reader with a Greek passage to illustrate her argument; occasionally she fails even to give the reference for a citation. For example, on p. 20 n. 94 she affirms that '$\beta\acute{\iota}\eta$ has a negative sense only once in the *Iliad*, in a recent passage'. The reader would like to know which passage the author had in mind—and why it is characterized as 'recent'.

This is a very long book and it is all the more regrettable that the lack of theoretical sophistication renders it superficial, even if this is often the way with dissertations. As a compendium of information, however, it will be useful.

Brown University PURA NIETO HERNÁNDEZ

THE INVENTION OF LITERATURE?

A. FORD: *The Origins of Criticism. Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*. Pp. xiv + 356. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002. Cased, £29.95. ISBN: 0-691-07485-2.

Andrew Ford offers us in this substantial volume an ambitious and challenging attempt to rewrite the history of early Greek criticism. The discussion is detailed, wide-ranging, impressively documented, and often highly original. Since it is far too rich a book to summarize (or discuss) in full in a short review, I shall simply say that everyone should read it for themselves, and proceed to raise a few questions.

F. defines 'criticism', at least for the opening phase of the story he tells, as 'any public act of praise or blame upon a performance of song' (p. 3). This reflects his emphasis on the 'close connection between social occasion and critical values' (p. xi) in late archaic discussions of literature—a connection broken as the story unfolds. Because of this break, it is misleading if earlier criticism is read with hindsight as a series of contributions to a single, progressively emergent critical discourse. Rather, what later emerged was a different kind of discourse about poetry: there was 'a fundamental and broad shift from early responses to singing as a form of behavior regulated by social, political, and religious values to a conception of poetry as a verbal artifact, an arrangement of language subject to grammatical analysis, formal classification, and technical evaluation' (p. 8).

In his treatment of the earlier period, F.'s programmatic emphasis yields valuable fruit in a series of readings that seek to place the material more fully in a social and cultural context than has been done before. The evidence is, of course, scanty, and F. is sensitive to its limitations and to the fact that accidents of preservation are not necessarily representative (see, for example, the apposite observations on the possibly 'adventitious centrality' of Gorgias, p. 172). This awareness enables him to subject received interpretations to a sceptical reappraisal, while showing (in general) proper caution in proposing alternatives.

My doubts became progressively stronger, however, the nearer we got to the end of the story. Chapter 10 marks a crucial turning point with its title, 'the invention of literature'. But when F. has taken such care to avoid reading anticipations of later critical discourse back into the archaic period, it is disquieting to find him claiming that 'it is first in the fourth century that we can recognize something like the modern notion of literature as imaginative writing and of literary criticism as a special knowledge of such writings' (p. xi). 'The' modern concept of literature (ill-defined and, in my view, of deeply questionable usefulness) is the product of a long and complex post-classical history: I would need a lot of convincing that it can validly be mapped onto fourth-century concepts. The same goes for 'art': when F. (speaking of the

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Phaedrus) says 'Plato first defines art-works as . . .' (p. 240), the searching scrutiny to which he subjects earlier texts has given way to far too easy a projection of a modern category onto an ancient text.

The point may be illustrated from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which F. regards as 'the most conspicuous monument' (p. 8) of the 'properly literary criticism' (p. xi) that developed in the fourth century. Aristotle was certainly not talking about 'literature' or 'art' in the *Poetics*; he was not even about poetry in any normal sense—he defines a non-standard technical usage for the purposes of *Poetics* (a terminological innovation which Aristotle himself does not adhere to elsewhere). It is thus wrong to say that Aristotle is able 'to combine the recognized forms of poetry in his day under a single category, imitations using language' (p. 262): his category explicitly does *not* correspond to what contemporaries recognized as poetry. Nor am I persuaded that 'the Greek word that can be said to express a concept of fiction is Aristotle's *mimēsis*' (p. 231). Could one speak of (for example) a portrait or a piece of music (both mimetic in Aristotle's terminology) as fiction? F.'s distinctive definition of 'fiction' as 'a story or poem that, though not true, provides a special form of knowledge or a uniquely valuable experience' (p. 230), compounds the problem: that does not correspond to the way I (to say nothing of my local bookshop) use the word. And when Kant's aesthetics pops up in a footnote (p. 230 n. 3), I become still more deeply troubled.

The worry, of course, is that this assimilation of fourth-century to modern critical discourse may have skewed F.'s understanding of the development of ancient critical discourse. In his account, the 'specifically literary approach to song' that developed in the fourth century 'relied on transforming genre from social to formal requirements' (p. 251). But how deep is this opposition? 'Early evaluations of poets tended . . . to focus on whether they were socially and morally useful' (p. 293). But F.'s earliest 'critical scene', the argument over Phemius' song in *Od.* 1 (pp. 5–10), although it raises a question of who controls song, does not invoke social or moral usefulness; the only evaluative criterion that Telemachus applies to the song itself is freshness. F. does acknowledge, rather too unemphatically to my way of thinking, that 'formal and aesthetic qualities' were not ignored in archaic evaluation of song (p. 11; cf. p. 293). But in general he has remarkably little to say about the pervasive emphasis on loveliness, sweetness, and delight in archaic poetry's self-reflection.

One would, it is true, be hard-pressed to identify a similarly pervasive emphasis on social and moral usefulness of poetry in Aristotle. Even so, Aristotle does not ignore social and ethical values (as F. is well aware). The presence of ethically weighted concepts such as *spoudaios* at key points in Aristotle's theory of tragedy and, above all, the rôle of pity in an appropriate response to a properly composed tragedy, mean that ethical values are incorporated into his formal (but hardly 'formalist') analysis. When Aristotle distinguishes correctness in politics and poetics (1460b13–15), the underlying point cannot be that ethical values have no bearing on the evaluation of poetry; but determining *how* they bear is not straightforward, and must take account of what poems of a given kind aim at. The aims Aristotle has in mind there are internal, rather than external. Does that mean that he has severed poetry from its social contexts and occasions? Perhaps explicit reference to the occasion is unnecessary in analysing a poetic form. Aristotle might argue that we do not need to ask what *would* make a song appropriate to its occasion, because what *is* appropriate to that occasion has already (and more reliably) been determined by a prolonged social process, as generations of poets try things out and observe audiences' favourable or unfavourable responses. Appropriateness to occasion is therefore built into what is recognized as a good poem of that kind. (That we could speak of this process of social selection as evolutionary

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

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

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

University of Leeds MALCOLM HEATH

EARLY GREEK POETICS

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

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

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

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