PEGASUS

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PEGASUS

The Journal of the University of Exeter Department of Classics & Ancient History

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Contributions of any sort—articles, reviews, or other items of Classical or Exonian interest—are always welcome. Such pieces may be submitted in any easily decipherable form: paper, disc (MS Word format if possible), electronic (*M.Wright@exeter.ac.uk*), *etc.* A complimentary copy of *Pegasus* is sent to all authors of published contributions; in addition, undergraduate contributors are rewarded with a modest fee.

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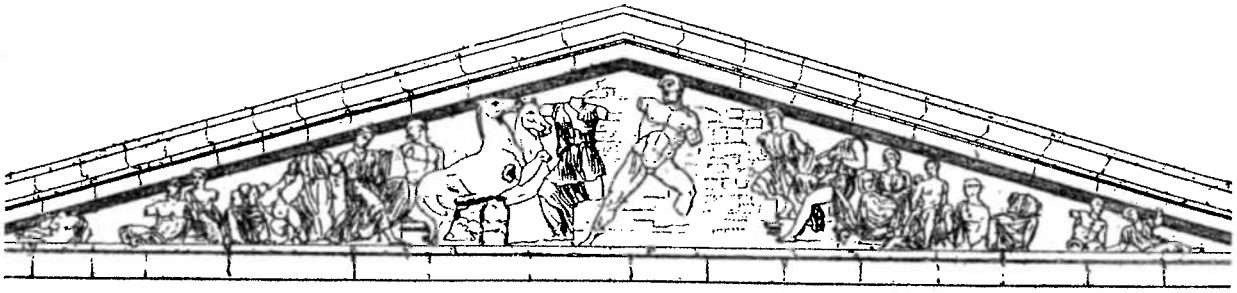


THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION

South-West Branch

Meetings of the Classical Association have not yet been planned for the 2002-3 programme, but there will be a range of lectures and events, including joint meetings with the Hellenic, Roman and Devon Archaeological Societies. New members are very welcome! (Fees: individual membership £5 per annum; life membership £50; schools £8 per annum.)

Subscriptions to: Mrs H. Harvey, 53 Thornton Hill, Exeter, EX4 4NR.
Information about events: Mr K. Woodgett, Dept of Classics & Ancient History, Queen's Building, University of Exeter, EX4 4QH.

empire, and its importance in preserving and questioning relationships with Rome. Articles in press on Plutarch on Alexander the Great, the values attached to prose literature, Samuel Butler and his theory that the Odyssey was written by a woman, and Philostratus' *Heroicus*. I am currently working on a variety of projects, most notably on the ancient novel. The book will be *Reading the self in the ancient Greek novel* (CUP): a literary reading of the novels focusing on their (de)formations of cultural, gendered, sexualised (*etc.*) identities.

John Wilkins (J.M.Wilkins@ex.ac.uk)
My work on Galen and Athenaeus continues. I find these Greek writers of the Imperial period a rich area to work and have written essays on Galen's research methods and Galen's work on nutrition. These are spin-offs from the text of *de alimentorum facultatibus* which I am preparing for Budé. On Athenaeus, I am preparing a volume of essays by various scholars entitled *Athenaeus the Navigator*, which will map the *Deipnosophistae* on to the Mediterraean world.

Peter Wiseman (T.P.Wiseman@ex.ac.uk)
I am in the final stages of editing a book called *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome*, which is due to be published by the British Academy in time for the Academy's centenary celebrations in July 2002. There are 17 contributors, and it's going to be about 450 pages long—just the thing for your holiday reading....

Karl Woodgett (K.A.Woodgett@ex.ac.uk)
I am working on a—soon-to-be-finished—doctoral thesis, which looks at how the Roman historians developed the idea of the moral danger of peace, and how their narrative of key events and individuals is informed by this concept.

Matthew Wright (M.Wright@ex.ac.uk)
I am nearing the end of my doctoral project on Euripides' *Helen*, *Iphigenia among the Taurians* and *Andromeda*, which will, hopefully, become a book entitled *Escape-Tragedies*. During the past year I have also been working, and delivering papers, on such topics as Stesichorus, *tyche*, and tragic theology.

Dissertations

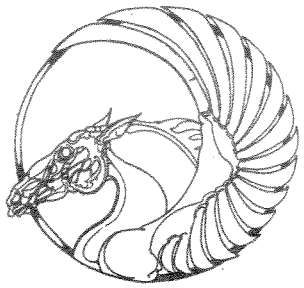
The following list contains all dissertations completed for higher degrees in the Department of Classics & Ancient History during the period 2001-2002. (An asterisk denotes a Distinction in the M.A.)

M.A. in Ancient Drama and Society
Rosemary Mathewson, 'In what ways does drama seek to represent the *polis*?'
*Mario Vitor Santos, 'The sublime in five passages of Greek literature'

M.A. in Ethics
Alex Stovell, 'Stoic and Roman Values in Cicero's *On Duties* 3'

M.A. in Roman Myth and History
Craig Axford, 'Velleius Paterculus: the View from AD 30'
*Kate Gurney, 'Personified Abstractions and Morality in Roman Religion and History'
Lee McGill, 'Germanicus Caesar: Man into Myth'
*Anita Watson, 'Metamorphic Myth and Hybridised History: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti* 3, and Historiography'

Doctor of Philosophy
Eireann Marshall, 'Images of ancient Libyans'
Larry Shenfield, 'Chariots in early Greek culture: myth *versus* reality'



Panning for Gold: Truth, Fiction and Greek 'History'

Betony Taylor

THE STRANGE LINK between truth and fiction in Greek historiography may be seen in Cicero's description of Herodotus as simultaneously the father of history and the author of innumerable lies.[1] Similarly, the Oxford English Dictionary uses a critical quotation on Herodotus to illustrate the use of 'falsehood'.[2] The aim of history-writing is generally interpreted as the recording of truth rooted in actual past events; so how can it be appropriate to describe a fabricator as a writer of 'history'? Surely an invented statement or narrative is a description of 'fiction', which is inherently untrue or imaginary. However, for the ancient Greeks, 'history' embraced past events, such as the Trojan War, which we would regard as fictitious, as is seen in (for example) their acceptance of hero-cult.[3] The Greeks' 'history' was the received account of their past that reached back into mythical times without a break, and their mythical past was just as important and relevant as the 'historical' past.[4] Fact (truth) and myth (falsehood) were not clearly differentiated, and this blurring of categories is perhaps understandable when we try to distinguish fact from fiction in Herodotus' and Thucydides' presentation of past events.[5]

Herodotus states his purpose as being threefold: 'that human achievement may not become forgotten in time, and that great and marvellous deeds – some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians – may not be without their glory; and especially to show why the two peoples fought each other'.[6] He defines his work as a *historiê* – the Greek word, meaning 'inquiry', implies an organised approach to the material – but his inclusion of 'marvellous deeds' *(thômata)* adds a fantastical, yet not necessarily fictional, dimension. From the start, Herodotus is trying to reconcile the two halves of his inherited past, the historical and the mythical, and he is credited with the invention of a genre, converting legend-writing into the science of 'history'.[7] By his prominent use of the word 'glory' *(kleos)* Herodotus recalls Homeric heroic values, and aligns himself with the epic tradition. The *Iliad* had expounded the glorious actions of the Greeks and Trojans, and in book 9 Homer depicts Achilles 'pleasuring his heart, and singing of men's fame'.[8] Herodotus could be seen as continuing Homer's theme by singing of both Greek and non-Greek deeds, and some even go as far as calling him 'the Homer of the Persian wars'.[9]

Not every ancient writer believed in the historicity of Homer, although the culture of writing history remained rooted in the epic tradition. Xenophanes criticised the credibility of Homer, and Hesiod was aware of the inaccuracies in the historical content of epic, although his warning relates more to the use of the same style of presentation for fact and fiction ('we know how to tell many falsehoods that seems real: but we also know how to speak truth when we wish to').[10] The Greeks recognised the generic differences between history and epic poetry but the blurring of the line between truth and falsehood in representation of the past caused problems. Plato took the view that the validity of a work's content matters less than the usefulness of the content:

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[1] Cicero, *De Legibus* 1.5: *et apud Herodotum, patrem historiae, et apud Theopompum sunt innumerabiles fabulae.*

[2] L. Brown (ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford 1993), *s.v.* 'falsehood': the quotation there is from E. Stillingfleet.

[3] To give one example from Herodotus (1. 67-8): Orestes was given hero-cult by the Spartans when, after being instructed by the Delphic oracle, they exhumed the bones of Orestes and defeated the Tegeans.

[4] G. W Bowersock, *Fiction as History* (California 1994).

[5] See M. I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, pp. 15-16.

[6] Herodotus 1.1.

[7] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London 1946), p. 19.

[8] Homer, *Iliad* 9.189.

[9] J. T. Shotwell, *An Introduction to the History of History* (London 1922).

[10] Hesiod, *Theogony* 27-28.

capacity as saviour in the mysteries as well as to his wife's rescue.

There are two passages that might represent obstacles to the argument that Plato thought highly of Orpheus. On neither of the occasions when Orpheus or Orphism is derided is Socrates' the speaker. On the contrary, Socrates is unimpressed with the arguments posited by his opponents. The first passage occurs within the context of an argument put forward by Adeimantos in the *Republic*. Those who think, with Homer, that "the gods themselves can be swayed by prayer and...human beings turn them from their purpose when someone has transgressed and sinned", according to Adeimantos,

> "present a noisy throng of books by Musaeus and Orpheus, offspring as they say of Selene and the Muses, in accordance with which they perform their rituals. And they persuade not only individuals, but whole cities that the unjust deeds of the living or the dead can be absolved or purified through ritual sacrifices and pleasant games. These initiations, as they call them, free people from punishment hereafter, while a terrible fate awaits those who have not performed the ritual."[17]

Adeimantos is an outsider. His derogatory speech—in particular, his mention of 'pleasant games'—is the argument of a non-initiate ignorantly deriding rituals which he has not troubled to understand. This passage, in the light of those to be discussed later, may be intended to portray Adeimantos as unable to substantiate his argument with facts, resorting instead to abuse and generalisation. However, it seems safe to assume that Orphism was a widespread phenomenon. In this passage the themes of the afterlife and music are presented together again. The Muses are, he says, spoken of as mothers of the two legendary musicians, a common metaphoric lineage for poets, and it is made clear that Orphic books contain instructions for the performance of rituals. In other words, the Orphic texts may form some kind of liturgy.

The mention of the Muses and the 'noisy throng of books' is ambiguous. The fact that the Orphic rituals were performed in accordance with books written by the children of the Muses would in itself indicate that poetry and music were involved in them. But why are the books described as a "noisy throng"? Unless some sort of pun is intended, the idea is odd. Despite the obvious intention of conveying the impression of a confusing array of texts, it is possible that the equation of these texts with sound is not accidental. If the books were in some sense a source of sound, given what has already been established about Orphism, it seems a reasonable conjecture that the rituals they contained were intended to be sung, in view of what is known of Greek poetic performance practice.

During his discourse on the nature of love in the *Symposium*, Phaedrus gives his curious account of Orpheus' journey to Hades.

> "Orpheus, however, [the gods] sent unsatisfied from Hades, after showing him only an image of the woman he came for. They did not give him the woman herself, because they thought he was soft (he was, after all, a cithara-player) and did not dare to die like Alcestis for Love's sake, but contrived to enter living into Hades. So they punished him for that, and made him die at the hands of women".[18]

This is the first known reference to Orpheus' mission having been unsuccessful, which immediately places it under suspicion. Also, Phaedrus' argument is one of several refuted by Socrates. It is possible, therefore, that this passage is an example of Plato's use of literary device.[19] Here he invents a version of a myth in order to correspond more closely with the

[17] Plato, *Republic* 364e.

[18] Plato, *Symposium* 179d.

[19] See K.A. Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge 2000).

argument of one of his speakers. This may also be a subtle way of implying, even before Socrates has had the chance to refute it, that Phaedrus' argument is flawed. The more conventional version of the Orpheus myth, in which Orpheus succeeded in bringing Eurydice back from the dead, was probably the one that Plato's first audiences would have known, so they would have seen the implications.

Since the passages where Orpheus is mocked do not represent Socrates' opinion, it does not seem incongruous for Socrates to use Orpheus as an authority. Indeed, elsewhere, in two other dialogues, Socrates cites Orphic poems to add authority to his arguments.[20] It seems possible, then, that Socrates did not entirely share his companions' apparent disdain for Orpheus.

There is at least one other participant in a Platonic dialogue who quotes Orpheus. In the *Laws*,[21] Athenias says: "But human authors, in their silly way, jumble all these things together into complicated combinations. In Orpheus' words, anyone 'Whose delight in life is in its springtime' will find them a rich source of amusement."

The subject under consideration in this passage is the nature of divine music, so the use of Orpheus as an authority is of special significance. It seems that the type of music Orpheus represents is at odds with these 'complicated combinations.' The implication seems to be that Orpheus' music was of a spiritual and edifying kind suited to moral edification rather than virtuosic display. In this respect it is exactly the kind of music that Plato extols as worthy for inclusion in his ideal Republic. Another interesting issue to arise in this context is that of the harmony of the spheres. Could this concept be implicit in the reference to divine music? If this is the case, and Plato is contrasting the simple, divine music of the spheres with the inferior music made by humanity, the reference would be of great significance, as the harmony of the spheres is based on a Pythagorean definition of the musical scale.[22] If Plato is implying the superiority of this diatonic music to the chromatic and enharmonic[23] genera which were (probably) prevalent in his era, it would explain why Orpheus and Pythagoras are often closely associated in the ancient world. It is likely, given this association, that their musical ideas would have something in common. It seems feasible, then, to suggest that Orpheus and his music may have represented the practical side of the Pythagorean tradition, and that Orpheus, in his guise as legendary musician, was therefore responsible for the propagation of diatonic music.

One possible link between Pythagoras and Orpheus is found in Plato's *Timaeus*. This work is heavily indebted to the Pythagorean notion of the harmony of the spheres. From this idea is extracted the theory of musical ratios, which is used to support a pseudo-scientific musical creation myth concerning the importance of proportion in all things. These ratios form the harmonic series and when combined produce a tonal scale, which can be represented in the mathematical figure of the tetractys. This idea is quintessentially Pythagorean, but Orpheus' name appears nowhere in the *Timaeus*, so at a cursory glance one could be forgiven for assuming that he has nothing to do with the musical creation and cosmology outlined within it. Consequently, to make any connection between him and the *Timaeus* may seem unjustified. There is, however, at least one implicit connection to be found in *Timaeus* 40e. It is worth quoting the passage in full:

"It is beyond our powers to know or tell about the birth of the other gods; we must rely on those who have told the story before, who claimed to be children of the gods, and presumably know about their own ancestors. We cannot distrust the children of the gods, even if they give no probable or necessary proof of what they say: we must conform to custom and believe their account of their own family history. Let us therefore follow them in our account of the birth of these gods. Ocean and Tethys were the children of Earth and Heaven, and their children were Phorcys and Cronos and Rhea and their companions; and from Cronos and Rhea were born Zeus and Hera and their

[20] In the *Cratylus* (42b), Orpheus is cited alongside Homer in the course of a theogonic myth; a similar use of Orpheus as a genealogical authority is found in the *Philebus* (66c).

[21] Plato, *Laws* 2. 669d.

[22] Plutarch *On Music*.

[23] These terms are used here in their ancient Greek sense, quite different from modern definitions. See Barker, *Greek Musical Writings, Vol. 2* (Cambridge 1984) *s.v.* 'Aristoxenus'.

brothers and sisters whose name we know, and they in their turn had yet further children."[24]

The purpose of this passage is to link a monotheistic creation myth with the polytheistic world of the gods in which Plato and his contemporaries, for the most part, believed. But what is its relevance in the present context? For a start, the author, or authors, of this theogony are said to be children of the gods. This description would be appropriate for the Platonic Orpheus, since in the *Republic* (340e and 366e) his divine parentage is asserted. Also, and more specifically, despite the absence of night at its beginning, this theogony is identical with the Orphic, Eudemian theogony.[25]

There is a problem, however, with West's assertion that this Eudemian theogony is quoted from an Orphic hymn. His only evidence is that cited above, that Orpheus and Museaus were the offspring of the gods. This is in itself problematic, since Plato claims that they were the children of the Moon (Selene) and the Muses, who were not real deities. Such a slight difference may perhaps be overlooked if the other evidence fits. West also claims that Plato quotes twice elsewhere from an Orphic theogony,[26] a fact which, whilst true, can hardly be said to clinch the argument. He claims that the *Timaeus* genealogy is likely to have been derived from the same poem which Plato quotes elsewhere, but he gives no clear reason why this should be the case. To state that 'it is also likely to be the same as the Orphic theogony to which Aristotle and Eudemus alluded' is simply speculation. West then goes on to argue that the fact that Night is not the starting point for this genealogy is not important, since Plato was merely extracting what he wanted from the Orphic poem. This seems unlikely, as to replace Night at the head of this genealogy would mean rejecting its most obviously Orphic aspect. Night stands at the beginning of every known Orphic theogony.

The creation outlined in the *Timaeus* is mathematical and musical in construction, and is fundamentally concerned with cosmology. These disciplines, including mathematics (as the abstract aspect of music), were pertinent to Orphism. Another clue might be Plato's mixing-bowl image:[27] it is known that there was an Orphic poem entitled *The mixing-bowl*.[28] So there are almost certainly overtones of Orphism in the *Timaeus*. However, it cannot be said that there is an irrefutable link between Orpheus and the theogony of the *Timaeus*. However impressive the evidence, when all of the above is taken into account, it would be dangerous to make any definite statements concerning Orpheus and Plato with *Timaeus* as the sole source. Unless a definitive version of the Eudemian theogony comes to light, the question of whether or not the theogony in the *Timaeus* is based on a Eudemian model cannot be answered. Any speculative answers should not be used as the basis for further conclusions. This does not mean that the *Timaeus* is of no further use, as shall be seen.

A source of comparison for the cosmology found in *Timaeus* is the 'Derveni papyrus': this document, discovered near Thessaloniki in 1962, has only recently been dated to the fourth century B.C.[29] It is, therefore, roughly contemporary with Plato. The Derveni papyrus (perhaps a kind of 'hand-book' of the after-life) offers an opportunity to examine the practical side of Orphism and to see whether Orphic ideas of creation and cosmology match those of Plato. Both agree on the essentially monotheistic nature of creation. Instead of inventing a creator figure, as Plato does with the demiurge, the writer of the Derveni papyrus chooses the more conventional figure of Zeus, but this discrepancy of detail should not obscure the fact that, like the demiurge, Zeus is seen as representing a state of 'being', the world of the eternal moment. Also, like the demiurge, Zeus created a world of becoming and ceasing, in other words a world of transitory existence. This imagery is overwhelmingly Platonic, and the methodology of the Derveni author, in emphasising the necessity of allegorical interpretation, anticipates neo-Platonic methods. This shows that the allegorical method of textual interpretation was used at an early date and is consequently a valid way of reading philosophical authors contemporaneous with Plato. This serves to substantiate some of the claims of the neo-Platonic scholars, widely derided to-day for placing an undue emphasis on

[24] Translated by M. L. West (n. 9), p. 116.
[25] As reconstructed by West (n. 9).
[26] West (n. 9), p. 116.
[27] Plato, *Timaeus* 35, 41d.

[28] Suda *s.v.* 'Epigenes'. Perhaps there is a connection here with the singing bowls of Hindu and Buddhist Tibetan culture which emit a note when a stick is run around their rim. This note acts as a prayer.
[29] See A. Laks and G.W. Most, *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford 1997). All translated quotations are taken from this edition.

allegorical interpretation. The Derveni commentator even goes so far as to say that Orpheus 'signified his meanings in sayings.'[30] A further link with Platonic thought is found in the Derveni author's apparent attitude towards reincarnation. He sees the continuation of specific entities as being directly dependent on the reordering and reforming of pre-existent things. Just as in the *Timaeus*, the cosmos is seen as a living and breathing organism.

It is therefore beginning to seem that West may have been right in suggesting that the theogony Plato uses is Orphic, for the simple reason that so many of the ideas in the *Timaeus* are consistent with the Orphism of the Derveni papyrus. The strong musical bias of the *Timaeus* may also be significant. It contains one of the most extended passages of musical theory in Plato as well as a passage in which Plato comes closer than anywhere else in his output to setting out a (possibly) unique system of religious belief. Both of these concerns are conspicuously Orphic.

Column 16 of the Derveni papyrus sheds light on another aspect of Orphism in Plato: 'in cities, it is no wonder initiates do not attain knowledge; they do not hear and at the same time understand the words.' This suggests that an allegorical reading of Orphic texts is the only true path to understanding. The performance of a mere ritual will not suffice.

In the *Republic* and in the several dialogues about the trial and subsequent death of Socrates is found the most important information about Socrates and Plato's respective intellectual relationships with Orpheus. In the curious Myth of Er in the *Republic*, we find a reference to the element of personal choice in the selection of one's next incarnation.

> "For the most part, their choice depended upon the character of their former life. For example [Er] said that he saw the soul that had once belonged to Orpheus choosing a swan's life, because he hated the female sex because of his death at their hands, and so was unwilling to have a woman conceive and give birth to him."[31]

The idea of Orpheus the misogynist is not a new one, but what appears to be overlooked here is that, even before his death, Orpheus had a marked preference for men anyway, if the reason for his death at the hands of the women is to be believed. The choice of the swan as his reincarnatory vehicle seems somewhat arbitrary. It is possible to interpret this passage as another example of Plato's use of literary artifice in order to make a philosophical point.[32] The two most important myths concerning swans can both be connected with Orpheus. The first, and most obvious, is the simple and enduring idea that the swan, mute for the whole of its life, sings just before its death. The connection with Orpheus here is obvious, and an element of irony may be noted in the fact that Orpheus, unlike the swan, continued to sing after his death. Alternatively, this may be an example of Plato's sense of humour. Orpheus' singing caused his death at the hands of the women of Thrace. If, in his next life, he could not sing until the point of his death, he would avoid the possibility of the problem recurring. The second story connected with swans is that of the rape of either Nemesis or Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan. But it is the aftermath of this event that is of particular importance. In most versions of this myth, the result of the union is the hatching of Helen of Troy from the egg, but in the version quoted by Athenaeus and Hyginus it is the process and analogy that is important. Robert Graves paraphrases this concisely:

> "But some say that the egg dropped from the moon, like the egg that, in ancient times, plunged into the river Euphrates and, being towed ashore by fishes and hatched by doves, broke open to reveal the Syrian goddess of love."[33]

This is a clear reference to the Orphic cosmologies and theogonies in which night, here represented by the moon, is at the beginning and

[30] *Derveni Papyrus* Column 10.

[31] Plato, *Republic* 10. 620a4.

[32] Again, see Morgan, *Myth and Philosophy* (n. 21).

[33] Graves (n. 11), § 60.

is the sole existent entity. Out of the cosmic egg hatches, in most versions, Eros, the god of love. Here a female goddess of love is hatched instead.

Yet another connection with Orphism can be found in the imagery employed in this short passage. When Orpheus' decapitated head floated to the shore of Lesbos it was followed, according to Simonides,[34] by birds in the sky and fish jumping from the water. The parallel between this and the doves and fish found here guiding the egg to the shore is surely of some significance, particularly given the physical similarity between head and egg. This in turn brings another Platonic image to mind, that of the spherical cosmic head in the *Timaeus*. Like Plato's perfect sphere of the cosmos, Orpheus' head needs no limbs or body in order to function, and, like the cosmos, Orpheus' head is making music.

That a connection is made here with Helen of Troy is interesting. Both she (in Euripides' play of the same name) and Eurydice (in the *Symposium*) are replaced by phantoms, a fairly uncommon theme in ancient literature. So perhaps the imagery that Plato is using in this passage about reincarnation is not as simple as it might appear on the surface. That reincarnation is the topic under discussion in this part of the *Republic* is significant, given the clear implication that the birth of Helen was remarkably similar to that of the Syrian goddess of love.

It is also important to see the myth of Er in its wider context as a cosmological myth. If we accept West's supposition that the genealogy of the gods given in the *Timaeus* is Orphic, as the evidence cited above would suggest, then it is surely of some significance that the figure of Orpheus is present, albeit in an oblique way, in the background of Plato's two most important cosmological works. Can we infer from this that Orpheus, or some aspect of Orphism, was associated with cosmology or even astrology /astronomy, as Eratosthenes' myth of Orpheus' post-mortem existence as a constellation might suggest?[35] Bearing in mind Pythagoras' links with cosmology and Orpheus' links with Pythagoras, such a connection would be unsurprising.

Is there a link between Orphic ideas and the transmigration of souls? We know that Pythagoras' followers believed in this doctrine and we have already briefly touched on the subject concerning Helen of Troy. It has often been suggested that Orphism espoused a doctrine of reincarnation, on the basis of a passage in which Plato cites Pindar:

> "But those at whose hands Persephone accepts atonement for ancient griefs, their souls in the ninth year she sends up again to the sun of this world; wherefrom spring proud kings, men of strength and speed and those chief in wisdom, and for all time to come they are called of men 'holy heroes."[36]

If this passage is indeed based on Orphic ideas, then there can be little doubt that there is a connection between Orpheus and reincarnation of some sort; but there is no conclusive evidence to link this passage with Orphism. For the moment, then, we must be content to say that, although a link with reincarnation cannot be proved directly, the juxtaposition of passages in Plato may hint at a connection.

Having said this, I feel that, if we take into account the passage concerning Orpheus and the swan, and the Orphic overtones of the myth of Er, it seems likely that some idea of the transmigration of souls was associated with Orpheus in Plato's time, just as it often was in later antiquity. The charge that this negates Orpheus' role as an intercessor between the initiate and the next world may be countered by the implication, in the myth of Er, that the soul passes through an ascending hierarchy of various incarnations towards a final death when it is permitted freedom from the body and is reunited with its creator. The seven planets are linked to the seven notes of the Pythagorean scale and the dead souls take seven days to complete the first part of their journey. Varro of Atax and

[34] See also Tony Harrison, *Olympian II* (London: BBC Television, December 2000).

[35] See n. 6 above.

[36] Plato, *Meno* 81b-c (= Pindar, fr. 133).

Eratosthenes in his poem *Hermes* suggest a link between the seven planets, the seven notes of the Pythagorean scale and the seven strings of the Orphic lyre.[37] On each of the planets spinning around the earth in the myth of Er is a Siren emitting a note. Bearing in mind the importance of number symbolism, these may be seen to correspond to seven notes of the Pythagorean harmonic series. In the *Argonautica* Orpheus' most important single action is to defeat the Sirens with his music. In the *Orphic Argonautica* the Argo's voyage, like those of Egyptian myth, is, unquestionably, representative of the journey into the afterlife. We can combine what we know of the Sirens in the *Argonautica* with what we find in the Myth of Er and interpret both passages allegorically, as suggested by the Derveni papyrus. In order to attain the next level of incarnation, the Orphic initiate would need the help of Orpheus or one of his charms, each charm represented by its corresponding string on the seven strings of his lyre, to overcome the music of each of the seven sirens in turn, which, bearing in mind their role in the Argonautica, may be taken as symbolic of eternal death. If this link with reincarnation were a part of Orphism it would explain the close parallels between Orpheus and Dionysus, who was the dying and rising god and Greek counterpart of the Egyptian Osiris. If it is objected that the connection between the Sirens of the *Argonautica* and those of the Myth of Er is tenuous, it must be remembered that the story of the Argo was one of the most established of Greek myths. Consequently, a contemporary audience would be likely to associate Plato's Sirens with those of the *Argonautica.*

There is, however, a more general objection to this theory. If the idea of Orphic reincarnation was of significance to Plato and Socrates, then why is the importance of Orpheus in general, and his religious role in particular, never made explicit in any of the dialogues? One might reply by pointing out the intrinsically esoteric nature of Orphism. In the context of a mystery religion, knowledge may only be made explicit to the initiate. Subtle hints of the sort seen in the dialogues would be the most that could be expected from widely-accessible writings.

The most interesting references to Orpheus in Plato are found in the final few dialogues. Orpheus the poet and musician is mentioned by Socrates in the *Apology* (41a): "What would any of you give to meet with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? I am willing to die many times over if these things are true." The first thing to note about this passage is the possible reference to reincarnation, again in close association with Orpheus. This juxtaposition is frequent enough to make one doubt whether it is purely coincidental. The other point of interest here is that Orpheus heads the roll-call of great poets whom Socrates would like to meet in the afterlife, which implies that Socrates held him in high regard. This passage sets the tone for the dialogues that anticipate the death of Socrates. These dialogues are, unsurprisingly, concerned with the themes of death and the afterlife, subjects with which Orpheus is indisputably linked. Later Socrates is described as "a ponderer over things in the air, and one who has investigated the things below the earth",[38] words which could equally well be used to describe Orpheus when one considers his descent into the underworld.

This passage, from the *Phaedo*, is of crucial importance:

> "The same dream came to me often in my past life, sometimes in one form and sometimes in another, but always saying the same thing: 'Socrates', it said, 'make music and work at it'. And I formerly thought it was urging and encouraging me to do what I was doing already and that just as people encourage runners by cheering, so the dream was encouraging me to do what I was doing, that is, to make music, because philosophy was the greatest kind of music."[39]

Socrates says this in order to explain why he is writing music and poetry whilst in prison awaiting his death. He is working on a metrical version of Aesop's fables and a hymn to Apollo. This comes as something of a shock, for Socrates seems to be questioning his vocation, wondering whether music and poetry, not philosophy, may have been his calling. Why should Socrates suddenly change his mind? Perhaps the answer is to be found in the abundant Orphic inferences present in this dialogue. Music and poetry are natural companions, but music is less frequently used as a symbol or analogy for philosophy.

Elsewhere, Socrates allegorises the search for wisdom: "when human loves or wives or sons have died, many men have willingly gone to the other world led by the hope of seeing there those whom

[37] E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford 1993).

[38] Plato, *Apology* 18b.

[39] Plato, *Phaedo* 60b-61a.

they longed for, and of being with them."[40] Although no mention is made of his name, Orpheus' descent to the underworld is the most obvious example of this type of myth. Perhaps a parallel can be seen with the myth of Eurydice. If we interpret her successful rescue allegorically, as the bringing back of wisdom from beyond the grave, then we can see more clearly Orpheus' role. This would serve to give purpose to a myth that otherwise merely shows Orpheus' prowess as a lyre player. If this interpretation is accepted, the themes of music, the afterlife and wisdom are all present in this passage.

A little later in the same dialogue Socrates says:

> "I fancy that those men who established the mysteries were not unenlightened, but in reality had a hidden meaning when they said long ago that whoever goes unsanctified and uninitiated into the other world will lie in the mire, but he who arrives there initiated and purified will dwell with the gods. For as they say in the mysteries: 'The thyrsus-bearers are many but the mystics are few'; and these mystics are, I believe, those who have been true philosophers. And, I in my life have, so far as I could, left nothing undone, and have striven in every way to make myself one of them."[41]

Not only is Socrates endorsing the mystery religions, he is also using their texts to substantiate his argument and is, perhaps most importantly, allying himself with the mystics who wrote literature of this kind. In other words, he is identifying with such figures as Orpheus. Socrates the musician and mystic has already been identified. Now he is seen, like Orpheus, as an advocate for religions that promise initiations capable of ensuring a safe passage to the afterlife.

More Orphic overtones are found a little later in the *Phaedo*, during a conversation between Socrates, Cebes and Cinnias:

> 'Let us try to persuade the child within not to fear death as if it were a hobgoblin'. 'Ah,' said Socrates, 'you must sing charms to him every day until you charm away his fear.' 'Where then, Socrates,' said he, 'shall we find a good singer of such charms, since you are leaving us?' "[42]

The charming-away of the fear of death is associated both with Orpheus himself, charming the gods of the underworld, and with the Orphic hymns that have come down to us from late antiquity.[43] This time it is not Socrates himself allying himself with things Orphic. One of his friends is now drawing thinly-veiled parallels between Socrates and Orpheus. This implies that Socrates' Orphic leanings were not strictly private but were also known to his circle. Alternatively, Plato is simply using the conversation as a literary device in order to drive home the point that Socrates was in some sense allied to the Orphics.

Now the swan, a bird already seen to be associated with Orpheus, reappears, this time directly associated with Socrates, who says:

> "You seem to think that I am inferior in some way to the swans who sing at other times also, but when they feel that they are to die, sing most and best in their joy that they are to go to the god whose servant they are."[44]

Orpheus, who returned as a swan in the *Republic*, was known as a prophet after his death, when his severed head was set up as an oracle. Nowhere other than in this passage is the swan said to sing 'at other times also'. Taken in isolation, the reference makes no sense, but if the other references to Orpheus, as symbolised by the swan, are taken into consideration, then all becomes clear. Orpheus, who of course sang 'at other times', was well known as a prophet. This in turn can lead us to another conclusion. It seems likely that, when Socrates is chiding his friends for thinking him inferior in prophecy to the swan, he is implying that he is in no way inferior to Orpheus himself. This would therefore connect Socrates with prophecy, just as he has been seen to connect himself with music. That both connections occur in the same dialogue

[40] *ibid.*, 80b.
[41] *ibid.*, 69b.
[42] *ibid.*, 77e.
[43] These charms and prayers, as Thomas Taylor suggests in the introduction to his *Hymns and Initiations* (Frome 1986: reprint of private edition of 1824), are probably later versions of much earlier texts, since we know that the mystery religions, and especially Orphism, were centred on such works.
[44] *Phaedo* 84e.

strengthens the case for seeing Socrates as an Orphic sympathiser.

The *Phaedo* makes further exploration of the image of the swan. It is referred to as Apollo's bird, and it should not be forgotten that Apollo was god of both music and prophecy. Neither should it be forgotten that it was for his change of allegiance from Dionysus to Apollo that the former sent Maenads to kill Orpheus. If any suspicions remain that Socrates' allusions to the swan were incidental, the following passage lays them to rest.

"I believe [the swans] have prophetic visions, and because they
have foreknowledge of the blessings in the other world they sing
and rejoice on that day more than ever before. And I think that I
am myself a fellow servant of the swan, and am consecrated to
the same god and have received from their master a degree of
prophecy no whit inferior to theirs."[45]

The association of the swan with Orpheus appears to be a Socratic invention, since it occurs nowhere outside Plato. By connecting himself so strongly with this bird Socrates also links himself with Orpheus. When it is added that this dialogue leads up to Socrates' death in prison, given that the Orphic mysteries were devoted to the safety of the soul in the afterlife, the link becomes stronger still.

The evidence seems almost conclusive. Socrates saw himself in a role similar to that of Orpheus, and may even have believed himself to be a reincarnation of the mythical musician.

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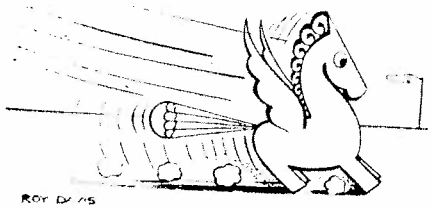
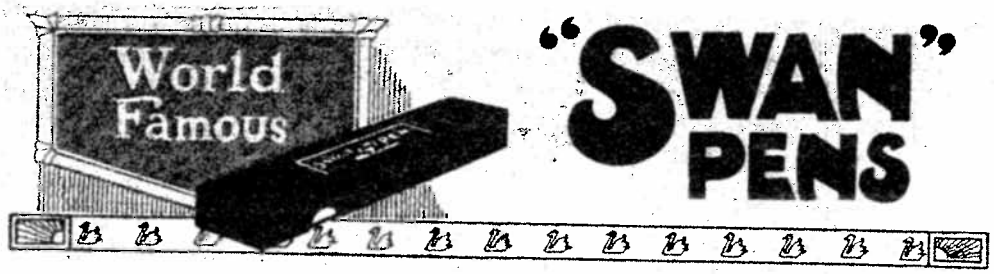


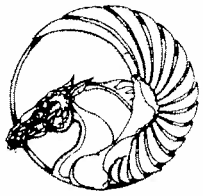
What's in a Name?

This competition, for Exeter students, was held in February 2002. Undergraduates and postgraduates were invited to combine erudition with humour and to come up with alternative definitions for famous names of Classical antiquity. For example, one of our editorial assistants suggested that *Gorgon* might be, not a grotesque and terrifying monster, but 'a company for cleaning up murder-scenes' (gore gone); similarly, *Medusa* might be defined as 'someone who holidays in the Mediterranean' (feminine participle). Feeble stuff, this, in comparison with the efforts of our winning entrant, ALWYN HARRISON (Classics, first year), who wins a modest cash prize and a free subscription to *Pegasus*: a selection from Mr Harrison's entry is reprinted below.

Dionysus: bobsled accident
Theanus: the definite article
Seianus: teach a child to swear
Barea Soranus: a pederast's best friend
Pandora's box: Epimetheus' bane
Pylos: a fat man's nightmare
Antinous: capital punishment protestor
Aristophanes: a sloane's wet dream
Caesarea: Roman lechery
Boudicca: surprise attack from the rear
Plato: cleans dirty dishes and minds whiter than right



[45] *ibid.*, 85a-b.



A new approach to the *Fasti*

Emma Gee, *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus: Astronomy in Ovid's* Fasti (Cambridge, 2000)

Reviewed by Jenny Quickfall

As this is the subject of my own Ph.D. I sympathized immediately with the problem facing Gee: how to find a new way into the *Fasti*, a poem that has been studied frenziedly over the past two decades after many more years of neglect. Yet she is correct in her claim that the stars have been largely overlooked and that, while the influence of Aratus' *Phaenomena* has been commonly assumed, it has never undergone exploration.

The aim of this book, we are told, is an examination of the interaction between the *Fasti*, *Phaenomena* and (to a lesser extent) *Metamorphoses* and an attempt to grasp the new 'register of meaning' to the *Fasti* that Aratus generates through issues of stability and flux, unity and fragmentation (4).

The first chapter opens with a study of calendrical precedents. Gee argues that Julian epigraphical calendars differ from the *Fasti* in their disregard for astronomical material for which we must go instead either to agricultural calendars or prose writers. No conclusions are drawn from this, however, except a warning to 'guard against any over-schematic analogy between Ovid's *Fasti* and the Roman calendar' (20).

More adventurous is the following discussion of Caesar and Aratus. Clearly inspired by Ovid's description of the desire of a man facing apotheosis to avoid having to enter his new home as a stranger, Gee adopts Domenucci's claims that Caesar wrote a *De Astris* similar to the *Phaenomena*.[1] From this, the conclusion is drawn that Aratus the astronomical poet and Caesar the calendrical writer have been 'collapsed into one another', resulting in a closer alignment of the *Phaenomena* and the *Fasti* (20). Although I found this section difficult to follow and am uncertain about the conviction of Domenucci's argument, I think what is being argued here is that Caesar, if we agree that he did write an Aratean work, reinterpreted Aratean concerns as adaptable to a calendrical scheme. This is of course exactly what Ovid goes on to do.

The second chapter is concerned with the *Fasti*'s identity as a didactic poem and examines elegiac, epic and didactic precedents. Yet I am unsure whether it advances the generic debate any further than Hinds.[2] Opening with an examination of Propertius 4.1 as a model for Ovid's aetiology and astronomy, Gee dismisses Newlands' claims that the Propertian opposition of astronomy and a Roman aetiological project is reflected in the *Fasti* through the appearance and later disappearance of Cancer.[3] We should not, she argues, see the stars in the *Fasti* as necessarily 'subversive' of the Augustan message although she does concede that 'it is true that some of the individual star myths...may look strange against the Roman religious calendar...' (63).[4] I agree with this reaction against a blanket view of Ovid's use of the constellations and an overly prescriptive reading of Cancer. However, Gee is rather prescriptive herself in her denial that Cancer's reappearance signals the incompleteness of the poem because it is not the *absolutely final* star in the poem.

I did find two elements of this chapter very interesting. Both illustrate ways in which Ovid adapts epic motifs to his own ends. The first is a demonstration of the cosmological significance of the *ancile* received by Numa from the heavens and how, in its comparability to the cosmology on Aeneas' shield (*Aeneid* 8), it represents Ovid's religious project as Aeneas' shield reflects the

[1] This is Ov. *Fast.*3.155-64, quoted on p.16. Domenucci's argument can be found in *Astra Caesarum: Astonomica, astrologia e catasterismo da Cesare a Domiziano* (Pisa, 1996), 85-99.

[2] See especially S. Hinds, '*Arma* in Ovid's *Fasti*', *Arethusa* 25 (1992), 113ff.

[3] For this see Carole E. Newlands, *Playing with Time: Ovid and the* Fasti (Cornell 1995), 35-6.

[4] She refers to the catasterism of Callisto, dealt with in the final chapter.

epic project of Virgil.[5] The second is the analysis of Manilius' use in the *Astronomica* of conventionally epic gigantomachy imagery to reflect scientific domination. She compares Manilius' *Ratio* stealing Jupiter's thunderbolts to Numa's 'eliciting' of Jupiter in *Fasti* 3.

The following chapter promises to interpret the *Phaenomena* from a viewpoint of Stoic unity and cohesion. Gee's case here appears convincing. Particularly interesting is the final section on the artist in Aratus (84-91). This is related to the preceding discussion by the Stoic belief that the structures of language are generated in accordance with the natural state of the cosmos. Gee argues that the craftsman simile (*Phaen.* 529-33) used to describe the Celestial Circles provides a model for the poet. This makes Aratus' role 'daedalic' and turns the poem into a kind of ecphrasis. It is disappointing, however, that she does not look at this in the wider didactic context. One could, for example, draw a comparison between Aratus 'building' the universe and Propertius 'building' the city of Rome.[6]

The next chapter, we are told, will compare this Aratean unity supplied by a Stoic interpretative strategy with the lack of cohesion to be found in the *Fasti*: 'Ovid can sing the universe (*kosmos*); but nonetheless *kosmos* ('order', in both cosmic and poetic sense) can paradoxically be lacking' (91). The model used is the *Vestalia*, long recognized by critics as representative of the disjunct and incohesive nature of the poem as a whole.[7]

What follows is an interesting discussion on Vesta's comparison to the Sphere of Archimedes (*F.* 6.277-80) and a convincing explanation of how the Sphere, as a symbol of cosmic order, echoes the Aratean structure of the world. Undermining this symbol of unity is the surrounding confusion over the etymology of Vesta's name. Etymology, while an important expression of cosmic unity throughout the Stoicizing tradition, in Ovid expresses the fluid relation between language and the world.

This appears to work well as far as it goes. However, alongside this idea of the *Vestalia's destabilizing* reinterpretation of Aratean cohesion is the claim that the festival is *unified* by means of a vein of Stoicizing elements running throughout it which harmonize the apparently contradictory 'rationalising' and 'mythological' parts of the passage. These two arguments are not clearly reconciled.

The introduction did promise that the generic and literary tone of the first three chapters would be politically modulated in the final three. However this does not really get underway until the following chapter. Its subject is the catasterism of the Olenian She-goat and the Naiad Amalthea who secretly raised and suckled the infant Jupiter (*F.* 5.111-28). Gee demonstrates how elements of the narrative (the cornucopia, the reflection of Capricorn in the 'heavenly goat' etc.), positioned against the contemporary backdrop of the astrological articulation of Augustan power, come to serve a panegyric function.

This presentation of uncomplicated encomium is, however, undermined in the following and final chapter. Correctly denying the possibility in an Augustan setting of disengaging stars and politics, Gee confronts one rather undignified result of catasterism: the writing of Julius Caesar and Augustus as characters of celestial mythology. Emphasis is placed on the theme of Caesar's *cognatio* with the stars to be found in both *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*, and how this has an origin in Stoic and Platonic thought through the cognate nature of the fire that forms both human souls and stars.[8] Yet at the same time Ovid parodies Plato in his description of a time when the constellations were uncharted and *constabat sed tamen esse deos* (*F.* 3.112). It is a shame that this observation is consigned to a footnote, implying as it does that the time when men believed the stars to be divine was one when, as we learn a few lines later, they had *animi indociles et adhuc ratione carentes* (3.119). This lies extremely uncomfortably with the description 40 lines later of Caesar as *ille deus* preparing for his move to the heavens. Is the implication that even now only those lacking in *ratio* can believe such things?

The longest and final section of the chapter is on Callisto. Apparently agreeing with previous

[5] The latter is demonstrated by Philip Hardie in *Vergil's* Aeneid*: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986).

[6] Especially Prop. 4.1.57: *moenia namque pio coner disponere versu*. See also C. Edwards, *Writing Rome: Textual approaches to the city* (Cambridge 1996), 6-8.

[7] On the disparate representation of Vesta see especially A. Barchiesi, *The Poet and the Prince* (Berkeley and Los Angeles1997), 137; Newlands (n.3), 124-45; F. Bömer, *P Ovidius Naso,* Die Fasten, *2 vols.* (Heidelberg 1957-8) *ad Fasti* 6.249.

[8] Ov. *F.* 4.949-50; *Met.* 15.745-61; Cic. *Rep.* 6.15; *Tusc.* 1.19 (for the Stoic concept); Plat. *Tim.* 40b.

'subversive' readings of the proximity of the rising of Aquarius (Ganymede) to a comparison of Jupiter and Augustus, Gee examines how the *Fasti* Callisto narrative (2.153-92) destablizes the panegyric of the poem by taking us into the 'anarchic world' of the *Metamorphoses* with its strong element of cosmographic parody.[9] Ovid, it is argued, reveals the dangers inherent in catasterism insofar as it can be used to articulate imperial greatness within the murky mythological scheme of the *Metamorphoses*: in their imminent catasterisms Caesar and Callisto have rather too much in common.

I find the problematic concept of the Julians as 'agents and beneficiaries of metamorphosis' (187) interesting. In the epilogue, the effects of metamorphosis are described: 'the...nexus... between the *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* plunges Ovid's Augustan *Phaenomena* into a universe of flux incompatible with the unified and teleological universe, both of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, when read as a Stoic poem, and of the Principate' (191). However, I cannot help my impression that this argument perhaps depends a little too heavily on an assumption that the *Metamorphoses* is 'naturally' anarchic and subversive in contrast to the Augustan order of the *Fasti*. I would argue for a less prescriptive analysis. We must not forget after all that it is at the end of the former that the longest passage of encomium is to be found.

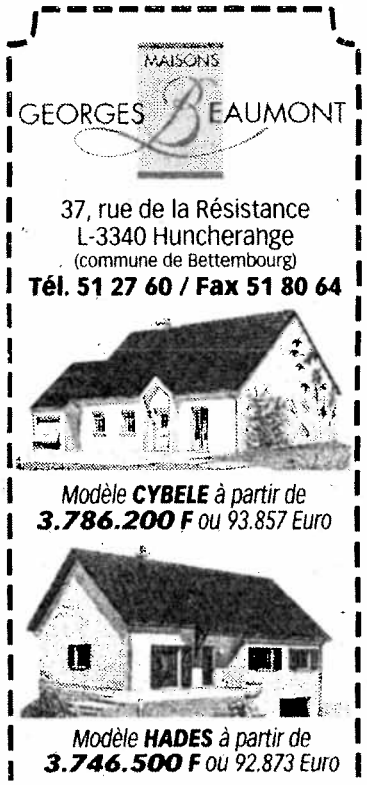
I found this a very interesting book, particularly the middle two chapters with their demonstration of how the Stoicizing unity found in the *Phaenomena* is placed within the destabilizing context of the *Vestalia*. My main criticisms would be that the argument is in places difficult to follow and, while the final four chapters illustrate a clear purpose, the initial two seem rather detached.

One further disappointment is Aratus' fading away from the discussion in the final two chapters. While it is argued that Ovid adopted Aratus for more than purely poetical reasons, it is also admitted that he is only 'implicitly monarchical' (191).[10] In other words, he can only be employed retrospectively in a discussion of imperial encomium. It is Ovid who politicizes his stars.[11]

Despite these complaints I am convinced that this book has thrown open the door for critics of the *Fasti* onto a previously neglected but clearly important and revealing dimension.

Jenny Quickfall is a research student in the University of Birmingham; she also teaches Latin in our Department at Exeter.

We are grateful to *Celia Halsdorf* (formerly *James*) for sending in this advertisement from a Luxembourg newspaper.



[9] This is Gee's own expression (p. 4). On Ganymede and the preceding *pater patriae* passage (*F.* 2.119-48) see Barchiesi (n. 7), 81-3 and Newlands (n. 3), 46-7.

[10] For example, Aratus is 'inversely' involved in the encomiastic aim of the Capella passage (147-148) by an echo of his invocation of Zeus (*ek Dios archomestha*, *Phaen.* 1) at the opening of the *Fasti* passage: *ab Iove surgat opus* (*F.* 5.111).

[11] And Callimachus, as Chapter 6, pp. 168-174 illustrates.

'Greek beer in Victorian bottles': A new edition of Prout

John Clay

It is a matter for regret, by classicists and poetry-lovers alike, that the poetic works of Lemuel Prout (1802-1908) have fallen into general neglect. Indeed, there are many scholars to-day to whom the name of Prout signifies nothing at all, a situation that even fifty years ago would have been unthinkable. I have been engaged, for more years than I care to enumerate, in the preparation of a new Collected Edition of the works of Prout, the aim of which is threefold: to mark the bicentenary of the poet's birth, to introduce Prout's *oeuvre* to a wider audience, and, as it might be most importantly, to rehabilitate his critical reputation to some extent. Now that this project is belatedly drawing to its conclusion, I thought it timely to put into print a few *prolegomena*, including a number of extracts which will, one hopes, give a taste of the delights in store. I was encouraged by my Exeter friends to think that the readers of *Pegasus* may find particular interest in matters Proutean, on account of his local origins as well as his classical leanings.

It seems best to begin with a brief biographical note. Lemuel Tertius Prout was born in Exeter on Christmas Eve, 1802, to a family whose renown in and out of Devonshire was already considerable. His father Maximilian, war-hero and award-winning topiarist, was the founding editor of the *Devonshire Argus* (that progressive journal which, as readers will need no reminding, played such an influential role in the Chartist movement), and his mother Arabella was a noted beauty, with connexions in the Prussian aristocracy. The Prouts' home, Bayley House, was situated in the area of the city which is now known as the University's Streatham campus. The infant Lemuel, along with his brothers Ebenezer (the famous musicologist and editor of Handel's *Messiah*) and Harold (the pioneering dental surgeon), was educated privately at home in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Logic, and later at Christ Church, Oxford, where he took a Pass degree in Literae Humaniores in 1825. This early Classical training was, as it will become clear, one of the greatest influences on Prout's aesthetic and intellectual character.

After going down from Christ Church, Prout spent a number of years travelling in Europe, before eventually deciding that his vocation lay in Holy Orders. He entered St Leonard's Theological College, Torquay, in 1830 and was ordained four years later. Prout became Curate (1834-7), and later Rector (1837-50), of Ottery St Mary, where he was, by all accounts, a popular and capable minister to his flock. (A brass plaque commemorating Prout's zeal and energy, dedicated by grateful parishioners on his departure in 1850, can still be seen in the nave at Ottery.) After leaving Ottery, Prout went on to become Chaplain of St John's College, Oxford; and there is every sign that his life would have continued to follow a worthy, but uneventful, ecclesiastical course, had it not been for the unexpected death of both his parents in 1850. The Prout brothers each inherited a large fortune, which left them free to pursue their own individual interests. This coincided with the

publication, in the same year, of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, which seems to have had an enormously inspirational effect on Prout. As he later wrote, in *Memoirs of a Long Life* (1902), 'I had been a clergyman for twenty years, but there were, I truly believed, other ways in which to glorify our Maker. I determined at once that I should be a poet. If I could only combine the emotional range and power of a Tennyson with the beauty and grandeur of the Greek poets—ah, what a goal, indeed!'

So Prout returned to Exeter in 1853 and immersed himself in Classical literature. It seems that his original aim was to translate Homer's *Iliad* into English verse: 'I would, I fondly hoped, rival Pope and Chapman: my greatest pleasure at the time was to imagine my readers, like stout Cortez with his eagle eyes, looking into *my* Homer...' (*Memoirs of a Long Life*, pp. 213-4). But in the event, for whatever reason, Prout never completed his *Iliad*. Instead, he decided to compose a completely new epic of his own, along Homeric lines. Prout's *Epic Poem on the Battle of Burscough Bridge* heroically recounts an episode in the turbulent history of the aristocracy of thirteenth-century Lancashire—the only epic poem, in fact, to attempt this feat. This huge poem came to take up a great amount of Prout's attention, from its inception at some time in the 1860s right up to his death in 1908, at which time the epic remained incomplete. Running to almost sixteen books (of a projected twenty-four), *The Battle of Burscough Bridge* narrates the infamous two-day-long conflict between the forces of Arthur de Rouffignac, second Count of Burscough Bridge, and Henry Stazicker, fourth Earl of Ainscough: the battle took place late in 1282 and is estimated to have wiped out more of the local population than the Bubonic Plague (see H.L. Mullet, *Military Cock-Ups of Old Lancashire* [Preston 1974], 10-28).

During the long gestation period of his epic, Prout published a steady stream of original works, as well as translations from the Classical authors, which made him extremely celebrated in his day. After initially disappointing reactions to his early translations from Euripides (for which see below), Prout found a large and appreciative audience for his semi-autobiographical poem *A Devonshire Lad* (1867) and his quasi-Vergilian collection *Bucolic Lays* (1870). Other works followed in profusion: these included *Prout's Wesleyan Hymnal* (1871), which was adopted in a very few Methodist chapels between Exeter and Barnstaple, and is today almost impossible to come by; verse translations of Sophocles' *Electra, Ajax* and *Kingly Oedipus* (1873-5); *The Golden Hind* (1880), a historical poem about Sir Walter Raleigh; and *Maxims* (1890), an experimental book of hexameter poems, based on the writings of Mill, Bentham and Darwin. Such time as was left after his poetic endeavours Prout filled with charitable works and family life: during his extraordinarily long life he married six times, and fathered twenty-three children (a good account of the extended Prout clan is to be found in L.H. Pollox, *The Victorian Family* [London 1936], pp. 34-9). Although Prout never won the Laureateship or any other literary award, he was held in consistently high esteem by his public (as witness his huge sales figures in the 1880s and 1890s).

At the time of his death, Prout had completed what he believed to be his greatest work so far—a translation of Vergil's *Aeneid*—but was greatly dismayed by its rejection by all the leading publishing-houses (on the grounds, reputedly, of its extreme inaccuracy). He never fully recovered from the blow: after the death of his sixth wife Enid in 1906, Prout's health had entered a decline, and he eventually died, of complications arising from haemorrhoids, on New Year's Day, 1908. It must be seen as a great misfortune that his last act was to destroy the manuscript of his *Aeneid*. Whether it was inaccurate or not cannot be known—although it should be noted that his renderings of the *Medea, Agamemnon,* and others are characterized by an innovative style and wonderful freedom from rigid rules of grammar and syntax—but it is the view of this critic that Prout's *Aeneid* is one of the great 'literary losses', to be classed alongside Euripides' *Andromeda* and Ovid's *Medea*.

Admirably fitted to stand comparison with the works of other practitioners in the same *genres* (such as Pope, Tennyson, Calverley, McGonagall, *etc.*), Prout's works, in modern times, have largely escaped the critical appreciation and enthusiastic following enjoyed by certain of his contemporaries. Prout's ponderous blank verse in the epic style may never quite attain the lofty grandeur of (say) Pope's *Iliad*, nor his occasional translations of the classical dramatists entirely capture the pace and excitement of the originals; but it is impossible to deny that Prout's work has a certain feel to it which is entirely unique. He is a fearless experimenter in rhyme and sound; his whimsical, Latinate vocabulary is unparalleled; he is a master of the set-piece; his similes are almost

pure Homer, seen through Victorian eyes. Prout's critics (there have been many) have always been too quick to fault his narrative technique, his occasional lapses into bathos, and his unnaturalistic use of conversational idioms, but they invariably fail to appreciate the true poetic spirit of Prout and his age. Ogden Nash's verdict on Prout's *Medea*, 'Pure gravy', is nearer the truth; or one might also add Prout's own description of his work as 'Greek beer in Victorian bottles' (*Punch*, 17th November 1896). Just as 'Victoriana' in art and architecture, once unfashionable, is lately enjoying a resurgence of fortune, so Prout's poetry, I hope, will once again be seen as a true monument to his own, as well as the Classical, age.

*

Prout's translation of the *Medea*, his first work of any importance, was published at his own expense in 1865. It attracted indifferent notices at the time, and (as far as I can ascertain) has never been performed. The text will appear in full in my Collected Edition: here I print a small extract which adequately conveys the pace and emotional energy of the whole. It is a dramatic 'gem', as one might say, ripe for rediscovery (and performance, indeed, by some enterprising theatre company). The following lines are taken from the infanticide scene, the climactic point of the whole tragedy.

Chorus: Hear'st thou? Methinks the Bairns are *Hades*-bound;
Their miserable Parent raveth wild.
First Child: Help!
Second Child: Help!
First Child: Help!
Second Child: Help!
First Child: Help!
Second Child:: Help!
First Child: Help!
Second Child: Help!
First Child: Help!
Second Child: Help!
Chorus: Ye Gods! It doth behove us to assist,
To save the Children from a brazen Death.
First Child: O Mother!
Second Child: Don't you try to do It, Please!
First Child: I can't evade thy devastating Sword!
Chorus: Alas, *Medea*! How hast thou Offended!
How couldst thou slay the Produce of thy Womb?
Thy ferric Nature hath their Life-Breath ended
And sent them hurtling to a gelid Tomb.
There was another frantic *Femme Fatale*,
Who did dispatch her Issue to the Grave:
'Twas *Ino*, struck out of her Wits by Heav'n;
Sly *Hera* Anguish to the poor Girl gave.
Unhappy *Ino* roam'd the whole World o'er,
Then plung'd into the Briny, Tots-and-all;
The Waves, unheeding, foam'd with swirling Gore,
As lancinated Corpse on Corpse did fall.
O Tragedy! What could be worse than This,
The murd'rous Actions born of Womankind?

Upon the Earth lie Sorrows manifold,
Which cruèl Heav'n hath to our Race assign'd.
(*Medea* 1271ff.)

Notes:

1. **Bairns:** In Euripides' original play, the chorus was composed of Corinthian women, but Prout has made them Aberdonians: a daring and singularly effective move.

3. A bizarre but powerful line. Prout has achieved a truly *horrific* effect, which is, surely, what was aimed for. Kitto's 'nothing but bathetic' (*TLS*, 16th March 1954, p. 3) is a little harsh.

6. **Don't you try to do It, please!** Not a common expression, in Euripides' or Prout's own time; but one which evidently found favour with the 1970s musicians *Boney M*, who went so far as to include it among the lyrics of their mid-period hit *Rasputin:* '...but the ladies begged: "Don't you try to do it, please!" ' (there, in response to an ill-timed suggestion that the Mad Monk should be executed)). Prout's appeal has always been astonishing.

10. **ferric Nature:** Prout's use of epithets is stupendous. (cf. *Battle of Burscough Bridge* XVI.23: 'Then lupine Anger fill'd him to the Core', *etc.*)

12. ***Femme Fatale:*** Prout seems to have been unaware of the subtle *nuances* of this phrase, and has taken it, it seems, at literal value. The poet had never visited France, so perhaps we might forgive him such unidiomatic expressions. (cf. *Memories of a Long Life*, p. 46, where Prout describes the three elderly nuns who inhabited the convent at Broadclyst: 'It was a regular *menage-a-trois.*')

19. **lancinated:** Euripides makes no mention of this. I can only assume that Prout's addition of this detail is intended to increase his audience's distaste for the killing (J.F. Griles, 'Seneca's and Prout's *Medeas*', *CQ* 34 [1984] 90-4, sees 'gory' elements as owing far more to Seneca than to Euripides).

*

Far less well-known, even among professional Proutean scholars, than the poet's lengthier forays into the world of classical drama, is his later work *Agamemnon in One Act* (1890), which I here reproduce in full. This short piece of characteristically unusual drama was written for a competition, in *Home Notes*, to find the 'Best One-Act Plays of 1891'. Prout, it appears, was somewhat in the dark concerning what would make an 'ideal' one-act play, but he obviously interpreted the aim of such a work as being the achievement of the utmost possible brevity (v. *Memoirs of A Long Life*, introd. pp. vii-viii, n. 2b: 'The conditions for entry were most vague and illusory, like an Aeschylean metaphor... I decided in the end to aim for economy of dialogue and crispness of action'). Indeed, it is hard to see how the great man could have scaled down Aeschylus' play any more than this (forty-four lines, compared with Aeschylus' more prolix 1673). Ultimately, while this technique has produced a play of great dynamism and pace, it has also resulted, unfortunately, in a certain lack of depth so far as issues of characterization, imagery and so on are concerned.

Prout failed to win even a consolation prize in the *Home Notes* competition, which left him disheartened (he was not to turn again to drama), but he was able to persuade the Torquay Society of Amateur Dramatics to perform the work at their 1892 Summer Festival, where it met with mixed reviews. ('Prout has done it again' [*Budleigh Advertiser*]; 'Lemuel Prout combines a minimum of charm and grace with an almost startling *penchant* for bathos, as those who have read his *Golden Hind* will know' [*Torquay Parish Magazine*].)

Watchman: A Beacon-Light! A-ha, then *Troy*'s been Nabb'd!
Chorus 1: What, *Troy*? Not Nabb'd?
Chorus 2: Yea, Captur'd—in a Night!
The *Greeks*, victorious, kill'd those *Trojans*!
Chorus 1: Fab!
Chorus 2: Nay, Bad—for all their Doings there weren't Right...
Chorus 1: Talking of Wrength, here cometh a dang'rous Wench,
Her Countenance doth fill me with Alarm.

[*enter Clytemnestra*]

Clytemnestra: What-Ho! [*cups hand to ear*] Is that my Spouse that I can hear?
'Tis so!—but who's that with him in the Car?
Agamemnon: I'm Home, Dear! Hast thou got the Water on?
I crave a Spumous Bath—

Cly.: Oh, yes! Step in,
And tread with Sacrilege upon these Rugs;
A Feast of bloody Gore awaits inside:
The last of all Ablutions. [*exeunt Cly. & Agam.*]

Cassandra: My! Oh, my!
I fear Demise—alas!—for *Argos'* King.

Cly. [*emerges from house*]: Thou too, prophetic Hag! Hast thou no Wits?
Hath *Ate* hebetated thee, Dull Thing?
I mean to slay you Both!— Ha! ha! ha! ha!
[*Cly. grabs Cass. by hair & exeunt.*]

Chorus 1: O No! The Mistress hath her Marbles Lost;
She'll do 'em both to Death, mark thou my Words!

Chorus 2: Would that our aged Limbs yet had their Might—
We're Helpless!

Ch.1: What a piteous Shame—

Ag. and Cass. [*from within*]: Aargh! Aargh!

Chorus 2: Too late: we can't do Aught to save them now,

Chorus 1: Yea: *Clytemnestra*'s sadly gone Too Far:
The Substance of their Lives hath Deliquesced.
[*Cly. emerges from the house on a trolley, standing over the two bodies*]

Cly.: Three Cheers for *Clytemnestra*! Hip, hurray!
I've been a bad, Pellacious, Wicked Gal:
And seen that *Agamemnon*'s had his Day,
Not only he, but that *Cassandra* 's well.
[*Enter Aegisthus looking pleased*]

Aegisthus: Then hast thou topp'd 'em Both? My Dear, how fine!
Now shall we Rule, we Twain, o'er all this Realm.

Chorus [*horrified*]: Thou art a Cad, *Aegisthus*—Hast thou no
Respect for t' noble House of *Atreus*?

Aeg. [*testily*]: Confound you! This Impertinence won't Do—
I'll make you all Regret it! Why, I'll Tear
You Limb from Limb, and Spit upon you too,
And Gouge your Eyes out with my Ashen Spear;
Nor shall I finish there—your Lungs and Hearts
Shall Ripp'd out be, and lie upon the Floor,
With all your other Ruined Vital Parts,
While I Guffaw and Mock the dripping Gore.
I'll Flay you— Aye! 'T'will seem a Holiday,
After—

Cly. [*impatiently*]: *Aegisthus*! Silence, wretched Wight,
And get the Tea on—*I'm* the Murd'rer here:
Tyrannicide provoketh Appetite.

(*Agamemnon in One Act*)

Notes:

1. **Nabb'd**: Not, perhaps, the happiest choice of word for what was, arguably, the most important event in classical mythology (see P. Browne, 'The Influence of Edward Lear on Prout', *Poesy To-day*, n.s. xviii (1997), 2-8). It must be that the word is chosen for the purposes of rhyme (with 'Fab!' (line 3)), for which it is admirably suited.

2ff. Note the extreme fatuousness of the chorus, whose characterization (such as it is) is sometimes said (on the basis of chapter 4 of *Memoirs of a Long Life*) to be based on Prout's observations of his cousin, Percival

Gobb Prout (1830-1937), the music-hall impresario. (See M.E. Wright, *Prout's Familial Allusions* [Ripon 1998], 65-8 for further discussion of this difficult problem.)

4. **all their Doings there weren't Right**: the pejorative moral tone of Aeschylus' representation of the Greeks at Troy is picked up here.

5. **Wrength**: an unusual Proutean coinage, a noun formed from 'wrong' (by analogy to *strong-strength*, etc.). Found also at *Battle of B.B.* XII.378, XIV.237, *etc.*

7ff. It has to be admitted that Clytemnestra strikes one more as a comic heroine than a terrifying figure from tragedy (esp. 'What-Ho!' etc., which was used to great acclaim by (e.g.) Wodehouse (*My Man Jeeves* (1919) *etc.*). A great amount of fear could no doubt be created on-stage by a skilled actress. The part was played in 1892 by Mrs Jessie Hudd of Totnes, who was, sad to say, panned by the critics (esp. in the two papers cited above), who pointed out, correctly enough, that Clytemnestra had never been envisaged by Aeschylus as blind or one-legged.

10. **spumous Bath**: sinister irony.

13. **The Last of all Ablutions**: a fine phrase. **My! Oh, my!**: again, this seems somewhat untragic, but we must remember that the Victorian sense of the colloquial was different from our own. We are bound to come to this phrase with the wrong colouring in mind if we think of its use in (e.g.) the popular 1930s song *My! Oh, My!* performed by the jazz musician Mr Eddie South and his Orchestra (Philips CD23789VN).

16. **Hath *Ate* hebetated thee, Dull Thing?** Pretension abounds here. One sympathizes with the *Home Notes* adjudicating panel.

17. **Ha! ha! ha! ha!**: No comment.

21. Prout here reproduces the deliberately un-naturalistic Aeschylean theatre, with the death-cries heard off-stage and the chorus ineffectually pondering what is to be done. ('I nearly burst my sides' (*Torquay Auto-Mart and Herald*, 24th June 1892).)

24. See note on 16 above.

[*trolley*]: the *ekkyklema* of Attic theatre. Prout's original production in Torquay did not use a low trolley, as in the theatre of Dionysus at Athens, but a two-tiered tea-trolley donated by the Women's Institute, on the top shelf of which Mrs Hudd crouched with the two 'bodies' crammed into the space below (according to the *Torquay Parish Magazine*).

26. **Pellacious**: found only in Prout (cf. *Battle of B. B.* XVI. 32: 'Pellacious *Time* hath forc'd thee to Retreat!'). From the Lat. *pellax.*

29ff. Aegisthus appears here, as in Aeschylus, as an unpleasant character with overbearing arrogance and *hybris*. He is shown up for a coward by Clytemnestra's telling words at 41-4. The threats which he makes, though bloodthirsty, pale into insignificance when compared to the (frankly repulsive) descriptions of murder and mutilation in *Battle of B. B.* (esp. III-V, the digression on 'Deaths in the Field' – for which consult my own article in *The Literary-Medical Journal* 45 (2000), 34-58).

43. Clytemnestra will have no nonsense. This is very telling in relation to the familiar Oresteian theme of the male-female dichotomy: see S. Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: The Oresteia* (Cambridge 1984).

44. **Tyrannicide provoketh Appetite**: a marvellously gnomic ending. Cf. *Battle of B.B.* XIII. 8: 'Belligerence provoketh Appetite', used later as the motto for Swansea Boys' School (although it was later changed to the far less amusing *Nil nisi optimum*, which, I am informed by Mr. D. F. Goss-Custard, B.A., the present editor of *Swansea Old Boys' News*, has been a constant source of inspiration to all the boys past and present).

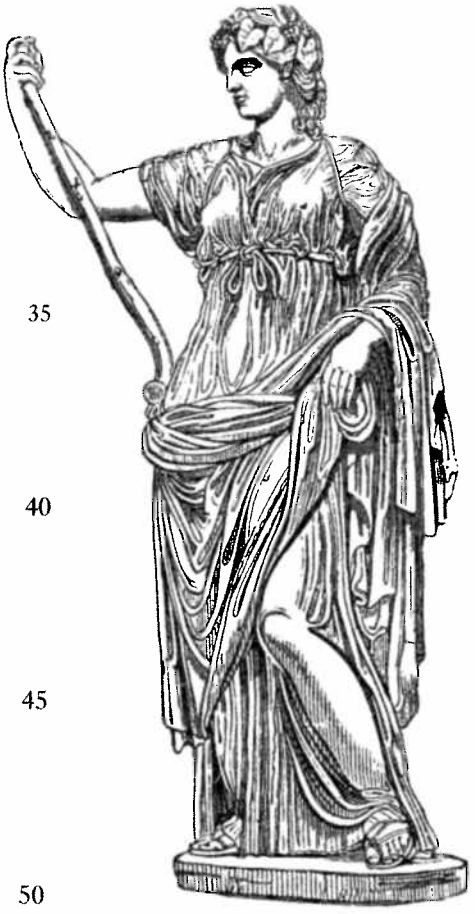
*

I shall finish with the proem to Prout's great, unfinished *Battle of Burscough Bridge*. The poet's sonorous rhythm and Homeric imagery are evident from the outset.

Terpsichore, draw thee near, and with thee bring
Melpomene, Clio and *Calliope*,
Neglecting not that other Fine Sibling
of thine, *Urania*, nor yet *Euterpe*;
Erato, Polyhymnia! Join the Throng,
With *Thalia* too: Descend, O Heav'nly Choir!
Shirk not, dread Goddesses, the Proutean Song
Nor *Helicon* prefer to *Lancashire*,
For Need have I of Succour musical,
To recount Doings of Gross Magnitude,
Which Quarrels, Treasons, Spoils and Deaths withal,
Left *Burscough Bridge* bereft of Quietude:
Yon Northern Hills did groan beneath the Weight

Of Cadavers, 'pon ev'ry Sod display'd:
Lancastrian Lords became a Carrion-Feast,
Decapitated, Mangl'd, Torn and Flay'd.
Narrate, fair Sisters! in what Hideous Wise
Pernicious Strife arose and black'd the Skies.
Beginning hath th' Indecent Tale in Jest,
Yet Merriment a Darker Side doth have,
One ought, if one be Wise, to ponder first,
Before commencing, when 'tis Wrong to Laugh.
The goodly *Count* of *Burscough Bridge* declar'd
To th' noble *Ainscough*, one Day out on th' Moors,
'By *Socrates!* Hast thou in all the World
E'er spied a Wench as Disfigur'd out of Doors?
Good Heav'ns Above! Her head with Paper Bags
Had been Concealèd, if I had my Way;
Unsightly Lass! And I've seen Countless Hags,
But this one's more Distressing—Lackaday!
He pointed out the Girl Digitally,
As Flow'rs she gathered in th' adjoining Field;
And cruèl Cachinnations such as these
Did *Burscough* utter: So his *Fate* was Seal'd,
For this Unbeauteous Woman was the Spouse
Of *Ainscough*, and the Apple of his Eye,
His Darling, and the Mistress of his House:
Than such Contumely hear he'd rather Die.
As when a Rav'nous Pack of Wolves descend
From *Ida*'s Summit, full of Lust for Blood,
Then rend asunder Bantams in a Farm,
And Lupine Howling echoes through the Wood,
So did Lord *Ainscough*'s Bilious Temper Rise:
He Blaz'd with Fury, pausing not for Breath—
'Thou Filthy Cad!' quoth he, 'God damn thine Eyes:
The Guerdon of thy Canine Conduct's Death!'
This said, *Ainscough* to raise his Troops did Leave,
Nor tarry long did *Burscough* on that Tor,
But hasten'd Homewards, fill'd with Magnine Grief
That Pique and Temper should result in War.
Alas! Poor *Ainscough*, Constant to the End!
Compell'd by Pride, which cannot be Ignor'd,
To wage Unending War against a Friend—
Cruel *Heav'n*! Thy Doings are to be Deplor'd!

(*Battle of Burscough Bridge*, I. 1-54)



Notes:

1ff. **Terpsichore...**: The initial address to the Muse(s) is of course a standard *topos* of epic verse (cf. Homer's *Iliad* A.1: *Menin aeide, thea...*), but no other poet known to me has ever invoked all *nine* Muses. The effect is nothing less than astounding; and one can only marvel that Prout has the audacity to begin with Terpsichore and not Calliope (see L. Haddock, *Poesy To-day* 19 [1939] 23-9).

6-8: 'Choir' has to be made to rhyme with 'Lancashire', requiring the reader to be doubly alert.

10. **Doings:** the poet's skilful use of ring-composition is a joy to behold. The word occurs again at line 54, marking off the proem from the action of the epic proper.

13. **Yon Northern Hills...**: also the first line of a rousing Passiontide hymn by Prout, to be found at *Prout's Wesleyan Hymnal,* no. 34b: 'Yon Northern Hills did groan beneath the Weight /Of Feet; *Golgotha*'s Goulish Crowds, /Where our Dear Lord and Saviour was Crucified /Upon a Tree Unyielding: *Alle-luia* (*etc.*). The tune, composed by Prout's friend John Stainer (1840-1901), is very irregular indeed, and seems to require the word 'Tree' in the fourth line to be held for five bars.

16: The sense of horror is building already.

20. **Yet Merriment**: Note Prout's frequent use of pithy maxims, which 'fulminate through his epic like an adder in a corn-field' (T. S. Eliot, 'The Goodness of L.T. Prout', in *The Times*, 1st April 1932). Compare 52 below ('Pride, which cannot be Ignor'd'). Such heavy philosophizing was not always to the taste of Prout's original audience.

25. **By *Socrates*!** Not a usual exclamation, especially when measured by the standards of thirteenth-century West Lancashire, which was largely free of Platonic influences on speech and literature (see L. Girth *et al* [edd.], *Platonic Paradoxes in the Middle Ages* [Cambridge 1992]).

26. **a Wench as Disfigur'd**: Lady Ainscough (1250-1309) was afflicted with goitre, which she contrived to exacerbate by indulging in a variety of vigorous hobbies, including cock-fighting and fencing. There are no surviving portraits.

32. **Flow'rs:** Dandelions or poppies, I should surmise from the evidence elsewhere in the poem (cf. *Battle* IV. 220, 'A Dandelion droop'd upon her Bodice'; IV. 229, 'The *Countess* "Poppies!" crieth, "What Joy be Mine!" ').

39ff. A typical Homeric simile; cf. *Battle* XVI. 5ff. ('As when a pair of Lions...'). Mount Ida features more frequently than is strictly necessary, I am afraid.

48. **Tor:** Prout, in general, pays meticulous attention to naturalistic detail; but here his ignorance of local geology has let him down. There are no tors in Burscough Bridge or Lathom, which has little granite (see F.D.Harvey, *The Cartography of Mediaeval Lancashire* [Exeter 1970], 11-4).

49. **Magnine**: a Proutean coinage.

54. **Cruel Heav'n...**: A favourite line, to be found also at *Battle* I. 444. The use of stock lines and epithets is, of course, a deliberate reminiscence of Homer.

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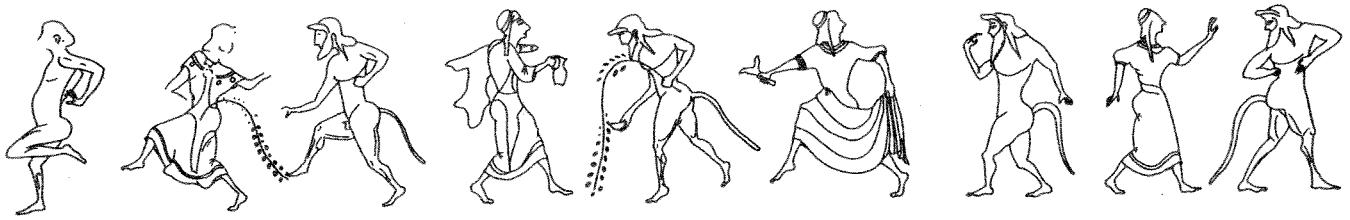
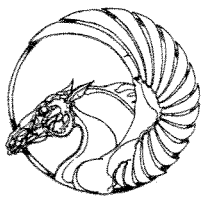




Actions speak louder than words

Christos A. Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables: The Augustana Collection* (Leiden, Brill 2001)

Reviewed by Alex Stovell

The collection of fables attributed to Aesop continues to captivate the hearts of millions of readers, young and old, throughout the world. It seems fair to say that some of Aesop's proverbs have become so common to us in our everyday lives that we are scarcely aware that we are using them. Who has not heard of the sayings 'a case of sour grapes' or 'actions speak louder than words'? What better thing can there be, then, than to celebrate the achievement of Aesop with a new scholarly book? The book that I am talking about is *Ethics in Aesop's Fables* by Christos Zafiropoulos, a former Ph.D. student in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Exeter.

Zafiropoulos' monograph is not only a comprehensive work of academic scholarship on Aesopian ethics but also an excellent introduction to the Greek fables in general. The book is easy to read, has a clearly-marked structure, and is arranged thematically. Detailed cross-references and careful analyses make for an extremely rich and gripping read. It is also possible for the reader to dip into it and think about it section-by-section. In fact, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables*, in spite of its title, is not so much a demanding book as a highly enjoyable one. In what follows I hope to give a flavour, at least, of such writing.

The book begins (Chapter I) by giving an outline definition of the fable in Greek literature. The fable (*ainos*, *muthos*, or *logos*) is a short story or allegorical tale that incites the reader to acknowledge a certain kind of reality or truth. It is also principally moral in that it offers advice on how a person should behave in a specific context. The fable can also be seen as didactic in that it instructs the reader directly, with strong intentional force. Taking this as his starting-point, Zafiropoulos then traces the origins, development and influence of the fable throughout Greek antiquity. This topic is given a reasonable amount of attention and I think, considering the difficulty of the task, that the author has done a good job at tracing historical strands.

Particularly interesting is the identification (especially in I.2.2) of certain social norms and customs inherent in Greek culture and literature during different periods: Zafiropoulos examines the relationship between these phenomena and the type of moral messages contained in Aesop's fables. For instance, in fable CVII ('The Dog Invited to Supper', also quoted by Xenophon), an abusive dog represents a person who is anti-social and unappreciative of the kindness of others. The fable seems to touch on the question of etiquette in Greek popular thought: although you may have received an invitation to dine at someone's house, it remains up to you and your judgement of the situation, firstly, whether to go along and, secondly, how to behave as a guest if you do decide to attend. (Of course the motif of the dog is quite a famous one in Greek thought. Who can forget Achilles' attitude towards Agamemnon in the *Iliad*, or Socrates' witty saying 'By the Dog!'?)

Some of the fables are, clearly, meant to be comic (such as CLXXV, 'The Boy who Went Swimming'), and one can catch a glimpse of the attraction that such pieces would have had for the Greek comic playwrights, especially Aristophanes. In fact, the relation of the fable to comedy is an aspect to which Zafiropoulos gives little attention. He prefers, instead, to examine the earlier traditions reflected in Herodotus or Aristotle in relation to Greek popular thinking more generally. But I don't think that one necessarily gets the impression that there is a gap in the book; it is more a question of focus.

I especially liked the way in which (in I.3.2 and elsewhere) Zafiropoulos draws parallels between Aesop's use of animal characters in his stories and modern cartoons like *The Jungle Book* and *The Lion King*. These are seen as excellent mediums for conveying simple moral messages to young children and for broadening their ethical horizons. Another point that Zafiropoulos brings out well here is the idea (which becomes common in later Hellenistic thought) that certain moral principles are inherent in nature (the natural world), including those creatures that inhabit those regions unaffected by human use and occupation. There is a famous saying of Chrysippus that we should look to the beasts and make positive inferences from their behaviour. This reflects the idea in Stoicism that humans share some capacities (such as appetite and impulse) with animals, but that humans are much more capable of carrying things out because they have the additional, higher capabilities of rationality and reason. Zafiropoulos also recognises the techniques of 'distance' and 'detachment' in the animal stories, and notes their beneficial effect in conveying a moral message.

If the introductory chapter is general in its scope and emphasis, then Chapter II deals with specific interconnected themes and motifs, which are explicitly related to prominent notions in Greek (and Roman) thought and literature. The theme of the 'Competition' or 'Conflict' (II.1) is a particularly strong one in Aesop. Zafiropoulos takes the heroic exchanges in Homer as being of special interest in this respect, the typical scenario being (inevitably) that there can only be one survivor or victor in the competition. This theme is located in a broad cultural framework—the Greek city-state and its various political and athletic contests—and then explored directly through certain individual fables in Aesop. Two points of particular interest emerge. First, we should respect our limitations and not go beyond our means, so that we don't end up in an

unsuitable situation which will take advantage of our weaknesses. Second, we should accept defeat (or whatever might befall us) gracefully, and realize that our moral character (and the respect which it earns us) matters more than winning a competition.

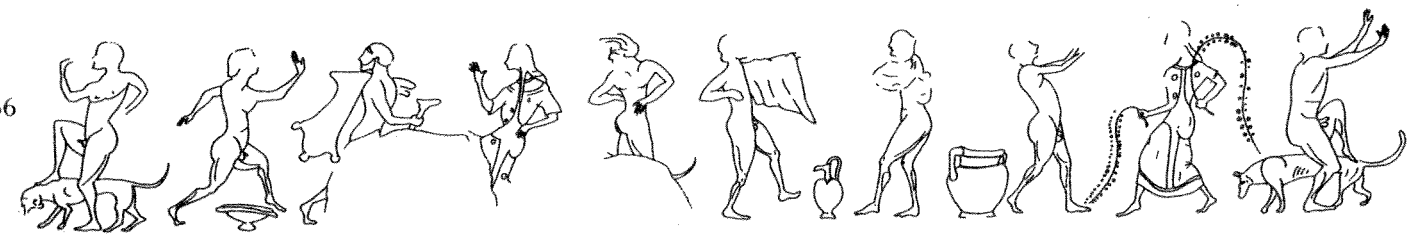
The section on 'Learning Through Suffering and the Theme of Toil' (II.4) is well-researched and meticulous with regard to detail. This is a theme which frequently recurs throughout the fables, but what Zafiropoulos does is to take a couple of indicative examples and focus closely on these. The key character here is Hercules, whose endurance and many labours (like those of Odysseus, as represented by Homer) eventually yield high rewards both for the hero and for his community. Fables LIX ('Hercules and the Wagoner') and CI ('The Lion, the Bear, and the Fox'), to cite just two instances, demonstrate this idea with marvellous beauty and power, as Zafiropoulos shows.

Chapter III covers Reciprocity in the Augustana collection. This is by far the longest and most demanding section of the book and I can only hope to give a brief sketch of it here. The main topics dealt with in this section are friendship, altruism, and social justice, which are successfully related to modern scholarship on ancient ethics. While I appreciate what the author is trying to do here, I have to say that I have some reservations about this chapter. While friendship and reciprocity are important topics in Greek ethical thought (see books 8 and 9 of Aristotle's *NE*, for instance), I would question whether these concerns are central to the fables. Another critical point here is that Greek ethical thinkers (including Aesop) seem not to have made such a sharp distinction between 'the self' and 'the other' as we do in modern times. Indeed, research has shown that, for the Greeks, the notion of leading a good moral life in line with one's personal concerns and desires is not only fully compatible with, but in fact goes hand-in-hand with, benefiting and caring for other people socially. I think that these ideas are assumed in Aesop to such an extent that they barely constitute a distinct topic. The moral message that Aesop wants to express seems best understood and appreciated in strong personal, rather than social or political, terms.

Despite these reservations, I should say that there is much of interest in Section III. I especially like the idea that some kind of external (or divine) sanction is represented in the Fables as a kind of ethical norm or ideal (III.3.5). This idea emerges not through the depiction of conventional piety (sacrifice, *vel sim.*) but from the characters' own conception of 'the right thing to do'—that is, moral goodness and its relation to the natural environment. Fate and chance, also, play a large (but hidden) part in Aesop. Some stories, such as CXCVII ('The Miser') and CXLII ('The Bull and the Goat'), see their animal actors as struggling against fate or against their own nature—and such actions always have disastrous consequences. I would have liked to see these themes developed further, and a few more direct examples given from the fables, but I think that Zafiropoulos has written with great insight and intelligence here.

The final chapter (IV) rounds the book off nicely by arguing that different fables are indicative of different moral qualities and attitudes in people, and that certain animals (the fox and the lion, for example) are characterised in such a way that they come to represent either actual people or stereotypes. The fox always tries to be cunning and undermine another's efforts, but ultimately fails because he disregards the well-being of others: see CXXI ('The Ass, the Fox, and the Lion'), for example. The lion, on the other hand, is successful only if he uses his immense strength to help other weaker characters in need: see L ('The Lion and the Mouse'). On all occasions, exploitation of others leads to downfall and ruin. But what is interesting here is how Aesop, as Zafiropoulos explains (IV.1.2-4), sees animals in their natural environment as best encountering what are for us human problems by acting in accordance with their own strengths and capabilities. To put the point differently, Aesop seems to suggest that we should look at and preserve what is the best in ourselves, and explore how this can help others to achieve their goals and aspirations. Zafiropoulos brings out all these points and more, so it remains for me to say that in order to discover more you are just going to have to go and read it for yourself.

Alex Stovell is a Ph.D. student in the Department, working on ancient ethics and Cicero's *On Duties*.



Maritime competition

We offer a prize of a five-year subscription to *Pegasus* to the first reader to identify the author of the poem printed below. Here are two clues: (a) he is a well-known poet, though this is not a characteristic work; (b) there should be some reason why it appears in *Pegasus*, a classical magazine.

Entries should be sent to PEGASUS MARITIME COMPETITION, c/o Dept of Classics and Ancient History, Queen's Building, The University, Exeter EX4 4QH, by the end of December, 2002. We begin with a few words of introduction by the author:

The sea is a subject by no means exhausted. I have somewhere a poem which directs attention to one of its most striking characteristics,which hardly any of the poets seem to have observed. They call it salt and blue and deep and dark and so on, but they never make such profoundly true reflexions as the following:

O billows bounding far,
How wet, how wet ye are!

When first my gaze ye met
I said 'Those waves are wet'.

I said it, and am quite
Convinced that I was right.

Who saith that they are dry?
I give that man the lie.

Thy wetness, O thou sea,
Is wonderful to me.

It agitates my heart
To think how wet thou art.

No object I have met
Is more profoundly wet.

Methinks, 'twere vain to try,
O sea, to wipe thee dry.

I therefore will refrain.
Farewell, thou humid main.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE:

ANCIENT AND MODERN APPROACHES TO ETHICAL OBJECTIVITY

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER, JULY 1-4, 2002

The aim of this conference is to debate philosophical issues raised by the idea of ethical objectivity, drawing on the insights of ancient (Greek and Roman) and modern philosophy. The conference will focus on three issues:
Are objective norms necessarily universal ones or can culture-specific norms also count as objective?
What forms of objectivist ethical epistemology still look credible?
Does virtue ethics have an objective basis?

SPEAKERS AND TOPICS:

Sarah Broadie (University of St. Andrew's): *The Meaning of the* Summum Bonum
Simon Blackburn (Cambridge University): *The Bogey of Objectivity: The Burden of Judgement*
Wolfgang Detel (University of Frankfurt): *Plato and the Normativity of Good Arguments*
Christopher Gill (University of Exeter): *Must Objective Norms be Universal Ones?*
Sabina Lovibond (Worcester College, Oxford): *Virtue, Nature and Providence*
M. M. McCabe (King's College London): *Out of the Labyrinth: Plato's Attacks on Consequentialism*
Terry Penner (University of Madison): *Socratic Egoism and Ethical Epistemology*
Christopher Rowe (University of Durham): *What Difference do Forms make for Platonic Epistemology?*
R.W. Sharples (UCL): *Justice is Natural: Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mantissa* 156-159 Bruns*
Nancy Sherman (Georgetown University): *Virtue, Convention and Ritual*
Ludwig Siep (University of Münster): *Virtues, Values and Moral Objectivity*
Richard Sorabji (King's College, London): *Ethical Objectivity: What we Learn from the History of Ideas*

All sessions will include ample time for plenary discussion.

The Conference will run from late afternoon on Monday July 1 to lunch-time on Thursday July 4. All meetings, meals and accommodation will be in the University of Exeter (an attractively rural campus close to the cathedral city of Exeter). Tuesday afternoon will be free for an excursion, exploration of Exeter or recreation. Travel to Exeter from London, Birmingham, Oxford between two and a half and three hours by rail.

Costs: conference fee (full) £30; (student/pensioner) £15; (daily) £10
Accommodation and all meals throughout conference: (en-suite accommodation): £150
(standard accommodation): £125
Daily rates and non-residential meals also available.

A limited number of bursaries, covering meals and accommodation throughout the conference, are available for postgraduate students: to apply (by end of April 2002) send a one-page statement on yourself and your reasons for wanting to attend the conference, supported by a letter from your supervisor or other academic staff-member in your Department. (Address below)

For the full programme and booking-form:
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