

space in which the reader is invited to reflect on various questions, from who we are, to how we are to act, to how different spheres of life – the political, the personal, the literary – interrelate. While this main thread of the book comes to a close at the end of Chapter Four, there is also a four-page epilogue which gives a brief sketch of the reception of Horace. The brevity of this history is perhaps explained by Miller's assertion that 'there is no single poet since the ancient world who has captured Horace's unique combination of the pursuit of formal perfection, metrical versatility and a sustained commitment to Socratic inquiry and the care of the self, though many have captured one aspect or another' (p. 183): his focus throughout the work on the idea of Socratic irony means that Horace's successors, who do not generally take up this aspect of his poetry, do not relate much to the central idea around which the book is organised.

One of the delights of this book is the time and attention given to close reading of the poetry. It is through careful reading of the poems that Miller's view of Horace the ironist emerges, but in the course of his analysis many other points relating to genre, theme, literary tradition, and historical context are necessarily introduced and elaborated on, allowing the reader who is new to Horace to gain a sense of the important questions and contexts in Horatian scholarship, and allowing all readers to consider how these points bear on the interpretation of individual poems and Horace's poetry as a whole. For example, in the course of identifying the irreconcilable contradictions and ambiguous nature of *Ode* 1.9 (pp. 88–100) and the structural elements which create the possibility of this ambiguity and irony, Miller also naturally addresses the relationship between Horace's lyric poetry and the Greek tradition. He finds in the phrase *Sabina diota* a metaphor for Horace's poetry: 'old wine (Greek poetry) poured into new Sabine/Italic bottles, or perhaps new wine (Latin poetry) poured into old bottles (Greek lyric metres)' (p. 95). The close reading is also what makes the book a good, if challenging, introduction. Sixth form students in particular might find the discussions of poems provide an insight into what might be taken into consideration when reading Horace's poetry: the flow and structure of the poem; the historical and intellectual context; and attention to verbal detail.

It will be clear from what has been said that Miller does not compromise on the importance of Horace's careful, deliberate choice and placement of words. This is, he argues, poetry which is written rather than oral, having in mind an audience who will read and reread these works attentively, and the verbal structure of these works creates the possibility of the ambiguities which are so fundamental. This means that detailed examination of the Latin text is required. The book is made accessible to a wider audience by the consistent use of translation alongside the original Latin; furthermore, it is written in such a way that a reader who is reading Horace in English can follow details of the arguments about the Latin text, though a handful of more technical explanations of grammar (the discussion of *seria ludo* on p. 35, for example), while helpful to learners of Latin, may be somewhat confusing to those reading only in translation. On the other hand, those who read Horace's poetry in Latin may find it slightly frustrating that a few quotations whose language is not examined in detail are given only in translation. However, these minor points detract little from this volume, which contains much to be recommended to both new and old readers of Horace.

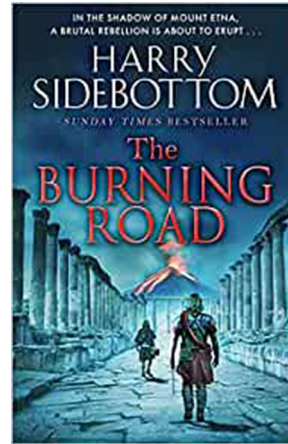
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The Burning Road

Sidebottom (H.) Pp. 344, maps. London: Zaffre, 2021. Cased, £12.70. ISBN: 978-1-78576-967-2.

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“... a free man ... would often think that an Athenian was a slave ... for, so far as clothing and general appearance are concerned, the common people here are no better than the slaves ...”²¹ So said the Old Oligarch about 5th century BC Athens, but the reality of being a slave was not that they were indistinguishable from freemen out and about in the city or countryside. Slaves, for the most part, had no agency and no control over what they wore, ate or did and there were very many of them. One of the reasons the Spartans did not feel

comfortable campaigning away from Sparta for extended periods of time was because of the threat from the Helots, the subjugated population of Laconia and Messenia. Slaves might have been useful and responsible for allowing the wealthier classes to pursue activities such as warfare (Sparta) or rhetoric and philosophy (Athens), and we can wonder whether empires such as that of Rome might have been rather different with a non-slave society. In short, slaves were everywhere and the people of an ancient society depended on them for the smooth running of their lives. In *The Burning Road*, Harry Sidebottom tackles the fear of these numerous subjugated people rising up and fighting for freedom, and in *Historia Magazine*, in November 2021, he explained the background to this gripping novel. There were three major slave revolts in the ancient world, two in Sicily in the second century BC and, what is perhaps the most famous of all, Spartacus' revolt in 73–71BC. Sidebottom suggests that the Roman response to Spartacus' revolt was so complete that slaves were wary of reprising the event, but *The Burning Road* is set in Sicily in AD 265 during the reign of the emperor Gallienus, long after this, and the premise is that after the battle of Milan in AD 260, many of the defeated Alamanni tribesmen could have been relocated to Sicily as shepherds. If this were the case then there would be a large groundswell of discontent towards their Roman masters and with the emergence of a charismatic leader (Soter in the novel), the circumstances were right for revolt. Sidebottom knows his history and the detail in this novel is phenomenal. We have clear pictures of seafaring, villa life, the perils of a shepherding life and most of all the dangers of travel in the Roman world. Sicily is a beautiful island, and the people are immensely welcoming, but even now there are moments in the central parts of the island that make you look over your shoulder at the approach of a stranger, and Sidebottom captures these moments in detail. The characters are well drawn – Ballista is a well-known character for those who are familiar with the 'Warrior of Rome' series – but the slaves, townsfolk and shepherds who are met

along the way are rounded and believable and there is a wealth of detail about their lives and hopes. The maps at the beginning of the novel are helpful in tracing the route taken and descriptions of the towns and cities are detailed and clear. This is important in the later parts of the novel – spoilers! This is an accessible novel for people of all levels of knowledge of the ancient world, but teachers might want to keep it for the slightly older age-groups as there are a couple of scenes of a sexual nature and some fairly gory deaths. That aside, I would recommend it as background reading as Sidebottom's evident scholarship and ability to write a gripping story shine through.

Note

1 The Old Oligarch, Pseudo-Xenophon's *Constitution of Athens* LACTOR 2

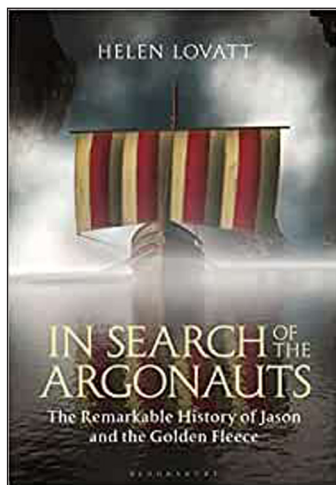
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In Search of the Argonauts. The Remarkable History of Jason and the Golden Fleece

Lovatt (H.) Pp. xvi + 255, ills. London: Bloomsbury Academic 2021. Paper, £22.99.
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The Trojan War stories are very familiar to most of us, but the adventures of Jason perhaps less so, and they deserve to be better known as they include an extensive range of topic and theme particularly relevant to today's questioning society. Lovatt traces the development of the story through 'eight landmark versions' (p. 9), but covers many others, and includes the expected Classical authors, tragedy and epic, modern European authors, children's literature, opera and art (the

book is well illustrated). There are full notes and a list of versions/texts (xi–xv). Lovatt has a clear focus, and the detailed discussion is evidence of her extensive research.

Lovatt discusses (chapter 2, Femininity and Sexuality) such figures as Atalanta, a disturbing female presence among the male Argonauts, Hylas (was Heracles' love erotic or parental?), and Medea, by far the best known and written about of the characters. From where did she derive her power? Was she a strong woman or just a witch, a saviour or a traitor, an object of desire or fear, of sympathy or hatred? Successive authors seem almost to compete in their presentation of this powerful figure. How do we view the all-female society of Lemnos, as a society turned inside out, a

threat in a male-dominated society or a glance back to some golden age of a matriarchal society, as survivors or murderers? The answers may depend on the perspective or gender of the reader.

Chapter 3, Masculinity and Leadership, asks what makes a hero – special powers or skills, parentage or outstanding virtue. Can a woman be a hero, what makes an ordinary person (like us) a hero, does divine help or a magic power detract from one's heroism? What makes a good leader? Is Jason a good leader if he is reactive rather than proactive? How do you treat your team; do you bond or seek to control? How do you cope with a rival leader like Heracles (leave him behind), and what do you do when he is gone? What makes a villain, savagery or merely difference, and how can a villain be a worthy opponent? What is the relative value of brain vs brawn? Should you treat an enemy, like Amycus, with mercy or just kill him? Again, these questions are ones we ask today.

Chapter 4, Entertainment and the Marvellous, covers the role of the gods, incongruous figures in the 21st century except perhaps in children's literature. They have been viewed as both 'psychological allegory' (p. 108, cf Virgil *Aeneid* 9.185) or as explanations of natural phenomena. Are the human characters players or pawns in the game of life? Monsters like Talos, who can be seen as extremes or distortions of humanity, can evoke both fear and sympathy.

How do we treat others, strangers and foreigners, in general? Do they attract or repel us? Do we judge them or try to learn from them, impose our own ways on them in the name of 'civilisation', or simply destroy them? Our generation is not the first to debate these issues. Should we attempt to rationalise the tension between the geographical Mediterranean setting and the presence of exotic marvels, mythical beings, barbaric foreigners? (Chapter 5, Ethnicity and Otherness)

A hero's adventures (Chapter 6, Heroism and Betrayal) may include a journey, a quest, heroic feats (fighting a dragon), a (distracting) woman, near-death situations, success and failure, a time for self-development, a 'coming of age', moral choices. Is the cost of glory worth it? Is it more reprehensible to kill a child or an adult (Absyrtus)? Is it easier to identify with a hero like Jason who is flawed?

Chapter 7, Quest and Fleece, examines interpretations of 'myth'. 'Myth is by definition multiple' (p. 202), and is constantly being reshaped. Each new retelling uses, adapts or ignores its predecessors to suit its context, its audience's perspective or its author's agenda. There is no canonical Argonautica; Apollonius is a starting point, not definitive (p. 5). Valerius Flaccus' Roman *Argonautica*, for instance, views the story from a first century imperial perspective with a cosmic dimension. Few versions apart from his include Hercules' rescue of Hesione. How 'true' is any myth, a question discussed by Diodorus Siculus (4.44.4–6 see p. 91) which continues to exercise Christian theologians today.

Chapter 8, Findings and Endings, sums up and looks to the future. Lovatt's detailed discussion has shown how a familiar myth can be adapted to suit its context and how each generation can add new meanings and perspectives to the narrative. The voyage of the Argonauts includes all the aspects of a good story: entertainment, a gripping plot, timeless appeal, the starting point for discussion, and elements of the exotic and fantastic, but it is more than this. Many questions are raised and explored in their context, but the final answers are left to us the readers to reflect on and judge. Lovatt's approach has particular relevance today with our interest in the power and role of women, in diversity, race and