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## Paragraphoi

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This section publishes short essays exploring topics of interest to the profession. Submissions should run to no more than 1200 words. Diverse opinions and spirited exchanges are welcome. Contributions will be evaluated by the editor, who reserves the right to return those deemed unsuitable for the format.

### Retrospective

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In his eloquent valedictory, Sander Goldberg, the outgoing editor of *TAPA*, last year anticipated the pleasures in store for his successor “as she too observes our profession at work in all its diversity.” Reflecting upon my maiden year of editorship, I can indeed total up a great many pleasures, far more than enough to offset the few brief headaches. Gaining fresh insights into classical antiquity was, without a doubt, the greatest source of gratification—although, as it turned out, discovery was often preceded by the shock of unlearning a standard truth instilled in graduate school. Loss of earlier certainty then created room for a rush of illumination. The energy generated by that ongoing process of reconsideration and revision informs this entire volume.

For example, as a general classicist I had been sketchily aware of issues under discussion in the field of archaic Greek epic. On becoming editor, however, I was astonished to perceive the multitude and range of current challenges to supposedly settled “Homeric questions.” The three essays that lead off the present volume are all striking examples of the intellectual ferment in Homeric studies. Whatever its intent—attempting to refine and qualify an established analogy between Homeric and South Slavic literary languages, to suggest that orality and literacy, far from being mutually exclusive factors, can simultaneously shape processes of literary production, performance and transcription, or to revisit the belief that the *Cypria*, and by extension the entire Epic Cycle, was a late accretion to the core of a monumental *Iliad* and

*Odyssey*—each of these papers breaks with conventional wisdom and approaches the evidence from a provocative new perspective.

While Homeric studies is, and properly should be, the site of the most intense interrogation of received opinion, essays in this year's *TAPA* reflect dynamic rethinking of assumptions in other areas as well. Structuralist and feminist readings of maiden sacrifice in tragedy are reexamined from the vantage point of cultural studies; a highly influential interpretation of Aristophanes' *Wasps* undergoes a probing critique; the pursuit of small game is first shown to play a key part in the recreational life of the Roman elite and then metaphorically to underpin the first book of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. The tendency of Roman literary history to glide smoothly from Callimachus and his fellow Alexandrians to the neoterics, with passing glances at Plautus, Ennius, or Meleager, is interrupted by the recovery of enigmatic traces of a vanished narrative poem from late reminiscences, a disquieting reminder of how many significant Hellenistic predecessors have been lost. Finally, the axiomatic notion that Roman literature suffered from the imperial-era vogue for public declamation is called into pointed question: on tragedy, it is argued, the effect of that passion for rhetorical display was radically invigorating.

I hope that these and other conclusions advanced in *TAPA* 126 will spark off energetic comment in next year's **Paragraphoi**. Expressly designed as a forum for reflection and debate, this section invites thoughtful responses to the views of contributors. Lively exchanges of opinion will insure that *TAPA* remains at the cutting edge of a discipline increasingly conscious of the need to scrutinize many of its cherished presuppositions.