ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

A Handbook of Greek Literature

From Homer to the Age of Lucian

H. J. Rose

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Routledge Revivals

A Handbook of Greek Literature

First published in 1934, this book covers a broad array of ancient Greek literature, taking into account the most acknowledged of the Greek authors as well as those less well known. H. J. Rose presents the latest findings of the time in terms of research into Greek literature and covers subjects from Homer, Comedy and Poetry, to Philosophy, Science, and the Empire.

TO

MY TEACHERS

PREFACE

WHEN so many manuals of Greek literature have already been written, the author of a new one may reasonably be asked to justify himself. My explanation is, that I do not find any book in English and at present in print which covers the whole field, is of moderate length yet not so short as to include the principal authors only, and takes account of the latest results of investigation. I have tried to meet those requirements in the present work.

As in my *Handbook of Greek Mythology*, I have used different sizes of print for different paragraphs. Those in larger type assume no knowledge whatever on the student's part save the alphabet of Greek, which he may learn in half an hour. They attempt a continuous account of all those movements which are of importance to the literature of Greece or of the world generally. Less important authors, and especially those whose works are lost, are dealt with in the smaller type. These parts are also a little more technical and presuppose a little acquaintance with the subject. Details, however, of chronology, the genuineness of works assigned to a particular author, and such things interesting mainly to the specialist, are in the footnotes, which are meant to guide those who wish to pursue their studies further, or to judge for themselves of the value of statements which, for brevity's sake, it has often been necessary to make in a dogmatic form.

Brevity has also been sought by cutting down aesthetic criticism to the barest minimum. Furthermore, the vast Christian and the considerable Jewish literature written in Greek have been wholly omitted, not that they

lack importance, but that they represent a different spirit from that of the Greeks themselves, and are best handled in separate works. Some space has been saved by assuming that the reader has access to a History of Greece, of which there are many, and by referring to the author's little work on Mythology for explanations touching that subject.

Greek names, with a very few easily understood exceptions, have been simply transliterated, not given in their Latinized forms. On the other hand, the Latin titles of many Greek works have been so long familiar that they have been retained, save for writings which are now lost. Therefore the reader will find Oidipus mentioned, but the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and the *Hellenica* of Xenophon, but the *Hellenika* of Anaximenes.

H. J. ROSE

ST. ANDREWS
New Year's Day, 1934

A fourth impression being called for, the author has taken the opportunity to make a number of minor additions and improvements.

H. J. ROSE

ST. ANDREWS
January, 1950

Every handbook needs constant revision, as knowledge progresses. This imprint contains such alterations as seemed desirable and technically possible; several would have been made earlier but for the Second World War and its aftermath, which cut British scholars off from their Continental colleagues for some time.

H. J. ROSE

ST. ANDREWS
November, 1955

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A HANDBOOK OF GREEK LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE: WRITING

AT an unknown, but fairly early date, perhaps towards the end of the third millennium B.C., a tall, fair-haired people was making its way southward down the Vardar valley and, farther east, across the Dardanelles into Asia Minor. The more westerly section of this migration in time conquered and occupied that country which was afterwards known as Hellas, but is generally called by us Greece. There, the invaders, who probably were not very numerous and certainly were not under one central command, found a people whom they, at least in historical times, termed Pelasgians; a convenient modern name, which begs no questions as to their origin or ethnology, is Helladics. These were not savages; they had attained some degree of culture of their own, and both they and the new-comers were profoundly influenced by the great and ancient civilization—we call it Minoan—of the island of Crete. The result was the formation of a new culture, the Mycenaean, containing elements from the northern and the southern constituents of the mixed population, but ruled by chieftains of the invading stock. The language was, or at least ultimately became, that of the northerners; in historical times but a few small districts still kept remnants of the Helladic or Pelasgian speech.[1]

The more easterly group likewise founded new kingdoms, in Asia Minor, where they seem to have led a somewhat turbulent existence as unruly vassals of the Hittite empire, or as principalities more or less independent, maintaining relations, friendly or other, with the native powers. We hear of one such principality in

[1] See Herodotos, i, 57.

particular, that of the district known to us as Troy, or the Troad, where a dynasty probably partly northern in origin seems to have borne sway for many years, till finally its power was broken by a united effort of the settlers in Greece itself, traditionally led by their great king Agamemnon. After this, Greece was disturbed by a new immigration; a belated and culturally rather backward section of their own kin, known to us as the Dorians, swept down into the Peloponnesos, perhaps about the eleventh century B.C., and drove out the earlier comers, who seem to have called themselves Achaioi. Bereft of their possessions in Greece, many of these passed across the sea to Asia Minor, where in time they formed a long line of coastal settlements, collectively known as Ionian and their inhabitants as Iones, Ionians, the Yawan (Javan) of the Old Testament. These settlements, founded by fairly civilized people close to ancient seats of civilization, rose with some rapidity to a brilliant culture, while the people of Greece proper remained for a while comparatively backward. With Ionia, therefore, the history of Greek literature begins.[2]

But, since all Greek literature has certain characteristics in common, it is well to ask what the new-comers brought with them and what they found when they came. The Achaians, so to call them, appear to have been a race of hardy, intelligent, courageous folk, of independent character, respecting more, perhaps, than most peoples in the stage of culture they had attained the rights of the individual. They might be loyal subjects of a ruler who understood them, exceedingly turbulent under one who did not, but hardly the slaves or contented underlings of any man. Their material culture was not very high as yet, but they were willing and able to learn. Their religion, so far as we can say anything about it, included the worship of a sky- or weather-god, Zeus, the one certainly common feature in the cults of all Wiros.[3] Probably they also reverenced a corn- or earth-mother, the later Demeter. The Helladics were less

[2] For details of this early history, see *C.A.H.*, vol. ii, p. 431 *sqq.*; iii, p. 527 *sqq.*; Meyer, i, p. 771 *sqq.*; ii, p. 162 *sqq.*; Myers, *Greeks*, *passim*. Certainty is still a very long way from being reached; I have given in outline what seems to me the most probable view.

[3] I prefer to use the name 'Wiro' for those peoples, or that people, which originally spoke the language from which the existing tongues, ancient and modern, more commonly known as Indo-Germanic, Indo-European and Aryan are descended; also for their language. In the former sense, the term is due to Dr. Giles, and avoids begging any questions of habitat or race, merely denoting the existence of a widespread word for *man*, Lat. *uir*, mod. Welsh *gwr*, Eng. *wer* (*-gelt*, *-wolf*), declined with an o-suffix (as in the so-called second declension of Latin).

valiant and independent, but more skilful of hand, not slow of wit, and capable of influencing and being influenced by the new-comers. Their religion is obscure enough, but seems to have included a number of cults of powers who could bestow fertility on the land and all that lived in it; some at least of these were female.[4] Of their language we can say very little, for the tongue of the invaders won the day.[5] Of this tongue, the Greek language, it is necessary to say something.

The Achaians, if we may use that name for the new-comers generally, had as their common heritage one of the languages of the great Wiro or Indo-Germanic family. It was rich, varied, melodious [6]

[4] No account of Greek religion can be given here. A good short sketch is provided by Farnell, *Outline History of Greek Religion*, London, Duckworth, 1920 (a reprint of his article, *Greek Religion*, in Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*). Somewhat longer, and to be recommended, is Nilsson, *History of Greek Religion*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925. The same author deals with pre-Greek cults in his *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, Lund, Gleerup (London, Milford), 1927. Much that is excellent will be found in Wilam., *G.d.H.*

[5] Details of this process will be found especially in Huber, Kretschmer, and here and there in Kühner-Blass. These works, together with Kieckers (short account of the whole subject) and Meillet, *Aperçu*, should be consulted for the history of the language in general.

[6] It is much to be regretted that, in English schools especially, a conventional pronunciation prevails which is both ugly and unlike anything Greek. The following facts concerning classical pronunciation are fairly certain (see Kühner-Blass, i, pp. 46–322; Pernot, pp. 98–180). *α*, whether short or long, was an Italian *a*: *ε*, a narrow sound approximating to French *é*; it is regularly short, and when long is conventionally written *ει*. *η*, a much broader sound, resembling Fr. *é*, and always long. *ι*, like *i* in *machine*, not as in *mine* or *it*. *ο*, a narrow sound, approximating at times almost to *u*; when long, it is conventionally written *ου*. *ω* is much broader, and always long. *υ*, originally like a German or It. *u* (Eng. *oo* in *moon*), was in classical times, for most dialects, like Fr. *u* or Germ. *ü*, save in diphthongs, where it kept its original signification. Of the diphthongs, *αι* was like Eng. *ai* in *aisle*; *αυ*, like Germ. *au*, Eng. *ow*; *ει*, when not the conventional writing of a long *ε*, had a sound approximately like Eng. *ay* in *lay* (never like *y* in *try*), at least originally, but confused it with *é*; *ευ* and *ηυ* had simply the sounds of the component vowels pronounced in one breath; *οι*, like Eng. *oi* in *boil*; *ου*, at least in the developed Attic pronunciation, apparently *u* (Eng. *oo* in *moon*); *υι*, much like Eng. *we*. *ᾳ* (*āι*), *ῃ* (*ηι*), *ῳ* (*ωι*), a combination of the long vowels with a slight *i*-sound following. The unaspirated mutes (*π*, *τ*, *κ*; *β*, *δ*, *γ*) were pronounced as in French, *i.e.*, with no perceptible emission of breath; the aspirates (*φ*, *θ*, *χ*) had a distinct emission of breath accompanying them, *p-h*, *t-h*, *k-h*, not as in Eng. *Philip*, *thin*, and Scots *loch*. The other consonants were practically as in English, but *ξ* everywhere *ks*, even at the beginning of a word, *ζ* a combination, probably varying locally, of the sounds of *d* and *z* or *s*, possibly like *dz* in *adze*, not like Eng. *z*. Cf. Sturtevant, also Cessi, pp. 154–67.

and highly inflected.[7] Maintaining its structure almost if not quite unimpaired by the native speech, it nevertheless borrowed from it a number of words, especially names of plants, animals and above all of the unfamiliar sea-fish. Thus strengthened it became an admirable vehicle, perhaps the most admirable yet evolved, for the expression of thought; and thought the people had in abundance, together with keen observation (they were, to use a technicality now in fashion, predominantly extroverts), a critical faculty which developed early, a keen sense of the beautiful in all forms, and a wholesome love of a good story, well told.

Since not all the Achaians settled in the same district, and both Greece and, to a less extent, the coast of Asia Minor abounds in natural barriers, the new-comers necessarily broke up into small and scattered groups. Being thus deprived of close intercourse with each other, their language naturally divided in time into a number of dialects.[8] Many of these remained mere local patois; others never produced any literature; but four evolved into standardized literary forms, and are recognized by the ancient grammarians. They are

1. DORIC, the speech of the latest comers into Greece. This, while very far from being identical with primitive Greek, retained certain rather old-fashioned features, the most obvious and notable being the preservation of the long *a*-sound in words which had originally had it. Thus, the word for 'mother', pronounced and written *μήτηρ* in Ionic and Attic, remained in Dorian mouths *μάτηρ*, as in Latin. Of the phonetic changes to which this dialect like all others was subject, one especially persisted till a late date in the variety of Doric spoken at Sparta, when most forms of Greek had ceased to be affected by it. The sound of *s*, when it occurred singly between two vowels, had anciently a very strong tendency to be dropped. Thus a whole series of nouns whose stems ended in *σ* lost that letter when the ending began with a vowel; for example, the dative case of the common word signifying a clan was originally *γένεσι*, but by the operation of this law it became *γένεϊ* and then *γένει*. In time, this dislike of a single *s* between vowels passed away, but persisted in Sparta, which thus pronounced the common and familiar name

[7] The inflections will be found in the various works on grammar, as Kühner-Blass, Gildersleeve, &c.: they cannot be discussed here, though occasional mention of them may be necessary.

[8] For a full and scientific account of the dialects and their peculiarities, see the various modern works on the subject. There is also a long discussion of them in the appropriate sections of Kühner-Blass, vol. i.

of the Muse *Μῶ̔α* (*mō-ha*), when the rest of Greece said *Μοῦσα* or *Μοῖσα*.

2. AIOLIC, again a dialect with certain features of great antiquity. Like Doric, it preserved the original long *a*; but more tenaciously than Doric it clung to the sound represented by Eng. *w*, in Greek written *ϝ* and called *wau* or, in later times and by most moderns, *digamma*. Aiolic had also a peculiar habit of shifting the accent nearer the beginning of the word than was the custom in other dialects; and it resisted one phonetic change, the passing of *p* into *t* in certain combinations, saying for example *πίσυρες* for 'four' when the usual word was *τέσσαρες*, *πήλυι* instead of *τηλόθι* for 'at a distance'.

3. IONIC, with which it is usual, though not strictly scientific, to class the so-called Epic or Homeric dialect. This also had at least one somewhat old-fashioned feature, in that it often did not contract its words; *i.e.*, if two vowels came together, it was more apt than most forms of Greek to pronounce them as two distinct syllables, instead of running them together into a diphthong. Thus the common word for 'sheep', which in Athens was a monosyllable, *οἷς*, was a dissyllable in Ionic, *ὄϊς*. This dialect lost its digamma quite early, and consistently made its long *a* into a broad *e* (*η*).

4. ATTIC, the dialect of the territory of Athens. This became by far the most famous and important of all, and in a somewhat debased form, known as the Common Dialect or *κοινή*, it was the ordinary speech of most civilized men for some centuries after Athens had ceased to be of political importance or even a great cultural centre. To this result the large and admirable Attic literature contributed greatly. It was apparently a development of Ionic, affected also by other forms of Greek; in its vocalization it carried out the change of long *a* to *e* much less consistently, and certain combinations of vowels were invariably contracted.

But all the invaders seem to have had, even at the moment of their entry into the territories they were to occupy, rudiments of what, in some cases, was to become a great literature, the only European literature that is wholly native and original, for a long time the only one existing on this continent, and in a sense the parent of all the rest.

One of these was no doubt the possession of certain folktales, or *märchen*,[9] or at all events the themes of such. We are, it is true, in the dark as to many things concerning these tales, widespread in later ages and reported from many areas of the world;

[9] See Rose, *Myth.*, Chapter X; W. R. Halliday, *Indo-European Folk-Tales and Greek Legend* (Cambridge, 1933).

but sufficient traces of them remain in the literature of Greece to make it almost certain that they were never entirely absent. That more were borrowed from the native population is highly likely, although we cannot prove it.

We can say with rather more definiteness that the invaders had a kind of metre in which to express their thoughts when, as commonly happens in the unwritten beginnings of a literature, these took poetical form. The fact on which this statement is based is the resemblance which has been noted between Greek and Indian metres,[10] suggesting that the rudiments of them at all events are a common inheritance from the so-called pre-ethnic period, prior to that series of emigrations which spread the original Wiro tongue from its primitive centre, wherever that may have been, to the regions where its various descendants appear in historical times.

In Sanskrit and Prakrit are to be found several types of verse, whereof some have a fixed number of syllables, the quantity of which is subject to no very constant law, although a tendency is seen to have long syllables in some places, short in others; some again have a fixed number of times, *i.e.*, are equivalent in all cases to a certain given number of short syllables, but make up this number by sundry combinations of long and short, often very like the 'feet' which later metricians recognize in Greek poetry. Corresponding roughly to these phenomena, we have in Greek certain lyric lines not all of whose syllables are of a determinate quantity, especially those at the beginning of the verse, but the total number of syllables is constant; thus the verse known as the Glyconic has always eight syllables, but in Greek usage the first two may be of any quantity, while on the other hand the hexameter, Homer's metre, may vary in length from twelve to seventeen syllables, but has, with the rarest exceptions, a total value of twenty-four short syllables, one long counting as equal to two shorts and the slight pause at the end of the line being allowed to make up for any lack of length the final syllable may have.

Be that as it may, the Greeks had developed, in the earliest days of which we can find any record, a system of metre depending entirely upon the quantity of syllables; that is, upon the difference between a syllable containing a long (slightly drawled) vowel, or a diphthong, and those whose vowels were short, *i.e.*, somewhat clipped in pronunciation. Syllables which contained a short vowel, but had more than one consonant intervening between it and the next vowel, were regarded as long, save in certain well-defined cases.[11] The rhythm depended wholly

[10] See Meillet, *Origines*; Leumann.

[11] Abundant details will be found in Wil., *Verskunst*; White, *Verse* (contains bibliography of older works); short account in Hardie.

upon regular recurrences of these two elements; we have no proof that any syllable anywhere in the verse was ever stressed in reciting or singing, and indeed the only accentuation we can prove classical Greek to have had under any circumstances (that conventionally marked by the signs ´, ` and ^ over certain vowels in our texts, which follow on the whole the usage of ancient grammarians in this matter [12]) was a difference in the pitch of the voice, not in the intensity with which the sound was pronounced. In any case, it was totally disregarded in metre throughout the classical epoch.

What beginnings of literature the Helladics possessed, or if they had any, we cannot now tell; but it is fairly certain [13] that the Mycenaean civilization, which as already (p. 1) mentioned resulted from a mixture of the immigrants with the natives and the influence of Cretan civilization upon both, produced several great cycles of saga and had more than a little to do with the formation of myths.[14] The most noteworthy of the hero-tales current from Homer down are concerned with the exploits of kings and nobles living on Mycenaean sites, and the gods, to whatever stratum of the population they may have belonged originally, are organized in a community of their own very like what we may suppose the entourage of a Mycenaean lord to have been.

And now another factor of very great importance for the development and survival of Greek literature must be mentioned. At their first coming into Greece and Asia Minor, the Achaioi were doubtless illiterate; but they entered an area in which writing of one sort or other had long been known. We have still extant actual documents (not copies) written in Egypt, Babylonia (from which the Hittites adopted a system of writing) and Crete not later than 2000 B.C. and in some cases earlier. These are all apparently (the Cretan script awaits deciphering) ideographic, like the present Chinese system; that is, their characters for the most part represent words, not letters nor syllables.[15] Hence from the moment of their arrival, or not long after, the Achaioi might have written what they thought worth preserving, for Cretan script at least was known, though it would seem not very much used, on the mainland of Greece in Mycenaean times; how

[12] Accentuation is well discussed in Postgate, *Guide* (contains short bibliography).

[13] See M. P. Nilsson, *Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*, Berkeley, California, Univ. of Cal. Press, 1932.

[14] For definitions of these terms, see Rose, *Myth.*, Chapter I.

[15] Brief account in Kenyon, *Books*, pp. 4–16. See p. 422.

much Greek poets used it, or if they used it at all, we cannot say. Much more important was the adoption, with successive modifications, of that North Semitic alphabet which the Greeks called the Phoenician letters.[16] This, save for some differences in the shape of the characters, was the same as the Hebrew alphabet, *i.e.*, it consisted of a series of symbols each representing a consonant. With characteristic felicity[17] the Greeks made the improvement that was needed to express perfectly a language like their own. They used as signs for the vowels certain characters which represented Semitic sounds not existing in Greek, supplemented these with newly invented characters, or perhaps adoptions from other sources, and so in time produced, with various local modifications,[18] the alphabet known to us, the parent of the Roman and hence of our own.

Once this was done (and a practicable system of Greek writing certainly existed as early as the eighth century B.C., very likely a good deal earlier), the Greeks had ready to hand a method of preserving their literature which they never lost through all the vicissitudes of their history. Besides permanent records in the shape of inscriptions on stone, metal, &c., obviously not well adapted to literary purposes, they seem to have used prepared leather,[19] a less efficient form of the later parchment, which is also a Greek invention. No doubt use was also made from early times of the material which Homer names in his one mention of writing, a ' close-folded tablet ' presumably of wood, perhaps overlaid with wax, as in classical times.[20] But for longer documents, to be conveniently read, they adopted the book-roll, made of Egyptian papyrus-paper when it could be had. This was simply a long strip of papyrus, made by gumming together a number of smaller pieces. On one side of this was written the work it was desired to preserve, in a series of columns, running down the width of the roll. The reader held the roll in his hands, unwound a part from the beginning, read what was written on it, and then unwound more, winding up what he had already read.

[16] *γράμματα Φοινικήια*, Herodotos, v, 58, 2. For details, see Roberts-Gardner, i, p. 4 *sqq.*; Kühner-Blass, i, 39 *sqq.*

[17] ' Whatever ' says the author of the *Epinomis*, 987 e, ' the Greeks borrow from the barbarians they improve upon in the end.'

[18] One of the most noteworthy was that the Western Greeks, including the settlers in Italy, used X as the Romans did and we do; the Ionians used X for the sound *kh*, representing that of our *x* by Ξ.

[19] Herod., *l.c.*, 3, says that *διφθέραι* (' hides ') was an old Ionic word for ' papyrus rolls ', ' because once they used hides of goats and sheep for lack of papyrus.'

[20] *σήματα λυγρά, γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῷ*, Il., vi, 168–9.

Often a round stick, like a ruler, was gummed to one end of the roll to facilitate this. In the earliest rolls, we may conjecture, he would start at the right-hand end of the volume (*uolumen*, 'thing that is rolled', the Latin term for it; the Greeks usually said *βύβλος*, which is simply another name for the papyrus plant itself, *βυβλίον*, or less correctly *βίβλος*, *βιβλίον*), for the earliest script ran from right to left, after the Semitic fashion; but we have no rolls so early as this, and all our specimens are to be read from the left-hand end. The amount of text must be but moderate, or the roll would be unwieldy; hence the conventional division into 'books', *i.e.*, rolls, of epic poems, histories, romances and so forth. Hence also the amount of space needed for a library in antiquity was much greater than for one of the same size to-day; thus, the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, printed in Greek type of ordinary size and on a page somewhat smaller than this, is about half an inch thick in the Oxford edition; in antiquity, written in a small and neat hand, it would still require seven rolls, each containing about a dozen yards of papyrus some eight or nine inches wide.[21]

The unhandiness of the Greek book was the less felt because classical Greek students used their eyes much less, their ears and their memories far more than moderns do. The normal way to become acquainted with a new work, at least up to the fifth century or even the fourth, was to listen to it when read or sung, by the author or someone else. We need hardly doubt that professional reciters, to say nothing of authors, possessed copies of such works as the Iliad, or at least parts of it, from quite early times, to consult when their memories failed them or they wished to increase their répertoire. School-boys, much of whose education consisted in memorizing poems, must have had copies of some sort available to learn them from; at least the master must have one himself. Pindar, in an ode written about 472 B.C., urges its recipient not to 'hush the tale of his father's virtue nor silence these hymns of mine'.[22] It is absurd to suppose this to mean 'do not refrain from letting this ode be performed', since a performance was the avowed reason for writing it at all; it must surely imply 'do not refrain from letting copies of it be circulated'. Yet for one such hint at publication, and a few mentions, much later in the century, of people owning and habitually reading books,[23] we have many which assume that the

[21] See Kenyon, *Books*, Chapter II; more details will be found in the various manuals and encyclopaedias of antiquities.

[22] Pindar, *Isthm.*, ii, 45 (Farnell's trans.).

[23] As Eurip., *Hipp.*, 954; Ar., *Frogs*, 1400