

COIN-LONGERAY (S.) **Poésie de la richesse et de la pauvreté: étude du vocabulaire de la richesse et de la pauvreté dans la poésie grecque antique, d'Homère à Aristophane: ἄφενος, ὄλβος, πλοῦτος, πενία, πτωχός** (Mémoires du Centre Jean Palerne 38). Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2014. Pp. 241. €27. 9782862726632.

As the author explains in the introduction to this book (7–12), despite a number of works that deal with the topic of wealth and poverty in recent years, no systematic analysis of the terminology referring to these concepts has been done so far. Following the method of Bruno Snell (*Die Entdeckung des Geistes*, Göttingen 1975) and Émile Benveniste ('Problèmes sémantiques de la reconstruction', reprinted in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Paris 1966), Coin-Longeray investigates the key words referring to wealth and poverty in Greek poetry from Homer to Aristophanes. These are *aphenos*, *olbos* and *ploutos* (for the semantic field of wealth) and *penia* and *ptochos* (for that of poverty).

The analysis follows a similar path in each chapter, with sections devoted, respectively, to the etymology of each term, its derivatives and compounds and its occurrences (conveniently summed up in tables). For each word the author provides a discussion of the social, political and moral meanings associated with it. So *aphenos* refers to wealth as a sign of social prestige and virtue, and it is often used to describe the status of epic heroes (21–42). Similarly, *olbos* also indicates prestige and social status, but as the author argues, based mainly on passages from Classical tragedies, it is more narrowly linked to the idea of power (68–74). Both words refer to wealth that is well-seen, and often even granted, by the gods. By contrast, *ploutos* shows material richness and it is often charged with negative moral meanings, as is apparent by some of its compounds, such as *neoploutos*, 'the new-rich' (93–143).

The exploration of the vocabulary of poverty occupies a smaller part of the book (145–201) and focuses on the terms *penia* and *ptochos*, between which the author sees a clear difference. *Penia* evokes ideas of misery, isolation and dishonour, but is also associated with positive values linked to the activity of work. By contrast, the figure of the *ptochos* is characterized by the act of begging and by a life as a vagabond, and the word presents mostly negative and comic connotations, which

occur as early as the *Odyssey* (see the portrayal of Iros in book 18) down to fourth-century comedy.

Coin-Longeray quotes an impressive number of sources, for the majority of which she provides her own translations. When she quotes authored translations she gives account of her reasons for choosing one them (see 115 for a discussion of different translations of Aesch. *Ag.* 381–84). Regrettably, less attention is devoted to 'historical questions', despite the declaration in the introduction of the intention to explain changes in the meanings of some words in the light of political and economic developments (11). For example, the author writes of a 'confusion' between *olbos* and *ploutos* in Euripides (140–43); although the two terms traditionally refer to two clearly distinct forms of wealth in the epics and Archaic lyric, Euripides uses them as synonyms (so the adjective *olbios* occurs instead of *plousios* in Eur. fr. 326). The author ascribes this fact to the socio-economic changes which affected Greek society in the Classical period. Since now wealth could be acquired rather than just inherited, the traditional bond between wealth and nobility was broken (142). This caused the weakening of the distinction between 'aristocratic wealth' (*olbos*) and 'acquired wealth' (*ploutos*), and it is the reason for Euripides intentionally overlooking this traditional distinction. This is an important claim and one would expect the author to offer further evidence. But in the same sub-chapter she admits that this 'confusion' of the two terms by Euripides is attested mainly in his fragments and that these may not even be genuine but date in a later period (143). The reader will be confused here and regret that the author does not devote greater attention to this question.

In the analysis of the vocabulary of poverty the author rightly notes that *penia* entails also positive connotations and that these occur in literary texts from the Archaic to the Classical period (173–76). However, since she bases her claim on passages of Theognis, Euripides and Aristophanes, the reader would expect the author to raise the question of the changed historical context and the different audiences that these works addressed. The praise of *penia* contained in Aristophanes' *Plutus* 557–61, for example, must be read in the context of the economic crisis in which Athens was immersed in the early 380s during the Corinthian War. It expresses a different perception of *penia* than Theognis 393–94.

A deeper enquiry into historical aspects could have complemented well the semantic analysis,

but this does not affect the quality of this work, which remains a good tool for future research on the topic of wealth and poverty in the Classical Greek world. The book will prove to be particularly useful to those interested in learning about the different nuances of specific terms. The organization of its contents into sub-chapters, the order of which is identical in each chapter, makes this work well suited to practical consultation.

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