
B's Heracles is a useful and stimulating book, and will find its market among those who need more guidance than the Loeb can offer, but who do not require or are not yet prepared to use the editions of Wilamowitz and Bond. B's sensible translation of Diggle's OCT text and commentary are complemented by various prefaces and introductions: Christopher Collard's Foreword, B's own General Introduction to the Series, and B's Introduction to the Heracles.

B's Introduction to the series is noteworthy for its clarity and intelligent economy. B briefly examines the religious dimension of dramatic performances, and then turns to a consideration of the forces that shaped Attic tragedy. Starting from J.-P. Vernant's insight that the 'tragic moment' is a function of the unsteady coexistence of the heroic ideal and the collective values underlying the mentality and institutions of the polis, she offers a recipe for the 'explosive mixture of past and present' that informs tragic artistry. Then she more conventionally sketches the Bauformen of the genre, assesses the veracity of Aristophanes' depiction of Euripides, and offers her own appreciation of the playwright. B's ability to fuse conceptually both sociological and literary approaches to the genre, to view the playwright from the perspective both of his detractors and admirers, and to understand the complex interplay between tragedy and other genres (especially epinikion) is illuminating and refreshing. B might consider presenting Peisistratos' first introduction of civic competitions in tragedy and Thespis' victory in 534 BCE as something less than factual (x). Similarly, dithyramb is probably not a dramatic genre in the same way that tragedy, comedy, and

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satyr play are (ix). B’s discussion of the use of various poleis as settings for Greek tragedy might have benefited from recent discussions of the topic.\(^2\)

B’s Introduction to the play shares the same virtues as her General Introduction. It is concise, but thorough, and throughout displays the author’s lively engagement with the play’s structure and over-arching themes, which she identifies clearly and interprets persuasively. Both in her introduction and commentary she stresses the play’s poetic sensibility, its exploration of the tenuous line of demarcation between legitimate and transgressive violence, and its depiction of an evolution from physical to moral courage and from heroic self-sufficiency to community. The translation is accurate and spirited; and where B deviates from the letter of the original, she cogently explains her rationale in the commentary.\(^3\)

One may occasionally question B’s interpretative choices and language. For instance, she follows Denniston to E. El. 327 in commenting that κλεινός ‘normally connotes royalty’, but the actual usage of the word does not substantiate this claim. Likewise, B places great stress on the ‘romance’ and ‘romanticism’ of the choral persona and its narrative of Herakles’ potioi in the first stasimon (e.g. 131, 139), but it is difficult to understand the applicability of this terminology.

Though B envisions the tragic moment in the clash of old and new, she prefers to interpret the drama as text rather than as performance linked essentially to other cultural performances.\(^4\) In


\(^3\) For some ‘queries’ about B’s translation, see C.S. Kraus’ review of the Heracles in BMCR.

\(^4\) Important exceptions are B’s excellent n. to 588-92 and her n. 757-9.
this regard, B more or less insulates the drama from any interaction with contemporary Athens and its considerable body of civic ideology, choosing, for instance, to deny that the debate between Lykos and Amphitryon has anything to do with 'military history' (a designation which makes it easy to expel from consideration in the interpretation of poetic drama) and confines the problem to the 'poetic tradition.' And yet the poetic texts, which heap scorn upon the Trojan Paris and uncharitably criticize the bastard Teucer for being bowmen, hardly problematize the archery of full fledged heroes—Odysseus, Philoktetes, and Herakles are not in any sense contemptible 'bowmen'. The Heracles does. The poetic tradition may not tell the entire story—the peculiarly successful Athenian adoption of the bow in its land and sea operations and its clash with Athenian and Panhellenic ideology constitute an important supplement to the poetic tradition.

Indeed, Herakles personifies many of the central elements of Athenian civic self-definition: liberator, savior and benefactor of Hellas, tyrant-slayer, civilizer, penetrator of remote seas who made them safe for man, hero whose experience is defined as ponos, and hero of eugeneia par excellence. This aspect of Herakles and his drama receives no attention. In sum, B has produced a useful translation and interpretation. Its strengths are palpable: B is a superb guide to the language and imagery of the play, to the plot structure and meaning, and to all facets of its aesthetic interpretation. She does not, however, achieve in practice a mode of interpretation which fully justifies
her vision of tragedy as constituted by the clash of old and new, myth and civic ideology, heroic excellence and civic practice.5

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Good books on the Satyricon have not been abundant in recent years and Petronian studies seem to have become bogged in a methodological quagmire that begins and ends in a theory of uninterpretability. Conte's Sather Lectures hold out at last a means of rescue, promising to lift the debate onto firmer critical soil. In approaching the text from a new direction he revises the conventional ways in which many of the usual scholarly questions have been formulated and answered: What is the Satyricon's genre? Does the author have a serious purpose or is he merely an amoral, if not immoral, literary entertainer? Is the plot a parody of epic or of the Greek romantic novel? Is the work realist? Which parts of the work reflect Petronius' personal views as opposed to the views of the narrator Encolpius?

5 This edition is generally well presented. I include a list of the errors/queries: xxvi: read 'Agaue' instead of 'Agape'; 9: is 'panoply' the intended word?; 13n.48, 128 (to 74ff), 131 (to 140-251), 137 (to 301), 140, 146 (to 481), 151 (to 613, bis), 175 (to 1214-1426), 176 (to 1235), 190-191 (passim): titles of journal articles italicized; 149 (to 562ff.) Gregory (1991) instead of (1981).