spiritualism that is peculiarly her own, has probably been cited with appreciation more often by anglophone than by French Homerists in the past twenty-five years. But praise of its ethical commitment and sensitivity has to be tempered by doubts about whether its thesis that the epic paints an unconditionally negative picture of war (showing, above all, that violence 'kills' those who use it) does full justice to the poem's complex values. Holoka's edition is an informative contextualization of a fascinating if idiosyncratic piece of mid-twentieth-century Homeric reception. Reception of a passionate and controversial kind is also to the fore in Rush Rehm's *Radical Theatre*,[9] a set of essays that present Greek tragedy as a medium through which to confront fundamental issues in the modern world, including those of environmental damage, American foreign policy, rampant capitalism, racism, terrorism, and poverty. Rehm is well known for writing that is nothing if not challengingly wide in sweep (see *G&R* 50 [2003], 104, for his *The Play of Space*); his latest book will disappoint no one in that respect. Simultaneously attacking the inward-looking conventions of much modern theatre, the reality-evading relativisms of 'performance theory', and the history-fleeing complacencies of much modern culture, Rehm argues for the horrifying but emboldening power of Greek tragedy to confront the extremes of the human predicament. He insists on tragedy's location in public spaces (both theatrical and imaginative), its instructive dramatization of fear, its focus on the paradox of human agency vulnerably exercised in the face of 'fate', its scope for ideological questioning, and its engagement with multiple aspects of time. This book 'generalises boldly' (Rehm's own phrase) about the 'deep content' of ancient plays and the desperate plight of the modern world, creating a polemical collage of scenes from tragedy with vignettes from contemporary politics. But one might wonder why, if Greek tragedy has a 'bracing otherness', Rehm can move so *easily* from its mythic world to burning global issues of today: one finds oneself transported in a half a page,

[8] *Simone Weil's The* Iliad *or the Poem of Force*. A Critical Edition. Edited and translated by James P. Holoka. Peter Lang, New York, 2003. Pp.+ 130. Paperback $19.95.

[9] *Radical Theatre*. Greek Tragedy and the Modern World. By Rush Rehm. Duckworth, London, 2003. Pp. 174. Paperback £10.99.

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for instance, from the inherited woes of the Labdacids to statistics for the U.S.A.'s spent nuclear fuel. I admire Rehm's fervent belief in the capacity of theatre to make us think, feel, and question more deeply; his book throws up big ideas for debate. But I did find myself muttering, from time to time, 'n'allez pas plus vite que la musique'. The curiously named series, 'The Greek Tragedy in New Translations', was founded in the 1970s with the aim of getting working poets to produce creative versions of the plays. More recently it has adjusted its guiding principle to one of collaboration between poets and scholars. *Antigone*,[10] by Reginald Gibbons and the late Charles Segal (who previously worked together on *Bacchae*), is an effective piece of work, though it has many competitors (including Paul Woodruff's lean version: see *G&R* 49 [2002], 241, 51 [2004], 108–9) and its style is, if truth be told, not so different from the typical idiom of many non-poet translators. In fact, Reg Gibbons admits (or laments), in his honest introduction to the translation, that for 'unavoidable historical and cultural reasons' contemporary English lacks expressive equivalents to many lexical and stylistic registers of the Greek originals. So the choices he and Segal make bear traces of compromise. Dialogue scenes are rendered in short lines that avoid prolixity but are sometimes caught (in word order, for example) between the conflicting claims of living speech and stylized solemnity. In the lyrics, by contrast, the translators are free to put more pressure on the language, using compression and rhythmic angularity to squeeze out maximum semantic resonance, though there is less lyric fluency than in the Greek. The edition is enriched with an interpretative introduction by Segal and a substantial set of notes (practically a mini-commentary). Between them, annotation and translation pay commendably close attention to the fine weave of Sophoclean imagery. A new commentary on a Greek tragedy, ⋆*Euripides' Alcestis* by Luschnig and Roisman,[11] is purpose-built to give high-school pupils or undergraduates at intermediate level all the support they need in reading a complete work in the original. In addition to a brief introduction and clearly printed Greek text, students will find here a commentary that provides linguistic explanations and some grammatical back-up (e.g., sets of noun declensions), translations and scansions of the lyrics, and an admixture of other notes; a lengthy 'discussion' section, where the two authors encourage reflection on critical issues by posing questions to which they then supply *separate* answers (one would expect Euripidean scholars to enjoy a bit of an *agôn*); and a full vocabulary at the back (making the amount of vocabulary given in the commentary, however, rather excessive). This is a well executed task which will help intermediate students build their linguistic confidence; it is only slightly marred by a sprinkling of Greek misprints and a few slips (including a couple in the short introduction to iambic trimeters). It is a notable achievement of Jeffrey Henderson's to have published the four volumes of his Loeb Aristophanes over a period of only five years. The final instalment, ⋆*Frogs, Assemblywomen, Wealth*,[12] keeps up the high standards of its predecessors (see *G&R* 46 [1999], 82–3, 235, 48 [2001], 231). It would be ungracious at this stage to reiterate minor reservations. The

[10] *Sophocles* Antigone. Translated by Reginald Gibbons and Charles Segal. Oxford U.P., New York, 2003. Pp. ix + 197. Hardback £12.99.

[11] *Euripides'* Alcestis. With notes and commentary by C. A. E. Luschnig & H. M. Roisman. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 2003. Pp. xv + 284. Paperback $24.95.

[12] *Aristophanes, Frogs, Assemblywomen, Wealth.* LCL 180. Edited and translated by Jeffrey Henderson. Harvard U.P., 2002. Pp. 601. £14.50.

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substance and real value of the edition reside in the conjunction of a dependable text with a translation which, all things considered, strikes a happy balance between closeness and vigour. Although the latter is understandably more U.S. than U.K. in ethos, this admirable set of Loebs can expect to do lengthy service on both sides of the Atlantic.

STEPHEN HALLIWELL

Latin Literature

Habitués of Roma Termini will be familiar with a very large bookshop catering to almost every taste. Amongst its offerings there is always a wide selection of modestly priced classical texts with Italian translations. It tells us something about Italian culture that the publisher of these texts is now bringing out a third edition (since 1953) of Plautus' *Amphitruo*[1] with full introduction, text, and translation. Why is there nothing like it in British stations? In *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*,[2] Jeri Blair DeBrohun seeks to explain the apparently violent contrast between Propertius' imitation of Callimachus in his amatory elegiacs (books 1–3) and his openly political approach in book 4. Put with unfair brevity, the suggestion is that whereas, for the amatory work, Propertius subtly misrepresents Callimachus, in book 4 he is actually imitating Callimachus' *Aetia* with greater fidelity. 4.1 is obviously crucial to this investigation and many interesting observations are made, including an absolute certainty that it is a single poem; it is however disquieting to read the suggestion (p. 20) that the trochaic name *Horos* might be intended to suggest either the trochaic *῾Ωρος* (surely correctly, though he is given an impossible accent) or the dibrach *ὅρος* (surely not). Various interpretations of *Horos* are explored but it is in fact far most likely that his name and the exotic names attributed to his relatives are intended only to suggest the mysteries of Egypt. Next, DeBrohun reminds us that the poems of book 4 seem almost to alternate between patriotic aetiological poems (2, 4, 6, 9, 10) and amatory elegies (3, 5, 7, 8) and seeks to refute two popular interpretations of that fact, either that Propertius himself added the amatory elegies as an afterthought or that they were inserted by an editor ignorant of Propertius' purpose. To assist in this project, DeBrohun enlists the notion of a 'third' element as defined by Marjorie Garber, writing on the subject of transvestism (pp. 24–5). Readers may judge for themselves the utility of this element from a not untypical sentence: 'Through the exposure and reinscription of certain of elegy's central strategies and themes, what I have called "thirds", Propertius multiplies the text's possibilities for creating meaning and evokes a number of possible interpretative responses from the reader. Viewed in one way, the use of "thirds" has a universalizing effect' (pp. 236–7). Readers may also wonder at the significance of 'verbal doubles' (p. 213) when they notice that the term includes the occurrence of *signa* both at 4.6.24 and 38 lines later. The general conclusions that Propertius was writing under the same pressures as were Virgil and Horace, and that each found his own way of coming to

[1] *Plauto Anfitrione*. Prefazione di Cesare Questa, introduzione di Guido Paduano, traduzione di Marco Scàndola. Testo latino a fronte. Classici Greci e Latini, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 3rd edition, 2003. Pp. 219. Paperback €8.50.

[2] *Roman Propertius and the Reinvention of Elegy*. By Jeri Blair DeBrohun. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2003. Pp. xii + 263. Hardback £34.

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