

## POETRY AND POETICS IN THE PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS

Of the Presocratic thinkers traditionally credited with the foundation of Greek philosophy, Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles are exceptional for writing in verse. This is the first book-length literary-critical study of their work. It locates the surviving fragments in their performative and wider cultural contexts, applying intertextual and intratextual analyses in order to reconstruct the significance and impact they conveyed for ancient audiences and readers. Building on insights from literary theory and the philosophy of literature, the book sheds new light on these authors' philosophical projects and enriches our appreciation of their works as literary artefacts. It also expands our knowledge of the genres in which they wrote, of the literary culture of the Western Greek world, and of the development of Greek poetics from the Archaic to the Classical periods, exposing the influence of these thinkers on more famous Sophistic and Platonic ideas about literature.

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POETRY AND POETICS IN  
THE PRESOCRATIC  
PHILOSOPHERS

*Reading Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles as  
Literature*

TOM MACKENZIE

*University College London*



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*For my mother and the memory of my father*

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## *Abbreviations*

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow those of *OCD*<sup>4</sup> or, in the case of Greek texts for which it does not provide abbreviations, *LSJ*. Abbreviations of journal titles in the bibliography follow those of *L'Année philologique*. In addition, the following abbreviations are used:

- |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>BNJ</i>   | I. Worthington (ed.) (2007–). <i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> . Leiden. Online at <a href="https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby">https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby</a> (accessed 18 September 2019).                                                       |
| <i>BNP</i>   | H. Cancik, H. Schneider, M. Landfester, C. F. Salazar and F. G. Gentry (eds.) (1996–). <i>Brill's New Pauly</i> . Leiden. Online at <a href="https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly">https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly</a> (accessed 18 September 2019). |
| <i>CEG</i>   | Hansen, P. A. (1983). <i>Carmina epigraphica graeca saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. N.</i> Berlin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <i>DK</i>    | H. Diels, and W. Kranz (1952). <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> . 6th ed. 3 vols. Zurich.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>FGE</i>   | D. L. Page (1982). <i>Further Greek Epigrams</i> . Cambridge.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>FGrH</i>  | F. Jacoby (ed.) (1923–). <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin/Leiden.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>KRS</i>   | G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield (1983). <i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i> . 2nd ed. Cambridge.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <i>L.-P.</i> | E. Lobel and D. L. Page (1963). <i>Poetarum Lesbiorum fragmenta</i> . Corr. ed. Oxford.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>Lfgre</i> | B. Snell et al. (eds.) (1955–2010). <i>Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos</i> . 4 vols. Göttingen.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>LM</i>    | A. Laks and G. W. Most (2016). <i>Early Greek Philosophy</i> . 9 vols. Cambridge, MA.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>LSJ</i>   | H. G. Liddell and R. Scott (1925–1940). <i>Greek–English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed., rev. H. Stuart Jones. Oxford.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

- M.-W. R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (1967). *Fragmenta Hesiodica*. Oxford.
- OCD<sup>4</sup> S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow (eds.). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 4th ed. Oxford.
- OF A. Bernabé (2004–2007) *Poetae epici graeci: Testimonia et fragmenta Pars II*. 3 vols. Munich, Leipzig and Berlin.
- PCG R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds.). *Poetae comici graeci*. 8 vols. (1983–2001).
- PMG D. L. Page (1962). *Poetae melici graeci*. Oxford.
- SH H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (1983). *Supplementum Hellenisticum*. Berlin.
- SVF H. von Arnim (ed.) (1903–1905). *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*. Stuttgart.
- W M. L. West (1989–1992). *Iambi et elegi graeci ante Alexandrum cantata*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. Oxford.

## *Note on Fragment Numbers*

I generally refer to fragments and *testimonia* of the Presocratics and Sophists using the numbering systems of both LM and DK, with the LM number placed first. ‘P’, ‘D’ and ‘R’ numbers are from LM, whereas ‘A’ and ‘B’ numbers are from DK. Occasionally, it has not been possible to include both, since some fragments and *testimonia* are only included in one or other edition. A further complication is that the two editions do not always divide the fragments in the same way: DK may include lines in a fragment that are considered spurious by LM, and, in some cases, two fragments that are kept separate in DK are joined together in LM (e.g. Parmenides B7 and B8 in DK are treated in LM as a single passage, D8). Where I only give the fragment numbers and a single line number, it can be assumed that the extent of the fragment – and therefore the line number – is the same in both editions. For instance, Xenophanes ‘D49=B34.4’ refers to line 4 of both D49 and B34, and the extent of the two fragments is identical. Where I give two separate line numbers, this is not the case. For instance, Parmenides D8.2=B7.2 refers to line 2 of D8, which is the same as line 2 of B7, but the two fragments are vastly different in extent, since D8 also includes the much longer B8.

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