

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

Christopher Pelling ed., *Greek tragedy and the historian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997. Pp. x + 268.

Christopher Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian*. Approaching the Ancient World. London and New York: Routledge. 2000. Pp. x + 338.

More years ago than its reviewer likes to admit, there appeared a volume of essays on *Greek tragedy and the historian* edited by Chris Pelling. He has now followed that with his own, extended, discussion of the (broader) subject, *Literary texts and the Greek historian*, part of Routledge's series, 'Approaching the ancient world,' of which David Potter's *Literary texts and the Roman historian* also forms a part (reviewed in *Histos* 2 (1998) 308–16). Though concentrating on the more recent volume, this review begins with an overview of the contents and approach of the earlier.

Greek tragedy and the historian comprises 11 papers: P. on 'Aeschylus' *Persae* and history' together with a 'Conclusion' discussing 'Tragedy as evidence' and 'Tragedy and ideology'; P. E. Easterling, 'Constructing the heroic'; A. M. Bowie, 'Tragic filters for history: Euripides' *Supplikes* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*'; Alan H. Sommerstein, 'The theatre audience, the *demos*, and the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus'; Peter Wilson, 'Leading the tragic *choros*: Tragic prestige in the democratic city'; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 'The place and status of foreigners in Athenian tragedy'; Stephen Halliwell, 'Between public and private: Tragedy and Athenian experience of rhetoric'; Robert Parker, 'Gods cruel and kind: Tragic and civic ideology'; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Tragedy and religion: Constructs and readings'; Robin Osborne, 'The ecstasy and the tragedy: Varieties of religious experience in art, drama, and society.'

This is a distinguished list of literary scholars and ancient historians, and the papers do not disappoint. They reflect interests in the relationship between drama and civic ideals and expectations (Easterling, Bowie, Sommerstein); in the interplay between drama and other forms of public discourse, especially rhetoric (Parker, Halliwell); in how rhetoric constructs tragedy and tragic behaviour, both on and off the stage (Wilson); in the 'codes' and 'registers' that tragedy deploys in representing ancient social groups (Vidal-Naquet); in Athenian ritual practice and religious belief, including ancient *schemata* for organizing religious experience (Sourvinou-Inwood) and the

evidence of artistic representations of maenads (Osborne); and in what we can deduce about the interests and expectations of the audiences who watched these performances (P.). ‘Historians like evidence,’ writes P. in his ‘Conclusion’ (213); as concerned with methodology and theoretical stance as with the results obtained therefrom, this collection attempts to show, from various different standpoints, how tragedy can be used to provide evidence, and for what.

As I read through the papers, my strongest impression was of the limitations and the nuances required in using these literary texts. Genre matters exceedingly: so Parker argues that the apparent divide between the positive, supporting, image of the gods in public oratory, and their harsh, often perplexingly unjust, manifestations in tragedy, can be understood not because tragic representations of the divine are unrelated to ‘real’ conceptions, but because tragedy as a genre does different things with the gods: in particular, he argues, tragedy (with few, though important, exceptions) focuses on the gods’ relations with individuals, and asks us to consider the nature of divine vengeance (often against those who do not deserve it) in a challenging ‘corrective to civic optimism’ (159). Athenians could, and did, think the propositions that the gods do not exist, or that they are indifferent to any human conception of justice, just as they could, and did, think the proposition that the gods support Athens. But they did it in different places, relying on political oratory, with its ‘theological opacity’ (158), to give them a vague and positive picture of the divine, and on tragedy, with its ‘transparency,’ to let them explore in detail the possible workings of that divine world, and to experiment with ‘what would happen if ...,’ including imagining that the gods could destroy a city they had once loved. For her part, Easterling argues that tragedy’s heroic world is ‘designed to be identifiable’ through its language, its epic credentials, and its setting in a distant time (22): genre creates a kind of ‘heroic vagueness’ through which the tragedians can both bid for cultural hegemony (25; tragedy is the legitimate heir of panhellenic epic) and explore different possible interpretations of difficult civic and historical issues: ‘images of the community,’ as she terms them (28-36; her examples come from the *Orestes* and the *Oedipus Coloneus*). So P., in his ‘Conclusion’ here and throughout *Literary texts*, argues that the first principle we must bring to reading these texts as historical documents is that an ancient audience ‘could think in different ways on different occasions; even ... at different stages of the same festival’ (222). Audience response is never monolithic; moreover, generic expectations and conventions can determine not only what may be said but how it may be received, or thought about, by an audience. They can also, if unrecognized, appear to provide a reflection of historical reality when in fact they do not. So P. argues that in the *Persae* Aeschylus’ Salamis is a construction of literary *topoi* and motifs which, on ‘a sliding scale of suspi-

cion' (2), seem to fit far too well artistically to add up to a picture of real, remembered events that was 'substantially true to life' as many (n.1) have claimed.

Some of the contributors do suggest ways in which tragedy may echo quite particular events of the Athenian experience. So Bowie argues that tragedy acts as a 'filter' for seeing 'major events ... of considerable contemporary impact' (45): his examples are Delium (as refracted through myth in Euripides' *Supplikes*) and the recall of Alcibiades (as reflected in the *Philoctetes*). He sees this as an exercise in intertextuality: 'particular historical events are made homologous with mythical stories in such a way that the action of the dramas provides various models for viewing the events' (61). This is more direct than what is described by Sourvinou-Inwood's cinematic metaphors of 'distancing' and 'zooming,' wherein tragedy overlaps mythical events with real life, giving certain parts of a play, or certain issues raised by a text, more direct (and, this being tragedy, more uncomfortable) resonance to a contemporary audience. But Bowie is interested in the interplay of similar structures in texts and real life rather than in allegorical readings; as such he is more convincing (in my sceptical view) than Sommerstein, who reads aspects of the action of Aeschylus' Danaid trilogy as 'designed to recall recent events involving Kimon and Athenian-Spartan relations and to strengthen feeling against him ahead of the ostracism vote' (78). This argument for a deliberate use of tragedy as a 'political weapon'—a tactic which Sommerstein believes Aeschylus also deployed in 472 and 458 BCE—sits oddly in a collection otherwise reluctant to pin tragedy down to direct, pointed reference to contemporary events, or indeed—in the case of Vidal-Naquet on metics, or Osborne on maenads—to go much further than positing a 'reflective' or 'exploratory' relationship between literary performative text and 'real' life, however illuminating that exploration may be.

Where all these papers share common ground is in the assumption that tragedy, as a civic discourse, is both reflective of, and constitutive of Athenian ideology, and that—if carefully handled—it therefore has much to tell us about civic (and audience) assumptions and experience. What 'ideology' means is, of course, problematic. Pelling's definition is typically, and necessarily, blurred: ideology forms a spectrum, from 'ideology as creed' and 'ideology as imperative' (especially in genres such as the *epitaphios*: 'Athens the gleaming, Athens the merciful') to 'ideology as question' (229-35). Tragedy is far out on the exploratory end; but represents 'a shift of register, not a tension or a clash' with the pre-play at the festivals, and with other modes of civic discourse, from funeral oration to oratory to comedy and more (235). Sourvinou-Inwood's metaphors of 'distancing' and 'zooming' (metaphors P. likes: see *Greek tragedy* 12, 217-18, 228-9, 233-4 and *Literary texts* 166, 170-1, 173, 182) are key. And the effects go both ways: 'Tragedy affords a model for

reading real life, but real life also affects the way the audience read—that is hear, interpret, and respond to—the tragedy which they see’ (217). This is true, of course, for us as well; one profound difficulty with relating any ancient literature to events in ancient history is the temptation arising from our own piecemeal knowledge of those events. Not only are we unable to sense nuance, tone of voice, levels of irony (despite all those particles!), and differing levels of attention or sympathy in the original scripts or audience; but the fragmentary nature of our knowledge of ancient history makes it almost irresistible to connect the dots, to try to get a more secure understanding of what ancient life was like. So (to take a crude example), because we know about the destruction of Melos in 416 BCE, and because a year later Euripides explores in the *Troades* the effects of a city’s destruction, like the ancient scholiasts with their obsessive synchronism, we long to see the one as a direct comment on the other. This collection ably sets out the difficulties involved in such an enterprise, and some of the payoffs from a more nuanced approach to relating history and text.

The themes deftly handled by the contributors to *Greek tragedy and the historian* are elaborated from a literary-historiographical point of view in *Literary texts*. In it, P. concentrates on some core (and some not-so-core) texts either from the fifth century BCE (broadly construed) or from authors reflecting on events of that century: so we have chapters on 415 BCE (Thucydides and Andocides on the Herms); on Nicias and Alcibiades in Plutarch; on Plataea (Apollodorus and Thucydides); on Thucydides’ speeches; two chapters on Aristophanes, with special emphasis on the *Acharnians*; on the *Eumenides* and the *Orestes*; and finally, a discussion of Lysistrata and other persons of gender from the genres treated elsewhere in the volume, i.e. tragedy, comedy, and oratory. There are lots of texts to chew on (all translated), and the material has been carefully chosen to tie in together, with plenty of cross references. This is a book that works both as a whole and as individual parts, and its far from modest aim is to show us not only how to use literary texts for extra-literary purposes, but how to do ancient history.

It should already be apparent that I am sympathetic to P.’s approach. In the following paragraphs I simply register some questions, primarily about details, a procedure which seems justified at least partly by the book’s insistence on close reading of texts, and by its sustained engagement (especially in the extensive endnotes) with the minutiae of scholarship on Greek literature and history. I will end with some more general points, and an attempt to play devil’s advocate about the project taken as a whole.

Historical narrative first (Chapters 2-6). On the (in)famous issue of narrative dislocation, P. has interesting things to say about Thucydidean practice. He treats a problematic Thucydidean text on Sparta and the Herms (6.61.2) sympathetically; his own rhetoric (25: ‘simply a matter of narrative

smoothness' [but cf. 94 'the result is anything but smooth']; 'the way [Thucydides] has textured this item goes closely with his interpretation of the whole affair ... There is no need to find this procedure ... sinister') itself glides smoothly through the issues without simplifying them. In Chapter 5 ('Explaining the war'), P. goes into more detail on Thucydides' use of narrative delay—what P. calls the 'Need to Know' principle. Here, I started becoming (sometimes) confused by whose 'need' it was—and as conceived by whom. P. reads Thucydides from the inside, explaining why events are distributed as they are (e.g., in the narrative of the Pentekontaetia, 91-4); but we too often lose track of what other possible stories could have been told about the period, with other 'needs' and other narrative distributions. P.'s analysis corresponds to Thucydides' narrative pressures—but is there an alternative narrative? Dionysius of Halicarnassus' expectations about what and how Thucydides should explain may have been 'bland' (94), but they were at least as experienced as ours in the ways of ancient historiography. And though P. repeatedly allows for different possible stories (e.g., 23), he (perhaps unconsciously) presents Thucydides' as an almost inevitable one—responding to those narrative pressures? A kind of blurring of P. and Thucydides results, coming to a peak (it seems to me) at 98-100, where this extremely experienced reader of Thucydides teases out the reasons for the historian's procedure and the central concern of his narrative (power). How different, one wonders, would a naive reader's reading be? And what about someone who not only brings, but foregrounds, their experience of other kinds of historical narrative to their reading of Thucydides? Coming from Herodotus, with his generous citing of sources and ample room for debate even within his authoritative version (see 84-9), one might well find Thucydides' 'need to know' procedure extremely sinister indeed; and one could see Thuc. 1.106, in explaining which even P. is tempted to invoke the principle of the 'unfinished text,' as a vestige of the other Thucydides—the one who goes for shock value (cf. 7.29-30, and see Chapter 1 of Woodman's *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography*)—rather than something Thucydides included because (93) 'no-one is going to be misled by the inclusion of that single bloody afternoon; no-one will think that this was what the development of the empire was all about, or that this explained the outbreak of war in 431'. 'It is hard to think,' says P. later, apropos of the objection that the Samian debate of 1.40-3 would have been more chronologically and narratively appropriate in the Pentekontaetia, 'that any airing of the issues there could have taken more than a couple of lines ...; 1.40-3 is anyway where it belongs, at the point where it most effectively influences arguments and thoughts' (98-9). I do not dispute that it 'belongs' where it is—at least not insofar as P. is talking about Thucydides' narrative strategy as read by P. But what about his first point? Who would have thought that the historian would have included 1.106?

Or—as P. says later—the Funeral Oration? P. is acutely aware, and energetically tries to expose and eliminate, what he calls ‘Poirots’: brilliant reconstructions that explain the evidence, but which are not the *only* reconstruction that could do so (34-5). In getting so far under the skin of his historian’s narrative, however, P. is at times in danger himself of producing a kind of Poirot, of assuming that because Thucydides is the kind of author he is/ is believed to be—see, e.g., 79, ‘any Thucydidean view demands respect,’ or 115, ‘It is hard to think that Thucydides, *of all people* [my italics], was too intelligent to notice’—then the text must make sense in a particular way.

I suspect that something of the sort is operating in P.’s brilliant—and, I think, largely convincing—analysis (Chapter 6) of the theory behind Thucydides’ speeches and of 1.22.1-2, which he takes as deliberately vague, providing ‘an umbrella description which would cover a range of different procedures’. P.’s Thucydides writes speeches which blend ‘his own reconstructions with what he knew had been said; but the blend itself can be very variable, and it will be impossible to work out what that blend is in any particular case’ (117). This is very P.: nuanced, with movable boundaries, but an insistence that we should not rule out the possibility of reliable information, either from the historian’s own autopsy or from the accurate reports of others. Unless I am missing something, however, P. seems to slide in this chapter, and the slipperiness comes with the question of the speeches’ tendency to deconstruct themselves, or to tie themselves into logical knots (115, 118). Twice P. uses this fact to argue against interpretations which read 1.22 as saying that Thucydides wrote the speeches as ‘model’ orations, or chose the best arguments available—hence uses it in partial support of his claim that the speeches contain original material. Yet by the end of the chapter, this self-deconstruction has become part of the Thucydidean procedure of ‘picking up selected highlights of the argument for dissection, but not necessarily keeping anything like the balance of the original ... for presenting (and implicitly unmasking) the thought-processes which underlie an action or the disingenuous rationalizations which purport to justify it’ (121). I suppose that this can fall into the categories set up on 120, that ‘we may provisionally assume any individual part of a speech either to be what was really said, or appropriate enough for Thucydides to include it in his own reconstruction,’ always bearing in mind that the proportions and balance of the ‘reconstruction’ will differ from the original, to an extent which we cannot know. But I am not sure I can see a reason on the ground, as it were—on the level of ‘story,’ as opposed to on the level of ‘discourse,’ the Thucydidean meta-text—for speakers ‘appropriately’ to tie themselves into logical knots, or implicitly unmask their own thought-processes. I do not doubt that these speakers do such things; but that they do them must, I think, push their

speeches much farther into the realm of ‘constructions’ than P.’s ‘reconstructions’ would have us believe.

Comedy, second, and some smaller details (Chapters 7-8). The model for Aristophanes’ escapist/alternative reality plays (125-7) has always seemed to me to be close to the romance ‘Green World,’ a sort of ancient ‘Wizard of Oz’ scenario (‘and you, and you—and *you* were there!’). Though I would agree that ancient comic sensitivities must have been different from our own, there have been and are plenty of radio and stand-up shock jocks (e.g., Andrew Dice Clay, whose heyday was in 1989) to whom jokes about Soma-lia famine represent the upper limit of tastefulness, and who draw large audiences—at least in my (ironically challenged) country (134). On the reason for the *Telephus*’ enduring appeal and recognisability (144), P.’s modern analogies with actors don’t quite work—all of his examples appeared in *serial* TV shows or movies, which is not quite the same as a single early role. A better comparandum might be Clark Gable in ‘Gone With the Wind’: not a particularly early role, but a defining one. Again on *Telephus*, the irony in the original version, that Telephus is only pretending to be Greek (149), was in fact a double one, as he was Greek by birth, the son of Auge and Heracles. I think one could make more of P.’s wonderful fantasy (148) of Dicaeopolis being hauled off ‘still doubtless ... in costume and mask, to defend himself in the *bouleuterion*’. Do we in fact need *any* overlap between Aristophanes (or ‘the poet/producer’) and his character in *Acharnians*, given comedy’s inborn obsession with breaking through the stage/audience barrier? One is irresistibly reminded of ‘The Purple Rose of Cairo,’ or ‘The Last Action Hero’. The screen (or the orchestra) is semipermeable at all times, and Dicaeopolis’ ‘I’ meaning ‘Dicaeopolis’ surely makes as much sense offstage in this comic fantasy as it does on.

I liked the argument (151-5) that Aristophanes is not parodying Herodotus at the beginning of *Acharnians*; he is surely right that not only do we not need anything ‘real’ for the joke about Aspasia’s tarts to work, we don’t need—nor are we given any pointers to—Herodotus. Homer, and the chain of ‘logical’ argument in historical explanation, are enough. I am less sure, though, about the point (156) that in real life real hunger was expected to follow from whatever Megarian decree was passed, ‘for otherwise we need not have had “hunger” as the transition here [*Ach.* 535-7] at all’. As P. notes immediately thereafter, comedy demands that we allow for exaggeration; it also, I suspect, demands that we allow for food—as theme, as the basis for jokes, and as the matrix for comedy. And the *Acharnians* is full of food, as the motivation for, and the fruit of, Dicaeopolis’ peace. What is more, Dicaeopolis has just constructed his Megarians entirely in terms of food: cucumbers, hares, piglets, garlic, salt.

Third, tragedy (Chapter 9). I'm not sure why P. doesn't mention Phrynichus when talking about contemporary events in tragedy (170-1); that is the most famous example of the (confirming) counter-proposition to his formulation, 'you can bring contemporary events into drama, but you cannot bring them too close.' Too obvious, perhaps (and P. examined the issues in his chapter on *Persae* in *Greek tragedy*). I found P.'s take on the question of Ephialtes in the *Eumenides* sensible, if a little vague: the existence of the Areopagus reforms and related contemporary issues 'zoom' the relevance of the issues in Aeschylus' play (173), setting the audience on the challenging end of its ideology spectrum, without being allegorical of the events of 462/1. The difficulties and disquieting features of civic process which P. explores in the *Eumenides* and *Orestes* are designed, he argues, as part of the self-questioning that tragedy is licensed, even commissioned, to perform. I agree; and I agree, too, that the *Orestes* is poised very close to the edge of disorientation. Some parallels with other Euripidean plays, might further illuminate (or complicate) matters: Euripides had already explored Apollo's various empty promises in the *Electra*, especially its end, with the Dioscuroi's unconvincing appearance; and while the Athenians *were* likely to respond positively to 'self-protection and cunning' (185), again in *Electra*, we see the same emphasis on the unheroic nature of the children (pointed by Electra's unrealistic fantasies about her brother), and the end is decidedly disorienting both for them and for us. In both *Electra* and *Orestes* the traditional story (or the fact that there *is* a traditional, heroic story) plays against the 'reality' on stage, and it is that contrast that is vital. These Euripidean explorations could not exist without the *Oresteia*, or indeed without their characters' experience of the *Oresteia*. One could note, further, that the *Iphigenia at Tauris* plays the same story but in a different, almost comic (because 'green,' and ultimately safe) world—where self-protection and cunning are given their just rewards. P. plays the *Orestes* primarily against contemporary reality (though with attention to echoes of the *Oresteia*); I think that some of its effects are as well understood through intertextuality and metatheatricality as through fifth-century politics and Athenian self-analysis. As P. does so well with Plutarch (Chapter 3), here more detailed consideration of the author's distinctive moves, his hallmarks, might be in order.

Finally: though P. is certainly right that 'tragedy can help us to see what moral issues the audience found most interestingly poised' (187), I do wonder whether we should factor in competition results—though I have no idea how we would go about doing so. Does the fact that the *Medea* (one of P.'s gender plays, 196-208) came third of three mean that Euripides' expectations of the audience's interest (200) were badly misjudged? (One could of course argue from the known results that Euripides habitually misjudged that interest, as Sophocles habitually got it right: but I think the question

needs to be asked.) The *Medea* raises a number of questions about tragic convention, and P. might be more careful than he is with the word ‘natural’ (on Medea’s ‘feminist’ ideas [201]: ‘the points are fleeting and casual, but that makes them all the more revealing. They must still not grate or bemuse: the natural connection of ideas must be taken for granted’). But this leaves out rhetoric’s undisputed ability to *construct* a ‘natural’ connection of ideas, an ability which P. sees keenly elsewhere (e.g., in discussing Apollodorus’ oratorical versions, Chapter 4). In this play, particularly, the rhetorical ability of Medea σοφῆ is fundamental, and enables her to manipulate audiences inside and outside the play, becoming no less than a new playwright constructing her own plot. And in her increasingly independent plot, various stage conventions, including that of the sympathetic female chorus (201), are—perhaps—stretched (metatheatrically) to their limits: that is, we are meant to question the plausibility of the choral support, or (better) to notice its artificiality, just as Aristotle noticed the artificiality of the Aegeus episode (*Poet.* 61b20).

There do not seem to be any books called (say) *Historical texts for the literary scholar*. Is this because the literary scholar is not deemed to read ‘historical’ texts (which would in that case be construed primarily as epigraphic? numismatic? legal?); or because she is not expected to need to know *how* to read them (are they self-explanatory? Thucydides and Livy talk about what happened, that’s easy enough...); or is it because there is no such thing as a ‘historical’ text, only a literary one? Certainly, the emphasis in recent years has been on giving historians the tools they are thought to need to handle this suddenly unfamiliar beast, the literary text increasingly equipped by literary scholars with an implacable density, opacity, and seemingly endless self-referentiality, generic codes and norms, and intertextuality. What used to appear relatively simple (when Aristophanes in *Acharnians* says Creon vomited up five talents, that means—allowing for comic exaggeration—that he paid *something*) must now be refracted through all sorts of filters, and may not mean (see *Literary texts* 129–30) that he paid anything at all.

I am here simplifying, of course, the way ancient historians used to read literary texts—it’s been a long time since Theopompus, or whoever his modern equivalent might be, interpreted Aristophanes as simply transparent or reflective of reality. But it is not so long—at least to a literary outsider’s point of view—since historians have suggested that one can remove, or step around, the comedy (or the literary ornament, or the tragic myth context, or the personal bias) to see something genuinely historical: that is, as P. puts it in the ‘Conclusion’ to *Greek tragedy* (213), that one can extract ‘indicative evidence’ from these literary texts, evidence which ‘illuminates something beyond itself’. This is, I think, what is sometimes referred to as a ‘hard core’ of historical ‘fact’ embedded in literary texts. The great merit of *Literary texts*

(and of the papers in *Greek tragedy*) is that for the most part, this view of texts as somehow comprising (as it were) chocolate chips + cookie dough, from which the chips (the ‘facts’) can be removed and enjoyed and the dough (the matrix of literary stuff) discarded, is itself discarded in favour of a less crude approach which takes the medium as the message, which must be understood, and evaluated, accordingly.

The trouble with this, however, is that the texts now become evidence for themselves; or, as P. puts it, again in *Greek tragedy* (214), ‘If we talk of a tragic text as “evidence” for the civic theatrical experience, it is more like talking of a fragment of a pot as “evidence” for the original artefact: we begin from a part and reconstruct what we can of the whole’. Putting aside the question of how we do that *if we don’t already know what the pot looks like* (would we be able to reconstruct Thucydides complete with Funeral Oration?), I wonder: if I were not someone who eats the whole cookie, but wanted only the chocolate bits, might I ask, upon reaching the end of *Literary texts*, where all this sophistication, blurred boundaries, and nuanced readings were getting me? What *does* a historian get from this book?

As P. is a scholar with one eye continually on his own methodology and possible reactions to it (P. reads P. almost as carefully as he reads his ancient texts), this is naturally a question which he anticipates and addresses several times (e.g., 179, ‘It is doubtless correct to say that the [tragic] audiences therefore ‘explore’, ‘challenge’, ‘test’, ‘interrogate’ the ideology of the democratic courts; but these can be slack terms ...’; 251-2, which reprise [with examples from previous discussions] the argument that one can, from alternative historical explanations or scenarios, choose those which are relatively more plausible). It is also a question that he may intend to disarm at the very beginning by claiming that, though informed by a number of different theoretical approaches, especially narratological and reader response, he has ‘not started from theory’ (ix). I am sure this is autobiographically true—P. knows where P. started, and it is clear that these books began a long time ago (in 1970, according to the ‘Preface’ to *Greek tragedy*). P.’s response to the issues in them has been pondered, argued, and refined over years of intellectual debate. From a reader’s standpoint, however, the claim seems extraordinarily disingenuous. *Literary texts* is one of the most pervasively, refreshingly, indeed *obtrusively*, theorized books I have read in a long time: it is *about* theory, in fact, about how to look at and how to read texts. That is why—to register my only real reservation about P.’s position—it is frustrating that he does not discuss how he envisions (or indeed constructs) his ancient ‘readers.’ He seems to dislike invoking ‘the reader inscribed in the text’ (*Greek tragedy*, 14)—but on almost every page of his contributions to that collection, and of *Literary texts*, he invokes readers and audiences, both singularly and collectively. Who are they? How do we know? Sometimes, as argued above, they

seem to be projections of P. (his ‘ideal reader?’); at other times they seem to be (re)constructed from historical evidence (including the texts under discussion—that pot again); at still other times they seem to be implied in the texts under analysis. But how???

Over and over again P. characterizes scholarly approaches, including his own, as ‘moves’ or ‘play’; and *Literary texts* does not merely ‘insinuat[e] a particular set of reading strategies’ (ix): it argues for them as a way of doing history. By foregrounding the claim not to start from theory, however, and by emphasizing that there are ‘facts’ behind statements, that he is interested in getting at ancient *realia*, and that some interpretations are more equal than others (7), P. takes what might be characterized as a traditional historian’s stance. This is not simply a *captatio benevolentiae*: P. believes that there is a reality to which these texts refer, and that we can, with care, learn something about it. Nor does he shy away from arguing about difficult cruces (the Megarian decree[s], for example: *Literary texts*, 103–111). What may disconcert the historian whose approach to the ancient textual cookie I have travestied above is that the facts we might get from these cookies are now enmeshed in a gossamer structure of finely balanced probabilities; of a gaze directed not at what the author or the audience thought but at what the audience, in particular, found interesting to think about or to think with; of deductions based on analysis not of an author’s biography or political leanings but of what he habitually does in his text, of the ‘moves’ he habitually makes. As a result, we find (in P.’s words on another occasion) ‘the complexities of the present [i.e. the time of writing] to be affecting the reading of the past, so that our understanding of [that past] is renuanced by our understanding of the present.’ As a non-historian, I found in *Literary texts* a near-ideal combination of the *dulce* and the *utile*: it is persuasive, cleverly constructed, smoothly written, impressively knowledgeable, and above all, illuminating of what a historian does, or might do. What a proper historian will make of it remains a question that I cannot answer.

Oriel College, Oxford

CHRISTINA S. KRAUS