

R. BURGER (ed.): *Encounters & Reflections. Conversations with Seth Benardete. With Robert Berman, Ronna Burger, and Michael Davis.* Pp. x + 229, ills. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. Cased, US\$30/£21.50. ISBN: 0-226-04278-2.

Seth Gabriel Benardete (1930–2001) took three degrees at the University of Chicago and was from 1976 professor of classics at New York University. He is known for his widely used translations of Aesch. *Pers.* and *Supp.* in the Grene–Lattimore series. His publications on Homer, Herodotus, and Plato are rarely cited. ‘For several hours on six occasions in 1992 and ’93’ three adoring students armed with a tape recorder had him chatter about people he had met, and several ancient authors. They transcribed the chatter, edited it a bit, and added minimal notes and a selective index. I cannot control the accuracy of the transcriptions. Lily Ross Taylor (p. 63) is misspelled. For some reason, the University of Chicago Press published this. The book has two main parts. The first and better contains reminiscences of teachers and colleagues at Chicago, the American School at Athens, the American Academy in Rome, Harvard, Brandeis, NYU, and the New School. The second preserves his idiosyncratic often obscurantist views largely of Homer, Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, Xenophon, Virgil, and Apuleius. There are several well chosen photographs. There is not even a brief *vita* nor what we most need a bibliography of his publications with reviews of his books. There is no effort to control the accuracy of the sexagenarian’s recollections. Take, for example, his remarks (pp. 23–5) on Benedict Einarson (1906–78). His dates are omitted, and the editors do not know the necrology at *Gnomon* 51 (1979) 207–8. We are repeatedly told how often he laughed, and that ‘he went bonkers and ended up in a loony bin in Western Massachusetts’. No evidence is provided for this libel. Benardete alleges (p. 79) that one Simon Caplan, his colleague at St John’s, ‘wrote a commentary on Polybius, in three volumes’. It does not exist. We learn that Giorgio Pasquali (p. 55) ‘went crazy, and they put him in a loony bin. He was there from the end of the war until the summer of 53 [he died 9 July 1952!]. The day he walked out of the loony bin, he was run over by a Vespa.’ This is not true. Contorted reasons (p. 97) explain why Momigliano always felt an alien. Omitted are the real reasons that he was a Jew in an anti-Semitic society and lived knowing that he had been an engaged Fascist.

The incompetence of the notes delights. I shall mercifully be selective. Burger muddles (p. 31 n. 29) the excavator of Olympia, Ernst Curtius, whose dates are rightly given as ‘1814–96’ with his grandson, Ernst Robert Curtius (1886–1956). Benardete never met the widow of Ernst Curtius in Geneva. She would have been 150. At p. 31 n. 31 Burger tells us that David Daube died in 1990 but nonetheless ‘he taught in the School of Law [at Berkeley] until 1993’. We learn (p. 58 n. 3) that C. M. Bowra became Warden of Wadham at age 24, holding the post ‘from 1922 to 1971’. That would have been an Oxbridge record. He in fact was Warden 1938–70. She thinks Jaeger’s *Paideia* (p. 61 n. 6) was one volume. Arthur Darby Nock becomes (p. 85 n.1) ‘professor in classics at Harvard from 1929 to 1963’. He was in fact Frothingham Professor of the History of Religions (1930–63). Sterling Dow (p. 90 n. 6) is dated 1891–1972; rather: 1903–95. Eric Havelock (p. 102 n. 2) professed at Yale 1963–71 not 1963–76. Tales of Leo Strauss (pp. 34–48), if nothing else, preserve what students told one another. We have the first discussion in print of the parentage of Jenny Strauss Clay (p. 38). A future biographer of Benardete will read the book. I see no reason for anyone else to.

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