

D. MULROY: *The Complete Poetry of Catullus*. Pp. xlv + 114. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. Paper. ISBN: 0-299-17774-2.

With the exception of Virgil, Catullus is probably the Roman poet most widely read by both students of classical studies/classical civilization and non-specialists; Mulroy's new translation is therefore a welcome addition to the several versions already available.

This nicely produced volume includes a thirty-page introduction and minimal explanatory notes (scarcely a 'commentary', as the title-page claims) on each poem. The translation itself reads well, and generally follows the Latin closely; M. does not attempt, however, to imitate the verbal structures of the original as closely as (for example) Guy Lee (Oxford, 1990). This makes for less stylized English than the sometimes mannered language of Lee's (otherwise excellent) version, and students will no doubt find M. more accessible. M. effectively conveys something of the excitement and (apparent) immediacy of Catullus' poetry. The studied, formal elegance so characteristic of the elegiacs, in particular, is perhaps harder to convey in translation, though M.'s intermittent use of rhyme works well as a counterpoint to his colloquial diction; the metrical schemes employed (explained in detail on pp. xxiv–ix of the introduction) are also more strictly adhered to than is often the case in modern translations. The opening of poem 16, for example, is neatly rendered: 'I'm going to rape you, front and back, / you queer and you nymphomaniac'; and the epigrammatic conciseness of poem 70 is nicely captured in M.'s version: 'My woman says that she would prefer none other / to me, though Jupiter sought her. / She says, but a woman's words to her lover belong / on wind and rapid water.' Occasionally, M. strays over the fine line that separates the colloquial from the prosaic ('I feel it occur' for *feri sentio* in 85.2, for instance, struck the reviewer as a false note); generally, however, the stylistic level is nicely pitched, and M. does not fight shy of obscene language where appropriate.

The introduction is, on the whole, less satisfactory. This reads very much as a historian's—rather than a literary scholar's—take on the context and character of Catullus' poetry. It may be none the worse for that, and it is certainly useful to have the invective poems located within the framework of contemporary factional politics; but M.'s speculative comments on what Catullus 'must' have felt about particular events verge at times on crude biographical criticism of the kind from which the author seeks to distance himself on p. xvi. M. makes an effective case (pp. xii–xvi) for the identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli, though his attempts to date specific poems (pp. xvi–xvii) rely, inevitably, on circular arguments; nor does he take sufficient account of recent work on the representation of Roman women, which might incline us (like, for example, Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women* [London, 2001], pp. 133–56) to attribute apparent similarities between Lesbia and Clodia to the exploitation by both Catullus and Cicero of a common stereotype, rather than identify the two women. This part of the introduction concludes (pp. xxv–vii) with some curiously romanticized conjectures about the poet's ultimate fate (M. implies that Julius Caesar may have had him assassinated): the romantic 'novel' of the young poet dying of love is replaced here by the equally romantic image of Catullus the fearless political activist. Still more naïve is the section (pp. xxvii–xxxii) dealing with 'Catullus' Sincerity': M. finds it 'difficult to resist thinking that [Catullus] really was smitten' (p. xxix), but does not seem to have stopped to ask himself why this should matter (or, indeed, how Catullus creates this effect of apparent sincerity).

M.'s translation is, in short, readable and often felicitous; colleagues employing this volume in their teaching, however, would be well advised to issue a health warning to students against uncritical reading of the introduction.

*Trinity College Dublin*

MONICA R. GALE

G. GIARDINA: *Contributi di critica testuale. Da Catullo alla Historia Augusta*. Pp. xi + 186. Rome: Herder Editrice, 2003. Paper. ISBN: 88-85876-79-X.

Giardina here reprints and indexes thirty-two sets of critical notes, of which thirty appeared from 1970 to 2000 in *Museum Criticum*, one in *Paideia* 52 (1997), and one in *Studi Gagliardi* (2001). Nine concern Petronius, whom he has edited with Rita Cuccioli Melloni (1995); six Propertius, whose second book he has edited (1977); four Catullus; three Horace; another three

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved