

all, fresh fish, where he essentially follows Davidson's analysis of the tensions excited by fluctuating prices); but what is at stake in these shifting discussions is not really made clear.

Wilkins is properly alive to issues of gender in comic treatments of consumption, but again some points perhaps elude him. On pp. 59–61, in an interesting discussion of passages on domestic feasting at or related to marriages (Men. *Samia* 287–8, fr. 186 and Euangelos fr. 1), he fails to distinguish segregated dining in the sense of women eating (if at all) quite separately from the men, from the wedding banquet where there may be separate tables at a shared feast for males and females (who may then presumably exchange in collective exchanges). He discusses on p. 375 Pherekrates fr. 70 ('no one ever saw a cookess, nor indeed a fish-wife—*ichthyopolaina*') as evidence for cooks, but the issue of why women might be selling bread or vegetables in the agora, but not fish, arguably to be related to the extra tensions and possibilities of violence around those stalls, is not taken up by him (nor, I think, by Davidson). I also missed, on p. 62, any discussion of whether the Athenian *gynaikonomoi* were created by the democracy or (as I prefer) by Demetrios of Phaleron, or what their purpose was exactly.

Finally, there are many signs of haste in the composition and completion of the book. Texts in footnotes may not support the argument (e.g. p. 370 n.4, the inscriptions cited for use of a *mageir*-word—dated to c. 400 and 335/4—scarcely support the suggestion of an expansion in 'Hellenistic and Roman times', *LSS* 10 is not a deme calendar, and the intrusive question mark at the end of this note suggests that anyway it lacked a final check). It is not always clear why some texts are given in Greek as well as in English, or why and where certain Greek terms are discussed; there a good many typos (of which *barely* for *barley* on p. 16 is perhaps the tastiest); and references to secondary literature can lack the precision of page numbers (e.g. p. 62, Ogden 1996 on *gynaikonomoi*).

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## ISOCRATES, *BUSIRIS*

N. LIVINGSTONE: *A Commentary on Isocrates' Busiris*. (*Mnemosyne Supplement* 223.) Pp. xi + 225. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 2001. Cased. ISBN: 90-04-12143-9.

When an Athenian named Polycrates decided to become a sophist and teach rhetoric in order to earn some money, probably between 395 and 375 B.C., he advertised his skill by writing speeches arguing for views which appeared to be indefensible. Just as Gorgias before him had written an encomium of the adulterous Helen and a defence of the trickster Palamedes, so Polycrates wrote an encomium of Clytemnestra, an encomium of mice, and probably other similar pieces; also an accusation of Socrates (at a time when remorse had swung Athenian opinion in Socrates' favour). Among the rest he composed a defence of Busiris, a mythical king of Egypt who was said to have killed and eaten any foreigners visiting his country, until he was himself killed by Heracles, who was passing through on his way to find the apples of the Hesperides. Isocrates, who was some years younger, probably saw Polycrates as a potential rival. So he wrote a letter purporting to give him a little friendly advice in confidence (but, of course, he published the letter) by pointing out what was wrong with his defence of Busiris and demonstrating how that character could be praised more effectively. His

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purpose was to put Polycrates down and display his own superior skill. This ‘confidential letter’ is the text which we now have under the title *Busiris*.

It has probably had few readers in recent years, but Niall Livingstone maintains that it throws significant light on a middle way between rhetoric and philosophy, showing that the kind of education offered to Athenians by Isocrates was preferable to either Plato’s unworldly pursuit of abstract truth or the sophists’ amoral individualism. L. claims that his book is ‘the first scholarly commentary on *Busiris* in any language’. By implication, that dismisses as unscholarly the commentary by Robert Flacelière in *Isocrate: Cinq discours* (Paris, 1961). There are also annotated translations in the Budé and Loeb series, and now (too recent for L. to have taken account of it) there is a translation with notes by David Mirhady in *Isocrates I* (Austin, 2000). But it is certainly true that L.’s study is far more thorough than any of those.

His long introduction is in five chapters. The first chapter, entitled ‘What is *Busiris*?’, gives an account of the themes of the text, together with a survey of different kinds of rhetoric and a detailed analysis of the style of sample passages. The second chapter assembles all the evidence about Polycrates. In the third, L. considers and successfully demolishes all the specific evidence that has been adduced for dating *Busiris*. His own inclination to assign it to the early 370s results from the comparison with Plato which occupies his fourth chapter. He suggests that *Busiris* was written after *Republic* but before *Phaedrus*; that is certainly possible, though the argument that Isocrates’ account of Egypt parodies Plato’s ideal state seems to me precarious. The last chapter of the introduction is about the treatment of the myth of Busiris in other literature and in vase-painting; L. emphasizes that previously Busiris had been presented mainly as a comic victim of Heracles, but Isocrates made him a dignified king and founder of Egypt.

L. has not examined the manuscripts and does not provide a Greek text or apparatus criticus, though he discusses some textual variants in the commentary. Nor does he offer a translation. It is true that we now have Mirhady’s translation; nevertheless, a version by L. would helpfully have shown how he interprets some phrases which he does not explain in the commentary. I give a few examples. §8 τάναντία: ‘the opposite’ to what? §9 What is the sense of ἔχουσαν? Mirhady says ‘calls for’, which I think is right. §12 What is the meaning of πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σύμπαντος φύσιν? Mirhady says simply ‘by nature’, which seems inadequate; L. says nothing. §20 τὴν αὐτῶν ἔχοντες: what feminine noun is to be understood? Flacelière suggests γῆν, whereas Mirhady translates ‘satisfy its own needs’; L. is silent.

But in general the commentary is very lavish, especially in quoting parallels for rhetorical vocabulary and arguments, and for moral and philosophical ideas. L. has a remarkably wide knowledge of other relevant texts; note, for example, his detailed comparison of the accounts of Egyptian intellectual culture given by Isocrates and by Chaeremon of Alexandria (pp. 146–7). Some notes are very full, offering a good deal more than is strictly required for explaining Isocrates’ text; see especially L.’s discussion of the theory and arrangement of encomia (pp. 114–21), his account of Pythagoras’ connections with Egypt (pp. 155–60), and his analysis of other writers’ criticisms of poetic myth on moral grounds (pp. 170–4). This commentary is written at a high level of scholarship and is not for beginners in the field, but readers who have a special interest in Greek rhetoric and thought will learn much from it.

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