BOOK REVIEWS

Mary R. Bachvarova, *From Hittite to Homer: The Anatolian Background of Ancient Greek Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xxxviii + 649 pp. ISBN: 9780521509794.

Epic poetry, first linked to Homer, is considered the foundation of Western literature. But where did it come from? From what narrative traditions did the poet(s) of the Iliad and the Odyssey draw their inspiration? This volume from Bachvarova answers these questions through a wide-ranging examination of the modalities of transmission of Ancient Near Eastern literary motifs, storylines, and song traditions to the Greek epic.[1]

It comes in the wake of the renowned works of Burket and West[2] and is part of a research trend during recent years that has seen the release of two volumes, both with very different approaches and methodologies, by Johannes Haubold and Christopher Metcalf.[3]

The book falls into two parts: Chapters 1-8 and Chapters 9-16.

In the first part, Chapter 1 defines the Hurro-Hittite narratives as a genre, and clarifies the influence these narratives may have had on Homer; the subsequent chapters argue this thesis in detail. Taking a number of texts as a case study, B. reflects on why these narrations were brought in, and how they were used within Hattusa. The selection of texts embraces: (i) Gilgamesh, specifically, the Akkadian, Hurrian and Hittite versions; (ii) the Hurro-Hittite Song of Release (SoR); (iii) the legends of Old Akkadian kings.[4] (i) In discussing the tradition of Gilgamesh, she develops the argumentative basis for the entire volume. First, she argues for the presence of a living bilingual oral tradition and the development of a model of oral composition parallel to that of Parry-Lord for Greek epic verse. Second, she locates Anatolia as the hub for the transmission of motifs from the Near East. A passage on Enkidu's dream is only preserved in the Hittite version of Gilgamesh (68). This parallels the passage within Iliad (16.419-683), where Zeus and Hera ponder on the fate of Sarpedon. Third, the references to pit-rituals and necromancy in Gilgamesh seem the most appropriate contexts for the transference of narrative motifs between Anatolia and Greece. (These three points are in fact the least convincing — as discussed below). (ii) SoR narrates the sacking of Ebla, and recalls the plot of the Iliad by means of narrow parallels.[5] (iii) The Cuthean legend of Naram-Sin may have influenced the character of Hector in the Iliad.

The second part (Chapters 9-16) focuses on how Hurro-Hittite narratives have been transmitted to and received by Greek poets. B. offers both the means of transmission and the contexts through which interactions could be verified. The resulting scenario involves bilingual bards at ritual practices and religious festivities (especially those of royal ancestor venerations) in a geographical area comprising Cyprus, Cilicia, and western Anatolia within the time span of Late

1 Oriental abbreviations follow CAD and Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie, while those from the classics follow Année Philologique. Please refer to both lists to assuage any doubts. The broad reception of the volume can be seen in the large number of reviews that featured her work. Here are a few (listed in alphabetical order) with which the present review intersects. Cohen 2016, BMCR. Dale 2017, JC. Yakubovich 2016, JNES 76/2, 363-365. Metcalf 2016, 'The Homeric Epics and the Anatolian Context', CR, 3-5.

2 Burkert 1992; West 1997.

3 Haubold 2013; Metcalf 2015.

4 The principal reference on the subject remains Westenholz 1997.

5 For more, see B.'s seminal article 2005, 131-153, with refernce to further literature.

Bronze and Early Iron Age Greece. The volume ends with a critical examination of the multiple 'layers of Anatolian influence' on which the prehistory of the Iliad is based.

To respect the review's word limit, I cannot do justice to the immense work contained within this volume, so I will consequently confine myself to only commenting on certain points.

The strengths of the book in question can be seen on multiple levels.

Majesty. It deals with an enormous variety of very different and intricate sources (from textual to archaeological), with an abundance of details, maps and tables, as well as an appendix on the dactylic hexameter and a bibliography of 100 pages. These highlight the author's mastery in managing both the sources and the parameters that surround, influence, and modify them.

Weaving. It interlaces several disciplines that have long been divided: Assyriology, Hittitology and Classical Philology. Incorporating the modern methodology of Homeric studies into the East-West field of late Bronze and Early Iron Age studies, it highlights the recent trend towards closer integration between these disciplines.

Multilingualism. It underlines the rich and multilingual (Hittite, Hurrian, Akkadian, and Luwian) archives and libraries of the Hittite capital, Hattusa, during the mid to late second millennium BC, revealing a 'bilingual tradition' (without prescribing a 'bilingual singer'). Hattusa, as the polyglot capital, was the hub for the transmission of the Mesopotamian narratives to the Eastern Mediterranean — consequently the Greeks — and the main source for the mechanisms and vectors of that transmission.

Ultra-specialism made accessible. It presents the Hurro-Hittite literature, previously seen only by enthusiastic 'insiders', to a wider audience, with both clarity and simplicity.

Clarity. It demands more and more careful re-readings — not for lack of lucidity (indeed, it is highly readable), but due to the plethora of themes and multi-layered discussions it contains.

There appear to be three principal weaknesses: (i) there is a great insistence on orality; (ii) the parallels between Near Eastern and early Greek sources are less convincingly demonstrated, and are merely referred to; (iii) there are certain linguistic slips. The three points mentioned here should, however, be taken as an expression of profound interest in B.'s work, to which we owe our gratitude for taking a giant step forward in the jungle of the pre-classic traditions of the Greek literature.

B. states 'my focus is on the oral transmission of Near Eastern motifs rather than transmission via writing' (5). This is one of the most controversial points in the volume, as it proposes the misleading idea that oral transmission[6] was the main vehicle for the spread of Near Eastern epics. This reflects mainstream ideas of Homeric scholarship, which have been widely rejected by Ancient Near East scholars, particularly Assyriologists. Historically, the second millennium BC in the Near East and the first millennium AD in Central Asia were characterised by written literature, in clear contrast with the reconstruction of Early Iron Age Greece.[7] Nonetheless, one can see that she is not talking about writing oral performances on tablets; in general, B. presents a balanced picture between written and oral transmission regarding Ancient Near Eastern literary motifs, storylines, and song traditions and their reception in the Greek epic.

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6 On this topic, with a focus on the Ancient Near Eastern context, see C. Cooper 2007, 55-70 and Alster 1992, 23-69; for a focus on the linguistic elements of oral poetry, see Kiparsky 1976, 73-106.

7 On the composition and transmission of cuneiform literature, see K. Radner and E. Robson 2011. About the interface of the oral and written (across the spectrum of seeing, hearing, and writing) in Ancient Mediterranean, see R. Coote and A. Weissenrieder 2010.

The parallels between the two cultures are not sufficiently highlighted. These need to be commented upon, to provide details from both the Greek and the Ancient Near Eastern perspective, from coeval sources, parallel passages, etc.[8] However, the work completed by the author is enormous, and the tracks left unexplored by its end serve as highly fruitful hints for research ahead. We may be very grateful for the groundbreaking work, even if there are areas that need further investigation.

There are occasional linguistic slips. Owing to word limits, I will provide just two examples: the intervocalic sound changes * m > w in Babylonian history;[9] and the etymology of Typhon < Mount Ṣipon.[10] These glitches can be ironed out in a second edition, however.[11]

With the array of new information and approaches it contains, this volume fills a perceived gap, is appropriate for a wide scholarly audience, and will ideally stimulate deeper conversation within scholarship concerning the pre-classical traditions of Greek literature.

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Mark Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire, AD 235-395*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. 240 pp. ISBN 9781472457592.

Mark Hebbelewhite's book deals with the relationships between the armies and the Roman Emperors. It contains a few subjects which have been neglected in the study of the period 235-395. The book is an adaptation of the author's PhD dissertation at Macquarie University, Australia. It comprises an introduction and six thematic chapters followed by a concluding one.

Hebblewhite establishes his thesis on the basic assumption that the Roman army was a political entity. The introduction shows that he is well aware of the writings of ancient authors like Tacitus, who mentioned the importance of the army and its capability to overthrow the Emperor and to seat a General on the throne. Tacitus viewed it as 'the innovation' in the 'year of the four Emperors'. Accordingly, Hebblewhite refers to Emperors trying to please the army and to secure its backing, acknowledging the role it had been playing in determining the ruler even before the 3rd century. The author argues the army had been growing in importance during the 3rd and 4th centuries, enhancing its role as 'kingmaker', but he doesn't provide any proof to his claim. Indeed the 3rd century witnessed a high frequency of usurpations, but the author doesn't make any comparison between events before and after 235 in order to verify his assertion.

8 Whether linked historically/geographically or not, the structural and expressive modalities — which constitute literary texts — show parallels. Without unraveling the contexts, one works on comparative literature 'without influence' — which is not the case with the book reviewed here. This road has been well-trodden, involving *Gilgamesh*, by R. North and M. Worthington, KASKAL 9 (2012), 177-217 and A. R. George, KASKAL 9 (2012), 227-242.

9 In discussing the dubious Mesopotamian origin of Thetys. For more on the subject of Akkadian historical phonology, see W. von Soden 1995, §21d; A. Militarev and L. Kogan 2000, lxxi-lxxii.

10 In addition to being far-fetched, this goes against one of Watkins' arguments on the spread of the myth from the Anatolians to the Mycenaeans during the Late Bronze Age. See Watkins 1995, 448-459.

11 For numerous annotations on these aspects, see the review by Dale.