



February 1991

Review of H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea*

Ralph M. Rosen
University of Pennsylvania, rosen@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers

Recommended Citation

Rosen, R. M. (1991). Review of H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea*. Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/23

Reprinted from *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, February 1, 1991. Publisher URL: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1991/02.04.12.html>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/classics_papers/23
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Review of H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea*

Abstract

This book collects some of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones' [Ll.-J.] most important work on the subjects listed in its title, and forms, along with its companion volume on Greek epic, lyric and tragedy [reviewed in this issue by M. Halleran], an elegant and impressive tribute to the career of one of this century's most influential (if at times controversial) classical scholars. The book represents the full range of Lloyd-Jones' interests and expertise, including brief, incisive textual notes, full-blown "editions" of fragmentary texts, book reviews, and expansive, often polemical, treatises on various aspects of Greek culture and Classical scholarship.

Comments

Reprinted from *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, February 1, 1991. Publisher URL: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1991/02.04.12.html>

H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek Comedy, Hellenistic Literature, Greek Religion and Miscellanea*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. Pp. x, 424. ISBN 0-19-814745-7. \$110.00 (hb).

Reviewed by Ralph Rosen, University of Pennsylvania.

This book collects some of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones' [Ll.-J.] most important work on the subjects listed in its title, and forms, along with its companion volume on Greek epic, lyric and tragedy [reviewed in this issue by M. Halleran], an elegant and impressive tribute to the career of one of this century's most influential (if at times controversial) classical scholars. The book represents the full range of Lloyd-Jones' interests and expertise, including brief, incisive textual notes, full-blown "editions" of fragmentary texts, book reviews, and expansive, often polemical, treatises on various aspects of Greek culture and Classical scholarship. All the pieces assembled here are reproduced with only occasional changes; such changes are limited, as noted in the Preface, to correction of errors and updating of references. There are also, however, other editorial asides that pepper the volume, usually adding some historical perspective to a work (e.g. p. 196, which explains the genesis of "A New Papyrus Fragment of Hellenistic Elegy [= *SH* 970]"), but just as often spicing the collection with wry observations and quips (e.g. p. 93 at the end of his "Terentian Technique: *Adelphi* and *Eunuchus*" where Ll.-J. notes that R.H. Martin and A.S. Gratwick "declined to learn" from the article). Each piece is clearly keyed to a complete bibliography at the end of the volume, and original pagination is well indicated.

The bulk of the first section of the book, on Greek comedy, actually deals with New Comedy: only two very short notes, covering just four pages (pp. 3-6) and a review of Henderson's *The Maculate Muse*, curiously placed at the end of the section, directly address Aristophanes and Old Comedy. Two well-known and important papers on Menander lie at the heart of this section, one on the *Samia*, the other on the *Sikyonios*. Both are of the sort that has become one of Ll.-J.'s hallmarks: the systematic and meticulous exegesis of a fragmentary, usually papyrological, text. The vast storehouse of Greek literature that Ll.-J. seems to have at his fingertips makes his textual reconstructions of the Menander papyri appear effortless, and his commentary and interpretation, while usually focused on individual passages or words, are characteristically sober and learned without being pedantic.

The same can be said for the longer articles collected in the section on Hellenistic poetry, an area in which Ll.-J. has perhaps made his greatest contributions outside of tragedy. Chapters 14, 16 and 17 reprint three now classic articles, all critical editions of difficult and troubled fragmentary texts. The first of these, "Callimachus fr. 260-1 [= *SH* 288-9],"

co-authored with John Rea in 1968, re-edited the most extensive fragment of Callimachus' *Hecale*, based for the first time on autopsy of the wooden tablet on which it is found (*P. Rainer* VI; Pfeiffer had to work from photographs). Some of Ll.-J.'s notes in his line-by-line commentary on this text are beautiful models of philological argumentation: one might single out, for example, his discussion of Pellene in line 27 (p.144), or of speaker assignments at lines 16-61 (pp. 148-51). The section closes with a fairly recent, more free-ranging piece that originally appeared in *SIFC* in 1984, "A Hellenistic Miscellany." This is an article of great charm as well as substance, which in a sense performs a function similar to, if less explicitly prophetic than, Pfeiffer's famous address to the Jubilee Meeting of the Classical Association in 1954 on "The Future of Studies in the Field of Hellenistic Poetry" (alluded to by Ll.-J. himself on the first page). It is at once an overview of Hellenistic scholarship in the 20th Century, an account of the genesis of Ll.-J.'s and Parsons' *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, and a critique of prevailing notions and evaluations of the Hellenistic "aesthetic." On this score Ll.-J. offers no particularly novel spin on the literature of the period, though he stresses, as he does frequently in his work, the pernicious effect our own preconceptions and prejudices can have on our understanding and ultimate appreciation of the past. In an amusing moment of self-irony we read (pp. 242-3): "To some people technical perfection will always give an impression of coldness, ornament or insincerity, and lightness of touch will seem to indicate a lack of seriousness. Still, we are living in an age when, perhaps because we are becoming more decadent, even Northern Europeans are finding it easier than ever before to enjoy Borromini or Caravaggio; and there may well be young Englishmen living now who are getting keener and sharper pleasure from Hellenistic poetry than I was able to extract from it before the age of thirty."

The most provocative piece in the third section of the book is "Psychoanalysis and the Study of the Ancient World," reprinted from *Freud and the Humanities* (ed. P. Horden, London-New York 1985) not only because it offers a lively survey and critique of psychoanalytic approaches to classical texts and culture, but also because it reveals distinctly Ll.-J.'s position in the intellectual history of recent decades. It is clear from this essay that Ll.-J., like many classicists still, is concerned more with the conscious lives of authors and figures than with the various intangible forces that may have shaped their activities and production. His criticisms of psychoanalytic approaches to literature and myth command assent on many points, especially when it comes to some of the more excessive applications, but Ll.-J.'s own impatience with what he sees as imprecision and speculation itself seems excessive, especially in view of his own commitment to such equally elusive notions as "artistic purpose" (p. 286), "conscious mind" (p.290) or "conscious art" (286). One might perhaps just say that Ll.-J. is simply interested in a different set of questions than a Devereux or a Levi-Strauss (different as these two are, of course), but it is also clear that Ll.-J.'s concept of what constitutes "literary criticism" is now somewhat dated.

Even if one denies the force of the dreaded "intentional fallacy" in the interpretation of texts, as Ll.-J. evidently would, recent critical work in and out of classics even before 1985, when the essay first appeared has shown that a text reflects much more than an author's designs. If we ignore less tangible aspects of a culture on the grounds that they

don't by definition constitute "evidence," the task we all set for ourselves of reconstructing (some might say "constructing") the past will proceed with a limp rather than a stride. This point is not intended to overlook Ll.-J.'s laudable attempts to keep scholarship honest and clear of noxious gasses, only to suggest that methodology itself, be it psychoanalysis or structuralism, is not the villain in the interpretation of literature, only its careless application.

Thirteen book reviews are reprinted in this volume, ten of which are collected in the last section of "Miscellanea." Ll.-J. has always been a prolific reviewer: 142 such items are listed in the bibliography, and this doesn't include his numerous reviews in non-academic journals for which he may be even more famous. Indeed, readers familiar with Ll.-J.'s reviews in, say, the Times Literary Supplement or the New York Review of Books, may be surprised at the relative dearth of polemics and the downright generosity of the reviews collected here. A glance at the books reviewed explains why: they are nearly all very important works by scholars of the highest stature, with whom Ll.-J. is able to engage in genuine scholarly dialogue (e.g. Maas, Latte, Snell, de Romilly, Kenney). Most of these reviews have the great virtue of situating the subject at hand within the history of scholarship (a subject in itself near and dear to Ll.-J.; cf., e.g., his review of Calder's *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren*, p. 399, and his essays in *Blood for the Ghosts*), and most contain a good deal of new, substantive material.

At the end of his review of Bowra's *Problems in Greek Poetry*, Ll.-J. asks a question that many may ask about his own collected papers: "one may wonder why some essays of this kind need be reprinted when they are already available in the periodicals in which they originally appeared" (p. 366). In the case of Ll.-J., aside from the mere convenience of having them in one place, it is also very instructive to be able to read these papers as a group, since doing so not only helps articulate the coherence of Ll.-J.'s wide-ranging work, but at the same also allows us to appreciate a methodology that is rapidly falling out of favor in Classics as well as in other disciplines. In an age when the very notion of "philology" is becoming politicized and marginalized in a curious war between enemies whose identities seem to shift daily (despite some recent half-hearted attempts to call a truce), it is a pleasure to be reminded by a master practitioner that philology still has much to offer both in theory and practice.

It has by this time become an unfortunate, but still necessary, ritual to end reviews of many books published by Oxford with a lament about price and production. In the case of these volumes the Press evidently decided -- quite wrongly, I think -- that only libraries would be interested in purchasing them; hence the truly obscene price of \$235 for both volumes. No doubt a more affordable paper version is in the works, but it would have been nice to put the "real thing" at least within range of the scholar's budget. Finally, although the volumes are quite lavishly and carefully produced, there remains the problem of the glued, as opposed to sewn, signatures: one quire of the bibliography in my copy popped out after a week of casual and gentle thumbing. These books are indeed a wonderful *ktema eis aiei* that celebrate a great scholar's career, but one would like them to reach posterity in one piece.