designation of the *epyllion* as "non-Homeric" epic; 49f.), and Dracontius' "mixing of genres" such as miniature epic with lyric or tragedy. Part One concludes with W. turning her attention to the *Aegritudo Perdicae*, a poem that, she finds, while inferior to those by Dracontius not only in "range of poetic talent" and "depth of moral reflection", can nonetheless be read with "certain pleasure" (p. 109).

Part Two, "The Elegy without Love: Maximianus and his *Opus*", treats Maximianus as a "bold translator" of the traditional Augustan elegy into a different culture (p. 135). W. emphasises that Maximianus' poetics is polyphonic – diversity of themes, moods, and forms is *the* characteristic of his work in general (p. 120). In the Christian era, it is tempting to interpret elements of the poems through a certain moralistic lens, however, W. rightly steers the reader onto a middle road. Love is not read as either wholly similar to what is presented in earlier Latin love elegy, or as a spiritual Christian love (p. 135). What W. rightly concludes is that Maximianus' poems provide no simple messages on love and old age (p. 161).

In Part Three, "The Roman Epigram in the Romano-Barbaric World", W. turns to the final genre she considers: epigram. After providing a summary of the genre from Catullus, via Martial, W. then shifts her focus onto Luxorius, the "Carthaginian Martial" (p. 169). For W. Luxorius is comparable to Martial particularly in his "clear vision" of the genre, for, "like Martial, he seems more precise than his fellow litterateurs in describing the genre" they practiced (p. 217). This section also examines the works of the anonymous author of the *Sylloge* (published by Riese as cc. 90–197), and the Christian poet, Ennodius. W.'s meagre conclusion (p. 236) that the author of the *Sylloge* tells us even less than Luxorius does of life in North Africa – that the "action" of the poems occurs outside any specific context – should not detract the reader for her discussion of the aesthetic qualities of the poems themselves.

Despite her worthwhile and in-depth discussions of the poets and poems she has chosen to examine, often W.'s conclusions are not very profound. However, this estimation should not be read as a caution to actually engaging with the arguments presented in this monograph, but rather as a statement to signal to the potential reader that the real substance and worth of the book (apart from the impressive and very useful bibliography) are to be found in the details, and exemplary discussions of the poems themselves, and often not in the concluding remarks. While the poets that W. has discussed occasionally form a sort of "postscript" to their predecessors – usually only by the negative designator "imitators" – W. has confirmed their importance in any genological study of Latin literature.

Jeffrey Murray

Isobel Hurst: *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: The Feminine of Homer. Classical Presences*. Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York 2006. ISBN 978-0-19-928351-4. VIII, 253 pp. GBP 60, USD 85.

Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: The Feminine of Homer charts the exposure to and influence of Classical literature on literary women, both authors and fictional characters, during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The book is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, but the theme that Isobel Hurst weaves throughout the book is women's "special" relationship towards the Classics compared to men, derived from differences in education and gendered attitudes towards life experiences and social circumstances.

After a short Introduction (pp. 1–10), the book commences with a discussion of education ("Encounters with the Ancient World in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture", pp. 11–53). It at first sets out to describe the ways in which boys and young men were taught their Classics from schoolroom to university, to establish the "norm" against which women's experiences should be contrasted. Hurst chooses to emphasize the system as repressive and stultifying, initially quoting Byron's "drill'd dull lesson" (later echoed as a heading for a sub-chapter). According to Hurst, the way in which boys were taught their grammar and literature was by rote and repetition, which deprived many of enjoyment of the Classics, which in some cases had to be rediscovered later in life. This Hurst wants to deliberately contrast with the way in which girls might have learned Classics, which was always out of personal interest, and lacking the formality and rigor which would on the one hand ensure impeccable grammar (a frequent criticism against women scholars) but might stifle enthusiasm at the same time. Hurst sets out a nice historical outline of the development of Classical education in Britain, which is paralleled in the second chapter by a historical outline of the development of Classical education for women. Chapter 1 concludes by leaving the sphere of male education and looking at ways that women who did not have the opportunity to learn Classical languages for themselves might have been exposed to the Classics: through ancient works in translation, historical fiction, and travel.

In Chapter 2 ("Classical Training for the Woman Writer", pp. 52–100), Hurst presents a loose historical arc of the development of women's education in the Classics from informal beginnings to university tuition. The chapter is divided into sub-chapters: the first ("Studying at home") looking at the support women might find from male members of their family, i.e., fathers, brothers or guardians – or, later in life, husbands. Hurst looks at the development of formal education for girls from the ladies seminaries "which provided social rather than intellectual training" (p. 70) to the raising of academic standards in girls' schools founded in the 1840s and 1850s, and the eventual preparation of girls to take university entrance exams. Latin was prevalent while Greek was a "luxury", and books like Magnall's *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions for the Use of Young People* ensured a moralizing slant to the study of the ancient world. Nevertheless, Hurst notes that the women likely to attend the newly-founded women's colleges were more likely to come from an upper-class, academic or clerical background and to have been educated at home, rather than acquiring a formal education in girls' schools. Hurst emphasizes the need that the first women attending Oxbridge felt to do well in the traditionally "masculine" spheres, i.e., Greek and mathematics, and the popularity of the image of Atalanta for claiming a stake in the traditionally male arenas of both Classical learning and athletics. After a brief discussion of Jane Ellen Harrison – the only "academic" Classicist to be discussed in the book – and her impact on more literary writers of the Victorian period, Hurst proceeds to discuss the performing of Greek tragedy at universities, and, finally, a provocative section titled "Oxford and the Decline of Classics", which culminates in Dorothy L. Sayers rejection of Classical studies in favor of English, and completes a pattern explored earlier in the section on men's education.

From World War I and the rejection of the Classical model of the hero, we skip backwards in time to Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her aspirations to be the "feminine of Homer", grappling with the epic and heroic modes ("Unscrupulously Epic", pp. 101–29). Hurst argues that Barrett Browning deliberately distanced herself from the gendered literary form that is epic, by focusing on women's issues and perspectives of significant historical events, she was "revising epic tradition", but was nonetheless "enabled by Homer" and Andromache's speech

in the Iliad, as well as emphasis in Euripidean tragedy on the fate of Troy's women.

From there to "Classics and the Family in the Victorian Novel", which marks a change in direction from a biographical and historical emphasis to looking at literary characters – the creations of Victorian writers in Chapter 4 (pp. 130–63), and their responses to female characters from Classical literature in Chapter 5 ("Greek Heroines and the Wrongs of Women", pp. 164–91). The fictional characters in Chapter 4 seem mostly similar to their creators and their experiences introduced in Chapter 2, although Hurst argues that the novels portray an "unhappiness and familial hostility" towards women's studies that may not reflect reality (p. 60). There is much in Chapter 4 in terms of content and themes that links directly with Chapter 2, both largely centering on access to education and attitudes towards women possessing knowledge of the Classics, that one wonders why the two chapters were not amalgamated and treated together.

Chapter 5 deals with the treatment by Victorian writers of Greek heroines – Aspasia and Xanthippe as wives of intellectuals, Medea and Alcestis as cases for divorce reform. Hurst argues that they are mainly recast as a mirror of the times. This chapter is broken up in the middle by another out-of-place discourse on elements of Greek tragedy found in the novels of George Eliot. Chapter 6 takes on the task of "Revising the Victorians" (pp. 192–219) by looking at the writings of Oxbridge-educated women of the 1930s, such as May Sinclair, Vera Brittain and Dorothy L. Sayers, and the trauma of World War I and the changing sexual politics (often expressed through Classical allusion) and attitudes towards academic women of post-war society. The book concludes with a brief look at Virginia Woolf's essay "On Not Knowing Greek"; Hurst concludes that Woolf is describing the study of Greek not as a hopeless cause but as a crucial element in the development of woman writers of the previous generations.

In essence, the title of the book, *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics,* encompasses three separate questions, all of which the book attempts to answer: 1) what was Victorian women's access to the Classics? 2) How did the Classics affect Victorian women's writing? 3) How did Victorian women write about the Classics? The questions are interesting and the answers fascinating. The problem is that these questions are not treated in turn, although they are treated distinctly in the various sub-chapters. The organization of the book is such that we jump between these very different discussions in a way that leads to both discontinuity and redundancy. This makes the book rather repetitive to read straight through, and then a little difficult to navigate when going back looking for something specific. One also wonders who the intended audience is. Although published in the series "Classical Presences", it seems that a background in the Victorian novels discussed will allow one to get more out of the book than familiarity with the Classics – merely having read *Wuthering Heights* as a teenager doesn't quite cut it. There are a few quotations in Greek and Latin, but these are supplied with some manner of translation. There is an index, predominantly of names of Victorian authors, although my few attempts to use the index to trace back references to authors who pop up again several chapters later were unsuccessful.

The problems of internal organization notwithstanding, the book presents a fascinating study of women's education and women's writing in the 19th century, which should lead to a new appreciation of these authors' achievements and literary output.

Marlena Whiting