

NOTICES

S. SHIRLEY (trans.), J. ROMM (ed.): *Herodotus: On the War for Greek Freedom. Selections from the Histories. With Introduction and Notes.* Pp. xxviii + 201, maps. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003. Paper, £5.95 (Cased, £24.95). ISBN: 0-87220-667-X (0-87220-668-8 hbk).

It is depressing that there is thought to be a market for this abridged Herodotus when excellent annotated translations of the whole work are available at little extra cost. £7.99 will buy you either the revised *Penguin* (John Marincola [Harmondsworth, 1996]) or the World's Classics version (Robin Waterfield, with introduction and notes by Carolyn Dewald [Oxford, 1998]). But, on the assumption that there is indeed a demand to be met, this compilation is nicely done. The introduction, though it starts badly with a slight mistranslation of 1.5.4, is lively and stimulating. In particular, Romm makes a very instructive comparison of Herodotus' technique as displayed in Book 1 (which, predictably, gets the lion's share of space in this volume) with the approach observable in some of the historical books of the *Old Testament*. R. is also responsible for the excellent narrative summaries linking the extracts, for some of the translation, and for annotation. If the notes seem somewhat basic, or even skimpy, it must be allowed that any translator of Herodotus has to struggle with the temptation to overload the text with explanatory material. Provision of maps is generous; however, the lack of any bibliography or suggestions for further reading is to be regretted.

A few points of translation: 1.141 (pp. 40–1): the musician in Cyrus' parable is a piper, not a flute-player (cf. 6.129.2, p. 117); 2.35.3 (p. 54): '[The Egyptians] go to the bathroom indoors' jars on British readers; 7.33 (p. 128): the manner of Artayctes' execution should be rendered in the same way here as at 9.120.4 (p. 187).

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I. MCAUSLAN, J. AFFLECK: *Sophocles: Oedipus Tyrannus. A New Translation and Commentary.* (Introduction to the Greek Theatre by P. E. Easterling.) Pp. viii + 120, map, ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Paper, £4.95/US\$9.95. ISBN: 0-521-01072-1.

Behind this series of Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama lies the basically sane and sensible idea of making available to the student reader a straightforward translation of a Greek tragedy with enough notes and background to explain why it is what it is. In this particular instance there have been several hands at work, which may account for an uneasy variety of tone. There are two series editors, one of whom, Judith Affleck, is credited with the commentary; the translation is by Ian McAuslan. There is also a brief Introduction to Greek Theatre from Pat Easterling, which comfortably negotiates the no man's land between controversy and dogmatism, marred only by a slightly populist approach to the audience as '... football crowds rather than typical theatre audiences in the modern world'. Still, that is an improvement on all those commentaries of yesteryear which used to equate the experience of Greek theatre with attending a mass in a medieval cathedral.

M.'s translation offers a literalness which is more elegant than such an approach might herald but can lead to some infelicities—'Are you so shameless as to start that line?' (Oedipus, 354), '... I hear that terrible words /Are spoken against me by king Oedipus./That's why I'm here. I can't bear it' (Creon, 513–15), 'What's that, old man? In the name of the gods, do tell me' (Oedipus, 1019). The prime virtue is to render the narrative clear and accurate, helped by a layout which centres the lyrics leaving the dialogue in free verse.

A.'s notes are another matter. Many of them are enlightening and wide-ranging, but others

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seem almost at odds with the translation. There is brief mention of the significance of the word *tyrannos*, but little about how it is manipulated within the play. The word '*tyrannos*', used directly or in cognate form, occurs at least a dozen times within the first two-thirds of the play but never subsequently. On four occasions M. translates it as 'ruler', five times as 'king', once 'royal power', once 'absolute power', and only once as 'tyrant' ('*Hubris* breeds the tyrant'). This may seem picky, but is actually important if you are considering dramatic 'irony', which A. seems to understand as simply identifying when the audience knows more than the characters.

She does point out that Jocasta realizes the truth before Oedipus but says hardly anything about the range of oracular pronouncements and the possible reasons for their discrepancy. She draws useful attention to a number of modern versions, but why discuss the Creon of Anouilh's *Antigone* and ignore the far more direct parallel in the same playwright's *Oedipe ou le roi boiteux*?

Elsewhere, A. pays an uneasy lip-service to performance issues, equating 'pace' with 'speed', and perpetuating the myth that an actor in a mask 'could communicate only one or two emotions'. Too many of the bullet-point questions with which the notes are peppered have that special crassness of a GCSE empathy exercise, inviting today's sixteen-year-olds to speculate on how they might have felt as soldiers in the trenches about to go over the top: 'Do you think Creon is quoting or paraphrasing [the oracle]?'; 'How far does Tiresias control his feelings in this scene?'; 'Has Jocasta always disbelieved in oracles?'; 'If this play ended differently with Apollo appearing *ex machina*, what might he say? How far would he accept responsibility?' These do not enhance the sense of the play as a play; in fact, they are downright unhelpful.

There is also one bizarre error over which a veil might be drawn were it not for the difficulty in understanding how it could ever have been suggested of *Oedipus at Colonus* that it took up the story 'after the events in this play [*Oedipus Tyrannus*] and those of *Antigone*'.

Numerous virtues apart, it is simply not clear what level this edition is aimed at. Many students of classics and of drama may be looking for some more challenging stimulus and at least more penetrating questions than being invited to speculate on why Oedipus asks for a sword when he has just found his wife/mother swinging at the end of a rope.

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S. RUDEN: *Aristophanes: Lysistrata. Translated, with Notes and Topical Commentaries*. Pp. x + 126. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003. Paper, US\$5.95 (Cased, US\$24.95). ISBN: 0-87220-603-3 (0-87220-604-1 hbk).

Sarah Ruden's *Lysistrata* does not purport to be a full-blown scholarly edition; rather, R. sees her work as a useful place for students to get into Greek Comedy. She insists on two principles: that the translation be funny, and the notes and accompanying material be basic and entertaining. It is relatively easy to confirm that her focus has not been on a full report of scholarly views. She has, for instance, stuck with an interpretation of the Scythian girl ('Skythaina') at 184 as a female Scythian archer offered by Jeff Henderson in his 1987 edition (the one R. says she mostly used). Henderson revised his view in his Loeb translation of 2000, no doubt because he was convinced by Sommerstein's excellent note on that line in his 1990 Warminster edition. The work, then, must be judged on R.'s own principles, rather than with nit-picking pedantry.

R.'s translation is, in contrast to other recent versions by Sommerstein (1973, 1990) and Henderson (2000), in verse. It does, however, share this feature with Halliwell's 1997 Oxford version. It is worth making a brief comparison between the latter and R., to illustrate what R. has made of the venture. At 137–9, after the women have rejected her plan to deprive the menfolk of their 'marital rights', Lysistrata famously condemns her sex for being obsessed with sex. Halliwell's translation of the lines is:

The female sex! Sheer lustfulness, that's us!
No wonder they write such tragedies about us!
Our lives are simply full of sex and intrigue.

R. writes:

O gender fit for boning up the butt!

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