

philosophical writings, yet in light of their prominence in the oeuvre, perhaps what we should have been looking for is evidence that the work is positively disconnected from the world of Socrates. By way of an answer to the question ‘What is it?’, I suggested *Anabasis* is primarily a ‘Socratic history’, with the philosopher’s values perpetuated through the character of his student on the long retreat homeward of the Greeks who went upcountry with Cyrus the Younger (246).

Brennan’s major contribution to the ongoing assessment both of Xenophon himself and of his oeuvre is to have shown the various ways in which the influence of Socratic education on Xenophon is tangible throughout the *Anabasis*. He concedes that his position nevertheless, and naturally enough, is open for further discussion: ‘[t]he interpretation offered here is incomplete, and another reader might take up one or more of its loose strands, or upend the whole by presenting a case for something entirely different’ (256). All the same, I find his a challenging and very worthwhile voice in the ongoing discussion of this sometimes elusive work (notably as regards Xenophon’s intended audience, in Chapter 2) and Brennan has well served this constantly fascinating author.

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BROCKLISS (W.) **Homeric Imagery and the Natural Environment** (Hellenic Studies Series, 82). Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. Pp. 294. \$28.50. 9780674987357. doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000265](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000265)

In what some still call ‘the West’, the world splits into phenomenological categories such as ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, separating humans and what we make from the planet that created us. To say that this conceptual break is necessarily a feature of modern identity is an understatement. Yet merely asserting so is insufficient now, nearly 20 years after Bruno Latour argued for collapsing our dichotomies in *Politics of Nature* (Cambridge MA 2004) and almost two generations since (western) literary critics started to take ecology seriously as a theoretical impetus in their work.

Despite Clara Bosak-Schroeder’s ecological focus in *Other Natures: Environmental Encounters with Ancient Greek Ethnography* (Oakland 2020) and the 2016 collection edited by Christopher Schliephake, *Ecocriticism, Ecology and the Cultures of Antiquity* (Lanham 2017), classical studies writ large has been rather slow to respond to the ecocritical movement. The story of Homeric scholarship of the past century is largely one of humans *qua* culture: language, history, psychology, arts, religion, etc. (See, of course, recent exceptions such as Alex Purves’ *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative* (Cambridge 2010) and Christos Tsagalis’ *From Listeners to Viewers* (Cambridge MA 2012).)

William Brockliss’ *Homeric Imagery and the Natural Environment* does some of the foundational work needed to address this absence. On the surface, Brockliss’ work does not conform to what an outsider might imagine a work of ecocriticism to be, but his efforts to understand how Greek poets (and hopefully audiences) conceptualized the natural world shows how much corrective work modern readers have to do to break down the wall we have built between ourselves and the *rest* of the natural world.

Brockliss is a fine Homerist who takes literary theory seriously, as evidenced by his work on disability study, new materialism and, more directly, on ecocriticism and Hesiod. This book is less directly engaged with eco-theoretical frames, but instead provides a bridge between traditional philology, metaphor theory and the urgency of the natural

world. The introduction provides a brief description of what ‘Homer’ means to Brockliss followed by a discussion of Homeric metaphor. Brockliss’ treatment of metaphor is concise and effective, especially in emphasizing that differences in metaphor and imagery in ancient Greek poetry speak to differences in genre and ‘contrasting engagements with the Greek natural environment’ rather than distinctions between individual authors.

In the first part of the book (‘Flowers and erotic bodies’), Brockliss looks at differences in the use of floral imagery for eroticism between epic and lyric poetry. This analysis situates the Homeric poems in a cosmic cycle of life and death and centres lyric interests in observing and cherishing beauty. The explanation is attractive, but may not leave enough room to play within (and against) the genres. If some of the conclusions seem anti-climactic, this is due to Brockliss building up a careful argument in discrete steps before demonstrating how these patterns are used to develop tension and meaning from a lexical level (for example, through the Greek adjective *poikilon*, ‘variegated’) to the level of scene and theme, as in Brockliss’ discussion of the Iliadic deception of Zeus.

In ‘Cosmic and civic order’, Brockliss moves to images for the universe and human society, charting an internal metaphorical contrast between the temporary growth of flowers/flowering plants and the more sustained, stable life of forests. As in the first part, Brockliss finds a generic contrast in the use of floral and arboreal images, identifying a wider range of images for order in Hesiodic poetry than in Homeric poetry. I find the argument compelling, but wonder whether content and theme guides the distinction rather than genre (unless we simply make those categories constitutive of generic difference between ‘Hesiod’ and ‘Homer’). Especially insightful in this section are Brockliss’ comments on trees as markers of civilized spaces in the *Odyssey* in Chapter 5. Chapter 6’s addition of Theophrastus’ analysis of spontaneous and non-spontaneous growth is curious at first, but it certainly helps to demonstrate how pervasive the metaphorical system is.

The book’s third part, ‘Youth and death’, builds on these studies to examine floral imagery of death, exploring whether differences in metaphor align with arguments about a shift in attitudes about death in the Archaic period, from seeing death as part of life to positioning it as an evil to be feared. Again, generic distinctions abound with lyric, elegiac and epic expressions striking different tones. Brockliss’ closing argument that the Homeric poems are more pessimistic should be a surprise to no one, although his in-depth analysis and examples help to illustrate how generic or thematic differences shape metaphor choice throughout archaic Greek poetry. The closing chapter brings together images of order and disorder, attempting to present a more synoptic view of how Homeric poetry uses vegetal metaphor to reflect on, and perhaps lament, death.

In the conclusion, Brockliss summarizes and then focuses on the ‘pessimism’ of the Homeric use of natural imagery. By emphasizing ‘darker notions, such as sudden disappearance, unruly growths, and monstrous profusion’ (426), Homeric epic may effectively elevate life and peace over violence and death. Herein, we find an ecocritical analysis of Homer that speaks to the mortal condition and our own modern willingness to take the world with us to our doom.

It is difficult to do justice to the range of insights and close readings Brockliss offers in this book. Anyone interested in ecological images and archaic metaphors for life and death will find this book an invaluable resource. The presentation leaves a lot of room for considering how different performers received and manipulated their poetic traditions. The one criticism I have is that intergeneric relations and play are somewhat undertheorized by comparison to topics like ‘the gaze’. Brockliss has perhaps made the wise choice in restraint, since, as it stands this is a book brimming with ideas and nearly overfull at moments. I look forward to what the author and readers will make of this work in the future.

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