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SUBJECT REVIEWS

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

Greek Literature

If the beginnings of centuries heighten awareness of the uneasy interface between survivals from the past and the uncertainties of the future, what more appropriate work to keep alive in the twenty-first, when the future of Classics itself is (as always) at issue, than the *Odyssey*? Remarkably, Rodney Merrill's *Odyssey*[1] is already the second new American-English verse translation of the work since 2000, thus maintaining the dominant Homeric translation tradition of the second half of the twentieth century (a tradition that has helped partly to protect Homer against the more prosaic inclinations of British translators). Pondering Merrill's relationship to his principal predecessors (Cook, Fagles, Fitzgerald, Lattimore, Lombardo), one is instantly struck by his brave choice of a long, quasi-hexametric line designed to generate a timbre far from ordinary speech or idiom. Merrill, who expounds his principles in a preliminary essay, is opposed to complacent modernizing of Homer; he wants the tone to be direct but also 'noble' (*à la* Matthew Arnold), reflecting the stylizations and repetitions of Homeric Greek as much as English will now reasonably tolerate, and preserving (like Cook and Lattimore) a line-to-line match to the original. This version inevitably takes risks in employing such a rhythmically marked verse-style, but the results are rewarding for readers prepared to share the translator's ambitions. There is also a sensitive introduction by Thomas Walsh on the origins, structure, and some key themes (guest-friendship, women, storytelling) of the poem. My only complaint about this book is its price – too high for many university students to buy: the translator's laudable aspirations are let down by the publisher's commercial caution. For those venturing on the *Odyssey* in Greek for the first time, Janet Watson has produced so thorough a revision and updating of a long-favoured first set-text, G. M. Edwards' 1915 edition of ⋆*Odyssey VI & VII*,[2] that it counts as a new book. A concise introduction to some basics of Homeric epic and the *Odyssey* in particular has been added, as well as a guide to epic grammar and metre; above all, the notes have been linguistically expanded, so that, in conjunction with the revised vocabulary (which contains the odd misprint), they give assistance with most lines. This edition provides a functional, unfussy means of starting to get to grips with the rudiments of Homeric Greek. After all the critical debates conducted around the Homeric poems during the past seventy-five years, since oral theory sharply challenged the terms of the 'Homeric Question', Ruth Scodel's *Listening to Homer*[3]

[1] *Homer.* The Odyssey. Translated by Rodney Merrill, with Introductions by Thomas R. Walsh and Rodney Merrill. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2002. Pp. viii + 421. Paperback £20.

[2] *Homer Odyssey VI & VII.* Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Vocabulary by Janet Watson. Bristol Classical Press, 2002. Pp. viii + 114. Paperback £9.99.

[3] *Listening to Homer.* Tradition, Narrative, and Audience. By Ruth Scodel. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2002. Pp. 235. Hardback £35.50.

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proves it is still possible to explore the workings of epic without recourse to a battery of jargon or technicalities. This is not a 'one big idea' book but a rich (if sometimes slightly diffuse) set of reflections; it makes refreshing reading, but is not easy to summarize. Scodel has an enviable grasp of the flexible negotiations of expectation and possibility that take place between the tellers and audiences of stories (cf. my review of her previous book in *G&R* 47 [2000], 102–3). Drawing deft comparisons with many non-Greek oral traditions (African, Egyptian, Finnish, French, Javanese, Turkish . . .), she argues for a multi-layered model of 'tradition' in the Homeric setting. It is more fruitful, she contends, to understand how narrative elements operate within their contexts than to categorize them dogmatically as inherited or invented; tradition itself is in constant flux. Both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were exceptional 'interventions' in tradition, whether by individuals or groups of poets – reinterpretations of essentially familiar material that satisfied the contrasting but complementary desiderata underlying 'the never-ending work of reinventing the past to make it usable in the present'. Weaving a multitude of examples into her case, Scodel develops a sophisticated analysis of narrative modes, while remaining alert to how epic song is presented within the poems' own mimetic world, where she believes it is distinguished, as socially 'disinterested', from the presentation of other kinds of authoritative speech. This is a book with carefully pondered remarks on almost every page, though like so many others Scodel assumes a little too easily that Homeric audiences 'believed that the stories were basically true'. Proof-reading of Greek could have been better, as could the general index.

Two final Homeric items deal with minor but intriguing figures in the *Iliad* – and in part with what they might be *outside* the *Iliad*. A monograph on the Iliadic Briseis by Casey Dué[4] centres on Briseis's grief for Patroclus at *Iliad* 19.282–300 and seeks to construct the character's double significance as a paradigm of the female lament-singer (paralleling Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen) and as the focus of a story that, though only indicated in compressed form in the *Iliad*, as a 'micronarrative', could have supplied material for more than one independent 'macronarrative'. Working (occasionally not without hints of the doctrinaire) with an oralist poetics of interconnected, multiform traditions, Dué successfully illuminates associations and echoes between Briseis and other figures in the *Iliad*; by tracking Briseis's meanings in a range of texts (right down to Latin love elegy), as well as in visual art, she is able to hypothesize alternative story-patterns in which the character plays the variant rôles of war-prize, unmarried girl, and widowed wife. On both sides of her enterprise Dué manages, with laudable concision, to say interesting things about webs of connection between epic themes and characters, even if specialists will want to argue over some components of her methodology.

If Briseis was loved by Achilles, Thersites was hated, indeed killed, by him (according to the dominant account, for having mocked Achilles for his love of another woman, the Amazon Penthesilea: cf. *G&R* 50 [2003], 105). But who was Thersites: a bold political spokesman (even a proto-demagogue) for the disaffected rank-and-file, a scapegoat for the failings of the Greek commanders, an ugly and spiteful misfit, a savage satirist? Luigi Spina's short book, *L'oratore scriteriato*[5] ('the witless orator', a title based on the epithet *akritomuthos* at *Iliad* 2.246) is a lively collection of

[4] *Homeric Variations on a Lament by Briseis*. By Casey Dué. Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2002. Pp. xi + 140. Paperback £20.95.

[5] *L'oratore scriteriato*. Per una storia letteraria e politica di Tersite. By Luigi Spina. Loffredo Editore, Naples, 2001. Pp. 121. Paperback €11.36.

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aperçus on some of the varied ways in which the Homeric figure of Thersites has been reused, and in the twentieth century even imaginatively rehabilitated, in literary works and politico-cultural debates. Drawing on a variety of sources both ancient and modern, including Libanius's sophistic *Encomium of Thersites* (whose text is printed, with a short commentary, in an appendix), Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, and Stefan Zweig's 1907 verse drama *Tersites*, Spina helps us see that there are a number of ambiguities in the Iliadic scene involving Thersites that have encouraged the refashioning of him as everything from the reckless rebel to the mordant exposer of insecure élites. Odysseus may have beaten Thersites into submission, but 'the ugliest man who went to Troy' has lived on to be a fascinating test-case of the political and social sympathies of those who contemplate his fate.

A literary bridge from Homer to Greek tragedy is formed by the latter's convention of the messenger speech. James Barrett's *Staged Narrative*[6] examines five main cases of this important feature of the genre (*Persians*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Sophocles' *Electra*, *Bacchae*, and *Rhesus*, with shorter treatment of several others), foregrounding a tension between the messenger's ostensibly authoritative, quasi-Homeric narrative voice and his subjective, often marginal, social position. How can such figures provide 'transparent' reports of events in a genre so heavily marked by rhetorical/epistemic uncertainties? Barrett discerns a pervasive conflict between the messenger's supposed assertion of 'extradiegetic' status (as a poet-like narrator standing outside the drama) and the constraints of his embedded context within the reported scene. Now, messengers often occupy special positions *vis-à-vis* the action they witness, and Barrett offers some thought-provoking readings of the interplay between what messengers purport to have seen and what the observed characters do or do not see. But the analysis is sometimes strained. The narrative self-effacement of many messengers is in part a reflection of worlds in which slaves might sometimes function as intimate yet 'invisible' eyewitnesses; it is flimsy to suggest that it has anything to do with the feminization of their bodies (99–100). More fundamentally, the premise that messengers themselves 'claim' to be extradiegetic narrators – in virtue of their eyewitness accounts and their use of Homeric language/techniques – is conceptually problematic. Barrett confuses characters and authors by supposing, for example, that it is the messenger at *Heracles Furens* 951, rather than Euripides, who 'appropriat[es]' a line of Homer and 'claims a comparable authority'. And the attempt to find Aristotelian support for this premise is unconvincing: in discussing the *Poetics* Barrett ignores chapter 11's reference to the Corinthian messenger of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which disproves any notion that Aristotle thinks messengers are extradiegetic, a point not circumvented by the distinction between messengers who do and who do not deliver set-speech reports. This book is a worthwhile exploration of some of the narrative and thematic intricacies of messenger speeches, especially their recurrent preoccupation with the nature of watching/viewing, but parts of its critical framework need modification.

There is no bigger mountain for a translator of ancient literature to climb than the *Oresteia*; the challenge has attracted both poets (most recently Ted Hughes) and eminent scholars. Christopher Collard's new version[7] prioritizes accuracy and

[6] *Staged Narrative*. Poetics and the Messenger in Greek Tragedy. By James Barrett. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002. Pp. xxiv + 250. Hardback £35.

[7] *Aeschylus Oresteia*. Translated by Christopher Collard. Oxford U.P., 2002. Pp. lxxix + 232. Hardback £45.

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readability, while adopting different styles for spoken sections (rendered into prose) and lyrics (presented in various forms of marked verse, some designed to reflect strophic responsion in the Greek). The result is a translation full of weight, one which doesn't shirk the clotted textures of Aeschylean poetry yet manages to maintain vigorous momentum. Collard also maximizes the opportunity to furnish students with wonderfully substantial interpretative assistance – a sixty-page introduction and over a hundred pages of end-notes, between them offering a wealth of ideas on the trilogy's theatrical, dramatic, and religious character. There is so much here to admire, and hardly anything to carp over (though I am surprised Collard allows himself the term 'sin' from time to time). The combination of linguistic reliability, strong feeling for the densities of Aeschylean language, and abundant annotation makes this a first-rate achievement, one of the very best new scholarly translation of Greek tragedy to appear for many years: once paperbacked in World's Classics, it will be an obligatory purchase for all school libraries. The most obvious comparandum is the Lloyd-Jones version, originally published in 1970. There is little to choose between them: Collard is slightly less literal than Lloyd-Jones, and his introduction and notes are wider ranging, but Lloyd-Jones's annotation is more conveniently placed on the same page; any student who worked with both these volumes could hardly be better equipped to tackle this towering masterpiece in translation. It is good to be able to welcome a pair of Euripidean volumes, Sophie Mills' ⋆*Hippolytus*[8] and William Allan's ⋆*Medea*,[9] that inaugurate a new series, 'Duckworth Companions to Greek and Roman Tragedy' (the first Roman volume, on Seneca's *Phaedra*, has also appeared promptly). The series' brief is to put works in historical context, provide guidance to critical debates, and offer selective treatment of each play's cultural reception. Mills and Allan fulfil this with clarity, succinctness, and up-to-date competence. Both give lucid information about the mythological tradition and its reshaping in each play. Mills concentrates on complexities of psychological motivation in the main characters (she is strong on the strange mixture of beauty and violence in Hippolytus's mentality) and on the disjunction of appearance and reality; she also has a useful critical survey of readings of the play. Allan focuses on issues of gender, the Greek/barbarian polarity, and revenge, maintaining that in all these areas *Medea* poses pointed challenges to Athenian preconceptions. There are only one or two small anomalies which might be ironed out in later volumes: Mills, for instance, includes metrical terms in her glossary, Allan does not (though he uses some). Allan's treatment of reception is somewhat skimpier than Mills', though he packs more ideas into his endnotes. An excellent double start to a promising series. And now for another duo, this one Aristophanic: a pair of books from American scholars that make stimulating contributions to current thinking about the playwright. The first is Douglas Olson's excellent Oxford edition of *Acharnians*,[10] appearing commendably soon after his commentary on *Peace* in the same series (see *G&R* 46 [1999], 235–6) and exhibiting an even more impressive coverage of linguistic, historical, and cultural aspects of the play, including detailed matters of mythology, politics, religion, sex, speech register, staging, warfare, and much beside. Olson's commentary is so crammed with primary and

[8] *Euripides*. Hippolytus. By Sophie Mills. Duckworth, London, 2002. Pp. 160. Paperback £9.99.

[9] *Euripides*. Medea. By William Allan. Duckworth, London, 2002. Pp. 143. Paperback £9.99.

[10] *Aristophanes Acharnians*. Edited with Introduction and Commentary by S. Douglas Olson. Oxford U. P., 2002. Pp. cii + 379. Hardback £65.

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secondary references that it sometimes becomes a little overcrowded (brackets within brackets are an eyesore), but this is a small price to pay for a prodigious amount of information and good judgement. The text has been expertly re-edited, with a new stemma and a partially reconfigured textual tradition. As regards overall interpretation of the play, Olson's introduction makes shrewd observations on e.g. the relationship between Dikaiopolis and 'the poet' (showing that they come apart at certain points). But he ends up somewhat caught between a recognition that the play offers so exaggerated an image of politics that if one were to take it seriously 'one would have little but to condemn [it] as irresponsible', and, on the other hand, a lingering desire to find some lasting political point behind the fantasy. Less wavering about Aristophanes' political stance is Niall Slater's *Spectator Politics*,[11] the most elaborate application of the idea of metatheatre to Aristophanes' comedies yet undertaken. (The book appears just as an assault on the concept of metatheatre is launched by Thomas Rosenmeyer in *Arion* 10 [2002], 87–119.) Slater takes theatrical self-reference to be a means by which Aristophanes not only creates comic effects but also 'educates' his audience into being critical about all public/political performances. His book contains scene-by-scene 'performance readings' of eight plays (*Clouds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Wealth* miss out), flanked by more general chapters on the genre's character as theatre (including discussion of the fifth-century emergence of professional actors). Slater writes attractively, and with an imagination well attuned to nuances of staging practice (voice, movement, costume), on Aristophanes' own many-sided theatrical self-consciousness; he also displays a nice touch for comparative reference to later dramatic works. More debatable is his connection between theatrical and political forms of criticism. There are three main problems for me: first, Slater struggles to make coherent political sense of certain plays (it seems hopelessly optimistic to suppose that *Birds* depicts a utopian 'refuge and hope' or 'an Athens in which the politics of persuasion have their proper place' – for anyone other than the megalomaniac Pisetairos!); secondly, Aristophanes' comic-rhetorical pronouncements about 'teaching' the people are themselves exempted from Slater's scrutiny of performance criticism; thirdly, the logic of the argument is arguably back-to-front (don't the plays *presuppose* a capacity for political suspicion and even cynicism? did Athenians need the antics of padded actors to make them think about the ruses of 'performing politicians'?). Here and there Slater admits notions which are hard to square with his overall thesis – Aristophanes as an 'anarchic' comedian, his genre as one 'not afflicted with a conscience'. But the model of politically instructive comedy survives everything. Readers of this book will have to choose whether to accept the double package of dramatic/political criticism. Either way, there is much they can learn from Slater's distinctive and theatrically sophisticated angle on the plays. Among five Hellenistic items for review here it seems right to give prominence to a trilingual edition of all the surviving epigrams of Posidippus of Pella,[12] including the more than a hundred new poems, a majority textually more-or-less intact, found on a third-century BC papyrus roll (now in Milan) which was fully published only in 2001 but is already the subject of animated discussion among specialists. The present 'editio minor' gives a Greek text of both the new material and the thirty or so poems/fragments previously

[11] *Spectator Politics*. Metatheatre and Performance in Aristophanes. By Niall W. Slater. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2002. Pp. x + 363.

[12] *Posidippi Pellaei Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Edited by C. Austin & G. Bastiniani. LED Edizioni, Milan, 2002. Pp. 234. Paperback €26.

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known, with both Italian and English translations on facing pages. It is handsomely printed, has excellent Greek indexes, and is reasonably priced: both publishers and editors are to be congratulated on making the Milan collection more widely available in this form. The new papyrus divides its epigrams into thematic/generic groups, including works on precious stones, (bird) omens, and medical cures, alongside more familiar categories like dedications and epitaphs. Among salient features are several poems in which the exquisite properties of gems are closely observed and sensuously connected to women pictured as wearing them, and others in which the old theme of artistic lifelikeness is given fresh twists in application to statues by major sculptors: in both cases there is a notable dwelling on the act on viewing and the appreciative eye; 'contemplate close-up . . .', as one of the statue poems enjoins the imaginary viewer, simultaneously serving as metaphor for the process of reading itself. Epigrams lend themselves to intensely focussed moments of (poetic) self-consciousness, and while the quality of the new Posidippus collection is mixed there is plenty here to enrich our understanding of the Hellenistic evolution of the type.

After long being relatively neglected, Callimachus's *Iambi* have received renewed attention in recent years. Benjamin Acosta-Hughes' *Polyeideia*[13] is a thematically organized monograph that incorporates a text and translation of the ten works whose character can be best recovered from the fragments. Acosta-Hughes' overarching interest is in the *polyeideia* or generic multiplicity (of voice, theme, metre, dialect) traceable in the *Iambi*, and in the contribution that this polymorphousness makes to the project of Callimachean poetics, allowing as it does for the manipulation of poetic personae that can embrace both criticism of others and irony at one's own expense. He pursues these concerns through detailed consideration of the relationship between Callimachus's Hellenistic ambience and the archaic world of Hipponax's blame-poetry, the mixture of 'high' (including hymnic) and 'low' models (including fable) in the poems, the reworking of the old iambic use of sexual criticism, and the shifting use of a statue motif in three of the works. The book presents an often instructively patient, if occasionally laboured, sifting of resistant evidence, with copious documentation and quotation of earlier poetic traditions; but Acosta-Hughes is not always as careful as he might be. On poem 3, for instance, a good case is made for seeing the poetic persona as ironically inverting the traditional idea of homoerotic 'education' by depicting *himself*, the impoverished poet-lover, as the one who has (bitterly) learnt from the experience; at the same time, some details are unreliable: Acosta-Huges simply assumes that Apollo is being addressed in line 18, and he wrongly calls the verb in line 10 Hipponactean. But this book is certainly a valuable addition to criticism on Callimachus; alongside Kerkhecker's more guarded reconstructions (see *G&R* 47 [2000], 241) it will assist anyone gutsy enough to grapple with what can be salvaged of the *Iambi*, even if it still leaves one uncomfortably aware of how much remains indecipherable.

A new translation of *Theocritus: Idylls*[14] by Anthony Verity, with a predictably assured introduction and notes by Richard Hunter (though it's a pity to mention parallels with visual art without supplying references that encourage readers to pursue the connection), offers pleasingly smooth versions of the twenty-two poems usually considered authentic. Verity uses a form of free verse that

[13] *Polyeideia*. The Iambi of Callimachus and the Archaic Iambic Tradition. By Benjamin Acosta-Hughes. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002. Pp. xv + 351. Hardback £45.

[14] *Theocritus Idylls*. Translated by Anthony Verity, with Introduction and Notes by Richard Hunter. Oxford U.P., 2002. Pp. xxiv + 114. Hardback £35.

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generally has 4–6 main stresses to the line, allowing him to keep tolerably close to the shape of Theocritus's hexameters while preserving sufficient spring in the English rhythms. There is virtually nothing to quibble over here – except, that is, the absurd price: even some university libraries will baulk at paying so much for this slender volume, especially when an inexpensive paperback will surely follow soon in the World's Classics series; that will be the one for schools and individuals to purchase. Space precludes more than a closing mention of Christos Fakas's *Der hellenistische Hesiod*,[15] an assiduously documented monograph on Aratus's *Phainomena* that, as its title suggests, concentrates extensively on the poem's complex reworking of Hesiodic elements and does so in order to maintain that Aratus has produced a 'generic experiment' and a 'rewriting' of epic tradition which reflects wider literary, aesthetic, and philosophical tendencies of the Hellenistic period. A book which specialists will certainly want to digest.

STEPHEN HALLIWELL

[15] *Der hellenistische Hesiod*: Arats *Phainomena* und die Tradition der antiken Lehrepik. By Christos Fakas. Serta Graeca 111. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2001. Pp. x + 258. €65.

Latin Literature

The new works to be considered here are dominated by three books on Horace from Italy, Crete, and Britain. Andrea Cucchiarelli's *La satira e il poeta*[1] is a tightly written book on self-revelation in Horace as found in the *Epodes* and the *Satires*. Full attention is also given to Horace's debt to Lucilius and to his legacy in Persius and Juvenal. The very full bibliography reflects the author's active engagement in her footnotes with a wide range of modern scholarship. A collection of papers entitled *Horace and Greek Lyric Poetry*[2] delivered at a conference of the same name held in Rethymnon in Crete in May 1999 has now been edited and contributed to by Michael Paschalis, who also promises a second collection based on a further conference held in 2002 on Imperial Epic. The present work is concerned with the nature of the relationship between Greek lyric poetry and Horace; it starts with a summary by Michael C. J. Putnam of all ten contributions; your reviewer will restrict himself to little more than authors and titles: Denis Feeney's 'The Odiousness of Comparisons: Horace on Literary History and The Limitations of Synkrisis' pays special attention to Cicero's *rôle* in these matters. Anastasia-Erasmia Peponi's 'Fantasizing Lyric; Horace *Epistles* 1.9' discusses in great detail Horace's attitude towards the Greek lyric poets. Alessandro Barchiesi's 'Palingenre: Death, Rebirth and Horatian Iambos' discusses the concept of *genre* in the context of Horace's *Epodes*. Michael Paschalis's 'Constructing Lyric Space: Horace and the Alcaean Song' discusses 'space' in, particularly, Alcaeus and Horace. Lucia Athanassaki's 'On Horace *Odes* 1.15 and Choral Lyric' argues for a Pindaric or Aeschylean inspiration for *Odes* 1.15. Richard Martin's 'Horace in Real Time: *Odes* 1.27 and its Congeners' argues that no known part of the Greek lyric tradition stands behind *Odes* 1.27 and that it may be more closely related to Roman comedy. John

[1] *La satira e il poeta*. Orazio tra *Epodi e Sermones*. Biblioteca di Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici 17. By Andrea Cucchiarelli. Pisa, 2001. Pp. 255. €50.

[2] *Horace and Greek Lyric Poetry*. Rethymnon Classical Studies volume 1. Edited by Michael Paschalis. University of Crete, Department of Philology, 2002. Pp. ix + 195.

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