

Book Reviews

Reading Homer: Iliad Books 16 and 18 (JACT Classical Teachers' Greek Course)

Anderson (S.) MacLennan (K.) and Yamagata (N.)
(eds.) Pp. xii + 193, b/w & colour ill. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2023. Paper, £19.99.
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John Godwin

Independent scholar, UK
drjohngodwin187@gmail.com

Students who have only been learning the language for a year or so can, with the help of these three great pedagogical *psychagogoi*, tackle two entire books of the *Iliad* with confidence and enjoyment. All Greek words are glossed at their first appearance in the text and also in the vocabulary at the end of the book. There is a lucid and brief account of some of the oddities of Homer's Greek in the Introduction, and these points are explained again when the reader meets them in the text: so (for instance) the Homeric omission of the augment in forming the aorist tense is described on page 11 and then explained again in the notes on the first lines of Books 16 and 18. The notes also point out what Homer's words would be like in Attic Greek, thus reinforcing the student's basic knowledge as well as extending it. Names, geographical locations, methods of making a shield – all these and much more are explained in the notes, and especially knotty lines are translated clearly for the reader. Speed and ease of reading is massively helped by having the notes on the same page as the text rather than collected together after it. The amount of help on offer is exemplary: students can read this poem without needing any other books to hand and they will quickly acquire familiarity and fluency as they work through the 1,484 lines of Greek text. Nor is it assumed that all readers will work through both books of the *Iliad*: each of the two books assumes a linguistic *tabula rasa* in the mind of the reader, so that (for example) points on 16.1 are repeated almost verbatim on 18.1.

Readers are not expected to have any prior knowledge of Homer or the plot of the *Iliad*. The Introduction – which is a model of clarity and enthusiasm – takes us through what we know about Homer and what happens in the *Iliad*, before whetting the reader's appetite for the epic style which makes this poetry so impressive. 'Style' here involves both literary technique (similes, speeches etc) and also literary methods of working with heroic themes and the role of the gods. The 'Homeric question' is well summarised in the course of a discussion of 'verbal repetitions', and the authors also give us a quick tour of the metre of Homer's verse and a judicious

set of suggestions for further reading. That they manage all this in 15 pages, without either cutting any corners or talking down to their readers, is something of a miracle of concision and clarity.

The books chosen for the text are full of variety and interest, giving us the tragic tale of Patroclus in 16 and the subsequent explosion of grief and anger which Achilles unleashes when he learns of his friend's death in 18. The notes point out places where Homer is emphasising words and themes with devices such as enjambement (e.g. 16.70) but they do not spoon-feed the reader with their own interpretations. That said, the authors point out factual matters which are of significance and which the novice could not be expected to know: when Thetis is economical with the truth in her words to Hephaestus at 18.452, the note sharply corrects her version of events by reminding us of what Homer has told us in the opening lines of book 16. The ecphrasis of the shield of Achilles with which book 18 closes is beautifully described and explained ('Achilles will then carry into battle a panorama of the life he has renounced') and the authors show themselves to be as authoritative in metallurgy as they are in everything else. When Achilles promises the dead Patroclus that he will 'slit the throats of twelve shining sons of the Trojans' (18.336) the note on this line is a masterpiece of stylistic and contextual comment: 'ποδειροτομήσω is 1 s. fut. An emphatically horrible word, taking up more than a third of the line, used only here and at 23.22 (again Achilles to the dead Patroclus). He duly fulfils his promise at 23.175-6.'

There are 12 superb illustrations and the typesetting and production quality of the book is excellent throughout. Students (of all ages) coming to Homer for the first time are extremely well served by this book, and when the price comes in at under £20 they are certainly getting a bargain.

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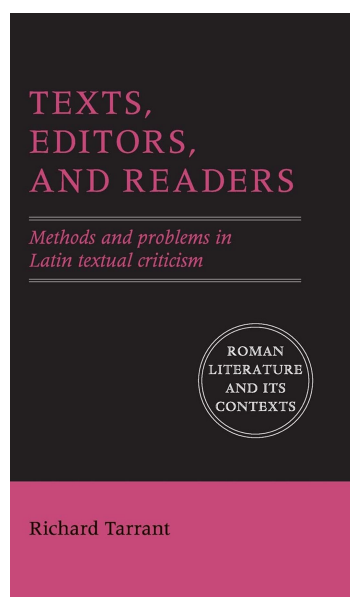
Texts, Editors, and Readers. Methods and Problems in Latin Textual Criticism

Tarrant (R.), Pp. xii + 192. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Paper; £22.99. ISBN: 978-0-511-80516-5

Jerome Moran

Independent Scholar, UK
jeromemoran@hotmail.com

Apology for the interval between the publication of the book and this review. But, barring the forthcoming Oxford Handbook



(see below), it will probably be a long time before another book of this kind appears, in English at any rate. Apparently, few Anglophone scholars have the aptitude or inclination to produce one.

‘Our editions of Greek and Latin authors are good enough to live with’ (E.R. Dodds). ‘Maybe, maybe not; it all depends on one’s standard of living’. (D.R. Shackleton Bailey)

I recommend readers whose interest may have been whetted by this review to read the much fuller and more

informed review by Franz Dolveck at *BMCR* 2016.11.46. There is a useful thumbnail account of textual criticism in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (see also the entries ‘texts, transmission of ancient’ and ‘books and writing’). There is also a more scholarly and condensed account by Bruce Gibson in Chapter 4 of the Wiley-Blackwell *A Companion to the Latin language*. We still await what will almost certainly be the even more scholarly account in the Oxford Handbook series, though for most of us this may prove to be too much of a good thing.

Textual criticism (TC) is the scholarly activity that seeks (ideally/idealistically) to restore the autograph of a text, in this case a Latin text from Antiquity. (The subtitle indicates that the book is concerned with the TC of Latin texts only, not both Latin and Greek texts.) As a recognised discipline within Classics, it has been practised for 500 years or more. Actually, it has been practised, both for Greek and Latin, since Antiquity, e.g. the Greek scholars in Alexandria and Pergamum, and Latin scholars such as Servius and his commentary on Virgil. From being almost synonymous with Classics itself (according to one school of thought), conferring ‘heroic’ status on its best-known practitioners in the 18th and 19th centuries, it has become, in Anglophone circles at least, an endangered species whose extinction would hardly be realised – until it was too late. This book describes its rise and decline. Its fall is not able to be recorded yet, and one can only hope that it never will be since Classics will always be in need of its now unsung services.

The author is best known as an editor of Ovid. In general, editors of classical texts are also textual critics; the converse is not always the case. Only a tiny number of either has written about their craft. Until this book came out it looked like we would not see another one, in English anyway. About the only guides available in English until now have been those of Paul Maas (1953), Martin West (1973) and the estimable *Scribes and Scholars* by Wilson and Reynolds, now in its fourth edition. This book is as timely therefore as it is genuinely instructive. Apparently, there has been a steady decline in interest in TC, on the part of Anglophone classicists at any rate. Perhaps interest will be rekindled by this book and more will be forthcoming. But it is doubtful that we shall ever see again such pioneering figures as Scaliger, Heinsius, Gronovius, Bentley, Lachmann, Housman, to drop just a few names. Much of the work they did does not need to be

done again. This is one of the causes of the decline of TC – a victim of its own (qualified) success, you might say.

The book is concerned mainly with the present-day state of textual criticism and editorial practices, so a very up-to-date, indeed proleptic, guide: the concluding chapter is about the present and possibly future role of digital technology in TC.

The central chapters of the book are concerned with the traditional accredited procedures employed in establishing the best possible text. So they are concerned with creating a stemma, collation, recension etc. Tarrant devotes a chapter or a section of a chapter to each of these. The rest of the book is given over to less technical and more digestible stuff.

The book is concerned with more than textual criticism as such and the mechanics of TC. This is what makes it so readable. A colleague – neither a textual critic nor an editor – told me he found it such a page-turner that he read the whole book at one sitting. It is not a ‘how to’ user guide-type manual, in spite of ‘Methods and Problems’ in the subtitle – not that a manual in itself would get you very far as a critic, or an editor.

We learn a lot about the characteristic virtues (and vices, though not always fairly attributed) of well-known critics and editors. The footnotes are full of their egregious triumphs and disasters (as Tarrant and others have seen them), the latter often deliciously exposed by Tarrant, but without any of the mordant malignity of Housman or Bentley, delicious though that may be too in its way, if we are to be honest.

TC is a frustrating and thankless activity ultimately. The goal – to restore the autograph of a text – is unattainable, and even if it were attainable, one could never know that one had achieved one’s goal. This book explains why, but makes you feel that the effort is still worthwhile. It doesn’t quite make TC ‘sexy’, but nor does it make it ‘nerdy’ either, an image it has acquired since losing its hero status, and one that this book may help to dispel.

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Greek Pedagogy in Crisis

Miller (D.R.) Pp. xiv + 247. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019. Paper, £23, US\$31. ISBN: 978-1-5326-9093-8.

Cressida Ryan

University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
cressida.ryan@googlemail.com

This book began as a thesis assessing the state of Greek pedagogy in theological educational establishments, primarily in the USA. The structure is introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. About 40% of the volume comprises appendices, including copies of the survey responses informing the research. Miller is concerned that there has not been much research on what constitutes good pedagogy in ancient Greek. He has a point; it has been an under-researched area. Unfortunately, however, he misses much of the work which has gone on, and the changing landscape.