

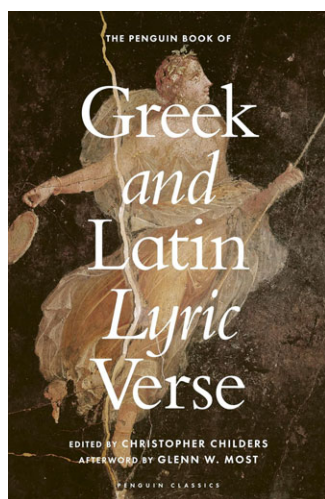
## Book Review

### The Penguin Book of Greek and Latin Lyric Verse

Childers (C.) (ed.) Pp. xviii + 956. London: Penguin Books, 2023. Cased, £45.00 ISBN: 978-0-241-56744-9

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*The Penguin Book of Greek and Latin Lyric Verse* is perhaps the most ambitious work that I have encountered. Christopher Childers, who is both the translator and the editor of this work, has taken on the Herculean task of translating all of the poems contained in this anthology along with extensive commentary. One might fear that having the same translator for works that span over 1000 years and different cultural and historical milieu might run the risk of homogeneity and a flattening of the diversity of these

works, yet Childers masterfully translates this broad collection of poems in a highly readable and highly enjoyable way. The remarkable artistry of Childers' translations is seen in the fact that these poems often read as if they were English poems. Translations of poems so often lose all of the essential aspects of the original

poem, yet Childers is able to masterfully bring the voice of these ancient lyrics to life for the contemporary reader. Childers' ability to turn ancient poems into modern poems is remarkable

The topic of defining and characterising the lyric form is masterfully discussed by Glenn W. Most in the Afterword. Most traces the origins of lyric to its musical connection with the lyre in Greco-Roman Antiquity. In his description, Most distinguishes for the modern reader the ancient Greco-Roman conception of lyric with that of our modern conception which has largely divorced lyric poetry from its essential connection to music. This intrinsic connection between lyric and musical performance has largely been lost or at least become interpreted in a more figurative way in modern poetry.

The breadth and diversity of this tome are notable. Both the Greek and Roman lyric traditions are treated together and the works span over 1000 years. The authors range across all different walks of life and their poems span from the mundane concerns of ordinary life to the lofty thoughts and musings of philosophers. Authors sing about the deepest aspects of the human condition – emotions, desires, and ambitions. Childers brings their unique voices to life for the modern reader in this monumental work.

As someone who is passionate about Greco-Roman Antiquity and about the languages of the Greco-Roman world, I wish that the original texts were also supplied along with the beautiful English translations. It would make this already large tome perhaps unbearably large, but it might be a valuable addition to see the original side by side with the translation.

In his preface, Childers says, "I hope, in short, that reading a poem in this volume might feel a little less like encountering a Greek statue or a Roman mosaic in a museum, and a little more like seeing it in the atrium of the villa it was made for, along a road of cobblestones precisely rutted by the wheels of untold trundling wagons". Thanks to his artistic translations, Childers enables as authentic an encounter as possible with these ancient lyric poems, enabling the modern reader to transcend the confines of time and space and to allow the ancient author to speak across the millennia.

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