

ful' and 'provocative', and by others to be simply 'unnerving'. But it is too difficult for use in teaching or for people generally interested in ancient philosophy, and too idiosyncratic for specialists; so I fear it is likely to disappoint both audiences.<sup>1</sup>

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## ASCLEPIADES

SENS (A.) (ed., trans.) *Asclepiades of Samos. Epigrams and Fragments*. Pp. cxvi + 353. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Cased, £90. ISBN: 978-0-19-925319-7.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X11000990

Following the original decision by A.S.F. Gow and Denys Page to publish all known Hellenistic epigrams in their monumental *Hellenistic Epigrams* (1965) by author, a foundation was laid for the study of the individual poets in separate and full monograph form. In the last decade, for instance, Asclepiades himself has already been the subject of two commentaries, one in Spanish by Luis Arturo Guichard (2004) and one in Greek by Ioannis S. Nastos (2006). Now we have S.'s edition, at 469 pages to Gow–Page's 12 pages of text and 37 of commentary. And, not to detract from Gow–Page's achievement for a minute, Asclepiades proves eminently worth the extra attention, and S.'s efforts prove eminently welcome.

The Introduction provides all the vital information concerning traditional subjects like Asclepiades' life and works, the transmission of the text and the problem of ascriptions in the *Greek Anthology*. Throughout, S.'s treatment is balanced and judicious, rightly emphasising, for example, that Meleager's very personal selection of the poems he included in his *Garland* may well have left us with an unrepresentative sample of Asclepiades' total output, which makes the question of the authorship of the poems of multiple ascription all the harder. Of particular value is S.'s contextualisation of Asclepiades' cardinal contribution to the development of Greek erotic epigram. S. succinctly traces his debts to earlier elegy (the paraenetic element), lyric (the evocations of erotic encounters), and comedy and mime (the motif of the comast's dramatic monologues, and the dramatisations of a host ordering food for a party). The section on Asclepiades' points of contact with his contemporaries Theocritus, Apollonius, Callimachus, Posidippus and Hedylys demonstrates clearly his priority and vital influence.

Alongside these more traditional editorial concerns, S. offers comment on matters which have become the subject of more recent scholarly interest, in particular Asclepiades' use of motifs from inscriptional epigram, and his placement of narrative voice and genre. It proves impossible to identify the narrators with the poet, even when an epigram addresses him, as in xvi, where the exhortation for him to drink could be a self-address or, in tune with the practice of early elegy, the words of a fellow-symposiast. Again, meanings of words are made to shift in the course of a poem, as in iv, where the adjective applied to a woman, *πιθανή*, at first appears to mean 'persuasive', or 'alluring', but in the course of the poem seems better taken as 'compliant', with the connotation 'sexually available'.

<sup>1</sup>Warm thanks are due to Jonathan Barnes, Gail Fine and Jane Orton for improving my review with very helpful suggestions of both form and content.

The comparative brevity of the discussion of Asclepiades by Gow and Page was in large part the result of their avoidance of literary-critical comment. The introduction of such analysis into commentaries on the Classical authors has, however, become much more common in recent years, and it is a bonus of S.'s edition that in his commentaries on the individual pieces he contributes impressively to the elucidation of Asclepiades' subtlety. A representative example is the treatment of xviii. S. demonstrates how the opening gnome 'Wine is a test of love' may accord with this element in archaic sympotic elegy, but leads untraditionally into a narrative of how Nicagoras continually toasts, weeps and hangs his head, and how his garland falls. Moreover, it is the falling garland of the final line which reveals Nicagoras' psychological state: it gives the lie to his denials that he is in love, and, humorously, to the relevance of the initial aphorism, for it is not inebriation that exposes the truth. The tone is therefore poignant and ironic. S. deftly contextualises all this by comparisons with the reworkings of the poem by Callimachus *HE* 1103–8 (= *AP* 12.134) and Hedylus *HE* 1831–6 (= *AP* 5.199).

Another strikingly sensitive reading is that of the two brief mime-epigrams, xxv and xxvi, in which hosts compose shopping-lists for a party. S. carefully locates the poems in motifs found in comedy, and also in Hellenistic literary mime, in which people give directions to or complain about their slaves. He brings out the subtlety of the characterisation of the speaker of xxv, his suspicion that his slave has been taking advantage of him by buying at outrageously high prices, his expressions of financial want over against his extravagance in ordering lavish supplies of unguents on credit from a vendor – on the grounds of his heroic sexual performance with her – and his own low social standing, signalled by the names of the people of the poem, which all have disreputable connotations (we learn that his is Bacchon). S. also explores this concern with characterisation in his study of xxvi, where he makes the attractive suggestion that the speaker's real interest is to stage a rendezvous with the girl Tryphera, whom he coyly mentions only at the poem's close. S. finds after careful analysis that the low diction-level of xxvi adds significantly to the characterisation of the poem's 'ordinary' speaker.

Among the poems outside the 33 of definitely Asclepiadean authorship, those which evoke viewers' reactions to works of art – xxxix, on a statue of Aphrodite and its resemblance to Berenice, and xliii, on Lysippus' statue of Alexander – receive particularly interesting coverage. S. regards the elegance and concision of xxxix as possibly favouring Asclepiades rather than Posidippus as its author, and after careful historical inquiry, identifies the poem's Berenice with Berenice I, wife of Ptolemy I Soter. He rightly sees the hexameter of the distich as raising the expectation that the poem is an inscription for a work of art, and he shows how that expectation is subverted by the pentameter, in which the narrator expresses indecision whether a third party would say Aphrodite is more like Berenice or vice versa. In this way the poem modulates into the mode of Hellenistic epigrams on art, which represent the viewer's response, while at the same time artfully playing with that topos in that the viewer expresses *doubt* over what *someone else* might say. S. inclines to ascribe xliii to Asclepiades as well, given its phraseological contacts with Posidippus 63 A–B, and given that Posidippus so often expands on Asclepiades elsewhere. His discussion of the historical, art-historical and literary elements is impressively meticulous and wide-ranging.

My selection of examples hardly does justice to S.'s sustained good sense, balance and interpretative skill, but something must be said about his engagement with modern scholarship. His general strategy is to cite and discuss opinions which deal

directly with Asclepiades as an epigrammatist. So, for example, he spends a lot of time challenging Alan Cameron's view, printed as Appendix C in *Callimachus and His Critics* (1995), pp. 494–519, that the 'girlfriends' of Asclepiades' epigrams are not hetaerae, or the same scholar's sympotic setting for the poems (pp. 71–103). Given the service that S. has done us especially in supplying extra interpretative help, it would be perverse to expect full doxographies on all points. However, the problem remains that, if an editor introduces his interpretations (however excellent they are in the present volume), these methodologically require at least some, even skeletal incorporation of rival views. Moreover, the reader of S.'s studies of the poems on statues, for example, is given no reference to or concept of the wider context of the recent and burgeoning debate over Hellenistic viewing. This is also true of those involving characterisation, the precocious childhood of deities like Eros, or 'ordinary' life. That said, would we really prefer to return to the severity of Gow and Page? The problem is one which S. is most certainly not the only modern editor to face, but once the crucial step of interpretation has been taken, we should take the second step of putting it in its scholarly context, thereby testing and strengthening it.

Nevertheless, this is an elegant volume which gives full and deserved prominence to an exquisite and cardinally significant Hellenistic poet.

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## NICANDER

JACQUES (J.-M.) (ed., trans.) *Nicandre: Œuvres. Tome III. Les Alexipharmques. Lieux parallèles du livre XIII des Iatrica d'Aëtius*. (Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé 458.) Pp. clxxxviii + 329. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007. Paper, €72. ISBN: 978-2-251-00541-6.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X11001004

This is the third volume of J.'s Budé edition of Nicander, although the first – to contain testimonia, fragments and a general introduction – is yet to be published. J. presents a new edition of the *Alexipharmaca*, with an appendix providing parallel passages from Aëtius, *Iatrica* 13. The volume includes sevenfold indexes for Volumes II and III and addenda and corrigenda for Volume II – ironically, the table of contents gives the wrong reference for the latter.

Sympathetic interest in minor Hellenistic poets, Nicander included, is something that has revived in the past two decades. The only twentieth-century edition of Nicander was by Gow and Scholfield (1953), which itself was published almost a hundred years after the previous edition, that of O. Schneider (1856), which was the first to provide a reliable text. Dubbing their work 'first-aid', Gow and Scholfield made no pretence at creating a major new edition, and limited themselves to giving scholars access to the text and some assistance in understanding it. A new edition has thus been long overdue. Now in a short space of time both K. Oikonomakos (2002) and Jacques have examined the MSS, the scholia and Eutecnius' paraphrase afresh. I do not propose to conduct an in-depth comparison between the resulting editions. The textual history of the *Alexipharmaca* and its abstruse subject matter leave many points obscure or matters for interpretation. As a result the editors