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SUBJECT REVIEWS

Greek Literature

I began my last set of reviews by expressing doubts about the speculative literary prehistory in Mary Bachvarova's *From Hittite to Homer* (*G&R* 64 [2017], 65). Near Eastern antecedents also feature in Bruno Currie's *Homer's Allusive Art*.[1] Currie displays more methodological awareness and more intellectual suppleness: he recognizes the possibility of parallels arising independently (213–15), but denies that his examples can be coincidental, while acknowledging that this confronts us with a 'glaring paradox' (217). To be fair, he has a point in this instance, and in many of his other case studies; and his overarching argument is beautifully conceived. On the debit side of the account, there are methodological tautologies: that we should accept conclusions if there is 'sufficient warrant' (29) or the evidence is 'sufficiently compelling' (174), and not bring charges 'too quickly' (32), follows from the meaning of 'sufficient' and 'too'. Adverbial IOUs of indeterminate creditworthiness like 'arguably' (×45) are not an adequate substitute for arguments (cf. *G&R* 63 [2016], 235). 'Of course' (×50) is superfluous if it refers to what is genuinely a matter of course, and misleading if not. And, of course, Currie's use of scare quotes is arguably too extravagant. Some weaknesses are more substantive. For example, when trying to determine the *Iliad*'s relation to a hypothetical antecedent (designated '**Memnonis* (*Aethiops*)'), Currie maintains that 'the short life of Achilleus arguably [!] has the status of "fact" [!] because the audience knows – through familiarity with an earlier version – which way Achilleus is ultimately going to make up his mind' (62). Regardless of their familiarity with any hypothetical earlier version, the audience of the *Iliad* knows that Achilles' life will be short because the *extant* version establishes it as a fact when it makes this a presupposition of the exchange between Achilles and Thetis (*Il.* 1.352, cf. 416–18, 505–6). From 9.410–5 we might infer that what is presupposed in Book 1 results from Achilles' prior choice: if so, the change of mind implied in his answer to Odysseus is implicitly retracted in his response to Ajax (650–5). 'The choice that Achilleus is actually going to make only after the death of Patroklos' (62) had therefore already been made. It is disappointingly reductive to say that 'Diomedes plays out the part of Gilgamesh in this episode of *Iliad* V, but for this part of the *Iliad* Diomedes serves as a "stand-in" [!] for Achilleus, and Achilleus in the *Iliad* more widely plays out the part of Gilgamesh' (197): Homer's characters are not tokens, and Diomedes is always, and distinctively, himself. The point of putting *Od.* 19.96–604 alongside an alternative version manufactured to be parallel but different (47–55) eluded me entirely. 'I do not see', says Currie, 'what is gained by refusing to speak of allusion to a particular poem' (102).

[1] *Homer's Allusive Art.* By Bruno Currie. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 343. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-0-19-876882-1.

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Nor do I; and some of his parallels seemed compelling, however hard I tried to resist. Nevertheless, we must balance the loss in refusing to speak of allusion against the risks of building on foundations that may have too high a proportion of sand. Currie has written a brilliant and subtle book. Its contents will need careful sifting.

On a smaller scale, Barbara Graziosi's introduction to Homer[2] is written with a graceful economy that enables her to achieve a lot in her limited space. Her visualization of the Catalogues in *Iliad* 2 is illuminating (48–9), and she shows a rare appreciation for the later books of the *Odyssey* (52–5). Popularizing condescension is generally avoided – though I wondered why I needed to be told that Milman Parry was 'dashing' (15); the lapse is uncharacteristic. I would have welcomed a stronger sense of the poems' overarching narrative structures, and found things I wanted to question. 'In the *Iliad* writing is presented as a devious trick' (39) generalizes recklessly from a single instance. 'In the course of the poem, Achilles comes to realize that he is indeed the son of a mortal man' (62): his awareness of his mortality is evident from the start (1.352). 'Each man dies in a particular way. Each has a name…' (76): the poem's many anonymous victims do not deserve to be overlooked. Hector's 'acute sense of shame' (81) and his 'great sense of responsibility' (91) are mentioned, but not his irresponsible recklessness, overconfidence, and intolerance of dissenting advice. From *andra* (*Od.* 1.1) to 'what it is to be human' (95) is too big a step: *anēr* does not mean 'human'. Even so, this is an excellent example of its genre.

Edited volumes are best (obviously) if the contributions are consistently excellent, and if the theme is either sufficiently focused to produce a whole that is more than an aggregate of separate papers, or sufficiently novel to open up underexplored territory. Thematically, *The Reception of the Homeric Hymns*[3] breaks new ground and, despite the range of the eighteen contributions (Greek vase-painting; Augustan poetry; Greek literature of the Imperial, Late Antique, and Byzantine periods; Renaissance and modern literature), the editors have, as they hoped, managed to 'tie the individual chapters together' (20). The quality is also impressively high. I particularly enjoyed Oliver Thomas' demonstration of how the study of Renaissance reception is enriched by the study of manuscripts: 'my research suggests that there is a great deal here for future scholarship to explore' (299). That gives me something to look forward to.

By contrast, the theme of *Homeric Receptions Across Generic and Cultural Contexts*[4] is neither focused nor novel; nor do the introduction and twenty-eight papers deliver the rare treat of consistent excellence. There is good work here: for example, Andrej Petrovic on archaic funerary epigram; Chris Carey on Homer and epic in Herodotus; Kleanthis Mantzouranis, giving a good account of the work that Homer is made to do in Aristotle's discussion of courage; Maria Ypsilanti on Nonnus' *Paraphrase*. But many of the chapters struck me as routine. The stand-out contribution is undoubtedly

[2] *Homer*. By Barbara Graziosi. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. x + 154. 14 b/w illustrations. Hardback £10.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-878830-0.

[3] *The Reception of the Homeric Hymns*. Edited by Andrew Faulkner, Athanassios Vergados, and Andreas Schwab. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 409. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-872878-8.

[4] *Homeric Receptions Across Generic and Cultural Contexts*. Edited by Athanasios Efstathiou and Ioanna Karamanou. Berlin, de Gruyter, 2016. Pp. x + 495. Hardback £97.99, ISBN: 978-3-11-047783-2.

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Ivana Petrovic's chapter on the impact of Wolf's Homeric scholarship on the perception of South Slavic oral traditional poetry in the nineteenth century: a real eye-opener. The three chapters on Homer in silent film (Pantelis Michelakis), in Cacoyannis' cinematic trilogy (Anastasia Bakogianni), and in Theodorakis' music (Hara Thliveri) introduced me to material with which I was wholly unfamiliar; they engaged my attention more than metapoetics in Latin poetry.

So I approached *Contemporary Adaptations of Greek Tragedy*[5] in an optimistic frame of mind. I know and admire the work on Greek tragedy that the editor, George Rodosthenous, has done with drama students at Leeds, and 'a wide-ranging analysis of the role of the director in shaping adaptations for the stage today' (21) seemed sure to expand my horizons still further. Unfortunately, many of the contributors spread themselves too thinly, or are too anecdotal and lacking in detail, to give any clear sense of what was happening in any given adaptation, or (therefore) to ground any serious analysis. Much of the writing is impenetrable: for example, 'the body is heavily textualized, inscribed with signs that transcend discursive meaning, and, as a result, in its extraordinary transformability, becomes a vessel for *logos* to unravel its mysteries as pure sound' (55); or 'positing axiomatic questions' (62, a phrase which is, at least, concisely nonsensical). The contributor who, commenting on *Trojan Women*, asserts that 'it is on the female body that masculine aggression and violence is inscribed, especially at times of war' (98) should have given more thought to what has become of the Trojan men. Seemingly arbitrary dramatic gestures are often presented with no attempt to explain their point: 'they smear [Helen] with mud before a giant bear symbolically rapes her' (132); 'in the opening scene, Dionysus. . .holding a red high-heeled shoe was pushed on to the stage on a hospital gurney' (201). All the more credit, then, to Sophie Klein for a vivid and detailed account of Theater of War and its 2014 *Ajax*, and especially to Sue Hamstead for a well-organized comparison of four adaptations of *Antigone*, with acute analyses of the consequences of different directorial decisions – and also for not leaving Sophocles out of the equation.

We are now surprisingly well supplied with translations of the fragments of Old Comedy. For tragedy, the big three have been well served by up-to-date Loebs, and Hellenistic tragedy (not quite so well) by Kotlińska-Toma (*G&R* 62 [2015], 221). Now Matthew Wright has undertaken the useful enterprise of a complete English translation of the fragments (down to single words) of classical tragedy. The first volume of *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy*[6] contains the 'neglected authors'; Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides will follow in the second volume. Though the importance of testimonia and citation contexts is emphasized in the Prologue (xxiv), translations of these are not provided. However, we do have six chapters discussing the earliest tragedies, some fifth-century tragedians, Agathon, tragic family trees, some fourth-century tragedians, and 'the very lost' (attested, but with no surviving fragments). Wright's appreciation of Agathon, with an entertaining list of fifteen ways in which 'Aristophanes' portrait

[5] *Contemporary Adaptations of Greek Tragedy. Auteurship and Directorial Visions*. Edited by George Rodosthenous. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Pp. xiv + 279. 12 illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-4725-9153-1; paperback £21.99, ISBN: 978-1-4725-9152-4.

[6] *The Lost Plays of Greek Tragedy, Volume 1. Neglected Authors*. By Matthew Wright. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. xxx + 277. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-4725-6776-5; paperback £21.99, ISBN: 978-1-4725-6775-8.

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of Agathon might. . .be read' (67–9), is well worth reading. But the description of Agathon's work as 'a mixture of traditional elements and bold innovations, including formal experimentation with generic conventions' (77–8) would also apply to Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides – as I hope the second volume will not fail to make clear. The chapter on tragic families is somewhat speculative, and unhelpfully appeals to Bloom's 'anxiety of influence'. Highlighting subjects shared with relatives is meaningless in the absence of comparable data on the frequency of subjects shared between non-relatives. Regrettably, Wright does not mention the possibility that the younger Astydamas' *Antigone* (part of his prize-winning production at the Dionysia of 341) was the play behind the synopsis in Hyginus 72 and the vase-painting Ruvo, Museo Jatta J423 (36734). The (speculative, but not more tenuously so than many of the hypotheses aired in this book) sequence of Sophocles' (probable) invention of the story of Antigone, Euripides' transformation of it, and its further transformation by Astydamas would provide an excellent illustration of the scope for innovation in the tragedians' handling of myth. It might also help to replace Wright's Bloomian psychoburble with an appreciation of the exuberance of influence – a much more interesting phenomenon.

Bloomsbury has produced a tragic tetralogy. Three short books introducing the major tragedians appear in revised editions. When I reviewed the first edition of Alex Garvie's *Plays of Sophocles* (*G&R* 54 [2007], 114), I rated it as outstanding, with the reservation that its calm assurance might not encourage the target readership to ask questions. The revision[7] (around 15 per cent longer by my estimate) has more to say about staging and the use of dramatic space. A few queries for which I did not have room (or failed to notice) first time round: if Haemon has already committed suicide when Creon arrives (33), who is it who tries to kill Creon? Who are the 'we' who, watching a play about Electra, Orestes, and Clytaemnestra, only realize at the last moment that there will be a matricide (62)? If Lemnos is uninhabited 'by a dramatic convention which the audience easily accepts' (63), what exactly was that convention, and how was the audience cued to it?

Garvie's *Plays of Aeschylus*,[8] which I did not see in its first edition, also deserves a strong recommendation. Here, too, the revision has more to say about staging. The treatment of *Persians* has been updated in the light of Garvie's excellent commentary (*G&R* 57 [2010], 389), in particular in emphasizing its use of the themes of return poetry – something on which he places more emphasis in his chapters on Sophocles' *Electra* and *Women of Trachis*, too.

I felt less positive about James Morwood's *Plays of Euripides*.[9] He has 50 per cent more space than either of Garvie's volumes, but also disproportionately more plays to deal with. One can understand why the publisher would have wanted to keep a book of this kind to a modest scale, but an average of just over six pages per play

[7] *The Plays of Sophocles*. By A. F. Garvie. Second edition. Classical World. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. x + 96. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-1-4742-3335-4.

[8] *The Plays of Aeschylus*. By A. F. Garvie. Second edition. Classical World. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. x + 99. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-1-4742-3327-9.

[9] *The Plays of Euripides*. By James Morwood. Second edition. Classical World. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. x + 144. 7 illustrations. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-1-4742-3359-0.

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gives remarkably little scope for saying much about any of them. Morwood, however, seems confident that he has more than enough space, since (unlike Garvie) he devotes some of it to pictures. Maybe a picture of Maria Callas rehearsing for the role of Medea in Cherubini (14) can speak a thousand words: but, if so, how relevant are those words to Euripides? How likely is it that Morwood's target audience will appreciate his references to Chaucer, Shakespeare (ten of them), Ibsen, *Everyman*, Gluck, and Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, and find their understanding of Euripides enhanced by them?

Bloomsbury's tetralogy is not completed by a satyr-play. Laura Swift's overview of tragedy's themes and contexts, targeted at undergraduates and advanced school pupils (x),[10] has chapters on tragedy as a genre; Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; myth; heroes; the gods; contemporary thought; gender and the family; and the chorus. Her style is clear, concise, and always accessible, even as the demands on the reader escalate. This, of all the tetralogy's components, is most likely to stimulate thought and prompt questions. Questions that occurred to me include (predictably) how the end of *Poetics* 14 can be reconciled with the statement that 'Aristotle preferred sad plays to ones with happy endings' (10); how 'a reversal of fortune. . ..which Aristotle calls *peripeteia*' (39) can be true, given his restriction of *peripeteia* to complex plots (*Poet.* 10, 1452a14–18); and where in *Women at the Themsophoriazusae* anyone says that Euripides' 'depiction of cruel gods has damaged the business of those selling religious paraphernalia' (22).

The Cup of Song,[11] a collection of twelve papers on 'the symbiotic connection of poetry and symposion' (1), brings us back to edited volumes and the importance of editors. From the rambling editorial introduction, it is easy to understand why the contributor who apologizes for the structure of his chapter (43) was not asked to improve both its structure and (more generally) the intelligibility of its exposition. Another contributor announces 'the first thing I want to single out' fourteen pages into his chapter (220) – the first piece of signposting, and the last: no second thing is singled out in the nine remaining pages. A third contributor begins with a reference to Aristotle that has no relevance at all to the rest of the paper. If she had been encouraged to omit this decorative flourish, she would have avoided quoting (inaccurately) another scholar's erroneous claim that 'Aristotle thought his φαντάσματα to have visual form' (159; Aristotle makes it clear that *phantasia* is a term generalized from sight, the dominant sense, to *all* perceptual modalities: *De an.* 3.3, 429a2–4; 3.11, 433b31–4a5; *Insomn.* 3, 461a23–30). Admittedly, decorative preambles are commonplace in current scholarly writing. But why should we have to put up with a page or more of waffle before we are told what the item we are (or, perhaps, are not) going to read is about? Contrast the exemplary clarity and efficiency of Gregory Hutchinson's opening paragraph (247). Also recommended are the reflections of two veteran campaigners in this subfield, Oswyn Murray and Ewen Bowie. Ralph Rosen, on Aristophanes' *Wasps*, argues that 'the symposium. . .functioned as a kind of testing-ground for the limits of permissible speech, and helped calibrate the point at which socially transgressive discourse ceases to be comic', and conversely that 'the symposium helped to establish

[10] *Greek Tragedy. Themes and Contexts*. By Laura Swift. Classical World. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. xii + 125. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-1-4742-3683-6.

[11] *The Cup of Song. Studies on Poetry and the Symposion*. Edited by Vanessa Cazzato, Dirk Obbink, and Enrico Emanuele Prodi. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii + 329. 23 illustrations. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-968768-8.

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protocols. . .for poetic genres that privileged satirical content' (141). Guy Hedreen, on the vase-painter Smikros, argues that 'Smikros is none other than Euphronios himself' (136): that conclusion is convincing, but does it make Smikros 'fictional'? Why shouldn't we think instead of a single real artist working under two different names?

Single-authored books can suffer from a lack of editorial control, too: for example, the disjointed and unbelievably repetitive *Postcolonial Amazons*,[12] an assemblage of Greek ideas about Amazons and archaeological evidence for female warriors in the ancient world, with an overlay of postcolonial and gender theory. The author's ambitions sometimes seem undemanding ('I hope to show that Athenian gender norms were not shared by others', 5), his claims unnecessarily cautious ('real women warriors and warrior queens. . .may have viewed themselves differently from the way they were seen by Athenians', 11). He is not reticent in stating the obvious ('the "distaff and the loom", a clear reference to weaving', 24) or the obviously false ('Chaeroneia in Boiotia, a Dorian city', 52). It would perhaps be unfair to describe the statement that 'Aristotle thought that women. . .did not contribute to the genetic makeup of a child' (39, n. 86) as obviously false, since the error is so widely disseminated; but it is, even so, completely false. That Aristotle, an exceptionally acute observer of biological facts, should have failed to notice inheritance of traits in the maternal line is so implausible that the widespread belief that he did fail to notice it baffles me. But if you think that he might have overlooked this phenomenon, read *Generation of Animals* 4.3 and mend your errant ways. Treat Penrose's references with caution. When he writes that 'the term *parthenos* is understood by linguists to have derived. . .from the root *par*. . . [male], and *theino* [*to smite*]' (77), he exaggerates: G. W. Elderkin suggested that (*AJPh* 56 [1935], 344–5). The other footnoted reference does not (as the plural might tempt us to infer) say anything about etymology (or, indeed *parthenos*), and it came as no surprise to me that Elderkin's proposal is not in Beekes. Penrose observes that 'much scholarship on Amazons has been written from a twentieth-century mindset, which, in addition to being Eurocentric, is also presentist' (121). His abhorrence of presentism evaporates in the following paragraph, in which twentieth-century psychologists are written off for failing to know 'what we know now'. As is generally the case in out-group denigration, Penrose's display of presentist othering is based on a sweeping generalization ('twentieth-century psychology adhered to a dichotomous system of gender, identifying what we now know to be social constructions as rigid, biological categories') to which there are easily discoverable counter-examples (e.g. A. Constantinople, *Psychological Bulletin* 80 [1973], 389–407, which I found in less than five minutes by following a citation in a paper that Penrose cites). Despite the book's many geographical references, there is no map.

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[12] *Postcolonial Amazons. Female Masculinity and Courage in Ancient Greek and Sanskrit Literature*. By Walter Duvall Penrose, Jr. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xvi + 317. 32 b/w illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-953337-4.

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