Dem Buch von W., das über die Kommentierung von Enn. II hinaus reiche Einsichten in die Geschichte der antiken Kosmologie gibt, wünscht man viele Leser, unter den Plotinforschern ebenso wie unter allen an antiker Naturphilosophie Interessierten. McG.s wenig professionelle Arbeit trägt dagegen zum Verständnis von Enn. I kaum etwas bei; ihre Lektüre scheint entbehrlich.

Jena

Christian Tornau


Based on Isobel Hurst’s doctoral thesis, the book is a contribution to the OUP series ‘Classical Presences’ which aims to highlight the continuities and changes in the appropriation of the classical past and to document later generations’ perceptions of ancient Greece and Rome, most dominantly in 19th and 20th century Europe. Coming from the study of English literature, H. explores the social connotations associated with the study of ancient literature and the knowledge of Latin and Greek in 19th and early 20th century England. The main purpose of the study is a re-evaluation of the specific challenges and achievements of female writers in the context of literary responses to Latin and Greek texts as well as a documentation of the innovative ways women writers used their classical education to create, deny, imagine or demand their own position in society. The examination of different aspects of this project is centred around the lives and works of three Victorian women writers, Elisabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot and Jane Ellen Harrison. The poetess, the novelist and the classical scholar are tied together under the heading of ‘the feminine of Homer’, a phrase taken from a remark by Elisabeth Barrett Browning. In it, Barrett Browning describes a girl who imagines herself to be ‘the feminine of Homer’ and thus challenge the immortal rank of the ‘father of European literature’. The quotation is used by H. to emphasise the need for a new representation of Victorian women’s classical education and interest in the classics, a representation different from the pejorative equation of lady’s Greek as ‘Greek without accents’. Focussing on the history of teaching and learning Greek and Latin in 19th century England and the social boundaries and gender inequalities it implied, H.’s study looks at the different ways female writers in Victorian England overcame, articulated and transformed the difficulties or shortcomings they encountered in their ambition to study the ancient past. H.’s book is divided into six chapters. Chapters 1, ‘Encounters with the Ancient World in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture’ and 2, ‘Classical Training for the Woman Writer’, put classics and classical education in the context of Victorian culture through an examination of the availability of resources for classical education to men and women and look at the ‘gendered boundaries of education’ (p. 55), analysing the different ways women acquired a knowledge of Greek and Latin despite external restraints. Chapter 3, ‘Unscrupulously Epic’, is dedicated to Elisabeth Barrett Browning’s use of her classical education as reflected in her writings. H. argues that the disadvantage for girls in access to higher education, as epitomized in the phrase of ‘lady’s Greek without accents’ taken from Browning’s ‘Aurora Leigh’, is overcome by
Barrett Browning’s aspiration to acquire the status of the «first great woman poet» (p. 113). Especially after 1848 and the Italian ‘Risorgimento’, H. claims, the «epic moment in Italian history enables the woman poet to assimilate some of the prestige that attaches to epic but looks forward to a new kind of poetry which will be both morally and aesthetically superior to Homer.» (p. 122).

Chapter 4, ‘Classics and the Family in the Victorian Novel’, looks at the «conventional opposition of learning and domestic duty» (p. 131) as represented in selected passages of Victorian novels by female authors. H. presents the reader with short summaries and interpretations of novels by Charlotte Young, George Eliot, Lynn Linton, Elizabeth Gaskell and Margaret Oliphant. Chapter 5, ‘Greek Heroines and the Wrongs of Women’, illuminates some ways in which female role models were taken from classical Greek drama and misogynist interpretations of Greek drama were subversively challenged by Victorian women writers. In it, H. gives some valuable historical background information about performances of Greek tragedies on the Victorian stage of the 1840s and 1850s (which emphasised the heroines’ mental feebleness) and contrasts them with performances that were put on stage after the ‘Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act’ of 1857. H. shows that in the equation of fifth-century Athens and Victorian England, writers both idealized the past and the present (e.g. Matthew Arnold) and stressed the inequalities and sufferings for women in both societies (e.g. Amy Levy and Eliza Lynn). In an analysis of the popularity of Euripidean plays, and of ‘Medea’ especially, in 1880s England, H. convincingly demonstrates how the revival of ‘Medea’ on the Victorian stage indicates a change in the perception of both contemporary females and the ascriptions of certain qualities to female characters in plays of the ancient past. However, it has to be said that H.’s analysis is largely indebted to the work of Edith Hall on this point (cf. especially Hall’s article ‘Medea and British Legislation before the First World War’, Greece & Rome 46, 1999, 42–77). Chapter 6, ‘Revising the Victorians’, reaches out to women writers of the early twentieth century and argues that for them, too, Greek still symbolizes «all that is denied to women» (p. 192) and thus retains its central place in their narratives, even though the ardent desire to acquire a knowledge of the ancient languages seems no longer present in either their works or their biographies. The assumption is supported by an examination of novels by Mary Sinclair, Dora Russell, Vera Brittain, and Dorothy Sayers. The Conclusion (pp. 220–2) entitled ‘On not Knowing Greek’ pays tribute to Virginia Woolf’s essay ‘On Not Knowing Greek’ from 1923 in which Woolf comments on the desire of women to live up to male standards and learn ancient Greek. On H.’s book as a whole is has to be said that it is irritating to be at times confronted with rather prejudiced remarks about classical scholarship and its gender implications. Throughout her study, H. maintains that women in the 19th and early 20th century were «weaker in traditionally masculine areas of classical study such as grammar and accents» (p. 222), suggesting that the study of a language does not necessarily imply a certain degree of expertise in its grammatical structures and, which is worse, that the study of ancient texts could easily be divided into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ areas, relating, it seems, to a division of the subject into structure and contents. More often than not to the disadvantage of her own sex, H. risks the danger of oversimplifications, as in: the gendering of diligence
and intelligence (p. 12: «Since women did not have to memorize and construe Latin and Greek on a daily basis, did not attend competitive examinations, and were not awarded degrees, only those who were exceptionally diligent could attain the level of familiarity with ancient texts that any intelligent schoolboy would possess.»), the description of a typically female, more emotional approach to ancient literature as opposed to a more analytical male one (p. 84 «Women felt passionately about success in traditionally masculine subjects like Greek and mathematics») and the distinction of a ‘male’, more military-minded interest in ancient civilizations from a female interest in domestic bliss and the arts, narrowing the scope of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s work to a rather dull statement (p. 129 with respect to Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s re-invention of the genre of epic: «Finally, in her most consistent epic, she uses the techniques of an alternative (more feminine) epic tradition, starting with the Odyssey, to suggest that modern heroism lies in domestic life and in building up a new society by means of art, not arms»). Highly irritating in a reappraisal of the classical education of Victorian women writers is the sentence: «The reforms which made education more accessible to women and working-class men contributed to the downfall of classics.» (p. 27). This harsh (and historically wrong) statement opens the section headed ‘Extending Access’ and is repeated in similar words in the section entitled ‘Oxford and the decline of Classics’ (pp. 94–100), in which H. describes the «notable decline in poetry which makes use of classical figures and idioms in women’s magazines» (p. 100) and locates its roots in the loss of the «allure of Greek and Latin for the ambitious Victorian girl» (p. 95), for which she sees the reason in the loss of the prestige of classics after the facilitation of access. Extremely problematic in the argumentation of H.’s thesis are some too narrow observations and jumps to conclusions (as her comments on the dynamics of group psychology with respect to a performance of the ‘Eumenides’ in 1880s Oxford on p. 94: «One woman counted the Furies and found that there were fourteen, the same number as the students at her college, so they adopted this name for themselves [...]. This identification with a group of female characters is interesting, as the shift from single heroines such as Medea or Antigone suggests that collegiate life encouraged women to see themselves as deriving power from the group, rather than the individual»), rather crude (and, again, historically wrong) gender generalizations (p. 111: «Poets of both sexes had an uneasy, yet potentially liberating, relationship to dominant gender ideologies in the Victorian period; poetry seemed inimical to the rigid structures of bourgeois masculine culture») and somewhat forced analogies with methodologically problematic implications regarding the treatment of (auto)biographical narratives (p. 111: «[...] it is significant that the male poets Barrett chose as models had in some way overcome obstacles (physical or social) to their achievement of poetic fame. Homer and Milton, whose poems inspired The Battle of Marathon and A Drama of Exile, were both blind; Barrett later claimed that in her seclusion from real life she too had been a blind poet». The concluding chapter of the book is equally problematic. In it, H. comments on some interesting remarks about Woolf’s view on the unsurpassable distance and un-Englishness of Greek: «‘Not Knowing Greek’ means not being drilled in the language at school, not identifying the ancient Greeks with modern Englishmen [...], not assuming that Greek
culture is recoverable." (p. 222). However, in what follows these sentences H. also claims that « [...] Woolf learnt from her predecessors that finding pleasure in the strangeness of a new language and creating contemporary forms of literature in response to ancient myth are crucial to the development of the woman writer.» (p. 222). This juxtaposition of quite different, if not mutually exclusive statements at the very end of the book is characteristic for H.’s study: one often wonders whether the author wants to strengthen a feminist or an anti-feminist attitude towards the role of classical education in Victorian women’s writing, whether she allows her women writers to be diverse in their attitude towards Classics (risking that some of their statements would not be very useful for her main argument) or whether she prefers to streamline them in a choir of voices who expresses the female wish to overcome ‘what is denied to them’ by society. The lack of clarity in this respect may be owed to the fact that the Victorian women writers she examines make use of the classics, and of Greek especially, to support conservative as well as progressive views on the relevance of classical education and the role of women in society. However, a more concise distinction of the different modes of apprehension and transformation of classical education in Victorian literature by women writers would have been more illuminating than the ascription of unfair generalizations to most of them. Edith Hall noted in 1997 (E.H., ‘Greek Plays in Georgian Reading’, Greece & Rome 44, 1997, 59–81) that, for instance in the case of Mary Russell Mitford, the ambivalence towards Greek studies could lead to «deprecating the female intellect in an ironic manner designed to imply the opposite.» (p. 71). H.’s investigation misses to outline such important nuances and in fact most of the times leaves her readers in the dark about how differently female strategies react to the social conditions around them. Also, a more sophisticated reading of Greek drama could have revealed that the hints to Euripidean drama in the Victorian novel might imply more than «women’s powerlessness» (p. 185; cf. the misleading shortcut «Greek tragic women, especially Medea the vengeful victim, and Glauce, the innocent victim, powerfully symbolized the position of women in a patriarchal society»), p. 185f). Despite the sometimes unconvincing presentation of the material, H.’s study is a good source of information about the educational background of major Victorian women writers and their use of the classics. Her analysis of both biographical background material and literary works sheds light on various ways in which Victorian and Modern women writers responded to the status of classics in the society that surrounded them. The outlook H. gives at the end of the volume is thought-provoking and reminds the reader that the issue H. addresses in this study is by no means an easy one. Quite remarkably, H.’s analysis manages to expose through an examination of responses by female writers to the teaching of classics some of the social pitfalls and gender inequalities in classical scholarship which dominated the subject for most of its history in England and possibly helped to shape several of its interests, blind spots and perspectives. The index is useful but at times disappointing (I missed entries for Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s ‘The Battle of Marathon’, Harold Bloom, Dorothea Brooke, Anne Dacier, George Eliot’s ‘Daniel Deronda’, Stella Gibbons’ ‘Cold Comfort Farm’, Edith Hall, Lorna Hardwick, Margaret Oliphant, Dora Russell’s ‘Hypatia, or: Women and Knowledge’; ‘Andromeda’, ‘Anglicanism’, ‘bluestockings’, ‘celibacy’, ‘classics
in translation’, ‘colonialism’, ‘Creûsa’, ‘Euripides’, ‘historical fiction’, ‘Prometheus’ and ‘school classics’). Last but not least it needs to be said that, quite unfortunate for a book so concerned with eliminating the cliche of ladies’ Greek as a Greek without accents, there are accents missing on almost all occasions the Greek occurs in the original: on p. 154 (missing accent on ἄλλον), in δὲν ἀμοιεύειν καὶ ὑπίσθον ἐξεμεναί ἄλλον on p. 175 (missing accent on τόλμη and acute instead of a spiritus lenis on the first epsilon in ἐκφαντϊμεθι) and on p. 206 (ψευδή λέγειν ως ἀεί).

Durham

Ranja Knöbl


Cette édition partielle des tragédies d’Ennius concerne Alcmeo et le cycle troyen qui regroupe Achilles Aristarchi, Aias, Alexander, Andromache Aechmalotis, Hectoris Lytra, Hecuba, Iphigenia, Phoenix, Telamo, Telephus. On regrettera que n’ait pas été pris en compte aussi le Thyeste enniens: par-delà le retour de Thyeste qui provoquera la fureur de son frère Atrée, cette pièce appartient au cycle de cette famille maudite des Atrides, comme le rappelle Aristote dans sa Poétique, et par conséquent, indirectement, à la pièce d’Iphigénie, fille d’Agamemnon, vouée à être sacrifiée.

A. Masiá (A.M.) organise son livre de la manière suivante. L’introduction générale sur Ennius (p. 3–32) est subdivisée en plusieurs rubriques. La première est relative à la vie de l’auteur, à son œuvre, à ses relations politiques et contacts aristocratiques. Ce poète, proche de Caton, le protecteur avec lequel s’établira la rupture, et de Fulvius Nobilior, établit des liens étroits avec les Scipions, qui, célébrés par le poème Scipio et rivaux du Censeur, ont fait partager leur tombeau au poète. Dans les trois rubriques qui suivent est posé le principe de l’imitatio enniennes, dans une quête de sources grecques possibles, sous-tendant le corpus tragique étudié et visant à insister sur les inévitables ‘infidélités’ enniennes au modèle supposé, selon les principes d’une contaminatio en émulation créatrice. On y retrouve tout à la fois un Homère ‘réadapté’ et Hésiode, les tragiques grecs classiques, avec surtout Euripide et un peu Sophocle, Apollonios de Rhodes, Lyco- phon. Y sont adjointes des références latines anciennes ou contemporaines et postérieures, dont Hygin notamment.