

BOOK REVIEW

Thinking the Greeks: A Volume in Honour of James M. Redfield. Edited by BRUCE M. KING and LILLIAN DOHERTY. London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2019. Pp. xv + 252. Hardback, \$140.00. ISBN 978-1-138-67186-7.

A list of authors and titles appears at the end of the review.

James M. Redfield, Emeritus Professor of Classics and Social Thought at the University of Chicago, is a renowned Homerist. Casting new light on the *Iliad* through the lens of Aristotle's *Poetics*, Redfield's *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (1975, expanded edn. 1994; also translated into French, Modern Greek and Spanish), may safely be regarded as one of the landmarks of Homeric criticism. The present collection, which stems from a 2015 symposium in Redfield's honor, pays tribute to his work by bringing together sixteen papers that engage, one way or another, with some of the scholar's principal fields of interest: Homer, Plato, plus some emphasis on the social perspective. Authors discussed to a lesser degree include Aristotle, Sophocles, Euripides, Menander and Terence.

In the Introduction, the editors aptly foreground the originality of Redfield's research, which glides between classics and anthropology, and his experimental perception of literature (and of the ancient world) grounded on and informed by social theory – the latter also reflected in the scholar's affiliation to the Committee on Social Thought of the University of Chicago. Redfield's second major work (*The Locrian Maidens: Love and Death in Greek Italy*, 2003), bearing witness to his "interest in the margins" as to both content and perspective, presents "a counter-history to the canonic history of Athens and Sparta" (3). As a true ethnographer, Redfield identified with the areas he worked on, be that the world of the Locrians or of the *Iliad*, and viewed "culture as a whole, as a field of action in which reasoning plays a major part" (2). The Introduction closes with an overview of the individual contributions.

The first part of the collection consists of five papers on Homer. Slatkin convincingly argues for the construction of the Iliadic story through tensions and counter-pressures: Achilles may be hindered from killing Agamemnon but his

wrath gives further impetus to the Trojan war. Olmstead examines, in the Cyclops and Circe episodes, Odysseus' re-appropriation of the role of the *xenos* as to the hero's evasion of forming customary bonds of lineage with his hosts. Nooter's paper provides a constructive reading of the wooden horse as a *mise en abyme* for the *Odyssey*, which demonstrates both the deadly and liberating powers of craft. Zeitlin briefly discusses the Homeric body as an object of wonder, employing in addition insights from archaeology. Finally, Kretler detects arresting similarities between ring composition in Homer (the speech of Phoenix in *Iliad* 9 and the Shield of Achilles), Aristotle's discussion of the birth of tragedy and the second stasimon in Euripides' *Heracles*.

The second part comprises six contributions on "Plato in Conversation with Epic, Tragedy and Comedy." On the question whether tragedy is perceived as distinct from or identical to Homer in Plato's *Republic*, Most is inclined to adopt a middle position. In his discussion of the *Hippias Minor*, Sharp foregrounds the significance of context in the interpretation of the *Iliad*. Nelson examines the opposition between tragedy and comedy in the *Symposium*, arguing that both genres are necessary for Plato's philosophy. King's paper demonstrates how *philia* is overturned by *eros* (passionate desire) in *Lysis* and in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Ludwig discusses vulgar *eros* in the *Phaedrus* as a first step in the ladder of noble *eros*, while McGlew associates sortition (lottery) with political equality in the *Laws*.

The third section ("Travel and Transmission") includes five essays on a variety of topics, which are meant to relate broadly to the social aspect in Redfield's scholarship. Nagy views the "ritualised surreptitiousness" of a pilgrimage sacrifice to Achilles' tomb (cited in Philostratus' *Heroicus*), which was being carried out by the Aetolians from Thessaly, as a reflection of a historical rivalry between Sigeion and New Ilion over the tomb's authentic location. In one of the most rewarding papers of this volume, Doniger examines the variants of the myth of the clever wife (referring to the seduction of a husband by his wife disguised as another woman in order to meet his bewildering challenge that she get pregnant without him having sexual intercourse with her) in Menander's *Epitepontos*, as well as in *Hecyra*, the Roman version by Terence. As it appears, modifications in both plays and departures from the original pattern are culture-specific, indicating the superior social position of the husband and of characters other than the wife herself. Borgeaud surveys the attempts of Matteo Ricci (an Italian Jesuit missionary of the 16th century) to approach the religions of China and trace possible Graeco-Roman influences. Zatta meticulously explores affinities between Hobbes' political theory and Aristotle's *History of Animals* – a primary divergence being that

animals should not, according to Hobbes, be termed political. By way of conclusion, Desai takes us through a completely diverse though no less interesting route, tracing Mahatma Gandhi's intellectual debts to the 19th century naturalist and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, to Leo Tolstoy, and principally to Socrates, as regards the idea of resistance to political brutality and injustice by means of a passive (i.e. nonviolent) civil disobedience.

The collection closes with a list of Redfield's publications in chronological order and a general Index (including passages discussed). The volume is nicely produced and the number of typos is minimal.

All in all, this book succeeds in presenting papers that relate to Redfield's work, concerning mainly the authors he published on and to a lesser extent the anthropological perspective. Some ideas could perhaps have been developed further with a view to clarity, but given the limitation of space it must be stressed that the volume serves well in reflecting the breadth of Redfield's scholarship.

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Bruce M. King and Lillian Doherty, "Editors' introduction", pp. 1-9.

Part One: Homer

1. Laura M. Slatkin, "Counterfactuals and the plot of the *Iliad*," pp. 13-23.
2. Wendy Olmsted, "Odysseus at the boundaries of pre-culture," pp. 24-37.
3. Sarah Nooter, "The wooden horse and the unmaking of the *Odyssey*," pp. 38-52.
4. Froma I. Zeitlin, "Constructing the aesthetic body in Homer and beyond," pp. 53-69.
5. Katherine Kretler, "Tapping the wellsprings of action: Aristotle's birth of tragedy as a mimesis of poetic *praxis*," pp. 70-90.

Part Two: Plato in conversation with epic, tragedy and comedy

6. Glenn W. Most, "Homer, the first of the tragedians? Remarks on Plato *Republic* 10," pp. 93-101.

7. Kendall Sharp, "Plato's *Hippias Minor* as literary criticism," pp. 102-111.
8. Stephanie Nelson, "Between Being and Becoming: comedy, tragedy and the *Symposium*," pp. 112-127.
9. Bruce M. King, "Contrafactual education in Sophokles's *Philoktetes* and Plato's *Lysis*," pp. 128-142.
10. Paul Ludwig, "Vulgar eros in the *Phaedrus*," pp. 143-158.
11. James McGlew, "Equality and sortition in Plato's *Laws*," pp. 159-169.

Part Three: Travel and transmission

12. Gregory Nagy, "A ritualized rethinking of what it meant to be 'European' for ancient Greeks of the post-heroic age: evidence from the *Heroikos* of Philostratus," pp. 173-187.
13. Wendy Doniger, "Menander, Terence and the rape of the clever wife," pp. 188-199.
14. Philippe Borgeaud, "Sarapis and the emperor of China: some thoughts on comparison," pp. 200-215.
15. Claudia Zatta, "The desire to live: Aristotle's animals in Hobbes's philosophy of man," pp. 216-228.
16. Ian Desai, "The alchemy of influence: Socrates, Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi," pp. 229-243.

Publications of James M. Redfield, pp. 244-247.